

## Introduction

IN SEPTEMBER 1951, the Japanese prime minister, Yoshida Shigeru, and a staff of envoys arrived in San Francisco to attend the peace treaty conference that would signal the end of their nation's postwar occupation by the United States. Newspapers across the country highlighted the historical importance as well as the unusual tenor of the visit. The *New York Times* observed that the official welcome at the airport "was anything but the kind of greeting traditionally extended to treaty signers from a beaten country" because of its cordiality.<sup>1</sup> The presence of Japanese Americans at events honoring the visiting delegation contributed to this sense of reconciliation. When the diplomats landed, a drum and bugle corps with Boy Scouts of Japanese ancestry supplied the ceremonial music. A woman and a child dressed in kimonos then presented bouquets of chrysanthemums and roses to Yoshida and his party. Later that week, the prime minister addressed more than eight hundred attendees at an evening ballroom reception that included federal and state officials and representatives from local Japanese American communities. Yoshida began by confessing his amazement at the new congenial attitude among Americans toward the Japanese. "The pre-war anti-Japanese feeling was strong," the Los Angeles-based *Rafu Shimpo* noted, "and . . . neither he nor Japan expected anything but a treaty of revenge and retaliation."<sup>2</sup> The graciousness of the United States, as displayed by the gathering that night, cheered the dignitaries from Japan. This shared affection among the dinner guests obliged the prime minister to ponder the new turn in transpacific sen-

## Excerpt • Temple University Press

timents. For a statesman catering to his audience, the explanation appeared simple enough: Japanese Americans played a vital role in fostering friendlier relations between two former adversaries.

Media attention on exchanges that revealed suddenly improved domestic and international affairs was understandable. Only a few years earlier, Japan was a formidable and hated enemy during World War II. American propagandists painted the Japanese as savage “monkey-men” or rats who devalued human life, caricatures that fueled desires to exterminate them. Wartime public opinion polls even showed that Americans were more willing to kill Japanese soldiers and civilians than to destroy Nazi Germany.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Japanese Americans were a disparaged populace in the United States, with more than 110,000 of them from the West Coast and some from Hawai‘i confined to camps as a supposed military necessity. Following the Imperial Japanese Navy’s attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, many suspected the loyalties of those with a Japanese background, considering the immigrant Issei generation as “enemy aliens” and their native-born Nisei children as not much better. Their racial and ethnic ties to the ancestral land, as the argument went, trumped whatever feelings of allegiance they pledged to the United States. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, by which the federal government removed Japanese Americans to seventeen temporary “assembly centers” on the West Coast and then to ten “relocation centers” built in the most harsh and desolate environments in the nation’s interior. Other facilities held the more suspect among them. That two-thirds of the civilians imprisoned without trial were U.S. citizens hardly roused concern or protest against this injustice.<sup>4</sup>

Once the Pacific War ended, however, American political and military leaders, journalists, Hollywood filmmakers, and other figures tried to encourage among the public a different understanding of relations at home and abroad. The onset of the Cold War motivated these new circumstances, with geopolitical realignments helping to shift how the nation’s mainstream perceived the Japanese and Japanese Americans. Postwar Japan became a valued anticommunist “model ally” in the Pacific theater to contain the machinations of the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea. That the Russians and Chinese had been U.S. allies and the Koreans a colonized people under Japanese sovereignty in World War II only accentuated the transformed global landscape. For their part, Japanese Americans purportedly overcame a traumatizing mass confinement and other acts of racial prejudice, becoming in the process the prototype for a “model minority” that exemplified the best of American values. U.S. Cold War objectives affected how both populations now appeared to possess redeeming characteristics, such as industry, reliability, and honesty, proving capable of appreciating the benefits offered by a liberal democracy.

## Excerpt • Temple University Press

These transitions in sentiment were astonishing, given what Japan had represented and what Japanese Americans had endured in the United States. The *New York Times* correspondent covering Prime Minister Yoshida's appearance in San Francisco wondered at this turn of events, surmising that the Japanese Americans who greeted him had spent time in the prison camps. Now they were participating in the State Department's ceremonies to receive the leading dignitary of a nation that once dominated East Asia.<sup>5</sup>

As previous scholarship has shown, the changed perceptions of Japan and Japanese Americans were mutually reinforcing, ones intended to soften prior racist beliefs and to encourage cultural understanding among domestic and overseas populations. Ideally then, if Japanese Americans could underscore their U.S. patriotism and integrate into the white mainstream despite a past associated with imperial Japan, the Japanese could reject their militarist desires, embrace democracy, and profess loyalty to the United States as well. These models of postwar conduct could then promote American values and benevolence and help to contain national and international developments.<sup>6</sup>

Labeling Japanese Americans as quiet, persevering, and "almost white" in their presumed beliefs and behaviors lessened the visibility and severity of their wartime confinement and other injustices. As depicted in popular forums, they gained new prominence by apparently recovering without any help to become "success stories" and forgiving any past wrongdoings against them. Media coverage framed Japanese Americans as law-abiding citizens who appreciated the opportunities for assimilation, advancement, and abundance, an alluring vision that coincided with the promises of a postwar American utopia. This later image, however, served to limit any voicing of grievances and to discourage social movements against a governing system that had forsaken them. It also worked to discipline other ethnic minorities, especially Latinos and African Americans, who demanded more state interventions to protect their rights and to rectify structural inequalities. By the mid-1960s, a prevailing logic emerged among sociologists, editorialists, and politicians that if Japanese Americans could flourish in the United States despite whatever setbacks, then others had no excuse for their own failures to enjoy what the nation offered.<sup>7</sup>

Japan and its revived industries became a U.S. base of operations not only to restrict communist influence but also to integrate market and military alliances with developing countries in Asia. Similar to West Germany's role in Europe, Japan played the junior partner to the United States in these efforts, accommodating American and allied troops to fight in Korea and forming trade networks with Southeast Asia and beyond.<sup>8</sup> Presenting the island nation as a reformed state also helped to downplay its imperial past and an evolving U.S. expansionism. Prominent writers familiar with Asia, such as Pearl S. Buck and James A. Michener, endorsed the need for Japan and other nations

## Excerpt • Temple University Press

to help stabilize the region, while denying that the United States was reenacting or furthering its earlier turn-of-the-century imperial ventures. Despite the establishment of overseas military bases and client states, they saw U.S. involvements in the Pacific as opportunities for building friendships with other countries.<sup>9</sup> In this way, American disavowals of postwar empire building coincided with recognizing the pitfalls in showcasing supremacy over peoples of color. As Mary Dudziak explains, a new emphasis on “Cold War civil rights” arose, wherein U.S. statesmen urged a readjustment in racist practices on the home front. These changes were essential to attracting countries with non-white populations in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Asia to an American-led global order. Otherwise, the Kremlin had only to suggest that postcolonial nations would experience similar bigoted conduct from the United States. Cold War imperatives to advertise “the American way of life,” as opposed to what the communists offered, thus dictated that memories of World War II and perceptions of U.S. racism required reshaping to meet the latest challenges.<sup>10</sup>

Yet such abruptness in reversing earlier animosities in transpacific relations elicited uncertainty among the victors, the vanquished, and the victims. However constructed, the new world order still retained raw traumas and residual prejudices from the past, even as it created other problems.

Exultant after winning a world war, Americans realized that the days of international isolation were over and that the United States had to lead a new global coalition against communism. As John Dower and Naoko Shibusawa have demonstrated, Americans accepted Japan as a junior partner in this fight, in part because of U.S.-made popular images that depicted the defeated nation as infantile and thus submissive.<sup>11</sup> But many continued to distrust Japan, a response with racial overtones intensified by the Pacific War and left to simmer long afterward. Stereotypes of Japanese “inscrutability” and fears of Japan’s receptiveness to communism only added further misgivings about a new ally. In truth, mainstream editorialists gathered that the Japanese would not be so compliant under American guidance. *Commonweal* declared in 1951, “The fact remains that Japan cannot be a reliable ally unless the Japanese people are a willing partner of the non-Communist powers.” That willingness, the writer intimated, was suspect, as Japan began the process of regaining its sovereignty after the occupation. In the same year, *Newsweek* envisioned a drastic scene: “By joining the Communist East, Japan, as the most advanced country in Asia, can achieve its old aim of dominating China and the rest of the Far East.” The magazine conjured the frightening wartime specter of Japan’s imperial presence in the region. This time, however, the country would have communist allies to help revitalize its ascendancy. If this opinion sounded melodramatic, others chimed in at similar decibels. Edwin O. Reischauer, the

## Excerpt • Temple University Press

noted Japan specialist at Harvard University and later a U.S. ambassador to that nation, likewise remarked in the *New York Times Magazine* in 1956, “If Japan does not become a major asset for our side, there is always the possibility . . . that she might join the Communist camp.” The United States had to keep nurturing democracy in Japan, he cautioned, or else its industrial output and technological savvy, combined with a potential partnership with communist China, would be “the death blow to democratic hopes in Asia.” Fears of a reimagined Asiatic horde were palpable: instead of becoming a model ally, the Japanese could join the Chinese as a postwar yellow peril.<sup>12</sup>

This matter gained urgency in the reconstruction of Japan. With a despairing and disillusioned populace, the nation attempted to reformulate past intentions, particularly its militarist ambitions. The demands of the imperial hierarchy had resulted in defeat and exhaustion, leading many Japanese intellectuals to fault previously cherished ideals and institutions, from the emperor on down. Affected by the power and presence of the U.S. occupation, people’s everyday language adjusted to acknowledge the benefits of democracy and antimilitarism. Some even satirized Japan’s folly in feeding its expansionist appetites. In other cases, however, the occupation itself came under scrutiny and even mockery. To American foreign policy makers, these viewpoints were a constant source of danger that smacked of communist and socialist encouragement. The new Japanese constitution established under American auspices in 1947 renounced war and militarism, guaranteed trade union rights and universal suffrage, provided women with more rights, and protected freedom of speech and assembly, among other issues. But U.S. efforts to contain communism in the Pacific, along with an economic downturn and mass demonstrations in Japan, made American officials anxious about their new ally’s susceptibility to Soviet pressure. In response to these concerns, occupation authorities enacted a “reverse-course” policy in which they reinstated to power once-purged Japanese business and government leaders to bolster the country’s financial stability. Democratic reforms became less important in this scenario, as U.S.-supported Japanese authorities began suppressing labor groups and other activists that pushed for further social advances. China’s establishment of a communist government and the Soviet Union’s testing of an atomic bomb in 1949 ensured this more conservative turn by the United States in Japan’s rebuilding. The start of the Korean War in 1950 also contributed, rousing Japan’s economy through a massive dose of U.S. military spending. But after the occupation ended in 1952, public opinion polls revealed ongoing concerns among Japan’s populace. Between 1956 and 1962, for instance, more than 50 percent of respondents regularly opposed having U.S. military bases in Japan, while a range of only 14 to 18 percent favored them. For many Japanese, doubts about, and discontent with,

**Excerpt • Temple University Press**

the American presence in their homeland and U.S. influence on their political leadership remained constant.<sup>13</sup>

Alongside these developments, the wartime confinement of Japanese Americans became an “absent presence,” as Caroline Chung Simpson phrases it, a painful past unseen and unsaid, yet still extant as a submerged narrative within U.S. triumphal memories of “the Good War.” Fearful of communism and enthralled by mass consumerism, most Americans avoided addressing the incarceration of civilians and other egregious actions based on little more than racial prejudice.<sup>14</sup> The formerly imprisoned themselves remained silent about their wartime experiences, with feelings of shame overshadowing, but not dissipating, their hurts, losses, and grievances. When released from the camps, the Issei and Nisei simply wanted to rebuild their lives and sought a return to normalcy. Even so, migrating back to the West Coast or resettling in other regions also meant facing instances of racism, some involving physical violence or the destruction of property. Starting their lives and careers again from almost nothing posed other hardships for Japanese Americans, such as limited work and housing opportunities, not to mention the untold psychological sufferings endured.<sup>15</sup> The confinement and its aftermath thus became something that younger generations did not learn about until decades later. As one elder recalled from that sorrowful time, “When shame is put on you, you try to hide it. We were put into camp, we became victims, it was our fault. We hide it.” Another confessed to literally interring his remembrances of confinement: “Before leaving camp, I buried my diary, in which I had written about many bitter memories. . . . I even buried the good memories I had committed to paper.”<sup>16</sup> Not until the late 1960s and early 1970s, with persistent civil rights activism, the advent of films and writings on the issue, and the beginnings of the Japanese American redress movement, did many seek public notice and reparations for their earlier misfortunes.<sup>17</sup>

Given these concerns, the dual emergence of Japan as a model ally and Japanese Americans as a model minority within a U.S. Cold War mind-set requires more critical interrogation. This book offers a cultural perspective that includes Japanese and Japanese American voices that spoke within and around such developments.<sup>18</sup> The following chapters provide such an outlook through the lives and works of four figures: the novelist Hanama Tasaki, the actor Yamaguchi Yoshiko, the painter Henry Sugimoto, and the children’s author Yoshiko Uchida. In the late 1940s to the early 1960s and beyond, these writers and artists, along with sympathizers in the arts industry (editors, publishers, reviewers, film producers, and others) offered more engaging visions of transpacific relations that played into, but also challenged, the rehabilitated images of Japan and Japanese Americans. The topics these figures brought into public view through their work were wide ranging, yet

## Excerpt • Temple University Press

interrelated. These encompassed the racial legacies of the Pacific War, the migrations between the United States and Japan, the imperial endeavors of both nations, and the wartime confinement of Japanese Americans. Through their varying efforts and interests, the four individuals created public personas and imaginative spaces in cultural forms that allowed audiences to consider domestic and global relations in complex and contradictory ways.

I identify this group of artists and writers as “Japanese/Americans” to denote their heterogeneous backgrounds and concerns that highlighted the influence of transpacific encounters on American Cold War culture. To trace these different yet intertwined and shifting markers of “Japanese” and “American,” I adapt David Palumbo-Liu’s broader framing of U.S.-Asia relations and their impact on Americans of Asian ancestry. By writing “Asian/American,” Palumbo-Liu explains that the solidus “marks *both* the distinction installed between ‘Asian’ and ‘American’ *and* a dynamic, unsettled, and inclusive movement.”<sup>19</sup> This construct emphasizes the separations formed from the history of legal restraints that disallowed Asians from entering the United States and from the exclusionary practices used against them once they were within the country, where they were still considered “perpetual foreigners.” Conversely, each term also merges with, and destabilizes, the meanings of the other, creating new possibilities for understanding or extending what constitutes modern America. The “and/or” positioning thus indicates the concurrent tensions and overlaps that arise from cross-cultural interactions. Important, too, the relationships between signifiers on each side of the divide can change over time, even within a person’s identity, outlook, or career. In light of this wide-ranging assessment of Asian/America, more focused work on particular periods and populations becomes necessary as well. The four artists and writers examined here contributed to postwar Japanese/American formations in multiple ways that defied issues of loyalty, citizenship, or national borders, just as these figures were constrained by them.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the sociopolitical structures and lingering racial prejudices that undergirded the transitions from wartime confinements to Cold War containments—as broadly defined restrictions on bodies, movements, ideas, and images—were very real. This book assesses how the arts in the postwar period offered a range of tools to critique relations at home and abroad that blurred the boundaries and categories that the United States sought to impose on its minority populace and on other nations.

No doubt the doctrine of containment shaped in vital ways how the United States realized its power and possibilities domestically and throughout the world. As Alan Nadel observes, “Because of the United States’ unprecedented capacity in the decades following World War II to deploy arms and images, to construct alliances and markets, to dominate global entertainment, capitalize global production, and epitomize global power, containment was perhaps one

**Excerpt • Temple University Press**

of the most powerfully deployed national narratives in recorded history.”<sup>21</sup> Intended to counter Soviet expansion, American influence on other nations and regions was unsurpassed in its political, cultural, economic, and military scope. Yet containment served domestic as well as global purposes, pervading nearly every aspect of postwar American culture. As several scholars have argued, “containment” proved a useful metaphor for describing and controlling perceived threats within the United States: communist sympathizers in Hollywood, women in the workforce, civil rights activists on the streets, homosexuals in government agencies, among other groups. Containment as an overarching idea thus affected how Americans negotiated and contested their social relations with one another through their understandings of gender and sexuality, race relations, and class antagonisms as well as political, regional, and religious affiliations.<sup>22</sup> The machinery of McCarthyism in government and in public life as well as other repressive measures on the home front, such as racial segregation, certainly constricted the clout and capacity of dissenting voices. But recent critical work demonstrates how these systems of containment were not monolithic but malleable and scattered, unintentionally allowing for opposition to ensue. Alternative viewpoints appeared and persevered, challenging how the nation’s political apparatus functioned by coopting its ideals of fairness, domesticity, patriotism, citizenship, and other issues.<sup>23</sup>

This point applies to how Japanese/Americans in the arts became a determined public presence in the early Cold War era, but in more fluid, transnational ways. The backgrounds of the four figures reveal this mixing of nationalities, borrowing of cultures, and combining of domestic and overseas interests as well as the inherent risks involved when proceeding in such directions. The popular but now forgotten novelist Hanama Tasaki was a Hawai‘i-born Nisei who fought for Japan in World War II because of the racial discrimination he faced in the United States. Remaining overseas in Japan after the war, he still appealed to his native land to adhere to its democratic ideals when getting involved in Asian affairs. Yamaguchi Yoshiko was a famous Manchuria-born Japanese actor and singer who posed as a Chinese national starring in propaganda films for imperial Japan. In her postwar Hollywood phase, however, she played fictional characters in the process of “becoming American.” Henry Sugimoto was a Japan-born Issei artist long troubled by his wartime incarceration, revisiting the topic in his paintings for the rest of his life. But he also embraced the opportunity to become a U.S. citizen, even as he expressed a love for European aesthetics and pictured himself as an artist unbounded by styles, themes, or borders. The children’s author Yoshiko Uchida was a California-born Nisei who wrote about the imprisonment of Japanese Americans in popular young-adult books. Yet she also wanted to strengthen U.S.-Asia relations and began her career crafting Japanese folktales

## Excerpt • Temple University Press

to ease the postwar tensions and misunderstandings between her ancestral and native lands.

All of these individuals journeyed between the United States and Japan and to other parts of the globe as well. These travels and wider social contacts informed identities, works, and worldviews that disclosed cosmopolitan sensibilities. Although few of the figures used the term “cosmopolitan” to describe themselves or their projects, they did favor more inclusive interactions between cultures and beyond borders that contested the Cold War’s binary distinctions between “us” and “them.”<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the artists and writers aligned their understandings of the world with the principles of Cold War liberalism in problematic ways. Contrasted against communism, this set of Western beliefs assumed universal desires among societies for the benefits of democracy, free markets, individual rights, national self-determination, reason, and scientific progress. Yet, since the eighteenth century, the aim of liberal nation-states to implement these concepts and systems has coexisted in tension with what they have enacted against their own populaces and the rest of the world such as labor exploitation, imperial interventions, immigration and trade restrictions, and other policies that have ensured regional, racial, gender, and class hierarchies.<sup>25</sup> As transpacific actors, the four artists and writers acknowledged, even welcomed, liberalism’s global influence and inclusive values while critiquing its exclusive practices. But they avoided offering developed political commentary and demonstrated worldliness in the most general sense when appreciating and encouraging the diversity of exchanges among peoples, cultures, and nations. This stance was not about transcending differences so much as accepting and working within them in order to fashion more cooperative communities in the wake of war. The two Nisei authors—Hanama Tasaki and Yoshiko Uchida—cautioned against American aims to unilaterally spread liberal democratic values and practices, and thus U.S. power and influence, throughout the world. They instead advocated for postwar Japan and other nations to cultivate their own versions of peaceful, democratic societies. The two persons born in East Asia—Yamaguchi Yoshiko and Henry Sugimoto—initially identified their cultural affinities and desired public images with China and France, respectively, and not with their ancestral land. By the postwar era, they came to recognize, through creative ventures in film and art, the history of geopolitical friction between the United States and Japan that they hoped to assuage. Each of these positions developed over the course of years, during which these artists and writers adjusted to shifting conditions within nations and continents.<sup>26</sup>

More specifically, the aftershocks of communal wartime suffering informed the four figures’ thoughts on, and encounters across, the Pacific. The series of conflicts in Asia and their repercussions in the United States stirred

**Excerpt • Temple University Press**

among them a desire to nurture affective links among different populations that, in turn, inspired how they approached their work. For those living in Japan, but originally from elsewhere (Hanama Tasaki and Yamaguchi Yoshiko), enlarging their career prospects meant attracting American audiences wary of rising U.S. commitments in East Asia. To accomplish this goal, the writer faced and the actor masked their feelings of war guilt about imperial Japan's destruction of China. For the Issei and Nisei figures based in the United States (Henry Sugimoto and Yoshiko Uchida), incorporating the Japanese diaspora as subject matter gave broader and deeper meaning to their imaginative labors. These efforts arose from an urge to confront the haunting anguish of their wartime confinement. In this manner, we can see how they all occupied interstitial positions. Although enjoying the privileges gained as world-traveling cultural producers, they were also vulnerable to state power as displaced or exploited subjects. The group thus disclosed perspectives that were historically situated and in dialogue with social and political developments in the United States and abroad. Having incurred suspicion, discrimination, imprisonment, and other hindrances, they were attentive to how U.S. interventions and anxieties regarding global affairs intersected to shape definitions of race and national belonging.

This book converges with, and builds on, prior work that links Asian American studies and Cold War studies, but with a focus on the arts as a mode for cultural critique. Scholarship on Japanese Americans has emphasized their wartime incarceration, since it was, and still is, the defining event of their history in the United States. A host of volumes have examined the government policies behind removal and confinement, the inmates' varied experiences and responses, and how Japanese Americans first became seen as model citizens during World War II, with the Nisei's military service and professions of loyalty to the United States.<sup>27</sup> Other works have focused on the postwar period, when changing relations with China, Japan, and Korea affected how the United States saw Asian Americans as threatening aliens and as assimilating subjects.<sup>28</sup> Scholars have also explored how mainstream Americans embraced distant lands and peoples as potential Cold War allies through popular culture. For Christina Klein, interpreting Asia through film, musicals, novels, and other venues provided white Americans a way to comprehend the continent as underdeveloped and immature, and thus requiring U.S. guidance and protection from communists. These forums, as she suggests, helped to create sentimental bonds between U.S. audiences and Asian subjects to integrate and strengthen global alliances. For Naoko Shibusawa, Americans reimaged Japan as a childlike nation in the stages of developing into a junior partner willing to accede to U.S. wishes. This strategy reinforced American hierarchies of power over the Japanese with regard to race, gender,

## Excerpt • Temple University Press

and maturity.<sup>29</sup> Considering the artists and writers in this study discloses the nuanced relationships that Japanese/Americans had with reviewers and audiences when critiquing the wartime confinement and other prejudicial accounts through a transpacific framework. These cultural enactments attract our attention because they spoke to, and moved beyond, the state subjugation of a minority populace and its ensuing rise as a model citizenry that served to shroud this subjugation from public memories of the Pacific War. While doing so, the four figures also exposed the strains of having to navigate their personae and performances between two warring, then allied, nation-states, while entangled in the desires and aggressions of each.

In this rendering, the late 1940s to early 1960s gave rise to fascinating moments when Japanese/Americans developed what Viet Thanh Nguyen calls “flexible strategies” to convey stories.<sup>30</sup> The literary and visual narratives examined here played on the promises of American principles in complex ways when responding to U.S. demands for fidelity and forgetfulness. Rather than choosing between resisting and accommodating these expectations, the four artists and writers negotiated among different ideologies, institutions, and cultural authorities to get their efforts noticed. Adopting such flexible strategies to create cultural forms was a matter of professional survival and adaptability, given that many of the publishers, art critics, filmmakers, and audiences they hoped to attract belonged to the American mainstream. To gain public approval, these individuals evaded or revised particular stances when asserting themselves through the arts. Other moments reveal how they took on the liberal state’s ideals to critique its failings, even as they lent credence to its power and potential. But throughout this process, the group still articulated its hopes for, and frustrations with, U.S. encounters with peoples of Asian ancestry at home and abroad.

Chapter 1 examines the brief popularity of the Hawai‘i-born novelist Hanama Tasaki (1913–1996). I discuss his once best-selling, but now neglected, antiwar novel, *Long the Imperial Way* (1950), which portrays the sufferings and war guilt of a Japanese soldier in occupied China during the 1930s. Tasaki based the work on his own experiences in China, and he later fought for Japan during World War II, decisions that marked him as “not quite American.” Yet his birth in Hawai‘i made him “not quite Japanese.” The chapter compares this background with postwar fiction and histories about Japanese Americans in Hawai‘i that portrayed the Nisei as patriotic and self-sacrificing model citizens, despite whatever past discrimination they faced. Tasaki positioned himself alongside these 1950s narratives as an anti-imperialist reformer, explaining the destructive methods of Japanese expansionism for an American nation reasserting its own presence in East Asia. Reviewers took to his novel’s lessons about the limits of imperial desires when

**Excerpt • Temple University Press**

debating U.S. involvement in Korea and in the occupation of Japan. Tasaki later revealed broader cosmopolitan yearnings in a second novel, *The Mountains Remain* (1952), when an Imperial Army veteran returns home after the war, willing to consider all points of view—capitalist and communist, traditionalist and reformist—to create a new Japan. This text, however, received less notice from American readers, revealing their rejection of alternatives to U.S. unilateral influence on a postwar ally.

Chapter 2 analyzes the Hollywood arrival of Yamaguchi Yoshiko (1920–2014), a famous Japanese singer and actor, through her films *Japanese War Bride* (1952) and *House of Bamboo* (1955). Known in wartime Asia as an entertainer who played the Chinese love interest of Japanese men for imperial Japan's propaganda films, Yamaguchi shed her Chinese public persona and transformed herself in the postwar era (as “Shirley Yamaguchi”) by portraying a Japanese war bride involved with American GIs. I contextualize her new visibility through popular media coverage on the marriages between American servicemen and Japanese women during and after the occupation of Japan. Considering these relationships as part of the intimacies of empire, I examine film reviews and other publicity to show how Yamaguchi and her Hollywood productions intensified American interest in Japan. Her status as a transpacific cosmopolitan, bolstered by her marriage to the celebrated Nisei sculptor and designer Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988), also bestowed attention on Japanese Americans and their mass imprisonment. Yet Yamaguchi's postwar identities and Hollywood movie roles, in which she performed the parallel feats of “becoming Japanese” and “becoming American,” served to quell the specters of Japanese and U.S. empire building, while her films reinforced the stereotypes of Japan as a model ally and Japanese Americans as a model minority.

Chapter 3 considers the wartime and postwar art of Henry Sugimoto (1900–1990), an Issei painter incarcerated in the camps at Jerome and Rohwer, Arkansas. Like other imprisoned Japanese American artists, Sugimoto wanted to document his trying experiences and the landscapes in which they occurred. Unlike others who stopped painting after the war or who moved into abstract art, he continued to explore and expand on the themes of incarceration from the 1950s to the 1980s. His postwar art especially divulges a wider transpacific vision of Japanese American history, from the turn-of-the-twentieth-century Japanese immigration and the restrictions placed on it to the wartime confinement and the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan. The postwar era thus reveals how he was still tormented by the wartime incarceration that challenged his sense of American and Japanese identities, destabilizing the “Japanese immigrant becomes an American citizen” success narrative. The chapter traces his developing artistic sensibilities about the confinement

## Excerpt • Temple University Press

period and about U.S.-Japan relations through his adaptations of Mexican muralist and French Postimpressionist influences. Although Sugimoto defined himself as a worldly and apolitical artist, he revealed through his styles and themes a trenchant social critique of war, migration, and imprisonment as interrelated processes.

Chapter 4 focuses on Yoshiko Uchida (1921–1992), a popular, award-winning Nisei author of children’s literature, with a career spanning the late 1940s to the early 1990s. This chapter focuses on her earlier works from the late 1940s to the early 1960s that divulged her interest in Japanese culture, when Japan and the United States attempted to restore peaceful relations. Uchida desired to enhance cultural understanding among the younger generations, publishing works about Japanese folktales, while also portraying the interactions of white American, Japanese, and Japanese American protagonists in other books. She admitted that this period of creativity was crucial to understanding herself as both American and Japanese after her release from the camp in Topaz, Utah. As a child, she wanted to be “American, not Japanese,” even though her country saw her as “Japanese, not American.” The confinement unsettled her ideas about what it meant to be a native-born U.S. citizen, but also helped her appreciate her ancestral culture. In turn, Uchida’s valuing of her family’s heritage helped her, from the 1970s to the 1990s, to produce books and memoirs about the wartime imprisonment. These later and more well-known works on the confinement had cosmopolitan roots in the early Cold War era, when she wrote about Japanese society and culture, more so than in the later civil rights period of the 1960s and 1970s.

Immigration, war, empire building, occupation, and confinement provided the historical bases from which these four individuals became products and shapers of larger transactions, both beneficial and perilous, between two nations.<sup>31</sup> Surveying the overlaps between these case studies permits us to see not only the relationships between larger global forces but also how the artists and writers responded to them in both critical and compromised ways. In turn, their film, art, and literature made visible to the American public the linked processes of U.S. actions at home and abroad. Their efforts thus reveal how American Cold War culture itself proved susceptible to dissent, critique, and complication from transpacific exchanges, just as the United States could still work to contain these disparate voices and visions because of its Cold War concerns. Within these possibilities and pressures, Japanese/Americans in the arts crafted, claimed, and altered their public presence to interrogate a problematic past while offering more hopeful prospects for the future.