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The "American Novel Series" from Cambridge continues to grow apace with the appearance of three volumes devoted to "classic" novels (though that designation has been at some time problematic for all three texts) which have attracted a significant degree of attention recently from literary theorists.

The most recently canonized of the three novels is Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The issue of canonization is explicitly raised by Robert Hemenway, Hurston's biographer and author of the essay, "The Personal Dimension in *Their Eyes Were Watching God." Hemenway uses an amusing analogy with the academic hierarchy to describe the position of Hurston's novel "at the untenured assistant professor level... subject to replacement by Jamaica Kincaid or some other promising newcomer" – definitely not among the upper ranks of literary full professors. Related is the issue of Hurston's attitude to her white patrons during the period 1925 to 1932. Hemenway describes the oppressive influence exerted by the expectations of her supporters upon Hurston, affecting her health and her capacity for imaginative writing. The expectations that Hurston will articulate the experience of black women – by answering "how it feels to be colored me" – is held not only by Hurston's patrons; Hemenway suggests that we see in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* an interrogation of, or "interlocutionary discourse about," that very question. The image of Janie as engaged "in an incessant dialogue with the meanings of 'colored', of which she is not in control" provides the focus for Rachel Blau DuPlessis's stimulating essay, "Power, Judgment, and Narrative in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston: Feminist Cultural Studies." Hazel V. Carby's essay "The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and the Folk: Zora Neale Hurston" investigates the shifts in black cultural production that have not only contributed to bringing Hurston into the academy but have helped to transform her into "a veritable industry." And Nelly McKay, in "/, 'Crayon Enlargements of Life': Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as Autobiography" treats the text as an encounter between Hurston's writerly self and Janie's speakerly self, two discourses that together represent a "composite 'reading' of black female growth and development against the history of the oppression of race and sex," a composite which in terms of style belongs to a distinct tradition of African-American autobiographical writing.

The new essays on *Sister Carrie* collected in Donald Pizer's volume share as their common theme the place of the author in relation to his text. Thomas P. Riggio, in "Carrie's Blues," makes the case for Dreiser as a writer of psychological realism, pointing to an emotional counterpoint in the novel (Carrie's dissatisfaction or melancholia which increases with her material successes) that matches the well known structural counterpoint between Carrie and Hurstwood. This structural device has been seen as evidence of Dreiser's interest in the dynamics of Social Darwinism, an interest that is reconsidered by Richard Lehan in "Sister Carrie: The City, the Self and the Modes of Narrative Discourse." Barbara Hochman's essay, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Actress: The Rewards of Representation in *Sister Carrie,\" presents the figure of Carrie as a complex allegory of Dreiser's own experience of artistic creation – his "stake in creative autonomy and his need for
editorial and moral support" – including the projected relationship with his audience. The question of how to situate Dreiser in relation to the narrative is the explicit concern of Alan Trachtenberg in his essay, "Who Narrates? Dreiser's Presence in Sister Carrie," where he examines why it is that "the novel has yet to free itself altogether from the fate of exemplifying a life or a cultural moment."

If the essays on Sister Carrie share an interest in the author, Donald Pease's volume of essays on The Rise of Silas Lapham are all concerned with placing William Dean Howells's novel within the context of its cultural moment. For instance, the first essay of the collection, Paul A. Bove's "Helpless Longing, or, the Lesson of Silas Lapham," considers the ways in which Howells moulded the possibilities of literary realism to take in the experience of post-Civil War America. Wai-Chee Dimock writes a Foucaultian analysis of the novel within the conceptual framework provided by late nineteenth-century discourses about pain, in the tellingly entitled essay, "The Economy of Pain: Capitalism, Humanitarianism, and the Realistic Novel." The motif of suffering is explored further in the following piece, "Smiling through Pain: The Practice of Self in The Rise of Silas Lapham," where Daniel T. O'Hara discusses the novel's dynamics of power and subjection, foregrounding the tensions between Howells's romantic and commercial narratives. The commercial fate of Silas Lapham in the literary marketplace is the subject of James M. Cox's "The Rise of Silas Lapham: The Business of Manners and Morals" which plots the declining popularity of the novel in the twentieth century, and ultimately sides with Henry James's astonishment at Howells's contemporary popularity given that this novel "comprehends a world of misery – not the misery of failure but the misery of success … a psychological misery bordering on neurosis." A neurotic subtext is discovered in the novel by John Seelye, whose essay "The Hole in Howells: The Lapse in Silas Lapham" most closely approaches the narratological. Beginning with the observation that the writing of Silas Lapham coincided with a period of intense psychological strain for Howells, Seelye identifies a major lapse in the text's verisimilitude, a flaw that provides access to a subtextual psychological drama.

All three collections continue the high editorial standards of the series and each includes a lengthy and very informative introduction that sets out the changing conditions of reception for each novel, from the biographical and cultural details of first publication to an outline history of changing interpretations of the texts. These are books to be recommended for the insight they provide into current critical thinking about these important American novels.

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