Utopia in the Back Streets

— A City Fantasy in Hashimoto Gorô's

"Streets Not Found in the Map" —

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Hashimoto Gorô's "Streets not found in the Map", appeared in "The Shin-Seinen", April 1930, is a sort of fantastic novel. The fantasy of Tokyo, a large town, viewed with the eyes of Terauchi, the hero of this novel is extremely symbolic. The world of darkness, the negative world into which the hero is introduced under the initiation of a mysterious old man. Taking advantage of his dismissal, our hero enters into "another" world where there exist a wide variety of secret passages.

Parks and back streets, among others, in the huge space of modern town are place of great importance leading to the strange "streets not found in the map" existing in a world in a town.

The parks symbolize a naturalistic world as opposed to the artificial world of the urban life, though they stand close to bustling amusement quaters. They are a space representing a nature of fringeland. The parks at night become a world where negative existences in the urban life come together. They are a space where a conversion is possible from daily into fantastic, non-real world. Terauchi, after aquainting himself with the old man, departs for the unknown world of darkness.

The back streets, though they are adjacent to the main streets and amusement quaters, constitute some marginal places hiding some magical power to charm any strangers by their bottomless, labyrinth-like characters. Though parks and back streets are somewhat the routine places where people pass through or come across with each other, they can never be considered as destinations. They are rather places that allude to a possibility to enter into an unknown depth of large town. At the same time, they are a folkloric space where one can realize intensively such traditional fantasy or rather some idealistic thought such as rebirth, transmigration, and another world.