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ASIA/PACIFIC/AMERICA(S)

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The goal of American Studies in a transnational direction would be to find a new frontier for American Studies. There should be little doubt that Transatlantic and Hemispheric American Studies would have an indispensable part to play in this. The problem is basically how to activate within American Studies the assets of multicultural studies hitherto accumulated. We may pose a question here: who are the true cultural Others of our day? An expected answer would be Islamic Others (or Oriental Asia). What about Confucian Asia and Buddhist Asia? I hold that, while Islamic Others are intrinsically homogeneous in the sense in which the European/Western world shares monotheism with them, Confucian Asia and Buddhist Asia are precisely non-monotheist heterogeneous cultural Others. If Americanists systematically encounter these heterogeneous cultural Others, then we should be able to move beyond limits within which we unconsciously stay and will begin to capture something indispensable to undergo a drastic change. In what ways can we advance American Studies from the perspectives of Asia, the Pacific and the Americas? In what way would we be able to contribute to 'Hemispheric American Studies'?

My suggestion is to seek to establish a new area of research by combining Transpacific studies and Hemispheric studies. If we succeed in so doing, we may be able to enhance an effective interaction of the research interests of fellow Americanists and bring the issues of 'homogeneous and heterogeneous cultural Others' to the foreground. (I do not necessarily mean that we should devote ourselves to the comparative area studies of religions. When I contrasted monotheism and non-monotheism in the previous passage I was being somewhat provocative. My intention has been to highlight the importance of cultural Others.) I would enlist here as possible topics 'Transpacific and Hemispheric Encountering with Cultural Others' and 'Orality, Literacy and Multiculturalism in the Context of Transpacific and Hemispheric American Studies'.