Commuting gazes

Schoolgirls, salarymen, and electric trains in Tokyo

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In the first decade of the twentieth century, there were several transformations in Tokyo urban space and in the lives of its inhabitants. Many of these social and spatial movements converged on the train. During the years after Japan's 1905 military victory over Russia, the infrastructure of Tokyo was laid, and train and streetcar routes were extended.[1] A growing number of people moved to Tokyo from other parts of Japan, and the city population started to dramatically increase. Concurrently, families of different socio-economic classes began to migrate from the city to the surrounding countryside, seeking nature and tranquillity away from the noise and crowds. The residents of these suburbs included the 'salaryman', who, as indicated by the anglicised signifier *sarariiman*, was a male corporate or government employee paid monthly and a member of the new urban middle class that formed with the developing capitalist economy. The salaryman, his wife, and children lived alongside upper-class families, whose daughters often attended school in the centre of Tokyo and commuted there by the expanding network of mass transport. From the last decade of the nineteenth century, the number of female students (*jogakusei*) increased, and the image of the teenage schoolgirl dressed in *hakama,* wearing hair ribbons, and traversing Tokyo or its suburbs on a bicycle or by train frequently appeared in popular literature and the mass media.[2] Both the proliferation of salarymen and female students and the rise of the suburbs they inhabited were facilitated by the development of Tokyo transport, especially commuter trains, the spaces of which were shared by these men and women of different ages and social backgrounds.

Trains became integral to everyday life in Tokyo. Different from earlier horse buses, they were 'mass' transport, and genders and classes interacted in passenger cars. The daily commute was implicated in and characteristic of changing sensory perceptions of urban crowds, shocks, and spectacles and in psychological adjustments to the new systems of signs and practices in the city. Trains were places to watch and for being watched, and altered the way people viewed the landscape and each other. Female passengers often became objects of the gaze. As Foucaultian 'heterotopia', temporary worlds in transit, trains revealed and reflected the conditions of daily life in the twentieth century, and they epitomised the conjuncture of capitalist growth, State

ideologies, and social transformations, all of which helped cause their development and the diversification of their passengers.[3] Trains became a practical means of living, studying, and working in Tokyo but were, at times, the site of urban behaviours and seductions and could be viewed as synecdoche for the rapidly modernising city itself.

The historical concurrence of and relationship between the creation of new gender roles, the development of Tokyo's network of modern transport, and the growth of the suburbs in the first decades of the twentieth century were frequently depicted in fiction, journalism, and popular songs. In the years after 1905, the inseparable connection between mass transit and social and spatial change was most vividly seen and intensely felt in Tokyo, and, therefore, trains and passengers figured prominently in stories, essays, and other writings at the time. Literature was an effective vehicle to express such historical transformations, and, in their stories, Japanese authors described the thoughts, emotions, and impressions of men and women who rode trains and streetcars, thus providing insight into how individuals experienced urban modernity. Writers saw something captivating about trains and the potentially liberating but traumatising experience of riding in them. Moreover, the presence of objects and practices in literature, art, and other media often coincides with the start of their integration into the realities of daily life. When such commodities and behaviours become familiar, they are no longer threatening to established systems or alluring in their newness. Therefore, images of commuter trains and their male and female passengers can be stationed at a distinct juncture in Japanese modernity. In particular, Tayama Katai's (1872–1930) short story 'The Girl Fetish' ('Shôjo byô'), published in the May 1907 issue of the influential journal *Taiyô* (*The Sun*), depicts and reacts to the historical trends concerning gender and transport of its times and suggests problems caused by the extension of the gaze, mobility, and sexuality made possible by train travel. This fictional work, the prose of which echoes the rhythm and tempo of a moving train, also shows how a seemingly ordinary event, like a daily commute, could be a means to seek catharsis from the pressures and frustrations of everyday life in Tokyo. Thus it is important to examine the depiction of salarymen and female students in 'The Girl Fetish' to better understand the advances and contradictions of this period in Japanese modernity.[4]

Told in third-person omniscient narration, Tayama Katai's 'The Girl Fetish' is the story of a thirty-six or thirty-seven-year-old man whose habit of obsessively staring at schoolgirls and other young women during his daily commutes causes him to fall from a crowded passenger car to a gory death on the tracks below. The protagonist is continually referred to in the story as 'man' (*otoko*), and his pen name, Sugita Kojô, is not revealed until the third section and is mentioned only once. This man is dissatisfied with his domestic life in the Yoyogi district, a new suburban residential area in the western part of Tokyo, and is tired of his banal editorial work at the Seinensha publishing company in the central Kanda section of the city. The plot encompasses one day of the man's morning and late afternoon commutes, the times of which

coincide with those of female students, and he fantasises about starting a relationship with one of the alluring women he longingly gazes upon on trains and in stations. However, he is frustrated by social, psychological, and class constraints, and instead he tries to satisfy his desires by just looking. In addition, his gaze focuses upon women's physical appearance, clothing, and hairstyles, and, subsequently, the popular fashions and customs of the female students of the times are colourfully depicted. This helps to place the story in a certain historical setting. Yet perhaps 'The Girl Fetish' can also be read as an allegory of an unnamed average man who is unable to change the track of his everyday urban(e) life.[5]

Classifying space: commuting salarymen, suburban sprawl, and electric trains

The 1905 military victory over Russia demonstrated to Japan that it had achieved its nineteenth-century aspirations of 'rich country, strong army' (*fukoku kyôhei*) and was becoming a first-class nation equal to those of the West. Many political goals of the Meiji State had been fulfilled, and, starting at this time, a general change of emphasis from 'civilisation' (*bunmei*) to 'culture' (*bunka*) could be perceived among the population.[6] This involved greater attention to individual development, more open pursuit of private interest, and the growth of consumer capitalism.[7] Subsequently, daily life in Tokyo became increasingly cosmopolitan, and many young people, who once had aspired to work for the government, wanted to earn a salary and be part of the commercial empire.

The salaryman epitomised this new pursuit of personal success and was often depicted as a worker who commuted from his home in the suburbs to his office in the centre of Tokyo and who supported his wife and children by his wages.[8] The salaryman was defined as performing thinking labour and as earning his own money and not relying on inherited status or fortune. Beginning in 1871, the Japanese government began paying workers monthly instead of annual salaries, and, subsequently, a new level of bureaucratic employees was created different from the high-level officials who rode to work in horse-drawn buses or in carriages sent by the emperor. These men usually dressed in Western business attire and were frequently sighted walking to their offices or to the modern mass transport vehicles that would take them there.

The rise of the salaryman also exemplified the destruction of an older family system, in which several generations lived together in the same house in the countryside, and the creation of a new nuclear family unit, which often viewed the suburbs as an ideal place to raise children. At the time 'The Girl Fetish' was written, there was a large population influx to the suburbs, which then reflected the changing class composition of Tokyo. It was the start of a trend that would continue throughout the twentieth century. In 1900 there were 129 new residential areas to the north, west, and north-west of Tokyo, including Sendagaya, where the protagonist of 'The Girl Fetish' lives, and

these sections had a total population of 1,497,565 people.[9] By 1908 the number of housing districts had increased by 5 per cent, but their population had exploded by 45 per cent to number 2,168,151 residents.[10] The September 1904 issue of the magazine *Schoolgirls' World* (*Jogakukai*) explained various new lifestyles in Tokyo and described these areas around the city as an extension of Yamanote, a name that connoted the place where the upper classes lived and which could be contrasted to the often dirtier and more congested Shitamachi downtown.[11] In name, there was a social distinction between Yamanote and Shitamachi (uptown and downtown), but in spatial reality the true division seemed to be between the inner and outer city.

The suburban population increasingly relied on expanding public transport networks to take them to work or play in the centre of Tokyo. The suburbs grew, in part, because of the availability of trains, and, despite the size and locations of suburban houses, their residents were temporarily equal in the space of the passenger car. Yet, as shown in the literary works of Tayama Katai, Kunikida Doppo, and other early twentieth-century Japanese writers, relations between the classes were not always peaceful, and social transformations and technological advances often made the suburbs dangerous places to live. The suburbs and the train lines that connected them with the centre of Tokyo experienced a growth spurt after many people lost their homes in the 1923 earthquake, and the thirteen private railways especially extended their routes in the latter half of the 1920s.

Although equal in the train car, socio-economic distinctions between passengers were maintained through classes of tickets. Ticket discounts were offered before the morning rush hour, which started at 7.00 a.m., and this was mostly for the benefit of labourers, whose workday generally began earlier than that of office workers.[12] Multiple-ride train passes were available for students from June 1901, and other commuters purchased either red or green tickets, colour-coded according to price.[13] Red tickets were less expensive than green, and the protagonist of 'The Girl Fetish' uses a red ticket to board the Kôfu Line train.[14]

Passengers holding different tickets rode together, and the train car became a travelling universe, grouping unrelated people for a brief moment. For the first time, men and women of various social classes were forced literally to look upon each other in new ways. As stated by German social theorist Georg Simmel, 'Before the development of buses, roads, and trains in the nineteenth century [the twentieth in Japan], people had never been in a position of having to look at one another for long minutes or even hours without speaking to one another.'[15] This changed sense of sight was liberating, for people could interact and form relationships, and many stories of the times, such as Natsume Soseki's 1907 novel *Sanshiro*, depicted chance and potentially erotic encounters between men and women on trains. Authors, journalists, and intellectuals frequently saw the passenger car as a new space in which to observe the behaviours, customs, and appearances of the diversifying Tokyo population. However, the extension of the act of sight was also traumatising for the observer and the object of his gaze, as seen in Tayama Katai's 'The Girl Fetish.'

In addition to being new spaces for social interactions and people watching, crowded mass transit vehicles, where passengers experienced close physical proximity to strangers, were becoming icons of Tokyo. Although perhaps less seen as symbols of industrial modernisation than the steam locomotives that preceded them, electric trains and trams were instruments and icons of urban modernity and were striking visual markers of the rise of the city they came to represent. For example, many early twentieth-century songs celebrated trains and the scenery which could be seen from their windows. The famous 'Railway Song' ('Tetsudo shôka') by Ôwada Takeki was an unprecedented hit after it was released on 10 May 1900. Sung in elementary schools in part to teach children about geography, this tune glorified the view from Japan's modern steam locomotive after it left Shimbashi station, the main terminal station for Tokyo at the time, and travelled through the surrounding landscape. The popularity of this song continued in the decades that followed, reaching the ears of almost half of the Japanese population and selling over 10 million copies.[16] The fifty-seven-verse 'Streetcar Song' ('Densha shôka') was released in September 1905 and celebrated the sights to be seen from the window of a tram passing through the centre of Tokyo. It especially described popular entertainment areas and places that represented technological advance, including the Ueno Zoo and panorama museum, Asakusa's twelve-storey tower and aquarium, and the then brick streets of Ginza.[17] Both songs associated transport, modernity, and the allure of the city.

Popular songs, however, also noted the disadvantages of using the expanding mass transit network. Beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century, there were often not enough trains and streetcars to transport in comfort Tokyo's rapidly growing population, and this shortage worsened during succeeding pre-war years. A verse in Soeda Satsuki's 'Tokyo Song' playfully cursed 'Tokyo's famous packed trams/Even though I seem to wait for ever, I can't ride 'em./In order to get on, I have to fight for my life./Ah, finally an empty tram comes,/But the conductor waves his hand, "No, No. It's not in service."/ The tram doesn't stop but keeps on going./Why, you damn trams!'[18]

Moreover the commuters themselves, especially salarymen and female students, often symbolised modern Tokyo and were seen as embodying its social problems in addition to its economic progress. The 15 November 1906 issue of the business magazine *Jitsugyô no Nihon* (*Enterprising Japan*) published an article entitled 'On Observing People's Faces on the Train' which argued that, because the train was increasingly becoming part of the everyday routine in modern Tokyo, it represented a microcosm of society. Several social ills could be diagnosed by studying the tired and negative facial expressions of commuters, especially those of young salaryman (*tsutomenin*). The writer divided what he saw into categories of positive and negative expressions, and the latter included despairing, disappointed, and complaining faces and those that revealed that one had no hopes or dreams. He stated that these tired and disappointed looks were signs of the fatigue these company employees felt as they commuted on crowded trains from their suburban homes to inner-city

offices. Their faces often revealed the poor condition of their bodies and indicated stomach, lung, and blood disorders and psychological depression. The writer emphasised that the faces of salarymen silently shouted the need for better health care and awareness to protect the vitality, spirit, and well-being of youth.[19]

Overall, by 1907, trains were new spaces for observing the actions and appearances of others. In analysing these transformations it is useful to consider the concept of the nineteenth-century European *flâneur* – an upper-class urban wanderer who observes the people in the city around him – and how to lead him from the Parisian arcades and on to Japanese trains. The *flâneur* observed others, especially women, as he traversed the urban centre on foot. However, train travel expanded the range of the *flâneur*'s gaze, for it removed him from the direct sensory contact of the streets and thereby mediated between object and observer. Modern transport also made it possible for anyone to be a *flâneur*, even those lacking in leisure time and money, such as a middle-class salaryman. In other words, in Tokyo, modern public transport helped to 'massify' the *flâneurie*, or the wanderings of the *flâneur*. A *flâneurie* could be incorporated into a Tokyoite's everyday routine, and, through the gaze, even a dissatisfied salaryman could seek escape from the problems and pressures of his domestic and work lives. Such an experience is depicted in Tayama Katai's 'The Girl Fetish.'

A close look at 'The Girl Fetish'

From the beginning of 'The Girl Fetish', a connection is made between the man, the suburbs, and the train. The story opens with the simultaneous passing of the 7.20 a.m. Yamanote Line train through Yoyogi station and the walking of the protagonist from his home near Sendagaya. [20] Both of these events occur regularly each morning, regardless of the weather, and reflect the routinisation of modern urban life. Notably, the neighbourhood residents adjust the course of their daily events not to the train schedules but to the passing of the man. For example, after sighting the man walking by her home, one woman wakes her husband 'who is prone to sleep [in] on drowsy spring mornings', fearing he will be late for work.[21]

Similar to the *flâneur* described in nineteenth-century European texts, the man's physical appearance and mannerisms distinguish him from the others who watch as he passes. He walks alone to the station in a 'duck-like' fashion and wears a threadbare tweed suit and a ragged Inverness cape, tattered versions of the Western attire of early twentieth-century Japanese salarymen.[22] He carries a walking stick with a dog's-head handle and carries a purple bundle, which may be his lunch.[23] Purple (*ebi chiro*) was a colour popular among schoolgirls at the time, but the man's worn clothing can be juxtaposed with the clean, new styles of the women he watches and further delineates a class distinction between them. The man possesses an unusual countenance, for he has a 'pug nose, protruding teeth, and tangled side-burns.'[24] However, his eyes are kind and gentle, and always seem to be

intently gazing upon something, thus alluding to the importance of the modern sense of sight.

The first appearance of the man coincides with the development of the suburbs, a phenomenon in which the train plays a large part, and the changing social and spatial composition of these areas around Tokyo is epitomised in a description of the man's home. The suburban scenery is described in the rhythm and speed as if seen from the window of a moving train and includes the skyline of Sendagaya's new residential area, smokestacks from the numerous factories in Tsunohazu (which often appeared in static shots in early Ozu Yajiro films), the tops of telegraph poles, pebbly lanes, and rice paddies. Class distinctions are also maintained. For example, the man most likely resides in one of the homes for rent behind the trees or in the valleys below the mansions of government officials, military generals, and company executives.[25]

Moreover the two train lines, Yamanote and Kôfu, and the Sotobori streetcar route mentioned in 'The Girl Fetish' had different uses at the time. The Yamanote Line, the oldest of the three, was constructed between 1884 and 1885, but, at the time of the story, it was not electrified and not convenient for travelling to work or school and was most often used for carrying freight. It became a commuter line when its present circle of tracks around what became of the heart of Tokyo was completed in November 1925. Trains did not stop at Yoyogi station, and thus the 7.20 a.m. mentioned in the first sentence merely passed by the man's suburb, reminding the residents that it was time for the morning commute.

Yoyogi station was constructed in 1893 to service the first all-electric commuter route, the Kôfu Line, called the Chuo or central line after it became part of the national railway network in 1906. From 1889 the Kôfu Line brought workers and students from the western suburbs to the centre of the city, and, in 1907, its trains consisted of four-wheeled electric cars with a handrail for passengers to grasp for stability, the first vehicles of their kind in Japan. The service extended from 4.45 a.m. to 11.06 p.m., and a train came every seven minutes.[26]

Electric streetcars first appeared in Tokyo on 23 August 1903, after at least five other places in Japan, such as Kyoto (1895) and Nagoya (1898).[27] In 1907 three companies, Tokyo Densha Tetsudo, Tokyo Shigai Tetsudo, and Tokyo Denki Tetsudo, which was also known as the Sotobori Line, provided a network of routes that wove through the centre of Tokyo. All three routes were celebrated in songs released in the autumn of 1905 and sung in elementary schools.[28] Although they were relatively high-speed vehicles, the streetcars were often crowded, and, because there was no orderly method of getting passengers on and off, they frequently ran late. Because they were open at both the front and the back, some passengers did not ride fully inside, a potentially dangerous situation, as evident in 'The Girl Fetish'. When the city government purchased the system in 1911, approximately 585,000 out of an urban population of 1,900,000 rode the electric streetcars in a single day.[29]

On the train, the objects of the man's gaze are women, not the passing scenery. The protagonist devises a means of positioning himself on the train

in order to best observe the female passengers without being noticed. He sits on the seat diagonally opposite at an angle and, while pretending to look to the side, casts glances at the young women:

> The train left Yoyogi.
> It was a pleasant spring morning. The sun shone gently overhead, and the air was exceptionally clear. Untidy rows of new houses in the low land of Sendagaya and the dark rows of charcoal oaks, topped by the beautiful form of Mount Fuji away in the distance, passed quickly by like a kaleidoscope. But our man, preferring the figure of a beautiful girl to the beauty of mute nature, was almost completely entranced with the faces and figures of two girls opposite him. Gazing upon human beings … is more troublesome than gazing upon mute nature, and so, sensing he might be discovered if he stared too openly, he was pretending to look to the side, while flashing furtive sidelong glances at the girls. As someone once said, when it comes to girl watching on trains, it's too direct to watch them face-on, whereas from a distance it's too conspicuous and likely to arouse people's suspicions; therefore, the most convenient seat to occupy is the one diagonally opposite, or rather at an oblique angle. Being an obsessive girl watcher, [the man] had not, of course, had to be taught this secret and had naturally discovered the technique for himself, never wasting any suitable opportunity.[30]

At the time of the story, upper-class young women could be frequently seen on Tokyo trains, most often commuting to school. Following the establishment of compulsory elementary education in 1872, a growing number of children attended classes, but schoolgirls remained fewer in number than schoolboys. In 1888 28·3 per cent of girls nationwide received some education, and by 1907 the figure had risen to the then all-time high of 96·1 per cent.[31] Secondary schools for girls became more common, especially in cities. Although there were only twenty-six all-girls' academies in 1897, in 1907 there were 133 secondary schools with 40,000 female students.[32] Moreover the 1907 hit 'Schoolgirl Song' ('Jogakusei no uta') further suggested their increasing popularity.[33]

The public appearance of schoolgirls on trains meant that these well bred women who moved in exclusive social circles were seen by greater numbers and diverse kinds of people. In turn, this affected how they were viewed in Japanese society. Female students became both idealised as model modern women and eroticised as sexual objects. For example, their fashions and figures could be observed and even evaluated by other passengers on commuter trains.

In 'The Girl Fetish' the man has the opportunity to observe such attractive young women first-hand, for the time of his commutes coincides with those of female students. During the so-called 'rush hour' (*rasshû awa*) the trains between the centre of Tokyo and the outlying suburbs were often packed. Sexual offences, petty crimes, and other misdemeanours were not unusual on these crowded trains. The train was an everyday space, but it was also a potentially dangerous one. In 1928 the popular writer Maeda Hajime advocated that young women should not ride trains at this time:

> A hand gets grabbed. A foot gets stepped on. Something that should not be touched gets touched. A wallet gets picked from inside a kimono sleeve in a momentary impulse. Abnormal psychology and the seduction of theft are there if we only turn our heads and look … Caring parents must not let their beloved daughters ride the train during the rush hour.[34]

A commuter train including a car for women only was put on in 1912, five years after the time of the 'The Girl Fetish'.[35] Nicknamed the 'Flower Train' (*hana densha*) and distinguished by the large characters 'For Women's Use Only' printed on its side, such vehicles first appeared in Kobe and later in Tokyo. 'Flower train' was the signifier then used to connote open railroad cars that were decorated to commemorate occasions, such as the emperor's birthday or the opening of a department store, and it also referred to the youthful beauty of the students. According to an article in the 28 January 1912 *Tokyo Asahi shimbun* newspaper, the Flower Train was instituted to protect female students from having their 'beautiful figures looked at and enjoyed' by misbehaving male students and other passengers. It is uncertain whether the idea of the Flower Train was suggested by the female students themselves or was advocated by municipal, railway, or other authorities to protect their innocence and purity. Yet women were portrayed as passive victims of such attempts, unable to protect themselves or even to perpetrate attacks. This was also the time when waiting rooms for women only were available at some train stations, perhaps at Yoyogi, where the man spotted a familiar young woman.[36]

Moreover the sensory perceptions engendered by train travel are also depicted in 'The Girl Fetish'. The physical appearance and dress of the young women the man watches are colourfully described, and thus the popular fashions and customs of the day can be seen. For example, the young student the man sights in the Yoyogi station waiting room is full-bodied, plump, and rosy-cheeked. She is wearing a 'bright striped top and a maroon *hakama*', carries a 'slender parasol in her right hand and a bundle wrapped in purple cloth in her left'. She wears a white hair ribbon on that day.[37] The man also pays close attention to female eyes and hair. For example, when the Kôfu Line train leaves Yoyogi station the man looks at the faces and figures of two young women.

> The expression of the elder girl's eyes was infinitely beautiful. Even the stars in the sky, he felt, lost their sparkle in comparison. Slender legs under that crepe kimono, a brilliant mauve hem, white-stockinged feet in fashionable high sandals, a beautifully white neck, beautiful breasts at the swelling of her chest – it was too much for him to bear.[38]

This is the second mention of female breasts in the story. As told as a flashback by the omniscient narrator, during his walk to the station on a certain morning the man retrieves and directly hands a fallen aluminum hairpin to a female student he has often watched. He then notices that she has large breasts.

The man savours the odours emanating from female hair. However, while he admires female hair, the man is reminded that he is too old to start a relationship with any of these alluring young women and has not experienced enough of the pleasures of the flesh as a youth. These thoughts torment him, cause him to feel that he has no reason to be alive, and make him want to tear at his hair. Notably, the man often wonders whether the girls he watches are engaged and sadly envisions their wedding days, but he does not think about his own wife or look at her hair. Although the man does not seem to notice, the omniscient third-person narrator describes his wife's hair as being tied back in a rather old-fashioned style and her striped apron parallels the striped kimono tops of the female students.[39]

As a *flâneur* the man gazes at female *passantes* (passengers), but he does not touch them. In the story a distinction is made between looking and touching and between sense and reality. The man dreams that the embrace of one of these alluring women will give hope to his otherwise bleak daily life, and his failure to make contact is both metaphorical and real and facilitates his demise. On the day described in the plot, the Kôfu Line train he rides is unusually crowded, owing to the Tokyo exhibition (another site that alludes to the modern importance of sight). In the crowded train car, the man spots an attractive female student he has seen before and who usually boards at Shinanomachi station.[40] He begins to wonder how a woman so beautiful can exist in such a terrible world, he agonises over thoughts of the man who will hold her in his arms, and seeks to maintain a position on the train where he can continue to stare and fantasise about her.

As the passenger car becomes more and more crowded, the man struggles to keep his eyes on the young woman, but his hand cannot maintain its grasp of the brass handrail.[41] He loses his balance, tumbles on to the tracks, and is run over by an oncoming train. In further contrast to the brightly coloured clothes and accessories of the young women, the man's body seems no longer human and instead is a black blob trailing a crimson train of blood.

Tayama Katai's prose reflects the speed and rhythm of a moving train, which further shows the final triumph of the machine over the man. Notably, in this story that focuses on the gaze, the final mastery of the train is depicted in sound. In the last section the phrases 'better off dead' (*shinda ho ga ii*) and 'loneliness' (*sabishisa*) are repeated three times in succession. In addition, the last young woman from Shinanomachi has beautiful eyes, beautiful hands, and beautiful hair, alluding to the failures of sight and touch of the story. The rhyme between the Japanese words for eyes (*me*) and hands (*te*) further mimic the tempo of the train. In the final one-sentence paragraph, the sound of the engine's emergency whistle is heard.

Tayama Katai included accidental deaths caused and suicides facilitated by trains in other stories. For example, in his 1912 'The Railroad Tracks' ('Senrô') a five-year-old child, innocently playing in the grass near his suburban home with his friends, is suddenly run over by a passing train. The accident is told both from the point of view of the passengers on the train and from that of the third-person narrator. However, the people who have

witnessed the gory scene soon get off, and, after a while, new passengers get on and gossip and laugh about other topics.[42] Other authors, including Kunikida Doppo and Natsume Soseki, wrote about suicides in front of moving trains in 1907 and 1908, and, in those years, newspapers and government statistics reported an increasing number of such deaths. In 1907, out of a total of 9,180 reported suicides, 1,001 were committed with the help of a speeding train, an increase of 882 train-related suicides over 1906.[43]

Finally, it is important to mention that, in addition to being passive objects of the male gaze, during the first decade of the twentieth century, women also watched and even seduced men on Tokyo trains. In June 1908 the presence of high-class prostitutes soliciting on trains was reported in newspapers. These street riders could be easily distinguished by their gaudy Western-style umbrellas, as contrasted to the slender parasols which female students often carried. They were most often seen during the spring of each year and were especially prevalent on the Sotobori Line, one of whose trains the protagonist of 'The Girl Fetish' rides to work. Usually, between nine and ten o'clock at night, they rode through all of its station stops, pretending to be absorbed in reading newspapers. However, when the opportunity arose, they attracted men, primarily bankers and Chinese exchange students. These prostitutes were between eighteen and twenty-three years of age, a few years older than the female students who ride the train with the salaryman in 'The Girl Fetish'.[44]

Overall, Tayama Katai's 1907 short story 'The Girl Fetish' showed how the daily train commute shared by salarymen and female students both redefined gendered and class relations and illustrated many of the social and spatial changes in Tokyo. By 1907 Tokyo trains had become spaces for observing the actions and appearance of others and were symbols of the modern city. An everyday train ride became a way to seek temporary escape from the pressures of modern urban life, but the passenger car could be a threatening environment for the observer and the people who became objects of his gaze. The fatale *flâneurie* of the salaryman protagonist further presented the problems caused by the extended sense of sight, physical and social mobility, and sexuality made possible by train travel. In the rapidly modernising city and the literature that described and reacted to its transformation, young women were often associated with the allure and the dangers of train travel, and, therefore, it is important to investigate representations of new gender roles, especially female students and salarymen, to gain a greater understanding of the lived experience of Japanese modernity.

Notes

1 The Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) was a turning point in Japanese history, for it was the first occasion in modern times that an Asian country had militarily defeated a Western power.

2 *Hakama* is a long skirt worn over a kimono so that the top of the kimono is showing. *Hakama* became the popular dress for female students in the last decade of the nineteenth century and, along with hair ribbons, became metonymy for the schoolgirls. See Masuko Honda, *Jogakusei no keifu* (*The Genealogy of the Schoolgirl*) (Tokyo, 1990).

3 Michel Foucault, 'Of other spaces', *Diacritics* 16 (1986), pp. 22–7; Lynne Kirby, *On Parallel Tracks: the railroad and silent cinema* (Durham NC, 1997).

4 This story has been translated by Kenneth Henshall, who rendered the title as 'The Girl Watcher'. Although this accurately captures the essence of the story, the original Japanese includes the word *byô*, which connotes an illness or psychological disorder. Tayama Katai, 'The Girl Watcher', in *The Quilt and other Stories by Tayama Katai*, trans. Kenneth G. Henshall (Tokyo, 1981).

5 Interesting similarities between the metaphorical use of trains, discontent with modern domestic and work lives, and death can be seen in King Vidor's 1928 American silent film *The Crowd*. In this melodrama, set in Chicago, a young man becomes increasingly frustrated with his family life in a small apartment, his lack of financial and social success, and his inability to find and maintain a satisfying job. After he has married, has his first child, and is happy with his job, he is seen sitting by the window of his small flat, strumming a mandolin, and gazing out at a passing train. He sings, 'Inside life is heaven, but outside it is El.' Yet, at the climax of the film, the protagonist considers committing suicide by throwing himself upon the railroad tracks.

6 The Meiji period lasted from 1868 to 1912. The former Tokugawa (1603–1868) feudal hierarchy was abolished, and the national government initiated several technological, financial, and educational changes in part to catch up with and surpass the West.

7 See H. D. Harootunian, 'Introduction: a sense of an ending and the problem of Taisho', in Bernard Silberman and H. D. Harootunian (eds), *Japan in Crisis: essays on Taisho democracy* (Princeton NJ, 1974).

8 I may be using the term 'salaryman' anachronistically here. At the time of the writing and publication of 'The Girl Fetish' *koshiben* may have been the more common signifier for this new kind of urban worker. *Koshiben* was an abbreviation of *koshi bentô,* a term from the late Tokugawa period that signified lower-level *samurai* who worked in locations outside their homes and often brought their meals to work. The term was often used pejoratively in 1907 to connote the bottom strata of urban white-collar workers who still wore Japanese clothing, for their jobs were not important enough and their salaries not high enough to warrant wearing expensive Western suits. In 1907, when an inner-city train ticket cost between three and five sen, a made-to-order suit required an average of twenty to twenty-five yen. (One yen is equal to 100 sen.) The Western-clothed equivalent of the *koshiben* was the *yôfuku saimin,* or ill suited, poor businessman. In the early twentieth century, businessmen were also known as *getsukyôtori,* men who earned a monthly salary, and *tsutomenin,* men who commuted to work by train. However, the term '*koshiben* road' (*koshiben kaidô*) was used to describe the morning and evening journeys of these businessmen to their trains and offices. Notably none of these terms is used in the 'The Girl Fetish' but, although the man is referred to as an editor, he falls into this new class of businesspeople. The image and actual social position of the salaryman changed during the early years of the twentieth century, especially after the development of the Marunouchi business area in the 1920s, which was located directly in front of Tokyo station (opened on 20 December 1914). See, for example, Masuda Taijiro, *Chirashi kôkoku ni miru Taisho no sesô, fuzoku* (*Examining Taisho Period Social Conditions and Customs through Leaflets and Advertisements*) (Tokyo, 1981), pp. 47–8. Ishihara Chiaki, Tôgawa Nobusuke *et al.* (eds), '"Shôjo byô" o yomu' ('On reading "The Girl Fetish"'), *Bungaku* (*Literature*) (July 1990), p. 169. Maeda Hajime, *Sarariiman monogatari* (*The Story of the Salaryman)* (Tokyo, 1928), especially the introduction.

9 Yogo Ikunobu, '"Take no kidô" no kûkan/Aratana "Watsureenu hitobito" no monogatari' ('Space in Kunikida Doppo's "The Bamboo Wicket" and "A New Story of 'Unforgettable People'"'), in Taguchi Ritsuo (ed.), *Toshi* (*City*) (Tokyo, 1995), p. 51.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.* See also Edward Seidensticker, *High City, Low City: Tokyo from Edo to the earthquake* (Cambridge MA, 1991).

12 See, for example, Matsuda, *Chirashi ni miru*, pp. 47–8.

13 *Shûkan Yearbook: Nichiroku 20 seki 1901* (*Weekly Yearbook: Journal of the Twentieth Century, 1901*) (Tokyo, 1998), p. 16.

14 This distinction is reflected today in the presence of 'green cars' on Japan Railway long-distance trains. The seating in green cars is reserved and commands a supplementary fare. In addition, weekly, monthly, and other train passes for the JR network are coloured green, while one-way tickets are usually brown.

15 Quoted in Walter Benjamin, 'Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', in his *Charles Baudelaire: lyric poet in the era of late capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1973), p. 38.

16 *Shûkan Yearbook: Nichiroku 20 seki 1900* (*Weekly Yearbook: Journal of the Twentieth Century, 1900*) (Tokyo, 1998), p. 38. For the text of the 'Railway Song' see Owada Takeki, *Tetsudô shôka* (Tokyo, 1900).
17 For the text of the 'Densha shôka' see Ishikawa Teizo (ed.), *Basha tetsudô kara chikatetsu made* (*From Horse Tramway to Subway*) (Tokyo, 1963), p. 1. A 'New Railway Song' ('Shin tetsudô shôka') was played on the national public radio station (NHK) in 1937, but this song also reflected the times in which it was produced, as it was much more imperialistic and glorified three long-distance super-express JR trains. Harada Matsumasa, *Nihon no kokutetsu* (*Japan's National Railways*) (Tokyo, 1986), pp. 87–9.
18 *Showa hayari uta shi* (*The History of Popular Songs in the Showa Era*) (Tokyo, 1985), p. 27. This song has also been known by other titles, and there are versions that include slightly different lyrics.
19 Shiro Sei, 'Densha nai nite mitaru hitobito no kao' ('On observing people's faces on the train'), *Jitsugyô no Nihon* 9 (15 November 1906), pp. 1816–8. *Jitsugyô no Nihon* was a magazine devoted to success in business and often published articles on the importance of proper behaviour, especially facial expressions. See Earl Kinmouth, *The Self-made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought: from samurai to salary man* (Berkeley CA, 1981), p. 260. These early twentieth-century observations are strikingly similar those described in the 15 September 1999 issue of the *New York Times* regarding the tired faces of commuters on the Long Island Railway. See David M. Halbfinger, 'I've been sleeping on the railroad: Long Island commuter run is a medical researcher's lab', *New York Times*, 15 September 1999, p. A27.
20 I use Kenneth G. Henshall's excellent translation 'The Girl Watcher'. I have, however, made slight alterations in addition to the title. For example, Henshall refers to the protagonist by his last name, Sugita, instead of the anonymous signifier 'man'. The Japanese edition used here is that included in Ishihara Chiaki, Togawa Nobusuke *et al.* (eds), 'Shôjo byô o yomu', and Tayama Katai, 'Shôjo byô', in *Tayama Katai shû* (*Selected Works of Tayama Katai*), *Nihon gendai bungaku zenshû* (Tokyo, 1962), pp. 34–42. It is interesting to note the similarities in form and content between the first sentence of 'The Girl Fetish' and that of Kunikida Doppo's short story 'The Bamboo Wicket' ('Take no kidô'), published in 1908. The first line of 'The Bamboo Wicket' reads, 'Ôba Shinzo, a company employee [*kaishain*], lives in a Tokyo suburb and commutes to his office in the Kyobashi section of the city; he walks half a mile to the train station on foot every morning, but he claims it is good exercise.' Kunikida Doppo, 'Take no kidô', reprinted in *Teihon Kunikida Doppo zenshû* (Tokyo, 1967), p. 133.
21 'The Girl Watcher', p. 167.
22 *Ibid.*, p. 167.
23 *Ibid.*, pp. 167–8.
24 *Ibid.*, p. 168.
25 *Ibid.*, p. 172.
26 See, for example, Ishihara Chiaki, Togawa Nobusuke *et al.* (eds), 'Shôjo byô o yomu', p. 163. Suzuki Masao, *Tokyo no chiri ga wakaru jiten* (*Guide to Understanding Tokyo through its Geography*) (Tokyo, 2000).
27 Horse-drawn streetcars were in use in Tokyo until 1904.
28 For the texts of all three streetcar songs see Hayashi Junshin and Yoshikawa Fumio, *Tokyo shiden meijo zue* (*Maps and Pictures of Tokyo Streetcars and the Famous Places they Traversed*) (Tokyo, 2000), pp. 146–60.
29 Yomiyuri shimbun newspaper company (eds), *20 seki: donna jidai datta ka—raifusutairu, sankyô, keizai hen* (*The Twentieth Century: what kind of era was it?* Volume on *Society, Industry, and the Economy*) (Tokyo, 2000), p. 301.
30 'The Girl Watcher', p. 175.
31 *Asahi Chronicle: the Twentieth Century Week by Week, 1906–07* (Tokyo, 2000), p. 31.
32 *Ibid.*
33 *Ibid.*
34 Maeda Hajime, *Sarariiman monogatari*, p. 50.
35 A train with women-only accommodation was put on in the United States in 1909 and may have been the model for the one in Japan. On its first day, a total of 131 women used the Tokyo Flower Train. The Flower Train was in service until the Second World War. A movement to reinstate it was successful in 1947, and Chuo line trains included a passenger car for women only until 1973. *Asahi Chronicle: the Twentieth Century Week by Week, 1906–07* (Tokyo, 2000), pp. 20, 30. During December 1999 the privately owned Keio

Line, which connects the western Tokyo suburbs with the city centre, included a car reserved for women on the last train of the night. The aim was to give female passengers a more 'comfortable' ride, apart from drunken salarymen during the end-of-the-year party season, but many women said they used the car because it was less crowded. Keio made the night-time women-only car a permanent feature on 25 March 2001.

36 At this time, female students also commuted to school by bicycle. In 1905 it was reported that twelve or thirteen students from Tokyo Christian Women's University, and seven or eight students from the music conservatory (Ongaku daigaku), rode bicycles to class. *Shûkan Yearbook: Nichiroku 20 seki 1905* (*Weekly Yearbook: Journal of the Twentieth Century, 1905*) (Tokyo, 1998), p. 30.

37 'The Girl Watcher', p. 169.

38 *Ibid.*, pp. 175–6.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 172. I am grateful to Professor Angela Yiu for drawing my attention to this similarity between the clothing of the female students and that of the man's wife.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 180. Throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, Shinanomachi station was associated with upper-class male and female students.

41 Literally, 'his hand, excited about the girl's beautiful figure', lost hold of the brass pole (*reijo no bi ni utsutori toshite ita kare no te*).

42 'Senrô' has also been translated by Henshall and is included in *The Quilt and other Stories*.

43 Takeda Nobuaki, *Sanshiro no notta kisha* (*The Steam Train ridden by Natsume Soseki's Fictional Sanshiro*) (Tokyo, 1999), pp. 99–100. See also Hiraoka Toshio, *Nichiro sengo bungaku no kenkyu* (*Research on Literature written after the Russo-Japanese War*) I (Tokyo, 1985).

44 Ishikawa Teizo (ed.), *Basha tetsudô kara chikatetsu made*, pp. 14–15.

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