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Introduction

Recasting Women in the U.S. Occupation of Japan

Our experience in the Philippines and in the more recent reformation of Japanese life, where in reshaping the lives of others we have been guided by the same pattern from which is taken the design of our own lives, offers unmistakable proof that while American in origin and American in concept, these tenets underlying a truly free society are no less designed to secure, preserve and advance the well-being of one race than of another. . . . The lesson from past and contemporary events is that they are no longer peculiarly American, but now belong to the entire human race.

—FOURTH OF JULY MESSAGE, GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR,
SUPREME COMMANDER IN OCCUPIED JAPAN¹

This occupation has had no historical guide. Its approach is an out-growth of the slowly rising tide of humanism in the West. . . . The goodwill, the desire to be helpful to the Japanese as a people and as a nation is found, by and large, at all levels and seems to stem from the genuine altruism and enlightened concept of the United States interests of General MacArthur and many members of the Occupation. One needs only to recall the colonization policies in the East of the Western world in the last centuries to realize the colossal differences in points of view.

—DR. FLORENCE POWDERMAKER, VISITING EXPERT²

The remarkable progress of Japanese women as they pull themselves up by their geta straps to pioneer in democratic procedures provides an inspiring record of world history. Only by comparison with their previous subjugation under feudalistic tradition little more than one year ago can the full significance of their achievements be realized.

—LT. ETHEL WEED, WOMEN'S AFFAIRS BRANCH OF THE
CIVIL INFORMATION AND EDUCATION SECTION³

On August 15, 1945, World War II came to an end with Japan's unconditional surrender. General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), flew from the Philippines to Japan with a mission to occupy and demilitarize the defeated nation. The place and manner of MacArthur's arrival seemed to signal the victor's absolute confidence and unquestioned authority over its vanquished enemy. MacArthur—the embodiment of U.S. military power and a consummate actor well known for his grand performances—landed at the Atsugi Airfield, previously a training field for Japanese *kamikaze* fighters, with a handful of Allied troops. MacArthur himself was armed only with a corn-cob pipe. Despite his staff's concern about possible attacks by enemy soldiers not yet disarmed, MacArthur's triumphant landing was followed by a smooth procession to the New Grand Hotel in Yokohama, and later an entry into Tokyo where he established the General Headquarters (GHQ) of SCAP. A new chapter of postwar U.S.–Japan relations thus opened with richly gendered and racialized symbolism: the United States' imposition of its white masculine military authority over Japan, now a defeated and subjugated nation in the Far East.

Following the ferocious belligerence between the enemies in World War II, many Japanese feared that the objective of the occupation was to punish Japan. Yet, MacArthur declared that his intention was benign and noble: to “reorient” and “rehabilitate” Japan into a modern, democratic, and enlightened nation. While he perceived the Japanese as “an alien race of spiritual growth stunted by long tenure under the physical, mental and cultural strictures of feudal precepts,” he had supreme confidence in his ability to transplant the American ideal to Japan and civilize its subjects.⁴ He had what he considered evidence to support his conviction: U.S. governance in the Philippines had demonstrated America's capacity to “civilize” an alien and inferior race, and establish “democracy” abroad. Just as the U.S. policy of “benign assimilation” in the Philippines had uplifted its subjects from a state of ignorance and savagery, so would the U.S. occupation give the Japanese an unprecedented opportunity for civilization and enlightenment.

As MacArthur frequently argued, U.S. intervention in Asia was distinctly different from the European colonialism that preceded it, a sentiment clearly shared by Dr. Florence Powdermaker, a “visiting expert” who reported on the occupation's effects on the Japanese. This belief in the exploitative and oppressive nature of European colonialism was widespread among Americans involved in the occupation, who believed that U.S. overseas operations were driven by superior “humanitarian” objectives. Thus, MacArthur and Powdermaker articulated—in extraordinarily universalizing and expansionist terms—the new mission the Americans were to perform in the postwar world: the dissemination of American tenets of freedom and

democracy that were “no longer peculiarly American, but now belong to the entire human race.”

It was in this context of the American project to civilize and democratize a racially inferior other that Japanese women as gendered subjects emerged as centrally important figures. Seen as victimized for centuries by “Oriental male chauvinism,” Japanese women embodied for the Americans feudal tradition, backwardness, and lack of civilization. As oppressed and helpless women of color, they became ideal candidates for Western salvation and emancipation. The occupiers’ zeal for liberating Japanese women from indigenous male domination was all-consuming and multifaceted. MacArthur granted suffrage to Japanese women and praised their “progress” under U.S. tutelage as setting an example for the world,⁵ while other male occupiers “emancipated” Japanese women by initiating various constitutional and legal changes and policies.

Following a familiar colonial trope of heterosexual romance between Western men and non-Western women, American men involved in the occupation expressed their desire to save Japanese women in various ways. Earnest Hoberecht, a correspondent for United Press International, advocated kissing as a path to liberation.⁶ Kissing, of course, was often only a prelude. Many occupiers believed that fraternization and marriage were ways to save Japanese women. Based on a James Michener novel, the popular film *Sayonara* portrayed a sexual encounter between a U.S. soldier and a Japanese woman as an analogy of the U.S. occupation of Japan. Romance provided the woman with a means of escaping from restrictive social systems in Japan, allowing her to achieve individual fulfillment and freedom. As if to enact the script of *Sayonara*, Raymond Higgins, the military governor stationed in Hiroshima, married his Japanese maid, “saving” her from the aftermath of the atomic bomb and her abusive husband. Their union symbolized a new, heterosexual, familial coalition between the two nations in the postwar world.⁷

The postwar U.S.—Japan encounter also involved dynamics that exceeded the colonial trope of heterosexual romance, however. No less earnest in their attempts to emancipate and transform Japanese women were women reformers in the occupation forces, and especially Beate Sirota Gordon, a European Jewish woman who had acquired American citizenship just a few years prior to her enlistment in the occupation. Although she had lived in Japan before the war and possessed Japanese language skills, she had absolutely no legal expertise. Nevertheless, the twenty-two-year-old college graduate was placed on the all-American—and almost all-male—constitutional revision team, and assigned to draft articles for Japanese women’s civil rights. She thus came to play a critical role in pushing for a constitutional guarantee of gender equality, a guarantee nonexistent in the United States.

The ideal of gender equality proclaimed in the new constitution was to be implemented by a group of American women occupiers led by Ethel Weed. Their passion for gender reform was all the more remarkable, as they were utterly unfamiliar with Japan, had no language skills, and received no extensive training for their job in occupied Japan. Low ranking within the predominantly male occupation bureaucracy, these women nonetheless worked tirelessly to emancipate and transform Japanese women. Despite rhetoric to the contrary about its importance, gender reform efforts were frequently left to individual women occupiers' ingenuity and commitment. Many other, "more important," reforms originated from blueprints created prior to the occupation, or from MacArthur's directives, and involved higher ranking personnel in the U.S. government or the headquarters in Tokyo.⁸ Ironically, this gave women occupiers some autonomy and allowed them to devise and implement—often from scratch—their own visions of gender democracy in Japan. Many Japanese women enthusiastically welcomed American women occupiers and their efforts to democratize Japan, and tapped into shared discursive repertoires of gender equality and democracy to articulate their own visions of postwar womanhood.

As the occupiers' memoirs and autobiographical writings indicate, the occupation offered many American women the best and most memorable years of their lives. As citizens of a nation founded on principles of democracy, and confident about their qualifications and effectiveness as educator-reformers, they believed that American women were the ideal teachers for Japanese women. Ethel Weed's epigraph at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates her conviction that the arrival of Americans ended centuries of oppression of Japanese women. During the occupation, American women were given a rare chance to engage in a mission of national, indeed global, significance. By disseminating freedom, equality, and democracy in postwar Japan, they were supporting American Cold War struggles against communist totalitarianism.

Over the past five decades, belief in the successful transformation of Japanese women's lives provided many occupiers and subsequent generations of Americans with "unquestionable" evidence that U.S. interventions in Japan were benign, and indeed beneficent. The picture of Japanese women being liberated from male domination and gaining new rights under U.S. tutelage is also etched in the minds of many Japanese, and is understood as a turning point in the history of Japan. This view of the occupation as a remarkably generous effort by the victor to "democratize" Japan and especially its women has constituted an extraordinarily powerful historical account shaping American and Japanese self-understandings. For Americans, the narrative of Japanese women's emancipation has solidified the image of the United States as the leader of freedom and democracy, justifying and promoting its

pursuit of imperial hegemony in the post–World War II world. For Japanese, the celebration of the occupation as Japan’s new beginning, its rebirth as a democratic and peace-loving nation, has resulted in historical amnesia about its colonial violence prior to the occupation and subsequent involvement in the Cold War. In crucial though often unacknowledged ways, the gendered narrative of occupation has effected a cleansing of the images of two imperial nations with violent pasts.

Rethinking the Occupation: Gender and Cold War Imperial Feminism

Pedagogy of Democracy: Feminism and the Cold War in the U.S. Occupation of Japan is an attempt to intervene in the triumphal narrative of the occupation, women, and democracy from a critical feminist perspective.⁹ I argue in this book that rather than an unprecedented moment of liberation for Japanese women, gender reform in occupied Japan was intimately connected on the one hand to prewar nationalist and imperialist politics, and on the other to emerging Cold War cultural dynamics. By resituating the U.S. occupation and its feminist interventions in larger geopolitical and cultural contexts, I examine it as an extraordinarily complex and problematic instance of Cold War imperial feminism in the Far East.

In critiquing the existing narrative of the occupation, I do not simply replace the “occupiers as liberators” model with that of “occupiers as oppressors,” but offer a far more nuanced and multilayered analysis. During the occupation, as I show, American women simultaneously promoted and undermined the U.S. pursuit of Cold War hegemony. At one level, they clearly participated in U.S. imperialism by disseminating Cold War discourses of femininity and domesticity and promoting the Americanization of postwar Japan in the name of women’s emancipation. Their project of emancipating Japanese women was inspired by, and in turn promoted and justified, U.S. imperial expansionism in the early postwar years. At the same time, American women also subverted the dominant structure of power, as their participation in gender reform visibly contradicted the Cold War notions of women and domestic containment. Japanese women’s participation in the occupation had equally or more complex consequences. On the one hand, Japanese middle-class women enthusiastically welcomed the occupiers’ reform project and embraced American discourses of democracy and gender equality. On the other hand, however, they also developed a close personal bond with American women reformers, deviating from the Cold War tenet of heterosexual normativity by creating a female homosocial sphere and causing anxiety among American male occupiers. Even Japanese women’s resistance often resulted in

ambiguous and unpredictable outcomes. Women unionists openly defied the American authorities by participating in communist-led labor protests and praising gender policies in the Soviet Union and China as the ideal. However, they also insisted on the Cold War ideals of domesticity and heterosexuality and stigmatized poor, economically displaced women who earned their means as prostitutes. In U.S.-occupied Japan, then, American and Japanese women were constantly stepping in and out of the dominant apparatus of power, sometimes reinforcing and at other times undermining an emerging structure of hegemony. Recast from a critical feminist perspective, the U.S. occupation of Japan becomes an extraordinarily dynamic and multifaceted story about women's negotiations with power. Simultaneous tenacity and instability of hegemony, and unpredictable and ironic outcomes of feminist political mobilization, constitute the major themes of this book.

In analyzing the occupation as a case of Cold War imperial feminism, I create an interdisciplinary dialogue among occupation studies, Cold War cultural studies, and feminist colonial and postcolonial studies. This multidisciplinary dialogue not only results in richer analysis of the occupation itself; it also challenges each discipline to reconsider some of its preexisting analytical and empirical assumptions.

Occupation Studies

The task of documenting and evaluating the U.S. occupation of Japan has generated numerous and contentious debates among scholars and nonscholars in Japan and the United States, resulting in a large body of work collectively referred to as occupation studies, or *senryō kenkyū*. Often at stake in these debates are national self-understandings of each country. Review essays by John Dower and Carole Gluck illuminate this aspect of occupation studies.¹⁰ During the 1950s and 1960s, American scholars had a strong tendency to define the occupation as an example of beneficent American rule, which liberated and democratized the Japanese. Americans thus focused on demilitarization and democratization, but largely ignored the antilabor and anticommunist measures that accompanied economic recovery and Cold War containment policies. Japanese scholars during the same period were highly critical of U.S. operations, focusing on the occupation's "reverse course" and its repressive and antidemocratic measures. The reverse course refers to a major shift in U.S. policies in Japan around 1947, when the agenda of democratization was replaced by one of rebuilding Japan as an economic and military ally for the United States in the emerging Cold War. Strongly influenced by Marxist class analysis, Japanese scholarship thus focused on the occupation's repressive measures toward leftist labor and other popular movements, and the resurgence of prewar Japanese conservative forces and the economic structures.

Spearheaded by John Dower in the United States and Takemae Eiji in Japan, since the 1970s, these scholarly communities have modified their clearly opposing views, and begun a dialogue and even collaborative research. As Carol Gluck succinctly notes, while earlier studies focused on “what the well-intentioned United States had done for Japan in political and social reform” revisionist scholarship questioned “what the United States had, for its own ideological and security interests, done to Japan in the way of economic and military involvement.”¹¹ Revisionist historians began to pay more attention to the operation of power at various levels in the U.S. occupation and to Japanese dynamics, as well as to the larger geopolitics of the Cold War. On the Japanese side, Takemae and other revisionist historians have refrained from overarching generalizations regarding U.S. interventions, examining instead individual policies and decision-making processes, in particular pertaining to land reforms, labor policies, and the imperial throne, and tracing the motives and intentions of individual occupiers and Japanese responses to them. Since the onset of this revisionist historiography, American and Japanese scholars have collaborated in joint conferences, most notably a series of symposia involving scholars and ex-occupiers held at the MacArthur Memorial, Archives, and Library in Norfolk, Virginia, from 1975 to 1991.

These studies have provided an important foundation for subsequent scholarship by identifying the occupation’s general trend, organizational structures, and major policies. Started as the Allied occupation of Japan at the end of World War II, the occupation was almost from the very beginning exclusively controlled by the United States, which evaded interference from other Allied powers such as Britain, the Soviet Union, China, and Australia. Under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, who as SCAP upheld demilitarization and democratization as the twin agenda in postwar Japan, American occupiers set up general headquarters, GHQ SCAP, in Tokyo and proceeded to administer indirect rule of mainland Japan by executing reform through the existing Japanese government. While General MacArthur stood as the head of SCAP, the bulk of reform efforts was carried out by American military and civilian bureaucrats in staff sections of Tokyo headquarters, including Government Section, Public Health and Welfare Section, Civil Information and Education Section, and Economic and Scientific Section, among others. Literally thousands of directives, memoranda, and verbal orders were issued by these sections in areas ranging from reform of the Imperial Throne to economic reconstruction to educational liberalization. To assist GHQ SCAP, local military government teams were set up throughout Japan, with American occupiers transmitting orders and directives from GHQ to local Japanese officials and monitoring the progress of democratization. Built in extreme haste, the occupation’s organizational structure suffered from numerous conflicts and disagreements among sections and

poor communications between Tokyo headquarters and local military teams. Furthermore, despite their zeal and self-understanding as democratizers, many of the occupiers had little knowledge of Japan and lacked qualification and experience as reformers. These factors contributed to the occupation dynamics that were frequently contradictory and unpredictable, even haphazard and chaotic.

By now, it is commonplace among scholars to characterize the occupation as consisting of at least two different phases, with the so-called reverse course causing a major shift in occupation policies somewhere between 1947 and 1949. The initial phase of the occupation witnessed strong idealism among American occupiers who went on to initiate a series of radical reforms aimed at demilitarization and democratization. They include constitutional revisions that upheld popular sovereignty and pacifism; purges of wartime collaborators from public offices and trials of war criminals at military tribunals, the most famous of which was the International Military Tribunal for the Far East; liberalization of politics that released prewar political prisoners, legalized the Japan Communist Party, and enfranchised women; economic reform that dissolved *zaibatsu* (industrial conglomerates) and abolished the exploitative system of rural landlordism and tenancy; protection of workers' rights through such laws as the Trade Union Law that encouraged unionization and the Labor Standards Law that set the standard for working conditions; and educational reform that promoted coeducation and emphasized propagation of democracy, peace, and freedom.

With the emergence of the Cold War, scholars argue, the occupation entered a conservative, retrenchment period characterized by increasingly repressive measures of remilitarization, economic recovery, and political containment of the left. While SCAP's intervention in a nationwide general strike scheduled for February 1, 1947 is commonly considered the beginning of reverse course, there are other events and policies that indicate an increasing "reversal" of the occupation policies. Those who had been purged at the beginning of the occupation were now depurged, and the "Red Purge" began to target Communist Party members and the left-labor front activists and workers. The policy of demilitarization was replaced by that of remilitarization, leading to an increasing pressure toward constitutional revision and Japanese rearmament, industrial remilitarization geared toward defense production, and a projection for long-term installation and expansion of U.S. military forces in Japan. Propagation of democracy, freedom, and equality gave way to anticommunist education, which emphasized the danger of communist infiltration and the importance of defending (American) democracy.

Clearly the occupation went through a shift halfway through its course. However, it is too simplistic to characterize the occupation as consisting of two distinctly different and contrasting phases, with the initial democratic

and liberatory (thus positive) period replaced by the later antidemocratic and repressive (thus negative) period. As the subsequent discussions show, American democratic reform in Japan, especially its feminist intervention, was from the very beginning deeply informed by American racism, sexism, and imperialism. Even those seemingly positive reform efforts in the early days of the occupation such as inclusion of gender equality in the new constitution, enfranchisement of women, and grassroots educational efforts originated from and fed back into American assertion of imperial hegemony and racial and national superiority. As the Cold War increased its saliency, feminist reform discourses and practices got progressively entrenched in the politics of anticommunist containment, but the intertwining of feminism and imperialism had been a defining feature since before the onset of reverse course. Thus, instead of arguing for the drastic reversal of the occupation, this book examines how preexisting, and already problematic, imperial feminist discourses and practices were gradually revised and refitted to inform Cold War containment politics of gender, race, class, and sexuality.

In recent years occupation scholarship has witnessed a number of studies that challenge and expand empirical and analytical scopes of previous scholarship. Pushing the disciplinary boundaries of Japanese studies and occupation studies and drawing on critical scholarship on race, culture, and empire, studies such as John Dower's *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* and *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* and Yukiko Koshiro's *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the U.S. Occupation of Japan* illuminate the significance of race in the occupation dynamics.

Focusing on the parallel and mutually reinforcing development of American and Japanese racism and imperialism, Yukiko Koshiro argues that race constituted a common discursive ground where the two former enemies came to affirm each other's standing in international hierarchies, which led to "successful" and indeed "smooth" Cold War alliance making. Adopting Western imperial discourses of racial and national hierarchies (i.e., the superiority of self and the inferiority of others) to engineer its own colonial expansionism in Asia, Imperial Japan had constructed itself as an "honorary white," a nation capable of assimilating into superior Western culture and civilization while standing apart from and above other inferior Asians. Despite its challenge to Western imperialism during the war, Japan had affirmed and reinforced Western imperial understanding of white supremacy, and Western nations in turn had accepted to an extent Japan's sense of superiority to Asia and proximity to the West. This mutual dependency of Western and Japanese racism continued into the postwar years. After a short period of time during which race was used as a punitive tool to put Japan back into its "proper place," the United States actively cultivated and even manipulated Japan's admiration toward the West and its distance

from the rest of Asia to turn the former enemy into an effective Cold War ally. As Koshiro argues, race and racism functioned as a source of productive power during the occupation.¹²

Echoing Edward Said's thesis on Orientalism, John Dower's studies situate the occupation within the larger context of imperial culture, history, and politics and provide a genealogical perspective on race and racism that covers a longer span of time. Observing American racism toward Japan during the war and the postwar occupation, he argues that American understanding of self as civilized and superior and Japan as uncivilized and inferior traces back not only to "racial stereotypes that Europeans and Americans had applied to nonwhites for centuries: during the conquest of the New World, the slave trade, the Indian Wars in the United States, the agitation against Chinese immigrants in America, the colonization of Asia and Africa, the U.S. conquest of the Philippines at the turn of the century," but more generally to the long-standing Western colonial vocabularies of the superior West and the inferior Orient/Other.¹³ Defining the occupation as an instance of "imperial democracy" driven by the notion of white supremacy, he argues that "[f]or all its uniqueness of time, place, and circumstance—all its peculiarly 'American' iconoclasm—the occupation was . . . but a new manifestation of the old racial paternalism that historically accompanied the global expansion of the Western powers."¹⁴ Dower goes on to illuminate how within the context of American imperial democracy and racism Japanese actively engaged in a diverse range of political negotiations with the occupiers—from collaboration to manipulation to resistance—at the grassroots and intergovernmental levels. Both Koshiro and Dower shed light on the significance of race as an analytical category that merits careful attention in studies of the occupation.

Despite the enormous contributions that have been made in the past decades, in particular excellent analytical and empirical insights offered by Dower and Koshiro, occupation historiography—revisionist or not—has been primarily "masculine" scholarship. The voluminous scholarship of the last five decades offers little information and analysis pertaining to women during the occupation, and equally or more problematically, fails to see the occupation itself as a gendered and gendering process that is also informed by other vectors of power such as race, class, and sexuality.

Influenced by the increasing saliency of a women's studies approach, women scholars in the United States and Japan have undoubtedly intervened in this trend by focusing on women who had hitherto been ignored in occupation studies. Defining the occupation as an instance of "women's liberation," however, the predominant focus has been on the positive effects the occupiers allegedly brought to Japanese women. Susan Pharr's influential work, "The Politics of Women's Rights," is a prime example. She analyzes the policymaking processes in which American women occupiers formed

“an alliance for liberation” with middle- and upper-class Japanese women leaders to achieve Japanese women’s rights, despite patriarchal resistance from both Japanese and American men. The occupation, Pharr argues, was “the world’s most radical experiment with women’s rights,” resulting in successful “feminist reform”: “The marriage of democracy and women’s rights in the minds of most Occupation personnel heightened the significance of their contribution.”¹⁵

To a surprising degree, Japanese scholars share Pharr’s perspective. Citing Pharr, they argue that the occupation’s gender reform—constitutional and civil code reforms, women’s suffrage, the establishment of the Women’s and Minors’ Bureau, grassroots educational programs, and so on—provides overwhelming evidence of the positive role that the United States, and especially its women occupiers, played for Japanese women. Even though U.S. gender interventions might not have been thorough or sufficient, the occupation was a positive event for Japanese women.¹⁶ It is important to note, however, that the studies by these Japanese women scholars are significantly more nuanced than Pharr’s, generally mentioning the limitations inherent in any effort to instill “foreign” notions of “democracy” and “gender equality.” Uemura Chikako, for example, points out that U.S. gender policies were based on a U.S. middle-class ideology, and thus were not as radical as they might seem at first sight. Japanese women scholars are also aware of the reverse course and thus acknowledge the less than democratic nature of occupation interventions. Yet these observations do not lead them to a more critical reevaluation of U.S. gender reforms per se, nor of the meanings and implications of such reforms within the context of the occupation or of Cold War imperialism. They rarely question what they perceive as the genuinely liberatory motives and intentions of American women occupiers, and ignore racism, sexism, classism, and imperialism that informed these women’s discourses and practices. As a result, they repeat a pattern well observed in other studies of women and imperialism: A feminist project of bringing women to the center stage of historical analysis of empire sustains and promotes, rather than challenges, Western imperial hegemony. Women’s studies scholarship has played a salient role in reproducing a problematic connection between imperialism and feminism.

In the recent shift women’s studies has caused in occupation studies, former women occupiers have played a salient role. Beginning with Susan Pharr’s interviews with Beate Sirota Gordon in the 1970s, scholars and media have sought witness accounts from women who served in the occupation. As a result, Gordon, an author of the gender equality articles in the postwar constitution, and Carmen Johnson, an officer in charge of grassroots democratization efforts, have achieved a certain celebrity status as feminist mother-liberators of Japanese women. Not only have they become women scholars’

favorite interview subjects; their memoirs have been published, first in Japanese and later in English; documentaries depicting their efforts to emancipate Japanese women have been produced in Japan; and academic conferences and lectures both in the United States and Japan have provided forums for them to tell their occupation stories to a predominantly female audience.

Gordon's 1997 English-language autobiography, *The Only Woman in the Room*, was praised by a number of American celebrities.¹⁷ On its back cover, Gloria Steinem states that "[Gordon's] personal story will enlighten all who question the importance of women's presence in the corridors of power"; Yo-Yo Ma describes the autobiography as "[t]he story of a remarkable life . . . Fascinating"; and Joanne Woodward describes Gordon as a "marvel of a woman," whose book "reflects her genuine love of people, the arts and life itself." On February 10, 1999, Gordon was interviewed by Ted Koppel on ABC's *Nightline* regarding her role in emancipating Japanese women.¹⁸ On February 18, 2002, in the midst of the U.S.-Afghan war following the attacks on the World Trade Center, Gordon was interviewed by Jackie Judd on NPR's *Morning Edition*, where she discussed not only her role in bringing gender equality to women in postwar Japan, but explicitly referring to the task she had performed for Japanese women more than half a century ago, strongly urged Afghan women to insist on their desire for gender equality.¹⁹ In both her retelling of the U.S. occupation of Japan and commentary on the U.S.-Afghan war, women of color become students who need to be prodded and encouraged by Gordon, the ultimate feminist teacher-liberator. With a women's studies approach as her vehicle, and women scholars as her interlocutors, Gordon has played a vital role in recirculating the gendered narrative of women, democracy, and imperial might.

The exhilarating narrative of American women emancipating Japanese women is not simply a product of American bias. For instance, Gordon's memoir, first published in Japanese, resulted from her collaboration with a Japanese female filmmaker, Hiraoka Mariko. As the postscript to the Japanese-language version titled *1945-nen no kurisumasu* indicates, the project of documenting Gordon's story started with Hiraoka. Initially, an all-female film crew, directed by Hiraoka, created a documentary about Gordon's involvement in the constitutional revision. The popularity of the film led to the publication of her autobiography, in which Hiraoka was again instrumental. Not only did she interview Gordon, who dictated her life story in Japanese. Hiraoka conducted archival research, and interviewed a number of Japanese and American individuals who had been involved in constitutional revision. Then Hiraoka transcribed the dictation, incorporated the archival materials, and turned them into a book-length manuscript. To ensure its accuracy, she then revisited Gordon in New York, and read aloud the entire manuscript to her. The Japanese-language version of Gordon's autobiography

was thus created through Hiraoka's remarkable dedication. The publication of an English version followed. Hiraoka's contribution to making Gordon's story public is thus crucial, and well acknowledged by Gordon.

Clearly, Japanese women—Hiraoka and numerous others who enthusiastically embrace the story of their own emancipation by foreign women—share overlapping discursive spaces with their American counterparts, drawing on the same reservoir of ideas and assumptions about the occupation and its positive impacts on women. How do we explain Japanese and American women's collaboration in maintaining and circulating this understanding of the occupation? Crucially, the narrative of successful gender reform (dis)locates both women outside the purview of critical analysis of nation and empire. The narrative hinges on the long-standing Orientalist construction of Japanese women as helpless victims who, until the arrival of American women in 1945, had been incapable of any action. The image of Japanese women as victims without agency conceals, and indeed makes unimaginable, their willing participation in Japanese colonialism. The same narrative also relies on and reinforces the notion of progressive, emancipated, and thus "superior" American women who selflessly pursued the emancipation of other, inferior women. Driven by good intentions, they initiated a remarkable, indeed revolutionary, feminist reform project. With an emphasis on the occupation's emancipatory intents and successful outcomes, it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, to imagine how American women's discourses and practices were in fact informed by racism, nationalism, and imperialism. In sum, the congratulatory narrative of the occupation constructs both American and Japanese women as innocent bystanders to, rather than complicitous participants in, the problematic politics of race, nation, and empire in the twentieth century.

Like other historical narratives, however, the stories of women and the occupation are complex and contested. An entirely different interpretation, which actually predates the women's studies' analysis, focuses on the experiences of working-class women, and on the antilabor policies that the occupation authorities and the collaborationist Japanese government pursued. These studies conclude that the occupation was essentially oppressive and exploitative, resulting in the curtailment of working-class women's union activism and their economic and political rights, and denying Japanese women the opportunity to achieve genuine democratic social transformation.²⁰ According to this argument, the pledge to "democratize Japan" was a false promise, and the occupation hindered, rather than promoted, Japanese women's democratic emancipation. This more critical argument, however, has been overshadowed by the narrative of successful gender democratization, which as I have shown, has far more institutional support from women's studies, as well as the stamp of authenticity from the American women occupiers.

A suggestive, although not fully developed, perspective is offered in a short article by Yoda Seiichi, who argues that rather than genuine democratization, the major objectives of the occupation were the demilitarization, modernization, and transformation of Japan into an effective ally in the emerging Cold War. Instead of the occupation's gender reform accomplishing the liberation of Japanese women or radicalizing Japanese gender relations, the intention was actually to create Japanese women who would be enfranchised and conservative allies for the United States. Posing as the liberator of Japanese women is seen as a U.S. strategy to gain the allegiance of women in the occupied country. Yoda's work points to the need to examine *gendered* strategies of the occupiers, not simply women's experiences, in analyzing the U.S. occupation of Japan. It calls for a careful and systematic study of how the concept of gender (i.e., a binary opposition between the meanings associated with women or femininity and men or masculinity) was mobilized to inform the occupiers' discourses and practices.²¹

Yoda's insight concerning gendered dynamics of the occupation is further developed in a number of studies that examine U.S. Cold War cultural formation. Lisa Yoneyama's recent article analyzes U.S. media portrayals of the occupation's gender reform and argues that during the occupation a feminist discourse of Japanese women's emancipation and rehabilitation was mobilized to disseminate an image of new—feminized and pacified—Japan and to affirm and justify Cold War U.S. hegemony both domestically and internationally. Such understanding of the occupation also depended on and recirculated the feminist imperialist notion that Western, especially American, women were more emancipated, progressive, and thus superior. Far from the moment of women's liberation, she suggests, the U.S. occupation of Japan should be examined as an occasion where the figure of Japanese women was strategically deployed to articulate U.S. nationalism and imperialism in the Cold War context. Caroline Chung Simpson's *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945–1960*, Naoko Shibusawa's *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, and Christina Klein's *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961*, also show the significance of gender in American Cold War formation where American self was frequently imagined as masculine and others (i.e., Japanese Americans, Japanese, and Asians) as feminine.²²

The studies on women and the U.S. occupation I have reviewed here provide important historical information, and often drastically different conclusions, but their analyses are insufficient, and even flawed, in a number of ways. Pharr and other scholars who define the occupation as a successful feminist reform implicitly rely on an essentialist assumption about women: American and Japanese women *naturally* shared, because of gender, the same political visions and interests—the fight against patriarchal domination,

whether by the male-dominant Japanese state or the male-dominant U.S. occupation. Such an argument conceals a multitude of hierarchies, as well as complex negotiations, that existed between women of the victorious occupying nation and those of the defeated and occupied. Furthermore, both the studies that focus on middle-class women's experiences and the studies of their working-class counterparts each draw their conclusions about the occupation by wrongly generalizing class-specific experiences to the entire population of Japanese women. Both fail to consider the category of "Japanese women" as heterogeneous and diverse, segmented by class, race, and other workings of power. Similarly, their implicit assumption that the American occupiers were a coherent, homogeneous category results in a static understanding of the occupation. An enormous, bureaucratic ruling body assembled in extreme haste, the occupation forces in fact constituted a diverse, conflict-ridden, and often incoherent and disorderly governing authority.

Perhaps more fundamentally, the existing occupation studies fail to explore in a systematic and extensive manner the occupation as a gendered and gendering political process. As Joan Scott argues in *Gender and the Politics of History*, taking gender as a category of analysis goes far beyond simply uncovering information about women. Scott defines gender as a socially constructed binary opposition between the meanings associated with masculine and those with feminine. Gender as a meaning system constitutes "a primary way of signifying relationships of power" or "a primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated," and "structure(s) perception and the concrete and symbolic organization of all social life."²³ Thus incorporating gender as a category of analysis leads to a drastic shift in historical studies. As she points out, gender analysis

provides a way to decode meaning and to understand the complex connections among various forms of human interactions. When historians look for the ways in which the concept of gender legitimizes and constructs social relationships, they develop insight into the reciprocal nature of gender and society and into the particular and contextually specific ways in which politics constructs gender and gender constructs politics.²⁴

While I take seriously Scott's insight concerning gender as a centrally important category in historical analysis, I see the need to go beyond a study based on a single category of analysis. The recent important shifts in the feminist paradigm—from excavating women's stories, to incorporating gender as a category of analysis, and finally to examining the intersectionality of multiple categories of race, gender, class, sexuality, and so on—have placed studies of history on new terrain.²⁵

Among numerous studies that examine multiple and intersecting vectors of power, I find Anne McClintock's study, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, particularly useful for the analysis of the U.S. occupation of Japan, as she delineates the intricate and often convoluted workings of gender and power in imperial and colonial settings. McClintock points out that gender is always articulated in relation to other vectors of power, and insists on the importance of an analytical paradigm that takes into account more than one category, cautioning against "narratives that orient power around a single, originary scene":

Race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively like armatures of Lego. Rather, they come into existence in and through relation to each—if in contradictory and conflictual ways. In this sense, gender, race and class can be called articulated categories.

As she emphasizes, race, gender, class, and so on are not "reducible to, or identical with, each other; instead, they exist in intimate, reciprocal and contradictory relations." What she refers to as "a fantastic conflation of the themes of gender, race and class" is a distinctive feature of both Western colonialism and the U.S. occupation of Japan.²⁶

As the subsequent chapters of this volume show, the analytical approach suggested by McClintock not only casts new light on American and Japanese women's discourses and practices during the occupation, it also leads to the observation that the occupation was an extraordinarily dynamic political process simultaneously animated by gender, race, class, and sexual dynamics. Throughout this book, I point out how a multivector analysis of the occupation and its gender reform provides a unique analytical framework that leads to different interpretations of a given event that often oppose those exclusively focused on race, gender, or class. The significance of this approach is pointed out by Dorinne Kondo, who succinctly argues that analysis that pays attention to a single category of power "forecloses the possibility of ruptures and interventions when other forces are considered."²⁷ I argue that the heterogeneous—and often disruptive, contradictory, and uneven—nature of the occupation and its gender reform can only be illuminated by attending to the intersection of multiple strands of power that sometimes work with, but other times against, each other. A multivector analysis of power allows us to examine, for example, how the occupiers' gender reform as an apparatus of domination was made all the more powerful as it was energized by the convergence of race, gender, and class dynamics. Gender reform relied on and reinscribed the racialized imperial notions of American superiority and Japanese inferiority on the one hand,

and on the other recruited Japanese women as a tool of class containment; that is, as conservative, anticommunist allies in the midst of increasingly volatile labor mobilization. Yet, gender, race, and class dynamics did not always so neatly line up. Gender reform also caused much instability and incoherence in the occupation, as Japanese middle- and working-class women forged a cross-class alliance in critiquing the “undemocratic” treatment of Japanese women in the occupiers’ venereal disease control and reasserted their racial, sexual, and national respectability. A feminist analysis informed by McClintock’s and Kondo’s insights thus sheds light on the ubiquitous nature of hegemony, but equally or more importantly, allows us to recognize hegemony’s inability to hold itself together, or its constant “leakage,” in U.S.-occupied Japan.

Cultures of Imperialism and Cold War Studies

In this volume I argue that the U.S. occupation of Japan was an instance of imperialism, and that strong similarities and continuities exist between European and American imperialism. In the U.S. academy, the notion of U.S. imperialism is not always recognized or accepted. In *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, Amy Kaplan critiques the “absence of empire in the study of American culture.” As she points out, U.S. scholarly communities share a strong compulsion to disassociate the United States from imperialism, and if anything, perceive the United States as inherently anti-imperial since the time of its independence from Britain. As a result, current discussions of colonialism and postcolonialism frequently neglect the fact that the United States has had strong ties to European colonialism, and furthermore, has been internally and externally a colonizing and imperial force on its own.²⁸ The same point is made by Anne McClintock. “Since the 1940s,” she argues, “the U.S. imperialism-without-colonies has taken a number of distinct forms (military, political, economic, and cultural), some concealed, some half-concealed,” but nonetheless it could and did “exert a coercive power as great as any colonial gunboat.” Thus one needs to see “continuities in international imbalances in imperial power” between European dominance up to the mid-twentieth century, and subsequent “U.S. imperialism without colonies.”²⁹

Strong similarities and continuities between European and American imperial politics can be found in the significance assigned to “native women.” As feminist colonial and postcolonial studies reveal, in Western colonial processes, the figure of “native women,” a gendered and racialized construct, played a number of critical roles. The colonizers often analogized relations between colonizers and colonized to a male–female sexual encounter. In European male colonial fantasy, Africa, the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific

were feminine, colored, and sexualized bodies, while European colonizing forces were white and masculine, invading, exploring, and conquering “virgin lands.”³⁰ As well documented in recent and expanding scholarship on American imperialism, similarly gendered and racialized imaginaries have been mobilized to justify as well as facilitate America’s encounter with Others.³¹

The figure of “native women” played another equally important role in imperial and colonial encounters. In the minds of Western colonizers, indigenous patriarchal domination over women was an indication of the uncivilized and racially inferior condition of colonized societies. In contrast, the colonizers perceived their own societies as gender egalitarian, or at least well ordered and proper, and as such, civilized and racially superior. Thus the hierarchical construction of the West and of the non-Western Other was significantly mediated by gendered and racialized discourses. European and American women, including feminists, often actively participated in and endorsed such a construction of superior West and inferior Other, although their own subordination to Western men made their location within the colonial project often ambiguous.³²

In colonial encounters, constructions of “native women” did not remain simply rhetoric, but frequently led to interventions in the name of “civilizing” native women and indigenous gender relations. Indigenous women were often perceived as a good means of “infiltration,” and singled out as important “entry points” for the Western civilization project, whose objective was tantamount to socializing indigenous women with Western values to create obedient and loyal colonial subjects. Gendered and racialized acculturation projects were further informed by class dynamics: They often focused on schooling indigenous elite women. Following such reeducation, Western values would “filter downward” to the rest of the indigenous population, destructuring the indigenous power structure.

In the U.S. occupation of Japan and its gender reform efforts, stunningly similar dynamics were observed: the American masculine gaze toward Japanese women, indeed to the Japanese nation as a whole; constructions of Japan as feudal, patriarchal, and thus racially inferior, in contrast to the modern, gender-egalitarian, and thus racially superior United States; the centrality of Japanese women’s reform as an American civilizing and modernizing project, and American women leaders’ participation in it; and American reformers’ focus on Japanese middle- and upper-class women leaders as the target of indoctrination. At the same time, as McClintock suggests, it is important to analyze the distinct features of U.S. imperialism in the postwar years—of which the occupation of Japan was but one example. For one, in asserting its own imperial domination, the United States sought to distinguish itself from, and establish its legitimacy against, its predecessor and rival (i.e., the European imperial powers). This required the United States to perform, among

other things, rhetorical maneuverings so that its foreign operations would be perceived as different from, and better than, European colonial rule. Furthermore, U.S. imperialism in the case of the occupation was significantly shaped by the nature of Japan itself. What Tani Barlow calls Japan's "double relation" to colonialism—Japan's own development as a colonial power in Asia since the late nineteenth century within the context of Western imperial and colonial domination—complexly shaped the postwar U.S. occupation of Japan.³³ Third, the occupation took place in the context of the emerging Cold War culture. The U.S. efforts to democratize Japanese women were inseparable from Cold War containment politics. As feminist scholars frequently point out, Cold War containment culture was not simply about anticommunist rhetoric and practice. It also produced historically specific understandings of gender, sexuality, domesticity, nation, and so on. The occupiers' gender reform efforts in postwar Japan were deeply intertwined with these emerging, and deeply gendered, cultural dynamics.

In examining U.S. involvement in Asia since the 1920s, Mark Bradley examines American efforts to distinguish its own imperial foreign policies from those of European nations. On the one hand, American policymakers often relied on European Orientalist discourses, thus rendering authority and authenticity to their own (i.e., American) Orientalist constructions of Asia. At the same time, however, the United States frequently criticized European colonial rule in Asia as a "failure," because it failed to train the natives for eventual self-governance. In American eyes, European colonialism was exploitative, oppressive, and therefore "bad." In contrast, American overseas interventions, aimed at educating and civilizing—in short, "training"—the natives, who would otherwise be unable to govern themselves, were not only more successful but morally superior. The occupiers' emphasis on "rehabilitating" and "reorienting" Japanese women was inseparable from this understanding of American intervention as training. Typically the Philippines was invoked to showcase America's benign rule, despite the blatantly oppressive and exploitative nature of the U.S. colonization there.³⁴ MacArthur's Fourth of July message echoes this sentiment, presenting both the U.S. occupation of Japan as well as the Philippines as instances of U.S. beneficence in Asia.

However, U.S. imperialism in the case of the occupation was also shaped by the nature of Japan itself. Although the duration does not compare with European colonialism, Japan had been a ferocious colonial power in the course of its modernity. While contending with Western colonial domination, Japan pursued its own imperial project by colonizing its neighboring nations in the name of creating the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. Japanese modern feminism emerged out of this context, sharing intimate and problematic ties with Japan's nationalist and colonial dynamics. Despite its unconditional surrender and enormous reduction in territory at the end of

World War II, many aspects of Japanese colonialism, including its gendered nationalist politics, survived after the summer of 1945. As John Dower clearly documents in *Embracing Defeat*, the existing Japanese ruling sector tenaciously negotiated with, and even covertly resisted, the U.S. authorities. Since the U.S. needed to remake Japan into its ally in the emerging Cold War context, MacArthur often compromised, and even collaborated, with the existing elites, which led not only to a retention of the Imperial Household but also to the emergence of a conservative, pro-American regime in postwar Japan. As I later demonstrate, this led to, among other things, the Japanese rearticulation during the occupation of its own hegemonic nationalist and imperial discourses concerning women, race, family, and nation. Japanese middle-class women leaders who were empowered under the guidance of American women occupiers participated in these political dynamics and rearticulated their own imperial feminism in postwar Japan.

Finally, U.S. imperialism in the case of the occupation was uniquely shaped by the emerging Cold War culture. As well analyzed by a number of scholars, the Cold War spawned several distinct political discourses and practices, as the United States utilized a number of cultural and political strategies to establish and maintain hegemony both domestically and internationally. In the context of Cold War divisions, the United States constructed itself as a champion of democracy, freedom, and gender equality against communist totalitarianism. Exporting democracy to Japan and other parts of the world constituted a particularly important rhetorical and material strategy the United States deployed in creating allies against the communist block and maintaining its legitimacy as the leader of the “free world.”³⁵

During the Cold War, a narrative of containment became a dominant trope in the United States. Containment of nuclear energy was often equated with containment of women, of racial others, of sexuality, of subversion, of degeneracy, of disease, of communism, and so on.³⁶ Domestic containment became a powerfully gendered and sexualized trope within this context. The white middle-class heterosexual familial sphere came to possess new political significance. It was simultaneously a means to personal and national security, a symbol of (American) democracy and freedom, and a bulwark against the danger of communist infiltration. Thus traditional heterosexual gender roles within the family came to be invested with new meaning and significance, resulting in the postwar cult of domesticity. Those who fell outside of this new familial sphere included not just “failed” wives and mothers, but leftist women, prostitutes, and homosexuals, among others. Perceived as uncontainable they became subjected to intense social surveillance as subversive elements, and even as communists.

U.S. Cold War strategies involved disseminating containment narratives involving women, family, and sexuality in postwar Japan and elsewhere. In

occupied Japan, the project of gender reform became a salient site of Cold War cultural dissemination where American and Japanese middle-class women came to share overlapping discursive repertoires, drawing on the common reservoir of ideas, assumptions, and language practices to make sense of their world. American women occupiers worked tirelessly to make available the discursive repertoire of democracy and gender equality along with proper domestic life. For many Japanese middle-class women, that repertoire of sense-making practices was congenial, resulting in their willing participation in containment narratives. Yet, this gendered Cold War strategy did not go uncontested. Drawing from a different and competing universe of meanings, working-class unionized women upheld Soviet and Chinese gender orders as their ideal and denounced American democracy as a “sham,” thereby coming under strict surveillance and discipline by the occupation authorities.

The centrality of the Cold War is also visible in the American women occupiers’ reform techniques. In reeducating and democratizing Japanese women, the American women occupiers devised numerous skits and role plays with containment themes, and at training sessions, Japanese women were required, quite literally, to play a part, practicing their roles until their performance became flawless—proof that Japanese women were rehabilitated and reoriented. Through repetition, American women occupiers, and also many Japanese women, came to believe in the veracity of the American democratization of Japan and the desirability of the American way of life, a reform strategy that shared striking similarities to the U.S. civil defense program in the 1950s. In the Cold War United States, Guy Oakes and Laura McEnaney point out, the civil defense program also relied on “performance,” in particular learning and mastering skills and procedures through repeated drills and exercises. The U.S. civil defense programs “identify the procedures essential to survival and teach the American people how to perform them,” with the understanding that “a set of rules, if correctly followed, would produce the desired results.” Had nuclear deterrence failed, it was argued, Americans could still protect themselves and survive nuclear attack by utilizing civil defense techniques and procedures. Survival in the nuclear age was thus “reduced to the performance of routines.”³⁷

In the Cold War United States, the acquisition of techniques and procedures also had moral and ethical implications. Civil defense was considered a means to build a national ethic, solidify morale, and ensure the survival of the American way of life. As planners argued, civil defense was “a moral obligation of every household,” teaching “civic virtues indispensable to the American way of life in the nuclear age.”³⁸

The occupation period—from 1945 to 1952—took place in an early phase of the Cold War, where a multitude of political and cultural discourses and practices were beginning to be articulated through the narratives of

containment. Within this context, occupied Japan became a highly charged theater for emerging Cold War culture, where containment discourses and practices, including mastery of skills and techniques through repeated exercises, proliferated. It was not simply that Cold War culture was being exported to and imposed on Japan. It would be more appropriate to argue that despite its geographical distance from the U.S. continent, Japan became a salient site for the articulation of Cold War containment culture, with a remarkable degree of willingness on the part of Japanese to participate in its performance. The occupiers' gender reform constituted one exemplary locus of such containment culture.

Feminist studies of the Cold War, such as *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* by Elaine Tyler May, and *Survival in the Doldrums* by Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, frequently emphasize the conservative nature of the era. From this perspective, the Cold War spawned the postwar cult of domesticity, confining women within the sphere of home, eroding economic and other gains women had made during World War II, and commencing a downturn in feminist mobilization. However, an increasing number of scholars question this understanding of the Cold War and its impact on women. For instance, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960* edited by Joanna Meyerowitz presents a far more heterogeneous and ambivalent picture. “While no serious historian can deny the conservatism of the postwar era or the myriad constraints that women encountered,” Meyerowitz argues,

an unrelenting focus on women's subordination erases much of the history of the postwar years. It tends to downplay women's agency and to portray women primarily as victims. It obscures the complexity of postwar culture and the significance of social and economic changes of the postwar era. Sometimes it also inadvertently bolsters the domestic stereotype. Especially in works on the 1950s, the sustained focus on a white middle-class domestic ideal and on suburban middle-class housewives sometimes renders other ideals and other women invisible.³⁹

Indeed the Cold War United States witnessed numerous instances of contradiction, resistance, and challenge by women, as containment politics were far more ambivalent and unstable than previously understood. Laura McEnaney's study, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties*, provides a fascinating example of ambivalent and contradictory dynamics of the Cold War which could never completely contain women. Her analysis builds on and expands Meyerowitz's insight by showing how Cold War tenets of femininity, domesticity, and anticommunism combined

to provide an impetus to a version of feminism in the postwar United States. “[T]he postwar cult of domesticity,” McEnaney writes, “was a malleable and widely applicable construction in the Cold War years,” and American middle-class women leaders appropriated the discourses of motherhood, anticommunism, and Cold War nationalism to pursue their feminist political objectives.⁴⁰ These leaders saw in civil defense mobilization “an opportunity to expand their membership rolls and enhance their political influence,” and “[t]hrough a peculiar fusion of militarism, maternalism, and feminism,” collaborated with the postwar state to demonstrate “that women’s full participation in the polity was still necessary even after World War II’s demand for their labor had disappeared.”⁴¹ Arguing that “there were no predicable politics that unfolded from postwar domesticity,” McEnaney calls for “a more complex view of the relationship among the Cold War, the feminine mystique, and women’s political activism.”⁴²

As a case study illuminating the complex and often unpredictable relationship between the Cold War and women, the U.S. occupation of Japan reveals how the Cold War also facilitated, rather than suppressed, feminist mobilization of both American and Japanese women and opened up a new political and cultural space in which the women both bolstered and resisted the dominant structure of power. While often willing participants in the Cold War mobilization, neither American or Japanese women completely believed in the containment narratives and assigned different, often radically opposing meanings to the ideas of femininity, domesticity, and democracy. Armed with feminist discourse of women’s liberation, American and Japanese women involved in gender reform refused to be contained within home and family and sought for autonomy, mobility, and empowerment. Although these women’s transgression did not go unpunished, they continued to express their political agency in ways that often exceeded all expectations. Examining women’s active and often subversive negotiations with the Cold War tenets of femininity, domesticity, and heteronormativity thus constitutes an important task in this book.

The unpredictability of women’s agency McEnaney and Meyerowitz point out and this book will delineate has much to do with the ambivalent nature of Cold War culture itself. As existing studies on Cold War containment politics frequently point out, sexuality constituted a particularly significant source of this ambivalence, undermining the dominant narrative of white, middle-class, heterosexual domesticity as the bulwark against communism.⁴³ As exemplified in the national debates surrounding George/Christine Jorgensen, a World War II veteran who underwent a “sex change” operation in 1952, American male sexuality was at best an ambiguous, and often extremely unreliable, symbol of national strength and prowess. In the Cold War context where national security was frequently articulated in

relation to sexuality, an ambivalent American masculinity became a source of much anxiety and insecurity.⁴⁴

In postwar Japan, sexuality also constituted a site of ambivalence and instability. By relegating the task of gender reform to women, the occupation authorities inadvertently created a “women-only” sphere consisting of American and Japanese women reformers. While these women were ardent promoters of containment politics, they also developed close working relationships, and sometimes extremely strong and passionate bonds, with each other. In the Cold War context, where any sexual transgression was immediately associated with political subversion and thus a cause for suspicion, the existence of a female homosocial sphere in postwar Japan disturbed the occupation authorities. MacArthur and other male occupiers often warned against, and even expressed hostility toward, the formation of a “women’s block” in gender reform.

Sexuality became a source of disturbance in another way as well. Fraternization between American soldiers and Japanese women, and the resulting widespread venereal disease infection, caused much controversy. Far from being compliant subjects of the occupation, Japanese women proved to be a source of “contamination,” indeed “menace.” Unruly and uncontrollable, Japanese women’s sexuality was endangering the very success of the occupation. Equally or more problematic, venereal disease was considered a sign of American soldiers’ moral, spiritual, and physical degeneration. The American soldiers’ lack of self discipline was jeopardizing the U.S. mission of defending democracy in postwar Japan.

Such observations challenge and complicate existing feminist understandings of imperial and colonial encounters. By now it has become commonplace to argue that sexuality provides a familiar trope for international domination and subordination. In the Western colonial imagination, the West’s encounters with others were often analogized to male–female sexual relations. The significance of sexuality was not limited to its metaphorical power, as many imperial and colonial encounters actually entailed sexual subordination of indigenous women to Western men. An increasing number of scholars apply this insight to the occupation, arguing that the United States stands as a dominant, masculine figure with a mission to rescue subordinate and feminized Japan. Early postwar films, novels, and other cultural artifacts certainly attest to the power of this heterosexual metaphor for shaping American understanding of the occupation. Fraternization between American soldiers and Japanese women was a concrete manifestation of such hierarchical, gendered, and sexualized dynamics between the two nations.

Yet, a closer examination of the occupation reveals other political dynamics that do not easily fit this analytical framework and thereby points to a need for more complex analysis of women, gender, and sexuality in

U.S.–Japan relations. The crisis of American masculinity represented by venereal disease indicates the precariousness of the notion of America as masculine and powerful and Japan as feminine and docile. Lacking self-discipline and control, American soldiers were undermining, rather than promoting, U.S. hegemony. Uncontainable and menacing, Japanese women were posing a serious challenge to the occupation authority. The emergence of female-to-female bonds in the course of gender reform further challenges and complicates the argument that the occupation be read exclusively as a heterosexual narrative of white men dominating, possessing, and rescuing subjugated and docile women of color. Stepping into a postwar imperial project primarily defined in heterosexual and masculinist terms, American and Japanese women shifted, rather than simply replicated, these terms. A reform network consisting of American and Japanese women introduced a narrative of female homosociality into a Cold War project predicated on the erasure of homosexuality, thereby significantly unsettling containment politics. The current, almost exclusive emphasis on containment domesticity and heteronormativity in feminist analysis of the Cold War, and that of masculinization of America and feminization of Japan in gender analysis of U.S.–Japan relations, falsely construct Japan and its women as subjugated and without agency, and thus inadvertently reproduce the dominant orders of gender, sexuality, and nation without due attention to numerous examples of resistance, subversion, and contradictions that occurred during the occupation.

Feminist Colonial and Postcolonial Studies

Finally, in analyzing the U.S. occupation of Japan, this volume joins feminist postcolonial studies in pressing for new interpretations and formulations of feminism. My inquiry into the U.S. occupation of Japan and its feminist politics was sparked, and has been subsequently sustained, by analytical and political concerns emerging in this field. Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Mohanty, Inderpal Grewal, and Caren Kaplan, among others, have cast critical light on feminism, modernity, and colonialism, urging us to reconceptualize feminism and imperialism as two interrelated social formations. The meanings and consequences of feminism need to be reexamined as imperial and colonial formations that have significantly and problematically mediated the relations between Western and non-Western women. Critical feminist understandings of self and other demanded by feminist postcolonial scholars have serious implications not only for feminist scholarship, but also for feminist movement discourses and practices as a whole.

Feminist postcolonial studies have shown how modern Western feminism was enabled by the colonial construction of non-Western women as an embodiment of an oppressive and chauvinistic culture of others. In

articulating a feminist vision of an emancipated self, for instance, foundational British feminist texts, such as *Jane Eyre* and *Vindication of the Right of Woman*, relied on, reproduced, and recirculated what Gayatri Spivak calls “the axioms of imperialism.”⁴⁵ The emergence of the feminist subjectivity of the British woman, Spivak notes, crucially hinged on the simultaneous invocation and erasure of a non-Western, other woman. In showing that Western feminist writers frequently turned to images of oppressive, chauvinistic, and despotic “oriental life” to articulate their feminist visions of transformation of Western societies, Joyce Zonana traces similar dynamics in nineteenth-century British feminist texts: “[B]y figuring objectionable aspects of life in the West as ‘Eastern,’ these Western feminist writers rhetorically define their project as the removal of Eastern elements from Western life.” Such “feminist orientalism” defined the project of feminist transformation of society as an attempt to “make the West more like itself”—more civilized, enlightened, and above all, gender egalitarian than the East.⁴⁶ In Western feminist articulations, then, non-Western women are treated as mute objects of oppressions, deprived of their political and historical agency, who nonetheless play crucial roles in the formation and maintenance of Western feminist subjectivity.

Silencing, indeed erasure, of non-Western women in Western feminist discourses is not limited to literary texts of the past. Erasure of other women continues to take place in Western feminist texts, be they literary or academic. In “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” Chandra Mohanty argues that similar discursive strategies continue to inform Western feminist scholars’ analysis and result in binary understandings of emancipated and autonomous Western women and oppressed and victimized non-Western women.⁴⁷ Even though Mohanty’s article has been widely read by feminist scholars by now, it continues to pose a challenge because her insights need to be situated in various and concrete historical settings to see how they work. In the case of occupation scholarship, Mohanty’s arguments need to be complicated, as Japanese women have frequently collaborated with American women in maintaining a binary construction of emancipated American women and oppressed Japanese women, suggesting a more convoluted relationship among women, imperial politics, and production of knowledge.

These problematic dynamics have clearly shaped feminist movement discourses and practices. In *Burden’s of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915*, Antoinette Burton shows how these dynamics manifested themselves in British women’s mobilization on behalf of their “Indian sisters” in Victorian and Edwardian England. British feminists frequently argued that Indian women were powerless victims of indigenous patriarchal culture, and that as “emancipated sisters,” British women had a mission to help women in India. By presenting themselves as

helpers of the colonized women, Burton points out, British women could effectively argue that they were performing a “womanly job” for the empire, thus establishing their own “imperial citizenship.”

Despite numerous differences, American imperial feminism shares a number of recurrent threads and common opportunities for women with its British counterpart. In such works as Jane Hunter’s *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn of the Century China*, Ian Tyrrell’s *Woman’s World, Woman’s Empire: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880–1930*, Leila Rupp’s *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women’s Movement*, and Tracey Jean Boisseau’s *White Queen: May French-Sheldon and the Imperial Origins of American Feminist Identity*, the connection is made between U.S. imperial endeavors abroad and women’s feminist articulations. Historically, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with ideologies and practices underpinned by a “feminist” critique of male domination at home and an endorsement of an “international sisterhood” among Western and non-Western women, American women missionaries, moral reformers, and suffragists were often critical of U.S. imperial expansionism and European colonialism. Nevertheless, they often uncritically accepted and recirculated the notions of racially inferior, uncivilized, and oppressed non-Western women and civilized and emancipated Western women who were to save women of color. In practice, their work provided a critical means for U.S. imperial expansion abroad, lending force and justification (often in the name of feminism) to its pursuit of hegemony. The U.S. occupation of Japan reveals this same intimate connection between American imperialism and feminism as it unfolded in the Cold War context. Furthermore, one can trace tangible connections and continuities between European and American imperial feminism in the figure of Beate Sirota Gordon, a European Jewish woman who served on the occupation forces as an American member and played a central role in constitutional revision.

In *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan explore the intimate—and problematic—relationship between feminism and imperialism:

Our critiques of certain forms of feminism emerge from their willing participation in modernity with all its colonial discourses and hegemonic First World formations that wittingly or unwittingly lead to the oppression and exploitation of many women. In supporting the agendas of modernity, therefore, feminists misrecognize and fail to resist Western hegemonies.⁴⁸

Their observations about feminism’s “imbrication” with modernity and its related institutions, such as colonialism, racism, and nationalism, provide a

crucial insight for analysis of Western feminist formation and its relation to other women. The question we need to ask is not simply whether Western feminists were imperialists or anti-imperialists. Rather we need to investigate when and how feminist discourses and practices inform and are in turn informed by politics of nation and empire.

In *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel*, which examines British and Indian feminist formations, Inderpal Grewal offers analytical insights that are applicable to instances beyond British imperialism and that put not only Western women but also non-Western feminist formations under critical scrutiny:

[M]any forms of feminisms existed through participating in certain dominant discourses so that the issue, then, is not a search for a transparent or transcendent feminism but a need to examine the conditions of possibility of these feminisms. . . . Rather than debate feminism's collusions or resistances, I argue that nationalism, imperialism, and colonial discourses shaped the contexts in which feminist subjects became possible *in both England and India*.⁴⁹

Recognizing imperialism as an enabling condition—a condition that “provided possibilities and problematic” for feminism—is crucial.⁵⁰ Moreover, by showing colonized (in this instance, Indian) women’s feminist formation as equally, although differently embedded in modernity, nationalism, and imperialism, Grewal challenges binary, oppositional notions of dominant and oppressed, or colonizers and colonized.

The feminist postcolonial critique already discussed, especially Grewal’s nuanced understanding of imperialism and feminism, informs my analysis of the U.S. occupation of Japan. Like their European counterparts, American women’s self-understandings have often hinged on the construction of unequal, racially inferior others, in this case Asian women. A primary signifier of otherness in American women’s imaginations, Japanese women have been mobilized—discursively and materially—for white women’s self-realization. A critical understanding of imperialism and feminism also needs to be applied to Japanese women, who in pursuing their own agendas, frequently utilized nationalist and colonial discourses that had survived defeat and surrender. Ironically it was the very presence of American women reformers that enabled Japanese women leaders to articulate postwar feminism in this manner. Through their collaboration with American women reformers, Japanese women were soon to participate in Cold War containment politics.

Indeed, in U.S.-occupied Japan, the Cold War provided an extraordinarily powerful context for all. Postwar understandings about women, family, sexuality, and democracy were deeply informed by containment narratives. To

a remarkable degree, American and Japanese women proved to be willing participants, and even those who resisted the U.S. occupation were often so well informed by containment narratives that they were frequently recuperated back into the dominant social orders. At the same time, however, containment politics in postwar Japan were heterogeneous, and often disruptive, uneven, and unstable, and thus did not preclude possibilities of irony, subversion, and ambivalence. In sum, this volume reveals how the stories of the occupation subvert themselves in the process of their (re)tellings. In the name of democracy, empire extends its reach and tightens its grip; in the name of privatized domestic consumerism, women are mobilized into public, militarized activities; in pursuit of proper heteronormative families, women develop intense personal bonds with each other. As I show throughout the book, feminist discourses and practices that emerged out of these dynamics were fraught with ironies and contradictions.

Chapter Organization

The following chapters present a complex and multifaceted picture of Cold War imperial feminist discourses and practices in U.S.-occupied Japan. Chapter 2 examines the two major legal reforms initiated at the outset of the occupation: women's suffrage and constitutional revision. Long-standing symbols of Japan's postwar rebirth, these reforms were in fact deeply informed by preexisting American and Japanese dynamics involving gender, race, nation, and empire, and constituted central sites of Cold War articulations of domesticity, heteronormativity, and racial and national purity. The chapter especially focuses on Beate Sirota Gordon, author of women's rights articles in the new constitution, as an iconic figure who embodied both imperial hegemony and its instability. Clearly, her narratives about constitutional revision repeat, quite explicitly, a feminist imperial discourse about white, emancipated women endowed with a mission to liberate oppressed and victimized women of color. At the same time, Gordon, with her Russian Jewish background, disrupts the dominant narrative of the occupation by insisting on her difference from American occupiers and superiority of European and Soviet discourses of gender equality to the American counterparts. Tracing the complex historical dynamics that informed the occupation's gender reform, the chapter redefines women's suffrage and constitutional revision as a moment of women's reentry into, rather than emancipation from, ongoing nationalist and imperialist politics.

Chapter 3 analyzes the meanings and consequences of Cold War transnational feminist mobilization involving Japanese and American women. Following women's suffrage and constitutional reform, the occupiers attempted to disseminate the notions of democracy and gender equality

among Japanese women. With the help of American women leaders back home, women occupiers initiated a series of grassroots educational efforts aimed at Cold War indoctrination of Japanese women. Japanese middle-class women, including its feminist leaders, enthusiastically responded to the occupiers' reform efforts and embraced containment tenets of domesticity and femininity. Ironically, however, the reform network of American and Japanese women soon became a source of instability and disruption. Not only did the network become a space where women would voice their critique of gender reform and point out the fallacy of American democracy. It turned into a female homosocial sphere where American and Japanese women reformers forged strong bonds with each other, subverting the Cold War tenet of heterosexual normativity. In U.S.-occupied Japan, women's complicity in a dominant system of power frequently gave way to subversion, undermining an emerging structure of hegemony from within. By focusing on the ambivalent and unpredictable role feminist mobilization played in the occupation, the chapter's analysis illuminates both the ubiquity of hegemony and its inability to sustain itself.

Following the analysis of women's complicity in hegemony, Chapter 4 explores the nature of "resistance" by examining the various ways in which women's attempt to challenge and undermine oppression gets reabsorbed back into the dominant system of power. In contrast to their middle-class counterparts, Japanese working-class women, especially women of the left-labor front, explicitly opposed the occupation's gender reform. Their oppositions to the United States were twofold, simultaneously informed by class and gender. On the one hand, they actively participated in the left-labor mobilization led by the newly legalized Japan Communist Party and contested the occupation's economic and labor policies. On the other hand, they also challenged the occupiers' gender reform by upholding the Soviet and Chinese gender systems as the model and forging connections with procommunist women's organizations abroad. In articulating their resistance, however, they also relied on containment narratives of heterosexual normativity, thereby failing to transcend the dominant orders of the time. Analyzing the dynamic interweaving of resistance and recuperation of leftist women, the chapter questions the notion of "pure" resistance and calls for a nuanced analysis of women's oppositional politics.

Chapter 5 brings together the themes of domination, resistance, subversion, and recuperation by focusing on controversies surrounding venereal disease infection among American soldiers. During the Cold War, venereal disease infection was equated with weakness and degeneracy of the (male) mind, susceptibility to communist manipulation, and a threat to democracy. In occupied Japan, poor, economically disenfranchised women who resorted to prostitution and allegedly infected the soldiers became a

source of serious danger that threatened national security. The authorities' containment effort—indiscriminate round-up and detention of Japanese women—backfired, sparking massive grassroots protest. Middle-class women leaders fiercely opposed the indiscriminate round-up of “innocent” women, insisting on the respectability of middle-class wives and mothers. Women of the left-labor front joined their middle-class counterparts and insisted on their own sexual respectability. Together these women demanded that the occupiers observe a crucial distinction between “respectable” and “unrespectable” women and called for stricter surveillance and regulation of “fallen” women as part of postwar democratization. Articulated at the intersection of Japanese nationalism and Cold War containment sexuality, feminist protestation both enforced and challenged the dominant structures of power. The chapter illuminates the problematic legacies of postwar feminism that emerged out of the intense comingling of gender, class, race, and sexual politics in the controversies.

Chapter 6 concludes this volume by highlighting the complex relation among feminism, imperialism, and Cold War containment politics that shaped the U.S. occupiers' gender reform in postwar Japan.