Stranger Magic:
On the Social Role of Itinerancy in Northeastern Japan

異人の魔術
―東北地方における放浪の社会的な役割を考察

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Abstract

This introductory study considers the role of itinerant musicians and shamans in northern Tohoku, and the evolution of their relationship to local communities across the transition between Tokugawa and Meiji modernity. The analysis is framed by a methodological consideration of discourses of modernity, which privilege urban spaces and nation-state distributions of power; and an impulse to overcome the limitations of that point of view. It begins by parsing different aspects of modern subjectivities resulting from the hegemony of capitalist ideology, and then, pivoting around Harootunian's concept of temporal unevenness, turns to the topic of proliferating subjectivities in northern Tohoku. This latter part of the paper contextualizes the concept of mobility in Tokugawa Japan, before drawing on both native Japanese folklore studies and classic western sociology and anthropology to begin the work of theorizing the role of visually-impaired itinerants: *itako, goze,* and *bosama.* By juxtaposing the methodological critique and theorization of historical subjectivities, I take a small step toward imagining a practice producing alternative social ontologies.

Keywords: itinerancy, modern subjectivity, shamanism, blindness, *itako*, *goze*, *bosama*

The Problematics of Framing Historical Inquiry via Modern Subjectivity

The history of modernity occupies a central position in the field of area studies, not the mundane cataloguing of the development of novel technologies—machines of industry, politics, and economic exchange—but as a critique of the state's production of new subjectivities within ideological regimes of capitalism and fascism. The intentionality and rapidity of modernization and capitalization in Japan beginning around the 1868 Meiji Restoration, realized throughout a half-century of imperialist expansion, provides a plethora of evidence to the totalizing effects of capitalism beyond the realm of economics, penetrating deeply into consciousness, identity, and perception. In just one salient example, citing Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke, Harootunian (2000) indicates how "completely everyday life in the 1920s—the target of cultural production and the site of its consumption—had become dominated by film, photography, print journalism, and radio. These technologies were finally indistinguishable from the experience of daily routine..." (p. 111). Driscoll (2010) deploys the term "neuropolitics" to describe the operationalizing of real subsumption—totalizing commodity fetishism—as a weapon of capitalism, saturating modern subjectivity,

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especially that of the leisure-consumption obsessed "modern girls" [*moga*] and "modern boys" [*mobo*] (part II). In modern capitalism, we do not merely consume, we *are* what and how we consume.

The spread of consumer subjectivity was attended by an unprecedented form of social liberalization. The characteristic obsession with ever increasing orders of sensation and affect underlines the individualism of the consumer-subject.[1]   Maeda Ai's (2004) historiography of the novel offers a perspective on reading practices following this very trajectory, as he reveals how the shared, performative experience of reading broadsheets and *gesaku* [popular fiction] in early modern Japan was ultimately mostly supplanted by individualized silent reading. Also, quintessential public spaces of modernity like train cars, movie theaters, department stores, and (later) commercial airplanes further impress on their occupants a kind of public isolation. The paradox of intimate proximity and often complete anonymity of moderns in these spaces reinforces the introspective turn—individualization and fragmentation—while negating the possibility of organic community. Georg Simmel (2007) would probably describe this in terms of the *blasé* "emotional numbness" characteristic of urban modernity, a mental self-defense mechanism guarding the fragile psyche against the information overload entailed by ceaseless encounters with strangers (and strange environments) (p. 409–426). Thus, for Benjamin (2007), the modern man is either the proletarian "man of the crowd," numbed both by the sonic shock of mechanized factories, and the overstimulation of the bustling city; or the *flaneur*, a pliant character who can dissolve into the ever-shifting scene of cosmopolitan urbanity (p. 161–167).

This is all to say that the processes of modernity and hegemony of consumer capitalism have wrought profound transformations on subjectivity. I deliberately lead into the following historiographical inquiry by attempting to grasp that notion, that our contemporary epistemological structures are necessarily foreign to those of the non-modern or transitional subjectivities of nineteenth and early twentieth century Japan. There is a necessity to guard against the impulse to romanticize the past, as nostalgia can so easily be mobilized in service to the modern nation-state, and, in extreme cases, fascism (e.g. Blickle, 2002; Harootunian, 2012; Anderson, 1983). Yet, at the same time, I stress that we may also learn from the glimmer of optimism in Harootunian's (2012) pronouncement that "By uncovering heterological temporalities and histories—recognizing uneven flows and the never-ending prospect of untimeliness—'progress' is released from its unilinear mooring and rethought as a relative term that considers missed opportunities and defeated possibilities" (p. 8). In other words, by recognizing spaces of temporal unevenness within the landscape of modernity, the present can be opened up to critique (and, idealistically, real opportunities for a tactics of resistance (De Certeau, 1984, p. xi-xiv)). It is from this perspective that I consider the social role of itinerancy in northern Tohoku on the threshold of modernity—not in a fascistic allegiance to past, but in a style of what Boym (2001) describes as "reflective nostalgia," with the goal of imagining new kinds of development in the future (p. xviii, 41).

(Im)Mobility in Pre-modern Tohoku

Japan during the chaos of the Warring States Period [*sengoku jidai*] (circa 1467–1600) was marked by extreme divisions between political domains, such that the majority of the populace lived in relative isolation from each other. When travel for commoners was possible, it was often hampered by the rampant violence. In addition to travel restrictions imposed by local warlords, the ravages of war and impoverishment of non-combatants profoundly reduced the mobility of numerous of the farming and artisan classes. Until the eighteenth century, the reality was that most Japanese had little to no knowledge of anything beyond the immediate context of their home village—after all, the vast majority populated small agricultural communities spread across the archipelago; a condition

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[1]   This same underlying narrative can be observed in the evolving relationship between modern liberal subjects and the natural environment (see Stolz, 2014).

which lasted well after the end of the Meiji regime (Totman, 2005, p. 615). Anything beyond the nearest geological obstruction would fall into the unverifiable territory of "hearsay" for them (Morris-Suzuki, 2001, p. 82).

Travel became safer after Tokugawa Ieyasu unified the country under his shogunal government in 1600, but he maintained restrictions on who could pass between the barrier gates [*seki*] between various domains (Bolitho, 1990, p. 486). Although travel during this period remained heavily regulated, the *sankin kōtai* policy, by which the Tokugawa regime's defeated enemies were forced to pay homage to the capital every three years, ensured a regular stream of legal travel by a large number of officials, their families, and their retainers. Additionally, with the centralization of political power and wealth in Edo, the government invested in an extensive system of highways to lubricate the flow of trade (Totman, 2005, p. 238–40). In addition to the traders and aristocrats, day laborers, pilgrims, spiritual and religious workers, and entertainers of various stripes could also be found treading those highways. Pilgrimages were undertaken for a variety of motivations, often for the mere pleasure of travel. Monks and exorcists, as well as musicians, dancers, and spoken–word entertainers were sometimes employed by the government as spies, sometimes patronized by their local *daimyō*, and usually toured on seasonal schedules (Nishiyama, 1997, p. 113–143).

Many members of these latter groups were actually considered to be outside of the Tokugawa social order, the Confucian-inspired hereditary *shi nō kō shō* caste system, which regarded military and political families at the top of society, followed by farmers, craftsmen, and merchants at the bottom.[2] On the one hand, the wealthy, merchants, and growing urban middle class were able to exercise mobility via their economic and political power; on the other, those who did not fit into the caste system were not legally registered to the land, and were therefore exempted from many of the general travel restrictions. Their exclusion from formal society, in other words, provided them with freedom from some of its regulations.

Morris-Suzuki (2001) deconstructs assumptions about historical "timespace" projected back on to Tokugawa Japan. Her term is analogous to Bakhtin's (1981) iconic "chronotope," defined as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships... The process of assimilating real historical time and space in literature" (p. 84). The coding of regions like Tohoku as distant from the state center is a relevant example. Yanagita Kunio suggested that this phenomenon in early twentieth-century Japan was a necessary, if temporary, "time lag" between country and city, as the latter expropriated mineral, agricultural, and human resources from the former in order to fuel its march into modernity (Harootunian, 2012, p. 24). The rural periphery and its people were subsequently left in the past. Morris-Suzuki specifically cautions against a tendency to project contemporary conceptions of timespace onto the past; a tendency to make assumptions about historical consciousness based on contemporary subjectivities.[3]

This opens up a range of questions regarding the depiction of people and place in non-modern Japan. Critiques of the national mythos, like those leveled by Hobsbawm (1983) and Anderson (1983), stand at the heart of contemporary area studies, and lay the groundwork for this desired deconstruction. This can be observed in the evolution of the word *kuni*, originally a marker of the local fiefdom, to its present meaning of "country" (Morris-Suzuki, 2001, p. 82). Therefore, in methodological terms, one must not only take care not to project modern politico-spatial consciousness onto the past, but also to avoid casting modern consciousnesses uniformly across uneven geographies of any historical period. We must recognize and respect the spatio-temporal unevenness intrinsic to modern capitalism. This means being wary of the significant body of scholarship, alluded to above, which claims

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[2] The *shi nō kō shō* model is an idealization; in reality, one's circumstances were ultimately determined more by economic than social status. As a result, some scholars—and the period aristocracy—have found more currency in the categories of "warriors, townsmen, and villagers" (Totman, 2005, p. 229–235).

[3] In a similar vein, Karatani Kojin argues that literary scholars must be wary of how epochal terms—Meiji, Taishō, Shōwa, Heisei— as well as periodization in the Gregorian calendar can project anachronisms onto period authors (Karatani, 1991).

modernity as the privileged domain of urban life. By turning the following discussion to the predominantly rural region of northern Tohoku, I intend to focus on the uneven temporality of early modernizing Japan, and how central policy created new subjectivities in the provinces, despite the initially limited reach of the familiar regalia of modernization.

Tohoku Frontier

The Tohoku region covers the northern third of Honshu, and contains present-day Aomori, Akita, Iwate, Yamagata, Fukushima, and Miyagi prefectures. Historically, parts of the region have borne a variety of monikers, including Ezo (lands and people beyond the control of the central government), *ura nihon* (the "backside of Japan"), and Michinoku ("the end of the road"). Matsuo Bashō's legendary extensive 1689–1691 tour of Honshu, recorded under the title *Oku no hosomichi* [Narrow road to the deep north], only reached as far north as southernmost Iwate and Akita prefectures. In other words, from the perspective of Edoite literati at the end of the first century of the Tokugawa period, northern Tohoku was considered even more remote than the "deep north." Such place names clearly indicate that Tohoku was considered a space of alterity in pre-modern Japan. Indeed, in geomantic terminology, the northeast [*ushitora*] is equated with "the devil's passage" [*kimon*], a threshold from which otherworldly spirits and dangerous maladies pass in order to assault the civilized center. As the northern frontier of the burgeoning nation-state of early modern Japan, and as a constant signifier of barbarity and belatedness, Tohoku was a site to be both conquered and civilized, to provide the "center" with a modern identity through its negation (Hopson, 2014). Tanigawa (1978) and Ivy's (1995) critical examinations of the "Discover Japan" Japan Rail ad campaign, which depicted Tohoku as a nostalgic object of postmodern desire, demonstrate how little this perception had changed even by the 1960s and 70s.

So coded with pastness, Tohoku would be set in opposition to Meiji modernization. The official Meiji-era program of civilization and enlightenment aimed at rationalizing the archipelago through the spread of scientific "spiritualism," attempts to produce scientific studies of irrational spiritual phenomena (Nihei, 2017); the vanquishing of folk beliefs and superstition, for example through the spread of western medical knowledge (Figal, 1999); the adoption of the Gregorian calendar (Tanaka, 2004); and the systematization of a national language (Yeounsuk, 2010). However, rather than treating rural Japan as underdeveloped in relation to Japan's urban centers, I propose to consider in the same way that Harootunian posits Japanese and Euro-American development: as sites of coeval processes of modernization (2000, p. xvi). As such, the question of Tohoku and *volkisch* practices of religion, spirituality, and magic may provide insight into "heterogeneous temporalities"; alternatives to contemporary capitalistic subjectivity.

Itinerant Subjectivities of Sightlessness: *Itako, Bosama,* and *Goze*

As described above, the Tokugawa period saw a diverse demographic traveling throughout the Japanese archipelago, along the imperial highways and waterways. Many were of the privileged aristocratic class; merchants and urban pilgrims, members of the burgeoning *chōnin* class of city-folk, also exercised mobility through their ever-increasing economic power. The spiritualists and entertainers, however, belonged to the outcast class of *kawara mono*, or "people of the riverbed," and did not wield significant economic or political power.[4] The three groups of

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[4] Other similar labels can overlap with this population—which included criminals, beggars, and prostitutes as well. They include *eta* [outcast], *senmin* [low people], and *hinin* [non-person]. In addition to performing rituals and entertainment, members of these groups were affiliated with "polluted" labors such as grave digging, tanning, and butchery. After the Meiji Restoration, these groups were given family names and rewarded status as "new citizens" [*shin heimin*] and reformulated as *burakumin* [people of the villages]; however, widespread prejudice against these groups continued to persist (see Robertson, 2002, footnote 18).

Tohoku *kawaramono* I consider below are the female shamans called *itako*, and the itinerant beggar-musicians known as *goze* and *bosama*.

Itako, *goze*, and *bosama* were some of the limited ways of life available to the visually impaired in early-modern Japan. For those who lacked the full faculty of sight, options for survival basically included shamanism, music (singing and playing shamisen, biwa, and koto), and medicine (in the form of acupuncture, moxybustion, and massage). Takahashi Chikuzan (1991), a *bosama* born in 1910, also describes episodes of teaming up with thieves and conmen to sell snake-oil eye ointments (p. 62–66).

Whereas *itako* were trained through individualized master-disciple relationships, *goze* and *bosama* were trained by the major Tokugawa guilds for the blind. The guilds did not only provide certain protections for their members, but also forcibly extorted money from them. Indeed, many blind men were forced to join the guild and to pay dues against their will (Groemer, 2001). Both guild members and *itako* provided entertainment and spiritual services in exchange for rice or money, and both worked in seasonal agricultural cycles and in concert with regional holidays. The strictly controlled guild-based musical market, which used of state enforcement to exterminate competition, and the paradox of their standing as indispensaible-outcasts, set these women and men clearly outside of the modernizing and capitalizing center. Ivy's (1995) study of *itako* in the 1970s and 80s ironically recontextualizes them as subsumed by the tourism industry while simultaneously embodying the irrational reality of non-modernity (p. 141–191). The social significance of these subjects-out-of-time in the modernizing periphery is the central question of the remainder of this paper.

On the supra-local level, *goze* and *bosama* would be associated with the mysticism of the *biwa hōshi*, the "lute priest" performers of historical narrative, and progenitors of much of their musical tradition. At the local level, they would sometimes be conflated with *itako* (or similar shamanic figures like *kami* and *gomusō*), either through marriage or through their own spiritualistic practice (Daijō, 1998, p. 52–57). Blindness is key for understanding the social position and function of all of these groups. The Japanese character representing "blindness" 盲 is composed of two elements: "to die" 亡 and "eye" 目. Closer examination of the etymology of the upper element of the character reveals that it is a reduction of a visual representation of a person人hidden behind a wall乚, out of sight. If "death" is understood to be a transition from the "visible realm" [*utsushiyo* or *gense* 現世] to the "hidden realm" [*kakuriyo* 幽世], then the ideograph for blindness 盲 suggests a liminal body, split between two realms. Not only have the optical organs failed, but they have symbolically transitioned into the realm of the dead. Thus, *itako*, *goze*, and *bosama* exist simultaneously between two cosmological planes; they are both familiar and strange; they, *unheimlich*, represent a portal to death.[5]

Goze and *bosama* were initially dispatched by the central guilds to provide musical and medical services to regional populations. As travelers of significant distances, they also relayed news on current events from the outside, often in the form of narrative song [*kudoki-bushi*]. Conversely, while they do not relate earthly tidings, *itako* conduct special séances known as *kuchiyose* [calling by mouth] to put supplicants in touch with departed loved ones. There is even speculation that the word *itako* is derived from an Ainu verb (increasing the resonance of alterity) "*itaku*," to narrate (Daijō, 1998, p. 157).

In this way, both *itako* and the musicians rely on techniques of "oral culture" (Ong, 2002) whereby the internal consciousness of the performer is communicated in an irrational manner. This is similar to Yanagita Kunio's idealized sensorial [*kanjitaru mama*] interpretation of pre-modern written Japanese language. This sensibility is

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[5] A well-known representation of this consciousness of blindness can be found in "Mimi nashi no Hōichi" [The story of Hōichi the earless], Lafcadio Hearn's rendition of a tale in which the spirits of Heike warriors approach Hōichi and force him to perform a tale recounting their demise. While the blind minstrel is unable to see the spirits, his liminal status renders him uniquely able to perceive the voices and rustling silk garments of his spectral audience, which the sighted temple attendants cannot (1898, p. 1–20).

opposed to the analytical form of modern language "that mimetically traces the contours of speech [and] thus accede[s] as closely as possible to the transparent reflection of the object" (Ivy, 1995, p. 77–8). The difference between classical and Meiji-period *gen'bun itchi* writing is an epistemological split between non-modern and modern subjects. In Benjamin's (1955) parlance, the performers were "storytellers" imparting embodied experience, rather than narrators relaying dis-embodied information, communicating lived wisdom through feeling rather than mimetic reproduction of fact.[6] Thus, these figures on the edges of society, on the threshold between corporeality and other, have special access to the irrational ontological substance which lies beneath the rationalized relation between modern subject and object.[7]

The seasonal circuits these men and women followed, their periodic visitations as outsiders upon villages and communities, placed them in the lineage of the ancient *hokaihito* [also: *hokaibito*]. Yanagita's (1970) study of Japanese death ritual, *About our ancestors* [*Senzo no hanashi*], argues that the etymology of *hokai* can be found in the word for the platter used to provide offerings to one's ancestors during the summer all-souls festival, as well as in the name used in northern Tohoku to describe that ceremony. The offerings of food would be placed outdoors near the family grave. The gifts were left out in the open, expected to be consumed by animals and beggars. The term *hokai* soon became associated with human outcast scroungers, who were called *hokaihito* or, in abbreviated form, *hoito* [also, *hoido*]. *Hokaihito* beggars would regularly appear during the season of religious offerings to ancestor-gods—rituals which were intended to welcome spirits from the otherworld—resulting in a natural conflation between the human and ethereal visitors (p. 99–107).

Orikuchi Shinobu, a student of Yanagita's, pursued a further study of *hokaihito*, developing a primordial category of what he called *marebito*. These were itinerant gods who visit local communities from a faraway place usually marked geographically by a mountain range or ocean, but cosmologically signifying a separate plane [*tokoyo*]. According to Orikuchi, the two categories of "performance" and "ceremony" developed organically around these figures. His writing on the origins of Japanese performing arts suggests that *marebito* were responsible for the creation of "ceremonial rites" [*saishi*] and "Shinto ritual" [*kamugoto/jinji*], from which *hokaihito* created "performing arts" [*geinō*]. However, scholars have more recently argued that the two practices, and the two ontological categories of *hokaihito* and *marebito*, are not mutually exclusive (Ōishi, 2007).

Goze, *bosama*, and *itako* were literal manifestations of *hokaihito*: they would appear from beyond the borders of one's village to perform ritual, music, and stories, particularly during religious festivals. Furthermore, *itako* were reported to serve as prostitutes for *marebito* during their travels (Schiffer, 1967, p. 183), becoming "vessels" for the gods just as the *kawaramono* performers of *dengaku* and *nōgaku* dances summoned *kami* into held totems [*torimono*] and into their bodies themselves (Ortolani, 1984, p. 166–190). These shamanistic bodies both receive and become the *marebito*; they are holy outcasts, both essential in their quasi-religious functions, and repellent for their corporeal transgressions.

Theoretical Interpretations

An anthropological perspective suggests that these itinerant gods performed a kind of spiritual labor for the communities they encountered. Take for example the practice of *goze's hyakunin gome* [hundred-person rice].

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[6] I have argued elsewhere that this transformation had repercussions for the musical sensibilities of the *bosama* and their descendent purveyors of "Tsugaru-jamisen" (see Solomon, 2017, chapter 2; Solomon, 2016).

[7] Harootunian interprets Benjamin's "valorization of the storyteller" as a nostalgic desire to "rescue a submerged authenticity invariably aimed at restoring origin and making present the auratic" (2000, p. xxvi). As I caution above, it is not my intention to fall into an unthinking restorative nostalgia. However, I do intend to indicate the contiguities between these non-modern actors and aspects of the psychoanalytic real, a type of authentic experience which holds the potential to exploit uneven temporality in order to produce alternative subjectivities, or new modes of being.

Goze, already imbued with the aura of *marebito*, would sing and beg for uncooked rice throughout the villages they visited. Then, after mixing the donations into a single bag, they would resell the grain to the very people who donated it. The grain commanded a high price, because it was thought to have mystical or curative powers derived from the combined vital force of its various original owners (Groemer, 2014, p. 4).

Hyakunin gome is a textbook example of sympathetic magic, whereby sorcery is accomplished through mimicry and tactile contact (Frazer, 2014, Chapter 3; Taussig, 1993, p. 47–51). There is something of Mauss's (1990) "gift" in it as well, whereby the giver and gift are connected in "spirit" (p. 11–12). Thus, the magic of the *hyakunin gome* is created through sympathetic contact between the disparate community members via the medium of the rice, catalyzed by the spiritual power of the transubstantiated divinity of the *goze*. According to Yanagita's (1970) folkore study, local deities [*kami*] were considered an amalgam of ancestral spirits, who, through worship, united the community (p. 120–124). The rice, grown in soil, which is nourished by the bodies of the dead, also participates in this cycle of death and rebirth. As a result, the *goze* occupy multiple chronotopes, visiting villages on a cyclical calendar marked by agricultural and religious events, while acting as conduits between the dead, the past, and the present community. The body of the *goze* becomes a temporary abode for the spirits of the deceased, and the rice draws its life from the small-deaths created through the decomposition and fertilizer. By consuming the mixed product of *hyakunin gome*, villagers would enjoy unity with both their diachronically historical ancestral spirits, and with the synchronic community of their everyday experience.

While the physical and occupational markers of otherness would remain throughout their lifetimes, the transitory existence of the *goze* and *bosama* changed qualitatively over time. This was particularly true during the years straddling the Meiji Restoration's early-stage national democratization and state-directed modernization program. Meiji modernization eliminated the caste system of the Tokugawa regime, granting *kawaramono* status as "new commoners," or *shinheimin*, in 1871 (Howell, 2005, p.7). Although the title of *shinheimin* nominally provided the rights and privileges of citizenship, it functionally denied *goze*, *bosama*, *et al*. access to the social mobility [*risshin shusse*] so central to Meiji modernity (Van Compernolle, 2016), becoming instead a prejudicial label (Nozawa, 2006, p. 76). As a result, the effort toward democratization further ensconced the *shinheimin's* otherness.

These outcasts and *shinheimin* often lived in some kind of proximity to the social center. There were those during the Tokugawa period who defied the central guilds' rule, and became attached to the local land: women and men known as *hagure-goze* and *hagure-bosama* (Tomita, 2011, p. 22). There even existed large transient communities occupying spaces like *Jikken-chō* in Aomori city, and the so-called *Bosama-machi* in Hirosaki city, to which itinerant beggars sought stable return (Nozawa, 2006). And following the Meiji Restoration and collapse of the guild system in 1871, centralized support for the travelers was cut off, forcing many to settle down in disparate localities (Groemer, 2001, p. 374).

These men and women were thus always potential "strangers," in Georg Simmel's terminology. Simmel (1950) defines the "stranger" as "the person who comes today and stays tomorrow"; an outsider in the process of negotiating her or his relation to a community within geographic proximity to it. Drawing primarily on the experience of Jewish merchants in prewar Europe, Simmel argues that the objectivity of these parties due to their lack of entanglement with localized social politics, and the constant reminder of their religious and cultural distinctiveness—their otherness—led to their serving, in many cases, as arbiters of personal disputes (p. 402–408). As geographical, temporal, and even cosmological "others," *bosama*, *itako*, and *goze*, to whatever extent they played the part of interlocutor into the spiritual matters of the local people, certainly seem to fit the bill.

Perhaps more compelling is Simmel's characterization of the communal consciousness of self and other in the context of the stranger's presence. The stranger's strangeness comes from "the fact that similarity, harmony,

and nearness are accompanied by the feeling that they are not really the unique property of this particular relationship"; they are, "as a group member... near and far at the same time" (p. 407). Strangers are embodiments of the *unheimlich*. The consciousness of strangeness and familiarity, their "nearness" and "farness," forms a constant tension surrounding the body of the *goze-bosama-itako*. They exist as a doubled image stretched by the centripetal force of common identifications of nationality, culture, and humanity; and the centrifugal force of their non-local origins, unfamiliar-vernacular, physical deformity, chronotopal dislocation, and non-productive, spiritual/affective labor (c.f. p. 406). In a stranger twist of Freud's classic uncanny, these wanderers are empowered by their familiar strangeness; their deviancy (blindness, poverty) implicates them as ghosts of society's repressions, while their evocation of sympathetic magic suggests their role as strands of weft connecting the threads of the communal whole.

Conclusion

I began this exploration by reviewing how the processes of modernization produced new subjectivities in Japan, profoundly altering the relationship between post-Meiji Japanese society and its experience of time and concept of progress. While Harootunian has indefatigably documented this new global reality in hegemonic terms, I suggest that his historiography also provides a window into the possibility for a tactics of resistance against the status quo. By studying the "heterological temporalities and histories" embodied by visually-impaired itinerant strangers, we may learn how to see-differently—or, perhaps un-see—the hegemony of progressive time which swathes our contemporary consciousnesses. By emphasizing non-modern themes of mimetic magic, cyclical time, and itinerancy, I hope to have taken a beginning step toward imagining an ethical praxis generative of alternative temporalities, which then may condition new meaning-making community.

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