Christine Kim


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Christine Kim’s *The Minor Intimacies of Race: Asian Publics in North America* traces the distinct conditions under which different publics are formed through the conversations, events, gestures, and relations of power that produce social intimacy between individuals. Kim specifically focuses on Asian Canadian, Asian North American, and Asian diasporic “minor publics,” which are theorized as impermanent and “malleable” racial collectives that emerge in response to specific sociopolitical concerns and the actions of a dominant and more stable public (8). As these collectives contend with issues of recognition within the nation and under multicultural governance, they also create new communities—new minor publics—based on their affective responses to particular events. Approaching the problematics of “Asian Canadian” or “Asian North American” through the framework of a minor public is provocative. What would it mean to read these publics as ones that are formed not solely through claims of identity, heritage, or nationality, but through shared feeling and contingent forms of social engagement? *The Minor Intimacies of Race* suggests that examining the emergence of these publics reveals the specific ways that “matters of address, affect, and audience” shape the exchanges that figure these minor Asian publics (18). More importantly, Kim’s analysis reveals that these publics, though ephemeral, can “transform the social imaginary by forcing us to engage with racial affect and our desires for social intimacy” (27).

To undertake this study, Kim analyzes social texts and debates that express the dominant public’s refusal of social intimacy with minor publics, and considers how performance art, literary texts, theatrical performances, and media discussions from these minor publics also engage with the need for affective recognition and collective belonging. Kim primarily focuses on Asian Canadian artists and writers whose works reflect a yearning for publics that are “willing to engage with diasporic memories, global migrations, and transnational racial identifications not often recognized by a national multicultural imaginary” (17). Although the project’s scope is the global routed through the national or the local, some of Kim’s most incisive artistic critiques are raised in relation to artistic interventions that have the capacity to reach a very limited audience, but still produce vital affective responses and forms of social intimacy.

In addition to a reading of Joy Kogawa’s novel *The Rain Ascends*, Chapter 1 engages with one performance that reaches a small audience: Theatre Replacement’s *Bioboxes*, which only reaches a single audience member at a time. Exemplary of her theorization of social intimacy, Kim addresses the potential for quotidian elements of Asian Canadian narratives, rather than traumatic experiences, to become sites where individuals are bound together through mutual identification. For instance, Kim discusses how social intimacy is produced in artist Cindy Mochizuki’s contribution to the *Bioboxes* project as