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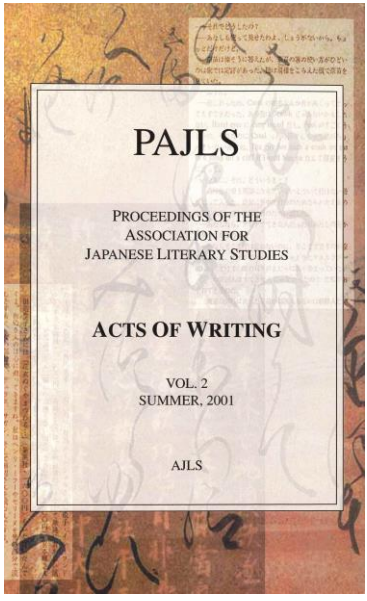

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ANZAI FUYUE'S EMPIRE OF SIGNS: JAPANESE POETRY IN MANCHURIA

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> If I want to imagine a fictive nation, I can give it an invented name, treat it declaratively as a novelistic object, create a new Garabagne, so as to comprise no real country by my fantasy (though it is that fantasy itself I comprise by the signs of literature). I can also—though in no way claiming to represent or analyze reality itself (these being the major gestures of Western discourse)— isolate somewhere in the world *(faraway)* a certain number of features (a term employed in linguistics), and out of these features deliberately form a system. It is this system which I shall call: Japan.[1]

While the title of my paper derives from the fantastic system of signs Roland Barthes thus imperiously declared "Japan," the subject is a body of twentieth-century poetry which invokes a fictive territory beyond Japan, though it is written in Japanese by a native of that country. The author, known by the pen name Anzai Fuyue, spent his most creative years in the colonial territory of Manchuria. His writing, with a modernist sensibility and a voracious appetite for foreign vocabulary, stretches the territory of his native tongue. It is the relationship between the linguistic and imaginative territory of Anzai's poetry and the historical fact of Japanese Imperialism that I will briefly consider here.

In 1920 at the age of twenty-two, Anzai Katsu moved with his father, a former educator and government bureaucrat turned businessman, to Dalian, a port city comprising the southeastern terminus of a corridor of land administrated by the South Manchuria Railway Company, the enterprise at the heart of Japanese Imperialist ambitions in Northeast China. The next year he secured a position at the South

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[1] Barthes, 3.

Manchuria Railway Company, but, after only a few months at work, he was hospitalized for a severe infection in his knee, seemingly brought on by the harsh continental climate, for which his right leg was amputated.[2]

After the amputation, Anzai abandoned his career with the South Manchuria Railway Company and devoted himself solely to the composition of poetry, frequently employing the pen name of Anzai Fuyue. In the mid 1920's, Anzai Fuyue's poetry began to attract attention not only among the Japanese community in Manchuria but in the home territories as well. In 1924, Anzai and three others founded the poetry journal *A*, which Anzai would edit for the next four years from his home in Dalian. In 1928, Anzai and another *A* co-founder, Kitagawa Fuyuhiko, went on to become founding members of *Shi to shiron (Poetry and Poetics)*, the premier modernist literary journal of the prewar period. Through their poetic and critical contributions to *A* and *Shi to shiron*, Anzai and Kitagawa championed two distinctive literary forms, the *tanshi* or short poem and the so-called *shin sanbunshi*, or new prose poem. Thus Anzai played a major role in the development of modern Japanese poetry from his geographical position on the *gaichi*, or colonial periphery of Japan.

Anzai's poetry is especially noteworthy for its distinctive approach to language that, while eschewing the Futurist-derived experimentation with expressive typesetting of some contemporary poets, nevertheless places a high degree of focus on the graphic dimension of modern printed poetry. In particular, Anzai's poetry employs an extraordinary range of unusual *kanji*, including continental toponyms and words from both classical and contemporary Chinese sources seldom found in Japanese texts.[3] These *kanji* are frequently glossed with *rubi* offering imaginative colloquial Japanese readings for the characters, and carefully mixed with *hiragana* and equally erudite Western loanwords in *katakana* and *rômaji*.[4]

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[2] For biographical information on Anzai, see Myochin.

For an extensive discussion of Anzai's use of Chinese vocabulary, see Tokami.

[4] While Anzai's poetry, and particularly his development of the *tanshi*

If Roland Barthes called the symbolic system created through writing *L'empire des Signes* "Japan," what might we call the unique realm of linguistic signs formed in Anzai Fuyue's poetry? Perhaps, following the title of the journal that Anzai co-founded, named, and edited from his home in Dalian, we could refer to this realm as "A." In the passage cited above, Barthes claims to create a purely fictive symbolic system, yet then ironically designates this system with the name of a historical and geographic entity as real as any, whose artifacts he proceeds to willfully explicate in his book. Expanding on this strategy, he writes, "I am not lovingly gazing toward an Oriental essence—to me the Orient is a matter of indifference, merely providing a reserve of features whose manipulation—whose invented interplay—allows me to 'entertain' an unheard-of symbolic system, one altogether detached from our own."[5] In his very words of denial, Barthes acknowledges and implicitly criticizes the historic discourse on the Orient—which has been more a projection of Western desire than of any factual reality—while he knowingly indulges in the same discursive impulse.[6]

Although Anzai's historical position is entirely different from that of the touristic French theorist, I would argue that his choice of "A" (亜) for the title of his poetry journal relies on a similar play of ambivalence and irony. Isolating the first character of the *kanji* compound *ajia* (亜細亜), Anzai's title seems to claim, in an Imperial

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(short poem) form, have frequently been discussed in terms of the similarities to and differences from haiku, his poetry and poetic persona(e) should also be considered in relationship to Edo and Meiji varieties of language play in the *différance* of *wa* (native vocabulary) and *kan* (Chinese-derived vocabulary) in *wakan konkôbun*, as well as to the production of *kanshi*, or poetry in Chinese, and the adaptation of a *bunjin* or Sinophilic literatus persona which often accompanied this poetic production. On Edo-period language play, see Jones.

[5] Barthes, 3.

[6] My discussion of Orientalism here and below is indebted to Edward Said's work of the same name. David Pollack has discussed Barthes and Orientalism in his *Reading Against Culture: Ideology and Narrative in the Japanese Novel*, 12-38. Stefan Tanaka has explored Orientalist tropes in the relationship between Japan and China in *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History.*

gesture, the entirety of the Asian continent for the Japanese poet. Yet this ambitious signification seems ready to dissolve into the smallest fragment, the simplest human utterance, "a." The name *ajia*, which at the time of Anzai's journal played a central role in Japanese Imperialist discourse, is a geographical entity reflecting a classical European worldview, a geographical imaginary which was entirely foreign to Chinese or Japanese geographical conceptions before the modern era. It was Jesuit cartographers in the seventeenth century who transliterated the Latin word into Chinese characters, choosing for the first syllable a character whose meaning is literally "secondary," as in the compound *aryû*, second rate or imitative.[7] The ambiguities and ironies of this etymology, together with the graphic qualities of the character itself, are all in play in Anzai's choice of title. This monosyllabic journal title thus provides a window into the complex linguistic sensibility of Anzai's poetry.

By far the best-known of Anzai's works is a short poem of a mere nineteen characters entitled "Haru," found in his first poetry collection *Gunkan Mari* [*rubi* are in parentheses]:

春
てふてふが一匹韃靼海峡を渡って行った。[8]

Anzai's poems ceaselessly draw our attention to written language: in this case, the orthographic contrast between the linear *kana* of てふてふ, and the dense *kanji* 韃靼海峡. Many of Anzai's poems, including this one, employ toponyms to achieve their effect; here, a place name referring to the Straits between Sakhalin and the Asian mainland, derived from a Chinese word for northern nomadic tribes.[9]

In fact, not only unusual and exotic toponyms, but also maps

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[7] Higuchi, 153.

[8] Anzai, 47. See postscript for English translations of the poems cited. Several of Anzai's poems have been translated in Dennis Keene's *The Modern Japanese Prose Poem: An Anthology of Six Poets*.

[9] For a recent study of the history of place names in Northeast China, see Elliott.

themselves make frequent appearances in Anzai's poetry. In "Dattan kaikyô to chô," a poem published years later as a fantasia on the images of the by then well-known "Haru," the map becomes an explicit element:

> 韃靼海峡と蝶
> 木の椅子に膝を組んで銃口を鼻にする。蒼（あを）い脳髄で嗅ぐ煙硝の匂が、私を内部立体の世界へ導いた。
>
> 私を乗せた俥（くるま）は公園に沿うて坂を登つていつた。曇天の下でメリイゴオランドが将（まさ）に出発しようとして、馬は革製の耳を揃（そろ）へてゐた。しかし私を乗せた俥は、この時もう曇天を堕して坂を登り尽してゐた。
>
> 私は遊離された進行に同意する。
>
> 彼女は目を眠（つむ）つてゐた。壁に垂れた地図に横顔をあてて。彼女の肩を辷（すべ）つて青褪めた韃靼（だったん）海峡が肩掛のやうに流れてゐた。
> 流れる彼女の眸子（まなざし）はいつも慍（いか）つてゐる。
> 併し私は気にしない。
> 私は構はずレツスンをとる。
> レツスンをとるために歩きまはる。
> 歩きまはるために、私はたちどまる。さういふ私を彼女は始めて笑ふのだ。
>
> 微笑がいきなり弾道を誘致した。弾道が彼女を海峡に縫いつけた。
> 次の瞬間、彼女の組織が解体するだらう。穿たれたホールから海峡が落下奔騰するだらう。その氾濫の中で如何にして自分は、自分自身を収容すべきであらうか。
>
> 私は決意した。
> 銃の安全装置を解（はづ）す音は田舎駅の改札に似てゐる。
> 銃を擬して、私はピツタリと彼女をマークした。

すると一匹の蝶がきて静に銃口を覆うた。[10]

The intricate "Dattan kaikyô to chô," more so than the pithy "Haru," illustrates a number of important elements in Anzai's poetry, including the theme of the map and the invocation of a decadent and sadomasochistic eroticism. The motifs of the butterfly, gun, map, and woman are combined to suggest a private reenactment of global seductions and violence. The image of a disintegrating body flooded with the water from a map of empire is particularly striking given the poem's publication context in a 1943 anthology, at the height of Japan's Asia-Pacific War. However, while we might be tempted to identify a disintegrating private body with a disintegrating political body, the poem's very formalism, holding multiple linguistic and imagistic elements in an complex equilibrium, seems to set the poem off as a closed system, and pleads against any overtly political reading. Indeed, this reworking of political tropes into a kind of private linguistic theater is typical of Anzai's strategies of poetic depoliticization.

While the polished language of "Dattan kaikyô to chô" reveals careful attention to lexical and orthographic choices, the graphic element in this poem is foregrounded to a lesser extent than in "Haru" or Anzai's many other excursions into linguistic exoticism. For another example of a poem which foregrounds orthographic contrast, we can turn to the short poem "Banshun," found in Anzai's first poetry collection.

晩春
街衢（まち）は病熱（ねつ）に魘されてゐる
pagoda

どこまでゆけばあの下に出られるか。[11]

Each of the three lines which form the body of this poem highlights a

[10] Anzai, 173-74.

[11] *Ibid.*, 85.

different orthography: the first line uses two Chinese compounds, which would normally be read *gaiku* and *byônetsu* but are glossed with the more colloquial *machi* and *netsu,* followed by the rather literary predicate *unasarete iru,* also incorporating a dense, multi-stroke *kanji* character. The second line, obviously, is English written in *rômaji* or alphabetic letters, and the final line is a thoroughly colloquial phrase employing only two relatively inconspicuous *kanji.*

The first line of "Banshun" evokes dense streets in a city caught in an epidemic. From the "pagoda" of the second line we can infer that this is an East Asian city. Although the exact location is not given, we might imagine it is Chinese, given the recurrence of continental settings in Anzai's poetry and the contemporary trope of China as the "sick man of Asia," a trope as prevalent in Japan as it was in the West.[12] Ironically, the most identifiably "Oriental" element in the poem, the pagoda, is written in *romaji.* This orthographic juxtaposition raises several questions. Is the speaker of the third line attempting to reach the pagoda by consulting an English-language map? Or has his consciousness, his internal map, been so colonized by Orientalist modes of viewing and signification that this "traditional" building is identified with a Western signifier? Is the speaker seeking out a religious complex as a sanctuary from the epidemic? Or, more likely, is he blithely ignoring the epidemic as he searches for the pagoda on a touristic excursion? In any case, it is clear that the poem's gentle irony relies on the larger ironies of an internalized Orientalism.

In "Futatsu no kawa no aida," a poem from his second poetry collection, Anzai employs a similar orthographic technique while perversely resuscitating the hoary archeological theme of "civilization arising between two rivers."

二つの河の間
　私どもの亜細亜では、最初の床を、二つの河の間にとるのです

　印度では、*Vyomaganga* の下で、*Ganges*

[12] Fogel, 66-125.

の上で。支那では、*Kiang* と *Ho*
にさしはさまれて。蒙古では、流れる沙の面紗と沙の面
紗を被いだ流に匿されて。朝鮮では、閨房にある河～*Jor*
dan の水に沃ぎあうて。..... [13]

This poem follows a predictable pattern of increasing poetic abstraction until it reaches the sexually suggestive final sentence. (The eroticism of this final line is intensified by the use of a character for *sosogu* (to pour) which is employed in compounds such as *hiyoku suru* (fertilize) and *yokujaku* (nubile beauty)). The second sentence of the second paragraph echoes "Banshun"'s alienation from the Chinese cultural sphere produced by Orientalist knowledge in applying *romaji* to Chinese toponyms. Indeed, the linguistic, geographic, and metaphoric territory inscribed in this poem encompasses the full scope of the Orientalist/Imperialist erotic gaze, from the Holy Lands to India to Inner Asia and the Far East—lands which are subtly but unmistakably sexualized as female bodies. The speaking subject of the poem lays claim to this Orientalist imagination by the paradoxical identification of himself as an "Oriental" in the first line, which, by the phrase "*watakushidomo no ajia de wa*," grandly asserts a common speaking identity with such manifestly diverse and geographically remote peoples as Indians, Mongolians, Koreans, and Japanese. It is nevertheless telling that it is Korea, the territory most thoroughly and brutally colonized by the Japanese, which is the site of ultimate erotic plenitude in the poem's knowing fantasy of imaginative travel.

As poems such as "Banshun" and "Futatsu no kawa no aida" indicate, Anzai frequently relies on an adoption of an Orientalist persona to achieve his idiosyncratic poetic of modernist irony. This strategy is most fully realized in the lengthy prose poems of his third poetry collection, such as "Ikaru kawa,"[14] which tells of a railway surveying crew lost in a sandstorm in the Gobi Desert, or "Gisô yôkan," which describes the results of an archeological survey of the eponymous lost

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[13] Anzai, 112-13.

[14] *Ibid.*, 129-130.

city in the Sinkiang region of Central Asia, whose name is not to be found "in the most detailed maps stored in the any of the royal libraries of the earth."[15] In the poem "Shôbai teki," the poet likens himself to his former schoolmate, an antique dealer in search of "curios" in China; again the word "Curio" appears symptomatically in *rômaji*.[16] Later in his career, Anzai returned to the archeological metaphor, and described his role as a poet as an "excavator of dead words." Thus the Orientalist persona appears in the several guises of surveyor, archeologist, linguist, corrupt colonial administrator, tourist, curio collector, and armchair traveller.

Indeed we might conclude that, in the context of the centuries-old poetic engagement between Japan and China, Anzai systematically replaces the poetic voice of the *bunjin*—the *wenren* or literatus who dominates Sinophilic poetic practice from the Tokugawa through the Meiji periods—with that of the Orientalist. Both the *bunjin* and the Orientalist define themselves through a relationship to a cultural Other who is ultimately a fantastic projection. Yet while the *bunjin*'s attitude is fundamentally one of empathy and emulation, the Orientalist relationship to the Other is one of mastery—the subject/object relationship of knower and known, possessor and possessed. Here we are reminded of Anzai's own brief employment at the South Manchuria Railway Company, whose research wing was at the forefront of the production of knowledge of the colonial Other in the service of the Japanese Empire.

It should be stressed, however, that Anzai's adoption of the Orientalist persona is by no means naïve, but rather this persona is put to the service of a poetics of dry wit, irony, and a knowing indulgence of exoticism. The difficult language and arcane geographic and academic references create a gamelike arena between poet and reader, testing the reader's ability to unlock the playful ironies behind the poem's conspicuous erudition. Nevertheless, the irony of Anzai's poetry is predicated on the larger historical irony of a country which becomes a colonizer in response to the threat of European colonialism, of a country which comes to view itself and its neighbors through the prism of

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[15] *Ibid.*, 131.

[16] *Ibid.*, 114.

European Imperialist fantasies and structures of knowledge. The edge to Anzai's seemingly gentle irony springs from the cruelty of this underlying historical irony. Here we should take note of Kawamura Minato's related suggestion that the aesthetic of sadism and sexual perversion which comprises another aspect of Anzai's poetry can be read as an oblique reflection of the everyday cruelty and perversity of the colonial situation which Anzai witnessed first-hand in Dalian.[17]

While Anzai's poetry may present an attentive reader with a poetic microcosm or facsimile of Japanese Imperialism, a facsimile that may reveal both the irony and the violence of Japan's historical position, it nevertheless remains a poetic artifact presented for aesthetic edification. Indeed, the ironic register which dominates Anzai's poetry posits a complicity of knowledge and position between poet and reader, since the reader must be in an analogous epistemological position to the poet in order to comprehend the ironic reference. Hence a poetics of irony is fundamentally antithetical to a poetics of fissure, opposition, or activism. Anzai's aesthetic and political position therefore differs sharply from that of his associate Kitagawa Fuyuhiko, who, together with the witty formalism associated with the *A* school, blended into his poetry equal parts surrealist shock and anti-imperialist invective.[18]

What, then, is the status of Anzai Fuyue's empire of signs in the post-Imperialist era? Anzai's position in literary history is an ambiguous one, at once foundational and marginal. On the one hand, through his role as editor of *A* and founding member of *Shi to shiron,* Anzai occupies a solid position at the stem of the genealogy which leads through prewar modernism and into the postwar *gendaishi,* or contemporary poem. On the other hand, Anzai's linguistically forbidding and fetishizing poetry, so firmly rooted in its own Imperialist historical moment, has come to represent a certain dead end. Anzai's single representative poem "Haru" has been pinned to the pages of countless literary histories like an exotic lepidopteral species, presumed to be extinct.

It seems likely, however, that given the current revival of

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[17] Kawamura 1990, 66-68.

[18] For a discussion of Kitagawa's formal approach and status as critic of Japanese imperialism, see Gardner.

interest in Manchuria and in the literatures of Japanese imperialism, a reexamination of Anzai's work will be undertaken. One hopes that such a reexamination will feature a more careful attention to the complex and ironic relationship between Anzai's works and Imperialist and Orientalist regimes of knowledge.[19] Indeed, such an investigation might even conclude that the ambiguity of Anzai's poetic legacy, at once marginal and foundational, is the underexamined legacy of Empire itself.

POSTSCRIPT: TRANSLATIONS OF POEMS CITED

Spring
A single butterfly crossed over the Tartar Straits.

Tartar Straits and Butterfly

Crossing my legs on the wooden chair, I put the gun muzzle to my nose. The smell of gunpowder sniffed by my pale brains led me towards a world of internal forms.

The rickshaw carried me up the slope along the park. Beneath the overcast sky, a merry-go-round seemed about to embark, the leather ears of its horses in line. However, my rickshaw by this time had already descended from the overcast, and had finished climbing the slope.

I'm in agreement with the disengaged procession.

Her eyes were shut in sleep. With a map hanging loose from the wall pressed against the side of her face. Slipping across her shoulder, the faded Tartar Straits flowed down like a shawl.

There was always a resentful fire in the flow of her gaze.

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[19] Leading examples of the revival of interest in Manchuria and literatures of Japanese colonialism include Kawamura Minato's *Manshû hôkai: 'Daitôa bungaku' to sakkatachi* and Louise Young's *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism.*

But I never paid it any mind.

Heedlessly, I gave her her lessons.

Trying to give her her lessons, I would strut around.

Trying to strut around, I would stand still. Seeing me like this, she would smile for the first time.

The smile suddenly enticed a bullet trajectory.

The bullet trajectory stitched her to the Straits.

In the next instant, her structure will undoubtedly disintegrate. The Straits will plummet and boom from the burrowed hole. How should one accommodate oneself amidst this flood?

I made my decision.

The sound of the safety releasing on the gun resembled the ticket-puncher in a country train station.

Aiming the gun, I marked her with exactitude.

At this moment, a single butterfly appeared, and silently covered the muzzle of the gun.

Late Spring
The streets are gripped by the cauchemar of fever
pagoda

How do we get out to under there?

Between two rivers

We in Asia have always taken our first bed between two rivers.

In India, below the *Vyomaganga* and above the *Ganges*. In China, squeezed between the *Kiang* and *Ho*. In Mongolia, sheltered by the drifts, covered with flowing veil of sand and veil of sand. In Korea, bathed in the waters of the bed-chamber's river—the *Jordan*. .....

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