



# Queer Mother For The Nation: The State And Gabriela Mistral

*Licia Fiol-Matta*

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Chilean writer Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957), the first Latin American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, was a poetic idol for generations of Latin Americans who viewed her as Womanhood incarnate, the national schoolteacher-mother. How this distinctly masculine woman who never gave birth came to occupy this role, and what Mistral's image, poetry, and life have to say about the relations-and realities-of race, gender, and sexual politics in her time, are the questions Licia Fiol-Matta pursues in this book, recreating the story of a woman whose misrepresentation is at least as intriguing, and as instructive, as her fame.

A *Queer Mother for the Nation* weaves a nuanced understanding of how Mistral cooperated with authority and fashioned herself as the figure of Motherhood in collaboration with the state. Drawing on Mistral's little-known political and social essays, her correspondence and photographs, Fiol-Matta reconstructs Mistral's relationship to state politics. Her work questions the notion of queer bodies as outlaws, and insists on the many ways in which queer subjects have participated in and sustained the normative discourses they seem to rebel against.

Licia Fiol-Matta is assistant professor in the Department of Spanish and Latin American Cultures at Barnard College.

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