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Ethnic Modernisms: Anzia Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Dislocation, and: Rereading the Harlem Renaissance: Race, Class, and Gender in the Fiction of Jessie Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, and Dorothy West (review)

Linda Wagner-Martin

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negotiate because of a distended, jargon-stuffed prose, styled to approximate modernist difficulty as well as poststructuralist estrangement. Lest this complaint be confused with the revenge of an antitheoretical prejudice, I'll quote a sample sentence from the chapter on the playwright Kennedy: "Seeking to control the crisis of incommensurate interpretive tasks by establishing its limit through thematized configurations of specific conflictual linguistic performances—in particular, undertaking to establish the contrast in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* between the Jungle and the Room (emblems of reified stasis—statuary, walls, repetition—versus signs of wildness—hair, scream, movement) as synecdochic enactment of a larger defining tension between classicism (such as colonialism, the unified bourgeois subject, theater history) and its disruption or interruption by the Uncanny (such as revolutionary resistance, the subject-in-process, the Imaginary)—I experienced instead the frustration of any sure conceptual grasp as Kennedy's play continuously displaced my schema by its own ceaseless self-interrogations" (229). Simply put, Benston's book is too good to contain such candidates for the museum of bad academic writing.

William J. Maxwell, University of Illinois,
Urbana-Champaign

***Ethnic Modernisms: Anzia Yeziarska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Dislocation.* By Delia Caparoso Konzett. New York: Palgrave. 2002. xiv, 202 pp. \$55.00.**

***Rereading the Harlem Renaissance: Race, Class, and Gender in the Fiction of Jessie Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, and Dorothy West.* By Sharon L. Jones. Westport, Conn.: Praeger. 2002. ix, 159 pp. \$62.95.**

The study of all literatures depends on definitions. During the past decade, the study of American literature has benefited immensely from new perspectives on its national and generic characteristics. Much of the recent critical work published under the rubrics of new historicism, feminism and postfeminism, and cultural, race, and queer studies has focused on modernism and its needlessly separated subcategory, the Harlem Renaissance. These two books draw usefully upon this decade of work, and—more important—help to move the discourse into different patterns of emphasis.

Delia Konzett's *Ethnic Modernisms* considers how the writings of Anzia Yeziarska, Zora Neale Hurston, and Jean Rhys attack stereotypes of class and nativism. The opening chapter is a model of helpful definition in which Konzett rehearses the crucial dilemma of recognition that Henry James experienced upon his return from England in 1904. Absent for over twenty years, thoroughly—and complacently—immured in the social and literary conventions of the upper middle class, James was aghast at the current state of cul-

ture in the United States. Reacting in *The American Scene* (1907) to what he saw as the transience of modern accomplishment, he wrote: "One story is good only till another is told, and sky-scrapers are the last word of economic ingenuity only till another word be written" (2). This is also the essay in which James introduces the claim that the "hotel-spirit" is the American spirit—a restless searching for the new rather than the enduring. (It is not surprising that James never again returned to this country, and that most of the writing he did during the last years of his life was nostalgic.)

In her chapter of definition, Konzett not only captures the sense of shock that accompanied the realization in the new century that a more populist America now existed, but she also identifies the many immigrant groups that changed the composition of a country dominated only twenty years earlier by Western European and Anglo languages, values, and blood lines. Konzett describes well the battles between the democratic acceptance of difference and actual exclusionary politics, as practiced, for example, by the Immigration Restriction League and the American Eugenics Society. She also summarizes current theoretical work on ethnicity, such as that by Edward Said, Werner Sollors, Paul Rogin, Thomas Ferraro, and Michael North.

The problem of categorization is never simple, and Konzett explains her choices of Yeziarska, Hurston, and Rhys as appropriate to the complex grid of modernism that was changed by new considerations of race, class, and displacement. These writers assume "complex, rather than reductive positions on ethnicity," and they reach for innovative language in order to provide what Konzett calls "their unique articulation of ethnic identity in an unprecedented era of transformation, displacement, and mass consumer culture" (7).

Konzett's best analyses within this interesting treatment concern the language experimentation in these writers' truly avant-garde aesthetics, which are "appropriate to their experience of dislocation and exclusion" (8). The readings of Yeziarska and Rhys, in particular, sustain new kinds of interpretations and give the reader challenges that live up to the announced wide topic.

In *Rereading the Harlem Renaissance*, Sharon Jones emphasizes class more than race. Jessie Fauset, with her degree from Cornell University, and Dorothy West, with her family home on Martha's Vineyard, have often been excluded from ethnically based considerations of modernism. Jones seeks to redress this omission with her polished readings of the works of both writers. Jones's major contention, however, is that today's view of Harlem and its artistic renaissance is severely limited, illustrating what she calls "the politics of race and socioeconomic class through the commercialization and commodification of Harlem as a site of 'blackness' and urban American culture" (1). Jones's introduction deals with the problem of defining "authenticity" in the black experience, and she categorizes existing treatments of African American literature as dominated by three tropes: the folk, the bourgeois, and the proletarian. That none of Jones's authors is a good fit for any of these three categories lends credibility to her objections.

That Zora Neale Hurston serves as lynchpin in both books speaks to the ever enriching activities of the best criticism. Rediscovered, republished, and reread in ways both textual and cultural, Hurston is now iconic. Her current position allows her to serve as a stable, accessible point of focus in considerations of less familiar writers and their works. In Konzett's book, Yeziarska and Rhys draw energy from being grouped with Hurston, as do Fauset and West in Jones's study. If any of us has ever questioned the centrality of Hurston to today's study of literature, these very good books provide emphatic positive answers.

Linda Wagner-Martin, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

***Red Matters: Native American Studies.* By Arnold Krupat. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press. 2002. xiv, 167 pp. Cloth, \$47.50; paper, \$18.95.**

***Grave Concerns, Trickster Turns: The Novels of Louis Owens.* By Chris LaLonde. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press. 2002. xiii, 220 pp. \$34.95.**

Arnold Krupat's *Red Matters* and Chris LaLonde's *Grave Concerns, Trickster Turns* seek to position Native American literature and cultural production centrally in American studies. Krupat addresses a variety of Native American texts, from the narratives of Sherman Alexie, Charles Eastman, and Mourning Dove to oral histories and translation theory; LaLonde, on the other hand, focuses exclusively on the novels of mixed-blood author Louis Owens. But their goal is the same: to use a variety of theoretical methods (from Derridean-informed poststructuralism to formulations of trickster metafictional techniques) to enrich and complicate our understanding of Native American identity and experience.

In *Red Matters*, Krupat aims to develop a "cosmopolitan comparativism" (ix) that will acknowledge nativist scholarly and political endeavors (the reach for tribal sovereignty), embrace an indigenist, earth-affirming non-Western knowledge system, employ a poststructuralist understanding of language (the indeterminate sign), and posit a postcolonial subaltern that speaks within and against master narratives of colonialism. Krupat's overarching goal is to develop an inclusive, post-Native "ethnocriticism" that will displace "colonial knowledge" systems that continue to erase or contain Native peoples. Here Krupat balances a series of close readings of texts ranging from Mourning Dove's *Cogewea* (1927) to Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1996) with Native social, judicial, and political struggles contextualized within a long history of genocide. For example, in his reading of mixed-blood representation, Krupat explores the varying narrative engagements throughout the twentieth century with larger social and political concerns. *Cogewea* must be read in its sociohistorical context not as a tragic story of "selling out" but as a text that affirms the