

*Dominion from Sea to Sea*

Pacific Ascendancy and  
American Power



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He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,  
and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

—Psalm 72

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## Preface

This book develops a Pacific perspective on America's relationship to the world, standing in James Polk's Washington a century and a half ago and coming down to the present, drawing a fairly straight line all the way from the origin and development of California and the West ultimately to the heartland of the People's Republic of China. If Walt Whitman and historian Richard Drinnon had not thought of it first, "facing West" would be the title of this book. In other words, this is not a book about the West or about American involvement in the Pacific. It is about both, as a way of erasing the line between domestic and international perspectives. In exploring the contemporary American ascendancy, I attempt to join together what other authors usually treat separately: domestic and international history, international relations and political economy, and both sides of a vigorous Pacific economy. This book is also about technological change, and how sharp leaps forward in economic growth created a bicoastal national economy that has led the world for more than a century, a development that also transformed, undercut, or simply crushed original American conceptions of the continent they first inhabited nearly 400 years ago: a garden, an Eden, Arcadia, someday a Utopia.

Most of the American literature on international affairs remains deeply imbued with Atlanticism, but I will argue for a dual posture: an Atlanticist dimension in our relations with Europe and a Pacific dimension that began with the frontier and mid-nineteenth-century relations with East Asia, but which in the past half-century has come to rival and perhaps surpass our Atlantic relations, giving us a new way to make sense of the American position in the world. The global leader that the United States replaced had the same curiosity as the one that was going to hold sway in the current century: Great Britain and Japan both occupy small islands, set just far enough away from the mainland to breed a solipsistic sense of ineffable superiority (indeed, for the British, "continentalism" connotes European provincialism). Once the United States was also called an "island country," sheltered by two great

oceans. It was the only great power that for more than a century was entirely self-sufficient unto itself and therefore invulnerable to external dependencies, and the only power with vast reaches yet to be filled up with people and enterprise (save for Russia's frigid and still-undeveloped frontier in Siberia, or the deserts and mountains of China's Central Asian steppe, still home to tribes and nomads). The American position in the world, however, owes much to its being the first hegemonic power to inhabit an immense land mass: not an island empire like England or Pacific Century—pretender Japan, but a continent open at both ends to the world's two largest oceans. The United States is the only great power with long Atlantic and Pacific coasts, making it simultaneously an Atlantic and a Pacific nation. The historic dominance of Atlanticists, gazing upon a Europe whose civilization gave birth to our own, averts our eyes from this fact (indeed, the continental divide still makes a New Yorker uncomfortable in Los Angeles—and vice versa).

I want to put forth a “Pacificist” interpretation of America's role and position in the world, or for short, a non-Atlanticist text. But “Pacificist” sounds too much like “pacifist” (and is a synonym for it according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*), which is hardly my intent, nor is it to critique or supplant Atlanticism. That is a venerable narrative, kept alive in our time by people like Henry Kissinger, for the world, and the late Samuel Huntington (*Who Are We?*), for the ethnic core that shaped it: Anglo-Saxons. It would be boorish to point out that most Atlanticists seem to know very little about our Pacific involvements, or East Asia itself; Kissinger's multivolume tome is the best memoir of a secretary of state since Dean Acheson's *Present at the Creation*, but when it comes to trying to understand Japan or China, one is a kabuki play and the other is boxes-within-boxes.

My main themes are these, recurring throughout the analysis: (1) the American singularity of a thickly settled and still dynamic Atlantic Coast and Middle Border (the Midwest, as it was long called), and an even more vibrant Pacific Coast that keeps reinventing itself; (2) the expansion of settlers through a continent perceived as empty and unspoiled, a limitless garden—or Eden, or Arcadia—requiring only white settler fertilization to bloom into Utopia, and the absence in the same narrative of any means of comprehending the relentless industrialization that began to transform this garden nearly two centuries ago and has never quit; (3) the white settler encounter with people of color, which was and remains fundamentally different from American interaction with Europeans; (4) American relations with East Asia which, beginning more than 150 years ago with Perry's “opening” of Japan on the heels of Polk's war with Mexico, have never conformed to the Atlanticist

narrative and in fact depart dramatically from it; (5) the tipping point that 1941 signified in our interactions with East Asia and the rest of the world, which ultimately became more important and determining than our historical relations with Europe—since Pearl Harbor the United States has operated differently in the Pacific compared to the Atlantic, and this increasingly seems to be the way we operate globally—leading to the deepest divisions with our traditional Atlantic allies since the victory in 1945; (6) the role of the central state in developing the West and especially California; (7) the global archipelago of military bases that arose during the Korean War and the cold war and that has its strongest impact in the Pacific; and (8) a state-funded digital revolution in the past half-century that is a core element of American preeminence. These themes recur in chapters that move both chronologically and back and forth in time from the 1840s to the present.

The Pacific is the world's largest ocean, indeed it is the planet's “biggest single feature,” in Colin McEvedy's words; twice the size of the Atlantic, it occupies about one-third of the earth's surface. It also has more islands than any other ocean, about 25,000. Few books with Pacific in the title fail to dwell on the islands—and their romance, exoticism, and freewheeling ways (think of Michener's *South Pacific*). This book isn't about that vast ocean or that romance. The equator marks off the southern boundary of my interest. It isn't that the southern region is unimportant: it's that American interactions with East Asia are much more important. They began with China, Hawaii, Japan, and Korea, then a war with Spain over the Philippines, then the Pacific War; since Pearl Harbor we have fought three major wars in East Asia (one win, one draw, one loss)—and since roughly the same time, the opposite shores of the northern Pacific have had world-historical industrial booms.

The Pacific West has been an engine of growth for more than 150 years. The gold rush touched off the Americanization and multiethnic peopling of California, and industrial agriculture, citrus, the discovery of oil, movies, and real estate booms followed on its heels. The Roaring Twenties was not just an era of flappers and the Charleston, but years of pioneering innovation when Californians first sampled the seductive possibilities of mass consumption and mass culture that the rest of the world now absorbs as part of its lifestyle: automobiles, suburbs, radios, Hollywood films, professional sports, “consumer durables” like refrigerators. And a sharp-eyed Willa Cather noticed: “The whole world broke apart in 1922 or thereabouts”; America “had got ahead wonderfully, but somehow ahead on the wrong road,” she thought. At that time American industry perfected both mass production and the means to digest the same goods—en masse. The 1920s capped an amazingly quick

American rise to world preeminence: the United States had 29 percent of global industrial production in the 1880s, 36 percent by 1913 (compared to Britain's 14 percent), and 42 percent in 1929—the highest percentage ever, save for the abnormal period just after World War II when all the advanced industrial economies had suffered extensive war damage, except for the unscathed United States (which temporarily held half of all global production). Southern California occupied the horizon of 1920s-style mass consumption, a new form of pioneering that defined the third industrial revolution (autos, assembly line mass production often called Fordism).<sup>1</sup>

The successive administrations of Franklin D. Roosevelt provided the turning point from continental isolation to global involvement. When he was “Mr. New Deal,” an open spigot of federal spending brought the direct involvement of the national government into the extensive development of the Far West, and especially water and power; the New Deal built massive infrastructures (like the Grand Coulee Dam) and managed and developed western farmlands and the immense water works necessary to till them. When Roosevelt was “Mr. Win-the-War,” under emergency conditions federal administrators authorized and subsidized hundreds of new war-related industries in Southern California, the Bay Area, Portland, and Seattle, thus accomplishing the industrialization of the Pacific West while the gross national product doubled in five years. The emergence of Los Angeles as a major industrial city in the space of one decade (1940–50) symbolized this continental “market completion,” and another huge shot in the arm came via the Korean crisis and permanent cold war defense spending at historically unprecedented levels. The stage was thus set for the American political economy to grow in tandem with both Atlantic and Pacific interests and involvements.

Defense firms like Lockheed failed several times before the war but flourished thereafter, all through the cold war and until its end, when defense contracts began drying up. (In 1996 Disney spent \$45 million to turn Lockheed's Stealth aircraft design facility, long known as “the Skunk Works,” into an animation studio.)<sup>2</sup> Just as this happened, however, new information-age industries drove America's Pacific economy out of recession and into the longest peacetime boom in American history. Boeing teamed with Microsoft to transform Seattle from a backwater to a major Pacific Rim city in the space of one decade (roughly 1980–90), Intel and Nike brought Portland out of the 1970s–80s doldrums of an old economy based on resource exports (mainly timber), and California recaptured its leading-edge position in the national economy as Silicon Valley made northern California richer even than Southern California. I will argue that the core of California's incessant industrial

innovation resides in a peculiar combination of youthful initiative and fulsome state funding, a phenomenon that goes back to the Depression and World War II, and trades on California's salutary *distance* from the dominant institutions of the East. Other parts of the American West will interest us: Texas, an anomalous aspect of the story, is nonetheless part of it. Like the Pacific Coast states, it also fronts on an ocean, but the other western states do not and thus belong to a different narrative.

It might appear that this is a Pacific Rim book. But I never understood this term that came of age in the 1970s and 1980s or the counterpart locution of the 1990s, “the Asia/Pacific”—and I don't think anyone else did either. (Is Guatemala included in the “Pacific Rim”? Is Burma or Bangladesh in “the Asia/Pacific”?)<sup>3</sup> These are inventions and constructions of the powerful, especially America and Japan, and they occupy what Alexander Woodside called a “prophetic culture”—China (or Japan, or the Pacific Rim) is rising, or a miracle, or a menace—and the prophecies tend suddenly to evaporate when history illustrates their obsolescence, as in Japan's bubble economy and subsequent stagnation or the 1997 Asian financial crisis which abolished the rhetoric about “the four tigers.” Still, prophetic hoopla doesn't change the fact that Japan began its essential industrial pattern of state-guided bursts of growth in the 1880s and since the 1950s has been East Asia's most formidable industrial state; Korea and Taiwan got off the mark in the 1960s and haven't stopped. Our old antagonist Vietnam is one of the fastest growing nations in the world. But China puts everyone else in the shade, growing by nearly 10 percent annually since Deng Xiaoping's epochal reforms in 1978—a snapshot of a “Great Leap Forward” that will help to shape the rest of this century. All this is true. But the American Pacific states also had great leaps forward after Pearl Harbor, completing a continental industrial economy the likes of which the world has never seen. This is the basic reason why the American share of global GDP has remained steady since 1970, at about 30 percent, as against a nattering flock of Cassandra predicting East Asian advance and American decline—or even oblivion.

I have written much about the East Asian side of this Pacific phenomenon in my earlier work, and like that work, there is a theoretical framework at the basis of this book. I have tried to wear it lightly because it puts off or bores the nonspecialist, but the appendix contains some essential ideas about “late” development, “spurts” of growth, technological innovation, the role of the American state, the curiosities of space and time in expansion and development on a continental scale, and ill-understood words like “empire” and “hegemony.” The claims in this book are not theoretical, however. My

concern is to unfold an argument about general patterns; figuring out exactly what happened (let's say up on Cripple Creek or in the Southern California citrus boom or in the origins of Silicon Valley) is compelling, the details are fascinating, but I am more interested in what the larger patterns mean for the American role in the world. Where I have failed in grasping a particular history, the reader will find rich sources of correction (not to mention many ideas for further reading) in the bibliography. Meanwhile if I fail at the general level, I have no one to blame but myself.

Historians of the West still experience a sense of distance, even an inferiority complex, around their colleagues who consider their own work (say, on a village in colonial New England) more central and more important. People who work on the West are thought to do regional rather than national history—or maybe their region *is* history (in her first teaching job Patricia Nelson Limerick was told that her courses shouldn't go past the 1890s). This book asserts that the United States cannot be understood without knowing the West; that in the past 150 years the country has been shaped more dramatically by the West and American Pacific involvements than by any other region; that one state—California—is a more dramatic shaper of national destiny than any other; and that America's position in the world, the ultimate whole we are trying to understand, is inexplicable without grasping the intertwined power of the coastal states and U.S. dominance across the expansive oceans on which they gaze.

I think this is a story of the past and the present, but many will think it is prophecy—a claim on the future. It doesn't matter, really; paradoxically, the old and timeworn traditions of western history return to us today with a new freshness, as the search for India or a northwest passage to the Orient or Berkeley's westward march of empire or America as the "middle country" linking Asia and Europe acquire a true depth of meaning with an ascendant Pacific trade, and more importantly with the mingling of diverse peoples and cultures, now so casual and unexceptionable on the West Coast and in much of the country. American destiny is finally and thoroughly intertwined with Mexico, China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and again finally, India.

The emergence of the United States after 1941 as a simultaneous Atlantic and Pacific power, operating at a cutting-edge technological pace on both coasts and at many places in between (Chicago, Houston, Denver) is the central idea of this book, and I believe it is the essential basis of a global hegemony that has reached no more than early middle age in our time, if that. The central problem of the book is how to understand and explain the difference between an Atlantic-facing internationalism and a Pacific-facing expansionism, the twin sides of America's relation to the world. Just in time, as if history relishes an illustrative counterpoint, along came a westerner with the most finely honed example of the expansionist tendency since James Polk, Teddy Roosevelt, or Douglas MacArthur: George W. Bush. But I began working on this book years before he came into office, and I am forced to admit that I thought things were moving in the other direction—toward a new internationalism (called "globalization") in both Europe and East Asia, which Bill Clinton seemed to understand and forward effortlessly.<sup>4</sup> Today it appears that unless extraordinary efforts are made to overcome our historic unilateralism and easy recourse to the use of force in Asia, thus to engage and involve the East Asian countries in a spirit of equality and mutual advantage, this century is going to have prolonged and devastating consequences for world peace.

## A Personal Note

My life, if not my career, has been shaped by the Pacific states since I learned how to drive (age ten) and began my prodigious after-school reading: *Hot Rod Magazine*, *Rod and Custom*, *Car Craft*, *Road and Track*; my imaginary adolescent life was shaped by car customizers like the inimitable George Barris and drag racing stars like Don Garlits, and my fondest wish was to cruise down Whittier Boulevard in a '32 Ford Hiboy. (Little did I know that a University of Chicago student had already linked hot rodders to one innovation after another in Detroit—and of course to American ingenuity and individualism.)<sup>5</sup> My parents moved to Palo Alto when I was eighteen, "voting with their wheels" for a new life like so many other Americans, and I learned then about a very different California, the one in the north (the civilized part) that Alfred Hitchcock brilliantly portrayed in *Vertigo*. This was 1962 when the national media "discovered" it again, the occasion being California passing New York as the most populous state, but the perennial text was California's embodiment of the American dream, a window to the future for the rest of the country.<sup>6</sup>

Fifteen years later I got a job in Seattle, still in the backwash of Boeing having laid off tens of thousands of workers in 1969–71; it appeared to be a company town, a sleepy backwater in an exquisite setting facing the contiguous forty-eight's only genuine fjord (Puget Sound), more often facing "back East" (which seemed to mean anywhere over the Cascade Mountains), an Omaha that just happened to be on the Pacific—except that it had a very good coffee shop named Starbucks down at the Pike Street Market. When I

left in 1987, Bill Gates was adding a world-class monopoly to Boeing's oligopoly, Starbucks was franchising outward to the world, Asians and Asian-Americans were pouring in, and the Emerald City had permanently turned around to face West, a new jewel in America's Pacific crown.

The original germ of my intellectual interest in the West and California, which took a long time to germinate but stayed always in my mind, came in December 1974 when I was dawdling around waiting to defend my doctoral thesis at Columbia and walked into a \$2.00 second-run theater on the Upper West Side to see *Chinatown*. For the first time in my life I stayed on for a second viewing; the film is enigmatic and difficult to decipher at one sitting (the producer, Robert Evans, said the script "was pure Chinese" to him)<sup>7</sup> or even two or three. Ostensibly a crime noir filmed in apricot shades steeped in nostalgia for the old, vanished Los Angeles, it is the most intelligent film ever made about the prewar western social milieu, which had its concentrated essence in the WASP oligarchy that ran Los Angeles and the people of color who worked for them. The screenwriter, Robert Towne, reversed our optic by taking the stereotypical view of Chinatowns at the time—inscrutable deviants mired in tong wars, opium dens, filth, prostitution, incest, omnibus mayhem, "you could never tell what went on there"—and making it the story of the oligarchy. He took what scholars call the theory of Oriental despotism (the satrap above, the masses below, moving rivers to deliver water and create wealth in an arid climate) and brought it home to the Los Angeles aqueduct, the San Fernando Valley, the collapsed St. Francis Dam, and the curious, poignant figure of Hollis Mulwray, director of water and power—otherwise known as William Mulholland.

The film is entirely typical of a Southern California discourse which holds the industrialists responsible for fouling the air, the real estate speculators for desecrating the land, cars and freeways for despoiling the Edenic environment, and the politicians for making it all possible. It is a singular film bringing China to Southern California and imbedding it in a determining and largely true municipal history. More broadly, the film symbolizes what contemporary Americans will face for the rest of their lives: the joining of enormously productive semi-arid valleys, the ones that Californians watered with the Owens Lake and the Colorado River, and the Yangze and Yellow river valleys that China now showers with a billion talents. For the first time in world history, the Pacific Ocean is joining the Mediterranean and the Atlantic: the expansive scene of an infinity of human transactions and ultimately a Pacific civilization that we envision but dimly today.

I am still humbled by the history I attempt to interpret and the substantial

literature that has been my guide—however badly or wrongly I may have used it. Carey McWilliams once remarked, "All my books represent efforts to relieve my ignorance," and I have had the same feeling since I first directed my ignorance toward the Korean War. I am all too aware of how much more could be said and done, how many omissions remain, how tentative many of my generalizations really are. The best that can be said: this is the book I wanted to read but couldn't find, so I wrote it myself. I offer it to the reader in the spirit of Joseph Schumpeter's aphorism: "We all of us like a sparkling error better than a trivial truth."

## CHAPTER EIGHT

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### Pacific Crossings: Asians in the New States

The first generation passed away, the next de-Chinaized, Americanized and educated, would soon become absorbed in the national life, and known only as model artisans and workers. As the ocean receives all rains and rivers . . . so America receives the Saxon and the Celt, the Protestant and the Catholic, and can yet receive Sambo and John, and absorb them all.

—GENERAL JAMES F. RUSLING, 1866

From the very moment that Americans welcomed California into the Union, the westward march of empire ran into people going the other way—“eastering” across the Pacific. This ocean crossing eventually brought millions of Asians to the Pacific states, but for more than a century after the gold rush these early pioneers endured an appalling racism that barely distinguished the West from the abusive treatment of blacks in the South. If slavery was not widespread (it did exist from time to time), various kinds of indentured servitude often began an Asian pioneer’s life, lynchings were frequent, and many massacres stained the soil. This sorry record culminated in the forced removal to ten concentration camps of 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent after Pearl Harbor. Opportunities for everyone abounded after the war ended, but public spaces remained segregated in the Pacific states, real estate covenants kept cities divided, antimiscegenation laws were still on the books, and Asian immigration remained sharply restricted until 1965. The dramatic change that year—a new immigration law that was also a strong expression of the civil rights movement—opened floodgates that brought millions of new Asian-Americans to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle.

#### Longtime Californ’

Tens of thousands of Chinese ’49ers crossed the Pacific, and no significant group of pioneer Californians was any earlier. The pull of the gold rush and the push of the massive Taip’ing Rebellion brought Chinese streaming to the



West, as many as 25,000 by 1852, and in some states, like Idaho, they came to constitute as much as 30 percent of the population. They were unquestionably pioneers, but their passage and arrival evoked the experience of other Americans—those from Africa: workers ubiquitously known as “coolies” were sold or indentured to European and American agents for transit across the Pacific. In 1852 a British report described the scene in Amoy: “The coolies were penned up in numbers from 10 to 12 in a wooden shed, like a slave barracoon, nearly naked, very filthy, and room only sufficient to lie [down]; the space 120 by 24 feet [held] . . . the number in all about 500.” Each one’s destination was scrawled on his chest—C for California, S for Sandwich Islands—and then they were shoved onboard and into the hold where they were confined for the ocean voyage, often in cages and chains. One load in 1855 led to the suffocation of nearly 300 people; about 30 percent of coolies shipped to Peru over a three-year period died during the passage. California’s Ellis Island had a wholesome name: Angel Island. But the Pacific immigrant passage was not like that of the European: the Guantánamo prison camps of the second Bush administration would be a closer comparison. For three decades after 1910, some 175,000 Chinese were detained on Angel Island in appalling, overcrowded conditions; they spent weeks, months, and even years trying to show that they should be admitted to the United States. In the end, the vast majority (about 90 percent) were, but many others were deported for any kind of infraction, however minor. For decades Chinese could not return to China to see relatives without fearing that they would not be allowed back in.<sup>1</sup>

A grand total of seven Chinese residents lived in California in 1848, a decade later there were 35,000, and by 1860 every tenth Californian was Chinese; they were present at the creation of this state and present for the creation of long-lasting Anglo stereotypes. The *Shasta Courier* reported the arrival of Chinese miners in April 1852: “An immense number of the uncouth visaged [*sic*] and picturesquely dressed sons of the Orient passed through this place . . . enroute [*sic*] for the Trinity mines. . . . How these little, weakly looking hombres manage to carry such loads over such mountains . . . we cannot possibly comprehend. However, we suppose it is done by some sort of legerdemain, as it is well known that the Chinese can do almost anything through the instrumentality of certain mystic sciences.”<sup>2</sup> But there was nothing surprising, let alone “mystical,” about it: southern China had a long tradition of sending adventurous young males throughout Southeast Asia—Singapore, Indonesia, Malaya. Now they were just extending the domain of their Pacific.

Chinese workers on the railroad were often highly skilled, and unlike

many others they didn’t pass the nonlaboring hours with whiskey and women—mostly they sipped life-giving green tea or took daily baths or laundered and pressed their clothes (astonishing the slovenly whites), while the white workers reinvented the gold rush days: the railroad brought “a brawling, whoring, drunken civilization” to the West (yet again). Upwards of 12,000 Chinese built the western line, fully 90 percent of the workforce. They were hardworking and fearless—dangling from long ropes in wicker baskets, a venerable Yangze River technique for canyon labor; poking dynamite holes into the face of granite mountains (Summit Tunnel was drilled through a quarter mile of granite); laboring through the howling Sierra winter; learning how to deploy nitroglycerin without blowing themselves up (which nonetheless happened all too often); or facing a blank wall of prejudice that led to frequent murders and lynchings: the western railroad was the handiwork of thousands of nameless and faceless individuals, most of whom embarked from a few counties near Canton. From this point onward, big business favored Chinese immigration, and organized labor became its biggest and most powerful opponent.<sup>3</sup>

In 1854 the *California Farmer* wrote that growers were tired of the “bindle stiffs” and “fruit tramps” representing the flotsam and jetsam of failed ’49ers; they wanted instead to bring in the Chinese: “The Chinese! . . . educated, schooled and drilled in the cultivation of these products are to be to California what the African has been to the South. This is the decree of the Almighty, and man cannot stop it.” Chinese immigrants were particularly important in the Central Valley: they built dykes, dug irrigation canals, and showed whites how to farm intensively, whether they were raising rice, potatoes, strawberries, or apple orchards. They were “the first farmers in the West to produce and market” a host of commercial crops, “leading the way in the transformation of California’s wheat fields and cattle ranges.”<sup>4</sup>

By 1880 one-third of all farm laborers were Chinese. Giant producers like Miller and Lux liked Chinese labor because it was low cost, disciplined, and self-sufficient—the workers fed and housed themselves. The owners contracted with the Six Companies (Chinese firms or “tongs”) in San Francisco to bring labor gangs to the fields, giving the brokers \$27 a month per worker in the 1870s, from which the broker took his cut and then used the rest to pay off the debts incurred in shipping the laborer from China (no Chinese could return to his home village without a clearance from the Six Companies). The growers loved the system. As Alice Prescott Smith put it, the Chinese labor boss would provide fifty replicas of himself, carrying their own food and bedding: “They lived in the field, worked as locusts, cleared the crop, and

melted away." In return the companies provided social protection, insurance, and banking services, even armed force through the "specials" that roamed through the Chinese ghetto. And as Jake Gittes could have told you, "For many years the Six Companies kept a special Chinatown contingent of San Francisco policemen on their payroll." Jack Manion spent twenty-five years running "the Chinatown Squad" from 1921 into the World War II era; an Irishman like most of the city police force, he was "really the law" in Chinatown—well, either he was or the Six Companies were. Actually these companies were above the law, enforcing their own rules somewhat like the Mafia to sponsor illegal gambling, extort protection money, and traffic in women and drugs. (It seems that they still do, at least in New York.)<sup>5</sup>

Chinese males probably constituted about one-fifth of the gainfully employed in California by the 1870s, and among wage workers it was more like one-quarter. Where Chinese were not excluded—in mining, agriculture, and trades like cigars and tailoring—they almost took them over: of about 8,700 people in the cigar industry in the 1880s, 8,500 were Chinese; of 8,510 tailors, 7,510 were Chinese. Many of them were Californians much longer than whites, but they had to live in their own hermetic Chinatown world. Chinese were excluded from San Francisco business clubs, law firms, brokerage houses, and the ranks of judges and city supervisors. Large sections of the city would not sell or rent to them; they quickly ran into trouble if they dared cross the perimeters of Powell Street, Broadway, or Kearny by themselves. Thus they had to live cheek-by-jowl in sections of the city open to them, which in turn became objects of Anglo curiosity—people liked to gather and watch Chinese laundrymen "distend their cheeks with water and then sprinkle the undergarments of ladies and gentlemen there from."<sup>6</sup>

Others drew a truer picture of people of color in the new West. General James F. Rusling wrote a fascinating account of his military inspection mission in 1866, full of insight and wise observation. In Portland he encountered "John Chinaman" and decided that "as a class [they] were doing more hearty honest work by far, than most of their bigoted defamers. We could not refrain from wishing them well, they were so sober, industrious, and orderly." By the time he got to San Francisco he concluded that without the Chinese, the industry of the Pacific Coast "would soon come to a stand-still." On New Year's Eve 1866, General Rusling gathered at the grand Occidental Hotel in San Francisco with assorted city fathers and many of the wealthiest Chinese merchants to celebrate the launching of the *Colorado*—the first steamer on the new monthly route to Hong Kong. Representatives of the big Chinese companies were there, too, and they all seemed to get along amiably with the San

Francisco elite. "Here, surely," General Rusling wrote, "is evidence of fine talent for organization and management—the best tests of human intellect and capacity . . . [that] imply a genius for affairs, that not even the Anglo-Saxon can afford to despise."<sup>7</sup>

General Rusling was appalled by the whorehouses in Chinatown—but mainly by the white men who frequented them: "the brutality and bestiality of Saxon and Celt here all comes suddenly to the surface, as if we were fiends incarnate." This and other "shameful spectacle[s]" that he observed led him to think that "justice will not sleep forever" when confronted by "a strong race trampling a weaker one remorselessly in the mud." He went on to urge that millions more Chinese be enticed to emigrate; they will do all the hard work and slowly assimilate: "The first generation passed away, the next de-Chinaized, Americanized and educated, would soon become absorbed in the national life, and known only as model artisans and workers. As the ocean receives all rains and rivers . . . so America receives the Saxon and the Celt, the Protestant and the Catholic, and can yet receive Sambo and John, and absorb them all." Rusling thought this was what Jefferson meant by the preamble to the Declaration of Independence—his was an early call for assimilation and multiculturalism.<sup>8</sup>

Outside the relative sanctuary of San Francisco, whites could do with Chinese whatever they wanted. In Rock Springs, Wyoming, whites demolished the Chinese community in 1885: they massacred twenty-eight people and drove some six hundred more from their homes, which they then put to the torch at a total loss of \$150,000; the authorities sided with the whites. Two years later renegade "cowboys" murdered thirty-one Chinese miners working along the Snake River, mutilated their bodies, and looted their belongings. A white jury later refused to convict anyone for the crime ("none of the jury knew the Chinamen," a local rancher explained). Meanwhile Indians were equal-opportunity marauders: Paiutes slaughtered forty to sixty Chinese miners in 1866, and lesser massacres of Chinese by Indians were commonplace in the West.<sup>9</sup>

Relatively few Chinese lived in Washington's cities and towns in the late nineteenth century compared to California or Oregon, but that did not stop the proper citizens (especially the police) of Seattle and Tacoma from abusing and ultimately banishing them. In 1885 the mayor and the police chief of Tacoma spearheaded a movement to expel several hundred Chinese from their homes and buildings, and a year later the Seattle police chief led an angry mob of whites into Chinatown under the guise of examining sanitary conditions, whereupon the mob broke into homes, loaded belongings and

furniture onto wagons, and forced the Chinese to march to the dock and get onboard the *Queen of the Pacific*, bound for San Francisco. The rule of law resurfaced momentarily when a federal judge kindly informed the Chinese that no law required them to go, but most of them had the good sense to clamber aboard—especially since teamsters had already loaded their furniture and belongings. Trouble was, there were too many of them. So 196 left and 200 remained, as the threatening crowd closed in on them—“raving, howling, angry men.” Whites grabbed rifles from the police and fired into the crowd, killing two Chinese. The governor declared martial law and began summary arrests; the next day President Grover Cleveland ordered in federal troops. The remnant got out as best they could, and Chinese did not return to Seattle for many years. Similar efforts to drive the Chinese out occurred all over the West in the 1880s and particularly in California—except for San Francisco, to which the Chinese typically fled; newspapers once estimated that the city’s Chinese population grew by 20,000 in a few months. Labor unions didn’t like that, so they organized a Pacific Coast anti-Chinese congress given over to nauseating racial invective. Within a few years, all the anti-Chinese agitation culminated in the 1902 law permanently excluding Chinese immigrants.<sup>10</sup>

In both Los Angeles and San Francisco new Chinatowns replaced old Chinatowns, like a palimpsest burying history. The first Chinatown in Los Angeles was legendary—an underground city, “a nest of catacombs where inscrutable sins were committed,” in Norman Klein’s words. For paleface sinning there was also an aboveboard city: all legalized prostitution was situated in Chinatown until 1909. The whores and the opium dens were mostly for whites, and it was all fine until the city fathers decided to demolish Chinatown to make way for the Southern Pacific train depot (the Union Station that still sits as a monument to 1930s art deco, Mission Revival style); here was a multiple palimpsest, because Union Station and the old Chinatown stood on the site of the first orange grove ever laid out in California (by a Kentucky trapper in 1841). City fathers burned the brothels, opium dens, and cribs to the ground in fear of bugs and germs that might carry bubonic plague.<sup>11</sup> A new Chinatown emerged a few blocks away, a spiffed up Potemkin Village attractive to tourists instead of the slumming whites who patronized the cribs. In San Francisco the great earthquake and fire destroyed a Chinese ghetto that traced its roots back to the gold rush, so the city replaced it with a red-and-gold simulacrum for tourists. (The 1906 fire also burned up city records on Chinese immigration, enabling thousands to make up genealogies attaching them to Chinese families already resident in the city.)

A German photographer, Arnold Genthe, recorded the old Chinatown

and then tried to reconnoiter the lost past of his own camera images in the new one. All the grime and dirt, the inclement density of people forced to live on top of each other, the fascinating human panorama—it had all washed away, he wrote in 1913: “On brilliantly illuminated streets, smoothly asphalted, filled with crowds in American clothes, stand imposing bazaars of an architecture that never was, blazing in myriads of electric lights. Costly silk embroideries in gaudy colors, porcelains of florid design, bronzes with hand-made patina, and a host of gay Chinese and Japanese wares which the wise Oriental manufactures for us barbarians, tempt the tourist to enter.” Some tourists were taken in, while others saw more: Oscar Wilde called San Francisco’s Chinatown “the most artistic city I have ever come across.” Will Irwin, in a book containing Arnold Genthe’s photographs of Chinatown, exemplified the interchangeability of Oriental stereotypes in California. He offers a paean to the Chinese cook (found in every California mansion according to him): “He was the consoler and fairy-teller of childhood. He passed on to the babies his own wonder tales of flowered princesses and golden dragons . . . he saved his frugal nickels to buy them quaint little gifts. . . . The Chinaman was an ideal servant.” But now, “the insolent and altogether less admirable Japanese” were taking their places by the cook stoves, and so “your San Francisco housewife will never cease lamenting for the old order.”<sup>12</sup>

## American Stoics

Throughout the United States and much of American history Chinese individuals and families have lived in isolation, running a restaurant or a laundry in a small place, often as the only Chinese-Americans in town. It is a largely unnoticed diaspora, taken for granted by other Americans as a fact of life—but not a very interesting one. In 1953 Paul Chan Pang Siu completed a dissertation at the University of Chicago entitled “The Chinese Laundryman: A Study of Social Isolation.” (People on the Pacific Coast had sent laundry to be done in Canton before many Chinese came to America, believe it or not, which began the association of Chinese with washing clothes.) Siu called the laundryman neither a marginal man nor a person interested in assimilation; he was instead “a sojourner.” Not that he expected to return to China (although Americans liked to ask when he was planning to go back)—the sensibility of the sojourner was a response to discrimination. Likewise he worked as a laundryman out of necessity, not choice; none of the subjects Siu studied ever said their ambition was to be a laundryman. Most of them were single, social contact with customers was perfunctory, the hours were long;

they led miserable workdays waiting for a few hours of "frantic release" on Sundays to gamble or visit a prostitute. They passed the time in the laundry thinking up new Cantonese insults to mock unsuspecting customers who came and went.<sup>13</sup> Racial oppression cannot destroy the curious phenomenon that it creates, namely, W. E. B. DuBois's famous "gift of second-sight," which takes the measure of the oppressor.

When Jack Nicholson comes looking for Faye Dunaway in *Chinatown*, a Chinese maid greets him at the door: "Mrs. Mulwray no home." That was the only line Beulah Ong Kwoh spoke in the film—an English literature major at Berkeley with a master's degree from the University of Chicago who spoke perfect English. The writer Frank Chin, a fifth-generation American, still bumps into whites who congratulate him on his fluent English and ask what part of China he's from: "You dumb bitch, I'm not from China," he wants to say. When he worked in a bar as a student they called him "the Indian"; drunks would apologize to him for nuking Hiroshima. Blacks feel that they have been emasculated by whites, Chin wrote, but "the genius of white racism in regard to the Chinese is that they never granted them balls in the first place. They convinced them that it's so. That it was a virtue to be passive, to keep your place." His own father was example number one—yet he was president of the Six Companies. "I look at the way he tunes the television set, it's all wrong. The people look like they're dead. They come on looking dingy, gray, the color of Roquefort cheese. But that's the way he sees the world."<sup>14</sup>

### A "New Japan" in California

Chinatown in Los Angeles was much smaller and less influential than its northern counterpart. The City of Angels was instead a mecca for Japanese. Also pioneers in an easterly direction, early migrants hoped to find open land that they could develop, thus "to create the second, new Japan" in the American West (as an 1887 guide for emigrants put it). Between 1895 and 1908 about 130,000 Japanese migrated to the United States and Hawaii, most of them males from better-off rural households looking for bigger earnings. By 1935 around 32,000 Japanese lived in Los Angeles County, 13,000 in the city itself, and almost all of them lived in Little Tokyo spreading out from First and San Pedro streets. At least half were born in the United States but almost all of these were kids—perhaps three-quarters were under twenty-one. The Japanese cornered the produce business, supplying from some 5,135 farms three-fourths of the fresh vegetables—cauliflower, strawberries, spinach, tomatoes, celery—that the great city consumed. More than 500 Japanese fishermen plied

the nearby coastal waters. Subject to continuous prejudice and restrictive housing covenants, Japanese-American aspirations were nonetheless thoroughly American and middle class—"home-owning, church-oriented" (even if Buddhist and Shinto congregations sat alongside Christian churches)—and dedicated to the American pastime that took hold so readily in Japan: baseball. A third of their children went on to college.<sup>15</sup> Teenage boys with their letter sweaters and cheerleading girls in bobby sox crowded into hamburger joints and movie drive-ins.

The Nisei desire to Americanize and settle down did little to stop the racial hatred that had denied them home and farm ownership, and that kept them penned up in segregated housing—which of course meant segregated schools (and for good measure, in 1906 the San Francisco school board ordered all Oriental students into a single segregated school in Chinatown). Carey McWilliams gave a name to this sorry experience—the California-Japanese War of 1900–1941—that aptly reflected how white Californians had contaminated United States–Japan relations long before Pearl Harbor, and how American expansion, especially the acquisition of Hawaii, had brought tension to the relationship with Japan. This was race- and class-based antagonism; Japanese farmers were too good, they threatened their white counterparts. At the peak in 1909, 42 percent of the farm labor supply in California was Japanese, rising to 66 percent in sugar beets and 86 percent in berries. In Los Angeles alone, Japanese-farmed acres grew from 6,173 in 1910 to 30,820 in 1940, with much of the acreage along the lovely coastline of the Palos Verdes peninsula, thought by Anglo farmers to be too arid. Soon these lands drew the highest truck farm rents in the state. If anti-Chinese fervor was strongest among labor unions, anti-Japanese agitation came from middle- and lower-middle-class whites threatened by their success.<sup>16</sup>

Japanese-Americans tried to fit in. K. K. Kawakami, secretary of the Japanese Association of America and a writer on United States–Japan relations, published several books from 1903 to 1920 arguing that the rise of Japan as a modern nation-state posed no threat to the United States but would complement America's own power in the Pacific (this is China's line today); he also sought to downplay white racism against Japanese-Americans. Baron Gōto Shimpei, a veteran of the architectonic colonialism the Japanese built in Taiwan and Korea, wrote in 1921: "Thirty years ago when the stream of the Japanese immigrants began to pour into the Golden Gate, Americans welcomed it with a true Walt Whitman spirit, 'I am large, I contain multitudes.' The process has since been reversed." Other Japanese leaders pointed out that racist campaigns like "Keep California White!" violated the commitment to

racial equality in the charter of the League of Nations; a famous journalist, Kayahara Kazan, said Americans, unlike Europeans, still regard Japanese as children. For Washington these campaigns were not idle matters but central to the health of the United States–Japan relationship, but the discussion effectively ended with the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924. In Congress a coalition of western anti-Asian constituencies combined with southern racist votes to push through exclusionary legislation for the nation as a whole; during the debates racist caricatures of Asians sometimes were drawn to make them look like blacks.<sup>17</sup> Emigration across the Pacific to America essentially ceased for the next forty years.

In these years racism provided a vocabulary and a grammar to understand the world. Books like Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Colour against White World Supremacy* (1920) took it for granted that world politics revolved around an axis of race relations. For this Harvard Ph.D. and the biologist who introduced the book (Madison Grant, chairman of the New York Zoological Society), "science" had proved the superiority of whites and the inferiority of the red, yellow, brown, and black peoples. Dr. Grant did not stop just at colors: there were also evil "Semites," and the "Mediterranean race"—"swarthy-skinned" and "long-skulled." True, their skull shape had an inexplicable affinity with the head shape of "the great Nordic race," but most other races were round-skulled (technically the "brachycephalic" skull type, found among "the Asiatic Mongols" among others). The just-concluded Great War, Grant thought, was mere prelude to the coming assault on Western Europe by "Bolshevism with Semitic leadership and Chinese executioners." Stoddard, however, was more worried about the pollution of white America by immigrants. The white world—which, we remember, still controlled most of Asia and Africa—stood "at the crossroads of life and death" because of the global march of colored peoples: "Fifty millions of our race wherewith to conquer and possess the earth! . . . China is our steed! Far shall we ride upon her!"<sup>18</sup>

These were not crackpot views but representative of American leaders from Benjamin Franklin to Woodrow Wilson's well-known racism to Berkeley professor R. L. Adams, who in 1921 classified various ethnicities into "an absurdly retentive, racialized bestiary" that ranked their suitability for agricultural labor in California, and to Jack London, who thought "the menace to the Western world" lay in "the little brown man" (the Japanese) undertaking to manage "the four hundred millions of yellow men." London's writings were tremendously influential, imparting an image of an intelligent, efficient, clean, but dangerous Japan and a dirty slumbering Chinese giant, hardwork-

ing under proper leadership and therefore also dangerous (but otherwise indolent). London's paranoid fears of organized Orientals are all too evident in "The Unparalleled Invasion" (1907), which imagines China's teeming population spilling over into white colonies in Southeast Asia, whereupon Western armies cordon off all escape from China and then bombard it with deadly germ projectiles cooked up by an American scientist. China, now happily empty of the Chinese, is fumigated and then resettled by people of other nationalities under a "democratic American program."<sup>19</sup> It is as if China were forcibly returned to the condition of the New World after smallpox and other European diseases had run their course.

The 1924 exclusion of "Orientals" marked a change, however, from the harebrained science of race, focusing on head shape and the like, to an official racism emphasizing "cultural, national, and physical difference," in Mae Ngai's words. For the first time numerical limits were placed on immigrants, and for the first time the United States established "a global racial and national hierarchy that favored some immigrants over others." The disfavored were those thought to be *unassimilable*—"that our white race will readily intermix with the yellow strains of Asia," California governor William Stephens wrote in 1920, "And that out of this interrelationship shall be born a new composite human being is manifestly impossible." Likewise the Asiatic Exclusion League of North America argued that Asians were "incongruous and non-assimilable"; between the white American and the Asian, "there is no common tie whatever. There is no community of thought, nor of feeling, nor of sympathy," just a Pacific void. A genuine Caucasian, Bhagat Singh Thind, argued that he was white and should be naturalized, but the Supreme Court ruled that whites were those deemed white by the common man—and so South Asians were not white. The American Federation of Labor's *Clarion* backed Asian exclusion, while sounding like the ladies of the *Social Register*: "This great Caucasian club of ours must vote out people who are not clubbable." Unfortunately dictums about the unassimilability of Asians were widespread, long lasting, and convincing, even to progressive historians like Charles Beard.<sup>20</sup>

Our little brown brothers in the Philippines fared little better. In 1934 Franklin Roosevelt pushed through Congress the Tydings-McDuffie Act, transforming the Philippine colony into a semi-autonomous commonwealth, pending independence that was scheduled for 1946. This gift from one hand was instantly nulled by the other: the bill deprived Filipinos of American citizenship and cut their immigration quota back to fifty per year. Dr. George Clements, a publicist for big agriculture, wrote in the *Pacific Rural Press* in

1936 that the Filipino was “the most worthless, unscrupulous, shiftless, diseased, semi-barbarian that has ever come to our shores.”<sup>21</sup> (Clearly the *latifundistas* had no more need for Filipino labor, as whites emptied Oklahoma.)

### The Coming War with Japan

A stock article in the expansionist lexicon was the invasion of California that Japan was stealthily preparing. An odd hunchback named Homer Lea argued in *The Valor of Ignorance* (1909) that a conflagration between the United States and Japan was inevitable: Lea outlined a complex logic by which growing economic competition would ultimately lead to war. Once it started the Japanese navy would deposit a million invaders at three spots: Chehalis in Washington, Goat Island in San Francisco Bay, and Los Angeles. His book, complete with detailed maps and replete with nonsense, sold very well. The American general staff paid close attention to *Valor*; General MacArthur’s intelligence chief, Charles Willoughby, was still quoting Homer Lea in 1941. The Hearst press frequently trumpeted alleged Japanese threats to the Pacific Coast and even provided a plan of how war would happen in a September 1915 article: photographs depicted Japanese soldiers training for an amphibious landing on the shores of California (later they proved to be doctored photos from the Sino-Japanese War). Los Angeles newspapers imagined that once the war began Japanese railway workers would seize Henry Huntington’s “Red Car” system to move their divisions around Los Angeles County; Americans who ridiculed this discourse were called “white Japs.” A novel titled *Invasion* conjured the ultimate Angeleno nightmare: Japanese planes set the city ablaze with firebombs and then hordes of paratroopers “fiendishly gorge on oranges.”<sup>22</sup>

The most famous scenario for United States–Japan war was Hector Bywater’s 1925 book, *Sea Power in the Pacific: A Study of the American–Japanese Naval Problem*. War would begin with a Japanese attack on the American Pacific Fleet, he claimed, gaining him a retrospective fame (he anticipated some aspects of Japan’s attack on the Philippines and Guam in 1941, if not Pearl Harbor). The only way to contain Japan, Bywater thought, was to establish naval bases in the Philippines and Midway and Wake islands—and that really was prophetic of the war and its aftermath. Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, architect of the attack at Pearl Harbor, carefully studied Bywater’s book as a young naval attaché in Washington, sending reports on it back to Tokyo. Needless to say, this was going to be a “race war,” whites against yellows, Anglo-Saxons against Japanese samurai; Field Mar-

shal Yamagata Aritomo was particularly taken with the idea of an apocalyptic clash between the races.<sup>23</sup>

### Not Quite Belonging

An eighteen-year-old Japanese youth named Noguchi Yonejirō had arrived in the United States in 1893, or as he later wrote, “a sudden turning” had thrown him into “the strange streets of San Francisco.” The English he learned in Japan was of little avail, he couldn’t understand a thing; he chose to remain silent, as if a deaf mute, but he began reading. He walked all the way to Palo Alto to pick strawberries and read Victor Hugo in his spare time while holed up in the Menlo Park Hotel. He hiked to “the heights,” a secluded enclave in the hills above Oakland (that is, Piedmont), washed dishes, delivered newspapers, gardened, working quietly the while. He befriended poet Joaquin Miller and began to write his own poetry. Soon he published a book of poems: *Seen and Unseen; Or, the Monologues of a Homeless Snail*. His silence was eloquent, a memento for the multitudes of Asian-Americans who labored on the railroads or in the mines, fields, and gardens, saying nothing but taking everything in. Later on Noguchi left California for Chicago, New York, and London. He fathered a child with a white woman in 1904 and took the baby back with him to Japan. That child was Isamu Noguchi, subsequently an artist and sculptor of extraordinary range and talent—from great murals to sets for Martha Graham and her dancers, to geometric hanging lamps and giant stainless steel sculptures.

One Sunday morning Isamu Noguchi set off in his “woody” station wagon along the coast south of L.A. to pick up some stones for his work from a supplier: it was December 7, 1941. Soon after Americans of Japanese descent were incarcerated, he voluntarily went to live for six months in the camp at Poston, Colorado (the Poston camp was built inside the Colorado Indian Reservation and run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs). As he later recalled: “Pearl Harbor was an unmitigated shock. . . . With a flash I realized that I was no longer a sculptor alone. I was not just American but Nisei.” This remarkable act of courage and witness—to join a camp of 17,000 where every inmate had a serial number, not a name—grew out of the “haunting sense of unreality” that had marked his first four decades, a feeling “of not quite belonging.” Noguchi later said he wanted to get to know his fellow Nisei, but to them (as to white Americans) he was racially “mixed”—that curious term we ought to apply to all humans, with our DNA as the proof, but applies only to people like Noguchi. He was a hybrid, and he wrote prophetically in

1942, "To be hybrid anticipates the future. This is America, the nation of all nationalities."<sup>24</sup>

In spite of restrictive legislation going back half a century, in 1941 Japanese still ran 5,000 farms in California and marketed more than 40 percent of its truck crops. War hysteria after Pearl Harbor led to many attacks on Japanese-Americans and panic by official agencies: FBI agents, for example, wasted little time in arresting 100 leaders of the Japanese community in Seattle on the very "date that will live in infamy," December 7. They had done no wrong, of course (and city newspapers had applauded their patriotism), but political leaders weren't listening; in early 1942 Idaho's governor, Chase Clark, urged that they all be sent back to Japan—and after that, "sink the island [*sic*]." "They live like rats, breed like rats, and act like rats. We don't want them." The University of California wanted at least one, though, at its graduation in the spring of 1942: Harvey Akio Itano, a premedical student who was the valedictorian of his class; he had been removed to a resettlement center in April. Ironically, Japanese-Americans found welcome in the Owens Valley, where the infamous Manzanar camp was established—not at first, but after local businesses began to prosper by supplying the needs of the nearly 10,000 Japanese-Americans incarcerated there.<sup>25</sup>

The Japanese relocations were hardly unprecedented, and not just because of massive Indian removals: when millions of jobs disappeared after the 1929 crash, powerful Americans decided to get rid of Mexicans, too. From 1929 to 1935 public authorities from the federal level on down expelled between half a million and a million Mexicans, of whom only some 100,000 had arrived in the United States illegally. Mexicans and anyone who "looked Mexican" (in the Southwest the U.S. immigration service was notorious for lumping various peoples of color as Mexican) were picked up in widespread sweeps, and if they didn't have proper papers on them, they were packed onto long trains and shipped from Los Angeles to the El Paso border. In 1931, the worst year, 138,519 people were deported, but the total was always above 70,000 a year during the Hoover administration. After Roosevelt came in the deportations lessened considerably—only three trains departed after April 1933.<sup>26</sup> This disgraceful ethnic relocation, worthy of Stalin, was abruptly reversed when the war started and massive labor shortages developed; now came the "Bracero Program" to bring cheap Mexican labor pouring back across the border as fast as possible; 200,000 came in during the war, with the government paying their transportation costs. The number of braceros peaked at 450,000 in 1956, when they made up more than half the labor force in lettuce, tomatoes, sugar beets, and cotton. Richard A. Walker calls this "a

kind of indentured labor: contracted by the government, housed in closed camps, bused to the fields, and sent home to Mexico once the season was over." During the Bracero Program the authorities still launched assaults against illegal Mexican aliens; "Operation Wetback" in 1954 mounted "a direct attack . . . upon the hordes of aliens facing us across the border," in the words of General Joseph Swing, who commanded this massive assault in Texas and Southern California. Cesar Chavez lodged one of his first big victories when the Bracero Program finally ended in 1964.<sup>27</sup>

### Concentration Camps East of Eden

After the Chinese were driven away from Seattle in the 1880s, Japanese-Americans slowly arrived until they were the city's largest minority by 1941, numbering nearly 7,000. They lived on "Skid Road" (made famous in Murray Morgan's wonderful book by that title), or the south side of First Hill, or up Beacon Hill—older and usually dilapidated parts of the city. Kazuko Itoi's father ran the Carrollton Hotel on Skid Road, a flophouse like many others, but he kept it clean and safe. Born just after the Great War, Kazuko had a wonderful child's life growing up in the middle of the city; if her parents spoke Japanese and kept to the old ways, she was a budding American, a Seattleite who tended to forget her Asian heritage until some white reminded her (when are you going back to China?). She was like her much more numerous counterparts in Los Angeles, a bobby-soxer running off to the soda shop or the movies—until 1941.<sup>28</sup>

The first relocations took place on nearby Bainbridge Island in March 1942, when fifty-four families were carted off to camps; soon the entire community was eliminated. Kazuko and her friends were shocked and flabbergasted, but off they went to the camps. Local newspapers reported on all this matter-of-factly, as if it were of little moment. Seattle took notice of the deportations only when a senior at the University of Washington, Gordon Hirabayashi, refused to go along, or even to obey the army's nightly curfew. A conscientious objector born to Quaker parents, he turned himself in after Seattle had been emptied of his kind, in the middle of 1942. After being sentenced to three months in prison, he appealed his case all the way to the Supreme Court—which upheld his conviction. A young William O. Douglas argued that no racial discrimination was involved; in his dissent Robert Jackson eloquently argued that it most certainly was. A bit later this precedent was cited when the Court decided *Korematsu v. United States*, a California case that is much better known. After he got out of prison Hirabayashi worked

with the American Friends Service Committee in Spokane and refused to fill out a questionnaire designed to test Japanese-American loyalties. Back to jail he went for another year. Later he got a Ph.D. at the University of Washington and became a hero among his people—and among many whites who had remained silent during his incarceration.<sup>29</sup>

### The Japanese Garden

Until the recent period, Asian influence in the West, apart from migrating Asian-American laborers in various trades, has primarily been architectural, aesthetic, and gastronomical—Japanese gardens in Beverly Hills, Asian motifs in residential design, art collections in the museums and homes of the wealthy, dinner out at a Chinese restaurant—a kind of patrician Orientalism, to borrow Jack Tchen's apt term, with roots in the China trade of the early Republic. The genteel tradition in the Pacific states was rarely overtly racist, but like Teddy Roosevelt, overtly Japanophile: admiring of Japan's modern prowess (when it didn't threaten the United States) and awed by its aesthetic taste and spiritual sensibility. Before 1965, of course, this was all surface, exterior influence, merely epidermal rather than cultural or civilizational; Asians still lived in their communities and went to the back door.

Charles Augustus Keeler, a Berkeley poet whom Kevin Starr nominated as the author of "a garden ideology" for California, wanted to bring the Mediterranean and East Asia together in gardens designed to "exhilarate our souls by the harmony and glory of pure and brilliant color . . . in the shadow of the palm and . . . the whisper of rustling bamboo," while William Hammond Hall figured out how to build a thousand-acre park and woodland atop shifting sand dunes in the 1870s, thus creating Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, with its famous Japanese tea garden. The Bernheimer Japanese Gardens in Los Angeles also attracted many tourists.<sup>30</sup> The Pacific Coast Highway opened in 1937 and coursed through perhaps the most impressive wilderness in America, the Big Sur running along the shore from San Luis Obispo to Carmel, with great cliffs rising above the sparkling surf, capping mountains and foothills that extend back into the interior through unspoiled forests<sup>31</sup> and truly natural gardens—Arcadia unveiled.

Big Sur would not reach its apotheosis as the epicenter of transcendent mind-body experience and all-round therapeutic curative for the well-heeled and the hippie alike until the 1960s, but an itinerant Tibetan lama already signified this telos as early as 1915. On a pilgrimage to Monterey he told reporters that the Point Lobos cypress groves arose from seeds planted a

thousand years ago by wandering monks who got there via China and Japan (he might have had a point, because they grow nowhere else in America). How the monks did that he chose not to reveal, but he vouched that the trees came from a monastery in Lhasa. This auspicious beginning did not last much past the opening of the coast highway, however, as the local literati, firmly facing East, determined that Big Sur really resembled the western Irish coast, and thus they beheld "the second Celtic Twilight."<sup>32</sup>

In San Diego, though, Orientalism had a kind of heyday even before the Tibetan's pilgrimage. Katherine Tingley brought Theosophy to the city in 1897, more particularly to Point Loma overlooking the Pacific; this religion made eclecticism into a fetish, taking guidance from Buddhas and Brahmins, Cabalists and Gnostics, neo-Platonists and "Swedenborgian teachings" (a liberal doctrine of the nineteenth century involving, not surprisingly, the interplay of nature and spirit). Her smorgasbord of religious quackery found not a few takers (this being Southern California): "Wisdom of the Ancients," "World Soul," meditation, reincarnation, escape from tarnation—there was something for everybody. Tingley built her national headquarters at the Point (right next to the navy), and by 1910 three hundred students were enrolled at her Raja Yoga School. Some raved about it, others put out rumors of "forced labor and nighttime lockups." Strange midnight processions of people in pajamas added to the fun. But lots of English and American artists and freethinkers showed up, and in the end, at least according to one observer, Point Loma did as much as any other institution to bring culture and the arts to San Diego.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile the formidable Huntington Library dedicated itself to "the origin and progress of the civilization of the English-speaking peoples with special reference to their intellectual development," and the bulk of its original collection was steeped in British culture and civilization. In this Henry Huntington merely expressed in philanthropy "the Anglophilia of establishment culture" in Southern California.<sup>34</sup> If that made them no different from their establishment peers in New York or Boston, the latter were not peering East from a distance of 3,000 miles, backs turned to the Pacific. Maybe one elite college makes the point best: there it is, situated in an idyllic natural setting five miles from Pasadena, founded in 1914 by "Protestant oligarchs" as "a more refined alternative to rah-rah U.S.C." Myron Hunt designed the campus in "opulent Mediterranean Revival."<sup>35</sup> Its name is Occidental College. One wouldn't have expected it to be called Oriental College, of course, but can we say that the City of Angels, perched on the Pacific, was merely part of the Occident?



## Bad for the Glass

The legion of Japanese gardeners in Southern California had the deepest aesthetic influence, transforming one arid setting after another into a new, nature-conforming aesthetic—except that most of the “nature” was either imported or worked carefully at the Japanese hand to make a pine tree or moss-covered rock look natural (much as in Japan, except the plastic, transformative effect was much greater in California because Japan is not arid). Here was the deepest penetration of any East Asian influence into the life and culture of the Pacific Coast before the war, satisfying Californians’ Arcadian desires for harmony and order, serenity and balance in life. Falling water, strategically placed stones, cherry and peach blossoms, a lily pond with multi-colored goldfish (otherwise known as carp) swimming under a spare wooden foot bridge, artful arrangements of small pine trees (the pine is worshipped in Japan and used in a thousand ways)—this became a formula replicated in one garden or home or public space after another by some 2,500 Japanese gardeners. Add a Greene and Greene Craftsman bungalow (an architecture also absorbing Japanese technique and design), and you have “the temporarily unassimilable metaphor of Japan as a conscious model for imitation and usage by white California.”<sup>36</sup> The Issei and Nisei themselves, of course, were to be seen in the garden and not elsewhere, they were not assimilable; instead a wall of exclusion kept them just as confined in Little Tokyo as blacks were in Bronzeville. I may mistake Kevin Starr’s meaning, but does “temporarily unassimilable” mean there was a later point where Japanese metaphors and influence, or Japanese-Americans themselves, were assimilable, beyond home and garden or sushi restaurant? I don’t think so; Larry Ellison’s secluded estate in Woodside (called “Sanbashi” or Three Bridges) is a thorough paean to the way extremely wealthy Japanese live: but apart from its absurd extravagance, how does it differ from the teahouse in Golden Gate Park or Mrs. Mulwray’s backyard pond?

## Conclusion: Not Quite Belonging

World War II did not end state discrimination against Asian-Americans. During the cold war the FBI harbored deep suspicions about the various Chinese and Korean communities, engaging in its own close surveillance while allowing the dictatorships in Taipei and Seoul to spy on and often terrify local communities. Both regimes funded newspapers, held gala celebrations on this anniversary or that, acted in loco parentis for college students,

and sought to intimidate any and all critics of the dictators. Then everything began to change, thanks to the civil rights movement: “eastering” turned into an avalanche. A mere 7 percent of immigrants in 1965, Asian-Americans accounted for a quarter of all immigration in 1970 and more than a third by 1975. Koreans poured into Los Angeles, which quickly surpassed Japan as the primary location of the Korean diaspora.<sup>37</sup> By the 1990s boom in Silicon Valley, one-quarter of the population was Asian-American, and soon Berkeley, UCLA, and other California universities welcomed freshman classes in which Asian-Americans were nearly the majority.<sup>38</sup> Orange County, almost uniformly white until 1965, sprouted Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean communities in Monterey Park (now 63 percent Asian), Westminster, and Garden Grove. At long last “eastering” Asians had a fighting chance for equality—and still, a sense of not quite belonging.

## Notes

### Preface

1. Chirot (1986), 224. (Daniel Chirot calls this the fourth revolution, the third being chemicals and electricity. I think textiles, iron, steel and railways, and autos and mass production all had more transformative impact than chemicals and electricity, but I can see his point.) Willa Cather quoted in Commager (1950), 153–54.
2. *Weekly Variety*, March 18, 1996, p. 123.
3. For my critique of these terms see Cumings, “Rimspeak; or, the Discourse of the Pacific Rim,” in Dirlík (1993), 29–50; see also Alexander Woodside, “The Asia-Pacific Idea as a Mobilization Myth,” in Dirlík (1993), 13–28; also McEvedy (1998), ix.
4. I published nothing related to this book until 1999, when I did a long paper on “the American ascendancy” which appeared the following year in the *British Journal of International Studies* and in a shorter version in the *Nation*. These articles show that I did not anticipate the recrudescence of unilateralism; my views about internationalism and expansionism had actually developed in the Reagan years, which involved what now seems to be a mild return to American nationalism and unilateralism. For another account predicting that the world was moving toward a broad multilateralism—even “governance without government”—see Hardt and Negri (2000), 13–14.
5. Gene Balsley (1950) in Rhodes (1999), 193–94.
6. Schrag (1999), 27. George B. Leonard, later a leader of the Esalen Institute, wrote in 1962 of the “migrating millions who vote with their wheels for California.” Quoted in Schrag (1999), 28.
7. “Just like the title,” Evans said, the script “was pure Chinese—nobody, I mean nobody, understood it.” Evans in *The Kid Stays in the Picture* (Los Angeles: Woodland Films, 2002).

32. Peirce (1972), 337-38, 345-49; Fuchs (1961), 237. Masayo Duus has a full, gripping account of the 1920 strike and the astonishing hypocrisy and violence of the authorities (Duus 1999). See also Cooper and Daws (1990), 171, 185.
33. Fuchs (1961), 290, 297-98, 397-99.
34. Haycox (2002), x-xi; McPhee (1977), 17-18.
35. Ritter (1993), 92-99; Borneman (2003), 16; McPhee (1977), 22, 103, 142; Lang in Haycox (2002), vi.
36. Haycox (2002), 20, 36, 41-43; Borneman (2003), 173-75, 200-203; McPhee (1977), 224-26. Haycox spells the name "Carmacks," Borneman and McPhee have it as "Carmack."
37. Haycox (2002), 61, 68-69, 72; Nalty (1999), 92-93; Borneman (2003), 337-41, 350-52, 364-66.

### Chapter 8. Pacific Crossings

1. Dirlik (2001), xxi; research by Ching-Hwang Yen and Persia C. Campbell cited in Okihiro (1994), 41-42; Nugent (2001), 214; Starr (1997), 136.
2. The 1852 quote is from Brott (1982), 9; St. David J. Clair, "The Gold Rush and the Beginnings of California Industry," in Rawls and Orsi (1999), 187; Jackson (1970), 213; McWilliams (1949), 59, 66-67; Bancroft (1886), 699, 708; Royce (1886), 168-69. "Long-time Californ" is the title of Victor and Brett de Bary Nee's fine book: Nee and Nee (1972).
3. Nee and Nee (1972), 49-52; Saxton (1971), 63; Takaki (1979), 215-49.
4. The *California Farmer* quoted in Worster (1985), 219; Hine and Faragher (2000), 359, citing scholarship by Sucheng Chan and Ronald Tagaki; Hale (1851), 40.
5. Saxton (1971), 8, 149; Iglar (2001), 129-30; Nee and Nee (1972), 67; Smith quoted in Stoll (1998), 149. For a laudatory account of "the Chinatown Squad" that might have been written in 1920, see Flamm (1978), 84-94. On contemporary *tong* criminality see Kwong (1996), 120-22.
6. Saxton (1971), 7, 170; Atherton (1945), 154; Starr (1997), 137; Nee and Nee (1972), 15.
7. Rusling (1877), 38, 56, 250, 269, 301, 305.
8. *Ibid.*, 310, 317-18, 320.
9. Dirlik (2001), xxiv, xxxii; Saxton (1971), 202-3; David H. Stratton, "The Snake River Massacre of Chinese Miners, 1887," in Dirlik (2001), 215, 220, 226.
10. Saxton (1971), 205-9, 263; MacDonald (1987), 24-25; Sale (1976), 37-49. (Sale has a detailed account of the Seattle expulsion.) For a long list of Chinese exclusion laws see the appendix in Nee and Nee (1972).
11. McPhee (1966), 90; Klein (1997), 58-60.
12. Wyatt (1997), 7, 112; Genthe quoted in James Lee, "Another View of Chinatown: Yun Gee and the Chinese Revolutionary Artists' Club," in Brook et al. (1998), 166; Wilde quoted in Hine and Faragher (2000), 422; Irwin in Genthe (1912), 27-8.
13. See Henry Yu's excellent discussion of Siu's research, Yu (2001), 133-36, 168.
14. Yu (2001), 172; Chin quoted in Nee and Nee (1972), 377-89.
15. Azuma (2005), 23, 29; Starr (1990), 146-47; Starr (1997), 162; Starr (2002), 55.
16. McWilliams (1945), 39-46; McWilliams (1949), 140-41; Pomeroy (1965), 272; Heizer and Almquist (1971), 160, 165, 181; Modell (1977), 99, 105-7.
17. Starr (2002), 47, 49-50; Iriye (1972), 126-41.
18. Stoddard (1920), vi-vii, xiv, xxxi, 50, 196. The great Franz Boas had already

- established, through his "cephalic index," that the various races were equal in mental capacity (Menand [2001], 383-85). For his efforts Boas was denounced as "a radical environmentalist and a Jew" by Harvard anthropologist Ernest Hooten (in Willinsky [1998], 168).
19. Lye (2005), 16, 25, 30, 40-41. Meredith Jung-en Woo first brought "The Unparalleled Invasion" to my attention. On Professor Adams, see George L. Henderson's brilliant dissection: Henderson (1998), 91-96.
  20. Ngai (2004), 3, 8, 40, emphasis in original; Heizer and Almquist (1971), 189-90; Henderson (1998), 89; Beard (1935), 193-95; Palumbo-Liu (1999), 39. Ngai notes that many American liberals still remain ambivalent about immigration from the third world (p. 246).
  21. Palumbo-Liu (1999), 40; Clements quoted in McWilliams (1939), 139.
  22. Lea (1909), 269, 307; Bywater (1925), 97; Modell (1977), 35, 64; Starr (2002), 51-55; Honan (1991); Sackman (2005), 125, 143-58, 295.
  23. Bywater (1925), 97. On Yamagata's racial views, see Dickinson (1999), 43-44.
  24. Duus (2004), 13-31, 162-64, 168-69; Wyatt (1997), 185-89; Noguchi's unpublished manuscript, quoted in Duus (2004), 164.
  25. Walker (2004), 81; Clark quoted in Nash (1985), 150; Lotchin (2003), 105.
  26. Nugent (2001), 234-37.
  27. Ngai (2004), 155-56; Walker (2004), 72-73.
  28. Sale (1976), 176-77.
  29. MacDonald (1987), 151-53; Sale (1976), 177-78; LaFeber (1997), 221.
  30. Tchen (1999), 22; Starr (1973), 406-07; Starr (1990), 7-8.
  31. Especially the Los Padres Forest, one of the largest national preserves.
  32. Starr (1997), 53-54.
  33. *Ibid.*, 99-102.
  34. Starr (1990), 336-37.
  35. *Ibid.*, 365.
  36. *Ibid.*, 190-91; Starr (2002), 56.
  37. Kwong (1996), 101; the Korean activities come from the author's experience in Seattle and Chicago. The Korean autonomous area in China has the largest diaspora, a much older population just across the North Korean border.
  38. The entering class in 2006 at Berkeley was 46 percent Asian, 56 percent at UC-Irvine, and 43 percent at UCLA. See Timothy Egan, "Little Asia on the Hill," *New York Times Education Life* (January 27, 2007), pp. 24-26.

### Chapter 9. A Garden Cornucopia

1. Kelley (1971), 37, 47-48, 165; Stoll (1998), 3; Williams (1997), 14-15.
2. McPhee (1993), 17-18; Federal Writers Project (1939), 18; Lowitt (1984), 196; Peirce (1972), 81-82.
3. Didion quoted in Dawson and Brechin (1999), xiv; Dasmann, "Foreword," in Dawson and Brechin (1999), xi.
4. Frémont and James quoted in Starr (1973), 375, 418.
5. Here I draw on Cumings (1998); see also Kelley (1971), 201-8.
6. Lummis (1892), 269; Davis (1992), 25; Gordon (1972), 99.
7. Walker (2004), 1-3, 32, 51, 88-89, 110. California produced about 2.1 billion pounds of cheese in 2006, compared to Wisconsin's 2.4 billion. See Monica Davey, "Wisconsin's