Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico explores elite notions of crime and criminality from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. In Mexico these notions represented contested areas of the social terrain, places where generalized ideas about criminality transcended the individual criminal act to intersect with larger issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality. It was at this intersection that modern
Mexican society bared its soul. Attitudes toward race amalgamation and indios, lower-class lifestyles and leperos, women and sexual deviance, all influenced perceptions of criminality and ultimately determined the fundamental issue of citizenship: who belonged and who did not. The liberal discourse of toleration and human rights, the positivist discourse of order and progress, the revolutionary discourse of social justice and integration sought in turn to disguise the exclusions of modern Mexican society behind a veil of criminality—to proscribe as criminal those activities that criminologists, penologists, and anthropologists clearly linked to marginalized social groups. This book attempts to lift that veil and to gaze, like Jose Guadalupe Posada, at the grinning calavera that it shields. Robert M. Buffington is an assistant professor of history at Bowling Green State University.