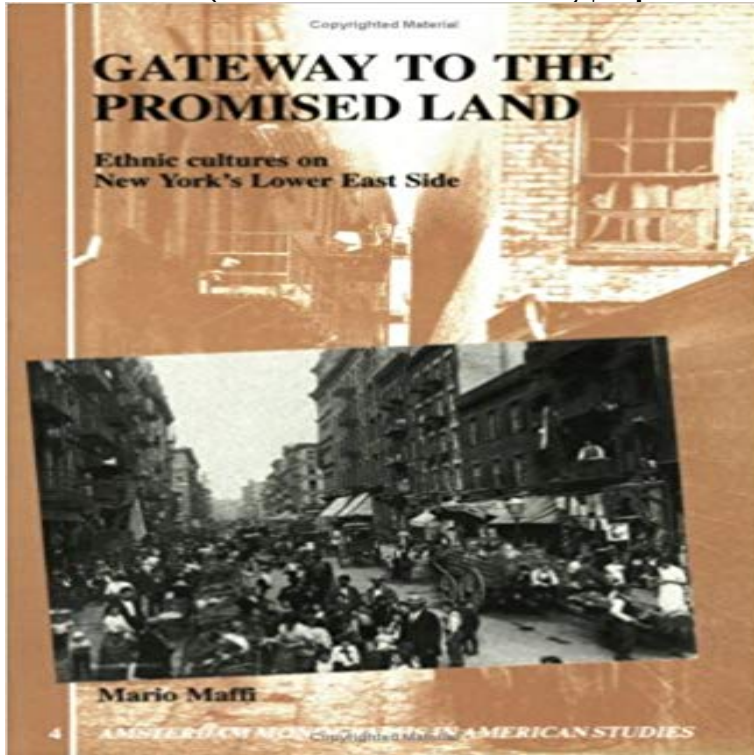


Gateway to the Promised Land: Ethnic Cultures on New York's Lower East Side (Amsterdam Monographs in American Studies)



For the first time told in its entirety, the social and cultural experience of New York's Lower East Side comes vividly to life in this book as that of a huge and complex laboratory ever swelled and fed by migrant flows and ever animated by a high-voltage tension of daily research and resistance - the fascinating history of the historical immigrant quarter that, in Manhattan, stretches between East 14th Street, East River, the access to the Brooklyn Bridge, and Lafayette Street. Irish and Germans at first, then Chinese and Italians and East European Jews, and finally Puerto Ricans gave birth, in its streets and sweatshops, cafes and tenements, to a lively multi-ethnic and cross-cultural community, which was at the basis of several modern artistic expressions, from literature to cinema, from painting to theatre. The book, based upon a rich wealth of historical materials (settlement reports, autobiographies, novels, newspaper articles) and on first-hand experience, explores the many different aspects of this long history from the late 19th century years to nowadays: the way in which immigrants reacted to the new environment and entered a fruitful dialectics with America, the way in which they reorganized their lives and expectations and struggled to defend a collective identity against all disintegrating factors, the way in which they created and disseminated cultural products, the way in which they functioned as a gigantic magnet attracting several outside artists and intellectuals. The book thus has a long introduction detailing the present situation and mainly depicting the realities within the Chinese and Puerto Rican communities and the fight against gentrification, six chapters on the Lower East Side's past history (its social and cultural geography, the relationship among the several different communities, the labor situation, the literary output, the development of an

ethnic theatre, the neighborhoods influences upon turn-of-the-century American culture in the fields of sociology, photography, art, literature and cinema), and a conclusion summing up past and present and discussing the main aspects of a Lower East Side aesthetics.

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