



Pistol Packin' Mama: Aunt Molly Jackson and the Politics of Folksong (Music in American Life)

Shelly Romalis

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
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Meet Aunt Molly Jackson (1880-1960), one of American folklore's most fascinating characters. A coal miner's daughter, she grew up in eastern Kentucky, married a miner, and became a midwife, labor activist, and songwriter. Fusing hard experience with rich Appalachian musical tradition, her songs became weapons of struggle. In 1931, at age fifty, she was discovered and brought north, sponsored and befriended by an illustrious circle of left-wing intellectuals and musicians, including Theodore Dreiser, Alan Lomax, and Charles Seeger and his son Pete. Along with Sarah Ogan Gunning, Jim Garland (two of Aunt Molly's half-siblings), Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly, and other folk musicians, she served as a cultural broker, linking the rural working poor to big-city left-wing activism. Shelly Romalis draws upon interviews and archival materials to construct this portrait of an Appalachian woman who remained radical, raucous, proud, poetic, offensive, self-involved, and in spirit the real pistol packin' mama of the song.

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