

# ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis deals with the concept of the cultural identity of Mexico and Argentina in the works of selected essayists. The cultural area of Hispanic America is often criticized for not having an original philosophy. Hispanic Americans generally avoid dogmatic statements and strictly defined concepts in their works. In their writings prevails thinking in images, which is often processed in an essay form. For this reason, essay writing represents an important source of knowledge about Hispanic American thought. The authors included in this work were selected from the twentieth century, when there is a shift in the way of thinking about one's own culture. The works of the selected writers deal with the question of cultural identity from diverse points of view, and the style of their essays also differs.

The first part of the work focuses on the thinking of Ricardo Rojas (1882–1957) from Argentina and Alfonso Reyes (1889–1959) born in Mexico. Both Reyes and Rojas see the basis of national identity in the harmonious mixing of individual races and cultures throughout the history of both countries. The work of these authors is filled with optimism, both writers believe in a better, sometimes even utopian, future not only for their countries but for the entire continent.

The second part of the thesis deals with essays by the Argentine Ezequiel Martínez Estrada (1895–1964) and the Mexican Samuel Ramos (1897–1959). These writers begin their creative period under the influence of disillusionment with the failure to fulfill the goals that the country has set for itself. Their work contrasts with the harmony and hope of previous authors. Ramos and Martínez Estrada try to uncover the causes of the problems both states are facing. In their works, they examine the psychology of Mexicans and Argentines, analyse the past, and deal with the influence of foreign cultures on the nature of society.

The third part of the work is devoted to the essayistic texts of Ernesto Sábato from Argentina (1911–2011) and Octavio Paz from Mexico (1914–1998). One of the themes that accompanies the texts of both writers across genres is the subject of loneliness. They explore this not only in relation to the individual but also their thinking about national identity connects to the problem of alienation. In their analysis of culture, they examine the elements that embody the character of the nation, they deal with the different approaches to death in their cultures, and the relationship with Europe or the United States of America. They criticize the deification of science in modern times.

By analysing these essays, we try to show that, despite the given differences, it is possible to recognize many common features in the way of thinking of the individual authors. Both states encountered similar problems on the way to recognizing their distinctiveness, and often only their specific manifestation differed. The last question to be examined is whether the creation of one's own distinct culture conflicts with the idea of the existence of a transnational entity. The selected authors unanimously show that there are different positions of nationalism and that national pride does not necessarily mean xenophobia, on the contrary, awareness of one's own distinctiveness and the ability to appreciate it are necessary for individual states to coexist as equal partners.

**Key words:** Ricardo Rojas, Alfonso Reyes, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, Samuel Ramos, Ernesto Sábato, Octavio Paz, Mexico, Argentina, cultural identity, essay