Media and the Folk

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Thinking about the folk (and folklore), both as an identity and as a category that defines a field of study, is inevitably a historical project. To think of the place of the folk and of folklore studies, now, therefore, surely has its own historical specificities. This is especially the case given the current context, in which globalized structures of economy and new media technologies are arguably transforming the very basic grounds of orientation away from a world in which the "folk" might have any relevance. What does it mean to think of the folk now (who would they be)? Especially, what does it mean to think of the *Japanese* folk now?

For the purposes of this brief and schematic paper, I am assuming the category of the folk to be a term of relation as much as an actual content—though the category most certainly always has an actual content. As a term of relation, the folk operated as a critically important point of orientation in the anchoring of modern identity. But again, how, or where, might one think of locating the folk now? I think this is a question worth raising not only to consider how the world has changed—that is, to consider how or if we have moved away from a world in which the folk is a relevant point of reference—but also because folk-like imagery does continue to be raised in popular culture (even for example in *anime*), and because the possibility of an "outside" of our current conditions also continues to be raised.

I want to consider the historically changing place of the folk only in terms of a delimited perspective: that is, the transformations of media, and differing experiences of those media technologies, that have occurred between Taisho and contemporary Japan. New media technologies have for some time now been consistently described as the principal grounds for social transformation, constructing novel grounds of social and cultural form. Given that this seems to be the way that new media technologies are being experienced, it is worth taking a careful look at what kinds of orientation are felt to emerge from the differing technologies, and then, what the implications might be for our understanding of the folk and of folklore studies, among other things. I should admit right away, though, that this is not only very preliminary, but more really just an initial attempt to look for a possible way to frame such a study.

In many ways a product of modernity, the concept of the folk articulated relations to modernity that are well known. In general terms, the relations and distinctions between the folk and the modern helped to secure a more or less unified subject, structured along the lines of what might be called a depth model.[1] One of the best depictions of this modernist subject remains Georg Simmel's "The Metropolis and Mental Life."[2]

Simmel sets up a series of oppositions that emerge within the modern subject. These are in part spatial, with the folk typically being tied to the rural life of the countryside in

opposition to the city and the urban life. These are of course temporal oppositions as well, with the folk located as sites and repositories of tradition and the past, in a time that was either slow or without change altogether. This is in contradistinction to the very contemporary character of the urban, with its time of disjunctive rapidity—so that it too is ultimately a time almost without history, but in this case precisely because of its disconnection from the traditional past. To some degree, the temporal disjoinder of the folk from the urban meant that the folk arises (*within* modernity) as a term that is held to be outside modern life, and against which modern life finds definition and orientation.

Attached, then, to these spatial and temporal orientations, are oppositions of modes of production, which imply different orders of socioeconomic value. The folkic countryside remains a place of barter, and unchanging values (profit and interest do not figure much in this economy), while city life is dependent on cash economies and exchange values. Because the rural, folkic economy of barter entails a more essentialist understanding of value, it produces a social order that not only is fixed, but also is based on essential, qualitatively real and meaningful, distinctions of identity within the social order. The urban exchange value economy, on the other hand, homogenizes the value of everyone and everything in such a way that yields only social indifference, and a general abstraction of meaning (in other words, the kind of indistinction that makes for meaninglessness). The countryside, furthermore, serves as a kind of emplaced locality, embodying real, rooted identity, whereas the city is a place of flow, and impermanence of identity.

It should be kept in mind that Simmel is not just laying out oppositions between the modern and the non-modern (though he is sometimes read this way); these oppositions *collectively* make up the modern subject. The time, place, and value of the countryside folk on the one hand and of the modern urban dweller on the other are thus related to each other as "private" and "public." Furthermore, while the public character of the urban is associated with cold intellect, the private world of the rural folk is the place of warmth and emotion; the urban is the brain, and the rural the heart.

All this is organized into a depth model of the modern subject. At its interiority lie true, essential uniqueness, local identity, genuine value, and authentic meaning. This depth furthermore is panoramic—entailing a relation to the world in which that which is distanced seems yet to also be most stable and true (I return to this briefly below). Here, the source of rootedness and authenticity of social and economic value, identity, and meaning is the traditional, folkic past, but that past yet persists both as the countryside and as the private interiority of the modern subject.[3]

The terms thus outlined by Simmel are, to varying degrees, evident in the modern institutionalization of folk and folklore studies (as *minzokugaku*) in Japan as well. Yanagita Kunio's early twentieth-century valorized focus on rural culture, against city life—whether understood as a critique of or complicitous with the national government's fostering of new, sometimes agrarian-based ideologies—was dependent on similar spatial and temporal axes of country versus city and traditional folk versus contemporary modern worlds.

For Yanagita and others, one could look to the countryside for practices of everyday life that were not only more traditional than city life, but also somehow purer. As with Simmel's pastoral folk, the purity of the folk was determined in part as a socioeconomic value form

(pitting agrarian practices against capitalism), that structured a more enduringly meaningful order of time (thus, Yanagita's new category of the *jōmin*, or "abiding folk),[4] and a more essentially rooted identity grounded in a more localized sense of place.[5]

Also as with Simmel's modern subject, the folkic pole in Yanagita's framework existed as the originary source of meaningful identity—a "deep layer" or "deep culture" (*kisō bunka*) underlying the surfaces (*hyōsō*) of modern Japanese subjectivity.[6] To some extent, Yanagita and others did seek this folkic quality quite literally in the countryside, and in the agrarian classes. But especially as used by Yanagita by the 1930's, the *jōmin* was a truly new conceptual category, and one that in some ways was still more transcendent than Simmel's folk. Already existing terms such as the *minshū* (folk, masses), *shōmin* or *heimin* (commoners or plebians), had actual referents, including as specific socioeconomic classes and, potentially, specific political constituencies. The *jōmin*, on the other hand, came very quickly to refer to a kind of commonality and continuity that underlay *all* Japanese, from all eras, and whether rural or urban, traditional or modern, lower class or rich. It was therefore transcendent not only of historical context, but also of any specific economic value form; it therefore would not be so easily mobilized as a position of critique against (or for) capitalism, for example, or an aristocratic ruling class.[7]

Instead, the "ordinariness" (*jō*; "ordinary" in the sense of custom, or that which persists through change and difference) of the *jōmin* formed the foundation of something much closer to the German *volk*—a universalized folk community forming an ethnic nation.[8] This impulse towards transcendence is perhaps endemic to modernism in general,[9] but in Japan it contributed to the particularly strong unification of a subject form that was at once ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, and national.

Nonetheless, as in Simmel's depiction of the folk, the *jōmin* can be thought of as operating in a panoramic, and nostalgic, relation to the modern—distanced from the immediate surface of everyday life, but privileged as its heart and ever-stable true origin.

Since the time of these early twentieth century frameworks, the place of the folk as an operative term of social orientation has changed, perhaps even dissolved. Clearly, this is in part due to the rapid disappearance of many of the real peasant societies to which at least some ideas of the folk did refer. But the transformation in social orientations also, by some arguments, has something to do with the increasing prevalence of new media technologies in everyday practices. I want to turn to some of these changes now.

The belief that new media technologies could somehow place people in a new relation to each other and to the world, however, thereby fundamentally shifting world horizons, is also endemic to modernity in general. At the same time that the folk was being conceptualized in the early twentieth century, debates were even then developing around the possibilities and implications of cinema as a new visual technology. While these debates about film as a new media and the discourse on the folk were perhaps not immediately related, it is also worth considering to what extent there was a correspondence, or even a complicity, between the modern idea of the folk and the modern experience of cinematic conditions. That is to say, not only may modern conditions have been experienced to be somehow "cinematic," but the relation between the "folk" and the modern can itself be thought of as cinematic; the folk might be thought of as having been cinematically located. I will look at this possibility first,

before turning to the apparent transformations brought by new media forms.

One reading of the "cinematic" conditions of early twentieth century Japan can be found in a Taisho-era short story by Edogawa Rampo (*Oshie to tabisuru otoko*; "The Traveler with the Pasted Rag Picture").[10] Edogawa was a well-known observer of, and in some ways a critic of, Japan's urban modernity (as his pen-name hints at). Although the story I look at here by no means is directly concerned with the folk, it does lay out the general terms of orientation within which the "folk" was an important point of reference, and places these terms within a framework of media technologies.

The story is short but complicated. In brief, it tells the tale of a man who falls in love with a woman. He only seems to be able to see this woman, however, when looking through a telescope from the heights of a twelve-story tower, newly built in the entertainment and spectacle area of Tokyo; down below, in the labyrinthine maze of spectacles, she is nowhere to be found. It turns out that the woman is in fact only an image, in a pasted rag picture, which itself is located in a peep show booth. But by the trick of having his brother look at him through binoculars held in reverse, the man is placed within the space of the rag picture, and is united with his object of desire—sort of; at the story's end, it seems that the man within the picture continues to age, though the woman does not.

Those are the basic relations, but it is more complicated, especially in terms of the relations of spaces and media. The story begins in the past—specifically, in 1895, which was the year before cinema was introduced to Japan, and it then shifts to Edogawa's own time (the '20's), which was the first peak of cinema's popularity in Japan. This is also phrased as a shift from the countryside (Uotsu) to the city. At the outset, the setting is an almost surreal blurring of boundaries and scale—the sky is undifferentiated from the land; faces become enormous clouds; etc.—and the narrator is unsure if it was a real event of memory or a mirage, or a dream. But gradually things take shape and find clear definition. Matter itself, Edogawa writes, evolves from shifting blobs into the form of a train. The setting also is then described as film-like ("like the flickerings of a black-and-white picture," in which the narrator "stood and stared at the mysterious scenes projected on the sky...," etc. So the world takes on some clarity, but in the form of a train, and under conditions that are somehow cinematic. This, then, allows the narrative itself to take shape, and the remainder of the story takes place within the space of a train.

Thus the very material certainty of the world, as well as the clarity of the story itself, occurs in this shift from the country to the city, and from the uncertain into the spaces and forms of the train and the cinema. Edogawa also equates the space, and movement, of the train with the cinema. This is a classic and often-noted modernist correlation, so again I will avoid detail. Basically, the space is panoramic: from a train, for instance, what lies immediately in front of oneself is blurred, or fragmented, but what lies in the distance remains stable, static, and clear (Edogawa describes the slats of a fence next to the train as "flickering" by).[11] The most important point here is that this is a space that does provide a stable, clear, and firmly identified orientation in the world, but it is also a space in which the observer is necessarily distanced from that world of stable identities.

These relations are then further emphasized by the monumental twelve-story tower (the *jūnikai*), the other central architecture of space in the story. The main character can only

clearly see his object of desire—and in fact desire itself only arises—from the heights of the tower; once he descends into the networks of city streets below, the woman is nowhere to be seen.

Yet there are still other kinds of media, and spaces, that are placed within this panoramic space—in particular, the rag picture itself. In contrast to the lack of depth of the picture (and the alienation from it) when viewed from the perspective of the tower, the picture itself is eminently a space of organic corporeality and of three dimensionality. The woman's image, which is in fact made not only with real cloth but with real human hair, is described as "uncannily realistic," so that the narrator sees "the swelling of [her] breasts, the bewitching line about her thighs, the scarlet crepe of her undergarments showing from beneath her kimono, the natural fleshy texture of her white skin...(etc.)."[12] And in contrast to the filmic flatness of the story's opening, the rag picture's space is that of a theater stage, which has both depth and 3-D perspective (there are also contrasts of filmic grayness versus full color in the picture; etc.; the picture is in effect the most "real" of spaces). Lastly, in contrast to the uncertainty of memory and reality at the story's opening, this rag picture is the space of history: it is a scene, supposedly "well-known," from a famous and by then "traditional" kabuki play.

There is accordingly a panoramic relation to history itself implied. By contrast to the "cinematic" conditions, this picture of history does create an image of fully dimensional and firmly placed identities. But like the woman in the rag picture, one can only get a sense of this kind of identity from across the distance of other spaces and times. I might note too that this is also a form of knowledge—one which desires and believes in the possibility of a complete, or panoramic knowledge of a stable, true world, but one in which, as the man who climbs the tower to get a better view, one can only gain such knowledge by distancing oneself from that world.[13]

So, in all of these ways, Edogawa's story constructs a set of relations of media and space-times, that entail different orientations of identity and being in the world. There is the organic space of the kabuki theater stage, which is trapped within the flat space of the rag picture, which itself is caught within the cinematic space of the train. As emphasis, all of these media spaces are brought together at the end of the story, which draws to a close with the pasted rag picture, and the organic space it supposedly holds, being held up to the window of the train, so that the man in the picture could panoramically gaze out of the window at the passing scenery, and, ultimately, the "new Tokyo."

In sum, by bringing these different media together, Edogawa give us a picture of the modern world of Taisho Japan. This is a world that brings together a varied set of horizons of orientation, into a larger, hierarchically coherent order.[14] These horizons of orientation include the differing relations that most commonly are thought to define the modern world, including not only city versus country, but also past versus present, tradition versus mass cultural modernity (with the more distant past of populist, even folkic tradition of kabuki being the site of fuller, more organic identity), and so on.

The principal point is that all of these relations are understood as being brought into coherence only through the framing conditions of what Edogawa seems to understand as the "cinematic." The traditional horizons of kabuki are still present, as an apparently more "real" and whole world—a transcendent, interiorized world (in the sense that the layers of narrative

leading to the more organic world of desire and fulfillment are also ever more privatized levels of narrative), but that very transcendence and wholeness nonetheless still finds its definition only within the larger media conditions of the cinema. In the same way that Simmel's folk was very much a term of relation *of* the modern subject, rather than truly an outside element from the past that might or might not persist during the modern, Edogawa's vision of the cinematic order of things was dependent on a panoramic distance that gave stability and depth to the modern subject.

Thus, for Edogawa, modernity was defined by the cinematic. This cinematic horizon created an image of the traditional past as a desired world of wholeness and unity (figured by the sensual bodiliness of the kabuki actress), while it yet also envisioned that world as panoramically distanced, or alienated from, the modern. (The popular, folkic, media of the pasted rag picture itself seems to retain some of those non-modern qualities.) This "cinematic" relation thus functioned by eliciting desire and a sense of the real through distance, in such a way as to anchor a reality that was transcendent to the more superficial conditions of modern urban life. This cinematic understanding of the world thus created and depended upon a privileging of rooted origins and authentic identities—as did the early twentieth century concept of the folk.

The idea of the cinematic modern gains additional specification in the context of relations that are emerging out of late twentieth century new media (primarily, electronic digital technologies), and I return to this below. First, though, a general summary of some of these new conditions.

In contrast to the kind of earlier twentieth century cinema just outlined, the media conditions that are employed by and thematized within *anime* are different—supposedly creating different relations to the past, and to the kinds of rooted, traditional identities generally associated with the folk. Yet there are claims being made again that the new technologies do allow a connection with pre-twentieth century, non-modern Japanese identities (sometimes specifically presented as the "folk," though sometimes more generically as a non-modern tradition). To consider this, the media technologies I focus on here can for the moment be thought of through the increasingly common analytical opposition of the analog versus the digital.

In part, these technologies are simply the new forms of electronic communication, the internet in particular, with which nearly everyone is now familiar. Paul Virilio's classic critique of the spaces and times that emerge from the internet emphasizes what he calls the new "ubiquity" of time and space.[15] By this he means that, as we focus on an architecture based on looking at computer screens rather than out windows, we enter into a space which is everywhere (especially now that, at least in Japan, people are connecting to the internet via cell phones even more than via laptops), but everywhere the same—it matters not whether you hook up in the middle of the city or on top of Mt. Everest. Nor do the classic, organic orders of time (including night versus day, or the differentiation of global time zones) mean anything anymore. So for Virilio, electronic technology produces a loss of antipodes—a loss of the organic means by which different identities can find orientation in the world. We have lost the dimension that allows both identity and critique. Virilio's critique, in other words, really ends up in many ways a panoramic structure like Edogawa's, which holds up a notion

of singular organic identity, based on firmly placed positions of identity and difference, which nonetheless are also already distanced or lost.

There are, however, other arguments, particularly about the workings of digital technology. Most of these emphasize that these technologies allow for ways to think of identity as "emergent" rather than as fixed and unitary; for some, this is a positive thing (because it supposedly allows a more open, flexible and creative understanding of identity). One of the most basic claims is that analogic technologies always insist on reproduction, for example of images or sounds, based on mimetic equivalence. There is a point of origin (the image or figure that is being reproduced), with all its complexity, and a good analogic reproduction maintains at least some of this complexity in a stable way. This is therefore a kind of identity that insists on stable origins and authenticity, and these origins then guarantee that identity itself remains stable.

Digital technology, on the other hand, proceeds through a fragmentation into relatively simple code. This simple code then works in a recombinant way to reproduce an image or sound. But there no longer is any claim to one form of recombination being truer than any other (thus, for example, digital photography can no longer be "trusted" in the same way that filmic photography can be). Also, theorists of computer-generated design technology say that while computer programs designed to generate new designs (for robots, for example) similarly consists of relatively simple code, out of this code will emerge—at the surface—complex and unpredictable forms. So by these technologies, identity is understood to have only an uncertain relation to a point of origin. Identity is in this sense "emergent," and identity can be located only at the surface—not some earlier, or interior, point of origin. This does not mean that the idea of having a point of origin is discarded, nor that identity itself is being given up on; it is just that the point of origin, or points of origin, do not guarantee an authentic and singular concept of identity.[16]

These "digital" conditions are being played with throughout popular culture in Japan and elsewhere. One of the more interesting art movements in Japan (actually it is global too), for example, is what is know as "superflat" art. In part the idea of a superflat perspective is to maintain this idea of identity as having only an uncertain, emergent relation to a point of origin—whether that point of origin is an image in the real world, or in one's own personal history, or somewhere else. But the idea also is to maintain a sense in which we are all caught in a number of different "surfaces" of identity at once, and these differences can all be thought of as coexisting on a single plane of existence (or a single plane of an artwork), in something like an open dialectic. One could think, for example, of all of the different media times and places narrated in the Edogawa story, but without the hierarchical privileging of one or another that comes from the panoramic perspective.

By these terms, Edogawa's cinematic modern subject was an analogic formation. As with Simmel's depiction, it found orientation through stable reference to a singular and transcendent point of origin. The surface expression of this identity, however variable or alienated (again, one could think also of Freud), could always be excavated to find the more authentic identity within.

"Digital" formations on the other hand—which, it should be kept in mind, almost inevitably still retain some analogic structures within them—almost inevitably reconfigure

the place and role of a folkic or any other essentialist identity. This is being taken up within new media arts. Among other things, some of the superflat artists (and others, including for example Uchiyama Shotaro) say that this is a means of reimagining a "Japanese" identity, including a relation to Japan's traditional, and even folk, past. Though not clear, this seems to imply the possibility of a belief in a real traditional past, that does in some ways serve as a real origin and ground of identity—but only as one "layer" that exists within an increasingly global variety of contexts, or layers. This is not then a simple postmodernist rejection of tradition, either.

Anime, as opposed to photographic film, is not only using these digital technologies, but it is highlighting the "digital" conditions of identity as basic thematic grounds of its world views. Or at least, these conditions become a source of debate. Miyazaki Hayao, one of the most interesting and complex animators, has produced a whole set of films that ultimately seem to argue for the cinematic/analog as opposed to the digital (he accordingly has continued to insist that his films not be categorized as anime; he also long refused to utilize digital technologies at any level in the production of his films). In *Nausicaa*, for example, a potentially idyllic world is set up (the "Valley of the Wind" being the homeland), which is nonetheless threatened by a larger set of "pollutions." To again simplify greatly (to the point of meaninglessness, perhaps), in Nausicaa the world is good when a large set of oppositional relations (the forest versus the city; the past versus the present; even good versus evil) are maintained. When the boundaries between these oppositions become blurred, then life itself is threatened; the maintenance of these oppositions retains a kind of identity that is unified, organic, singular, and stable, and this is the truly "good" kind of identity. Thus, too, Nausicaa holds up two different figures of identity. One is the arboreal, literally: trees (obviously a rooted form of being, that may branch out, but will always have a stable connection to its roots) are good (they even clean the atmosphere of the poisons that threaten Nausicaa's world), while the poisons themselves are figured by spores (a kind of identity which is without either stable roots or clear boundaries). And thus too, in happy moments, Princess Nausicaa has a clear connection to her past through the emergence of memories—and these memories are indicated by little more than the appearance of a huge tree; when the spores appear, on the other hand, the picture itself becomes blurred and indistinct, the colors blend into a uniform blue-gray, etc. The "arboreal" good thus also implies a stable, rooted and singular relation to memory, and therefore to the past. In Nausicaa, it is only when all the above oppositions are retained that the world can return to a pure, unpolluted state—including not only a stable relation to the past, but also to the past as tradition, and even folkic (Miyazaki cites a variety of traditions, legends, and folksongs, to indicate the happy past in Nausicaa).

In all of these ways, Miyazaki ultimately seems to be arguing that all the relations of opposition that ground a stable modernist concept of identity, and that Edogawa equated with a "filmic" world, are the true and good orientations of life in general. Miyazaki is in a sense using animation to argue against the digital, and the "anime-ic."

But a great deal of anime argues in favor of a more digital view. To take just one obvious example, one could look at *Serial Experiments Lain*. The artwork itself is produced out of both analog and digital methods, and through these methods it tries to produce effects from a variety of different media, including film, photography, and digital forms. The story—which

also is a mystery of sorts, but really is the story of a girl named Lain—is not produced in a linear narrative, but rather works through what are called "layers"—which include things like "society," "religion," and ultimately "ego." Each of these segments is done by a different art director, so each is different even at a formal level. And each one starts over at the same starting point, but ends up somewhere different. All of these layers, though, with their different orientations, help to make up who and what "Lain" is. Thus, *Lain's* layered understanding of everyday life is close to the superflat view of the world, and of the possibility of constructing a relation to the past, to tradition, and to the folkic as somehow "outside" the present.[17]

This "digital" view of the everyday is not only being worked through in cinema or *anime*. To cite just one last, quick example, one could look at the theme park built by Arakawa Shūsaku and Madeline Gins in the countryside of Gifu Prefecture, called the Site of Reversible Destiny (*Tenmei Hantenchi*). This theme park consists among other things of a house and a huge pit; the pit contains "landmarks" associated with different well-known moments from Japanese history. The architecture is meant to be completely disorienting, with physical space that might be thought of as stochastic rather than Euclidean. In fact the park closes if it rains because of the dangers of slipping on irregular terrain; reportedly at least one person fell and broke bones on the park's opening day, and one can now rent rubber-soled shoes and helmets. The park attempts to bring together not only different points of historical memory, but also different kinds of space and temporality (including domestic space, the world of leisure, and the countryside) in ways that randomly conflict but nonetheless coexist—so that each visitor might emerge with their own sense of things. In other words, it is almost like a "superflat" park.

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At least as part of more general changes that include transformations in global economics (and shifting relations between economics, received political entities, and popular culture), new media *have* brought real changes to our world. Not only have the peoples once defined as the "folk" themselves been transformed by these conditions, but within the new media (broadly understood), we increasingly are finding ourselves in a different relation to those histories and places that in the twentieth century were sites of the folk.

This does not mean that the folk, and folklore, are no longer with us at all. Miyazaki Hayao's animated films, after all, are consistently centered around folkic and mythological themes, often in very traditional ways—and Miyazaki's works continue to outsell all other animated and cinematic films in Japan. Just as analogic relations continue to be active within, rather than simply replaced by, a supposedly digitized world, the folk it seems continues to have some role as a point of identity. But as a term of relation, the folk *is* being repositioned.

In view of these changes, one of the effects within the field of Japanese folk and folklore studies has been a literal turn away from the countryside, and toward locating the folk within the urban (including in the form of urban folklore, urban festivals, and so on). A typical claim, though, is that although the rural locales and economies of the traditional folk may be disappearing, one can still find an element of genuine folk culture sedimented within the urban. Thus, the rhetorical and conceptual framework of an abiding authenticity, somehow existing at a different stratum but nonetheless undergirding the modern, is retained. Arguments then continue to revolve around the degree to which these urban manifestations

are truly preservations of local folk traditions, or, to the contrary, are merely marketing ploys of a commoditized as opposed to a real folk tradition.[18] The oppositional framework not only of a transcendent time, but also a truer economic value form, to the times and capitalist values of modernity, is hence rejuvenated as well.

The disciplinary turn to the urban folk is therefore not altogether adequate to the kind of open relations between origin and identity that superflat artists and others see as increasingly definitive of our world—including our connections to tradition and the folk. If anything the search for the urban folk simply returns to the classic, and what now can be defined as analogic, role of the folk as an anchoring position of modernity.

Yet this very persistence of earlier twentieth century models of the folk and the modern should also be paid some attention. It may be that the countryside is no longer populated with the traditional agrarian peoples who might once have offered some possibility of thinking an essentialized identity. It may also be that, at least to some extent, digital technologies are truly transforming our grounds of orientation, in such a way that the idea of a deep, transcendent origin no longer holds the weight that it once did. But at least as much as analog relations are inevitably folded into and retained within digital media,[19] so the place of the folk as a term of temporal and economic value continues to serve as a reference point for the contemporary world. And it continues to do so in often classic ways—not as just one more origin, or one more open layer of experience among many, as described by the more liberatory readings of digital relations, but rather, according to the panoramic ordering of experience described above. The "folk," in other words, is also a good example of the ways in which received institutional and conceptual structures continue not only to subsist within, but also to hierarchize, new and supposedly emancipatory forms of identity and everyday life.

In sum, if one is going to locate the place of the folk today, it would therefore seem that this point between the analog and the digital would be a good place to start.

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Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*. New York: Semiotext(e), 1991.

Yanagita 1951

Yanagita Kunio, ed., *Minzokugaku jiten* (Tokyo: Tokyodō), 195.

NOTES

1 This depth model is very much tied not only to the privileging of three-dimensional space, but also to the unity of single-point perspectival space.

2 Simmel 1969, pp. 46-60. Simmel's essay "Die Grosstädte und das Geistesleben" originally appeared in 1903.

3 Simmel therefore writes: "the general conclusions of this entire task of reflection become obvious, namely, that from each point on the surface alone—one may drop a sounding into the depth of the psyche so that all the most banal externalities of life finally are connected with the ultimate decisions concerning the meaning and style of life." Ibid, 50. Freud could clearly be invoked in this context as

well.

4 The identification of the folk with an agricultural cycle that is more "natural" continues in postwar Japanese ethnology. A very common model describes pre- and early modern Japanese societies as based on a ritual temporal order that cycled between "everyday" (*ke*) and "non-everyday" (*hare*) moments, which ostensibly were dependent upon, and expressions of, the natural cycling of life and death seen in the annual progression of seasons. Modern modes of production then "freed" industrial society from any adherence to this natural calendar, resulting in a temporal order more dependent on the arbitrary vagaries of industrial production and urban contingencies. For a more recent expression of this argument, see for example Ashida 1994. For a discussion of village calendars as still based on good communal time rather than on individual interest, see Miyata 1981.

5 This view is also basic to some of postwar Japanese studies of folk religion. Sakurai Tokutarō, for example, argues that folk religion is distinguished by its emphatic locality and particularity, as opposed to the "great" or "established" religions (such as Buddhism and Christianity), which are universal and translocal. See Sakurai 1976. For a summary discussion, see also Havens 1994.

6 See Fujii 1956, 7. Norman Havens therefore argues that for Yanagita, the very study of folk customs "would eventually allow one to intuit Japan's 'basic' or 'deep culture'…and 'deep religiosity (*kisō shinkō*) which lay as bedrock beneath the 'superficial'…levels of literate culture and religion." Ibid, 3.

7 Yanagita in fact felt that terms like *shomin*, *minshū*, and *heimin* had become overly politicized. See "*Jōmin*," in Yanagita 1951.

8 Norman Havens argues that Japanese folklorists borrowed the concept of 'basic' or 'deep' culture from the German folklorist Hans Naumann's *Kultur der Mutterschicten* (he also points out that this would later be utilized in the German racial myth fostered by the Nazi). See Havens, ibid, f.n. 17.

9 Yanagita himself apparently noted that he formulated his concept of *jō* on the basis of the English usage of "common" cultural activities. See Miyata 1990.

10 Edogawa 1928. I am utilizing an argument I develop more fully elsewhere, and in a different context; the aim is to use this framework to think through a broad range of issues related to new media and social transformation in the early and late twentieth century. See Looser 2002.

11 So too in film, one can get a complete picture only from across the breaks between and within still shots.

12 I am using here the translation by James B. Harris, *Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1956), p. 206.

13 Michel de Certeau's discussion of the "panoramic city" is apt here--especially if thinking in terms of the space of the twelve-story tower. De Certeau describes a transcendent, panoptic kind of knowledge, that is ordered as a Euclidean, geometric space of totality, and is opposed to a practice of knowledge that is intertwining, "shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces," into intersecting and moving networks. See De Certeau 1984.

14 This order of encompassment and transcendence included Edogawa's own national political context: as described in the story, the walls of the tower the man climbed each day were hung with macabre war paintings of the Sino-Japanese war.

15 See Virilio 1991.

16 For example, see Hayles 1999, 1-26. See also Rosen 2001, chapter 8. Rosen, however, tends to reduce digital conditions to an indexical relation.

17 This is complicated. Even some of Lain's visions of death refer to folk "spirituality," but again, this "folk"-ness is only one layer of meaning within the world of Lain.

18 For example, from the perspective of folk religious studies, Norman Havens writes, "the very self-consciousness of 'tradition' represented by a festival preservation association seems somewhat an aberration in the context of a genuine folk culture. Certainly, from one perspective, it cannot help

appearing as little more than a product of modern ideologues' claims about the 'value of tradition' coupled to the economic motive of marketing folk religion—as a commodity—to people from *outside* the community. Whether, and in what form, Japanese folk religion will survive modern marketing techniques remains an open question." See Havens, ibid., 9.

19 This happens at nearly every level. One could think, for example, of the digital notion of "movement capture" within video games, in which "natural" motion is captured by attaching electronic sensors to real human actors. This organic movement is then analogically recreated (albeit through digital technology) within the video game world, in a space that is very much three-dimensional and perspectivally oriented.