

## Editor's Column

These years post-9.11 have seen the escalation of war not only between the U.S. and the Middle East, but also between the White House and Hollywood. What strikes me as most ironic is the war between President George W. Bush and the documentary filmmaker Michael Moore, for both of them equally represent the American spirit of populism in our media-saturated reality. Back in the 1960s, JFK was considered the most movie star-like president, but in the 1980s Ronald Reagan replaced him, being quite literally an ex-movie-star become president. In this way, the late Cold War era — that critical period of “Star Wars” fantasies in politics and film — aided and abetted the populist conspiracy between Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles. The early 21<sup>st</sup> century, moreover, came to see their critical differences as those within populism and not as the difference between politics and art. Even now, as President George W. Bush continues to invent a number of political hoaxes about the Iraq War, the director Moore consistently fires back with his counter-hoaxes at the President himself, as in recent masterpieces such as *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) and *Fahrenheit 911* (2003), both winners of prestigious film awards. The “war” being waged here actually has turned out to be a homeopathic one between two of the most populist and anti-intellectual of hoaxers.

Carefully observing this paradigm shift from the Star Wars to the Hoax Wars, we very naturally conjure up the literary figure of Mark Twain, the Gilded Age authority on the art of the hoax and the fin-de-siècle prophet of postmodern fabulations. In order to understand the essence of today's North America, rereading Twain is indispensable. Now launching the first issue of *Mark Twain Studies* from The Japan Mark Twain Society, I sincerely hope that this new international journal will radically explore the global range of literary history and contribute to the transpacific exchange of literary criticism.

Japan itself has gone through a unique history of Twain reception. For example, in postwar Japan, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has been compared invariably with Lucy M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, which Twain loved so much. Both Huck and Anne are representative “North American” orphans caught up in the Oedipal complex. They each try to overcome the father figure by creating pseudo-kinship ties with others.

Moreover, just as Huck inspired the frontier spirit of Japanese boys who would reconstruct their own nation, so did Anne fascinate the independent spirit of Japanese girls who developed themselves in proto-feminist (if not quite anti-patriarchal) ways. In speculating upon the popularity of this hero and heroine, we must take into account the influence of Muraoka Hanako, born in 1893, educated at a famous Canadian Methodist mission school, and the translator of *Huckleberry Finn* and *Anne* in editions still easily available from Shincho Paperbacks (the Japanese equivalent of Penguin). Muraoka once stated that the Japanese literary tradition had been deformed by its lack of healthy domestic fiction, implying that the modern domestic novel serves as a blueprint for the modern nation. Here we might note that *Huckleberry Finn* is a story set in the antebellum South written by a postbellum humorist who survived the Civil War and felt nostalgia for “the good old days.” *Huckleberry Finn* is undoubtedly a “postwar” novel reconstructing its prewar days, one whose vitality gives us prescriptions for modernizing the family and the nation. It is here that we find the popularity of the South for the postwar Japanese audience, especially for those readers who came of age in the late 1940s and the 1950s. Feeling the deepest sympathy for antebellum America as described by Twain, postwar Japan came to survive many hardships and to achieve its own successful Reconstruction. This is how Huck Finn has gradually come to be naturalized in Japan, not only as the all-American hero but also as a type of universal hero.

However, we should also acknowledge that when the economic high-growth period took over from the postwar reconstruction, it was the long and winding Vietnam War that gave Japanese writers clues to reinterpreting Twain. In *The English Book and its Marginalia* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), Nakai Asako gives the example of Kaiko Takeshi's nonfiction novel *Kagayakeru Yami* (Into a Black Sun). When he is in Vietnam from 1964 to 1965 as a temporary correspondent for the Japanese journal *Weekly Asahi*, Kaiko's persona narrator in the novel quite unexpectedly discovers a copy of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* in the war-torn Vietnamese forest. This unusual discovery leads the narrator to imagine Twain's novel to be really a neo-imperialistic ploy to spread the light of civilization. Similarly, subsequent wars — especially the post-9.11 ones — have led us to reconsider the significance of canonical texts such as *Moby-Dick* and *A Connecticut Yankee* in the light of our own times. While the period of postwar

reconstruction helped the Japanese people sympathize with the character of Huck Finn, that of economic high growth at the critical point of the Vietnam War invited us to turn from Huck to privilege instead the narrative of Hank Morgan. Even the most banal and neutral act of reading is affected by the historical context of its encounter, and this is perhaps especially true of Twain's texts.

I recall that my first Mark Twain paper centered on *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*. Even now I vividly remember the seminar on "Childhood and American Literature" taught by Professor Walter Slatoff in the fall of 1985 at Cornell University. Though the other students very quickly decided their respective topics for their oral presentations, I was at a loss for what to do. But then, efficient as ever, Professor Slatoff assigned me to report on *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*. At that point, I was not sure if I would like the novel. Nevertheless, I perused William M. Gibson's edited text of *The Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts* very closely and before long I found myself overwhelmed by Satan's logic of innocence, a logic which pervades most of Twain's masterpieces: "No brute ever does a cruel thing — that is the monopoly of the snob with the Moral Sense. When a brute inflicts pain he does it innocently; it is not wrong; for him there is no such thing as wrong ("The Chronicle of Young Satan," Chap. 3). Furthermore, we cannot read this passage without recalling the following one from *A Connecticut Yankee*: "I have noticed my conscience for many years, and I know it is more trouble and bother to me than anything else I started with" (Chap. 18). Occasionally glancing behind me as I wrote my paper, I took in a huge shantytown built there on campus in the mid-1980s. I had become increasingly fascinated by Twain's post-humanist ideas, mainly because the context in which I conducted research on his work coincided with the rise of the anti-apartheid movement that made me aware of what was going on in South Africa. The demonstrators included students and professors, all attacking the inhumane policies of apartheid that perpetuated white domination and dispossessed black people of their inalienable rights.

Reading *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger* in this political context made me speculate on the deep paradox of innocence in Mark Twain on the global level. Since then I have paid attention not only to Twain's early "realist" novels but also to his later "fantastic" romances. Certainly, Twain's realistic novels helped create the all-American Hero in Huck Finn and promulgate the populist idea of American anti-intellectualism; yet, by the same

token, we should not forget that Twain's fantastic romances served also as an antidote to the modern American cultural context constructed in his early masterpieces. It is my hope that this new journal will be instrumental not simply in producing a diversity of readings but also in rediscovering such differences within Mark Twain, in his time and our own.

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In order to celebrate the publication of the first issue, the editorial committee planned this special feature on "Mark Twain, Our Contemporary" inspired by Jan Cott's magnum opus *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary* (1965). We are very pleased to have been able to receive a variety of stimulating essays from major scholars, critics, and writers such as: Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Michael Kiskis, Fred Hobson, Larry McCaffery, and Kim Stanley Robinson. This special feature will undoubtedly reveal you the future direction of Twain studies.

What is more, the five articles published here invite us all to explore the frontiers of Mark Twain studies. In particular, Arima Yoko's article, "Twain's Move toward Fantasy: A Study of His Writings, 1905-1906," appears here fresh from the 2003 symposium on "Mark Twain and Fantasy" held in Nagoya. As we note in the summary of the symposium in "Professional Notes," Arima radically deconstructs the image of Twain by redefining him as a romancer, not as a realist.

Ogushi Hisayo's article, "Romanticizing Slavery: Dangerous Crossings in Child, Twain, and Chase-Riboud," is a New Historicist take on Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. By comparing the novel not only with Lydia Maria Child's *A Romance of the Republic* but also with Barbara Chase-Riboud's *The President's Daughter*, she succeeds in revealing the hidden agenda of post-Republican American history.

Nakagaki Kotaro's article, "Searching for the Ideal Girl: Mark Twain's Lost America," reinvestigates Twain's gender politics by closely rereading his later short stories, "My Platonic Sweetheart" (1905) in particular. In doing so, this essay gives us greater insight into Twain's friendships with the girls in the Angelfish Club. There, Twain found the wish expressed in his dream world had been realized in real life, which enabled him to cross the borders between dream and reality.

Mitsuishi Yoko's article, "The Recurrent Trope of the Indivisible Body: Mark Twain's Postmodern View of Identity and the Body," attempts to clarify the way Twain's

philosophy, first spelled out in *Huckleberry Finn*, gets developed into more idiosyncratic ideas of identity and body later in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins*. Thinking twice about the debate between Huck and Jim, Mitsuishi reminds us just how modern Twain's ideas really were.

Mary Knighton's article, "'Was Huck *Burak(k)u*?': Reading and Teaching Twain in Asian Pacific World Literature," adopts a comparative literary approach, reading Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* against Oe Kenzaburo's *Shiiku* ("Prize Stock"). In support of "reading for the conflicts" in order to gauge the relevance — and the continuing power — of literature in today's diverse classrooms, Knighton traces intersections of race and imperialism in Twain and Oe. Against the backdrop of Asian Pacific routes of cultural and historical convergence, she questions the role played by tutelage and mimicry in Japanese and American representations of blackness, arguing that they are inextricable from domestic patterns of discrimination against minorities (particularly against *hisabetsu burakumin* and African Americans).

Last but not least, we would like to express appreciation for Ishihara Tsuyoshi's fully annotated bibliography of Japanese Twain Studies. It is thanks to his efforts that this first issue is truly international and totally transpacific.

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