The Politics of Spanish American Modernismo: By Exquisite Design

A century after modernismo flourished as a fin-de-siecle phenomenon (both philosophical and literary), this so-called quintessentially Spanish-American movement continues to intrigue the critics. The tendency in the modernismo debate has been to stress the escapist detachment of the ivory tower poets, concerned with Art for Art's sake, who owe a great debt to the European masters, especially French symbolists and parnassians. This poetic attempt to escape chronologically and geographically has generally been linked with the artists' reluctance to become involved in the political process.

By the subtle juxtaposition of dialectally opposed sets of components, Gerard Aching takes a new look at the problem and makes an important contribution to the ongoing debate. He argues that key figures such as Jose Marti, Manuel Gutiérrez Najera, Ruben Dario, Julian del Casal, Jose Enrique Rodo, and others in...