Excerpts from

Valued Letters (1932-1979):

Correspondence between Gabriela Mistral, Victoria Ocampo & Victoria Kent


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Preface

Objective

The present correspondence reflects the friendship of three exceptional women over five decades and how they interacted with the political-social development surrounding them. The correspondence exchanged between Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957), Victoria Ocampo (1890-1979) and Victoria Kent (1882-1987) represents their constant travel as they overcame the barriers of time and space that they experienced during wartime, disease, exile and imprisonment. The personal and the political are inseparable in the friendship that this correspondence builds. The transatlantic relationship that they maintained is essential to LGBTQ history and understanding the gender and social identities that they wove into developing humanitarian networks during the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent Franco regime.

These letters offer a privileged vision of queer sociability in specific times and places: Madrid, during the Second Republic (1933 – 1939) and New York from the 1950s to the 1970s, in which Mistral and Kent both lived in “a world of intellectual women and queer travelers” (Fiol-Matta, “Redux ”48). Both unexpectedly fell in love with young American, English-speaking, upper class. These relationships, without being the main thing in their lives, are
essential in the development of their professional activities. As Licia Fiol-Matta observes when commenting on the correspondence between Mistral and her close friend and executor Doris Dana: “If two women had an affair, it is not, in my opinion, the most important issue; it’s the query after a world of queer women intellectuals and travelers… without unfettered access to the larger archival corpus, Mistral’s personal discourse cannot be fully studied…” (“Queer Mother Redux ”48). Intimate correspondence between women reveal both Madrid in the 30s and New York of the 50s an exceptionally homogeneous groups with common interests in theater and art, in the education of women and in politics. These interests brought together many single women, professionals, offering them modes of public integration that let them see and be seen in each other’s company, while avoiding, at the same time, being stigmatized. Tracing these friendship networks and their impact in the field of art, literature, music and theater challenges the patriarchal hegemony that equates the feminine with the weak and emotional object that Fiol-Matta criticizes in the Chilean sphere (45).

Among their meeting places in Madrid during the Second Republic is Mistral’s consulate in Madrid, a quasi-public venue where her visitors included Victoria Kent, María de Maeztu, Victoria Ocampo, Teresa de la Parra, Lydia Cabrera and Carmen Conde, among others (Mangini, “El Lyceum Club” 128; Benavente, “Gabriela” 190-91). In addition to their respective homes, their further meeting places women's institutions such as the Residencia de Señoritas, the “saloncillo” of the Spanish Theater and the Lyceum Club, a “Parnassus” of institutionalist feminism (Carretón Cano 7, García Lozano 204). As Carmen de la Guardia indicates when commenting on Kent's years in New York, "little has been investigated these women of the avant-garde from the world of affections" among this network of friends "who recognized themselves as free women" (15). This correspondence constitutes a watershed with respect to the representation of women during a long-lasting friendship that begins shortly after they first meet in Madrid during the Second Republic and ending in New York and Buenos Aires in 1978. The edition presents the letters chronologically, divided into three sections. The first section, the most complex and extensive, consists of 81 letters, of which only six have been previously published. 80% of these letters belong to the correspondence between Kent and Mistral. Another 15%, some twelve letters, are an exchange between Kent and Palma Guillén, a Mexican diplomat interacting with Kent, who served as Mistral's attorney in an extremely delicate legal matter: a trip to Barcelona.
to add, that is, alter a notation in the Civil Registry about the birth and name of Mistral's presumed “nephew”, a young man whom Guillén herself cared for during the Chilean writer's many travels. The first section begins with a letter from Kent to Ocampo soon after the two had met, in which Kent effectively asking Ocampo what the next steps in their friendship will be. Next comes a letter from Mistral to Kent, sent from Lisbon on October 20, 1935. This letter’s value consists in its the very first letter that Mistral wrote after having been "kicked out” of Madrid. Anna Caballé comments on this murky episode: “with Mistral’s sudden transfer to Lisbon as second-class consul, commissioned to write propaganda... the Chilean Government sought to tackle one of the most deplorable episodes in Chilean diplomatic history, caused by an unforgivable slip on the writers part ”(240). In that letter, Mistral provides a detailed analysis of the episode (much commented among Mistral scholars, such as Vargas Saavedra and Benavente). The subsequent letters that Mistral and Kent exchanged provided further confirmation about this international incident and its true causes (GM3, GM7).

The intense correspondence between Mistral and Kent becomes somewhat less frequent during the first half of the Civil War, giving way to the anguished exchange between Guillén and Kent. Concluding this first section is a series of deeply concerned letters dating from the years 1939 and 1940, when Kent, Mistral, and Guillén strove to help Spanish refugees obtain protection, money, and visas in order to emigrate to America. From July 1939 onwards, Mistral persistently tried to convince Kent to leave France for America (GM27) but the Spaniard determined to stay in France, and firmly rejected Mistral’s reasoning (VK28). As Mistral hastened to leave France for Brazil, she regretfully wrote about how her friend refused the transit papers: “Victoria always responds to my proposals with good words and without facts, insinuating that they’re naive “. When Victoria and her friend Adele seek to join Mistral in Nice, the poet advises them that it is already late: “I did not have, I repeat, the slightest idea that you could come here, enliven this bad death of wartime Nice”(GM31). After recovering from the flu, Mistral wrote to Kent again in January 1940, informing the latter that an exit visa through Chile was no longer possible: “We’ve been ordered to cancel the visas already issued” (GM34). The last letter of this first section, dated March 21, 1940, shows the last will and testament that Mistral draws up while preparing to board the ship traveling from Bordeaux to Rio with a stopover in Lisbon, accompanied by her now-teenaged nephew, along with the Puerto Rican Consuelo Saleva, who was Palma Guillén’s successor as Mistral’s secretary and personal
assistant. As this book’s mini-biography of Mistral explains in detail, these letters provide information - hitherto unknown - about what Mistral, Kent, Ocampo, and Guíllén did, and why, during the Spanish Civil War.

World War II and the immediate postwar years frame the next section of letters, the shortest in this volume. To the 21 letters exchanged between Mistral and Kent in the 1940s we have added some previously published ones that Mistral sent to Ocampo during wartime (Horan and Meyer). These letters show Mistral and Ocampo’s deep concern for Kent’s fate when they had minimal information about her. They both knew that Kent was hidden and isolated in Paris, and that their letters were not reaching her. Later Mistral and Ocampo learned how she escaped the harshest consequences of being found by the Gestapo and Lequerica's agents: Kent survived by moving into a borrowed apartment, where she lived alone under the false identity of "Madame Duval." Right in front of the building where Kent lived — on Wagram Avenue, near the Bois de Boulogne — was a military garrison, but the Germans never asked Kent for her papers as she acting as if she were a French woman, going shopping and for walks. Since she could not pay for anything without a ration card, she enjoyed long walks in the fresh air in the Bois de Boulogne (Gutiérrez Vega 139). Kent's hard survival experience during her four-year stay in wartime, occupied Paris presents an unexpected irony: this woman who was so well known and celebrated by the Republic, the first woman to become a lawyer in the history of Spain, twice elected to the Legislator and serving as the Director of Prisons, was forced into hiding during the period of the German Armed Forces’ occupation of Paris.

Both Mistral and Kent decide to move when the war ended. Mistral lives in California for two years before meeting Kent in exile in Mexico, where for Kent, as for so many others, it was necessary to start all over. Mexico became a nation of universal refuge during the presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas, Manuel Ávila and Miguel Alemán, accepting not only the victims of Francoism, but also those harassed by the growing anti-communist hysteria that Mistral and her friends – Thomas Mann, among others – perceived in California. That phenomenon was soon be repeated in Chile, where the "Accursed Law" (Ley Maldita) removed the names of all members of the Communist Party from voter registration lists and prohibited them from any holding any kind of public sector job. Towards the end of the second section of this book is the poem "The Prisoner's Woman," which Mistral wrote in Mexico and gave to Kent. It belongs to Mistral’s series "Crazy women," which have a strong autobiographical nature. The isolation, confinement,
and uncertainty of imprisonment that the poem describes resembled Kent’s experiences in Paris and Mistral’s in wartime Petrópolis, in Brazil.

The third series, of 104 letters, begins in New York in 1953. At this point in time both Mistral and Kent, now in their sixties, forged close friendships with two young New Yorkers, Doris Dana and Louise Crane, respectively. Here, too, the letters to and from Victoria Ocampo become a major factor. The friendship between Ocampo and the Cranes - mother and daughter - dates back to the 1930s. When Ocampo visited New York in 1946, she admires and sympathizes with social skills of the powerful Josephine Boardman Crane, co-founder of the Metropolitan and Modern Museums of Art, while also enjoying the company and musical taste of Louise, “Daughter Crane” on her visit to Harlem (Postwar Letters 38, 474). We see how the introduction of the two young New Yorkers, Crane and Dana, subtly altered the pre-existing friendship between the three women, although they were fully accepted in the friendly circle. The warm sociability of Kent’s close friend, the philanthropist Louise Crane included Ocampo to a much deeper degree than was the case with Mistral and her close friend, executor and principal heir, Doris Dana.

A letter from Mistral to Ocampo in August 1955 shows that the Chilean understood the relationship between Louise and Victoria in sentimental terms along with a fierce realism about the condition of Kent’s finances: “Over there our Victoria Kent has found a jewel of a girl who houses her and feeds her with a great nobility, because she has surely already spent her savings. Vict. she looks happy; only her face falls, yes, it falls, when she talks about Spain — she is very patriotic (Esta América 270). Similarly, Ocampo interprets the relationship between Dana and Mistral is terms consistent with the decorum and good manners that characterize friendship. The first report that Ocampo published about visiting Mistral when the poet was on her deathbed, Ocampo makes Doris Dana a symbol of piety: “When my broken neck cannot support me… (but there was the unforeseen, filial arm of Doris) ... And my hand touched the light sheet ...”

What consolidated Ocampo’s friendship with Kent and Crane was the couple’s quick, effective and politically astute work when the Argentine Maecenas was imprisoned by the Peronist regime in May 1953. Crane and Kent knew how to operate behind the scenes, when to be discreet and when to act decisively. While Crane contacted Kent's many friends in Europe and the United States to protest Ocampo's arrest and secure her release, Kent telephoned and met Doris Dana for lunch to get Mistral to join the cause in favor of Ocampo. As the Spanish lawyer,
An educator, politician and former diplomat had met the New Yorker in Mexico. She knew that Dana not only watched over Mistral's health, but filtered all of her visitors along with the poet’s correspondence. Despite the poet’s wavering memory and declining health, Mistral wrote several articles and sent letters in favor of Ocampo’s release. When the Argentine was released on June 2, 1953, the official press indicated that “the decisive factor” had been the cable that Mistral had sent to General Juan Domingo Perón, as Meyer comments: “By saying this, Perón was able to save face with the working classes who condemned Victoria as an oligarch, but who sympathized with Mistral as one of their own” (161).

Ocampo's release was conditional, as the populist regime refused to renew her passport. Every time Ocampo made one of her periodic visits to the police offices for this procedure, she was met with the invariable answer: "It's in process." Kent, Crane and Mistral arranged for Ocampo to receive invitations from abroad: Igor Stravinsky asked Ocampo to declare at the performance of his opera Persephone in Turin, while the government of India invited her to the Santiniketan University founded by Rabindranath Tagore; likewise, the University of Puerto Rico invited her to give lectures. But all was in vain since Ocampo’s passport was not returned until after the fall of Perón in the Restorative Revolution of September 1955.

Although Ocampo's name was considered as Argentine ambassador to India (VO12), her first trip abroad after three years in mandatory prison within her country was a discreet visit to New York in 1956, perhaps for an operation. Medical concerns led Ocampo to stay with Crane in her 18-room New York, Park Avenue apartment during her recovery (VO13 and LC1). During this period Mistral repeatedly asks Ocampo to visit her. The editor responds that the economic losses caused in SUR reduced her possibilities of traveling from her. At this time and with help from Crane, the Argentine Maecenas sold a copy of the first edition of James Joyce's Ulysses (VO43) and a sketch by Auguste Rodin (VO51). This income let Ocampo spend a month in her beloved Paris. In a clear economic recovery, Ocampo stays at her favorite hotel, the Trémoille. Although she meets a few of her many friends, she enjoys the pleasure of the flâneuse, wandering the city alone, as would have been utterly impossible during her adolescence in pre-WWI Paris.

In a postscript to Kent in August 1956, Ocampo mentions her concern for Mistral's mental deterioration: “Do you know anything about Gabriela: she writes me letters that leave me somewhat uneasy. I mean her mental health” (VO15). Three months later, Kent telephoned
Ocampo, telling her that Mistral had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Ocampo flew to New York that very same week. The day after she arrived, Ocampo, Kent, and Crane visit Mistral in Long Island, at the home that the poet shared with Doris Dana. When that month ended, the friends all visited again, this time at the General Hospital in Hempstead, Long Island.

Many of the letters Mistral that wrote in the last five years of her life testify to her physical and mental decline, but her characteristically mischievous conversation continues to the end. Various candid recordings of the conversations between Mistral and Doris Dana, the youngest of the group, show that the latter accepts and embraces the stigmatized identity of the lesbian in terms of “shameless scoundrel” (sinvergüenza): “DD: I am a shameless scoundrel. But you have taught me everything. (They laugh.) / GM: Don't tell Victoria [Kent] / DD: No. I’m going to be very correct, right? / GM: Because I think she's not a filthy girl. / DD: No, me I also think it's not. / GM: But I'm going to prescribe farts to make her calm down (they laugh). The shameless scoundrel is coming tomorrow… (Mistral yawns”).

The last photograph of Mistral - the only one that portrays the three friends - literally dates from the poet's last days. This is a photograph taken during a visit to Roslyn, Long Island, by Kent and Ocampo, accompanied by Crane. Dana receives them. Ocampo is very impressed to see that the formidable and solid body of the Chilean has become a shadow of who she once was. The poet wears a white nightgown. Her face lights up with the dazzling, almost childlike smile that her friends always remembered with great affection. Mistral is delighted to see her visitors. In the photograph, Ocampo appears solid and serene; her tailored outfit and sophisticated earrings that contrast with the utter informality of Mistral. Despite Ocampo’s characteristic white framed dark glasses that obscure her eyes, her attitude is that of a woman who resolutely returns the camera's gaze. Ocampo's expression registers the gravity of the moment, as stated in the letter she wrote to her sister Angélica (another friend of Mistral’s) on that date, December 2, 1956. On the other hand, judging by the more comfortable pose and the unbuttoned collar of the blouse, Kent's demeanor is more laid-back, as is further suggested by the resigned acceptance of her slightly wistful smile.

At the end of that same month of December 1956, the friends met once more. Mistral fell into a coma on January 4, 1957 and passed away six days later. Crane and Kent made sure that that month’s issue of Iberica – the magazine that they edited and published -- included an obituary of Mistral. The next issue after that featured an elegiac tribute by Kent,
characteristically careful but fervent. In April — the month in which Mistral and Ocampo habitually exchanged birthday messages since they were both born on the same day, but a year apart — *Ibérica* published the pages that Ocampo dedicated to the memory of her friend. It is the first of several essays based extensively on the Mistral letters. Ocampo and Kent's preservation and rereading of the poet's letters reflects her fidelity to her and her gratitude for the friendship they shared.

In her will, Mistral named Dana her executor and her quasi-universal heir. However, Kent was among the first to perceive that Doris Dana lacked the ability to fulfill her mission. In a letter to Ocampo, Kent does not hesitate to criticize the 36-year-old "young woman":

“Doris is a case that I do not understand. The Chilean critic “Alone” (Hernán Diaz Arrieta) came to make a selection of Gabriela's poems, in particular to organize the long poem about Chile, unpublished, as you know. Alone has already left and Doris tells me, be amazed! that he, Alone, has done it very badly and that the best thing will be for her to do the job herself… No commentary necessary! As you know what Doris's Spanish is like, so that reaction of hers terrifies me. It terrifies me that she dares to undertake the selection along with the necessary corrections that must be made. I’m afraid that she will be helped by some mediocre person and it will be a disaster … I am painfully convinced that she is a girl with many literary ambitions and she is not capable at all … (VK48)

With time, it turned out that Kent was absolutely right about Dana's limited abilities. Kent distanced herself from her, leaving Crane to manage relationship. Although Dana did not turn to a mediocre editor, she gradually became alienated; she lost all trust in others. Thousands of handwritten pages of writing by the Nobel laureate are still unpublished.

**Origins, conditions and criteria of this edition**

Ten weeks after Doris Dana's death in November 2007, Elizabeth Horan received a phone call from Doris Atkinson, Dana's niece and executor. Atkinson invited her to review Mistral's files before they were sent to Chile by diplomatic bag. Atkinson's legacy - “more than 40,000 documents, objects, photographs, tapes and books, hidden for years in secret places” - stipulates that the National Library of Chile would house the archives (Benavente, “Prologue” 7). The library in turn committed to its digital reproduction to make the documents accessible to scholars and the general public. As Benavente points out, “almost all” the documents are now available in
the catalog of the National Library of Chile (13), although she warns us that “what is lacking is the hard work: the metadata, the deciphering of the difficult handwriting, the chronological classification of certain poems, where they were written and when. We must also consider that there are materials that have disappeared, either due to Mistral's extensive travels or because they may be housed elsewhere" (Benavente,“ Gabriela Mistral ”121).

Most of the letters in this collection come from "elsewhere", place other than Dana's archives. It seems that the media frenzy generated by the widespread coverage revealing the archive's existence and its previously unsuspected dimensions led Carlos Ripoll - a renowned expert on José Martí and a friend of Zenaida Gutiérrez-Vega - to contact Horan. Ripoll claimed to have a collection of letters from Mistral, Ocampo and Kent. As he told Horan: "Against my wishes ... [Zenaida] left me everything along with these letters." In addition to publishing a biography of Kent in 2001, Gutiérrez-Vega - Victoria Kent's secretary in her last decades - had also “begun to transcribe the letters with the purpose of publishing a book on these three most illustrious women of our language in last century: Gabriela Mistral, Victoria Ocampo and Victoria Kent. She was surprised by her death. Upon receiving such precious material, I began to transcribe some of those letters, but I could not continue in my efforts due to my advanced age and other books that I am preparing"(Ripoll to Horan, May 12, 2010).

Ripoll subsequently put the original letters up for sale at an auction house, kept copies, and sent some to Horan, who deemed them indisputably authentic. The inventory compiled by Ripoll pointed to the exceptional literary and historical value of the letters. Although various dates and addresses were partial or wrong, the collection consists of more than a hundred letters that Mistral and Ocampo sent to Kent. Curiously, Ripoll did not include the copies of the letters that Kent sent to Ocampo, a sign that the task of locating, transcribing and chronologically organizing the letters, a task that had surpassed Gutiérrez-Vega, was too much for him alone.

Ripoll committed suicide shortly after his initial contact with Horan, but Althea (Vicki) Silveira, director of Special Collections at Florida International University, a friend of Ripoll and his wife, contacted the attorney in charge of the estate. Fortunately, Ripoll left copies, annotations and correspondence on the legacy that had passed through his hands. This Ariadne’s thread reveals that both Gutiérrez-Vega and Ripoll donated materials to the Beinecke Library at Yale, where numerous Kent documents were included in the Crane family's admirable collection of materials. Horan, who was familiar with the archives of the Houghton Library – to whom
Ocampo had sold her archives while she was alive - noticed the addition of new correspondence, not yet cataloged, to the Houghton Library. This new correspondence turned out to be the letters that Mistral and Ocampo exchanged with Kent, and some letters from Kent and Crane addressed to Ocampo.

The integration of materials originated over four decades (1932-1979) and located in four different archives, constitutes a new approach to female friendship, letters, and first-person narrative. For example, with very few exceptions - Benavente on Carmen Conde, the edition of Cartas de Vargas Saavedra (Mistral, Antología mayor, volume III) and Esta América Nuestra by Horan and Meyer – all others editions of letters by Mistral and by Ocampo derive from a single archive. What’s of paramount importance, however, is that this collection documents the cross-border life of diplomacy and exile: the letters bear witness to the commitment to friendship despite distance, between three women at the prime of their life, immersed in the worlds of international art, literature, politics.

This the first edition of letters by any of these women to make visible the importance of place and the trust exchanged between friends. It demonstrates how Kent, Mistral and Ocampo spurred the development of political and cultural relationships. It also makes clear their importance as cultural and political intermediaries. The letters reveal how their respective authors change tone, register and discourse depending on the recipient. Thanks to how they combine their distant and overlapping networks, neither they, as individuals or the organizations they represent are ever separated or isolated. Their collaborations, initiated through friendships, romantic or not, pave the way to form pacts involving both politics and patronage.

The meetings and the letters: their meaning

Correspondence is basically a self-representation and often, self-dramatization in the case of Mistral, carried out through the performative act of the letter. It allows her to affirm her admiration for people, to speak to them of their shared ideals and thus seal her closest friendships. With the help of friends and secretaries, the writer routinely devoted several hours a day to correspondence. This fact is necessary order to comprehend the vastness and incredibly variety of Mistral’s discursive universe. "Mistral took the letters very seriously" (García-Gorena 2). Letters were her main and many times, only mechanism to create and maintain her networks
of friends (Garrido Donoso 17). They are her lifeline to Chile and to her far-flung colleagues, and vice-versa.

M insurgent and Ocampo exchanged letters on and off for nine years, before they met in person for the first time, pat the end of 1934. There's when María de Maeztu – the founder and Director of the Residencia de Señoritas in Madrid, who was a friend of both - brought the well-known feminist, founder of the magazine and publishing house SUR - to meet Mistral, the famous poet, journalist and consul - to the house-chalet that the Chilean had rented in Ciudad Lineal. On the following day, Luis Enrique Délano, who was then working as the secretary of Mistral, writes that Gabriela “who had a great sense of humor, laughed when I told her that the meeting had made me think of the embrace of Maipú, San Martín and O'Higgens” (Délano, Sobre todo Madrid 37). Soon after, Kent also went to visit Mistral in Madrid. Thus began the correspondence that we present below.

After first meeting in Madrid, Ocampo and Mistral met personally at least seven times. It was Mistral's second encounter and intensifying correspondence with Ocampo and the success of her newly-founded magazine, SUR, that decisively established the two women’s friendship with Kent. Mistral’s article on Kent was published in Sur in April of 1936, just after Kent and other Republicans were returned to power in Madrid. Mistral met both women at least three times in Paris, in June and July 1937, between conferences. Shortly thereafter, Mistral proposed that Ocampo publish the collection of poems Tala, convincing Ocampo to dedicate the sale of the volume to refugee children from the Civil War, a cause in which Kent was very deeply involved, working from the Spanish Republican Embassy in Paris to establish schools and provide the children and their families with funding.

Mistral corrected the proofs of Tala during the following year during the ten weeks that she and Ocampo spent together between March-May 1938. Ocampo hosted Mistral at her home in Mar del Plata (“Villa Victoria”) and along with home in Buenos Aires, in Belgrano. Mistral and Ocampo also spent a few days together in the large house "Villa Ocampo" in San Isidro, where they shared their passion for gardens and plants. During this same period they developed a close friendship, discovering, for example, their shared interest in the countryside and the coincidence in their having the same birthday, April 7, just one year apart. It is also during this visit that Editorial SUR, from Ocampo, published Tala and the two women spent many hours
talking about the future of Spain and by extension, of Europe and South America, in the event of a Fascist victory.

In the following year of 1939, after these shared weeks, Ocampo and Kent surprised Mistral by meeting her on the ship in which she was arriving in Cannes on her return to Europe in February. “It was very sweet to go down as someone says of their hand to the demonized Europe” *(This America* 102). "The Two Victorias" helped Mistral establish her consulate on Rue de la Victoire (now Avenue Jean Médecin), in Nice. Later that year, Ocampo traveled through Italy and from there, returned to Argentina. From the letters that Mistral sent to Kent it is clear that they saw one another face-to-face at least three more times in France during 1939, and that one of these meetings concerned Mistral’s and Guillén’s request that Kent help them acquire papers and official documentation from Spain, during the final weeks before the fall of the Republic, that would support the two women’s story about how the boy, “Juan Miguel” was related to Mistral through a half-brother and a Catalan woman that not one of their colleagues reports ever having met.

After the Nobel Prize acceptance ceremony, Mistral went on a frenzied “tour,” hopping from Stockholm to London (just months after the War’s end, on to Paris, Rome and back again, before flying to the United States. Ocampo managed to see her for a few hours in Washington in March 1946 (Esta América 310), while Kent saw her two months later, in New York City (VK32). The deterioration of the Chilean writer's health was now quite evident, but she did not receive medical treatment until the end of that year, in California (GM 36). For her part, Kent and Mistral met another three or more times in Mexico in the period between 1949 and 1950. Kent traveled from Mexico City to see Mistral in Veracruz. Two years later, Ocampo and Mistral met in Rome in 1952. When Mistral moved to New York the following year, Kent was one among the first friends of the writer to visit her and Doris Dana in Roslyn, Long Island, where the two women acquired a house in which they lived together until the poet’s death four years later. The letters between Kent and Mistral ceased with Mistral’s move to New York, but the friendship continued, although Doris Dana’s daybooks show more frequent phone calls than visits with Kent coming out to Long Island, and none with Mistral and Doris Dana going to New York to see Crane and Kent.
Partial publications of this correspondence

The figure of Kent — unjustly vilified in the history of Spanish feminism due to her opposition to granting the right to vote to women on October 31 — is being recovered in these first years of the 21st century. Along this line, Carmen de Urioste’s recently published *De Madrid a New York* includes articles, lectures, letters, which includes political and professional letters, transcribed for the first time. These letters are addressed, among many others, to Diego Martínez Barrios, José Martínez (President of the Committee for Aid to Spanish Refugees), Pilar Giménez (Secretary General of Unión de Mujeres del Mundo), Fernando de los Ríos, Félix Gordón Ordax and Salvador de Madariaga. The present volume features letters of a more personal nature. Only one of these private letters from Kent - collected in this volume - has even been previously published: VK2, which first appeared in *Carta para muchos* (Benavente and Shütte 2015). Only a few short sentences from Kent’s most personal and intimate correspondence, included in this book, has previously appeared in print. One concerns a sentence from Kent's first letter to Ocampo (VK1), which Santiago López Ríos cites with an erroneous date, one that’s contradicted by that letter’s content and by the multiple postmarks on the enclosed envelope. Three other sentences taken from Kent's letters appear in Gutiérrez-Vega's biography: VK 27 and VK28, from Kent to Mistral, and VK45, from Kent to Ocampo.

More than half of Kent's surviving letters were addressed to Mistral. That sustained correspondence demonstrates a mutual desire to continue and deepen their friendship. At first, Mistral turned to Kent for legal help and political counsels during the challenging period when Mistral was figuring out how to recover her equilibrium after her extremely precipitous departure from Madrid. Kent’s support leads the poet to consider but ultimately discard the idea of returning as a consul to Madrid following the victory of the center-left coalition in the elections of February 1936. After World War II, Kent asks Mistral for recommendations so she can work in Mexico and Puerto Rico.

The 31 letters that Kent writes to Ocampo cover a variety of topics; several include contributions from Louise Crane. That Ocampo helped Kent feel connected to the Spanish-speaking world is evident in the letter of condolence Kent sent to Angelica, Victoria Ocampo’s sister, after the Argentine Maecenas passed away. Kent’s dignity affirms the lasting ties between the Ocampo and Crane families. Her recognition of the loss suffered by Angelica evidences their mutual grief.
The 61 unpublished letters that Ocampo sent to Kent and/or Crane date from the last twenty-five years of the Argentine publisher's life. These letters reflect her place in culture after having dedicated both her efforts and her fortune to *Sur* magazine and publishing house. The correspondence that Kent and Ocampo exchanged before 1953 appears to have been lost. The surviving letters indicate that the lost ones detailed Kent's work in France with war refugees. They also discussed Ocampo's decision to publish Kent's text, *Four Years in Paris*, the manuscript of which Ocampo collected from the New York Central Post in April 1946 (*Cartas de Posguerra* 42), shortly before Ocampo continued on to Europe to attend the Nuremberg trials. It is highly likely that Ocampo had Kent’s manuscript with her during those trials.

The 43 letters that Mistral writes to Kent are previously unpublished and have never been available to scholars, outside of the four sentences from four different letters that Gutiérrez-Vega cites in her biography of Kent (GM1, GM10, GM36 and GM39). Since Mistral traveled so much and moved almost on a two-year regular basis, Gutiérrez-Vega, like all writers prior to the digitization of the poet’s archives, found it very difficult and often impossible to discern the chronology. The obstacles to dating the letters are exacerbated by the poet's habit of using whatever writing paper that she had at hand, as well as her habit of not specifying the date in the letters. For the chronology of this edition, a dynamic timeline and relational database have been established on the basis of all known Mistral correspondence with reliable dates. In turn, these factors are triangulated with contemporaneous sources such as other letters and the media—historical newspapers, for example.

More than 75% of Mistral's letters to Kent date from the dangerous times of the Spanish Civil War, that is, from the nine months prior to the military coup in July 1936 until Mistral's departure for Brazil in March 1940. Since Mistral was under surveillance in Portugal during the first year of the Civil War, she refrained from contacting Kent. The few letters that reached their destination were the result of the efforts of trusted friends such as Mexican diplomats Daniel Cosío Villegas and Palma Guillén, who personally delivered the letters to Kent where she had moved, with other members of the Republican government, to Valencia, during the Siege of Madrid. From there, Kent moved to Paris in June 1937, which is where Mistral and Kent met again, also reestablishing epistolary contact between them. From February 1939 to February 1940, the women exchanged numerous letters from their respective residence in Paris and Nice, France, as both were concerned with obtaining visas not only for Spanish citizens but also for
European Jews who’d come to France, seeking refuge, and who then realized that they’d have to leave (GM29, GM31, GM34 and VK30).

Mistral and Kent lost contact during the four years that German submarines patrolled the North Atlantic and their tanks rolled across Europe. Mistral’s correspondence was a cherished memento of the life Kent had had to leave behind. That Kent greatly valued the letters is clear from the fact that she brought the file of all the letters with her each time of the many times that she moved. They went with her from Madrid to Valencia; she then took them with her to Paris in June 1937, where she worked to organize aid for Spanish children. When Kent emigrated to Mexico in 1948, she again took the letters with her along with her very few belongings. She repacks them the fourth and last time that she moved, this time to New York in 1952. Zenaida Gutiérrez-Vega kept them from 1987 to 2007; Ripoll treasured them until her death in 2011.

This string of wartime and postwar moves makes it all the more remarkable that so few of the letters Mistral wrote to Kent have been lost, although two are incomplete. About four letters and two missing or misplaced Mistral telegrams date from when two unsettled times when Kent was constantly traveling: during the election campaign in early 1936 and in the first year of the Civil War. At this time, photographs and copies of Kent's speeches show her reviewing the troops in Spain.

The 41 letters that Kent sent to Mistral date from the period 1935 to 1953. The longest and most affectionate ones date from the first months of their friendship. Kent shares with Mistral her intimate and romantic feelings about the imminent Christmas holidays. During the subsequent electoral campaign, writing letters gave Kent a refuge and the opportunity to reflect, to develop her inner life, her private life, so different from her severe and still heroic outward appearance. Although nine letters and a telegram appear to be lost, their themes and dates can be partially reconstructed by means of other letters that have been preserved, such as one from Mistral to Palma Guillén on the early days of the Civil War: “Victoria Kent has told me about images of the Virgin, that a squad of primary students use for target practice” (Vargas Saavedra, Castilla 224). Many of Kent's missing letters to Mistral date back to 1939, the year Mistral spent in Nice, where Mistral moved at least three times trying to find a pension, a house, or an apartment that had a basement in event of bombing.
Conditions and general characteristics of the letters

Mistral's letters are the longest, as they often span four or six pages, and some, like GM14, reach fifteen pages. Those of Kent and Ocampo tend to be both brief and direct. The frequent omission of dates in Mistral's letters, along with the patience required to decipher her handwriting, constitute the greatest challenge in editing her correspondence. Mistral's handwriting tends to lean toward the end of the line and the writing invariably extends down along the margin. On the other hand, it is clear about the division of words. Sometimes Mistral includes partial references to the date towards the end of the letter, near her signature, perhaps to indicate that it is ready for mailing. Mistral usually wrote by hand, correcting in the process. She left the letters for her secretary to place in an envelope, write the address of the addressee, and put them in the outgoing mail.

Unlike the letterhead, fancy stationery, and the ink characteristic of Ocampo's handwritten letters, Mistral used whatever she had on hand: pencil, pen, stationery, etc. One letter, GM31, consists of ten handwritten pages on both sides of three different letterheads. Despite their apparent spontaneity, these letters are very carefully formulated. This is especially noticeable when Mistral was initiating a correspondence, since she recognized letters as the main means of extending an invitation or carrying out friendship rituals. Her warm words are well chosen, and her entertaining stories could have been described as "gossip" had it not been for the insightful observations on the mindsets of very well-known writers, high-ranking politicians, and diplomatic service personnel.

Mistral's typed letters (or the ones she gave to her secretary to type) could be defined as "business" correspondence, since they deal with legal matters or complicated political-diplomatic situations. The term does not do justice to her funny, dramatic and carefully choreographed narratives, such as GM10, in which she describes a four-hour interview with Gustavo Ross, the conservative Chilean finance minister known as "the last pirate of the Pacific," who had dropped in on her in Lisbon as he was about to launch his candidacy for the presidency of Chile against the radical Pedro Aguirre Cerda, Mistral's main protector. The poet treats such men respectfully, but always on an equal footing, as her equal, even after Aguirre Cerda had ascended to the Presidency. Other letters classified as "business" contain extensive reports that she wrote in Florida in 1939, including summaries of confidential information obtained on Pablo Neruda, among other important political figures (GM21, GM27). Mistral sends this material to Kent, for
whom it is potentially useful, when Neruda was about to begin supervising the emigration of Republicans to Chile in the famous episode of the Winnipeg ship.

Mistral also sends a personal typed letter when she hopes to win the admiration or trust of someone who can help her politically and professionally. Mistral's long typed letters, written in single spacing, from three to five pages, invariably include handwritten corrections and comments placed either between the lines or in the margins, demonstrating her careful attention to reviewing the letters before dispatch.

The letters that Ocampo writes on letterhead (printed or stamped) from Argentina range from one to four pages; however, the ones she writes from outside of Argentina, while traveling, employ plain paper and tend to be considerably longer — six to seven pages. Ocampo always uses a blue ink pen. Her handwriting is clear and legible, but it tends to occupy all margins (top, bottom, right, and left) including the back of the letter, so that understanding the text requires that the page be physically rotated. As custom dictates, Ocampo's letters almost always begin with the date in the upper left margin. Ocampo only types when it comes to business-commercial letters or when she needs multiple copies to ensure wide distribution, such is the case of the long report that she writes upon being released from jail.

Victoria Kent's prewar letters are mostly handwritten and always have dates. The postwar ones are mostly typewritten. In the pre-war period, if she considered matters of business, she resorted to a draft before typing it, and kept a copy. This is why she keeps her correspondence with Palma Guillén. In postwar New York, she kept copies of all of her correspondence related to the magazine *Ibérica*.

Unlike correspondence such as that of Alfonso Reyes, which includes a dialogue with Enrique Díez-Canedo, very few of the letters that Mistral and Ocampo exchanged with each other, or with Kent, can be described as an "exercise in style", designed to be a chronicle or essay on a particular topic. However, such letter-essays occur when Ocampo or Mistral respond to an explicit request from Kent. One such example is when Kent begs Mistral to share her impressions of Concepción Arenal (VK6, 7, GM6). Kent subsequently quoted both of these letters from Mistral and Ocampo when she gave a presentation on Arenal at the Ateneo de Madrid (VK11). Something similar happens when Kent asks Mistral to share her pedagogical ideology (VK20), according to an impeccable logic: following her return to the government and political power in February 1936, the Spanish woman began considering the possibility of
launching a national educational reform. Rather than drawing on her eighteen years of experience in the Chilean school system - where the lack of an official degree limited Mistral’s influence on educational policy - Mistral’s response focuses on her contributions to the Mexican educational reform, a political endeavor (GM14).

Both Mistral and Ocampo are well-known for their development of a unique personal styles in essays intended for and indeed read by a very wide audience. It is not surprising, therefore, that Kent asked Ocampo for a study on Unamuno to be published in *Ibérica*. Ocampo responds professionally by sending Kent a formal three-page essay along with a short note in 1964 (VO26). Likewise, it is obvious that Ocampo writes the “report” of her experience in prison for a very wide audience, since she sent identical copies not just to Kent and Mistral, but to all of the many who had collaborated in the campaign to request her release, such as Alfonso Reyes (117-24). An excellent example of Ocampo’s colloquial style is seen in a letter, which resembles an essay, that she addressed to Kent and Crane in New York about the “attitude of sympathy towards those who fight (even if they sometimes make mistakes) by giving women have equal rights (not of a physical nature) with men ”(VO57).

**Editorial responsibilities**

Elizabeth Horan obtained copies of all the materials and organized them by author, date and provenance, keeping the information on their origin tied to each. This task included downloading digitized letters from Kent to Mistral available at the National Library of Chile. In addition, Horan photographed, and in a few cases she obtained photographs from the Beinecke Library at Yale University. Likewise, the librarians at Harvard University’s Houghton Library took photos of the letters exchanged between Kent, Crane, Mistral and Ocampo, which Horan identified and organized by date and author. The Carlos Ripoll Collection of the Special Collections Department of the Green Library of Florida International University includes copies of many of these letters, along with valuable contextual material that Horan photographs.

Horan was in charge of transcribing the letters from Gabriela Mistral and Palma Guillén; Carmen de Urioste transcribed those of Victoria Kent and Cynthia Tompkins those of Victoria Ocampo. We came to depend on each other to decipher illegible terms. We divided the collection into thirds, in order to include notes that Urioste meticulously edited, along with the manuscript, which we all collated. Also, Urioste edited the different versions of the prologue. Tompkins
translated the Preface that Horan wrote in English into Spanish and tried to keep the organization chart. Horan submitted a proposal for a Seed Grant to the Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Center at Arizona State University. This scholarship was funded and allowed us to organize a symposium on the Spanish Civil War in Tempe on April 21 and 22, 2017, with the participation of Josebe Martínez Gutiérrez from the University of the Basque Country, Noël Valis from Yale University and Shirley Mangini from California State University, Long Beach.

**Editing criteria**

Among the idiosyncrasies of the writers that have we standardized for ease of reading is the format and arrangement of dates. Not wanting to tire readers with the continued use of brackets, we decided to include them only when those dates were not indicated in the original, but rather, added by us, in whole or in part. In Mistral's letters the date is very often inferred from internal textual references, as when these correlate with verifiable events, with other contemporaneous materials with verified date. All three authors use abbreviations to refer to people, places, and organizations, such as "Min." by "Minister" and "B.A." by "Buenos Aires." Both abbreviations and capitalization have been standardized.

Punctuation is problematic for Mistral and Guillén, who usually drop the initial part of the question or exclamation mark. To avoid using multiple brackets, we chose to complete these punctuation marks. Assuming that the readers of the 21st century have access to the Internet, notes that identify the people mentioned in the letters have been minimized. For that reason, footnotes either provide the necessary context to ensure a smooth reading of the letter, or that add crucial data unknown to the general public.

All unpublished letters appear with the initials of their respective author followed by the number that indicates the order in the chronology. The only exceptions are ten letters previously published in *This America of ours*, seven of which we have included to provide information about the four years that Kent lived in hiding in Paris. The other three are letters that Ocampo exchanged with Mistral, including Kent at the same time.

As this correspondence establishes the context of the time, it provides evidence of the tastes, affections, and exasperation experienced by three women born in different countries and distanced by the Atlantic, the Andes, or both. They became friends despite radical economic, educational, social class, and racially identifiable differences. The personal encounter, followed
by a continuous exchange over the years of letters, was an aspect of human behavior that led these frank and confident women to discover that they had much in common. At first, all three had rejected the role of the obedient and self-sacrificing wife-mother, as well as the impoverishing expectations envisaged for the female sex in the early years of the 20th century, with the exception of the opportunities offered to women during the Second Spanish Republic. Through the correspondence between them, they found satisfaction in close friendships and personal and professional fulfillment through their commitment to action, artistic exploration and participation in civic life.

**Thanks**

The editors are extremely grateful to Fundación Sur and its president, Juan Javier Negri, for granting them permission to publish Ocampo’s texts and to Doris Atkinson for her generous help. This edition, for its part, complies with the copyrights of Gabriela Mistral and the Franciscan Order and has the permission of the family of Louise Crane, through Josie Greene, in relation to the copyrights of the letters of Victoria Kent. We acknowledge the rescue work carried out by Carlos Ripoll and the valuable efforts of Vicki Silveira, who increased the Ripoll Collection in 2014. We also appreciate the foresight and excellent services of the archivists of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, the Beinecke Library, from Yale University, the Department of Special Collections of the Florida International University (FIU) and the National Library of Chile. Finally, we do not forget the scholarship obtained from the Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Center of the Arizona State University, which allowed us to offer in a place as distant from Spain as Arizona, a symposium on the times lived by these three great women — Gabriela Mistral from Chile, Victoria Ocampo from Argentina and Victoria Kent from Spain— representing so many others who did not have the opportunity to go down in history and as history.

Tempe, October 2018
Excerpts from Correspondence between Gabriela Mistral, Victoria Ocampo and Victoria Kent

G.1
20 January [19] 25

Victoria Ocampo,

Thank you for your pretty flowers.

I leave for Europe early tomorrow morning.

I’ve asked various people about you. I would’ve been honored and very happy to get to know you. Now isn’t the time.

In you I salute an extraordinary sensibility within our race and I declare myself your servant.


G.2
[Paris, France] 22 March [1929]

Admired Victoria Ocampo:

I send you greetings. Only yesterday I learned that you’re here. And it’s very difficult for me to leave without seeing you. ³ I’m leaving Monday. Could you favor us with a visit to the Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, 2 rue Montpensier? Mr. Levingson has been advised in the event that you grant us this honor and courtesy.

I’m buried in paperwork and don’t have a bit of free time.

I’ve loved and admired you for years now. Receive these words without smiling. Affection is always a beautiful thing, whomever it comes from.

This year in Madrid, M[aría de] Maeztu and I often remembered you. ⁴

Yours truly,

Gabrielamistral⁵

Today, 22 March.
Dear Victoria Ocampo;

These have been days of setting things up in Cataluña; you’ve always been on my mind, but I haven’t been able to write you.

I repeat, because it’s not too much, what was said to you with force and affection or with the force of affection: some of us concerned with the fact of America as a unified whole need you and we tend to feel that you pass us by. How do you pass us by and in what ways? It’s a little ingenuous to spell out and specify; you begin passing us by in language, you continue passing us by in a kind of being more European than Europeans, you wind up passing us by in preferring exotic topics when you write.

It’s been a tremendous surprise for me to find you so *criolla*, as *criolla* as I am, although more refined. What’s more, it’s been a real joy. And needless to tell you, a hope of mine. From age twenty to forty we wear cosmetics, at forty everything that isn’t our bone and marrow falls away. I await in you, then, the years to come, and I do so with patience and certainty. When you live with the full volume of your blood and not with a portion of it, you will return or you will go towards Spanish, all by yourself. Until then, you should let some eager people like us send you books, old and new, written in a language that you can’t help but love and that will give you absolute pleasure. Let’s see what you make of Gracian, whose “*El heroe y el discreto*” (*A Pocket Mirror for Heroes*) I’m going to look for, for you. [note added, bottom of page:] I left two books for you in Madrid.

My letter is taking on a tinge of imperiousness that I find disagreeable. Try to overlook it.

Your case wouldn’t matter much to me if I had the dishonesty of the literary types, male and female, who deny you the category of “writer.” But ever since I read your first book (“*De F[rancesca] a B[eatrice]*”) [*From F[rancesca] to B[eatrice]*] I knew that you threw yourself into literary writing, body and all. If along with those same invidious people I believed that your sphere of influence did not extend beyond a group of snobbish gentlemen, I wouldn’t waste my time writing to you. The caste of snobs matters less to me than the guild of stamp collectors. But
I know, principally by way of Sur, that you reach and influence our South American youth. The magazine would not turn without you turning, from the very depths of your being.

I vaguely understand that you fear falling and making Sur slip into that creole nationalism of saddle pads and spurs and mate or tango, into which others fell and became mired. You who have the possibilities in your mind and your soul should create a superior criollismo, an American-ness both smooth and fine, like that of your beautiful personal manner, and identify and weed out all that our manner might lack; take care, with the most zealous carefulness, of your Spanish and that of the people who follow or surround you. Perhaps this is your duty in this world: to transpose Argentine-ness along more qualitative lines. American-ness isn’t resolved by a repertoire of dances and colorful fabric, or some foolish and insolent postures of defiance towards Europe. That portion of American-ness is dealt from the left hands of jokers and fools. There are a thousand possible directions and paths to follow and with your subtle aim you can choose the least suspected ones.

We ask nothing of you, only a presence, as complete as possible, within the American movement. As I told you, I really fear that this presence might not be possible if you remain rooted in the French language, and I fear that you deceive yourself believing that by merely dealing with American topics, you fulfill your obligation to us.

Pardon my impertinent demand.

Some of those of your race, whom you must love, Sarmiento, for example, would tell you more or less what this schoolteacher is telling you.

I will continue in another letter, Victoria. The topic is huge and everything that you know matters to me.

Believe in my long-time, affectionate admiration. I’m at your command and I hope that you accept my Spanish greeting, a greeting which is joyous because knowing you has been a gift of joy for me.

Regards to María [de Maeztu]. Palma [Guillén] sends her affection. Give me your address in Argentina.

9 January. Gabriela.

The portrait was mailed. Send me yours.

G.4
Dear, admired Victoria Ocampo:

I had to write you on receiving your portrait which, on account of light and machinery, unhappily differs from your physical form. Light and machinery are, put more precisely, almost like people, so unfaithful are they. Even so, weak and faithless, it has accompanied me and accompanies me in Ciudad Lineal, where I’m living now, in a bare room in which I work with a certain comfort precisely because of this aridity of wall and space. You and Don Miguel de Unamuno offer counsel and support. It would be somewhat tasteless to explain that support to you, what part you have in it. You affirm and maintain the American-ness that I so often denied you, an American-ness more physical than literary. But since the body exists terribly, Victoria, the other varieties of American-ness will come carted along, hissed at or swollen up by it sooner or later. I believe that you are already collected, like water behind a dam, by doubts, by anxieties, by I-don’t-know-what fierce loyalty, all awoken in recent years (3, 5?) in your greatest depths, that is, in your innermost nature. This photo that unfortunately does not gaze will go with me and will work diligently on me, which is how matchless things work in my being, from within, seismically, like Chilean geology. (This is badly put, but leave it at that.)

Your book came, for which I thank you very much. And now, I’m only missing those pages of Infancia (Childhood) from my Victoria, who isn’t exactly the same Victoria as others. I believe I recall María [de Maeztu] spoke to me of this publication as an imminent thing. I’ll not talk to you about the beautiful and noble Testimonios so as not to make you read the same thing twice over, here and in my article.

Palma Guillén went off to Colombia, as her country’s Minister. She’s there right now, suffering a turbid, violent, and medieval rain of insidiousness from the clergy, who have had the good graces to declare her a communist, an atheist, an advocate of divorce and other nasty comments in Holy Colombia. [Note in margin: Palma is Catholic and never engaged in politics.] Oh, Victoria, how our America resembles, in its double face, its precious guanaco of the mountain ranges, smooth to the touch, the color of toast, a skittish air that tends become wild and spits on the familiar and the foreign alike...There she [Palma] went, with a pretty image of you. You were, for her, exquisitely attentive and cordial. She is among the best of our women and her
head, the most careful and organized of the women of Mexico. Your paths will cross again: take care of her and get to know her.

I’ve seen María only once, and very quickly. She and I have our lives full to overflowing. And I fear that both of us, side by side, are full of inconsequential things or the ashes of hard, sad dust, which give neither strength nor joy.

You left in the house, with those who saw you, a tinge of witchery. Tinge and all, Victoria, it lasts. Through you I’ve understood this mission of the Beatrices and I’ve gone back to examining the Muses, that I allowed to fall, like great Myths, years ago. You have a mission (the word is trite, put whatever word you want), a clear and evident job, which you know about, but also others. Be careful of the transparency (the clarity) of the message that you bring to spread and to spread with fitting insistence. Be careful of the instrument (a seismograph, they call it?) so that they don’t cut or alter its operation without you. And be careful of those who are being careful.

This letter will give you work with its unconventional handwriting. I won’t be hurt if you don’t finish it. You are one of those rare people (the ones who are naturally great) who cure the vanity of others, even the slightest kind, because you cast them away to such heights that only little stones, trifles and pruderies are left behind. You bathe others with your broad, direct gaze, and you leave them in bettered conditions so that they can speak with you in this state of decency. This, among other things that you do and that you surely don’t know that you do.

This address is good only until September: 5 Sanchez Diaz, Ciudad Lineal, Madrid.

May God watch over you, Victoria, the American, and may I meet you again somewhere, but with more leisure for you and for me.


G.5

Lisbon, Portugal. 7 April [1936]\(^{18}\)

[Note, left-hand margin, p. 1, hand of GM]: This article is not for use in *Sur* and isn’t sent for *Sur*. G.”]

Dear, remembered Victoria Ocampo:
Truly as “dear” as “considered,” even though you don’t write. I have had in these months a change of countries and a long, cloying, clinging intestinal illness that, on account of a ferocious diet, drains the energy. I have abandoned long letters and sent off only brief ones in these six months in Portugal, so sweet for getting cured, for convalescing and for growing old as well. Here is where I’d like you to be so we could converse without passports and…without Castilian raging, on the topics that you bring to the foreground and that are American ones, very much ours, as are you, our Victoria, finally clear to me, as definite and trim as one of our pineapples or apples, after much turning it around, checking it out and telling it off (scolding it) as well.

I left Spain: it seemed that it couldn’t be. But a messy combination of patriotic Spaniards (storekeepers, that is) from Santiago and some three colleagues keen on the job in Madrid, facilitated the operation of cutting me loose from Castile, where I was already moving from exasperated to despairing…Our Hispanophiles, Columbus Day types, wouldn’t understand it, but that’s how it was. The Spanish climate, aridity, office, the air heavy with furies (the furies that have since broken out and the furies that will follow) made that climate overwhelming to me. Even so, it’s a sparkling climate and it formed my precious Saint [Teresa] and the other ones whom you also love, St. John [of the Cross] whom I like more and more each day and the smooth-sharp Luises [of Leon and of Granada].¹⁹ Wild ones, that’s how we are…And there’s no helping it: we come from those slimy depths and from that scrubby highland.

We’ve been thinking and speaking of you often with V[ictoria] Kent.²⁰ She’s a friend of recent months with whom I get along marvelously, as much as I was run-in and stand-offish with the other ones. I greatly admire and cherish her and because of you we began getting together and loosening our talk in lovely confidence. That sizeable article will tell you more about this friendship.

Here I am in these angelic Portugals. They are almost South America. It rains too much but since it’s not cold, I don’t suffer.

I learned that Palma Guillén received Testimonios directly from you. She told me nice things about you and the book in a letter that I was going to send you, my Vict., and that I misplaced. There you have another Frenchified American, much to her good, as with you. She’s managed it in such a way as to turn out, in the end, always Mexican and tremendously Mexican. The same will happen to you and I’ll celebrate it….
I still owe you the commentary on “Texto[monios].” It’s become more than that for me: the commentary is about you. It’s drafted and I haven’t corrected it because ever since I could get to anything (on account of being ill, I wasn’t good for anything) I’ve been busy with some of those things called “propaganda articles.” They’ve got me on recess here, the office on vacation, and I have to pay those semi-amusing salaries with something. Because that famous Law finally emerged, much knocked about, but it emerged, thanks to God and many interventions, among which I’m particularly aware of the Argentine woman from your P.E.N. Club. This dispatch of budgetary heroics was the secret cause of the press campaign that I endured in my country. Writers don’t want their absent brothers and sisters to eat and the thing drove about five of them crazy and they joined in the gothic-colonial furor…. It’s good to know that one will eat tomorrow; this gives a feeling of peace for recovering and helps one get to sleep at night. I’ll get out from under another six articles about Chilean things and I’ll have yours copied. My head with daily migraines has given me a horror of the typewriter.

I beg you to have Sur sent to me. In Madrid I’d find it in the bookstores; here, I don’t have it.

With regard to that article about V[ictoria] K[ent], I want to ask you a favor: have it published in some Argentine publication where there’s space for lengthy contributions. It interests me in an extra-literary way (it’s very loose, poor thing) on account of our women’s orientation towards social work and so that they might know what a sensible woman she is among the feminists to the 101st degree! I’ve lost touch with your magazines. They fired me from La Nación like a servant in the past century, not even telling me “Scram!” Guillermo de Torre, a fine man, let me understand that I’d done poorly in going off to Crítica. And I, who’d believe it, didn’t know Crítica although I was writing in it… I needed money in those years in Spain, which were hard ones. They offered me the opportunity to contribute and I accepted it. I first saw the periodical two months ago, now and I’ve understood getting kicked out of La Nación. Still, I was less than guilty for not knowing certain hatreds between one newspaper and another. I don’t know anything about Argentina, my Victoria.

I beg you not to take these words as a subterranean request, Indian-style, to be reinstated. I don’t return when I leave, even less when they toss me out. I had to tell you this because the process struck me as strange in a people from a non-violent country, and among well-mannered
persons. You might give that article of mine, when you have the time, to some magazine where it might do its job, which is for women to read it.

What are you writing now? Or do the preparations for that Pen Club Congress have you rushing around? I read in a Chilean newspaper that two official delegates from Chile are going there, a lady (I don’t know her) and Mariano Latorre, 25 the novelist. I doubt that I can go, my Victoria, although I’d find it a rare and profound joy to see and hear you. If I went to Buenos Aires I’d have to go through Chile and my land is in a seething mass of hatreds into which I don’t wish to fall. I’d say imprudent things – because each day I’m less capable of keeping quiet – and they’d run me out on rail. Keep this reason for my absence to yourself. In a few more months I’ll thank PEN and I’ll excuse myself in some way. I don’t believe anyway that I’d get from the trip the pleasure and delight of being in your company. You’ve a lot of life around you. When I measure my little strength, I lose the hope of knowing provincial, rural Argentina, which is the one I most love. I walk an hour and it no longer gives me any energy: it’s the fruit juice diet that doesn’t nourish my big body….

It seems that I’m here for some months, which I’ll try to stretch into a year. Perhaps they’ll send me to Brazil after that. I’d rather stay in this tender land that pampers the eyes and the spirit. There or here, I want and hope to see you again.

In the conflict with the Spaniards, María de Maeztu acted very nobly towards me, quite beautifully. Her qualities are noble; the circumstances are harmful to her. I fear that she’s going to suffer a good deal again with the new situation (much better, in any case, than the past). Why don’t you bring her to your University for a year or two? Whether she knows it or not, her Spain is sick and broken, with its brutal contrasts pushing it around and breaking it into pieces. 26 Take a look yourself, my Victoria, and think about the problem, which is moral and, indirectly, physical.

May they give you – may you give yourself – some long stretches of peace in order to write. No woman and few men in America today write as you do. Don’t let your life be infested by what they call the social scene – as if it consisted of those ladies who serve tea with almond dainties. Preserve your precious soul for your writing and for the delight of those who are yours. Protect yourself with the force of courage: the childhood book, when will it be coming out? Or has it come out? Portugal keeps quite apart from Spain and I don’t know anything. María told me that you’re about to finish the pages that you were kind enough to read to us. Finish them, and
don’t delay very much because a book, like an angel, passes from your hands if you don’t hold on to it. And then go on from Childhood to Youth. We who never had you close by feel a furious appetite, which isn’t idle curiosity, for your soul and its years, ranches where we never lived. There’s no other way to have you with us and make life without you somehow less wicked and despoiled.

Sooner or later some words of mine will go out to you – not as lengthy as these, reminding you to write and to defend yourself from the enemy that theology named as the first among the enemies of the soul: the World, the World, my great and beloved Victoria, the thick, dry World.

Today, my birthday, I’ve sat down to speak with you and with Palma Guillén and with a colleague from P.[uerto] Rico. 27 You are perhaps the souls who most matter to me on that side and this one, of the great water. In order to tell you that I think of you tenderly that I’m better and may God watch over you for me.

Gabriela.

G.6

Lisbon, Portugal. 21 August [1936]28

Dearest V.O.:

Your lovely letter came, in which you told me about your inclination towards the theater. I know that Christmas seasons are always happy and I was happy about it since it was a successful show. But I was afraid and I continue to fear that the genre might entrap you and if this happens, I know that the theater as a profession – even lived at the greatest possible height, at that of Eleonora Duse – would never make you happy.

After the news came in your letter I’ve read two reviews of your premiere, both of them full of praise. What a pity, a pity not to have seen it; I should’ve seen it.

No, I knew nothing of your mourning 29 and I learned of it very late, when it’s stupid, now, to go digging into that kind of sadness. It’s such a serious thing when one of our own dies on us – and not us – that no other thing comes close to this circumstance. Since we don’t see our own death, or suffer it either, although some believe that we do, the only death that truly falls on us is that of a father, mother, siblings, and children. I don’t know if you’ve amassed such
pessimism from life to be able to see absolutely and to take absolute joy in the liberation of a being. It’s liberation, in any case, whether from chronic illness, a great shame, and from old age, an even worse shame. May God watch over and keep, wherever that might be, but close to Him, that creature, who must have been very kind, very lovable, to be your kin, your progenitor, admirable Victoria.

My head is spinning as I write you. In three newspapers and in two different versions I just read about the death of Ramiro de Maeztu, executed by firing squad in Madrid. I liked him, despite his absurd ideas, I liked him: he was a great believer, he was furthermore a man of organic ideology, which is very important. He was a man with heart, crazed by the loss of his friends and of a lamentably monarchical Spain, which he nonetheless saw in a beautiful way that dazzled his eyes, his poor eyes of a Basque boy, a mystical boy. It seems horrible to me that they killed him, whatever it is that he might have done, which were childish things, to be sure. For God’s sake! The Spaniards are waging their civil war the same as the conquest of America, and the worst of it is that now they’re beginning to be proud of the “epic,” according to what I saw yesterday in a conversation in the Embassy Council in Portugal. Just like they live full of pride in the other “heroic deed” in America.

Needless to say, my heart goes out to the people of Madrid, for the sake of ideas and of that so well-named mass of air called justice. But today’s newspaper brings news that could singe flesh. I hope it’s not true, about the shootings, the executions of Benavente, the Quinteros, Zuloaga, etc. These aren’t confirmed, not like the other one.

Dear Victoria, I feel a certain remorse for not having listened to my instinct some days ago, when I wanted to write to Ramiro telling him to come here, and to my house, if he was in danger. I held back because of a very stupid prejudice. Now it’s a matter of accepting today’s blow to the heart, which is to call María.

My Victoria, there is no mail between here and Madrid. Yesterday, in that Council, they told me that they manage to do it by sending the letters to Barcelona, where they are re-sent. But this is for communicating with people on the left, this doesn’t work for a letter directed to María. María won’t get anything that doesn’t risk being observed or waylaid. I’ll try, in the coded cablegrams that our Legation here sends to the Embassy in Madrid, to see if they can put in a message from me for María. I really doubt that our Embassy would transmit it, to avoid suspicion. Couldn’t you possibly try, Victoria, to have this message arrive from where you are
[in Buenos Aires]? It would be that she could come to Portugal, to be with me, via Galicia at the present moment, by what way in days to come, I don’t know.

It’s no fantasy to think that María is in danger. Many, but really many women on the left hate her. Given the chance, they’ll do her injury, I don’t know but that it would be rash to tell you, but one cannot discount the most serious sort. I think that maybe she’s gone to Biarritz, since the roads to France are open. But to do this, the same as going to Portugal, she must run the risk of declaring herself dissatisfied, as a person who wants to escape. This is the trickiest difficulty. You, my noble Victoria, give some thought to the problem. I could talk about this with [Enrique and Teresa] Diez Canedo, who are friends. Nonetheless, I’m seeing here, day by day, that partisanship has gone to such a point that it doesn’t allow for conversation with Spaniards, A to Z, about their enemies.

It’s been twenty days since I’ve had news of a Catalan friend whom I greatly love and esteem, who has become ill in the middle of the revolution, a person from the left wing, but from the pinkish left, not a bull’s-blood red. Now I know he’s alive, recovering from a very grave condition, but he tells me in a very serene, very calm letter, “that there are things worse than dying and they’re what I’ve seen.”

At the least, I want to know if María is in Madrid and if she thinks of the possibility of leaving or if she sees extreme danger ahead, for herself. And the women in Spain, the crazy Falangists and the Communists, are already fighting, carbines at their shoulders. I would like the women on the left to win, but I will never understand women being brought to guerilla warfare, that filthy thing, even if it were in order to save the Baby Jesus from running into … danger. For God’s sake, those battalions of women set my crazy head to spinning. They can go off to cook for the soldiers, to sew their clothing, to bring them their children so that they can see them, to heal them, to sow wheat in Castile so that there’s no hunger, to irrigate, to work in the factories, to do a thousand things; but because the spectacular thing is trousers and a carbine, there they go, the big sensationalists.

You must be very busy right now with your visitors from the P.E.N. Club. I beg you to make a bit of time, that you take a moment to think about this, my well-loved Victoria, about what can be done about all this. Who knows what may have happened in Spain between today and the day my letter comes to you in Buenos Aires. (In passing, another request. If Duhamel’s wife, Blanche Albane, has gone to Buenos Aires, she’s someone you’d do well to get to know,
do me the good favor of sending her some flowers, for me. Perhaps Duhamel has gone alone, or with one of his children.

Braga came through and stayed awhile. I sent my regrets, telling him I couldn’t come by. He told me that they had named him to that Committee on Letters, in the League [of Nations]. I’ll see if it’s true, and then ask you to give me some advice about what can be done there, for Argentina.

Palma Guillén is being transferred to the [Mexican] Legation in Denmark. I’m satisfied with that; we will be living far apart, but always able to get in touch with one another in case of hardship, hers or mine.

Many thanks, generous Victoria, for the placement you gave to that article about V[ictoria] Kent. No, it wasn’t sent for Sur. I realize that you want to publish there articles by women about women. So now things will change. Two “recados” (really articles) have gone out – They should be forged into one – about that Venezuelan, whom I loved so much and who died, Teresa de la Parra, whom I spoke to about in Madrid, giving you a childhood story of hers to read that I much admire. If you are interested in that long memoir of hers, publish it; I have not sent it for publication to Argentina.

The Sur collection came, and it struck me as magnificent, just magnificent, worthy of you. The first time that a feminist argument has really hit home for me is in this work by V[irginia] Woolf. I have a lot to tell you in this regard. Next time. I thank you, as a personal service, for having it translated and for having it sent to me.

And no more, in order not to tire you out for now, my Victoria.

A faithful embrace from your reader and friend who is with you, always, talking to you, in her way.

Gabriela

21 of August.

G.7


Dear Victoria:
Maruja Mallo will be arriving there. I hope the rest of the teachers were able to travel by the same boat and be rescued for the good of their country’s future.

I know that you will comfort the distressed soul that she bears, underneath her smile. How good it is that your Argentina is big enough for its own people and for those who need it in these bad times. Mexico, thank God, is going to take ten, no less than ten teachers in a little while. I haven’t gotten anything out of my land, yet, but getting this from Mexico, managed from Portugal through a friendly Minister, soothes my American conscience.

I hope very much – more and more – to speak with my Victoria. I’ve traveled more than two months abroad, in France, in Germany and Denmark. 40

On stopping to rest – I just returned – I have to send you that article about you.

I heard Duhamel and his wife remember you, in Paris. 41 I very much liked some scenes they were sketching in which you appeared.

God keep you and remember me from time to time.

I admire you, I love you, and I follow you,

Gabriela

G.9
Paris. 4 August [1937]42

Dear Victoria Ocampo:

Pardon these rapid, much-burdened lines. I write you pending the trip to Brazil, full of anxieties.

A book of mine – twelve years of verses – is finished and ready. I have given it to the Basque refugee children in the Residencia of Pedralbes, Barcelona, where I lived for a few months. 43 Since the poor Catalans scarcely have paper 44 and they want at all costs to make an edition, it seems that the book will have two or three, for several reasons. One would be the Catalan one that the Fac[ultad] de Filosofía [the Philosophy Department, in the University] will do on their own account. The State of Pachuca, Mexico, will do another one for Mexico and the United States only. And the third should be one by Calpe in Buenos Aires. But Palma Guillén thinks that it wouldn’t make very much for the children and in this case it’s really a question of getting money out of a book as the goal. She wanted me to propose to you that you, alone or with
her, for the Spanish children, do this third edition aimed at Argentina which perhaps could be
some 2000 copies. *Sur* would do it although Calpe would distribute it, so that you could watch
over it and keep the money from evaporating…

And so, abruptly, I propose it to you, before leaving Paris. I’m taking a ship to Rio de
Janeiro. The originals remain in the hands of Palma Guillén (Legation of Mexico in
Copenhagen). Please do me the favor of answering her. – Since you know me, you’ll pardon this
direct request, which seems pretentious. In its abusiveness there’s nothing but the desire to do
something useful for those creatures with half of our blood. According to Vict[oria] Kent, about
200,000 children (no less!) have left Spain. It’s best, good God, that they remain there with their
own. Our America, blinded by political fanaticism, has crossed its arms. Except Mexico, which
has accepted 6000 and is going to receive more. 45 My Basque Chile, Hispanophile Peru and the
rest of our people have pretended not to know what’s going on. And those children go to
England and to Russia as if a continent half-theirs and with their flesh and blood didn’t exist!

I beg you to remember your Gabriela: a negative response from you would not offend
me. 46

Yesterday with [Jacques] Maritain, 47 who loves you and thinks of you, we spoke of you
a great deal.

I, I always have you with me.

4 August. Gabriela.

G.10

[Rio de Janeiro, Brazil] 31 August [1937].48

Dear Victoria:

Many, many thanks for your letter. I found it here at my arrival; ten days have passed but
I’ve had no peace. You already know how hectic and fatiguing our American hospitality is
wherever you go, even among the Yankees….  

Your letter brought me the honor of your good thoughts; but in it I found, at the same
time, some bittersweet paragraphs that you’ll clarify for me when we see each other. You say
that in my letter there are things that you recognize as being from Gabr[iela], and others that
aren’t from her. Who are they from, then? My dry, hard face always freed me from bossy people and advisors. That letter is mine, wholly mine. Give me, on its account, what I deserve, but don’t think it’s the work of others….

I don’t know if I mentioned it: I went off to find [José] Bergamín – whom I never met – _exclusively to deal with your matter_ , to tell him about my astonishment at what had been done and to give him my opinion about you, since I believed that he was absolutely uninformed about you. If, on leaving Lisbon, I hadn’t received those two letters, that you sent me, I wouldn’t have sought out or met J[osé] B[ergamín]. I even fear that some of the people around him, if not him, have seen me as a flatterer of the Minerva or Juno that you are, in the flesh and in literary portraits…

It happened to me like in the fables: the hero won me, he trapped me without trying. And it’s because Spain has remained, after Unamuno’s death, quite bereft of a certain accent, and of a certain mystical or super-national marrow, and I found in my long conversations with Bergamín, a restitution, a recuperation, partial or what-have-you, of that admirable old man whom I loved more than he knew and whom I miss terribly as I try to live, _nothing less than try to live_ !

 […]

Vict., you know that in the _papers_ I am called a raging anti-Spaniard. It’s because I spoke out about Hispano-Americanism some four or five years ago. The Spaniards interest me in regard to their being masters of certain spiritual essences that I don’t find elsewhere in Europe, the core inspiration of my mystics, of this group of five or six men and women that have _shaped my soul_. I look at the Basque as mine with relation to blood; at the Catalan as mine by way of co-existence. The rest I see with absolute disinterest, personally, _racially_. But in the nameless and measureless misfortune that they are living, I have followed them and held them _breast to breast_. Peixoto was telling me – and he has some reason – that what the Spanish are going through can be seen in me, printed across my face. Many sleepless nights have I given them, in the middle of the deepest conversation, and they pass before me and carry me away with them like the “Holy Campaign” of their folklore, and I stop seeing those who are with me, and I don’t know how to keep on talking. They know the story [of the war], in a certain way. I have lived it from Portugal. It will take days and nights to tell you about it…
Noble and good Victoria: it’s true that whole novels are being circulated about you. From Mme. Duhamel I heard about an almost communist Victoria, sister of La Pasionaria – who’s Basque, don’t forget. And here, at a table in the PEN Club, I heard about a V.O. proud of her power and disdainful of the Brazilians. And in Paris, I heard you called a Turin-style fascist and surely you wouldn’t believe me foolish enough to believe any of the three legends. I try to understand you and I understand you two thirds of the way. I’m missing another third, Vict., and that one you owe me, in slow and patient explanation.

It’s possible, Vict., that I’ll go to Arg[entina] if I go to Chile. The signs, up to now are that I’ll go. That is to say, there’s a letter from the wife of my boss in Relaciones, in which she tells me I should go. If they order me to go, I will, at the risk of many things. I am – very much wounded by my people; but I’ve pardoned the Spaniards who insulted me, not like they have you, very, very much more, and it will not be unlikely that some day I may pardon my Chileans. Until today this hasn’t happened, Victoria; I’m a resentful Indian and a pigheaded Basque, the two things, my God, together!

But you are leaving to Europe and I run the danger of not seeing you. Tell me: is it possible to ask you to stay in Rio a few days? It’s the surest way of my speaking with you. When will you pass this way? I’m not thinking of staying in Brazil less than two months. The truth is that I would like to stay about six months. This country fascinates me and I want to know the provinces. But I don’t know anything about anything. They’ve received me very well, without convincing me that, in the long run, I won’t wind up with a policeman on the corner and with two or three spies in the hotel, like in my Portugal – beloved in spite of those things. Who knows anything for sure in these extraordinary times. For right now, tell me when you will pass this way. I’m not at all happy about going to Argentina and not finding you there. It isn’t that I intend to cause you any trouble over my personal needs, as I am wont to do, no, nothing of that sort. It’s just that your being there would give me a sense of tranquility and conversing with you for a few days would compensate me for tiredness and nuisance. Too much!

I’m already on page seven and haven’t spoken to you about my book and its Argentine edition. I sent a very detailed letter to G[uiller]mo de Torre, and I hope that he has read it all by now. It’s enough that I sent G[uiller]mo to send a second letter asking for a quick reply. I’m expecting it any day now.
See [Jacques] Maritain in Paris, Vict., and talk with him at length. He seems almost a saint, to me, and at any rate, a soul capable of saving, an extraordinary guide. He and his wife love you very much. They’ve realized it and they don’t deform it with silly admiration or hatred. What a relief and a pleasure to know that, ceaselessly, humanity produces these beings, and that they are within our reach for great crises. You, with your aversion to atheism, remember in your bad days, that that man is there, in France, and that your soul is very important to him.

I beg you to write down my address and not to write to me someplace else.

Hugging you with total loyalty and warmest appreciation, your Gabriela.

G.11 [the next three letters were written by Mistral to Ocampo while Mistral was Ocampo’s houseguest in Argentina; Ocampo often exchanged letters with her house guests this way]

[Mar del Plata. April 1938].

Dear Victoria,

I very much fear that your cough last night can be blamed on my smoking and the fatigue we gave you. (Fatigue can become a thousand things.) I humbly ask you to take that remedy of mine: there’s none better.

Don’t get out of bed, or stay in your room. Even if we don’t see you all day. The flu is more jealous than the most jealous ones…

So that you can rest, I’m not going to see you.

Yours

Gabriela.

Regards from Connie.

G.12

[Mar del Plata, Argentina. April 1938].

Dear Victoria:

I slept, not soundly all in a block, but I slept. And I awoke without knowing where I was, until the face of Victoria came to me, and the peaches and the figs arrived…
I am grateful that you love me a little. I need it. Perhaps with sleep it’s the only thing that I need.

If you are the same as yesterday then you’re not as well as yesterday. You should have woken up much better. Maybe I tired you yesterday. Don’t let me talk so much, and even less about Spain!

I’m going to see your trees and write some letters.
I want to read that thing by the Chileans whom Neruda is captaining.  
God keep you.
Gabr.

G.13
[Mar del Plata, Argentina. April 1938]

Dear Vict.:
The second set of proofs arrived. But a major part is missing. Will they come later or have they forgotten them?

Missing, in the “Nocturnos,” is the one dedicated to you, which shouldn’t go anywhere else but in the section of the “Nocturnos.” Wasn’t it already incorporated into the book? It’s the last Nocturno in the Section.

I’m going to the city. I may be late. I’ll see you at 4:30 or 5.

Gabr. 
[Written along left margin: I hug you without pins…]

G.18 [in this longish and remarkable letter Mistral responds to a request from Ocampo, that Mistral help Ocampo’s lover at the time, Mallea, with spiritual counsel; instead, Mistral responds with suggestions for Ocampo]

[Argentina. May 1938.]

Dear, very dear, so precious Victoria:
I thank you very much for your letter today, more than you could know. Almost tomorrow and I’ll be leaving and it’s very unlikely that I’ll see you again. If I return to Europe, I’ll be in places where I won’t be able to call you because it won’t be business-related; if to the U.S., it will be the same thing. And I was leaving in a sorrowful mood or manner (also Mallea, here) towards you. You had given me lots of confidence and none at all, Vict. You’re like family, and this without intimacy. Mallea kept floating in the air as the cause of your anxiety and like the knot that doesn’t let you ever have joy or break out, open and happy, in full-fledged laughter. I’m not a meddler, Vict., and I usually live with people without asking them to confide in me in a certain way and also being distant, avoiding it when they want to put things in my hands. But precisely the opposite occurs those whose salvation matters to me. (Go ahead and laugh if you want, at the word…). Your salvation, Vict., matters a lot, but in this case it’s liable to be additionally interwoven with the salvation of another. I was going to leave, putting you behind me like that horrible thing that’s called “an important literary relationship.” I exaggerate, by an octave, as always. Apart from your work, I’ve been interested in your soul, but you’ve given me no indication of coming to the heart of your problem or of even barely touching it with a pen.…Now, yes, I can do so, and I take the opportunity, excessively, maybe grossly (in the sense of abundance) because I’m leaving and it’s quite probable that I won’t see you again in this world.

I’m going to follow the order of your letter and answer you, point by point, before telling you what’s truly important for me to tell you.

1° You say that living without you must be as painful to Mallea as living with you. In the core of your being, where the truth springs up in a steady stream, you know (I lower by an octave, there) that that isn’t true. In suffering with what is esteemed and loved, suffering it from down there, badly, what is most painful, worse, what is most humbling, even, is to live, to live, and the rest, a neutral life that’s even soft for the others, is Death, one swallow after another, and what the saints call a bad death. You know (there, where one is aware, in that depth of one’s being) that Mallea – and you, you! – that the two of you are, better, you exist, you are, together, close, say what you may, including insults. Don't talk to me using language and expressions from outside, which the thinking senses give you. That’s nobody’s true speech.
2° Mallea is far-sighted when it comes to good fortune, and he can’t touch or feel it except in the form of a memory, regret and nostalgia. You also can know it that way, but what’s more, you can live the present, which exists for you.

The sick person and all imaginative people have this vice of oblique, indirect good fortune.

I don’t believe that he’d be capable of looking at good fortune and drinking it in, with his face in the bubbling fountain. And if he can’t, you have to strive after it with him – strive for it, live it, suffer it with Passion – until he learns that good fortune and accepts and lives it. You know better than I that the only one who’ll do this is a mother or a woman who loves a man, to whom his salvation matters. (Come and eat this word again, my lioness, but chew it well). No one bothered that I learn that and I have had to strive for it on my own and belatedly, and in this as in everything, to live by my own forces alone. Because I know that agony gives me strength, it’s important to me that it be taught to others.

3° That I can achieve, with Mallea, what you no longer can! You’re not speaking to a vain, silly woman (the two are one and the same). If you believe something like that, at least remember that I’m going away and that like you – with more certainty in your case – I won’t be seeing him again in this world. You are the only woman who can do it, you, not even his mother. But what’s more, you must do it or you’re going to eat the bitter fruit of remorse all your life. Make up your mind, and quickly, throwing aside the loose threads, the little nothings that cloud your view and are just that, foolish.

4° Coming between the two of you, you say, is what’s harsh, rough in you, and what’s dark, stubborn, underground, in him. When you – when anyone buys a piece of ground, they also buy, without thinking about it, the subsoil. The farmers never think about it or concern themselves with it, but they have it, there it is. And there are no lands without subsoil and even without abysses. You have them too, despite your precious frankness that I adore in you and this nature of yours, of air, sun, of marine gusts and enormous openness. You have them, undergrounds and abysses. Only you don’t live there, and maybe, as one does when walking along a mountainside, you turn your face to the side when you come across them.

I’m speaking, almost, of an unknown person – I haven’t finished his book yet – and it’s a little grotesque for me to embark on this adventure of defending him. One is born this way, with half of one’s body in a cave, my Vict., one arrives this way and it seems that one dies this way.
Take a look: I seem so frank, my whole body visible and open, like you. But I am Mallea too: ten sub-soils and the depths of the black-and-blue sea that use me or see me. Neither Mallea or I believe that we’re loved and we’re quite vain about being this way: I wish that we weren’t, for our own good and the good of others. Last night I spent two hours without writing letters or reading, completely submerged, body and all, in a tremendous cave, my own, the same as always, since I was seven years old. Coni came in late and I said nothing to her. What for? To what end? She’s very much a child and what’s more, she’s North American. But not you, and with Mallea you have the duty to accept that he lives on the normal plane – the road, the paving by the house – interspersed with his abysses, of tropical or Indian quivering, it’s all the same, perhaps with vertigo, and with darkness in any case. I would hope (I’m full of hope…) that he might’ve separated the two planes by now, and that he could live the forbidden and the somber one alone… giving you, as much as possible, his pure body and his normal and solar soul. Some day, I know it, a tremendous appetite will make you want him to give you the other one as well, and from then on you won’t want, not for anything in the world, to stay with just the Mallea who’s easy, flat, and pedestrian to live with…That moment would be so beautiful, our Vict. (his and mine).

5° Your arguments have wound up lasting – weeks later – a year. Horror and worse horror: one caused by stupidity, an infinite stupidity. There are no imbecilities like the ones that the most intelligent people cook up. It should shame the two of you, a vast, ample shame, a burning shame.

Suppose that one or the other of you were to die in this interval of silence and of separation. Wouldn’t the surviving one chew his or her fists in anger and sorrow, saying, a thousand times, idiot and what an idiot? And something like dying will happen to you. You’re going off, sailing off to beautiful Europe, without cutting this knot first, leaving the stupid conflict intact. And it can happen – may your guardian Angel not want it and prevent it – that you’ll gamble it all. That happens. One plays, one doesn’t play, so one thinks, one plays with the dice, putting one’s destiny out on the table of the air. Full of bile and fury and …with remorse – which seems like fire some times – and one plays … Then, as the priests say, and rightly, what follows is only the grinding of teeth, hell, plain and absolute.

Slim chance, worth the risk of going like that - with those degrees of frantic pain.
You may or may not know it, but you’re in pain, acute, strong pain. It courses through you and we hear it, even strangers hear it. And I don’t want you to live this way, because I care about you, and Mallea – the other example of self-negation – must feel the same way; I saw some words from him that carry a similar pulse of frenzy.

Listen, Vict. You waste a lot of patience with fools and rogues; more than you believe. And this patience, which is false, plus a hundred [illegible] like it, you should be capable of giving to Mallea. For the plain and simple reason that he is who he is and that you care for him. An unhappy and flea-ridden woman understands that, why don’t you understand it? The best part of ourselves – the broadest and loftiest, I repeat, the best – should go to what one loves. If patience is something heroic in you, on account of what it costs you, that arduous thing is owed to him; if humility – this is the great thing – humility is what’s most bleedable in you, that humility with blood and weeping floods, within you, is also owed to him.

There’s a little white stone, not from the beach but from the soil, from the poor soil, to which you have given scant attention and that perhaps you don’t like, on account of Niestche’s [sic] which perhaps they haven’t let you see well, which is stupid and divine and is called humility. I too – pardon the comparison – I, too, discovered it late, but for a little while now I’ve been traveling with it, carrying it in a little bit of a disk that has to grow in me – like the Japanese mushroom, that ugly thing, which cures….

It offers very curious things, the poor face of the soil: in the long run it offers a fulfilling sweetness, a separate happiness, a joy unleashed by the tears of coming where it comes from and of being so strange, so secret, this – delight, so very… - pardon the word - supernatural.

You are living a kind of Satanism: you’re capable of that humility with the servants in your house, with children, with animals, and yet you don’t want to live it with this man, precisely because it’s him, for being himself. You’ll see that it pains me to have you understand this, but you’ll also see how clearly and well I understand it. It would be better if I didn’t comprehend it, as happens to me with so many things!

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At this point I went to lunch, and you know what was said.

I’ve thought over some convictions and you’ve left me in doubt about some points. But I’m going to continue answering the letter.
6° You say that you don’t want dealings with him to continue slowly roasting you like Guatimogin [Cuactemoc]. But what’s absurd is that without him you’re burning yourself up and I don’t believe it’s a slow burn. In these matters, I put it brutally, because it’s better, the only solution is to stop loving, but since it isn’t the case that you’ve stopped loving him even a pinch less, and perhaps you love him even more than before, the only remedy (and how the word will strike you!) is to accept reality. And this is total sacrifice – fear it or laugh at it – the same as Indian women and poor little Oriental women.

If Mallea is that very difficult man, that algebra from another planet, that Theology which is more Alexandrine than Roman, that spiny sea urchin and shimmering mother of pearl and that snail, hidden away or big as a bull, and that secret doctrine, then there’s nothing to be done except…devote your life to him, sparing no effort, until you conquer him, in the ineffable conquering that would be giving in, ultimately surrendering himself for his own good; finally trusting and not fearing anything any more. Adopting a stable manner of being and no longer clouding his sight with fickleness! Knowing himself loved, if he hasn’t already realized that, foolish man! And with this, finding happiness from head to toe, happy with all his might, fearlessly happy, happy without a barometer and without a calendar in hand. The rest would follow from this. It strikes me that this might be the answer to everything: the fact that you aren’t happy and can’t be is partly due to him but also– don’t deny it – due to your pride. Because when it comes to affection you experience something like what happens in your writing: you’re a woman of passion who doesn’t want to let it out, either because you think passion shouldn’t be expressed on paper or because you prefer famous ideas to passions. It could be that Mallea recognizes in you the snare that your readers have encountered: that you cheat them of the best of yourself and then some. What for? I don’t know. It can’t be stinginess; you are as generous as the uncontrolled Amazon River. Is it fear? And why do believe that the Great Dealer gave you, precisely, passion? To put it away in canning jars? Or to perform with it the likewise satanic operation of transforming it into coldness and into “an ordered revolving of eternal stars,”68 when in fact you’re not a firmament but just a creature.

And you’re going to grow old, if this is the case, and since passion doesn’t dry up in women before the bone marrow dries up, you, in years to come, with the burning oven in your hands, will give it to some macaw that they’ll bring you from Ceylon or to some microscopic
monkey from Brazil or to… theory number 2000 of an English suffragette concerning human happiness.

7° “Moi, Pur sang” And I knew it ever since I saw you in Madrid and now, every time that I’ve heard or seen you. You are such an exemplary type, the crowning example of your caste and such a stellar person, that for this very reason your egregious suicide is angering (health commands and desperation sits upon it), your wasting yourself is enraging, the full-scale burning of your noblest oil only to serve what, on the face of it, you didn’t want to call arrogant pride and you settled for calling dignity. Here I repeat to you that a vocabulary of this sort (imbecilic whether it’s dignity, self-love, scruples) is a language to use in speaking with outsiders, with all of those who come to your doorway but that no one with any knowledge of life uses with those who are close to them, with their own, with the same breath and the same pulse in their wrists, so to speak. You use this language with Mallea. Still! And if he’s heard you say it, then he’s right to have broken it into bits that you now must join together like the little metal rods of a Swiss watch, until it runs again.

8° And there you also say that if you weren’t yourself you would have had patience always and sweetness always. And why don’t you have them? And what does it matter to you, this business of not being yourself? Or is it that you can’t stop being yourself? My Vict., all women at some point could perform this monstrous turn-around, this almost deadly, gut-deep upheaval. When they wanted to. But as crazy women. One loves God, a man, a child, a vice, in this way, and one shouldn’t love in any other way. The rest doesn’t count. The rest, which doesn’t suffice, which doesn’t reach this scalding-point, can go to the garbage-heap or serve to scour basins: half-hearted affection, half-hearted pity, half-hearted sacrifice, life dished out in cubes or by the teaspoon like my [blood pressure medicine].

9° You’re bored or weighed down, you say, by “good people.” I’m not one of them and I don’t what you’re referring to. It’s not by way of being good that one does the above-noted; as you know very well, there’s no merit in loving, there’s no virtue in it, no plan, how could there be, good God! One doesn’t make it, just as one doesn’t make summer or the South. It only comes by way of taking no short cuts with dams of limestone and machinery and perverse will and education and I don’t know what other nonsense, plus life’s high tide, loving on a large scale, the swelling of powers, rising to one’s destiny as at one’s noon. You need do no more than not stand in your own way, not ruin this seasoning of the soul that you should complete and from
which, in a chain of consequences, the rest will follow. I really fear, Vict., that despite your being the patron of the natural that I’ve imagined with respect to all women, and being the tiger that a wise man says you are and the ceiba tree that a foolish woman has called you, with all this, you, whether on account of venom, poison, and intellectual drug, you may be the one who diminishes your treasure or closes internal reservoirs, or perhaps you’re not yet capable of sloughing off, like a snake’s old skin, the rotten parts of that class upbringing, that education you were given (when it comes to upbringing I’ve always believed that even a good one was really bad).

10° It’s beautiful that you confess that your conscience is uneasy. Y per cause! And you won’t rest easy, either, not until you save the soul from which you may hang and depend. Even if it only means saving him from himself, and with more reason if he has no enemies except for within himself. Why should you want anything other than to make a man happy, a man to whom you gave happiness and who taught you to receive happiness from his hand? All the rest will mature in him, for you, because of him, with him, by way of him. Look: I believe that this interruption of ten to twelve months has been sterile for you, including your writing, conversation, everything.

11° It’s natural that he wouldn’t agree to take Sur and lose you. You want to exact a Mongolian torture: to walk in your footsteps, breathe in your air, and touch you in your walls.

12° And now comes the most senseless part of the whole letter. It turns out that I could do Mallea some good, and I could do this …with my poetry and with my conversation! The ingenuousness, the dotage by which you know me, don’t take me that far. My Victoria, I’m not a vain woman. I know what my possibilities are, what I’m capable of, what I can give, what I can achieve in human beings. Mallea is a profound soul; it’s not a matter of my not achieving anything – I can’t even attempt it – to convince him, with regard to Sur: he knows that he should leave if you flee the business, tossing it into his hands. With regard to spiritual resources that I might give him, I need them, I lack them myself. A small group of beings lives off of me. They are children or old women. I’m of no use for more than that.

Save him yourself, my Vict., a man of that value and category who’s worth all of it. Continue what you began! My God, you have enough to feed the soul of peoples, you are tremendously rich! You can do whatever you might want with whatever place – physical or
moral – where you alight or lend. But settle in, stay, don’t travel, don’t be capricious, don’t wear yourself out, don’t deny yourself, don’t give up.

Pardon your Gabriela for bringing you harshness and sourness. The others don’t give it to you. I have to give it to you. It’s a sad charge.

G.

G.21

[June 1938. Santiago, Chile]\(^{74}\)

Dear Vict.:

Last night the lovely Laureano Rodrigo, manager of Ercilla [publishing house] came to the house,... He came to speak to me about Desolación, but we talked about nothing but Chilean editions, from 9 to 1 - 1 in the morning. I want to send you some information in the rough, Votoya, because I’m going to forget it. Rodrigo says that he has written you five letters proposing to defend Sur’s rights here, to list Sur’s books in the National Library etc. and that he has never received a reply from you. He swears that he never attacked you, because he’s an Argentine and a nobleman (!), the child of a Spaniard! You might add this colossal news: that all or almost all the books stolen from Sur are done by Letras and that Letras is a trio made up of Amanda Labarca, her husband, and a Sr. Urzúa, a third party. He knew nothing. And I imagine that My President won’t follow through with his word, to me, hurting the little business of his ex-girlfriend.

Rodrigo says – he began with saying – that he had been the biggest pirate of books ever seen, but that now he’s the only one who pays author’s rights; according to him, 30,000 francs go to France alone, each month. He says he hasn’t done you any injury, apart from getting in ahead of you, to get L’Espoir from Malraux when you were going to publish it. He insisted on this a lot, really, the hapless man – he doesn’t understand how you didn’t see, from the beginning of his deed, his plan: to pirate, left and right, in order to create an American publishing business. 75 He came, bringing me real propaganda about my being an Indianist, an American racist, a folklorist, etc. Poor Mistral had to set herself up as a promoter of Europeans….
He says he has a corps of lawyers to defend himself from the other publishers, *Letras*. The wolves, devouring one another!

Now this news from Don Carlos Errázuriz. (Keep it to yourself.) Ross, the one in charge – sure to become Pres. – will kill off *Ercilla* [publishers] because it’s a political enterprise (the latter is the pure truth). It’s pro-Ibañez and promotes communism...

Votoya, in Vicuña I left off on page 14 of your defense; there’s that much still lacking. Here, I continue under the deluge of people. This will last until I get out of here. It’s a real horror.

The beginning of a letter for you is going off, done some twenty days ago.
- I live, *encore*!76 at your beck and call. We live.

Gabriela

[Added in top margin, p. 1, hand of GM] P.S. The 600 pesos are a payment on my book account (Tala). Coni needs the final bill. She is writing to [Carlitos] Reyles today.
Carissima Votoya,

It seems appropriate to begin with a word in Italian, since they’re so in vogue with you, thanks to the ineffable suitor. Just what we needed, now, was for you to stir things up for us with a son of beautiful and shameless Italy. (I’ll write this whole letter in the language of the Valley of Elqui, with rude words, concrete and hot). Just what we needed, compared to so many beautiful things seen strolling about America. But, tired and all, falling down and all, I’d show up, wherever you were, to throw a bucket of boiling bleach at you, to get you out of Italy, even from Florence, in a big hurry, as in a protest demonstration. – I’ve heard you - the defenses, the declarations of cold and snow, the near-Nirvana of freedom in which your soul finds itself, etc. But what you don’t say is that you’ve flirted to your heart’s content. The best that remains in the Italians, after the scabby crust which the Duce has formed on their skin, the best, which is a pathetic bit of goodness once the false has been expurgated, which creates a horizon for them, can be found in a certain person in your Argentina whom you continue to kill from far away, with Italian stabbing... You won’t recover, over there, in Mother Rome, what you have crazily and craftily wasted in Plata. You like to make them go crazy, you like the spectacle, even when after a few weeks it becomes boring for you. You turn on your heels, then, and leave, with what your French people call a mountain of images, like a coquette’s tattoos that you carry away to look at again among the sand dunes of Mar del Plata, laughing by yourself, cleaning the salt from your lips, salt from the sea and the other kind.

Your letter has been wandering through the South of the United States. It finally reached me in Atlanta. Because I left St. Augustine some time ago, I went to N. Orleans, which struck me as the most tasteless city that I’ve seen, a sub-Marseilles with horrible streets, drives, and clothes. The people sweet, nigrified without knowing it. Of France, they’ve retained nothing but dirtiness. Oh, yes; and Catholicism. And it makes me think, the fact that they have totally lost the language and that the religion has remained. It’s something to meditate about, for a while. From there I went to Atlanta, in order to see a prisoner from Puerto Rico, they say, the leader of the nationalists - but it wasn’t to do that, although it would have been a great, sweet thing to see
the holy man, whom they have in the maximum security prison with hardened criminals maybe because he’s the best man and the only man of that little island. I wanted to see Atlanta, because, if I must return from Europe to here, it could well be to this point, where hot and arid Florida ends and the Yankee kingdom doesn’t fully begin yet.

Thank God that you decided to write. You had to ask me about that thing with Spanish children and you picked up your pen, which is always there for foreigners, but not your own people. Bad girl, spoiled little criolla, HOPELESSLY petulant, rebellious child. (There isn’t a dictionary of the Valle de Elqui yet, and there, these words have a sugar that sweetens them and makes them delicious, giving them a honey that you couldn’t get from this letter). I have to accept something of what’s said about your snobbery. You throw away what you know, and above all what is, what’s certain, and weighty, what’s to see and to touch; and you go off – and here there’s a pinch of sentimentality – with the vague and the alien, with foggy heartthrobs and with boyfriends made of willow charcoal who come apart in your hands. Because it seems like a year now that I’ve had no news from you, although Connie has asked you in various tones; I’ve wound up pleading for your address from the happy mortals who know it. Stay in Europe until it gives you hiccups, until you’re full of it and you can’t take it anymore. That way, on the next trip, you won’t have to see the Arc de Triomphe again and the Pontevecchio and the streets of London, and your wicked hand will grab a card in order to write. I’m not asking for leagues-long letters, which I can’t write anymore myself. I’m asking that you, occasionally, send a postcard so that we know that you’re well, something of your spirits, and where you are. To know where you are, in order to think about you, Votoya, and not spend our thoughts on sniffing you out, like dogs do, in order to locate you, you great big little rascal, lazy-bones Patagonian ñandú-ostrich.

I will not have time to write you as much as I want to, or even to send you all the reprehension that I have in my heart for you, the dense rages that I have developed towards you, in these months. Let’s go to the matter of the book. In Chile, the Basque community, which is very fearful of the local atmosphere, didn’t want me to sell the book in the Plaza: it asked for two hundred copies, promising to sell them. It struck me as possible, because the bookstores and publishers, except for the Catholic ones, haven’t put Tala in their display cases, on account of the anger they have towards me; and the Basques promised to put it in an unhappy little window of their shop. The book is something like a mangy dog in my beautiful Santiago. Anyone who I received it from you, from Sur, keeps it to themselves. Without trusting too much to the Basques,
I delegated doña Carmela Errázuriz, the wife of my boss, to collect the money when the time came. But then came the avalanche of water, the flood, Votoya: the triumph of the F. P. [Popular Front] and the defeat of the... family names, in Chile. Since then Doña Carmela, her husband and I have exchanged nothing but letters with local gossip. Then came the earthquake. And between these things, there’s been the discussion about whether I might go to Central America (Aguirre’s idea, after the one about Uruguay), or whether I might go where my boss promised to send me and had me named, to Nice, to the France of naughty, horrible Votoya. It’s been a mere week that I’ve known that they’re letting me go there, and I know, to my soul’s relief, that they’re not going to throw Errázuriz out of the Ministry [the Foreign Service] on me, that they’re leaving him in his job. Without him, I’d have the savage followers of Amanda [Labarca Hubertson] on top of me, now in their glory, because of the victory of the Popular Front and they’ve become emboldened, not like lionesses, but like mountain goats. Until yesterday, with my tickets in hand, I knew that I’d go on the 4th. But last night the newspapers – spoke of Roos[evelt’s] trip to the Caribbean, which was cancelled because of the crisis in your Europe. Pardon the idiotic digression: I have learned nothing about the sale of those books, or the other ones, that I left in La Serena. Now Connie has written, trying to collect once and for all. I have CONSUMED 86 books; their earnings, in the event that I don’t leave on the 4th, will go from here to you, and if you go to England, to the other Vic. I hadn’t thought, again, about this as an urgent thing, because I’ve believed, until seeing in the United States the newsreels in the movies, that the Spanish Republican government, which still has millions in the till, wouldn’t allow those poor little ones to leave in rags and half-starved - for France, saving, that way, the money to buy weapons that no one wants to sell them. And, as I told you in Arg[entina], until a very short time ago I intended that our money, Votoya, would go to one of those orphanages that would remain, in a stable form, within the Basque country or in Cataluña. Palma, incredibly, never talks to me about that war into which she’s put her soul. Until I gave her a strong reprimand last month, and she’s begun telling me the kinds of things that don’t appear in the press. Horrible, all that, horrible! In the same post that brought me your letter there were others from Spanish friends, professors, who have left for Provence and Paris. Reading them makes my head spin. I always believe that I’m touching the bottom of the Spanish nightmare, but – deeper dregs always remain. You’ve seen the big, comfortable ones, the impeccable Ortegas, the Barojas in carpet-slippers, the Marañones, midwives to the princess. But there’s another portion of emigrants.
Just to mention one, there’s José Carner, the Catalan, of whom Palma has written, asking you, on his behalf, to publish in Sur. Carner is one of the three great poets of Cataluña. In a love-suicide pact of feverish patriotism, he’s only written poetry in Catalan, and you can’t know the marvels that have come from him. But Carner is, what’s more, a magnificent writer of Spanish prose, overshadowed by the Castilian fury towards anything Catalan. He’s a living classic, a man who seems to have left Rome and come directly to us, a total Latin, full of Roman-style wisdom and writing in a language that is living Latin. (He could translate Latin classics for Sur.) I hope that you can do something for him. I hope that you can get to know him. He works with Vic.[Kent] in the Embassy in Paris, where he’s a Minister. I would like you to see him, because I know that you would enjoy this man of totally unimprovised nobility, who’s a Mediterranean classic, so natural, unassuming and simple.

If there’s no war, Votoya, I’ll sail out on the 4th. I’d arrive there on the 10th, by way of Cannes or Nice. If you’ve left Paris, I’ll send the money to Vic[toria Kent]. I’m not doing it today, because they’ve left me with just the money for my trip. I’m talking about what I owe you. The rest, they’ll remit from Chile, delayed, because we live where the Devil is always trying to pull a fast one. What they haven’t sold in Chile I’ll have returned to me, in France, and I’ll take care of it.

I beg your pardon for this neglect of our things, Votoya; when I’m on the road, I do nothing but that road, moving about, acting stupid, hearing people and talking like a phonograph. A walking charlatan, that’s what my Chileans are making of me. I’ve neglected my other affairs in the same way, all except my poetry (or verses) which I continue writing when I find some peace.

I was telling you that the news that I now have from Spanish emigration, by way of the Pyrenees, has changed my plans. It’s necessary to help those unfortunate wandering children, which France rejects and doesn’t reject in turn, in its customary way. It wants their fathers as soldiers for the upcoming War, and it makes faces about taking the women and children. Last night I wrote to one of the Republican leaders and I asked him whether they might be thinking of doing something stable and worthy with the millions still available for the families repudiated by France and Spain, but who could be accommodated in France if our idealistic Mother [Europe] were paid for their food, shelter, water, etc. If some such thing were to be done, you and Vic[toria Kent] could buy – or have bought – a dormitory for those creatures in one of the
settlements. Because Franco, the Vatican’s pet, has made Spain a wandering Jew, who isn’t accepted in America either, because Franco doesn’t want that; he’s created a kind of medieval procession of lepers, parallel to the Hebrew one, but without the money that even the unhappiest Jew carries under this squalid, poor flesh of ours. Votoya, it brings tears to my eyes, although they’re too dry for tears to fall.

You’ll ask why I’m going to France, since I speak so badly of it. There are but two countries in the world left to me that aren’t fascist, my Votoya: this gringo one [the US] and that one. I love the French in the only way possible to love them at this moment, after the Spanish War: with anger, anger at their avarice, that has risen from their hand to their heart, and from the latter, to the last breath of their soul, a nameless thing. On account of their avarice, for money and for blood, they’ve sacrificed Spain, believing to save themselves, as if there weren’t a God looking at them and who’s going to make them pay for this wicked BUSINESS, this shame. I’m also going there to be near Palma. She’s my only family in this world, since I can’t move my sister out of Chile any longer. I found her exhausted, devoured, and dead, with her goodness the only bright thing in her, halfway between a saint and a ghost. My poor little one! And I’m also going because there I can concern myself with the Institute for International Cooperation, at the very least. That Consulate doesn’t have work, it exists in name only. I haven’t accepted the POLITICAL posts that they’ve offered me, and I had to indicate something I’d do there.

Errázuriz believes that as long as Ibañez doesn’t come to power, I’ll be left in peace there... He never thinks about the European war. Another arrangement was possible for me, which he proposed: to stay in Florida, overseeing a permanent mission of conferences for the Caribbean. I’ve worn myself out, Votoya; I’m tremendously tired, and those little animals that I caught in Ecuador, amoebas and other... plants. - Connie goes with me. As long as Palma continues in Geneva, I would be alone and you already know that I’m not able to do anything, that I can’t manage on my own. She, the Yankee, is charitable. She’s like that with me; she has a profound, tender affection towards you, which you return by not keeping in touch with her all year…

We often think about you, Votoya. We almost live you. In each lovely place, we say how good it would be to have you there. Facing each explosion of organdy, of the Pacific, we laugh at the same thought: yours. We’re carrying you so enmeshed in our lives that we don’t understand how your soul can be so calloused as to not know and feel this: that two creatures are always walking along and calling on you.
I’ll rest, now, in order to tell you things about *Sur*. You did badly in putting the three poems from Chile, there. It’s necessary that you UNDERSTAND and believe what I tell you: you should have chosen one of the three.

A wide, lovely hug from your

Gabriela.

P.S. Don’t concern yourself with speaking and writing about your friend from Elqui. Don’t rest. Later. A thousand thanks for having sought out Palma and my Y[in]Y[in]. I want you to love them for me.

[Note in hand of C. Saleva, reverse of final page] Lovely Vic. – I hope to see you quite soon. What am I going to say to you, for having forgotten us so much, all this time! I love you always, your Connie.

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G.30

[Niteroi, Brazil.] 19 May [1940?]88

Oft-remembered Votoya,

You’ll say that I only write you about somebody. That may be the case, but we’re always thinking about you, no exaggeration, every day. Your manuscript – what you’re writing – has not arrived. Get to work, since that’s the only salvation in this moment of desperation, of sobbing aloud.89 The Holy Spirit, whose celebration was yesterday,90 won’t pardon you for slacking off, for deserting your gifts, for your *criolla* laziness.

Look, I’m very worried about Victoria Kent.91 I doubt that the address that I have for her is still valid. Today, the press is saying that the French government has told emigrants or refugees that they should leave as soon as possible. I imagine how: in Nice I saw things that would shame any human being. It’s very well that they seek out and punish traitors, but their own should come forward: they are the most and the least unpardonable ones.

Give thought, Votoya, to what you can do for her, for the one who shares your name. The Spaniards always think that they’re going to finish off or save the world. I told her, over and over, that she should come here. She paid no attention to me. She was in a heroic frame of mind, as she was in Spain, but it is grotesque for her to feel that way in France, where foreigners are
pushed by the waist towards the sea, every day, to make them leave. Palma [Guillén] is another story. The Mexicans believe that they are adept at escaping from everything, because they’ve escaped from the guerrillas... She stayed too. God reward you for whatever word of yours you manage to get to Victoria. Maruja Mallo may know someone in Paris capable of looking for her in the horrible confusion that’s coming, Votoya.

I’ve had some days of sheer ecstasy in this house, of being overwhelmed with euphoria, with my two vegetal walls of dense mountain on each side. I’ve wondered to myself, with a burning cry in my throat, what was I doing for fourteen years in Europe! Then, Votoya, came the business with Holland, with Belgium, and with France, and tempers are on edge now, hot and furious.92 The Furies are about, in the air.

Have you read those tacky verses from one of our classic writers, beginning with that thing about “Virgen del mundo, America inocente?” [“Virgin of the world, innocent America”] Yes, innocents, in the popular sense, not in the theological one, that we are only in part; the other part is formed by the fifth column,93 in each one of our towns, and there’s another that barely counts as a part, made up of lucid people who see and shiver, not from fright, from horror. A few hundred Yankee-influenced fools have convinced our people that It won’t happen here, that the ocean is very wide. But it’s coming, clearly, it’s coming. Now we’re going to see if the outsiders in our lands will fight for us and with us, if they don’t jump to the fifth column, which is their natural site.

I read your words in the beginning of the issue of Sur dedicated to France.94 I was moved by the attitude, very much yours, Votoya, that is, very much Minerva. The issue is excellent. But England deserved to be recognized first, because England was the only one that was fighting then,95 the one that knew from the beginning that it should fight, for it had declared war. If you do an English issue, I’ll send you something for it, without fail.

I haven’t sent you verses, although there are plenty, because I’ve corrected nothing, except a poem for Finland that I distributed among all our countries.96 I didn’t send it to you, because it was important to me that it go out to the masses, so that the communists would get what they deserve. When I finish setting up the house – I still haven’t unpacked my books – and setting up the office in Niteroi and get out of this burning, dry state of mind I’ll somewhat correct it, to send to you. Thanks very much.
Cantilo understands what we are living through, what others are living, what’s happening, what the fools don’t see. That makes me feel happy, strong. May God protect him.

Susana [Larguía] passed by here. We were with her just one night, that’s all. Over there, she could be caught in the war. Here, the gringos – the Yankees – say the same thing as people were saying in Nice: that they won’t let England become a meal for the savage beasts. Things go so quickly – everything becomes vertical, time and events – that it won’t take very long.

Susana spoke to me about a long letter from María Rosa for me. It hasn’t come, Votoya. Tell me through M.R., if you receive these lines; it’s very important to me that they get to you. And if there’s some response from V. Kent, let me know that, too. You’re incapable of sending me two lines, quickly.

Have Sur sent to me here. My house address is this and you don’t have to write me at the office: Av.de Tijuca, 1505, Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro. We live on one of the highest hills of the city, on the side of Corcovado.

They’ve told me that you’re sad on account of the failed publishing business. I don’t know if it’s Susana who told me about how poorly that that business went. You and I have strived to defend the Jews and both of us have encountered some types who make people ask: But is it true? It pains me that they’ve treated you badly and that you’ve signed over an enterprise of that character and prestige, and at a time for the world in which it was so necessary, more than ever. But don’t be upset. The day that you find the person who can properly manage book distribution for you, doing it as it should be done, you’ll be able to do it again.

I sent you a message with Alonso and with Torre, in which I beg you not to see a veiled petition. I believed that I ought to consult with you before disposing of Tala and the other books that I offered you in France. Now I know what’s happened. It was a matter of duty and affection, for me, to get your permission.

Write what’s yours; loosen yourself up, don’t polish too much, dare to be American. Remember Sarmiento, Guiraldes, the others. Forget about culture, it’s already a bad word. Toss it out and write, forgetting what you know and what’s foreign to your blood; write with total disregard for whatever comes from your brains, rather than from your blood….

A hug from Connie and me. She’s very displeased with you. She’s more than right. Yin Yin also chimes in and sends you a kiss, from his pure little mouth, not nazi and not fascist, almost American, it’s so clean.
19 May. Your faithful

Gabriela

P.S. – I don’t believe I’ll move from here unless they throw me out. Nor is there a matter of traveling.\textsuperscript{100}

\textbf{G.31}

[Niteroi, Brazil. July 1940.]\textsuperscript{101}

Votoya,

I write you quickly: to give you news. An Argentine professor, Silvio Julio Iglesias, a friend of G[onzález] Lanuza, gave a lecture here about modern Argentine literature.\textsuperscript{102} He’s the professor in that field at the Central University of Brazil, a little resentful of \textit{Sur}, according to what I saw in a conversation that we had beforehand, because he writes verses and criticism and it seems that he feels left out of that coveted house…. He did quite well. He divided the lecture into genres and in speaking about essayists, he cited you first, with lively praise. It’s the first time that your people praise you in front of me and I liked that very much and it made Connie happy.

I believe that the Russian friend you sent to me has probably told you about a long conversation I had with the Venezuelan Ambassador in Rio, about your Emily Bronte biography. He’s an educated old man, a kind of minor Spanish nobleman with a tinge of the hacienda owner, but not cattlemen-crude. He’s married to a Brazilian who follows Hitler, but is intelligent, can you imagine. He seems more enamored of you than of his wife, although she’s beautiful as well. He said the same as I did, in I-don’t-know-what letter, about your biography, and about how much life experience is felt in it. When you come to Rio – some time you’ll come – we’ll go see him, because it’s worth it.

\textsuperscript{An issue of \textit{Sur} arrived with two things of yours and that long and mature article translated from French, dense with culture and \textit{sagesse}.\textsuperscript{103} Need I tell you that it hurts me that you speak about the people of Paris as if they were your own, Corn Goddess.\textsuperscript{104} It’s very true, what you say about European interference in America, that it’s going to increase; keep your eyes on it, and you’ll see it grow.}
Our Russian friend is off; I still don’t know whether to Argentina and Chile, or to the Caribbean. I’m very grateful to you for having made me see that show. I wouldn’t have gone without your advice, because I live very far from downtown, lovely and naughty Votoya. I’ve given him some letters. I went to the mountains to get rid of some flu, and I couldn’t attend to him here, although I’ve managed to give him some help in the lands where he’s going. He’s a fine person.

I’ve made four significant efforts to see what women and Latin American writers can do TOGETHER with what’s about to happen to us; three of them with your country. Listen, it’s the same as always: each one believes that they’ll escape on their own; each one looks at the map to see the size of the group that they’re talking about creating… The Spanish anarchists have done us in with their blood. When someone does agree to create a group, it’s someone with some Basque ancestry; watch, when this happens, and you’ll see.

H[enri] Focillon, whom I admire and have liked for years, said some insightful things about you. The French are late in getting started; they’re lost for a while. They have to speak Spanish if they’re going to work at the grass-roots level, as they would like, now, with our peoples. Usually they don’t learn any language very well. It’s a good thing that he’s at Yale telling the Yankees the truth about many things. And the mission that he’s on is well-planned.

Here, every night, we pray for England using a precious French Psalter that I’d like you to read.

It makes me happy, I can’t tell you how very happy, that you’re there, being the godmother of our liberty; but I need to know that apart from this you’re writing inspired things like the one about E[mily] B[ronte], which is your only writing where you reveal some of your enormous roots, so covered up by the foreignness that buries them so deep.

I wrote to V[ictoria] Kent by way of Palma [Guillén]. Palma tells me that she still hasn’t managed to contact any of the Spanish refugees to whom she writes, because of the war, the occupation. Poor people! But Mexico has done this marvelous thing of declaring them Mexicans and notifying the Germans.

I send you a big hug and my desire to talk with you ten days and ten nights, when it occurs to you to come visit. Tender regards from Connie – that’s how it’s written here…. Gabriela.
Fondest *saudades* to you – I’ll write you soon.

G.40

[Petropolis,] Brazil. [mid-May 1943.]

Dear Vic,

I’ve just received an extremely detailed letter about the German invasion of the Mexican Legation in Vichy [France]. That’s how I know that all the Spanish refugees there were taken prisoner. My last news about Victoria Kent was this: more than a year ago, I learned that she was there and what she needed was for nobody to bother her in her refuge. You may remember that for lack of credible information, I made the mistake of encouraging a series of Yankee women’s groups to act in her favor. Then I left her in peace and I haven’t heard a word more from her. It’s very probable that she didn’t stay there this long. But now I begin to think: with the blessed foolishness of innocent people, who still hope for some morality from people who don’t have it, she could’ve stayed in the Mexican Legation up to now. And I’ve thought that maybe you know something about her that could calm me. You know that only your government and mine can do something for those unhappy Spaniards; the remaining unfortunate American countries lack the good grace to do so.

I deeply appreciated your telegram about the action on behalf of Nicolau D’Olwer. I sent you details about him with a French friend. I beg you to tell me, in a quick note, if you receive that letter, which should reach you in two weeks, at most. This request corresponds to the fact that, as you know, I never know whether or not my letters arrive and at least half of my correspondence suffers the fate that you’re familiar with, through the work of a fascist trio that, up to the present, I’ve decided not to denounce to the Chancellery in Rio, because I feel sorry for the children of one of these villains.

My letter was intended to give you details about the career of the Spanish humanist for whom you’ve taken active steps, in a true act of faith in me, in your concern for him and championing him while knowing almost nothing. For you, I’m adding the following to that information. A year ago, when I first to action so that he could leave jail with provisional liberty - (an action directed towards Vichy, which had imprisoned him at the request of the Spanish government), I learned about the total iniquity of Madrid with regard to its compatriots in trouble. The Peruvian Minister, Garcia Calderon received from the Vichy Government the
declaration that Spain was accusing him of not accounting for the money from the Bank of Spain that had been in his charge. I sent this to Nicolau, and I learned that said funds were set aside to give to the Spanish refugees from the Pyrenees – some hundred thousand – a minimal assistance of food and clothing, until the end of the war and that by resolution of the Republican Governmental Junta, to whom the money belonged, he could not declare the location of that money. Only now do I know that they were in the Mexican Legation, because the press has said so. There were some twenty million francs, grabbed by the Germans, on account of which all those poor people are left without food and will have to do forced labor, maybe in Germany.\textsuperscript{112}

Nicolau has been named Legal Consultant in the Mexican Legation in Vichy. It seems that he was found there the day the Germans sacked it, the same day as they also invaded the Brazilian Embassy.

Nicolau was, at the end of the [Spanish] Civil War, Director of the Bank of Spain, a post that Azaña begged him to accept, because of his profound faith in him. He defended the funds deposited there, not just Franco’s funds, but the French funds too. A French Minister of Relations called him to his office to tell him that he would guarantee the custody of the Republic’s funds if he had handed over that astronomical sum. He refused and on leaving the palace he knew that they wouldn’t let him leave France ever again. He lived in Paris, at first, then in a village near Vichy, in a refugee’s and philosopher’s poverty, and his sister likewise. When I came here, I left him my scanty furniture, because I saw the bareness of the two rooms that these people were occupying, people who had been great señores in Cataluña. The rest of his life was in the letter that they will be bringing to you.

Again, a thousand, thousand thanks for what you’ve done for him. I owe to him, Votoya, much of my passion for the classics and considerable advice about philology (he did the Catalan Dictionary with Pompeu Fabra\textsuperscript{113} and since Catalan and Provencal are close twins, I have often sought from him the words that I doubted in Provenzal poetry).\textsuperscript{114}

I believe I told you, but I’m not certain, that my eyesight has gone down by more than a third on account of an old kidney infection that has become more acute. That’s why I’ve neglected my correspondence. My eyes are clear some three or five days after each treatment; then, the darkness comes, until the new treatment. They say that it would be better to take out the kidney, but I don’t have faith in the local doctors and I can’t go to the U.S. yet. Understand, in this way, the few letters.
Tell me how they responded to your efforts, to orient me about what remains to be done.

Yin is very weak on account of his terrific growth, and I have let him stay with me in order to give him some months of overfeeding. Connie always thinks of you. And I give you a hug, amid the inferno [added, in pen: that the newspapers bring] and the day that your France has been bathed of its misery with the business of Toulon, content with your contentment, which is mine as well and is, like yours, marked with mourning for so many dead.

Gabriela.

1 Letterhead: none. 1 p. pen, hand of GM. LC/OAS. This letter was probably written as GM passed through Buenos Aires on her way to Europe. On GM’s travel at various dates in the 1920s, see Gazarian-Gautier, Rubio, and Samatán.

2 Letterhead: SOCIÉTÉ DES NATIONS - LEAGUE OF NATIONS. Envelope postmarked: March 22, 1929, Paris “Ste. ANNE” and addressed, hand of GM: “Diplomatique” to Mme. Victoria Ocampo, 40, rue d’Artois, Paris. 3 pp. pen, hand of GM. LC/OAS. GM worked for the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, within the League of Nations, from 1926 until the League was disbanded in 1939. Following WW II, the Institute was replaced by UNESCO within the United Nations. A number of GM’s letters mention her work in the Institute, such as arranging the publication of Latin American literature in Europe, and speaking at a conference on the future of literature following the Spanish Civil War.

3 GM was leaving for either Southern France (Bedarrides, Provence) or Northern Italy (Cavi, near Genoa). She spent much time in both places, from 1927 until moving to Spain in 1933.

4 María de Maeztu (1882-1948), Basque/Spanish writer, feminist, founder and director of the Residencia de Señoritas in Madrid. GM met María de Maeztu during her first visit to Madrid, in 1924; GM stayed at the Residencia when she attended a women’s conference in autumn of 1928. María de Maeztu arranged for VO and GM to first meet one another. The meeting took place in Madrid. While the year of that meeting is uncertain (see notes to letter G3), it seems to have been in December of 1934.

5 The signature, “Gabrielamistral” run together as a single word, is typical of GM prior to 1930.

6 Letterhead: none. 8 pp. pen, hand of GM. LC/OAS. The context suggests that VO and GM first met towards the end of 1934 or in the first days of 1935. In this letter, immediately following a meeting, GM requests a picture of VO; GM dated this letter “9 January.” In the following letter, which GM dated 14 May 1935, GM thanks VO for having sent a picture of herself. Although VO’s essay, “GM en sus cartas” (69-70)(GM in her Letters) describes the two women as first meeting at GM’s house in 1930, GM did not begin living in Spain until 1933. VO seems to have visited Spain and met Mistral during a late 1934, early 1935 trip to Europe that also included meeting with Mussolini in Italy and Virginia Woolf in England.

7 Pablo Neruda was assigned to Barcelona following GM’s appointment to Madrid beginning in July 1933. On GM’s residence in Barcelona at the beginning of 1933, during what was apparently a happy time see Figueroa 32. She definitely lived in Madrid from at least February 1934 (Tan de Usted 88-90) to October of 1935 (Gazarian-Gautier; see also Délano). Writing to Mexican writer Alfonso Reyes, GM expressed pleasure in Cataluña, antipathy for Castile, and
ambivalence towards Argentina: “Except for a long stay in Cataluña, this Spain has given me the most inclusive, the most complete sense of foreignness” (3 March 1934 or 1935, Tan de Usted 102)”. A great patria, Argentina, but patria of what race and of what destiny? At best, it’s an anti-American one…” (Ibid.). GM’s correspondence with VO shows the Chilean writer’s attempt to situate Argentina within the wider question of what it means to be Latin American versus European.

8 The words criollo and criolla recur throughout GM’s letters to VO, with GM using the word to signify persons of European or mixed European and native ancestry born and educated in Spanish-speaking Latin America. More broadly, she regards herself as sharing this identity with VO, even as GM additionally identifies herself with indigenous Americans.

9 GM repeats her expressions of enthusiasm for Baltasar Gracián, “El heroe y el Discreto” (Pocket Mirror for Heroes, tr. Christopher Maurer). Seven years later, GM again mentions the book and its importance for VO. Gracián’s work is part of the rich literary tradition of Medieval and Renaissance literature for GM. Gracian’s work, like Machiavelli’s The Prince, belonged to a tradition of self-improvement handbooks, a literary genre familiar to Mistral, to which she contributed from her earliest publications for schooltexts.

10 V.O.’s first book, De Francesca a Beatrice, was published by José Ortega y Gasset’s Revista de Occidente Press in 1924.

11 Raza: GM’s use of this term seems to mean people sharing the same cultural history.

12 Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (Argentina 1811-1888), writer, educator, and president of Argentina (1868-1874), was an intimate friend of VO’s father’s family. GM wrote and published “Sarmiento en Aconcagua” in Oct. 1930, describing Sarmiento’s educational activities in Chile during a period of exile.

13 Palma Guillén(1890? - 1975) Mexican diplomat, educator, writer, was a close friend of GM beginning with GM's work in Mexico in 1922. Insofar as Guillén's appointments permitted (with the appointment to Colombia she was the first woman to serve as a Minister from a Latin American country) the two women often lived together during GM’s years in Europe (1926-1940). Guillén subsequently served in Copenhagen, Switzerland, and Cuba. Mistral dedicates Tala to Palma Guillén in terms of her piety as a Mexican woman. The dedication could be seen as a dual attempt to embrace continental Americanism and to ward off suggestions that the two women were lovers. No Mistral scholars have ever raised this possibility in print. Guillén was deeply devoted to her friend, coming to GM’s assistance at several crucial points in the latter’s life. She defended GM from the resentment that her presence as a foreigner may have inspired in some Mexican teachers, in 1923 (see “Introduction” to Lecturas para mujeres (Readings for Women). The two women co-parented Mistral's nephew Juan Miguel Godoy when he was an infant and later when GM was traveling abroad in 1930 and 1937-1938. Palma Guillén helped GM prepare her second major volume of verses, Tala, for the press. Finally, she rushed to GM’s assistance on the death of Juan Miguel Godoy in 1943. Only a few letters from Palma Guillén have been published (see Vargas Otro Suicida; Arce and von demme Bussche, Proyecto). The Guillén-Mistral correspondence, when available in print, will constitute a crucial source for our understanding of the Chilean poet’s life.

14 Letterhead: none. 5 pp., hand of GM. LC/OAS. Dated by GM at end of letter, along with address. The opening lines continue the conclusion of the last letter: GM and VO have exchanged photos of one another. GM exchanged photographs with her other literary correspondents, notably Pedro Prado and Eduardo Barrios.
15 Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), Basque/Spanish philosopher, writer, Professor of Greek at the Universidad de Salamanca, Spain. GM apparently had a photo of Unamuno as well as of VO. On GM's relationship with Unamuno, see her essay "Cinco años de destierro de Don Miguel Unamuno," (1927) (Miguel Unamuno’s Five Years of Exile).
16 This sounds like something that GM asked VO to write, showing that GM wanted to know more about VO’s early years (and vice versa).
17 Palma Guillén received a cable appointing her minister of Mexico in Colombia on 6 Jan. 1935.
18 Letterhead: 3x5 note card with “G.M.” printed in upper left hand corner, and “Av. Antonio Augusto Aguiar, 191. Lisbon, printed in upper right hand corner. 16 pp. pen, hand of GM.
19 St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582). Spanish nun, writer, and founder of the Discalced Carmelites. GM’s lengthy essay “Castilla” (Castile) (1925) written during her first travels in Spain, is primarily an imaginary dialogue-travelogue with Teresa of Avila, a figure whom she identified, describing her as “the wanderer, the founder, the woman crazy with love for Christ” (Castilla 205) sharing the earlier writer’s vagabond nature, inclination to autobiography, lack of formal education, engagement with founding institutions for women. St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), Spanish poet and priest who worked with St. Teresa of Avila in founding the Discalced Carmelites; Luis de Leon (1527-1591), Spanish poet, professor of Latin and Scripture. Luis de Granada (1504-1588). Dominican friar, author of numerous books of spiritual counsel.
20 Victoria Kent (1898-1987). First woman lawyer in Spain, representative in Congress, General Director of Prisons. Supporter of the Radical Party, then the United Front, forced into exile by the Spanish Civil War, first in France (where she assisted in smuggling out refugees), then Mexico and New York, where she worked for the United Nations. The essay “Victoria Kent,” that GM sent to VO was immediately printed in Sur 20 (May 1936) with GM’s permission. Victoria Kent is another of GM’s and VO’s mutual friends who appears throughout this correspondence. Like them, she was unmarried and deeply involved in public service, especially to women.
21 VO’s Testimonios (1a. serie) was published in Madrid 1935.
22 GM probably refers here to the special act of the Chilean legislature passed on 17 Sept. 1935, signed by President Alessandri that made her a consul (Second Class) with the right to choose her own residence. The law was the result of the efforts of the PEN Club and various European intellectuals whom GM had met in Spain, France, and Italy. For GM’s account of the law, see her letter to Teresa de la Parra and Lydia Cabrera (Hiriart).
23 The “press campaign” to which GM refers began with the unauthorized publication, on Oct. 2 1935, in the Santiago-based magazine Familia, of a private letter GM wrote to Armando Donoso & María Monvel (Rubio; Vargas Saavedra et al: En Batalla 159); for the actual letter, see Arce and von demme Bussche, Proyecto.
24 Guillermo de Torre (1900-1971). Spanish-Argentine literary critic, historian, and leading authority of the avant-garde who contributed regularly to Sur, La Nación and Crítica.
25 Maríano Latorre (1886-1955), Chilean novelist from Maule, inclined to realism and depiction of the countryside.
26 This is the gist of GM’s criticism of Spain, which turned out to be prophetic: the social divisions of the country, abetted by fascist alliances with Germany and Italy, pushed Spain into Civil War just three months after GM wrote this letter.
28 Letterhead: 3x5 note card with “G.M.” printed in upper left hand corner, and “Av. Antonio Augusto Aguiar, 191. Lisbon, printed in upper right hand corner. 5 pp. typed, corrections in hand of GM. LC/OAS. This is the first letter in which GM mentions having received a letter from VO; that letter, now lost, probably recounted VO’s performance of Persephone with Stravinsky in December 1935, in the Teatro Colón.
29 Victoria Ocampo’s mother, Ramona Aguirre, died in Argentina in December of 1935.
30 Ramiro de Maeztu (1874-1936), Spanish/English/Basque, writer, member of Spain’s “Generation of 1898,” and brother of VO’s and GM’s mutual friend María de Maeztu was a Monarchist who was shot in Madrid in the chaos of the first months of the Spanish Civil War.
31 The Spanish Civil War began on 16 July 1936 and lasted until 1939, when Francisco Franco became a military dictator until his death in 1975.
32 Jacinto Benevente (1866-1954), Spanish dramatist, satirist and winner of the Nobel Prize in 1922; Serafín Alvarez Quintero (1871-1938) killed in the Spanish Civil War and Joaquín Quintero (1873-1938) killed in the Spanish Civil War and Joaquín Quintero (1873-1944), Spanish dramatists, specializing in comedy and satire; Ignacio Zuloaga (1870-1945) Basque/Spanish avant-garde painter. All of these were associated with the left-wing, but not with the communists: they were well-known as satirists of the Spanish middle-class. None of the rumors of their deaths in the first months of the Spanish Civil War were true.
33 Theresa and Enrique Diez-Canedo: Enrique (1897-1944), Spanish poet, critic, translator, journalist, diplomat. As an Ambassador from Republican Spain to Argentina, he returned to Spain at the start of the Civil War. Following the war, he lived in exile in Mexico. Diez-Canedo organized a PEN Club dinner in honor of GM during her visit to Spain, in December 1924, a courtesy that mattered a great deal to Mistral, who on that occasion met a number of Spanish intellectuals. See GM’s essay, “Enrique Diez-Canedo” (1932).
34 In hand, GM has drawn a line from “izquierdas” (left-wing) to the lines above, to draw a triangle around the “A,” probably a reference to Spanish anarchists.
35 Blanche Albane, a French actress, was married to Georges Duhamel (1884-1966), French novelist, physician, literary critic, playwright, and member of the French Academies of Letters and of Sciences. Duhamel and Blanche Albane knew GM through the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation. Duhamel and Albane attended the Congress of PEN Clubs celebrated in Buenos Aires in 1937; Duhamel regularly published in *Sur*.
36 Dominique Braga, Brazilian/French, head of the Institute for Intellectual Co-operation, predecessor of UNESCO; Gazarian-Gautier notes that Braga came to live in Petropolis, Brazil 1942-1945, close to Mistral.
37 Teresa de la Parra (1889-1936), Venezuelan novelist, born in France and resident there for many years. GM wrote two “recados” on Teresa de la Parra: “Gente Americana: Teresa de la Parra” (1929) and “Teresa de la Parra” (1936). GM’s correspondence with de la Parra and her partner, Lydia Cabrera, Cartas a Lydia Cabrera, edited by Rosario Hiriart (1988) dates from the
The “childhood story” of de la Parra’s to which GM refers could be the novel *Memorias de Mama Blanca* (Memoirs of Mama Blanca) or *Iphigenia*.  

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* was published by *Sur*, in a translation by Jorge Luis Borges (although Borges liked to say that his mother was the one who really did the translation).  


GM traveled with Palma Guillén in Germany, France, and Denmark in the winter of 1936-1937.

GM was in Paris on 25 Nov. 1936, for a meeting of the Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, where she would have spoken with Duhamel about VO.

Letterhead: none. 2 pp., hand of GM, pen. LC/OAS. Date: day and month next to signature.

Jan. & Feb. 1933 are the most likely months of GM’s residence in Barcelona.

Neruda, in *Confieso que he vivido* (Memoirs) likewise describes the shortage of paper in wartime Cataluña, which in his case led the soldiers to contribute their clothing so that his book, *España en mi Corazón* (Spain in my Heart) could be published.

Mexico was among the most generous of Latin American countries, in accepting war orphans and Republican refugees from Spain.

In this letter GM asks VO to publish *Tala* on behalf of the war orphans from the Basque country of Spain. GM was apparently confident that VO would agree: in a letter to Alfonso Reyes, written in August 1937, GM indicated “Finally you’ll have this book of mine, before I have it, from the hand of our Victoria” (*Tan de Usted* 113). Reyes was living and working Buenos Aires as part of the Mexican Legation to Argentina.

Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) French Thomist philosopher and political thinker, and Raissa Maritain, writer and contemplative (1883-1960). GM visited both Jacques and Raissa Maritain in Paris. Maritain’s friendship was important to Mistral from this time onwards. At this same time, his influence was contributing to the forming of what would become Chile’s Christian Democratic Party. Finally, Maritain and Mistral had a number of encounters during her last years in New York, when he was living nearby, in Princeton, N.J.

Letterhead: none, although GM has printed the following address at the end of the letter: Hotel Souza, Dantas, Rua Laranjeira. 7 pp. numbered, pen hand of GM. LC/OAS. Date: day and month appear at end of document, by GM signature.

GM rejected modern Spain, but not the values of the late medieval mystics and early Golden Age, which she admired.

GM’s sense of Latin American identity arguably dates from her residence in Mexico in 1922-1924 working for Minister of Education José Vasconcelos, when she participated in the reform of the Mexican school system. This dates mentioned in this letter confirm, however, that her sense of that identity substantially grows in 1930, when she was teaching classes in Latin American literature and pre-Colombian civilizations at Barnard College, Vassar College, and Middlebury College in the US. See, as well, GM’s letters to Mexican writer Alfonso Reyes in *Tan de Usted*.

Peixoto: a member of the Institute for Intellectual Cooperation.

GM’s notes on "Santa Compaña" appearing in *Tala*, regarding her poem "La Cabalgata," is relevant here: "La ‘Santa Compaña,’ pero la de los héroes" (The Holy Company, but the one of the heroes).
“My boss’ wife”: For GM’s letters to Carlos Errázuriz and Carmela Echenique de Errázuriz, see *Vuestra Gabriela*.

Letterhead: engraved stationery inscribed “Villa Victoria, Mar del Plata,” followed by an icon of a telephone and the number 504. 1 p. pen hand of GM. LC/OAS. Date: GM spent about eight days at “Villa Victoria”, coinciding with their April 7 birthday. Gabriela Mistral disembarked in Santa Fe in the last days of March of 1938, invited by the National University of Litoral…From Buenos Aires she had already been moved to Mar del Plata, as a guest of Victoria Ocampo (Samatán 132).

“My smoking”: GM smoked up to three packs of cigarettes a day.

“Regards”: written along left hand margin. "Connie": Consuelo Saleva was a teacher from Puerto Rico who accompanied GM from August 1937 to June of 1943 (when they briefly separated, in Brazil), and from early 1947 to about 1949, when they definitively split, in Mexico. Connie thus stayed GM through her South American – US tour of 1937-1938, in wartime France in 1939 and several years in Brazil (although she was not living with GM at the time of Juan Miguel Godoy’s death). Connie seems to have returned to help Mistral back to health in California, in 1947, and they later traveled together in Mexico, in 1948-1949. At that point the friendship seems to have fallen apart, and Connie seems to have returned to Puerto Rico. In later letters, GM alleges that CS stole money from her; the sum mentioned varies and there is no supporting evidence. Palma Guillén thought that Connie died in 1968 or 1969 (Guillén, letter to Vargas Saavedra, printed in *Otro Suicida*).

Letterhead: engraved stationery inscribed “Villa Victoria, Mar del Plata,” followed by an icon of a telephone and the number 504. 2 pp. pen hand of GM. LC/OAS.

Letterhead: engraved stationery inscribed “Villa Victoria, Mar del Plata,” followed by an icon of a telephone and the number 504. 2 pp. pen hand of GM. LC/OAS.

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Reference to galley sheets for *Tala*, to be published by SUR. María Rosa Oliver helped GM correct the galley sheets for *Tala* while the two of them stayed at VO’s house in Mar del Plata (Letter, María Rosa Oliver to GM, 19 March 1947; Houghton Library Collection).

“Nocturnes”: the section "Nocturnos" opens *Tala*. Among the poems in this section, the second to last is "Nocturno de Descendimiento," (Nocturne of Descent), dedicated to VO, which closes, "Year of the Spanish War." The final poem of the section is not a *nocturno*, but a transition poem to the next section, a practice followed in the different sections of both *De solación* (1922) and *Tala* (1938).

The final line is written along the left margin.

Letterhead: none. 22 pp. hand of GM, pencil. LC/OAS. Date: conjectured from references to Eduardo Mallea and to VO (who was about to leave for Europe, in the second half of 1938) and to the fact that in letter, GM does not know what her next consular assignment or future might be, since her fate would be decided following the September 1938 Presidential Elections in Chile. In Argentina, Eduardo Mallea was replaced by José Bianco as editor-in-chief at *Sur* by June 1938 (see King, *Sur*). Few letters show more starkly the differences between GM and VO.

Original in English

GM here underlines twice and uses an initial capital letter to insist on its full range of meaning in “passion.”
“the surviving one chews? his fists in anger or sorrow”: see Dante, *Inferno* XXXIII, 58: Count Ugolino, imprisoned with his four sons, incapable of sorrow while alive, perpetually crying from rage after his death, chews his fists in anger, realizing his enemy the Archbishop Ruggieri will survive him.

“ordered revolving of eternal stars”: GM refers here both to Dante *Paradiso* XXXIII, 145 ("l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stele"); the love that moves the sun and other stars) and to VO’s book on Dante.

I, pure-blooded

Original, scarcely legible, seems to read “Taka” or “Tata,” followed by “Diastolaos.” Diastolic, referring to blood pressure, together with “teaspoon,” could be the name of an unidentified medication GM might have been taking.

“el Sur”: GM’s pun on VO’s publishing enterprises.

And with good reason.

dotage: *chochez* is a word GM used to describe herself in one of her earliest extant printed letters, which she wrote as a 25 year-old schoolteacher, to Ruben Dario. The letters is reprinted in Belmas, *Ese otro Ruben Dario*; repr. in Arce and von demme Bussche, *Proyecto*.

Letterhead: REPUBLICA DE CHILE, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. 1 p. pen hand of GM. LC/OAS. Written immediately following GM’s trip to Vicuña and the Valley of Elqui, from the house of Don Carlos Errázuriz in Santiago: for details of this visit see *Vuestra Gabriela* 40-41.

Here VO’s trusting nature was evidently a drawback to her editorial plans: it appears that she failed to understand the tactics that her competitors would adopt, in attempting to undercut her efforts: See King, *Sur*.

And with good reason.

Dearest.

Frugoni, VO’s latest amour.

Reference to Mallea.

Despite GM’s expression of distaste for New Orleans, she visited again in 1947 and in 1954, the latter being one of the last trips she made.

Puerto Rican Nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos (1891-1965) jailed in the Federal prison is Atlanta, Georgia.

Amanda Labarca Hubertson was deeply involved with the Radical Party.

GM here compares the lot of the various Spanish intellectuals associated with the “Generation of 1898.” Those who were strongly associated with Catalan or Basque autonomy found themselves fighting, dying, or forced into an exile from which the Franco government did not allow them to return. Ortega y Gasset voluntarily left Spain in July 1936; after lecturing in France, the Netherlands, and Argentina, he spent 1942-1945 in Portugal. Baroja could be either the novelist Pio Baroja or, more likely, Julio Caro Baroja, a novelist whose poor eyesight enabled him to escape being sent to the front (he spent the war in his mother’s hometown, near Pamplona. The physician Gregorio Marañon, who supported the monarchy, was easily able to return to Spain, in 1943.

Josep Carner (1884-1970). Catalan poet and career diplomat who lived in exile in Belgium following the Spanish Civil War.
At the end of 1938 the Aguirre Cerda administration offered GM the post of Minister Plenipotentiary to Central America, based in San José, Costa Rica. She turned it down.

During the Nazi regime in Germany there was a constant threat of an Ibañez-led coup in Chile; an attempted takeover was put down, shortly before the 1938 presidential elections.

Letterhead: Consulado de Chile. 2 pp. typed, pencil corrections, hand of GM. LC/OAS. GM established the Chilean consulate in Niteroi in 1940, while she was living in Rio de Janeiro.

The first six months of 1940 were bleak, as it appeared that the Axis might triumph in Europe. The implications of the German-Soviet pact became evident when Soviet Russia invaded Finland on 30 Nov. 1939. On 13 March 1940 Finland and the Soviet Union signed an armistice.

The feast of the Holy Spirit, which takes place following Pentecost, is celebrated in parts of Brazil (especially in Santa Rita) with a week of festivities, marking abundance. Since Easter fell on March 24 in 1940, Pentecost would have been May 13, hence the date assigned to this letter.

Victoria Kent, sent to France by the Spanish Republican Government to assist in establishing child care centers, lived in hiding from the Gestapo for four years in Paris, during the Occupation, an experience she later described in her book *Cuatro años en París* (Four Years in Paris, 1948).

Holland, Belgium: Germany invaded these countries in early May 1940.

Fifth Column: a group of secret sympathizers or supporters of an enemy that engage in espionage or sabotage within defense lines or national borders. The phrase originated in the Spanish Civil War with Emilio Mola Vidal, a Nationalist general: as four of his army columns moved on Madrid, the general referred to his militant supporters within the capital as his "fifth column," intent on undermining the loyalist government from within.

The Oct. ‘39 issue of *Sur* opened with a long essay by VO, “Visperas de guerra” (On the Eve of War) describing her travel to Strausburg.

As of May 1940 England was the only country that had declared war against Germany.

GM here refers to her poem “Campeon Finlandés” (Finnish Champion) which she wrote celebrating the Finnish resistance to the Soviet invasion. The poem was later published in GM’s fourth book of poems, *Lagar* (Wine-Press), which collected poems she had written between 1938 and 1954.

José María Cantilo. Argentine Chancellor for External Relations in 1940, who proposed moving Argentina at that time from a “neutral” to “non-belligerent” status.

GM also uses this Tijuca address in a letter to Alfonso Reyes dated 4 November 1940 (*Tan de Usted* 131). Her use of the address is related to her concern that her mail might opened or waylaid by third parties. The concern was justified, not just by her personal experience of having her mail opened, read, and published by third parties without her consent, but in the local context of Rio de Janeiro, which during WW II was a center for gathering war-related intelligence.

This paragraph has two lines marking it in the left hand margin, for emphasis, it seems. The lines may have been marked by VO or by GM.

[Side margin, last page] An article of mine about Mallea [“Algo sobre Eduardo Mallea,” Something about Eduardo Mallea, 1940] came out there, with shameful errors. When C[onnie] copies the whole thing (it was in pieces) I’ll send it to you.
102 GM quotes from this lecture in an essay about José Miguel Ferrer that she wrote in Rio de Janeiro in July 1940 (Recados para hoy 142).
103 Wisdom. GM again refers to VO’s essay “Visperas de guerra” (Sur 61: Oct 1939).
104 “Diosa de Maiz” is added in GM’s hand, as a note at the foot of the page, to this sentence. Here GM is returning to theme of VO’s essentially American identity.
105 Professor Henri Focillon (1881-1943), French art historian and an affiliate of the Institute for Intellectual Cooperation. Focillon was at Yale from late 1940 until his death in 1943.
106 Psalter: GM similarly mentions praying for England using a Psalter, in a letter written from Niteroi in 1940: “We’re praying for England every day, here, using a Catholic Psalter that has more Jewish prayers that are so strong that they seem made for this precise moment of the world.” (Vuestra Gabriela 66). “England”: the Battle of Britain began on 10 July 1940 and continued until 12 October 1940, when Hitler postponed the planned invasion of Britain.
107 Palma Guillén remained in neutral Switzerland until the end of 1941.
108 Nostalgia; regards.
110 The detailed letter mentioned may be from Palma Guillén, dated 29 April 1943, which describes an invasion having taken place on Monday, 26 [April 1943] (see Proyecto).
111 Luis Nicolau d’Olwer. (1888-1961), Catalan classicist, writer, and supporter of the Republic. He married Palma Guillén, apparently following WW II. After being forced from Barcelona to France, he went into exile in Mexico, where he established a second career as an authority on Mayan and Aztec manuscripts. He also worked with other exiles from Spain to establish the Spanish Athenaeum of Mexico. GM writes another letter similarly expressing GM’s attempt to find a safe place for Nicolau D’Olwer and his sister (Tan de Usted G32). GM reports to Reyes that VO worked on behalf of Nicolau (Tan de Usted 143).
112 Spanish Republicans were among the first deportees from Vichy France. They were sent to forced labor camps in Germany.
113 Pompeu Fabra (1868-1948), Catalan mathematician, engineer, and university professor who directed the creation of the first authoritative dictionaries and grammars of the Catalan language.
114 The influence of Provencal poetry on GM is evident in Tala, with the sections entitled “Cuenta Mundo” and Materia” that describe the physical world in luminous detail, in language of ordinary things that seems elementary yet nonetheless infused with sensual and metaphysical significance.
115 On 27 Nov. 1942 the French fleet at the Mediterranean port of Toulon was scuttled by French sailors, who destroyed it rather than deliver it into the hands of the Germans.