

ABSTRACT

DOCUMENTARY DRAMA IN MEXICO: AN EXAMINATION OF  
MARTIRIO DE MORELOS BY VICENTE LEÑERO

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This examination of the documentary play Martirio de Morelos aims to prove the relevance and effectiveness of documentary theatre in Mexico today as a reflection of the most urgent preoccupations of its people.

Vicente Leñero is a Catholic writer whose experience in journalism and television has stimulated his deep interest in two major issues: the role of the Church in modern Mexico and the free expression of progressive ideas in the post-revolutionary Mexican society. He has chosen documentary theatre, which is based on the dramatization of key historical or contemporary episodes by the adaptation of authentic documented source material, as a means of provoking critical awareness of such concerns.

Leñero has already taken a pioneer step in the introduction of the documentary genre to Mexican audiences and readers with his first work for the theatre, Pueblo rechazado, written in 1969, which deals in dramatic form with a controversial topical issue within the Church. He has also returned to the period of the Revolution with his documentary play, El juicio, in which he examines the question of religious fanaticism in the context of the "Cristero" movement.

In Martirio de Morelos, he focusses on the more distant era of the War of Independence, in an attempt to point the significance of the ideals and conflicts of the historical past to the late twentieth century present in Mexico. The play is structured on the conversion into drama of the most authentic documents available concerning the capture, trials and execution of the leader of the Independence Movement, José María Morelos. The essence of documentary theatre is the search for a fair, unbiased and accurate dramatic representation of either the historical or recent past. Leñero's task, therefore, is to effect an objective adaptation of document to drama, and yet create a work of theatrical intensity which makes a valid statement about Mexican society today.