

Foreignness and Friendship: American Studies and Gender Studies

TAKEMURA KAZUKO

OCHANOMIZU UNIVERSITY

Introduction: American Studies Revisited

In literary studies a reexamination of “American studies” started in the mid-1980s with the introduction of new historicist and multicultural perspectives. Such revisionist studies, as it was called those days, could be roughly divided into two groups, domestic and international. Research into the first group tried to reveal ideological biases reflected in literary texts and their criticisms in terms of race, class, gender, etc., calling into question the concept of the “canon” of American literature, which had previously been embraced by American studies.

The second group, related to the first one, focused on the complicity between the formation of the literary canon and U. S. diplomatic policy in the cold war era, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. The hegemony the United States acquired in the aftermath of WW2 required of it demonstrations of its cultural supremacy suited to its political power as the world leader. As one of its strategies, American literature or, more specifically, several white male writers in mid-nineteenth century New England, were then authorized as representatives of American writers, who were to legitimately inherit the Western, that is, “universal”, values allegedly embodied by European writers before.

This assessment of American literature as the “world” literature has been disseminated worldwide with the expansion of American studies beyond its national borders through overseas scholarly exchanges supported by US-based programs as well as by encouragement of this specialization in “friendly” nations, including Japan. Certainly, there have been fruitful academic and personal dialogues for mutual understanding between the people of the States and other countries. The Fulbright Program is one of those projects that have been making such a contribution, and actually sponsors this Nagoya Seminar. Still, American studies cannot be neutral or “objectified” (Chow), in that any scholarly work in general is unable to escape from the historical milieu it is situated in. This is especially true for American studies, owing to “America’s unique ameliorative global mission” (Chow) cherished even in its (apparently) bilateral or multilateral foreign policies (Mastanduno), and to the obstinacy of racial and ethnic discrimination, including immigrants (Lee).

The uneasiness Professor Rey Chow said she feels toward American studies as “an outsider to the specialization” is, therefore, shared also by those who are working within this field, particularly since the rise of revisionist studies. Paradoxically enough, however, it is this uneasiness that gives us an opportunity of rethinking the linkage between foreign policy and domestic matters or between friendship and foreignness. In this sense, three papers of today are all concerned about this linkage in some way or other.

Furthermore, the official topic arranged for this year is “American Studies from Different Perspectives: Gender and Comparative Approaches.” At a glance, these papers do not directly treat the gender issue. Neither does the foreignness-friendship nexus apparently have anything to do with gender. But, considering the historical exclusion of female rapport from the referent of friendship, the comradeship-alterity connection could or should be reexamined in a wider context including gender hierarchy. This afternoon, based upon my interest in literary studies, I am going to focus on two of Kurosawa’s films Professor Chow analyzed, and therewith to respond to all the papers in terms of foreignness, friendship, and gender, as a Japanese feminist researcher in American studies.

I. Fraternal Democracy and Women

Professor Chow presented the issue of “we” with reference to Sakai Naoki’s concept of “translation.” According to her, a “heterolingual” address, produced by translation as incessant interaction between a speaker and a listener rather than, in its literal sense, as a simple transference from one language to another, alters “‘we,’ usually used by a speaker to designate a putative collectivity between himself and the audience” (Chow) into “a new kind of ‘we’” (Chow), a site for encounter with otherness outside and within oneself, whether one is a listener or a speaker. The heterolingual moments she read in Kurosawa’s films, *No Regrets for Our Youth* (1946) and *Rhapsody in August* (1991), are somewhat concerned with the Japan-US relationship after WW2, during which Japan was, in the first several years, occupied by the Allied Powers led by the U. S. and then, as a sovereign nation, strengthened its ties with the States under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between them. In a sense, the two nations have been on such friendly terms as to call themselves “we,” especially since the ratification of the treaty.

Friendship, often regarded as personal exchange, has actually a highly political dimension along with the development of democratic society. Jacques Derrida, starting his book, *The Politics of Friendship*, with Aristotle’s paradoxical address, “O my friends, there is no friend,” contemplates the philosophical genealogy of the politicization of friendship. The two “disjointed” times for affirmation and denial found in this phrase are indicative of the not-yet-comingness of friendship. Put another way, Aristotle’s address is an apostrophe or a “grief” delivered to *friends* (not just people), who are not yet present or will not

be present forever. But this (im)possibility of friendship has usually been reduced into a “fraternity” more intelligible and more acceptable in society. In Derrida’s words, “the figure of the friend, so regularly coming back on stage with the features of the *brother*, ...seems spontaneously to belong to a *familial, fraternalist* and thus *androcentric* configuration of politics” (viii).

Misogyny and homophobia harbored in male bonds had already been detected by Eve K. Sedgwick, who finds homosocial structure in every phallogocentric apparatus in modern society—bureaucracy, army, business world, sportsdom, academy, etc. In her discussion, however, male friendship is just regarded as one of the “compulsory relationships” for men to “enter into adult masculine entitlement” (Sedgwick 186), no matter how precarious the promise of such entitlement may be made by the repressed but not eliminated homoerotic undertone. On the other hand, Derrida rather highlights the not-yet-coming-ness of friendship, which induces otherness in the stabilized “we” to open up a new epistemological purview toward democracy to come.

What is at stake here is the “*familial, fraternalist* and thus *androcentric* configuration” of friendship cultivated in the lineage kinship and safeguarded in the republic under the rubric of democracy. This familiarized and democratized cohesion could be, then, displaced by “sisters,” who have been required to “forget” they “will never provide a docile example for the concept of fraternity” (Derrida viii). Significantly enough, both of Kurosawa’s films have women protagonists who could deliver heterolingual addresses toward the existing norms. But are they really successful in displacement, escaping the clutches of male friendship, which makes “the woman... a sister, ...[a]nd a sister a case of the brother” (viii)?

Certainly, the woman hero of *No Regrets for Our Youth* might bridge the urban Western radicalism and the rural non-Western defiance by her unyielding commitment to the cause of freedom. Yukie, with her whimsicality as a young woman and then with her bulldog tenacity as the wife of a resister, is seemingly qualified as “the other” that cannot be domesticated by the given order. Still I hesitate to call her such, since the whole of her resistance is formulated by her husband as well as by her father, who presumably imbued liberal thoughts into her from her childhood.

Derrida says fraternity “must be rendered *docile*, and there we have the whole of political *education*” (viii, italics mine). In fact, there are found so many allusions and references to education here: a campus protest called the Kyoto University Incident¹ used as the basis of the film; the first sequence composed of alternate shots of two picnics by male students including Yukie and by their teacher and his wife (why is this juxtaposition needed?); Noge’s mentor-like attitude toward his wife before and after their marriage; her father’s paternal advice to his daughter, “Freedom requires sacrifice and struggle,” which is repeated in the film as its key theme; and his re-inaugural address delivered to an all-male audience at college to encourage them to fight against injustice, praising

his former student, Noge, for his martyrdom for liberty. At this time, however, he never refers to Yukie's colossal valor and fortitude shown in pursuance of her husband's mission after his death. In other words, the proper name "comes more easily to men than to women, to brothers than to sisters, to sons than to daughters" (Derrida 292).

Coming back to the Japan-US friendship, the film made during the period of occupation alludes to the fight, under the supervision of the United States, against totalitarian regimes. This is presumably why the film passed the GHQ censorship. Yukie, as an outsider of the Japanese militarist and feudalist regime, can be an agent for linking the prewar Western, that is, "universal," liberalism secretly embraced by some of the Japanese male intelligent, with the post-war American and also "universal" ethics of democracy, which the reborn Japan is to cultivate to be a legitimate member of the international brotherhood of democracy. This is due to the fact that she is *docile* to her husband and her father, both believers in freedom and justice. Despite her refusal of her father's request to stay with them when the war is over, she is still docile to his beliefs. She is, as it were, a "neutralized sister," innocent of the past crimes of Japan and dedicated now to the fraternized democracy led by the U. S. The English title of the film is "No Regrets for *Our* Youth" (italics mine) while its Japanese equivalent "*My* Youth." Then, who are "we (our)" here? I don't know whether the translator is Japanese or American, male or female. But, regardless of that, the translator and the English-speaking audience may presume "we" to be a monolingual community united together to fight for liberty. Yukie's otherness is here subsumed into democratic fraternity.

Still it seems the film has one heterolingual sequence. This is that where Noge shows his wife the picture of his parents, saying:

"This is my weakness —the most vulnerable corner of my soul.... As in childhood, I'm still afraid of being scolded by my father and of seeing my mother weeping.... Oh, my God. The parent-child matter should have been perfectly fixed when the critical problem in hand is resolved. I know it very well, theoretically. And yet.... [But] no regrets for my youth, no regrets for my youth." (translation mine)

Interestingly, Noge is aware of the close connection between family matters and national and international affairs, though ignorant of how they are connected. Then, has Yukie successfully resolved the family issue, after laboring in his parents' rice paddies and eventually having his cause understood by his parents and by the village people? Is *his* parent-child matter congruent with *hers*? How is the "proto-feminist awareness of women's liberation" (Chow) sketched briefly at the last scene related with the brotherly mission delineated throughout the film? How about the relation between feminism and fraternity in the States? In what manner can she involve herself in the post-war Japan-U. S. fraternity when Japan has been accepted as a sovereign nation by international democratic society? In order to consider these questions in light of the other film by Kurosawa, let me

turn to the matters of foreign policy and interracial population presented by Professor Michael Mastanduno and Professor Jennifer Lee.

II. Friend and Foe, Internal and External

John F. Kennedy may be called the first U. S. president who put the women's issue on his agenda. The President's Commission on the Status of Women was established in 1961, the first year of his tenure, based on his Executive Order 10980. But soon his measures proved not necessarily to be women friendly. Calling the commission to make "recommendations for overcoming discriminations in government and private employment on the basis of sex" (*American Women* 85),² he "reaffirmed, at the same time, traditional cultural values upholding the primacy of wifehood and motherhood" (Berkeley 21). This contradictory attitude of his as well as the political balance taken by Esther Peterson, the "driving force" behind the committee, derailed the realization of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).³ But basically the commission was created also in the light of the international politics at that time. In fact, its report titled *American Women*, "in keeping with the Cold War mentality, ... represented a careful balancing act between documenting discrimination against women and recording their 'progress in a free democratic society'" (23). The women's issue was partly appropriated by the government for its own fight against the camp of the East.⁴

Since then, the fate of the ERA has shown a more complicated relation with U. S. foreign policy. In the first presidential election after the assassination of J. F. K., the rightist Barry Goldwater won the Republican nomination only to find himself defeated by the Democratic candidate, Lyndon B. Johnson. Ironically, however, his rout begot the New Right, which has been, since then, stirring up people's fear of "the ERA, abortion, busing, homosexuality, [and] affirmative action" (Berkeley 87), as social menaces, rather than that of a communist invasion of the States and the free nations. When the Cuban missile crisis had narrowly been averted, the foreign foe was superseded by the domestic one, as an excuse for national solidarity. Indeed, the Democratic president Jimmy Carter, elected with the promise to "increase the number of women appointed to high-level executive and judicial positions" (Berkeley 114), was eventually forced to remove the radical feminist Bella Abzug as co-chair of his National Advisory Committee on Women, after being exposed to concentric fire from the Right in Congress. During the "'golden age' of multilateralism" (Mastanduno), the U. S. fraternal democracy was fighting against its alleged foes, first outside and then within the nation.

But U. S. multilateralism itself is not so democratic or pacifist as it appears. According to Professor Michael Mastanduno, "American governments, Republican and Democratic," have "resorted regularly to unilateralism when it suited U. S. interests," while multilateral policies have been applied just in

rhetorical or practical (usually economical) terms. Professor Mastanduno predicts that the campaign promise given by both Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton of “a ‘reengagement’ of the United States with the world” will not actually be fulfilled even if the Democrats gain a victory this autumn. On the other hand, unilateral action conducted usually with no concern for what others think or want also entails a clear distinction between “we” and “they,” friends and foes, regardless of their possible indistinguishability generated by reciprocal relations associated with multilateral and bilateral interactions in their idealized forms.

Phratrocentrism as well circumscribes its own comradeship, showing an “inclination to take on the economic, genealogical, ethnocentric, androcentric features of fraternity” (Derrida 236–37). It has its outside as its enemy. Derrida says:

The Greek *génos* (lineage, race, family, people, etc) is united by kinship and by the original community. On these two counts it is foreign to the barbarian *génos*. As in every racism, every ethnocentrism—more precisely, in every one of the nationalisms throughout history—a *discourse* on birth and on nature, *phúsis* [nature] of genealogy (more precisely, a discourse and a phantasm on the genealogical *phúsis*) regulates, in the final analysis, the movement of each opposition.... This *phúsis* comprises everything—language, law, politics, etc.... [I]t defines the alterity of foreigner or the barbarian. (91)

Then, how can an *interior* enemy be harbored by a brotherly community? This should be because the community is actually based on a “discourse” and a “phantasm” on birth and nature and not upon genealogy itself, such as it pretends to be. Fraternity has its own drive to increase its members. What matters here is the number of friends. With the development of fraternal democracy, the drive has been accelerated, and foreigners/foes have been included in the brotherly league, for instance, through the rhetoric of “the family of free nations,” just as post-war Japan was. (Actually Japan hosted the G8 summit this July). The rubric under which the Bush administration and its allied states started the war against Iraq was also the democratization of a rogue nation.

But fraternalization is double-edged—enlargement and “adulteration.” The interracial children Professor Lee studies today are another example of something that produces both effects through their hybridity. On one hand, they contribute to the enlargement of fraternal society as legitimated newcomers through their metropolitan lineage while, on the other hand, they are still outsiders as descendants of foreigners. Thus, interracial children are classified as newcomers or outsiders, according to the scale of their non-threatening-ness to the “phantasm” of fraternity. For citizenship/friendship entitlement, immigrants and their offspring are supposed to “emulat[e] the cultural practices and institutions” (Lee) of metropolitan society. This means, in the case of the U. S., “intentionally distancing themselves from blacks, and rejecting fellow ethnics who married blacks as well as their... multiracial children [by blacks]” (Lee). African

American exceptionalism could be attributed to the US history of slavery, which is an ineffaceable stain on the legend of American democracy. African Americans are a bitter reminder of its deception and of *un*-fraternity deeply structured in the fraternal “we.” This might be why Barak Obama, an interracial son of a *non-U. S. born* black man, could be accepted as the Democratic candidate.

Rhapsody in August has an interracial offspring as a personage who plays a key part in the diegesis. Throughout the film, Clark, as he is called, is regarded as nothing but an American citizen, that is, “white,” by Kane’s son and daughter (for whom he is an epitome of American wealth) and by their children (who arranged chairs to make a bed for him), and also presumably by Kane (whose memory of war-time catastrophe is terribly resurrected by his visit). But what most clearly defines him as an American seems to me Kane’s “forgiveness and embrace” and her “sophisticatedly pacifist, cosmopolitan address” (Chow) made in her dialogue with Clark.

Certainly, as Professor Chow argues, Clark’s apologies and Kane’s forgiveness are both linguistically ambiguous regarding to whom they are addressed about what. It is vague whether their statements are just made personally or have public connotations. The earlier boundary drawn in Kane’s speech between “we,” sufferers in Nagasaki, and “they” who “claim they dropped the flash to stop war” is as well later obscured and replaced by the anonymous term, “people,” who are “doing anything... just to win a war. Sooner or later, it will be the ruin of all of us” (*Rhapsody in August*, italics mine). The transference from the we-and-they divide to the generic “people-us” may signify “a universal refusal of war” (Chow).

Furthermore, I agree with Professor Chow that the last rhapsodical sequence shot in pouring rain denies any easy edifying pacifist interpretation of the film. And still, I am wondering if a different kind of “we” is heard or glimpsed in terms of gender. Or rather, I would say Kurosawa’s phallogocentric casting unintentionally implies what might be heard otherwise. This is woman’s voice.

In this film the immigrant, an *Issei*, is cast as a man. He is now on his deathbed in Hawaii, midway between the U. S. mainland and Japan, without sending any voice toward either side of the Pacific in the past and the future. Kane could not even remember him at first. His child, an interracial offspring, is also a man and does not narrate his *own* story to his Japanese aunt even in their heart-to-heart exchange. There seems to be little in common between them. Kane is a rural aged Japanese woman while the *Nisei* Clark appears to be a genuine American, played by Richard Gere (!). Kane’s repeated address to him, “That’s all right,” not only universalizes the crime of war, but also romanticizes both of them as the personifications of the conscience or ethics of cosmopolitan friendship, depriving them of every detail of their sufferings and experiences as a survivor of the war or as a hybrid newcomer to American society.

This kind of universalization has acquitted both Japan and the U. S. of their

atrocities perpetrated against people in Asia during *and after* WW2. In fact, the Treaty of San Francisco (1951) was signed during the Korean War, incorporating Japan into the international brotherly community. This pact is also known under the alias of the San Francisco *Peace Treaty* (italics mine), which was accompanied by the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security with the U. S. Since then Japan has possessed its own military, first called the “National Police Reserve” and then the “Self-Defense Forces.” Furthermore, the fraternal community is extending itself, recruiting friends, one after another. Between Korea and the U. S. as well, the Mutual Defense Treaty was signed at the end of the Korean War, upon the basis of which Korea sent its army to Vietnam and recently to Iraq as an ally of the States.

III. Not-yet-ness and To-Come-ness

When a foe has turned into a friend, a foe is no longer a foe. Or I should say a foe who can be a friend was not essentially a foe. Then, was such a foe already a friend? “How many are there? How many of us will there be?” (Derrida x) But such a friend-foe seems not to be a friend as indicated in Aristotle’s apostrophe, “O my friends, there is no friend.” That is just a brother, and the “brother concept is indispensable to anyone... who would set out to think of *Humanity* as a *Nation*” (Derrida 264). Then, is the woman, who “is not yet fraternal enough, not friend enough, [or] does not yet know what ‘fraternity’ means” (Derrida 238), regarded as a foe to fraternal society? Indeed, she is its enemy, as designated by the New Right during the cold war and as still shown in the media’s treatment of Hillary Clinton. But the woman is an enemy just owing to her “not-yet-ness,” or to the extent that she has *not yet* been “moraliz[ed enough]... to participate in universal fraternity” (Derrida 273) namely, in the brotherly “we.” Moralized women are “*our* sisters

If Kurosawa’s film had a woman *Issei* and a woman interracial *Nisei*, its diegesis might be different from what is narrated now. Their heterolingual voices could reveal the conspiracy of familiar kinship and fraternal comradeship, that is, the linkage between the domestic issue and social issue, which was just alluded to in *No Regrets for Our Youth*. Historically, the book by a discharged professor at Kyoto University, after whom Yukie’s father is modeled, was banned owing to his criticism of the application of the anti-adultery law only to women. Again here, the *brother’s* denial of adultery-adulteration is glimpsed—through the association with women. But *No Regrets for Our Youth* does not mention these circumstances but rather highlights the advocacy of academic freedom in general. This diegetic maneuver is symptomatic of the concealment of the *familial* and *fraternalist* tie-in entrenched in fraternal society. If the immigrant and his son had been cast as a woman and her daughter in *Rhapsody in August*, they might have recited, in their own light, what Kurosawa’s former film left unspoken.

Yet, the story to be narrated would not end with something like a pre-

established harmony. This is because the diegesis might “find the other in oneself, already: the same dissymmetry and tension of *surviving* in self, in the ‘oneself’ thus out of joint with its own existence” (Derrida 24). Friendship, as “the political,” should also be resonant in woman’s voice as an *irreducible singularity*, entailing a friend-enemy at the same time. In this regard, “the woman” does not mean simply biological women but includes multiracial immigrants, “blacks,” queers, sisterhood, friendship between a woman and a man, and others excluded in the given society. They air “a grievance concerning the judgment handed down, concerning its given, and the most accredited concepts of politics and the standard interpretation of friendship, as to fraternization” (Derrida xi). Grievance/grief in Derridian terms is inherent in heterolingual addresses delivered toward a new kind of “we” and toward the (im)possible “friendship.”

Finally, let me ask you, each of today’s speakers, what you think about the relations between the topics you presented today and my concern, the friend-foe issue.

First of all, Professor Jennifer Lee, I am curious about the rhetoricity of the white and nonwhite divide. It seems the line including some nonwhite immigrant groups into “white” is, on the other hand, dissociating racial discrimination more and more from the alleged skin-color divide, which was, though, already a downright fiction, as shown by “the one-drop rule.” Then, do you expect the inflation of rhetoricity will possibly undermine not only the white-nonwhite divide but also the black-nonblack divide some day in the future? If so, what do you foresee will replace the color-based divides? In case this includes a line concerning economic mobility caused by global economy, how do you think a sort of solidarity which might remain among African Americans—however loosely, but as still shown in the Democratic presidential campaign—will be undone so that a sort of friend-foe opposition or vicissitude may be exacerbated within the African American community as well as other racial/immigrant communities?

I would also like to address Professor Michael Mastanduno. I would like to hear from you about the relationship between U. S. foreign policy and international (brotherly or non-brotherly) society. The United States seems to be “as comfortable acting unilaterally as it is working multilaterally with its economic and security partners” (Mastanduno) only to the extent that the boundaries of nation states are fixed in political, economical, and security terms as they have been so far in some way, and that the myth of fraternal democracy is cherished internationally as the universal cause. But the transgression of capital, population, and information beyond national borders is creating other kinds of international friendship or fraternity such as an ecological network or a certain kind of “multitude” of labor, in Negri’s term. Do you have any ideas about U. S. policy and a new kind of international friendship/fraternity which might be emerging?

Finally, may I ask Professor Rey Chow about heterolingual addresses and gender issues concerning Kurosawa's films? It seems to me both films are misogynistic in spite of their casts of women protagonists. Despite the symmetrical casting between the sexes, the girls in *Rhapsody in August* play minor parts to boys, having their own voices less heard.⁵ I would say Kane's daughter is depicted as more vulgar and less sensitive to her mother than her son. There could scarcely be heard sympathies or "sisterhood" among the women as women. Rather, the boys seem to feel a stronger affinity with their grandmother. Furthermore, Kane's husband (a school teacher) or, more precisely, his picture is haunting the diegesis like a phallic phantom and seems even to possess Kane (also an ex-teacher) to make of her the universal conscience, regardless of gender asymmetry. Could you tell us something about heterolinguistic address in terms of gender in this film?

Thank you.

Notes

1. This is also known as the Takigawa Incident. In 1933 the law professor Yukitoki Takigawa at Kyoto Imperial University was suspended from (later forced to resign) his office for his alleged "Marxist" thought. The entire faculty of law school and their students protested against his dismissal, and some of them quitted school. This was the first government suppression of free speech under the Peace Preservation Laws, and since around the time Japan was militarized and rushing headlong into the 15-year war. After the war, Takigawa returned to school under the guidance of GHQ for the purpose of "normalization" of Japan.
2. This is quoted from Berkeley's *The Women's Liberation Movement in America*, p. 36. The original is: *American Women: Report on the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1963).
3. Peterson, serving also as head of the Women's Bureau of the Kennedy administration, gave priority to laws to protect women over the ERA.
4. Despite its ambiguous political attitude, *American Women* was well received among women, and "result[ed] in unintended, positive consequences for second-wave feminism" (Berkeley 148). Many of the women who participated in the committee and related ones later contributed to women's movement, based on their experiences gained there.
5. For instance, the lyrics repeatedly used in the film are translated, in English subtitles, as "the *boy* a rose did see" (italics mine). Actually in the film it is the younger boy, Shinjiro, who looks at a rose in the garden with Clark in a long and impressive sequence during the memorial service for the dead. In contrast, however, the popular Japanese translation of these lyrics, which were originally written by the German writer Goethe, say it is a genderless "kid" (*warabe*) who sees a rose, and not a boy.

Works Cited

Berkeley, Kathleen C. *The Women's Liberation Movement in America*. Westport, Connecticut

- & London: Greenwood P., 1999.
- Derrida, Jacques. *The Politics of Friendship*. 1994. Trans. George Collins. London & New York: Verso, 1997.
- Michaels, Walter Benn, and Donald Pease, eds. *The American Renaissance Reconsidered*. Eds. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. U of California P, 1990.