



The Modern Mexican Essay

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Hilborn, H.W.
 Martínez Gutiérrez, José Luis (1964-),
 editor.
 edt.
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Monografía

Although the more superficial features of the Latin-American countries are becoming better known to North Americans as a result of improved travel facilities, their cultural and economic problems still remain largely unappreciated. The Rockefeller foundation, aware of this fact, has provided grants, administered by the Association of American University presses, in support of the translation into English of the more significant Latin-American scholarly and literary works. This collection, edited by Jose Luis Martinez, the eminent Mexican scholar and critic who has written widely on the subject of Mexican literature, was originally published as *El ensayo mexicano moderno*. In selecting the essay to be included in this translation, Professor Hilborn has aimed primarily at presenting a Mexican national outlook, in the hope that more people may be led to interest themselves in the psychological and spiritual aspects (as well as the economic and practical considerations) of Mexican culture. It would be difficult to discover any problem confront the modern Mexican, or almost any member of the Latin-American community of nations, that does not receive attention in this anthology. The essays translated by Professor Hilborn are, almost without exception, of high literary quality, and they will make a profound impression on the English-speaking reader. Martinez prefaces the anthology with a detailed and illuminating study of the essay as an art form. The essayists are ten presented in roughly chronological order, giving the reader a sense of Mexico's growing national consciousness. The first of the essays date from the last decade of the nineteenth century, the point at which Martinez perceives the first flowering of Mexico's literary and intellectual modernity, marked by a decided break with the romanticism which had lingered in Spanish America long after its decline in Europe. Other essays deal with Mexico's cultural past and the literary figures who contributed most significantly to it, with the period preceding the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the struggles which followed this upheaval, while others are on purely literary and philosophical themes. The depressing realities of social conditions in Mexico are not ignored but the contrast of opulence and misery is not regarded as permanent, and, without exception, the writers presented to us through Martinez have something vital to say about their nation. For Canadians this anthology provides an excellent basis for a comparative study of Canada and Mexico. For Americans, it could be a startling revelation

of the image their country presents to their southern neighbours. In international relations, knowledge of the points of view presented in this anthology is of incalculable value for any project aimed at strengthening the solidarity of our continent

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