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THINKING AFTER THE HEMISPHERIC
The planetary expanse of transnational American writing

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Introduction
In a passage from a rough draft of the Declaration of Independence, read in Congress on June 28, 1776, Thomas Jefferson accused George III of having waged “cruel War against human Nature itself, violating its most Sacred Rights of Life and Liberty in the Persons of a distant People who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into Slavery in another Hemisphere, or to incur miserable Death in their Transportation thither.”

Although this passage was to be deleted from the definitive text formally adopted by Congress on July 4, 1776, what did Jefferson mean by “another hemisphere”? A traditional interpretation very naturally defines it as the Western Hemisphere to which colonial America forcibly transported native Africans of the Eastern Hemisphere into slavery. Whatever Jefferson hoped to imply by vaguely invoking “another hemisphere,” and however magically these words disappeared from the final text of the Declaration of Independence, we must recognize how the concept of the “hemispheric” has been present from the founding of the country through to our contemporary moment.

Today’s political viewpoint undoubtedly invites us to reread this term as signifying not only the Western Hemisphere but also the Northern Hemisphere. Taking into account the nineteenth-century rise of the Monroe Doctrine, whose post-Jeffersonian hemispheric imagination led to the twenty-first-century imperative of the Bush Doctrine in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, I feel obliged now to reconsider the paradoxical way post-Revolutionary America came to champion the cause of post-colonialism as the discourse of crypto-imperialism—and to recognize how in the Trump administration, such imperialism has reached its newest zenith; while he has attempted to reinforce the border wall between the United States and Mexico, Trump also has a transpacific agenda, looking to impact Far East geopolitics, most notably in the US-North Korea Summit of 2018. It is in this respect that whenever and wherever war breaks out, we often find ourselves thinking of total apocalypse and planetary survival simultaneously. For those of us involved in Transnational American writing...
Studies, our work is interdisciplinary and deeply connected to the larger, shared concerns of those engaged in discovering and analysing the transnational impacts experienced in societies and across time. From this perspective, I would like to further explore the theoretical frontier of planetarity by re-examining the recent theories of Gerald Vizenor, Gayatri Spivak, Wai Chee Dimock, Lawrence Buell, Gretchen Murphy and Yunte Huang. In order to achieve this purpose I will illustrate my points with transpacific writers ranging from Mark Twain, William Faulkner, and Sakyo Komatsu down to Karen Tei Yamashita.

Metamorphoses of the Monroe Doctrine: From Jefferson through George W. Bush

George Washington’s “Farewell Address” (September 19, 1796) first proposed a kind of national policy of isolationism and non-interference:

In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs as a matter of serious concern, that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by geographical discriminations—Northern and Southern—Atlantic and Western; whence designing men may endeavour to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views. … The Great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign Nations is in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible.²

Further renovating the hemispheric imagination suggested by Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, Jefferson’s disciple James Monroe and his close friend John Quincy Adams joined forces to create the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, nearly half a century after the Declaration of Independence. On December 2, 1823, the fifth president of the United States James Monroe published his “Annual Message to Congress,” putting special emphasis on the following statement:

We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.³

Today, we take it for granted that the Monroe Doctrine guarantees the Western Hemisphere’s right to refuse the Eastern Hemisphere’s political and colonialisnt intervention, promising neither to intervene in the international affairs of the Eastern Hemisphere nor to colonize other countries in the Western Hemisphere except for the reason of protection. At first glance, the Monroe Doctrine seems to be the archetypal post-colonial critique of George III’s act of carrying native Africans into slavery in the Western Hemisphere, but upon examination it may indicate the prototype of another form of imperialism, thus symptomizing future Anglo-American intervention and domination in the Latin American countries of the Southern Hemisphere. Doubtless, in the rhetoric of the Monroe Doctrine lies the twisted logic naturalizing the ambivalence between post-colonialism and crypto-imperialism.

It is this twist of logic that made possible the vindication of Manifest Destiny in antebellum America, leading to Pax Americana in the twentieth century and American unilateralism in the twenty-first century. The rough draft, as well as the final version of the Declaration of Independence contain not only the theory of abolitionism but also the oxymoronic concept of what could well be called “post-colonial imperialism.” Without this twist of logic the
United States may never have constructed its military strategy for the Far East, forcing open Japan in 1853 (the very country Herman Melville in the 1851 novel *Moby-Dick* called the "double-bolted land," which both prevented its citizens from leaving it and the foreigners from entering it) and occupying it in the postwar years from 1945 through 1952. Even though the Far East undoubtedly is in the Eastern Hemisphere the Founding Fathers had promised not to intervene in two centuries prior, but which the Spanish-American War allowed the United States to dominate. As a result of what William V. Spanos called "the American exceptionalist ethos" (Spanos 2014, 4), the United States seized from Spain the latter's colonies of Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. Making the most of this twist of logic, or the rhetoric of political ambivalence peculiar to the United States, Gretchen Murphy’s *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* reads the political unconscious of Lydia Maria Child, James Fenimore Cooper, and Nathaniel Hawthorne as not incompatible with the hardcore version of the Monroe Doctrine.

There are four metamorphic stages of the Monroe Doctrine that show the way the United States gradually came to justify the double logic and the ambivalent politics of "hemisphere." The first stage became visible when Theodore Roosevelt clarified his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine by proclaiming in 1904 that not only did America have the right, à la Monroe, to block European attempts to re-colonize any of the Western Hemisphere, it also had the right to take over and shape up any nation in the hemisphere guilty of "chronic wrongdoing" or uncivilized behavior that left it "impotent"; that is, powerless to defend itself against aggressors from the "Other Hemisphere," meaning England, France, Spain, Germany, or Italy.4

The second stage was prepared by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, who became deeply disturbed in 1912 by the Japanese businessmen on the verge of buying vast areas of Mexico’s Baja California, bordering Southern California. Cabot established a second corollary to the Monroe Doctrine that prohibited foreign interests, Other Hemispheroids of any description, from giving any foreign government "practical power of control" over territory in the Western Hemisphere.5

The third stage features George Kennan, the diplomat who developed the containment theory of dealing with the Soviet Union after the Second World War. In 1950, Kennan devised the third corollary to the Monroe Doctrine by asserting that since communism was simply a tool of Soviet national power, the United States had no choice but to eradicate communist activity wherever it turned up in Latin America.

The fourth stage represents not only the fourth corollary to the Monroe Doctrine but the dramatic rise of what we call the "Bush Doctrine," which came into being on the very day of George W. Bush’s second inauguration. The voice of New Journalism Tom Wolfe mocked Bush’s speech scathingly: "By Mr. Bush’s Inauguration Day, the Hemi in Hemisphere had long since vanished, leaving the Monroe Doctrine with—what?—nothing but a single sphere [...] which is to say, the entire world."6

Following in Wolfe’s footsteps and further expanding his theory in the context of the Trump presidency, here it is safe to say that we are witnessing the rise of the Trump Doctrine. While the border between Northern and Southern Hemispheres gets tense and critical, the Western Hemisphere as represented by the United States intervenes in the Eastern Hemisphere, trying to resolve the international tension quite ambitiously.

**On the Planet of Mississippi: William Faulkner’s *The Wild Palms***

In order to illustrate my theory of post-hemispheric planetarity, I start with rereading William Faulkner’s controversial novel *The Wild Palms*, originally entitled "If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem," published in 1939. *The Wild Palms* is a kind of modern apocalyptic “double”
novel with the flooding of the Mississippi River as the central motif, featuring the city of New Orleans that serves as the geographical junction, the nexus of the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere as well as the Atlantic and the Pacific.

*The Wild Palms* predicts the rise of disaster narratives in modern and postmodern literature affected by not only flood but also by earthquakes, tornadoes, and hurricanes on the transnational level. In retrospect, All-American writer Mark Twain precedes William Faulkner in his representation of the Mississippi River. Twain notes that while the town of Delta used to be three miles below Vicksburg, a recent cut-off radically changed the position, moving Delta two miles above Vicksburg: “The Mississippi does not alter its locality by cut-offs alone: it is always changing its habitat bodily—is always moving bodily sidewise” (Twain 1982[1883]). In addition, Twain does not forget to mention the “Big Flood” of the Mississippi River in 1882, the first major one since 1874, as reported by himself in an article “Voyage of the Times-Democrat’s Relief Boat Through the Inundated Regions”:

On the right-hand side of the river is Turnbull’s Island, and on it is a large plantation which formerly was pronounced one of the most fertile in the State. The water has hitherto allowed it to go scot-free in usual floods, but now broad sheets of water told only where fields were. The top of the protecting levee could be seen here and there, but nearly all of it was submerged.

*(Twain 1982[1883], Appendix A)*

Being an admirer of Mark Twain, William Faulkner must have been keenly conscious of *Life on the Mississippi*, whose influence is visible in his representation of nature in *The Wild Palms*. This double novel consists of two alternating and essentially separate narratives. One is “Wild Palms,” set in 1937, an adulterous romance between a hospital intern Harry Wilbourne and a young married woman who meet in New Orleans and determine to sacrifice everything for love and freedom. The other is “The Old Man,” a disaster novel about a tall, lean, unnamed convict about twenty-five years old surviving the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. The former narrative ends up with the death of the heroine as the result of Harry’s failed abortion, whereas the protagonist of the latter rescues a female flood refugee and helps deliver her baby. The intern keeps writing romance fiction for a pulp magazine, while the convict is so innocently swallowed up in pulp detective fiction that he botches a train robbery. Harry has to accept the fate of death, while the tall convict still embraces the hope of life. Although both heroes are destined to inhabit the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman, they do not meet at any point in the narratives.

Climatography explicates the Great Mississippi Flood as follows:

flooding of the lower Mississippi River valley in April 1927, one of the worst natural disasters in the history of the United States. More than 23,000 square miles (60,000 square km) of land was submerged, hundreds of thousands of people were displaced and around 250 people died. After several months of heavy rain caused the Mississippi River to swell to unprecedented levels, the first levee broke on April 16, along the Illinois shore. Then, on April 21, the levee at Mounds Landing in Mississippi gave way.⁷

Up until that point this was the greatest natural disaster in American history. Faulkner finds an analogy between Noah’s Flood and surviving the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. See for example the way the convict considers “that quarter-acre mound” as “that earthen Ark out
of Genesis” (Faulkner 1990[1939], 652). Faulkner thus weaves a comical story of the tall convict, which serves as a counterpoint to the tragic story of Harry the hospital intern.

What matters most here is that the penultimate chapter of “The Old Man” gradually comes to blur the distinction between the tall convict and the Old Man, that is, the Mississippi River:

When he saw the River again he knew it at once. He should have; it was now ineradicably a part of his past, his life; it would be a part of what he would bequeath, if that were in store for him. But four weeks later it would look different from what it did now, and did: he (the old man) had recovered from his debauch, back in banks again, rippling placidly toward the sea, brown and rich as chocolate between levees whose inner faces were wrinkled as though in a frozen and aghast amazement, crowned with the rich green of summer in the willows.

(Faulkner 1990[1939], 682–683)

This passage tactfully superimposes the personal history of the tall convict with the national history of the Mississippi River at large, that is, the old man “brown and rich as chocolate between levees,” who “himself” resembles an old black slave runaway from the plantation. Furthermore, we should not ignore that the national history of the American South the author would like to depict conceals within itself a history of race closely intertwined with that of sexuality.

This novel starts with Charlotte’s hatred of “the whole human race,” especially “the race of man” (Faulkner 1990[1939], 500), and ends with the tall convict’s grudge against his former girlfriend, who deceived him and married another man. The latter develops into his malice towards the race of women, that is, the very conclusion to the whole novel: “Women, shit” (Faulkner 1990[1939], 726). In displacing the problematics of ethnicity with that of sexuality, The Wild Palms not only dramatizes the confrontations between the race of men and that of women, but also speculates more deeply on the ethnic fate of “humanity” Faulkner envisions within the “Old Man” himself. At this point, Faulkner undoubtedly conceives in the portrait of the “Old Man” the long and multicultural history of humanity beyond the small and repressive framework of modern man. Whenever a certain kind of fatal panic takes place on the planet, it puts the concept of the modern individual at stake, reviving the deep time of “humanity” per se.

Now let me seize the opportunity to reconsider the significance of New Orleans as a key city in The Wild Palms. This city is widely accepted as the entrance into North America as well as the intersection between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Therefore, if we take into account the second stage of the Monroe Doctrine in 1912, which denied any foreign political intervention in the Western Hemisphere, and the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 that made possible transportation between the Atlantic and the Pacific, it is no wonder that the panic of the Great Mississippi River Flood of 1927 induced Faulkner to write a double novel conscious of deep time as well as the double role of New Orleans as a key junction.

According to Kirsten Silva Gruesz, New Orleans occupied a dual historical position from the beginning.

It is both a locus of power from which US hegemony over much of Latin America has been extended, and an abjected place within the national body of the US—particularly after Reconstruction and the establishment of neo-colonial relations of dependence on Northern capital. Both positions have been ideologically supported...
by the “natural” fact of the city’s access to the Gulf of Mexico, which I will describe as a system of transnational cultural exchange distinct from overlapping regional formulations such as Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic” or Joseph Roach’s “circum-Atlantic.”

(Gruesz 2006, 470)

However, it is the construction of the Panama Canal (1904–1914) that revolutionized the hemispheric imagination; it redefined the Gulf of Mexico not only as transatlantic but also transpacific. Thus, Gruesz states.

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, New Orleanians represented their city as the central point of Atlantic-to-Pacific trade routes and made vigorous arguments for trans-isthmian passages that would route traffic through the Gulf rather than bypassing it, as the Panama Canal ultimately did.

(Gruesz 2006, 476)

However, while the news of Hurricane Katrina drowning New Orleans in the summer of 2005 stormed the whole world, the news of Emily ravaging the Yucatan Peninsula in the same year was not covered globally. This disproportionate media coverage reveals that we are still affected by the bias of traditional continentalism as exemplified even in the 2010s by Trump’s underestimation of Puerto Rico. What is demanded now is a new perspective on New Orleans not as a North American city but as a kind of island linking the Atlantic and the Pacific. Thus, New Orleans gains another significance in this transnational imaginary, as the capital not of a US state but of a broader hemispheric entity that looks North and South in the Americas.

Gayatri Spivak coined and defined “planetarity” as “a catachresis for inscribing collective responsibility as right” (Spivak 2003, 102). And yet, lately Yunte Huang has critically redefined it as follows: “Only by means of acknowledgment rather than knowledge, through recognition of both the ontological status of the Other and the epistemological gaps in our knowledge, can we begin to approach the conditions of collective responsibility and planetary imagination” (Huang 2008, 10). To put it another way, planetarity starts by revolutionizing our sense of history and geography and ends up by denaturalizing the discourse of ethnicity and playing the game of collective responsibility at once. In this context, our argument proves to be closely related to Gary Y. Okihiro’s new book Island World (2006), which radically criticizes the continentalist way of thinking, and instead proposes a new vision of insularism focusing on the ocean, and consisting of a number of islands as civilization units. This perspective will enable us to read Faulkner’s The Wild Palms not only as an anecdote in his Deep South Saga, if not Yoknapatowpha Saga, but also as a critical commentary on hardcore American continentalism and as a planetary meditation on the impact of panic on traditional concepts of humanity and orthodox chrono-cartography.

Fabricating ethnicity, displacing hemispheres: Faulkner, Komatsu, Yamashita

The planetarity of the Mississippi will carry us into the symbolic year of 1973 that saw not only the Oil Shock but also the coincidental publication of three novels by major Japanese writers who had all perused Faulkner’s The Wild Palms: Catholic novelist Shusaku Endo’s Shikai no Hotori (Beside the Dead Sea), 1994 Nobel Laurnat Kenzaburo Oe’s Kouzui wa Waga Tamashii ni Oyobi (The Flood Invades My Soul), the winner of the Noma Literary Prize that
year, and science fiction writer Sakyo Komatsu’s *Nippon Chimbotsu* (*Japan Sinks*) (Komatsu 1977[1973]), the year’s top bestseller with sales of more than four million copies.

American readers of Faulkner may wonder why *The Wild Palms*, one of the minor novels usually excluded from the Faulkner canon, came to influence three major postwar Japanese writers. The reason is very simple. Insofar as Faulkner’s novels are concerned, it is *The Wild Palms* that was first translated into Japanese. In 1950, one year after Faulkner won the Nobel Prize in literature, translator Yasuo Okubo published the Hibiya Shuppansha edition of *The Wild Palms*, which was reprinted by Mikasa Shobo in 1951, and which coincided with the translation of *Sanctuary* (by Naotaro Tatsunokuchi and Masami Nishikawa). What is more, in 1950 a Japanese scholar-critic majoring in French literature Takeo Kuwahara recommended *The Wild Palms* as one of the best 50 modern literary works in his *Bungaku Nyumon* (A Reader’s Guide to Literature), published by Iwanami Shoten, one of the most academic publishers in Japan. The year 1954 saw the translation of *The Sound and the Fury* (translated by Masao Takahashi) and *Pylon* (translated by Kenzaburo Ohashi), further stimulating the popularity of Faulkner in Japan.

The first peak of the Faulknerian fever in Japan was reached in 1955, with Akutagawa Literary Prize winner Yoshie Hotta’s ambitious but premature literary project inspired by *The Wild Palms*, a project that ended up not so much as a double novel but as a couple of different narratives *Jikan* (Time) and *Yoru no Mori* (Nightwood) both published in 1955. 1955 is also the year of Faulkner’s own first and last visit to Japan, which brought about fruitful discussions with Japanese scholars and students at his Nagano Seminar. This experience convinced Faulkner that Japanese people do not necessarily look for new intellectuals, but only human beings, and that they want Japanese writers to reflect Japan’s view that literature conceals an old and meaningful common language, the simplest means of communication shared by all human races. Faulkner wanted to see “humanity” in Japan, the faces of the Japanese. Here we have to note that Faulkner defines one of his key concepts—“humanity”—in the terms of the late Impressionist artists Vincent Van Gogh and Edouard Manet, that is to say, in terms of anthropology.

However, it was the year 1973, 18 years after Hotta Yoshie’s literary failure and Faulkner’s visit, that witnessed the first truly Japanese literary recreations of *The Wild Palms*. First, influenced by Yoshie Hotta, Catholic novelist and perennial candidate for Nobel Prize in Literature Shusaku Endo completed a double novel *Upon the Dead Sea*, with two alternating narratives: “Pilgrim,” with its twentieth-century viewpoint, and “A Man of the Crowd,” with its first-century viewpoint. Unlike *The Wild Palms*, Endo’s narratives wind up by drawing closer to each other. Second, although it is not a double novel, Kenzaburo Oe’s *The Flood Invades My Soul* acutely mirrors the atmosphere of the Japanese students protesting against the renewal of the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty (known as “Ampo”), and creates a contemporary protagonist living in a deserted fallout shelter who will get involved with an eco-terrorist gang “jiyu-Kokai-dan” (The Free Voyagers). While Faulkner grasped the Mississippi River Flood as the perfect metaphor for the 1930s, the apocalyptic years of the Great Depression, now Oe, who favors a passage from *The Wild Palms* “between grief and nothing I will take grief” (Faulkner 1990[1939], 715), re-imagines the “Flood” as the perfect metaphor for the nuclear crisis, the most contemporary apocalyptic moment. On one hand, American southern modernist Faulkner attempted to invent his own deep time between the post-Civil War South of the late nineteenth century and the Great Depression of the 1930s. On the other hand, Japanese contemporary writers reinvented Faulkner in their own Far East framework of deep time between the horror of Hiroshima in 1945 and the persistent fear of a full-scale nuclear war after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.
The year 1973 brought not only the impact of the Oil Shock but also the end of the Vietnam War and investigations into the Watergate scandal. The final tragic days of the Nixon presidency in the early 1970s ironically supported the verisimilitude of Komatsu’s disaster novel *Nippon Chimbotsu* (*Japan Sinks*), which makes use of recent plate tectonics theory to vividly describe the Pacific coast of the Japanese Archipelago sliding away into the deep, at the same time that the Japan Sea coast rises up for a brief moment, like one side of a capsizing vessel. According to Doctor Tadokoro, who prophesies the submer-sion of Japan:

...in any case, the mantle mass on the Pacific side of the Japan Archipelago is rapidly shrinking. ... This may be the harbinger of a crust change of unprecedented kind extending over the whole earth. ... Or perhaps it will affect only this area. ... If the present speed and direction are maintained, there’s reason enough to believe that once the shift in matter reaches a certain point, the present dynamic balance existing between the mantle and the crust structure will collapse at a stroke. Up to now, you see, the pressure from the Pacific side has held the Archipelago relatively firm against the pressure coming from the continental side. And so, should the convection pattern on the Pacific side suddenly change, the result would be a crushing blow to Japan.

(Komatsu 1977[1973], 81–82)

Between fears about the Oil Shock in the heyday of the Cold War, and the inter-nationalization slogans that dominated the high growth period in Japan (“A Bold Leap into the World”), this novel conveyed such realism and significance that it was quickly made into film, TV drama, and even manga, and set off *Japan Sinks* fever all over the nation. What matters here is that majoring in medieval Italian literature at Kyoto University, Komatsu, from the beginning, hoped to set up a transnational analogy between the Jewish diaspora in history and the possible Japanese diaspora in speculation. Thus, it is Faulkner’s *The Wild Palms* that helped him narrativize this idea as a novel.

Komatsu grew fascinated with *The Wild Palms* after he came of age—that is, in the year of 1951 or 1952, immediately after the publication of the first Japanese translation of *The Wild Palms* in 1950 as I clarified above. Thirty-five years later, in the summer of 1987, when he established himself as a bestselling author many of whose works had already been made into big-budget films, Komatsu went so far as to visit the United States to interview Faulkner’s daughter Jill Faulkner Summers at her house in Virginia. Since *The Wild Palms* is a kind of disaster novel, Komatsu wanted to write another dis-aster novel dramatizing the submersion of the Japanese archipelago. While Faulkner compared the flood refugees to the passengers of Noah’s Ark, Komatsu compared the submersion of Japan to the sinking of the legendary continent Atlantis. There is no doubt that Faulkner and Komatsu both treated the planetary fate of humanity, and both in times of politico-economic crisis. Furthermore, as Faulkner reconsidered the history of race as the history of sexuality, Komatsu tried to speculate with a fictional analogy between the history of the Jews and the Japanese facing the death of their own country. A character who seems to be a monk states in Chapter 5:

The Jews have the experience of a two-thousand-year period of exile. Whereas this island people of ours have had the happy experience of living secure in their own country for a like period. Therefore it would be no easy matter to take on the other role. Would we gain some wisdom from our Diaspora over
the course of the years? And throughout such a period, would the Japanese people remain the Japanese People?

(Komatsu 1977[1973], 124)

Is it possible for the Japanese to simulate the diaspora of the Jews? This is the greatest philosophical question Komatsu raises in this disaster novel. However, his first novel Nippon Apatchi-Zoku (The Japanese Apache, published in 1964) also suggests a kind of what I call creative masochism in Full Metal Apache (Tatsumi 2006) whereby the author draws transnational inspiration from historically defeated tribes such as Native Americans and Jews. At this point, the vision of planetarity will lead us to question the artificial discursive framework of ethnicity. Gerald Vizenor once mocked the western racist discourse of “Indian” by calling himself “post-indian,” and I once coined the term “Japanoid” in order to meditate on the rise of a fake Japanese or neo-Japonistic or simply Japanophilic culture nicknamed “Cool Japan” and globally cherished by younger Japanese and non-Japanese. In these ways, the discourse of ethnicity has been revealed to be an effect of modern western culture from the beginning. The political stance that remains to us is no more than “strategic essentialism,” as Gayatri Spivak pointed out.

In this context, as a born-Catholic Japanese, I feel deep sympathy with Karen Tei Yamashita’s radical critique of the concept of “pure Japanese” in her own prologue to the fourth novel Circle K Cycle (Yamashita 2001). The author herself states:

What could it mean to be a ‘pure Japanese?’ I felt hurt and resentment. I came from a country where many people, including my own, had long struggled with the pain of racism and exclusion. Purity of race was not something I valued or believed to be important, and yet, in Japan, I was trying so hard to pass, to belong.

(Yamashita 2001, 12)

Yamashita’s third novel Tropic of Orange (1997) attempts to displace the tropic of cancer and the Monroe Doctrine’s very order of hemispheres, another project that impresses me as brilliantly planetary. However, what is most striking is that Yamashita’s first two novels, Through the Arc of the Rain Forest (1990) and Brazil-Maru (1992), share so many elements with Sakyo Komatsu’s early novels, especially The Japanese Apache and Japan Sinks. Through the Arc of the Rain Forest describes a new Gold Rush in Mataçao, the Brazilian holy land located near the equator, which produces a rigid magnetic polymer capable of mimicking any object. The novel’s hero is Kazumasa Ishimaru, whose bosom friend is a tiny prophetic satellite whizzing inches from the boy’s forehead. This idiosyncratic setting cannot help but remind us of Komatsu’s The Japanese Apache, which transforms the real postwar scrap thieves haunting the Osaka Army factory in Sugiyama-cho between Osaka Castle and the Nekoma River (at one time the largest munition plant in Asia) into a new species of radically cyborgian and weirdly metallivorous post-human beings. As I examined in my own book Full Metal Apache (2006), we should note that this picaresque community originally consisted not simply of Koreans but also of Japanese and Okinawans, ranging from bank robbers and bicycle thieves to get-rich-quick schemers. Although it is Japanese journalists who made the analogy between the action of Hollywood “Apache Indian” movies in the 1940s and 1950s and the activities of the postwar Japanese scrap thieves, the self-proclaimed Japanese Apache community consists of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural tribes. However, this abuse of the term “Apache” automatically invites us to notice that the ethnic category of American Indians should have been put into question much earlier. The rise of the Japanese Apache in the Eastern Hemisphere rather convinces us of the fake structure of ethnicity itself.

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While Komatsu compared the Japanese and the Jews in *Japan Sinks*, Yamashita shows a similar interest in diaspora in her second novel *Brazil-Maru*, which begins with a contemporary version of Exodus. Nonetheless, what strikes one most is not necessarily the fate of Japanese immigrants but the novel’s mysterious denouement, which reinvents ethnicity. Consider this “curious article,” probably from a newspaper, that is quoted in the novel:

> Three days ago, the so-called Indian of the Lost Tribe was found dead, killed probably while helping himself to someone else’s food or store of hidden goods. He was described as a very slight, bowlegged, unkempt man with long dirty black hair, thin strands falling in a tangled beard from his face. He was found shot through the head and clutching a rusty old carbine, empty except for the red earth pushed into the tip of its disintegrating barrel.

*(Yamashita 1992, 248)*

As Kandice Chuh and other critics have pointed out, this mysterious “Indian of the Lost Tribe” is Genji Befu, Part IV’s narrator, a son of Seijirō and Haru Befu and nephew of Kantaro Uno, leader of the Japanese Brazilian community in Esperança. Of course, if one is reading this novel closely, the description of this dead man first conjures up the image of Hachiro Yogu, a dirty and mean trickster who carries a pistol in his belt, and who was rumored to have “lived with the Indians in the Mato Grosso and wandered around with no clothing” (Yamashita 1992, 27–28). However, since at the end of Part IV Genji is involved in a plane crash that kills Kantaro, it is natural for readers to identify this mysterious dead man as Genji, who must have gotten lost in Mato Grasso, a region of the Brazilian forest (Chu 2006, 628). What complicates and disturbs the concept of ethnicity here is that Genji is mistaken for a Native American, a tribe sometimes already believed to belong to one of the “Lost Tribes” of Israel, that is, a tribe of the Jews. When Sakyo Komatsu compared the fate of the Japanese to that of the Jews in *Japan Sinks* in 1973, it probably reflected the popularity of Isiah Ben-Dasan a.k.a. Shichihei Yamamoto’s bestseller *The Japanese and the Jews*, published in 1970 and translated into English in 1972 (tr. Richard L. Gate) *(Yamamoto 1972[1970]*) 

In the same way, Karen Tei Yamashita has favored an analogy between the Japanese and the Native Americans. She repeats this analogy in the last section of *Circle K Cycles*, entitled “Epilogue: Wagahai wa Nikkei de Aru”:

> And there are plenty of books suggesting that the original Japanese are a lost tribe from Israel. Speaking of tribes, I thought the literal translation of Nikkei is “of the Japanese tribe,” but “real” Japanese never refer to themselves as Nikkei.

*(Yamashita 2001, 146)*

At first sight the transgression of ethnic essentialism employed by Komatsu and Yamashita in their critical passing narratives may be disturbing to us epistemologically. However, without accepting this creative abuse of ethnicity and the constructive displacement of hemispheres penetrating the literary heritage ranging from William Faulkner, to Komatsu Sakyo and Karen Tei Yamashita, we cannot comprehend the potential of the post-hemispheric transnational imagination and the planetarity of the post-Monroe Doctrine frame of reference. This perspective, at first glance, may seem to be a small step for comparative literature, but is actually one giant leap for transnational American literary history.

Now let me conclude the chapter by empowering the sense of transchronological strategy instrumental to transnational studies. In the wake of postcolonialism, especially of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent Iraq War, we have witnessed the rise of Transnational
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American Studies, if not anti-American studies, as represented by Spivak’s “Planetarity,” Dimock’s “Deep Time,” and Murphy’s “Hemispheric Imaginings” as I have mentioned time and again in this chapter. Their ideas undoubtedly helped decenter and reconstruct America from different perspectives cultivated in non-American countries located in the non-western hemisphere. What matters most here, however, is the creative interactions between a transnational approach and transchronological strategy. For example, as distinguished New Historian Michael T. Gilmore pointed out in War on Words by quoting Rafael Campo’s opening lines of “Patriotic Poem” (“The war on words had been declared: A voice / was considered dangerous / and could be confiscated by police”), “the climate of intimidation adopted in the United States after the invasion of Iraq” and “the perilous state of civil liberties under the Bush administration” (Gilmore 2010, 12), which censored free speech, cannot help but remind us of what had happened in Antebellum America characterized by the gag rule oppressing the discourse of abolitionism. Although Gilmore himself found it necessary to defend himself against “the charge of anachronism” (Gilmore 2010, 12), I find this kind of transchronological strategy indispensable for promoting transnational Americanism. Otherwise, it is safe to say that Gilmore’s creative anachronism had already been fully supported by what William Faulkner stated in an open letter “To the Youth of Japan” written after his first and last visit to Japan in 1955. In this letter he set up a surprisingly trans-hemispheric and trans-historical analogy between the South, the defeated nation in the Civil War, he is descended from and Japan, the defeated nation in the Second World War, dreaming the day out of Japan’s disaster and despair “will come a group of Japanese writers whom all the world will want to listen to, who will speak not a Japanese truth but a universal truth,” transfiguring the experience of defeat into the creative imagination (Faulkner 1956, 187). Of course, hard-core Faulknerians would like to regard the author’s sense of the past as the very incubator for his apocryphal imagination without which he could not have published the Yoknapatowpha Saga. Nonetheless, what attracts me here is the beautiful resonance between his creative anachronism and creative analocism, paving the way for the interlock between the transnational and the transchronological, which will undoubtedly motivate American Studies to come.

Notes
5 Wolfe 2005.
6 According to Wolfe, Bush’s speech seems to expand the global reach: “America’s vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one.” (Wolfe 2005)

Bibliography


