



Mexican Masculinities (Cultural Studies of the Americas)

Robert McKee Irwin

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The first of its kind and a powerful challenge to customary views of gender and sexuality in the life and literature of Mexico, this book traces literary representations of masculinity in Mexico from independence in 1810 to the 1960s, and shows how these intersect with the constructions of nation and nationality. The rhetoric of "Mexicanness" makes constant use of images of masculinity, though it does so in shifting and often contradictory ways. Robert McKee Irwin's work follows these shifts from the male homosocial bonding that was central to notions of national integration in the nineteenth century, to questioning of gender norms stirred by science and scandals at the turn of the century, to the virulent reaction against gender chaos after the Mexican revolution, to the association of Mexicanness with machismo and homophobia in the literature of the 1940s and 1950s--even as male homosexuality was established as an integral part of national culture. As the first historical study of how masculinity and, particularly, homosexuality were understood in Mexico in the national era, this book not only provides "queer readings" of most major canonical texts of the period in question, but also uncovers a variety of unknown texts from queer Mexican history, including the 1906 novel *Los 41*, which reenacts the scandal of a turn-of-the-century transvestite ball that launched modern discussion of homosexuality in Mexico. It is a radical undermining of the simple hetero/homosexual and masculine/feminine oppositions that have for so long informed views of the country's national character.



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