



## Haunting Modernity

### *Tanuki*, Trains, and Transformation in Japan

This article explores a cycle of legends popular in Japan from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Featuring a deadly confrontation between a *tanuki* (“raccoon dog”) and a steam train, these narratives enact a conflict between a traditional animal of Japanese folk belief and a new technology that was rapidly transforming the countryside; they articulate anxiety about, and resistance to, the burgeoning infrastructure of modernity and the changes it would bring to the natural and cultural environments. Furthermore, as narratives of haunting, in which restless memories of the past disturb the easy flow of the present, these tales allow us to productively consider the relationship between time and place while also gesturing to the way tales of haunting can assume not only an affective quality, but political and ideological shades as well.

KEYWORDS: *tanuki*—legends—modernity—*yōkai*—haunting

IN FRONT of restaurants, bars, and saké shops throughout Japan, one often finds a ceramic statuette of a wide-eyed, cheerful beast known as a *tanuki* 狸. Standing upright and adorned with a straw hat, the *tanuki* is portrayed as a jovial hedonist; he has a rotund belly, a jug of saké in one hand, and is particularly distinguished—if you look carefully—by an enormous scrotum. On the streets of a modern city, the *tanuki* radiates a sense of good-natured camaraderie and traditional welcome.<sup>1</sup> But the ubiquitous, lighthearted image of the *tanuki* is only one manifestation of this particular *yōkai* 妖怪, or supernatural creature; the *tanuki* also has a long history as a common character in folktales, legends, local beliefs, and more recently, all sorts of commercial iconography. Since at least the Kamakura period (1185–1333), narratives have featured the *tanuki* as a trickster who enjoys causing mischief, and sometimes mayhem, in the human world.

Zoologically, the *tanuki* is a real animal, a small, generally nocturnal, omnivorous mammal that looks somewhat like a raccoon crossed with a possum. In English the *tanuki* is sometimes referred to as a badger, but “raccoon dog” is perhaps a more accurate label, at least in terms of its Linnaean classification as a canid.<sup>2</sup> The *tanuki* is found throughout East Asia, and in the twentieth century it was introduced into the former Soviet Union because of the value of its fur; it reproduced rapidly and now inhabits Scandinavia and much of northern Europe. In addition to its high rate of reproduction, one reason for the *tanuki*’s success is its ability to live in relatively close proximity to humans and eat human-made foods (KAUHALA 1994). That is, similar to raccoons, possums, foxes, and coyotes in other parts of the world, the *tanuki* is a wild animal that occasionally makes mischievous forays into areas inhabited by humans. It is a beast of the borders, ecologically skirting the line between culture and nature. Folklorically, too, *tanuki* are commonly depicted as liminal creatures, simultaneously of this world and the other world.

It is not my intention here to present a comprehensive survey of the enormous amount of folklore concerning the *tanuki*.<sup>3</sup> Rather, I will briefly introduce the creature and then focus on one cycle of *tanuki*-related narratives that emerged at a particular time of transition soon after the Meiji Restoration (1868), as Japan embarked on its frantic rush into modernity. This moment of intense cultural, political, and economic flux provides insight into the intersection, and occasional collision, of the natural world with the human world, and concomitantly of folk



FIGURE 1. A ceramic figurine of a *tanuki* outside a restaurant in Nagano Prefecture. (The sign hanging from his nose indicates that the shop is closed for a regular holiday.) Photograph by author.



FIGURE 2. *Tanuki*. Photograph by author.

belief with the modern desires of a nation-state experiencing rapid industrialization and urbanization. I do not argue that modernity and scientific rationalization caused an attenuation of the importance of *tanuki* and other folk creatures; rather, I suggest that the familiar character of the *tanuki* and the motifs surrounding it were readily adapted for a new set of narratives through which anxieties about modernity, and the way modernity was reshaping the geographical and cultural landscape, could be voiced. If we listen carefully to a cycle of *tanuki* legends that circulated at this time, we hear a counter-narrative to the hegemonic story of progress and modernity: through the din of industrialization, urbanization, and modern science, tales of *tanuki* voice a subtle ideological resistance. From the vantage point of the present, we can see how often overlooked folklore can articulate critical concerns that fly below the radar of conventional histories.

I also want to push this analysis one step further, and consider these counter-narratives as narratives of *haunting*, in which restless memories of the past disturb the easy flow of the present. Haunting, of course, is commonly expressed in frightening stories of ghosts and revenants; most of the *tanuki* legends I relate here are not explicitly frightening, but they reflect a similar disjuncture between time and space that is, I suggest, characteristic of haunting narratives. Moreover, within their particular historical context, the haunting of modernity represented by these *tanuki* tales assumes not only an affective quality, but political and ideological shades as well.

#### A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF SHAPESHIFTING

Although the *tanuki* (or a related/conflated creature called a *mujina* 貉) makes its earliest documented appearance in one of the oldest extant texts in Japan, the mytho-historical *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 of 720, it is not until a *setsuwa* (説話 short tale) from the thirteenth-century *Uji shūi monogatari* 宇治拾遺物語 that we find what one scholar has called the first recorded *tanuki* “haunting” (DE VISSER 1908, 41).<sup>4</sup> The *setsuwa* tells of a mountain hermit who, after years of deep devotion, begins to receive nightly visits from the Bodhisattva Fugen on his white elephant. A hunter who brings the hermit food is invited to stay to witness the holy vision. But when Fugen appears, radiating a beautiful light, the hunter is suspicious. Why would he, a killer of animals, be permitted this vision of the divine? And so, to test its veracity, he duly fits an arrow to his bow and lets fly at the image. The light goes out and a crashing sound is heard. In the morning, the hunter and the hermit follow a trail of blood to the bottom of a ravine where they find a dead *tanuki* with an arrow in its chest.<sup>5</sup>

Historically, the image of the *tanuki* is often combined with that of the fox, or *kitsune* 狐, and sometimes legends associated with the two creatures are interchangeable. Indeed, a common term for the two together was *kori* (狐狸; Ch. *buli*), a combination of the two Chinese characters that came to refer to all manner of supernatural or mysterious occurrences. While it is difficult to generalize, *kitsune*-related narratives and belief—often directly influenced from Chinese folk and

literary motifs—tend to portray a seductive, sly, and dangerous creature. Often a *kitsune* will take the shape of a woman, seducing a man away from his wife and dangerously disrupting family or village life. Fox possession of a person or a place was a well-known problem; even until the early twentieth century, certain types of illnesses or erratic personal behavior might be diagnosed as possession by a fox.<sup>6</sup>

Broadly speaking, *tanuki* tended to be more bumbling than foxes, and were not as commonly implicated in the possession of humans. As in the medieval-period narrative related above, they often end up dead, despite the temporary magnificence of their transformations. Whereas the sleek body of the *kitsune* translates into a sharp and deviously deceptive shapeshifter, the *tanuki* came gradually to be characterized as a more comical and ribald trickster, sometimes assuming the human form of a pudgy, Falstaffian Buddhist monk. As lore relating to the *tanuki* continued to develop during the long Edo period (c. 1600–1868), a time of relative political stability in Japan, the lighthearted image of a somewhat inept shapeshifter could be found, for example, in the famous folktale of the *Bunbuku-chagama* 分福茶釜, in which the *tanuki* is unable to sustain a transformation into a teapot—a dilemma that made for all sorts of wonderful imagery in woodblock prints and other visual forms (INOUE 1980, 106–12).<sup>7</sup>

I would be amiss not to mention here the fact that the *tanuki*'s magic is often performed through the machinations of its gigantic scrotum—numerous woodblock prints and other images attest to the protean abilities of this magnificent physical feature. With such paraphernalia, it is not surprising that one of the many roles the *tanuki* plays in contemporary Japan is that of fertility symbol in the realm of commerce, a function transferred into a sign of prosperity and good fortune as he stands in front of restaurants and shops throughout the country. While this article does not focus on the dynamics and origins of the *tanuki*'s magical equipment, I would note only that his gigantic scrotum becomes—in imagery and legendry throughout the Edo period—a fertile symbol of shapeshifting itself, a completely mutable, flexible instrument through which the *tanuki* changes his own shape.

But the *tanuki*'s shapeshifting abilities are not limited to self-transformation; they extend to a power to reshape the landscape. Many a local legend is told of somebody eager to get home after a night of saké drinking only to become hopelessly lost in terrain magically defamiliarized by the antics of playful *tanuki*. Such defamiliarization may be caused by optical illusion—the creation of *fata morgana*—or just as likely by mischievous behavior: an early twentieth-century legend, for example, tells of “a *tanuki* who is in the habit of throwing sand. When a person is passing through at night, the *tanuki* will rain down so much sand that the person will lose his way, and then the *tanuki* will guide him to a river or waterside and cause him to fall in” (KONNO 1999a, 144). *Tanuki* are also adept at leading people astray by imitating sounds, creating what we might call sonic mirages; they are particularly notorious for making an uncanny drumming noise by thumping their bellies (*hara tsuzumi* 腹鼓).<sup>8</sup>

The Edo period witnessed the efflorescence of a rich visual and print culture of woodblock prints, *kabuki* drama, *bunraku* puppet theater, and numerous forms of



FIGURE 3. Illustrated entries for *kitsune* (top) and *tanuki* (bottom) from *Kinmō zui* encyclopedia (1666). (From the Japanese collection at Stanford University Libraries.)

graphic literature, such as the *kibyōshi* 黄表紙 that featured lighthearted, often satirical stories, complete with detailed illustrations. In these formats, folklore relating to the *tanuki* (and other *yōkai*) intersected dynamically with popular cultural concerns, veiled political sentiments, and commercial and artistic interests. At the same time, this period also witnessed numerous scholarly attempts to organize both the natural and human-made world, and we find a proliferation of almanacs, travel guides, natural history texts, and encyclopedias. The *tanuki* duly makes an appearance in these venues as well: for example, in the *Kinmō zui* 訓蒙図彙, an exceedingly popular illustrated encyclopedia published in 1666, the *tanuki* appropriately shares a page with the *kitsune* (Asakura 1998). And in a later, more detailed encyclopedia, the *Wakan sansai zue* (c. 1713), an extended entry on the *tanuki* describes its appearance and habitat, and then, very casually, mentions that, “Just like *kitsune*, old *tanuki* will often change their shape [*henshin*] and become monsters [*yōkai*]. They always hide in a hole in the ground and emerge to steal and eat grains, fruits, chickens and ducks.... And also, they enjoy themselves by thumping on their bellies...” (Terajima 1994, 92–93).<sup>9</sup>

Even as we get this sort of encyclopedic description, however, the *tanuki* continues to appear as a common character in *kaidan* 怪談, or spooky narratives, often related in tale-telling sessions known as *Hyaku monogatari kaidan kai* 百物語怪談会. Here, for example, is one from a 1677 collection called *Shokoku hyaku monogatari* 諸國百物語:

In Bishū, a samurai with a salary of two thousand *koku* had lost his wife. Every night she was all he could think about. Then one night, when he set down his light and nodded off, his dead wife, beautifully made up and appearing exactly as she had in life, came to his bedroom. She looked [at him] longingly and made to get under the covers. Surprised, the samurai said, “Is it possible for a dead person to come back?” He grabbed her, pulled her toward him, and he stabbed her three times with his sword: she disappeared into thin air. His retainers rushed in, lit torches, and searched everywhere, but there was nothing. When morning broke, they discovered a trace of blood on the hole of the door latch. Thinking this was very strange indeed, they searched and found a hole in a grove located at the northwest corner of the property. They dug this up and found an aged *tanuki*, stabbed three times and lying dead. (TACHIKAWA 1995, 81)<sup>10</sup>

Much could be said about this short narrative, but I will note only a few elements that will resurface again later. First, just as in the earlier tale in which the *tanuki* appears to a devout hermit as the Bodhisattva Fugen, here too the *tanuki* takes on the shape of the protagonist’s deepest desire. In this case, he (literally) embodies the samurai’s longing for his dead wife. Of course, we cannot read the *tanuki*’s intentions—whether his objective is simple mischief or perhaps even an expression of pity—but certainly he disrupts the *present* by appearing as something from the *past*, a projection of the samurai’s desperate longing for what is lost and irrecoverable. Secondly, we see here the trumping of desires and dreams by reason and reality. In a shockingly sudden move, the samurai violently stabs the image of his wife. Whether this can be interpreted as his private coming to terms with the irreversibility of his wife’s demise or as an expression of samurai stoicism, it is through this bold action that the samurai reunifies real time (that is, a time in which his wife is dead) with physical space (his room where he sleeps alone).

This is just one brief narrative; tales of *tanuki* are too varied and numerous to generalize beyond noting that in the popular imagination of Edo-period Japan, the *tanuki* was a common everyday animal with fantastic and supernatural potential. Sometimes the *tanuki* is fleshed out, so to speak, in narratives like the one above, but often it simply serves as a kind of numinous scapegoat, a default explanation for the otherwise unexplainable—odd sounds in the forest, a sense of being watched, strange occurrences of all sorts. In many cases, the term invoked is *kori*, again, a combination of *kitsune* and *tanuki* that simply connotes the mysterious forces found in the natural environment.

## THE TRAIN ARRIVES

Against this Edo-period backdrop, what happens to the *tanuki* when the nation becomes possessed by the ideology of modernity? In Japan, modernization, both in theory and practice, was rapid and transformative. With the advent of the Meiji period (1868–1912), a relatively isolated nation was abruptly flooded with fresh ideas and new technologies, in large part inspired by direct contact with the West. The capital was officially moved to Tokyo and the disparate provinces of Japan were politically reconsolidated under a new government. During this period of radical transition, one of the clearest symbols of the linking together of the nation, and of modernity itself, was the steam train. If the *tanuki* is one protagonist in my story, the train is the second.

On 14 October 1872 the nation's first railroad line, an eighteen-mile stretch between Shinbashi and Yokohama, was officially opened. Government employees were given the day off, citizens lined the rails, the military fired salutes on land and sea, and Japanese officials and foreign dignitaries gathered at both stations to honor this monumental technological achievement (ERICSON 1996, 6; 61–62).<sup>11</sup> The next several decades witnessed the rapid diffusion of a network of rails throughout the country; by 1889, a thousand miles of track had already been laid (AOKI 2009, 3) and by 1907 almost five thousand (ERICSON 1996, 9). More and more people were coming in contact with this fantastic new invention: from 1890 to 1900, the number of rail passengers increased from twenty-three million to a staggering one hundred and fourteen million (ERICSON 1996, 68). As the train became a common sight, tunneling through mountainsides, slithering along riverbanks, thundering through rice fields, it was celebrated in newspapers, magazines, books, travel literature, woodblock prints, songs, and even games, as a glorious symbol of *bunmei kaika* 文明開化 or “civilization and enlightenment,” one of several slogans “repeatedly wielded as emblems and instruments of national policy” (GLUCK 1985, 18) from the 1870s on. The railroad was both a sign of modernity and modernity itself, the superlative metonym of this age of rapid transition; as historian Steven J. Ericson puts it, “For the Japanese of Meiji... the steam locomotive was the quintessential symbol of progress and civilization, the very epitome of modern industrial power” (ERICSON 1996, 3).<sup>12</sup>

The train literally reshaped the landscape, carving passages through mountains and across rivers, and creating new routes to previously hard-to-reach places. People traveled. Community boundaries were suddenly more permeable. Local identities and traditions were exposed to distant influences. Nature itself was changed forever, and the human relationship with the environment was indelibly altered.<sup>13</sup> In pre-Meiji folklore, mountains and forests—the no-man's land between village boundaries—were commonly portrayed as otherworldly, mysterious places where one might run into a troublesome, supernatural presence. It was often in these very in-between spaces that *tanuki* would work their mischief, causing the wayfarer to get lost. As the train made progressively deeper inroads into previously mysterious terrain, perhaps it was inevitable that this metonym for modernity and industrialization, this new shapeshifter, would clash with that older icon of tradition and nature, the *tanuki*.

DEATH OF THE *TANUKI*

This clash was narrativized in numerous memorates and legends similar to this one from the Tokyo region:

Now there's reclaimed land in the area around Shinagawa, but in those days the waves ran against the shore, making a sound like *pashan pashan*. It was a lonely place, and there were a lot of *tanuki* and *kitsune* there as well.

At night, when the train would run through [the area], they would hear a sound, *shu shu po po po* coming from the other direction, and they'd hear a steam whistle blowing, and they'd say "a train is coming!" At first, even the conductor was thinking, "we're going to crash," and he would stop his own train and have a look around.

But the train from the other direction never came. "This is strange," they'd think, and then one night as always, the *shu shu po po po* sound came, and they could hear the steam whistle, and this time they thought, "let's not worry about it," and they gave it more speed and went straight ahead.

... Everybody expected a head-on collision—but they just went right on with no problem.

When dawn broke, along the tracks at the foot of Mt. Yatsu, they found a big *tanuki* lying there dead. Back in the days of the steam engines, there was only one track so there was no way a train could randomly come from the other direction. Well, of course, it was just that *tanuki* really enjoy imitating things.

(MATSUTANI 2000, 34–35)<sup>14</sup>

This is but one version of what would come to be known as the legend of the *nise kisha* 偽汽車, the "counterfeit steam train" legend or, more poetically, the "phantom train legend" (also called the *yūrei kikansha* 幽霊機関車, or "ghost train"). The putative father of Japanese folkloristics, Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), mentions the legend in a 1918 essay (YANAGITA 2000); Sasaki Kizen 佐々木喜善 (1886–1933), folklorist and Yanagita's source for his famous *Tōno monogatari* 遠野物語, also writes about the narrative (SASAKI 1926, 157–64); and in a more recent collection, children's author and folklorist MATSUTANI Miyoko (b. 1926) presents over forty examples of creatures imitating trains from prefectures throughout Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku, and suggests that some form of the legend probably existed as early as 1878 (1985, 13–47). Certainly real dead *tanuki* were found wherever railroad tracks were laid, and with them these phantom train narratives proliferated; MATSUTANI (1985, 15) notes that by 1910 the legend had spread throughout Japan. SASAKI also alludes to the ubiquity of the narrative, commenting in 1926 that, "probably everybody has heard this story somewhere at least once" (1926, 157).<sup>15</sup>

Beyond Matsutani's collection, scholarly focus on the legend has been relatively limited. YANAGITA (2000) emphasizes the comic nature of the narrative and references it as an example of the *tanuki*'s penchant for imitating sounds. Sasaki explains that, "It seems we have recognized the legend of ghost ships (*funa yūrei*) since a long time ago. But the phantom train appears to be only a very recent story, the oldest [version going back to] sometime between 1879–1880 and around

1887. Despite this [relative newness], the narrative has been distributed far and wide, spreading along with the railroad” (SASAKI 1926, 157). Sasaki also makes the point that, unlike earlier ghost ship legends, the train narratives are not “mystical”; rather they contain “humor” and generally end with a laugh on the part of the raconteur (SASAKI 1926, 162). He concludes his analysis by noting that this “new interesting legend” (SASAKI 1926, 163) has even been found in recently settled areas of Hokkaido and does not seem to be fading—though he does not know why.<sup>16</sup>

I would suggest that one reason for the legend’s resilience during the early years of the twentieth century is that on a metaphorical level it betrays deep ambivalence about modernity, and a sense of loss for the natural environment and local traditions that the train, as the vehicle of progress, would destroy. The legend expresses concern about the unstoppable forces of industrialized modernity that were everywhere changing the land and its traditions; the *tanuki* is a small, native animal, made of flesh and blood, who futilely resists the encroachment into its territory of a huge, foreign-inspired, monster made of iron. If the mountains and forests were otherworldly regions in which a person en route from one village to another might encounter a supernatural force, the phantom train legends creatively document the destruction of these liminal zones; the steam train tied together villages in a whole new way, taking the mystery and danger from these otherworldly spaces.

The legends can be interpreted as allegorical on many levels—culture versus nature, industry versus environment, foreign versus native, dominant technologies versus local knowledge—and it is perhaps not surprising that they accompanied, as a kind of counterpoint, the network of rails expanding from region to region. If the hegemonic narrative of Meiji was *bunmei kaika*, then these legends speak of resistance to the tales of progress told of (and by) a nation becoming modern. They lament the indelible changes to the physical and cognitive landscape; the train is a monster of modernity rampaging through traditional community life—defended in vain by the human’s proxy, the native, old-fashioned *tanuki*. The legends present the possibility of a counter-narrative to the glorious and romantic official story of modernity.

Historians have suggested that some rural villages actively resisted the incursion of the train, forcing stations to be built on the outskirts of town. In some cases there may have been an economic rationale for this opposition: hotel owners and workers felt that the train, passing quickly through, would reduce the number of travelers spending the night. There were also fears that the smoke might affect mulberry trees and damage silk production, or that the noise would cause chickens to stop laying eggs (NAGATA 1964, 99), and in at least one instance, a rumor circulated that the sound of the train whistle would shorten the hearer’s life (ERICSON 1996, 59).<sup>17</sup> The actual prevalence of local opposition movements is a matter of dispute; one scholar adamantly argues that there is no historical evidence for these “legends of refusal” [*kyōhi densetsu*] (AOKI 2009). Ultimately, however, whether local opposition to the railway was historical fact or not, the very development of “legends of refusal” indicates real anxiety about the changes the railroad, and its inexorable penetration throughout the land, might bring.

Resistance to the train was also found in the literature of the time. Japan's most influential novelist and literary theorist of the early twentieth century, Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916), for example, repeatedly “uses the motion of trains as a metaphor for rapid national changes that have not been fully understood by the individuals they affect” and “implicitly critiques Japan’s state-sponsored capitalist development, imperialism and war, all of which were predicated on the mobility of goods and people” (FREEDMAN 2011, 70). In novels such as *Sanshirō* 三四郎 (1908), railroads (steam trains and street cars) represent violent forces that not only cause characters to feel anxious and disoriented, but sometimes literally lead to death through suicide or accident.<sup>18</sup>

Despite this strain of critical commentary, as railroads became more and more ubiquitous, the dominant attitude, both in official and popular culture, was acceptance and celebration. “For the vast majority of the population,” Ericson suggests, “darker images paled before the bright symbol of the railroad as the engine of civilization and enlightenment.” Negative “perceptions were,” he explains, “largely confined to the world of disaffected novelists, agrarian ideologues, and rural storytellers” (ERICSON 1996, 57). But indeed, this is my point: as lingering tales of resistance, the phantom train legends provide insight into the sentiments of the people who felt dispossessed by Japan’s modernity.

Moreover, such sentiments represented more than just apprehension about a new technology with the potential to destroy the environment. Historian Carol Gluck has noted that the two most powerful symbols of modern Japan were the railroad and the emperor, a correlation that is only fitting, for the train and the emperor are both part of the received narrative of modern Japanese nationhood (GLUCK 1985, 101). It is no coincidence that the Meiji Emperor was the star passenger on that official inaugural journey between Tokyo and Yokohama. And by the early 1900s, almost all railway lines in Japan were state owned.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, during this same period of intensive railroad building at home, Japan was engaged in violent imperialist ventures abroad, including the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), and the annexation of Korea (1910); trains were deeply implicated in (and also symbolic of) these colonialist incursions (HARADA 1991, 42–54). In short, the railroad and the imperial nation-state were one and the same during this period; the train signified not only the destructive potential of industrial technology itself, but also the consolidation of nationhood and the imperial expansion that such technologies made possible.

Within this context, the phantom train narratives can be read as, to invoke James C. Scott’s term, “hidden transcripts,” in which people openly, yet in “disguised form... insinuate a critique of power” (SCOTT 1990, xiii). Quietly but incisively the legends comment on the binding together, through train and emperor, of metropole and periphery into a single imagined community. The *tanuki* may seem like a passive victim in this national, industrial expansion, but by confronting the progress of the steam train, often through sound, he voices a sentiment counter to the modern, homogenizing project. As in the earlier examples—whether the *tanuki* poses as Fugen or as the wife of a samurai—the narrative hinges on the trope of

transformation and mischievous mimicking. But in this instance, when confronting a pervasive symbol of modernity, the trope functions not only as a comic or affective narrative device, but also articulates a political critique. The *tanuki* deploys his traditional skills of deception just as he has always done, but by targeting the train, he enacts an ideological offensive against everything the railroad stands for: industrial modernity, the destruction of nature, and the dissolution of rural community structures.

It is, therefore, all the more significant that the legends end with the *tanuki*'s death. When he stands up to the train, his small voice is tragically silenced, his old magic squelched by a new industrial magic that permanently alters his traditional territory. The *tanuki*'s imitation of a train is a plaintive cry to halt the progress of the modern; though it gives the engineers pause for a moment, eventually they choose to ignore the sound and, come what may, go full steam ahead. Like the samurai of the earlier narrative, their bold decision brings them back to reality. In the morning light, the *tanuki*'s dead body—mundane, bloody, bereft of magic—signifies the futility of trying to retain the old landscape. The legends may reflect disillusionment with the train and all that it signifies, but also, more devastatingly, they reflect an *acceptance* of the inevitability of this destruction, and ultimately the futility of fighting against it. In the wake of progress, it seems, there is always a dead body, and the *tanuki*'s corpse becomes a metonym for those things—nature, tradition, magic—that the narrative of modernity destroys.<sup>20</sup>

#### THE POLITICS OF HAUNTING

If there is political and ideological conflict voiced in the phantom train legends, we can extend this analysis one step further to explore how these counter-narratives can be understood as tales of *haunting*; we can also, therefore, gesture to how tales of haunting might be read as political or ideological critiques. I suggest that we can think of “haunting” as a kind of contextual error in which the past articulates itself uncomfortably, threateningly, into the present. This does not mean that haunting has anything to do with a lack of rationality on the part of the teller or listener; indeed, memorates such as the phantom train legends are often flush with evidentiary details—from specific locations, to the body of the dead *tanuki* themselves—that serve the cause of believability. In a sense, in fact, these tales thematize the triumph of modern sensitivities over the supernatural; they are all about getting to the truth behind the illusion, causing the deceptive shape-shifter to reveal its true form.<sup>21</sup>

I am more interested in thinking about how these narratives are structured around the persistence of something from one time into another time; their plots are driven by intrusive anachronism. In the samurai narrative recounted earlier, for example, the wife in her living form is a vision *from the past*; therefore her embodied appearance *in the present* is inappropriate: it is, as it were, out of time. Only through a powerful act of will, as the samurai thrusts his sword into his wife's body, can the past be banished from the present. Etymologically, the notion of a

*haunt* or *haunting* comes from the French and refers not—as in contemporary vernacular discourse—to something spooky, but rather to the notion of habituating or frequenting a place or a practice. Even today, of course, we speak of our old “haunts.” The kind of haunting I am concerned with here, then, is the possibility of a “thing” that frequented a particular place in the past continuing to frequent that same place in the present. Of course, this is to a certain extent the mechanism of memory itself: all memories hinge on the existence of the past in the present. But a haunting is a pathological experience of memory; it signifies the subject’s inability to retain a memory *as* just a memory. The past is perceived as real, but in the wrong place.<sup>22</sup>

We see this with the phantom train legend. The time of modernity, as manifest by the train, is in the process of claiming the landscape. That is, the train is in the present time and the *tanuki* can, only for a moment, use their old powers of transformation and imitation to thwart this forward progress. Ultimately, however, the *tanuki*’s appearance is only a temporary imposition of the past on the reality of the present. Here is another version of the legend, this one reported in the *Tōō Nippō* 東奥日報 newspaper on 3 May 1889:

Just before arriving in Okegawa one evening, a steam train that had left Ueno [in Tokyo] encountered another train, with its steam whistle blowing, advancing along the same tracks from the opposite direction. The train driver was surprised; he hastily reduced his speed and blew his whistle wildly. The oncoming train did the same, blowing its whistle insistently. However, the train that had appeared close [at first], did not seem to come any closer. When he fixed his eyes on it, the train seemed to be there but it also seemed not to be there; it was very unclear, so he increased his speed so much that he was going to crash into the other train. But the other train just disappeared like smoke, leaving not a trace. However, where it had been, two old *tanuki* the size of dogs were found lying dead on the tracks, having been hit by the train. Thinking they were terrible nuisances and now they would get their comeuppances, the driver skinned them and used the meat for *tanuki* soup. What a surprise that such a thing could occur these days, during the Meiji period.

(“Kori no kisha”; reprinted in YUMOTO 2009, 209)<sup>23</sup>

There are many familiar elements here, including the decision to go full speed ahead, and the tragicomic ending in which the *tanuki* ends up as dinner, but I want to focus on the reporter’s last line. “What a surprise,” he says, “that such a thing could occur these days, during the Meiji period.” The narrative itself emerges from this surprise—from the disjuncture between the industrial, institutional, modern(izing) time of Meiji and the still mysterious spaces of the countryside. This disjuncture is the catalyst for the feeling of haunting.

Bakhtin famously coined the term “chronotope” for what he describes as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships.” He explains that in the chronotope, “spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole,” and that “time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the

movements of time, plot and history” (BAKHTIN 1981, 84). While Bakhtin is writing specifically about literary narratives, the basic concept of the *connectedness* of time and place is a good starting point for exploring the *disconnectedness*, or incongruity, of temporal and spatial relationships that characterizes the phantom train narratives, and many other narratives of haunting.<sup>24</sup>

When I speak of *time* in this context, I am referring to what I will call “indexical time.” In contrast (or in addition) to scientific time or calendrical time, indexical time reflects a sense of time in one place in reference to time in another place. Indexical time hinges on the fact of history as a narrative of sociocultural change and continuity: modernity, with all its accoutrements and defining characteristics, is distinguished as a particular historical moment in a particular place in contrast to—that is, having an indexical relationship with—historical moments that come before and after it. The phenomenon of simultaneously being *physically present in one time but affectively connected to another time* can cause the cognitive and contextual disorientation of haunting. In other words, haunting articulates an impossible copresence; it is the bewilderment a subject feels when two times are simultaneously experienced in the same place. If Bakhtin’s notion of chronotope suggests that a particular place is linked to a particular time, then the phenomenology of haunting complicates the logic of this indexicality: time is out of place, or place is out of time. Put another way, we can say that if chronotopes themselves are historical constructs (MORSON and EMERSON 1990, 369), then the changes wrought by the train ruptures chronotopic unity—and the disorientation of this movement gives rise to hauntings.

#### SPEED, LOSS, DESIRE, NOSTALGIA

During the Meiji period, the train was the literal vehicle through which modern regularized (urban) time was introduced into the countryside. It not only provided access to other villages and to once distant cities, but it also standardized schedules, creating set timetables regardless of season and climate. The extent of these changes cannot be overemphasized: before the Meiji period, for example, such fine calibrations of time as the “minute” did not exist because that level of exactitude was not necessary in daily life. “Through the opening of the railways,” historian Harada Katsumasa explains bluntly, “people had to learn new units of time measurement” (HARADA 1998, 65).<sup>25</sup>

The railroad also simply made things faster. The locomotive embodied speed, altering relationships between once disparate places through its steam-driven velocity, bringing them closer together in time and imagination. The spatial disorientation caused by speed was a notorious effect of trains everywhere; in 1843, for example, German poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) commented simply that “space is killed by the railways” (cited in SCHIVELBUSCH 1986, 37). In Meiji Japan, the average train speed was only about twenty miles an hour, but even this pace triggered cognitive disjunctions with regard to place and time. The technology of the train ruptured the “traditional space-time continuum” which was “organically embedded in nature” (SCHIVELBUSCH 1986, 36). A possibly apocryphal, though

nonetheless significant, story recounts one of the first railroad journeys from Shinbashi to Yokohama. The passengers, it is said, refused to disembark after arriving in Yokohama because they simply could not grasp the fact that they had arrived at their destination so quickly. How could they possibly have covered the distance of a full day's walk in little more than an hour? (ERICSON 1996, 69–70). With the advent of the train, traditional human perceptions of time-space relations were rapidly and shockingly altered.<sup>26</sup>

The phantom train legends play with this temporal and spatial reshaping, narrating the disorienting experience of rapid travel between city centers. In a sense, railroad time does not even allow space to exist between cities: “the railroad,” Wolfgang Schivelbusch points out, “knows only points of departure and destination” (SCHIVELBUSCH 1986, 38). When traversing the traditionally liminal spaces of rural Japan, therefore, travelers enter not only another space, but also another time—a time from the past in which *tanuki* can still enact mystery and danger. Significantly, in this in-between (and therefore nonexistent) space, the train drivers overcome the illusion of the *tanuki* by trusting their own sensibilities as modern men and using the violent technology at hand to go forward at full throttle. Like the hunter's arrow shot or the samurai's sword thrust, the burst of full steam ahead pierces the veil of illusion. It brings the timeless space of the wild countryside into the same time zone as the cities, a time-space in which the *tanuki* is nothing more than a flesh and blood animal fit for soup.

As with much folklore collected during this period, it is difficult to know the context in which the phantom train narratives were related, but their abundance and the relatively long period in which they circulated suggest that they clearly had resonance with a great many people. While I have argued that they represent an expression of resistance to the inevitability of modernization, one might argue inversely that the *tanuki*'s constant failure suggests that the tales express complicity with the modern project. They do, in one sense, fit the mold of so-called *yōkai taiji* 妖怪退治, traditional narratives in which a (usually) human hero triumphs over a troublesome or dangerous monster. In this case the question may be which is the monster, the *tanuki* or the train?<sup>27</sup> Ultimately, we can say that even as the phantom train narratives are about resistance to modernity, they are also about the inevitability of its triumph; even as they are about complicity with progress, they document a longing for the things destroyed in its wake. In short, whether the teller/listener cheers for the *tanuki* or for the train, the popularity and ubiquity of these narratives reflects ambivalence to the changes that were occurring throughout the nation; the *tanuki*—even as he is killed—is a symbol of the sacrifices made for the sake of modernity. The phantom train narratives are about loss.<sup>28</sup>

Just as the *tanuki* in the samurai story mentioned earlier represents the physical embodiment of the samurai's personal longing, the *tanuki* protagonist of the phantom train tales enacts a desire for that prelapsarian moment before the radical shifts of modernity, when *tanuki* still had agency in, and on, the landscape. The longing in this case is not personal, but ideological, a desire to counter with equal power the forward movement of the train, to reverse the flow of time; the *tanuki*'s

inevitable death articulates the futility, the already-too-lateness, of such an emotion. His corpse lying on the side of the tracks embodies the impossibility of longing for a time already no longer possible.<sup>29</sup>

In a sense, then, the narratives articulate nostalgia at a moment of profound change. The word *nostalgia* derives from Greek and literally combines grief or pain (*algia*) with the notion of returning home (*nostos*). In contemporary discourse, of course, it has come to encompass a range of feelings concerning “the juxtaposition of an idealized past with an unsatisfactory present” (BEHLMER 2000, 7). In addition to the homesickness felt on leaving one’s native place, nostalgia can also be experienced when the place that *was* home changes beyond recognition. That is, the desire to go back home can indicate a desire to go back in time. In this way, we can affiliate the concept of *nostos* with the chronotope, the fusion of time and place, to signal that the telling of these tales emerges from a longing for a “concrete whole,” as BAKHTIN puts it (1981, 84), in which temporal and spatial vectors are fused, or rather, when the subject feels a sense of unity or wholeness between time and space. The phantom train narratives circulate only when the past is already impossible to (re)claim because it no longer exists or, more likely, never did. And the *tanuki* represents this desire given form; as revenants of the past they haunt the modern lives of the people who tell their tales.<sup>30</sup>

#### MODERNITY HAUNTING

But in times of rapid flux and cultural change, it is not only the past that haunts the present. The desire for the future, for an impossible modernity, can be just as disorienting. I would like to complicate the phantom train legends now by introducing another similar narrative originally told in the 1920s and 1930s, toward the end of the period during which the phantom train legends were most prevalent. The narrative is not set in one of Japan’s expanding conurbations, but on a small island where there has never been a train. Shimo-Koshikijima 下甑島 is situated about twenty-five miles off the west coast of Kagoshima Prefecture in southwestern Japan, hundreds of miles from the large urban centers of the Tokyo and Osaka regions. In the 1930s, the population of Teuchi 手打, the community in which the narrative takes place, was probably no more than four thousand people. But even in a place like this, excitement about the steam train infected the residents.

In 2001, an islander named Torii Keijirō 鳥居刑二郎, then in his late sixties, recounted to me this legend he had heard as a small child. The protagonist is a man from the island, recently married. In my slightly abbreviated translation here, I have tried to replicate, as much as possible, Torii-san’s words and style:

Of course, there’s absolutely no way there can be a train on this island [*aruwake wa nai*]. But in spite of that, this guy’s asleep and, you know, in those days bathrooms were outside, so you had to put on *geta* [wooden clogs] and go outside or you couldn’t use the toilet.... So this guy wakes up in the middle of the night and goes out to the toilet... and he hears the *chīn chīn* sound of a train. He’s

never seen a train before, never even heard the *chīn chīn* sound of a train before. Only maybe he's heard about it in rumor (*seken kara*)—that the train goes *chīn chīn*... you know, he's just heard people talking about it. So he hears *chīn chīn* and believe it or not (*masa ni*) a train comes along. This guy lived in an area called Amida-zo; he hears, "This is Amida-zo Station." And he thinks, "Wow, that's a train"... and he runs and leaps aboard... and then the train gradually goes along the coast, and [the announcement] says, "This is Jugoya-baba; are there any departing passengers?"... The guy thinks, I'm already [*sekkaku*] on board so I may as well ride on to the last station... the next stop is Kunboigawa, so the [announcement] says, "This is Kunboigawa [*koko wa Kunboigawa desu...*]," and you know there's a place called Shirakihama, so when they get there it says "This is Shirakihama."... And then there's that shrine, Suwa-jinja, and they arrive there and it says, "Last stop, Suwa-jinja." In the old days there was a rocky shore there, so they get to the shore, and then the guy gets off and arranges the area, making a nice spot for himself.

Meanwhile, his wife [back home] is thinking, he went out for a piss and he hasn't come home yet.... And they were just newlyweds, so she's wondering what could have happened, where could he have gone? So she calls the fire department and the search begins. The firemen search throughout the village, and when they find the guy, he tells them proudly, "Hey, I came out here by train."

That's the story. When was it? Probably from the fourth or fifth year of Shōwa, so a pretty recent story, not all that old.... Nobody's sure what it was, but it was probably a *tanuki* [*sore wa tanuki deshō*]. There are a lot of people tricked by *tanuki*, so it was most likely a *tanuki* for sure.<sup>31</sup>

The narrative makes clear that even on an island where there was no train, the romance and excitement of the modern affected the psychic worlds of the residents. There is also a distinct emphasis on sound here. Although he says nothing of the visual aspects of the *tanuki*-train, Torii-san very vividly describes the *chīn chīn* sound and performs the station-stop announcements.

Moreover, within the story, the *tanuki* lives up to its traditional function as a shapeshifter renowned, as Torii-san reminds us, for tricking people. Becoming a train, or the illusion of a train, the creature causes the man to interact with familiar terrain in an entirely new way, ironically performing a function similar to real trains on the mainland that were defamiliarizing geographies and altering human relationships to time and space. In fact, residents would know the actual place-names mentioned in the narrative and realize that a distance of hardly one hundred meters separates each station stop and that the entire distance traveled by the *tanuki* train is probably no more than two kilometers. These distances do not require a train—the scale is wrong. So while the plot itself is driven by an error of perception, for those aware of the geographical setting and spatial context, the humor of the narrative is derived from a disjuncture of distances.

Considered within its historical context, the legend suggests a local desire to be one with the modernity of the nation—separated by water, perhaps, yet linked in

terms of progress and potential, part of the broader, expanding Japanese nation-state. But the message is ambiguous, even cynical; its humor is based on the fact that unity with the rest of the nation is ultimately nothing more than a dream, the product of an over-excited imagination, and that the island has already been left behind as Japan moves forward. In the guise of the *tanuki*, the specter of modernity, like a ghost of the future, haunts the island, poking fun at its desire to have what it cannot have. On one level, the tale is nothing more than a humorous narrative about a country bumpkin longing to have what he thinks they have in the city, a self-critical commentary about a desire to keep up with the rest of the nation. More poignantly, however, it also critiques the effects of modernity itself, the way scales of consumption leave some people and places behind—to live, as it were, in a different time zone.<sup>32</sup>

It is significant also that, unlike the newspaper reporter's conclusion earlier—"What a surprise that such a thing could occur these days"—Torii-san ends by noting, with no surprise at all, that this was a "recent story" and "it was most likely a *tanuki* for sure." The implication is that on the island in the 1930s, *tanuki* were not anachronistic; it was only natural that they would practice their traditional antics. Furthermore, the *tanuki* in this story does not end up dead, but, in a sense, continues to haunt the island. In fact, if we return to the notion of haunting here, we find that this narrative represents a converse form of the other tales we have looked at. In the phantom train legends, the *time* of modernity is real, but the *landscape* is distant and imaginary—an idealized space of supernatural possibility disconnected from the temporal world of the Meiji period. Inversely, in Shimo-Koshikijima the landscape is real, but the modernity imposed upon it in the guise of the train represents, for the islanders, an imagined time in which trains might actually have a relevant function. Within the narrative, the real space of the village is overlaid by a temporal world of the future, an image fashioned from a longing for a time not available on the island. A real place and a desired time are fused to create an idealized but impossible narrative. The *tanuki* enacts this desire, enchanting the islanders with the specter of a modernity in which they cannot fully participate.<sup>33</sup>

#### DEATH OF THE *TANUKI*: REDUX

This brings me to a final, much more contemporary, example: the animated film, *Heisei tanuki gassen Ponpoko*, known in English simply as *Pom Poko*, directed by TAKAHATA Isao of Studio Ghibli (1994). The story is set in the late 1960s and revolves around the plight of a tribe of *tanuki* living in the Tama Hills on the outskirts of Tokyo. Humans are planning to build a new suburb, destroying the *tanuki*'s native home. In a desperate attempt to thwart the encroachment of human civilization, the older *tanuki* teach the younger *tanuki* the shapeshifting magic of old. Together they create illusions and roadblocks in order to stop the construction of the suburb and the destruction of their traditional habitat. Here we have a vivid, animated representation of ideological clash and a storyline uncannily reminiscent of the phantom train legends.



FIGURE 4. *Tanuki*, looking back. Photograph by author.

Without going into details, suffice it to say that the *tanuki* eventually fail in their efforts. The film evokes the same comic-tinged pathos of the phantom train legends, and articulates the same sense of resignation to the futility of struggling against the hegemonic narrative of progress. Toward the end of the film, the *tanuki* marvel at the fact that humans are the ones doing all the transforming of the landscape, when this had always been their own traditional role. In a final gesture of defiance—though they know it will be futile—the *tanuki* muster up their abilities for one last, temporary transformation. In this extended scene, they cause a landscape from the past to reassert itself into the present: buildings drop away to reveal pristine forests and tranquil rice paddies, with children and *tanuki* alike playing in this pastoral world. For the *tanuki*, as well as for the human residents of the new suburb, it is an intensely nostalgic moment—an overlaying of the present with the memories of the past. It is a haunting scene.

Of course, all the tales I have discussed here—whether related by word of mouth, print, or film—are created by humans and reflect very human feelings of desire. By halting the forward movement of the locomotive, even for just a night or two, the

*tanuki* of the phantom train narratives express a human longing for the tranquility of the rapidly disappearing premodern landscape, for “those days,” as the narrator says, when “waves ran against the shore.” The *tanuki* haunts the modern Japanese citizen with a visceral reminder of a place, and a way of being, already no longer possible. In the Shimo-Koshikijima narrative, the *tanuki*-as-train enacts a dream of a modernity coeval to, and connected with, that of the mainland, a local desire to be integrated into the broader Japanese nation. Here the *tanuki* is an enchanted projection of modern time onto an unchanged landscape. These narratives of haunting are alternately informed by a desire to return to the past and a longing for an impossible future. Either way, time and place are, momentarily, out of sync with each other. As the narrative vehicle through which these desires are enacted, the *tanuki* ultimately becomes a powerful symbol of the futility of such desires.

Yanagita Kunio suggests that by the modern period, when the phantom train narratives proliferated, the *tanuki* had already descended into a comic role in which it retained only the power to cause surprise (*odorokasu*), but nothing more (YANAGITA 2000, 310). But I would argue that even, or especially, as a light-hearted character, the *tanuki* can critique the hegemonic narrative of the moment. It is exactly by performing the role of bumbling trickster that the *tanuki* articulates an ideological counter narrative, a hidden transcript, against the rapid rush of human historical change.

By situating the phantom train narratives within a time-space structure of haunting, I have also tried to gesture more generally to ways of reading narratives of haunting as forms of political or ideological critique. The disconnect between the temporal and spatial dimensions that gives rise to the fantasy of haunting so often indicates a very real, and likely unvoiced, site of anxiety or discontent. And just as these sites themselves change from period to period, so too the role of the *tanuki* is constantly remediated, from late nineteenth-century legend to late twentieth-century animated film. During different historical moments, these shapeshifting creatures voice the conflicting desires of the humans who tell their tales, commenting critically about the time and place in which they live, and die.

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#### NOTES

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1. The image described here is generally associated with the Shigaraki pottery style from Shiga Prefecture; although many of these features have long been associated with the *tanuki*, the ubiquity of the Shigaraki figurine is a twentieth-century phenomenon. Walker suggests that the figurine can be interpreted as saying, “Come inside, and be reassured that what you will find in this place is ‘traditional’ and ‘Japanese’” (WALKER 2005, 4).

2. Linnaean classification *Nyctereutes procyonoides*. Three subspecies have been identified: *Nyctereutes procyonoides procyonoides* and *N. p. ussuriensis* in continental Asia, and *N. p. viver-*

*rinus* in Japan. See KAUALA 1994; WARD and WURSTER-HILL 1990; NAKAMURA 1990, 236–44; INOUE 1980, 34–51.

3. For a brief review of *tanuki* lore, see HARADA 1976. For in-depth overviews of *tanuki*-related lore and history, see NAKAMURA 1990; INOUE 1980.

4. The relationship between the *mujina* and *tanuki* is often confusing. In contemporary biological terms, the *mujina* generally refers to an *ana-guma*, or badger, also native to parts of Japan. In some regions of Japan, however, *tanuki* were also called *mujina*, and the two are often conflated in folklore (MURAKAMI 2000, 326; NAKAMURA 1990, 236–44; INOUE 1980, 57–61).

5. The tale is found in the *Uji shūi monogatari* vol. 8, tale 6. For English translations see TYLER 1987, 174–75; MILLS 1970, 297–99. See also LI (2009, 192–233) for an important contextualized discussion of this tale and similar animal-related *setsuma*.

6. Research on *kitsune* is extensive and often considers the fox's ability to possess humans; see, for example, HIRUTA 2000. *Tanuki* possession was not as common as fox possession. For a brief discussion of *kitsune* lore, see KOMATSU 1995, 44–79. For English-language discussions of the fox in history and religion, see BLACKER 1986, 51–68; BATHGATE 2004; SMYERS 1999; JOHNSON 1974. For a thorough early discussion of both *tanuki* and *kitsune*, see DE VISSER 1908, who suggests that in Chinese texts the term *kori* referred exclusively to foxes (1); he also notes that it is not until the early thirteenth-century *Gukanshō* 愚管抄 that the term appears in a Japanese text (41). See also CASAL 1959; FOSTER 2006.

7. Although it is fair to say that the *tanuki* image from the Edo period onward was generally a lighthearted one, such comicality is not ubiquitous. Particularly in the famous folktale of *Kachi kachi yama*, the *tanuki* is portrayed as vicious and dangerous; however, even this decidedly nasty *tanuki* dies in the end. For a brief outline in English of this tale and similar types, see SEKI 1966, 39–40.

8. The *tanuki*'s particular ability to deceive with sound has been noted by YANAGITA 2000, 314; see also KONNO 1999b, 236–37. MATSUTANI (1985, 14–15) also notes the *tanuki*'s long association with mimicking sounds.

9. One of the remarkable qualities of this description is the way it oscillates seamlessly between details that we would currently consider zoological (eating of grains) and those that we might think of as slightly fabulous (belly-thumping) all the way to the blatantly magical (ability to change shape). The entry goes on to describe ways *tanuki* can be cooked and various uses for *tanuki* skin (particularly good for making bellows). Unless otherwise noted, translations from written and oral sources in Japanese are my own.

10. From *Shokoku hyaku monogatari* (*Hyaku monogatari* of the various provinces) compiled by an unknown editor in 1677; see HIGASHI 2001, 85–86. For more on the *Hyaku monogatari* genre of tale-telling, see HIGASHI 2001; REIDER 2001; FOSTER 2009, 52–55.

11. Technically, this was not the first run of a railway line in Japan: a portion of the same track, from Shinagawa through Yokohama, had already been opened for daily usage in June of the same year; see HARADA 1991, 17.

12. For more on the early trains in Japanese popular culture, see ERICSON 1996, 54–55; FREEDMAN 2011, 38–46.

13. On the radical shifts in consciousness and society caused by the railroad during the Victorian period in Britain and the US, see FREEMAN 1999.

14. This was related by the son of the man who experienced it in early Meiji. Incidents of *kitsune* and *tanuki* causing mischief along the train tracks were widely distributed. See MATSUTANI 1985, 13–47; NOMURA 2005, 200–10.

15. Although I focus on *tanuki* here, in some cases, including many of Matsutani's and Sasaki's examples, the protagonist is a *kitsune*. See also INOUE 1980, 72–75. Kenseiji (temple) in the Katsushika Ward of Tokyo has a *mujina tsuka* (*mujina* mound) dedicated to a *mujina*

killed after imitating a train. The general structure of the narrative is similar regardless of whether the animal in question is a *tanuki*, *kitsune*, or *mujina*. Some motifs associated with the phantom train legend are K1887 (illusory sounds), K1886 (illusions in landscape), and F491.1 (spirit leads person astray). Also, there is a correlation here to D420 (Transformation: Animal to Object) in IKEDA 1971.

16. There is no clear date at which point the phantom train legends disappear, though they seem to have become less and less prevalent in the 1930s. But the association of the train as a vehicle at odds with the natural and supernatural world persisted at least into the late twentieth century. When the Sanyō Shinkansen (bullet train) was opened in the 1970s and 1980s, passengers noticed a loud booming sound coming from the mountains; explanations were offered that the “mountain gods were angry at the construction, or that this was the work of a *tanuki*,” and in some cases it was said that you could see a ghost through the window when traveling through a tunnel. It was later determined that the sounds were caused by air compression as the train shot rapidly through tunnels (OGANO 2010, 204).

17. Not surprisingly, the early trains were frightening to behold; a young spectator standing along the tracks at the opening ceremonies in 1872 described the train as “a monster... leaping at me” and noted that many people “covered their ears with both hands, shut their eyes, and faced downward as if waiting for a frightening thing to pass” (quoted in ERICSON 1996, 61–62).

18. For a detailed analysis of the role of trains in *Sanshirō* and other fiction at this time, see FREDMAN 2011, 68–115.

19. For more on the nationalization of the railroads, see HARADA 1991, 50–58; ERICSON 1996, 375–79.

20. As mentioned earlier, iconography associated with the *tanuki* is often lighthearted; in the phantom train narratives, too, the creature’s death may be tragic in its inevitability but it is also somewhat comically anti-climactic. Yanagita suggests that the “demonology” of the *tanuki* can be divided into three historical epochs. In the first, *tanuki* have the power to possess [*tsuku*] people; in the second, they can only deceive [*taburakasu*]; in the third, they only have the power to startle [*odorokasu*]. “Demonology,” Yanagita says, “declines inversely to the evolution of civilization” (YANAGITA 2000, 310). The phantom train legend is told within the third epoch—the historical juncture of modernity—when *tanuki* have lost the power to do anything more than startle. Yanagita’s thinking reflects the social-Darwinistic mindset of the early twentieth century when he wrote this essay (1918); yet his point that the *tanuki*’s powers devolve in inverse proportion to the advances of modernity is useful for considering the way in which *tanuki* tales gesture towards a resistance to the master narrative of progress.

21. On the rhetorical strategies invoked by tellers of supernatural tales, see GOLDSTEIN 2007, 70–78. While my own analysis of haunting may differ from folkloric interpretations that focus on issues of belief, I share a similar concern with highlighting often forgotten or overlooked ways of knowing; as MOTZ suggests about “practices of belief,” stories of haunting are “there but not there, seen but unseen, said but unsaid, floating just out of reach as a ghostly reminder of tasks left undone, insights unnoticed, omissions uncorrected” (1998, 341).

22. Perhaps we can draw an instructive analogy between the haunting of a narrative and the growth of weeds in a garden. A weed, most simply defined as a “plant growing in the wrong place” (MABEY 2010, 5), is ultimately a social and cultural construct determined by the expectations and needs of the gardener or farmer. By persistently appearing in the “wrong place” (or at the wrong time) weeds not only obstruct or make chaotic the growth of the garden but also bring attention to the cultural parameters that define the garden *as* a garden in the first place—that is, to the world view that determines what kind of plants are supposed to be there. Similarly, a haunting figure such as the *tanuki* reveals the assumptions and structures of the hegemonic paradigm that define it as something in the “wrong place.”

23. In another version of the legend from Yamagata Prefecture, railroad workers similarly dine on soup made from the carcass of the mischievous *tanuki* (MATSUTANI 1985, 21–22).

24. The notion of the chronotope is notoriously complex; my own invocation here is necessarily limited. As MORSON and EMERSON note, “Characteristically for Bakhtin, he never offers a concise definition. Rather he offers some initial comments, and then repeatedly alternates concrete examples with further generalizations. In the course of this exposition, the term turns out to have several related meanings” (1990, 366–67). For an analysis of these related meanings, see MORSON and EMERSON 1990, 366–432.

25. In the pre-Meiji system, the smallest measurement commonly used was a segment of approximately fifteen minutes. For details, see HARADA 1998, 63–66. The modern mode of time standardization associated with the railroads is reminiscent of what Benedict Anderson famously describes as “‘homogeneous, empty time,’ in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, not marked by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar” (ANDERSON 1991, 24, and 187–88). Anderson derives this concept from Walter BENJAMIN (1968, 262–63).

26. For more on the space-time compression caused by the train, see HARADA 1991, 57–59, and 1998, 51–66; see also the classic analysis by SCHIVELBUSCH 1986.

27. While introducing the phantom train legend, Sasaki Kizen also significantly includes a tale about an old woman who sees a train approaching from the distance and mistakes it for a smoke-belching “black monster” [*makkuro na kaibutsu*]; even after she eventually gets accustomed to seeing trains, she cannot help but think of the locomotive as a “living thing” (SASAKI 1926, 160–61).

28. In her analysis of the relationship between modernity, folklore studies, and the uncanny, Marilyn Ivy notes of Yanagita Kunio’s *Tōno monogatari*: “Written at a moment (1909–1910) when it has become inescapably clear that western industrial capitalism would not only bring civilization and enlightenment but would efface much of an older Japanese world, *The Tales of Tōno* thematized this effacement in its description of Tōno, an obscure region in northeastern Japan” (IVY 1995, 72). The phantom train legends similarly thematize a loss of an older world, but through a less literary and more widely distributed form of popular narrative.

29. One anonymous reader of this article has noted that the *tanuki*’s lonely struggle against modernity is akin to the human heroes, “who waged their forlorn struggle against overwhelming odds,” discussed in Ivan Morris’s classic analysis in *The Nobility of Failure* (MORRIS 1975, xxii).

30. MATSUTANI (1985, 18) notes that the very earliest steam trains were driven by British engineers, who never reported the phantom train legend. The British workers, of course, had no memories of a pre-railroad Japan for which to long.

31. Mini disk recording by author in Teuchi, Shimo-Koshikijima, Kagoshima Prefecture, 17 January 2001. In a follow-up interview on 4 April 2012, Torii-san calculated that this incident itself would have occurred approximately ninety years ago, in the early 1920s, and then circulated as a “true story” [*jitsuma*] for years afterward. Although there are probably no *tanuki* currently living on the island, older residents confirm that they used to be the go-to explanation for all manner of strange occurrences.

32. The narrative here is just one articulation of the stark distinction between island life and urban Japan. Recently, for example, a resident in her eighties explained to me that when she first came to the island from Tokyo after the end of World War II, she was considered exotic and islanders flocked to get a glimpse of her. For her part, she was stunned at how “primitive” life was on the island at that time. Interview in Teuchi, Shimo-Koshikijima, Kagoshima Prefecture, 24 January 2012.

33. Perhaps we can loosely characterize “haunting” as the return of the past and “enchantment” as a projection of the future—“enchantment” implies hope and optimistic longing rather than the sad longing of the haunt.

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