He was, however, the first Tokyo emperor. His father was reared in Kyoto and buried in the outskirts of that city. The Taishō emperor lived his whole life in Tokyo, to the extent that anyone in this mobile age lives his whole life anywhere. His grave lies in Tokyo Prefecture. No one remembers much about him except that he was kept out of sight, but in this one regard he was unique, an original.

2

HAPPY RECONSTRUCTION DAYS

The official view was that the reconstruction of Tokyo from the great earthquake was complete by 1930. A "reconstruction festival" took place in March of that year. The emperor, who had been regent at the time of the earthquake, was among those who addressed a reconstruction rally in the palace plaza. The mayor addressed a gathering in Hibiya Hall, a few hundred yards to the south. The citizenry was not much a part of these rallies, but the celebrations went on for several days and included events to please everyone—parades and "flower trolleys" and the like. These last were elaborately decorated trolley cars that went all over the city.

The emperor took an inspection tour, and expressed taciturn satisfaction with all that he saw by way of reconstruction and hopes for a future of unity and progress. He used the word "capital" to particular effect, as if to emphasize that there was to be no more talk of a capital elsewhere. The organizers of the tour shielded him from the masses with a thoroughness at which the Japanese are very good. Some fifteen thousand people with whom it was conceivable he might come into contact were vaccinated for smallpox. An estimated quarter of a million people were in some way involved in the planning and execution. The tour took him through the flat Low City, the regions most cruelly devastated by earth-

The Shōwa emperor, then regent, on an inspection tour after the earthquake; he is standing next to the chair

quake and fire. He stopped, among other places, at Sumida Park and the earthquake memorial (see page 12).

The park is a product of the earthquake, one of the two big new parks beside the Sumida River. It runs for not quite a mile along the right, or Asakusa, bank, less than half that distance along the left bank. The shorter, or left-bank, portion has been the more successful as a park, because it contains venerable religious institutions and the famous line of cherry trees. A new start had to be made on this last. The fires of 1923 destroyed the old one almost completely. Much of the right-bank portion is on reclaimed land. The Arakawa Drainage Channel of mid-Taishō had removed the threat of floods and made reclamation possible. When, in recent years, an ugly concrete wall was put up to contain the river, the incentive was less a fear of waters rushing down the river than of waters rushing up from the bay during stormy high tides. Title to the land for Hamachō Park, the other of the two, on the right bank downstream, presented few difficulties, since there were only three landowners. Getting rid of all the little places that had rights of tenancy was more complicated. Much of the Hamachō geisha district happened to sit upon

the tract, and geisha and their patrons can be strong willed and influential people. The quarter was rebuilt a short distance to the west.

If the official view is accepted, the city did not have long to enjoy its new self. The reconstruction had taken seven years. Only a decade and a little more elapsed before the Second World War started pulling things apart once more. Happy days were few. It may be, indeed, that the years of the reconstruction were happier than the years that followed, for the latter were also the years of the depression, the assassinations, and the beginnings of war.

The Japanese word that is here rendered as "reconstruction" is also rendered by the dictionaries as "restoration." Perfect restoration of a city is probably impossible. There may be attempts to redo a city exactly as it was before whatever made restoration necessary. There have been such attempts in Europe since 1945. The results may be faithful to all the evidence of what was lost, but they are somehow sterile. The life that produced the original is not there.

Nothing of the sort was attempted in Tokyo. Probably it would have been impossible except in limited neighborhoods. We may be grateful that the city was allowed to live and grow, and not forced back into molds it had outgrown. Yet, though few people now alive are old enough to remember what was there before September 1, 1923, one has trouble believing that the old city was not more pleasing to the eye than what came after. If perfect restoration is probably impossible, a reconstruction is generally less pleasing than what went before it. In Tokyo the reasons are not mysterious. They have to do with the fact that Tokyo and Japan had opened themselves in the decade of the 1860s to a deluge of devices and methods from a very alien culture. These had much to recommend them. They were ways of fending off political encroachment. They also tended to be cheaper and more convenient than old devices and methods. So with each reconstruction jerry-built hybrids became more common.

The citizenry seems on the whole to have been rather pleased with the rebuilding, as it was again to be in 1945 and after. Everything had become so cheerful, all that white concrete replacing all that dark plaster and those even darker tiles. Sukiya Bridge, west of Ginza, with the new *Asahi Shimbun* building reflected in its dark waters like a big ship, and the Nichigeki, the Japan Theater, like a bullring, was the place where

all the *mobo* and *moga*, the modern boys and girls (for these expressions see page 401), wanted to have their pictures taken.

Fully aware that there are no rulers for measuring, and at the disadvantage of not having been there, we may ask just how much it did all change. The opinions of the best-informed and most sensitive are not unanimous. Most of what survived from Edo had been in the Low City, because that is where most of Edo was. Therefore most of it disappeared. So much is beyond denying. It is in the matter of the rebuilding and the changes it brought to the physical, material city and to its folkways—changes in spirit, we might say—that opinion varies.

In the early years of Shōwa, Nagai Kafū was spending many of his evenings in Ginza, at "cafés," which today would more likely be called bars or cabarets. In 1931 he put some of his experiences and observations into a novel, *During the Rains (Tsuyo no Atosaki)*. An aging character who is in many ways a surrogate for Kafū himself—although Kafū was younger, and never served a prison term for bribery, as the character has—muses upon the Ginza of recent years. Every day something changes;

Kyōbashi, as rebuilt after the earthquake

the sum of changes since the earthquake is like a dream. The Ginza of today is not the Ginza of yesterday. The old gentleman's interests are rather narrow. He is chiefly concerned with the cafés which sprang up in large numbers after the earthquake, most of them on burnt-over tracts, and which, being outposts of the demimonde, were highly sensitive to new fashions and tastes. He speaks for Kafū, however, and Kafū found the changes devastating. The old pleasure centers were gone, and good taste threatened to go with them.

Tanizaki Junichirō, a native of the city who had been away most of the time since the earthquake, felt differently. Change had not lived up to his predictions. On September 1, 1923, he was in the Hakone Mountains, some fifty miles southwest of Tokyo. He had a famous vision of utter destruction and a splendid flapper-age rebuilding. What he saw and wrote of in 1934 was disappointing, or would have been had he still been in his 1923 frame of mind. He had changed, and was glad that changes in the city had not been as extreme as he had hoped and predicted. The Tanizaki of 1934 would have been disappointed, this is to say, if the Tanizaki of 1923 had not himself changed.

> So ten years and one have now gone by. The decade which seemed so slow as it passed came to an end on September 1 of last year. I am forty-nine. And how are things today with me, and how are things with Tokyo? People say that the immediate future is dark, and that nothing is as it should be; yet looking back over the meditations in which I was sunk on that mountain road in Hakone, I feel somewhat strange. I do not know whether to be sad or happy at the irony of what has happened. My thoughts then about the extent of the disaster, the damage to the city, and the speed and form of the recovery were half right and half wrong. . . . Because the damage was less than I imagined, the recovery in ten years, though remarkable, has not been the transformation I looked for. I was one of those who uttered cries of delight at the grand visions of the home minister, Gotō Shimpei. Three billion yen would go into buying up the whole of the burned wastes and making them over into something regular and orderly. They were not realized. The old tangle of Tokyo streets is still very much with us. It is true that large numbers of new bridges, large and small, now describe their graceful arcs over the Sumida

and other rivers and canals. The region from Marunouchi through Ginza and Kyōbashi to Nihombashi has taken on a new face. Looking from the train window as the train moves through the southern parts of the city and on past Shimbashi to the central station, I cannot but be astonished that these were lonely wastes where I would play half a day as a child. People back from abroad say that Tokyo is now a match for the cities of Europe and America. . . . The daydream in which I lost myself on September 1, 1923—I neglected to think even of my unhappy wife and daughter, back in the city—did not approach the imposing beauty I now see before me. But what effect has all this surface change had on the customs, the manners, the words, the acts of the city and its people? The truth is that my imagination got ahead of me. Westernization has not been as I foresaw. To be sure, there have recently appeared such persons as the stick girls of Ginza, and the prosperity of bars and cafés quite overshadows that of the geisha quarters, and movies and reviews are drawing customers away from Kabuki; but none of these places, and even less the casinos and cabarets, bears comparison with even the Carleton Café in Shanghai. . . . How many women and girls wear Western dress that really passes as Western dress? In summer the number increases somewhat, but in winter you see not one in ten among shoppers and pedestrians. Even among office girls, one in two would be a generous estimate.

(Since Tanizaki was born in 1886, his age is obviously by the Oriental count. "Stick girls" were female gigolos. Like walking sticks, they attached themselves to men, in this case young men strolling in Ginza.)

So Tanizaki's feelings are mixed. He is sad that he must admit his inadequacies as a prophet and sad too that with regard to Nihombashi, at least (see page 5), his predictions were not exaggerated. Yet he does not see changes in customs and manners as Kafū does.

Writing also in the early thirties, Kawabata Yasunari is more interested in physical change, and is a subtler chronicler of it, than Kafū or Tanizaki. (Kafū was twenty years older than Kawabata, Tanizaki thirteen.) In Hama Park he comes upon a kind of revivalism directed not at Edo and the Japanese tradition but at early Westernization. He finds Western tendencies, in other words, that have become thoroughly Japanized.

Everything is new, of course, Hama Park being one of the two new ones along the banks of the Sumida. Nothing is unchanged except the sea gulls and the smell of the water. Yet nostalgia hangs over the place. The new Venetian pavilion is meant to recall a famous Meiji building lost in the earthquake, the offices put up by Josiah Conder for the Hokkaido Development Bureau. Conder, an Englishman, was the most famous of foreign architects active in Meiji Japan. The music and revelry from the riverboats of Edo are too remote for nostalgia.

Kawabata does not tell us what he thinks of Sumida Park, the other new riverside one, but quotes a friend who is an unreserved booster. With its clean flowing waters and its open view off to Mount Tsukuba, Sumida Park, says the acquaintance, is the equal of the great parks beside the Potomac, the Thames, the Danube, the Isar (which flows through Munich). Give the cherry trees time to grow and it will be among the finest parks in the world. In his silent response Kawabata is perhaps the better prophet. Tsukuba is now invisible and concrete walls block off the view of a very dirty river. Only in cherry-blossom time do people pay much attention to the park, and even then it is not noticed as is the much older Ueno Park.

Kawabata has a walk down the whole length of the new Shōwa Avenue, from Ueno to Shimbashi. Some liken it to the Champs-Elysées and Unter den Linden. Kawabata does not. "I saw the pains of Tokyo. I could, if I must, see a brave new departure, but mostly I saw the rawness of the wounds, the weariness, the grim, empty appearance of health."

Famous old sweets, offered for centuries along the east bank of the Sumida, are now purveyed from concrete shops that look like banks. Though Kawabata does not mention it, the mall in front of the Asakusa Kannon Temple was also done over in concrete, in another kind of revivalist style, the concrete molded to look like Edo. The main building of the National Museum of Ueno, finished in 1937, is among the most conspicuous examples of the style.) The earthquake memorial on the east bank of the Sumida, where those tens of thousands perished in the fires of 1923, is a most unsuccessful jumble of styles, also in concrete. Is it no longer possible, Kawabata asks of a companion, to put up a building in a pure Japanese style? "But all these American things are Tokyo itself," replies the companion, a positive thinker. And a bit later: "They may

Shōwa Avenue (Shōwadōri), looking northwards from the freight yards at Akihabara

look peculiar now, but we'll be used to them in ten years or so. They may even turn out to be beautiful."

Kawabata does think the city justly proud of its new bridges, some four hundred of them. Indeed they seem to be what it is proudest of. In a photographic exhibition about the new Tokyo, he notes, more than half the photographs are of bridges.

In 1923 Tokyo was still what Edo had been, a city of waters. The earthquake demonstrated that it did not have enough bridges. There were only five across the Sumida. They all had wooden floors, and all caught fire. That is why more people died from drowning, probably, than directly from the earthquake. On the eve of Pearl Harbor, with the

completion of Kachitoki Bridge, there were eleven. Kachitoki means "shout of triumph," but the name is not, perhaps, quite as jingoistic as it may seem. Those who chose it in 1940 may well have had in mind the shout of triumph that was to announce a pleasant end to the unpleasantness on the continent, but the direct reference is to a triumph that actually came off, that over the Russians in 1905. The name was given to a ferry established that year between Tsukiji and filled lands beyond one of the mouths of the Sumida. The name of the ferry became the name of the bridge, a drawbridge that was last drawn almost twenty years ago. By the late fifties automobile traffic to and from Ginza was so heavy that there was congestion for two hours after a drawing of the bridge.

Nor were there enough bridges across the Kanda River and the downtown canals. These waterways did not claim the victims that the Sumida did, but they were obstacles to crowds pressing toward the palace plaza. Of the streets leading westward from Ginza toward the plaza and Hibiya Park, only three had bridges crossing the outer moat. The moat was now bridged on all the east-west streets, as also was the canal that bounded Ginza on the east.

Moat and canal now are gone. There was some filling in of canals from late Meiji, as the city turned from boats to wheels for pleasure and for commerce. Between the earthquake and the war several canals in Nihombashi and Kyōbashi were lost, but one important canal was actually dug, joining two older canals for commercial purposes. Other canals were widened and deepened. Both in 1923 and in 1945 canals were used to dispose of rubble, that reconstruction might proceed. It has been mostly since 1945 that Tokyo of the waters has been obliterated. In the old Low City the Sumida remains, and such rivers or canals as the Kanda and the Nihombashi, but the flatlands are now dotted with bus stops carrying the names of bridges of which no trace remains. Venice would not be Venice if its canals were filled in. Tokyo, with so many of its canals turned into freeways, is not Edo.

It was after the earthquake that retail merchandising, a handy if rough measure of change, went the whole distance toward becoming what the Japanese had observed in New York and London. Indeed it went further, providing not only merchandise but entertainment and culture. Mitsukoshi, one of the bold pioneers in making the dry-goods stores over into department stores selling almost everything, has had a

theater since its post earthquake rebuilding. Most department stores have had amusement parks on their roofs and some still have them, and all the big ones have gardens and terraces, galleries and exhibition halls.

The great revolution occurred at about the turn of the century, when Mitsukoshi and the other Nihombashi pioneer, Shirokiya, started diversifying themselves. What happened after the earthquake is modest by comparison, but a step that now seems obvious had the effect of inviting everyone in. Everyone came.

The change had to do with footwear, always a matter of concern in a land whose houses merge indoors and outdoors except at the entranceway, beyond which outdoor footwear may not pass. Down to the earthquake the department stores respected the taboo. Footwear was checked and slippers were provided for use within the stores. There were famous snarls. They worked to the advantage of smaller shops, where the number of feet was small enough for individual attention. After the earthquake came the simple solution: Let the customer keep his shoes on.

Simple and obvious it may seem today, but it must have taken getting used to. Never before through all the centuries had shod feet ventured beyond the entranceway, or perhaps an earth-floored kitchen.

Smaller shops had to follow along, in modified fashion, if they were to survive. In earlier ages customers had removed their footwear and climbed to the straw-matted platform that was the main part of the store. There they sat and made their decisions. Customer and shopkeeper were both supposed to know what the customer wanted. It was fetched from warehouses. Now the practice came to prevail of having a large part of the stock spread out for review. Floor plans changed accordingly. There was a larger proportion of earthen floor and a smaller proportion of matted platform, and customers tended to do what they do in the West, remain standing and in their shoes or whatever they happened to bring in from the street with them.

Private railways were beginning to put some of their profits from the lucrative commuter business, which in Meiji had been largely a freight and sewage business, into department stores. In this they were anticipated by Osaka. The Hankyū Railway opened the first terminal department store at its Umeda terminus in 1929. Seeing what a good idea this was—having also the main Osaka station of the National Railways, Umeda was the most important transportation center in the Kansai region—the private railways of Tokyo soon began putting up terminal

department stores of their own. Thus they promoted the growth of the western transfer points—Shibuya, Shinjuku, and Ikebukuro—and their control over these most profitable of places.

The department stores discontinued old services. The bourgeois matron from the High City now had to come to the store. Fewer and fewer stores would come to her, as all of them had in the old days. New services were added as the railways began to open their stores and competition became more intense: free delivery, even free bus service to and from stores. If it asked that the matron set forth and mingle with the lesser orders, the department store made the process as painless for her as possible.

External architecture changed along with floor plans. Tiled roofs began to disappear behind false fronts. The old shop signs, often abstract and symbolic and always aesthetically pleasing, gave way to signs that announced their business loudly and unequivocally. Advertising was now in full flood. Huge businessman and little businessman alike had taken to it, and the old subdued harmonies of brown and gray surrendered to a cacophony of messages and colors. This seems to have been truer west than east of the Sumida. In the conservative eastern wards rows of black-tiled roofs were still visible from the street. The west bank was said after the earthquake and rebuilding to resemble a river town put up by the Japanese in Manchuria.

The first vending machines were installed at Tokyo and Ueno stations early in 1926. Like advertising, whose origins in Tokugawa and Meiji were so simple that they were almost invisible, vending machines have become an insistent presence in the years since. They now offer an astonishing variety of wares, from contraceptives to a breath of fresh air.

Like the practices and habits of shoppers, those of diners-out changed. The restaurant in which one eats shoeless and on the floor is not uncommon even today. Yet new ways did become common at the center, Ginza, and spread outward. Good manners had required removing wraps upon entering a restaurant, or indeed any interior. Now people were to be seen eating with their coats and shoes on, and some even kept their hats on. Before the earthquake women had disliked eating away from home—it was not good form. The department-store dining room led the way in breaking down this reticence, and the new prominence of

the working woman meant that women no longer thought it beneath them to be seen by the whole world eating with other women. Before the earthquake a restaurant operator with two floors at his disposal tended to use the upper one for business and the lower one for living. Now the tendency was to use the street floor for business. An increasing number of shopkeepers (a similar trend in Osaka is documented in Tanizaki's *The Makioka Sisters*) used all the floors for business and lived elsewhere, most often in the High City. So it was that money departed the Low City.

The habits and practices of the Buddhist clergy were also changing. The priests of some sects had long married. Now there was an insurgency in a stronghold of Tendai, one of the sects that had remained celibate.

The Kaneiji Temple once occupied most of the land in Shitaya Ward that is now Ueno Park. There it ministered to the souls of six Tokugawa shoguns, whose graves lay within the premises. It was almost completely destroyed in the "Ueno War" of 1868, when the Meiji government subdued the last Tokugawa holdouts in the city. Sorely reduced in scale, the temple was rebuilt and came through the earthquake without serious damage. In the Edo centuries there were fifteen abbots, even as there were fifteen shoguns. All of the abbots were royal princes, and all were celibate, at least to appearances, though dubious teahouses in the districts nearby seem to have catered to the needs of the Kaneiji clergy. In Meiji the abbots started taking common-law wives. In 1932 one of them made bold to enter into a formal, legal marriage. The appointment of his successor was the occasion for a struggle between the Kaneiji and Tendai headquarters on Mount Hiei, near Kyoto. Hiei demanded that the Kaneiji candidate choose between marriage and career, and did not prevail. He had both. The Hiei abbots have gone on being celibate.

The female work force was expanding rapidly. In that day when Taishō democracy was dying but not quite dead, a few people were beginning to have ideas about the equality of the sexes. Already in Meiji, women had taken over nursing and the telephone exchanges. In the years before and after the change of reigns "red-collar girls" appeared. These were bus conductors, and their trade was almost entirely feminine until its extinction after the Second World War. Up and down Shōwa Avenue, the wide new street cut through from Shimbashi to Ueno after the earthquake, were gas-pump maidens. The day of the pleasure motorist had come, and pretty maidens urged him to consume. The day of the

shop girl had also come. Sales in the old dry goods stores had been entirely in the hands of shop boys.

The question of the shop girl and whether or not she was ideally liberated added much to the interest of the most famous Tokyo fire between the gigantic ones of 1923 and 1945. The "flowers of Edo," the conflagrations for which the city had been famous, were not in danger of extinction, but they were becoming less expensive and less dramatic. Firefighting methods improved, the widening of streets provided firebreaks, and, most important, fire-resistant materials were replacing the old boards and shingles. Except for the disasters of 1923 and 1945, there have since the end of Meiji been no fires of the good old type, taking away buildings by the thousands and tens of thousands within a few hours. The number of fires did not fall remarkably, but losses, with the two great exceptions, were kept to a few thousand buildings per year.

The famous fire of early Shōwa occurred in a department store. It affected only the one building and the loss of life did not bear comparison with that from the two disasters. It was, however, the first multiple-storey fire the city had known, and the worst department-store fire anywhere since one in Budapest late in the nineteenth century.

The Shirokiya, an eight-storey building constructed after the earthquake, was the chief rival of the Mitsukoshi through the years of diversifying and expanding. On the morning of December 16, 1932, a fire broke out in the toy department on the fourth floor. The end of the year had traditionally been a time of giving gifts, and Christmas gifts had of recent years been added to those based on older customs. The Taishō emperor brought Christmas Day into prominence by dying on it. Christmas Eve was now becoming what New Year's Eve is in the West. The Shirokiya was bright with decorations. A technician was repairing Christmas lights and a tree caught fire. The fire spread to the celluloid toys, and the whole fourth floor was soon engulfed. Fortunately this happened at a few minutes after nine, before the store had filled with customers. A watcher from a fire tower nearby saw the fire before it was reported. Firemen were changing shifts, and both shifts rushed to the scene. Presently every pump in the city was on hand. Not much could be done to contain the fire. The floors of the Shirokiya were highly inflammable and all the top ones were quickly in flames. The fire was extinguished a few minutes before noon.

Utility poles and wires along the main streets, and the narrowness of

The Shirokiya fire

side streets, made it difficult to use ladders, though some rescues were effected. Ropes and improvised lines from kimono fabrics in the store inventories brought people down and slings up to bring more people down. Army planes came by with ropes, although, according to the fire department, they were too late to do much good. It may be that no one except a single victim of asphyxiation need have died. The other thirteen deaths were by jumping and falling. The bears and monkeys on the roof came through uninjured, to demonstrate that the roof was safe enough throughout. The jumping was of course from panic. The falling had more subtle causes, having to do with customs and manners—in this instance, the slowness of women in converting to imported dress.

All shop girls in those days wore Japanese dress and underdress, wraparound skirts in various numbers depending on the season. Traditional dress for women included nothing by way of shaped, tight-fitting undergarments to contain the private parts snugly. The older ones among

the Shirokiya women, also being bolder, made it safely down the ropes. Some of the younger ones used a hand for the rope and a hand to keep their skirts from flying into disarray. So they fell. In 1933 the Shirokiya started paying its girls subsidies for wearing foreign dress, and required that they wear underpants.

From about the time of the earthquake, advertising men had been pushing Western underdress for women, which they made a symbol of sexual equality. But a disaster like the Shirokiya fire was needed to effect decisive change. It demonstrated that women were still lamentably backward, and the newspapers loved it. Underpants became one of their favorite causes and enjoyed quick success, though the reform would actually seem to have begun earlier. Kawabata noted that all the little girls sliding down the slides in Hama Park were wearing underpants.

Some years earlier another department store, the new Matsuya in Ginza, which was to be the Central PX for the American Occupation, had provided the setting for another new event. The Shirokiya had the first modern high-rise fire, and the Matsuya the first high-rise suicide. It occurred on May 9, 1926. In a land in which, ever since statistics have been kept, there has been a high incidence of suicide among the young, suicides have shown a tendency toward the faddish and voguish. Meiji had suicides by jumping over waterfalls, and the closing months of Taishō a flurry of jumping from high buildings.

In May 1932 a Keiō University student and his girlfriend, not allowed to marry, killed themselves on a mountain in Oiso, southwest of Tokyo. The incident became a movie, *Love Consummated in Heaven,* and the inspiration for a popular song.

With you the bride of another,
How will I live? How can I live?
I too will go. There where Mother is,
There beside her,
I will take your hand.

God alone knows
That our love has been pure.
We die, and in paradise,
I will be your bride.

At least twenty other couples killed themselves on the same spot during the same year.

Early in 1933 a girl student from Tokyo jumped into a volcanic crater on Oshima, largest of the Izu Islands. Situated in and beyond Sagami Bay, south of Tokyo, the islands are a part of Tokyo Prefecture. The girl took along a friend to attest to the act and inform the world of it. A vogue for jumping into the same crater began. By the end of the year almost a thousand people, four-fifths of them young men, had jumped into it. Six people jumped in on a single day in May, and on a day in July four boys jumped in one after another.

On April 30 two Tokyo reporters wearing gas masks and fire suits descended into the crater by rope ladders strengthened with metal. One reached a depth of more than a hundred feet before falling rocks compelled him to climb back up again. They found no bodies. After more elaborate preparations the *Yomiuri* sent a reporter and a photographer into the crater a month later. Using a gondola lowered by a crane, they descended more than a thousand feet to the crater floor. There they found the body of a teenage boy.

The year of all these suicides seems to have been a nervous and jumpy one in general. It was the year in which Japan, having rejected the Lytton Report, left the League of Nations. The report demanded that Japan withdraw from Manchuria. Feelings of isolation and apprehension seem to have swept the land. Yo-yos were bobbing everywhere. Peak sales ran to five million a month. During the summer, the withdrawal from the League having come in the spring, everyone was out in the streets and in the parks, hopping about to the accompaniment of the great hit song of the day, "Tokyo Ondo" ("Tokyo Dance"). The music of this is by Nakayama Shimpei, generally held to be the founder of modern Japanese popular music, and the lyrics are by Saijō Yaso, a poet of such distinction that he is given three pages in a one-volume encyclopedia of modern Japanese literature.

The lyrics do not say very much. Half of them and a bit more are meaningless chants to keep rhythm by: *sate ya-a to na sore yoi yoi yoi,* and that sort of thing. Interspersed among them are fleeting references to places and things and combinations of the two, such as the moon upon the Sumida, the willows of the Ginza, and Tsukuba and Fuji, the mountains that are supposed to adorn the Tokyo skyline but seldom do.

Advised that the dancing in Hibiya Park was disturbing His Majesty's rest, the Marunouchi police ordered it to desist at nine o'clock. At Asakusa the police did the opposite, protected the dancers. They had had reports that the movie theaters, most of whose potential customers were out in the streets dancing, had hired men from underworld gangs to break the dances up. In parts of town the dancing crowds stopped traffic, and the police were powerless either to disperse or to protect.

The number of Tokyo suicides doubled during the first decade of Shōwa. The number of attempted suicides doubled in three years toward the end of the decade. Despondency, illness, and family difficulties were the predominant motives. The effects of economic depression are to be detected in the last category. The number of suicides began to fall with the approach of war and continued to fall during the war.

The most famous suicide of early Shōwa occurred in the northern suburbs of Tokyo. On July 24, 1927, the writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke killed himself with an overdose of "Veronal, etc.," as accounts of the event uniformly have it. He did not, as General Nogi did, choose the day of the emperor's funeral, but his passing has widely been taken as symbolic of the passing of the Taishō reign.

A remarkable Kawabata essay, "Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and the Yoshiwara" ("Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to Yoshiwara"), published in 1929, associates the Akutagawa suicide with the horrors of the earthquake, and so makes it yet more symbolic.

> Hirotsu Kazuo describes in a recent story how he and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, having seen Uno Kōji to a hospital, went off for a look at the Tamanoi district and its unlicensed prostitutes. . . . I had an account directly from Mr. Hirotsu, and the impression it left was more powerful than that of the story. The conclusion had a certain ghoulishness about it, with the women of Tamanoi turning pale as Akutagawa passed, and whispering to one another: "A ghost, a ghost!"
>
> Akutagawa had by then completed preparations for his suicide, and so I wanted to attach all sorts of meanings to the anecdote, and of course I remembered how, some five or six years ago, I went with him to look at the Yoshiwara. . . .

I had been taking long walks through the city every day from September 1. There cannot be many who saw as well as I did what the earthquake had done. I believe I was sitting on the veranda of the Akutagawa house describing a little of it. Akutagawa himself suggested, I think, that he and Mr. Kon and I go look at the bodies in the Yoshiwara pond. Akutagawa was wearing a striped kimono and a helmet. The helmet was incongruous, like a gigantic toadstool perched on the thin face and figure. Walking along in those great strides of his, swinging his body as if about to take flight, he looked like a villain setting forth on some evil mission. He was a war-horse striding past the devastated wastes, up streets that were a tangle of charred electric lines, among survivors tired and dirty as war refugees. I was a little annoyed with him and the briskness that put him in such contrast with everyone and everything else. As I ran after him, I thought what fun it would be if a policeman or a person from the vigilance committees were to stop him and question him.

The pond beside the Yoshiwara quarter was one of those horrible pictures of hell which speak only to someone who has seen the real thing. The reader should imagine tens and hundreds of men and women as if boiled in a cauldron of mud. Muddy red cloth was strewn all up and down the banks, for most of the corpses were those of courtesans. Smoke was rising from incense along the banks. Akutagawa stood with a handkerchief over his face. He said something, but I have forgotten what. Probably it was something light and sarcastic, well worth forgetting.

He came upon a policeman in the Yoshiwara. For a kilometer or so on our way back they walked side by side, and he drew forth all manner of information about the earthquake. The policeman was an accommodating sort who answered all his questions. . . .

For me who had so little to do with Akutagawa while he lived, the picture that comes first to mind, now that he is dead, is of that helmeted figure striding vigorously along with no regard for his surroundings. There was in it a lightness and briskness that contained no hint of death.

But when, two or three years later, he had made his resolve to die, the picture must have come back into his mind, I am sure, of those horrible corpses piled on one another in the Yoshiwara pond. He seems to have deliberated all sorts of ways to die in search of one that would leave a handsome corpse. In contrast to the handsome death, its antithesis, were those corpses in the pond.

That was the day in his life when he saw the largest number of them.

And I who was with him in observing the most repellent of deaths can perhaps visualize his handsome death better than those who have been spared the repellent kind.

All of the other persons mentioned were well-known writers. Tamanoi is a district east of the Sumida River, then in the suburbs. Until 1945 it contained an unlicensed pleasure quarter. It is the setting of Nagai Kafū's *A Strange Tale from East of the River* (see pages 52–53).

The Taishō era needed a literary symbol, and Akutagawa was a good one, embodying (or so it is widely held) the sometimes neurotic refinement and intellectualism that were products of the great Meiji endeavor to encompass and catch up with the West. The common view has therefore been that his suicide, more than the death of the emperor, brought an end to an era. It is not easy to establish that Akutagawa's mental illness was peculiar to the era. Yet he will do as a symbol, as the poor emperor will not. The emperor's illness ran in the direction of retardation, which will hardly do for either Meiji or Taishō. The Akutagawa suicide provides reasonable grounds for considering the unlikely Taishō reign an independent and in some measure self-contained cultural period.

The new and popular words of the post-earthquake years were mostly foreign. This seems proper for that relatively cosmopolitan day of Taishō democracy; people did not have to be apologetic about importing their neologisms. Things were rather different in the late thirties. The Japanese language has always been hospitable to new words. Tokyo, where the lords of the media and of advertising have their seats, has coined most of them and helped others to spread. Numbers of Osaka words have made their way into the standard language, but they have had to be adopted by Tokyo before prevailing in the provinces.

Here are some popular words and expressions from late Taishō and

early Shōwa "It," "shan," "mobo" and "moga," "Charleston," "mannequin girl," "modern life," "stick girl," "casino." The significance of some should be clear enough; some require explanation. (Among the pleasures of modern Japanese is that its use of one's own language so often requires explanation.) "It" refers to the Clara Bow quality. "Shan" is from the German *schön*. It is a masculine term referring to feminine beauty. The mannequin girl is a particular kind of beauty, the fashion model. Though models had been used in advertising even before the earthquake, the modeling business really got started in 1929. From the spring of that year all the big department stores began using them. Curiously, an early photograph of the Mannequin Club—like most other people, models quickly formed a club which had as its chief aim the exclusion of everyone else—shows almost all of the ladies in Japanese dress. "Stick girl" will be found above, in Tanizaki's remarks about his native city. "Mobo" and "moga" are acronyms, and among the words that might be thought symbolic of the age itself. They are from "modern boy" and "modern girl" *(garu)*: the advanced young people of the day, the ones most sensitive to fad and fashion, they who went strolling in Ginza and had their pictures taken at Sukiya Bridge.

Many a neologism has had its brief day and gone, but all of the above remain in the language and are to be found in any dictionary. "Casino," from French rather than Italian or English, might be rendered "music hall." A neologism that did not gain immediate currency but has since become very much a part of the language was first used in a women's magazine in the spring of 1929. Before the earthquake "mama" was already supplanting native words for "mother." "Mama-san," adding the common appellative, now came to indicate the lady in charge of a café or bar, also often called a "madame."

Taishō was a time of great change. Such places of entertainment as the cafés make Ginza, for instance, come to seem near and familiar. And, given that wars, especially lost ones, and economic miracles are always potent engines of change, there has been no paucity in this respect in the years since. A 1929 survey of Tokyo *sakariba* shows us a city that is in important and interesting respects different from the city of today. The biggest of Japanese-English dictionaries gives "a bustling place" as one of its definitions of *sakariba*. These are places where crowds gather, and where revelry and shopping occur with the greatest intensity.

The *sakariba* covered are Ginza, Shinjuku, Ueno, Asakusa, Shibuya,

Ningyōchō, and Kagurazaka. No one today would include the last two, and Asakusa would be a borderline case; and no one would leave out Ikebukuro or Roppongi. Omissions and inclusions tell of the westward march of the city. Now among the gigantic transfer points in the old western suburbs, Ikebukuro was slower to get started than Shibuya and Shinjuku, those other western giants. To the huge profit of the Seibu Railway, one of the private commuter systems, it has grown hugely this last half century. The southern wards contained no bustling places in 1929. Shibuya lay beyond the city limits. Roppongi is in the old Azabu Ward, but it is a latecomer which got its start as a camp follower. This was in the late nineteenth century, when war (a victorious one in this instance) brought military barracks to the district. It has really emerged since the Second World War, as the most highly amplified of the *sakariba* and among the ones dearest to the very young.

Ningyōchō was lively in Meiji and has been in decline since the earthquake. So has most of the old Nihombashi Ward, the recognized center of mercantile Edo. Ningyōchō is as good a place as any to go in search of the mood and flavor of the old Low City, but it is not the smallest competition with a place like Shinjuku in the matter of drawing crowds. Kagurazaka, in Ushigome Ward, to the northwest of the palace and not far from the western limits of the old city, was for a time after the earthquake among the leading *sakariba*. It was one of the uptown geisha districts for which the knowledgeable Nagai Kafū had great contempt. Their geisha were, he thought, without accomplishments other than those of the bedroom. Kagurazaka had its period of prosperity with the destruction in the earthquake of the Low City pleasure quarters. It lay near a station on the western suburban line of the National Railways, but was not a transfer point, and so was outstripped by Shinjuku, which was.

The 1929 survey was made in the afternoon at all the places except Ningyōchō, where it was done in the early evening. In none of them do women outnumber men. Shinjuku in midafternoon has the highest proportion of women, 43 percent, and of these only a third are recognizable as housewives. In Ginza at four o'clock, young men account for almost half, young women only a little over a tenth; and so those who went strolling seem to have done it mostly by themselves or with male companions. *Mobo* were most commonly without *moga*. Asakusa, as noted above, would today be a borderline instance. It drew big crowds a half century ago but does no more. In 1929 the golden age of the music halls was just

getting underway, yet the survey contains ominous signs. The proportion of young men is much smaller than in Ginza, and that of middle-aged men higher. Already so early, it may be, the blight was setting in. The middle-aged crowd may spend more generously, but it is the young crowd that sets the tone and ensures that there will still be crowds for a while. When the young start to abandon a place, it is in for bad times.

The sex ratio would be different today. Ours is a much more womanized age. At four in the afternoon women would probably outnumber men in any of the places that still draw great crowds, except just possibly Ueno. Asakusa, Ningyōchō, and Kagurazaka do not.

The survey also spelled out categories, which would seem to show that a great uniformity has settled over Japanese crowds this past half century. Here is a full list of them: provincials, soldiers (Ueno had the most), shop boys, laborers, young boys, male students, youths (other than students, presumably), middle-aged men, old men, old women, housewives, young women, female children, female students, serving maids, geisha, and working women. They obviously are not carefully enough defined to be mutually exclusive, but we may assume that the surveyors could confidently, albeit vaguely, distinguish the categories one from another. Many of them would be indistinguishable today—students from other young men and women, for instance, and housewives from serving maids, or shop boys and laborers from other young men the same age. Many a provincial these days could easily cross the line and pass as a Tokyo person. There has been a leveling process which some might call democratic and others might call conformist.

Another survey of 1929, of department stores, also reveals a few interesting things. There were as many men as women. Today there might just possibly be on a Sunday afternoon, if an uncommonly large number of wives were able to drag their husbands forth on shopping expeditions. There certainly would be at no other time. The categories, again, call for notice: gentlemen, merchants, provincials, housewives, working women, serving maids. Again they are obviously rough, and they cannot be all-inclusive. Why are there no children and no students, who were in those days, as they are not now, easily detectable by their uniforms? Yet the categories are more distinctive than they would be today. Almost two-thirds of the men are in Western dress, but only a sixth of the women—and only 2 or 3 percent of "adult women," which category is not defined. The tendency of women to stay longer in traditional dress than men seems to be universal, and was clear in Japan from the beginning of Meiji. Cosmetics seem to have been a way of distinguishing the urban lady from the provincial. Heavy applications were the mark of the provincial.

Since 1898 Tokyo had had a mayor who presided over the "ward part" of the prefecture, the fifteen wards of the Meiji city, whose limits remained almost unchanged until 1932. Appointed governors had jurisdiction over the whole prefecture, including the "county part," the towns and rural regions that lay outside the city limits. Population was already spilling beyond the city limits in 1923, and did so ever more rapidly in the years that followed. The city wished to go west, and indulged the wish more and more.

Already in 1923 the prefecture was growing faster than the city. The process speeded up after the earthquake. Because the suburbs suffered relatively light damage, many of the 1923 refugees did not return, and population increase tended toward places where land was cheaper. With 1918 considered as 100, the population of the wards stood at only 90 in 1932. It fell by about a sixth immediately after the earthquake (though this was by no means as drastic a fall as that during and after the upheavals of 1867 and 1868 and the disaster of 1945). It quickly began to recover, but at no time before 1932 had it returned to the 1918 level. The population of the prefecture, again with 1918 as the base, stood at 156 in 1932, and the population of the city as its limits were redrawn in 1932—the population, that is, of the fifteen old wards and twenty new ones—stood at 322. Even what remained of the counties, to the west of the newly enlarged city, had risen to 129 as against 100 for 1918.

In 1920 the city still contained more than half the population of the prefecture. In 1930 the proportion had fallen to between a third and two-fifths. Four towns on the edges of the fifteen wards had more than a hundred thousand people in 1930. Fifteen had fifty thousand to a hundred thousand. The expansion of 1932 lagged far behind the facts. The city was much larger than the area the mayor had jurisdiction over.

As the old city filled up and spilled over, so did its cemeteries. The big new ones of Meiji, along the western limits of the city, were filling by the end of Taishō. Plans were completed on the eve of the earthquake for a new one, out in the "county part" of the prefecture, not far from

the Tama River. It too was filling before the new reign was a decade old. This time the city looked eastward. A tract was purchased at a place named Yasumi in Chiba Prefecture. Yasumi seems a most pleasant and appropriate name for a cemetery. The commonest word for "rest" is homophonous.

The western and southern suburbs were growing more rapidly than the northern and eastern ones. So once more we have evidence of the decline of the Low City. The northern and eastern suburbs were an extension of the Low City, the southern and western ones of the High City. The southern suburbs, on the way to Yokohama and in the industrial belt that lay between the two cities, were growing fastest of all. The town of Ebara, immediately beyond the southern city limits, had more than fifteen times the population in 1932 that it had had in 1918. Only one town to the north and east had an increase of more than sevenfold during the same period.

The suburbs, particularly the western and southern ones, were the realm of the *bunka jūtaku*, the "cultural dwelling," a euphemism for the kind of dwelling the "salaryman" or office worker was expected to be happy in. ("Salaryman" is a coinage from English which seems to have come into use during the First World War.) A cultural dwelling typically had three or four little rooms, one of them in a somewhat Western style, two floors, a floored kitchen, and a bath. In more traditional houses for the middle and lower orders the kitchen had a floor of packed earth. The private bath marks a major departure from tradition. In recent years it has become more economical for a family to bathe at home than to go to a public bath, and so of course the public bath has declined grievously. The public baths of Edo and Meiji were social and even cultural centers. Many cultural dwellings had pink and blue roofs, and so we have the beginnings of the plastic look, to replace the earthen look of the older styles.

At irregular but convenient intervals among all the new cultural abodes were shopping districts, many of them called the Something Ginza. Thatch-roofed farmhouses still dotted the suburbs, and some of them still had lands to farm. In late Taishō there was farming in eleven of the fifteen wards. Today there are truck gardens and a few paddies in the twenty new wards, but none in the fifteen old ones.

Universities began deserting the old city after the earthquake. Burned out in Kanda, the University of Commerce (Shōka Daigaku)

moved by stages to the place where, with the name Hitotsubashi from the old site, it now is, far out in the western suburbs. Burned out in Asakusa, the University of Technology (Kōgyō Daigaku) moved out to the paddies in what is now Meguro Ward. Keiō, one of the better-regarded private universities, built itself a second campus in Kanagawa Prefecture, beyond the Tama River. In this it was abetted by one of the private railways, many of which were also energetic real-estate developers. Title to the new land passed, without reimbursement, from the Toyoko (Tokyo-Yokohama) Railway to the university. Today the Tōyoko is a part of the Tōkyū, or Tokyo Express, system. Keiō retained the original campus in the old High City where it had since early Meiji been an evangelical center for Westernization.

The growth of the suburbs was not only residential and educational. Industry was also moving outward. In 1932, when rebuilding from the earthquake was held to be complete, more of the large factories in the prefecture—factories with more than a hundred workers—were outside than inside the city. By the thirties the district from southern Tokyo into Kanagawa Prefecture was emerging as one of the great industrial belts of the country, and the largest in the Kantō region. Really heavy industry situated itself across the Tama River in Kanagawa, but there were many subcontractors in what from 1932 were the southern wards of Tokyo. By that year the prefecture had passed Osaka in industrial output.

Tokyo bound far the largest number of books, printed far the largest number of pieces of paper, and made far the most pencils in the country. It excelled in what might be called the literate industries. Early in the thirties, chemicals were the largest Tokyo industry. By the end of the decade, with the war approaching, machine tools had emerged as the largest. Of the five wards with the largest industrial output, only one, Honjo east of the river, was in the old city. The largest of all was Kamata, a part of the Tokyo-Kanagawa industrial belt. The district east of the river continued to be one of light industry, while the south was heavy. Most of the printing was done in the old city, because that is where the newspapers were.

The burgeoning of the suburbs has not, as in many American cities, meant the withering away of the center. Ginza, at least, and to an extent

Ueno have held their own against the growth of the suburbs and the places Shibuya, Shinjuku, Ikebukuro where office workers on their way to and from suburban cultural dwellings change trains. Because centers yet farther east, prosperous in Edo and Meiji, have declined with the general decline of the Low City, Ginza may no longer be at the center of a cobweb; but the westward movement of the city has not emptied it. Westernmost among the lively centers of Meiji, it is now, with Ueno, the easternmost. It is still a place upon which rapid-transit lines converge, bringing crowds. We hear of a "doughnut effect" in Tokyo. It unquestionably is there, but the doughnut is an eccentrically shaped one, not exactly penannular, but far puffier to the left, as we face the top of the map, than the right. The center is not merely a hole.

If we think of the center as a larger complex than Ginza proper, including Nihombashi to the north and Marunouchi to the west, there has been a shift. This has been remarked upon above. Nihombashi is relatively less important than it was as a retail center, having lost ground to Ginza, and as an entrepreneurial center, having been the victim of a shift to Marunouchi. Yet few people would have been inclined during the interwar years to think of Shibuya or Shinjuku or Ikebukuro as the center of the city. Some might incline toward Shinjuku today, but Ginza would probably come at worst second.

These were the great years of *Gimbura*, another of the acronyms of which the Japanese are so fond and for which they have such a gift. The first syllable is from Ginza, and the other two are from *burabura*, a mimetic word which indicates an aimless wandering or an idling away of time. "Fooling around in Ginza" might do for a translation. The *Gimbura* crowds were young. They may not have had much to spend in the newly risen Ginza department stores, but they were an animating presence. More than any other part of the city, Ginza was the place to be. Yet it was first among peers. Tokyo has always been a city with several centers. That is why it is often called not a city but a collection of villages. "A collection of cities" might better catch the truth.

The Shōwa reign was a year and five days old when, late in 1927, the first Tokyo subway line began service. It was the first in the land, and in Asia. The route was a short one, less than a mile and a half long, between Ueno and Asakusa. Four companies had franchises to dig; only one started digging. The same company extended the line to Shimbashi in 1934. The entrepreneur who owned all the land around Shibuya and

brought the private commuter line into it saw his opportunity. Shimbashi must not remain the terminus. So he started digging from Shibuya, and his line was opened to Shimbashi in 1939. There were two Shimbashi stations, without free transfer between them. The two companies were brought together, and the stations united, in 1941, under a public corporation whose capital came from the National Railways and the prefecture. Remnants of the other Shimbashi subway station can be detected a short distance toward Shibuya from the one now in use.

The two halves of the Ginza line, as it is now called, show a certain difference in spirit. The northern half, from Shimbashi to Asakusa, was dug by a company specializing in transportation and interested in pleasing its customers. Some of the stations are rather charming, in Art Deco and traditional styles. The station next south and west from the Asakusa terminus was decorated with the family crests of famous actors. That was deemed in keeping, and one must heartily agree that it was, with the nature of the district served. The stations south and west of Shimbashi are uniformly drab and boxlike, the product of an entrepreneur whose chief interest was in getting hordes of people as rapidly as possible

Entrance to the new subway in Asakusa

into the Tōyoko department store, on the third floor of which the line ends. So we might say that the Ginza line symbolizes transition. The northern half belongs to the past, the southern half to the emerging future.

The earliest section, Ueno to Asakusa, was a huge popular success. It had turnstiles adapted from New York ones. People would go in and out, in and out. They could not do it on Sundays and holidays, however, when a wait of as much as an hour was required to get aboard for a five-minute ride. Stories of subway picnics seem a little unlikely, given the shortness of the route.

The subway company put up high buildings at each of its two original terminuses, Asakusa and Ueno. (For the Asakusa terminus, see page 72.) The Ueno terminus had a department store, on its front a clock, illuminated at night, said to be the largest in the world. It was some twenty meters in diameter. Both buildings have been torn down in the years since the war. Subway people do not seem to have had the heads for retailing possessed by the people of the surface railways.

The Ginza line, not quite nine miles long, was the only line in existence during the war years. Construction did not begin on a second line until 1951, when another reconstruction of the city was underway. Thus well over 90 percent of the splendid system we have today is postwar. Though not badly planned, insofar as it was planned at all and not given over to mercantile ambitions, the Ginza line was not ideally planned to alleviate congestion on the National Railways. Shinjuku was growing more rapidly than Shibuya and would have been a better terminus. The National Railways continued to provide faster transportation from all commuter transfer points except Shibuya than did the subway. Yet it probably helped to keep Ginza at the center of things, and for this we must be grateful. Rapid transit had terminated just south of Ginza when the railway line to Yokohama opened in early Meiji and skirted it when, early in Taishō, the National Railways began service through to Marunouchi. Now it ran north and south under the main Ginza street.

Another change in the transportation system favored the suburbs. Buses grew numerous and important, and, most naturally, the trolley system entered upon the decline that has in recent years brought it near extinction. With the trolley system and the railways heavily damaged by the earthquake, large numbers of little companies sprang up to take people to and from the suburbs—almost two hundred of them, mostly

short lived, in two months. Motorized public transportation was in much confusion. In the mid-thirties there were still several dozen private bus lines, in competition with one another and with the municipal buses.

The private railways, enterprise at its boldest and most aggressive, were getting into the bus business. They still are in it, most profitably. They were also in the department-store business and the real-estate business. In both of these they were anticipated by the Hankyū Railway in Osaka, which was the first company to open a terminal department store. In one Tokyo instance, the real-estate business came first, the railway afterward. A land company that owned huge tracts in the south-western suburbs and on into Kanagawa Prefecture built a railway, the Tōyoko, to push development and, incidentally, to make Shibuya the thriving center it is today. The Tōyoko also developed a garden city, a city in the fields," which is today one of the most affluent parts of Tokyo. It gave Keiō that new campus, out in Kanagawa Prefecture beyond the Tama River.

With the completion of the Yamanote line in 1925, Tokyo Central Station may have become the front door to the nation, but it did not itself have a back door. The throngs poured forth on Marunouchi, where Mitsubishi had built its brick "Londontown," a showplace of Meiji. As early as the thirties it was beginning to tear Londontown down, and today almost nothing remains; and Mitsubishi was beginning also to lose its monopoly. The proportion of non-Mitsubishi offices in the district rose from a tenth to two-fifths between the wars. We need not pity Mitsubishi, however. Marunouchi had by then become the undisputed managerial and entrepreneurial center of the land.

In 1929 Tokyo Central got its rear or east entrance, facing Kyōbashi and Nihombashi. The new entrance was a limited one. For long-distance tickets people still had to go around to the front, or south to Shimbashi. It was only after the Second World War that the rear entrance began to offer full services. Nihombashi has never recovered from its earthquake losses, but the new entrance has brought a turnabout. The east side of the station, known as Yaesuguchi or "the Yaesu Mouth," has become a much livelier place for shopping and revelling than the older Marunouchi Mouth.

The name Yaesuguchi is an interesting one, and a somewhat mobile one. A Dutchman named Jan Joosten Loodensteijn had his residence and business on an inlet of the bay near what is now Hibiya Park. By the

familiar acronymic process and by assimilation with an old word for "fish weir," Jan Joosten's strand became Yaesu. The inlet disappeared in the seventeenth century and so of course did the strand, but the name survived and moved northward and eastward to where it now reposes. Together with the more famous Englishman Will Adams, Loodensteijn served the first Edo shogun.

Unlike most of the High City and the suburbs, Shinjuku suffered heavy damage in the fires of 1923. A part of the district had been incorporated into the city in 1920, but the vicinity of the railway station still lay beyond the city limits. The station, the car barn, and the Musashino, the largest and most popular movie palace in the High City and beyond, were all destroyed. This was probably good for Shinjuku, famous earlier for its horse manure, clouds of which would blow up on windy days like the yellow dust storms of Peking. With wartime prosperity and the beginnings of suburban growth, it was ready to take off. Buses began to run from Shinjuku into the suburbs, and the trolley line westward from the palace was extended to Shinjuku Station. A new station was completed in 1925. It too produced a turnabout. The main entrance had faced south, on the highway westward to the mountains and the province of Kai. The new one faced northward, in the direction of the postwar and post-earthquake boom.

Mitsukoshi opened several emergency markets throughout the city just after the earthquake. In 1924 its Shinjuku market became its Shinjuku branch, the first Shinjuku department store. After a move or two it settled where it is now, a few steps east of the east entrance to the station. The forerunner of the Isetan store was in Shinjuku, on the present Isetan site, in 1926. Two big private railways had come into Shinjuku by 1930. One of them set up a retail business, called the Keiō Paradise, the second word in English, in the upstairs of its Shinjuku terminus.

Old shops were rebuilding and transforming themselves, with an eye to the sophisticated and literate sorts who had to set foot in Shinjuku every working day. The Kinokuniya, an old lumber and charcoal dealer, moved westward from Yotsuya and made itself over into a bookstore, the biggest now in Shinjuku and one of the biggest in the city. A greengrocer near the station became the Takano Fruits Parlor, one of the places

everyone knows. The last two words of the name are in English. An insistence upon putting "fruit" when used as an adjective into the plural is a little idiosyncrasy of Japanese English. "Fruits punch" has long been a standard item on the menus of such places everywhere.

A jumble of the old and the new, Shinjuku was already a traffic nightmare in the twenties. Automobiles and construction projects blocked the main streets, stalls and crowds blocked the back streets, lines of sewage wagons backed up each evening. Growth continued even with the panic and depression. Shinjuku took business from such places as Kagurazaka in the old High City. By about 1930 Shinjuku was second only to Ginza as a retail center.

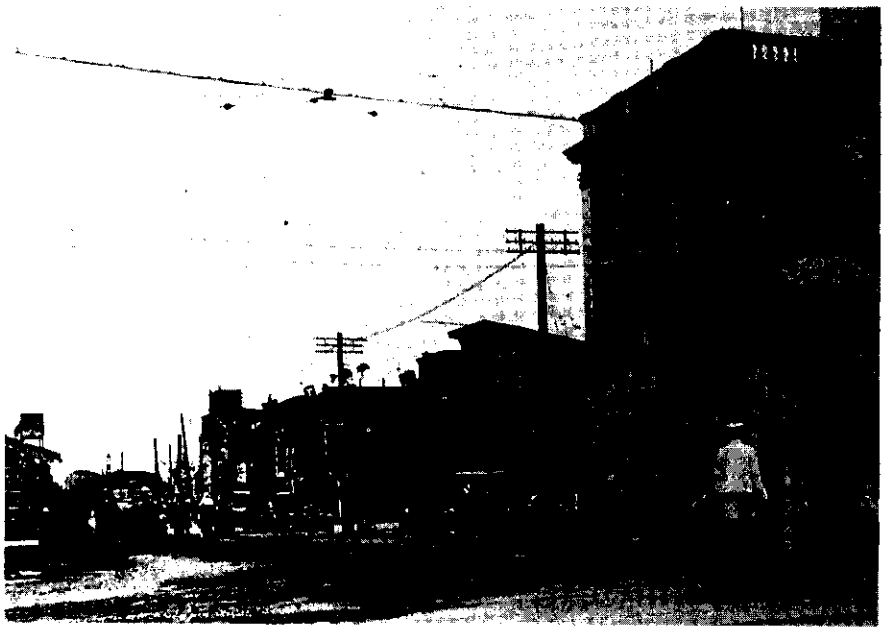
It was one of the "mouths," the last of the old post stations on the way into and the first on the way out of Edo. Pleasure quarters grew up at all of the "Five Mouths." The old Shinjuku quarter straggled along the Kai highway. Shortly before the earthquake it was brought together into a more compact and easily definable and controllable neighborhood, just at the city limits after the 1920 annexation of a part of Shinjuku. Like Kagurazaka, it benefited from the destruction in 1923 of the Low City pleasure quarters. It was the noisy, bustling center of Shinjuku until things began to get lively near the main entrance to the new station.

The Shinjuku of the interwar years, like Asakusa, is often referred to as second-rate, and again the standard of comparison is Ginza. According to such members of the Ginza congregation as the novelist Ooka Shōhei, Shinjuku ran altogether too easily and giddily in pursuit of the modern and "high collar," two expressions meaning very much the same thing. The modern boy and modern girl went to extremes thought unseemly and in bad taste by high Ginza. Certainly it was the place where the Marx boys gathered, as to a lesser degree were the stations along the Chūō line of the National Railways. From precisely these regions was to emerge the new intelligentsia that dominated the media in the years just after the San Francisco Treaty of 1952. The phonograph was far more conspicuous in Shinjuku roistering places than the samisen, and these places were known for their large, ribald women, with limbs such as foreign women were thought to have. Street stalls made the narrow streets yet narrower. By the early years of Shōwa, Shinjuku was probably the most crowded place in the city, at least during the prime evening hours. It had more street musicians than Ginza. It had flower women

and children, their wares both real and artificial, and fortune tellers and beggars, a constant stream through the evening hours.

Shinjuku had all of these in the twenties, and, except that the street stalls are gone, must have been rather as it is today. In the thirties it became a sort of western capital some distance behind the eastern one at Ginza-Nihombashi-Marunouchi. It had a famous slum too, even as Asakusa had one, just north of the temple. The Shinjuku slum was just south of the department stores, a place of cheap inns, bedbugs, and a transient population of day laborers, peddlers, street musicians, hawkers.

The Shinjuku quarter was one of six licensed ones. Two, including the venerable and once-glorious Yoshiwara, now fallen sadly, were within the limits of the old city. Three lay beyond, at three of the old "mouths," or stations. The Shinjuku quarter straddled the city limits. After 1932 they all lay within. Then there were the unlicensed quarters, the "dens of unlicensed whores" *(shishōkutsu)*, the most famous of them beyond the city limits. At about the time Japan went to war with China (the Japanese have preferred to call the war an incident), Nagai Kafū



The liveliest part of post-earthquake Shinjukū, near the old licensed quarter

wrote one of his best works about the Tamanoi quarter, by then within the city limits but before 1932 in the northeastern suburbs. A lady there reminded him of Meiji and his youth, and gave the lie to his contention that Meiji quite disappeared in 1910 or so. Because of Kafū, Tamanoi was the most famous of the unlicensed quarters, but it was second in size to Kameido, a bit to the south. The Kameido district, on the north or back side of the Kameido Tenjin Shrine and its splendid wistaria, gave sustenance to some seven hundred ladies. Tamanoi had fewer than six hundred. Prostitution was quite open in both places. There was little to distinguish them from the licensed quarters, except perhaps that in the latter procedures for obtaining employment were more complicated, hygienic facilities were better, and the ladies did not have to work as hard. The Kameido quarter had been there from late Meiji. Like Tamanoi, it had its best years after the earthquake.

Shinjuku may at certain hours of the evening have had a greater press of bodies than Ginza, and certainly that is one of the things the city loves best, but it was still second-rate Ginza. The high life of the years after the earthquake centered upon the cafés. In these Ginza was preeminent, the place that other places looked up to. The early interwar period was the full summer of the cafés, and this word almost demands the qualification "Ginza."

Shibuya had about it much more the look of the one-company town than Shinjuku. It was quite dominated by the Tōkyū Railway system. As a place for reveling it has always been some distance behind Shinjuku, though polls have shown that the teenage crowd prefers it. In one respect it was at the very forefront of progress. Along with Asakusa, it offered a multilevel transportation, entertainment, and retail complex. Representations of the future as seen from the thirties, with rocketlike objects shooting off in all directions and shooting back again, look as if Shibuya might have been the inspiration.

The Shibuya complex has been described as very Tokyo-like. If by this is meant that it is very crowded and cluttered and difficult to find one's way about in, then the characterization is apt. Shibuya has the only subway station all along the Ginza line that is not underground. Indeed the tracks are high above the ground, the highest of all the tracks in the complex. The Tōyoko department store is mazelike and inescapable. Perhaps that is what the founding magnate had in mind. The arrangement of the station is in another respect not wholly irrational.

What is now the busiest part of Shibuya, still countrified after reconstruction

The use of the hill beyond as a turnabout station and car barn makes it possible to run subway trains in very quick succession. The assumption that everyone will benefit once he or she gets the hang of it all (a little time and study may be required) also seems very Tokyo-like.

At the beginning of Meiji "the flower and the willow" quite dominated the high demimonde. The former was the courtesan and the latter the geisha. It is not easy to say just what a geisha is. The expression is a vague and complex one covering a broad range of prostitutes and performing artists. Geisha of the more accomplished sort, and the literal significance of the word is something like "accomplished sort," were the ones the affluent merchants of Edo and Meiji looked to for elegant and expensive entertainment. Their accomplishments were in traditional music and dance, at their best in the pleasure quarters, whether licensed or "private," and in the theater.

There came Western incursions. Opinions will differ as to whether

the nightclub entertainer and the bar girl of our day are as accomplished as was the geisha of old, but the geisha has gradually yielded to them. The story of the high life of this past century might be told as the retreat of the one and the advance of the others. If Nagai Kafū had been a century younger and, as Tanizaki was, a true son of the merchant class, he would probably have spent his bachelor nights among the flowers and willows, to the extent that he could afford them. Being a man of conservative tastes, he did not forsake these people, but far more of his nights during the post-earthquake years were spent among the tinselly flowers of the Ginza cafés.

Ginza, not Shinjuku, would have been recognized by almost everyone —and certainly by Kafū, who did not often go to Shinjuku—as the place for them. The number of drinking spots in Kyōbashi Ward, which included Ginza, was twice in 1930 what it had been in 1920. This is to say that in one decade the accumulation of such places equaled what it had become through all the decades before. The big buildings of Ginza came through the earthquake and fire fairly well, but not the little ones along the back streets; so building and rebuilding were feverish in the half dozen years after. Each day the Ginza of the cafés must have indeed been as the old gentleman of *During the Rains* saw it, not the Ginza of yesterday.

These years also had bars, dance halls, and cabarets, all of these words from either French or English. Distinctions among them, though cultural historians tend to treat them as obvious, are not always clear. In a general way a café was a place, sometimes small and intimate, sometimes big and noisy, but always, when it was doing well, crowded, whose clientele drank, took light refreshments, and enjoyed the company of pretty girls. We have the testimony of Kafū, among others, that many of the girls were scarcely distinguishable from the courtesans, those other flowers of Edo. Their company could be made, if the conditions were right, to last through the night. Café ladies in Kafū's fiction have a way of complicating things for themselves by accepting too many after-hours engagements.

An Osaka influence is discerned in the gaudier of the Ginza cafés. (It was just before the earthquake that Ginza became what it is today, the district on either side of the old Edo–Kyoto highway that lay between two bridges, the Kyōbashi on the north and the Shimbashi on the south. Before then only the northern part had, strictly speaking, been Ginza.)

In a Ginza café

Crowds on the main Ginza street

The Osaka style bars of northern Ginza were very gaudy and very big, illuminated in many colors with neon lights and flashing bulbs and dancing spotlights. The smaller and more modest Tokyo sort prevailed to the south. Predictably, Tanizaki Junichirō, having departed Tokyo in 1923 and turned vociferously against it, preferred the Osaka version.

> All up and down the back alleys of Ginza are tiny, intimate cafés. . . . To be sure, Osaka cafés with their noisy bands are somewhat vulgar; but no one could possibly call these cramped little places in the smallest degree elegant. It is not as if there were only a scattering of them. They are numberless, each with its own steady little clientele. The Osaka kind may be vulgar, but they do at least require a certain investment. These Tokyo ones do not. Five or six tables crowded together in a tiny room, nondescript furnishings thrown together from nothing, dim indirect lighting to conceal the tatters, a French name to attract ambitious young literary types: such places have sprung up like bamboo shoots after a rain.

It is peculiar for an aesthete like Tanizaki to distinguish between good and bad in terms of money spent, and the passage perhaps does damage to the impression he assiduously cultivated of the quiet classical repose to be found in the Kansai. One may suspect, moreover, that had the Osaka version and the Tokyo version been reversed, he would have preferred the former then too. There was little that he liked, or professed to like, about Tokyo in those years. Yet it does seem to be the case that Osaka capital was quicker than Tokyo to plunge into the entertainment industry—and that little cafés sprang up like (as we would say) weeds.

The principal character of Kafū's *During the Rains*, written in 1931, is a promiscuous café lady. She works in a place called the Don Juan, so crowded in among other cafés that one must be attentive to avoid going in the wrong door. It is in the northern, "Osaka" part of Ginza, and fairly large, the main downstairs room covering an area of some seven or eight hundred square feet. Stepping through the front door—over which, in Roman letters, is the name of the place supported by two naked feminine statues, or paintings, it is not clear which—one has chiefly an impression of clutter. Screens and booths and tables are everywhere, lights and artificial flowers hang from the ceiling, genuine greenery is

like thickets on the Kabuki stage. One does well not to enter by the alley and through the kitchen. Bluebottle flies buzz among garbage cans, and an odor of stale cooking oil pours from a hut of corrugated metal that might have been put up just after the earthquake.

Kafū loved dressing rooms. Here is the Don Juan one:

> You kept your shoes on to climb the steep stairway from the earthen floor of the kitchen. At the head of it was a room maybe a dozen feet square all along the walls of which were mirror stands, fourteen or fifteen of them. It was a few minutes before three, the hour of the change of shifts, the morning one to the evening one. The place was so crowded that you could not find a place to sit down. The girls jostled one another as they pushed their faces forward into the mirrors.

The Don Juan seems to have kept long hours. At midday it must have been more like a European than a Tokyo café, and the ladies on the early shift must have had more of the night for sleep than did Kimie, our heroine.

A striking thing about descriptions of Ginza cafés is how familiar they look. Gentlemen with a taste for the high life gather now in Ginza and Shinjuku bars, and gathered then in Ginza cafés. The two seem very much alike. One may find it a little hard to imagine what a "milk bar" of Meiji may have been like, but not a Ginza café of early Shōwa. (Milk bars were places where intellectual and literary people went to read difficult publications and discuss constitutionalism and such things.)

The novelist Takeda Rintarō describes a café in his novel *The Eight Ginza Blocks (Ginza Hatchō)*, written in 1934. The title is an up-to-date one, referring to the newly expanded Ginza, eight blocks of it from Kyōbashi to Shimbashi. The café is making its way through a dull Sunday evening.

> From time to time the door would open. Everyone would look up in anticipation of a customer; but always there would be, and in considerable numbers, children selling flowers, and imitators of famous actors and singers, and mendicant priests with boxes inviting contributions to the Church of Light and Darkness, and violinists, and sketchers of likenesses, and lutists, and solemn-

> faced young men in student uniform selling pills and potions, and, with babies tied to their backs, women selling horoscopes. They would all of them glance inside and, seeing that there were no customers, be on their way.

The priests, wandering adherents of Zen, would be uncommon today in Ginza and Shinjuku bars, and guitars and accordions would be more likely than violins and lutes. The Ginza café of 1930 or so, however, does not seem so very different from the Ginza bar of today.

Eroguro, sometimes *eroguro nansensu*, is the expression held to capture more than any other the mood of early Shōwa. It is the Japanese equivalent of "Flapper Age." *Nansensu* is the English "nonsense." *Eroguro* is another product of the Japanese talent for acronyms and abbreviations. It is compounded of the first two syllables of "erotic" and the first of "grotesque," the latter made into two syllables by the Japanese dislike of consonant clusters. The radical reactionaries of the thirties were against *eroguro nansensu*, even as they were against money-grubbing. Already before the earthquake there were cries for a return to the solid and austere old ways. After the earthquake, voices were raised telling the city that it was Sodom, punished by the heavens for being so. Tsubouchi Shōyō, a distinguished man of letters and a leader of the avant-garde theater, heard a Diet member remark in London that divine punishment had come for all the looseness and frivolity, all the moral laxness. Shōyō asked why divinity had chosen to punish those tens of thousands of people east of the river who did not have enough money to be frivolous and loose. The reply is not recorded.

As it concerns the cafés, the erotic half of the word is easier to apprehend than the grotesque. Suggestions as to what the latter half signified in their regard are mixed and contradictory. Also in *The Eight Ginza Blocks*, Takeda Rintarō describes a Ginza bar as dark and spooky in an outmodedly grotesque style. This suggests something crepuscularly Gothic; yet the *eroguro* that came from Osaka would seem to have had noise and light as its most conspicuous qualities. We may conclude that "grotesquerie" refers very generally to what made a new cabaret distinctive.

When we turn to the sideshows at Asakusa and their tendency to-

ward what anyone would recognize as grotesque, it does not seem so very new. In the Asakusa park of Meiji there were, among others, a spider man and a woman who smoked through her navel. These we may describe as reasonably grotesque. In *Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, Kawabata Yasunari describes a worthy successor in the post-earthquake years to the woman who smoked without troubling her respiratory tract. The scene is one of the little huts in the park.

"That it may be of use to medical science," cries the man on the stage, "we will show you right before your eyes how he eats through the mouth in his stomach.

"The man with the hole in his stomach was born in Asahigawa on the island of Hokkaido. The liquor with which he fended off the snow and the cold was pure alcohol. It produced strictures of the esophagus. So the doctors at Hokkaido Medical College opened this hole in his stomach.

"Unfortunately there were no teeth in the mouth the doctors made. So he has this bill, like a bird's."

It was true. The man in white untied the cord of the cloth around the bill, an object like a tobacco pipe inserted into his stomach.

Putting a glass funnel into the pipe, he poured milk and bread crumbs inside.

"Even in his pitiful condition he seems unable to forget the taste of sake. Occasionally he has a cup. He tastes it with the mouth in his face and drinks it through the one in his stomach. . . . Are not the advances of medical science marvelous?"

In another story from Kawabata's Asakusa period a young man back in Asakusa after an absence for his own safety gives a quick impression of how it has changed: "It's gotten to be just like Osaka." Which, if we turn again to Ginza, brings us back to lights and noise.

The grotesquerie is more elusive than the eroticism. It may be that they were put together because they sounded good together, and the first is the dominant half of the *eroguro* pair. This does not seem so very new either, although the borders of the erotic were pushed constantly back as the years passed. It took more to arouse a person. Primly dressed young women who played and sang traditional music were erotic in Meiji, as

we may judge from the crowds of young men who poured in to look at them and perhaps listen to them as well. Now a certain expanse of flesh was asked for.

In a society dominated by men, it is most natural that women should dominate the world of sensuous pleasure. The girls in the big, flashy Osaka cafés are said to have had "It," the Clara Bow thing. They were becoming more aggressive and less inhibited. In the early days, when Kafū was frequenting Ginza cafés with English names like Lion and Tiger, the ladies stayed in the background, pleasant to look at and not expected to make much noise. Men went for masculine companionship, much as they must have gone to the coffeehouses of Dr. Johnson's London.

Now the ladies emerged to take charge of the conversation. The age of the waitress gave way to that of the hostess. We are still in the latter age.

There was a "Hostess's Song," the lyrics once more by Saijō Yaso. Here are the first two of four stanzas. The other two are similarly damp and aggrieved.

I am a bar flower
That blooms by night.
Rouged lips,
Gauze sleeves,
Mad dancing
By neon light,
A flower watered by tears.

I am a bar flower,
A sad flower,
By evening a girl,
By day a mother,
Tear-dampened sleeves
Concealing the past.
They are heavy as the night wears on,
And not with dew.

Japanese popular music is so flooded with tears that we need not take them very seriously. Though such a world is bound to have its sorrows

and uncertainties. Takeda Rintarō tells us, again in *The Eight Ginza Blocks*, that the world of the Ginza cafés was tight and snug.

> The same people worked all the numberless places of the Ginza back streets. They moved from place to place, rarely staying long in any one of them; they all knew all the others. They knew everything about one another: foibles and general disposition, of course, and very private matters as well. It was the same with the customers. If each stronghold had its own little troop, it was a rare customer who limited himself to one place. They moved about, and so customer and hostess and manager were all of them acquaintances. The drinking places of the back streets were one world. For the clientele it was like a club, for management it was like a chain store.

Many if not all hostesses were, like Kimie of *During the Rains*, accommodating. Prices rose as the ladies came forward to dominate the scene, and so did tips. The ordinary "salaryman" could afford to go to one of the fashionable places perhaps once a month, on payday. Takeda Rintarō tells us that students were not welcome at the café of *The Eight Ginza Blocks*. They did not have enough money. Though they were not refused admission, it was hoped that they would sense the chill in the air and depart.

So another institution, the *kissaten*, literally the tea shop, emerged to fill the gap. An impecunious student could spend a whole afternoon for the price of a cup of coffee, and look at pretty girls who did not say much of anything after they had brought the cup. This meant essentially, on the simpler levels of the entertainment and pleasure business, a reversion from the age of the hostess to that of the waitress. It is a remarkable business, leaving no need unfulfilled, providing every commodity and service, and it is what the puritan radicals of the thirties objected to; and the product of their activism has been a society in which they would find much more to object to.

Tanizaki may have been right that the tiny Tokyo-style places all had French names, to attract customers with literary ambitions and pretensions. The bar that is the main setting for *The Eight Blocks of Ginza* is called L'Automne. Some of the famous tea shops also had French names: Colombin, Mon Ami. More had English or American: Columbia, Olympic, Eskimo, and Europe, the last pronounced in a way that established it as English and not French or German. Kafū was fond of a place called Fuji Ice, half of the name a Japanese proper noun and half an English common one.

For a time after 1923 Osaka may have been the first city of Japan. Artists and intellectuals fled to the Kansai district, of which Osaka was the center, in great numbers. They started coming back once Tokyo was comfortable again. Tanizaki was the great exception. He stayed not far from Osaka for most of his remaining years, although he never lived in the city. We have already seen an Osaka influence on the Ginza cafés and on the media. Osaka was largely responsible for the growth of monster newspapers. Only the *Yomiuri* among Tokyo natives stood out successfully against Osaka incursions.

And Osaka may be blamed in part for the decline of the Rakugo comic monologue. Both Osaka and Tokyo had monologues, marvels of versatile mimicry. Even before the earthquake a form called Manzai was replacing Rakugo in Osaka. Dominant in the closing years of the Taishō reign, it advanced upon Tokyo. Not all Osaka influences can be described as baneful, but this one surely was. Manzai performers come in pairs and crack jokes, sometimes funny. The difference between Manzai comedians and good Rakugo performers is that between the stand-up comic and the actor. The latter has skills and devices and puts himself into multiple roles. The former chatters, and if he is successful people sometimes laugh at the chatter. It is perhaps the difference between art and life, the one creating a world of its own, recognizable and persuasive but apart, the other being merely itself. Manzai has not raised the quality of popular culture.

Probably through Manzai, Osaka speech began lending words to Tokyo speech, the national standard. Tourists may not be aware that when they call the traditional livery jacket a "happy" they are using an Osaka word, *happi*. Many Tokyo people are similarly unaware that *shōyū*, almost universal now to indicate the soybean condiment, is an Osaka loan word.

Already in decline before the earthquake, Edo cooking surrendered the realm of high and expensive cuisine to Osaka. The most famous riverside restaurant of Edo was a victim of the earthquake, or, more precisely, the reconstruction. It stood on land marked for the new Sumida Park. Rebuilding elsewhere would have been possible, but the

owner took a good price for the land and withdrew. His clientele came in from the river, and, with wheels replacing boats, the river was not what it once had been. Today Edo cooking survives in a few proud old restaurants surrounded by Osaka ones. Here the Osaka influence is not to be called baneful. Osaka cooking is more subtle and imaginative than that of Edo. So is Nagasaki cooking, which also has spread.

But the share of the blame which Osaka must take for the decline of such popular arts as Rakugo is small compared with that which may be assigned to the rise of mass entertainment, whose day had come. Audiences had been small in Edo. Even the biggest Kabuki theaters and the Sumō wrestling tournaments had drawn only a few hundred. Now they swelled to millions.

Among the celebrities who came visiting, to great acclaim, were some whom the new age had created. They were products of the twentieth century and its mass culture, and Japan was part of the twentieth century even as it had been trying hard to be a part of the nineteenth. Entertainers had come from abroad in Meiji, but they had had limited audiences in their native places and had similar audiences in Japan. Without question the foreign visitors who raised the greatest stir in Meiji

Charlie Chaplin tries a Japanese snack during his visit

were General and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant. Next, perhaps, was an Englishman named Spencer, who did aerial stunts. Possibly the nearest equivalents in early Shōwa to the general and his lady were representatives of high technology and high culture. The *Graf Zeppelin* flew over the city in 1929 and was moored over water some miles to the east. George Bernard Shaw came in 1933. It would be hard to say that either quite captured the eager attention of the nation as the Grants did. They did not pay it as great an honor, and the nation would probably not have been as alive to the honor if, say, Calvin Coolidge had come. All people had to do was look up as the *Graf Zeppelin* flew over; they did not jam the streets for a look at its crew. They did for Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, who came the same year. Charlie Chaplin was in town on the day in 1932 when the prime minister was assassinated, the third prime minister to be so dealt with in this century, and the second in less than two years. The prime minister's son was supposed to take Chaplin across the river to the Sumō tournament on that beautiful late-spring Sunday. Chaplin went anyway.

The mass audience is not a uniquely Japanese phenomenon, of course. It was not something the Japanese did for themselves. Though one could not reasonably say that it was forced upon them, the way had not been prepared in Tokyo as it had in London and New York. Baseball did not give way to Sumō in New York as Sumō gave way to baseball in Tokyo.

The decline of Sumō is a relative matter. Baseball did not replace it immediately and has never replaced it completely. The only spectator sport in Edo, it has had its ups and downs in the century and more since Edo became Tokyo. The years before and after the earthquake were fairly good ones. There were popular wrestlers. The Kokugikan, "Hall of the National Accomplishment," the Sumō stadium near the earthquake memorial east of the Sumida, was badly damaged in the earthquake. Money for repairs flowed swiftly in. The national accomplishment, which is to say Sumō, has gone through periodic spasms of reform and modernization. The major one in the years after the earthquake led to the formation of a legally incorporated Sumō association. The Tokyo and Osaka bands of wrestlers came together, on the understanding that tournaments would be held alternately in the two cities. This was thought admirably in the spirit of Taishō democracy, but was not sufficient to prevent new

crises. Another split came in 1932, a few Kantō defectors going off to Osaka with the Osaka stalwarts to form a new band. The tournaments that resulted were not popular. Neither band had enough celebrated wrestlers to fill the top ranks. A reunion was arranged in 1933, though holdouts sulked in Osaka until 1937.

The crowds that gathered for Sumō, even in the Kokugikan, were small compared with those that were to gather for baseball, which may not call itself the national accomplishment, but is. Among the very young, Sumō was probably still more popular than baseball in the years just after the earthquake. It had a radio following and presently would have a television audience as well. Newspapers did a good business in Sumō extras. It may be that radio audiences for Sumō were as large as for baseball when popular wrestlers were doing well, but here conjecture must prevail. There were no commercials and no ratings, and NHK, the public radio corporation, had a monopoly. But if Sumō was sporadically popular, baseball has been consistently and increasingly so. Sumō is no competition at all when it comes to television huckstering.

Japanese baseball began in Tokyo, and Tokyo has been the baseball capital ever since. The early period was ambiguously amateur. The big teams belonged to the universities. A tourist guide published by the National Railways in 1933 could still say that "the biggest attractions are the matches organized by the leading universities in the spring and autumn." The big baseball universities, Waseda and Keiō, did not stint in their support of promising players. A game in 1905 raised animosity between them to such a pitch that it was thought better for them not to see each other again. They resumed play in 1925, the last full year of Taishō. The best baseball stadium was in the outer gardens of the Meiji Shrine, often called Meiji Park. The shrine and gardens are a memorial to the Meiji emperor. The gardens, complete with stadium, were finished in October 1926, when the reign of Meiji's successor had only two months to go. A three-university league, all of its members in Tokyo, was formed early in Taishō, and by the end of the period, with the accession of the perpetual cellar team, Tokyo University, it became what it is today, a six-university league.

The semiprofessional status of the celebrated university players aside, there were already in late Taishō the beginnings of professional baseball. An organization called the Shibaura Society, named for filled land by the bay where it had its grounds, assembled nonstudent players for whom

the game was more than sport. Its first games were with Waseda, which won. Waseda received the larger part of the credit for the sizable crowds. Ahead of its time, the Shibaura Society moved to Osaka. Professional baseball did not really get underway until the mid-thirties. It was not the Shibaura team but a Tokyo one, Shōriki's Yomiuri Giants, named by Tetty O'Doul, that was to become the national team. Wherever they go nowadays the Giants draw crowds, as no Osaka team does except in Osaka, and Osaka teams do better even in Osaka when playing the Giants.

Shibaura is at the southern edge of the Low City, but the Meiji Gardens are on the far southwestern fringes of the old High City. An attempt after the Second World War to give the Low City a baseball park of its own was not well received. Only teams from the non-Giant league played in it, and the crowds did not come. The Giants have their home park on the edge of the High City. So baseball and television, which fill the spare hours of the Low City, do not come from there.

March 22 is "founding day" for radio. On that day in 1925 experimental broadcasts went forth from Atago Hill in Tokyo, the high place just north of the Tokugawa tombs in Shiba Park that had been popular for its view of Edo and of Meiji Tokyo. There were also broadcasts in Osaka and Nagoya. The first program was elevated and eclectic: Beethoven, classical Japanese music, a play by Tsubouchi Shōyō which sought to bring Kabuki and Shakespeare together.

The three regional radio companies were amalgamated the following year into Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, a public corporation that has always identified itself to its audiences by the English pronunciation of its initials, NHK. Through the war years NHK had a monopoly on broadcasting. Commercial broadcasting came only in 1951, a few months before the first television. Tokyo Rose's popular wartime broadcasts were over NHK.

Movies were first among the forms of popular mass entertainment. So they continued to be until television began having its day. When old people, the lucky few who are able to, reminisce upon good times in Asakusa, they are likely to be talking of the music halls, and the "opera" they offered before the earthquake and the "reviews" after. They do not speak of Asakusa as the great center for movies. That is probably because

live, legitimate forms were very much *of* Asakusa, and movies were everywhere.

Yet Asakusa was the center. In 1930 it had fourteen movie theaters. The next-largest concentrations were on or beyond the city limits, at Shinjuku and Shibuya, with four each. A quarter of a century later, when television was beginning to bring bad days for the movie business and turn Asakusa theaters into game parlors, Asakusa had fallen a little behind the Ginza-Marunouchi complex in number of theaters (it was still ahead in the number that showed Japanese films) and was ahead of Shinjuku by a bit.

Kawabata did a survey of Asakusa in 1930 which showed theaters with live performances to outnumber movie theaters. There was a variety of styles of the former, but no single kind had as many places in which to show itself as did the movies. Asakusa still had a half-dozen Yose, or Rakugo variety halls, not as grievous a decline as one might have expected from the dozen or so of late Meiji. It had a single Kabuki theater, a small one, whereas it had had almost a monopoly on Kabuki when the shogunate fell. Then there were review places, to be discussed, places offering traditional music of more than one kind, and places whose chief attraction was swordplay, masculine and feminine, the latter the more popular because somewhat erotic.

But mostly there were the movies. Asakusa drew its crowds from all over the city. The High City and suburban places, Shibuya and Shinjuku and the like, got few people from the Low City. Asakusa had a "theater department store." Three houses under the same management stood side by side along the main Asakusa theater street. Passageways joined the three, and for the price of a single ticket the devotee could make a day of it, wander back and forth among them, and enjoy the offerings of all. Not much remains of the street from its best days, but, thanks to their continuing to be under the same management, all three houses survive, all with yellowish brick fronts, one surmounted by battlements, one with a plain-bellied front broken only by windows, the third with decorative windows in an Art Deco style. The connecting passageways also survive, but they have been left to spiders and rats for almost half a century. The survival of the middle theater, the plain-fronted Tokiwaza, is a modest triumph for the conservation movement. Until 1965 it was devoted to stage productions. Then it became a movie theater, and in 1984 it closed entirely and demolition was in prospect.

The Asakusa Sixth District in the great age of the movies and music halls; the three theaters shown were joined together, and they still survive—see page 68

Local pressures and donations from wealthy persons with attachments to Asakusa persuaded the Shōchiku entertainment company, owner of the three, to keep it open for recitals and short-run performances.

One Asakusa motion-picture theater was famous for a noisy ceiling fan. It was very popular. The attention the fan called to itself made people feel cool. The *benshi* must have been rather sorely tried, however. These remarkable and very Japanese performers were like Rakugo monologuists. Without the use of amplifiers, they declaimed all the parts on the screen above them, male and female, and told the story as well, so that the audience might be informed. They even spoke in measured phrases, alternating syllable counts of seven and five, like balladeers of old. There were *benshi* contests, one performer per reel. The advent of the talkie brought bad times. The man known as the last of the *benshi* died in the summer of 1987. He was only in his mid-sixties, and so he was a child when talkies came. It may be that others like him still preserve the art somewhere.

The first talking pictures from abroad required *benshi*. Between 1929, when the first one came, and 1931, when subtitles were first affixed (to *Morocco*) and when also the first Japanese talkie appeared, the *benshi* went on doing what he had been doing all along, a little more loudly perhaps. A Japanese audience viewing a foreign film had a *benshi* talking away in front of it while Greta Garbo and Gary Cooper were talking away on the screen. Garbo, noisy fan, no amplifier: it must have called for a durable voice, and kept people awake.

A strike by *benshi* against technical progress was in vain. Such strikes always seem to be, and one may wonder why. If it is true, and we are assured by those who remember the good *benshi* days that it was, that people often went to movies as much to hear the *benshi* as to watch the movie, why did there not continue to be a demand for silent movies? The very notion of technical progress seems to disarm resistance except on the part of those whose livelihood is immediately affected. It seems inevitable and it seems good, and those who prefer silent movies, like those who prefer silent radios and television sets, are ashamed to admit the preference.

Silent movies had background music too, and theme songs. The most popular song of very early Shōwa was from a movie, *Tokyo March (Tokyo Kōshinkyoku)*, which is also the name of the song. It is by the Nakayama-Saijō combination of "Tokyo Dance" (see page 36). There are four stanzas, about Ginza, Marunouchi, Asakusa, and Shinjuku. Here is the Ginza one:

> The Ginza willows bring thoughts of the past.
> Who will know the aging, fickle woman?
> Dancing to jazz, liqueur into the small hours.
> And in the dawn a flood of tears for the dancer.

There is at least one foreign word per stanza. In this one "jazz," "liqueur," and "dancer" are all in English (the transcription into the Japanese syllabary suggests strongly that the second is not French). The fourth stanza, the Shinjuku one, advocates running away from it all via the Odakyū, the Odawara Express, a private railway line opened between Shinjuku and Odawara, at the foot of the Hakone Mountains in Kanagawa Prefecture, in 1927. The railway objected to the recording company that if the name was to be used at all it must be used in full, Odawara Kyuko Denki Kido Kabushiki Kaisha. This did not fit the music very well, and the abbreviation Odakyū prevailed. The song was a huge piece of free advertising for the railway. Today no one calls it anything but the Odakyū. The invitation to flee via it has a stylish, up-to-date ring, for it runs through wealthy suburbs to what in another culture might have been called a hill station.

Some of the Asakusa theaters offered more than *benshi* and music to go with their movies. One burned incense in its pits during funeral scenes, which were frequent, bereavements being frequent. Movies were rated according to the number of handkerchiefs they made sodden with tears. One little theater jiggled and chugged as the view from an observation car passed on the screen.

During his Asakusa period, Kawabata was living just behind Ueno Park, within easy walking distance of Asakusa. He said in 1934 that he went there almost every day for three years. Sometimes he wandered about all through the night. Asakusa was a nightless place, the only part of the city with all-night restaurants. The best chronicler of Asakusa during those years, Kawabata found the crowds interesting even at the most unpromising of hours, the morning ones. Men who had passed the night in the Yoshiwara quarter north of Asakusa were on their way home, and geisha on their way to matins at the great Kannon Temple.

Yet, he said, Asakusa produced nothing of the really highest order. There had been a decline, certainly, since the last years of Edo, when Asakusa had had the best of the theater and, in the Yoshiwara, some of the best chamber performances as well. It may be that Kawabata's most famous Asakusa piece, *Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, is a little like Asakusa itself. Mannered, diffuse, obscure, inconclusive even as Kawabata novels go, it is second-rate Kawabata; but it is interesting. Asakusa may have been second-rate by Ginza standards, but it too was interesting.

In *Scarlet Gang*, Kawabata quotes a famous songwriter approvingly:

> "Asakusa is the pulse of Tokyo.
> Asakusa markets humanity."

These are the words of Soeta Azembō.

"Asakusa of the myriads flings everything forth in the raw.

All manner of desire dances there naked. All classes and all races mix into one great flow, limitless, bottomless, not distinguishing day from night. Asakusa is alive. The masses edge forward. Asakusa of the masses, melting down old forms to be cast into new ones."

In early Shōwa, Asakusa was still what it had been in Meiji, the most bustling among the *sakariba*, the "bustling places," of the city. It was the great purveyor of inexpensive entertainment. For centuries the grounds of the temple had been a place where people went to amuse themselves, often in coarse and vulgar ways. The doctrine of the temple was easy-going. From Meiji into Taishō there were new entertainments, notably the movies and the Twelve Storeys, the brick tower that fell apart in the earthquake.

The Twelve Storeys acquired a successor in early Shōwa. Here too, as in so many things and ways having to do with Asakusa, there was a falling off. The Twelve Storeys, when it was put up, was the highest building in the city. The tower that arose over the new subway station was by no means the highest. It was only six storeys, or some hundred thirty or forty feet high. Yet from the observation platform on the top floor one could see, on a clear winter day, Mount Tsukuba in the east and Mount Fuji in the west, and in the near distances a great deal of smoke, from factories, from trains, and from the brewery built on the site of the old Tokugawa estate. One riverside villa yet remained on the far bank. The new tower, Kawabata said, was in the Osaka style. All the floors except the top observation one were occupied by eating places.

The movies attracted the biggest audiences, but it was the legitimate theater that interested Kawabata, and is likely to interest us a half century and more later, when the crowds have gone the way of Kabuki and the geisha. Before the earthquake there was the Asakusa opera, and after the earthquake the Asakusa review. We learn in local histories of an opera period and a review period, as if these forms were clearly distinguished from each other. A catastrophe came between, to give the impression of a cultural break, with a conclusion on the one side and a beginning on the other. (So it was to be with the catastrophe of the forties. Before it were the reviews and after it the strip shows.) The reviews had a longer period to die in than did the opera. The reactionaries

of the thirties did not approve of such things and the war years brought an end to almost all theatrical performances. Yet the several genres are not discrete. They blend into one another.

The beginnings of the reviews are in the opera, the ancestry of which was Italian. An Italian impresario named G. V. Rossi is the recognized progenitor. Though the word "review" itself seems to have come from English, the reviews were ostensibly of French ancestry. ("Opera" is probably from Italian.)

Rossi never worked in Asakusa. First at the Imperial Theater in Marunouchi and then at a place which he bought near the southwestern city limits, he endeavored to produce Italian opera, including Mozart, using Japanese performers. Some of his disciples transferred the enterprise to Asakusa. The Asakusa performances based on Italian scores must have sounded more like operetta or musical comedy, people with pleasant voices singing in a manner all natural and unrestrained. The best of them had little musical education. The performance whose opening night is considered the birthday of Asakusa opera was definitely light and scattered. The language and the writer were Japanese. It could have been called a review.

Hamamoto Hiroshi, a novelist who died in 1959 and who drew most of his material from Asakusa, said toward the end of his life that the Asakusa opera was ruined by its own most fanatical supporters. Predominantly male—women preferred the movies, where they could all weep into their handkerchiefs—they demanded eroticism. They demanded a "decadent" (Hamamoto's word) something of the singers. Then there were dancers. Singing and dancing continued after the earthquake, but were beginning to look tired. They could not carry it all off by themselves.

A new element was added: bright, fast comedy, thought to be Gallic. So the review came into being. "Eroticism and nonsense and speed," said Kawabata, "and humor in the vein of the topical cartoon, and the jazz song and legs." All the items in the medley except the last are in English. So maybe it is the most important—it and the foreignness, the fact of depending so on a foreign language.

Whether or not the review was greatly inferior to the opera, and whether or not the break between the two is a clear one, the day of the review was the last time Asakusa could be ranked high among the *sakariba*. It may also have been the last time the Low City, center of Edo

An Asakusa review

mercantile culture, could be called the center and the producer of anything cultural at all. (Ginza, as we have seen, is a special instance, in but not of the Low City.) Asakusa has not done much in recent decades to return the affection of people like Hamamoto.

July 10, 1929, is the birthday of the Asakusa review, and it was born in a little place called the Casino Folies. The founders, two brothers, had been to Paris, and they loved the follies, and combined the Casino de Paris and the Folies-Bergère to give their theater its name. The Casino Folies occupied the second floor of an aquarium on a back street, next door to an entomological museum. "It came to be," says Kawabata in *Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, "that the girls of the Casino Folies passed the fishes in their tanks and turned in by a model of the sea king's palace to go to their dressing rooms." They also had to pass "dusty cases of flies, beetles, butterflies, and bees." The aquarium and the Bug House were "relics of the old Asakusa Park, left behind in the Fourth District."

What was known as Asakusa Park, not much of it very parklike, was divided into seven districts. The Casino Folies was some distance from the main theater district, which was in the Sixth District, much the most famous and crowded of the seven. The founding brothers, besides their love for Paris and its follies, had a modest amount of money. They rented a place somewhat apart from the main Sixth District street because they could afford it. Kawabata's *Scarlet Gang*, the first part of it serialized in the *Asahi Shimbun* from December 1929, attracted attention to the Casino Folies and made it popular. Those whom Kawabata called Ginza people started coming.

The reviews were to be more popular than the opera had ever been, but the original Casino Folies did not last long. At a disadvantage when theaters nearer the heart of the Sixth District started presenting reviews, and deserted by its most famous performers, it changed management in 1932. Ownership of the property remained with the aquarium, which survived because groups of schoolchildren were taken there to look at goldfish and turtles. Often they had to be rounded up by their teachers after sneaking upstairs and getting themselves in at reduced prices to look at the reviews. Curiously, children watching the reviews did not seem to upset the police as did children going to movies, some of which were forbidden to them.

The Casino Folies produced actors and actresses who were to become very famous. The actress Mochizuki Yūko was in her later years so successful in movie portrayals of troubled mothers that she became known as Japan's mother; she got her start in the chorus line at the Casino. She was the daughter of the caterer who delivered lunch to the troupe; an actor looked at her legs and said she might join. The actor was Enomoto Kenichi, probably the most popular of all Japanese comedians. Enoken, an acronym from the two elements of his name, is how everyone knows Enomoto. He has been called the Joe E. Brown of Japan, but he was more versatile than Brown. Besides having an impish and feckless kind of charm that made people smile before he had uttered a word, Enoken was a rather good singer and a very lithe dancer. Had Danny Kaye been around at the time, he might have been a more appropriate American analogue than Brown. The son of a shopkeeper in Azabu, one of the affluent wards along the southern tier of the old High City, Enoken defied the Azabu notion of what a schoolboy should do and went off to watch Asakusa opera. Though he made his debut at the age of fifteen

in one of the Sixth District opera houses, he had to wait for the reviews before he attracted attention, and the reviews had to wait for him. The July birthday assigned to the reviews might better be the November date when Enoken came onstage at the Casino.

He left the Casino Folies in 1930 for the bigger theaters in the Sixth District, where he headed troupes with such Gallic names as Poupées Dansantes and Pierre Brilliant. From them he moved on to the big movie and management companies and the central theaters, the ones near Ginza. The reviews thus became big time, with huge troupes and budgets. The Casino had ten girls or so in its chorus line. In the big theaters there were sometimes as many as a hundred people onstage at one time. Asakusa may not have produced the very best of anything, but performers who went on to be the best at what they did got their start in Asakusa. Though the "crisis" of 1937 and after was not deemed a time when people should be funny in public, and though Enoken was in very bad health in his last years, he did not give up until his death early in 1970, at the age of sixty-five. Not even the amputation of a gangrenous foot stopped him, and indeed he showed great ingenuity in converting his disability into comedy. It was sadder in his case than it would have been for others, because in his prime his versatility included dancing and acrobatics.

An impression that Enoken alone made a success of the Casino Folies and the Asakusa reviews would be wrong. Kawabata certainly helped. Enoken himself was to say in his late years that what really brought in the crowds was a rumor that the girls in the chorus line dropped their drawers on Friday evenings. It was, he said, a false rumor. Reminiscing back over a half century, Mochizuki Yūko said that a girl did in fact one day let the cotton wraparound drop from her breasts. It was an accident, and it may have been the source of the rumor. Falling drawers would not have signified very much in any event, said Miss Mochizuki, because the girls wore their own (and this before the Shirokiya fire) under the uniform stage costume. To give more strongly a sense of Paris, they sometimes wore golden wigs.

Miss Mochizuki described the test, a simple one, which candidates for the line had to pass. They raised their skirts, so that Enoken might have a look at their legs. Legs were what was wanted. They were very young girls, and by all accounts very innocent compared with the ladies of Kafū's café pieces. The average age was sixteen or seventeen. Kawabata tells of a girl who, at eighteen, had never worn cosmetics. Many

commuted to the review houses from home. In one of Kawabata's shorter Asakusa pieces several girls pass the night in the narrator's apartment, and it is all very virginal, not in the least suggestive of Kafū's orgies. The erotic element had to do almost entirely with the lower limbs. The shoulders and a patch of the back might have been exposed, but the breasts were obscured by wraparounds of cotton. It was hardly extreme nudity. Yet the police were touchy.

They forbade ad-libbing, for one thing, because they disliked surprises. As a device to forestall it they required that scripts be presented ten days in advance. Ad-libbing had been among the principal techniques of the comedians and it went on despite the ban. They did not have time to learn their lines very well. Besides, it was often the impromptu gag that brought the best laughs.

The police also worried about the garb and demeanor of the girls and handed down regulations. Drawers must cover at least the top ten centimeters of the thigh. Flesh-colored drawers were not permitted. A portion of the back might be exposed, but the whole front of the torso must be covered from a safe distance above the breasts. There might be no suggestive lighting about the hips and pelvis, no kicking in the direction of the audience, and no wriggling of the hips. If the girls wore tights for photographs, they must also wear skirts. And so on, through nine articles. The Casino girls were one day herded off to the Asakusa police station to have their drawers measured. Enoken went with them, and had to stay behind when the measuring was over, to write out an apology for indiscretions.

Two routines in particular put the police on their mettle. One, if it had gone a bit further, would have been consummated in a kiss, right there on the stage before everyone. (It was not until after the war that the movies made bold to show an unexpurgated kiss.) The other was about Tōjin (a translator has rendered this as "Chink"—it indicates a foreigner, or a Japanese whose foreign inclinations pass bounds) O-kichi, the reputed mistress of Townsend Harris, first American minister to Japan. O-kichi has been elevated to martyrdom, on the grounds that in surrendering to Harris she disgraced herself, and did it for her country. She was a good subject for Asakusa, combining nationalism and eroticism, but from the police point of view the writers seem to have provided too little of the former and too much of the latter.

Comedians and chorus girls and staff worked hard. To compete with

the movie theaters, the review halls changed their programs every ten days. There were three performances a day. In a short story called "Rainbow" ("Niji," 1934), Kawabata reported that the dancers were required to stay for photographs after the last performance on opening day and that rehearsals for the next program began after the last curtain on the fourth day. So there were only two nights during every run, or six nights a month, when they could go home and fall into bed. Perhaps a half dozen dance routines and an equal number of skits had to be put together. The dressing rooms were full of sleeping dancers, and fainting from exhaustion was not uncommon. A character in "Rainbow" finds conditions so bad that he does not bother to learn his lines. Nothing polished or substantial is likely to come of the effort, and ad-libbing works best.

Here, in a passage from "Rainbow," a choreographer is meditating upon the reviews and the life of the dancers:

> But there was no time for training in any real sense of the term. An amateur would suddenly be thrust on the stage and not so much trained as told to follow the others. Those who had a certain grace would presently acquire a certain facility. The choreographer would have to put five and six dances together in three and four evenings of rehearsal. The process would be repeated three times a month; and in the weariness of it all any sort of trickery was permitted if it worked. To point out faults was taboo. Nakane, only twenty-seven years old, more often felt sorry for himself than angry at the dancers. So in the beginning he warmly argued the merits and shortcomings of the chorus line with the male actors who were in positions of authority; but he found that no one was really listening.

There is a mild inconsistency here with what has been said earlier in the same story. The count of days for rehearsal is not quite the same. That there are not many is clear, as is the slapdash nature of the productions. So is the class structure, the distinction as to status and function between comedians and dancers. Clearest of all is that the dancers have a hard life. What have they to look forward to, Kawabata asks, but to go on kicking?

In *Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, Kawabata records a fragment of a program

at the Casino Folies, six numbers out of eleven. They include a "jazz dance," a dance to "La Paloma," an "acrobatic tango," a "nonsense" sketch called "That Girl," and a comic song.

> The changes of costume are so rapid that breasts are openly displayed in the process.
>
> And now we have Number 6, "Jazz Dance. Ginza."
>
> On a street the width of a sash:
> Sailor trousers, false eyebrows,
> An Eton crop. What fun,
> Swinging the snakewood!
>
> Silk hat at an angle, black velvet vest, red string necktie, collar opened whitely, a thin stick under an arm—it is of course an actress impersonating a man. Her legs are bare. Arm in arm with a pair whose skirts come to their hips and who are stockingless, she sings "Ginza Today." They dance their stroll down Ginza.

Nudity seems to have been more pronounced backstage than onstage. Most of the important nouns in the song—"trousers," "Eton crop," "snakewood"—are in English. Snakewood seems to be a South American wood with snakeskin markings, much used for walking sticks.

Also in *Scarlet Gang* is a complete program from early summer of 1930. The theater is not the Casino.

1. Grand Chorus: A Selection of Famous Songs
2. Fairy Story: The Spirit of the Artist's Brush
3. Musical Comic
4. Magnificent Magic, Made Public for the Very First Time
5. Ocean Dance
6. Dramatic Vignettes
   A. One Wants a Companion on a Journey
   B. Sleeping Car
7. Cowboy Dance
8. Dramatic Vignettes
   C. Falsehood
   D. Lady Angler
9. Cannon: A Sad Tale from the Wars of the Roses

10. Modern Dance: Five Festivals
    A. The New Year
    B. The Doll Festival
    C. The Iris Festival
    D. The Festival of the Stars
    E. Chrysanthemum Festival
11. Daring Aerial Acrobatics
12. Humorous Magic: Egyptian Paradise

This program too is larded with English words. "Cowboy Dance" and "Ocean Dance" are in English. So is the curious expression "Musical Comic." Even "Modern Dance," which, given the subject matter, was probably done in traditional dress, may well have had touches of the foreign. Elsewhere Kawabata speaks of a famous Asakusa dancer who did not imitate the Japanese dance as one got it at Hibiya Hall, the best concert and recital hall in town, but rather that of the port cities, aimed at foreigners.

Kawabata continues:

> The New Tsukiji Troupe had been here late in May, with the general theme "What Made Us Come to Asakusa?" It did "What Made the Girls Do It?" and "A Secret Tale of Tsukuba" and the like.
>
> On banners billowing in the winds before the Kannon Theater in July, "It," written in three ways.
>
> The Nihonkan thought of the effective name Eroero Dance Team, and even the Shōchikuza had to reply, in big black letters, with Dance Ero. "Ero" on all the billboards. The faltering Japanese of foreign performers is better than many things. Those who wish these days to collect the mottoes on the billboards of the specious reviews will find the alleys behind the lake and its theaters the place to do it: "Diary of a Sex Lunatic"—but come along and see for yourselves, all of you, in the evening. One hears that the extortionists are out along these alleys even in broad daylight; and here are the stage doors for the "ero queens." They come out to take the evening cool. My readers will understand that when I call the Danilevskis beautiful, the distortions and illusions of the night lights are at fault. Their legs are darker than those of Japanese.
>
> The program of this Tenshō troupe is, after all, not as specious as some of them. The magicians are marvelously skillful. The expressions the young dancers turn on the audience are studiously beautiful. Alas, Tenshō herself, old enough to be a grandmother, ventures to play a girl student. She appears in every act and throws herself about perhaps a bit too strenuously. Henry Matsuoka's aerial acrobatics are splendid. . . . But what surprised Lefty Hiko most were the wares flung out to the audience from the stage. Sawa Morino, playing the artist in "The Spirit of the Artist's Brush," wound up like a baseball pitcher and flung thirty or forty bags of sweets.

Another Asakusa review, at the Shōchiku

Kawabata had only this one try at a chatty style and an intimate narrative stance permitting frequent intrusions, and he was not comfortable with it. Yet *Scarlet Gang* is full of good reporting. It gives most vividly a sense of what the Asakusa reviews were like, and Asakusa itself. The passage requires comment. The three ways in which "It" is written are the two Japanese phonetic syllabaries and Roman letters. Mount Tsukuba would seem to fit in with the general theme, "What Made Us Come to Asakusa?," because Asakusa was proud of having it on the

eastern horizon. Lefty Hiko is a member of the Scarlet Gang, an assemblage of young delinquents.

There were foreign performers in Asakusa, most of them, as the passage suggests, Russian refugees. In that summer of 1930 (it seems to have been June) a pair of Finns, mother and daughter, the latter only ten years old, were a big hit. They, or one of them, did an imitation of Chaplin, and they sang in Japanese and did a Japanese dance. Four Russian sisters did Gypsy, Cossack, Spanish, and "jazz" dances, and sang Japanese songs with a sweet Russian accent. (Kawabata reminisces upon his student days, just after the Russian revolution, when little Russian girls no more than twelve or thirteen were walking the streets and selling themselves at no high price.) The Casino had a popular hula dancer, but she was Japanese. An American diver performed in a sideshow somewhere, and there was a French chanteuse, a dramatic soprano, we are told in English. "Her naked, pearl-white beauty quite radiates eroticism." Asakusa is kind to foreigners, says Kawabata, and especially to foreign children.

The "ero" that is up on all the marquees is of course that of *eroguro*, from "erotic" or "eroticism." The Shōchikuza is one of the grand theaters, the property of the Osaka company that dominated the Tokyo theater and had a large chunk of the movie business as well. Kawabata is saying that this institution, which should be above cheap tricks, must go erotic if that is what everyone else is doing. The sweets flung out so vigorously were aimed mostly at children. That there were children in the audience is interesting indeed, and may seem to go against generalizations about eroticism and grotesquerie. Probably such eroticism as there was, mostly bare legs, passed lightly over the heads of children. Though the Japanese police do sometimes treat foreign manifestations as if they were invisible (the original of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was sold openly even as criminal litigation was in progress against the publisher and translator of the Japanese version), neither Kawabata nor anyone else tells us that the chanteuse was uncommonly naked.

Asakusa connoisseurs (again our authority is Kawabata) have said that things were actually dirtier back in the days of the Russo-Japanese War. The diving girls in the sideshows of those days were far bolder than the dancing girls of early Shōwa were permitted to be. The garb of the latter was not much different from the bathing dress of the time. And there had been wantonness in the park, right there beside the great

temple, at least since the eighteenth century, when Edo came into its own as a cultural center. Wayside teahouses and archery and shooting stalls and the "famed sake places" all had had their pretty girls whose business was not only the announced one.

Yet the police of early Shōwa were being challenged. They had taken a position with regard to nudity, and the impresarios were pushing ahead in that direction as rapidly as they could. The police were also becoming more self-conscious. A spasm of puritanism was coming over the city and the nation, which had been victims of such spasms from time to time through the Tokugawa centuries.

Kawabata remarks upon the conservatism of Asakusa. In the following passage, the speaker, who is addressing a young lady of Asakusa, is Kawabata's alter ego.

> "I don't care what you say, Asakusa people are old-fashioned. They look after others and others look after them, they care for people and have a sense of duty, all of them, the dealers and hawkers at the top to the tramps and beggars at the bottom. They're like the gamblers of Edo. I'm told that the toughs in Shibuya and Shinjuku are a newer sort than the ones we have here. They don't have a tradition, and Asakusa does. It may all seem like flash and glitter, but there's nowhere else things are so on the move. It's like the Bug House too. Or an island way off somewhere, or an African village with a chief and a set of rules and bonds the modern world doesn't have."

Two important matters are involved: acceptance of a moral and ethical code, and sensual abandon. It is quite possible to have both. Not even the puritan radicals of the thirties forwent the teahouses and extralegal polygamy. For all its willingness to provide and sell almost anything for and to almost everyone, Asakusa does seem to have had moral groundings. The Bug House to which the man refers is the place with the dusty display cases next door to the aquarium and its Casino Folies.

The sentence about the hawkers and the others contains several words that are almost untranslatable. The people who look after and are looked after are *oyabun* and *kobun*, the surrogate parents and children in the social arrangements of such persons as gamblers, firefighters, construction workers, and extortionists. The qualities of sympathy and duty

are the *giri* and *ninjō* so prominent on the Kabuki stage. They come down to something not far from the Golden Rule.

As there were for the reviews, there were rules for the shooting stalls, which had long been covers for prostitution. The temple grounds still contained some forty of them in the early thirties. They could stay open for twelve hours from sunrise. Drinking was not permitted, nor was "wanton" touting and hawking. Only employees were allowed behind the counter. The rules may or may not have been enforced, but the fact that they were there, and that many customers were addicted to the stalls, suggests that they were used for something besides shooting.

Kawabata adverts to Asakusa speciousness and reports upon it. He is also good at scamps and beggars, the bottom of the heap. One sideshow promises nude beach photographs to those who will put down money for tickets; inside are photographs of athletic teams training on beaches. The curious passerby must buy the suggestive magazines at the stalls if he is to see what is in the secret supplements; they contain cooking and knitting lessons. A sideshow (another chronicler, not Kawabata, tells us of this one) offers an underwater strip show; inside, beyond a tank of water, is a painting of a nude woman. The code of Asakusa did not preclude misrepresentation, but it does seem to have forbidden complaining. Those who got cheated did not go to the police or otherwise protest.

When, at least partly because of *Scarlet Gang*, the "Ginza people" started coming to the Casino Folies, beggars and vagrants started going away. Earlier they had drifted in from the park to watch the girls. One caught the smell of them as the audience thinned out.

As for the scamps, there was a young delinquent known as the Mantis. He knew his law. Arrested numerous times, he could not be prosecuted until he was fifteen. Finally he got sent off to Iwo, the remotest place under the jurisdiction of the prefecture. One member of the Scarlet Gang, also a minor, works as a "cherry" for an Indian who peddles jewelry beside the temple. A cherry is a shill, someone who buys wares by prearrangement in hopes of starting a trend. An elderly man befriends him and teaches him a new trade, cat-catching. Skill and patience are required—a little, perhaps, as in fly-fishing. A sparrow on a string lures cats to within grabbing distance. Having seized one, the boy beats it to death and takes it off to the riverbank or a secluded part of the temple grounds, there to skin it. Makers of samisens pay a good price for cat skins, which function as sounding membranes on samisens.

At the end of "The Asakusa Mynah Bird" (*Asakusa Kyūkancho*), the bird of the title, which lives in a department store, is stolen. This exchange takes place:

> "Someone stole it? The first time since the place opened that a bird's been stolen."
>
> "You don't say."
>
> "Only in Asakusa."

The last remark catches Asakusa nicely. It seems to have been proud of its scamps. A history of the ward published in 1933 finds evidence of old-style verve and gallantry in the fact that Asakusa produced so many "knights of the town," as one dictionary defines the members of the underworld gangs.

In *Scarlet Gang* there is a labor demonstration. Asakusa did have its little touches of fashionable left-wing radicalism. From the sheet-metal roof of a theater marquee, a performer agitates the passing crowds. Unless the system is reformed, he shouts, they will all starve to death. The harangue over, several of his fellows join him, there on the roof, for a display of swordsmanship. He is not of the reviews, whose lower orders would have had every right to demonstrate against the class system of which they are victims. He is rather from one of the swordplay troupes that were another Asakusa attraction.

Kengeki means literally "swordplay," if "play" is understood in the sense of "dramatic performance." There were several such troupes in Asakusa. Like O-kichi, swordsmen appealed to old virtues, and thus satisfied the police, the radicals of the right, and the Asakusa masses. Female swordplayers were more like O-kichi than the men. They brought in eroticism, as the men could not easily do. Like plucky little Orientals overwhelming huge ugly Occidentals in Bruce Lee movies, they were always overcoming adversaries more muscular than they, and they appealed to the sympathy for the underdog which was a part of the image the son of Edo and Tokyo had of himself. Best of all, they managed, wielding their swords, to show their legs every bit as generously as the review girls were permitted to do.

Singers of Naniwabushi, Osaka narrative balladry, also answered to right-wing tastes. They were very popular in Asakusa, if not everywhere. In the late thirties a Naniwabushi man was unsuccessful in Hibiya Hall,

the place for advanced performances and awarenesses, but filled the Kokusai, the largest theater in Asakusa. The heroes of their ballads were strong on old virtues—loyalty, sacrifice, duty.

All of these attractions, and more, were available in Asakusa. The movies drew the biggest crowds, as they did everywhere, but it is well to note that Asakusa, in these its last good days, offered a variety of things.

After Enoken's departure the Casino Folies went arty. The choreographer had studied under Pavlova. There were dramatizations of socially conscious novels. There were ideological pieces aimed at the May Day crowd, the early years of Shōwa still being a time when the proletariat took to the streets of a May Day.

Sometimes the suggestion is strong that the reviews were not entirely serious even about artiness. On a stage other than the Casino, Kawabata saw two Heian courtiers, one of them Genji of the long romance that bears his name, the other the great lover Narihira. To all appearances they are in Heian dress, but under their arms they each have a walking stick hidden. They sway (not wriggle) their hips and sing. No, they are not courtiers at all. Observe these, their blue collars. And these weapons are not for elegant swinging, they are for smashing. The chorus line makes sedate Heian motions, and suddenly one of its number breaks into a Charleston, so earnestly that she falls exhausted. There ensue discussions of society and politics, a fox-trot, and a final "jazz chorus" and dance.

Artiness, however, may have had something to do with the untimely demise of the Casino Folies. Asakusa was not the place for that sort of thing. Shinjuku was. Shinjuku also had a review house, the Moulin Rouge, which opened on New Year's Eve 1931. The choice of opening day was an indication that it meant to be very advanced. New Year's Eve in Japan has traditionally been somewhat akin to Christmas Eve in the West, a vaguely religious night for family gatherings. Having done what they could by way of cleaning house and clearing debts, people stayed at home and perhaps went out to a shrine. Now they were invited to go to Shinjuku and watch the girls.

The Moulin Rouge was initially an offshoot of the Casino Folies. The first manager was a Casino man, and the first shows were scarcely distinguishable from the Asakusa sort. Shinjuku, however, was a place with middle-class crowds. It was also a student and intellectual center. Waseda University lay not far away. There were railway stations nearer the Waseda campus, but crowds draw crowds, and Shinjuku had the big ones. So the Shinjuku reviews gradually became sharper and more bracing than those of Asakusa. Eroticism waned as the challenge to the mind waxed. It was the sort of thing that brought radicalism of the left and of the right together. Both disliked venal politicians and money-mad businessmen. The police do not seem to have worried about it as they worried about the girls and their drawers at the Casino Folies.