

# Graciela Hierro

## A Fortunate Woman Who Left An Indelible Mark

Gloria Careaga Pérez\*

Graciela Hierro was a great teacher. Beginning in 1966, she taught logic and ethics at the UNAM high school, and continued in the School of Philosophy and Letters after 1972. She was in charge of the interdisciplinary seminar “Ethics, Philosophy of Education and Gender,” ahead of its time when it began in 1978. She was a great teacher not only in the classroom, but in the teachings she imparted in so many other places. For many of us, hers was a fundamental contribution not only professionally, but in our lives as well.

In 1978, she founded the Feminist Philosophical Association, affiliated to the U.S.-based Society for Women in Philosophy. In 1979, she spoke for the first time of feminist philosophy at a round table discussion entitled “The Nature of Women,” at the Third National Colloquium on Philosophy. Dr. Hierro’s classes always looked at the concrete dilemmas that each man and woman faced in life with the aim of helping every individual to face his or her real problems to be able to understand and overcome them: it was a way of recovering the original meaning of philosophy as a discipline which aims to orient life and help find a way forward to self-knowledge and happiness.

Graciela was a great philosopher and also a great political activist, concerned with social justice and human rights. Her work and thinking went down different roads: ethics, education, rights, the phenomenon of aging. But they were always centered on women and feminism. She was a radical fem-



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inist of difference. With a kind smile, she was a master of irony, who defended her convictions at the same time that she looked for ways to encourage women to advance. She was a woman committed to everything she did, very firm and coherent.

In her group, the Queens, Graciela reflected on women's aging in workshops about loneliness, sexuality, mother-daughter relations, love and other matters of equal import. She was a fortunate woman, aware of the respect, admiration and love professed for her. In addition to the many prizes and awards she was given and the success and impact of her work, she spent her days with her friends, with whom she shared her principles: reflection and pleasure. She always shared her ideas and her experiences; thus, she opened up new alternatives in life. Her memoirs leave the mark of her history; how enjoyment, and joy sowed the seed of pleasure and love for those around her. With her, we learned the importance of a sense of humor and even to laugh at ourselves.

Graciela dedicated her life to teaching and research. Her love for the UNAM committed her body

and soul to her work and to constantly contributing new ideas, creating new paradigms that aided in understanding human nature. But above all they aided in putting her ideas into practice in the construction of new, more equitable, fairer forms of relationships between people.

She was a woman of the avant garde, a pioneer in her proposals, always at the cutting edge of humanist thinking. With a different mentality, she was a permanent ally of women. Her lucid, brilliant mind contributed a joyous feminism and a new ethical outlook on relations between men and women to the knowledge of human nature. She put forward the idea of pleasure as the determining concept in a good life, worth living, and as the ultimate criteria for making a decision about the rectitude of actions.

Just like her mother, she did not want to die. And, like Borges, she neither wished for heaven nor feared hell. She imagined her death under a starry sky, but she met it in a flower garden, a reflection of her luminous presence that lit so many roads and was the fruit of all that she sowed. ■■■