

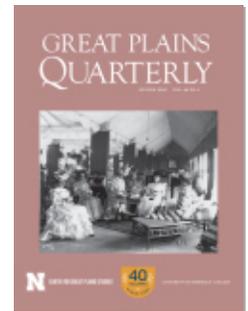


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*Left in the West: Literature, Culture, and Progressive
Politics in the American West* ed. by Gioia Woods (review)

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portant model for writing the history of a Great Plains state. It contributes a broad narrative that describes often overlooked historical contexts and serves as a helpful general reference for Texas history.

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Left in the West: Literature, Culture, and Progressive Politics in the American West.

Edited by Gioia Woods. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2018. vii + 432 pp. Illustrations, contributors, index. \$34.95, paper.

This expansive and provocative collection of essays focuses on how Left politics took shape in western American literature from the Progressive Era to the present. As Gioia Woods notes in the volume's introduction, the literary Left is typically thought to be rooted in the urban centers of the East Coast, and while the leftist politics in the West shared many ideas and even writers with the East, "western leftists developed concerns unique to the region, elevating issues of industrialization and environmental degradation, Native American sovereignty, and immigrant communities' access to power" (3).

Woods's introduction usefully contextualizes the history of leftist activism and writing in the West, from figures like Kenneth Rexroth and Lawrence Ferlinghetti to the recent struggle over the Dakota Access Pipeline. This broad scope is a key contribution of this volume. On the one hand, essays in the book address well-known political texts, such as Charlotte Perkins

Gilman's *Herland*, Woody Guthrie's ballads, and John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. Yet on the other hand, many essays address archives, figures, and texts that broaden and complicate what might count as leftist politics in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century West. From essays about peace activists in Utah, Ward Moore's speculative fiction, Mari Sandoz's fiction and autobiography, and the environmentalist thinking of Peter Berg, to accounts of poet Jack Spicer's revision of frontier tropes, Edward Weston and Tina Modotti's photographic engagement with bohemian spaces, Deborah Miranda's blend of the personal and the political, and Louise Thompson's unpublished memoirs, the collection arranges a broad array of ideas under the banner of "progressive politics."

The essays in the volume tend to be focused on particular archives or texts, and so the overarching connections between the variety and abundance of material in the volume can feel disconnected. Yet that is less of a problem with the volume than evidence of its success in expanding and revising our expectations about what fits under the rubric of leftist politics in western American literature. This edited volume adds to the already well-established scholarship on leftist politics in twentieth-century America, by drawing attention to the unique rapacity of political thinking and writing west of the Mississippi River.

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