



Elena Garro and Mexico's Modern Dreams

(Bucknell Studies in Latin American Literature and Theory)

Rebecca E. Biron

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Elena Garro and Mexico's Modern Dreams uses Elena Garro's eccentric life and work as a lens through which to examine mid-twentieth-century Mexican intellectuals' desire to reconcile *mexicanidad* with *modernidad*.

The famously scandalous first wife of Nobel Prize winner poet Octavio Paz, and an award-winning author in her own right, Garro constructed a mysterious and often contradictory persona through her very public participation in Mexican political conflicts. Herself an anxious and contentious Mexican writer, Elena Garro elicited profound political and aesthetic anxiety in her Mexican readers. She confused the personal and the public in her creative fictions as well as in her vision of Mexican modernity. This violation of key distinctions rendered her largely illegible to her contemporaries. That illegibility serves as a symptom of unacknowledged desires that motivate twentieth-century views of national modernity. Taken together, Garro's public persona and critical perspective expose the anxieties regarding ethnicity, gender, economic class, and professional identity that define Mexican modernity.

Blending cultural studies and detailed literary analysis with political and intellectual history, *Mexico's Modern Dreams* argues that, in addition to the intriguing gossip she elicited in literary and political circles, Garro produced a radical critique of Mexican modernity. Her critique applies as well to the nation's twenty-first-century crisis of globalization, state power, and pervasive violence.



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