



Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomás Rivera

Manuel Luis Martinez

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Rebelling against bourgeois vacuity and taking their countercultural critique on the road, the Beat writers and artists have long symbolized a spirit of freedom and radical democracy. Manuel Martinez offers an eye-opening challenge to this characterization of the Beats, juxtaposing them against Chicano nationalists like Raul Salinas, Jose Montoya, Luis Valdez, and Oscar Acosta and Mexican migrant writers in the United States, like Tomas Rivera and Ernesto Galarza.

In an innovative rereading of American radical politics and culture of the 1950s and 1960s, Martinez uncovers reactionary, neoromantic, and sometimes racist strains in the Beats' vision of freedom, and he brings to the fore the complex stances of Latinos on participant democracy and progressive culture. He analyzes the ways that Beats, Chicanos, and migrant writers conceived of and articulated social and political perspectives. He contends that both the Beats' extreme individualism and the Chicano nationalists' narrow vision of citizenship are betrayals of the democratic ideal, but that the migrant writers presented a distinctly radical and inclusive vision of democracy that was truly countercultural.

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