THE LOVE THEME IN THE POETRY OF GABRIELA MISTRAL

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Virginia Louise (Parsons) Escobar

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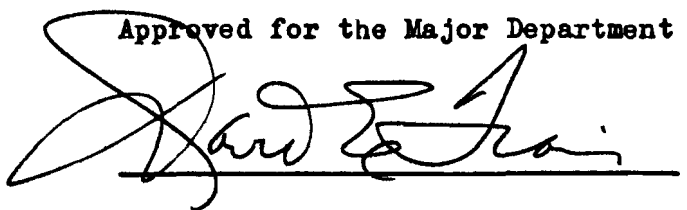

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CHAPTER I

PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THIS STUDY

It is perhaps significant that, with very few exceptions, women were absent from the copious literary movement of Latin America in the eighties and nineties; it was probably too impersonal for them. When at last they came into it, as a group, they came as rebels; and in their own way they were all rebellious. They did not openly reject the traditional restrictions of feminine life in the countries of Hispanic culture--they merely ignored them at the time of writing. They laid their souls bare and spoke frankly of love and passion, of joy when it came to them, but more often of disillusion and thwarted lives. The greatest of them, Gabriela Mistral, though a Chilean by birth, may be said to belong to the entire Spanish-speaking world.[1] Yet because her great theme was love and all her poetry is a variation on this theme,[2] she may be said to speak for all of mankind around the world.

All creatures understand love, even though each species has a different manner of expressing it. It is through the universality

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[1] Arturo Torres-Ríoseco, Breve historia de la literatura chilena (Mexico: Studium, 1956), p. 120.

[2] Enrique Anderson Imbert, Spanish-American Literature: A History (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), p. 343.

of the love theme that Gabriela Mistral speaks to one and all; love is truly a universal language.

The purpose of this study, then, lies in the investigation of the many variations of the love theme. The poetry of Gabriela Mistral as a whole may be likened to a symphony or some other musical composition based on one major theme. Each particular subtheme is a variation with a different tempo, mood, and character from the main theme. The source used in the investigation of these variations was Gabriela's Poesías completas, 1958 edition, for most of her published poems are found in this one volume. Unless otherwise stated, all pages cited refer to this work.

The relationship that exists between the life of a poet and his work and how to determine which element of his poetry is pure creation and which simple biography is very important in the analysis of a poetic work. There finally comes the moment when history and poetry seem to merge in such a way that one feels totally incapable of separating them and assessing the true value of each. Much of Gabriela's poetry was autobiographical and editorial. She was scarcely one of those poets who does not seem to be a part of his verse, who gives the impression of donning his poetry when he feels the impulse and removing it, as one removes an article of clothing that does not quite fit.

Gabriela's poems span a period of nearly forty years, and consequently they reflect the many changes of attitude and perspective that occurred in Gabriela's life. The emotional tone of

her poems ranges from deepest despair to exalted joy and intense hope, followed by resignation and waiting for the end to come.

The poems reflect a rainbow of subthemes, each blending almost unperceptibly into the next one until the love theme is a whole unit. As time passes and incidents change her life, her poetry echoes the changes--romantic love between two young people is replaced by a selfish, demanding love which in turn finally finds an expression in universal love: ". . .love of God, nature, motherhood, good causes of the world, the humble, the persecuted, the sufferers, the forgotten ones; and, above all, love for children.[3]

The plan of this study is to present the principal subthemes: physical love, spiritual love and love for nature, longing for motherhood, love for children, love for school and work, and love for homeland (with interpretations). In order that it may be seen how she has developed these different areas of thought, excerpts from her best written and most representative verse will be presented.

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[3] Ibid., 343-344.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF GABRIELA MISTRAL

Gabriela Mistral is the pseudonym of Lucila Godoy Alcayaga, the first South American to be awarded a Nobel prize. She was born on April 7, 1889, in the Elqui Valley of northern Chile. Her father, Jerónimo Godoy Villanueva, married Petronila Alcayaga de Molina, who had a daughter, Emelina, by a former marriage. Lucila's heritage was a mixed one: ". . .probably more than a touch of Indian"[1] and perhaps Jewish on her father's side, Basque on her mother's. Her parents, of modest fortune, belonged to the social class in which, according to genealogists, the descendents of the conquistadores have become obscure members, but not humble ones. This is to say that the family was a part of society which formed the true aristocracy.[2] Jerónimo Godoy is reported as having been a strange man[3]--vagabond, poet, and former theological student--and was at that particular time an elementary schoolteacher in La Unión. From her father Lucila inherited a wondering, anti-

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[1]Stanley J. Kunitz (ed.), "Gabriela Mistral," Twentieth Century Authors (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1955), p. 676.

[2]Alone (pseudonym of Hernán Díaz Arrieta), Gabriela Mistral (Santiago de Chile: Nascimento, 1946), p. 9.

[3]Margot Arce de Vázquez, Gabriela Mistral: persona y poesía (Helene Masslo Anderson, trans.), (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 1.

bourgeois spirit, stirrings of religious feeling, and a talent for poetry, although personal suffering actually shaped her destiny as a poet.[4] From her mother she received physical beauty and an artistic temperament.

When she was but three years old, her father deserted the home, never to return. Both her mother and Emelina, being teachers, devoted themselves to the instruction of the child. They supported the household with their earnings.

The family lived in the small Elqui Valley for twelve years. Lucila was in constant touch with the land and nature's creatures, a fact that was important in the formation of her character; for the mark of nature was stamped forever in her imagination. On Sundays her paternal grandmother would read passages from the Bible, and her mother and sister would tell her stories. She was fond of imaginative literature, all folklore, and Biblical tales. All of these left a profound impression on her spirit that would one day be echoed in her poetry.

Lucila's first teacher was Emelina. She took Lucila to school with her and taught her reading, writing, geography, and history. Because of her timidity, Lucila's teachers thought her dull, even suggesting to her mother that she be trained for domestic duties. Her classmates took advantage of her, but she never complained, nor did she ever say a word in her own defense.

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[4]Alfred Coester, The Literary History of Spanish America (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), pp. 484-485.

Their cruel treatment, however, left a lingering and painful imprint on her memory and sensitivity.

In spite of many difficulties, nothing deterred Lucila's mother and sister from continuing to prepare her for teaching, for it was evident that, as the daughter of schoolteachers, she would enter that profession. They had faith in her and considered no effort or sacrifice too great to insure the proper training. Upon moving to La Serena, they applied for her admission to the normal school there. About this time, however, Lucila began to write for the local newspapers. In poems and prose articles she freely expounded her socialistic philosophy and her admiration for Vargas Vila, the controversial Colombian writer. The chaplain of the school rejected her application, claiming that her ideas could "harm" the other students.[5] Emelina and her mother continued their work and through their tutoring helped her finish her course of study.

In 1905, Lucila had become a teacher's assistant in the school in La Compañía, a small village near the town where she was born; in 1907, she had an assistant's position in La Cantera, a hamlet located between Coquimbo and La Serena. With the winning of her official certificate of study in 1910, she was finally able to hold positions in high schools throughout the country: La Serena,

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[5]Arce de Vázquez, op. cit., p. 3.

Traiguén, Temuco, and Punta Arenas. She was given such titles as Inspectora General, Profesora de Historia del Liceo in Antofagasta, and Profesora de Castellano del Liceo de Los Andes in Santiago.

Up to this point Lucila was relatively unknown. By 1912, though, she was well settled in Santiago with her pedagogical work becoming recognized not only in her own country but even beyond its borders.

For Lucila teaching was a calling to which she gave of her enthusiasm and creative spirit. A large amount of her literary work, both prose and poetry, was for use in the classroom; it was written to form a moral and religious conscience and an aesthetic sensitivity within each child. She also used her literary work as a means of aiding the children in grasping concepts and learning facts. In the classroom she was a severe taskmaster, exacting hard work and strict discipline.

The culmination of her teaching career came in 1922, when José Vasconcelos, then Mexico's Secretary of Education, passed through Santiago after representing his country at the Brazilian centenary of independence in Rio de Janeiro. He officially offered her a two-year contract to collaborate with him in a program of educational reform that he was about to launch. Lucila accepted and went to settle in the Mexican capital, which was her headquarters until 1924. There she became especially interested in the education of Indians in rural areas. She explored every corner of Mexico, coming to know and to admire the Mexican Indian. Her

experiences in Mexico were decisive ones in her moral and intellectual life. At the time of her leaving Mexico 4,000 children sang her rondas in Chapultepec Park. The love and memory of Mexico and of her Mexican friends stayed with her until her death.

In 1923, Chile awarded her the title of "Teacher of the Nation." On March 4, 1924, after 21 years of outstanding educational service to humanity, she accepted retirement.

It was at the beginning of her rise to fame, while a teacher in La Cantera in 1907, she experienced her first amorous feelings. The young employee of a railroad company who opened her soul to the passion of love was named Romelio Ureta. He was a handsome young man, but their relationship was marred by frequent and bitter disputes due to sharp differences of opinion. They finally severed their relationship and parted. Then in 1909, in order to help a friend in need, he was prompted to borrow some of the company's funds with the intent of returning them. But it evolved into the familiar story: unable to replace the amount before the borrowing could be detected, and abandoned in his plight by his "friend," he sought escape in suicide.[6] The echo of this shot was the flowering and crystallization of her great literary career. This tragedy turned her to poetry,[7]

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[6]Sidonia Carmen Rosenbaum, Modern Women Poets of Spanish America (New York: Hispanic Institute, 1945), p. 174.

[7]Willis Knapp Jones (ed.), Spanish-American Literature in Translation (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963), p. 120.

and her poetry i indeed a mirror of her sorrows; many of her poems written in hose years speak of love, sorr and death.[9] In fact, the love that that young man inspired in her and the hurt that his death caused her can be considered the origin of all the rest that would occur to Lucila Godoy Alcayaga, including the Nobel Prize.

Her fame as a poet began on December 22, 1914, when she won the Gold Medal with her "Sonetos de la muerte" at the poetic Floral Games in Santiago. In these poems she cries of her love and her pain of Ureta's tragic death. Lucila, it is reported, attended the presentation of awards incognito, hidden among the people who had filled the room.[10] Her proud stature and her distant air gave her an aura of mystery, all of which enhanced both her fame as a poet and the magnetic attraction that her personality exercised on all who knew her.

Shortly after the first literary triumph she met under romantic circumstances a young poet from Santiago. For him she felt a passion much deeper, more intense, and more mature than her first love. A short while later, however, he married a wealthy young lady of the capital's high social circles. This cruel blow moved her to ask for a transfer to Punta Arenas in the extreme south of Chile, an inhospitable and desolate region. There she

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[8]Torres-Ríoseco; loc. cit.

[9]Arce de Vázquez, op. cit., p. 4.

[10]Ibid.

remained for two years, exiled and overwhelmed with sorrow. It was there, having decided to leave Chile, that she accepted the invitation from the Mexican government. The most moving and impassioned poems of Desolación, the very title of the anguished book, express with ardent eloquence her heartbreaking disillusionment.

She turned her gaze to children and wrote for them, transforming her frustrated longing for motherhood into tenderness expressed in poetry. In her affection for the American lands and peoples and in the pleasures of friendship she sought the companionship denied to her by love. She adopted her nephew, Juan Miguel Godoy, and raised him as a son. But in friendship she was also to know cruel blows. While in Brazil, she was shattered by the suicide of her dear friends, Stefan Zweig and his young wife, as well as that of Juan Miguel, on August 13, 1943. From the date of that event her physical health began to fail. Plunged into sorrow, she waited for death.

Lucila's literary calling became evident very early in life. In 1908, the daily newspaper La Voz de Elqui published articles of hers, essays in prose that were very much influenced by Vargas Vila. She also wrote for other newspapers and journals of her native region. Gradually, she became known for her anti-bourgeois social ideas and for her verses influenced somewhat by Modernism. Between 1916 and 1918, Manuel Maturana, a Spanish professor, included more than 50 examples of her prose and poetry in his Libros de lectura. His inclusion of her works brought Lucila

to the attention of the intellectual circles of Chile. She also began to win fame abroad, both for the writings she published in the press and for the correspondence she carried on with notable Hispanic-American writers, among them Rubén Darío. The prize she won in 1914 at the Floral Games in Santiago and the trip to Mexico consolidated her national and inter-American reputation.

In February 1921, Federico de Onís, a professor at Columbia University and an excellent critic, lectured on Gabriela Mistral's poetic work to a group of North American professors. These school-teachers of New York City defrayed the publication expenses of her first book, Desolación, which was published in New York by the Hispanic Institute of Columbia University and gained its author international fame. Thus, in 1922, with this publication the literary name of Gabriela Mistral definitively replaced her own name of Lucila Godoy Alcayaga.

There is some controversy in the adoption of this pseudonym. The Collier's[11] and Americana[12] encyclopedias contend that she formed her pen name from Gabriele d'Annunzio of Italy and Frédéric Mistral of France, two of her favorite poets. Willis Knapp Jones,[13]

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[11] Juan Marichal, "Gabriela Mistral," Collier's Encyclopedia, (New York: The Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, 1965), XVI, p. 393.

[12] "Gabriela Mistral," Encyclopedia Americana, International Edition (New York: Americana Corporation, 1966), XIX, p. 262.

[13] Jones, loc. cit.

the editor of Spanish-American Literature in Translation, is of the opinion that Gabriela derived her name from the first name of Rosetti and the last name of a Provençal poet who had just died. On the other hand Margot Arce de Vázquez, whose book is translated by Helene Masslo Anderson,[14] asserts that the adoption of this name reveals something of her conception of the world and of man: "Gabriela" for the archangel Gabriel, divine messenger of good news; and "Mistral" for the strong hot wind of Provence. This is summed up by Alone:[15] "nombre de arcángel con apellido de viento." Both names contain spiritual symbols. Gabriela classified people in three groups: children of air, or of water, or of fire. Those of air were the intelligent ones, distinguished by grace and spirit. She believed firmly in the archangels as creatures of pure spirit and intelligence and as mediators between God and men.

After Desolación there were long intervals between the publication of her other books of verse: Ternura, 1924; Tala, 1938. She was, however, constantly publishing new poems in the Hispanic-American press, and she began extensive and continuous journalistic work as a correspondent for the principal journals and newspapers of the Americas. Her journalistic work was initiated in the local press of Chile around 1907 and continued without interruption

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[14] Arce de Vázquez, op. cit., p. 6.

[15] Alone, loc. cit.

until her death in 1957. When she was in foreign countries, she also contributed to the newspapers, and her articles were translated into the respective national languages. Her pen was always at the service of truth, goodness, justice, liberty, and peace.

Perhaps it was the profound value of her poetry as a work of art and as a human document and of her prose as an expression of values essential to contemporary man plus her contribution to the betterment of man through education that won for her the highest literary award in the world, the Nobel Prize for Literature, presented to her in Sweden on November 15, 1945. She was both the first woman and the first Hispanic-American writer to receive this high universal recognition.

During the last twelve years of her life she continued to write poetry and prose for the newspapers in spite of her deteriorating spiritual state and the illness that sapped her physical energies. In 1951, she received the National Award for Chilean Literature, and in 1954, she published her last book, Lagar. She was preparing Canto a Chile, a long poem of eulogy and love for her country, when death interrupted her work.

The period of Gabriela's travels through Europe and America, of her service in the Chilean Consular Corps, and of her collaboration in cooperative intellectual world organizations dates from her departure from Chile for Mexico in 1922. Today her name is symbolic of feminine accomplishment in Spanish America.

At the conclusion of her stay in Mexico in 1924, she went

to the Pan American Union in Washington, D. C., where she delivered a speech to the brotherhood of the Americas. Then via New York she returned to Chile, but she did not remain long. Being pensioned by the Chilean government, she visited Buenos Aires and Uruguay on her way to Europe where she visited Italy, Switzerland, France, and Spain. In 1926, as a member of the Committee for Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations, with headquarters in Paris, she took charge of the section of Hispanic-American literature. She published a collection of Hispanic American classics translated into French in careful critical editions, with prologues, annotations, and, in some cases, with glossaries. She was also a member of the Educational Cinematographic Institute of Rome.

Although the Chilean government appointed her honarary consul in Naples, she was refused the Exequatur by Mussolini because of some anti-Fascist articles she had written. She returned to Puerto Rico in 1933 and taught a course in Hispanic-American literature as Visiting Professor of Spanish Studies at the University of Puerto Rico. There she was awarded an honorary degree, and the Puerto Rican legislature bestowed upon her the title "adopted daughter of Puerto Rico."

Between 1934 and 1935, she was in Madrid as honorary consul, going from there to Lisbon. In 1937, she visited France, Germany, and Denmark; she then returned to South America to tour Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Panama, and Cuba. Everywhere both intellectuals and the common people received her

with great enthusiasm when she gave lectures in the educational and literary centers.

In December 1938, she was appointed Chilean Consul in Nice, but the European crisis that unleashed World War II made her decide to request transfer to Brazil. There she lived from 1939 to 1945, first in Niteroi and later in Petrópolis. Overwhelmed by the suicide of her nephew, Juan Miguel, she left for Europe at the end of 1945. That year she received the Nobel Prize in Stockholm.

She returned to the United States as Chilean Consul in Los Angeles, but stricken with diabetes she went to Mexico to convalesce at the invitation of President Alemán. In 1951, she journeyed to Naples where she received the National Award for Chilean Literature. Then in 1953 she took part in the ceremonies of Martí's centennial celebration in Cuba. From there she moved to New York as Chilean delegate to the United Nations and participated in the colloquia on freedom of culture at Columbia University.

The state of her health forced her to resign from her post at the United Nations and to return to Roslyn Bay, Long Island, where she had lived since 1954 in the company of a friend.

On January 10, 1957, she died of cancer of the pancreas in Hempstead Hospital, Long Island. Funeral services were held in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York and her remains were removed to her native Chile, to Montegrande in the Elqui Valley, where they now rest.

CHAPTER III

GABRIELA'S LOVE

Although very little is known of Gabriela's personal life, it is relatively certain that she was in love with two different men on two different occasions. Both of these loves were thwarted; one ended tragically when the young man committed suicide, and the other ended when the man suddenly married a young society lady. Through the poems of Desolación, however, Gabriela tells the story of her two loves as if they were but one experience. The time was 1906 in a small Elqui Valley village. The poetess was 17 years old and had already published some verses. She was the young maestra rural, as she described:

> La maestra era pura. "Los suaves hortelanos",
> decía, "de este predio, que es predio de Jesús,
> han de conservar puros los ojos y las manos,
> guardar claros sus óleos, para dar clara luz".
>
> La maestra era pobre. Su reino no es humano.
> (Así en el doloroso sembrador de Israel.)
> Vestía sayas pardas, no enjoyaba su mano
> ¡y era todo su espíritu un inmenso joyel!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Como un henchido vaso, traía el alma hecha
> para dar ambrosía de toda eternidad;
> y era su vida humana la dilatada brecha
> que suele abrirse el Padre para echar claridad.
> (La maestra rural, pp. 51-53)

This is a portrait of Lucila at the time when she fell in love with

a railroad employee, Romelio Ureta, and was loved in return. She notices the spring-like blue sky, filled with intoxicating aromas and the songs of birds:

> El mundo fue más hermoso
> desde que me hiciste aliada,
> cuando junto de un espino
> nos quedamos sin palabras,
> ¡y el amor como el espino
> nos traspasó de fragancia!
> (Dios lo quiere, pp. 68-71)

It was a time free of worries. Nevertheless, she says:

> Si tú me miras, yo me vuelvo hermosa
> como la hierba a que bajó el rocío,
> y desconocerán mi faz gloriosa
> las altas cañas cuando baje al río.
>
> Tengo vergüenza de mi boca triste,
> de mi voz rota y mis rodillas rudas.
> Ahora que me miraste y que viniste,
> me encontré pobre y me palpé desnuda.
> (Vergüenza, pp. 73-74)
>
> Como soy reina y fui mendiga, ahora
> vivo en puro temblor de que me dejes,
> y te pregunto, pálida, a cada hora:
> "¿Estás conmigo aún? ¡Ay, no te alejes!"
> (Desvelada, p. 72)

But being in love has its complications and dangerous caprices. Gabriela felt an instinctive fear; she did not trust love's lures and fascinations, and these easily became afflictions:

> Anda libre en el surco, bate el ala en el viento
> late vivo en el sol y se prende al pinar.
> No te vale olvidarlo como al mal pensamiento:
> ¡le tendrás que escuchar!
>
> Habla lengua de bronce y habla lengua de ave,
> ruegos tímidos, imperativos de mar.
> No te vale ponerle gesto audaz, ceño grave:
> ¡lo tendrás que hospedar!
> (Amo Amor, pp. 61-62)

Tú viste que dormía al margen del sendero,
la frente de paz llena.
Tú viste que vinieron a quebrar los cristales
de mi frente serena.
Sabes cómo la triste temía abrir el párpado
a la visión terrible;
¡y sabes de qué modo maravilloso hacíase
el prodigio indecible!
(Tribulación, pp. 77-78)

Feelings of misgivings and enchantments were experienced at the same time. Besides the rapture of the discovery, there is nostalgia for peace of mind that is lost. Never has the surprise of love been more beautifully expressed nor the subsequent attitudes which she relates:

Tú no oprimas mis manos.
Llegará el duradero
tiempo de reposar con mucho polvo
y sombra en los entretejidos dedos.

. . . . . .

Tú no beses mi boca.
Vendrá el instante lleno
de luz menguada, en que estaré sin labios
sobre un mojado suelo.

. . . . . .

No me toques, por tanto. Mentiría
al decir que te entrego
mi amor en estos brazos extendidos,
en mi boca, en mi cuello,
y tú, al creer que lo bebiste todo,
te engañarías como un niño ciego.

Porque mi amor no es solo esta gavilla
reacia y fatigada de mi cuerpo,
que tiembla entera al roce del cilicio
y que se me rezaga en todo vuelo.

Es lo que está en el beso, y no es el labio;
lo que rompe la voz, y no es el pecho:

¡es un viento de Dios, que pasa hendiéndome
el gajo de las carnes, volandero!
(Intima, pp. 66-67)

This thought of death in the middle of discovering love is more literary than natural, without a doubt; but it suggests the unconscious reaction of un no se sabe qué in which death is hidden.

Then, as if these afflictions were not enough, between Lucila and her aliado there comes another woman, a finely dressed rival who distracts the novio and separates him from his peasant love. For the poor school teacher, humiliated and jealous, the flowers fade and the birds cease to sing:

El pasó con otra;
yo le vi pasar.
Siempre dulce el viento
y el camino en paz.
¡Y estos ojos míseros
le vieron pasar!
(Balada, pp. 75-76)

Siguió su marcha cantando
y se llevó mis miradas...
Detrás de él no fueron más
azules y altas las salvias.
¡No importa! Quedó en el aire
estremecida mi alma.
¡Y aunque ninguno me ha herido
tengo la cara con lágrimas!
(El encuentro, pp. 59-60)

El besó a la otra
a orillas del mar;
resbaló en las olas
la luna de azahar.
¡Y no untó mi sangre
la extensión del mar!
(Balada, pp. 75-76)

It is a popular belief that a sorrow never comes alone, but one

must face life with an unnatural and unfelt happiness:

> La maestra era alegre. ¡Pobre mujer herida!
> Su sonrisa fue un modo de llorar con bondad.
> Por sobre la sandalia rota y enrojecida,
> era ella la insigne flor de su santidad.
>
> ¡Dulce ser! En su río de mieles, caudaloso,
> largamente abrevaba sus tigres el dolor.
> Los hierros que le abrieron el pecho generoso
> más anchas le dejaron las cuencas del amor.
> (La maestra rural, pp. 51-53)

And after an explanation that nothing could reconcile them, there came a complete break in their relationship:

> Ahora, Cristo, bájame los párpados,
> pon en la boca escarcha,
> que están de sobra ya todas las horas
> y fueron dichas todas las palabras.
>
> Me miró, nos miramos en silencio
> mucho tiempo, clavadas,
> como en la muerte, las pupilas. Todo
> el estupor que blanquea las caras
> en la agonía, albeaba nuestros rostros.
> ¡Tras de ese instante, ya no resta nada!
>
> Me habló convulsamente;
> le hablé, rotas, cortadas
> de plenitud, tribulación y angustia,
> las confusas palabras.
> Le hablé de su destino y mi destino,
> amasijo fatal de sangre y lágrimas.
>
> Después de esto, ¡lo sé!, ¡no queda nada!
> ¡Nada! Ningún perfume que no sea
> diluido al rodar sobre mi cara.
> (Extasis, pp. 64-65)

The break, imposed by her offended dignity and pride, did not prevent her affections from becoming anxiously desirous, afflicting, or threatening:

Beso que tu boca entregue
a mis oídos alcanza,
porque las grutas profundas
me devuelven tus palabras.

. . . . . .

Ve cual ladrón a besarla
de la tierra en las entrañas;
que, cuando el rostro le alces,
hallas mi cara con lágrimas.

. . . . . .

Dios no quiere que tú bebas
si yo no tiemblo en tu agua;
no consiente que tú duermas
sino en mi trenza ahuecada.

. . . . . .

Si te vas y mueres lejos,
tendrás la mano ahuecada
diez años bajo la tierra
para recibir mis lágrimas,
sintiendo cómo te tiemblan
las carnes atribuladas,
¡hasta que te espolvoreen
mis huesos sobre la cara!
(Dios lo quiere, pp. 68-71)

And, in the meantime, gossip in the village embittered her.

Campesina, ¿recuerdas que alguna vez prendiste
su nombre a un comentario brutal o baladí?
Cien veces la miraste, ninguna vez la viste
y en el solar de tu hijo, de ella hay más que de ti.
(La maestra rural, pp. 51-53)

Without hope of the tide of comments abating, she turns her eyes toward heaven, but the sky remains mute and impassive. Neither grace nor a miracle descend:

En esta hora, amarga como un sorbo de mares,
Tú sostenme, Señor.
¡Todo se me ha llenado de sombras el camino
y el grito de pavor!

Amor iba en el viento como abeja de fuego,
y en el agua ardía.
Me socarró la boca, me acibaró la trova,
y me aventó los días.

. . . . . .

Ahora que llego, huérfana, tu zona por señales
confusas rastreando,
Tú no esquives el rostro, Tú no apagues la lámpara,
¡Tú no sigas callando!
Tú no cierres la tienda, que crece la fatiga
y aumenta la amargura;
y es invierno, y hay nieve, y la noche se puebla
de muecas de locura.

¡Mira! De cuantos ojos veía abiertos sobre
mis sendas tempraneras,
solo los tuyos quedan. Pero se van llenando
de un cuajo de neveras...
(Tribulación, pp. 77-78)

Miedo extraño en mis carnes mora.
¡Si tú callas, qué voy a hacer!
(A la Virgen de la Colina, pp. 26-28)

After this chilling howl of emotion, it would seem impossible to deepen even more this pathetic anguish; but the torment increased in the soul of the unfortunate woman, and the Nocturno, that must be counted among the most distress-filled and soul-moving poems ever written in Spanish, gushed from her lips:

Padre Nuestro que estás en los cielos,
¿por qué te has olvidado de mí?
Te acordaste del fruto en Febrero,
al llagarse su pulpa rubí.
¡Llevo abierto también mi costado,
y no quieres mirar hacia mí!

Te acordaste del negro racimo,
y lo diste al lagar carmesí;
y aventaste las hojas del álamo,
con tu aliento, en el aire sutil.
¡Y en el ancho lagar de la muerte
aún no quieres mi pecho oprimir!

. . . . . .

Me vendió el que besó mi mejilla;
me negó por la túnica ruin.

. . . . . .

Ha venido el cansancio infinito
a clavarse en mis ojos, al fin:
el cansancio del día que muere
y el del alba que debe venir;
¡el cansancio del cielo de estaño
y el cansancio del cielo de añil!

Ahora suelto la mártir sandalia
y las trenzas pidiendo dormir.
Y perdida en la noche, levanto
el clamor aprendido de Ti:
¡Padre Nuestro, que estás en los cielos,
por qué te has olvidado de mí!
(Nocturno, pp. 79-80)

The suffering continued thus until one November day in 1909 when Ureta put an end to his life for reasons of personal honor having nothing to do with his relationship with Lucila. He had not reconciled himself with the poetess, due to her stubbornness. He carried in his pocket a postcard from Lucila:

Yo mi amor escondí en mis venas.
¡Para mí no ha de haber piedad!
(A la Virgen de la Colina, pp. 26-28)

¡y en estas dos manos mendigas
no he oprimido ni las amigas
sienes de él!
(Serenidad, pp. 116-117)

Before the irreparable and through the stupor of the first moment, the volcano erupts, ungoverned and biblical. The image of her lover's open skull oozing blood became so hideous and rending that from this point on the poetess saw everything as being a red

color, stained with blood, and wounded. Expressions containing "red" and "blood" became her favorites; and her poetry during this particular period is filled with many sad thoughts about his death, a constant point of depression in the midst of an avalanche of impossible desires, of absurd and ferocious jealousies:

> Del nicho helado en que los hombres te pusieron,
> te bajaré a la tierra humilde y soleada.
> Que he de dormirme en ella los hombres no supieron,
> y que hemos de soñar la misma almohada.
>
> Te acostaré en la tierra soleada con una
> dulcedumbre de madre para el hijo dormido,
> y la tierra ha de hacerse suavidades de cuna
> al recibir tu cuerpo de niño dolorido.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Me alejaré contando mis venganzas hermosas,
> ¡porque a ese hondor recóndito la mano de ninguna
> bajará a disputarme tu puñado de huesos!
> (Los sonetos de la muerte, pp. 81-83)

> Ah! Nunca más conocerá tu boca
> la vergüenza del beso que chorreaba
> concupiscencia como espesa lava!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> ¡Ah! Nunca más conocerán tus brazos
> el mundo horrible que en mis días puso
> oscuro horror: ¡el nudo de otro abrazo!...
>
> Por el sosiego puros,
> quedaron en la tierra distendidos,
> ¡ya, ¡Dios mío!, seguros!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> ¡Benditas ceras fuertes,
> ceras heladas, ceras eternales
> y duras, de la muerte!
> (Ceras eternas, pp. 93-94)

In a state of nervous depression, she turns to a more primitive and mystic point of view: Lucila believes in a non-worldly alliance of beings, pre-established by the stars in the book of Destiny; she also believes in the power of bewitching charms, of the vehement wish that she made upon seeing her dead lover:

> Solo entonces sabrás el porqué, no madura
> para las hondas huesas tu carne todavía,
> tuviste que bajar, sin fatiga, a dormir.
>
> Se hará luz en la zona de los sinos, oscura;
> sabrás que en nuestra alianza signo de astros había
> y, roto el pacto enorme, tenías que morir...
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Y yo dije al Señor: "Por las sendas mortales
> le llevan. ¡Sombra amada que no saben guiar!
> ¡Arráncalo, Señor, a esas manos fatales
> o le hundes en el largo sueño que sabes dar!"
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Se detuvo la barca rosa de su vivir...
> (Los sonetos de la muerte, ppp. 81-83)

Nevertheless, remorse plagues her. Will her sorcery by chance be the cause of the dead lover's suffering in his life beyond the grave? Gabriela's emotions give way to the immense tenderness in the unforgettable lines of El ruego:

> Señor, Tú sabes cómo, con encendido brío,
> por los seres extraños mi palabra te invoca.
> Vengo ahora a pedirte por uno que era mío,
> mi vaso de frescura, el panal de mi boca,
>
> cal de mis huesos, dulce razón de la jornada,
> gorjeo de mi oído, ceñidor de mi veste.
> Me cuido hasta de aquellos en que no puse nada;
> ¡no tengas ojo torvo si te pido por este!

. . . . . .

¿Qué fue crüel? Olvidas, Señor, que le quería.

. . . . . .

Y amor (bien sabes de eso) es amargo ejercicio;
un mantener los párpados de lágrimas mojados,
un refrescar de besos las trenzas del cilicio
conservando, bajo ellas, los ojos extasiados.

. . . . . .

Fatigaré tu oído de preces y sollozos.

. . . . . .

¡Di el perdón, dilo al fin! Va a esparcir en el viento
la palabra el perfume de cien pomos de olores...
(El ruego, pp. 99-101)

Y responde, Señor: cuando se fuga el alma,
por la mojada puerta de las largas heridas,
¿entra en la zona tuya hendiendo el aire en calma
o se oyo un crepitar de alas enloquecidas?
(Interrogaciones, pp. 84-85)

But these dantesque images of her disturbed conscience are terminated at last by her confidence in divine kindness:

Yo sé que como el hombre fue siempre zarpa dura;
la catarata, vértigo; aspereza, la sierra.
¡Tú eres el vaso donde se esponjan de dulzura
los nectarios de todos los huertos de la Tierra!
(Interrogaciones, pp. 84-85)

After this period of reaction there follows, as is natural, a state of depression and melancholy, characterized by hallucinations and a reluctance to continue living. Not even the medical advice "Viajad.--¡Tanto he viajado!" can revive her contrite spirit.

Yo me olvidé que se hizo
ceniza tu pie ligero,

y, como en los buenos tiempos,
salí a encontrarte al sendero.
(La espera inútil, pp. 86-88)

Y nunca, nunca más, ni en noches llenas
de temblor de astros, ni en las alboradas
vírgenes, ni en las tardes inmoladas?

. . . . . .

¡Oh, no! ¡Volverlo a ver, no importa dónde,
en remansos de cielo o en vórtice hervidor,
bajo unas lunas plácidas o en un cárdeno horror!
(Volverlo a ver, p. 95)

Todo adquiere en mi boca
un sabor persistente de lágrimas;
el manjar cotidiano, la trova
y hasta la plegaria.

Yo no tengo otro oficio
después del callado de amarte,
que este oficio de lágrimas, duro,
que tú me dejaste.

. . . . . .

¡Tengo una vergüenza
de vivir de este modo cobarde!
¡Ni voy en tu busca
ni consigo tampoco olvidarte!

. . . . . .

¡Carne de miseria,
gajo vergonzante, muerto de fatiga,
que no baja a dormir a tu lado,
que se aprieta, trémulo,
al impuro pezón de la Vida!
(Coplas, pp. 91-92)

¿Si he cambiado de cielo?
Fui al mar y a la montaña.
Y caminó a mi vera
y hospedó en mis posadas.
(La obsesión, pp. 89-90)

It was during this phase of neurosis that, going "al mar y a

la montaña," the poetess began to wander from city to city (Traiguén, Antofagasta, Los Andes, Punta Arenas, Temuco, Santiago). Although exactness is always worthy of consideration, here poco antes or poco después has less importance than in other poets' works. The order of composition of the poems in not an imitation of the order and succession of the states of her mind and soul.

Whether one goes to the tropics or to the extreme ends of the globe, sadness will follow one and will not give the traveler peace. It unfolds, far from friendly faces and well-known things, and there begins to appear nostalgia for the homeland, accented by a dismal note:

> Al costado de la barca
> mi corazón he apegado,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Lávalo, mar, con sal tremenda,
> lávalo, mar; lávalo, mar.
> O me lo rompes en la proa
> que no lo quiero más llevar.
> (Canciones en el mar, pp. 112-115)

La tierra a la que vine no tiene primavera...

. . . . . .

El viento hace a mi casa su ronda de sollozos...

. . . . . .

Y en la llanura blanca, de horizonte infinito,
veo morir inmensos ocasos dolorosos.

¿A quién podrá llamar la que hasta aquí ha venido
si más lejos que ella solo fueron los muertos?

. . . . . .

Y la interrogación que sube a mi garganta
al mirarlos pasar, me desciende, vencida:
hablan extrañas lenguas y no la conmovida
lengua que en tierra de oro mi vieja madre canta.

Miro bajar la nieve como el polvo en la huesa;
miro crecer la niebla como el agonizante,
y por no enloquecer no cuento los instantes,
porque la noche larga ahora tan solo empieza.
(Paisajes de la Patagonia, pp. 123-124)

Nubes vaporosas,
nubes como tul,
llevad l'alma mía
por el cielo azul.

¡Lejos de la casa
que me ve sufrir,
lejos de estos muros
que me ven morir!
(A las nubes, pp. 129-130)

Time is a good doctor, however, as well as distance and work; and the night is long for wrestling with one's thoughts while the body is warmed next to a fire.

A la azul llama del pino
que acompaña mi destierro,
busco esta noche tu rostro,
palpo mi alma y no lo encuentro.

¿Cómo eras cuando sonreías?
¿Cómo eras cuando me amabas?
¿Cómo miraban tus ojos
cuando aún tenían alma?

. . . . . .

Araño en la ruin memoria;
me desgarro y no te encuentro,
¡y nunca fui más mendiga
que ahora sin tu recuerdo!
(Coplas, pp. 107-110)

Nubes, flores, rostros,
dibujadme a aquel

que ya va borrándose
por el tiempo infiel.
(A las nubes, pp. 129-130)

Y el amor al que tendí,
para salvarme, los brazos,
se está muriendo en mi alma
como arrebol desflocado.
(Otoño, pp. 131-132)

While the sweeper of memories erased her sad past, staunching the flow of blood from her wounds (in which the poetess seemed to take pleasure), the noche larga of the winter at Punta Arenas sharpened the sensation of aloneness. Helped by time and distance, the strong, healthy organism of the suffering one triumphed over psychological death. But her health is going to give rise to another crisis: the fight of the instinctive against the ideal, inducements against motives. Her legitimate desires for happiness prevented her from conforming to an unjust Destiny, but her spiritual excellence and her honesty prevented her satisfying them in a new love. This was, however, the advisable medicine for the occasion, but the idea is physically repugnant:

Los huesos de los muertos
hielo sutil saben espolvorear
sobre las bocas de los que quisieron.
¡Y estas no pueden nunca más besar!
(Los huesos de los muertos, p. 111)

Gabriela looks upon love, one might say, as a religion--as something almost tragically serious; something one enters into everlastingly--not "until death do us part," but on to eternity. Death severs the mortal bonds, but love lives on to be resumed beyond this

life. And because love holds so vital a meaning for her; because she fears she may some day lose that which she now considers an inalienable part of herself, she loves with passion, with an overbearing feeling of possession, of ownership. She is demanding and domineering.

CHAPTER IV

MOTHERHOOD AND LOVE FOR CHILDREN

Gabriela realizes that, after the death of the man (or men) she loved, there will be no arm on which human frailty can rest, nor a heart in which to empty smothering secrets. There will be, at most, a paper on which to spill the verse that bubbles up from within her. Returning to the sight of her body that has lost the freshness of 20 years, that feels steril and stamped by Fatality, and that is condemned to perpetual solitude, she utters a prolonged groan. All of her being protests, rises in rebellion, argues, and begs; and conquered, Gabriela cries her desolation, her grief in not being able to be the mother of the child of the man she loved:

> Un hijo, un hijo, un hijo! Yo quise un hijo tuyo
> y mío, allá en los días del éxtasis ardiente,
> en los que hasta mis huesos temblaron de tu arrullo
> y un ancho resplandor creció sobre mi frente.
>
> Decía: ¡un hijo!, como el árbol conmovido
> de primavera alarga sus yemas hacia el cielo.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Sus brazos en guirnalda a mi cuello trenzados;
> el río de mi vida bajando a él, fecundo...
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Al cruzar una madre grávida, la miramos
> con los labios convulsos y los ojos de ruego,
> cuando en las multitudes con nuestro amor pasamos.
> ¡Y un niño de ojos dulces nos dejó como ciegos!

En las noches, insomne de dicha y de visiones,
la lujuria de fuego no descendió a mi lecho.
Para el que nacería vestido de canciones
yo extendía mi brazo, yo ahuecaba mi pecho...

El sol no parecíame, para bañarlo, intenso;
mirándome, yo odiaba, por toscas, mis rodillas;
mi corazón confuso, temblaba al don inmenso;
¡y un llanto de humildad regaba mis mejillas!
(Poema del hijo, pp. 102-106)

Very original and fundamental is this Poema del hijo. It documents and defines Gabriela's drama and opens a new path in the poetic material: the theme of maternal desire that is neither a sexual desire nor tenderness. This theme of the steril lap inspired Gabriela to write two other brief but beautiful poems. In effect outstanding, sincere, and plethoric in meaning and in its teaching is the sonnet La mujer estéril:

La mujer que no mece a un hijo en el regazo,
cuyo calor y aroma alcance a sus entrañas,
tiene una laxitud de mundo entre los brazos;
todo su corazón congoja inmensa baña.

El lirio le recuerda unas sienes de infante;
el Angelus le pide otra boca con ruego;
e interroga la fuente de seno de diamante
por qué su labio quiebra el cristal en sosiego.

Y al contemplar sus ojos se acuerda de la azada;
piensa que en los de un hijo no mirará extasiada,
al vaciarse sus ojos, los follajes de octubre.

Con doble temblor oye el viento en los cipreses.
¡Y una mendiga grávida, cuyo seno florece
cual la parva de enero, de vergüenza la cubre!
(La mujer estéril, p. 16)

What poem is more tender and affectionate than El niño solo? It is an etching of the finest artisan and a resumé of the sad

history of the soul that, without uttering a single word, says in its lullaby and cradle song more than all the comments of the world could possibly say:

> Como escuchase un llanto, me paré en el repecho
> y me acerqué a la puerta del rancho del camino.
> Un niño de ojos dulces me miró desde el lecho
> ¡y una ternura inmensa me embriagó como un vino!
>
> La madre se tardó, curvada en el barbecho;
> el niño, al despertar, buscó el pezón de rosa
> y rompió en llanto... Yo lo estreché contra el pecho,
> y una canción de cuna me subió, temblorosa...
>
> Por la ventana abierta la luna nos miraba.
> El niño ya dormía, y la canción bañaba,
> como otro resplandor, mi pecho enriquecido...
>
> Y cuando la mujer, trémula, abrió la puerta,
> me vería en el rostro tanta ventura cierta
> ¡que me dejó el infante en los brazos dormido!
>
> (El niño solo, p. 17)

The Poemas de las madres are a paraphrase in prose of this same topic, a collection of dreams or reveries of a pregnant woman, a real cantar de los cantares of maternal love:

> Me ha besado y ya soy otra... Mi vientre ya es noble como mi corazón...[1] (Me ha besado)
>
> Por el niño dormido que llevo, mi paso se ha vuelto sigiloso. Y es religioso todo mi corazón, desde que lleva el misterio...[2] (La dulzura)
>
> Ya no juego en las praderas y temo columpiarme con las mozas. Soy como la rama con fruto...[3] (Sensitiva)

---

[1] Langston Hughes (trans.), Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 35.

[2] Jorge Velez, et. al., Orfeo, #23-27 (1967), p. 93.

[3] Ibid.

Palidezco si él sufre dentro de mí; dolorida voy de su presión recóndita, y podría morir a un solo movimiento de éste que está en mí y a quien no veo...[4] (El dolor eterno)

Por él, por él que está adormecido, como hilo de agua bajo la hierba, no me dañeis, no me deis trabajos. Perdonádmelo todo: mi descontento de la mesa preparada y mi oído al ruido...[5] (Por él)

Ya no puedo ir por los caminos: tengo el rubor de mi ancha cintura y de la ojera profunda de mis ojos...[6] (La quietud)

Esposo, no me estreches. Lo hiciste subir del fondo de mi ser como un lirio de aguas. Déjame ser como una agua en reposo...[7] (Al esposo)

Vino mi madre a verme; estuvo sentada aquí a mi lado, y por primera vez en nuestra vida fuimos dos hermanas que hablaron del tremendo trance.[8] (La madre)

Madre, cuéntame todo lo que sabes por tus viejos dolores...

Dame tu ciencia de amor ahora, madre. Enséñame las nuevas caricias, delicadas, más delicadas que las del esposo...[9] (Cuéntame, madre...)

Toda la noche he padecido, toda la noche se ha estremecido mi carne por entregar su don. Hay el sudor de la muerte sobre mis sienes; pero no es la muerte, ¡es la vida!...[10] (El amanecer)

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 163.

[6] Hughes, op. cit., p. 44.

[7] Ibid., p. 47.

[8] Velez, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

[9] Ibid., p. 94.

[10] Ibid., p. 93.

--¿Quién soy yo, me digo, para tener un hijo en mis rodillas?
--Una que amó, y cuyo amor pidió, al recibir el beso, la eternidad...[11] (La sagrada ley)

This series of pictures, emotions, and thoughts, the psychological penetration in the painting of these successive states of mind, the intimacy, and the transcendent intention makes each one of these poems a single and durable work.

Extension and declaration of maternal love, but in another state, are also Canciones de cuna and a majority of the poems Infantiles, in which the poetess practices the art of self-deceit and tries to give a place to her ternura.

In this ebb and flow of feelings, desires, dreams, and contradictions that fight for Gabriela's soul, there are times, however, of extreme depression in which habitual sadness darkens and embitters her. In one of them the unfortunate one ridicules her own flesh and curses the blood of her ancestors in verses that are mixed with protest and submission to Destiny:

Mientras arde la llama del pino, sosegada,
mirando a mis entrañas pienso qué hubiera sido
un hijo mío, infante con mi boca cansada,
mi amargo corazón y mi voz de vencido.

. . . . . .

Y el horror de que un día con la boca quemante
del rencor, me dijera lo que dije a mi padre:

---

[11] Hughes, op. cit., p. 51.

"¿Por qué ha sido fecunda tu carne sollozante
y se henchieron de néctar los pechos de mi madre?"

. . . . . .

Porque yo no cerrara los párpados, y loca
escuchase a través de la muerte, y me hincara,
deshechas las rodillas, retorcida la boca,
si lo viera pasar con mi fiebre en su cara.

. . . . . .

¡Bendito pecho mío en que a mis gentes hundo
y bendito mi vientre en que mi raza muere!

. . . . . .

Y como si pagara la deuda de una raza,
taladran los dolores mi pecho cual colmena.

. . . . . .

¡Padre Nuestro que estás en los cielos!, recoge
mi cabeza mendiga, si en esta noche muero.
(Poema del hijo, pp. 102-106)

Lucila has externalized above all else her unlimited maternal instinct. This instinct she reveals through images pertaining to human fertility and children. In all of her works the maternal feeling is expressed through certain images that, directly or indirectly, refer to the aforementioned instinct.

The most important and direct of these images is entrañas. It is found in the Poema del hijo as a cry, completely instinctive, of a woman who has been denied the natural right of motherhood:

Sus brazos en guirnalda a mi cuello trenzados;
el río de mi vida bajando a él, fecundo,
y mis entrañas como perfume derramado
ungiendo con su marcha las colinas del mundo.
(Poema del hijo, pp. 102-106)

And a little further on she states:

> Mirando a mis entrañas pienso qué hubiera sido
> un hijo mío, infante con mi boca cansada,
> mi amargo corazón y mi voz de vencido.
> (Poema del hijo, pp. 102-106)

In these cited verses the relationship entrañas-maternidad is very direct. In the following verses the relationship is not as apparent; nevertheless, the word entrañas is used in connection with the idea of fertility.

> Me da en la cara un alto
> muro de marejada,
> y saltan, como un hijo,
> contentas, mis entrañas.
> (La cabalgata, pp. 416-419)

> En sus labios de piedra se ha quedado
> tal como en mis entrañas el fragor.
> (El surtidor, p. 96)

> La dejé que muriese,
> robándole mi entraña.
> Se acabó como el águila
> que no es alimentada.
> (La otra, pp. 593-595)

Even the image of God Omnipotent is presented in relation to the idea of entrañas, and divine things, too, have a relationship:

> ¡Cómo duele, cómo cuesta,
> cómo eran las cosas divinas,
> y no quieren morir, y se quejan muriendo,
> y abren sus entrañas vívidas!
> (La abandonada, pp. 596-598)

When Gabriela finds herself completely forsaken, the feeling of fertility reappears referring to the earth in which she feels she is the child in the womb of the mother:

Esta tierra de muchas criaturas
me ha llamado y me quiso tener;
me tocó cual la madre a su entraña;
(Nocturno de la derrota, pp. 385-388)

This feeling is enlarged and transferred to nature itself as in the following lines: "Arbol que no eres otra cosa/que dulce entraña de mujer." (Himno al árbol, pp. 347-349)

The sea also is related to entrañas:

Y cuando te pones
su canto a escuchar,
tus entrañas se hacen
vivas como el mar.
(Elogio de la canción, pp. 44-47)

Bread, the elemental source of life, also suggests the idea of fertility to the poetess:

(El pan)
Huele a mi madre cuando dio su leche,
huele a tres valles por donde he pasado:
a Aconcagua, a Pátzcuaro, a Elqui,
y a mis entrañas cuando yo canto.
(Pan, pp. 441-443)

Closely related to entrañas is Gabriela's use of the image of maternidad. This image is presented in its psychological aspects. In other words the instinct of fertility in Gabriela seems to be more acute and conscious than in most women, and justly so because she never became a mother. This is perceptible in the following lines in which the love for the loved one acquired more vigor upon being compared with the spiritual joy that a woman feels in motherhood:

Como un hijo, con cuajo de mi sangre
se sustenta él,
y un hijo no bebió más sangre en seno
de una mujer.

¡Terrible don! ¡Socarradura larga
que hace aullar!
El que vino a clavarlo en mis entrañas
¡tenga piedad!
(El suplicio, pp. 20-21)

Finally one arrives at the song that unites the fundamental aspirations of the madre-maestra. Because in reality the poetess has not become a mother, she directs toward God her entreaty so that He might grant her motherhood, really and spiritually, through her students and that she might in this manner leave a part of herself in each one of them. This plea takes on dramatic accents through her expression of lonliness:

> Dame el ser más madre que las madres, para poder amar y defender como ellas lo que no es carne de mis carnes. Alcance a hacer de una de mis niñas mi verso perfecto y a dejarte en ella clavada mi más penetrante melodía, para cuando mis labios no canten más.[12] (La oración de la maestra)

Up to this point the task at hand has been to show through the use of entrañas and maternidad Gabriela's feelings of maternity and motherhood. The image of niño, an ideal realization of the fertility instinct, is found quite often and must be considered as important as the aforementioned images.

The niño-hijo is what fruit is for trees, young ones for

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[12] Velez, op. cit., p. 1.

animals, the plants for the earth. In all these instances there is the desire to be a part of the reproduction of all things, to feel like all other creatures the joy of bringing forth a child. As she has been denied the opportunity, she showers her affection on her students. This represents at least a partial relief to her unfulfilled maternal instinct.

The images of niño appear by degrees, but it always seems to be alive, made of flesh and blood. The mother feels the child within her body and she guards him: "Por él, por él que está adormecido, como hilo de agua bajo la hierba, no me dañéis, no me deis trabajo."[13] (Por él)

The state of the future mother must be guarded, and especially she should have no preoccupation that might bring harm to the yet unborn. The expectant mother must be left in peace because all of her is the child, no matter where one touches her: "En la frente, en el pecho, donde me toquéis está él y lanzaría un gemido respondiendo a la herida."[14] (Por él) The child is born and is described thus: "Y la chiquita se quedó una hora/con su piel de suspiro." (Recado de nacimiento para Chile, pp. 569-573) To her this human creature seems to be a child of all the other beings of creation: "Nació desnuda y pequeñita/como el pobre pichón de cría." (La muerte-niña, pp. 425-427)

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[13] Ibid., p. 163.

[14] Ibid.

No real mother could have given a more moving representation than Gabriela, virtually all alone but situated on the universal plane of poetry. Acute sensuality characterizes her maternal expressions. The call is strong, but Gabriela succeeds in sublimating this instinct, converting it into esthetic intuition and lyric lines of poetry.

Continuing the analysis of the niño image, one discovers that it is presented in episodes. The course of this history is gradual; and once the action unfolds, the representation of the child is clearer each time. The child is the center of everything; he is the protagonist. The mother has performed her most important duty, having given birth to the child. But the child now even more needs the warmth and protection of his mother:

Aliento angosto y ancho
que oigo y no miro,
almeja de la noche

. . . . . .

niño dormido.
(Niño chiquito, pp. 189-191)

The feeling of motherhood impels Gabriela to exercise every caution. She, having lived among the poor children of the Andean villages, knows by experience the abandon in which they live. This inspires verses of great tenderness and protection against men who do not realize the sad spectacle. The poetess is all atremble in the defense of her creatures because she sees the men's negligence of their duty as an afront to the mother:

Piececitos de niño,
azulosos de frío,
¡cómo os ven y no os cubren,
Dios mío!

¡Piececitos heridos
por los guijarros todos,
ultrajados de nieves
y lodos!

El hombre ciego ignora
que por donde pasáis,
una flor de luz viva
dejáis;

que allí donde ponéis
la platita sangrante,
el nardo nace más
fragante.

Sed, puesto que marcháis
por los caminos rectos,
heroicos como sois
perfectos.

Piececitos de niño,
dos joyitas sufrientes,
¡cómo pasan sin veros
las gentes!
(Piececitos, pp. 317-318)

This harsh censure against grown-ups (above all the men), that do not understand the children of the world nor the world of children, sometimes manifests itself in violent action. In a world where incomprehension and impurity of adults predominates, children represent the most genuine and moving force.

Manitas de los niños,
manitas pedigüeñas,
de los valles del mundo
sois dueñas.

Manitas de los niños
que al granado se tienden,

por vosotras las frutas
se encienden.

Y los panales llenos
de su carga se ofenden.
¡Y los hombres que pasan
no entienden!

Manitas blancas, hechas
como de suave harina,
la espiga por tocaros
se inclina.

Manitas extendidas,
piñón, caracolitos,
bendito quien os colme,
¡bendito!

Benditos los que oyendo
que parecéis un grito,
os devuelvan el mundo:
¡benditos!
(Manecitas, pp. 317-318)

A cardinal sentiment in the poetry of Gabriela Mistral is an unsatisfied wish for maternity, an expression both of feminine instinct and of desire for immortality. Her verse, more often virile than feminine and frequently colored by figures and words peculiarly her own, is characterized by great warmth of feeling and strong emotional power; but in the poems for children there is a haunting, wistful strain of maternal tenderness. She demands of the teacher the virtue of a saint: virility, fortitude, purity, gentleness, sweetness, joyfulness, poverty, submission to pain and death, and inner peace, because she conceives of teaching as a calling and an apostleship, a divine task entrusted to men. Gabriela believes in the educational power of beauty, and she clothes her teaching in beautiful descriptions and the symbolism of a parable,

similar to those found in the New Testament. There are some stories for school, each with a moral in which the protagonists are not animals, as in the fables, but roses, reeds, the root of the rose bush, the thistle, or the pond. The author uses these lovely, imaginative fictions to attempt to form the moral conscience of children. Other poems such as Poemas de las madres and Poemas del éxtasis represent the fusion of the frankest realism--almost verbal crudity--with the most delicate poetry: the chaste ardor of a sensuality spiritualized through maternal longing and the religious sense of life that is perhaps the most personal trait of her poetic vision of the world, the one that sets her apart from other American poetesses.

CHAPTER V

SPIRITUAL LOVE AND LOVE FOR NATURE

Gabriela often expresses her reverence for nature, and, as it has already been noted, quite often she transfers her feeling of motherhood to nature. The result is an intense image in which all things participate in what she is feeling. More than any others the following verses reveal the original violent instinct of motherhood:

> De aquel hoyo salió de pronto,
> con esa carne de elegía;
> salió tanteando y gateando
> y apenas se la destinguía.
> (La muerte-niña, pp. 425-427)

As was mentioned above, Gabriela's maternal feelings knew no limitations. They included not only the human element but all of nature--plants, animals, and all things. The earth is envisioned as a large mother in whose lap all living creatures find shelter: "La tierra tiene la actitud de una mujer con un hijo en los brazos (con sus criaturas en los anchos brazos)."[1] (Imagen de la tierra)

She also says: "Voy conociendo el sentido maternal de las cosas. La montaña que me mira también es madre, y por las tardes la neblina juega como un niño por sus hombros y rodillas."[2] (Imagen)

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[1] Hughes, op. cit., p. 46.

[2] Ibid.

Later the earth reappears symbolized in Cibeles, the goddess of fertility: ". . .la Tierra que es Cibeles,/la madre que es mujer." (Sueño grande, pp. 192-193)

Mother Nature exists for Gabriela, and, like all mothers, has human qualities, symbolizing the tie between all of God's creatures. The tree, for example, has a human spirit and sensitiveness: ". . .pues cada rama mece airosa/en cada leve nido un ser." (Himno al árbol, pp. 347-349)

And the protection offered by the tree to another of nature's beings, particularly a defenseless being such as a bird, is the intense expression of the affection the poetess always had for the weakest and most fragil creatures: children, poor people, small animals, and unfortunate persons.

The humanity of this poetess appears in its utmost splendor in the following picture of the love of two trees that look very much like human beings that help each other:

> Uno, torcido, tiende
> su brazo inmenso y de follaje trémulo
> hacia otro, y sus heridas
> como dos ojos son, llenos de ruego.
> (Paisajes de la Patagonia, pp. 123-126)

In Gabriela's way of thinking very closely related to nature is the poetic motif of creation, because she sings to every creation: to man, animals, vegetables, and minerals; to active and inert materials; and even to objects made by human hands. All beings have for her a concrete, palpable reality and, at the same time, a magic existence that surrounds them with a luminous aura. In a single

moment she reveals the unity of the cosmos, her personal relationship with creatures, and that state of mystic rapture with which she gathers them all to her.

In the sections Canciones de cuna and La cuenta-mundo of Tala there is evident a sense of identification and familiarity with the earth. Everything is personified, and both living creatures and inanimate things are bound together in a Franciscan brotherhood of love. There is an unmistakable religious accent and a note of thanksgiving in the happiness of these beings and the sense of wonder they engender.

The theme of natural beauty of the Americas is a source of inspiration found in Lagar. There are also descriptions of palm groves of Cuba, the desert of Arizona, a Brazilian orchard, the poppy, the okote pine, the dry silkcotton tree, the Uruguayan corn tassel, the stone of Parahibuna, the pruning of trees, the rose bush, and the almond tree. Her way of looking at these things is very far from the romantic subjectivism and the mental landscapes of Desolación. In these poems a profound, contemplative vision of strong religious roots predominates. The poet's childhood was spent in the country, among mountains, in direct, joyful, imaginative, free communication with plants and animals, with clouds and stars; her child's hands helped in the agricultural chores, in the kind of manual workmanship that does not breed dulling routine nor blunt the creative faculties. Her poems on nature are descriptions and eulogies of living things: behind the veil of their bright sensorial

beauty, they reveal their true essence, their mystery. The poet personifies and spiritualizes these living beings. She sees them not as isolated objects but as living parts of an organism, phases of harmony that sing the perennial psalm of praise to the Creator.

She says of the California poppy:

En la palma apenas duras
y recoges, de tomada,
como unos labios sorbidos
tus cuatro palabras rápidas,
cuando te rompen lo erguido
y denso de la alabanza.
(Amapola de California, pp. 639-641)

Sometimes her approach to these things is child-like--rapt, imaginative, mythological:

Las mazorcas del maíz
a niñitas se parecen:
diez semanas en los tallos
bien prendidas que se mecen.

Tienen un vellito de oro
como de recién nacido
y unas hojas maternales
que les celan el rocío.

Y debajo de la vaina,
como niños escondidos,
con sus dos mil dientes de oro
ríen, ríen sin sentido...
(Canción del maizal, pp. 358-360)

At other times her approach is that of a mother--tender, protective, sympathetic:

Llano y cielo no me ayudan
a acostarla en rojas gredas
con el rocío en su espalda
y el Zodíaco en sus guedejas.

. . . . . .

antes que las hachas lleguen,
mascullando un santo salmo,
tengo que entregarla al Fuego.
(Ceiba seca, pp. 656-657)

Always there is the attitude of the true poet who recreates and beautifies, who knows how to see beyond appearances, who listens in silence and senses the true significance:

Parece mi Cordillera
abajada, sierva y junta.
Parece Madre-Elefanta,
y el regazo que más dura
y la voz que más aúpa.
Parece el haz de una Gloria,
y el perdón de nuestras culpas,
y de lo ancha que es, la noche,
a ella no más arrebuja.

Buena para hacer la ofrenda
y alzar de lo alto su aleluya,
para encender una hoguera
u ofrecer desnudo un hijo
o morir dando el espíritu
de muerte aceptada y pura.
(Piedra de Parahibuna, pp. 644-645)

Gabriela captures both the earthly and cosmic sense of these beings; they appear to her as links of the chain that binds her to God and to the earth, as understandable words and signs of the earthly and the Eternal.

At times this objective vision gives way to a subjective, more personal reference. When this happens, a buried vein of feeling breaks through to shed its brief drops of bitterness on the song of praise:

Cuando para y cae rota
la borrasca, y no hay senderos,

voy andando, voy llegando
a su magullado cuerpo
y lo oscuro y lo ofendido
yo le enjugo y enderezo
--como a aquel que me troncharon--
con la esponja de mi cuerpo,
y mi palma lo repasa
en sus miembros que son fuego.
(Ocotillo, pp. 651-653)

There is also the curious poem Muerte del mar, the only one that is negative in mood. As in the darkest surrealistic nightmare, the sea basin is drained and reveals to the terrified eyes of the fishermen a livid, oppressive, chilling landscape:

quedaron las madreperlas
y las caracolas lívidas
y las medusas vaciadas
de su amor y de sí mismas.

Quedaban dunas-fantasmas
más viudas que la ceniza,
mirando fijas la cuenca
de su cuerpo de alegrías.

Y la niebla, manoseando
plumazones consumidas,
y tanteando albatrós muerto,
rondaba como la Antígona.
(Muerte del mar, pp. 646-650)

The life-death contrast, so often repeated, can be clearly seen when the above poem is compared with those in the section Naturaleza (Lagar). The latter are ardent hymns of movement and joy. The death of the sea reveals the poet's instinctive and intuitive rejection of everything anti-natural, disordered, or dead. In nature she loved movement, the power of the elements, growth, transformation, and change. Her adherence to the Christian concept of death as the seed and promise of a fuller, more real life is the

logical consequence of these promises.

The influence of the Bible on the poet's intellectual, religious, and even literary formation is evident in all her work, from Desolación on. In Tala there is a predominance of terms with a religious sense and constant references to the Scriptures. A tremendous longing for God dominates this intensely personal lyricism. God is implicitly present in all the verses as a single theme, as the most genuine and constant preoccupation. Love for things, obliviousness to her own happiness, her very humble confession of errors form the path by which the poet seeks to reach the Supreme Being. The grace of Christ, like the archangel, walks with her along the way.

The religious beliefs are not clear, nor do they follow a definite body of dogma. Poetically at least, she seems to deny the resurrection of the flesh:

> Acabe así, consumada
> repartida como hogaza
> y lanzada a sur o a norte
> no seré nunca más una.
> (El reparto, pp. 669-670)

On the other hand, she alludes to the state of expiation of sins in the beyond: "Y no llores si no te respondo..." (Encargo a Blanca, pp. 671-672)

The section Desvarío of Lagar contains only the two above-mentioned poems, both on a religious theme--the divestment and distribution of the bodily senses after death, a return in spirit to communicate with the living.

She conceives of the beatific state as a pure vision, as all encompassing intelligence and knowledge:

> ¿Ojos? ¿para qué preciso
> arriba y llena de lumbres?
> En mi Patria he de llevar
> todo el cuerpo hecho pupila,
> espejo devolvedor
> ancha pupila sin párpados.
>
> Iré yo a campo traviesa
> con los ojos en las manos
> y las dos manos dichosas
> deletreando lo no visto
> nombrando lo adivinado.
> (El reparto, pp. 669-670)

She calls paradise mi Patria and the earth mi Posada. This style also consists of calling things by very personal, metaphorical names, written with a capital letter, at times modified by the first person possessive. It is as if, in this way, the poet were sentimentally and subjectively taking possession of things, attributing to them some extraordinary value and thus creating for herself her own universe.

The section Religiosas is a prime example of Gabriela's spiritual feelings. Noel indio, Pinos de Navidad, and Estrella de Navidad objectively deal with the theme of the Incarnation, although they belong to the class of poems for children by virute of their gay rhythm, graceful images, and their form of story, ballad, and lullaby. The popular worship of Saint Rosa of Lima, the mountain range and the tropical sun is evidence of the eternal spiritual community of the American peoples.

The blessing of food in Almuerzo al sol serves as a pretext for exalting the luminosity and plenitude of noon. With almost mathematical conciseness she evokes the table, the fruit, the gestures of the table companions, setting them all into harmonious rhythm. The result is the clean color and the plastic imagery of a still life. The simple daily act is thus clothed in profound, ritualistic beauty.

Bendícenos la jarra
que abaja el cuello fresco,
la fruta embelesada,
la mazorca riendo,
y el café de ojo oscuro
que está empinado, viéndonos.

Las grecas de los cuerpos
bendígalas su Dueño;
ahora el brazo en alto,
ahora el pecho,
y la mano de siembras,
y la mano de riegos.
(Almuerzo al sol, pp. 743-744)

Pantheism is one of Gabriela's feelings that always manages to establish a dialogue between her and things:

Dulce Señor, por un hermano pido
indefenso y hermoso: por el nido!

Florece en su plumilla el trino;
ensaya en su almohadita el vuelo.
¡Y el canto dicen que es divino
y el ala cosa de los cielos!

Dulce tu brisa sea al mecerlo,
mansa tu luna al platearlo,
fuerte tu rama al sostenerlo,
corto el rocío al alcanzarlo

De su conchita desmañada
tejida con hilacha rubia,

desvía el vidrio de la helada
y las guedejas de la lluvia;

. . . . . .

Tirita al viento como un niño
y se parece al corazón.
(Plegaria por el nido, pp. 334-335)

This pantheistic feeling includes all animals and things. In all small beings of creation the poetess looks for the part that makes her feel like the reputed mother of many creatures, the majority of which are indefenseless and lack protection:

Las bestiecitas te rodean
y te balan olfateándote.
De otra tierra y otro reino
llegarían los animales
que parecen niños perdidos,
niños oscuros que cruzasen.
(Animales, p. 295)

In this protective gesture the earth excels; a mother among mothers, she is pictured sheltering her many creatures in her lap:

Mientras tiene luz el mundo
y despierto está mi niño,
por encima de su cara,
todo es un hacerse guiños.

Guiños le hace la alameda
con sus dedos amarillos,
y tras de ella vienen nubes
en piruetas de cabritos...

. . . . . .

Yo le digo a la otra Madre,
a la llena de caminos:
"¡Haz que duerma tu pequeño
para que se duerma el mío!"

. . . . . .

. . ."¡Duerme al tuyo
para que se duerma el mío!"
(La tierra y la mujer, pp. 154-155)

Gabriela is a mystic also. She feels illuminated and in communication with supernatural beings. As a mystic she not only believes in God, but also feels, and herein lies the certainty: God is an evidence that requires no proof. Her constant preoccupation is that her thoughts and conduct approach the perfection of God and depend on His example. Such fervent prayers as Nocturno, Tribulación, and El ruego are a result of her thinking. Her mysticism in Desolación is transitory, a crisis to turn over to God, the Supreme Power and at the same time more human and comprehensible than in earlier mystical poetry. For this reason the reader feels closer to Gabriela than to the older mystics; and when she prays the "Padre nuestro," one follows her with humid eyes.

Besides her deep feelings for children, there is an extraordinary tenderness for things: the breeze, flowers, etc. The world of things is important to Gabriela. There is a vital, existential dimension, and this aspect circles hidden in lines of apparent simplicity. This love for nature is of pure Franciscan thought. Gabriela never takes notice of the sensuality in her pleasure in created things; it is always love, a sense of admiration and gratitude, a desire to know God through all His creatures. She names no plant, no flower, no stone without knowing its history well. And this, that testifies for her artistic seriousness, also testifies for her love for the alliance of Earth with Nature.

In Gabriela religious poetry is born. The beautiful section called Oficio contains prayers for each day. The oficio also consisted of an Evangelical reading for the day, a reading from the Psalms, and a reading of some exclamations or expository writings by Gabriela herself. After these texts came the official prayers of the Catholic Church. To this routine Gabriela strictly adhered.

CHAPTER VI

LOVE FOR HOMELAND

Upon suffering the envy and injustice of her countrymen, Gabriela's solitude is made more intense. A feeling of loneliness impels her to flee from the Elqui Valley, the place of her birth, and she carries her tragedy to the villages of the Andes, to the steppes of Patagonia. Then begins her voluntary exile abroad. First was Mexico, where she was invited by the national government to collaborate in a reform of the public schools. Later, she traveled to the United States and to Europe. Her consular career, which began in 1932, took her to Italy and the many other places already mentioned.

Beneath the heading América (Tala) are joined together eulogies, landscapes, and memories of the South American continent; the tropical sun, the Andes, the hills and palm groves of Puerto Rico, the Panamanian dance tamborito; she sings to the Americas with the fervor of one in love. She sees the sun and the mountain range as unifying factors in the Americas and envisions a United States of the South both as a political reality and as a cultural unit based on the restoration of the indigenous past to the present. Gabriela's Americanism goes beyond national frontiers and embraces in the same loving gesture the Mexican child,

the sweet earth of Puerto Rico, and the pagan spell of the tamborito.

The language of all these poems is enthusiastic and passionate. The two Himnos have the hyperbolic accents of a litany; and description of the Mexican cornfield and of Mexican men has the power of a stone relief or the ritualistic rhythm of a Diego Rivera fresco:

Las mesas del maíz
quieren que yo me acuerde.
El corro está mirándome
fugaz y eternamente.
Los sentados son órganos;
las sentadas, magueyes.
Delante de mi pecho
la mazorcada tienden.
De la voz y los modos
gracia tolteca llueve.
La casta come lento,
como el venado bebe.
Dorados son el hombre,
el bocado, el aceite,
y en sesgo de ave pasan
las jícaras alegres.
Otra vez me tuvieron
estos que aquí me tienen,
y el corro, de lo eterno,
parece que espejee...

. . . . . .

El pecho del maíz
su fervor lo retiene.
El ojo del maíz
tiene el abismo breve.
El habla del maíz
en valva y valva envuelve.
Ley vieja del maíz,
caída no perece,
y el hombre del maíz
se juega, no se pierde.
(El maíz, pp. 470-477)

Beneath the heading Vagabundaje there appear Emigrada judía,

Adiós, and Patrias, songs of farewell to the Elqui Valley to Provence, to Liguria, and to Mexico. The beautiful lands she loved very much, faithful as mothers, always ready to welcome home the prodigal son, she describes with the warm tenderness of nostalgia:

> No son mirajes de arenas;
> son madres en soledad.
> Dieron el flanco y la leche
> y se oyeron renegar.
> Pero por si regresásemos
> nos dejaron en señal,
> los pies blancos de la ceiba
> y el rescoldo del faisán.
> (Patrias, pp. 779-781)

Gabriela's Americanism is always tinged with a strong Indianism. She feels that the essence of America, its originality, its uniqueness, is to be found in its indigenous element. Her love for the land, the landscapes, the towns, the people, and the objects of these countries is always accompanied by nostalgia for the pre-Columbian past, by her admiration for the Inca, Maya, and Aztec cultures. These are combined with a protest against conquerors and agents, a genuine social and pedagogical interest, and a great sympathy and compassion for the conditions of modern day Indians. In her poems she offers an idealized vision of the Indian and his culture.

The theme of nostalgia, of what Gabriela prefers to call by its more precise, richer, Portugese name saudade (longing), is one of the most repeated and important poetic themes in her work. She lived almost all of her life in the close spiritual climate of longing, as she wandered continuously far from the places, persons,

and things she loved.

In La extranjera, a magnificent moral self-portrait, she insists on speaking of her apartness, the constant sensation of strangeness and isolation with which she lived for several years in a small Provençal village.

> Habla con dejo de sus mares bárbaros,
> con no sé qué algas y no sé qué arenas;
> reza oración a dios sin bulto y peso,
> envejecida como si muriera.
> Ese huerto nuestro que nos hizo extraño,
> ha puesto cactus y zarpadas hierbas.
> Alienta del resuello del desierto
> y ha amado con pasión de que blanquea,
> que nunca cuenta y que si nos contase
> sería como el mapa de otra estrella.
> Vivirá entre nosotros ochenta años,
> pero siempre será como si llega,
> hablando lengua que jadea y gime
> y que le entienden solo bestezuelas.
> Y va a morirse en medio de nosotros,
> en una noche en la que más padezca,
> con solo su destino por almohada,
> de una muerte callada y extranjera.
> (La extranjera, p. 516)

Almost all of the poems of Tala date from her years of residence in Europe. Her home then was a refuge and mecca for all Spanish-Americans who happened to be passing through, no matter what their native land. For Gabriela, national differences did not exist where America was concerned; her wish was for one great unit extending from Mexico to Patagonia, with one common citizenship. In Tala she reveals her total love for America--her nostalgia for the lands, the countrysides, and the people. Several years of absence from the Americas had produced an almost

physical longing within her; she was haunted by insistent, pervasive images. To the guests in her home she spoke of Mexico, Cuba, Chile; she asked about Puerto Rico. She felt strange in that Spanish atmosphere and geography. She longed for her Chilean valleys, the mountain range, the tropical sun. She needed to draw strength from the Elqui Valley, or the Mexican cornfield. In the following stanza of Sol del trópico she has expressed this debilitation of her entire being when in exile:

Pisé los cuarzos extranjeros,
comí sus frutos mercenarios;
en mesa dura y vaso sordo
bebí hidromieles que eran lánguidos;
recé oraciones mortecinas
y me canté los himnos bárbaros,
y dormí donde son dragones
rotos y muertos los Zodíacos.
(Dos himnos, pp. 457-462)

Gabriela's broad sense of America superseded any excessive, foolishly sentimental love of country. During the territorial dispute between Peru and Chile, she had the moral courage to condemn publically Chile's conduct and support the stand of the Peruvians, who were in the right. The anger of her countrymen did not matter to her; what mattered above all was that justice was done. Out of that same sense of justice has come a song to the liberty of Puerto Rico:

Isla en caña y cafés
apasionada;
tan dulce de decir
como una infancia;
bendita de cantar
como un ¡hosanna!,

sierna sin canción
sobre las aguas,
ofendida de mar
en marejada:
¡Cordelia de las olas,
Cordelia amarga!

Seas salvada como
la corza blanca
y como el llama nuevo
del Pachacámac,
y como el huevo de oro
de la nidada,
y como la Ifigenia,
viva en la llama.
(Mar Caribe, pp. 478-480)

In contrast to the ruggedness of the Andes and the powerful landscape of the Continent, it was the softness and sweetness of the Puerto Rican atmosphere that attracted her:

En la isla de Puerto Rico,
a la siesta de azul colmada,
mi cuerpo quieto, las olas locas,
y como cien madres las palmas,
rompió una niña por donaire
junto a mi boca un coco de agua,
y yo bebí, como una hija,
agua de madre, agua de palma.
Y más dulzura no he bebido
con el cuerpo ni con el alma.
(Beber, pp. 517-519)

Her love for Mexico had other roots: the beauty of the country, the uniqueness of its indigenous culture, the loyal friendships of Palma Guillén, Alfonso Reyes, and Daniel Cossío Villegas; the sense of identity with blood and race:

En el campo de Mitla, un día
de cigarras, de sol, de marcha,
me doblé a un pozo y vino un indio
a sostenerme sobre el agua,
y mi cabeza, como un fruto,

estaba dentro de sus palmas.
Bebía yo lo que bebía,
que era su cara con mi cara,
y en un relámpago yo supe
carne de Mitla ser mi casta.
(Beber, pp. 517-519)

If in her American fervor Gabriela went beyond national borders to embrace the entire continent, in her charity and love of culture, all frontiers everywhere were erased.

There is much to be said about Gabriela's contradictory feeling toward Spain. The evils of the conquest and colonization of America and the mistreatment of the Indians by the Spanish settlers angered her to the point of losing all equanimity, even though she was reminded time and again that hers was a predominantly Spanish heritage. But once she had been presented with some Castilian folksongs and had heard their rhythms and poetry, she began to make her peace with the Spanish. She completely reversed her position after having met some of the most outstanding personalities of the time. And then, with the same passion she gave to everything, she devoted herself to helping the Spanish people in their fight against Fascism. Out of her concern came the gift of Tala to the children's camp of Pedralbes.

Gabriela's personal problems carried her into a fast-flowing stream of life from which she was unable to extract herself. There was her diplomatic career, but that was not sufficient to solve her problems--she was a woman alone, with a hunger for books a necessity for trips, and a vocation of hospitality. She had

to write for newspapers and magazines to earn her daily bread. The longing for the familiar sights of her homeland pressed her to look to the Cordillera for strength, and she engaged herself in the canto to it.

In the poems about the Americas the author appears being not only herself, Lucila of the Elqui Valley, but also a poet that assumes the representation of many beings separated from their personal places either in time or space.

In Tala Gabriela has attempted to sing her praises of America through hymns. In America, she says, there has been an overabundance of poetry concerned with trivialities. Her Dos himnos renews the current of Americanism but in the continental rather than the national sense of the word, and with a deeper consciousness of race and soil. The poet laments the fact that the poetry of landscape has been limited to descriptions of individualized details. Her telluric and cosmic sensitivity demands that attention be paid to the elements, to the primary forces of nature.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It has been the intent of this study to sketch the love themes in the poetry of Gabriela Mistral, the Chilean poet and Nobel Prize winner; and to illustrate, by means of excerpts from her verse, how this theme is present in its many forms throughout all of her works. The most important poems in which love is found are those she wrote about her personal love for a man, her unfulfilled wish for motherhood and love for children, her religion and love for nature, and her love for the lands and people of Latin America.

Despite the great period of time encompassed in Gabriela's poetry, there are poetic constants that appear in all books, but with variations that the passage of time imposes on them: there is pain, an inescapable but redeeming reality; the union with Christ; the longing for motherhood and children; the anguish of creating and that of dying. The constants are changed by time and Gabriela's maturation. In Desolación the theme is the accent and spirit of what was sung, expressed in a rather romantic manner. As one delves deeper and deeper into her poems, he may be surprised by the new language of love. This new language, free of prudery, reflects rustic realism, the frank manner with which people who live close to the soil refer to the events of life and to feelings: a

natural simplicity that calls "a spade a spade." But the subject matter of the melody that she sings is not important; the accompaniment is always love, a personal expression to all of God's beings. Perhaps the short-metered poems, the rounds, ballads, couplets, and lullabies, express her sentiment the best.

Gabriela's poetry possesses the merit of consummate originality, a voice of its own, authentic and consciously realized. She cultivated one of the most original styles in America, and it is the human quality that gives it its universal value. She has left an abundant body of poetic work gathered together in several books or in newspapers and magazines throughout Europe and America. There surely exist numerous manuscripts of unpublished poems that could be compiled, catalogued, and published in a posthumous book.

Gabriela wrote constantly, she corrected a great deal, and she was a bit lax in publishing. She did not take much care in the preservation and filing of her papers. Sixteen years lapsed between Desolación and Tala, another sixteen between Tala and Lagar. Each one of these books is the result of a selection that omits much of what was written during those long lapses of time. This suggests two possible fields of investigation, the unpublished poems and the prose. No doubt these areas would prove as interesting and rewarding as this study has been.

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