



Writing the Ghetto: Class, Authorship, and the Asian American Ethnic Enclave (The American Literatures Initiative)

Yoonmee Chang

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In the United States, perhaps no minority group is considered as "model" or successful as the Asian American community. Rather than living in ominous "ghettoes," Asian Americans are described as residing in positive-sounding "ethnic enclaves." *Writing the Ghetto* helps clarify the hidden or unspoken class inequalities faced by Asian Americans, while insightfully analyzing the effect such notions have had on their literary voices.

Yoonmee Chang examines the class structure of Chinatowns, Koreatowns, Little Tokyos, and Little Indias, arguing that ghettoization in these spaces is disguised. She maintains that Asian American literature both contributes to and challenges this masking through its marginalization by what she calls the "ethnographic imperative." Chang discusses texts from the late nineteenth century to the present, including those of Sui Sin Far, Winnifred Eaton, Monica Sone, Fae Myenne Ng, Chang-rae Lee, S. Mitra Kalita, and Nam Le. These texts are situated in the contexts of the Chinese Exclusion Era, Japanese American internment during World War II, the globalization of Chinatown in the late twentieth century, the Vietnam War, the 1992 Los Angeles riots, and the contemporary emergence of the "ethnoburb."

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