



Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years

Richard H. Pells

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The Great Depression of the 1930s was more than an economic catastrophe to many American writers and artists. Attracted to Marxist ideals, they interpreted the crisis as a symptom of a deeper spiritual malaise that reflected the dehumanizing effects of capitalism, and they advocated more sweeping social changes than those enacted under the New Deal. In *Radical Visions and American Dreams*, Richard Pells discusses the work of Lewis Mumford, John Dewey, Reinhold Niebuhr, Edmund Wilson, and Orson Welles, among others. He analyzes developments in liberal reform, radical social criticism, literature, the theater, and mass culture, and especially the impact of Hollywood on depression-era America. By placing cultural developments against the background of the New Deal, the influence of the American Communist Party, and the coming of World War II, Pells explains how these artists and intellectuals wanted to transform American society, yet why they wound up defending the American Dream. A new preface enhances this classic work of American cultural history.

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