

The cry of the renegade: politics and poetry in interwar Chile

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Abstrak

On the morning of September 29, 1920, a young poet died in Santiagos asylum, where he had recently been moved after nearly two months in police custody. Why and how did Jose Domingo Gómez Rojas end up in a prison, an asylum, and a cemetery? This book is an effort to answer that question. It is not a biography of Jose Domingo Gomez Rojas, although he figures prominently in its pages. It is, rather, a book about the context within which his arrest, imprisonment, and death unfolded and about the experiences of a number of the men he counted as friends and comrades. Covering a four-month period of 1920 in Santiago, it is a book about anarchists and aristocrats, students and teachers, poets and prosecutors, and cops and Wobblies. While narrative in form, the book has a number of analytical threads. It pays close attention to university students and the radicalization and disidentification they experienced over the course of the 1910s as well as the close relationships they forged with working people at the time. The book also stresses the importance of anarcho-communism in Chile in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The narrative is structured around the lives and labors of agitators and organizers who spent most, if not all, of their lives in Santiago and thus emphasizes the importance of place to radical politics. This is, in sum, a story of individuals and the collective struggles they waged, futures they imagined, and worlds they occupied.