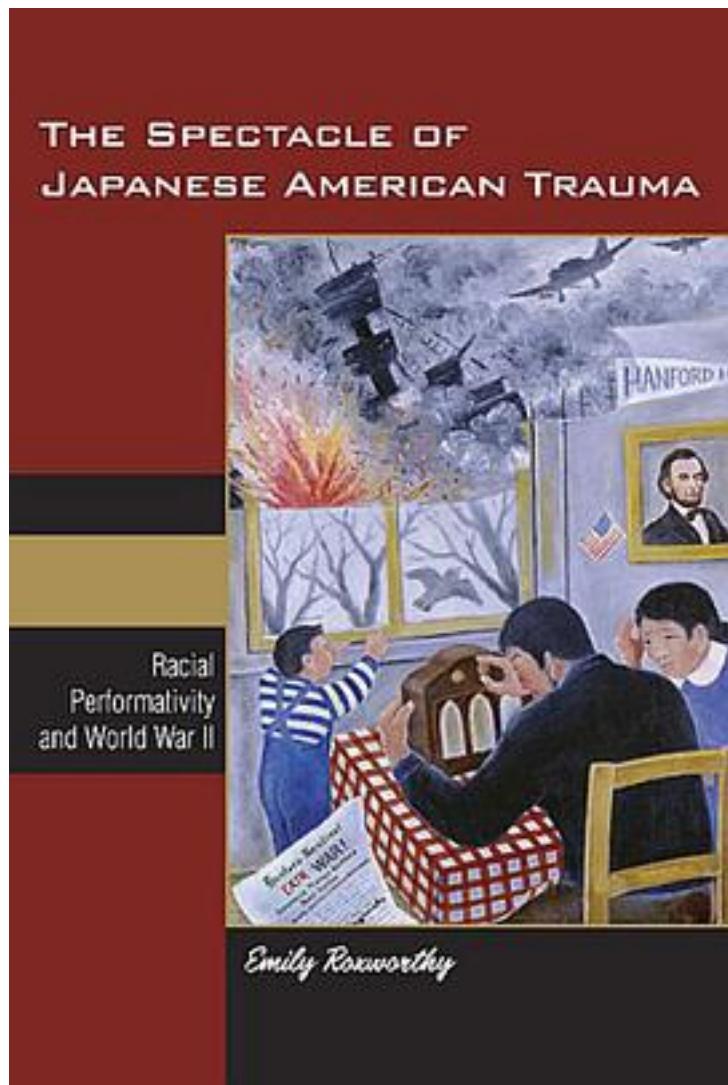


The Spectacle of Japanese American Trauma



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In *The Spectacle of Japanese American Trauma*, Emily Roxworthy contests the notion that the U.S. government's internment policies during World War II had little impact on the postwar lives of most Japanese Americans. After the war, many Americans behaved as if the "theatre of war" had ended and life could return to normal. Roxworthy demonstrates that this theatrical logic of segregating the real from the staged, the authentic experience from the political display, grew out of the manner in which internment was agitated for and instituted by the U.S. government and media. During the war, Japanese Americans struggled to define themselves within the web of this theatrical logic, and they continue to reenact this trauma in public and private to this day. The political spectacles staged by the FBI and the American mass media were heir to a theatricalizing discourse that can be traced back to Commodore Matthew Perry's "opening" of Japan in 1853. Roxworthy provides the first detailed reconstruction of the FBI's raids on Japanese American communities, which relied on this discourse to justify their highly choreographed searches, seizures, and arrests. Roxworthy juxtaposes her analysis of these political spectacles with the first inclusive look at cultural performances staged by issei and nisei (first- and second-generation Japanese Americans) at two of the most prominent "relocation centers": California's Manzanar and Tule Lake. The camp performances enlarge our understanding of the impulse to create art under oppressive conditions. Taken together, wartime political spectacles and the performative attempts at resistance by internees demonstrate the logic of racial performativity that underwrites American national identity.

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