

From Priestesses and Disciples to Witches and Traitors: Internment of Japanese Women at Honouliuli and Narratives of “Madwomen”

AMY NISHIMURA

ABSTRACT

This paper will focus on two of the Japanese American women internees who shared a common variable regarding internment: they were Shintō priestesses or disciples studying the religion at the time of their incarceration. One woman in particular was well regarded within her community and had several followers or disciples; based on transcripts from her trial, retrial, and parole hearing, the questions and accusations leveled against her demonstrate social injustice based on the practice of religion. For another Japanese American woman internee, I will examine how she is objectified and subjected not only to unjust treatment but she is cast as social pariah and a triple-threat to society: Japanese, Shintō disciple, and misdiagnosed “madwoman.” Her records demonstrate the neglect of government officials to obtain treatment for her and clarify how she was subjugated to humiliating scrutiny by military authorities. What seems particularly poignant about her narrative are the reflective letters and poems that capture her

Amy Nishimura, Associate Professor of English, University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu, 91-1001 Farrington Highway, Kapolei, HI 96707. This material is based upon work assisted by a grant from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior. The author may be reached at amynn@hawaii.edu.

angst; these letters and documents are addressed to military personnel who seemed to ignore her pleas. This paper will highlight not only civil rights violations endured by these and other women but I aim to argue how they were examined according to a Western patriarchal lens, preventing them from voicing (in their natural tongue) their identities.

In the state of Hawai'i, the prominent marker that historicizes World War II is Pearl Harbor, and the 50th state is often contextualized with stories about this monument; at times, this symbol overshadows individual narratives that remain silenced. The internment of Japanese Americans and some Europeans was an injustice, and scholars continue to strive toward reconciling the irony of a country that heralds principles of civil rights and freedom though it once detained and interned its own citizens. For the purposes of this paper, I use the word internment¹ to describe the situation of the eight Japanese American women (two in particular) who were unjustly arrested, detained, and interned at Honouliuli. The ongoing discussions about appropriate terminology continue: detainment center, relocation site, and internment or concentration camps are a few euphemisms that aim to contextualize the result of Executive Order 9066. Given the recent discovery of Honouliuli, the words internment and concentration hold center, as United States citizens were unjustly imprisoned. According to Alice Yang Murray, there is still much debate about the use of "euphemisms such as evacuation, assembly centers, and relocation centers" (2000:21).

Roger Daniels notes that the anti-Japanese sentiment was steeped in a sense of vehement hatred: "A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched—so a Japanese, born of Japanese parents—grows up to be a Japanese, not an American" (2000:51). Printed in the *Los Angeles Times*, the propaganda leveled against the Japanese and Japanese Americans was utilized to support the federal government's decision to call for mass action against all Japanese Americans. Probably most interesting is that the "internment of Japanese Americans did not end after the surrender of Japan in 1945" and "more than a year passed before the last concentration camp closed its gates" (75). In "The Decision for Mass Evacuation," Daniels uses the terms concentration and internment interchangeably and while this may seem problematic, he also requests that readers consider the hatred and mass action taken against United States citizens. As Daniels also notes, the shame that accompanies the experience of being interned outweighs the success of many Japanese Americans, "former

prisoners opened stores and farms, and sent their children to prestigious colleges and to success in business and professional careers. But the psychic scars of internment remained" (75). Though a myriad of silences remain, various scholars attempt to convey individual experiences or at least communicate how many men, women, and children demonstrated a silhouette of resistance.

This paper will focus on two of the Japanese American women internees at Honouliuli who shared a common variable regarding internment: they were Shintō priestesses or disciples studying the religion at the time of their incarceration. One woman in particular was well regarded within her community and had several followers or disciples; based on transcripts from her trial, retrial, and a parole hearing, the questions and accusations leveled against her demonstrate social injustice based on the practice of religion. Though religious persecution remains a long-standing discriminatory tool to imprison people, the paradox of the American government's "fight for justice" is a primary reason this topic continues to call for research among scholars in various fields. For one Japanese American woman internee, I examine how she was objectified and subjected not only to unjust treatment, and I argue how she was cast as social pariah and a triple threat to society: Japanese, Shintō disciple, and misdiagnosed "madwoman." Her records demonstrate the neglect of government officials to obtain treatment for her and clarify how she was subjugated to humiliating scrutiny by military authorities. What are particularly poignant about her narrative are reflective letters and poems that capture her angst; these documents are addressed to military personnel who ignored her pleas and repeatedly cited her as "ill." This paper will also highlight not only civil rights violations endured by these women but I aim to argue how they were scrutinized and questioned according to a Western patriarchal lens, preventing them from voicing (in their natural tongue) their identities. The eight Japanese and/or Japanese American women who were interned in Honouliuli had several things in common: they were Japanese American, they studied Shintoism, many of them knew one another and studied together, and all of them did not possess a mastery of the English language, though they attempted to make their opinions heard. There are two women in particular that this article will discuss: one was a Shintō priestess, Ryuto Tsuda who held a rather large following and the other, Haruko Takahashi, seemed to have an eccentric background and was subjected to cruel treatment that, in many ways, align with the fictional tale of "Miss Sasagawara," written by Hisaye Yamamoto (2001).

From a literary standpoint, Hisaye Yamamoto’s “The Legend of Miss Sasagawara” (2001), serves as an allegory to comprehend complicit silences that unfolded when the American government actively selected to intern US citizens, foreign nationals, and civilians who were living in Hawai‘i during the 1930s and 1940s. Yamamoto’s short story symbolizes the fear American citizens felt toward the Japanese and, more specifically, toward Japanese Americans. The characters, the internees, ostracize Miss Sasagawara, refer to her as mad, and deny their own duplicity in their treatment of a sensitive human being who desperately seeks to retain her artistic sensibility; her creative endeavors are remarked as “different” from those who conform easily to the expectations of the American government. She is depicted as untraditional, as a woman who values specific aesthetic forms such as dancing, poetry, and painting, and she is not hardened to life within the internment camp, a camp that serves as a microcosm to the larger civilian life of deference and proper hegemonic protocol. As Cheung (1993) notes in her work, *Articulate Silences*, Yamamoto’s “The Legend of Miss Sasagawara” is set pointedly in an internment camp and uses the story of a putative madwoman as an “ironic mirror” that magnifies the insidious effects of gossip, rumor, name-calling—those practices that indirectly led to the unjust incarceration of Japanese Americans” (2001:11). Offering a parallel to how many Americans treated Japanese Americans upon internment, Miss Sasagawara symbolizes the complacent attitude that held America at a time when the United States was fighting horror in Europe, the paradox that engaging in social justice abroad while persecuting others at “home,” remains a confounding predicament for the United States.

The parallel between the fictional Miss Sasagawara and one of the internees rendered “madwoman” during her time at Honouliuli provokes questions as to how other women who were imprisoned on the continent were also perceived and mistreated as mad. Cheung notes that as a woman or more particularly, as a Japanese unmarried woman, Miss Sasagawara disrupts the normative expectations of a culture that demands deference of the female gender (1993:59). The idle gossip that consumes the camp and targets Sasagawara parallels the gossip that surrounded the Japanese community before the time of their internment. Her accusers, thus, resemble those who provided only circumstantial evidence against the Japanese; that is, Yamamoto’s short story asks readers to examine and reexamine the names leveled against Miss Sasagawara, markers that exact a continuance of gender bias. This continuance has been culturally, politically, and socially examined by other literary artists

such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman (author of “The Yellow Wallpaper”), Kate Chopin (*The Awakening*), and others such as Adrienne Rich, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, and Gloria Anzaldúa.

The resolution of “The Legend of Miss Sasagawara” is fixed with polar oppositions yet a fragmented sense of peace echoes by the close of the narrative; the once demonized Miss Sasagawara has become a poet and her text about a man who achieves Nirvana, who rids himself of all “earthly desires,” is prescribed as “mad” because he does not relinquish his pursuit of the eightfold path. Those who follow the eightfold path search for a virtuous avenue, which includes right speech, right action, and right thought—to many it refers to a transcendentalist ideology. Within this ideology, there is no basic concept of good or evil, there is only a search for higher understanding, a comprehension of oneself that is not readily likened to the black-and-white rhetoric embedded within institutions like the United States military. So the duality that exists for an Asian American, a Japanese American, is not a fixed or static dichotomy in which one feels as though he/she can choose a position easily. The fictional depiction of Miss Sasagawara contextualizes how some of the actual women in internment camps had to justify their “madness.” Here again, Cheung (1993) argues that justice was an illusion, perhaps transmuted in order for the United States to soften the angles of their political alignment:

In the face of the triple occlusion of Miss Sasagawara—as a daughter by her father, as a single woman by the community, and as a member of a persecuted people by the government—she exhibits perhaps the only appropriate response to the situation; her “madness” is also a flight from the crazy circumstances. Miss Sasagawara’s poem, which challenges our earlier perceptions of madness and saintliness, aberration and innocence, should also make us wonder who was the guilty party. (1993:69)

In Gilbert and Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1984), the symbolism of the female cave can be likened to the allegorical story of Miss Sasagawara and the two women discussed in this paper. A central question the authors raise is applicable to feminist writing aiming to reconfigure the cave, to illuminate literary discussions, and to complicate the diagnosis of madwoman: “how does such a woman distinguish what she is from what she sees, her real creative essence from the unreal cut paper shadows the cavern-master claims as reality?” (95). The conception, the aesthetic work that the fictional character of Miss Sasagawara and Haruko Takahashi conceive or undertake, hold no material value in a society that depends on production or finite results. In the

transcripts that follow, the “cavern-masters” solidify the campaigns against women who trace lines that fall outside of patriarchal patterns or who follow a different interstice.

Transcripts of official hearings held for Haruko Takahashi, the woman rendered as “a problem” by government officials, underscore the bias, innuendo, and discriminatory language markers that led to her internment. On March 9, 1944, (Takahashi 1945) the Military Governor’s Review Board decided to prolong Takahashi’s imprisonment based on the following:

The board, which reheard her case, questioned her extensively regarding her loyalty. At that time she stated that she felt the same towards the United States and Japan; that she would be unable to obey a United States order to harm Japan; and does not know what she would do at such a time. Throughout her rehearing she gave indefinite middle-of-the-road answers always careful not to give direct replies.

Using circular reasoning instead of linear answers is a reflection of cultural context—to answer indirectly, at times, subsumes an air of humility or diplomatic tact. The US government required Takahashi and other Japanese females to don two conflicting roles: one of gendered deference and one of standardized practice; namely, to use American speech or rhetoric by answering definitively but remaining polite or discrete. Rather than citing the difficulty of her honest response, the lack of understanding by the board and their ignorance of a different culture cost Takahashi more time in the internment camp. More significantly, she lost social, political, and narrative capital despite her numerous attempts to reestablish her civil rights. Iris Marion Young (2000) defines democracy according to pluralistic involvement from all sides, not simply an approach that privileges those who hold positions of authority. She contends that social justice must employ an exposé of power and a foundational knowledge regarding how it functions within a civil society:

[T]he freedom of civic activity arguably makes more possible such moral appeals than political action under the constraints of bureaucratic or profit-oriented imperative. Sometimes the force of public moral appeals made by otherwise powerless people effects a change of policy because the powerful agents have been successfully *shamed*. (2000:175)

Because those who were interned felt “shamed” and held little hegemonic power, they were unable to act with any semblance of resistance; they held little agency to directly question what was happening to them, especially within the moment that it was taking place. Here, the “it” symbolizes the act and

the questioning, the violation that took place the moment they were asked to choose Japan or the United States. Young's work further contextualizes how power works through the subject versus object position; here, the object position is Takahashi as she is reduced (in description and name) by offering "middle-of-the-road" answers. Young's use of the word "shamed," that those in power should embody this idea, has not materialized; and after more than 70 years since the attack on Pearl Harbor, it is paradoxically problematic that the interned continue to feel ashamed to share their narratives. Taking this further, one can interpret Takahashi's "middle" answers as a self-conscious action; in this context, Takahashi resists the demand for linear answers, exhibits a sense of voice, but is punished for her responses.

The men who comprised the Board of Officers and Civilians were as follows: Lieutenant Colonel Edward K. Masee, president; Mr. Joseph J. Kelley; and Major Robert I. Freund. During Takahashi's rehearing, there was no attorney present but an interpreter was available, though, at this writing, his/her identity remains unknown. Some of the facts about Takahashi include her study to become a Shintō priestess at Konkōkyō Church, that she was born in Kohala, on the Big Island of Hawai'i, and that she held dual citizenship. Also, at the beginning of her rehearing, "evidence" of her initial hearing was brought to the attention of the board. Though she was a resident and citizen of Hawai'i, her single trip to Japan within 33 years was a primary reason she was held prisoner beginning December 14, 1941. Some of the more disturbing notes during her rehearing include items such as:

[I]n spite of her residence and education in this country, Subject speaks very little English. The three primary motives provided for her internment were: 1) "That the Internee, HARUKO TAKAHASHI, is a dual citizen, being a citizen of both Japan and the United States"; 2) "That she is disloyal to the United States"; 3) "That she is engaged in subversive activities, spreading the Japanese propaganda." (Takahashi 1945)

The conclusion of the board offered the following: "In view of her activities as a Shintō priestess and her apparent loyalty to Japan, Subject, in the opinion of this office is dangerous to the public peace, safety, and internal security of this country" (Takahashi 1945). The case was considered closed after this statement. In reviewing some of the questions Takahashi was subjected to (during her rehearing) to determine if she merited parole, some of the most problematic include the following: "How much English schooling did you have here in Hawai'i"? As linguist Charlene Sato argues in articles about Hawaiian

Creole English, language bias is an embedded tool used against those who do not assimilate to hegemonic English.² Because language acquisition is “twin skin” to one’s identity, the question posed is based on a one-sided loyalty assessment and presumes that if one does not speak English fluently, one cannot be a patriot, a “loyal” US citizen.³ At a time when racial profiling becomes exceedingly complex but consistently conflated because ideas of nationalism, borders, and “enemy alien” are still marketed and reproduced according to those who hold power, revisiting a time in history when the US government created an “other” or used the word “subject” in hearings to describe American citizens seems particularly timely.

What follows is part of the transcript for her rehearing and though the rhetoric she uses is fluid and circular, her inquisitors demand linear answers.

A: We believe in following our God and doing right daily from our soul and to give thanks to the God of Heaven and Earth. We believe in practicing wisdom and thank to the God economy in all things and brotherly love.

Q: Next to the Ten Chi, the God of Heaven and Earth, who comes after that, the Emperor?

A: No, we don’t pray to the Emperor.

Q: Do you consider him next to your God?

A: I don’t think the Emperor is a God.

Q: No, but is he next to the God? Did he come down from the Gods or the Sun Goddess?

A: Well, I don’t know a great deal about Japanese history. I know very little about that, and I don’t think the Emperor is a God.

Q: But is he the representative on earth of the God?

A: I know nothing about that. (Takahashi 1945)

The coercive line of questioning continues for several pages, all of which would strike most reasonable citizens as nebulous. At this time, based on transcripts for both the hearing and rehearing, it is apparent that Takahashi was given numerous non sequiturs and simplistic binarisms to address, and her character was questioned based on the practice of her religion, not due to suspicious actions. Perhaps what is most disturbing is the method in which the men on the board highlight her unfamiliarity of the Constitution of the United States and repeatedly attempt to define her loyalty according to the either/or binarism:

“Suppose the United States Government says you cannot stay in the center. You must choose. You must either give up your American citizenship or your Japanese citizenship” (Takahashi 1945). Her response conveys the complexity of choosing and instead of recognizing that she is Japanese American, a hedged or hybrid term that academics continue to discuss, they declare she is disloyal, nullifying the right for an American to methodically take her time when making a significant decision. When Takahashi states that she wants to remain in the “center,” her response resonates ideals of democracy. That is, she may have identified as Japanese due to her family structure but she also identifies as American due to her upbringing in Hawai‘i. This duality, the point of double consciousness as discussed by various scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Gloria Anzaldua, Henry Louis Gates, and others constitute a “center” that resists the either/or binarism.⁴

The reference to Takahashi as “subject” becomes interchangeable with the word “object” (in this context) for she is neither American nor citizen, she has become an entity, a “subject” studied and interrogated but never treated as a human being. The government collapsed a complex identity by referring to this Japanese American woman as “subject.” Like the No-No Boys who had to answer a questionnaire that left them no choice but to serve in the US military or be declared traitor to one’s country, the question and the answer, whether affirmative or negative, leaves one stifled, and the government feels justified in creating one’s identity based on what they believe is patriotic rhetoric (Okada 1957). Like the other Japanese women who were interned at Honouliuli, there was no justifiable reason to imprison Haruko Takahashi. The subsequent paragraph illustrates this point:

The Board was unable to get any clear-cut idea of all that went on in her institution. She insisted most emphatically that they did not believe that the Emperor was a God and that they did not pray to the Emperor, but at times there would be Shinto priests at the ceremony. It seems inconceivable to the Board that there could be such connection with the Shinto Church and she being entirely ignorant of the Shinto home, a Shinto shrine in the Church, but they never talk loyalty to the Emperor and that there was no picture of the Emperor in either her home or the Church. She stated that she would bow to the picture of the Emperor as a great man as she would bow to the picture of the President. (Takahashi 1945)

The result of this treatment, of being rendered as defiant or disloyal, continued during Takahashi’s time at Honouliuli. In letters she writes to officials, she laments her imprisonment and asks for release; one could argue she is also a

poet, not asking directly for her release and never making demands of those who caused her suffering and injustice. Instead, the words in her letters, like the responses she gave government officials during her hearing and rehearing, reflect an active and engaged persona, symbolized through a Western lens as “indirect thought” and/or language. Many narratives have been written about the effects of ill treatment during the time of internment; as Takahashi repeatedly asked for release but was met with resistance, her narrative has strong parallels to the short story written by Hisaye Yamamoto. As a woman, as a Japanese American woman, Takahashi was regarded with disdain and belittled according to a Westernized, myopic lens.

Although the board notes Takahashi as deranged and “pathological,” there are documents that assert a sensitive temperance and a poetic ideology that denies anger or retribution toward the US government. The following illustrates her melancholy as she struggled to accept her fate:

We came into this concentration camp for what reason.
 It is just like dew on the ground.
 We are stepped on.
 We can't take our head up.
 There are thousands of things to be recalled in our memory.
 Months and days spins like the trade-winds.
 Even when we sing our song does not sing like a melody.
 Thus clothes can be dyed, for instance, yellow could be dyed
 To brown, white, into red, but our heart cannot be pounding if we are aim-
 ing for Japan, we can't think about America.
 We are born into this.
 The room which we are in is just cold at night,
 We dream of our home, also homeland.
 Even in the moonlight we can't walk.
 What fun we're going to have.
 It is just like a trade-wind, always going around.
 When we wear our shoes and walk on the street.
 We came here but don't sit here like a dummy.
 Think fast like an arrow, but don't think what they say.
 Think that what you have been taught, but don't cry, be strong.
 You will obey orders, but obey the right ones. (Takahashi 1945)

This poem echoes what Takahashi's accusers were not able to recognize: Japanese American citizens did not “sit like dummies,” rather they were

aware of the injustice imposed upon them, and Takahashi's intelligence is symbolized throughout the poem. The lines, "if we are aiming for Japan, we can't think about America" and "We are born into this" capture the conflicted identity Takahashi and many other Japanese Americans endured. The point of being immobilized, of not being able to walk or move, to turn a corner, is made apparent by not being able to walk "even in moonlight." The feeling of being under surveillance is made clear whether one attempts to assert oneself in daylight or in the moonlight. Takahashi also seemed acutely aware of taking directive points by the government and attempting to closely comprehend what the consequences were if she did not follow the "right orders." Takahashi knew and said outright that Japanese Americans "[were] being stepped on" and she was also aware of the nebulous manner in which the United States interned specific groups of people; within the last few lines of the poem, she comments that they do not sit like ignorant people and that they must demonstrate restraint in terms of what they can and cannot articulate. Thus, she demonstrated a tactile insight that goes against the grain of the government's perception. Despite the fact that she was an English as a second language (ESL) speaker, her command and comprehension of English is articulated and well documented. In terms of social justice, we see in this particular poem that institutionalized oppression stripped away not only basic civil rights but the structure of the phantasm, as noted by Jacqueline Rose in *Why War* (1993) is constructed by those who wield power. In the historical and cultural consciousness of the US government, their sense of the perceived enemy is an entity they construct; unfortunately, for those who suffered from incarceration, articulating and knowing how they have been oppressed becomes highly difficult. As noted by organizations such as TACS that work toward bringing awareness about institutional oppression,

established laws, customs, and practices systematically reflect and produce inequities based on one's membership in targeted social identity groups. If oppressive consequences accrue to institutional laws, customs, or practices, the institution is oppressive whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have oppressive intentions. Institutional Oppression creates a system of invisible barriers limiting people based on their membership in unfavored social identity groups. The barriers are only invisible to those "seemingly" unaffected by it. (Cheney, LaFrance, and Quinteros 2006:2)

This definition ties into hegemonic practices in the United States when "invisible barriers" create a fictionalized account that includes, but is not limited to, producing a phantasm, a projected enemy, for the convenience of capitalism

benefitting those in privileged and entitled positions. The primary character in “The Legend of Miss Sasagawara” is a former dancer who possesses an eccentricity that sets her apart from the other internees,

nor did she ever willingly use the shower room, just off the latrine, when anyone else was there. Once, when I was up past midnight writing letters and went for my shower, I came upon her under the full needling force of a steamy spray. (2001:22)

Yamamoto presents Sasagawara as a perceptive person, someone whom the rest of the internees cognitively elect to alienate and treat as a social pariah. The text also serves as a form of protest but one in which the prose and characters focus on their capabilities as individuals as they maintain a sense of grace in spite of vitriolic behavior and speech. I argue here that eccentricity is likened to individuality, an attribute that was historically associated with American ideology.

In one exchange in which Miss Sasagawara attempts to escape, the narrative displays the contemptuous manner in which she is treated:

And this morning, just now, she ran out of the ward in just a hospital night-gown and the orderlies chased after her and caught her and brought her back. Oh, she was just fighting them. But once they got her back to bed, she calmed down right away, and Miss Morris asked her what was the big idea, you know, and do you know what she said? She said she didn’t want any more of those doctors pawing her. *Pawing*, her, imagine! (Yamamoto 2001:26)

The character has often been described as an example of female hysterics or, as King-Kok Cheung notes, that Yamamoto’s work is a “haunting story of a Nisei woman driven insane by the combined pressures exerted upon her as an ‘other’” (1993:54). After she’s sent away and returns, she is treated with disdain, not unlike the way in which internees were treated after their return to “normal” life:

It must have been several months, and when, towards late autumn, she returned at last from the sanitorium in Phoenix, everyone in Block 33 was amazed at the change. She said hello and how are you as often and easily as the next person, although many of those she greeted were surprised and suspicious, remembering the earlier rebuffs. There were some who never did get used to Miss Sasagawara as a friendly being. (Yamamoto 2001:28)

Monica Chiu (2009) argues that “The Legend” connects race and gender as Mari Sasagawara’s “flighty female behavior” (2009:32) is consistently named by those who regard her with suspicion. Whether it is her colorful clothing or

dancing through the camp, the internee's discriminating attitude against Sasagawara reflects the patriarchal internalization of the inhabitants. The contrast between Sasagawara and her father is stark and necessary and he is depicted as a community leader in the camp, aloof and indifferent of her achievements as dancer and teacher. In many contexts, Yamamoto illustrates Sasagawara as a forward-moving feminist metaphorically using her body to resist the treacherous effects of internment. As Chiu argues, "her body becomes a yardstick by which to measure their own angst over being female, elevating Sasagawara to the status of a respected woman at the same time that she is both a 'decorative ingredient' to camp experience and a seemingly naive child" (2009:33). It is questionable as to how or who respects Sasagawara; only toward the end of the narrative, as she takes on a new role of author, does the text imply a new status within the community. Indeed, those who live in the camp use Sasagawara as a way to measure their own perceptions and self-perceptions, and she becomes a double negative, a woman and a woman of Japanese ancestry who does not conform to expected norms. Chiu contextualizes this point further:

in the end, Mari represents the catalyst by which her fellow internees protested their treatment in the only way they could: censuring their own peers, especially a female peer. The internees' diagnosis of her illness served to displace the pathology of their identities as Japanese Americans in a nation seeking to extricate its own misdiagnosed cancerous population. (2009:35)

Chiu's reading of Yamamoto's allegory underscores the point that the US government needed to produce an "enemy," and, as a result, the consciousness of the nation became infected. Chiu complicates her argument in stating that Sasagawara's fellow internees need to "displace the pathology" (2009:35) and that an illness plagues the entire nation. The maladies that infused America, that continue to infuse how we direct our discriminatory consciousness have been examined and discussed by scholars such as Noam Chomsky, Cornel West, Michael Omi, Jacqueline Rose, and many others who continue to request that we contemplate how we commit acts of injustice. The internment of Japanese Americans has been studied across many different disciplines, but we are only now beginning to share individual narratives and considering how powers of horror impacted several generations.⁵

When initially researching the Japanese women who were interned, the similarity among them was the practice of the Shintō religion. It became apparent that a leader among the women interned at Honouliuli was Ryuto Tsuda, and in several documents her name is mentioned in the context of

community services, prayers, study, and healing. On her “Individual Internee’s Record” card (Tsuda 1945) Tsuda is described as an American civilian and the “Date of internment or capture” is June 18, 1942. She was held at the Sand Island Detention Camp before being moved to Honouliuli and like the other American civilians who were unjustly interned, the point of loyalty, or an attempt to define the word “loyal” served as the primary reason for imprisonment. I offer here a few conclusions from her rehearing held on May 17, 1944; it was decided by the board that her internment would continue. The board was comprised of Joseph J. Kelley; Lieutenant Colonel Edward K. Masee, president; Mark A. Robinson; and Major Robert I. Freund, CAC, AUS. They are all presumably tied to the US government and/or had a link to the commerce community in Hawai‘i and on the continent. Throughout her rehearing, Tsuda was described in terms related to “ancestor worship, healing the sick, and assisting the troubled through prayer” (Tsuda 1945). As a dual citizen, it is noted that she did not surrender her Japanese citizenship and under finding or reason number two, the board typifies her as “not truly loyal to the United States” and “she was engaged in activities that verge closely upon being subversive” (Tsuda 1945). The word subversive has been used repeatedly in reference to Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans, the racial connotation implicates one as stealthily plotting or evading. In this particular context, “evidence” against Tsuda (comprised of approximately three pages of single-spaced prose) includes innocuous letters she wrote to other Japanese civilian internees as well as other vague reasons.

Here again, there is a construction of the phantasm as the basis for internment in an imagined community: In one letter the Internee referred to the flag of the rising sun and stated that it really was a Buddhist expression and meant the glory “of the sunrise.” This explanation the board does not believe. She also referred to “the country” and stated that meant both countries. This the board does not believe (Tsuda 1945). I use the term “imagined community” to demonstrate how a group in power constructs those who have no power and are able to create, fantasize, or impose a value system onto the targeted group of people or culture.⁶ The remainder of the board’s findings consistently mentions Tsuda’s involvement in the temple and in one paragraph, there is notation of how she offered prayers to “boys who entered the United States military service” (Tsuda 1945). Creating in their imagination, a woman who held “subversive” capital within her community and might be influencing military men, the board decided to restrain and imprison her, in

effect attempting to silence her. If “she,” she being in the object position and regulated to an “other,” is described as an alien life force, as offering prayer that lies outside of the heteronormative expectation, “she” is creating evil. In the final paragraph of this rehearing, Tsuda is described in a similar manner to Haruko Takahashi:

This woman is in many ways bright, sharp, and shrewd, but cares little for orders or instructions if she desires to disobey and sustain a reason which satisfies her for doing so; would not hesitate to twist meanings or give false information if she deemed it to her advantage. She is believed a religious woman of the fanatical type, probably made so by lack of deep religious training and overstressing of form and repetitious ceremonies, and accentuated by frequent fasts. She insists she wants to be left in the Camp unless a house can be found for her to conduct her services again, but at the same time insists she is disgraced by being there. Whether or not she is a pathological case the Board is not prepared to state. In conclusion the Board believes that she is dangerous to the public peace, safety, and internal security of the United States. (Tsuda 1945)

The linear line of questioning and subsequent conclusions provide no internal gaze on the part of the US government, and there is no self-reflection about their actions or pronouncements; this is illustrated as they are unable to reconcile Tsuda’s desire for a home outside of the internment camp. Particularly puzzling is their inability to grasp the point or idea of being shamed through incarceration and “arrest.”

The initial hearing of Tsuda in 1943 offers a more layered context for comprehending the rhetoric used by the United States to intern Japanese Shintō priestesses. What follows is merely one passage taken from Tsuda’s hearing:

You have received four years of education in Japan and you were ordained at the Todai Temple in Nara, Japan, in 1941. You have criticized the Americanization of American-born Japanese. You claim to have supernatural powers. You have made no attempt to Americanize yourself or assume the duties and obligations of American citizenship. You admit that you are as loyal to Japan as you are to the United States. You have indicated a desire to return to Japan. You have not cooperated with the Internment Camp authorities. (Tsuda 1945)

The indictment of the board cites Tsuda’s disloyalty as rituals of praying, of keeping a shrine in her home, and of not choosing either America or Japan as a “home base.” Here again, as in the case of many internees, there is no substantive reasoning as to why Tsuda was interned and remained interned for

several years. Another supposed reason for internment was the government’s ideology of the phrase “supernatural powers.” In English, this has negative connotations, contexts that relate to the occult but Tsuda (and others who knew her) describe her practices as a healer. A specific example is cited in a letter written by a Fred Patterson who states that “[he] also heard of others who also benefited by these consultations, and I have never heard from any of them that she ever tried to influence them in such a way that it would lead them to believe that she was an enemy of the United States, or was in any way trying to assist Japan in the present war” (Tsuda 1945). The consultations Tsuda held allowed people like Fred Patterson to pray in a religious and spiritual manner, and there is no reference that she misled anyone who sought her expertise. Despite this, Tsuda was considered an “enemy” capable of inflicting tremendous damage against American citizens.

In Jacqueline Rose’s (1993) *Why War*, the ideology of war is presented as an abstraction or distortion of truth and Rose implies that the primary reason we engage in war is due to paranoia, a threat, a fear instilled in our consciousness. She uses the word “phantasm” as a fantastical category embedded within and constructed through propaganda, by those who hold situated stations of power, and by scientific reasoning that aims to classify and create a perceived reality. Part of her argument includes:

[R]eality is unable to secure the political distinctions or effects it is being required to perform. One could in fact say that, instead of a just appreciation of reality being the means whereby one cures the individual and the culture of its propensity to war, it is war which, in this argument, has the victory, by undermining the undiluted appeal to reality which is meant to bring it to an end. The distinction between fantasy and reality cannot withstand, or is revealed in its most difficult relation under, the impact of war. We can never finally be sure whether we are projecting or not, if what we legitimately fear may be in part the effect of our own projection. (1993:29)

The testimonies, letters, and line of questioning for both Takahashi and Tsuda reveal the preoccupation of the US government to obviate both women while accusing them of treacherous powers. On one hand, they were belittled and dismissed as ill, pathological, and subversive; on the other hand, as women who spoke English as a second language, they were rendered unclear and confusing. Like many tactics related to imperialism and colonialism, the desire to create an enemy transpires through not only what the “enemy” says but also the type of information the inquisitor seeks—the rhetoric used by those who aim to persecute. In this case, the internment of the Japanese was based

on inaccurate data and assumptions grounded in propaganda, in innuendo and gossip. The “reality” that was constructed and implemented was based on what Rose refers to as “limited resources of the real world” (1993:30) and this precipitates a reality enmeshed in declaring that “there has never been enough for all and we have lived by competition” (1993:30). The structure of capitalism, of democracy itself, demands that we adhere to a competitive lifestyle, altering ethics and truth to fit a system that makes “sacrifices,” a means to justify the capitalistic choices we make. The choice to intern the Japanese was made to appear justifiable, as a method to protect all involved; however, the language used to indict the two women I have discussed throughout this paper was based on the phantasmic structure that man has utilized to justify war. ❖

Notes

1. See Roger Daniels’s “The Decision for Mass Evacuation” (2000) for a discussion regarding use of the terms internment and concentration.
2. See Charlene Sato’s discussion of Hawaiian Creole English (1985). Sato was a socio-linguist who compared Pidgin to other Creole languages.
3. Gloria Anzaldúa’s “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” (1999) chronicles her experiences as a bilingual speaker forced to learn hegemonic English and to think/speak in ways that conform to a problematic identity. Her argument entails citing how one’s natural tongue is “tied down” in various situations and contexts and that language is an integral part of one’s cultural identity.
4. Resisting the either/or binarism used to incite multiple wars is discussed by various scholars and academics and they argue that the construction of an enemy begins by coercive manipulations, forcing people to choose one side over another.
5. See Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror* (1982) for a discussion of the subject, object, and abject positions. The abject is defined as a form of narcissism.
6. Benedict Anderson argues that the concepts of nation and nationalism are imagined or imaginary since one can never know all the members of their community. It is only in one’s mind that a community exists. Communities, he states, “are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/sincerity, but by the style in which they are imagined” (1992:6). Therefore, the idea of community is based on the cultural and political institutions of a given period, as well as in the political and cultural resistances to power.

References

- Anderson, Benedict. 1992. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: New Left Books.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1999. *Lafrontera/Borderlands*. Chicago: Aunt Lute Books.
- Cheney, Carol, Jeannie LaFrance, and Terrie Quinteros. 2006. "Institutional Oppression." *Tools for Diversity*. TACS.
- Cheung, King-Kok. 1993. *Articulate Silences*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Chiu, Monica. 2009. "Japanese American Internment, National Pathology, and Intra-Racial Strife in Hisaye Yamamoto's *The Legend of Miss Sasagawara*," *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 12(2):29–41, September.
- Daniels, Roger. 2000. "The Decision for Mass Evacuation." Pp. 29–63 in *What Did The Internment of Japanese Americans Mean?*, edited by Alice Yang Murray. Boston: Bedford St. Martin's Press.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. 1984. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kristeva, Julie. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Murray, Alice Yang. 2000. *What Did the Internment of Japanese Americans Mean?* Boston: Bedford St. Martin's Press.
- Okada, John. 1957. *No-No Boy*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle.
- Rose, Jacqueline. 1993. *Why War*. London: Wiley-Blackwell Press.
- Sato, Charlene. 1985. *Language of Inequality*, edited by Nessa Wolfson and Joan Manes. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Takahashi, Haruko. 1945. Record Group 489, Entry (A1) 19 Alien Processing Center, 1941–45, Box 97, Takahashi, Haruko. National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland.
- Tsuda, Kiyome. 1945. Record Group 489, Entry (A1) 19 Alien Processing Center, 1941–45, Box 105, Tsuda, Kiyome (alias Ryuto). National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland.
- Yamamoto, Hisaye. 2001. "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara." Pp. 20–34 in *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Young, Iris Marion. 2000. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.