

## Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral

GABRIELA MISTRAL

Translated by URSULA K. LE GUIN

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Despite her formidable skill as a poet, her unparalleled expertise as an educator, and her maternal compassion as a social advocate, Gabriela Mistral remains the intellectual property of academia. Ursula K. Le Guin and the University of New Mexico Press are out to set things straight. *Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral* is a calculated effort to garner the poet the readership she deserves without completely abandoning the academic sphere. The breadth of included poems from throughout the Nobel laureate's poetic life provides more than just a taste of Mistral's work, and the bilingual format, which places the translated stanzas side by side with the original for ease of use, is an excellent tool for students of Spanish.

Le Guin's translations are accurate and read exceptionally well, which is particularly laudable as she admits to approaching the daunting task of translating Mistral as a poet, not a scholar. "I have had no formal Spanish classes and cannot speak or write the language," she confesses in her introduction. Regardless of this apparent handicap, Le Guin displays an intuitive understanding of Mistral's poetic voice. In her approach, it is not the technical features of the verse, but the transcendent core of the poem that she seeks to elucidate. Each section of poetry is also briefly prefaced with biographical and bibliographical information concerning the poems at hand, and a concise chronology allows the reader to consider Mistral's work within the context of her greater life's path.

This newest collection, although arguably the most complete that exists in English, with 164 poems, does not likely represent the definitive translation of Mistral, nor should it. As with all grand poetry, Mistral's work defies simple classification and opens itself to fresh interpretations and translations with every analysis. Le Guin's readings of many of the poet's supreme creations are undoubtedly worthy of attention, and her selection will hopefully lift the shroud of obscurity that threatens to conceal Mistral from North American eyes.

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