

Nagai Kafū's Reflections on Urban Beauty in *Hiyorigeta*: Reappraising Tokyo's Back Alleys and Waterways¹

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Abstract

Edo's urban fabric was originally made up of *roji* districts, i.e. of narrow multi-functional alleyways leading through small-scale, gradually developed residential and business areas. An extensive network of waterways of rivers, canals and streams traversed the city and connected it to the bay. However, during the 20th century, much of Tokyo's space was exploited to serve capital accumulation, causing rapid change of the cityscape and urban environment and of their representation in various media. While the advocates of Western-style urban modernization regarded both the *roji* and the waterways as an obstacle to modernity, their opponents reconfigured them as counter-spaces to modernization. Until the late 1990s most *roji* had become erased from the cityscape and tended to be sidelined in urban discourse. However, in recent years Tokyo's waterways and *roji* areas have become part of the discussion about sustainable urban planning relating to urban amenity, to community centered street space and to the preservation of local culture and urban landscape. The recent reevaluation of the works by Nagai Kafū (1879-1959) can be viewed in this light. Kafū became famous for his particular lifestyle and for his explorative attitude towards Tokyo. He wrote many literary works depicting Tokyo's transformation from a critical standpoint, which was sustained by his experience of five years spent in North America and France. By searching for the familiar and authentic, Kafū investigated those aspects, which in his opinion represented Edo's beauty and were in danger of being completely destroyed. In particular his essay *Hiyorigeta (Fairweather Clogs)* anticipates some aspects of the current rediscovery of Tokyo's *roji* and waterways.

I. Introduction

Becoming modern involves numerous agents and spaces. The issue of space and its relation to modernity can be approached from various angles. For the purpose of this

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¹ This article is a continuation of my research into the recent revitalization of particular *roji* areas, i.e., back alley quarters in Tokyo and into its relation to the rediscovery and reevaluation of the works of Nagai Kafū. During my first research stay at the Seikei University Center for Asian and Pacific Studies in March and April 2006 my main focus was to ask how Walter Benjamin's concept of the *flâneur* could be applied to Nagai Kafū. The results of my research were published in Schulz 2007. The present article contains the results of the research I conducted at the Seikei University Center for Asian and Pacific Studies in autumn 2010. I would like to thank Professor Nakagami Yasuhiro and the staff of CAPS for their generous hospitality and support. I am also greatly obliged to the members of the Study Group at Seikei University and to Professor Miura Kuniyasu for their stimulating discussion and thoughtful comments when I had the honor to present a first draft of this article to them in November 2010. I would also like to thank Christoph Langemann, Basel, Switzerland, who carefully proofread my draft and gave many valuable hints.

study the following aspects of space are of particular interest:

- 1) the politics of space, i.e. space as a material site which is always connected with and regulated by questions of power and negotiation; and
- 2) the poetics of space, i.e. space as a cultural and social context which involves production, perception, imagination, and representation.

The two aspects are intricately related. This indicates how fluid and volatile space generally is. Due to the influence in many academic fields of the so-called spatial turn of recent years, researchers no longer treat space 'as obvious, as self evident and not really in need of further examination' (Crang 2005: 199). Rather, it has become fairly usual to regard urban space as socially constructed, i.e. produced by social interaction, and thus, in other words, social life is 'both space-forming and space-contingent; a producer and a product of spatiality' (Soja 1989: 129). Particularly in the social and cultural sciences space is now viewed from such a relational position, and urban spaces are increasingly considered to be the spatial manifestations of visions of modernity.²

Capital cities are the prime sites of modernity and therefore form a major focus of urban discourse. In Japan this process began in the 1880s shortly after Tokyo had been designated to be the new capital city. Since Japan's project of becoming modern began in the 19th century and up to today, Tokyo has undergone far-reaching transformation of its political, economic, social and cultural systems. Furthermore, since becoming Japan's capital in 1868, Tokyo has been reconstructed to be the center of the nation, and it has become an important instrument for disciplining the population's memory of the past as well as for creating visions of the future. It is no exaggeration to state that Tokyo is one of the most fiercely contested spaces in Japan. Down to the present day the city is a major battleground of various, often opposing visions of modernity. It is regarded as both a laboratory of Japan's future as well as the site of varied versions of the past. In other words, Tokyo is associated with two opposing views of historical Japan, one of a premodern and one of a modern Japan, and in recent years one of a globalized Japan versus a Japan that is in search of authenticity and local values. In this city more than in any other, Japan's national identity and modernity and their respective images have been staged and restaged, represented and contested.

This trend began when the *bunmei kaika* policy of the Meiji government was implemented, that is to say when Western-style civilization and the enlightenment paradigm were introduced. This policy was associated with rational thinking, with progress in technical and cultural terms, with industrialization, with the introduction of public transportation systems and with the improvement of public hygiene. Up to the present day Tokyo functions as the most important showcase of Japan's modernity, and to promote this image it has to be corre-

² For overviews over the spatial turn – sometimes also called the 'topographical' or 'topological turn' (Weigel 2002) (in Japanese translated as *kūkanronteki tenkai* 空間論的転回) – across the social sciences and humanities, cf. Bachmann-Medick 2006, Doring and Thielmann 2008, Hallet and Neumann 2009, Warf and Arias 2008. An important contribution to this field is Edward Soja's trilogy: *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), *Thirdspace* (1996) and *Postmetropolis* (2000). Soja 1996 has been translated into Japanese, cf. Soja 2005. For the "poetics of space" cf. Gaston Bachelard's *La Poétique de l'espace* (1957), a Japanese translation was published 1969 (Chikuma shobō bunkō 2002), and Tanaka Jun's *Toshi no shigaku* (*The Poetics of the City* 2007).

spondingly designed. Numerous architectural landmarks are situated on the map of the city, each representing a vision of modernity that existed at a certain time. Two well-known Meiji period examples are the Rokumeikan, a two-storied Western-style building commissioned for the housing of foreign guests and famous for its splendid receptions and balls, and Tokyo station which opened in 1914 and very soon became the symbolic centre of Japan's modern transport system. The avant-garde architecture of the Yoyogi National Gymnasium was constructed to house events for the summer Olympic games of 1964. It marks the global breakthrough of Japanese architecture. Recent mega-structures such as Roppongi Hills and Midtown Tokyo can be termed as epitomes of Japan's globally oriented modernity. All these splendid buildings and spacial redevelopments remain standing to prove the continuing aggrandizement and modernization of Tokyo. They are regarded as being a key element of Japan's future competitiveness and are meant to emphasize Tokyo's position as a global city.

However, while Tokyo was being embellished and redesigned on the one hand, traditional patterns of urban space were increasingly being destroyed on the other. During recent years more and more people have become aware of the consequences of such modernization processes. As a reaction, Tokyo's network of waterways and so called *roji* - narrow alleyways and backstreets -, which disappeared extensively through the implementation of Western style urban planning and architecture, as well as due to industrialization and catastrophes such as the earthquake of 1923 and the Tokyo air raids of 1944 and 1945, are now seen in new light and are being rediscovered. In contrast to the integrated high-rise property developments and the monumental architecture mentioned above, the *roji* are regarded as de-monumentalized space patterns that scale down the city to human dimensions and create culturally authentic zones for living and shopping. Particular *roji* areas are elevated to being symbols of the *genius loci* of Tokyo, i.e. they are seen as auratic places that provide a unique atmosphere. This atmosphere is regarded as being an expression of the essential character and spirit of the city.³ In many cases such places are newly perceived and reconstituted as being authentic and beautiful.

During the 20th century a large and diverse body of texts about Tokyo has been produced, covering a wide range of both non-fictional and fictional genres. In these texts, both the achievements of modernity and the losses of the past are reflected in the cultural, political and poetic ramifications of the depiction of space and manners. In contrast to the fictional texts that are included in the canonically defined category of the 'novel' (*shōsetsu*), a huge corpus of non-fictional and semi-fictional works exists on Tokyo.⁴ Most of them have so far received only scant attention from scholars.

A well-known literary product revealing the tensions inherent in the contested spaces of Tokyo is *Hiyorigeta (Fairweather Clogs)* by Nagai Kafū (1879-1959), a collection of essays about strolls through Tokyo, published in 1914. *Hiyorigeta* is regarded as both a classic of topographical writing and as a guidebook of Tokyo. The present study attempts

³ For the notion of *genius loci*, cf. Norberg-Schulz 1980 and Suzuki 2009.

⁴ Important sources for the study of the literature about Tokyo up to 1945 are Tsuchida 1994 and Unno, Kawamoto and Suzuki 1989-1991, an anthology of ten volumes.

to investigate how in *Hiyorigeta Kafū* adopts a strategy of unveiling various historical and topographical layers that form the Tokyo of his time. Special attention will be given to his method of depicting the *roji* and Tokyo's network of waterways. Kafū's emphasis on their significance for Edo-Tokyo's urbanity and his description of them in a refined literary language paved the way for the *roji* and the waterways being conceived of as spaces which are able to capture the particular ambience of certain areas of Tokyo.

II. The urban and architectural morphology of the *roji*: from demolition and erasure to reappraisal and revitalization

The *roji* is deeply rooted in Japan's urban past. Up until today the word *roji* denotes a loosely defined pattern of Japanese urban space. Despite regional and local variations a number of basic features and characteristics can be found. In general, the notion of *roji* implies a set of particular urban structures, streetscapes and vernacular architecture, and relates to specific forms of everyday lifestyle and neighborhood relationships. Basically, *roji* are narrow alleyways and backstreets branching off either side of a main street. The alleys are built with one or two-storied wooden houses. Many of today's *roji* originally belonged to Edo's residential quarters where the common people used to live and work, and in a certain sense enjoyed a freedom from the authorities. The *roji* provided an intimate and authentic atmosphere as still can be found in Japan's rural areas today. Down to the present day, a tight-knit neighborhood community exists in this type of locality and it is a space where residents can meet by chance to have a chat. A *roji* typically features a well and a shrine (Okamoto 2006: 48). The word *idobatakaigi* literally implies that people meet by chance at the *roji*'s well and chat with each other. Usually, flowerpots line these back alleys. Even today some *roji* can only be accessed on foot or by bicycle and give the impression of constituting a maze-like network of urban trails and paths. Many *roji* are dead-end streets. The *roji*'s reserved and slightly diffident air makes it often impossible for the outside observer to distinguish between public and private spaces. In this respect, *roji* areas hold an ambiguous position in the modern form of urban planning which is based on the distinct separation of private and public spaces.

During the Edo period most of Japan's urban population lived in *roji* areas. In particular Edo's Shitamachi was laid out as a grid of narrow alleyways and backstreets. Many of them were located along the city's waterways. In the literature and the arts Shitamachi is frequently depicted as a city of waterways and bridges where people either stroll along the canals and rivers or use a boat to get from one place to another. A famous example of such a portrayal of urban life is *Meisho Edo hyakkei (One Hundred Famous Views of Edo, 1856-1859)*, a series of 118 woodblock prints by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) showing the unique charm of Edo's waterways and streetscapes.⁵ The early 19th century narrative scroll *Kidai shōran (Excellent View of Our Prosperous Age, 1805)*, which is

⁵ For an English edition of this series, cf. Hiroshige 1999.

12m long, depicts the area to the north of Nihonbashi Street between Imagwabashi and Nihonbashi, the most important shopping street of Edo at that time, around the year 1805. The scroll displays images of more than 1700 people and animals and presents nearly 90 restaurants and shops as well, thus delivering a detailed panorama of everyday social life. It also shows numerous *roji* branching off the main street and leading into their hidden and intimate world, more or less invisible to outsiders.⁶

However, such sceneries gradually disappeared during the 20th century. The modernization of Tokyo affected an influence on two dimensions of its cityscape and urban fabric. First, Edo's infrastructure and transportation, that had been based on a network of moats, canals and rivers, was gradually replaced by railways, streets and later by highways. In other words, the "Edo of water" (*mizu no Edo*) was transformed to "the Tokyo on land" (*riku no Tokyo*) (Jinnai 1995: 107). Many of Tokyo's waterways were straightened out and their banks reinforced. Numerous canals were filled in or even built over with highways. Second, Tokyo's architectural cityscape was transformed from low-rise to high-rise buildings to make room for the rapidly growing population. From the 1880s onward, *roji* areas were regarded as being symbols of poverty and backwardness. Most of those *roji* areas that dated back to the Edo period suffered from the lack of sanitation, from overpopulation and diseases, and from high inflammability. Correspondingly, Tokyo's *roji* areas became major targets for urban development and redevelopment projects and were over time replaced by modern fireproof buildings. In many cases, the floor-area ratio was raised at the same time. With the introduction of Western-style planning and architecture, *roji* life, too, changed tremendously.

To sum up, the general framework and paradigms of urban development as they continued to have an effect into the 21st century caused many alleys and waterways to be gradually destroyed. Instead, the land was used to build the newest and most modern types of residence and street on. The urban planner Tateno Mitsuhiro investigated Tokyo's remaining *roji* areas and found out that *roji* still exist all over the city (Tateno 2005). The remaining *roji* have withstood the destruction of war as well as a host of new developments. Most of the *roji* consist of low-rise wooden houses thirty to fifty years old. In many cases, the multifunctional use of these areas has been preserved, too. However, only very few *roji* retain their original old-world atmosphere.

Since the 1980s, attempts have been made to maintain the mixed urban ecology of particular *roji* by revitalizing them in various ways. In most cases citizen communities have mobilized themselves with great determination to create a more sustainable and livable central city environment (Fujii, Okata and Sorensen 2007; Sorensen 2009). The inhabitants of the surviving *roji* areas are successful not only in fostering strong neighborhood relationships but also in producing a fresh image of themselves or even in gaining a status that could

⁶ This precious picture scroll is held in the Berlin East Asian Art Museum, Germany. Its title *Kidai shōran* is masterfully written at the beginning of the scroll by a famed calligrapher of the time, Sano Tōshū. The painter is unknown because there is no signature or artist's seal (http://eajrs.net/2006_conference/kidai_shoran; retrieved June 3, 2011). The scroll can be viewed at http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f0/%27Kidai_Shoran%27%2C_Japanese_handscroll_c._1805.jpg (retrieved June 3, 2011).

be called a brand, thus strengthening their local economy and culture. In doing so, they manage quite well to resist being overtaken by developers and to protect themselves from unwanted change. In this respect the most successful and famous *roji* areas in present day Tokyo are Kagurazaka, Kichijōji, Tsukudajima, Yanesen, Shimokitazawa and the backstreets of Omotesandō. The name *Yanesen* refers to the three neighborhoods of Yanaka (Ya), Nezu (Ne), and Sendagi (Sen). Each of these areas has its own local history and in retaining a unique sense of its community has over time successfully evolved a particular identity. Kagurazaka has become famous for its elegant restaurants for Japanese and foreign cuisine. Kichijōji is regarded as a model for a new sustainable lifestyle and as a place where creative people such as designers or writers prefer to live and work (Miura and Watari Kazuyoshi Kenkyūshitsu 2007). However, due to its great success, rents and property prices are rapidly rising, and this is causing worry to its inhabitants. Tsukudajima is a tiny, artificial island at the mouth of the Sumidagawa that escaped the earthquake, the war and the high-rise redevelopment. The area has become famous for its preserved local neighborhood with the Sumiyoshi shrine at its center and high-rise buildings in the background. At weekends, Yanesen's pedestrian walkways are flooded with people who relaxedly stroll along or shop. The name Yanesen originates from a local periodical of the same title that reports news about local history, people, restaurants, and commercial products. Shimokitazawa is known as an important center of youth culture and is said to be one of Tokyo's most culturally vibrant neighborhoods. In recent years, Ōkubo has become a trendy *roji* area. It is regarded as being a successful model of a multicultural low-rise multifunctional area in Tokyo. Due to its comparatively high percentage of foreign residents (nearly 10% in 2003, many of them from East Asian countries) Ōkubo has to provide a culturally vital and dynamic urban environment for various lifestyles and consumer habits (Inaba 2008).

Recent theories therefore emphasize the idea that the *roji* provide rich and varied living spaces linked to history and tradition (Okamoto 2006; Aoki 2007; Imai 2010; Usugi 2010). At least as an idea, such alleyways are now highly prized, since they provide intimate zones within the city, even though they were originally not thought of in this way. To speak of the alleys as an idea means to speak of a space in which urban *slow life* is possible. The residents are able to feel inward peace and to have breathing space, children can play within the neighborhood, and the elderly can stop and chat in the streets. Walking is enjoyable, since local traditions and the appeal of nature within the city can be rediscovered. A lifestyle in which one's workplace and one's place of residence are near each other is possible. *Roji* are humble spaces. They answer a need to scale down the city to a human size, so pedestrian zones can be created in order to slow down the pace of urban life. Urban researcher Hisashige Tetsunosuke lists five conditions for a *slow city* in his study of urban development theory titled *Nihon-ban surō shiti: Chiiki koyū no bunka, fūdo o ikasu machizukuri (The Japanese Slow City: Community Building That Revives the Particular Culture of the Region and Its Natural Environment, 2008)*:

- 1) Humanism: People can walk around in people-friendly public spaces at a comfortable pace.
- 2) Slow food: People can enjoy locally produced food.

- 3) Involvement: Citizens are able to participate in the region's culture and folklore.
- 4) Exchange: People can talk to each other, look at the scenery, and feel comfortable.
- 5) Sustainability: The lifestyle and intentions of the citizens are taken into consideration (Hisashige 2008: 132)

The *roji* are urban spaces in Japan that agree with all these five conditions. From the point of view of the opponents of monumental urbanism, the spaces provided by *roji* have become a viable counter model to Tokyo's megastructures, thus promoting socially and culturally sustainable environments. In this respect, the *roji* denote not only a particular pattern of urban space rooted in Japan's premodern culture but also represent a spatial concept which is in itself a form of criticizing mainstream modernity as well as a form resisting the capitalization of urban space (Radovic 2008). Both the waterways and the *roji* form the basic layer of the geographical, social, and cultural topography of Edo-Tokyo. The current wave of interest in Tokyo's *roji* and waterways can be traced back to the early 20th century, in particular to the works of the well-known writer Nagai Kafū

III. Nagai Kafū's rediscovery and reappraisal of Tokyo's *roji* and waterways in the early 20th century

1. Kafū's stay abroad and his returnee stories

The Meiji period is paradigmatic, and a large part of the cultural, literary, political and economic discourses dealing with Tokyo have their roots in the late 19th century. These discourses are all connected with the issues of Japan's modernization, and of the essence of modernity in general, and with the question of Japan's cultural and national identity. Against this backdrop, the *roji* evolved from being symbols of poverty and backwardness to being paradigmatic spaces. They have become important examples for discussing the above issues and in particular their relationship with urban topics. In many literary works a tendency can be observed that is shared by portrayals of Tokyo in various media. Both particular patterns or types of space and real places are depicted as being representations of the new Tokyo. They are then contrasted with surviving old spaces and places exemplifying specific aspects of Edo's culture and its traditional lifestyle. In many cases, elements of the past are praised as being authentic and beautiful, while the present is regarded as having severed its own roots. In other words, the past is constructed as a critical counterpoint to the present.

Such contrasting or even contradicting images of urban space form the basis of the depiction of Tokyo in the works of Nagai Kafū. During his long life as a writer, Kafū devoted himself to composing novels and essays in various manners and styles that document the spatial dynamics inherent in the Edo-Tokyo transformation from the end of the 19th century down to the 1950s.⁷ During Kafū's lifetime periods of tremendous growth and prosperity

⁷ Kafū's collected works comprise 30 volumes and are evidence of his outstanding creative power; cf. Nagai 1992-1995.

alternated with periods of destruction and material shortage. He had witnessed the modernization of Tokyo and its change from being the Shogun's capital in feudal Japan to being the capital city of a modern nation state. He experienced the disastrous Great Kantō Earthquake of September 1923 and the following reconstruction as well as Tokyo's destruction during the war years of 1944 and 1945 and its rebuilding and forced industrialization during the post-war period. Kafū's diary *Danchōtei Nichijō*, which he continued to write from 1917 until his death in 1959 is considered to be an important source for understanding these events seen through the eyes of an individual (Kawamoto 2009; Yoshino 1999).

Against this backdrop it becomes clear why many of Nagai Kafū's works can be read as reports of an eyewitness who is in search for the deeper meanings of these transformations and the powers that lay behind them. Recently Kafū has been rediscovered as the chronicler of Tokyo and the investigator of the gains and losses of its transformation first to a modern and then to a global city. Particularly around 2009, the year of the commemoration of Kafū's 130th birthday and the 50th anniversary of his death, a plethora of new publications about Kafū appeared and older ones were reprinted.⁸

Kafū spent the greater part of his life in Tokyo. However, like many artists and writers of his time who had a longing for the West, Kafū, too, was very much attracted to France and in particular to Paris. The generous support of his father enabled him to leave Japan in 1903 for a five years' sojourn abroad. He first travelled to the USA and stopped at various cities: in Tacoma/Washington from October 1903 to October 1904, in Kalamazoo/Michigan from November 1904 to June 1905, in Washington, D.C. from July to November 1905, and in New York from December 1905 to July 1907. During his long stay in the USA he studied English and French literature (Tacoma and Kalamazoo) and worked for short periods at the Japanese embassy in Washington, D.C., and at the New York branch office of the bank Yokohama Shōkin Ginkō. In July 1907 he embarked for France where he spent eight months in Lyon and two months in Paris before returning to Japan in August 1908.⁹ During his stays in New York, Lyon and Paris he became very fond of the Opera and Western music.¹⁰ In Paris he felt particularly attracted to the popular culture of the Quartier Latin and its demimonde. Perhaps his visits to the Quartier Latin and its back alleys inspired him to open a new perspective on Tokyo's *roji* and other hidden areas and their particular cultural traditions and way of life after his return to Japan.

Kafū's approach to and exploration of Tokyo is of particular interest. Probably with reference to Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), whom he admired greatly, Kafū assumed the

⁸ For new studies on Kafū, published in 2009 and 2010, cf. Aiso 2010; Fukuta 2009; Handō 2009; Hayashi 2010; Iwagaki 2009; Kondō 2009; Minami 2009; Mochida 2009a and 2009b; Ōmura 2010; Sakagami 2010; Satō 2009 (this is a collection of essays by Satō Haruo (1892-1964)); the exhibition catalogue Satō Haruo kinenkan 2009; Shindō 2010; Suzuki 2010; and Tsuge 2009. For reprints published in 2009 and 2010, cf. Akiba 2010 (first edition 1966); Kanno 2009 (first edition 1996); Kawamoto (first edition 1996); and Matsumoto 2006 and 2009 (first edition 2002).

⁹ For a detailed account and analysis of Kafū's stay in France cf. Imahashi 1993: 199-222; on his sojourn in Lyon cf. Kabuto 2005, and on his stay in New York cf. Suenobu 2002. For Kafū's perception of the urban landscape of New York, Paris and Tokyo cf. Minami 2007.

¹⁰ For Kafū's perception of Western music and particularly his enthusiasm for the opera cf. Matsuda 1992; Nakamura 1987; and Shindō 1997.

pen-name “Kafū sanjin” (荷風散人), literally “Kafū, the gentleman of leisure” or “Kafū, the man about town”.¹¹ After his return from France in 1908 Kafū started his lifelong habit of undertaking daily walks through Tokyo. He made notes and took photographs while wandering through the city and thus found inspiration for his writings.¹² When he returned to Tokyo Kafū noticed that during his five years’ absence the city had changed in many ways. From the 1880s on, the Meiji government had discussed the transformation of Tokyo’s central areas along Western principles of urban planning. Paris in particular, which had been restructured and renovated during the 1850s and 60s, was an archetype of city planning. Japanese planners intended to adapt essential elements of this French model, such as the construction of broad *boulevards*, sewers and water works. A great many of Tokyo’s new public facilities, such as banks, schools, theatres, libraries, and ministerial buildings, were built under the guidance of foreign architects and were completed in the first decade of the 20th century. A public transport system based on streetcars and later on subways and buses had started to replace Edo’s network of public transportation made up of boats and ferries.

A decisive factor for Kafū’s perception of Tokyo as a city that had changed tremendously was the dramatic change of Tokyo’s population: With the abolition of the *Sankin kōtai* system and the social, political and cultural turmoil after the Meiji restoration, there had been a considerable reduction in Tokyo’s population from over one million down to 670,000. People returned to the provinces, but shortly afterwards, economic hardship there and the promotion of Tokyo as a place of ‘civilization and enlightenment’, of progress and opportunity, created extensive migration back to Tokyo from all over the country. Between 1898 and 1907, inward migration numbered about 50,000 people each year. In 1908, the year of Kafū’s return, Tokyo’s total population was 1,626,000. These years marked the beginning of an intensive urbanization and of irreversible changes in the society and culture. Edo’s particular urbanity was diluted due to new lifestyles, manners and customs being introduced into Tokyo by the new population (Nakagawa 2000: 77-78).

After his return to Japan Kafū noticed that Tokyo’s current state was still a far cry from its Western models. He developed a very critical attitude towards Japan’s modernization policy and deployed a dichotomous relationship between Edo and Tokyo in his so-called returnee-stories. This term refers to Kafū’s works published between 1909 and 1910, that is, *Fukagawa no uta* (*Fukagawa Songs*), *Botan no kyaku* (*The Peony Guest*), *Kanraku* (*Pleasure*), *Donten* (*Cloudy Sky*), *Kitsune* (*The Fox*), *Kangokusho no ura* (*Behind the Prison*), *Sumidagawa* (*The River Sumida*), *Kichōsha no nikki* (*Diary of One Who Returned to Japan*), and *Reishō* (*Taunting Smile*) (Hutchinson 2001)¹³. These works are

¹¹ After his return to Japan in 1908, Kafū translated some of Baudelaire’s poems into Japanese. Kafū published translations of poems by Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine etc. under the title *Sangoshū* (*Collection of Corals*, 1913). These translations are regarded as classics up to today.

¹² Most of Kafū’s photographs were lost in 1944/45 in the turmoil of the Tokyo air raids.

¹³ Depending on the edition of Kafū’s complete works, *Kichōsha no nikki* is also referred to as *Shinkichōsha nikki*. For an in-depth study of *Kichōsha no nikki* and a complete translation into German, cf. Schulz 1997. Four editions of Kafū’s complete works have been published so far: Nagai 1948-1953 (Chūō kōronsha), Nagai 1962-1965 and Nagai 1971-1974, which are to a large extent identical (both are published by Iwanami shoten), and Nagai 1992-1995 (Iwanami shoten). In the latest edition (Nagai 1992-1995, Vol. 6: 151-209) *Kichōsha no nikki* is edited on the basis of its first edition in the magazine

often grouped together because they represent Kafū's attitudes and views concerning Japan's modernization over a short period of time – less than two years – and thus form a homogeneous series. The stories also share many characteristics which may be summarized as follows: The main character or narrator has often just returned from a period abroad and strolls around the city, critically and acutely observing and commenting on the changes that are taking place in Tokyo. While doing so, he laments the passage of time and the loss of the past. The Westernization of Tokyo is depicted as a superficial and ugly imitation, with no depth of understanding when compared to the genuine article overseas. The characters find solace and beauty only in the old areas of the city such as Fukagawa, Yanagibashi, or on the banks of the Sumidagawa, while the new Tokyo is depicted as messy chaos of traffic and building sites, a place of fragmentation, disruption and uncontrolled dynamics. In these literary works Edo functions as a counterworld to modern Tōkyō. The binary opposition between Edo and Tokyo forms the basis of Kafū's critical value judgement: Edo is related to the "genuine" or "original" and Tokyo to the "superficial" (Hutchinson 2001; Schulz 1997; Schulz 1998). For Kafū, Japan is moving too rapidly into modernity and thus the process becomes confusing and ends up as a fake. He warns that Edo's original culture will soon disappear and therefore should be preserved. The narrator in *Kichōsha nikki* puts it succinctly:

I'm not satisfied with the fundamental ideas of the Japanese people. Japanese who have travelled to the West think that if they only put into practice the external forms of factories, governments or anything else, then they can make a fine civilization with that alone. If they just bring back the form, then what good is that without the substance? This is Japan's civilization today. Because we don't look at the substance of true civilization, because we don't understand it, because we don't feel it, Japan's importation of European civilization has truly reached the extremes of unsightliness. [...] I think that as long as the Japanese take no notice of the substance of civilization, no matter how they may adorn it with beautiful external forms it will be of no use at all. (quoted in Hutchinson 2001: 199)

In these early works already Kafū elaborates on the question of what is the foundation of the city's beauty. For example, on 20 January, the narrator of *Kichōsha no nikki* visits Maruzen bookshop and "On the way back, along the Nihonbashi road, [he] was left in stunned amazement by the strange, unsightly scenes of lines of telegraph poles and road repairs and the crude buildings on both sides of the road" (Hutchinson 2001: 200). He encounters his friend Ryūsui and they walk together:

Stumbling over stones and pieces of broken tile and the like in the wide road, surprised by puddles of water, getting our feet caught up in discarded wire, and trying to avoid the passers-by who came walking along in confusion, I expounded upon

Chūō kōron in October 1909. There it is titled *Kichōsha no nikki*, Kafū changed the title into *Shinkichōsha nikki* in later editions.

the beauty of cities in Europe and North America, and Ryūsui also gave voice to his yearning for the order of the Edo period, which had never been ‘civilized’. [...] Meiji was neither reform nor progress nor construction, but destruction. It had destroyed the beauty of the old state of affairs and had only replaced it with this ugly confusion of one night’s work. (quoted in Hutchinson 2001: 199)

Kafū’s critique of the Meiji period as being nothing but “destruction” forms the underlying context of his returnee stories. The narrators in these stories contrast the ugliness and confusion of the new Tokyo with the Western cities Tokyo seeks to emulate and, with Edo, which in the modern age usually is disregarded as being without value. For Kafū, Western modernity (in particular that of France) is characterized by the coexistence of up-to-date improvements and conveniences with pre-modern and even antique culture. Kafū’s suggestions for Japan’s path to modernity point in two directions: Japan must understand the genuine nature of the culture of the West, and it must emulate the West’s respect for its cultural heritage. Kafū regards the culture of Edo as authentic and genuine and therefore insists on its preservation. Its originality – in *Kichōsha no nikki* Kafū uses the French term *originalité* (Nagai 1992-1995, vol. 6: 205; Schulz 1997: 231-235) – is required to lay the foundations of Japan’s modern culture. In other words, (pre-modern) beauty and modernity are closely interrelated. In *Kichōsha no nikki* Ryūsui, a figure whose attitude represents that of Edo’s *gesakusha*, the writers of sarcastic, humorous and frivolous fiction, praises the evening landscape of the quiet waterways near Kyōbashi:

I like the view of the canals. Precisely because there is such a thing in Tokyo, the beauty of the city has been preserved. But it is not just the canals. To put it in a nutshell, beginning with the imperial residence – all those places which have preserved Tokyo’s beauty and dignity and are appropriate for a capital city of a nation, have been built by Edo period people. Sometimes I wonder if such an epoch like the Meiji period should not be called truly barbaric.¹⁴ [...] The state of society in the modern age and the beauty of cities have something about them which makes them extremely difficult to reconcile. But the Western society that I’ve seen is not all entirely ‘modern’. That is, the places we call ‘the West’ are countries which reek of the past. They are countries which smell of history. Paris is not all about newly made subways and aeroplanes. It is also about building great churches, like the Sacré Coeur. If on the one hand they build a factory, then at the same time on the other hand they also undertake an achievement for posterity, not for utility, which will last a thousand years. [...] The Japanese use as their one defence that they haven’t any money, but even if they did have the money, the Japanese are so very absurd that such an idea, unconnected to utility, would not even occur to them. (quoted in Hutchinson 2001: 200).

This quotation clearly shows that Kafū’s rediscovery and reappraisal of Tokyo’s waterways and especially of the Sumidagawa and its banks are already discernable in his returnee

¹⁴ Cf. Nagai 1992-1995, Vol. 6: 192; translated by E. Schulz.

stories. Furthermore, it is evident that for Kafū the waterways symbolize the particular culture and lifestyle of Edo on the one hand and point to the negative effects of modernization on the other. In other words, the more intensively this landscape was industrialized, the more it became an evocative symbol of the past. A sense of loss of the essence of the “city on water” was repeatedly articulated not only by Kafū but also by other writers of his time such as Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927), Izumi Kyōka (1873-1939) and the members of the *Pan no kai* (*Pan society*), a group of writers and painters who were attracted to European romanticism and aestheticism. In their distinctive styles they all deployed the motif of the Sumida River as an important symbol of Edo culture, while also describing it as a symbol of their sense of loss created by modernization, i.e. they showed how disorganized Edo-Tokyo’s space had become in the name of enlightenment (*bunmei kaika*).

Kafū’s returnee phase ended around 1910 and he began to change his mode of depicting Tokyo. Instead of only emphasizing the negative effects of the Meiji modernization policy and criticizing it with barely concealed disgust, he turned his attention to a Tokyo that was very different from the new Tokyo as it had been outlined by the government’s modernization policy and as it was praised in guidebooks and sketches of Japan’s future. He focused on rather unspectacular, unimpressive sites and on places such as park-like areas in Yamanote and *roji* quarters along Shitamachi’s network of waterways. Kafū searched for the familiar and authentic which had developed over the years. In short, he investigated those things which in his opinion contained and represented Edo’s beauty and were in danger of being destroyed. In particular the literary work *Hiyorigeta* (*Fairweather Clogs*) marks a departure from Kafū’s dichotomous depiction of Edo-Tokyo as is characteristic of his returnee stories. Kafū published *Hiyorigeta* in 1914, six years after his return from France.

2. *Hiyorigeta* (*Fairweather Clogs*, 1914)

(1) General aspects

Hiyorigeta was first published in eleven installments in the monthly literary magazine *Mita bungaku* (*Mita Literature*) in 1914. In 1915 *Hiyorigeta* was subtitled *Ichimei Tōkyō sansaku ki* (*Report of Walks Through Tokyo*) and published as a monograph.¹⁵ *Hiyorigeta* is regarded as a classic of topographical writing as well as a literary guidebook of Tokyo. Thanks to its great popularity it has been reprinted again and again. Since 2010 it is even available as an app for Apple’s iPad.¹⁶ *Hiyorigeta* is famous for its elegant, refined style which is characteristic for the Japanese essayistic tradition, so-called *zuihitsu*.

At first sight, due to its subtitle *Report of Walks Through Tokyo*, *Hiyorigeta* appears to be a walking guide to Tokyo. This impression is further endorsed by the narrator’s reflections at the beginning of the book on the advantage of exploring the city on foot (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 111-112). The associative nature of the text seems to be particularly suited to representing the activity of walking. The narrator assumes the role of the critical

¹⁵ *Hiyorigeta* is also edited in Kafū’s collected works (*Kafū zenshū*), cf. Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 109-189.

¹⁶ <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/meisaku-novel-kafu-nagais/id378729553?mt=8> [retrieved 16.6.2011].

flâneur by asking rhetorically: “Isn’t today’s Tokyo a metropolis in which it is entirely unbearable for a bored dallier like me to go for a walk?” (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 129)

On closer inspection, *Hiyorigeta*’s structure is revealed as being a collage of quotations from various literary works of the Edo and Meiji periods as well as from contemporary Western, particularly French literature dealing with urban issues. This collage is accompanied by the first chapter which also bears the title *Hiyorigeta* and in which the narrator informs us about the advantage of exploring Tokyo on foot and the pleasure he takes in strolling around (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 111-119). The earliest works quoted by Kafū were written in the late 17th century, the latest are contemporary works of the early 20th century. In this way, Kafū enlarges the time spectrum of *Hiyorigeta* to cover a period of more than three hundred years. *Hiyorigeta* offers a simultaneous approach to both spatial as well as temporal aspects of urban space in Tokyo. Like a guidebook *Hiyorigeta* leads the reader into the deeper historical layers of Tokyo and provides access to its various forms of the past and their particular atmosphere and culture.

Kafū is primarily concerned with representing in his prose texts Tokyo’s multilayered and diverse historical and cultural topographies which have survived through time. The survey of the basic characteristics of urban beauty constitutes his underlying issue. *Hiyorigeta* explores the transformation of Edo-Tokyo and introduces us to the cultural and spatial margins of the modern city. Here Kafū locates the inherent creative quality of urban space and the authentic beauty of Tokyo. Accordingly, instead of introducing new landmarks of his time such as the parliament, railway stations or steel bridges, Kafū had a keen eye on those traditional patterns of urban space that had survived the *bunmei kaika* policy. For his investigation Kafū divides the Edo-Tokyo space into natural and cultural segments that existed long before the city became the center of the nation, and which formed its foundations. *Hiyorigeta* consists of eleven chapters: Four of these introduce topographical features and natural phenomena such as trees (*ki*, chapter 3), water (*mizu*, chapter 6), precipices (*gake*, chapter 9), slopes (*saka*, chapter 10), the evening sun or the setting sun (*yūhi*, chapter 11). A second group of chapters deals with institutions and sites covering essential aspects of premodern urban life such as shrines (*inshi*, chapter 2), temples (*tera*, chapter 5) and alleyways (*roji*, chapter 7). Chapter 4, *chizu* (maps), reveals Kafū’s particular method of exploring Tokyo.

Kafū’s classification of urban space bears striking resemblance to that of *Murasaki no hitomoto* (*A Sprig of Purple*, 1683), one of the oldest guidebooks on Edo, which is also quoted in *Hiyorigeta* (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 169).¹⁷ *Murasaki no hitomoto* represents an early attempt to cover the topography of Edo. It consists of two parts comprising the following chapters: The first chapter on Edo Castle is followed by chapters on “Hills,” “Slopes,” “Valleys,” (1), “Hollows,” “Valleys” (2), “Rivers,” “Islands,” “Moats” and “Ponds.” Part two comprises “Wells,” “Bridges,” “Ferry Crossings,” “Ships,” “Fields,” “Alleys,” “Tombs,” “Riding

¹⁷ *Murasaki no hitomoto* by Toda Mosui (1629-1706) had been completed by 1683 but probably was not published until the Meiji period, cf. <http://webcat.nii.ac.jp/cgi-bin/eng/shsproc?id=BN12125031> (retrieved June 23, 2011). *Murasaki no hitomoto* has been edited in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, Vol. 82 (*Kinsei zuisō shū*, pp. 29-242), cf. Toda 2000.

Grounds”, “Blossoms,” “Cuckoos,” “Moon,” “Maple Leaves,” “Snow,” “Festivals,” “Bells that strike the hour” (Elisonas 1994: 285-287). However, to the categories presented in *Murasaki no hitomoto* Kafū adds a chapter on “temples” and “shrines” and one on “precipices”. With reference to *Murasaki no hitomoto* he explains that Tokyo’s topography is characterized by an alternation between high and low areas and therefore precipices have been part of it from its beginnings until today (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 169-170).

(2) *Hiyorigeta*, a collage of citations from Eastern and Western art and literature

In *Hiyorigeta* Kafū deals with some of the issues he already touched upon in his returnee stories. He sometimes explores them in greater depth or then again approaches them from a new angle. In Kafū’s view the necessity of preserving the city’s landscape is especially emphasized as being of cultural value. Kafū’s reappraisal of Tokyo’s landscape is inspired by the phenomenon of Japonism, i.e. the influence Japanese woodblock prints, many of which depict Edo from various points of view, had on European, particularly French artists from the late 19th century onward.

In *Hiyorigeta* the Edo-Tokyo transformation is illustrated by various citations from textual and visual representations of the Edo period such as woodblock prints (*ukiyoe*), illustrated guides (*meisho zue*), as well as from contemporary French artists and authors. Most of the woodblock prints mentioned in *Hiyorigeta* were created by great masters of the genre and were well-known both in Europe and North-America at the time of writing. Many of them had reached Europe during the second half of the 19th century, and they influenced the European Impressionists, thus initiating the movement of Japonism. This becomes evident when we look at the works of the Edo period artists referred to in *Hiyorigeta*: Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806), Utagawa Toyokuni (1769-1825), Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) and Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) are all considered to be great masters of the woodblock print and have been internationally appraised since the late 19th century.

The woodblock prints cited by Kafū can be divided into two groups. The first comprises scenes from the microcosm of urban life in Edo’s residential areas such as Utagawa Toyokuni’s illustrations of women, *Imayōkagami* (1802). The second group consists of works depicting Edo and its surrounding landscapes such as Hokusai’s famous series *Fugaku Sanjūrokkei* (*Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, 1830-1844). This series, composed of 46 prints created between 1826 and 1833, celebrates the extraordinary appearance of Mt. Fuji by showing it in differing seasons and weather conditions and in a variety of perspectives and distances.¹⁸ Particular attention is given to waterscapes. Examples are the internationally renowned *Kanagawa ōki nami ura* (*The Great Wave off Kanagawa*), as well as *Fukagawa Mannen-bashi shita* (*Under Mannen Bridge at Fukagawa*) and *Onmayagashi yori Ryōgoku-bashi yūhi mi* (*Sunset Seen Across the Ryōgoku Bridge from the Bank of the Sumidagawa at Onmayagashi*), which both

¹⁸ The first 36 were included in the original publication, and due to their popularity ten more were added later.

depict well-known bridges and their surroundings in Edo.

Kafū demonstrates how he wants to point out the close relationship between Edo and its waterways by referring to *Ehon Sumidagawa ryōgan ichiran (Illustrated View of Both Banks of the Sumidagawa)*, a well-known series of woodblock prints by Hokusai, printed around 1800 (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 178). With the intention of depicting famous landmarks and scenes from everyday life along the Sumidagawa, Hokusai set sail in a boat near the small island of Tsukudajima in the bay of Edo (mentioned above) and travelled upstream to Ryōgoku and further on to Yanagibashi.¹⁹ Utagawa Hiroshige's *Tōto meishō zue (Famous Places in Edo, 1830-1835)*, too, shows many of Edo's waterscapes. In particular the first 27 prints depict scenes of the Edo bay and the Sumidagawa.²⁰ Another enormously famous guide to Edo cited in *Hiyorigeta is Edo meisho zue (Guide to Famous Edo Sites, 1834-1836)* by Saitō Geishin (1804-1878) and others, a comprehensively illustrated guide describing famous places in Edo (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11, 124). Due to its richly detailed illustrations as well as its sheer size this opus occupies a dominant position among Edo period guide-books: The seven volumes contain more than a thousand entries about famous spots in and around Edo.²¹ It was very successful and initiated a boom of follow-up works.

Another category of visual and textual representations cited in *Hiyorigeta*, in which Edo's everyday life is described are well-known examples of *gesaku* literature, i.e., of popular literature that is characterized by its playful, humorous and sometimes frivolous nature. Kafū refers to *Ryūkyō shinshi (New Chronicles of Yanagibashi, 1859 / 1871)* by Narushima Ryūhoku (1837-1884) and to *Ukiyodoko (A Barbershop of Our Days, 1811)* by Shikitei Sanba (1776-1822) (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 126, 152)²². Besides, Kafū quotes poems such as Takarai Kikaku's (1661-1707) *Ruikōji*, a famous collection of *haikai* and *haibun* published in Edo in 1707 (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 124). Kafū alludes to contemporary aspects of Tokyo by means of both his own personal remarks and of quotations from literary works by writers of his time such as Emi Suin (1869-1934), Togawa Shūkotsu (1871-1939) and Kinoshita Mokutarō (1885-1945) (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 142, 164). He also refers to the famous artist Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847-1915) who created numerous series of woodblock prints depicting Tokyo during the Meiji period (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 159). Finally, Kafū mentions contemporary works by himself, namely *Ōkubo-dayori (Tidings from Ōkubo, 1913)* and *Sumidagawa (The River Sumida, 1911)* (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 138, 153)

Many of the Japanese works mentioned in *Hiyorigeta* explore the topography of Edo-Tokyo and praise its beauty by virtue of the harmonious combination of hilly areas and

¹⁹ The complete series can be viewed online, cf. http://base1.nijl.ac.jp/iview/Frame.jsp?DB_ID=G0003917KTM&C_CODE=99-120-01 (retrieved June 19, 2011).

²⁰ Cf. Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 124 and 126. *Tōto meishō zue* is available online, cf. http://lib.s.kaiyodai.ac.jp/library/archive/bay_of_edo_htmls/edomiyage.htm (retrieved June 19, 2011).

²¹ *Edo meisho zue* comprises seven volumes, divided into twenty books. It is authored by three persons from different generations of the Saitō family. It took them nearly 40 years to write this voluminous work. Saitō Geshin (1804-1878) is the best-known of the three, as he completed it and saw it published.

²² *Ryūkyō shinshi* consists of two volumes. Ryūhoku began writing the first volume in 1859 and the second in 1871.

waterscapes. Kafū's plea to preserve such beauty and to acknowledge its cultural value is mirrored by the French writers and artists cited in *Hiyorigeta*. Many of them are representative 19th century French artists such as Jean-Francois Millet (1814-1875), who together with Camille Corot (1796-1875) was the leading artist of the so-called Barbizon school (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 146). Particularly Millet's painting *Le Semeur* (*The Sower*, in Japanese *Tanemaku hito*, 1850) is very well-known in Japan up to the present day since it is used as the trademark of the publishing house Iwanami shoten. Pierre Cécile Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) is another well-known French painter referred to in *Hiyorigeta* (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 172). Kafū often connects his memories of his impressions on viewing these paintings during his stay in Paris with observations he has made when walking around Tokyo. He quotes from various French literary works in a similar way. For example, while crossing the bridge Eitaibashi and watching the boats on the Sumidagawa, the first-person narrator in *Hiyorigeta* refers to Alphonse Daudet's (1840-1897) novel *La Belle Nivernaise* (*The Beauty from Niverne*, 1886), the story of an old boat and her crew, and laments the rapid change of the landscape by industrialization (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 143). Kafū combines impressions of the densely wooded area around the Nezu shrine in the vicinity of Ueno with poems by the symbolist writer Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), whom he greatly admired (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11, 170). In the chapter about temples, Kafū emphasizes the need to reevaluate the architecture of temples and shrines as true art (*bijutsu*) by referring to Louis Gonse (1846-1921) and Gaston Migeon (1861-1930), who both had a strong interest in Japanese art and had travelled in Japan. Gonse is known as the first French specialist for Japanese art. Migeon, specialized in Islamic and Japanese art, wrote *Chefs-d'Oeuvre d'art japonais* (*Key Works of Japanese Art*, 1905) and *Au Japon: Promenades aux sanctuaires de l'art* (*In Japan: Pilgrimages to the Shrines of Art*, 1908) (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 138).

A primary concern of Kafū is to point out how in contemporary Western and especially French urban discourse attention is devoted to the relationship between the preservation of urban waterscapes and the beauty of cities. He refers to two French writers, André Hallays (1859-1930) and Émile Magne (1877-1953), who both wrote about urban issues. For more than twenty years, from 1899 to 1923, Hallays contributed essays to the weekly journal *Journal des débats* (*Journal of Debates*) in which he described walks around famous places all over France. Kafū refers to Hallays' essays about Paris, entitled *En flânant à travers la France: Autour de Paris* and accentuates that Hallays' way of praising ancient places and sights while strolling around has something in common with the attitude of the dilettante writers and painters of the Edo period (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 114).²³

Probably one of Kafū's most important sources of information for his reappraisal of Tokyo's waterways is Émile Magne's lengthy treatise *L'Esthétique des villes: Le décor de la rue, les cortèges, marchés, bazars, foires, les cimetières, esthétique de l'eau, esthétique du feu, l'architectonique de la cité future* (*The Aesthetics of Cities: The Décor of the street, the Processions, Market Places, Bazaars, Fairs, Cemeteries,*

²³ For an in-depth study of the relationship between Hallays' *En flânant* and *Hiyorigeta*, cf. Takehara 1990.

Aesthetic of the Water, Aesthetic of the Fire, the Architecture of the City of the Future, 1908).²⁴ In *Hiyorigeta*, Kafū refers to this text several times. He translates the title *The Aesthetics of Cities* into the Japanese *Toshibiron* (都市美論) and at the beginning of the chapter on water remarks how Émile Magne describes the important role water in its various manifestations such as canals, rivers, river mouths, water fountains etc. plays for the beauty of a city (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 140).

Indeed, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century the question of what makes a city beautiful, i.e. pleasant to live in, was a major issue in urban discourse in Europe. Architects as well as artists and writers tried to identify aspects that would make municipalities feel warm and welcoming. Well-known contemporary writings in this field are *L'ésthetique de la rue* (*The Beauty of the Street*, Paris 1901) by Gustave Kahn, *La beauté de Paris: Conservation des aspects esthétiques* (*The Beauty of Paris: Conservation of Aesthetic Aspects*, Paris 1911) by Charles Magny, *Esthétique des villes* (*The Beauty of Cities*, Bruges 1893) by Charles Buls, and *Die Schönheit der großen Stadt* (*The Beauty of the Big City*, Berlin 1908) by August Endell. However, by far the most important thinker in this field of urban theory was Camillo Sitte (1843-1903), a well-known Austrian architect, art historian and city planning theoretician with great influence and authority on the development of urban construction planning. In 1889 Sitte published his famous book *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* (*City Planning According to Artistic Principles*) in which he pointed out that the urban space around an experiencing person should be the leading motif of urban planning. He thus turned away from the rather pragmatic planning policies of the time, which aimed at merely improving the basic infrastructure in the environmental and transport sectors.²⁵ To sum up, the discourse on urban beauty as revealed in Magne's and Hallays' essays constitutes a counter-discourse to the *Shiku kaisei* (Reorganization of the City Boroughs) policy of the Meiji government which aimed at modernizing the city along Western lines. The focus of the latter was on the creation of broad boulevards and representative public buildings as well as on equipping the city with modern drinking water provisions and with a working sewage system (Fujimori 1990: 3-205, 425-453). The politics of *Shiku kaisei* can thus be seen as the starting point of both the filling in of Tokyo's waterways and the clearance of Tokyo's *roji* areas during the following decades.

(3) Reappraisal of the *roji* in *Hiyorigeta*

Kafū devotes the seventh chapter of *Hiyorigeta* to the *roji* (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 152-155). According to Kafū, in the Edo period the vitality of the city was largely located in these teeming back alleys lined with shops, small houses, restaurants, and brothels. At the time of writing *Hiyorigeta*, the *roji* still were major spaces of everyday life, but were in danger of being torn down and replaced by more modern houses. Kafū perceived the *roji* as enclosed spaces separated from the new Tokyo in both geographical as well as cultural terms. In contrast to the main streets lined with Western-style shops, in Kafū's words

²⁴ This work is available online: <http://www.archive.org/details/lesthtiquedesvi00magngoog> (retrieved July 18, 2011).

²⁵ Sittes work has been translated into Japanese as *Hiroba no zōkei* (*The Design of Public Squares*, 1968).

the shady *roji* evoked “an atmosphere of sadness and human feelings, similar to that of the ferry boat.” The *roji* are home to the rather poor people; however, they offer various forms of living. The *roji* are calm and quiet locations relieving stress and pressure:

The comparison between the iron bridge and the ferry boats have drawn my attention to the *roji* that are hidden between the splendid main streets. The atmosphere of the main streets that are lined with imitations of Western-style shops is similar to that of the steel bridges on which the tramways pass by. In contrast to these the shady, dim *roji* evoke the sadness (*mono no aware*) and deeply rooted humanity of the ferry boats. Among the illustrations in Shikitei Samba’s *Ukiyodoko* there is one made by Utagawa Kuninao that shows the entrance of a *roji*. [...] As one can see from this woodblock print, then as now *roji* still are places where the poor live. Here hides a diversity of life that is invisible from the sunlit main streets. Here there is the transience of mean dwellings as well as the peace of seclusion. [*Roji*] are also happy places of leisure and of recklessness compensating for the living conditions of failure, of misfortune and of poverty. [...] Although *roji* are narrow and short, they are rich in tastes and changes. One can therefore say that they are like a long novel. (Nagai 1992-95, Vol. 11: 152)

Kafū’s praise of the shady and hidden atmosphere of the *roji* thus anticipates aspects of Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s famous essay *In’ei raisan (In Praise of Shadows)* published in 1933. Both writers pay tribute to the rather dim and asymmetric patterns of the Japanese form of arranging space. While Kafū focuses on the exterior, Tanizaki praises the traditional Japanese way of designing the interior. Both writers evolved their spatial concepts through interaction with Western notions of urban space. In this respect, Kafū’s concept of the *roji* is closely connected to the discourse on modernity in both the “East” as well in the “West” of his time.

(4) The rediscovery of *Hiyorigeta* and its connection to the discourse on “the beauty of the city” (*toshibiron*) in present-day Japan

Recently not only Kafū’s writings have been rediscovered but also his particular lifestyle, including his inquisitiveness and explorative attitude towards Tokyo. A considerable number of essay-like guides and cultural topographies have been published. They are written as descriptions of walks through Tokyo, and some of them even introduce walks along the very routes taken by Kafū.²⁶ People have come to realize that *Hiyorigeta* for example is a very stimulating text for discovering Tokyo’s backstreets and hidden corners. For instance, following this renewed interest in Kafū’s intimate relationship with Tokyo, it has become a popular practice to draw on *Edo kiriezu* while exploring Tokyo’s *roji* areas on foot (Jinbunsha henshūbu 2002). This practice reanimates Kafū’s interest in

²⁶ Cf. Iwagaki 2007; Kondō 2008; and *Tōkyō nijikan wōkingu: Aruku, kanjiru, egaku*, a series of illustrated walking guidebooks through Tokyo’s central areas. One volume introduces walking routes related to Kafū’s life and works, cf. Inoue and Yabuno 2004.

premodern representations of the city, which is mirrored in the maps the narrator in *Hiyorigeta* uses for his investigation of Edo-Tokyo: He relies on so-called *Edo kiriezu*, i.e., portable patchwork maps created by woodblock printers during the Edo period. Kafū's own reflections on Tokyo's modernization and his positive impression of the cities he visited during his sojourn abroad have also become subject to recent investigation. For example, with this aim in mind Nakajima Kunihiko analyzes essays by Kafū published prior to *Hiyorigeta*. He thus explores texts that paved the way for *Hiyorigeta*. Kafū's concept of urban beauty and the impact of French writers such as André Hallays and Émile Magne (mentioned above) on his way of looking at cities are particularly brought into focus (Nakajima 2009). In her study *Kafū to Meiji no toshi keikan (Kafū and Urban Landscape of the Meiji Period)* Minami Asuka explores Kafū's discussions about urban issues, especially about urban landscape, and analyzes views of the city as revealed in Kafū's works of the Meiji and Taishō periods. She then relates them to urban and landscape design policies in Japan from the Meiji period onwards to the present day (Minami 2009).

The recent new approach to urban design in Japan forms an important backdrop to reassessing Kafū's works and their relation to urban discourse. In contrast to the urban renewal politics of the 20th century that mainly relied on demolition and displacement and frequently privileged real estate profit over the needs of local residents, the new urbanism of the 21st century intends to transform the imperfectly built environment with the resourcefulness of existing communities. Key concepts are participation, the creation and renewal of streets and city districts that are fit for living in and a new relationship between the city and nature. This trend is backed by the *Keikanhō (Landscape Law)* implemented in June 2004. One of the main objectives of this law is to promote the protection of urban heritage on the one hand, and to design landscapes and cityscapes in a beautiful way in order to improve the quality of life and make human habitation more sustainable on the other (Nishimura 2005; Nihon kenchiku gakkai 2009). In this connection, the discourse on urban beauty at the end of the 19th century to the 20th century considerably resembles that of the present day. In this respect, *Hiyorigeta* can be read as an aesthetic critique of Meiji urbanism and as a contribution to the world-wide discourse on the beauty of the city that circulated at the beginning of the 20th century. In contrast to modernist urbanism that focused on implementing pragmatic functions in urban space, famous architects and thinkers of that time such as Camillo Sitte and also architects nearly forgotten today such as Charles Buls or Émile Magne wrote about the beauty of the city beyond modern functionalism.²⁷

²⁷ For Charles Buls, cf. Smets 1995.

IV. Reappraising Tokyo's waterways and *roji* in present-day Tokyo

In recent years, waterfront scenery and the openness of waterfront space have become more highly valued, and the multiple functions rivers and waterways offer to urban environments have accordingly come to be treasured as a key to urban regeneration. In many cities all over the world waterfront environments with their rivers and canals are regarded as ideal locations for implementing new types of urban regeneration. Serving as a backdrop to this process, the serious damage to and pollution of both rivers and the waterfront environment caused by modernization and industrialization during the last century have been increasingly criticized. Rivers and waterways were first exploited as sewage systems, serving as the garbage dumps of urban civilization, then they became sites for constructing highways or facilities to prevent flooding. It is only very recently that they have received any renewed attention. However, in Japan, among others, improvement policies for waterfront environments are going on. In 1988, several cities including Tokyo were designated for the *My Town, My River Improvement Project*, and now have regeneration projects for their waterfront environments underway.²⁸

Against this backdrop, Tokyo's waterfront environment and *roji* areas are being re-evaluated as essential assets for a prosperous, well balanced and satisfying urban life as well as for the long-term goal of improving Tokyo's attractiveness, livability, and sustainability (Fukukawa and Ichikawa 2008). The *roji* has become a major spatial concept in the discourse on alternative forms of urban modernity which emphasizes how necessary the revitalization of the city (*toshi saisei*) and sustainable urban planning have become. The rising interest in Tokyo's waterways and *roji* also can be regarded as a criticism of the increasing number of monumental projects such as Roppongi Hills and Tokyo Midtown. In contrast to these the *roji* form de-monumentalized space patterns that relate to the need to reduce the scale of the city to human dimensions and to slow down the pace of life in particular zones, thus creating a comfortable living environment that provides relaxation and quietude.

The recent debate about the beauty of the city and the rediscovery of slow motion areas can be traced back to the early 20th century. As mentioned above, Kafū's returnee stories and especially *Hiyorigeta* are an important source for understanding the early stages of this discourse. Moreover, later in life Kafū wrote numerous essays in which he on the one hand praised the Sumidagawa and its embankments for their cultural value and auratic sense of place, and on the other blamed the rapid change and destruction of this landscape by industrialization. Tokyo's urban periphery in general and in particular the landscape of Mukōjima changed rapidly (Waley 2010). The area surrounding the Sumida River is well known for being a waterfront environment that is connected with a wealth of legends and history which developed from its rich cultural resources. To this day, a number of natural and historical sites are to be found along the riverside areas between Asakusa and Mukōjima, a region which has undergone numerous transformations and is rich in history.

²⁸ <http://www.a-rr.net/jp/en/index.html> (retrieved July 11, 2011).

During the early Edo period, the Sumidagawa still formed the eastern boundary of the city, but after the disastrous Meireki Fire in 1657 the authorities decided to colonize the left-hand bank of the river to alleviate crowding. From this time on the Sumidagawa itself began to be used as an area for relaxation and recreation. Pleasure boats floated along the river connecting the most famous amusement areas, Edobashi and Nihonbashi, with Ryōgoku, Asakusa, and the pleasure quarter of Yoshiwara, while the riversides offered many sites for restaurants and teahouses. Most of Edo's places of entertainment were located along the riverbanks. Especially the bridges were nodes of the water transport network and became favorite amusement areas. From today's perspective, the entire Sumidagawa region was a peripheral slow zone until the early 20th century. It was characterized by a close relationship between waterways and *roji* areas (Schulz 2010).

To sum up, Edo-Tokyo can be characterized as a city of water. However, this city is not the only one in which the waterfront space plays a major role in the formation and structure of urban landscape. The same applies to cities all over the world. In general, a waterfront environment consisting of rivers or seashore is nearly indispensable to the formation and development of cities, for such environments form the basis of logistics and the foundation of cities. Throughout history, urbanization and the waterfront environment are closely connected. In other words, most major cities have a waterfront environment of some kind. It is commonly stated that in many cases the major element that adds charm to urban landscapes is the integration of historical townscapes and the waterfront environment, as this works to make the landscape more interesting and beautiful by creating a variety of perspectives. Famous examples are Amsterdam and Venice. The richness of the waterfront environment serves as the lifeline that preserves the functions of urban life and at the same time brands these cities as their landmark and expands awareness of them on a global scale. The Seine in Paris, the River Thames in London and the Spree in Berlin are convincing examples of waterfront development where the waterfront environment and the regional natural environment, history and culture have been brought together. In all of these examples, walkways surrounding the waterfront have been improved through regeneration of the waterfront environment. Included in such environments are residential areas that help to preserve a comfortable lifestyle and commercial areas for shopping and entertainment.

There are also many cities in Asia with rivers flowing through them. Among such cities, several have succeeded in implementing projects for water quality improvement and waterfront environment regeneration, in order to tackle the issue of environmental deterioration of surrounding rivers. One such project of particular interest is the renewal of the Cheonggyecheon River in Seoul. Various water purification measures have been taken in the course of this project, and recreational water facilities have been installed. As a result, the riverside region was successfully transformed into a recreational space within the city that is much loved by the people. Similar renewal projects of the waterfront environment are found in Japan, too. For example, in Osaka, where a number of canals have been running through the city for centuries, a boardwalk called the Tombori River Walk, which is set up in the heart of the city, plays an important role in regenerat-

ing the City of Water. The redevelopment project in Nihonbashi, Tokyo, which is under discussion, also shares some prominent features with the regeneration of the Cheonggyecheon in Seoul.

V. Conclusion and outlook

It seems that the 21st century may turn out to be a turning point for Japan in terms of urban planning and urban development. A variety of important issues, such as Japan's transformation from a growth-oriented society to a mature society, the problems of the aging population and low birth rate, the general issue of shrinkage, the end of the oil-oriented era, climatic changes, and the heat-island phenomenon, all lie behind this major transformation. Since cities of today face global competition, efforts should be made to create an environment that is sustainable and attractive, not only for the residents in general but also for domestic and foreign industries. The Fukushima nuclear disaster certainly will deepen discussions about urban sustainability and the quest for a "green Tokyo" in many ways. The fact that many atomic power plants are currently shut down discloses the vulnerability of megacities such as Tokyo which are largely dependent on energy produced outside the city.

In this context, *Hiyorigeta* provides surprising insights into Tokyo's past. Kafū contrasts issues of modernity with those of urban beauty and relates the latter to the past in which water and green spaces existed in excess. Through pointing out that these are major assets of a city that create urban beauty of lasting value, Kafū anticipates current discourses on urban sustainability.

However, in line with research following the spatial turn mentioned at the beginning of this article it should be noted that topographical descriptions such as *Hiyorigeta* do not simply depict reality as it is. Like all fictional texts they are highly self-conscious constructs that reflect the contradictory and constantly changing images of a particular place. Kafū's literary representations of Tokyo illustrate the narrative and fictional character of any literary depiction of spaces and places. Particular parts of both the real historic and literary spaces and places as represented in existing works of literature are first chosen, then arranged along personal aesthetic preferences, and finally mediated through a text.

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