

Introduction: “Aftering”

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“Critique and Cosmos: After Masao Miyoshi” aims to activate some of the energies, tactics, critical forces, geopolitics, comparative poetics, and visions Masao Miyoshi (1928–2009) carried out in his work from the 1970s into the present millennium: coming to terms with *aftering* this impact in temporal, border-crossing, translational, field-reframing, and revisionary senses. *Aftering* (used as a gerundive verb, like *worlding*) here means pro-longing, releasing, and transforming impacts across generic, political, cultural, and disciplinary borders of influence, negation, and control. The ten essays and one review in this special issue do not come to terms with Miyoshi’s works in any memorial, critical, or honorific sense, although they can do that, as in the differently framed field-surveying essays in solidarity within and beyond Japan studies by Harry Harootunian, Reginald Jackson, and Mary Layoun, as well as the review essays on Miyoshi’s photography and cultural criticism by Keijiro Suga and George Solt, respectively. Instead, these works release, amplify, and renew some of the antagonistic energies and critical visions that Miyoshi embodied and distributed as

life force across various domains, fields, studies, and sites of intervention, from Asian to Asian American studies (as here reframed by Stefan Tanaka and Chih-ming Wang) and beyond. Other essays move into the redefining impact of China across the twentieth century (Arif Dirlik) and its attempted geopolitical production and management of Tibet (Tsering Wangmo Dhompa), and into anthropogenic energies and planetary possibilities of the Anthropocene in differing cultural studies works (Christine L. Marran on “the planetary” as critical ethos, and Rob Wilson on the Korean film *Snowpiercer* as ecocidal embodiment of killer capitalism).

Masao Miyoshi’s work in scholarship and photography mandates that cultural criticism envision its work broadly and courageously, as what we call here “critique and cosmos.” The aim is not just to write and think as discipline-bound professionals following the protocols of a given field or discipline. Rather, the energies empower scholars and writers to act, intervene, reframe, and provoke knowledge making, and empower the polity and world to reject complacency, injustice, and intellectual obnoxiousness. From his free speech days as an assistant professor of English in Wheeler Hall at UC Berkeley, to his all the more globally disruptive impact as Hajime Mori Distinguished Professor of Japanese, English, and Comparative Literature at UC San Diego, Miyoshi’s work was never just retrospective or normative as such. His aim was always *projective*, pushing the work, the fields, our tactics of interpretation and linkage forward into situations as a world-making activity. Miyoshi’s recurring problematics and subject matter (in literature, art, the university, urban architecture, ecology), as well as his committed ethos to stage large-scale encounters between cultures and modes of doing academic work, areas, literatures, and nations, still call out for *aftering* this impact.¹

The essays presented here express this transformative power as they intervene in differing fields of environmental, Japanese, Asian Pacific, American, literature, art, film, and history as such. The essays by Miyoshi’s longtime comrades Harootunian and Dirlik continue to shake up the field-imaginary of Japan and China studies in the trenchant, disruptive, and redefining ways their work has been identified with over the past four

1. For further research and archival purposes, the Masao Miyoshi Bunko (Collection) is now housed at Doshisha University’s Faculty of Culture and Information Science in Kyoto, Japan. It can be accessed online at <https://doors.doshisha.ac.jp/duar/repository/ir/15836/?lang=0&mode=1&opkey=R152922533726880&idx=8>. We are grateful to Professor Tetsuya Taguchi and John Solt for their leadership on this project.

decades. The *agonistic* power of Miyoshi as a cultural critic always staged disruptive encounters within and across national terrains of global modernity, and we still need to stimulate such courage, impiety, and scope. “Critique and Cosmos” encourages the dismantling of sublimated discourses and superpower nationalisms, as well as the transnational complacencies of neoliberalism, from the US to Japan and China and the European Union. We need this worldly work if the world and planet are to survive our regimes of globalization, inadequate politics of difference, and drives to recolonization.

Some of the problematics we have in mind in this reworlding formation include the transformation of the humanities to challenge the current regimes of globalization, professionalization, and computerization that often are summoned under the neoliberal banner of the digital humanities and all too commonly serve the forces of corporate privatization. We seek to continue the scholarly and creative transformation of what Miyoshi and Harootunian (2002) called “learning places,” those areas, sites, and fields that would prod beyond disciplinary, institutional, and nation-centric frames. Such frames can still dominate in Anglo-American terms and often circulate globally to take academic dominion in sites across Asia and the Pacific. Such a reworking of these learning places would challenge what Miyoshi (2010: 205–41) called the incorporatization of the “Ivory Tower in escrow” in sites from California and London to Asia and the Pacific. At a more planetary level, we seek to embody the transdisciplinary turn toward modes of worlding study that Miyoshi called an ecological “totality” (2010: 243–61), which goes beyond more economic or anthropocentric frames called the Anthropocene. *Aftering* the will to transdisciplinary intervention of Masao Miyoshi, we thus seek to articulate undertheorized or unidentified critical or theoretical objects in emergence. As Ezra Pound once affirmed in “A Pact” (1957: 27), written across the centuries as linked to his antagonistic mentor and transfigurative model of “commerce,” Walt Whitman, working within global-local dreams of critique and cosmos:

It was you that broke the new wood,
Now is a time for carving.
We have one sap and one root between us.
Let there be commerce between us.

References

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