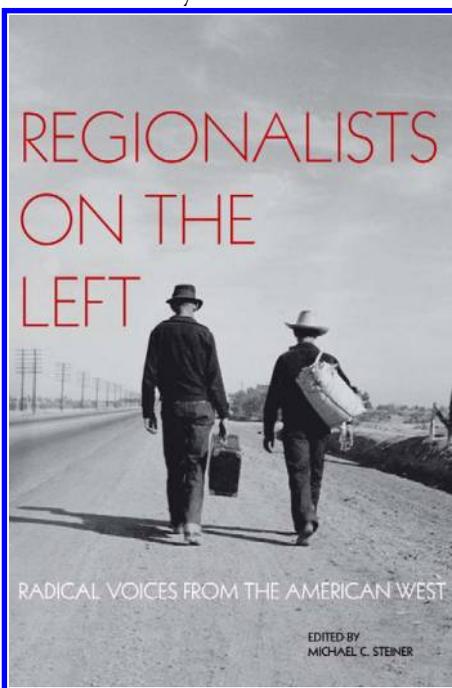


As a coda to the above, it should be noted that Doody and Meltzer also wrote a shorter monograph of the history of the Cahuilla Indians, *Glimpses of History: The San Geronimo Pass in the Nineteenth Century*. Thirty pages in length, the book is written at the secondary school level and should definitely be consulted for use in that area of instruction.

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REGIONALISTS ON THE LEFT: *Radical Voices from the American West*. Edited by Michael C. Steiner. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013. 399 pp. \$39.95, cloth.) Reviewed by Thomas G. Andrews.

The fifteen essays in *Regionalists on the Left: Radical Voices from the American West* collectively demonstrate that many western writers of the 1930s successfully



fused regionalism and radicalism. Editor Michael C. Steiner starts the volume with a preface and introductory essay that together explain why this argument might surprise us: Scholars in the United States, as in the broader world, have chiefly identified regionalism with reactionary politics. Steiner also accounts for the anthology's title, which echoes Daniel Aaron's *Writers on the Left* (1961) even as it gestures toward the overlap between the book's biographical subjects (political leftists) and its geographic focus (the trans-Mississippi West, which occupies the left-hand side of most maps). Readers expecting broad coverage of western radicalism—even in the literary realms of fiction, memoir, journalism, and historical writing on which *Regionalists on the Left* concentrates—may find themselves disappointed by

the book's narrow focus. Yet they will also appreciate the overall high quality of the volume's fifteen essays, as well as the insights they offer into the vexatious cultural politics that western intellectuals pursued in a pivotal and tumultuous decade.

Each essay focuses on a single writer, the lone exception being José Limón's chapter, which addresses both J. Frank Dobie and Américo Paredes. *Regionalists on the Left* is organized into sections on the Midwest, the Great Plains and Texas, the Northern West, and California. The logic behind this structure dovetails with the

book's attention to region, but it also insures that the Southwest, the Rocky Mountains, and the Great Basin receive no attention whatsoever. Fifteen of the book's radical regionalists wrote; the sole exception is the St. Louis painter Joe Jones. Most chapters focus on sensible subjects: Carey McWilliams, Carlos Bulosan, John Steinbeck, Robert Cantwell, D'Arcy McNickle, Meridel Le Sueur, Mari Sandoz, B. A. Botkin, Sanora Babb, and Angie Elbertha Debo. A few make compelling cases that lesser-known figures—Joe Jones and the Montana journalist and historian Joseph Kinsey Howard—deserve greater attention. But essays on California novelist, John Sanford, and Iowa novelist and magazine writer, Josephine Herbst, could have been omitted without appreciably affecting the book's larger purpose. The volume's contributors hail from history, literature, American Studies, Latino Studies, comparative literature, and psychology. Steiner has done yeoman's work in marshaling this broad range of disciplinary perspectives. *Regionalists on the Left* draws insights from many quarters, yet the essays converge nicely in style and tone. The volume—partly because of its focus on western regionalism and partly because so many of its essays were authored by scholars trained in the 1960s and '70s—almost entirely eschews high theory, yielding a frank down-hominess that virtually all of the intellectuals the book examines would have appreciated.

The book's geographic organization tends to distract attention from the disparate varieties of "radicalism" these westerners pursued. Some were essentially New Dealers; others were card-carrying Communists; and most fell somewhere in between. The wellsprings of the ideologies these intellectuals upheld and the circumstances of their radicalization also varied widely. Agrarianism, the labor movement, Marxism, crusades for racial justice, confrontations with the dark underbelly of American and western history, and the trauma and dislocation of the 1930s are themes that pop up repeatedly in the chapters of *Regionalists on the Left*. Especially worth reading are Shirley A. Leckie Reed's "Discover the Truth and Publish It: Angie Elbertha Debo and the Roots of America's 'Real Imperialism'" and T. V. Reed's "Robert Cantwell and Northwest Left Literary Labors."

California constitutes the focus of the book's closing section. Stephen J. Mexal examines the maturation of Filipino-American writer Carlos Bulosan from the 1930s to the early '40s "as a radical democrat seeking to overturn the racial and economic inequality produced by an unchecked, laissez-faire classical liberalism" (321). Though most scholarship on Bulosan focuses on his later career, Mexal traces the emergence of Bulosan's "intangible political faith in America" to his experiences working and writing up and down the West Coast.

David Wrobel's essay on John Steinbeck, by contrast, focuses not on the author's formative phases, but instead on his so-called "Years of Greatness," the startlingly productive period in which Steinbeck published *In Dubious Battle* (1936), "Harvest Gypsies" (1936), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), *Grapes of Wrath* (1939), and other writings. Wrobel compellingly uncovers how reactionary protests from growers' organizations and their political allies served to radicalize Steinbeck—a dialectical dynamic largely ignored elsewhere in Steiner's anthology. At the same time, Wrobel is careful to celebrate "the richness of *The Grapes of Wrath*," which, he claims, "clearly distinguishes it from the more direct advocacy politics that marked the genre

of proletarian fiction in the 1930s" (342). Ultimately, Wrobel makes a powerful case that *The Grapes of Wrath* was, "at its core, a book about the West" (343).

The final essay in *Regionalists on the Left*—and the closest thing to a conclusion the book offers—is Steiner's treatment of the personal, professional, and political epiphanies Carey McWilliams experienced over the course of the 1930s. The Colorado-born lawyer, historian, essayist, editor, and activist spent his first years in Los Angeles spellbound by that city's vibrant hubbub. By the late 1920s, McWilliams had become an aspiring bohemian who sought to advance what Steiner calls "aesthetic regionalism." By 1934, though, McWilliams had shorn himself of old aspirations and inhibitions. Leaving "his constraining marriage and lucrative Pasadena law practice in 1934 to devote himself to labor activism and legal advocacy for the working class," McWilliams's "expressive power seemed to soar with his rising social consciousness and decision to join ranks with the underdog" (366). In the mid-30s, McWilliams provided legal counsel to a succession of workers' movements. His experiences with struggles such as the East L.A. walnut pickers' strike led directly to *Factories in the Field* (1939), the first of ten books McWilliams would publish in the ensuing decade. For Steiner, McWilliams, "like many of the radical regionalists of his time, and many surveyed in this present volume," managed "to merge a deep-seated love of place with a passion for racial equality and social justice"—a combination that Steiner believes "holds immense promise for the future" (373).

Regionalists on the Left successfully puts to bed one of the oldest myths of American regionalism: that there is a natural congruity between regionalism, nationalism, and reactionary politics. As Steiner and the other contributors to this worthy volume show, western soils have always been a fertile mix of dispossession, discontent, and dauntless hope.

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FROM COVERALLS TO ZOOT SUITS: *The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front*. By Elizabeth R. Escobedo. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. 256 pp \$34.95 cloth.) Reviewed by Natalia Molina.

As someone who teaches U.S. and Chicana/o history, I was excited to see a renewed attention to zoot suiters and 1940s Mexican American youth culture more broadly. Luis Alvarez's *The Power of the Zoot* (2009) provides a deeper understanding of the cultural politics around zoot suit lifestyle. That same year, Catherine Ramírez published *The Woman in the Zoot Suit* and she expanded our understanding of popular culture through a gendered analysis and a focus on women in this time period. Thus, when Elizabeth Escobedo's book *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits* was published this year I wondered do I have to read yet another book on this same time period and subject? The short answer is yes.

Despite the recognized interventions and successes of Alvarez and Ramírez, Escobedo's book still expands our understanding of race, community, and identity