



New Literary Portraits of the American West: Contemporary Nevada Fiction

David Rio

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This book focuses on contemporary Nevada fiction as one of the most probing and intense literary explorations of the American West as a whole. Recent fictional representations of Nevada possess a revelatory value in relation to the whole West because they encompass some of the most common thematic trends in contemporary western writing. Actually, the thematic maturation of Nevada fiction over the last four decades often parallels the evolution of postfrontier writing, in particular, its growing departure from the overused topics and images of the formula western. Nevada fiction also possesses some unique and distinctive themes, such as its depiction of Basque immigrants, its emphasis on nuclear testing and nuclear waste, and its portrait of such peculiar cities as Reno and Las Vegas. This study discusses contemporary writing set in Nevada both by Nevadans (Robert Laxalt, Frank Bergon, Willy Vlautin, Phyllis Barber, Claire Vaye Watkins...) and by non-resident authors (Joan Didion, Hunter S. Thompson, Larry McMurtry...), drawing new attention to a remarkable literature that has been too often neglected in discussions of the American West.

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