

## URBAN EXOTICISM AND ITS SINO-JAPANESE SCENERY, 1910–1923

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The aim of this study is to show the beginnings of the Sino-Japanese exoticism in the Late Meiji, Taishô and May Fourth periods on the background of Euro-American, mainly French symbolist and decadent vision of the Other, using much material unexplored as yet in contemporary scholarship, and covering different genres of literature, art, architecture and living styles.

The Western perspective of viewing “the Other” as exotic has received ample attention in literary criticism of the past decade. Edward Said’s 1978 monograph, *Orientalism*, precurred a series of academic studies and critical reflections on the West’s image of the Beyond. The unanimous result of this bustling activity is easy to anticipate: the white man’s literary accounts of the Orient are reflections of his superior warfare and economical power. The Orientalized fairy tale starring the handsome adventurer unpacking the mysteries of a foreign land is thus an internal function of a society that rekindles the narcissistic passion of a fatigued self. The Orient is but the screen for the West’s projection of a redefined identity: “Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West.”<sup>1</sup>

This summary is highly simplified, of course, and this study is hardly intended to challenge a basically reasonable definition with a disparate approach. However, my reading of early 20th century Chinese and Japanese literature suggests that the fixation on the unilateral picture of the exoticist Occident and the exoticized Orient misses several aspects. The literary world of modern China and Japan encompassed a sizable exoticist scene. Like their European counterparts, these casually connected groups committed themselves to the artistic subjugation of the Exotic, and elevated their avant-garde cognition of “the Other” to an aesthetic cult.

In addition, there is more to be discovered than just an exoticist enclave of Sino-Japanese cast. Evidently, the “Orientalist” approach adopted by some Eu-

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<sup>1</sup> E. Said: *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books 1979, p. 22.

ropean artists, particularly those of French origin, served as a direct model for the Chinese exoticist looking westwards. In the course of this study, I will focus on an assessable circle of Shanghai and Tokyo writers who ventured to emulate, transform, and eventually supersede the French example of literary exoticism.

### **“Yiguo qingdiao”[1] or “Ikoku jôchô”: Occidentalism: Beginnings in China and Japan**

The inclusion of exotic imagery in Chinese and Japanese art and literature is not a new phenomenon. One could even assert that artistic exotica are as old as the transmitting genres – painting, sculpting, and literature – themselves. Ever since the formation of the *zhiguai* [2] genre (brief prose entries discussing out-of-the-ordinary people and events) during the period of the Eastern Jin (317–420), the topicalization of the “Strange,” the “Foreign,” and the “Supernatural” has been a standard element of Chinese, and consequently Japanese, literature.

The evolution of an “exoticist” consciousness, however, which elevates the exotic image from its traditional function of narrative ornamentation to the pivot of artistic motivation is a relatively recent phenomenon. As a vital expression of the modern Oriental predicament of being caught between East and West, tradition and modernity, it played a pronounced role in the development of modern Chinese and Japanese literature. Very similar to eastward-looking European exoticism, it reflects the struggle for aesthetic reinvigoration by initially employing new content in order to elicit new forms of expression. But while Western “Orientalism” has attracted close attention, the phenomenon of “Occidentalism” has not yet appeared on the map of cross-cultural criticism. A crucial element of the celebrated era of modernity has thus been neglected.

The mechanisms of exoticist aesthetics in an Asian context, however, are complex. The researcher soon finds himself trapped in a mirrored room where images of the exoticist, the exoticized and his own perspective are reflected back and forth; he finds himself confronted with a subject that rejects confrontation and renders its analyst powerless by integrating his image(s) into the kaleidoscope of endlessly reflecting mirages. The creative products of the exoticist mind-set thus cannot be sufficiently described via a one-way approach.

To clarify this assertion, I would like to utilize the image of a window through which the beholder views selected pieces of “exotic” scenery at an angle determined by his own position. While contemporary research on European Orientalism has described just that – a sovereign beholder peeking through a limiting frame – it has been unaware of the possibility that through the same window the self-assured spectator could himself be made the subject of intent scrutiny. “The palaver about exoticism has replaced exoticism,”<sup>2</sup> one critic

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<sup>2</sup> J.M. Moeller: “Orient der Seele” (review of the Stuttgart Exhibition series *Exotische Welten–Europäische Phantasien*), *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, Sep. 27, 1987, p. 29.

commented recently, relating the ironic fact that the oblivious position of the 19th century exoticist has now been taken by the contemporary “exotologist.”

I am not planning on duplicating this approach by portraying Sino-Japanese exoticism as an isolated phenomenon. As the procedures of watching and being watched were both essential to the exoticist motivation of Chinese and Japanese artists, I will try to define both perspectives by illuminating the “window” in between; the prismatic matter which blends see-through images with a hunch of the mirrored self.

The Chinese and Japanese conception of exoticism as a counterpoint to its Western prototypes becomes evident by simply observing the terminology involved. The search for verbal equivalents for the term ‘exoticism’ yields a phrase which dominates the respective literary scene in both countries: *yiguo qingdiao*, or, in Japanese transliteration, *ikoku jôchô*. While this term translates literally as ‘exotic sentiments’ or ‘exotic mood,’ there are numerous texts in both languages which directly equate this expression to the foreign word ‘exoticism’ – either by inserting the French or English letters after the Chinese characters, as often seen in the Chinese context, or by the Japanese superscription of *furigana* (side *kana* to show the pronunciation of characters).

The term *yiguo qingdiao* signals the presence of a specific artistic “mood” signified by a reservoir of specific “exotic” signs – just as Western exoticism depends on recurrent clichés such as silky fabrics, intoxicating perfumes, uninhibited savage women, or, more specifically, verbal signals of the Exotic like KIMONO, GEISHA, or MANDARIN.<sup>3</sup> My investigation begins with a definition of the contents of this reservoir and a simultaneous look into the sites of its creation. Kinoshita Mokutarô’s [3] (1885–1945) poetic cycle *Ikoku jôchô* (1910) apparently marks the earliest occurrence of the term in a creative context:

Cherry blossoms, among them red bricks: foreign mansions.  
With a sudden blaze of gold setting sun pours down on  
Roof beyond roof, and window glass,  
On the red American flag that flutters  
Atop the three-story watchtower of the **Consulate**;<sup>4</sup>  
Down on the vapor of the open sea;  
Down on the golden lions adorning the eaves of No. 33:  
The American Wainlead Mansion.  
On window-sills lined with flowers:  
Foreigners, but dear;

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<sup>3</sup> Words that are capitalized throughout, such as CAFÉ, PARIS, and CIVILIZATION, signify recurrent motifs of the Exotic which are illusory rather than tangible in nature; within titles, quotations, and blocks of translation, the feature indicates the presence of Latin letters in the Chinese or Japanese original.

<sup>4</sup> Within translations from the Japanese, letters in bold face indicate the presence of newly introduced “exotic” words that stand out from the original due to the use of *katakana* (Japanese syllabary used primarily for the transliteration of “foreign” words).

Young Englishmen who whistle  
 Soft and melancholy tunes,  
 Their song blends with the rhythmic strain that  
 trickles from the bowels of factories.  
 To make the most of a fore-shortened spring  
 The Harbour, the Concession, the tree-lined avenues,  
 The Dutch stores, the customs building, the post office,  
 The square in front of the Catholic church, and the Park  
 Are brimming with crowds of madly chanting people  
 from here and from there.<sup>5</sup>

The poem's definition of exotic landscape is unmistakably tied to the city of Yokohama. Only a small fishing village before the port's opening in 1859, the city rapidly developed into the stronghold of Western traders and, followed by Nagasaki and Kobe, grew to become Japan's most important "Window to the West." Within close range for Tokyo's artists, Yokohama quickly assumed a crucial position in the development of Japanese exoticism. The new city not only offered the intriguing material of a foreign facade on Japanese soil, but also the presence of about 8,000 foreigners who served the artist's inspiration as living *exotica*. The exoticist mind set out by initially recording "new," "strange," or "alien" phenomena in a traditional mode of expression: the woodblock print (*ukiyo-e*) [4] of the early Meiji period is the first artistic medium which sought to capture this "bizarre" world. The verses of Kinoshita Mokutarô, who once described his poetry as "*Ukiyo-e* copied in oil," thus mark a more advanced – "modern" – stage of exoticist activity as he packages his glimpses at the unfamiliar in the non-traditional form of Modern Poetry (*gendai shi*) [5].

For a definition of Kinoshita's exoticist outlook, however, his aspirations to modernity are the less important message encoded in the self-evaluation of his poetry. It is the adherence to the bright colors of the *ukiyo-e* and the medium of painting itself, which bespeak his credo as exoticist writer. The physical surface of Yokohama left the Japanese beholder with an overwhelming sense of the tangible presence of an unfamiliar materiality which emanated new sights, new sounds, and new smells. Kinoshita felt that in order to reproduce this attack on the totality of the senses – thereby creating the "exotic mood" desired – he had to convey the images three-dimensionally.

Kinoshita gained recognition both as a painter and a poet, possessing a combination of artistic interests which is common among interpreters of the Exotic in East and West. His work is strongly influenced by French symbolism and impressionism, those corresponding currents that play such an important role in the development of Japanese and Chinese exoticism. For him, the synesthetic

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<sup>5</sup> Kinoshita Mokutarô: "'Ijinkan embô no kyoku' no jo" (Preface to 'Song of Viewing the Ijinkan from Afar'). In: *Kinoshita Mokutarô zenshû*, 25 vols. Tokyo, Iwanami 1981–1983, vol. 1, pp. 163–164.

aesthetics of symbolism offered a way to “paint” with language. Only by amassing clusters of sensuous imagery, unrestrained by the rigid rules of traditional poetics, could his pastiche of Yokohama achieve its “exotic,” that is, its three-dimensional, tangible, sensually detectable flavor. Kinoshita did not write much else on the city of Yokohama, but his early “definition” of exotic scenery set the tone for artists to come.

### Visions of the Beyond: Yokohama in the Eyes of the Taishō Artist

The tradition of poetic interest in Yokohama was continued by Kitamura Hatsuo’s [6] (1897–1922) anthology *Gosai to haru* [7] (Five Year Old and Spring, 1917). A young painter-poet with symbolist tendencies like Kinoshita, Kitamura drew a series of scenic sketches which, due to their simple lines and bright colors, come across like the poetic version of a children’s picture-book. Images of square red brick buildings, azure skies, and spotlessly white sail boats fulfill the promise of the title by conjuring up the author’s boyhood memories of the harbor town. It is a deliberately naive portrait of Yokohama, which reinforces the impressionist vision of the Exotic as pioneered by Kinoshita Mokutarō.

Kitamura was also one of the three contributors to *Kaikō* [8] (Harbor, 1918), a poetic anthology that is probably the most prolific literary project centering on the fascination with exotic Yokohama. In fifty-two poems Kitamura and his friends Yanagisawa Ken [9] (1889–1953) and Kumada Seika [10] (1898– ) spread out a poetic map of Yokohama which leaves none of the city’s sites untouched: the Grand Hotel, the French and British consulates, the church towers, the shops and cafés, the parks and tennis courts, blond hair and blue eyes, the ocean liners towering over the harbor.

Placed in a superjacent context, however, this collection offers more than just the literary exploration of a specifically intriguing locale; *Harbor* permits the most extensive insight into the ubiquitous reservoir of generic “signs” which have come to define the outlook of Asian exoticism in general. A look at the scenery conjured up by the trio presents a preview of the images which we will encounter in the Japanese and Chinese visions of other cities with exotic appeal, specifically Tokyo, Paris, and Shanghai. A close reading of this collection, augmented by related materials, thus marks the first step toward the delineation of a standard set of exotic images and forms of presentation.

*Harbor’s* sense of facade is pervasive. As illustrated by the following examples, it is often the towers of Yokohama’s architectural landmarks which preface a close-up of the city’s spatiality:

- 1) A peek out of the window yields  
Red Buildings: the **Grand Hotel**;  
Mountain top scenery: the French **Consulate** in light mist.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Yanagisawa Ken: “Horanda fune” (Dutch Steamship). In: Yanagisawa Ken, Kumada Seika, and Kitamura Hatsuo: *Kaiko*, Tokyo, Bumbudō 1918, p. 10.

2) A leaden ocean as background, images congealed by frosty skies:

**Dome** of the customs building and tower of the club house,  
Sun color washing away their rusty green.<sup>7</sup>

3) Distant green,

Wafting bells,

The twin towers of the Catholic church faintly stretching into the blue sky.<sup>8</sup>

4) Yes, the building there on the mountain top:

The French **Consulate**.

The fluttering **Tricolore** –

Try once to sing the **Marseillaise**.<sup>9</sup>

In concordance with the panorama evoked by Kinoshita, the corner stones of Yokohama's landscape are marked by "official" buildings which serve as symbols of Western civilization itself. In the eyes of the poets they have no function, but are entirely representative facades without interiors. Unlike their poetic close-ups of shops, hotels, or cafés, the authors' depictions of these facades are not detailed. They never venture beyond the red brick fronts of the consulates or the custom house: these are empty signs, filled only with the poet's individual sense of the Exotic. "The Tower attracts meaning," as Roland Barthes once commented on the Eiffel Tower, "the way a lightning rod attracts thunderbolts; for all lovers of signification, it plays a glamorous part, that of a pure signifier, i.e., of a form in which men unceasingly put meaning (which they extract at will from their knowledge, their dreams, their history)."<sup>10</sup> Amorphous dreams are also unloaded upon the flags which, as the most prominent indices of the Exotic's presence, are fluttering atop the towers. The colors of the Stars and Stripes, the Tricolor, and the Union Jack are frequently evoked in Yokohama poetry, as "pure signifiers" meaning everything and nothing. On a subjacent level, however, they are always perceived as what they basically are: colors signaling a colorful life which is imaged "inside."

Historic significance is attached to the image of the church towers and the implements of Christian everyday life. The first Japanese contacts with Western culture were, after all, initiated by Jesuit missionaries during the period 1540–1640. The legacy of this short-lived "Christian century," as ethnocentric Euro-American historians have labeled this period, contributed significantly to the artistic perception of foreign man and his culture. In the exotic universe of the *ukiyo*e, the portrait of the bearded priest had soon become the stereotypical image of the "Southern Barbarian" (*namban*) [11]. It thus is no coincidence that

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<sup>7</sup> Kumada Seika: "Nigatsu" (February), *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> Kumada Seika: "Sangatsu" (March), *ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>9</sup> Yanagisawa Ken: "Kaikai" (Ocean Scenery), *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> R. Barthes: *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard. New York, Hill and Wang 1984, p. 5.

modern, symbolist exoticism also draws from this traditional reservoir of exotic imagery.

Kinoshita Mokutarô's interest in exotic themes, for instance, had first been awakened during a journey to Kyushu in July, 1907. His fascination with the Namban period when Portuguese and Spaniards created a Christian culture around Nagasaki is best illustrated by *Jashûmon* [12] *The Heretics*, 1909, the famous maiden work of his travel companion Kitahara Hakushû [13] (1885–1942). Regarded as one of the pioneering attempts of Japanese symbolism, Hakushû's verse avails itself of Christian imagery to express the author's youthful infatuation with fin de siècle decadence. The church ruins in *The Heretics*, therefore, figure less as religious symbols than as an aesthete's marker of European civilization itself – temples of worship to a decadent God. Hakushû's opening lines explicitly conjoin the poet's exoticist credo with Christian imagery:

I believe in the heretical teachings of a degenerate age, the witchcraft of a  
Christian God,  
The captains of the black ships, the marvelous land of the Red Hairs,  
.....  
I have heard their cosmetics are squeezed from the flowers of poisonous  
herbs,  
And the images of Mary are painted with oil from rotten stones.  
.....  
Oh, vouchsafe unto us, sainted padres of delusion,  
Though our hundred years be shortened to an instant, though we die on the  
bloody cross,  
It will not matter; we beg the Secret, that strange dream of crimson:  
Jesus, we pray this day, bodies and souls caught in the incense of yearning.<sup>11</sup>

Modern Japanese exoticism customarily utilizes the material facets of Christianity as standard indices of a highly aestheticized Other. The paintings of Takehisa Yumeji [14] (1884–1934), another modern poet/painter of the Exotic, corroborate this assertion. His famous series of Nagasaki portraits typically features a cross-bearing foreigner side by side with his Japanese mistress. Similar to the poetic apparition of the church towers, Yumeji's crosses became standard emblems of the Exotic – the inchoate utopia which in his case, again, represents the cosmos of the European fin de siècle. The painter's crosses thus carry erotic connotations rather than messages of moral constraint or ethical hypocrisy. Along these lines, Christian imagery also constitutes one of the main pools of exotic topoi used by Kitamura, Yanagisawa, and Kumada. *Harbor's* Yokohama scenery is in good part defined by church towers, monastery walls, Catholic

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<sup>11</sup> Trans. Donald Keene. In: *Dawn to the West*. 2 vols. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1984, vol. 1, pp. 243–244.

priests and nuns, the image of Christ, crosses of different sizes and materials, and the Bible, which characteristically attracts attention due to its striking materiality rather than its spiritual contents: prolifically illustrated and bound in golden cloth, it constitutes the archetypal image of the “decadent” book. Among the three collaborators, Kumada Seika most frequently avails himself of Christian imagery. On one occasion, he even ventures beyond the secretive facade of the Catholic church:

Peaceful afternoon inside the church:  
Christ, God’s Son, sleeping in his crib,  
The three Magi,  
**Johannes Pieta** –  
Smiling faces on stained glass,  
Bright rays dancing upon them;  
Even the altar’s golden vessels shine with a joyful light.<sup>12</sup>

The awe-inspiring exterior of the consulates, the customs building, and the Catholic church generally reflect the poet’s vision from afar, that is, from the mountains overlooking Yokohama, or from the ocean, utilizing the perspective of the world traveller arriving by boat. A literary close-up of the city’s spatiality usually diminishes the dominant images of towers and flags, and often turns to the shop facade of Water Street, which Yanagisawa Ken had declared to be “Japan’s finest boulevard” in 1917.<sup>13</sup>

As a professional chronicler of Yokohama life recorded, this commercial area right below the Bluff (known in Japanese as Yamate, the residential area most favored by foreign merchants) displayed “a long line of shops providing the obligatory amenities of the Westerner’s daily life: cafés, bakeries, tailors, furriers, stores retailing flowers, ladies’ hats, Western furniture, phonographs, and the like.”<sup>14</sup> Almost exclusively catering to the foreign inhabitants of Yokohama and a small circle of fashionable Japanese customers from Tokyo, Water Street offered a glimpse behind the merely representative front of the Exotic. Through its gallery of translucent show-windows, the pedestrian could not only savor materialized samplings of the colorful life promised by the foreign flags – such as bright clothing or imported flowers – but also have his non-visual faculties partake in the process of inspiring poetic imagery. Here, amidst an abundance of new sensual images, the synesthetic features of symbolist poetry could best be employed. Among the boulevard’s shops, the institution of the café must have especially appealed to the sensually oriented Yokohama poet. Yanagisawa

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<sup>12</sup> Kumada Seika: “Jûichigatsu” (November). In: Yanagisawa, Kumada, and Kitamura: *Kaikô*, p. 79.

<sup>13</sup> Yanagisawa Ken: “Yokohama yori” (From Yokohama). In: Yanagisawa Ken: *Indoyô no kôkon*. Tokyo, Yanagisawa Ken ikô kankôkai 1960, p. 462.

<sup>14</sup> Inoue Ikutarô: *Yokohama monogatari*. Tokyo, Chômonkaku 1925, pp. 24–25.



Ken's poem "Café" highlights the sensuously charged atmosphere of this subject:

Calmly I connect cup with lips:  
Hot **cocoa**, fragrant **cognac**, gold-coppered setting sun, dazzling gold.  
Beyond the **curtain**: evening breeze settles on dusky streets,  
Embroidered patterns on the **carpet** of sunset –  
Glittering **straw hats**.  
Joyfully I separate lips from cup.<sup>15</sup>

By amassing an array of multisensual imagery experienced during a sip of cocoa laced with cognac, the author not only comments on the synesthetic potential of the locale, but also highlights the stimulating faculties of its major retail items, caffeine and alcohol. Since CAFÉ and COFFEE belong to the most recurrent countenances in the exoticist reservoir of Japan and China, a more detailed analysis of coffee as *the* symbolist – or exoticist – “drug” will evolve as we venture through the three other centers of café-culture that feature so prominently in the Asian artist's mind, namely Tokyo, Paris, and Shanghai.

The sensation of potent smells features particularly prominently in the records created by the literary explorers of Water Street. Tanizaki Junichirō [15] (1886–1965), perhaps Yokohama's most famous portraitist, provides us with a prose version that is subtly reminiscent of Yanagisawa's synesthetic café impressions; exoticism has a “flavor,” an “aroma,” just as it has a visual side to it:

“Just as the lanes of Chinatown leave the visitor with the impression of a unique scent, this street, where foreigners hustle to and fro and where shops exclusively retail imported goods, exudes a highly original smell. There is the smell of cigars, the smell of chocolate, the smell of flowers, the smell of perfume – among those, the scent of the strongest cigars merges with the aroma of boiled cocoa and coffee and stealthily blends itself into the passing air.”<sup>16</sup>

While the literary topicalization of the cafés and stores on Water Street designated the first step toward a portrayal of the Exotic's inside, it was the majestic interior of the hotel which came to represent the ultimate nucleus of “exotic” civilization. The Western style hotel in Asia – and this is true even today – is the foreign traveler's harbor; an artificial space which, by shielding the occupants from the unfamiliar Outside, creates the reality of a familiar Inside. To Japanese artists, the HOTEL embodied the true temple of the Exotic, the sanctum where the essence of Western civilization could be savored.

In order to accommodate the many foreign diplomats, merchants, sailors, and tourists who lodged here upon their arrival, Yokohama of 1920 had close to 150 hotels. Many of them were emblazoned with evocative names such as THE UTOPIAN HOTEL, SHAKESPEARE HOTEL, or NEW YORK HOTEL. Most

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<sup>15</sup> Yanagisawa Ken: “Café”. In: Yanagisawa, Kumada, and Kitamura: *Kaikō*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>16</sup> Tanizaki Junichirō: “Nikkai” (Flesh). In: *Tanizaki Junichirō zenshū*, 28 vols., Tokyo, Chūō kōron 1966–1968, vol. 9, p. 5.

prominent among them was undoubtedly the Yokohama Grand Hotel which, overlooking the harbor, was one of the city's most distinguished landmarks. It belonged to the era of great Asian Hotels which has created such temples of stately luxury as the Raffles in Singapore or Fujiya Hotel in Hakone.

The Grand Hotel was most renowned for its annual New Year's Ball when its jazz band – reportedly the best in the Kantô area – drew party guests from as far as Tokyo, Kamakura, Zushi and Hakone. During the year, the popularity of its Wednesday and Saturday soirees apparently outdid the seasonally limited entertainments of horse racing, tennis, and boat cruising. In a lyrical piece entitled “Dansu monogatari” [16] “Dance Stories,” the essayist Inoue Ikutarô [17] has preserved his impressions of this event:

“Electric lights, with a softness as if filtered through red silk, floating the beautifully polished **hall**. Through two entrances gentlemen in swallowtails and **tuxedos** have trickled into the building and settled down to red cocktails and other drinks in two **waiting rooms** and **salons** facing the ocean. An **orchestra** plays on the second floor; enraptured by the joyful sounds, the men take women with translucent skin by their hands and enter the rhythm of the **foxtrot** that drifts down the corridor. In an instant the wide **hall** is crowded with tens, maybe hundreds of entangled pairs. The interior of the hall becomes an ocean of dress-tinged with an abundance of forms, lights, and colors like red, yellow, or purple.”<sup>17</sup>

Again, the synesthetic qualities of the scene are striking: clusters of colors, lights, and sounds define the atmosphere of the innermost core of the hotel, the dance hall. More than any particular features, it is the intensity of sensuous stimulation which often defines the “exotic mood.” “To foreigners who can't be a single day without intense stimulation and dense colors,” explains Inoue, “the [Grand] Hotel dance offers optimal consolation.”<sup>18</sup> Akin to the café and its intensifying stimulants, MUSIC and DANCE stood for the exotic concept of impassioned fervor, sharply contrasting with the traditional notion of harmonious tranquility and its superjacent aesthetics.

Inoue, however, was a professional celebrity reporter. While it was part of his job to observe foreign aristocrats, business magnates, or illustrious artists amidst their very own, most Japanese at first avoided the weekly dance spectacles at the Grand Hotel. They felt more comfortable around the Bluff and the popular hotel district Hommoku, where many establishments were managed by Japanese owners and thus promised a preponderantly Japanese clientele. Here the timid beginner could initiate himself in the rituals of social dancing without being embarrassed by an audience of professionals.

The Temburu Kôto on the Bluff, for instance, became the gathering place for a Japanese circle of Yokohama's high society. Among its frequent visitors was Tanizaki Junichirô, who had moved from Tokyo in 1921 to immerse himself in

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<sup>17</sup> Inoue Ikutarô: *Yokohama monogatari*, p. 122.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

the exotic ambience of Yokohama. During his two years of residence, he was known for his tuxedo bedecked excursions into the hotel world of Hommoku and the Bluff.

For Tanizaki, too, DANCE and HOTEL undoubtedly were definitive elements of the exotic sensation. As a writer, of course, he liked to assume the position of the passive voyeur rather than that of the participating dancer. The short piece “Minato no hitobito” [18] “Harbor People” describes the intriguing scene which the Kiyō House, a famous *chabuya* [19] small-scale hotel serving foreign customers, adjacent to his Hommoku residence, revealed to the nightly onlooker:

“My study on the second floor was directly facing the dance hall of the [Kiyō] House: every evening, until very late at night, I could see the shadows of madly gyrating dancers, hear the sustained sound of stamping feet, hear the alternating cries of women and the strumming of the **piano**... I somehow felt as if I had left Japan and was now looking at the scenery of exotic lands, very far away.”<sup>19</sup>

One of Tanizaki’s contemporaries interprets this spectacle in more unabashed terms: “In the Kiyō House foreign drunkards were dancing, holding naked *rashamen* in their embrace; to a young man like me, watching from the adjacent courtyard, the sight of this scene meant tormenting stimulation.”<sup>20</sup>

The *rashamen* – an initially derogative term for the mistresses of foreigners – constitute another characteristic element of Yokohama’s exotic landscape. Employed by *chabuya* such as the Kiyō House, they spoke English, danced, and frequently combined curly red hairdos with foreign dress. Popular opinion about the *chabuya onna* (chabuya women), as they were also called, was mixed. They were either despised as unpatriotic harlots or revered as “high-collar” trend-setters of modern fashion. In any case, they were subjects of tremendous curiosity among the Japanese communities of the port cities.

Inoue, who appears to have been rather positively intrigued, dedicated a series of tableaux to these harbingers of the “Hommoku look.” Asserting that many *chabuya onna* were “daughters from rich and highly esteemed families,”<sup>21</sup> he envelopes them in an aristocratic air that sets them apart from ordinary uneducated prostitutes. His portraits bear the curious double-features of the highly sophisticated and the Dionysian: on the one hand, they are liberal women yearning for freedom, love, and the “sweet males evoked by Heine’s poems,” sufficiently enlightened to discuss such pioneers of the modern day as Nietzsche, van Gogh, or Chopin;<sup>22</sup> on the other hand, they are portrayed as “gip-

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<sup>19</sup> Tanizaki Junichirō: “Minato no hitobito” (Harbor People). In: *Tanizaki Junichirō zenshū*, vol. 9, p. 432.

<sup>20</sup> Kon Tōkō: “Hommoku jidai” (The Hommoku Era). In: *Tanizaki Junichirō zenshū geppō*, vol. 8, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Inoue Ikutarō: *Yokohama monogatari*, p. 53.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

sy women,” carelessly intoxicating themselves with red wine and the wild rhythms of modern jazz.<sup>23</sup> A fellow artist who also drew inspiration from the *chabuya* girl was Takehisa Yumeji. His famous conception of the “Taishô look,” prolifically defined by his countless female sketches, is undoubtedly based on his impressions of the *rashamen* type.

The *rashamen*, *chabuya onna*, or *ijin musume* [20] foreigner’s mistress, are also standard protagonists in Western exoticist literature. Ever since Pierre Loti’s *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887), the image of the compliant Japanese mistress has become the frontispiece of European-style Japonaiserie. Popular works like Puccini’s opera *Madame Butterfly* or James Mitchener’s novel *Sayonara* have kept her stereotype alive even to the present day. However, while in Western literature the *chabuya* girl assumed the crucial role of the personified Other, to native eyes she was still of Japanese stock and not quite “different” enough to appeal to the exoticist mind as a subject worthy of full-blown literary treatment.

Recent research on European exoticism has appropriately singled out the foreign female as the most compelling emblem of an otherwise faceless Other. According to Edward Said and Wolfgang Kubin, for instance, the rendezvous of the European man and the Oriental woman constitutes an *in nucleo* representation of Western-Oriental relationship.<sup>24</sup> Although I agree that the focus on the foreign female is one of the definitive elements of literary exoticism, I would like to remove the one-sided edge from this theory. In other words, just as an exoticizing by the Western colonial writer took place, there was also the Sino-Japanese topicalization of the blond, blue-eyed woman being preyed upon by an Oriental male protagonist.

Yokohama assumes an important role in providing this centerpiece for a full-fledged exoticism of Japanese cast. As the port-bound phenomenon of the *chabuya* girl illustrates, the city was one of the first places where Japanese and Westerners would become amorously involved. But while the *chabuya* already flourished during the Meiji period, the only Western women residing in Yokohama at the end of the 19th century were the wives of foreign merchants. As many woodblock prints from this period document, their dress and comportment aroused voyeuristic interests, but there was no fully exotic, that is, sensual depiction of the Western female before 1917.

This situation changed drastically with the Russian revolution and its consequent exodus of Russian refugees. The October Revolution in Russia became a major event in the development of modern Chinese and Japanese thought. In a completely non-ideological way, it also played a crucial role in the development of Sino-Japanese exoticism. Due to its pathetic byproduct of thousands of destitute – and thus “available” – Russian females, November 7, 1917, marks an important date in the formation of “Occidentalism”: “Of all those Russian made

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> See Said: op. cit. and W. Kubin: “Die fremde Frau, der fremde Mann.” In: B. Mensen (ed.): *China: Sein neues Gesicht*, Zürich, Steyler Verlag 1987, pp. 9–25.

masterpieces of art,” comments a delighted Inoue, “the beauties who are just now being chased from Siberia to Yokohama, certainly appear to the Japanese eye as Russian art’s most perfect specimen.”<sup>25</sup>

By 1923, reportedly 2,000 White Russians lived among the 8,000 foreign residents of Yokohama. Many more were constantly coming through on their way to Paris, Berlin, and the United States.<sup>26</sup> During the years 1917–23, Inoue related the arrival of many Russian celebrities such as the ballet dancer Anna Pavlova or General Ataman Semionov. In hastily stowed crates and suitcases they brought with them mementos of imperial Russia, often family heirlooms that were now reduced to plain monetary value. The majority of the refugees, however, arrived with no lasting assets. Inoue has stories about them, too; we have heard them all, from Parisian and New York newspaper columns of the 1920’s when fugitive barons turned waiters and czarist bureaucrats became chauffeurs.

Most eye-catching, however, is the recurrent motif of the solitary Russian female – the forlorn figure, invariably of self-styled aristocratic descent, who now made a living in the demi-monde of dance parlors, cafés and hotel bars around the world. For many of them, Yokohama’s Hommoku was the first stop on a life-long journey. Here they made possible what many Japanese men had longed for: romance with a foreign woman. While Westerners were seeking exotic gratification in their quest for the almond-eyed Oriental GEISHA, the Japanese dandy tried to consummate the Exotic’s essence in affairs with blond or red-haired femmes fatales from Europe: “I have grown tired of fastidious Japanese females,” jots down Inoue, “I have developed a penchant for these truly lascivious, truly erotic Western women; the girls at the Western style hotels of Hommoku thus fill me with great contentment.”<sup>27</sup>

The figure of the Russian woman is omnipresent in the artistic cosmos of modern Japanese exoticism. It pervaded the feuilletons of the day, in the form of touching interviews with the “baroness turned bar girl,” or inside reports on the “exotic double-bed of Maria Mikhailovna.”<sup>28</sup> The work of the avant-garde photographer Nakayama Iwata (1895–1949) would not be the same without the theme of the female Russian drifter, and neither, of course, would the early novels of Tanizaki Junichirô. When Tanizaki moved to Hommoku and, shortly thereafter, to the Bluff, many of the stately brick buildings had been abandoned by their original owners. The First World War had summoned many of the Yokohama expatriates to their homelands. Destitute Russians and eccentric Japanese took over the houses left behind.

While in 1910 Kinoshita Mokutarô could marvel at those mansions on the Bluff only “from afar,” Tanizaki, eleven years later, was able to experience the Eu-

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<sup>25</sup> Inoue Ikutarô: *Yokohama monogatari*, p. 316.

<sup>26</sup> For an insightful parallel study focusing on the fate of exiled White Russians during the years 1918–1923, see Fr. Mierau (ed.): *Russen in Berlin 1918–1923: eine kulturelle Begegnung*. Berlin, Quadriga-Verlag 1988.

<sup>27</sup> Inoue Ikutarô: *Yokohama monogatari*, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 175–176 and 316–319.

ropean life-style from inside. He not only moved into a house featuring a “fireplace encased in marble,”<sup>29</sup> but also had himself initiated into the exotic arts of speaking English, dancing, and playing the guitar. Needless to say, most of his tutors were Russian women living in the immediate vicinity. Imitating the dandy attire of his early idol Oscar Wilde, the enthusiastic student reportedly strolled to his lessons “in a light brown business suit bedecked with a red necktie.”<sup>30</sup>

These neophytes of Western etiquette in Japan apparently inspired many a character in Tanizaki’s early work. A typical example is a dance instructor in his first important novel, *Chijin no ai* [21] “A Fool’s Love”, 1924:

“The Russian dance teacher was a countess named Aleksandra Shlemskaya. Her husband, the count, had disappeared during the Revolution. There’d been two children, but she didn’t know where they were, either; she’d barely managed to escape to Japan by herself. Having no other means of support, she finally decided to teach social dancing.”<sup>31</sup>

The synesthetic features of the Exotic, as I have identified them above, are often associated with the Russian female. She represents sensuality *per se*. Different from the somber tints of the Japanese woman, she is usually all color and light: radiant white skin, glowing golden hair, sparkling blue eyes, blazing red lips. Even more evocative of a figurative Other are the distinct smells attributed to her. “In a symphonic sensation, the exotic odor particular to Russian women... gushed out at me,”<sup>32</sup> reads the climax of Inoue’s anecdote about Maria Mikhailovna’s boudoir, and Tanizaki’s “Fool” marvels at Countess Shlemskaya’s perfume: “Ah, that scent – it evoked in me thoughts of lands across the sea, of exquisite, exotic flower gardens.”<sup>33</sup>

Again, to the typical exoticist, the Exotic is “aroma,” an intoxicating, atmospheric essence found in its most concentrated form in the body odor of the foreign lover. As Baudelaire’s *Fleur du mal* demonstrate, olfactory images also feature prominently in European poetics. Reminiscent of the evocative powers of smell as perceived by his admirer Tanizaki, it is the “parfum exotique” of Baudelaire’s mulatto lover Jeanne Duval that summons the poet’s vision of idealized, “exotic” regions:

When, with my eyes both closed, my nostrils sense  
Your breast’s warm odor, on a warm fall night,  
My shores of blessedness loom into sight  
Beneath white sunlight’s dazzling opulence.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See Tanizaki Junichirô: “Ave Maria” (1923). In: *Tanizaki Junichirô zenshû*, vol. 8, pp. 503–589.

<sup>30</sup> Torii Tami: *Yokohama Yamate: Nihon ni atta gaigoku*. Tokyo, Sôshisha 1982, p. 214.

<sup>31</sup> Tanizaki Junichirô: *Naomi*, trans. A.H. Chambers. Tokyo, Tuttle 1986, p. 58.

<sup>32</sup> Inoue Ikutarô: *Yokohama monogatari*, p. 319.

<sup>33</sup> Tanizaki Junichirô: *Naomi*, p. 212.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Baudelaire: “Exotic Perfume”. In: *The Flowers of Evil*. Trans. Fr. Duke. Charlottesville, The University of Virginia Press 1961, p. 45.

The Russian October Revolution of 1917 and the devastating Kantô earthquake of 1923 thus frame Yokohama's short-lived heyday. During six brief years the city's facade was accessible to one and all, regardless of nationality, and no longer was the realm of the Exotic an exclusive one. Everybody – Europeans, Americans, Chinese and Japanese alike – could savor the materiality of the city from a multiplicity of angles. Like Tanizaki, fashion-conscious eccentrics from Tokyo came here to shop, dance, love, live, and write. While pre-earthquake Tokyo was still engaged by the commanding spirit of Edo, Yokohama was “completely free of tradition,” rising on the doorsteps of Japan like “a mirage in the desert,”<sup>35</sup> a world of unprecedented material density but void of prescribed meaning; every visitor could inflate this contemporary “**hollowness**,” this “**blank** beauty”<sup>36</sup> with his individual visions of the Exotic.

Yanagisawa Ken disclosed the chimerical nature of *Harbor* on several occasions. He repeatedly expressed his first impressions of Yokohama, after being appointed acting director of the local post office, as being “frightful and perplexing.”<sup>37</sup> The noisy commotion of the city seemed much different to the former student of French literature and law than his prepossessed knowledge of Western atmospheres had prognosticated. He apparently had envisioned the “graceful ambience” and “refined classicism” which permeates not only the verse of his favorite poetic models, Albert Samain and Henri de Régnier,<sup>38</sup> but also the paintings of the impressionists whom he had reviewed in his essay collection *Inshôha no gaka* [22] *Impressionist Painters* the previous year.

In *Harbor*, however, we find no trace of Yanagisawa's initial distress. His YOKOHAMA, as he occasionally highlights this imaginary realm, is without the frenzied flicker of neon lights, the abrupt screeches of car brakes, or the stench of booming industrial production. To the contrary, it is exclusively imbued with scenes of natural luminescence and harmonious sounds.

Yanagisawa once praised his friend and collaborator Kitamura Hatsuo for the “fairy-tale character” of his *Five Year Old and Spring*: “The author's dream world... is pervaded with the sounds of reverberating pianos softly passing time, peaceful conversations, and dinner tables where graceful smiles are exchanged.”<sup>39</sup> In *Harbor*, this visionary notion of civilization is brought to conceptual maturation. YOKOHAMA is the location of eternal spring, an invariably bright world where the shades of nature gracefully blend with the unadulterated aroma of CIVILIZATION. Just as in Yumeji's paintings, the colors are plain and lucid (bright gold, deep blue, lily white, baby pink, crimson red, etc.), the smells are subtle, and the sounds are gentle. Whether it is the misty harbor front, the

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<sup>35</sup> Yanagisawa Ken: “Yokohama yori”, p. 462.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, idem, “Yokohama futô kara” (From Yokohama Pier). In: *Gendai no shi oyobi shijin*. Yokyo, Shôbundo 1920, p. 255.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

rhythmic beat of a tennis game in Yamate Garden, or quiet evening bells over maroon roofs, the tableaux consistently produce a gay, nature-bound atmosphere. YOKOHAMA is “cultivated” nature, deliberately harmonized with its organic surroundings: electric lights, glowing softly, emulate the evening sun; domesticated cats animate shops while birds and worms swarm the tree-topped hills; imported flowers in parks, on lawns and behind show-windows rival their regional counterparts in the wild; the aroma of coffee blends into the redolent polyphony of spring; and the resplendent tints of clothing or jewelry correlate to the colors of SKY, OCEAN, and FOREST which encompass this synesthetically perfect domain.

To more closely define the nature of *Harbor’s* Yokohama, let us briefly examine the opening poem of the collection. Yanagisawa’s “Kaisuiyoku” [23] “Sea Bathing” could well serve as the group’s programmatic statement:

People, flocking into the ocean  
 To enjoy a swim on a gay afternoon.  
 Brilliant blue, flickering gold, a light breeze cuts the waves,  
 Cheerful laughter tinges the water.  
**Pink** infants, like shells, glow on the surface,  
 To the bodies – snow-white like flowers – of their naked mothers they  
 cling.  
 .....  
 A flock of athletic youths, red and hardy  
 Buoyantly rise from the swell, cheering, then submerging again.  
 Flower-like virgins float holding hands. Gleam-like virgins:  
 Fragile lilies, softly blooming and withering on blue water.  
 Zipping by: a **yacht**; oh, quivering in the sea breeze, the sail’s shade hides  
 Flaxen hair and **straw hats**, lips impassioned by smiling eyes.<sup>40</sup>

“Observed at Hommoku” reads Yanagisawa’s subscript to the lengthy poem, but the author’s intentions evidently go beyond the portrayal of contemporary beach scenery. In a subtle manner, he associates the conventions of modern life with the simple beauty of a primeval age. The beach, one of the therapeutic inventions of the Western life-style, reinstitutes mankind in an archaic setting: reminiscent of the ancient Greeks, modern humanity – as typified by the Western bathers – is “naked,” in this case communicating with the waves of the ocean, which figures as the ultimate symbol of the all-encompassing aesthetics of nature. Likened to shells and flowers, the bodies are part of a sublime macrocosm. The newfangled yacht, rather than contrasting with the primal picture of the gleeful bathers, comprises a vital component of the “organic” scenery: by constructing this useless, purely pleasure-facilitating commodity, Western man’s love for exhilaration has come full circle.

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<sup>40</sup> Idem: “Kaisuiyoku” (Sea Bathing). In: Yanagisawa, Kumada, and Kitamura, *Kaikô*, pp. 3–5.



Though the golden age of unadulterated antiquity has long ago disappeared, the consciously devised refinements of modernity – exemplified by sea bathing and yachting – have brought about the renaissance of a pristine state wherein humankind, not yet conscious of its inherent quest for enchantment, instinctively danced about in self-forgetful bliss. The tuxedo bedecked soiree attendant and the unadorned bather thus represent two faces of the same exotic entity: CIVILIZATION, that is, the “archetypal” ideals of Greek antiquity reinstated in the modern age.

*Harbor* exhibits both faces profusely. Yanagisawa’s vignettes of ocean liners, hotels, and tennis courts are offset by mythological scenery, most obtrusively developed in his last two poems, “Kodaishô” [24] “In Praise of Ancient Times” and “Zoku kodaishô” [25] “Continued Praise of Ancient Times”:

Golden sunlight scorches upon sounds of laughter:  
A string of forest, mist-like tangle,  
Bronze age ancients inebriated by wine  
Laughingly pound their bodies – those sounds.<sup>41</sup>

Clearly, Yanagisawa’s vision of sun, wine, and dance-infused “ancient times” relates a Japanese interpretation of Greek mythology, specifically the realm of the Dionysian, which had so markedly engaged his European models. Works from all fields of creative activity come to mind: Nietzsche’s *Geburt der Tragödie*, Wagner’s *Ring des Nibelungen*, Debussy’s *Triomphe de Bacchus*, Mallarmé’s “L’Après-midi d’un Faune,” or Matisse’s *Bonheur de vivre*.

Yanagisawa’s enthrallment with Western mythology and its modern interpretations reaches back to his high school days. As early as 1907, he had publicized his perception of the “True, Good, and Beautiful” in a student journal. Forecasting the ambience of *Harbor*, the keynotes of his youthful discourse are the countervailing forces of Dionysian and Appollonian, the *Nibelungenlied*, and the “Nietzschean characters of [Izumi] Kyôka [1873–1939].”<sup>42</sup> During the ensuing years he further developed this penchant for the renaissance of Western mythology and its most prominent interpreters. He read intently Tobarî Chikufu’s [26] (1873–1955) introductory writings on Nietzsche, and, together with his poet friends in Yokohama, made it a social ritual to listen to the music of Wagner and Debussy.<sup>43</sup> A more direct source of inspiration for the *Harbor* collaborators were Paul Fort’s *Les idylles antiques*, a poetic cycle appended to the volume in a partial translation by Yanagisawa.

Yanagisawa Ken thus introduces a specific brand of fin de siècle aesthetics which is distinctly different from, for instance, Hakushû’s method of displaying

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<sup>41</sup> Idem: “Kodaishô” (In Praise of Ancient Times), *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> See idem: “Bundan no kinkyô o danzuru sho” (Pondering the Modern Literary Stage). In: *Indoyô no kôkon*, p. 46.

<sup>43</sup> See idem: “Saijô Yaso no geijutsu” (The Art of Saijô Yaso). In: *Gendai no shi oyobi shijin*, p. 127.

portentous decay. In marked contrast to the ostentatiously “decadent” tone of his early poetic role model, Yanagisawa’s contributions to *Harbor* exhibit an atmosphere of incandescent health.

This distinct turn from the melancholy autumn scenario flaunting gloom and decay toward the cheerful exuberance of spring keenly reflects a vital trend within the contemporary European scene. Just as the Parnassian movement had separated symbolism from its deliberately decadent origins (Baudelaire, Verlaine) by summoning the “healthful” spirit of a primeval world, *Harbor* strikes a markedly different tone than Yanagisawa’s poetic maiden work, *Kajuen* [27] *Orchard*, 1914. Though the typically “decadent” colors gold and red persist, the melancholy tableaux of moonlit autumn nights that characterized his early work have been replaced with an orgy of spring days and bright smiles.

Yanagisawa Ken, considering his age, social status, and poetic accomplishments, was doubtless the most distinguished among the *Harbor* originators. But all three were consistently weaving the colorful canvas of YOKOHAMA, characteristically imbued with the double features of modern life and pristine resilience. “Doesn’t a host of ancient Greek heroes reside in this sky,” exclaims Kitamura Hatsuo right next to scenes of urbane glitter, “just as if there was a miniature **Homeros** present.”<sup>44</sup> Even Kumada Seika, the trio’s most observant beholder of modern life and its curious appliances, joins in the duet. Sometimes, he represents the city’s environs in terms of a timeless garden:

Much purple, soaked into leaves,  
Creaks of wooden doors opened by someone,  
Harvesters’ song fading along the path to the vineyard,  
Leaves of trembling weeds,  
Blossoms in full bouquet contemplating fruition,  
Ocean scenery bathed in sunlight.<sup>45</sup>

And elsewhere, articles of supreme fashion embellish this image, like a hotel excursion yielding exotic delights. Note how the “Mediterranean” imagery is sustained even here:

On a happy breakfast table: Neapolitan **marmalade** and  
Six **crackers** each,  
Fresh **napkins** for two, folded like geese,  
With tiny **initials** at the beak.<sup>46</sup>

Kumada blends pictures of a mythical past with vogueish curiosities in almost every one of his seasonal tableaux of the city. There is the nostalgic Ukiyoe

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<sup>44</sup> Kitamura Hatsuo: “Hirusugi” (Afternoon). In: Yanagisawa, Kumada, and Kitamura: *Kaikô*, pp. 146–147.

<sup>45</sup> Idem: “Kugatsu” (September). In: *ibid.*, pp. 72–73.

<sup>46</sup> Idem: “Sangatsu” (March). In: *ibid.*, p. 55.

shop in Water street, for example, or stories of Sheherazade, mention of cubism/futurism, and the movies.

YOKOHAMA represents the materialized utopia where mankind has finally transposed the downfall from a state of inadvertent joy and regained its natural elegance: a realm where past and present, the fantastic and the tangible have been consolidated in one world. Paradoxically, it is by way of perfect erudition that modern man has recovered the grounds of blissful naiveté and self-forgetful grace.

Borrowing the masterful conclusion of Heinrich von Kleist's famous essay "On the Puppet Theater," YOKOHAMA becomes the (modern) realization of an (archetypal) ideal – after its image has passed through "infinity":

We see how, in the organic world, as reflection grows darker and weaker, grace emerges ever more radiant and supreme. But just as two intersecting lines, converging on one side of a point, reappear on the other after their passage through infinity, and just as our image, as we approach a concave mirror, vanishes to infinity only to reappear before our very eyes, so will grace, having likewise traversed the infinite, return to us once more, and so appear most purely in that bodily form that has either no consciousness at all or an infinite one.<sup>47</sup>

Two "modern" items are especially suited to illustrate *Harbor's* synthesizing of contemporary man and nature: the steamship and glass windows.

Inoue Iktarô had captured the high-society glitter affiliated with the ocean liner, but Yanagisawa was fascinated by the aesthetic ramifications of the object itself. Three months after his arrival in Yokohama he proclaimed: "I already remember not only the names of many ships, but also their shapes. Now I truly understand the beauty of ships, something I have never known before."<sup>48</sup> *Harbor* flaunts the poetic repercussions of his seaport gazings, as at the sight of the imposing Marusia: "Askant this ship my chest abounds./ Oh, **grand château**, mirage of the sea! Gigantic sculpture!"<sup>49</sup>

To Yanagisawa Ken and his friends the awe-inspiring silhouettes of foreign steamers comprised an integral part of the exotically charged dominions OCEAN and HARBOR, and thus were a definitive element of the land- and seascape of YOKOHAMA. Rather than being portrayed as antagonistic conquerors of the sea, the ships' colors and sounds "organically" embroider the brilliant carpet of SKY plus OCEAN and produce a picture of mellifluous congruity. To the creators of YOKOHAMA, 'artificial' and 'organic' are not yet perceived as antagonistic qualities. In *Harbor*, plants, water, and sky appear to be "artificially" colored, just as man and his contraptions seem imbued with "natural" luminosity.

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<sup>47</sup> Heinrich von Kleist: "On the Puppet Theater". In: *An Abyss Deep Enough: Letters of Heinrich von Kleist with a Selection of Essays and Anecdotes*. Ed. and trans. Ph. B. Miller. New York, Dutton 1982, p. 216.

<sup>48</sup> Yanagisawa Ken: "Yokohama yori", p. 463.

<sup>49</sup> Idem: "Kaikei", p. 14.

As Paul Morand's printed postal collection, *Rain, Steam and Speed* (1926), or John Dickson Carr's mystery novel *The Blind Barber* (1934) and an abundance of other writings indicate, the large-scale steamship and its dense facsimile of modern society was a topic of universal interest during the 1920's and 1930's. In *Harbor*, the ocean liner becomes the looming symbol of CIVILIZATION, aptly representing its twofold characteristics. On the one hand, it is a floating hotel equipped beyond the standard luxuries of its counterparts on land. It features elegant restaurants, movie theaters, and the nucleus of Western evening culture, the dance parlor. To the beholder ashore, on the other hand, it moves from and to "infinity," eventually submerging into all-encompassing nature at the meeting point of sky and ocean.

Most of all, this elaborate construction bears witness to the contingent "super-human" qualities of mankind: "What an astonishing thought, that this gigantic yet elegant entity has been created by human hands," remarks Yanagisawa elsewhere.<sup>50</sup> More than any other man-made object, it is this majestic carrier traversing East and West that suggests the presence of the Exotic and evokes visions of the journey abroad. At night, Yanagisawa used to listen to "the lonely wails of steamship whistles resounding from the harbor. It was quite an **exotic** sound; it instantly made my mind sail off to foreign shores."<sup>51</sup> Another recurrent motif in the polyphony of exotic images is the object GLASS, and, more specifically, its function as window glass. Though not as arresting an entity as the ocean liner, the WINDOW is a standard exoticist metaphor permeating not only *Harbor*, but also many other works created during the Taishô period. Tanizaki's sketches of Yokohama are full of shop-windows and reflected sunlight, and Kinoshita Mokutarô composed as many as three pieces which specifically deal with the allure of this material.<sup>52</sup>

"There are hardly any mirrors or glass windows in Shanghai, Hongkong, Singapore, or Penang,"<sup>53</sup> a Japanese traveler distinguishes the "civilized" look of Parisian boulevards and Tokyo's Ginza in 1912, and concludes: "Mirrors and glass are the symbols of civilization."<sup>54</sup> Again, the obsession with this imported commodity goes beyond the surface aspects of the newfangled and the curious. Like the steamship, glass encompasses a figurative meaning that points the way to an understanding of Sino-Japanese exoticism in general.

YOKOHAMA is a world perceived through windows. Yanagisawa, Kumada, and Kitamura draw their sketches of the city mostly via the windshields of moving cars, through portholes of anchored boats, and from behind the glass fronts

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<sup>50</sup> Idem: "Yokohama yori", p. 463; see also idem: "Yokohama futô kara", p. 258.

<sup>51</sup> Idem: "Yokohama yori", p. 465.

<sup>52</sup> Kinoshita wrote a poem, a play, and an essay, all entitled "Garsu donya" (The Glass Merchant); see Kinoshita Mokutarô: *Kinoshita Mokutarô zenshû*, vol. 1, pp. 118–120, or vol. 2, pp. 256–258, vol. 4, pp. 197–219 and vol. 5, pp. 141–142.

<sup>53</sup> Hashimoto Kunisuke: *Pari e-nikki*. Tokyo, Hakubunkan 1912, pp. 141–142.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

of cafés or hotel windows. This method of depiction endows the poems with a subtle frame effect: the singular exotic image becomes disengaged from its surroundings and appears as an aesthetically manipulated picture encased by discerning hemlines. Its contents are controlled by the selective perspective of the author's eye. He decides what is aesthetically pleasing to the exoticist taste: "No need for sharp scrutiny, it's me who is the possessor of it **all**./ Stronger than seascape, anyhow, I am," thus Yanagisawa's emphatic statement regarding the authority of the poetic voice.<sup>55</sup>

The group's penchant for photography and the "moving pictures" is related to the window-qualities of these new-fashioned arts. The camera is perceived as an artistic window which cuts and frames selected images, a conducive paraphernalia in the process of creating the "world of signs" delineated above.

As Kumada circumscribes his method of image compilation: "Through the window of a car dashing along a level road,/ We stealthily peek outside: a picture of harbor, **movie-like**."<sup>56</sup> The swiftly moving car takes the enraptured "I" and his lover Annabel Lee (a reference to Edgar Allan Poe's love poem "Annabel Lee") from a concert at the Gaiety Theater on the Bluff, a famous landmark further commemorated by Kumada in his two closing poems. This cultural sanctuary of "exotic picture land," as Yanagisawa once characterized Yokohama,<sup>57</sup> was solely constructed for the purpose of showing "pictures": lined by the ridges of a movie screen, or framed by curtain and stage lights, the Gaiety Theater engulfed the visitor in an ever more copious kaleidoscope of images, and Kumada's lyric grows breathless with exotic utterances encompassing stage and audience: **orchestra stall, ladies, overture, curtain, chorus girl, costume, harlequin, castanets, Pierrot**.<sup>58</sup>

The Gaiety Theater was what was for many Japanese intellectuals of the Late Meiji and Taishô periods the site of the first direct contact with Western performance and evening gala ambience. In 1891, the prominent Meiji enlighteners Tsubouchi Shôyô [28] (1859–1935) and Kitamura Tôkoku [29] (1868–1894) had come here to witness the Japanese première of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; in 1912, the young Akutagawa Ryûnosuke [30] (1892–1927) made the trip from Tokyo to marvel at Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* and her life-size counterparts in the audience; in 1921, the ubiquitous Inoue Ikutarô covered the week-long performance of a Russian opera troupe staging Bizet's *Carmen*, Puccini's *La Bohème*, and a string of Verdi classics; and Tanizaki, who initially had come to Yokohama as a script writer for a newly founded movie company, habitually attended the Tuesday and Friday movie showings offered at the Gaiety in 1922. To all of them, the Gaiety Theater was a box in a treasure chest, a mirage in wonderland, a window within a window.

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<sup>55</sup> Yanagisawa Ken: "Kaikai", p. 13.

<sup>56</sup> Kumada Seika: "Jûnigatsu" (December). In: Yanagisawa, Kumada, and Kitamura: *Kaikô*, pp. 83–84.

<sup>57</sup> See Yanagisawa Ken: "Yokohama yori", p. 463.

<sup>58</sup> See Kumada Seika: "Jûnigatsu", pp. 82–83.

Moreover, all Japanese authors of the new-sprung urbane milieu appear to be intrigued by the reflective qualities of glass, this “artificial” crystal which so forcefully multiplies the brilliant qualities of nature. This double feature of translucency and mirror function makes GLASS and WINDOW perfect insignia for the exoticist mind-set. The Exotic never represents the completely Alien (observed through glass), but in most cases the rediscovery of a reinvigorated Self (reflected by a mirror). *Harbor’s* emulation of Paul Fort’s spring eulogies, for example, rather than simply opening a window to the Unfamiliar, can be interpreted as the revitalized theme of eternal spring mirroring the colorful world of the *ukiyo*.

In sum, the modern Japanese concept of the Exotic (*ikoku*) [31] is clearly linked to the phenomenon CITY (*tokai*) [32]. The “exotic mood” (*ikoku jôchô*) consequently becomes transparent as an “urban mood” (*tokai jôchô*). However, all of the authors quoted above portray the harbor town in the romantic tradition of city within landscape, and do not yet employ the modernist method of portraying city as landscape. In YOKOHAMA, man-made constructions comprise part of the scenic texture and are often likened to organic phenomena. Roofs of foreign mansions “bloom” amidst the green of the Bluff, the sounds of strumming pianos blend with the chirping of birds, and coffee aroma merges with the scent of forest flowers.

Another preliminary result of these initial probings into the Sino-Japanese notion of the Other is a clear indication that the different shades of Japanese exoticism – and this is just as true for the Chinese scene – are modelled after French prototypes. In 1918, to Chinese and Japanese onlookers THE WEST generally meant EUROPE; but while the Union Jack stood for military power and the German eagle signaled pragmatic vigor, FRANCE designated the sanctum of Western art, the cultural Innermost of the foreign sphere. FRANCE – and this holds true even today – stood for all of the essential properties that are generally attributed to the Exotic: sensuous romanticism, synesthetic sensations, symbolist image compilation. It thus is no coincidence that most Chinese and Japanese exoticists emerged from the comparatively small group of French-educated intellectuals.

Yanagisawa Ken’s literary vocation represents a typical case. The former French major from Tokyo University devoted a major part of his lifetime to the introduction of the West as epitomized in French art and literature. On many different occasions throughout his career as a poet, essayist, and literary critic he recorded his love for things French. “I loved everything French since high school,”<sup>59</sup> he once began a literary critique, elaborating elsewhere:

“There were about forty people in my [college] class, but only a rare two of us chose French as our first foreign language. Later on, I was the only one left,

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<sup>59</sup> Yanagisawa Ken: “Nagai Kafû shi to Akutagawa Ryûnosuke shi to o kataru” (On Nagai Kafû and Akutagawa Ryûnosuke). In: *Indoyô no kôkon*, p. 95.

while everybody else studied English or German... In a word, I was the only pure, genuine Francophile.”<sup>60</sup>

After graduation, Yanagisawa not only continued to cultivate his eccentric erudition, but clearly aspired to join the ranks of the preeminent harbingers of 19th century French aesthetics in Japan. In 1924 he published *Gendai Furansu shishû* [33] *An Anthology of Modern French Poetry*, thus following the lead of Ueda Bin [34] (1874–1916), Nagai Kafû [35] (1879–1959), Yosano Hiroshi [36] (1873–1935), and Horiguchi Daigaku [37] (1892–1981), who pioneered the translation of French poetry into Japanese.<sup>61</sup> Accentuating the work of Albert Samain, Henri de Régnier, and Paul Fort, this collection appears to be a belated canonization of the aesthetic substructure underlying his youthful experiments in *Harbor*. At the same time, it marks his definitive credo in the lofty realm of French aesthetics which, to him, seemed superior to its British and German counterparts. More than Nietzsche, Wagner, and Greek mythology itself, it apparently was their integration into the dynamic sphere of the Parisian art world which interested Yanagisawa. “Poets like Whitman and Carpenter are second rate,” he proclaimed, dealing a vigorous blow to contemporary Japanese taste, and emphatically commended his French models: “Oh, here is my love, here are my *maitres*.”<sup>62</sup>

Considering Yanagisawa’s steadfast position, it is not surprising to discover that his acquaintances stem almost exclusively from the Francophile intelligentsia. This applies to early poetic role models like Kitahara Hakushû and Miki Rofû (1889–1964) as well as to his close personal and literary guide, Shimazaki Tôson [39] (1872–1943), and his intimate poet friends Saijô Yaso [40] (1892–1970), Horiguchi Daigaku, Kitamura Hatsuo, Kawaji Ryûkô [41] (1888–1959), and Hinatsu Kônosuke [42] (1890–1977).<sup>63</sup>

YOKOHAMA, undoubtedly, means FRANCE – the cosmopolitan refinement of Paris as well as the timeless Eden of Southern France’s Mediterranean scenery; the stately old parks and dwellings and the “Symbolisme des Centaures” found in the works of Régnier and Samain;<sup>64</sup> Paul Fort’s infatuation with the gleeful month of May and the copious smiles of spring.

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<sup>60</sup> Idem: “Osekihan” (Red Bean Rice), *ibid.*, p. 417.

<sup>61</sup> See Ueda Bin: *Kaichô'on* (*Sound of the Tide*, 1905); Nagai Kafû: *Sangoshû* (*Corals*, 1913); Yosano Hiroshi: *Rira no hana* (*Lilac Flowers*, 1914); Horiguchi Daigaku: *Kinô no hana* (*Yesterday's Flowers*, 1918). All of these collections highlight the tradition of the symbolist school.

<sup>62</sup> Yanagisawa Ken: “Kinô no hana o yomu: Horiguchi Daigaku chi no yakushi” (Upon Reading Yesterday’s Flowers: Horiguchi Daigaku’s Poetry Translations). In: *Gendai no shi oyobi shijin*, pp. 209 and 211.

<sup>63</sup> Though Hinatsu Kônosuke was a poet who predominantly translated English literature, his aesthetic preferences were very similar to his French-educated friends. He was best known for his adaptations of Oscar Wilde and his promotion of “aristocratic art” at a time when naturalism was in vogue; see, for instance, his poetry collection *Kokui no seibo* (Black-draped Madonna) from the year 1921.

<sup>64</sup> “Symbolisme des Centaures” is the critic Henri Clouard’s classification of the symbol-

My analysis might leave the impression that Yanagisawa and his colleagues created a dense labyrinth of hidden references, undecodable to anybody but themselves. The authors, however, did not intend their source of inspiration to be a secret. To the contrary, their affinity is placarded right on the frontispiece of the volume: *Yokohama sentimental: A Paul Fort* reads the subtitle to *Harbor*, clearly displaying the trio's aspiration to create a Japanese counterpart to their idol's poetic cycle, *Paris sentimental*.

Yokohama is thus explicitly linked to Paris, and implicitly its landmarks become "reflections" of the Parisian "originals": Water Street and the boulevard Sébastopol, the Union Church and Notre-Dame, Yamate Park and the Jardin du Luxembourg are but a few of several apparent correlations.

And just as the author of *Paris sentimental* reminisces about his first love (subtitle of this sixth series of the *Ballades françaises: Le roman de nos vingt ans*, so do the creators of *Harbor*. Kumada Seika's twelve-piece series "January" to "December" pivots around his love for a fictitious Annabel Lee, and Kitamura Hatsuo nostalgically ponders his pubescent passions in the poems "Juliet" and "Marie." In concordance with Fort's paragon and the "healthy" spirit of a revitalized symbolist movement, it is the pureness and naiveté of the Maria image, not the decadent properties of the femme fatale which characterize these figures.

Paul Fort himself had a decisive opinion about France's role in Japan's encounter with the West: "Hasn't France become the first godmother in the process of Japan's Occidental baptism?" he rhetorically asks in the preface to *Harbor*.<sup>65</sup> While the old symbolist guard had employed the Chinese/Japanese curio as their favorite artifact, the new generation – like Fort and Valéry – detected a reciprocal affinity between the two cultures. The creation of YOKOHAMA meant mounting this axis of aesthetic propensity from the Oriental end, and thus prepared, the transposition to France was not far away.

### Tokyo's Ginza and the "Urban Mood"

Confronted with the postmodern facade of contemporary Tokyo, it is hard to imagine that neighboring Yokohama once drew the creative attention of the Taishō avant-garde to such a remarkable degree. Back then, however, Tokyo hardly displayed any of the urban glitter which so markedly distinguishes its post-earthquake and post-war faces. In Yokohama – a foreign enclave sprung from the precepts of extraterritoriality – everything was new, that is, "Western," "modern," "exotic." Tokyo, on the other hand, was a city still evocative of Edo (as Tokyo had been known until the Meiji emperor moved there from Kyoto in

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ist's penchant for Greek mythology as exemplified by Régner's famous poem "Le vase" or Mallarmé's "L'après-midi d'un Faune"; see H. Clouard: *Histoire de la littérature française*, 2 vols. Paris, Michel 1947, vol. 1, p. 241.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Fort. In: Yanagisawa, Kumada, and Kitamura: *Kaikô*, p. 2.



1867), a scattered panoply of cultural traditions and architectonic layers. To illustrate the uninspiring state of the capital, we might best turn to the disillusioned testimony of Tanizaki Junichirô, an *edokko* (son of Edo) turned Yokohama “émigré”:

“I doubt that in those years, the years of prosperity during and immediately after the [First] World War, there was anyone even among the most ardent supporters of Tokyo who thought it a grand metropolis. The newspapers were unanimous in denouncing the chaotic transportation and the inadequate roads of “our Tokyo.” I believe it was the *Advertiser* which in an editorial inveighed against the gracelessness of the city... I remember the editorial because I was so completely in agreement. Foreigners and Japanese alike denounced our capital city as “not a city, but a village, or a collection of villages.”... Old Japan had been left behind and new Japan had not yet come.”<sup>66</sup>

Tanizaki’s disenchantment with Tokyo was felt by many Japanese artists of the day. Not everybody, however, followed his example and left the city for Yokohama. More typically, the Tokyo writer devoted himself to a nostalgic search for the “old Japan left behind,” and a selective hunt for edifices forecasting the “new Japan which had not yet come.”

In fact, most of the artists active in Yokohama had previously explored the scenery of urban Tokyo, and it was by way of composing pastiches on the somber capital’s “exotic” pockets that their aesthetic concepts had initially evolved. The making of YOKOHAMA, however much “purer” the exotic qualities of its subject might have been, is thus inextricably intertwined with the poetic scrutiny of Tokyo. Kinoshita Mokutarô, for instance, published two Tokyo poems under the heading *Tokai jôchô* [43] Urban Mood in 1909; their title and content clearly make them the precursors to his series *Exotic Mood*:

Boat: just as it passes beneath the bridge,  
Thunderously, the tempest of an electric train...  
Smug look of the streets, it’s sad! Glass stores  
Adjoining cloisonné shops, the cornices of the  
Three-story draper: a line of **illumination**.  
Night. Fastened the bank doors, alone  
The **stained glass** windows’ dreary reflections in the water.<sup>67</sup>

This definition of urban mood was published in the literary magazine *Okujô teien* [44] *Roof Garden*, experimental outlet for the effervescent clique of poets and painters who called themselves *Pan no Kai* [45] Devotees of Pan. As Donald Keene has pointed out, the group’s designation bears threefold connota-

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<sup>66</sup> Tanizaki Junichirô: “Setsuyô zuihitsu” (Osaka Essays). Trans. E. Seidensticker. In: *Low City, High City: Tokyo from Edo to the Earthquake: How the Shogun’s Ancient Capital Became a Great Modern City, 1867–1923*. San Francisco, Ellis 1985, pp. 283–284.

<sup>67</sup> Kinoshita Mokutarô: “Rokugatsu no shigai no jôcho” (Street Mood in June). In: *Kinoshita Mokutarô zenshû*, vol. 1, p. 127.

tions: obviously derived from the frolicsome Greek demigod, the name may also suggest the concept of an “all-embracing” society of artists, or even the artists’ preference for (exotic) bread over (domestic) rice.<sup>68</sup>

Centered around the pioneer translators of French poetry such as Ueda Bin and Yosano Hiroshi, and the main pacesetters of Japanese symbolism such as Kitahara Hakushû and Kinoshita Mokutarô, the Devotees of Pan constituted the first artistically oriented organization of Japanese Francophiles. Almost a decade before the salon meetings of the *Harbor* collaborators, Kinoshita recalls how this self-styled Sturm und Drang circle of young artists would meet in Tokyo’s entertainment quarter to “day dream about the life of Parisian painters and poets.”<sup>69</sup>

Immense importance was attached to the setting of their meeting place. Since the institution of the café had not yet been adopted by the city’s entrepreneurs, the group’s search for an adequate club house turned out to be a protracted process. Eager to emulate the flamboyant life-style of their Parisian idols, the Devotees finally declared the Maison Kônosu, a Western style restaurant in the depths of the Low City (known in Japanese as Shitamachi, the eastern sections of the city where the traditional entertainment quarter was located), to be Tokyo’s first café. Meetings were henceforth to be held here.

The Maison Kônosu thus came to be the original Japanese “Parnasse,” a life-sized counterpart to the typical gathering places of the French artist crowd of Montparnasse or the Quartier Latin. Parisian ditties were intoned here, taught to eager disciples by Ueda Bin, and books by the first “pilgrims” to France such as Iwamura Tôru’s [46] (1870–1917) *Pari no geijutsu gakusei* [47] (*The Art Students of Paris*, 1902) and Nagai Kafû’s *Furansu monogatari* [48] *French Stories*, 1909, were handed around. The wine-inspired meetings were sometimes attended by Kafû himself, and the young Tanizaki also made frequent appearances.

One of the inspiring urban pockets sought out by the Devotees was the foreign settlement at Tsukiji, which, although on a much smaller scale, resembled the Bluff in Yokohama. Kitahara Hakushû has left us an emphatic account of this isolated terrain which he used to explore with his friend and co-Devotee Kinoshita:

“EAU-DE-VIE DE DANTZICK, and the print in three colors of a Japanese maiden playing a samisen in an iris garden in the foreign settlement, and the stained glass and the ivy of the church, and the veranda fragrant with lavender paulownia blossoms, and a Chinese amah pushing a baby carriage, and the evening stir, “It’s silver it’s green it’s red,” from across the river, and, yes, the late cherries of St. Luke’s and its bells, and the weird secret rooms of the Metropole, and opium, and the king of trumps, and all the exotic things of the

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<sup>68</sup> See D. Keene: *Dawn to the West*, vol. 2, p. 241.

<sup>69</sup> Kinoshita Mokutarô: “Pan no Kai no kaisô” (Reminiscing the Devotees of Pan). In: *Kinoshita Mokutarô zenshû*, vol. 13, p. 156.

proscribed creed – they are the faint glow left behind from an interrupted dream.”<sup>70</sup>

Today, St. Luke’s Hospital remains the only memento of the settlement as Hakushû saw it. Like most of Metropolitan Tokyo, the exotic quarter vanished in the flames of the great earthquake in 1923. Ironically, the district owed its existence to one of the city’s notorious firestorms in the first place. Tsukiji is located at the eastern end of Ginza, an area that was destroyed by a large blaze in 1872. The governor, apparently weary of this continuous threat, thereupon decided that the city was to be made fireproof. The newly charred Ginza was an obvious place to begin the ambitious project. The English architect Thomas Waters was hired to erect an entire district in brick. After the construction of “Bricktown,” as it was called by the locals, was finished, there were about a thousand brick buildings in Kyôbashi Ward, which included Ginza, and fewer than twenty in the rest of the city.

Ginza was also the place for the new brightness which came to symbolize the new Japan of “Civilization and Enlightenment.” The Meiji authorities installed gaslights in 1874, and the first electric signs illuminated Tokyo’s most prominent boulevard as early as a decade later. Everybody came to see this prototype of modernized Tokyo, and especially at night when the rest of the city lay enveloped in the sullen darkness of Edo, large crowds streamed toward an incessantly irradiated Ginza. So evolved the custom of Gimbura (the Ginza stroll) which came to be the hallmark of an era.

For many of the curious wayfarers, Ginza was synonymous with Tokyo and a future of newfangled thrills. As one of the many Ginza chroniclers summarizes the appeal of the fancy thoroughfare just before the earthquake: “To the sight-seeing tourist, Tokyo’s single most thrilling sight is neither... Nihonbashi, nor Asakusa, nor Hibiya Park. At the bottom of the visitor’s yearning to return was an infatuation with urban things, its object being the Ginza night, the Ginza lights, the Ginza mood.”<sup>71</sup>

The phenomenon ‘Ginza’ resembled an atmosphere rather than a discernible conglomerate of mansions and shops. Similar to the entity of Yokohama, Ginza stood for “exotic atmosphere” and “urban mood.” Not surprisingly, Kinoshita’s definition of urban mood eventually develops into a poetic tune about the Ginza:

The mood of an urban summer night starts  
To Howl with the pain of dissatisfaction.  
Idle strollers on the nightly Ginza, impatient  
Some enter Masamune Hall, others lead their girls

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<sup>70</sup> Kitahara Hakushû: “Shitamachi” (The Low City). trans. E. Seidensticker. In: *Low City, High City*, pp. 41–42; EAU-DE-VIE DE DANTZICK is a reference to Kinoshita’s poem “Kimpunshu” (Gold Dust Liqueur). In: *Kinoshita Mokutarô zenshû*, vol. 1, pp. 170–171, which topicalizes this exotic drink.

<sup>71</sup> Matsuzaki Tenmin: *Ginza*. Tokyo, Gimbura gaidosha 1927, pp. 51–52.

Up the stairs for a sip of **soda water**.  
From the shadow of a flower-lined **balcony**  
Red, blue, and all of a sudden: yellow  
Electric lights flash their impulsive glares,  
While a phonograph blasts wanton foreign tunes.<sup>72</sup>

Among the “modern” Ginza things which especially appealed to the Devotees of Pan were the many cafés that started to pop up here around 1910. While the Maison Kōnosu may have offered Western delicacies introduced via Yokohama – ice cream and soda, for instance – there were no “waitresses,” the later hallmark of the typical Tokyo café. By Mid-Taishō, the heyday of the geisha culture was over and the era of the “café lady,” the “waitress,” the “madame” – in short: the “Ginza girl” (*Ginza onna*) [49] – was in full swing.

In other words, the Ginza offered a “high-collar” environment where the educated Taishō elite could not only read, write, and discuss the latest products of the Japanese avant-garde, but also look for romance. Consequently, the café girl evolved as one of the favorite protagonists of Taishō literature. Nagai Kafū was known for his literary portraits of the café girl, and Tanizaki’s name should also be mentioned in this context. Naomi, his childlike femme fatale whose carefully cultivated resemblance to Mary Pickford evokes the “fool’s love,” first meets her paternal lover as a hostess at Tokyo’s Café Diamond before she eventually moves to a European style mansion on the Bluff.

But different from the situation in Yokohama, the Ginza girl was always Japanese. Only one source reports the existence of a “singular exotic flower” among Tokyo’s waitresses; Nina was a Russian refugee who was employed – where else – at Ginza’s Café Russia.<sup>73</sup>

The Ginza was also the main location for Tokyo’s newspapers and publishers. The many cafés offered an ideal gathering place for their employees. Before the massive rebuilding in the wake of the earthquake and the consequent introduction of modern mass culture took place, the Ginza café was enveloped in a rather snobbish aura. It constituted the literati’s exclusive “Parnasse,” but was also visited by students, bankers and upwardly mobile office workers. As most of the writings by typical chroniclers of Ginza café culture – such as Kikuchi Kan [50] (1888–1948), Nii Itaru [51] (1888–1951), or Ogawa Mimei [52] (1882–1961) – indicate, the Taishō café was hardly frequented by the earthy folk of Tokyo’s day-laborers. Similar to the hotels in Yokohama, the Ginza café was patronized by the intellectual elite of the day. The names of Hakushū, Kinoshita, Kafū, and Tanizaki even appear on the list of an exclusive “Café Club.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Kinoshita Mokutarō: “Rokugatsu no shigai no jōcho”, pp. 128–129.

<sup>73</sup> See Matsuzaki Tenmin: “Roshia no onna: Ginza ni ikoku no hana” (A Russian Woman: Ginza’s Exotic Flower). In: *Ginza*, pp. 99–102.

<sup>74</sup> See Hirano Imao: *Ginza no shijō* (Poetic Ginza), 2 vols., Tokyo, Shirokawa 1966, vol. 1, p. 68.

Kinoshita's poetic treatment of the "urban mood" thus represents no isolated phenomenon. The art of capturing the special ambience of Tokyo's finest district again and again from a multiplicity of angles apparently was among the Devotees' favorite literary exercises, and the poetic pastiche commemorating the Ginza mood soon evolved into a genre of its own. In order to more closely define the group's fascination with the boulevard, one of Hakushū's lyrical image collages may be the most telling example:

Rain.....Rain.....Rain.....  
Fresh rainfall on the Ginza  
Solemnly it pours, drip-drop,  
With a scent of unripe apples,  
Onto the pavement, onto the snow.  
Black derby hats, otter furs,  
Young gentlemen walking in the rain.  
Tiny old women clutching parasols walking in the rain.  
...Black mourning dresses and feather hats.  
Janomen-umbrellas over charming girls.  
Solemnly it pours, drip-drop,  
A scent of apples in the rain.  
Fastened to bare willows, silver-green  
Winter's gaslights flicker on,  
On glass shelves: Spring knitwear, fluffy-white.  
A tubercular child, weak moan  
Behind his scarf.  
Persian rugs, and  
Golden letters on exotic books: the spirit of winter rain,  
HENRI DE RÉGNIER, their gloomy jewel,  
Breath is visible, and  
Rain means: silent tracks of kisses,  
And the green, the gems, the clocks, the compasses –  
their loneliness;  
Deep thoughts of the young **Loti**.  
Ceaseless shuddering: busy  
Whispers of Madame Chrysanthème's puppet sewing machine;  
Snow-white gleam of a bare shoulder,  
Hairdos shine in style, coquettish moves, at the beauty-shop  
Blue-black strains of hair smell afresh.  
A white **Pierrot**'s tear-stained face.  
A bear and toy boots:  
**Santa Claus** presents  
Desired by childish hearts.  
Outside, gloomy rain threads  
Mingle gently with light snow.  
The rain, with a scent of apples

Solemnly pours, drip-drop,  
Soaking through doors, it is  
The light rain of VERLAINE;<sup>75</sup>

Hakushû's lyrical portrait flaunts two obvious messages. First, there is the familiar string of decadent imagery which again emulates the atmosphere of the French fin de siècle. Hakushû's Ginza is dark, rainy, and chilly, animated only by sickly, mournful pedestrians. We are compellingly reminded of Baudelaire's gloomy tableaux of wintry Paris. Furthermore, the author attempts a direct linkage of Tokyo's Ginza with the streets of Paris. "Ginza rain" becomes "Verlaine's rain," that is, the rain of Paris as seen by Verlaine. Inductively, Hakushû not only associates the two metropolises, but also identifies his own status as urban poet with that of his French idol.

Even the planners and entrepreneurs of the Ginza might actually have had visions of the Parisian model in mind. The willow trees, as one of the symbols of Taishô Ginza referred to by Hakushû, furnished the boulevard with the distinct look of a French allée. Moreover, the proprietors of the Ginza cafés typically chose French names for their enterprises. From the trend setting Café Purantan (Café Printemps) to the later Kuro Neko (Chat Noir),<sup>76</sup> most cafés utilized the alluring air surrounding their Parisian prototypes as the most important means of self-promotion.

In other words, just as poetic Yokohama was ardently construed as a pendant to Paris, so was Tokyo's Ginza. But not only their "French" quality affiliated the two exotic domains with each other. From the beginning, Yokohama and Ginza were closely connected by means of Meiji infrastructure. Ginza was the terminal of the Yokohama railway. If the harbor town was Japan's window to the West, Ginza represented Tokyo's window to Japan's exotic frontier. Until the terminus was replaced by Tokyo Central Station in 1914, foreign goods and fashions reaching Yokohama infiltrated the capital almost exclusively via Ginza. It thus does not seem surprising that the *Harbor* authors perceived Tokyo's fanciest district to be an exterritorial appendage to their YOKOHAMA.

Striking proof of this assertion is Yanagisawa's "Ginza gai" [53] (Ginza Boulevard), the only Tokyo tableau included in the trio's Yokohama collection:

March. Slightly past noon, the Ginza.  
Blossoming faces. Faces of candy-like charm.  
A wafting scent of light-green **chartreuse**. Sweet stickiness.  
What a lucid profile. Fruit juices. Lovely toys.

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<sup>75</sup> Kitahara Hakushû: "Ginza no ame" (Ginza Rain". In: Miyasu Hiroshi (ed.): *Ginza*, Tokyo, Shiseidô 1921, pp. 250–253.

<sup>76</sup> The Café Purantan was Ginza's first café; the French letters "Café Printemps" were soon replaced by Japanese transliteration (Seidensticker's translation, "Café Plantain" is incorrect; see *Low City, High City*, p. 1). The Chat Noire was the legendary gathering place of a group of Parisian artists who tried to keep the memory of Verlaine alive.

The laughing sun. Tinged smoke. Halting sandals.  
 Black eyes with a delicate touch of dust. Dainty  
 handkerchief, catching eyes and a trace of sweat.  
 Gentlemen emerging from the cigar store, smoke of a  
**Havana**. Dazzling gold. Smile-bearing glances.  
 Oh, skirt hems tousled by a sudden breeze.  
 “IT’S A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY”  
 A young student whistles, standing by the postcard store.  
**Emily Samunomu** and, ah, like a picture of roses: **Betty Compson**.<sup>77</sup>  
 Gentle somebody cuing from behind. His turning head.  
 There, a blossoming face. Face of candy-like charm.  
 March, Japan’s Ginza. What splendid weather, what beautiful spring.  
 Even more lovely: their twosome profile. Youthful spring. March.<sup>78</sup>

Evidently, Yanagisawa’s poetic treatment of Tokyo’s Ginza fits seamlessly into the luminous world of YOKOHAMA. As a possible challenge to “Ginza Rain,” he contests Hakushû’s morose imagery with his newly founded canon of exuberant spring, smiles, and sunlight. Under Yanagisawa’s pen, Ginza – just like Yokohama’s Water Street or Yamate Park – becomes another counterpart to Paul Fort’s Paris.

My investigation of the exoticist scene of late Meiji and Taishô Japan thus yields two generations of poets, both extensively writing on Yokohama and the Ginza. The Devotees of Pan, like Hakushû, Kinoshita, and the Yosanos, pioneered a France-bound exoticism by adopting the creative method of the early symbolists, while their self-assured disciples, like Yanagisawa Ken and his friends Kawaji Ryûkô and Saijô Yaso, introduced a more contemporary mood to the Japanese notion of the Exotic.<sup>79</sup> Their differences, however, are differences of degree, not of direction. Whether YOKOHAMA and GINZA are designed to evoke Verlaine’s Paris or Fort’s Paris, both point toward the same imaginary object; PARIS, Roland Barthes’ “Eiffel Tower” which can be inflated by the individual artist’s exoticist vision.

### Chinese Images of a Hedonistic Utopia: Tokyo, 1910–1923

In purely spatial terms, the exotic sphere of the Ginza was not more than a few blocks long. But the repercussions of the “Ginza mood” were felt far be-

<sup>77</sup> Betty Compson (1896–1974) is a leading American actress of the 19s, who first starred in Christie comedies in 1915; I was unable to ascertain the correct English spelling for Emily “Samunomu”.

<sup>78</sup> Yanagisawa Ken: “Ginza no kai” (Ginza Boulevard). In: Yanagisawa, Kumada, and Kitamura: *Kaikô*, pp. 21–23. When “Ginza Boulevard” was composed in 1917, “It’s a long way to Tipperary” was apparently the most popular foreign song in Japan; Seidensticker: *Low City, High City*, p. 269.

<sup>79</sup> All of the writers mentioned here composed poems about Ginza during the Taishô period.

yond its limited physical boundaries. Not only did other Japanese cities model their urban development after this prototype of modern architecture, but it was also the playground and preeminent subject of the first Chinese exoticists.

Most of the Chinese writers with a penchant for the Exotic had steeped themselves in the characteristic Ginza atmosphere of urban excitement, Civilization and Enlightenment, and in its literary representation by Japanese writers like Tanizaki. Based on this premise, my preceding analysis of the early Japanese exoticist scene goes beyond the delineation of an isolated local phenomenon. As we shall see, it sheds indispensable light on the aesthetic status quo which conditioned the development of Chinese exoticism.

But did the Ginza, to the Chinese pioneers of the Exotic, really grant a much more remarkable insight into outlandish urban scenery than the facade of Shanghai's foreign settlements? In order to answer this question, we have to take a glance at China's intellectual predicaments of that time. For various reasons, the exoticist exhilaration of many Chinese intellectuals was initially obstructed by a variety of ideological and formal impediments.

Japan was the closest "exotic" frontier for Chinese writers in quest of wondrous sights. As a result of the reform drive of the Meiji period, Japanese cities, however traditional they remained, had adopted more "modern" things than their counterparts on the Asian mainland; this was especially true for the Ginza. But more importantly, this Western-style spatiality had been introduced by the Japanese themselves, a fact that made it much easier for Chinese artists to indulge in its exotic allure.

Photographs taken in Shanghai between 1910 and 1923 already show the stately facade of the Bund – even today the most distinguished skyline in Asia. Sassoon House, for instance, the harbor front landmark housing the legendary Cathay Hotel (today's Peace Hotel), had been built in 1906. And contemporary writing like Zeng Pu's [54] (1872–1935) prolific novel, *Niehai hua* [55] *A Flower in an Ocean of Sin*, 1905, offers additional proof that Shanghai was a fairly modern – and thus exotic – city by the turn of the century. But China's most important window to the West strongly reminded the Chinese of the humiliating situation created by the unequal treaties. During the first quarter of the 20th century, Shanghai was predominantly a sore reminder of national disgrace rather than a catalyst for exoticist excitement.

The Western-style enclaves of Tokyo, however, could be commented upon freely. Since about 1903, large numbers of Chinese students travelled to Japan in order to acquire the secrets of their neighbor's affluence; an affluence that had been speedily brought about by the reforms of the Meiji period. Most of them lived and studied in Tokyo. Underlying the travelogues produced by these first Chinese adherents of modern Japan there is characteristically a tone of childlike marvel, a two-sided attitude of awe and apprehension toward the new-fangled things encountered.

"Dongjing zashi shi" [56] "Tokyo Miscellanea", 1904, published as "tea talk" by an anonymous author in *Zhejiang chao* [57] *Tides of Zhejiang*, the magazine for Zhejiang students abroad, is a typical example. In six poems and their



subsequent commentaries a self-declared Chinese “reformer” cautiously explores the institutions of Meiji Civilization: Ueno Park, the Tokyo Museum, Japanese university life, book stores, taverns, and a train ride to Yokohama.<sup>80</sup>

The student’s observations are rudimentary and riddled with prejudice. But just when Hakushû and Kinoshita were beginning their poetic exploration of Tokyo’s urban texture, Chinese images of the metropolis reached a more complex level of representation. In 1910, for instance, another student from Zhejiang re-kindled the “Tokyo Miscellanea” motif by publishing a lengthy series of poems under the same title. But while the earlier version was still heavily spiced with Confucian resentment against debauched aspects of modernity, the new rendition comprises an elated account of the city’s urban facets. Yu Mantuo [58] (1884–1939), one of the more obscure members of the distinguished poetry association *Nanshe* [59] Southern Society, reflects his fascination with various aspects of Tokyo life in seventy-three poetic vignettes, i.e., “exotic” motifs such as photography, make-up, Red Cross nurses, jewelry, cafés, automobiles, bicycles, or electric trams. Here is a glimpse into Yu’s perception of “modern” Tokyo:

Coffee is sold under pearl screens aslant,  
A rouged face as brazier, feather hairdo as shawl;  
When the night watch strikes four and the moonlight is bright  
Shadows of headgear bedeck sumptuous clothes.<sup>81</sup>

With a keen eye for the contemporary, the author records the institution of the Ginza café which was just about to develop into a fashion. In contrast to his fellow student who expressed a marked uneasiness about the Japanese practice of co-ed window shopping, Yu passes no judgement on the erotic aspect of the café enterprise. Even he, however, is far from implementing elements of form or imagery which would justify the attributes “modern” or “exoticist.” Yu’s poem is clearly dominated by conventional imagery: pearl screens (*zhulian*) [60], kingfisher feathers (*cui*) [61], or night watch (*geng*) [62] are key words from the canon of traditional Chinese poetry, evoking nostalgic scenes from the Late Song entertainment quarters rather than a modern phenomenon of exotic allure. From the pen of the Zhejiang poet, the French-style Ginza café thus emerges as a Chinese invention; an offspring of the traditional wine tavern by the shores of the author’s native West Lake.

Even a different angle of presentation, however, would not have eliminated the traditional flavor of Yu Mantuo’s prolific effort. Befitting a Chinese *literator* of his time, Yu’s tableaux of the Japanese capital are composed in strict adherence to the rules of the classical *lüshi* [63] regulated verse poem. Before the

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<sup>80</sup> See Tai Gong (pseudonym): “Dongjing zashi shi” (Tokyo Miscellanea), *Zhejiang chao*, 2, February, 1904, pp. 161–164; recently reprinted by Shanghai shudian.

<sup>81</sup> Yu Mantuo: *ibid.*, 43rd poem of this cycle. In: *Yu Mantuo Chen Bicen shichao*, ed. by Yu Feng. Shanghai, Xuelin 1983, p. 100.

radical reform of the written language took place in the wake of the May Fourth Movement, it was hardly possible for a Chinese writer to experiment with new, “exotic” forms of expression. Much more obviously than in the Japanese case, the development of exoticist writing in China is therefore tied to a concrete date. Although there are numerous accounts of “strange” or “foreign” things preceding the legitimization of creative vernacular in 1919, their form and content make them the offspring of genres which traditionally illustrated the world of the Supernatural and the Fantastic.

It was only the following generation of Chinese writers who explicitly indulged in the exotic mood of French symbolism, café ambience, and fin de siècle decadence. For example, Yu Dafu [64] (1896–1945), the famous sibling of Yu Mantuo, spent the years 1913–1921 in Tokyo and Nagoya, and consequently set his early vernacular short stories in Japan. His writings, usually topicalizing an erotically deprived “étranger’s” state of emotional confusion in the vein of the Japanese *shishōsetsu* [65] I-novel have earned him the reputation of a Wertherian romantic. The same controversial label was applied to the *Chuangzao she* [66] Creation Society, the avant-garde circle which Yu established together with a small group of Chinese students in Japan. Since much has already been written on the aesthetic convictions of Yu Dafu and the Creation Society, I intend to limit my focus to the group’s perception of the Exotic.

Tian Han [67] (1898–1968), in his later novel *Shanghai* [68] (1927), has left us a vivid account of the Creationists’ student life in Tokyo. Among brief portraits of thinly disguised figures from the contemporary Shanghai literary scene, Tian reminisces on his first meeting with Yu Dafu:

“Ke Han [Tian Han] and Yu Zhifu [Yu Dafu] had started their literary career during their student sojourn in Tokyo... They immediately became good friends who discussed Lafcadio Hearn and ERNEST DOWSON; DOWSON’s life made them think of the French decadents, the decadent poets’ indulgence in wine and women led to a discussion of the modern café mood, the café mood alerted them to their own ennui, and their ennui, in turn, made them think of a bar nearby where beef stew could be ordered; once they had arrived at the bar, they met a waitress that Zhifu was well acquainted with. This waitress was a woman of dazzling erotic appeal, with big, black eyes, a pair of red, voluptuous lips, soft, white hands and this intoxicating scent which flowed from her lush tangle of hair, this alluring aroma which emanated from her protruding bosom... And, ah, Zhifu dared to sit with her, dared to take her hand and to stroke her hair, even dared to slip his hand up her wide sleeves and caress her breasts.”<sup>82</sup>

When Tian Han and Yu Dafu first met each other at Tian’s Hongō dormitory in 1920, the “Ginza mood” had evidently spread beyond the Ginza boundaries and infiltrated other areas of Tokyo. Like their Japanese colleagues, the Creationists tried to utilize this progressively urbanizing landscape for a palpable

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<sup>82</sup> Tian Han: “Shanghai”. In: *Tian Han wenji*, 14 vols. Peking, Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1983–1987, vol. 14, pp. 124–125.

taste of the Exotic. As Tian Han's anecdote illustrates, the discussion of French decadent poets – presumably Baudelaire and Verlaine – and their lifestyle of “wine and women” led the animated interlocutors directly to a “wine tavern” where a compliant “woman” was waiting.

Tian's terse account suggests that the Creationists' method of celebrating the “exotic mood” is basically analogous to the Japanese trends defined above. There is the ardent discourse on foreign authors, particularly the heroes of the French fin de siècle, the café excursion, and life-sized romance – with an exotic female, no less, since the Japanese waitress was a foreigner from the perspective of the Chinese visitors. Significantly, as in Tanizaki's – or Baudelaire's – portraits of the “personified Other,” it is her “aroma” which most strikingly identifies the exotic mistress.

Yu Zhifu, the ennui-ridden protagonist of Yu Dafu's early short stories corroborates Tian's account of Chinese student life in urban Japan. In the novella “Fengling” [69] “Aeolian Bells”, 1922, for instance, the author's alter ego reflects on his “dissolute adventures” in the Café Sans Souci, an establishment adjacent to the university;<sup>83</sup> he then searches for English, French, and German publications at the Maruzen Bookstore, eagerly perusing the pages of the latest Verlaine biography by Harold Nicolson,<sup>84</sup> and Rémy de Gourmont's essays on decadence which had just been translated into English.<sup>85</sup>

Even the Zhifu of “Qiuliu” [70] “Autumn Willows”, 1922, who has already returned to China, nostalgically contemplates the tangible pleasures of Japanese cafés. While glancing at the waitress of a local restaurant, he recalled the passionate ambience of the cafés abroad:

“If this were a foreign [Japanese] café, I could pull this girl on my lap and snuggle up to her. From mouth to mouth we would pass each several glasses of wine, and I could fondle her everywhere. Ah, this reincarnation was a mistake, I should not have been born in China.”<sup>86</sup>

The fascination with the French-style café, or its Japanese version, is a recurrent feature among the writings published in the group's literary mouthpiece, *Chuangzao jikan* [71] *Creation Quarterly*. “Bihua” [72] “The Wall Painting”, 1922, Teng Gu's [73] (1901–1941) sketch of a neurasthenic Chinese art student who falls in love with his Japanese model, features yet another character who spends a good portion of his stay abroad in Tokyo cafés.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *Yu Dafu xiaoshuo ji*, 2 vols. Hangzhou, Zhejiang renmin 1982, vol. 1, p. 155; the original title was later changed to “Kongxu” (Ennui).

<sup>84</sup> See H.G. Nicolson: *Paul Verlaine*. London, Constable 1920.

<sup>85</sup> See Rémy de Gourmont: *Decadence and Other Essays on the Culture of Ideas*. Trans. W.A. Bradlev. London, Richards 1921.

<sup>86</sup> Yu Dafu: “Qiuliu” (Autumn Willows). In: *Yu Dafu xiaoshuo ji*, vol. 1, p. 303.

<sup>87</sup> See Teng Gu: “Bihua” (The Wall Painting). *Chuangzao jikan*, vol. 1, No. 3 (November 25, 1922), pp. 42–54. The magazine has been reprinted by Shanghai shudian in 1983.

The Chinese writer who most ardently absorbed Tokyo's exotic ambience was probably the young Tian Han. Chinese researchers have left the famous playwright's early years in Japan shrouded in convenient obscurity, so as not to scratch the revolutionary image of the eminent party model. Tian's Tokyo diary has never been reprinted, and some of his early essays were even excluded from the recent edition of *Collected Works of Tian Han*. More than merely illuminating the exoticist outlook of Chinese writers, a brief glance at these materials adds a colorful shade to the stalwart icon of a canonized left-wing writer.

Particularly *Qianwei zhi lu* [74] *On a Path of Roses*, 1922, Tian's daily notes taken in 1921, reveal a strong penchant for the exoticist vogues of contemporary Tokyo. In early October he mentioned reading *The French Impressionists*<sup>88</sup> – perhaps Yanagisawa Ken's recent synopsis of the subject? Later the same month, he visited Ginza's Café Paulista,<sup>89</sup> previously one of the gathering places of the Café Club where Nagai Kafû had once created a scandal by courting a waitress who later attempted to blackmail him. Tian also expressed open admiration for the harbingers of fin de siècle thought in Japan; for the symbolist poetess Yosano Akiko [75] (1878–1942), for instance,<sup>90</sup> or for the painter, poet, and novelist Satô Haruo [76] (1892–1964), whom he paid a respectful visit to on October 16, 1921.<sup>91</sup>

The cinematophile Satô apparently not only introduced Tian to his Japanese idol, Tanizaki Junichirô, but also initiated the young playwright's passion for “the moving pictures,” the urbane art form that was just making its debut at Ginza and Asakusa theaters. While Yu Dafu remembers having devoured “approximately 1,000 foreign works of fiction” during his student sojourn in Japan,<sup>92</sup> Tian Han once proudly confessed to his reputation as a “CINEMA FAN who watched more than 100 movies” in Tokyo.<sup>93</sup>

Although Tian Han was officially registered as a student of English at Tokyo Teacher's College, he showed a distinct predilection for French poetry and the environment of its procreation. Particularly during the years 1921–22, he immersed himself in the Francophile enthusiasm fostered by the Japanese symbolists. Late in 1921, he published a biography of Baudelaire in which he attested to a recent change in his literary interests:

“In the first issue of this magazine I once wrote on the 100th anniversary of the populist poet Whitman, and consequently, my own artistic thoughts inclined toward populism. Now, for about one year, my attention has radically turned to

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<sup>88</sup> Tian Han: *Qianwei zhi lu*, Shanghai, Taidong 1922, p. 8.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>92</sup> Yu Dafu: “Wuliunian lai chuangzao shenghuo de huigu” (Reflections on My Literary Life of the Last Five or Six Years). In: *Yu Dafu wenji*, 12 vols. Canton, Huacheng 1982–1984, vol. 7, p. 178; originally published in 1927.

<sup>93</sup> Tian Han: “Xuezi” (Shoes). In: *Tian Han sanwen ji*. Shanghai, Jindai shudian 1936, p. 103.

Allen Poe, Oscar Wilde, and Paul Verlaine,... and my recent creations are adopting a Parnassian style.”<sup>94</sup>

Earlier in the year, Tian had already translated Wilde’s *Salomé*, the one-act tragedy which, though authored by an Englishman, can be viewed as one of the representative pieces of artistic “décadence” in France. Written during the last years of 19th century Paris, in highly stylized French, *Salomé* was first performed at the capital’s Théâtre de l’Oeuvre in 1896. As related earlier, the play had already intrigued some of Tian’s Japanese colleagues when it was first shown at the Gaiety Theater in Yokohama.

Sometime in 1922, Tian Han attended a salon meeting in honor of the poet Verlaine at Ueno in Tokyo – possibly a Japanese emulation of the poetic gathering that, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the great decadent’s death, had been held at the Jardin du Luxembourg during the previous year. Since the early soirees of the Devotees of Pan, the poet of rain and autumn had become the symbolist movement’s most prominent representative in Japan. Shortly thereafter, Tian jolted the readers of the newly founded *Creation Quarterly* with an enthusiastic essay about Verlaine: “Poets of the Young China! You should get to know “Pauvre Lelian,” this pacesetter of DECADENT MODERNISME, this pioneer of SYMBOLISME.”<sup>95</sup>

Significantly, Tian’s account suggests a compelling link between the phenomenon ‘Verlaine’ and the locale of its genesis, Paris:

“If we take Verlaine to be the son of Paris, the Paris he saw was indeed a very beautiful mother... Her open plazas, her art galleries, her cafés where leisurely talks could be held, her secluded gardens where even birds do not enter, her Quartier Latin where poets intoxicate themselves with the bouquet of heavy wine, her bookstores stretching along the murmuring Seine, her placid MORGUE, her sacred and stately churches, her splendid theaters – there was no site that didn’t induce a glimmer of passionate affection in the eyes of her sons.”<sup>96</sup>

To further augment the Parisian flavor of his essay, Tian interlarded the text, in Latin letters, with a colorful array of lexical pictures that generally epitomize the atmosphere of the French capital: QUARTIER LATIN, AVENUE, ABSINTHE, SEINE, FETES GALANTES, etc. – verbal signifiers of the Exotic, which, assuming relief quality, stand out from the homogeneous flow of Chinese characters.

Though the Verlaine article further illustrates Tian Han’s literary preferences at the time, it does not account for what he had earlier called the “Parnassian

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<sup>94</sup> Tian Han: “E’mo shiren Botuolei’er de bainian ji” (Honoring the 100th Birth Anniversary of the Demonic Poet Baudelaire), *Shaonian Zhongguo*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (November 1, 1921), p. 3.

<sup>95</sup> Tian Han: “Kelian de Lüliyan – PAUVRE LELIAN” (Wretched Lelian), *Chuangzao jikan*, vol. 1, No. 2 (August 22, 1922), Section Pinglun, p. 3; “Pauvre Lelian” was an alias used by the aging Verlaine.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

tendency” of his own creative work. Most probably, this self-acclaimed membership in the circle of international symbolists refers to his youthful attempts at poetry, which were later garnered in the collection *Jianghu zhi chun* [77] *Edo Spring*, 1922. As the title suggests, Tian’s verse ponders Tokyo from much the same angle which his Japanese predecessors had assumed, i.e., the nostalgic perspective that had so markedly defined the verse of Kitahara Hakushû and Kinoshita Mokutarô. Just like the Devotees of Pan, Tian’s poetic eye searches for the relics of Edo behind the cacophonous facade of modern Tokyo. Here is a telling specimen from the collection, allusively entitled “Ginza wen shakuha-chi” [78] “On Hearing a Bamboo Flute at Ginza”:

Intense light  
 Poisonous colors  
 Stream of carts and horses  
 Mountains of people!  
 High collars beckoning the gentlemen  
 Western hairdos escorting the beauties  
 Right here on the Ginza:  
 Sounds of a bamboo flute, where do they come from?  
 Like a battered man’s lament  
 Like a gaffer’s sobs –  
 Amidst this noisy symphony:  
 Forlorn and ready to die.  
 Hey! Enduring restless wanderers’ feet  
 Unworthy of your elegy,  
 Try telling your grief to the wintry moon in the midnight sky  
 Or to the waters running beneath Kyôbashi Bridge.<sup>97</sup>

Tian’s Ginza poem subtly confirms the author’s obsession with Parisian atmospheres – here creatively transposed onto an Oriental backdrop. Just like the Devotees’ yearning for a vanished Edo had paralleled the French indulgence in an imaginary past, Tian’s evocations of the pre-industrialized state of the Japanese capital echo Verlaine’s melancholy memories of an euphonious Paris. His image of the “battered old man” is clearly a reference to “Pauvre Lelian,” Verlaine’s self-perception as a broken oldster who, at the verge of death, spends the last years of his life vagabonding through a rapidly mutating Paris.

Tian Han’s poetic style is marked by the juxtaposition of modern and traditional images and language patterns. The first word, “intense” (*qianglie*) [79], inevitably invokes the scenery of modern Tokyo. *Kyôretsu*, its Japanese prototype, occurs in Taishô literature as one of the most widely used verbal signifiers for the upbeat rhythm of modern life. Similarly, “poisonous colors” refers to the

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<sup>97</sup> Tian Han: “Ginza wen shakuha-chi” (On Hearing a Bamboo Flute at Ginza). In: *Tian Han wenji*, vol. 12, pp. 40–41.

abundance of artificial stimuli exhibited on the Ginza, such as eye-catching fashions or lavishly decorated show-windows. The evocation of contemporary excitement is contrasted by the introduction of two four-syllable idioms (*chengyu*) [80] – “stream of carts and horses” and “mountains of people” – which illustrate the dense commotion in the narrow alleys of Edo rather than the automobile packed Taishô boulevard. In the following stanza, Tian’s Ginza profile turns around to show her modern face again – the Tokyo dandy on a date, a theme that Yanagisawa had so elaborately treated in his “Ginza Boulevard.” The bamboo flute, finally, swings the balance between voguish and antiquated imagery back to the distant environs of a quasi-exotic past.

The lament for the days of bygone Edo, of course, is a fashionable pose. Tian Han, the “cinema fan,” was never opposed to the modernization of Tokyo. But like the work of his romantically inclined Japanese colleagues, his urban tableaux are not yet dominated by the hectic hammering of car engines or the glares of neon lights. Tian Han’s poetic metropolis is all “city within landscape,” a world where the Modern is not only imbued with the remnants of Edo, its immediate predecessor, but with spawns of a natural state found only in the legendary abysses of pristine antiquity.

“Yuchang de wuta” [81] “Dance at the Bath House” is one of the spot lights that Tian throws on the “mythical” chambers of Tokyo:

Into the realm of obscuring vapor  
Bounces a lively little girl!  
Her body not covered by a single stitch  
She waits for her daddy to enter the bath.  
And many a bather  
Throws smiles at her;  
Not a bit shameful  
She is only playful dance in the mist:  
Streaks of glossy dark hair  
Veil part of her velvety face.  
A gas light flickering in the steam  
Brightens her winding curves.  
Ah, exotic girl  
You’ve come to dip into these tepid waters!  
Let me – an exotic poet –  
Extol your stark-naked beauty!<sup>98</sup>

Like the newfangled pastime of sea-bathing, the bath house was among the Japanese institutions of high exotic allure for Chinese students. By choosing to celebrate the “winding curves” of an innocent young girl, however, Tian Han shows extreme caution to avoid being labeled a radical decadent. He strove to

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

be a Parnassian – a “lofty dancer” (*gaodaopai*) [82], as his Japanese colleagues had termed the movement’s followers – without the dismal *Weltanschauung* which usually characterizes Baudelaire’s dandy ideal.

Tian’s poetry is thus far from emulating either the *état sauvage* of a debauched humankind as defined in the *Fleurs du mal*, or the explicit sexuality which Yu Dafu’s protagonist experiences during a bath scene in “Ennui.” Tian emphasizes the naive, pristine qualities of the naked body. Very similar to the nudes of YOKOHAMA, his dancing girl reinstates the feeling of mythological ebullience in a modern, civilized world.

Not surprisingly, an inventory of Tian’s favorite reading materials during the period in question locates Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* right next to the works of Poe, Swinburne, Baudelaire, and Verlaine.<sup>99</sup> Like Yanagisawa and his peers’, Tian’s ideal notion of the poet’s “Parnasse” fuses the café existence of the prototypical Parisian artist and the Olympian spirit of Greek mythology into the lofty scenario of his own exotic world.

The aesthetically transposed fascination with the nude body, in correlation with a “foreign” setting, is a frequently reappearing motif in Chinese accounts of the Exotic. Mu Mutian [83] (1900–1971), one of Tian’s fellow Creationists, once broached this subject in a more experimental manner:

*Resurrection Day*  
(Poem en prose)

The sound of Sunday bells. The priest ascends to the pulpit, heaves a voluminous book, and addresses the audience: “We will read John 20:1.” It is the day of the Lord’s resurrection.

The priest says: “The Lord has given his life for us, and for us he has been restored to life; the Bible offers proof, alert eyes will see.”

The audience listens in awed silence; “Amen!” here and there.

The priest opens the Bible, his wooden gaze roams the audience; there are no letters on the first page, he sees, only a picture of a naked girl nailed to the cross.

The priest closes the Bible and prays to God for forgiveness.

The priest, after finishing his prayer, opens the second page; but again, there are no letters, only the picture of a naked boy, clasping the naked body of a dead girl in his arms.

The priest closes the Bible and prays to God for forgiveness.

The priest, after finishing his prayer, opens the third page; yet again, there are no letters, only the picture of a naked boy, kissing the naked girl who has now been resurrected.

The priest says: “Amen!” He glares at the audience.

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<sup>99</sup> Tian Han: *Qiangwei zhi lu*, p. 13; diary entry is dated October 11, 1921.



The parishioners embrace and kiss each other; boys clasping girls;

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Another “Amen!” by the priest.

From afar ring the sounds of angelic psalms; the heavens rain flowers; butterflies dance atop the parishioners’ heads; the pack of people envisions a naked girl, locked in tight embrace with a naked boy, sitting on the Lotus Throne: “I just now have been resurrected,” her smiling ruby cheeks declare.<sup>100</sup>

Once again, the sphere of the foreign is represented by a combination of the exotic signifiers CHURCH and NUDITY. Corroborating the assumption about the “erotic” crucifixes of the Taishō painter Takehisa Yumeji, the accessories of Christianity – in Mu’s case the Bible – stand for a notion of the Exotic that is highly sensually charged. In the eyes of the Chinese writer abroad, the awe for the “pure erotic project” of Tokyo everyday life, as Roland Barthes once worded his over-generalization of Japanese culture,<sup>101</sup> blended with a mythologically transfigured worship of the nude body and yielded the sensuous amalgam of the exotic mood. *Nude and Steamship*, the cover illustration for the first issue of *Creation Quarterly* is thus a suitable emblem for the Chinese idea of exotic themes.

Another Chinese author who, from yet another angle, utilizes the exotic effect of Christian spatiality in Japan is the poet Feng Naichao [84] (1901–1983). Feng, like Tian Han a prominent member of the Creation Society, had actually grown up in Yokohama and seen its exotic scenery unfold just when Yanagisawa Ken and his friends created their poetic picture-book of the harbor town. In 1928, his anthology *Hongsha deng* [85] *The Red Gauze Lantern* still employs familiar remnants from the stock of Yokohama images. Different from his Japanese predecessors, however, Feng declares an anonymous “atmosphere” his exotic protagonist and renders the famous tower of the city’s Catholic Church, for instance, an unidentified entity; an image that remains situated in symbolist no-man’s-land unless the reader happens to be informed about the author’s biography:

Mist misty misty mist  
Street corners Falling leaves Arch-headed street lamps  
People passing Quivering landscape  
Cars passing Speckled tableau  
SANTA MARIA tiptoes by  
As woeful ladies undo their wide coats  
Winter Dark winter is here  
With fatalist gloom and ruthless grumble

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<sup>100</sup> Mu Mutian: “Fuhuori” (Resurrection Day), *Chuangzao jikan*, vol. 1, No. 3 (September 14, 1921), section Chuangzuo, pp. 22–23.

<sup>101</sup> R. Barthes: *The Empire of Signs*. Trans. R. Howard. New York, Hill and Wang 1987, p. 10.

The church tower renounces the suffering of life  
Parnassian style its cross soars to the highest of heavens  
HOLY NIGHT HOLY NIGHT  
ALL IS CALM ALL IS BRIGHT  
Bright as paradise sparkles the church  
Night colors settle on street corners like ink.<sup>102</sup>

In sum, the Chinese concept of the Exotic has two major roots in Japan. First, there is the aesthetic prototype of the “exotic mood” as preconceived by Japanese artists during the Late Meiji and Taishō periods. And secondly, there is the spatiality of Japan, which as the most readily accessible stretch of foreign soil, was established in Chinese writings as a sort of second hand exotic sphere. Clearly, to a large segment of the Chinese student populace in Tokyo, ‘Abroad’ originally meant Europe or the United States. It was mostly for financial reasons that they eventually enrolled at an institution in their progressive neighboring country.

Tian Han once explicitly stated that student life in Japan was only a surrogate for his original dream of traveling to Europe.<sup>103</sup> He compensated for his unfulfilled aspiration by poetically transforming Japan into visions of European land- and cityscape. The Japanese metropolis, or certain urbane parts thereof, became his Paris, and the rustic outskirts of Tokyo inspired images of “first degree” exotic scenery: “When we left the forest there was only a glistening white,” reads one of his travelogues, “just as if we were entering the boundless, snow-covered wilderness of Siberia; or as if we were actors in a movie shot in Alaska; a scene that made us long for the drifting life of the perpetual *étranger* like the gypsies lead it.”<sup>104</sup>

The same feature applies to the early prose of Yu Dafu. In the short story “Nanqian” [86] “Moving South”, 1921, the protagonist leaves Tokyo for a vacation on a rural peninsula. Yu describes the Japanese countryside in terms of the bucolic domains of Southern France:

“This peninsula might not exactly display the radiant and enchanting scenery of the boot-shaped island in the Mediterranean, but the billowing waves, the azure sky, the mild air, the rolling hills, the fishing nets along the shores, and the peasants plowing the countryside, altogether bestow on this place an atmosphere akin to the shores of Southern Europe and let the foreign traveler forget

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<sup>102</sup> Feng Naichao: “Suimu de ANDANTE” (Year’s End Andante). In: *Hongsha deng*. Shanghai, Chuangzao she 1928; reprinted in Sun Yushi (ed.): *Xiangzhengpai shixuan*. Peking, Renmin wenxue 1986, p. 219. More on Feng Naichao, see M. Gálik: *Milestones in Sino-Western Literary Confrontation, 1898–1979*. Bratislava-Wiesbaden, Veda-Otto Harrasowitz 1986, pp. 135–151.

<sup>103</sup> Tian Han: “Lixiang de ziwei” (The Taste of Leaving Home). In: Xiao Mei (ed.): *Tian Han chuanguo xuan*. Shanghai, Fangu 1936, p. 122.

<sup>104</sup> Tian Han: “Baimei zhi yuan de neiwai” (Around the White Plum Garden). In: *Tian Han sanwen ji*, p. 20.

that he is roaming extraneous terrain. In English one would call this region a HOSPITABLE, INVITING DREAM LAND OF THE ROMANTIC AGE.”<sup>105</sup>

It appears that the Chinese search for the Exotic went beyond the sphere of the strictly urban. The Japanese countryside was also used to draw visionary bridges to an idealized DREAM LAND, which was again associated with France or other cradles of Latin culture. Even though Chinese students in Japan generally understood little French, most of them adhered to the quixotic paradigm of the French *artiste*. Cheng Fangwu [87] (1897–1984), the English and German specialist among the Creationists, intended to name his first short story “Nouvel an et l'étranger” before he finally settled for the Chinese equivalent “Yige liulangren de xinnian” [88]. And “Muxi” [89] (Sweet-Scented Osmanthus), maiden work of his colleague Tao Jingsun [90] (1897–1952), was originally published under the heading “Croire en destinée” (sic). Just like the creators of YOKOHAMA and the Ginza mood, the Chinese avant-garde in Japan compressed their multi-faceted visions of the Exotic into the representative emblem of FRANCE, the utopian land of wine, women, and poetry.

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<sup>105</sup> Yu Dafu: “Nanqian” (Moving South). In: *Yu Dafu xiaoshuo ji*, vol. 1, p. 51.

1. 異國情調
2. 志怪
3. 木下木<sub>よ</sub>太郎
4. 浮世畫
5. 現代時
6. 北村初雄
7. 五歳と春
8. 海港
9. 柳澤健
10. 熊田精華
11. 南蠻
12. 邪宗門
13. 北原白秋
14. 竹久夢二
15. 谷崎潤一郎
16. ダンス物語
17. 井上立<sub>り</sub>太郎
18. 港の人人
19. 茶巫屋
20. 異人娘
21. 痴人の愛
22. 印象派の畫家
23. 海水浴
24. 古代頌
25. 續古代頌
26. 凳張竹風
27. 果樹園
28. 坪内逍遙
29. 北村<sub>たか</sub>谷
30. 芥川龍之介
31. 異國
32. 都會
33. 現代佛蘭西詩集
34. 上田敏
35. 永井荷風
36. 與謝野寬
37. 堀<sub>ほり</sub>口大學
38. 木露風
39. 島崎藤村
40. 西條八十
41. 川路柳虹
42. 日夏耿之介
43. 都會情調
44. 屋上庭園
45. パンの會
46. 岩村透
47. パリの<sub>さ</sub>藝術學生
48. フランス物語
49. 銀座女
50. 菊池寬
51. 新居格
52. 小川未明
53. 銀座街
54. 曾朴
55. 孽海花
56. 東京雜事詩
57. 浙江潮
58. 郁曼陀
59. 南社
60. 竹廉
61. 翠
62. 更
63. 律詩
64. 郁達夫
65. 私小説
66. 創造社
67. 田漢
68. 上海
69. 風鈴
70. 秋柳
71. 創造季刊
72. 壁畫
73. 藤古
74. 薔薇之路
75. 謝野晶子
76. 佐騰春夫
77. 江戸之春
78. 銀座聞
79. 強烈
80. 成語
81. 浴場的舞蹈
82. 高蹈派
83. 穆木天
84. 馮乃超
85. 紅紗燈
86. 南遷
87. 成方吾
88. 一個流浪人的新年
89. 木樨
90. 陶晶孫