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An illustrated guide to ‘unfamous places’: Satoshi Miki’s *Adrift in Tokyo* (2007)

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The months and days, the travellers of a hundred ages;
the years that come and go, voyagers too.
floating away their lives on boats,
growing old as they lead horses by the bit,
for them, each day a journey, travel their home.
Many, too, are the ancients who perished on the road.
Some years ago, seized by wanderlust, I wandered
along the shores of the sea.

Matsuo Bashō (Bashō 2002: 211)

Tenten/Adrift in Tokyo (Satoshi Miki, 2007) follows the wanderings of two men: Fukuhara Aiichiro (Tomokazu Miura), a debt collector, self-proclaimed saunterer at heart, and Fumiya Takemura (Joe Odagiri), a penniless law student and saunterer by force.¹ Fukuhara has killed his wife and intends to turn himself in to central Tōkyō’s grim-looking Kasumigaseki Police station, a few streets away from the Imperial Palace. To entice Fumiya to criss-cross Tōkyō streets with him, Fukuhara promises to wipe out his massive debt: “We walk to where I want to go. You come along with me, that’s all. (...) No time limit. We’ll walk till I’m satisfied. Three days or it could be a month. A million for walking in Tōkyō”. Fumiya is in such a rock-bottom financial situation that he readily accepts. At the same time the camera shows, like an ill omen, an innocent fly being trapped by one of the carnivorous plants the future travelling companions are standing next to in Tōkyō’s Jindai Botanical Gardens. Fumiya, who until then had been dragging his feet – he is a typical *dara dara yaruki* young man (the onomatopoeia *dara dara* imitates the sound of a thick liquid continuously dripping) (Jolivet 2010: 196) will follow Fukuhara on his heels, both literally and figuratively, as if they were attached together with a red rope like Matsumoto and Sawako, the two itinerant beggars in Takeshi Kitano’s *Dōruzu/Dolls* (2002).

Tenten in Japanese literally means “spot [to] spot”, both “here and there” but also “little by little”. Therefore, Fukuhara and Fumiya do not just wander around Tōkyō aimlessly, as we could surmise from the English title of the film, they also make various noteworthy stops along the way. In fact, the film is laid out as a kind of modern *meisho zue* (illustrated guides to celebrated spots, which had their heyday in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) encompassing places significant in Fukuhara’s and Fumiya’s lives and memories. As in the original *meisho zue*, the

¹ In ‘Walking’, Thoreau stresses the different meanings of the word : “[It] is beautifully derived from idle people who roved about the country, in the middle ages, and asked charity, under pretence of going *à la sainte terre*” (...), a saunterer — a holy-lander. (...) Some, however, would derive the word from *sans terre*, without land or a home, which, therefore, in the good sense, will mean, having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere.” (Thoreau 1863: 161-162) Both definitions apply to Fukuhara and Fumiya.

meibutsu or special features of the places they haunt consist of their tasty culinary specialties, the location of a renowned temple or historical landmark, or the traces these places have left in classic literature, history, legend and folklore. At the same time redemptive trip down memory lane, coming-of-age journey, pilgrimage, gourmet trail, and touristic circuit, the multi-layered *Adrift in Tokyo*, based on an original novel by Naoki Prize winner Yoshinaga Fujita, turns into a nostalgic survey of the Tōkyō urban-scape.

My aim in this article is to show how Satoshi Miki challenges the hackneyed, crude vision of the Japanese capital portrayed in various movies released in Europe lately by giving the Japanese capital pride of place in his off-beat comedy. Indeed, when a Japanese film graces European screens, film locations are more often than not omitted from the résumé or at least remain vague as if distributors were anticipating a spectator's hypothetical lack of knowledge of Japanese geography. On the other hand, this unfortunate oversight might just indicate that Japanese filmmakers themselves give priority to the plot rather than the locations in their films because Japanese town's "architecture and infrastructure have lost the social significance they had before the war" as the French geographer Augustin Berque claims (Berque 1993: 90).

By contrast, non-Japanese filmmakers publicize the fact they went all the way to Tōkyō – they rarely venture elsewhere in Japan - to film their new opus, but then tend to rehash the cliché of the Japanese capital as "a gigantic city, a chaotic anthill of anonymous crowds [and] packed trains [with] a schizophrenic population torn between tradition and modernity", laments the French author Philippe Forrest in his essay *Retour à Tokyo* (Forest 2014: 194-195).² Forrest then goes on to demonstrate how easy it would be to conjure up a more congenial image of Tōkyō, but doubts this new vision would attract people's interest. Paradoxically, as the enthusiasm for Japanese culture grows in Europe, popular mangas and original works of fiction in which the alienating representations of the metropolis have given way to a more visually palatable, genuine, suburban Tōkyō are taking bookshops by storm.

However, Satoshi Miki's film through its two endearing characters whose fates are intimately related to Tōkyō's, is still very much alone in recent cinema in giving the Japanese capital its scent of authenticity, hence its cult status in various parts of the world. Far from being an outlandish piece of work, *Adrift in Tokyo* rings true because it establishes, from its inception, a continuous dialogue with various existing trends (cinematographic, literary, pictorial) and folkloric beliefs within Japanese culture.

Therefore the purpose of this article is to explore the refined use of intertextuality in Satoshi Miki's film with a particular emphasis on some classic and modern filmic, literary, pictorial representations of Tōkyō and its inhabitants' way of life, customs and beliefs drawing examples from Hou Hsiao-hsien, Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Kenji Mizoguchi, Yasujirō Ozu, among others filmmakers, or from writers such as Matsuo Bashō, Jippensha Ikku, Hiromi Kawakami, or again from *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints to mangas. Fukuhara and Fumiya could become the honorary members of a *Club des flâneurs* such as the one Louis Huart dreamt of in *Physiologie du flâneur* (1841) because they have "good legs, good ears and good eyes" (Huart 1841: 53), physical

² All translations from the French are mine except when otherwise noted in the references.

advantages also required from *Adrift in Tokyo*'s spectators if they want to fully enjoy the film.

Law student Fumiya lives in a tiny, dingy, cluttered flat in the western suburb of Kichijōji, from which he and Fukuhara will set out for their action-packed, meandering odyssey across Tōkyō. Kichijōji is a neighbourhood of the city of Musashino which, in the seventeenth century, when the Tokugawa shogunate settled in the Kantō Plain, was part of the Musashi province dreaded for its wilderness. "The area central expanse was Musashino, where *no* indicates open, vacant country. (...) To invoke Musashino, in poetic terms, was to refer to all that *lacked* and failed to be civilized. (...) Musashino stood for autumn – a time of falling leaves and colder days – thus associated with sadness and loss," writes Timon Screech (Screech 2008: 71-72). Indeed, at the beginning of the film, the lonely, desperate Fumiya embodies the characteristics of old Musashino and leaving Kichijōji behind one fine autumn day, will allow him to grow and become a fully-fledged adult. To a certain extent, Fumiya's fate with its ups and downs gives a human face to Tōkyō's urban evolution. Fumiya is a distant cousin of Tsutomu (Akihito Katayama) who, in Kenji Mizoguchi's 1951 film *Musashino-Fujin/The Lady of Musashino*'s final scene, leaves his cousin Michiko (Kinuyo Tanaka)'s death bed and runs through the vast, wild expanse of the Musashino plain, past the ruins of a war-ravaged house. Stopping abruptly on the edge between the village of Musashino and Tōkyō, he has Michiko's suicide letter etched on his memory: "By the time you read this letter I will be dead. But before I go, there is something I must tell you. Your beloved, beautiful Musashino only exists in your dreams. It's a sentimental idea. Factories and schools and the dynamic new development of the city of Tōkyō are the reality of Musashino". As far as his eyes can see, Tsutomu discovers a breath-taking landscape of rooftops, factories, and extended roads deployed at his feet. Tsutomu then understands that he would cling to the past in vain as nothing will be able to stop the fast-paced progress of the "octopus with elastic tentacles" as Jean Cocteau described Tōkyō in his travelogue *Tour du Monde en 80 jours: Mon premier voyage/Round the world again in 80 days* (Cocteau 1936: 183-184). Indeed, a bird's eye view of the Japanese capital today shows that the octopus has stretched its supple arms in every direction as Damien Faure shows in the spectacular introducing shots of *Espaces Intercalaires/Intercalary Spaces* (2012).³ The filmmaker Kiju Yoshida reckons, in his seminal book on Yasujiro Ozu, that it is quite "impossible to pick the area which, on its own, could epitomize Tōkyō." For him, by its sheer size, Tōkyō is literally "beyond description" (Yoshida 2004: 146).

Therefore, when Abbas Kiarostami rose to the challenge and announced that the follow up to *Copie Conforme/Certified Copy* (2010) with its magnificent Tuscan settings, would be shot in Tōkyō, the perspective to see the Japanese capital through his eyes was a relishing prospect. Yet, when *Like Someone in Love* (2012) was released, many were struck by the conspicuous absence of Tōkyō sights in the film and were left disappointed by Kiarostami's otherwise trademark windscreens and bar mirrors reflexions or long takes of nondescript street corners. To those, the Iranian filmmaker explained that he "was somewhat dreading to show Tōkyō as

³ Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYRLwOmr0FY>. Accessed 3 December 2018.

everybody expected to see it” (Kiarostami 2012a) and that his purpose had never been to provide film audiences with “a National Geographic image” (Kiarostami 2012b) of the town. In the film’s Making off, Abbas Kiarostami rams the point home: “You ask: ‘Why Japan?’ I don’t know if I can give you a satisfactory answer in the time available. I’ll stick with a simple answer, which might be more pertinent than any other: Sushi! Is that a convincing answer?”

Other filmmakers such as Sofia Coppola with *Lost in Translation* (2003) or Alejandro González Iñárritu with *Babel* (2006) to Gaspard Noé and his hallucinogenic *Enter the Void* (2009), or again Isabel Coixet, author of *Mapa de los sonidos de Tokio/Map of the Sounds of Tokyo* (2009) among others, have brought back from Japan a string of threadbare images albeit hauntingly spectacular, mainly of Tōkyō by night. They invariably picture it as a full-scale Kabuki Cho, i.e. a district popular for its neon-lit alleyways, nightclubs, hostess bars and love hotels haunted by a shady crowd, where murderers rub shoulders with pimps, prostitutes, drug dealers, junkies, people with suicidal tendencies or, like in Leos Carax’s *Merde* (2008), with a dishevelled green man reminiscent of Godzilla, who lurks in the sewers and spreads terror around town. “One can’t understand a thing there as it’s all written in Japanese, so in restaurants it’s difficult to know what you’re going to eat” whines Julien (Jérémy Elkaim) in Elise Girard’s *Belleville Tokyo* (2011), a platitude which convinces his gullible friends he went to Tōkyō when he actually was hiding in the Parisian district of Belleville.⁴

Tōkyō remains a mysterious, unconquerable, indecipherable metropolis in British fiction as well. For instance, Eiji Miyake, the hero of David Mitchell’s *Number9dream* (2001), wanders “in the surreal and frenetic world of modern Tōkyō” amongst “pin-striped drones, a lip-pierced hairdresser, midday drunks, child-laden housewives” (Burgess 2012). As for Jonathan Lee’s protagonist in *Who Is Mr Satoshi?* (2010), he journeys through “the urban maelstrom of Tōkyō”, dazzled by its “buzzing neon shapes”. Emerging from a tunnel, he feels like “a disgorged newborn unable to take in the world outside the womb.” (Burgess 2012) However, “old views” of Japan similar to those pioneer operators filmed in the Empire of the Rising Sun a hundred years ago, can come at the worst possible moment like the incongruous, larger than life traditional house in which Sandra Brody (Juliette Binoche) lives in Gareth Edwards’ remake of *Godzilla* (2014).⁵

If representing Tōkyō on screen is challenging, its complete destruction seems more camera-friendly, a privilege mostly shared amongst Japanese filmmakers. Sakyi Komatsu’s “Asian Atlantis”, notoriously situated near the meeting point of three tectonic plates, has starred in many disaster-movies such as Akira Kurosawa’s *Mount Fuji in red* (1990) for instance, in which a formidable volcanic eruption activates the meltdown of a nearby nuclear plant leaving no survivors. When the *Namazu*, the legendary catfish on which Japan is said to lie upon, wags its tail, a

⁴ For a humorous list of Japanese clichés see ‘The Journey to Japan Sequence’ in Agnès Varda’s *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse/The Gleaners and I* (2000) (Calatayud 2011: 224-231).

⁵ When Albert Kahn’s photographers and film operators were sent to Japan to record images for the banker’s *Archives of the Planet*, he specifically asked them to shun old views of the country, an advice some modern filmmakers should pay heed to. See *Clichés japonais. 1908-1930, le temps suspendu* (9 November 2010-18 September 2011) at the Albert-Kahn Museum (Boulogne-Billancourt, France). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNhyFRFKOUA>. Accessed 3 December 2018.

violent earthquake strikes awakening Godzilla in Tomoyuki Tanaka's eponymous film (1954); it triggers a tsunami in Nobuo Mizuta's *252: Seizonsha ari /252 Signal of Life* (2008); or sets Tōkyō on fire in Hayao Miyazaki's *Kaze tachinu/The Wind Rises* (2013) among a plethora of other films. Moreover, if the disaster has not yet occurred, it is imminent as in Shinji Aoyama's *Yūrika/Eureka* (2000) in which a character predicts that "a tsunami is on its way [and that] everybody will die" or in Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Tokyo Sonata* (2008) when the young Takashi Sasaki wishes for the Big One to strike to topple everything over and free Tōkyō from all "the arrogant bastards" who live there.

From these various examples we can infer that in many filmmakers' imagination, an apocalyptic future awaits the Tōkyō Metropolis which will turn into the inhospitable Musashino all over again, a "wilderness overgrown with miscanthus grass" Lady Nijō travelled across in 1289, on her way back to the refined Heian Court after a pilgrimage (Dame Nijō 2004: 299).⁶

Yet Kiyoshi Kurosawa's depiction of Tōkyō is a case apart. From *Kairo/Pulse* (2001) in which Tokyoites self-ignite or vanish without a trace turning Tōkyō into a ghost town, not forgetting *Tokyo Sonata* where it is Kurosawa's "main character" (Kurosawa 2009), to *Riaru: Kanzen naru kubinagaryū no hi/Real* (2014) where it is literally erased from the surface of the earth or his latest *Yosho/Foreboding* (2017) with its invading aliens, most of his films have been shot in various areas of Tōkyō. Kurosawa is particularly fond of Embankment 13, a desolate area on Odaiba Island in Tōkyō Bay. The dark *Sakebi/Retribution* (2006) is a case in point: in the wake of an earthquake accompanied by strong rains, the body of a woman is discovered on Embankment 13, as if "born from an earthquake and a typhoon" (Londres 2010: 63-64). For the filmmaker, this location symbolizes the changes taking place in Tōkyō's city-scape and the city's amnesia for its past: "Nobody knows what was there before. Changes continually take place. Some ground is reclaimed from the sea, then a building is demolished and the place is again a wasteland" (Kurosawa 2008).⁷ However, Kurosawa who finds Tōkyō an "unhealthy [and] seedy place" (Kurosawa 2009), concedes that as the different neighbourhoods have no "clear boundaries" (Kurosawa 2013), the shortest walk becomes exciting as it takes you seamlessly from vibe to vibe. "Tōkyō's beauty lies off-screen" he continues in the same interview, in the maze of backstreets leading to different "pocket places". *Tokyo Sonata* for instance takes place in this picturesque "world apart, haunted by ghosts and free spirits" (Kurosawa 2013), off the main roads. Living in these *kōgai* or islets, generally coiled around a station, sheltered behind high rises, is like "living in the hole of a doughnut" joke the locals (Nagamura 2006). According to Augustin Berque, their endurance lies in the deep-rooted longing modern city-dwellers feel for the *furusato*, the village their forefathers left behind (Berque 1993: 68-69). A fleeting glimpse of this secretive Tōkyō can be caught in Takeshi Kitano's *Kikujirō no natsu/Kikujiro* (1999) for instance. The young Masao that Kikujiro will take to see his mother in Toyohashi, lives with his grandmother in an alley way typically lined up with flower-pots, in the north-eastern district of Asakusa, Kitano's birthplace, two steps away

⁶See also (Lady Sarashina 1975: 36).

⁷See (Philippe Pons 1988: 16-17) and (Mansfield 2009: 256).

from the famous Sensō-ji temple, where she sells *ningyo-yaki* (little baked dolls cakes).⁸

Toshima, another picturesque neighbourhood situated in the northern area of Tōkyō, is the backdrop of Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Kōhijikō/Café Lumière* (2003). Yoko Inoue (Yo Hitoto) lives near Kishibojinmae station served by the *Toden Arakawa sen*, Tōkyō's last streetcar line, which winds its way through areas left unspoilt by the Great Kantō earthquake in 1923 and spared from WW2's bombs. Yoko and her friend Hajime (Tadanobu Asano), who works in Jimbocho, a neighbourhood famous for its second hand bookstores, hop on and off the *chin chin densha* (*ding ding trains* for their distinctive horn). Hajime is helping Yoko in her research on Taiwanese composer Jiang Wen-Ye (1910-1983) and together they scour Tōkyō in order to locate the different residences and places he haunted. Most of the time their street-map is useless and, keeping their cool, they turn to locals to find their way around a particular area. Indeed, it is easy to lose one's bearings in Tōkyō where only main roads (*omote dōri*) have names.⁹ Tōkyō would even "confuse a compass" joked Albert Londres who called it the "entangled metropolis" (*métropole de l'enchevêtrement*) back in 1922 (Londres 2010: 63).

The couple formed by Hajime and Yoko in *Café Lumière*, Hou Hsiao-Hsien's tribute to Yasujiro Ozu and in particular to his most famous and beloved film *Tōkyō Monogatari/Tokyo Story* (1953), are in total contrast with Shūkichi (Chishū Ryū) and Tomi Hirayama (Chieko Higashiyama), the old couple who travelled to the capital to visit their children in Ozu's masterpiece, who see Tōkyō through weary, provincial eyes. Their discovery tour of the capital, partly done on board of a sightseeing bus, starts of course with the Imperial Palace, an "opaque ring of walks, streams, roofs, and trees" (Barthes 2005: 50), literally Tōkyō birthplace since Ota Dokan built a fortress there in 1457. Later, during a trip to the chic Ginza district, the Hirayamas climb the stairs to the top of a department store to indulge in the "voluptuous desire" to observe the city from a vantage point, to paraphrase Michel de Certeau (de Certeau 1984: 92). Then, "lifted out of the city's grasp [like] Icarus", they try to locate their son's house amongst the chaotic city-scape below. With the meticulousness of an entomologist observing an ant-hill's industrious society, Ozu shows us a continuous file of visitors climbing up and down the outer stairs, stopping a few minutes to admire the views, before resuming their shopping spree. During their stay in Tōkyō, the homesick, uprooted Hirayamas feel increasingly disorientated, and they fear what de Certeau calls "the devices of Daedalus in mobile and endless labyrinths" (de Certeau 1984: 92).

By contrast, for Hou Hsiao-Hsien, a great observer of Tōkyō life (Hou 2004), Yoko and Hajime are both typical young Tokyoites who "take for granted the tension between tradition and modernity" which so much fascinates foreigners, for them "to live in Tōkyō is nothing special, they are much more interested in their own little lives" (Rigoulet 2004). They share with *Drift in Tokyo's* street-wise Fukuhara and Fumiya the same common sense. Tōkyō is their hunting ground and disorientation their way

⁸ See Takeshi Kitano's autobiographical novels *Asakusa Kid* (Le Serpent à plumes, 2001) and *Takeshikun, hail/La Vie en gris et rose* (Picquier Poche, 2008).

⁹ See samples of detailed scribbled street maps handed out to Roland Barthes in Tōkyō (Barthes 2005: 51-55)

of life. They have no wish to hover above the city but rather to explore Tōkyō on foot, to make contact with its inhabitants, to literally feel the ground under their feet. Interestingly, true to life depictions of the Tōkyō backstreets with their shintō temples, commodity shops, crafts stores, and shopping precincts (*shōtengai*), are common features of modern Japanese novels in particular those by Hiromi Kawakami such as *Sensei no kaban/Strange weather in Tokyo* (2001) or *Furudogu Nakano Shoten/The Nakano Thrift Store* (2005) for instance. In 2008 Jirō Taniguchi, Europe's favourite manga artist, published a manga version of *Strange weather in Tokyo*, in keeping with his interest in Japanese neighbourhoods displayed in a number of his works such as the aptly named *Harukana machi e/A distant neighbourhood* (1998). In Taniguchi's *Kodoku no gurume/Solitary Gourmet* (1997) for example, Goro Inogashira's business trips turn into culinary quests for delectable local specialities. Each story shows a famished Goro led by mouth-watering aromas through warrens of tiny shops and eateries, to a restaurant where he meticulously checks a menu before ordering the local delicacy. In Tōkyō for instance he enjoys a dish of *Unagi don* (grilled eels on rice) in Akabane and fried pork and rice in San'ya. In *Sampo Mono/The Walking Man* (2009) Taniguchi's hero travels through eight different Tōkyō neighbourhoods marvelling at the charming juxtaposition of old and new buildings, at their will to survive and keep their traditions alive despite the ever-encroaching modernity, and at artisans' tenacity to maintain their trade - "Old Shinagawa is alive and kicking!" he exclaims when he stumbles upon a shop selling *getas* (wooden sandals), opened since 1865 (Taniguchi 2008: 22). Learning from a street sign that he is actually walking on a section of the old Tōkaidō road, which in the Edo period (1603-1868) connected Edo to Kyōto, he notices that the area seems as alive as it had been then: "Even if the surrounding area has changed, it's the same old Tōkaidō road alright... The mind boggles when you think that some hundred years ago samurais with hair buns and sandals used to travel on it!" (Taniguchi 2008: 22) Later, in Kichijōji, he meanders through Harmonika Yokocho, a covered market of bars, restaurants and shops. The chef and clients of a small eatery share with him their fear to see developers tear down the area, a sacrilege which will lead to the disappearance of the friendly atmosphere pervading the neighbourhood (Taniguchi 2008: 71).

Last but not least, Kenichi Kiriki's very recent and original *Tokyo Shutter Girl/La Photographie* (Komikku éditions, 2015) adds to the long list of Tōkyō areas ignored by tourist guides. Ayumi Yumeji, a photographer, wanders around Tōkyō, taking pictures of places such as the backstreets behind the Tsukiji fish market for instance, where she makes a point of eating a bowl of *Gyūdon* (rice topped with beef and onion) in the oldest local restaurant of the renowned Yoshinoya fast-food chain, which still serves "dishes from olden times" (Kiriki 2015: 13). Following her steps the reader discovers little-known or forgotten artists, festivals, arts and crafts, delicacies, stories: in Tabata she reminisces about the writer Ryūnosuke Akutagawa who had a house in the area at the beginning of the twentieth century; in Hongō she visits author Ichiyō Higuchi's house; in Nishi-Ogikubo she visits the antique market; in Asakusa she attends a *yabusame* competition (mounted archery). At the end of each chapter, Kenichi Kiriki explains how he discovered the area himself, encouraging the readers to follow his footsteps before these endangered places with their quaint

traditions are completely forgotten. To facilitate their visit, Kiriki even provides maps and texts highlighting must-see landmarks.

“These backstreets invite you to daydream. You can imagine all kinds of stories taking place around here” Taniguchi’s walking man muses at the end of his wanderings (Taniguchi 2008: 80). Indeed, Tōkyō is a “City of Stories” sums up the title of a book by Paul Waley (Waley 1991). According to him, “transience, movement, flux – these are all clichés of the Japanese urban scene. But these abstractions have concrete meanings too. Buildings were frequently dismantled and moved elsewhere. (...) The great Japanese cities (...) have stories where other cities have monuments. This is a narrative urbanism.” (Waley 2003: 385) Indeed, *Adrift in Tokyo* develops one of those myriad of potential stories inspired by the inhabitants, layout, customs, and the changing appearance of Tōkyō districts.

With its dramatic yet comical turns of events, improbable plots and zany, out-of-this-world characters in colourful outfits and weird haircuts, Satoshi Miki’s comedy borrows many tricks from the modern manga comics, but its pattern, its woven network of quotations and associations of ideas, is reminiscent of the precursor of this art, the ukiyo-e woodblock print, with its different juxtaposed panels. Utagawa Kunisada’s *Edo no Hana meisho awase/The Flowers of Edo: A collection of Famous places* series (1862-1865) is a case in point. A series of prints advertising Edo’s brigades of firefighters - *Hana* is a pivot word referring to a flower and a fire but also to distinguished Kabuki actors celebrated as the “Flowers of Edo” - each print is composed of different framed illustrations depicting the brigades’ names and lanterns, a famous building, a flower, a scene from a Kabuki play, and different pieces of writing whose interrelation epitomizes an Edo district. For instance, on the print dedicated to the Kayabashō fire brigade, the top panel shows a florist presenting a peony to a geisha, the right panel portrays the actor Iwai Shijaku in one of his famous roles, and the left panel depicts the Yakushi-in Temple host to a famous flower show.¹⁰ Thus, as *Adrift in Tokyo*’s two heroes stray away from Kichijōji and make their way towards Kasumigaseki’s police station through Tōkyō’s backstreets, each of their series of short trips could be the subject of a multi-panelled ukiyo-e print, part of a series on Tōkyō neighbourhoods, comprising the restaurant where they tasted the local delicacies, the landmark they visited, the literary, pictorial or historical episode they re-enacted, with quotes from the book in question. Caught in a whirlwind of interrelated journeys, Fukuhara and Fumiya who oddly carry no luggage, join the long cohort of travellers who, through the ages, have suffered the stresses and strains this activity causes, but who also experienced freedom and witnessed various acts of generosity all along the road. Fukuhara, with his purse on a strap half-hidden by his jacket and boasting a new pair of shoes seems to have donned the outfit of a savvy traveller as he has heeded two of the multiple recommendations given by Yasumi Roan in his *Ryokō Yōshinshū/Precautions for travellers* (1810) handbook dedicated to the waves of inexperienced Japanese who were discovering the art of travel at the beginning of the nineteenth century: “It is important to remember to take proper care of your feet from the very start” (Roan 1989: 471) and “Money for travel expenses should be kept in a purse tied around

¹⁰ See: <https://ukiyo-e.org/image/famsf/5050161212680085>. Accessed 3 December 2018.

your waist” (Roan 1989: 477). He has also listened to popular wisdom which recommends to buy sunglasses before a trip and to avoid having one’s hair cut before travelling. If Fukuhara had taken on board Yasumi Roan’s following advice - “Should you befriend someone while on the road and travel together for two or three days, or even as long as a week, do not share lodgings with him, nor exchange food or medicines, even though he seems to be an honest person” (Roan 1989: 476) - *Adrift in Tokyo* would never have taken place.

In fact the sharing of food plays an essential role in the film. A bon-vivant, Fukuhara wants to enjoy and by the same token introduce Fumiya to his favourite dishes before going to prison. Every twist and turn along the way is worth it if at the end of the road a special stall or eatery (*nomiya*) awaits them. However, his main concern is to enjoy the right farewell meal before giving himself in. After careful consideration, Fukuhara chooses hearty curry over sushi (a celebratory food eaten when you are released from prison) and ramen noodles (a staple food which will cruelly make you regret your freedom), a decision which will lead them to walk a tumultuous road to the north-eastern district of Asakusa.

The two travelling companions looking for a restaurant in Tsuchiyama or seen having a meal in Minakuchi pictured in a couple of Hokusai’s prints from the series *Tōkaidō Gojūsan-tsugi /Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō* (1810) are our heroes’ models as they walk in the direction of Fukuhara’s favourite haunt, a Chinese sweetshop where he and his wife would eat a bowl of Aiyu jelly (made out of a variety of fig) to “break the ice” after an argument.¹¹ Ironically, as Fukuhara and Fumiya are waiting to be served, a loud ruckus comes from the kitchen where the hot-tempered chef and his wife are having a terrible argument as their screams and the sound of shattering plates indicate. Eventually, to the two hungry customers’ utter consternation, the cook storms out pursued by his livid wife.

This hilarious episode can be compared to the Yam soup incident occurring in the Chojiya teahouse at Mariko post town in the famous picaresque novel *Tōkaidōchū Hizakurige/Travels on the Eastern Seaboard/Shank’s Mare* by Jippensha Ikku (1802-1809). In the novel, Yaji and Kita are looking forward to a meal of *tororo gohan* (Yam soup) but the chef and his wife get into an argument, and she spills the bowl in his lap.¹² Like *Adrift in Tokyo*, *Travels on the Eastern Seaboard* is made up of a combination of adventures, food tasting, and sightseeing, and was used as a travel guide to famous places (*meisho*) when it was published. The novel advises us to “visit all the celebrated places in the country and fill our heads with what we have seen, so that when we become old and bald, we shall have something to talk about over our teacups” (Ikku 2002: 733). The main characters, Yaji and Kita, are two “bosom friends” (Ikku 2002: 733) who travel on foot on the Tōkaidō road (the Eastern Seaboard Highway, the most important of the five routes connecting Edo to Kyōto), stopping at the fifty-three stations along the way, where they remark upon local landmarks, customs, dialects and culinary specialities. The narrator invites the reader to “join the dissipated Yajirobei and his hanger-on Kitahachi, with their money

¹¹ See Hokusai’s *Travelers Walking by a Restaurant* (<http://ukiyo-e.org/image/harvard/HUAM-CARP06778>) and *Two Men Dining at a Restaurant* (<http://ukiyo-e.org/image/harvard/HUAM-CARP06777>). Accessed 3 December 2018.

¹² See Fujikawa Tamenobu’s illustration of *Travels on the Eastern Seaboard/Shank’s Mare* here: <http://ukiyo-e.org/image/artelino/45865g1>. Accessed 3 December 2018.

kept warm in the loincloths around their navels” (Ikku 2002: 733). The description of Yaji and Kita could well fit Fukuhara and Fumiya: “No matter what [Yaji] tries his hand at, he ends up with nothing; impetuous and thinking only of the moment, he dives into things” (Ikku 2002: 734); Kita is “a lazy good-for-nothing; he has the face of a clown; his heart is like that of a sexy kabuki actor, and he speaks a lot, but he’s always off the mark” (Ikku 2002: 734).

Restaurants are not the only places Fukuhara wants to visit, he is ready to set out on a pilgrimage to various places reminiscent of happier times spent in the company of his wife. When he joins Fumiya on the bridge straddling the pond of Kichijōji’s Inokashira Park, and as they lean on the wooden balustrade, they strikingly resemble the two men resting on a similar bridge in Wada Sanzō’s “Pilgrims” print (1939) except for the traditional white garment and sandals, broad straw hat and wooden staff the latter have.¹³ Fumiya in tow, Fukuhara stops briefly at a yakitori stand outside the park (one of the delicacies nibbled along the trip) before leaving behind the bustling streets of Kichijōji, proceeding south to Jindai-ji temple, famous for its Dharma Doll Fair, where they intend to put their trip under the auspices of the local deity as it is the custom. Fukuhara explains he had exchanged his first kiss with his wife on the temple ground.

Like many travellers before them and notably the quack doctor Chikusai in the eponymous tale by Mitsuhiro Karasumaru (1610-1620), and the retainer Nirami-no-suke who, at the dawn of their “trip through the provinces, to live in whatever place the spirit stops [them]”(Karasumaru 1960: 164) pop in Kyōto’s Kiyomizu Temple to ask the merciful goddess Kannon “to look after them” (Karasumaru 1960: 165), Fukuhara and Fumiya sound the ritual bonshō bell outside a little shrine sheltering the goddess statue and start praying. Unfortunately, it is said that the sound of the bell can resonate in the underworld and awake spirits, a curse Fukuhara and Fumiya had not bargained for. To boot, giving a sense of foreboding to the scene, banners float around them announcing the forthcoming “Curse and Dissipation festival”, something the film will turn out to be. We will soon become aware, as they go along, that the sounding of Jindai-ji shrine’s bell did rouse some spirits which will then follow them in their wake.

The most ubiquitous and powerful one has the shape of the famous actor Ittoku Kishibe as himself, in a dialogue-free part, who once played a stern, cruel samurai in Takeshi Kitano’s *Zatōichi* (2003). With his deadpan face and unreadable stare, he keeps on popping up like a Jack-in-the-box in different parts of town and bringing good luck to whoever spots him. For instance, the friends sitting next to Fumiya in an amusement arcade keep on winning at the one armed bandit machine whereas he is down on his luck. They explain their windfall by the fact they have just spotted Ittoku Kishibe and that they are under the *Kishibe Power*. Later Fumiya and Fukuhara themselves will spot the actor in the street.

Those more affected by the Kishibe Power are Fukuhara’s wife’s three loony colleagues. When she becomes conspicuous by her absence from the supermarket where they work, they first call her – the phone rings in a flat where a form is lying

¹³See picture here: <http://www.ohmigallery.com/DB/ItemDetail.asp?item=11603>. Accessed 3 December 2018.

motionless on a bed. The following days they will spend every lunch break looking for her flat but Tōkyō being Tōkyō, they get lost of course. Every time they are about to discover the truth, something futile comes up which distracts their attention. Obsessed by food and especially by ramen noodles, they set out to look for their colleague but go in the opposite direction at the first opportunity to join the queue outside a well-known ramen restaurant in the area. They eventually manage to locate the block of flats where Fukuhara's home is situated when they spot Ittoku Kishibe who invites them on the spot to play extras in the film he is shooting in the area. If he had not diverted their attention, they might have discovered their colleague's dead body, the police might have arrested Fukuhara for the murder of his wife and Fumiya as his partner in crime before they could have accomplished their journey. Therefore, thanks to his miraculous intervention, Ittoku Kishibe has brought luck to Fukuhara and Fumiya.

Their fates depend also greatly on the goodwill of an impish, playful *yōkai* (a supernatural shapeshifting sprite which can take the shape of human beings, animals or inanimate objects) who forces them to change course on a whim. For instance, in the film's closing scene, as Fukuhara hands over to Fumiya the million Yen he bribed him with, one banknote escapes as if it had a life of its own – and by the time Fumiya runs to pick it up, Fukuhara has disappeared into thin air sparing them both the embarrassment of a sad farewell scene. At another time, when Fumiya boasts that as a child he dreamt of becoming Prime Minister, a ripe persimmon squashes on his head, thrown by a *yōkai* in the guise of a cheeky cat perched on the persimmon tree. "I seem to attract misfortune" moans Fumiya when the fruit crashes on his head, splattering him in juice, to which Fukuhara mysteriously replies that "meeting [him] may turn [his] life around".

Fukuhara himself seems to have supernatural powers. For instance, in the film's introductory sequence, Fumiya, holding a toothpaste tube, is thinking that to have bought a three-coloured toothpaste will bring him luck. He has hardly finished this bizarre thought when Fukuhara bursts in. Throughout the film, Fukuhara can appear without warning out of nowhere and vanish into thin air as he pleases. He can also find Fumiya wherever he is: "Don't run, it's useless" he has warned him. Later, left to his own devices, Fumiya is roaming the gigantic area of Shinjuku like a lost soul when Fukuhara finds him even though he is only a needle in a haystack.

Furthermore, on his way to meet Fukuhara at the Jindai Botanical Gardens, Fumiya finds a key which opens a locker in the train station in which he finds a bag full to the brim with Daruma dolls (a Daruma Festival takes place in March in the Jindai-ji temple nearby). Daruma dolls are modelled after Bodhidharma, the founder of the Zen sect of Buddhism. These dolls depict a bearded man (Dharma) and are regarded as a talisman of good luck. Fukuhara appears from nowhere, claiming the bag belongs to him, and tries out a long red Tengu's nose that was also in the bag identifying himself with this kind of protective *yōkai*.¹⁴ A famous print by Toyohara Chikanobu shows Tengu teaching Ushiwaka Maru (the future great samurai Minamoto no Yoshitsune) how to fight – Fukuhara will also teach Fumiya some tricks

¹⁴ See <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/tengu.shtml>. Accessed 3 December 2018.

to defend himself in life.¹⁵ Has he been sent on a mission to help Fumiya out of his predicament? Fumiya, led away by Fukuhara, unlikely mentor and father figure, resembles Ritarō, the son of the merchant Rihei, pawn in the hands of the good souls and the bad souls in Santō Kyōden's *Shingaku Hayasomegusa/Fast-Dyeing Mind Study* (1790), who will get back on the straight and narrow with the help of Master Dōri.

Fumiya has a darker, sadder side about him that Fukuhara reveals when he explains to the host of a Cosplay party they attend in Ikebukuro, that the student is dressed up as a character from a Yoshiharu Tsuge's story, a tormented manga-ka famous for his *ijin* (pariah) characters such as down-and-outs or recluses. Fumiya does not own or miss a "special place" of his own like Fukuhara does and when he finally thinks of one in the Asagaya area, it has been razed to the ground to be replaced by a coin parking lot. A dismayed Fukuhara remarks that it is the fate of "half the memorable places in Tōkyō" but Fumiya remains indifferent. His family has left unsavoury traces in the neighbourhood and they have to run from an irascible tatami shop owner whose wife had been seduced by Fumiya's "old man". He confides that he hates memories and that he has burnt all the photographs he once had. From then on, Fukuhara – who has lost a son – takes Fumiya, who is like a blank page, under his wings. The student will be literally spellbound by Fukuhara as the befuddled look on his face betrays: he will lap up everything his older travelling companion says. When Fukuhara, who is visiting a former flame, leaves him alone in Shinjuku, Fumiya roams the backstreets under garish neon signs inviting customers to visit love motels and bars, elbows his way through alleyways full of rowdy drunks, and follows a feather-clad musician to the sound of his ear-splitting electric guitar. At nightfall, totally lost, he moans that he had not been "this desperate for years. Not since that day [his] dad had disappeared." From Fukuhara he will learn to appreciate life's simple joys and to enjoy other people's company. At the end of his coming-of-age journey, his mentor will have turned his life around.

The finishing touches of Fumiya's transformation take place on the last leg of their trip. After a hearty meal of *ochazuke* (green tea poured over rice with savoury toppings), they continue their route up north, crossing the Sumida river on Omokage Bridge. Over his bowl of *ochazuke*, Fukuhara has made up his mind to eat his last supper (curry) at his "fake wife's" house near Ueno which will become their cosy safe abode for a time. For a few days or even weeks, Makiko, her niece Fufumi, Fukuhara and Fumiya play happy families. Fukuhara's fake wife (she stands in as his wife at weddings) tells Fumiya that she thought he was Fukuhara's son, and the young man even calls Fukuhara "dad" in a slip of the tongue. When this happens, Fukuhara considers his mission to turn Fumiya into a fully-fledged, responsible adult reconciled with his past, who can connect with people and feel emotions has come to an end. He then decides that the time has come to eat Makiko's delicious curry and set off on the final trip towards prison. Fukuhara, Fumiya and Fufumi lend a hand to the chef as she concocts her famous curry and the whole process – first the hand-picking of the best ingredients, the chopping and slicing of onions, tomatoes, potatoes, the

¹⁵ See https://ukiyo-e.org/image/jaodb/Chikanobu_Yoshu-No_Series-Ushiwaka_Maru_learning_marshall_arts_in_front_of_the_Tengu_in_Mount_Kurama-00035054-030925-F12. Accessed 3 December 2018.

pitching of the perfect seasoning - turns into a happy celebration of freedom, friendship and of all the good things Fukuhara will be deprived of while rotting away in prison. Indeed, curry is definitely the best dish before imprisonment.

While the mouth-watering dish simmers, they visit the Hanayashiki amusement park, Tōkyō's oldest (1872), situated near the famous Sensō-ji Temple in Asakusa, east of Ueno. There, Fukuhara redeems a promise Fumiya's real father had made to his son to take him on a roller-coaster ride: Fukuhara's and Fumiya's roller-coaster car enters a tunnel and when it reappears, the two occupants are younger, and obviously father and son. The father-son bonding scene, captured with a Super 8 camera, as if it had taken place with Fumiya's real father some years ago, expresses how Fumiya feels at the end of the film: for him the whole experience with Fukuhara is a new departure, he does not suffer from inner-deadness anymore, he is now equipped emotionally and soon will be financially sufficient to face society's challenges. He can no longer identify with the homeless man led away by two policemen he noticed in Inokashira Park when he was waiting for Fukuhara at the outset of their trip.

Finally, the morning after their curry feast, they set out to Kasumigaseki police station. They walk along the Meiji Shrine Outer Garden (a scene infused with nostalgia immortalized by the film's poster which shows Fumiya and Fukuhara walking under a canopy of trees in their most glorious autumn shades). They then turn right, walk along the Imperial palace moats before reaching their final destination. Thus Fumiya and Fukuhara put an end to their "lateral" exploration of Tōkyō, to use the word in the sense the writer Michaël Ferrier gives it: "An out-of-sight Tōkyō laying to be discovered, one step aside from the main streets" (Ferrier 2013).

"I read in a manga that walking backwards makes people younger, that walking backwards unwinds time" says Fukuhara before vanishing into thin air. Throughout *Adrift in Tokyo*, he has walked back in time and revisited his personal *meisho* (famous places). In sharing with Fumiya the love of walking he had inherited from his own father, he has passed on a certain wisdom on to the young man, his habits and the places they have visited together get a new lease of life.

At the conclusion of the movie a final duo of travellers spring to mind: Bashō and his friend Kawai Sora who left Edo in March 1689, on a trip to the northern region of Oku, in "a search for *utamakura*, or noted poetic places, especially the traces of ancient poets such as Saigyō." (Bashō 2002: 209) Bashō's ground-breaking travel diary *Oku no Hosomichi/The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1694) will later retrace their arduous journey during which "the poet-traveller hoped to relive the experience of his literary predecessors, to be moved to compose poetry on the same landscape" (Bashō 2002: 209). Prints by Yosa Buson such as *Bashō and Sora departing at Senju bridge* or Kyoroku's painting of the same on their trip, shows Bashō's disciple, maintaining a respectful distance with his master the same distance Fumiya kept when he walked with Fukuhara through the streets of Tōkyō.¹⁶ Should Fumiya be asked to explain what happened to him in that fateful autumn he met Fukuhara he

¹⁶See Yosa Buson's *Bashō and Sora departing at Senju bridge* here:

http://apdl.kcc.hawaii.edu/roads/oku_annotated_text1.html and Kyoroku's painting here:

<http://wkdhaikutopics.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/sora-kawai-sora.html>. Accessed 18 February 2016.

could borrow Bashō's introductory sentences to *Narrow Road to the deep North* : “Somehow or other, I became possessed by a spirit, which crazed my soul. Unable to sit still, I accepted the summons of the Deity of the Road” (Bashō 2002: 211).

In Ozu's *Bakushū/Early Summer* (1951), Noriko (Setsuko Hara) is saying farewell to her colleague: she is getting married and will be moving to Akita, 450 km away from the capital. Suddenly, as he tries with some difficulty to hide his sorrow, something in the street seems to catch his eyes. They both stand transfixed by the spectacle outside, their faces aglow with sunlight. “Look, this is Tōkyō... not too bad, is it?” he remarks. The sequence concludes with a low-angle shot of their office building and it is hard to distinguish behind which of these anonymous windows Noriko and her colleague are standing. However, when the camera reveals the panorama that gave them such pleasure, we cannot help but feel disappointed and perplexed. In vain are we searching for what caught their attention in this banal, long, narrow street lined up with ordinary buildings. Then we notice an incessant flow of people walking down the street, dodging through the traffic, going about their business. “This swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together” writes de Certeau about the New Yorkers, but this observation applies to Tōkyō as well (de Certeau 1984: 97). Satoshi Miki, as the author of *Adrift in Tokyo*, has been instrumental in weaving the different journeys in his film into one, and in doing so has skilfully managed to catch the fleeting spirit of Tōkyō in his net.

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