



Ain't Got No Home: America's Great Migrations and the Making of an Interracial Left

Erin Royston Battat

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Most scholarship on the mass migrations of African Americans and southern whites during and after the Great Depression treats those migrations as separate phenomena, strictly divided along racial lines. In this engaging interdisciplinary work, Erin Royston Battat argues instead that we should understand these Depression-era migrations as interconnected responses to the capitalist collapse and political upheavals of the early twentieth century. During the 1930s and 1940s, Battat shows, writers and artists of both races created migration stories specifically to bolster the black-white Left alliance. Defying rigid critical categories, Battat considers a wide variety of media, including literary classics by John Steinbeck and Ann Petry, "lost" novels by Sanora Babb and William Attaway, hobo novellas, images of migrant women by Dorothea Lange and Elizabeth Catlett, popular songs, and histories and ethnographies of migrant shipyard workers.

This vibrant rereading and recovering of the period's literary and visual culture expands our understanding of the migration narrative by uniting the political and aesthetic goals of the black and white literary Left and illuminating the striking interrelationship between American populism and civil rights.

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