

IN SEARCH OF THE ANTIPODEAN

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Points of the Compass

The other day I conducted a little thought experiment. I went out into my local high street in London and asked passers-by if they knew where the Antipodes were, and if they did, could they point me in the right direction. Some people thought it was a boutique or a restaurant, but couldn't for the life of them remember where it was. Most just gave me a blank stare, or a muttered 'sorry mate, not from round here' and rushed off, no doubt convinced that I was bonkers. I was on the point of giving up when I stopped a schoolgirl dawdling along eating a bag of crisps. She gave the question a moment's thought. 'You sure you don't mean Antigua or the Antibes?', she said. It turned out her parents came from the Caribbean and she had also visited the Cote d'Azur on holiday. When I assured that it was the Antipodes I was looking for she laughed and pointed down at the pavement. 'Well, Mister, I guess you better start digging, let me know when you get to Australia'.

The world map I grew up with after the Second World War still had large red blotches denoting British colonies and dependencies. Australia was indeed regarded as *the* Antipodes. It is alarming to think that school children today are still being taught this fiction. In terms of physical geography, the antipodes of London (51° 30' 26.4" S, 179° 52' 20.5" E) is in fact a stretch of water in the Indian Ocean. The idea that Australia, or 'down under' as we used to call it, was on the opposite side of the world, but still bore an uncanny resemblance to our own much smaller and definitely un-continental island was a facet of cultural geography, or if you prefer, a delusion which has survived the end of Empire. As I discovered during a recent visit to Oz, it shores up a sense of elective affinity with the UK on the part of those who still have emotional ties with the old country even if Australasia nowadays is economically, and increasingly demographically, more -asia than Austral-.

The schoolgirl might have had a geography lesson which taught her that the two largest inhabited antipodal areas are in China and Mongolia whose opposite numbers are to be found in Argentine and Chile. The Malay Archipelago finds its antipodes in the Amazon Basin. In terms of cities there are some intriguing twinnings: Hong Kong with La Quiaca in Argentina, Montevideo with Seoul, Bogota with Jakarta. But the antipodes are not just about physical correlations, but also symbolic correspondences. The antipodes have a geopolitical function too. They articulate oppositions between the Global North and Global South, and, of course between East and West. The points of the political compass and the ideological polarities they sustain might well be considered as a distinctive field of antipodean studies.¹ However in what follows I want explore the Antipodes in a somewhat different way - as a country of the mind which comes into focus whenever we travel to a place abroad whose culture is both foreign and uncannily familiar. For me that country is Japan.

Living the Dream?

I recently returned from a two-week trip to Japan at the invitation of a group of critical ethnographers and urbanists who are trying to question the parameters and priorities of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. On the day after I got back, after a long jet-lagged sleep, I

awoke with the following dream, which I have reproduced in full because it raises many of the issues I want to discuss about what it means to travel, both consciously and unconsciously in a globalised culture, and the role which maps of various kinds can play in this.

Here is the dream as I remembered it:

I am in a strange country, in which Japanese is spoken, but with a curiously Australian accent. I am trying to find out more about the culture and an opportunity comes up to buy a funeral pack for an unknown native whose family is too poor to afford a proper burial. The pack consists of the man's ashes in a sealed plastic envelope, some very basic information about his life, mostly culled from official records, plus some instructions on how to conduct the ceremony. The possible burial sites seem to be chosen arbitrarily and to bear little relation to where the man lived. The sites are located on a Google map available on a special app, but when I download it there are lots of black spots indicating areas where it is not possible to conduct ceremonies because Internet reception is poor.

I am at a loss on how to proceed. I attend one funeral as an observer to see how it is done. The ceremony takes place in a Shinto shrine I have visited in Tokyo. Participants have written prayers for the deceased which they attach to a tree, all praising his virtues. There is also a scroll map showing where he lived. Down the side, it has a series of ideograms which look like Japanese characters but have been transformed in some way.

The ceremony begins with a group of young people performing a strange ritual dance with fans and surgical masks. The girls are dressed in garish kimonos, with white painted faces, while the boys are wearing baseball caps back to front, and black leather jackets with the names of pop groups elaborately embroidered on their back. Then the cremation takes place. The relatives use chopsticks to sift through the ashes, to pick up the bones to save as mementoes or store in an urn. Watching this I realise that my chopstick skills will not be up to the task. I say that I cannot possibly conduct the service, especially as the information about 'my' deceased is so scanty and impersonal. It seems he was a professional shoplifter and continually in trouble with the authorities. However, I discover that he has an aunt living in Kyoto and belongs to a once wealthy family who disowned him when he was a teenage tearaway. I am very excited at the prospect of being able to interview her. A key informant at last!

This feeling is spoilt by a row with one of my local research assistants. I have a card with a picture of the Japanese Temple on the front and the aunt's address of the back. This assistant, a young geisha dressed in a spectacular red, white and blue kimono, grabs the card off me and announces that she will do the interview, as she speaks Japanese, and she doesn't want to be there just as a translator. I am furious and grab the card back from her. I tell her I am fine about her conducting the interview but I will hold the card as it symbolises the fact that this is my research project and I will be blamed if things go wrong.

Are we that map?

Every dream is some kind of a map, albeit one whose scopes and scales do not follow the spatial rules of Cartesian cartography, but the very different logic of primary process thinking. But what is the dream a mental map of? To what possible territory does it correspond?

The short answer is that the dream material corresponds to the world as we imagine it to be in all its materiality, as refracted through our conscious fantasies and their deeper, more unconscious patterns of representation. Long before I visited Japan, I had a set of images and imaginings about what it would be like, culled from films, novels, newspaper reports, sociological accounts, visits to sushi bars and a few Japanese people I had met in London. In a globalised culture, there are no innocents abroad. Even those who try to close themselves off from the anxiety of foreign influence, have to recognise that they drive cars or motorbikes, use mobile phones, computers, hi-fi equipment and a host of other digital devices, all of them made in Japan. Mitsubishi, Honda, Nissan, Toyota, Sony, Hitachi, Daiwa, Panasonic, these global brands are household names in the UK. My own imaginary Japan was populated by *The Seven Samurai*, characters from Manga comics, Beat poets like Gary Snyder who 'discovered' Zen, Basho of *The Long Road to the North*, Hokusai prints, geishas, *The Mikado* and *Madam Butterfly*, the music of Takemitsu, Kamikaze pilots, Resnais' film *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, Karate and Sumo wrestling, the tea ceremony and the bonsai tree. It may seem like a long list, but I have since compared it with friends, who have even longer ones.

One consequence of this plethora of cultural references is that the actual experience of travelling to another country is overdetermined to the point that the capacity for surprise is radically undermined. The risk is that one only finds what one always and already knows or is looking for courtesy of the Guide Book. The lure of the exotic and esoteric, the desire to be challenged by the strange, which is still one of the motivations for travel abroad, disappears and is replaced by a jaded appetite for novelty which is easily enough satisfied by the collection of souvenirs specially made for the tourist market. The ancient temples of Kyoto, which I visited, have got this down to a fine art, with the roads leading up to the shrines lined with shops selling a huge variety of trinkets, catering for the (mostly Japanese) pilgrims. It reminded me of Lourdes, without the sick and the handicapped.

Such comparisons, however involuntary, are of course part of the problem, a way of rendering the strange familiar and reducing even the most dissonant experience into a banal approximation of the *déjà vu*. European culture remains the norm against which the contrast is struck and in all too many cases difference is coded as deficit.

Perhaps one of the latent functions of dreams that feature travel is to restore to the uncanny its proper resonance of the familiar with the foreign and so make it possible once again to tell a traveller's tale that is more and other than a travelogue of consumer complaints about lost luggage, flight delays, bad hotels, and tourist rip offs. Many years ago, Walter Benjamin, taking a leaf out of Leskov's book, suggested the intimate connection between travel and storytelling.² The bearing of news in the form of narratives about faraway places was a staple ingredient of cultural exchange in societies organised around face to face communication. Benjamin was, of course, referring to a period before economic globalisation and cheap air flight, not to mention the Internet, had induced space/time compression. Nowadays it is possible to hold the whole world of information in one's hand.

The history of European travel writing, whether in the early form of recorded observations by Christian missionaries, aristocratic explorers or anthropologists is indissolubly linked to colonialism and to cartography as one of its key administrative instruments³. Against this background, contemporary travel writing is now largely a study in critical/reflexive auto-ethnography, in which the writer/traveller interprets his impressions of a particular place and people, their cultures and social practices, in the light of previous accounts, and with an acute awareness of the filters - or perhaps blinkers - through which perceptions of the Other are organised⁴.

Japan has been the object of more than its fair share of Orientalist narrative, focusing on what were seen as the exotic and esoteric aspects of its traditional culture.⁵ The rise of Japanese militarism and fascism in the 1930s, added a savage twist to the tale. This was now seen as a culture of fastidious cruelty as well as exquisite appreciation of Nature. In the

long Post War, Japan's dramatic economic recovery after the national trauma of defeat and the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, followed by American occupation, all this made the country and its population the subject of renewed Orientalist speculation. What exactly were the sources of its resilience? Did it lie in strong family values and an innate entrepreneurial spirit which combined to develop such a strong corporate culture? Interest was not confined to venture capitalists, who were both fascinated by and afraid of the Japanese economic miracle. There is an irony in the fact that the American Beats discovered Zen as part of their rebellion against the materialism of American consumer capitalism at the precise moment at which the Japanese manufacturing economy took off to provide so many of the material goods which fuelled this development in the USA.

In 1966, two years after Japan announced its re-entry to world sport with the first Tokyo Olympic Games, Roland Barthes, the doyen of French cultural theory, made the first of three visits, to teach a seminar there on the structural analysis of narrative. These visits were at the invitation of Maurice Pinguet, Director of the Franco-Japanese Institute in Tokyo.⁶ They generated a series of short essays, investigating aspects of Japan's culture, reflecting on language, sign systems, spatiality and the body⁷. The book was published as the *Empire of Signs* and in it Barthes advances a central argument about what he sees as the essential difference of Japan, considered from a semiological standpoint. Its food, its urbanism, its poetry and art offer what Barthes calls a 'situation of writing' wherein an abundance of objects and acts are read as empty of foundational meaning. Whether he is writing about everyday rituals of greeting and recognition, sumo wrestling and kabuki theatre, the Imperial Palace as a hidden pivot of Tokyo's post war development, or haiku, he discovers in the unity of form and substance a de-centredness which makes them available to semiological interpretation.

In his introduction he is quick to dissociate himself from the discursive strategies of Western Orientalism and he explicitly disclaims any attempt to unearth an 'authentic Japan'

I am not lovingly gazing toward an Oriental essence - to me the Orient is a matter of indifference, merely providing a reserve of features whose manipulation, whose invented interplay allows me to "entertain" the idea of an unheard-of symbolic system, one altogether detached from our own.

His strategy was to depict this unheard-of 'fictive nation' by isolating its distinctive features somewhere in the world (faraway) and out of them deliberately form a system, which he would provisionally call 'Japan'.

Despite his many genial insights, it is difficult not to discern in Barthes' way of closely observing surfaces only to discover their inner emptiness, their lack of depth and meaning, to see in this method not simply an adoption of the haiku's immersive grasp of the moment, but the re-invention of a central trope of Orientalism, namely the *inscrutability* of these social forms and cultural practices, and by implication, that of the people who enact them. In other words, to see in their resistance to the western gaze, the essential secret of these cultures, a secret which has to be penetrated and exposed by some kind of critical phenomenology.

The Empire of Signs was published eight years before Edward Said's monumental critique of *Orientalism*⁸ and although Said does not write about Western representations of Japan as such, I think he would see in Barthes's central proposition, namely that Japanese culture is essentially de-centred, a projection of post-modernist notions of identity quite alien to the way Japanese people themselves describe and understand their own practices. This issue is also present indirectly in my dream – and dreams necessarily proceed by indirection. The conflict here is ostensibly over the ownership and control of the knowledge produced by a research project. Will my Japanese assistant, who alone can conduct the interviews, and hence generate the primary data, have any stake in its interpretation, or will a neo-colonial division of labour prevail and the information extracted be transformed into intellectual capital by a Western ethnographer for consumption by a largely Western audience? But behind this

lies a deeper question, which Barthes also addressed, about the authority of the text, and the relationship between authorship and authenticity, an issue which is especially pressing for an ethnographer who is all too aware of the discipline's Other Scene.⁹

Tokyo Story 2020



Figure 1

Barthes was writing about Japan at a moment when its economic miracle was about to take off and the country itself was about to be transformed through rapid urbanisation and the development of high-tech industry. Fifty years on, the bubble of prosperity has burst, and the economy is in trouble, although there are few overt signs of poverty and unrest. Japan's growing underclass, many of them Koreans, as depicted in the recent film *Shoplifters*, are confined to makeshift dwellings on the outskirts of the cities, well away from tourists. Against this background one of the aims of Tokyo's bid for the 2020 Olympics was to kickstart economic growth by attracting large amount of inwards investment, especially from China.

I visited the main Olympic site, which is situated in the old, run-down port area of the city, in the company of my conference host, one of a small number of Japanese academics to take a critical stance towards the Games. At the two events I spoke at it was clear that there was considerable concern about the effects of social displacement in the newly designated Bay Zone. The old fish market has been destroyed and rebuilt 10 kilometres away, local football club pitches have been removed to build the Olympic village, and a large community of homeless camped in a park near Ueno Station have been dispersed. On the plane, I read an interesting novel by one of Japan's new generation of writers which explored this changing urban landscape. The narrator had worked as a labourer, brought in like so many others from the countryside, to build the 1964 Olympic Stadium. He noted that 'everything was done by human force, we dug the earth with picks and shovels and carried away the soil in handcarts'. After a series of personal disasters, not unrelated to the economic downturn, the novel's hero ends up living in a tent in Ueno Park. One day he sees a noticeboard put up at the edge of the park announcing its designation as a UNESCO world heritage site and also that 'Japan needs the power of dreams now more than ever. Bring the 2020 Olympics to Japan!' The evictions started shortly afterwards.¹⁰

My guide to the new Olympic Park gave me a 'disaster map' (see figure 1) of the site produced by some local community activists. The swimmer is saying 'Help! This area is polluted, I cannot swim'. He also pointed out that most of the construction workers were from the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea and Vietnam, many of them illegal immigrants. They may not be using picks and shovels, but already there have been many injuries and one suicide due to the long hours and poor working conditions. The scale of construction is enormous, almost double that of 2012, with clusters of tower blocks for luxury hotels and housing sprouting up wherever you look. While I was there the head of the Tokyo Olympics Delivery Authority resigned amidst charges of corruption over building contracts. The papers also reported that a long-time Tokyo resident, nicknamed Uncle Olympics, who had visited every Olympics since 1964, had died aged 92. These were bad omens for 2020.

So much is familiar from previous Olympics. What made the conferences strange for me was the reception of my book on London 2012.¹¹ Some of it had been translated into Japanese, but when other speakers at the conference began to quote it back at me, and my translator then dutifully turned it back into English, it was unrecognisable from the original, not just in terms of the syntax but semantically. It occurred to me that in order to understand the linguistic impact of one culture on another, you have to grasp what is lost - and sometimes gained - in translation and that is best done in the midst of a properly dialogic exchange, not in retrospect. It was not that my ignorance of Japanese released me from having to make sense of what people were saying (which it did for Barthes) but that I had to translate the sense - or sometimes nonsense - which my Japanese colleagues had made of my ideas back into my own conceptual idiom in order to recognise what it was they had grasped or failed to grasp. Contra Barthes, it is this reciprocal work of translation which fills what would otherwise remain empty with human significance.

Space Invaders and the culture of civility

Finding your way about Japanese cities is not always easy. Visitors are almost always disoriented by the absence of street names and numbers. The main thoroughfares in the cities are named in both Japanese and English, this dual language applying to almost all public signage. But once in the maze of unmarked back streets, you have to rely on tourist maps which are often not sufficiently detailed, or, nowadays, on Google Maps whose granularity is not always up to the task. My partner, whose commitment to navigating by the sun is only impaired by her somewhat shaky sense of direction, and by uncertain weather, took charge on days when it was shining. On dull days we supplemented Google by asking local people the way and here we encountered the public culture of civility for which Japan is

rightly famous. There were numerous occasions when we got lost looking for somewhere off the beaten track and had to rely on passers-by, who either indicated by pointing where we had to go, or in some cases actually went out of their way to accompany us there. We quickly learnt to recognise who might help us, mostly older folk, whereas young people either ignored us, or whipped out their phones and often as not sent us off on a wild googled goose chase.

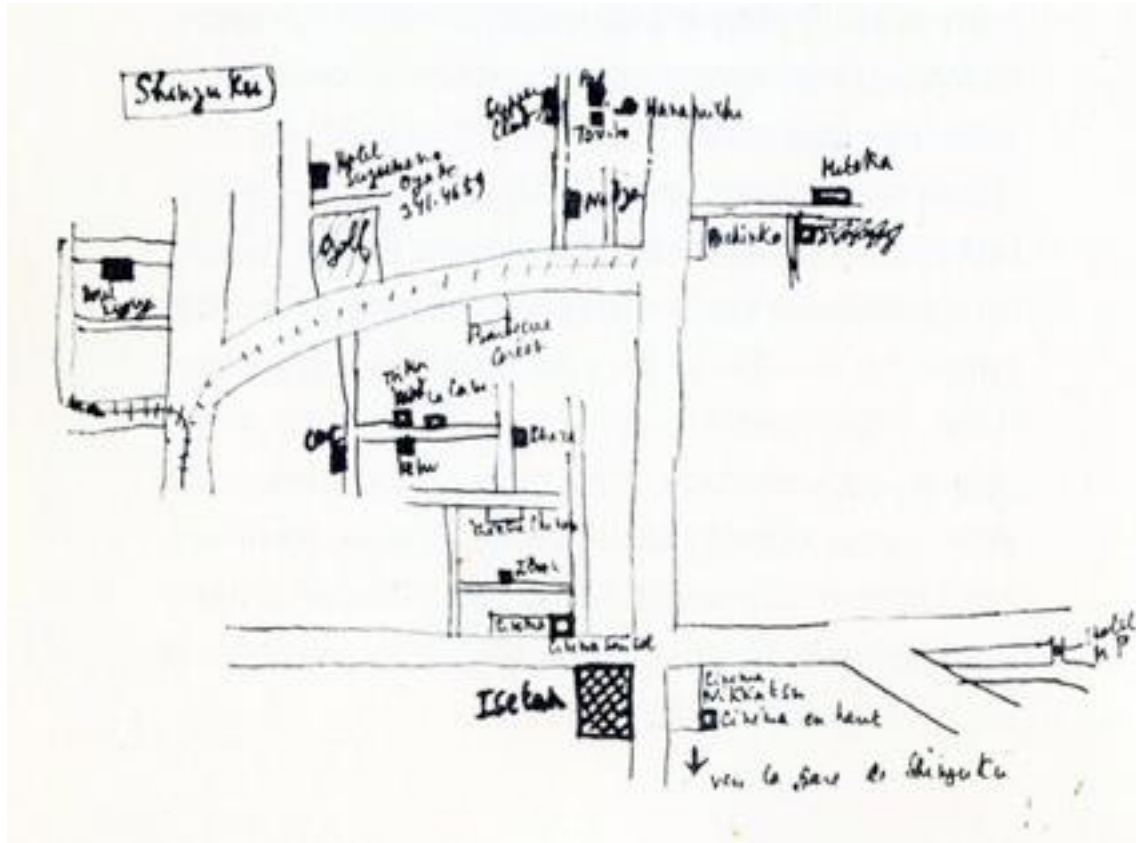


Figure 1.

Barthes was a keen pedestrian, and often relied on impromptu small scale maps hand-drawn by colleagues to find his way around (fig. 1).¹² This do-it-yourself cartography, which relies on precise mental mapping supplemented by locally situated knowledge continues to be a feature of this urban culture to a much greater extent than in the UK. Its sustainability may have something to do with the relative social homogeneity and demographic stability of Japan's urban population. Inevitably, in areas of hyper-diversity and population churn, as is now found in many of the UK's inner cities, where almost everyone is from somewhere else or just passing through on the way to somewhere else, navigation becomes uncoupled from narration, and depends almost entirely on satnav algorithms. The smart city is designed for citizens who are dumb about where they are.

Barthes was very enthusiastic about the formalities of public politeness which are central to Japanese social etiquette, especially the practice of mutual bowing in greeting and farewell. He was equally keen on the Japanese sense of spatial order, as exemplified in domestic architecture. For him the two were linked by a similar attitude to the body, not as a site of narcissistic identification, aggressive assertion or private shame as in Western cultures, but as a medium of public communication, especially through the eyes, gestures and posture. Some of these protocols survive. I was warned by my host that it was considered impolite in many circles to wear sunglasses because it removed an essential medium of social communication. If people cannot see your eyes and read your facial expression they feel

they are missing vital social cues. Japanese people regard foreign tourists who insist on wearing sun glasses even when there is no sun as the truly inscrutable ones.

The most visible aspect of public civility was the wearing of medical masks. Masks are an important feature of Japanese folk culture, especially in Kabuki and Noh plays. There they serve a purely symbolic function in identifying a character's social status and dramatic role. But the everyday wearing of medical masks is a relatively new phenomenon and dates from the SARS epidemic of 2003. This serious and sometimes lethal respiratory illness was mainly concentrated in Hong Kong and mainland China but also provoked panic and emergency measures in Japan. Today the practice of masking is quite widespread, and many people, both young and old, mask up whenever colds and flu are prevalent. During my visit it was hay fever season, which in Japan is caused by pollen from the omnipresent cedar trees and it was rather disconcerting to converse with people whose replies were so muffled.

A Japanese anthropologist I met at one of the conferences suggested that there was a hidden agenda behind the practice. In her view the wearer of a medical mask is both trying to protect themselves from other people's germs and to protect other people from their own germs. There is thus an implicit injunction for other people to do the same, and if they do not - and many still do not - then they can be regarded as selfish or anti-social or both. Pollution, whether from natural causes or from social interaction is thus regarded as an unwarranted intrusion into personal space. Just as ritual greeting avoids physical contact (no hugging, kissing or even shaking hands), so masking reduces the chances of bodily fluids, germs and other toxic substances attacking the body's immune system. The same logic applies to the creation of no smoking zones in the streets and other public spaces, smokers being confined to special areas. Likewise, there is no litter and no chewing gum on the pavements.

Etiquette can also be a matter of life and death. If you are wearing a kimono, you had better make sure you fold the left side over the right before you tie your obi. The other way round is reserved for corpses! As for the Japanese way of death, its funeral practices are quite accurately represented in my dream. The use of chopsticks to sift through the ashes for keepsake fragments, corroborates Barthes's analysis of Japanese table manners and eating habits, but as a way of dissecting, if not digesting, what should be remembered about the deceased, it seems to be to lack the same finesse.

The other, more progressive, side of obsessional civility is provision for people with disabilities. Every Japanese city we visited had special pathways in the pavements for sight impaired pedestrians while the station platforms had recordings of the paradise fly catcher twittering away at all the exits warning people of the escalators and stairs. Ironically the actual birds are now an endangered species as a result of the deforestation of its natural habitats, due in some cases to the expansion of the rail network. As a result, it would be possible to construct a braille map of every major city in Japan showing this pedestrian network (see fig 2).

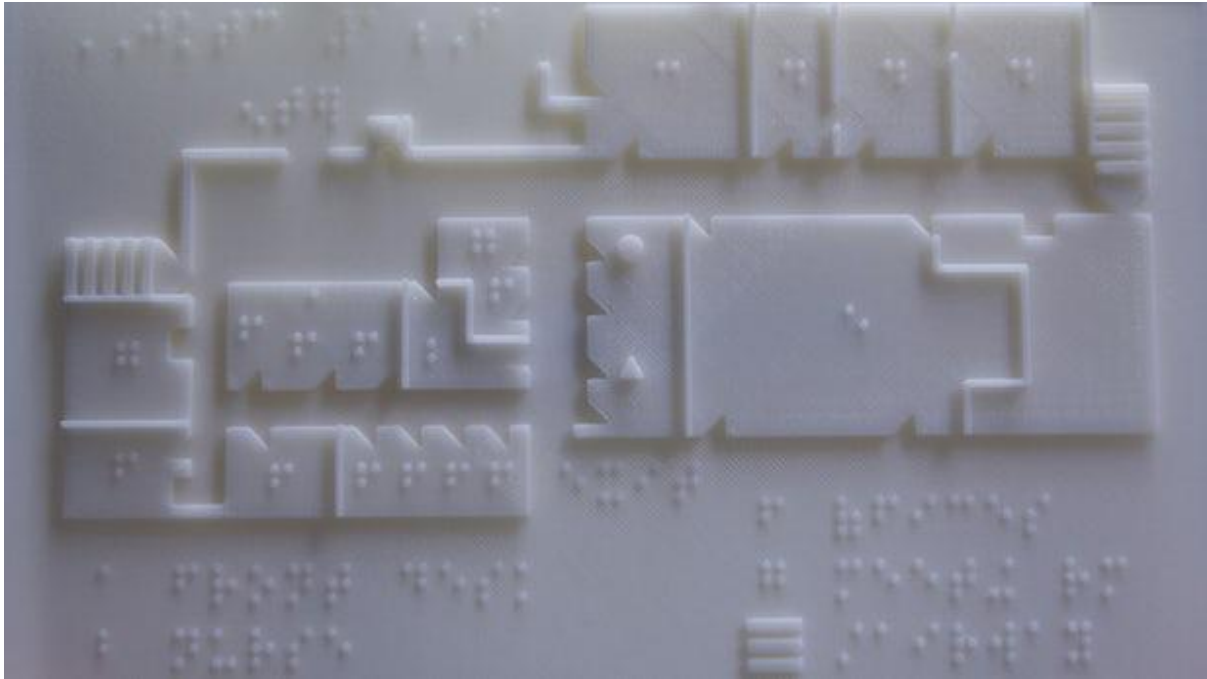


Figure 2

The latent function of public civility in creating defensible bodily space has intensified as the population of Japan's cities has increased. Tokyo has the highest density of any city in the world, apart from Hong Kong. The majority of the urban population in Japan live in overcrowded, badly designed, high-rise tenement blocks, mostly in tiny apartments, not in the spacious open plan traditional houses so beloved of Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles Eames, Walter Gropius and other early modernist architects who would have hated the drab tower blocks and urban sprawl.

The photographer Kyoichi Tsuzuki has documented Tokyo's hyper-modern environment and suggests that despite the apparent muddle of piled up belongings, so evident in the pictures, there is a hidden principle of order in the arrangement clothes, books, CDs and personal objects. This he relates to the notion of *Ma*, the negative space between things - the gap, interval, pause, silence - which was an important aesthetic feature of the domestic arts, from flower arranging and calligraphy to the tea ceremony and interior design. Applied to the crowded interiors of city dwellers, *Ma* becomes a way of creating space out of no space. One way of reading these habitats is to see them as so many boxes nesting one inside of the other, a strategy of containment and miniaturisation which has a long cultural history in Japan, but has now been updated to deal with contemporary circumstances. The art of small things arranged in small places. It was left to Muji, the so-called no-brand, to turn this aesthetic into a mass-produced commodity for a global market of young urban dwellers in Europe and the USA.

That was Zen, this is now

This was the name of a shop in one of Kyoto's busiest shopping arcades. It sold a range of American teenage fashions and their Japanese look alike brands. I asked the owner about the choice of name. He laughed 'So it's a joke, and its serious too. Just like Zen. Westerners think that Zen represents some authentic Japanese culture, its packaged and sold like that. It was supposed to be about learning to live in the moment, but look that is just what young

Japanese today want to do and they don't need Zen to do it. They have their music. They have rap. They have hip hop, they don't need Kabuki.'

Like many of my generation, and background I was fascinated by Zen Buddhism in the 1960s. Barthes was certainly influenced by the western intelligentsia's discovery of Zen when he wrote *Empire of Signs*. He devotes three essays to haiku as the poetic exemplification of Zen philosophy, and at one point he describes his aim in writing as being to achieve satori. His choice of emptiness as the defining characteristic of Japanese codes of behaviour is undoubtedly an attempt to reframe national identity in a Zen idiom. But the Japanese students I spoke with at the conferences, were adamant that it might still be an influence in the arts and crafts movement, and still shaped many Westerners view of what Japanese culture was about but in reality it was a small religious sect had little or no influence amongst young people like them.

Perhaps the best placed people to understand the complexities and tensions in Japanese culture are not the Japanese themselves who seem to take them for granted or at least take them in their stride. Nor visitors, like myself, or for that matter Roland Barthes, who are just passing through and can only capture a few fleeting impressions and are always at risk of trying to nail them down into some procrustean bed of theoretical or ideological assumption. The best vantage point is be in the culture, but not of it, to be able to participate fully, to live by its codes but still not to have been fully formed by them. Listen then to Pico Iyer, a long time but part time resident of Tokyo: "The evergreen riddle of Japan," he writes in 'A Reflection on the Capital' is that all its revolving-door fashions, fascination with the West and hunger for the new never seem to make it any less Japanese at the core; the place is like a froth of shifting surfaces and flashing images projected on an old, strangely shaped piece of wood that never moves."

Barthes meditation on its shifting surfaces led him to think that there was nothing more and in that absence of depth lay the culture's secret essence. It would be equally one dimensional to focus on what appears to be a solid, unchanging foundation, but which is only a sclerotic and reified image of an impossible stability outside history. Maybe instead we could think of Japan as its own antipodes. It is a society and culture whose identity is anchored to a set of fixed co-ordinates, but whose polarities are neither transparent nor easily articulated because they are perceived to belong to an upside-down world that is not easily mapped. As one of my young Japanese friends put it 'we are not measuring ourselves against our peers, as young people tend to do in Britain or the USA, but against what our parent's generation achieved. But these measures are not the traditional ones, and they certainly aren't the ones prescribed by politicians or economists. What is important for them is insignificant for us, and what we value they do not recognise'.

This young woman was doing a piece of ethnographic research into how digital culture was influencing the mental maps of different generations of Tokyo residents. Her early findings suggested that those with the most familiarity and facility with digital technology, including Google Maps, had great difficulty in describing verbally or pictorially the navigational patterns they created as they moved around the city, but when they were deprived of their mobile phones we able to find their way unerringly to their destination, and by the same routes. Her working hypothesis was that the algorithms which generated the Google pathway instructions were internalised and stored as neuronal pathways, becoming part of the brains internal satnav, and hence could be reproduced analogically without the prosthetic memory provided by digital technology.

My search for the antipodean had taken me on a 12,000-mile return journey across half the planet but where it finally led me is to a globe filled with air which sits on my desk at home. I would not dream of puncturing it with a long needle to see where it lands, because this globe does not map the physical geography of the world but the shape and direction of its information and data flows. The new antipodes of the globalised knowledge and information economy are constituted by the nodes and networks of platform capitalism which mine data, transform

products into rentable services and create new monopolies.¹³ There are no countries on this map, only platforms of different scope and scale. Google, Amazon and Facebook are its new continents. Spotify and You Tube its archipelagos. This world still awaits its cartographer.

¹ See for example the radical geographical journal *Antipode*

² Walter Benjamin 'The Story Teller: Observations on the work of Nicolai Leskov' in *Illuminations* and *The Story Teller :Tales out of Loneliness* Verso 2016

³ See for example Paul Carter *The Lie of the Land* Vintage (1996) on the mapping of Australia

⁴ Justin Edward and Rune Graulund (eds) *Post Colonial Travel writing* Palgrave (2011) and Tim Youngs and Charles Forsdick (eds) *Travel Writing: critical concepts in literary and cultural studies* Routledge (2012).

⁵ Jenny Holt 'Samurai and Gentlemen: the Anglophone Japanese Corpus and New Avenues into Orientalism', *Literature Compass* 11.1 (2014), pp 36-46.

⁶ For this context see the useful article by Colin Marshall 'Ways of seeing Japan: Roland Barthes's Tokyo 50 years later' *Los Angeles Review of Books* December 2016

⁷ Roland Barthes *The Empire of Signs* Vintage (1985)

⁸ Edward Said *Orientalism* Routledge (1978)

⁹ Roland Barthes *The Death of the Author* and Michel Foucault *What is an author?*

¹⁰ Yu Miri *Tokyo Ueno Station* Tilted Axis Press (2018)

¹¹ Phil Cohen *On the Wrong side of the Tracks? East London and the Post Olympics* Lawrence and Wishart (2013). Phil Cohen and Paul Watt (eds) *London 2012 and the Post Olympic City – A Hollow Crown* Palgrave (2017)

¹² More of these maps are reproduced at <https://www.thecinetourist.net/maps-in-films/25-maps-in-books-in-may-lempire-des-signes-roland-barthes-1970>.

¹³ Sick Nick Srneck *Platform Capitalism* Reaktion Books (2018).