



# Comrades and Critics: Women, Literature, and the Left in 1930s Canada

*Candida Rifkind*

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## Comrades and Critics: Women, Literature, and the Left in 1930s Canada Candida Rifkind

While Canadian historians have studied socialism in the 1930s, and although there have been many studies of American and British literary leftists from this period, *Comrades and Critics* is the first full-length study of Canada's 1930s literary left. Challenging dominant perceptions that this decade was a lull between the more celebrated modernist enterprises of the 1920s and 1940s, Candida Rifkind argues that the events of the 1930s - from mass unemployment, to the dustbowl, to the Spanish Civil War - galvanized a generation of writers, leading them to unite artistic practice and political action in provocative and influential ways.

Analyzing and recovering much-neglected poems, plays, manifestoes, and documentaries, Rifkind demonstrates how leftist cultural production came to dominate English-Canadian literature by the end of the decade. She pays particular attention to the significant role that women writers played in this period and examines a diverse group of writers that included Dorothy Livesay, Anne Marriott, Irene Baird, and Toby Gordon Ryan. These writers negotiated the struggle to revolutionize both literature and politics, while being subject to the gender hierarchies of socialism and literary modernism that continued long after the thirties came to an end.

A groundbreaking study in Canadian history and literature, *Comrades and Critics* is a much-needed examination of an important and still influential literary period.

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