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Regionalists on the Left: Radical Voices from the American West

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“Nothing is more anathema to a serious radical than regionalism,” Berkeley English professor Henry Nash Smith asserted in 1980. Although regionalism in the American West has often been characterized as an inherently conservative, backward-looking force, regionalist impulses have in fact taken various forms throughout U.S. history. The essays collected in *Regionalists on the Left* uncover the tradition of left-leaning western regionalism during the 1930s and 1940s.

Editor Michael C. Steiner has assembled a group of distinguished scholars who explore the lives and works of sixteen progressive western intellectuals, authors, and artists, ranging from nationally prominent figures such as John Steinbeck and Carey McWilliams to equally influential, though less well known, figures such as Angie Debo and Américo Paredes. Although they never constituted a unified movement complete with manifestos or specific goals, the thinkers and leaders examined in this volume raised voices of protest against racial, environmental, and working-class injustices during the Depression era that reverberate in the twenty-first century. Sharing a deep affection for their native and adopted places within the West, these individuals felt a strong sense of avoidable and remediable wrong done to the land and the people who lived upon it, motivating them to seek the root causes of social problems and demand change. *Regionalists on the Left* shows also that this radical regionalism in the West often took urban, working-class, and multicultural forms.

Other books have dealt with western regionalism in general, but this volume is unique in its focus on left-leaning regionalists, including such lesser-known writers as B. A. Botkin, Carlos Bulosan, Sanora Babb, and Joe Jones. Tracing the relationship between politics and place across the West, *Regionalists on the Left* highlights a significant but neglected strain of western thought and expression.

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