Panel Title: Representations of the city as a liminal space in post-war Japan

Panel Abstract

A site of progress that is deeply alienating to the human spirit, the constant oscillation between these contrasts defines the city as a liminal space. This interdisciplinary panel investigates the impact of the modern city’s liminality on urban subjects’ lives.

Jennifer Scott examines the country/city binary and the shifting state of mind of protagonists in the work of Furui Yoshikichi. Acknowledging the problems of a clear urban/rural divide, she argues instead for the insistent presence of liminality in Furui’s texts. Barbara Hartley examines Shanghai no hotaru (1976, Shanghai Firefly) by Takeda Taijun, set in Shanghai in the final year of the war. Liminality here relates to the depiction of the great Chinese metropolis as colluding with while contradictorily resisting the occupying Japanese.

Ross Tunney introduces the city in the post-war American military base photography of Tômatsu Shômei. Arguing against the usual “good Japanese/bad American” interpretation, Tunney concludes that Tômatsu’s work confirms the geophysical and psychological liminality of the urban base. Eiko Osaka discusses differing magazine depictions of Asian and western cities as travel destinations for young Japanese women. Liminality in this context relates to reader pursuit of romance in the west while seeking relaxation in the Asian urban space.

Proposed Program Stream: Cities, Nature and Landscapes
**Paper 1 Title:** Furui Yoshikichi: The city-country divide

**Name of Author 1:** Jennifer Scott

Institutional Affiliation: Shujitsu University, Okayama

**Paper 1 Abstract**

In his earlier works *Yôko* (1971), *Hijiri* (1975) and *Sumika* (1979), Furui Yoshikichi often uses the juxtaposition of the countryside or mountain regions and the city to represent the psychological state of his protagonists. This paper will focus on these protagonists as they negotiate the liminal space between city and country.

In *Yôko*, a young man comes across the title character as she sits motionless in a mountain valley, apparently suffering from some kind of psychological crisis. After assisting her back to the city, the two meet a number of times and slowly their relationship develops. It is through this process that the circumstances surrounding Yôko’s problems become clearer. Yôko becomes increasingly ill at ease, and her mental disturbance more obvious. During these episodes, Yôko is as if another person. In the ravine, she appears to achieve a rare communion with the natural forces around her. In fact, she is more in tune with nature than the young man, who, despite his apparent familiarity with the mountains, really perceives them in terms of a challenge to be conquered, of something to brag about to his friends.

*Hijiri* is firmly located in the present, in a modern, post-industrial society. ‘I’, a student who has lost his way in the modern world of Tokyo after the disintegration of his relationship and seeks solace in the mountains, and Sae, a young woman who has returned to her ancestral village to recuperate physically and spiritually after her own relationship break-up, become intermediaries between the divine or spiritual world and the world of everyday human experience, between the traditional and the modern way of life, and between the natural and the man-made worlds. He has been in the mountains struggling through dangerous conditions, and finally finds refuge in a dilapidated temple in Sae’s village. Sae has found herself forced by circumstances to take over the care of her seriously ill grandmother. She explains that she wants him to stay on for a couple of days to play the role of the traditional holy man, or *hijiri* for her grandmother’s peace of mind.

*Sumika* continues the story of their relationship and Sae’s psychological deterioration after their return to the city. Paradoxically, her disturbed state begins to become increasingly obvious at a time which is generally accepted by society as the most ordered and settled period of a woman’s life, that of marriage, childbearing and family life. Her disturbance reflects her position outside the perceived social
norms, while simultaneously enabling her to maintain her location on the periphery. The suburban location of her apartment symbolises her isolation from the mainstream, and provides a spatial representation of the border region between rural tradition and the urban lifestyle in which she now finds herself.
Paper 2 Title: The city as liminal protagonist in Takeda Taijun’s *Shanhai no Hotaru* (Shanghai Firefly)

Name of Author: Barbara Hartley
Institutional Affiliation: University of Tasmania

Paper 2 Abstract

A persistent feature in a number of works by the post-war novelist, essayist, dramatist and pre-war translator of modern Chinese literary material, Takeda Taijun (1912-1976), is the setting of mainland China. This presentation will focus on Takeda’s final long work and one of the writer’s key China texts, *Shanhai no hotaru* (Shanghai Firefly). Commenced in early 1976 and left incomplete at the time of Takeda’s death from cancer in October of the same year, the ‘novel’ is a semi-autobiographical account of a young man, Takeda, who arrives in Shanghai (as the author himself did) in June, 1944, to take up a position (like Takeda) as a Chinese translator of Japanese cultural material. Produced with his wife, Takeda Yuriko (1925-1993), as amanuensis following his partial paralysis from a stroke in 1971 and when the author was in seriously failing health, the text – until its abrupt cessation due to the author’s death – is an account of Japanese life in the Chinese metropolis from mid-1944 until an unspecified time in the summer of 1945 when the city is rife with rumours of an imminent American attack from the air.

The work is particularly notable for its representation, often with aliases, of a range of real-life Japanese literary visitors to the city. Hino Ashihei (1907-1960), Takami Jun (1907-1965) and Tamura Toshiko (1884-1945) are three of the *bundan*, or literary community, identities who pass through its pages.

Arguably, however, the real protagonist of this novel is the city of Shanghai itself. An oasis of shelter for both Japanese officials and their Chinese collaborators (a concept that, as Parks M. Coble observes, is problematic in that a significant number of those so labelled were merely taking the opportunity offered them to choose life over death), the Shanghai of this novel is an insulated terrain in the hell of a war. Outside the city, furthermore, the looming possibility of defeat takes the invaders to new heights of atrocity. For protagonist Takeda, the city is a liminal site which, even within the confines of the well-resourced French concession largely requisitioned by the Japanese administration, refuses easy access. Wandering the streets and entering various public sites such as theatres and drinking establishments, this rather guileless young man from Japan might easily be mistaken for the Baudelaire/Benjamin flâneur. He is disqualified, however, from such a category by his on-going sense of alienation in this city that, while superficially complicit with representatives of the invading
administration, ultimately refuses to be disciplined by the despised Japanese. I will draw on the work of Rhonda Lemke Sanford and her discussion of how, as much as the physical map, the emergence of the cognitive map and topological thinking in the early modern era permitted a definition of self and the ascription of meaning to place. My specific aim is to construct a ‘memory map’ of the occupied city of Shanghai as this is depicted in Takeda’s texts as a contradictory site of both resistance to and collusion with official authority.
Paper 3 Title: Liminal Spaces: US Military Base Towns in TÔmatsu Shômei’s Japan

Name of Author: Ross Tunney (doctoral candidate)
Institutional Affiliation: University of Tasmania

Paper 3 Abstract

This paper will focus on depictions of the American military bases in Japan as taken by Japanese photographer, TÔmatsu Shômei. TÔmatsu was a teenager at the onset of the Occupation and, like those of many of his compatriots, his feelings towards the American presence are best characterised as ambivalent. The Americans were at once liberators and oppressors, and the permeation of American culture into Japanese society a double-edged sword that brought both freedom and corruption. For TÔmatsu, the spaces that most potently embodied the postwar intersection of America and Japan were those surrounding the American bases. For this reason, TÔmatsu spent much of his career photographing the various bases around Japan. In his photographs of these spaces, Japanese women and children become sacrificial victims to the project of national rebuilding, and emblematic of the corrosive effect of Americanisation upon Japanese society. In many of TÔmatsu’s images taken in base towns, women and children are passive bodies upon which Americans impose themselves without restraint. Yet, as this paper will demonstrate, the very liminality of the base town meant that identities could never be stable enough to support a simple dichotomy of US oppressors versus Japanese oppressed. Instead, TÔmatsu’s images not only reveal the complexity of relations between the Japanese and Americans in Japan, but also foreground the power dynamics that operated in both American and Japanese society.

My paper will profile the complexity inherent in several of TÔmatsu’s images via an analysis that draws on the social and historical discourses that informed the creation of his images. I will argue that many of TÔmatsu’s base-town photographs reveal entrenched power discourses operating at the time. First, and most apparent, is the imbalance between the positions of American servicemen and Japanese women. Second, relations between Japanese men and Japanese women still largely resulted in disempowerment for women despite constitutional reforms. Third, TÔmatsu’s photographs reveal the tenuous position of African Americans in the context of the base town. Although African American servicemen were dominant over Japanese people in these spaces, their status in the US Armed Forces largely reflected their subordinate position in America’s domestic society. Moreover, TÔmatsu’s photographic incursion into these liminal spaces further destabilized the African American serviceman; many of TÔmatsu’s images bear the traces of Japanese derogatory discourses directed towards people of colour. Last, photographs taken near the Okinawa military bases reflect the historically unequal
relationship between the Japanese state and the people of Okinawa, which construed the ‘Okinawan’ as Japan’s primal Other or else sacrificial victim to the state’s broader objectives.
Paper 4 Title: A comparative analysis of western and Asian cities featured in travel articles in magazines read by young Japanese women

Name of Author: Eiko Osaka
Institutional Affiliation: Suragadai University, Saitama

Paper 4 Abstract

The purpose of this research is to compare the western and Asian cities featured in Japanese women’s magazines as travel destinations for young women in order to consider both reader travel objectives and social background. As Kaplan (1995) points out, the appeal of travel lies not only in the fact that it provides a release from everyday obligations and a chance to meet new people at the travel destination site, but also in the psychological benefits of being immersed in the natural environment. Thus, along with things such as fashion, love and beauty, travel is one of the themes consistently taken up in women’s magazines.

From the 1970s to the 1980s, the magazines An-an and Non-no focussed on the beautiful streets and natural scenery of the various places around Japan, setting a standard of leisurely travel that saw young women unhurriedly sipping tea and eating cakes in fashionable coffee shops. Recently, however, there has been a change in travel patterns and travel destinations resulting from the changing social and financial status of women that has accompanied the rise in the number of unmarried women and the increasing numbers of married women continuing in employment with larger enterprises. This has led to a shift in preference from domestic to overseas travel. According to Uemura (2003), since many unmarried women live at home with their parents and thus have limited housework or economic responsibility, they not only have available time and financial freedom, but also the freedom to be mobile.

Although in the past women’s magazines generally introduced cities such as Paris, London or New York as overseas travel destinations, in recent years there has been a focus on various cities throughout Asia including Seoul, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Europe has long been a site of romantic desire for Japan. In contrast to this, the Asian city is a place to travel for relaxation and release from stress and tension. Formerly travel destinations for Japanese men, many of these cities are located in sites that were once under imperial Japanese colonial control or occupation. Nevertheless, young woman can travel in these places feeling less conspicuous than they do in the west and therefore are able to enjoy shopping, massages and beauty treatments without inhibition. In this paper I will demonstrate the differences in articles written with Asian cities as travel destinations for women with those that recommend enjoying novel experiences in various cities throughout Europe and America.