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Thinking Its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry

Dorothy Wang

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When will American poetry and poetics stop viewing poetry by racialized persons as a secondary subject within the field? Dorothy J. Wang makes an impassioned case that now is the time. *Thinking Its Presence* calls for a radical rethinking of how American poetry is being read today, offering its own reading as a roadmap.

While focusing on the work of five contemporary Asian American poets—Li-Young Lee, Marilyn Chin, John Yau, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, and Pamela Lu—the book contends that aesthetic forms are inseparable from social, political, and historical contexts in the writing and reception of *all* poetry. Wang questions the tendency of critics and academics alike to occlude the role of race in their discussions of the American poetic tradition and casts a harsh light on the double standard they apply in reading poems by poets who are racial minorities. This is the first sustained study of the formal properties in Asian American poetry across a range of aesthetic styles, from traditional lyric to avant-garde. Wang argues with conviction that critics should read minority poetry with the same attention to language and form that they bring to their analyses of writing by white poets.

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