



Uncivil Wars: Elena Garro, Octavio Paz, and the Battle for Cultural Memory (Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and L)

Sandra Messinger Cypess

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The first English-language book to place the works of Elena Garro (1916–1998) and Octavio Paz (1914–1998) in dialogue with each other, *Uncivil Wars* evokes the lives of two celebrated literary figures who wrote about many of the same experiences and contributed to the formation of Mexican national identity but were judged quite differently, primarily because of gender.

While Paz's privileged, prize-winning legacy has endured worldwide, Garro's literary gifts garnered no international prizes and received less attention in Latin American literary circles. Restoring a dual perspective on these two dynamic writers and their world, *Uncivil Wars* chronicles a collective memory of wars that shaped Mexico, and in turn shaped Garro and Paz, from the Conquest period to the Mexican Revolution; the Spanish Civil War, which the couple witnessed while traveling abroad; and the student massacre at Tlatelolco Plaza in 1968, which brought about social and political changes and further tensions in the battle of the sexes. The cultural contexts of machismo and ethnicity provide an equally rich ground for Sandra Cypess's exploration of the tandem between the writers' personal lives and their literary production. *Uncivil Wars* illuminates the complexities of Mexican society as seen through a tense marriage of two talented, often oppositional writers. The result is an alternative interpretation of the myths and realities that have shaped Mexican identity, and its literary soul, well into the twenty-first century.

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