



Accented America: The Cultural Politics of Multilingual Modernism (Modernist Literature and Culture)

Joshua L. Miller

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American literary works written in the heyday of modernism between the 1890s and 1940s were playfully, painfully, and ambivalently engaged with language politics. The immigrant waves of the period fed into writers' aesthetic experimentation; their works, in turn, rewired ideas about national identity along with literary form. *Accented America* looks at the long history of English-Only Americanism—the political claim that U.S. citizens must speak a singular, shared American tongue—and traces its action in the language workshop that is literature. The broadly multi-ethnic set of writers brought into conversation here—including Gertrude Stein, Jean Toomer, Henry Roth, Nella Larsen, John Dos Passos, Lionel Trilling, Am?rico Paredes, and Carlos Bulosan—reflect the massive demographic shifts taking place during the interwar years. These authors share an acute awareness of linguistic standardization while also following the defamiliarizing sway produced by experimentation with invented and improper literary vernaculars. Rather than confirming the powerfully seductive subtext of monolingualism—that those who speak alike are ethically and politically likeminded—multilingual modernists compose literature that speaks to a country of synthetic syntaxes, singular hybrids, and enduring strangeness.

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