



A Gay Cuban Activist in Exile: Reinaldo Arenas

RAFAEL OCASIO

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Between Reinaldo Arenas's arrival in the United States in 1980 and his suicide a decade later, the Cuban exile produced his most mature writing, a prolific body of work that Rafael Ocasio places at the intersection of twentieth-century sexual and cultural politics.

Examining Arenas's fiction, critical articles, the epic poem *El Central*, and hundreds of letters to friends and critics, Ocasio explores the writer's bold criticism of the Castro regime and his bitter conflict with notable pro-Castro supporters such as Gabriel García Márquez. He connects Arenas's political activism to his public sexual identity and fierce advocacy of homosexuality, including his willingness to alienate Latino and Latin American audiences in order to remain true to his self-proclaimed identity.

As much literary biography as interpretation, *A Gay Cuban Activist in Exile* also reveals that Arenas disguised and misused his criminal conviction in Cuba as a homosexual pederast, and discusses Arenas's posthumously published autobiography, *Before Night Falls*, which documents the last, HIV-positive years of his life.

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