



American Narratives: Multiethnic Writing in the Age of Realism

Margaret Crumpton Winter

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American Narratives takes readers back to the turn of the twentieth century to reintroduce four writers of varying ethnic backgrounds whose works were mostly ignored by critics of their day. With the skill of a literary detective, Molly Crumpton Winter recovers an early multicultural discourse on assimilation and national belonging that has been largely overlooked by literary scholars.

At the heart of the book are close readings of works by four nearly forgotten artists from 1890 to 1915, the era often termed the age of realism: Mary Antin, a Jewish American immigrant from Russia; Zitkala-Ša, a Sioux woman originally from South Dakota; Sutton E. Griggs, an African American from the South; and Sui Sin Far, a biracial, Chinese American female writer who lived on the West Coast. Winter's treatment of Antin's *The Promised Land* serves as an occasion for a reexamination of the concept of assimilation in American literature, and the chapter on Zitkala-Ša is the most comprehensive analysis of her narratives to date. Winter argues persuasively that Griggs should have long been a more visible presence in American literary history, and the exploration of Sui Sin Far reveals her to be the embodiment of the varied and unpredictable ways that diversity of cultures came together in America.

In *American Narratives*, Winter maintains that the writings of these four rediscovered authors, with their emphasis on issues of ethnicity, identity, and nationality, fit squarely in the American realist tradition. She also establishes a multiethnic dialogue among these writers, demonstrating ways in which cultural identity and national belonging are persistently contested in this literature.

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