



# **An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960 (New Americanists)**

*Caroline Chung Simpson*

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There have been many studies on the forced relocation and internment of nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. But *An Absent Presence* is the first to focus on how popular representations of this unparalleled episode in U.S. history affected the formation of Cold War culture. Caroline Chung Simpson shows how the portrayal of this economic and social disenfranchisement haunted—and even shaped—the expression of American race relations and national identity throughout the middle of the twentieth century.

Simpson argues that when popular journals or social theorists engaged the topic of Japanese American history or identity in the Cold War era they did so in a manner that tended to efface or diminish the complexity of their political and historical experience. As a result, the shadowy figuration of Japanese American identity often took on the semblance of an “absent presence.” Individual chapters feature such topics as the case of the alleged Tokyo Rose, the Hiroshima Maidens Project, and Japanese war brides. Drawing on issues of race, gender, and nation, Simpson connects the internment episode to broader themes of postwar American culture, including the atomic bomb, McCarthyism, the crises of racial integration, and the anxiety over middle-class gender roles.

By recapturing and reexamining these vital flashpoints in the projection of Japanese American identity, Simpson fills a critical and historical void in a number of fields including Asian American studies, American studies, and Cold War history.

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