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Publication Details
Mackie, V. C. 2011, 'Tales of the City', Japanese Studies, vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 299-304.

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Publisher: Routledge
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Japanese Studies
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjst20

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Available online: 09 Dec 2011

To cite this article: Vera Mackie (2011): Tales of the City, Japanese Studies, 31:3, 299-304

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10371397.2011.619175

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Japanese Studies, Vol. 31, No. 3, December 2011

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

INTRODUCTION

Tales of the City

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Every day millions of people pass through Shinjuku Station, the massive transport hub in Western Tokyo, transferring between public and private railways, subways and bus lines. In the underground passageway near the western exit is a ten-metre-wide acrylic sculpture, known as 'Shinjuku no Me'/'L'Oeil de Shinjuku' (The Eye of Shinjuku). This gigantic eye, set into the wall, has looked out over the commuters since some time in 1969. Most people just walk past the sculpture without paying much attention on their way to the high-rise buildings just outside the western exit, or on their way to the nearby bus terminus. The 'Eye' is also, however, a convenient landmark for meeting friends. It can be difficult to find people in the largest railway station in the world.

Shinjuku Station has for some years been the site of conflict over the use of public space. For decades, homeless people sought shelter in the warmth of its underground passages. The Tokyo Metropolitan government, however, has made repeated attempts to banish the homeless from the station. In campaigns against the Tokyo government's anti-homeless policies, the 'Eye' has also served as a convenient assembly point for demonstrators.

Sculptor Miyashita Yoshiko has reflected on the inspiration for the 'Eye'. It seems that she created the work in a spirit of optimism.

> How to express the boundless overflowing of energy that is this monster [Shinjuku]. . .? That's it! An eye which looks at the passing of time, the changes in thought, every part of the contemporary age . . . an eye which will communicate history to the twenty-first century . . . Maybe it is an eye which gazes far out into space. I thought that an eye like this would be just right for the Subaru Building, the linchpin of the Shinjuku Subcentre [*fuku-toshin*].[1]

Miyashita challenges the viewer to 'stand in front of the eye, full of confidence, and wink' at it.[2] Critic Takiguchi Shūzō (1903–1979), in his appreciation of Miyashita's sculpture, figured the underground passageway as a womb, and presented the paradoxical image of the 'pupil of the eye inside the womb' (*tainai no hitomi*).[3] For

[1]Miyashita, 'Shinjuku no Me'.
[2]Ibid.
[3]In his appreciation of the 'Eye', Takiguchi reflects on the history of Shinjuku from one of the final stations on the Tōkaidō highway, to a major railway junction, and now the portal to a new city centre formed by a series of high-rise buildings from the late 1960s on. Takiguchi, 'Tainai no hitomi'.

ISSN 1037-1397 print/ISSN 1469-9338 online/11/030299-06 © 2011 Japanese Studies Association of Australia
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10371397.2011.619175

others, the 'Eye' has stimulated further creativity, in a rock song called 'Shinjuku no Me', and in a manga where the 'Eye' is a portal to another world.[4]

Like many Tokyo commuters, I have walked past the 'Eye' countless times, barely registering its presence. As I reflect on the cultural politics of the city, however, the image of the 'Eye' keeps returning to me. It now seems like a potent symbol of the constant surveillance carried out in places like Shinjuku. Takiguchi's embodied metaphors for Shinjuku station remind me of the mutual connections between personal, embodied geographies and the geographies of the city.[5] Looking back over the history of the 'Eye' reminds me of the myriad stories attached to particular places and the emotions stirred by these stories.

In the 1970s, Armistead Maupin contributed a daily column, 'Tales of the City', to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, documenting the developing gay community and counter-culture of San Francisco. Since then, other cities have received similar treatment: New York in Candace Bushnell's 'Sex and the City'; and Edinburgh in Alexander McCall Smith's novels.[6] From the earliest days of the modern Japanese novel, the city itself has been an important character.[7] Japanese film directors, too, have dealt with images of the city.[8] For international directors, cities like Osaka and Tokyo have provided a spectacular backdrop for adventure and romance.[9]

Cultural representations of Tokyo, in particular, reveal that the metropolis is really a series of villages: the shopping and entertainment districts of Shinjuku and Shibuya, the fashion precinct of Harajuku, the elite bars and clubs of Ginza, the downmarket bars, cinemas and vaudeville of Asakusa, the gay neighbourhood of Shinjuku Ni-chōme, the office precinct of Marunouchi, the government offices of Kasumigaseki, the student towns of Kanda, Komaba and Hongō, and the residential areas of the suburbs and surrounding prefectures. Osaka, too, has its 'villages', its entertainment districts, office precincts and suburbs.

In this special issue, we are interested in 'tales of the city' from Japan. The articles in this issue focus on the cultural representation of cities, and we pay particular attention to what these representations reveal about the politics of space in the city. We are interested in who has access to particular spaces, how these spaces are used, and the associated meanings and emotions.

Streets mediate between spaces. People travel along streets between the home, the school, the workplace, and the entertainment and shopping districts. Streets can also, however, be the sites of action in their own right as the venue for parades and demonstrations. The city of Tokyo has a combination of narrow, winding streets in the *shitamachi* (downtown) area, and wide avenues in the central area surrounding the Diet Building and the major government offices. These avenues around the Diet Building in Nagato-chō provide an ideal location for political demonstrations.

Parks are primarily places of relaxation, where people sit, read, play games, walk dogs. Since the 1990s recession, however, parks in Tokyo, Osaka and other major cities have increasingly been associated with dispossession. Homeless people sleep in parks, while

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[4]See, GPP, 'Shinjuku no Me', Moroboshi, *Yume miru kikai*.

[5]Nast and Pile, *Places Through the Body*; Teather; *Embodied Geographies*.

[6]Maupin, *Tales of the City*; Bushnell, *Sex and the City*; McCall Smith, *44 Scotland Street*.

[7]On literary representations of Tokyo, see Seidensticker, *Low City, High City*; Seidensticker, *Tokyo Rising*.

[8]Russell, 'Too Close to Home'.

[9]See, for example, Ridley Scott's *Black Rain*, largely set in Osaka, or, more recently, Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*, which features the shopping and entertainment districts of Shibuya and Shinjuku.

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the unemployed gather there, expelled from their former workplaces and no longer comfortable in the family home. Ueno Park, to the northeast of central Tokyo, hosts a major settlement of homeless people in 'blue tent' shelters. The larger public parks in Tokyo, such as Hibiya Park, have been used for demonstrations since the early twentieth century. For the last few years, Hibiya Park has been the site of the *Toshi-koshi Haken-mura* (End-of-Year Temp Workers' Village) which provides assistance to temporary workers left penniless over the holiday season due to company cutbacks. Miyashita Park near Shibuya has been the site of protest, as activists have unsuccessfully tried to oppose Shibuya council selling off part of the park to the Nike corporation.[10]

Railway lines, like streets, mediate between spaces. Railways transport people to work, school or entertainment. The railway carriage itself is a place where people read, send text messages, and listen to music, podcasts or language lessons on earphones. Trains not only take people to shopping districts, they also stimulate consumption through the advertisements on posters and LED screens. Station buildings are major sites for shopping and entertainment.[11]

The Tokyo metropolis has one of the most extensive underground railway systems in the world. The subway is supplemented by an immense network of underground walkways which provide a link between adjacent subway lines and also serve as destinations in their own right. Shops, restaurants, cafes and bars can be found underground. In many major cities, like central Nagoya, and parts of Tokyo and Osaka, the underground passageways are more easily legible and navigable than the corresponding streets above the ground. Underground passages can also provide a shelter from inclement weather for the homeless, but municipal governments constantly try to limit access to these spaces.

These public places are defined against the home and the workplace. The workplace is largely absent from many of the cultural representations examined here, but we see glimpses of workers going to and from their factories in the proletarian literature described by Heather Bowen-Struyk. The dispossessed *sarariiman* in Romit Dasgupta's discussion of *Tokyo Sonata* must accustom himself to work as a cleaner in a shopping mall. For the activist and writer Nakamoto Takako, as seen in Vera Mackie's article, the home itself is a workplace. Nakamoto writes stories, articles and petitions in her home, while also being responsible for childcare and housework. Many other workplaces are defined against the home. The home is often painted as a refuge, but in many cultural forms the home is rather a dystopic place.[12]

The city is often seen as the site of political activism. The very word 'citizen' is etymologically related to 'city'. In Japanese, too, the translation of the word 'citizen' is *shimin*, literally 'city-person'.[13] Citizenship is closely related to the notion of the 'public', the space for political discussion and deliberation. The uses of public space are addressed in all of the articles in this issue. Bowen-Struyk, Mackie, Eckersall and Cassegård are interested in political demonstrations. Freedman and Dasgupta describe the use of public parks as a dwelling for the homeless or a temporary refuge for the unemployed. Public space may also be a site for memorialisation, as discussed by Bowen-Struyk, Pendleton and Mackie.

[10]'Work Starts on Nike-Sponsored Park'.
[11]Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit.*
[12]See, for example, Morita, *Kazoku gēmu*; Sono, *Noriko no shokutaku.*
[13]Avenell, 'From the "People" to the "Citizen"'.

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In thinking about the emotions associated with particular spaces we have been informed by the work of cultural geographers, in particular those who deploy the concept of emotional geography.[14] Bowen-Struyk sees the streets as sites of both pleasure and danger. For early twentieth century proletarian activists, the streets were the places where they distributed leaflets, mobilised workers and carried out demonstrations. They also had to exercise constant vigilance, looking out for secret police 'tails' and bracing themselves for arrest. Mackie traces the trajectory from optimism to disillusion experienced by participants in the anti-Anpo struggle of 1960. Eckersall, in his analysis of the film *Chikatetsu hiroba* (Underground Plaza), describes the euphoria, optimism and then disappointment of student demonstrators in Shinjuku in 1969. Katsuhiko Suganuma considers different views of Shinjuku Ni-chōme: the voyeurism and negative affect displayed in a sensational television exposé, the feelings of belonging experienced by members of the gay subculture, the brave confrontation with mainstream homophobia by activist Tōgō Ken. Pendleton discusses attempts to change the feelings associated with the underground for survivors of the Sarin Gas Incident. Through walking along the route of the subway, but above ground, the survivors and their supporters attempted to heal traumatic feelings. Alisa Freedman describes a series of popular cultural texts depicting homelessness and how these texts work to elicit admiration of individuals overcoming obstacles, rather than indignation about inequality and inadequate welfare provision.

The articles in this special issue cover a period from the early twentieth century to the early twenty-first century, including the underground leftwing movements of the 1920s and 1930s, the political demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s, the recession of the 1990s, and political action in the streets and parks of Tokyo in the early 2000s.

Bowen-Struyk's article concerns the shifting meanings attached to the street in the work of early-twentieth-century proletarian writers. The street could be the space for nationalist mobilisation, but also a site where unions and proletarian political parties attempted to reach the workers. For activists, the streets were the places where they needed to be constantly vigilant – any passerby might be a member of the secret police. The streets mediated between home and workplace, or might be the place where they met to commemorate fallen comrades.

Mackie considers the wide avenues around the Japanese parliament building (the Diet). These streets were the site of the largest mass demonstrations in Japanese history in the campaign against the renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty (Anpo) in 1960. However, because of the failure of the anti-Anpo campaign, and the tragic death of Kanba Michiko on 15 June 1960, the meaning of these streets was transformed. The shifting meanings of significant spaces in central Tokyo are traced through a reading of the published diary of Nakamoto Takako, a woman who was intimately involved in the anti-Anpo struggle. Nakamoto's mental map of Tokyo combines personal memory and political history.

Eckersall analyses the contested meanings of Shinjuku. Activists who occupied the station in 1969 saw it as an 'Agora', a public space for gathering and carrying out meaningful discussion. Civic authorities, however, responded by renaming the place where they gathered. What had originally been known as a '*hiroba*' (plaza, agora) was renamed as a '*tsūro*' (passageway). Successive governments have gradually exerted

[14]Davidson and Milligan, 'Embodying Emotion Sensing Space'.

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greater control over public uses of the underground passages of Shinjuku, through evicting the homeless and making the station less hospitable for them.

Suganuma's article concerns an area to the east of Shinjuku Station, the gay district known as 'Ni-chōme'. This area provided sexual services to a largely heterosexual clientele until the mid-1950s, when the *Baishun Bōshi Hō* (Prostitution Prevention Law, enacted 1956, effective 1958) changed the entertainment districts of the cities. Licensed brothels were replaced by various other ways of providing sexual services. In Shinjuku's Ni-chōme district, these changes provided a space for the emergence of commodified subcultures catering to a gay clientele. Suganuma focuses on a series of representations of Shinjuku's 'gay town', by those who position themselves 'inside' and 'outside' the gay subcultures.

Pendleton reflects on the changing meanings of the 'underground' in Tokyo.[15] Survivors of the 1995 Sarin Gas poisoning incident and their supporters have attempted to transform the meanings attached to the underground railway as the site of trauma, and the streets above as a site of protest, memorialisation and ultimately, healing. Pendleton treats the city itself as a text, tracing the new meanings inscribed on city spaces through the actions of survivors of the Sarin Gas attacks and their supporters.

Dasgupta reads public parks as spaces which are neither home nor workplace. For the *sarariiman* protagonist of the film *Tokyo Sonata*, the park is a liminal space. He has been excluded from the workplace through retrenchment; and he is alienated from the lives of his family members in their shared home. In a charade designed to mask the reality of his retrenchment, he spends his days in a neighbourhood park, surrounded by other unemployed workers and the homeless. Freedman also focuses on parks as refuges for the homeless, analysing narratives of homelessness and their reworking in a series of popular genres: memoir, manga, television drama, film and parody. These texts are distinctive in focusing on Osaka rather than Tokyo, and in highlighting teenage homelessness.

Cassegård surveys some recent theorisations of public space in Japan, referring both to academic discussions of the 'public' and some recent deployments of space by activists. He traces the development of the idea of public space in twentieth century Japanese philosophy and twenty-first century activism, arguing for a more expansive notion of what constitutes the 'public'. This excavation of the history of thinking about public spaces in Japan also promises to shed new light on European theorisations of publicness. These discussions have contemporary relevance in the recent struggle over Miyashita Park in Shibuya.

In the film *Lost in Translation*, Tokyo is a city of high-rise buildings, karaoke boxes, bars, restaurants and department stores. In Coppola's film, the alienated, jetlagged tourists look over the city lights from hotel rooms, survey the scene from limousines or bullet trains, or gawk at people in the neon-lit streets.[16] High-rise buildings and neon lights provide an image of urban Japan which resonates with viewers around the world. In this special issue, we are also interested in the experience of cities in Japan, but we are much more interested in what goes on at a very local, everyday and embodied level: in streets, parks, railway stations and trains, subway stations and the underground railway itself. Rather than looking down on the city from above, we want to walk along the streets, ride on the trains, go window-shopping, join demonstrations, hang out in the

[15]See also Murakami, *Underground.*
[16]Coppola, *Lost in Translation.*

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parks and streets, descend into the underground, walk up to the 'Eye of Shinjuku' and stare right back at it.

Acknowledgements

Most of the articles in this special issue developed from a series of conference panels at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS; Philadelphia, March 2010), the Third International Conference on Emotional Geographies (University of South Australia, April 2010), and a symposium on Space, Place and Emotion in Modern Japan (University of Wollongong, April 2010). The Centre for Asia-Pacific Social Transformation Studies (CAPSTRANS) supported the symposium at the University of Wollongong. We are indebted to the audiences at these conferences for their questions, comments and feedback, and we would particularly like to thank Anne Allison for her comments as discussant at the AAS panel. Our contributions to this special issue have been improved immeasurably by the advice of Editors-in-Chief Judith Snodgrass and Carolyn Stevens, copy-editor *extraordinaire* David Kelly, and the constructive comments of the anonymous referees.

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