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WHAT THE EAR SEES:

MEDIA, PERFORMANCE, AND THE POLITICS OF THE VOICE IN JAPAN, 1918-1942

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ALEXANDER SCOTT MURPHY

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the mutual construction of voice and public sound in Japan's interwar period through the study of poetics, acoustics, and musical performance. Due to the era's coincident advent of mass sound media and imperial expansion, I argue that the human voice and its attendant mediation through radio and phonography became a site where the social tensions of colonial capitalism—racial and linguistic difference, migration and displacement, and the limits of the public sphere—found articulation as matters of rhythm, tonality, and noise. Against these conditions, I examine how an emergent cast of poets, orators, singers, and acousticians channeled the insights and affordances of aural media toward new forms of public expression—ones that took the newly audible contours of the human voice as the basis for reshaping the semiotic and sensory boundaries of the body politic.

Across its four chapters, this dissertation traces the liaisons of vocal sound, technology, and language that shaped the audiovisual contours of public performance, and by extension, the cultural politics of the era. These liaisons in turn link the efforts of poets and rhetoricians to develop experimental forms of radio poetry in the 1920s and 1930s to the vocal innovations of Japanese, Japanese American, and Black recording artists at the height of Japan's transpacific jazz age. In so doing, however, it casts an ear to how such linkages formed within and against the volatile sonic borders of the imperial metropole, where post-WWI patterns of colonial migration transformed the phonic signals of accent and intonation into frequencies of racialized difference that often exceeded the purchase of vision. With such modalities of attunement unfolding against state efforts to delimit the sensory boundaries of the public sphere, this dissertation then considers the role of these vocalities in shaping the development and theorization of mass sound media in Japan at both audible and, at times, infrasonic levels.



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## INTRODUCTION

"The voice makes the person (*koe wa hito nari*)."

—Narusawa Reisen<sup>1</sup>

"With the advent of radio in Japan," wrote the journalist Narusawa Reisen in 1940, "the human voice has come to reach the ears of the masses as an independent entity, separable entirely from its embodied form." Yet strangely, he noted, "this development seems to have inspired a wellspring of concern over the voice in its relation to the individual . . . what it tells of a person beyond what can be seen."<sup>2</sup> Paradoxically, that is, a newfound awareness in Japan of the voice's material objecthood—emergent in the rise of wireless broadcasting and commercial sound recording across the 1920s and 1930s—seemed to rouse a concomitant investment in its connection to personhood and subjectivity. Over this period, poets steered their efforts toward radio performance, popular singers experimented with new phonic articulations of intimacy and affect, and politicians and rhetoricians alike sought to reshape the formal contours of oratory in concert with the shifting sensory precincts of public reception. In short, what Narusawa detected across Japan's interwar years was a distinctly sonic imagination unfolding through the intertwined poetics of aesthetic and political life—beyond what could be seen through text and image, and toward what new modes of subjectivity might be conceived in sound.

In this regard, Narusawa's epoch-framing observation was one that resonated widely throughout the modern industrial world. Following the end of the First World War, the convergent accelerations of consumer capitalism and technological advancement in recording and broadcast inaugurated a global era of mass sound media, striking not only for its scope of

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<sup>1</sup> Narusawa Reisen, *Denpa ni kiku* (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1937), 177.

<sup>2</sup> Narusawa Reisen, *Oto to kage: Rajio to kamera no zuihitsu* (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1940), 85.

diffusion, but for its roughly simultaneous unfolding across the world's metropolitan and colonial spheres. Between 1920 and 1925, long-distance radio broadcasting commenced in Japan, China, Europe, and North and South America, while the advent of electrical sound recording in 1925 set off a "recording boom" in music that extended from the Caribbean to Southeast Asia.<sup>3</sup> As such, one could find echoes of Nurusawa's phrasing in as many languages as there were stations to broadcast them, pointing to the common apprehension of the voice as a newly potent medium of articulation in an increasingly interconnected world of sound.

For the German writer Rudolf Arnheim, this new age of wireless sound revealed a hitherto unexplored terrain of vocal expression, in which the artist could exploit the use "of the aural only, without the almost invariable accompaniment of the visual which we find in nature as well as in art."<sup>4</sup> Thus presenting the speaker or performer as "nothing but a voice," Arnheim sensed in the radio a unique potential to enliven new formations of presence and personality in the mind of the listener, and to conjure speculative bodies free from obligation to naturalistically reproduce or conform to existing ones. Similarly, the characteristic capacity of the gramophone to "split" sounds from their originating sources afforded singers the ability to create, as Alexander Weheliye puts it, "differently pitched technological oralities" that proliferated across a transnational musical ferment that has since found fitting description as a global jazz age.<sup>5</sup> Far from suffering in the apparent absence of the physical body, or from the listener's relative lack of visual stimulus, the central fascination of mass sound media seemed to turn precisely on how

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<sup>3</sup> See Michael Denning, *Noise Uprising: The Audiopolitics of a World Musical Revolution* (London: Verso, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, *Radio*, trans. Margaret Ludwig and Herbert Read (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1936), 14, 197.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 7. On the global jazz age, see Marc Matera and Susan Kingsley Kent, eds., *The Global 1930s: The International Decade* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 28-44. See also Andrew F. Jones, *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Duke University Press, 2001).

these perceived deprivations might free the human voice from its corporeal encumbrances and animate new figures of possibility in their place.

At the same time, however, what struck Arnheim and Narusawa as media effects—namely the disembodiment of the voice and the simulated "blindness" of the listener—registered to others as conditions intrinsic to the sensory experience of modern life. For the sociologist Shimizu Ikutarō, in fact, it was precisely this mode of diminished or curtailed vision that best captured the nature of perception under global capitalism, where societal and economic relations had "grown so complex that to grasp their full picture would require the eyes of a god."<sup>6</sup> Shy of such omnipotence, or what the modernist writer Yokomitsu Riichi similarly likened to an "aerial view" of reality, many Japanese writers felt that representing the fundamental excess and "inclarity" (*fumeikai*) of modern life was a task that demanded the intervention of sound, or more accurately for Yokomitsu, "noise" (*sō-on*).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, as Gregory Golley suggests: "To 'see' the capitalist system could mean to listen to fragments of unrelated conversations through a handheld receiver across miles of copper wire," or put differently, to acknowledge the eye not as inoperative but as insufficient—unable to solely claim objective purchase on phenomena that eluded traditional frames of fixed perspective.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, if sound media invited listeners to experience a diminution in the authority of vision, or to perceive a world whose horizons exceeded the limits of sight, such an experience was likely relatable to many.

In turn, what was broadly symptomatic of interwar capitalism was in this sense an acute condition of empire. In Japan, the same period that witnessed the advent and efflorescence of mass sound media (framed in this study as roughly 1918 to 1942) also saw a dramatic escalation

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<sup>6</sup> Shimizu Ikutarō, *Ryūgen higo* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2011), 22.

<sup>7</sup> Yokomitsu Riichi, "Bungakuteki jittai ni tsuite," in *Teihon Yokomitsu Riichi zenshū*, Vol. 13 (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1982), 137-140.

<sup>8</sup> Gregory Golley, *When Our Eyes No Longer See: Realism, Science, and Ecology in Japanese Literary Modernism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 47.

of the nation's imperial project, entailing not only military expansion across the Asian continent, but also a concurrent rise of colonial migration into the metropole. In attendance of the former, Japan's national broadcasting network (NHK) duly extended its range, relaying its signal outward at the same time that it channeled sounds and voices of the colonial sphere into metropolitan homes. Consequently, where many residents of the home islands (*naichi*) may have earlier regarded the colonies at a spatiotemporal remove—as "outer territories" (*gaichi*)" apprehensible mainly in discourse—the radio rendered the empire as an internal acoustic presence, or more accurately, an *acousmatic* one: a "sound unseen," both enigmatic and intimately felt through the tactility of the ear.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the post-WWI increase in labor migration from Korea confronted metropolitan residents with imperial subjects whose putative embodiment of colonial difference could not be readily adduced by sight; namely, the phenotypic likenesses between colonizer and colonized often frustrated the "scopic drive" to equate race with skin, and thus led many to racialize the aural features of language, accent, and vocal timbre.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, colonial difference came to register, again, in acousmatic terms—unseen and seemingly disembodied, yet therefore re-inscribed in the phonic contours of the voice.

As a result of these imbricated dynamics, the metropolitan public sphere underwent an internal transformation of sensibility marked by the vexation of what Mary Louise Pratt calls the nation's "imperial eyes," where in attempting to apprehend the vagaries of colonial capitalism, "the seeing-man's powers seem to dissolve into confused noise, distant sounds, a tree cut down by unseen hands."<sup>11</sup> Crucially, however, this sense of confusion also meant that sound and vision

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<sup>9</sup> On the "acousmatic," see Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> See Andre Haag, "Fear and Loathing in Imperial Japan: The Cultures of Korean Peril, 1919-1923" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2013), 87-88.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 177.

were never separate, but rather synesthetically intertwined—one sense always shading or "dissolving" into the edges of the other. As such, the newly-held potency of vocal sound seemed also to hold the promise of supplementing the "seeing-man's" limited perspective, or to paraphrase Don Ihde, of "mak(ing) the invisible *present*" in ways amenable to multisensory description, measurement, and adjudication.<sup>12</sup> To these tasks, Japanese musicologists and acousticians in the 1920s and 30s developed methods of visualizing and notating the mercurial rhythms of contemporary speech and song, while linguists and poets alike steered such insights toward delimiting the "correct" phonation of the national language (*kokugo*). Just as importantly, however, such efforts unfolded amidst the vibrant onrush of Japan's jazz age, wherein a multilingual cast of popular singers augmented the polyphonous soundscape of the metropole with sonorities drawn in the hues of Shanghai modernism as well as a burgeoning Black Pacific musical network. Ultimately, then, any attempt to construct boundaries around the errant vocalities of the moment, or to draw from them a sense of systematic or grammatical order, played out in inevitable tension with the more capacious visions of the ear, through which a host of aesthetic and political possibilities seemed to find virtual, anticipatory form.

It is this animating tension—unfolding not just *between* sight and sound, but rather *within* the synesthetic operations of the voice itself—that forms the basis for this dissertation. More than simply representing the "other" of vision, in other words, or serving metaphorically as an alternate "portal" into the "invisible, resonant pressures"<sup>13</sup> of the era, I argue that vocal sound in interwar Japan became a pivotal site of semiotic negotiation: where boundaries of subjectivity and personhood, affinity and difference, were forged, contested, and reinvented through the

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<sup>12</sup> Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 51.

<sup>13</sup> Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 13.

mediatic textures of speech and song. In order to pursue this argument, however, it is necessary to trace two inter-related paths of inquiry. The first concerns how Japanese writers of the period rendered the social tensions of colonial capitalism sensible through the media of vocal sound; in other words, how questions of racial and linguistic difference, migration and displacement, and the limits of the public sphere found articulation as matters of rhythm, tonality, and noise.

Second, I ask how a transpacific cast of vocal actors—poets, orators, and jazz singers—reshaped the semiotic and sensory boundaries of the imperial body politic by channeling the affordances of aural media toward different possibilities of identification and belonging.

Through this twofold line of questioning, my interest therefore extends beyond the voice's discursive description and representation to consider how vocal sound *materialized* in stylistic form both on and off the page—as in the case of poets who crafted new forms of recitation onstage and over the radio, or those who collaborated with popular singers to lyricize the shifting currents of mass culture in ways that might redirect them in turn. To borrow Goran Blix's phrasing, that is, I am interested in how "the cadences, rhythms, and phonic patterns of style might be thought to offer a shadowy sonogram of [the] period's affective landscape," whereby a host of lesser-heard voices might re-sound in oblique yet no less revealing ways.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, however, I regard these modes of vocal practice (song, speech, and recitative) not simply as reflections of their historical moment, but rather as agential forces in themselves—capable of transforming the very embodied and material structures that set them in motion. As such, what follows is an attempt to trace how such transformations unfolded in practice, and to listen after what speculative visions they might still inspire.

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<sup>14</sup> Goran Blix, "Story, Affect, Style," *nonsite.org* Issue 11: The Tank. Published March 14, 2014. <https://nonsite.org/jamesons-the-antinomies-of-realism/>.

## *The Alluring Matter of the Voice*

In undertaking a study of the voice in modern Japan, it is perhaps wise to begin with a brief definition of terms. That is, to first explain what I mean when referring to the "voice" in modern Japan. As straightforward as such a task may seem, however, it becomes complex as soon as one moves beyond the presumed isomorphism of translation: namely, that "voice" in English translates neatly to *koe* (声) in Japanese. At the level of convention, of course, this is an entirely acceptable rendering, insofar as the respective definitions of "voice" and *koe* in the OED and Iwanami's *Kokugo jiten* are virtually identical: "Sound . . . made or produced by the vocal organs of man or animals / *Hito ya dōbutsu ga, nodo ni aru tokushu kikan wo tsukatte dasu oto.*"<sup>15</sup> However, it is in the realm of secondary definitions and derivatives where greater care is required. In Japanese, for instance, one might find references not simply to *koe* (声), but to *seion* (声音), *onsei* (音声), *hassei* (発声), and other Sino-Japanese compounds where 声 (*sei*) is affixed to refer to inanimate sounds like *suissei* (水声), or the sound of water.<sup>16</sup> In this study, I have used conventional translations where appropriate, and have elsewhere striven for contextual clarity in favor of overly literal phrasings. Yet in some cases, it is worth lingering in the shade of a particular semantic nuance—as in the case of *nikusei* (肉声).

Broadly denoting the voice's emission from a specifically human body, *nikusei* (肉声, lit. flesh+voice) can be traced back centuries; the *Nihon kokugo daijiten* cites a 16th-century commentary on the *Mengqiu*, a Tang dynasty primer that defines it as "a voice emitted directly

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<sup>15</sup> See *Iwanami kokugo daijiten*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975).

<sup>16</sup> In this dissertation, I have generally translated *onsei* as "vocal sound," and *hassei* as "vocalization" or "utterance," yet in some cases I have opted simply for "voice" where the broader context is sufficient to clarify these semantic differences.



from a person's mouth."<sup>17</sup> However, the term seems to have been infrequently used in Japan until the start of the interwar period, where its usage increased sharply; in addition to observing this increase across a range of texts, keyword searches in the National Diet Library and Aozora Bunko digital databases also reveal a spike in usage that begins in the late 1910s and reaches a peak in the early 1930s. If the likely cause of this spike were not already apparent, however, the definition of *nikusei* in the postwar edition of Iwanami's *Kokugo jiten* makes it clear: "A voice in its natural state (*nama no mama no koe*) that does not pass through machines like the microphone."<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the term appears across a range of interwar texts discussing emergent technologies of broadcast, studio recording, concert amplification, and sound film. While traceable to antiquity, then, the notion of the human voice in its embodied, "fleshly" articulation resurfaced with a tangible sense of both novelty and urgency precisely at the height of Japan's encounter with technologized sound.

Here, one may be reminded of Walter Benjamin's paradigmatic insight regarding the apparent loss of the "aura," or one's relation to the singular, authentic presence of a work of art, in the era of its modern technical reproducibility. That is, if technical or technological reproducibility under capitalism may be perceived as commodifying the artwork and thus depriving it of its original, auratic presence in time and space, it is more likely the case that this sense of a prior aura is only thinkable *after* the work's reproduction. The presence of the aura emerges, as it were, through its own perceived dispossession. In this sense one could observe, as Narusawa Reisen did in 1940, and as Jonathan Sterne and other scholars in sound studies have

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<sup>17</sup> In the *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, this definition is rendered as follows: "Hito no jika ni kuchi yori dasu koe wo nikusei to unzo" [人の直に口より出す声を肉声と云ぞ].

<sup>18</sup> This definition in the 1975 edition of the Iwanami *Kokugo jiten* is in turn a more concise version of the one found in 1948 *Nihongo kokugo daijiten*: "Vocal sound emitted directly from the human mouth, as opposed to voices issuing from machines like the microphone or the telephone."

since, that the pursuit of (or desire for) a categorically "natural," auratic, and authentically-embodied voice seems to arise as an after-effect of its technological mediation.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, however, what is notable about this re-appearance of *nikusei* is not simply that it bespoke an urge to distinguish between "natural" versus technologized voices, but rather that its invocation frequently did more to foreground the very sense of materiality and excess that the voice's mediation made audible. As many scholars have documented, for instance, the global advent of electrical amplification sensitized listeners to various corporeal dimensions of the voice that, while previously undervalued as "noise," came to augment singers' expressive palettes in newly alluring ways. Breathly rasps, inhalations, quavering trills, and other intimate inflections acquired their own emotional currencies in song, while a new cast of "radio singers" won fame with voices tailored to more intimate spaces of listener reception.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, such heightened intimacy often registered in notably gendered terms; Japanese male critics like Iba Takashi and Okuya Kumao tended to use *nikusei* when detailing the "exquisite" and "beautifully rich" vocal qualities of female recording artists like Kouta Katsutarō, while writers like Murō Saisei frequently pondered what such alluring voices might be like "in the flesh."<sup>21</sup> In these instances of rapt description, however, the *niku* (肉) of *nikusei* seemed to point not to Katsutarō, for instance, but to the alluring matter of the voice's own sonorities—whether in the sibilant peaks and rounded pressures of its tone or in the shades of its

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<sup>19</sup> See Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 220. On auratic authenticity in relation to sound recording's "myth of fidelity," see Roshanak Kheshti, *Modernity's Ear: Listening to Race and Gender in World Music* (New York: NYU Press, 2015), 134-136.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, Allison McCracken, "Real Men Don't Sing Ballads: The Radio Crooner in Hollywood, 1929-1933," in *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music*, ed. Pamela Wojcik and Arthur Knight (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). See also Jacob Smith, *Vocal Tracks: Performance and Sound Media* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 130-146.

<sup>21</sup> See Okuya Kumao, "Sutēji to bokkōshō? Maikurofōn no geijutsu ryōiki joron," *Kaikan geijutsu* (August 19, 1935): 94-97. See also Murō Saisei, "Wakabadoki no kūsō," *Shinchō* (March 1924): 29.

timbral variation. Though intended to re-assert the voice's "natural" attachment to the speaker's body, the usage of *nikusei* seemed more often to disclose the body of the voice itself.

To the extent that such a body could be gendered, however, it could also be racialized in turn. Indeed, to echo Nina Sun Eidsheim's formulation of the "vocal body," the apprehension of *nikusei* as the "fleshly" or corporeal voice did not reveal the "unmediated sound of an unaltered body," but rather a suite of tonal, timbral, and accentual features mediated by "attitudes toward gender, class, race and sexuality."<sup>22</sup> As noted earlier, for instance, vocal sound became a highly charged site of such mediation at the height of Japan's imperial project, where officials and civilians alike enlisted the contours of accent and intonation in order to adjudicate the sound of colonial difference in the metropole. For Andre Haag, such adjudication was necessary insofar as "colonizer and colonized were *racially undifferentiated*, making it difficult to distinguish between the two *visually* based on such physical characteristics (emphasis mine)."<sup>23</sup> Here it is worth noting, as Haag does, that forms of visual and physiognomic discrimination toward colonial subjects did still occur, albeit in often vexed and volatile fashion. In contrast to Haag, however, I argue in this study that the relative difficulty in abstracting visible phenotypic distinctions between Korean, Chinese, and Japanese residents in the metropole did not mean that schemas of racialized difference were therefore absent, but rather that racialization occurred through a wider complex of fluid and multisensory frames of ascription—the vocalization of language being chief among them.

This argument is in large part indebted to scholars like Eidsheim, Mendi Obadike, Pooja Rangan, and Jennifer Lynn Stoeber, whose recent works have lent critical attention to sonic markers of race and ethnicity that have often eluded theorization in studies of music, media, and

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<sup>22</sup> Nina Sun Eidsheim, "Voice as a Technology of Selfhood: Towards an Analysis of Racialized Timbre and Vocal Performance" (PhD diss., UC San Diego, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Haag, "Fear and Loathing in Imperial Japan," 88.

cultural history.<sup>24</sup> However, while drawing valuable insight from Stoever's concept of the "sonic color line" in American popular media and Eidsheim's discussion of blackness and vocal timbre, the present study seeks to intervene in what has been a largely Euro-American field of inquiry by bringing the foregoing scholarship into dialogic entanglement with the cultural and political milieu of the transpacific. Put differently, it asks how these recent theoretical overtures might be further nuanced by attending to both the intra-Asian dynamics of race and sound in the Japanese empire, as well as the transits of diasporic movement and media circulation that linked these dynamics to North American and transatlantic racial formations in turn.

By the same token, I hope that such an intervention might also aid in advancing a belated discussion of race in the fields of Japanese literary studies and cultural history, which have only recently begun to abandon a long-held reticence toward the topic.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, as Atsuko Ueda notes, such reticence seems at least in part to stem from a tacit if broadly-observed biologism that has historically grouped the diverse populations of East Asia under the immobile heading of the "yellow" race, and has thus restricted most discussions of race in Japanese literature and media to static, visual representations of "blackness" or "whiteness" based on "physical skin color."<sup>26</sup> Consequently, while interwar intellectuals like Langston Hughes were keen to listen past visible difference in likening the treatment of Japan's colonial subjects to the racialization of Black Americans, for instance, scholars of Japan have been slow to build upon the theoretical

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<sup>24</sup> In addition to Eidsheim (2018), Obadike (2005), Rangan (2019), cited elsewhere in the dissertation, see Jennifer Lynn Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: NYU Press, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> For example, see William Bridges, *Playing in the Shadows: Fictions of Race and Blackness in Postwar Japanese Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), Anne McKnight, *Nakagami, Japan: Buraku and the Writing of Ethnicity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), and Yuichiro Onishi, *Transpacific Antiracism: Afro-Asian Solidarity in 20th-Century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Atsuko Ueda, *Language, Nation, Race: Linguistic Reform in Meiji Japan (1868-1912)* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 9-10.

and coalitional potential of these insights, as if avow that their own institutional legitimacy has long required (to quote Katherine McKittrick) "bifurcating" discrete racial histories "according to different identity markers and genealogies" so as to maintain the boundaries of separately knowable *areas*.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, the persistence of such studied silence would seem to affirm Junyoung Verónica Kim's suggestion that the "fetishization of area" in area studies "hinges on a disavowal of [the field's] own investment in race."<sup>28</sup>

However, in calling for a closer attention to racialization in Japan through the medium of vocal sound, it is crucial to refrain from reifying new categories of essential difference in turn. To be sure, one runs such a risk in linking the voice's corporeity too closely to the figure of an immutable "flesh," or else reproducing primitivist tropes of essentialized "rawness" that so often serve to fetishize the realm of orality among minoritized populations.<sup>29</sup> As such, it is worth channeling Anne Anlin Cheng's proposal to decouple racialized markers like skin color from their presumed attachment to the "intractable" qualities of the flesh, and attend to them instead as labile interfaces between surface and depth, identification and ascription, through which race is constructed and experienced.<sup>30</sup> In this regard, the *niku* of *nikusei* might be better translated as

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<sup>27</sup> Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 28.

<sup>28</sup> Junyoung Verónica Kim, "Epistemology Research Forum," in *Tactics and Theories for a Global Asias Praxis*, eds. Tina Chen and Charlotte Eubanks (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, Forthcoming).

<sup>29</sup> Here I am attentive to Hortense Spillers' efforts to decouple the body from the flesh, and Alexander Weheliye's reading of this move as a gesture to "reclaim the atrocity of the flesh as a pivotal arena for the politics emanating from different traditions of the oppressed." To this task, both are careful to separate a fetishization of the flesh as a container of "unmitigated agency" from the project of theorizing the flesh as both a site of extralegal violence and dehumanization as well as an excess that points to "future anterior freedoms and new genres of humanity." See Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 2, 130. See also Hortense J. Spillers, "'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe': An American Grammar Book," in *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). However, given that this dissertation does not currently lend its structure to a thorough engagement with the specificity and substance of Spillers' intervention, I refrain from invoking the flesh as an interpretative frame in discussing the voice's corporeal quality.

<sup>30</sup> Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13.

"skin"—as in Rey Chow's theorization of sonic "skin tones" or Pooja Rangan's notion of the "skin of the voice"—if we read skin not as a manifestation of fixed biological essence, but as a mutable site of negotiation subject to the material vagaries of mediation and (re)framing. In so doing, it might then be possible to attend to the voice's phonic matter without reducing it to the expressive disclosure of an unaltered or unalterable body.

### *From Expression to Articulation*

Echoing Eidsheim, Amanda Weidman writes: "Voices are constructed not only by those who produce them but by those who interpret, circulate, and reanimate them: by the communities of listeners, publics, and public spaces in which they can resonate and by the technologies . . . that make them audible."<sup>31</sup> To this, one might add that the inverse is also true; insofar as a public and the people within it can be thought to "resonate," voices operate not only as constructions but as constructive forces in themselves, able to transform social relations at the intersection of sound, language, and the body. Yet for this very reason, the voice is often invoked in vernacular idioms that trade its material textures for the smoother surfaces of metaphor. For example, it is common in Anglophone discourse to associate the voice with the direct expression of subjective agency; to "voice" one's opinion is to render one's inmost thoughts purely manifest in speech, while "voice" in its nominal form is likewise accepted as metonymic of a discretely-individuated subject (as in a "dissenting voice") with concomitant and equally-distributed powers of enunciation in the public sphere. Rather than posing a hurdle to the task of self-expression, in other words, the voice is often framed as a transparent conduit through which the individual or collective self can assert its immediate, unalloyed presence in discourse. Meanwhile, the realm of silence is by this measure equated to a lack of voice, and thus a relinquishing or deprivation of

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<sup>31</sup> Amanda Weidman, "Anthropology and Voice," *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2014): 45.

agency. To be voiceless is to be powerless: in want of an expressive identity that must either be rediscovered through self-reflection or bestowed by some benevolent third party.

In this capacity, the metaphors of the voice often serve as a cipher for a mode of liberal humanism that places its faith not only in public speech as a domain of transparent exchange between discrete and fully-formed subjects, but also in the fictive notion that such *a priori* wholeness is possible to begin with. Indeed, to invoke the voice in this register is to posit a subject that precedes social and political definition, and to thereby elide the scenes of sensory interpellation and recognition through which subjectivity becomes (un)thinkable in the first place. In other words, what the voice's metonymic reduction obscures are the material relations of power and mediation that structure the "phonic economy" of the public sphere: the modes of selection and filtration through which certain kinds of voices are produced, amplified, and circulated at the expense of others via technologies of performance, recording, and broadcast. Just as crucially, however, this reduction also silences the very agency that the *sounding* voice can exert in these settings, especially when it comes to techniques of disidentification and opacity that might challenge the selective biases of public sensibility. As a result, when seemingly "voiceless" actors (those who fail or refuse to evince a legible *logos* of identity) intervene upon the presumed transparency of public speech, they are often bracketed off as noise—as "audible difference," or "sound that can't be recuperated as voice."<sup>32</sup> In short, as Asma Abbas puts it, "liberalism is tolerant of abundant speech as long as it does not have to take into account voices it does not understand."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> On noise as "audible difference," see Mack Hagoood, *Hush: Media and Sonic Self-Control* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 6-7. On the "phonic economy" of mediated sound and noise as "sound that can't be recuperated as voice," see Charles Bernstein, *Attack of the Difficult Poems: Essays and Inventions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 110.

<sup>33</sup> Asma Abbas, "Voice Lessons: Suffering and the Liberal Sensorium," *Theory and Event* 13.2 (2010).

Moreover, this framing of the voice as a direct expression of interior selfhood recalls what Jacques Derrida has identified as a pervasive phonocentrism in (and beyond) the Western metaphysical tradition. In this paradigm, he argues, speech is privileged as a site of unmediated self-presence, where the subject discovers and forms itself in an intimate feedback loop of "auto-affection" between voice and ear, free of recourse to external signs. As such, the voice (*phoné*), which Derrida glosses as speech, serves as a pure vessel for the self's own inner discourse (*logos*)—its identity and interiority.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, writing (*écriture*, extending in turn to other forms of mediatic expression) is reduced to second-order representation, insofar as the sense of auto-affection between speech and self is "broken when, instead of hearing myself speak, I see myself write or gesture."<sup>35</sup> While devaluing writing, then, what emerges from this binary is a logocentrism that prevents the voice from signifying anything other than its own perceived transparency, whereby any trace of unassimilated materiality—or "phonic substance," for Fred Moten—becomes a perversion of the voice's originary function.<sup>36</sup>

Developing upon Derrida's insights, Karatani Kōjin has observed an analogous strain of phonocentrism in the eighteenth-century writings of Japanese "nativist" (*kokugaku*) scholars like Motoori Norinaga, who, in seeking to disaggregate a realm of native Japanese culture from the influence of the Sinosphere, drew a distinction between the foreign *écriture* of the Sinitic writing system and the native Japanese language as it expressed itself through speech and phonetic script. In this dyadic framing, the voice served as the vessel of Japan's originary ethnocultural endowment, capable of reanimating the self-presence of prelapsarian tradition through the oral

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<sup>34</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 20.

<sup>35</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. Leonard Lawlor (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 80.

<sup>36</sup> Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 39.



"spirit of words" (*kotodama*).<sup>37</sup> In turn, scholars like Harry Harootunian have explicated the influence of nativist hermeneutics on the modern discourse of Japanese ethnic nationalism that reached its apogee in the interwar period, as well as their imbrication in the concurrent efforts of "native ethnologists" (*minzokugakusha*) to rediscover organic forms of pre-capitalist community in the oral bonds of regional folklore. Operative in these endeavors was an almost theological faith in the spiritual purity of pre-literate oral folkways—a faith Jonathan Sterne has likewise observed in the works of Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, Tsuboi Hideto has traced this strain of phonocentric nationalism in Japan through the poetics of interwar modernism, in which he identifies an internal shift away from the visual and print-based experimentalism of the 1920s toward an aesthetics of immediacy and transparency in the 1930s premised on a "return" (*kaiki*) to poetry's ancient origins in/as oral performance.<sup>39</sup> In this regard, if the splintered typography of avant-garde modernism lent visual form to the fractured subjectivity of a Westernized Japan, then the sonorous and rhythmic continuities of "song" (*uta*) bespoke the promise of reconnecting the body of the nation (*kokutai*) to the spiritual *logos* of its primeval past. However, to the extent that the voice was meant to serve in this sense as a transparent conduit—a "vanishing mediator" between the nation and its ethnic spirit—Tsuboi argues that this vocal turn could only result in an ironic form of silencing; at the height of state censorship, a cast of prominent poets and performers lent their voices to wartime radio broadcasts of "patriotic poetry" (*aikoku-shi*): a series of tightly-curated programs designed to engender a unified sense of affective attachment to the nation and its imperial effort.

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<sup>37</sup> Karatani Kōjin, "Nationalism and *Écriture*," *Surfaces* 5 (1995): 1-25.

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Sterne, "The Theology of Sound: A Critique of Orality," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 36 (2011): 207-225. See also Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>39</sup> See Tsuboi Hideto, *Koe no shukusai: Nihon kindaiishi to sensō* (Nagoya: University of Nagoya Press, 1997).

In this denouement, Tsuboi suggests, any surplus "breaths of passion and pathos" that were earlier evident in the materiality of modernist verse fell silent in the enunciation of the empire's totalizing self-presence.<sup>40</sup>

By joining Karatani's Derridean line of analysis to an Adornian critique of the interwar culture industry, Tsuboi presents a vital account of how the humanist romanticization of the voice that had previously serviced the ideals of Taishō democracy could be readily transposed into a fascist key. Yet if it follows that the voice ought not to be reduced to a merely transparent vector of expression, one is left to wonder how the songs, chants, and recitatives of this vocal turn might have *sounded* in ways that either abetted or complicated the state's ideological designs. Or indeed, how the ideals of fidelitous transmission and unified listenership that endeared radio poetry to state propaganda might have met with challenges in practice; as Akiko Takeyama and Ji Hee Jung note, for instance, early radio announcers had constantly to contend with the difficulty of conveying clear language via the technologies at hand, while the anxiousness with which NHK officials continually revised methods of aural discipline suggested modes of popular listening that were neither as docile nor as homogenous as the state had initially hoped.<sup>41</sup> However, while Tsuboi and Harootyan gesture to these frictions, their impulse to foreground the ideological enlistments of the voice over the vagaries of its public articulation seems ironically to re-affirm the very priorities of fidelity and transparency they aim to critique—thus subjecting the voice to yet another round of silencing in turn.

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<sup>40</sup> Tsuboi Hideto, "Modern Poetry, Popular Song, and their Dangerous Liaisons," trans. Alexander Murphy, *Japan Forum* 30:3 (2018): 332.

<sup>41</sup> See Takeyama Akiko, *Rajio no jidai: Rajio wa chanoma no shuyaku datta* (Kyoto: Sekai Shisōsha, 2002), and Ji Hee Jung, "Radio broadcasting and the politics of mass culture in transwar Japan" (PhD diss., UC San Diego, 2010). In the ensuing chapters, I also cite interwar critics and NHK officials like Okuya Kumao and Iba Takashi, who discuss (and lament) the ways in which the commercial recording industry in Japan had in fact outpaced public radio broadcasting in technological advancement by the early 1930s. See Chapters Two and Three.

In this way, a peculiar inattention to vocal sound can be observed on either side of the phonocentric critique. As Fred Moten argues, for instance, the Derridean critique of the voice as a symbol of self-presence often proceeds ironically by way of "an occlusion (of sound) that occurs sometimes in the name of a deconstruction of phonocentrism," but "which has at its heart a paradoxically phonocentric deafness."<sup>42</sup> That is, by focusing on the voice's symbolic valence at the expense of its sonic attributes, this mode of analysis runs the risk of muting the very dimensions of the voice that enliven its possibilities beyond a given order of signification: the capacities of phonic matter to lure the listener's attention away from inherited corpora of meaning toward the speculative corporeity of the voice itself. As obvious as such a move may seem, then, it is crucial to consider not only how and what the voice represents, but how it *sounds*, both as a medium in itself, and through the media technologies that distribute its resonance. For indeed, as Moten suggests, it is this mode of attunement that can draw the ear away from the voice as an index of "absolute individuation" (vis-à-vis subjectivity, agency, and interiority) and toward its function in "augment[ing] and differentiat[ing]" the extensive constellation of noises, rhythms, and resonant pressures that imbue the composition of the self.<sup>43</sup>

In a similar spirit, this study asks how a material history of vocal sounds can serve to challenge the voice's sense of originary wholeness with an ear to its many paths of becoming. To this end, however, it does not seek to privilege sound to the exclusion of the voice's other imbricated valences. Indeed, to borrow Brian Kane's figuration, the significance of the voice (*phoné*) is always in transit between sound, language, and the body (or *echos*, *logos*, and *topos* for Kane), but "is neither identical with the simple summation of its three terms, nor a subtraction to any single term." Rather, it is a "product of a constantly circulating displacement"

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<sup>42</sup> Moten, *In the Break*, 222.

<sup>43</sup> David S. Wallace, "Fred Moten's Radical Critique of the Present," *The New Yorker*, April 30, 2018. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/persons-of-interest/fred-motens-radical-critique-of-the-present>.

or "spacing" between the three, wherein the intervention of various *technê* (both technologies and bodily techniques) can foreground certain alignments at the expense of others.<sup>44</sup> Like the event of vocalization itself, then, the present study can be understood as an exercise in triangulating the various crossings—between sound and language, language and the body, and the body and sound—through which the voice emerges as a site of *articulation* in Stuart Hall's doubled use of the term: as a locus of enunciation whose seemingly organic unity betrays a contingent linkage of "distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness.'"<sup>45</sup> To wit, I am less concerned with the voice as a stand-in for any precise or pre-given form of subjectivity (whether at the level of the individual or the nation) than with tracing precisely how such formations take public shape through the vocal event itself—which is to say, through the articulation of difference.

### *Media, Technology, and Performance*

A central claim of this dissertation is that the interwar apprehension of vocal sound as a site of material and subjective invention was not simply *induced by* the phenomenal effects of mass sound media, but rather *articulated through* the aesthetic, political, and technical affordances of the latter. In one sense, that is, the efforts of Japanese writers to theorize the apparently ontological operations of sound technology—the dislocation of sound in time and space, the acousmatic estrangement of voice and body, and the revelation of the voice's phonic surplus over and against its communicative function—served in fact to mediate concerns that were closely tied to their colonial moment. Namely, owing to the dislocations of life and labor

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<sup>44</sup> See Brian Kane, "The Voice: A Diagnosis," *Polygraph* 25 (2015): 105. See also Brian Kane, "The Model Voice," in "Colloquy: Why Voice Now?" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68 (2015): 673.

<sup>45</sup> Stuart Hall, "On postmodernism and articulation: an interview with Stuart Hall," ed. Lawrence Grossberg, *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10:2 (1986): 53.

under colonial capitalism, the metropolitan soundscape came increasingly to resonate with a surplus of strange languages, accents, and cultural timbres—voices without places, or rather, voices *out of place*—whose sonorities reached the ear via circuits of regional and diasporic migration as often as they transited those of recording and broadcast. In another sense, meanwhile, many of the performers who sang through these circuits attracted fascination precisely insofar as they were able to channel the affordances of the new media to perform novel rearticulations of language, race, and nationality that bespoke the foregoing transits of empire, and thus exceeded the metropole's existing parameters of public expression. To the extent, then, that these migratory currents of surplus and displacement could be rendered literal (and audible) in the figure of the technological *acousmêtre*, many interwar writers used the discourse on mass sound media as a rhetorical ligature for expressing concern not only with the media technologies themselves, but over the larger sensory and social transformations of the body politic.

While writers like Shimizu Ikutarō and Hasegawa Nyozekan did so as a means of circumventing ever-stricter modes of public censorship, however, other media-theoretical accounts from the 1930s seemed to convey these deeper-seated social concerns at a more subconscious level, as if to betray the extent to which they had already been sublimated beyond the scope of their own immediate recognition. In these latter instances, one can identify what Raymond Williams describes as a process of "projection and reification" through which the "social organization" of a medium is abstracted to the point of becoming objectified within the properties of the medium itself.<sup>46</sup> In such cases, he suggests, an over-emphasis on the seemingly neutral and "independent properties" of a given medium risks eliding the social, technical, and institutional dimensions of its composition and function. Without sufficient attention to the latter,

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<sup>46</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 160.

then, what results is a certain formalism that might prevent such critique from militating against the status quo, or in the case of interwar Japan, against the technologized momentum of fascism.

Yet even in interwar accounts that tend toward this mode of formalism (a companion, perhaps, to the aesthetic modernism of the period), one can still tune a symptomatic ear to the unspoken concerns that seem to guide specific avenues of scrutiny, and which therefore betray insights that go beyond the mere registration of media effects. Indeed, to paraphrase Steven Connor, "technologies of the voice" and the discourses around them can often be heard as "actualizations of fantasies and desires" which both predate and persist through the "actual technologies themselves." And as such, both can be understood more in desiring and speculative terms than in neutral or static ones—"not of Weberian disenchantment of the world," for Connor, "but of re-enchantment."<sup>47</sup> Here, however, what is true of desire is true of anxiety as well; for as many intellectuals as there were in Japan who sensed inventive and even revolutionary potential in the polyphonous, technologized oralities of the era, just as many heard in them the baleful effects of capitalism's excess. Against the commoditized and "mechanized" sounds of jazz and popular music, writers like Nagai Kafū eulogized the more organic orality of local folkways, while the increasingly cosmopolitan soundscape of mass culture prompted the pursuit in music and folk studies of a more authentic "Japanese voice." In short, for the poet Kawaji Ryūkō, what many listeners ultimately heard in mass sound media, for all of its sensuous pleasures, was a gap: a sense of alienation or "estrangement" (*hedatari*) that demanded a return of "the real thing."<sup>48</sup>

But if writers like Kawaji, Hasegawa and others agreed that radio and commercial recording effected an unnatural splintering of the voice from its embodied locus of subjectivity,

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<sup>47</sup> Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 40.

<sup>48</sup> "Iikani ii ongaku demo rekōdo wo tsūjite kiku mono wa honmono wa yohodo no hedatari ga aru." Kawaji Ryūkō, "Kodomo to chikuonki, sono hoka," *Shinchō* (March 1924): 31.

what fewer mentioned—and what this study therefore seeks to address—were the ways in which this apparently natural, prior unity had to be continually (re)constructed under colonial capitalism, and the modes of sensory and linguistic entrainment that its maintenance demanded. In this regard, I consider the efforts of poets and singers like Kitahara Hakushū and Terui Eizō to craft radiophonic forms of recitation suited to forging a suitably "national" poetry through the voice, as well as the work of scholars like Kanetsune Kiyosuke to explicate the purportedly unique features of the "Japanese voice" at the intersection of music, phonology, and psychoacoustics. At the same time, however, I situate these endeavors within a metropolitan economy of sound in which the features of accent, intonation and rhythm served as vital currencies of ethnic and racial identification, and where the failure to successfully perform the prescribed unity of sound, language, and the body could result in ostracization or even death for migrant populations, as was the case in the aftermath of the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923.

At its root, then, this dissertation is concerned with the aesthetic and political significance of the voice in Japan at the conjunctural crossing of empire and mass culture, and the ways in which vocal performance across poetry, music, and public speech served to mediate the stakes of that conjuncture in the metropole. To the degree that such a study could be framed as a media history of vocal sound in Japan, then, it follows in the spirit of works like Yoshimi Shun'ya's *Capitalism of the voice* ("*Koe*" no *shihonshugi*) and Kerim Yasar's *Electrified Voices*, the latter of which builds insightfully upon the former in tracing a cultural history of sound technology in Japan from the start of the Meiji period to 1945. Unlike these works, however, the present study does not cast sound technology as its main protagonist, nor does it aspire in its periodization to encompass the epochal advent of modernity in Japan or elsewhere. Rather, it seeks to foreground the role of vocal performance at a pivotal moment of social, economic, and technological

ferment, and to consider how specific *technê* of vocalization served across a range of intermedial settings—stages, studios, and streetscapes—to sensitize listeners to new aesthetic and political formations that might find articulation therein.

In other words, to paraphrase the subtitle of *Electrified Voices*, I am less concerned with how sound technology "shaped modern Japan" than with how the sonic and social practices of Japan's interwar moment shaped (and were shaped by) the technologies that rendered them publicly audible. In drawing this distinction with Yoshimi and Yasar's work, however, I do not aim to cast either as technologically "deterministic," as both employ great nuance in showing how technological change can unfold both within and beyond the social matrix of human agency.<sup>49</sup> Rather, I do so to highlight the generative potential of theorizing technologies of performance and sound media from the specificities of this historical conjuncture, and in drawing from them a conceptual grammar that might nuance the terms that have long rooted media theory in the provinces of Anglo-European experience. In this regard, I echo Marc Steinberg and Alexander Zahlten's suggestion in *Media Theory in Japan* "that different media-cultures give rise to distinct forms of media theorization," but with the crucial addendum that theorization be framed as an active endeavor in both a discursive and practical sense.<sup>50</sup> That is, if we can regard theorization as a mode of "speculative practice"—where as-yet virtual forms of being-in-the-world can be adumbrated, rehearsed, or granted an audience—then we might treat the singers and poets discussed herein as media theorists in their own right, intent on sounding out different

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<sup>49</sup> Kerim Yasar, *Electrified Voices: How the Telephone, Phonograph, and Radio Shaped Modern Japan, 1868-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 9-13.

<sup>50</sup> Marc Steinberg and Alexander Zahlten, eds. *Media Theory in Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 7.



understandings of subjectivity and social practice in relation to a shifting material ecology of cultural production.<sup>51</sup>

It is also with this speculative approach in mind that I seek to write against the impulse to retrospectively frame instances of media practice in interwar Japan, especially with regard to the radio, as rehearsals for their effective enlistment in the apparatus of state control. Of course, this is not to suggest that the sonic operations of state power are absent from my analysis. Indeed, one of the central concerns of this study is how the voice and its technologies functioned to encode "Japaneseness" in ways that could be constantly recalibrated against the vagaries of imperial expansion. Following much work in empire studies, however, I argue that the *techné* of imperial rule are often compromised as much by their own internal contradictions and inconsistencies as they are from outside resistance. In the case of radio, for instance, Japanese state officials sought from the mid-1920s onward for public broadcasting to serve as a transparent voice for the nation-body (*kokutai*): a medium singularly capable of codifying the sound of the national language (*kokugo*) and investing it with a sense of ethnonational pathos in turn. Yet as the NHK network grew to encompass (and broadcast) the wider extent of the *kokutai*'s polyphonous composition, listeners in the metropole came increasingly to regard the voice of the radio not as a conduit of self-presence, but as an uncanny *acousmètre*: a voice at once recognizable yet possessed of rhythms, accents, and tonal colors that seemed distinctly "other" to the *logos* of Japan's ethnonational endowment.<sup>52</sup> In this sense, if any sober account of

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<sup>51</sup> I borrow the term "speculative practice" from Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's discussion of the collaborative intellectual activity of the undercommons. See Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 110.

<sup>52</sup> In Chapter One, I elaborate on what Michel Chion, Mladen Dolar, and others describe as the potential of the radio's uncanny *acousmètre* to likewise abet the phantasmal authority of the state—as in the analogy of the Pythagorean screen or "His master's voice." However, I also resist the assumption that such theoretical potentials were necessarily realized or observed in practice, insofar as few accounts from the period actually associate the radio's acousmatic voice with any real sense of numinous or over-awing

imperial governance reads as a record of its inherent contradictions and dissonances, the radio allowed these dissonances to vibrate in real-time through the very larynx of the *kokutai* itself.

Moreover, what dynamic and polyphonous frictions could be gleaned from state media could be heard everywhere in the commercial sounds of mass culture. Across the 1920s and 30s, Japan's fledgling recording companies (Columbia, Nippon Victor, and Teichiku) produced and imported fleets of records stamped with genre labels reflecting the transnational scope of the industry: jazz, blues, lieds, folk songs, *naniwabushi*, *ryūkōka*, *chanson*, tango, Hawai'ian foxtrots, and "continental melodies." Where the exponents of fascist corporatism in Japan sought over the 1930s to obtain "capitalism without its 'excess,'"<sup>53</sup> to use Slavoj Žižek's oft-cited phrase, the decade found the urban soundscape pulsing with the rhythmic signatures of jazz and popular song—a soundtrack, for some critics, to the unstable surplus of global capitalism, and for others, the anomie and alienation of the modern *gesellschaft*; "If the standard beat of our music mirrors that of the heart," wrote the critic Shioiri Kamesuke, "the syncopation (of jazz) is closer to arrhythmia (*kettai*)."<sup>54</sup> However, while the majority of interwar critics were keen to map the lineaments of popular music onto the circuits of global capital, many of the performers I discuss in this dissertation—a cast of Japanese, Japanese American, and Black entertainers and recording artists—seemed better-attuned to the capacity of vocal performance to generate something in fruitful excess of those circuits: an alternate map of counter-melodic intimacies, coalitional potentials, or for Moten, a "critique of value, of private property, of the sign."<sup>55</sup>

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authority. Rather, a high number of accounts frame the radio's *atopical* voice as evidence of the state's detachment from the sentiments of the "people" (*minshū*). See Chapter One and Chapter Four.

<sup>53</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 210.

<sup>54</sup> Shioiri Kamesuke, *Jazu ongaku* (Tokyo: Keibunsha, 1929), 21. It should be noted that Shioiri, one of Japan's first champions of jazz, delivers this comment in jest, though his characterizations of jazz's rhythmic provenance in African "folk music" (*min'yō*) are not without their primitivist reductions.

<sup>55</sup> Moten, *In the Break*, 12.

It is with an ear to these future-anterior visions, then, that I adopt a mode of analytical attunement in this study similar to what Charles Bernstein terms "close listening," or a careful attention to the auditory dimensions of the performed word and the semiotics of the voice's "extralexical" features in both written and transduced form—a method approaching Jason Camlot's "audiotextual interpretation" of recorded poetry.<sup>56</sup> To do so, though, is not to set myself the task of grammaticalizing the voice's phonic plenitude, nor of assigning discrete values to each recorded or written gesture in a given source. Rather, it is an attempt to ground the following analysis in a simultaneously open and rigorous ethic of listening that might allow it to trace the cultural politics of the moment through the inventive workings of the voice itself: to locate more oblique movements of "extralexical" agency along the contours of the voice's material surfaces, and in its frictionous reverberations across the surfaces of studio and stage, shellac and celluloid film. Through this approach, in other words, I am interested in foregrounding modes of sonic agency that extend past the voice's reduction to self-presence, or to borrow from Anne Anlin Cheng, in listening for "the immanent possibilities of personhood" that arise from "its frightening-yet-seductive affinity for objectness."<sup>57</sup>

Just as crucially, however, I do so with an ear to instances where voices elude audible apprehension in recorded or printed form, but which nonetheless register their effects in moments of discursive uncertainty: for instance, when the language of a male metropolitan critical discourse encounters the limit of its descriptive or explanatory power against the overheard voice of the colonial migrant or the vernacular of the "modern girl." In these moments of textual opacity—where words fail to capture or translate a certain fugitive sounding—one can

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<sup>56</sup> See Charles Bernstein, ed., *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). See also Jason Camlot, *Phonopoetics: The Making of Early Literary Recordings* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

<sup>57</sup> Cheng, *Second Skin*, 121.

sense, as Miyako Inoue puts it, the echo of an agency that "resists the liberal notion of the (speaking) subject," and thus reveals the "political possibilities" of an attunement to what resonates "beyond observable and tape-recordable 'realities.'"<sup>58</sup> As such, "close listening" likewise entails listening not only for what sounds can be rendered graphically legible in writing or heard clearly as audio signals, but for those which might register only as overheard murmurs or perturbations in the audiotextual record. In such instances of apparent silence or invisibility, to listen closely in this sense is to ask what the ear can still see.

### *Chapter Summary*

The following four chapters span a period that begins roughly with the end of the First World War in 1918 and closes with the commencement of the Pacific War at the turn of 1942. In part, this periodization serves the goal of historical commensurability; by adopting a time-frame that affords recognition in Anglo-European discourse as the "interwar" era, I intend for the histories recounted herein to be read as integral to the global experience of capitalist modernity across the 1920s and 30s. However, if the use of "interwar" might imply an elision of Japan's military overtures on the Asian continent in the 1930s (punctuated by the empire's incursion into Manchuria in 1931 and its full-scale invasion of China in 1937), I maintain a focus on this period as one of militarized imperial expansion, in which residents of the metropole found themselves not simply between wars, but amidst escalating scales of conflict and capitalist crisis. At the same time, following scholars like Satō Takumi, Suzuki Kenji, and Miriam Silverberg, I argue that framing the period in these terms is equally crucial to understanding the cultural politics of vocalicity, performance and mass (sound) media that unfolded therein.

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<sup>58</sup> Miyako Inoue, *Vicarious Language: Gender and Linguistic Modernity in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 73-74.

In Chapter One, "The Voice of a Stranger," I introduce this conjunctural relation of colonialism and mass sound media by attending to a unique strain of media criticism that developed in the mid-1930s in response to a state ban on "groundless rumors" (*ryūgen higo*). Arguing that this law stifled independent expression in favor of state-run radio broadcasting, a diverse cast of intellectuals defiantly embraced "groundless rumors" as a subsonic voice of the "people" (*minshū*) whose aural sensibility they opposed to the foreign intrusions of wireless sound. At the same time, however, this critique belied a darker history of rumor and aurality that traced back to the violent aftermath of the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake. Therein, rumors of a Korean uprising in the city led police and vigilantes to massacre thousands of colonial migrants, relying in turn on ad-hoc "accent tests" to distinguish foreign dissidents who were otherwise unmarked by phenotypic difference. In response, the state moved swiftly to promote the radio as a larynx for the national body that would prevent such errant, disembodied voices from spreading in the future. As I argue, however, it was precisely this convergence of rumor and sonic surveillance that would serve to define the racialized contours not only of the radio's vocalic sphere, but also of the progressive critique that would oppose it in the years to follow.

Against this backdrop of colonial crisis, I then explore the divergent efforts of poets, linguists, and state officials to cultivate the radio's emergent listening public. In Chapter Two, "Enchantment of Politics, Poetics of Enchantment," I turn to the poetry recitation movement: a prominent consortium of poets and rhetoricians who turned to oral recitation in order to lyricize the turbulent rhythms and sonorities of the post-quake public sphere, and to the emergent medium of public radio broadcasting as a means of harmonizing these intensities into a widely-resonant voice of the "people." In so doing, however, the advocates of radio poetry found their efforts tied to those of state officials in shaping the nation's newly aural public via a radiogenic

poetics of vernacular language and vocal affect. Over the ensuing decade, then, I argue that the formal contours of radio poetry came to naturalize, or *enchant* the politics involved in reconstructing the post-quake public sphere by staging the state's curtailments of audible speech as steps toward a greater degree of poetic refinement and public resonance.

At the same time, the rise of jazz and popular music in the 1930s pitted such efforts against a metropolitan mass culture infused with newly audible articulations of sexual and racial difference, as well as a network of vocality that was increasingly transnational in scope. In Chapter Three, "Voices of a Different Shade," I explore this ferment with a focus on Fumiko "Alice" Kawahata (1916-2007), a Japanese American jazz singer who found success in Japan and throughout the empire across the mid-30s as the so-called "amber-colored Josephine Baker." Taking this appellation as a point of departure, I draw upon Pooja Rangan's notion of the "skin of the voice" to consider what the mercurial transits of Kawahata's vocal persona reveal about the audiovisual contours of race and diasporic difference at the height of Japan's late-imperial jazz age, and how such contours might be variously traced across the translingual performances of Japanese and Black American recording artists like Tokuichi "Dick" Mine, Midge Williams, and A.L. King. In so doing, I argue that these synesthetic liaisons of vocal difference not only bespoke the intrinsic contradictions and limits of inclusion within Japan's imperial culture industry, but likewise signaled discursive gaps in the former where latent formations of transpacific intimacy and even coalitional possibility could be heard.

In the fourth and final chapter, "Heard and Unheard Sounds," I then address these foregoing developments through the audiovisual contours of the Japanese language itself. Confronted with the cosmopolitan strains of jazz age modernism on the one hand and the domineering sensibilities of NHK's state-run "literary arts" (*bungei*) programming on the other, a

growing number of critics and scholars in the 1930s voiced concerns over the perceived endangerment of more "authentic" (*honmono*) voicescapes rooted in the sounds and rhythms of everyday life. As such, just as critics of state broadcasting came ironically to valorize the folkic orality of "groundless rumors" in the mid-30s, the burgeoning fields of folk studies and "native ethnology" (*minzokugaku*) turned likewise to regional folk songs (*min'yō*) and other oral traditions as a means of re-acquainting the masses with an autochthonous vocal culture of Japan.

With an ear to these currents, I turn to the work of Kanetsune Kiyosuke (1885-1957), an eccentric musicologist and critic who devoted much of the 1930s to researching the musical, linguistic, and acoustical properties of what he termed the "Japanese voice" (*nippon no koe*). To this end, Kanetsune developed novel methods of oscillographic analysis in order to visualize the waveforms of Japanese vocal recordings, and to thereby elucidate what he heard as hitherto imperceptible continuities between song and language, language and labor, and labor and social life. If such a project seemed to resonate in part with the era's more insidious strains of ethnolinguistic nativism, however, I argue that Kanetsune's research and critical writings had less to do with pursuing an oft-held "return to Japan" (*Nihon e no kaiki*) than with cultivating a more holistic attunement to the "differently pitched technological oralities" of his present moment, and to the audible publics yet to be formed therein.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE VOICE OF A STRANGER

"The street renders public. . . . And yet, what is published in the street is not really divulged; it is said, but this 'it is said' is borne by no word ever really pronounced, just as rumors are reported without anyone transmitting them and because the one who transmits them accepts being no one. Hence there results a perilous irresponsibility."

—Maurice Blanchot, *Everyday Speech*, 1969

"With rumor, there is no responsible party.  
That responsibility is assumed by what we call History."

—Miki Kiyoshi, "On Rumor," 1940

On the evening of November 25, 1940, the novelist Nagai Kafū opened his diary to record a strange bit of gossip. Overheard at a hot spring hotel in the coastal town of Atami, it concerned one of the civilian culprits involved in the failed military coup d'état of 1936, thenceforth referred to as the February 26th Incident.<sup>1</sup> After serving his sentence, the offender in question was released from detention, after which he traveled from Tokyo to Atami and checked into the Star Hotel. Over the next two weeks, he indulged nightly in lavish parties with "no less than ten *geisha*" on hand at a time, sent telegrams to various "famous friends" on expensive stationary, and generally carried on like a "debauched millionaire" while local police turned a blind eye.<sup>2</sup> What's more, the inn apparently granted their guest a dramatically reduced rate on his

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<sup>1</sup> The February 26th Incident refers to an attempt by a right-wing faction of young Imperial Army officers (and a smaller group of civilian co-conspirators) to seize control of the government and military through a coup d'état. On February 26th, 1936, the faction seized several municipal buildings in Tokyo, attacked the offices of the *Asahi shinbun*, and killed several prominent officials. The ensuing standoff lasted for four days before being suppressed. For a comprehensive account, see Ben-Ami Shillony, *Revolt in Japan: The Young Officers and the February 26, 1936 Incident* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Nagai Kafū, *Danchōtei nichijō*, Part 5 (1940-1944), in *Kafū zenshū*, Vol. 23, ed. Nagai Sōkichi (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1963), 104.



room and meals, leading some patrons to wonder if there were not in fact government funds involved in financing the sojourn. "If honest, tax-paying citizens wound up footing the bill," one muttered, "this country has surely sunken into dark times."<sup>3</sup>

Kafū relished stories such as this—incidental snatches of conversation, often laced with scandal, romance, or quotidian anxiety—mixed in with other valuable news of the day. Brief but detailed accounts of the "word on the street" (*gaidan-roku*) populate the pages of his diary before and after the November 25th entry, recording everything from rumors about impending conflict with the U.S. to speculation about the disappearance of *umeboshi* from store shelves. Faced with ever-tightening strictures on public speech and information, Kafū clearly knew, as Yoshimi Shun'ya puts it, "that the whispers on the street presented a communication network which penetrated far closer to the core of wartime affairs than media such as the newspapers or the radio."<sup>4</sup> More importantly, however, these whispers seemed to offer Kafū and his contemporaries a mode of latent discourse that could develop in place of a public sphere of critique that had been so thoroughly stifled by the censors—to bespeak what the critic Nii Itaru termed the "voices of the voiceless."<sup>5</sup>

But if this sphere of rumor and gossip could indeed possess such power, it faced a formidable rival in the form of the radio broadcast. By the eve of the February 26th Incident, more than half of the households in Tokyo owned a radio receiver, to say nothing of those who gathered in neighborhood squares and in front of shop windows to listen to news, sporting

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>4</sup> Yoshimi Shun'ya, *"Koe" no shihonshugi: Denwa, rajio, chikuonki no shakaishi* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1995), 10. For the quoted English translation, see Yoshimi Shun'ya, "Preface to Yoshimi Shun'ya's *Voice Capitalism*," trans. Helen Elizabeth O'Horan, *Japan Forum*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (2018), 380.

<sup>5</sup> Nii Itaru, *Machi no tetsugaku* (Tokyo: Seinen Shobō, 1941), 28.

events, and entertainment programs.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the state's public monopoly over the airwaves via the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (*Nippon hōsō kyōkai*, or NHK) was designed to ensure that, in the event of a national emergency, the government could swiftly move to militate against the spread of any information that might engender social unrest. As such, when the February 26th Incident seized Tokyo, state officials turned immediately to the airwaves to announce emergency measures prohibiting the dissemination of "groundless rumors" (*ryūgen higo*) in the name of defending the public order.<sup>7</sup> As the philosopher Tosaka Jun observed, however, the targeted realm of "groundless rumor, gossip, and falsehood" came effectively to encompass "any socially stimulating information coming from outside the official state news organ," which meant that even critical essays and print journalism could be classified as such.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the "emergency" pronouncement of martial law following February 26th left the radio as the de facto larynx of the state, and all other critical voices subject to surveillance or outright suspension.

In the years that followed, then, a larger confrontation between state ideology, mass media, and public expression found its figural shorthand in the rivalry between the voice of radio and the voice of rumor. Under pressures of censorship, however, this discourse manifested not in overtly political terms, but rather through a network of theories concerning the pernicious effects of mass sound media on the aurality and vocal culture of the "people." In particular, critics of state-monopolized broadcasting turned to an oblique mode of commentary on what the composer R. Murray Schafer would later call "schizophonia" (the split-voice), or the capacity of devices

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<sup>6</sup> By the end of 1935, there were nearly 2.5 million radio subscribers nationwide, accounting for 36.8 percent of the country's urban population, and more than half of the households in Tokyo; at the close of 1934, 49.8 percent of Tokyo households held subscriptions. By 1940, the number had climbed to 75.6 percent. See the appendix section (*zuhyō/tōkei*) in Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai ed., *Nihon hōsōshi*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1965). On street-level listening practices, see Yamaguchi Makoto, "Kiku shūkan, sono jōken: Gaitō rajio to ōdiensu no furumai," *Mass Communication Kenkyū* 63 (2003): 144-61.

<sup>7</sup> "Fuon bunsho torishimari," *Osaka jiji shinpō*, June 14, 1936.

<sup>8</sup> Tosaka Jun, *Gendai Nihon no shisō tairitsu* (1937), in *Tosaka Jun zenshū*, Vol. 5 (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1967), 333.

like the radio to estrange vocal sounds from their places and bodies of origin, and to drown out or replace the rhythms and timbres distinct to local life-ways with mechanical sounds from elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, many heralded the very media that the state declared "groundless"—rumors, hearsay, "whispers on the street" (*gaitō no sasayaki*)—as a means of attuning to what Yoshimi describes as an authentic "vocal culture grounded in place."<sup>10</sup>

By the same token, however, this equation harbored a disquieting resonance within the wider context of the imperial metropole. Indeed, the very invocation of "groundless rumors" would have called to mind the aftermath of the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake, when a rash of rumors alleging violence among colonial migrants and political radicals led to a devastating massacre of Korean and Chinese residents, labor organizers, and others who were mistaken as such. Therein, bands of local vigilantes subjected passersby to impromptu pronunciation tests in order to identify, through vocal sound, the colonial strangers in their midst. In these instances, to be overheard as "schizophonic"—a body possessed of a voice from elsewhere—was to be apprehended as an external threat to the social order, and therefore marked for execution. With this in mind, one can detect unspoken yet unmistakable overtones of colonial anxiety in the subsequent critique of radio's sonic alterity, and the attendant appeal to a native "vocal culture" inscribed in the circulation of rumors.

This ironic recurrence, I argue, points to a fundamental yet overlooked aporia at the heart of Japan's interwar media discourse: that is, the extent to which the critique of radio's itinerant, "schizophonic" character served to reanimate a mode of paranoid listening—what I refer to henceforth as *overhearing*—that had previously targeted the voice of the colonial migrant. As

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<sup>9</sup> See R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1977), 88-91. Yoshimi Shun'ya likewise invokes Schafer's term in reference to Kafū's aversion to the radio. See Yoshimi, "*Koe*" no *shihonshugi*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Yoshimi, "*Koe*" no *shihonshugi*, 21. For English, see Yoshimi, "Preface," 386.

such, even progressive critics of state media in the late 1930s could not help but re-inscribe a distinctly colonial logic of sonic difference, and with it a mode of aural surveillance to which they were now subject. In order to account for this aporia, however, it is necessary to trace the process through which the deeper anxieties of colonial estrangement—the dislocations of social life and labor under colonial capitalism—first drew apprehension through the medium of vocal sound, and later found sublimated articulation within the broader critique of sound media. In so doing, I hope to illustrate how this sublimation allowed intellectuals in the late 1930s to enlist rumor as a resistant voice of the "people" without fully reckoning with the colonial violence that had produced such a voice in the first place.

### *I. Between Silence and Speech*

Before the February 26th Incident could be grasped as a pivotal moment in the trajectory of interwar fascism in Japan, it registered in public discourse as a profoundly significant media event—or more specifically, a media blackout. During the four days in which the insurrection gripped the center of Tokyo, the government declared martial law and moved to limit the transmission of all relevant information to official channels of communication. This order led to a freeze on newspaper reporting, leaving Tokyo residents to rely primarily on state-run radio announcements to get a sense of what was happening in the heart of the capital. However, the vague nature of these updates created an information vacuum that filled quickly with rumors and gossip surrounding the incident. In response, presiding authorities took to the airwaves to warn citizens against "being led astray by groundless rumors spread through sources other than the radio."<sup>11</sup> Here, though these "other sources" went unnamed, observers were quick to realize what was occurring: under the pretense of preventing a rumor-induced mass panic, a sweeping effort

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<sup>11</sup> Satō Takumi, *Ryūgen no media-shi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko, 2019), 236.

to delegitimize non-state news organs was now underway, and would persist well past the state of emergency.

Meanwhile, many recognized that the precedent for such a move was already in place. As Tosaka Jun recalled, for instance, reporters covering the Eastern stock market crash for the *Asahi shinbun* had already been forced to resign under the accusation of "dispensing groundless rumors," while the perpetrators of the February 26th Incident had also attacked the *Asahi* offices with similar grounds of objection.<sup>12</sup> As such, a conflation of misinformation and print media that had been fermenting prior to 1936 now simply found occasion to be written into law. In June, the Diet passed the "Law for the Special Control of Inflammatory Literature," prohibiting the publication, sale, and circulation of "secretive" written materials that aimed to "disturb the peace."<sup>13</sup> As expected, Tosaka noted that the law's language largely echoed the government's earlier denouncements of "groundless rumors," only now with the term "objectionable writings" in place of the former. So transparent was this sleight of hand, he remarked, that the legislation would be better referenced in conversation as the "Groundless Rumors Law."<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the law proved ruthlessly effective; in the months that followed, Tosaka observed an "intellectual world plunged into a murky darkness," in which the state's measures to "protect the public peace" effected a gag order not only on discussion of the incident itself, but on "most political or ideological discourse in general." The "public," as he put it, "were now treated as spies."<sup>15</sup>

Under these circumstances, the radio's dominion over public information expanded apace. In July, the newly-formed cabinet under Hirota Kōki arranged the "Cabinet Information Committee" (*Naikaku jōhō iinkai*) as a centralized liaison for the information and propaganda

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<sup>12</sup> Tosaka, *Gendai Nihon*, 333-34.

<sup>13</sup> "Fuon bunsho torishimari," *Osaka jiji shinpō*, June 14, 1936.

<sup>14</sup> Tosaka, *Gendai Nihon*, 258.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 258, 333.

directives of the various government ministries, while the Communications Ministry moved to increase NHK's overall reach by boosting the signal of the Tokyo station and opening new branch stations throughout the home islands.<sup>16</sup> Here too, however, many had seen such an eventuality on the horizon for years. In the decade that had passed since NHK's formation in 1926, the radio's scope and influence had grown largely in attendance of the state's ideological imperatives; in anticipation of Emperor Hirohito's enthronement in November 1928, NHK worked expeditiously to build a national relay network in order to broadcast the public accession ceremonies throughout the country. That year, radio receiver subscriptions surpassed a half million units, offering an early illustration of the radio's capacity to form an imagined "wireless community" of national scale.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, the milestone of one million subscriptions arrived in the months following the Manchurian Incident in September 1931, owing to the coordinated efforts of the military, foreign affairs, and communications ministries to mobilize the radio as an instrument in building public support for the nation's imperial endeavors. Over the next four years, NHK built seventeen new branch stations throughout the archipelago and implemented programs in aural guidance (*chōshu shidō*) and group listening (*dantai chōshu*), yielding a body of listenership that likely exceeded the impressive official figure of 2.5 million subscriptions by February 1936.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai ed., *Nihon hōsōshi*, Vol. 3 (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1965), 45.

<sup>17</sup> The year-end total of radio subscriptions in 1928 was 564,603. The year-end total in 1931 was 1,055,778. For these and other specific statistics regarding radio listenership and subscription data, see *Nihon hōsōshi*, Vol. 1, appendix. Prior to the Shōwa enthronement ceremonies, Takeyama Akiko notes that the radio had attracted tremendous public interest by airing regular updates regarding the declining health of the Taishō emperor and subsequently broadcasting his funeral in December 1926. See Takeyama, *Rajio no jidai*. On the imagined "wireless community" of Japanese radio broadcasting, see Yasar, *Electrified Voices*, 114-53.

<sup>18</sup> 2.5 million subscriptions is a rough figure based on the total of 2,422,111 subscriptions recorded in December 1935. See appendix of *Nihon hōsōshi*, Vol. 1. On the construction and administration of branch stations between 1925-44, see Higuchi Yoshiaki, "Shoki rajio hōsō ni miru rōkaritei no tamensei," *Mass Communication Kenkyū* 84 (2014): 67-88. Regarding the development of listening guidance and

More than simply motivating the radio's rapid expansion, however, the Manchurian Incident prompted the state to exert a far greater degree of control over the burgeoning technology. Facing a wave of international reproach for the invasion, military and ministerial officials recognized, as Gregory Kasza notes, "that Japan's ability to persuade other countries" of their actions' legitimacy "required united public opinion at home."<sup>19</sup> To this task, NHK inundated the airwaves with lectures, special bulletins, and news from the continent, while state censors imposed stricter measures on the press to limit information that might negatively color public opinion. In turn, the sound of broadcast news grew increasingly univocal; national relay programs went from occupying just 17 percent of local airtime in 1928 to nearly 80 percent by 1933, leaving branch stations with vanishingly little discretion over their own programming.<sup>20</sup> From here, it was a short step to the centralization of news-gathering itself; in 1935, the Foreign and Communications ministries authorized the creation of the state-run United News Agency (*Dōmei tsūshinsha*), with a bulk of the initial financing coming from NHK. Consequently, while radio news broadcasts (both national and local) had previously drawn upon the reportage of independent journalists and wire services, they would thereafter depend entirely on what the military and state ministries saw fit to disclose.

By the fall of 1935, then, the liberal critic Hasegawa Nyozeikan could therefore diagnose the radio's central role in shaping what he termed the "current age of control." As he explained, if the newspapers presented a liberal public sphere of "oppositional expression [and] multiple positions," the state's monopoly over the airwaves rendered the radio a "tool of consolidation

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communal listening initiatives in the 1930s, see Jung, "Radio broadcasting and the politics of mass culture in transwar Japan" (2010).

<sup>19</sup> Gregory Kasza, *The State and Mass Media in Japan, 1918-195* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 95.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

[and] control for political purposes."<sup>21</sup> In the absence of a functioning free press and parliamentary democracy, then, the voice of the radio would be pitted directly against that of the masses, without an agonistic public sphere to mediate between the two. When this forecast was confirmed in the wake of the February 26th Incident, Hasegawa duly described the radio's suppression of "rumor" as a purely quantitative power struggle between "crowd psychology" and the ubiquity of broadcast.<sup>22</sup> In short, the state monopoly on radio had succeeded in quelling the potential for mass panic by collapsing all unregulated voices—journalistic, critical, or otherwise—into so many shouts in a crowd.

Rather than taking this equation as simply a debasement of journalism and critique, however, a number of social critics sensed an opportunity to dignify the sphere of "groundless rumors" as a site of valid social inquiry. Put simply, if the state had rendered rumor and critique as somehow equivalent, it might then be worth examining rumor's critical potential. Tosaka, for his part, suggested that while print journalism and rumors were clearly separate categories, many rumors "did indeed approximate some contours of the truth."<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Hasegawa's reflections on the radio implied that the masses represented an equally forceful medium in their own right, and therefore warranted consideration as such. Beyond these appraisals, however, it was the sociologist Shimizu Ikutarō who sought to elevate the study of rumors to a level that might ultimately offer a window into "the fundamental reality of everyday social life."<sup>24</sup> Through rumor, he argued, one could move past studies of one-sided mass media "consumption" and toward a theory of interpersonal communication *among* the masses themselves.

In his 1937 study *Groundless Rumors (Ryūgen higo)*, Shimizu put forth a theory of

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<sup>21</sup> Hasegawa Nyozeikan, "Rajio to tōsei jidai," *Chūō Kōron* (September 1935): 198-200.

<sup>22</sup> Hasegawa Nyozeikan, "Rajio bunka no konpon mondai," *Chūō Kōron* (September 1936): 95.

<sup>23</sup> Tosaka, *Gendai Nihon*, 262.

<sup>24</sup> Fabian Schäfer, *Public Opinion - Propaganda - Ideology: Theories of the Press and its Social Function in Interwar Japan, 1918-1937* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 140.



rumors as a kind of subfrequency of communication that persisted below the hierarchical divisions of "public" and "press," and in some cases in place of the latter. Drawing on the social psychology approaches of Georg Simmel, John Dewey, and others, Shimizu located the basic impulse of rumor in a psychological desire to make collective sense of unknown or vastly unknowable situations. In the days following the February 26th Incident, for instance, he noted that "the babbled information offered by the press and the radio . . . did not provide us . . . with what we were looking for," and thereby forced rumors to intervene in place of the disabled "extensions of our sensory organs." In this way, as Fabian Schäfer notes, Shimizu offered a materially grounded *media theory* of rumor that strikingly presaged Marshall McLuhan's subsequent framing of media as "extensions of man."<sup>25</sup> But while this phenomenon may have seemed to point back to Hasegawa's notion of the volatile medium of "crowd psychology," Shimizu instead grasped in rumors' circulation a movement away from the diffuse, vibrational intensities of the "crowd" and toward the collaborative generation of a new public from the ground up.<sup>26</sup>

For Shimizu, however, this public was not coterminous with what Jürgen Habermas would later model as the bourgeois public sphere, where public opinion (*yoron*) could be forged in arenas of open debate and dissent. Rather, he saw the circulation of rumors as forming what he termed a "latent public" (*senzaiteki kōshū*): a dynamic, interpersonal network of communication that fell short of the open, or "manifest" (*kenzaiteki*) level of public speech, but which nevertheless rose above the level of mere silence.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, if "manifest" public opinion were to be silenced, such a network offered a mode of surreptitious reporting—Shimizu noted that the "grammar" of rumors involved strategic use of intransitive verbs, passive voice, and "reported"

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 139-42. See also Shimizu, *Ryūgen higo*, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Shimizu, *Ryūgen higo*, 134-39.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 147-48.

speech—that could insulate its conduits from incrimination.<sup>28</sup> At the interstice of "silence and speech" (*chinmoku to gengo*), then, these whispered passages revealed to Shimizu what James C. Scott later termed a "hidden transcript" of everyday experience under a repressive regime, shot through with the kind of defiant common sense that one might suspect of those who challenge the terms of their domination "offstage."<sup>29</sup>

In proposing this counterpublic register of sociality, Shimizu joined an increasing number of intellectuals in listening past the silence of the public sphere toward other infrasonic modes of critique. Or more accurately, such listening seemed to border on eavesdropping, or overhearing snatches of insight or intrigue—the aural equivalent of *flâneur*'s surreptitious gaze. In addition to Kafū's aforementioned records of street gossip, the cultural critic Nii Itaru published his own meditations on "the philosophy of the streets" (*machi no tetsugaku*) in 1941, where he had sought out the "voices of chauffeurs, bathhouse owners, rice dealers, students, and factory workers" over the preceding years. These "voices of the voiceless," he argued, bespoke a hitherto "silent critique" that could only be heard by diving into this "subconscious" (*senzai-ishiki*) strata of society.<sup>30</sup> Further still, the philosopher Miki Kiyoshi suggested that the power of rumor surpassed that of public critique to such an extent that the social developments of the present would not only fail to enter the "world of history" through critique alone, but in fact *needed* to "pass through the coarse and unstable realm of rumor" as well. Rumors, as he put it, served as the "gateway through which things enter history," from which point they would be poised to reach the status of "myth."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Schäfer, *Public Opinion*, 153. See also Shimizu, *Ryūgen higo*, 102-13.

<sup>29</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 4-5. On "silence and speech," see Shimizu, *Ryūgen higo*, 161-70.

<sup>30</sup> Nii, *Machi no tetsugaku*, 28-32.

<sup>31</sup> Miki Kiyoshi, "Uwasa ni tsuite," in *Jinseiron nōto* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1986), 86.

## II. Echos and Topos

In this sense, whether rumors spread via physical voices or in print, what mattered was their perceived function as oral tradition; through their narrative interpolations and accretions of meaning, their passage from "one mouth to another" conjured the image of a genuine strain of folklore humming through the city streets.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, owing precisely to their *lack* of a singular source, the "groundless" orality of rumors served paradoxically to invite the imaginative projection of collective place, or *topos*, supplementing the absence of a discretely individual origin with a more encompassing sense of social presence. In the more recent field of voice studies, this effect has found theorization by various names, from Steven Connor's notion of the "vocalic body"—the figural projection of a body retrospectively "formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice"—to Pierre Schaeffer and Michel Chion's widely-cited accounts of the "acousmatic" voice, which Brian Kane broadly defines (via the former) as a "voice that speaks from an underdetermined source."<sup>33</sup> Put simply, in situations where a voice emerges from "a source that is invisible to the listener," a countervailing impulse arises to assign it a surrogate locus, whether in the form of a somatic body or else a broader *topos* of habitation. In the "acousmatic situation," then, it is the *atopical* voice—the "voice without a place"—that precedes and thus demands the creation of a legible point of origin.<sup>34</sup>

For Chion, this impulse can lend an outsize power to the acousmatic voice's imagined source of emission: a sense of presence encompassing a domain far beyond what a single,

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<sup>32</sup> The phrase "from one mouth to another" (*kuchi kara kuchi e*) recurs frequently in such references to rumor. For example, see Shimizu, *Ryūgen higo*, 42.

<sup>33</sup> On the "vocalic body," see Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 35. On the acousmatic voice, see Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), and Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen*, 186.

<sup>34</sup> In his essay "The Model Voice," Kane notes that, "[w]hen disconnected from its source, the *atopical* voice solicits from the listener the essential acousmatic question: Who speaks?" See Kane, "The Model Voice," 673. On the "voice without a place," see Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 27.

physical body could plausibly command. While Chion's theory pertained mainly to cinema, however, media historians have similarly invoked this uncanny sense of omnipresence in describing the interwar advent of radio broadcasting, citing the capacity of the radio's disembodied voice to engender sensations of mass intimacy as well as phantasmal displays of authority in democratic and fascist settings alike.<sup>35</sup> As Kerim Yasar argues, for instance, it was due in no small part to this protean aura that the radio in Japan was put to such "effective use [in] consolidating the subjective presence and reach of the imagined community of the nation-state."<sup>36</sup> At the same time, however, Yasar notes that even the radio's most ardent proponents did not take for granted that such an affective charge would arise spontaneously from an encounter with the wireless *acousmêtre*. Rather, as Ji Hee Jung has likewise observed, NHK officials worked strenuously on the one hand to ensure that the radio bespoke the authority of the state, while simultaneously experimenting with ways to "develop intimate and chatty forms of radio talk in an attempt to reconstruct the sociability and interaction of oral settings."<sup>37</sup> In this way, the

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<sup>35</sup> In *The Voice in Cinema* and other works, Michel Chion observed the tropic manifestation of these qualities in the figure of the *acousmêtre*, a portmanteau of *acousmatic* and *Stre* ("being"), which he defines as "a kind of voice-character specific to cinema that . . . derives mysterious powers from being heard and not seen." See Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 222. Elsewhere, Chion takes a broader perspective on the radio and telephone as "acousmatic media," but does not dwell as extensively on the radio as a case study. For more thorough treatments of the radio in this regard, see Jason Loviglio, *Radio's Intimate Public: Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), and Neil Verma, *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Further theorization on the fascist registers of the radio's acousmatic presence can also be found in Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), and Tom Gunning, "A Voice that is not Mine" in *The Voice as Something More: Essays toward Materiality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 325-35.

<sup>36</sup> Yasar, *Electrified Voices*, 118.

<sup>37</sup> Ji Hee Jung, "Imagining an Affective Community in Asia: Japan's Wartime Broadcasting and Voices of Inclusion," in *The Affect of Difference: Representations of Race in East Asian Empire*, eds. Christopher P. Hanscom and Dennis Washburn (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 211. While Jung notes that such deliberate efforts to transition from a "detached tone" (*tantanchō*) of radio announcing toward a more "passionate (*jōnetsuchō*) or emotional (*jōshochō*) tone" took place in earnest during the early 1940s, one can nonetheless identify instances of the latter across the 1930s. While not strictly reflective of state policy, for instance, Kerim Yasar describes the potent sense of immediacy and collective pathos that

radio's perceived efficacy seemed to turn in part on its capacity to remediate—and thus supplant—the vocalic realm of street-level gossip.

Compared to the vernacular orality of rumor and gossip, however, many took the sound of radio's imagined "wireless community" as an ersatz orality at best, and at worst, a material threat to the persistence of the former. For although the presence of the radio had become a fixture of everyday life in Tokyo by 1936, its ubiquity had likewise reached a point where its ideological service to the imperial project rendered it ironically detached from the local bodies it claimed to speak for. Far from identifying with the vocalic body of the imperial nation (*kokutai*), many urban intellectuals registered the radio as an intrusive, occupying presence—a dissonant embodiment of the state's totalitarian reach. Given its intrinsically aural nature, then, and in light of heightened censorship following the February 26th Incident, writers increasingly framed the threat of the radio's "reactionary turn" in terms of its sonic materiality. While Hasegawa Nyozeikan had earlier warned of the radio's dictatorial affordances, for instance, he devoted the final section of his September 1936 essay on radio to the "perversion of listening to mechanical sound," and its capacity to "disfigure the development of humans' aural perception." As a solution, he proposed that "the masses get in touch with direct, 'original arts' as much as possible," though the scope of the radio's sonic penetration into everyday life would surely hinder most efforts to do so.<sup>38</sup>

In these terms, Hasegawa's complaint struck close to describing the condition of "schizophrenia" that the composer R. Murray Schafer would later coin to diagnose what he heard

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could be generated by the spirited delivery of certain sportscasters in the mid-1930s. See Yasar, *Electrified Voices*, 126-47. Meanwhile, in his 1935 essay on the radio, Kiyosawa Kiyoshi observed that some news announcers had a tendency to take certain tonal and vernacular liberties in order to "make rather boring events seem more interesting." And though he appreciated the impulse to do so, he confessed to wishing "at times for a more accurate impression of the situation." See Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, "Rajio no uyoku-ka," *Chūō Kōron* (September 1935): 209.

<sup>38</sup> Hasegawa, "Rajio bunka," 100.

as the baleful effects of mass sound media on the modern soundscape. Referring primarily to "the split between an original sound and its electroacoustic reproduction," Schafer held that the twentieth-century diffusion of radio and sound recording had served to "dislocate" sounds from their embodied points of origin, such that voices were now "free to issue from anywhere in the landscape." Rather than celebrating the liberatory prospects of this development, however, Schafer intended the neologism as a "nervous word" that might adequately convey the "sense of aberration and drama" that attended this sundering of sounds "from their original contexts." In this way, as Brian Kane notes, Schafer dramatized the radio's acousmatic "spacing" of sound and source—*echos* and *topos*—as a lapsarian estrangement from an imagined, halcyon state of sound and social life; where sounds had once been "indissolubly tied to the mechanisms that produced them," Schafer now depicted a "synthetic" soundscape cluttered with inauthentic "substitutes" increasingly misheard as more "natural" than the seemingly organic originals they had displaced.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, Hasegawa opined that "the noise pouring from storefront radios like cloudy, unrefined sake" had contributed to an urban populace increasingly "stunted in their aural development," their "timbral sensitivities dulled."<sup>40</sup> Like Schafer, then, what troubled Hasegawa was not simply the experience of acousmatic listening; indeed, as with the "voice" of rumor, any number of urban sounds might be similarly unseen yet no less evocative of local specificity, from the cry of a nearby street vendor to the ringing of a neighborhood temple bell.<sup>41</sup> Rather,

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<sup>39</sup> Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 88-91. For Brian Kane's discussion of Schafer and "schizophonia," see Kane, *Sound Unseen*, 151.

<sup>40</sup> Hasegawa, "Rajio bunka," 100.

<sup>41</sup> In particular, ritual bells have been frequently cited in their capacity to delimit religious, communal, and political boundaries. Schafer writes, for instance, that the church bell "defines the community, for the parish is an acoustic space, circumscribed by the range of the church bell. The church bell is a centripetal sound; it attracts and unifies the community in a social sense." See Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 53-54. See also Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and meaning in the 19th-century French Countryside*, trans.

Hasegawa feared that the extent of radio's saturation had so clouded the city's aural topography that it would soon be impossible for the ear to draw such indexical connections in the first place. For unlike those sounds which (in Schafer's terms) "traveled only as far as one could shout," the radio's stream of non-native voices harbored no inherent relation or accountability to their immediate surroundings, and thus threatened to confound the very sense of locality and proximal attachment that sound had seemed previously to ensure. In short, with the growing volume of "storefront radios" drowning out the organic timbres of the street, a day was fast approaching when the sound of a vendor's call might fail to conjure its suitable vocalic *topos* in the mind's eye. Without this sense of intrinsic aural connection, Hasegawa anticipated "a coarsening of the ears" that would "drastically alter the nature of our social relations."<sup>42</sup>

As if to confirm Hasegawa's grim forecast, an especially telling depiction of the urban soundscape appeared the following year in Nagai Kafū's 1937 serial novella *A Strange Tale from East of the River* (*Bokutō kidan*). In it, the central plot unfolds from the narrator being driven from his lamp-lit study by the noise of a radio filtering through the thin walls of the neighboring house. Fleeing the uninvited, "piercing sounds" of "political commentaries in Kyushu dialect, *naniwabushi* ballads, and grade school-style recitals of Western music," he seeks refuge and romantic diversion in the quiet backstreets of Tokyo's Tamanoi red-light district, where the playing of radios is forbidden past 4 in the afternoon.<sup>43</sup> Here, the narrator finds an endangered substratum of vocal ties—women calling from windows, bygone registers of everyday speech—

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Martin Thomas (New York Columbia University Press, 1998). Further still, Yoshimi Shun'ya cites Nagai Kafū's 1936 essay "Kane no koe" (The sound of bells) as a spiritual predecessor to Schafer's account, in which Kafū "clearly contrasts the sound of bells ringing—'neither too far away, nor too close'—with that of the radio—which 'surges forth from all directions along with southeasterly winds.'" See Yoshimi, "Preface," 381.

<sup>42</sup> Hasegawa, "Rajio bunka," 100.

<sup>43</sup> Nagai Kafū, *Bokutō kidan*, in *Kafū zenshū*, Vol. 9, ed. Nagai Sōkichi (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1963), 129.

that remained just beyond the creeping hegemony of the radio's sphere of influence. Even without explicit reference, then, one can still detect through the narrator's ears what Tosaka described as "the ideology of Japanese fascism seeking to permeate the bodies of the nation's people (*kokumin*)," forcing the writer to seek out (if only half-consciously) those spaces where the voice of the radio had yet to "seep in through the cracks."<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, however, Kafū's *Strange Tale* also betrayed the extent to which the radio's encroachment had breached not only the bourgeois interiority of the quiet study, but also the whispering streets that Kafū and his contemporaries tapped for their latent social value. In his reading of the scene, Yoshimi Shun'ya relates the endangering of these spaces to the Swiss critic Max Picard's eulogy for "silence" in the era of "radio noise"; like Kafū, Picard mourned the loss of silence not as mere absence of speech, but as an ambient, originary "fullness" from which "all human language" emerges.<sup>45</sup> In more imminently resonant terms, we might further liken this to Maurice Blanchot's attunement in "everyday speech" to a "silence" composed of "unspeaking speech that is the soft human murmuring in us and around us."<sup>46</sup> These murmurs, as reservoirs of both creative and critical possibility, thus represented a kind of imperiled public utility, especially insofar as they belonged, as did Miki Kiyoshi's rumors, "to nobody and everybody at once."<sup>47</sup>

Echoing Miki's turn of phrase, Blanchot further submits that "the street renders public. . . . And yet what is published in the street is not really divulged . . . just as rumors are reported without anyone transmitting them and because the one who transmits them accepts being no

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<sup>44</sup> Tosaka, *Gendai Nihon*, 255.

<sup>45</sup> See Yoshimi, "*Koe*" *no shihonshugi*, 16-18, and Max Picard, *The World of Silence*, trans. Stanley Godman (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 9-12, 196.

<sup>46</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 242.

<sup>47</sup> Miki, "Uwasa," 84.



one."<sup>48</sup> Here, however, Blanchot detects "a perilous irresponsibility," insofar as this acousmatic impression can also serve to camouflage the social boundaries that form through rumors' circulation, and thus absolve the interlocutor of accountability to those excluded or harmed in the process. Put differently, the anonymity of rumors grants cover to unspoken or perhaps unspeakable beliefs and prejudices, bonding together those who share a tacit sense of who or what falls outside their sphere of trust. It is in this sense that the adoption of *overhearing* as a resistant mode of aurality carried with it a collateral impulse to surveil these tacit boundaries of sensibility, and to listen after certain shibboleths that might betray subtle overtones of affinity and difference. Whether through neighboring walls or in passing on the street, what seemed to lurk at the edges of this overheard register was the sense of some persistent form of estrangement or otherness being held at bay.

Tellingly, while Yoshimi depicts Kafū's scene of overhearing in *A Strange Tale* as one of passive, incidental proximity to sound, he likewise observes the writer's "acute sensitivity" to which sounds do and do not fit into his own "sense of place."<sup>49</sup> For instance, when the narrator bemoans the sound of "Kyushu dialect" piping through the radio speakers, a tone of condescension hangs over the comment, as if to approximate the aloof sigh of a life-long Tokyoite now forced to endure such coarse provincial twang on a nightly basis. However, given the patterns of provincial and colonial labor migration that had so reshaped the soundscape of Tokyo since World War I, the "schizophonic" encounter with a voice estranged from its peripheral origin would have hardly been limited to the neighbor's wireless—least of all in the working-class "low city" (*shitamachi*) environs of Kafū's *Strange Tale*, where a majority of the city's colonial migrants came to live at the turn of the 1920s. As such, the senses of

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<sup>48</sup> Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, 242-43.

<sup>49</sup> Yoshimi, "*Koe*" *no shihonshugi*, 9.

disfigurement or estrangement that colored Hasegawa and Kafū's critiques of the radio seemed also to index deeper currents of displacement churning at the peripheries of their own aural perception—currents which had indeed formed the very ferment from which Japan's broadcasting apparatus emerged.

### *III. The Voice of a Stranger*

One of the first large-scale public demonstrations of radio broadcasting in Japan was conducted in the spring of 1922 in Tokyo's Ueno Park, as part of the Tokyo Memorial Peace Exposition. Held to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the end of the Great War, the Exposition presented a massive public display of the postwar Taishō ethos of peace, internationalism, and liberal-democratic culture. The eleven million visitors that passed through the Expo site over its five-month run were greeted with iconic installations like the "Peace Tower," "Peace Bell," "Culture Village," and one of the most popular attractions: the Electronic Pavilion.<sup>50</sup> Here, visitors were treated to sounds originating not from on-site devices, but from a radio tower installed on the roof of the *Asahi shinbun's* Kyōbashi office, nearly three miles away.<sup>51</sup> In keeping with the Expo's paean to a new cosmopolitan age of communication and connectedness among nations, this was a fitting occasion to announce Japan's entry into the global "era of radio."<sup>52</sup>

By the same token, however, this meant that the new technology would also speak to the Expo's attendant display of Japan's imperial aspirations. Upon exiting the Electronic Pavilion, in fact, visitors would have looked out across Shinobazu Pond to find a row of stylized pavilions representing each of Japan's current and future colonial conquests: Hokkaido, Sakhalin, Taiwan,

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<sup>50</sup> See *Heiwa-kinen Tokyo hakurankai denki shashinjō* (Tokyo: Ōmusha, 1922).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 24. See also Yoshimi, "Koe" no shihonshugi, 203.

<sup>52</sup> Takeyama, *Rajio no jidai*, 15.

Korea, Manchuria, and Mongolia.<sup>53</sup> With this model menagerie of distant lands beckoning from across a miniature sea, the complementary experience of broadcast sound could readily reinforce a sense of proximate access to the colonial "faraway." At the same time, however, such newfound proximity might have also signaled a loss of the very sense of spatiotemporal distance that kept the colonial sphere at a safe remove from the metropolitan psyche.

Meanwhile, to gain a real sense of this heightened proximity, one had only to turn to the areas immediately surrounding the Expo site. Just west of Ueno Park, the University of Tokyo's Hongō campus hosted a growing population of Korean and Chinese students, while Korean workers took up residence in increasing numbers in Honjo Ward, east of the Sumida River. To the south, the Korean YMCA in Kanda Ward served as a hub of activity for student and other community organizations. By the time the Expo opened, the areas comprising this *shitamachi* region were home to the largest number of Korean residents in Tokyo.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, unlike cities such as Osaka or Fukuoka, where distinctly ethnic enclaves had emerged near industrial sites, the Korean population in Tokyo was smaller and more dispersed in terms of both occupation and housing.<sup>55</sup> This meant, at the very least, that the potential existed for more intimate proximity between Korean and Japanese denizens, the latter of whom were often rural migrants themselves. In the cramped quarters of the *shitamachi*, then, along its narrow lanes and row houses separated only by thin wooden walls, the "schizophonic" sound of voices estranged from their places of origin would come increasingly to accompany urban life in the imperial metropole.

Set against this shifting urban soundscape, the radio's public display presented an

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<sup>53</sup> For photographs of the pavilions and grounds, see *Heiwa-kinen Tokyo hakurankai shashinjō* (Tokyo: Tokyo Hakurankai Shashinjō Hakkōsho, 1922).

<sup>54</sup> Michael Weiner, *The Origins of the Korean Community in Japan, 1910-1923* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1989), 166.

<sup>55</sup> Sally Ann Hastings, *Neighborhood and Nation in Tokyo, 1905-1937* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 64-66.

experience that could be taken as doubly foreign to the senses. In her 2002 work *The Radio Era* (*Rajio no jidai*), Takeyama Akiko summarizes the popular response to these initial radio demonstrations (a second one hosted in Ueno Park by the *Hōchi shinbun* in the spring of 1923) as an "experience of strangeness (*fushigisa*) at being able to hear a voice from far away without [the aid of] wires."<sup>56</sup> On its surface, this reaction seems entirely predictable; inasmuch as any encounter with new technological phenomena involves a reckoning with foreign sensation, an "experience of strangeness" stands in for a spectrum of reactions ranging from bemusement to outright shock. But given the specific experience it defines in this passage, the "strangeness" of the radio voice bespeaks not only the mystery or newness of the technology itself, but also a peculiar spatial relationship that resonates beyond it. That is, by presenting itself to the listener as distant and near at the same time, the voice of the radio offers something that is neither familiar nor friendly, but rather more enigmatic and alien—the voice of a stranger.

In Georg Simmel's study of urban social psychology, the figure of the "stranger" is defined precisely by this peculiar tension of proximity and distance. For Simmel, the "stranger" represented an entity that might be found "within a certain spatial area," but whose position is "essentially determined by not belonging in it from the outset."<sup>57</sup> As a result, the stranger would come to personify the sense that "the distant is near," and thereby generate a certain tension with the senses of proximity that define more familiar relationships. Within a given group, then, the stranger finds company with other social elements—"various 'inner enemies,'" as Simmel puts it—"whose immanent presence and membership [in that group] include . . . an externality and opposition." Most often, such "inner enemies" possess a kind of migratory or itinerant quality that stands to undermine the fixity of a given social group, insofar as their very mobility is

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<sup>56</sup> Takeyama, *Rajio no jidai*, 17.

<sup>57</sup> Georg Simmel, "Excursus on the Stranger," in *Sociology: Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms*, Vol. 1, ed. and trans. Anthony J. Blasi et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 601.

perceived to afford a degree of freedom and objectivity unavailable to its more settled members. Without being "bound in action by residence, loyalty, or precedents," the stranger's presence itself becomes a subversive act, "entail[ing] all manner of dangerous possibilities" from critique to outright rebellion.<sup>58</sup>

For Korean residents in the metropole, this inherent sense of subversion was only exacerbated by the fact that the major postwar wave of Korean migration—1919 to 1922—occurred at the precise moment that Japan's relations with Korea reached an historic nadir. The independence movement that began in Korea on March 1st, 1919 shocked colonial administrators in its scale, attracting as many as two million participants in roughly 1,500 demonstrations over the course of the year and prompting a ruthless campaign of suppression by the Japanese military.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, the postwar economic recession created an epidemic of unemployment for many Korean workers in Japan who had been recruited as cheap labor during the manufacturing boom of the war years. With this new surplus population seemingly ripe for radicalization by anticolonial student organizations, the Metropolitan Police Bureau and Home Ministry instated restrictions on recruitment and migration in order to prevent the March 1st Movement from spreading into the home islands.<sup>60</sup> Yet with conditions in the Korean countryside worsening by the year, the rate of labor migration—and attendant anxieties over its radicalizing potential—only continued to grow.

On March 24, 1922, just two weeks after the Peace Exposition's opening, the Upper House of the Diet added new language to the "Radical Social Movement Control Law" that would punish "communication with foreigners or those residing outside the law's jurisdiction in

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 601-2.

<sup>59</sup> Ken Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble: Korean Workers in Interwar Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 39.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

order to disseminate matters injurious to the constitution."<sup>61</sup> Such a provision seemed necessary, as the Justice Minister Hayashi Raizaburō argued, given that "present regulations [had] proven inadequate to address the advent of socialists traveling abroad, making foreign contacts, and returning to Japan to spread radical thought." Moreover, he noted, the statutes of the existing "Peace and Security Law" addressed only the "distribution of published materials," while it was rapidly becoming clear that "other modes of circulating propaganda would need to be regulated as well."<sup>62</sup> Though Hayashi does not specify what these other modes might be, a study on wireless communication initiated by the Communications Ministry in the spring of 1922 clarifies the connection: "It should be a matter of course," it stated, "that the broadcasting of any content injurious to public morals (and subject to prohibition under the newspaper and publications laws) be likewise prohibited."<sup>63</sup>

Set against this backdrop of surveillance and suspicion, the Peace Exposition's construction of a colonial elsewhere in the heart of Tokyo would seem as much a distant fantasy as a reminder of colonial discord increasingly near at hand. Likewise, while the radio's display of voices detached from lines of physical connection signaled a kind of free space of transnational communication, that very freedom could be just as readily interpreted as an unregulated zone of communication where transnational conspiracies could flourish, or where dissident actors could tap into unguarded transmissions of the state. In short, if the space of the airwaves signaled a cosmopolitan utopia in the making, it did so by striking eerily close to the latter shade of utopia's fabled double meaning: a literal *lack of place* (*ov-topos*), evoked in the voice of a stranger, and

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<sup>61</sup> "Kageki shakai undō torishimari ni kansuru hōritsu-an" (March 1922), in *Gendaishi shiryō 45: Chian ijihō*, ed. Okudaira Yasuhiro (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1973), 4.

<sup>62</sup> Hayashi Raizaburō, "Kageki shakai undō torishimari hōan tokubetsu iinkai giji," in *Gendaishi shiryō 45: Chian ijihō*, ed. Okudaira Yasuhiro (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1973), 7-8.

<sup>63</sup> Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai ed., *Nihon hōsōshi*, Vol. 3 (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1965), 208.

possessed of a political logic at odds with the existing order.<sup>64</sup>

#### *IV. The Aurality of Difference*

By Simmel's definition, a wide cross-section of "strangers" came to inhabit the Tokyo area across the Taishō period (1912-1926). But no population aroused as much anxiety among the press and state officials as resident Koreans, and in particular, Korean laborers and students. In the case of the former, Ken Kawashima suggests that chronic unemployment in the postwar recession transfigured many Korean workers into a "colonial surplus population" with little recourse to stability either in Japan or their home provinces.<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, the temporary nature of Korean students' residence in the metropole afforded them a similarly racialized reputation as mercurial and nomadic, compounded by their perceived complicity in trafficking anticolonial and Bolshevik thought into the capital. Crucially, with burgeoning leftist activity and a newly formed Communist Party in Japan, this threat of colonial revolt offered a suitable outlet for displacing rural and working class resentments from within (still fervent in the wake of the 1918 rice riots) onto an outside danger. Taken together, the prospect of treachery among Korean laborers and students found popular representation in the trope of the *futei senjin* (a pejorative meaning "unruly Korean")—a figure of unstable surplus that came to mediate public anxiety over the economic and political insecurities gnawing at the foundations of the imperial metropole.

Narrowly, *futei senjin* referenced Koreans suspected of harboring anticolonial sentiments, but broadly indexed any violent or suspicious actions that involved a Korean agent. As such, the term abounded in newspapers between 1919 and 1923 whenever a crime or labor dispute carried any hints of Korean involvement.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, as Kawashima notes, the difficulty in

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<sup>64</sup> See Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. Henry Morley (London: Cassell & Company, 1901), 5.

<sup>65</sup> Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble*, 63.

<sup>66</sup> On press coverage of the *futei senjin* threat, see Haag, "Fear and Loathing in Imperial Japan," 89-91.

actually telling "unruly Koreans" (*futei senjin*) apart from either ethnic Japanese or "non-*futei senjin* Koreans" meant that the term ultimately sanctioned the surveillance of *all* Koreans as "potential and probable criminals."<sup>67</sup> By that same logic, however, it also rendered ethnic Japanese susceptible to misidentification, and thus more vigilant in finding ways to set themselves apart from the various inner enemies in their midst. More specifically, the relative absence of phenotypic markers that might otherwise lend themselves to visual articulations of racial difference (skin color, hair color, e.g.) meant that such difference would need to be defined through other means.<sup>68</sup> In this respect, the semiotics of colonial difference would demand a more comprehensive enlistment of the senses in order to distinguish those who embodied the *futei senjin* threat.

To this task, aurality seemed to offer one of the most immediate avenues. In particular, the vocalization of language presented a modality of difference that could be at once easily identified and also scrutinized as a metric of assimilation (or lack thereof). Indeed, as Michael Weiner notes, the rate of Japanese proficiency among resident Koreans was markedly low in the early postwar years; a 1923 survey from Osaka cites fewer than 50% of males and only 20% of females with "even a basic understanding of the Japanese language."<sup>69</sup> This inevitably led to corresponding segregation of labor at work sites, as well as the potential for conflict with Japanese workers. Newspapers frequently cited "linguistic misunderstanding" (*kotoba no ikichigai*) as a primary factor in riots and violence between Korean and Japanese workers, including one such incident at a steelworks in Hyogo that left the surrounding district "awash

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<sup>67</sup> Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble*, 154.

<sup>68</sup> Kantō kaigen shireibu, "Keihin-chihō ni okeru Chōsenjin no gyakusatsu wo ronji, sono zengosaku ni oyobu," in *Gendaishi shiryō 6: Kantō daishinsai to Chōsenjin*, eds. Kang Tōk-sang and Kūm Pyōng-dong (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1963), 250. See also Ogino Fujio ed., *Tokkō keisatsu kankei shiryōshūsei 12: Suihei undō, Zainichi Chōsenjin undō* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 1992), 272.

<sup>69</sup> Weiner, *Origins*, 74.



with blood."<sup>70</sup> Elsewhere, linguistic difference offered a convenient means of downplaying legitimate grievances among Korean workers, as in reports that attributed a major uprising at a Kokura steel manufacture to "linguistic misunderstanding" during salary negotiations.<sup>71</sup>

Such accounts offered a chilling counterpoint to the rhetoric of *naisen yūwa* ("Japan and Korea in harmony"), which often framed linguistic exchange as the linchpin of harmonious race relations (*ryō minzoku yūwa*).<sup>72</sup> While successful communication might yield good outcomes, they warned, failures in comprehension could just as easily result in violence or death. Yet even those who succeeded in developing Japanese proficiency still faced scrutiny on the basis of certain patterns of accent and intonation that could be taken as telltale signs of unassimilated phonetic bias. Whether through the voicings of certain consonants or the prolonging of particular vowel sounds, it was widely held that Koreans who might be able to pass as Japanese in appearance would be unable to do so through the voice.<sup>73</sup>

Though the "common sense" currency of these views makes their genealogy difficult to

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<sup>70</sup> "Irimidarete nissen daisōtō: Kotoba no ikichigaikara kōronshite Shikama-gun no chimamire-sata," *Kobe shinbun*, January 4, 1921.

<sup>71</sup> "Issen no senjin ni higeki: zōkyū kōshō no kotoba no ikichigai kara Kokura seikō no naisen-ninpu dairantō," *Keijō nippō*, July 4, 1918.

<sup>72</sup> Ogura Shinpei, *Kokugo oyobu Chōsenko no tame* (Tokyo: Otsuboya Shosekiten, 1920), Preface. Its opening line reads: "It goes without saying that the root of harmony between our two ethnic peoples is linguistic exchange."

<sup>73</sup> Similarly, Rey Chow writes: "Having an accent is . . . the symptom precisely of discontinuity—an incomplete assimilation, a botched attempt at eliminating another tongue's competing copresence. In geopolitical terms, having an accent is tantamount to leaving on display . . . the embarrassing evidence of one's alien origins and migratory status." See Rey Chow, *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Linguaging as Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 58. Moreover, Pooja Rangan argues (citing Chow) that "minoritized" or otherwise "accented voices" are accordingly racialized—"circumscribed in advanced as an objectified *skin*"—even if they issue from unseen bodies or from bodies that seem incongruously paired to them. In other words, as Nina Eidsheim has also argued, racialized values and prejudices regarding timbre, intonation, and other vocal attributes shape the moment of audition such that the act is never truly neutral, even in "acousmatic" situations where there is inadequate visual evidence to fully "identify" the owner of a given voice. See Pooja Rangan, "The Skin of the Voice: Acousmatic Illusions, Ventriloquial Listening," in *Sound Objects*, eds. James A. Steintrager and Rey Chow (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 137. See also Nina Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

trace, one can point to various works in the field of "national language studies" (*kokugogaku*) that address the phonetic attributes of Korean in explicit contrast with "standard" *kokugo* pronunciation. Tellingly, many of these studies position Korean not only alongside other "colonial languages" of the Taiwanese and Ainu people, but also among regional "non-standard dialects" (within which Ryūkyūan languages were frequently included).<sup>74</sup> The creation of this sphere of non-standard difference was indeed a necessary step in constructing and disseminating a standard, unified system of pronunciation for a "national" language which had never before existed.<sup>75</sup> As a result, even linguists like Ogura Shinpei positioned their studies of Korean language as adjunct to the task of explicating the phonetic features of *kokugo*. Likewise, researchers devoted to studying the Korean *language* on its own terms found themselves flanked by those concerned more with identifying the sound of the Korean *accent*. Rather than a linguistic identity in itself, then, these studies heard Korean more as a sonic impediment to the successful assimilation of *kokugo*.

An especially striking instance of this notion can be found in a 1918 study on "Experimental Methods for Correcting Stammers." In it, the authors include a section on "sounds that are easily confused by Korean speakers of *naichi* Japanese," and which correspond, they argue, to pronunciation errors commonly made by people with stammers. A table of Korean mispronunciations, drawn from a 1918 study by the Governor-General of Korea's Education Research Committee, highlights examples like the unvoicing of voiced consonants (*ga* becomes *ka*, *za* becomes *sa*, e.g.), the reversing of long and short vowel sounds (*taisō* for *taiso*), and the elision of the nasalized *n* sound (*gomen kudasai* becomes *kome-kutasai*).<sup>76</sup> The authors note that the lack of similarly voiced consonants in Korean leads to their most conspicuous difficulty in

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<sup>74</sup> See Ueda Kazutoshi, *Kokugogaku no jūkō* (Tokyo: Tsūzoku Daigakkai, 1916).

<sup>75</sup> See Lee Yeonsuk, *The Ideology of Kokugo* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).

<sup>76</sup> Ogata Masao, *Jikken kitsuon kyōsei* (Kure-shi: Tajima Shoten, 1918), 76-78.

pronouncing certain voiced consonants in Japanese, but warn that similar errors can also be detected in regional Japanese dialects—and among speakers from Kyushu in particular. In Fukuoka, for instance, they point out a tendency to switch the *ra* sound for a *da* sound, as in the case of *daikon* becoming *raikon*.<sup>77</sup> Without proper correction, then, even Japanese speakers from the home islands stood the chance of falling into the same dissonant register as the colonized or the otherwise vocally-impaired.

Yet unlike the regional dialect or the stammer, the oft-cited lack of corresponding "voice" in Korean's phonetic vocabulary could imply more than just a lack of vibration in the larynx. In his study on Korean phonetics, for example, Ogura Shinpei notes that "unvoiced speech" is what defines the "whisper" (*sasayaki*), or the passage of air over the threshold of the lips without the formative vibration of the vocal folds. Therefore, the unvoiced consonants *k*, *t*, and *p*—the sounds most distinguishing of the Korean "accent"—would fall under the heading of "whisper" sounds. Here, however, he admits the difficulty in separating this narrowly physiological definition of the "whisper" from its more common association with secretive, conspiratorial speech. This "whisper," as he puts it, involves "speaking softly so as to guard one's tales from disclosure."<sup>78</sup> Yet rather than pursuing this distinction further, Ogura allows the association to linger suggestively in the reader's mind, thus imbuing the Korean failure to properly "voice" the sounds of *kokugo* with a distinctly subversive sense of alterity felt less in discussions of regional dialects and speech disorders.

Indeed, for the previous authors of the "Stammering" study, the likening of certain Korean mispronunciations to those of stammering patients lent support to their thesis that stammers arose not only from "blockages of speech" (*kotoba no jōtai*), but also from "poor

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>78</sup> Ogura Shinpei, *Kokugo oyobi Chōsenko hatsuon gaisetsu* (Osaka: Chikazawa Insatsujo Shuppan-bu, 1923), 8.

mouth structure" that made it difficult to "consistently form mouth shapes correspondent to certain sounds."<sup>79</sup> As such, the authors recommended "treating" the Korean accent in much the same manner as a speech disorder: by retraining the mouth through a series of corrective vocal exercises in order to produce "suitable" sounds. These exercises consisted mainly of repeating individual syllable sounds and then reciting words and phrases in which the corresponding sounds appeared. With the syllable *ke*, for instance, one could choose from entries like *keikan* (policeman), *kenka wo suru-na* (don't fight), or *keisatsusho no mae no keijiba ni keihō ga kakagete-arū* (there is a warning posted on the bulletin board of the police station).<sup>80</sup> Here, with the lengthening of each successive phrase, the greater purpose of this training beyond mere phonetics is made increasingly obvious.

In short, these exercises served to confirm that the policy of *naisen yūwa*, and the public precinct it defined, was to be policed at the tip of the tongue. Under these terms, to acquire a "voice" meant to gain access to intelligibility, to have one's vocal utterance (*phone*) conferred with an assumption of meaning and interiority (*logos*), and to thereby secure entry into the public sphere's harmonic system. Meanwhile, to be "unvoiced" was not to be unheard, but rather to be *overheard* with suspicion, as if guarding some conspiracy through whispered tones. In this way, the Korean accent as the exterior of *kokugo*, the voice as mere sound (*echos*), did not signify a lack so much as an unruly surplus of meaning whose unassimilated presence in speech posed an implicit threat to the *logos* of the social order. Crucially, however, this threat did not arise from the sound of a purely foreign language, but rather the sound of language rendered foreign from within. To paraphrase Gilles Deleuze, this was the sound of the national language made to "stutter, stammer, or murmur," and thus vibrate with the very tension of proximity and distance

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<sup>79</sup> Ogata, *Jikken kitsuon kyōsei*, 79-80.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

embodied by the strangers who spoke it.<sup>81</sup>

Consequently, a sense of subversive potential colored the sound of the colonized body even before it reached the ears of many in the metropole. The *futei senjin* threat thus constituted a peculiar sonic media insofar as their disordering sound (*sawagi*) did not need to be heard in order to be felt. Rather, it was their very *inaudibility* that rendered them an even more fearful sonic force, capable of transforming the surrounding silence into only an *apparent* silence—a veneer stretched tenuously over a subterranean ferment that might irrupt upon the senses at any moment. By tensing the ears of readers with such paranoid acuity, this regime of mediation seemed to encourage a mode of listening that edged toward a perpetual state of surveillance—of overhearing, or "listening *after* something."<sup>82</sup> As the target of this listening, the unruly colonial subject came to be "overheard," in Brandon LaBelle's terms, as "a 'figure' whose agency [was] founded on the potential of interruption, to estrange the heard with a type of noise: with what may form into something, but not yet."<sup>83</sup>

#### *V. Winds Mistaken for Cranes*

This mode of paranoid listening reached its apotheosis when the Great Kantō Earthquake struck Tokyo on September 1st, 1923. Fires broke out across the city immediately, while the eruptions of gas mains, electrical explosions, and collapsing structures echoed thunderously across the densely housed *shitamachi* areas. As night fell, the terror of this vibrational morass intensified as the reliability of vision decreased, leaving the auditory field—as volatile as it may have been—as the primary grounds for *making sense* of the situation. However, given their

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<sup>81</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), 111-13.

<sup>82</sup> Brandon LaBelle, *Sonic Agency: Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance* (London: Goldsmiths Press, 2018), 19.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

acousmatic nature, these "terrifying, explosive bangs" activated the worst fears of many residents; rumors swiftly followed that "unruly Koreans" had finally taken to the streets to "hurl bombs" and wreak havoc on the innocent.<sup>84</sup> As one report noted, these rumors perfectly captured the idiom of *fūsei kakurei*: hearing the wind's voice as that of a crane, or every rustling leaf as an enemy's whisper. It continued:

The report of a night patrolman's signal gun? 'A Korean attack!' The blowing of a whistle? 'A Korean attack!' On and on like this, rumors continued to build up in the imaginations of survivors and spread out among them as if they were the shock waves of the blasts themselves.<sup>85</sup>

In other words, the fear of Korean violence that had been percolating in the press since 1919 finally irrupted in the ears of the city's panicked residents, leading many to process every abrupt or suspicious sound as an index of Korean treachery.

Meanwhile, the "total collapse of communications and news media" left survivors in the dark even during the daylight hours. "Without means of obtaining reliable information," that is, the sources and extent of the enveloping chaos were difficult to adequately grasp with the naked eye.<sup>86</sup> As Shimizu Ikutarō would later argue, this loss of media organs was itself akin to a state of temporary blindness. For even apart from moments of crisis, he suggested, mass media had come to "supplement and extend the sensory organs" to the point where such extensions seemed to take precedence in perceiving the full complexity of the modern urban environment. In a moment of crisis, then, the sudden failure of these organs would not only induce a fear of the unseen cause, but would also allow for that fear to form itself purely of one's own "expectations and premonitions." It was this fear, he proposed, that clothed itself as news in the form of the

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<sup>84</sup> "Shiryō kaisetsu," in *Gendaishi shiryō* 6, xix.

<sup>85</sup> Teito Fukkō Kyōkai ed., *Senjin shūrai ryūgen no shinsō* (Tokyo: Teito Fukkō Kyōkai, 1923), 6.

<sup>86</sup> Kantō daishinsai gojūshūnen Chōsenjin giseisha tsuitō kyōjijikō iinkai ed., *Kantō daishinsai to Chōsenjin gyakusatsu: Rekishi no shinjitsu* (Tokyo: Gendaishi Shuppankai, 1975), 40.

"groundless rumor."<sup>87</sup> Or as the sociologist Tamotsu Shibutani would later put it, "[r]umors emerge after environmental changes to describe related events that are not immediately *visible*."<sup>88</sup>

But what Shimizu's theory failed to address (for reasons that will later become clear) is the extent to which the post-quake rumors played upon an already-existing sense of visual impairment: namely, the difficulty of distinguishing "unruly Koreans" (and any Korean, by extension) from ethnic Japanese. As many rumors suggested, the *futei senjin* could, through a simple change of clothing, exploit a high degree of phenotypic likeness in order to violate the most vulnerable of the *kokumin*. In response, a range of methods sprung forth for identifying telltale markers of Koreanness, with the most salient being vocal interrogation. In an article in the *Kahoku shinpō* from September 7th, for instance, the reader is entreated to "Ask [the suspicious person] their age according to the imperial calendar . . . or to recite the *iroha* (phonetic syllabary)." For indeed, it advised, "Even if they're able keep up in Japanese, [the sound of] Korean will strike bluntly enough against the ears to give them away."<sup>89</sup>

As a Sendai-based newspaper, however, the *Kahoku shinpō* had a more pressing motivation for informing its readership of these methods. "People are out for Korean blood," it warned, "but Koreans are not the only ones in danger." If one spoke with a northern Tōhoku dialect, for instance, their "characteristically *stammering* accent (*ichiryū no totsutotsu taru ben*) might lead people to think, 'This guy's suspicious.'"<sup>90</sup> In order to avoid being mistaken for a Korean, then, those with any perceptible sense of alterity to their voice would have to police

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<sup>87</sup> Schäfer, *Public Opinion*, 141-43.

<sup>88</sup> Tamotsu Shibutani, *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966), 35.

<sup>89</sup> "Futei senjin ni taishite sashitaru fukushūshin wa nakanaka kiesōdewanai: Kibatsuna senjin kanbetsuhō," *Kahoku shinpō*, September 7, 1923," in *Gendaishi shiryō* 6, 162.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

themselves as much as their surroundings. What the article failed to mention, however, was that such misidentifications had already occurred. By the time the article ran, police and vigilantes alike had murdered thousands of Korean and Chinese residents, and in so doing, slain an uncertain number of provincial residents whose "stammering accents" they had overheard as enemy voices. In these instances of failed interpellation, one finds what the artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan has more recently described as a "testimony to the irreducibility of the voice to a passport . . . its inapplicability to fix people in place."<sup>91</sup> However, this very irreducibility likewise revealed the perceived need for the fiction of "voice recognition" to be maintained, and the violence required to do so.

In his poem "*Jūgoen gojissen*," the anarchist poet Tsuboi Shigeji recounted in vivid detail the method through which this violence occurred:

A soldier, armed with saber and pistol, stepped on to search the train  
His eyes as wide as a cow's  
He stared the train car up and down before  
Abruptly pointing to a man in a livery coat squatting beside me, and barked  
- Say *Jūgoen gojissen*!  
The appointed man,  
Failing to grasp the meaning of  
The soldier's rash, bizarre demand  
Paused a moment, then impassively  
Replied in exemplary Japanese,  
- *Jūgoen gojissen*.  
- Very well!  
After the soldier had holstered his weapons and moved on  
I glanced at the face of the man to my side and said,  
- *Jūgoen gojissen*.  
*Jūgoen gojissen*.  
I repeated the phrase to myself  
Until at last its meaning dawned on me  
Ah, if the man in the livery coat had been Korean  
And had replied with '*chūkoen kochissen*'

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<sup>91</sup> Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *Conflicted Phonemes*, <http://lawrenceabuhamdan.com/conflicted-phonemes>. See also Emily Apter, "Policing by Ear and Forensic Listening in Projects by Lawrence Abu Hamdan," *October* 156 (2016): 100-15.



He would have been surely dragged out on the spot.<sup>92</sup>

The poem's eponymous refrain translates literally to "Fifteen yen and fifty sen." At this end of this section, Tsuboi surmises that the phrase, like the textbook exercises that preceded it, served as a shibboleth to test the phonetic bias of a given speaker. Should they fail to properly voice the *j* and *g* consonant sounds, this would be taken as a betrayal of their true linguistic and thus racial identity. As such, to mistakenly utter the unvoiced '*chūkōen kochissen*' was to effectively betray oneself as Korean, and thereby face certain death at the hands of one's auditor. In the case of the train car incident that the poem depicts, the auditor takes the form of a "cow-eyed" soldier. In many cases, however, these interrogations occurred at the hands of local men with bamboo spears, heirloom *katana*, and even wooden canes with sharpened points—a loose coalition of police, reservist soldiers, and self-appointed vigilante corps (*jikeidan*) intent on interrogating and apprehending persons suspected as *futei senjin*.

For Korean residents, meanwhile, this lynching campaign constituted its own sonic terror. As one account put it, "the neighborhood was in an uproar, with townspeople shouting, 'Kill the *futei senjin*!'" Hearing this, many Koreans immediately knew they would be forced to speak. "Hardly any of us spoke Japanese, so they would spot us right away," recalled one Korean factory worker, while another echoed, "We didn't dare speak for fear of giving ourselves away. . . . But one of our comrades did speak up. As the vigilantes approached, he called out to me: 'I can't understand what they're saying, translate it for me!' Hearing this, they cut him down on the spot."<sup>93</sup> In this vocal encounter, one finds the anxiety of colonial estrangement made manifest. In

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<sup>92</sup> Tsuboi Shigeji, "Jūgoen gojissen," in *Tsuboi Shigeji shishū*, ed. Odagiri Hideo (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1954), 34-47. Originally printed in *Shin Nihon bungaku*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (April 1948): 50. It is also important to note that Tsuboi's poem was based on an essay of the same name that appeared in the proletarian arts journal *Senki* in 1928. In it, Tsuboi recounts the same train car interrogation in similarly vivid detail. See Tsuboi Shigeji, "Jūgoen gojissen," *Senki* (September 1928): 79-82.

<sup>93</sup> *Kantō daishinsai to Chōsenjin gyakusatsu*, 198.

overhearing the sound of their own language rendered foreign from within, the vigilante "community" (*kyōdōtai*) is faced squarely with the "schizophonic" threat that the colonial encounter represented: the mutual estrangement of the voice from its *topos*—its supposed sense of place—and their own voices made incomprehensible as a result. In the face of this disorientation, their solution is therefore to swiftly reconstitute the boundaries of the sensible by brutally implementing the violence inherent in the harmonic system of *naisen yūwa*.

But in the victims' reference to fellow "comrades" (*nakama*), one hears an equally dire threat to the policing body: the language of class solidarity. Indeed, it was for this reason that police spent September 3rd rounding up Japanese labor leaders like Hirasawa Keishichi in order to settle scores with the labor movement. Once the organizers were in custody at Kameido prison, the police slaughtered them and disposed of their bodies along the banks of the Arakawa canal, along with several hundred Korean and Chinese bodies. In its aftermath, the pretext for the murders was painted as a response to a quite literal noise disturbance; police testimonials later stated that detained labor organizers were "singing revolutionary songs with Korean and Chinese prisoners to incite them to rebellion."<sup>94</sup> Here, though this claim has been refuted repeatedly, one finds a concise sonic portrait of what stood precisely counter to the ideology of *kokugo* and colonial capitalism: an unruly chorus of anticolonial class struggle.

This points to the systematic and apparently premeditated way in which a larger leftist purge that well predated the earthquake was carried out in concert with the spread of anti-Korean rumors. Thus, for Tsuboi, the true source of the rumors and violence was so clear that it went without saying. Toward the end of "*Jūgoen gojissen*," he writes:

Was it really the rubbernecker who killed you?  
Who was it that armed these 'rubbernecker' with bamboo spears?  
Who passed them the fireman's hooks?

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 197.

Who made their sabers swing?  
I know

In the context of what we have just learned, what he "knows" would appear to be the involvement of the police and the military. But rather than proceeding to offer this apparent knowledge, Tsuboi seems to change the subject in the next line:

It's because of the Japanese word *zabuton*  
That you could not but pronounce as *safuton*  
Because you were made to read the rescript  
But could not.  
It was simply for this,  
My Korean comrades, that you were so cruelly slain.

Here, the line that follows what Tsuboi "knows" creates an enjambment that allows him to imply what cannot be said by saying two things at once: "Who made their sabers swing? / I know / It's because of the Japanese word *zabuton*." After generating an expectation for "the police" to appear, Tsuboi instead inserts "the Japanese word *zabuton*" in their place, effectively summoning "the police" as a virtual if unspoken presence in the latter. With this verbal palimpsest, Tsuboi thereby entreats the reader to see through the regime of aural sensibility housed in "Japanese word for *zabuton*" to the force of systematic violence lurking behind it. To consider that it was *both* state violence as well as the violence of vocal harmony that drove the general public—the rubberneckers—to take up arms. To perceive, in Jacques Rancière's terms, the police *as* the distribution of the sensible.<sup>95</sup>

## VI. A Voice of the "People"

With this in mind, we can return to the earlier question of why Shimizu Ikutarō's theory of "groundless rumors" refrained from addressing the case of the post-quake rumors, and by extension the colonial dilemma more generally. Strikingly, Shimizu omits mention of the 1923

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<sup>95</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (New York: Continuum, 2005), 3.

earthquake in *Groundless Rumors* but for one passage in which he dismisses it as an "exceptional case."<sup>96</sup> While puzzling on its surface, however, Tsuboi's coded revelation offers a plausible explanation for this apparent silence; subject to the burden of censorship, it is almost certain that Shimizu believed, but could not explicitly state, that these supposedly anonymous rumors were circulated widely through official channels. As Shimizu would later argue in a postwar essay on the earthquake:

Though it was said that the imperial decree on Sept. 12 [1923] was meant to *prevent* the spread of rumors and to protect Koreans and other targets, this was a lie. . . . Indeed, the slaying of countless Koreans along with [dissidents and activists] was carried out and covered up by the very banner of martial law which, from September 2 onward, created a dark vacuum that gave cover to the spread of rumors and vigilante attacks.<sup>97</sup>

As such, rather than the sort of source-less, horizontal, purely interpersonal vector of oral communication that he thought true rumors to be, the post-quake "rumors" seemed instead to be driven in large part by a top-down dissemination campaign intended to carry out the systematic purge of a political threat.

More specifically, in Shimizu's view, the apparent groundswell of rumors served as a smokescreen for obscuring the more deliberate operations of the state. As he argued, the first decree of martial law allowed the state to provide cover for the attacks by literally suspending the *letter* of the law and replacing it with a void to be filled by a street-level tribunal of voices. In turn, the passage of a second edict outlawing "groundless rumors" (the "Peace Preservation Act," or *Chian ijirei*), well after most of the damage had been done, allowed the state to cover its own tracks. As with the February 26th Incident, then, the decree of martial law opened up a state of

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<sup>96</sup> Shimizu, *Ryūgen higo*, 142. See also Mizuide Kōki, "'Jishingo-ha' chishikijin no shinsairon," *Mass Communication Kenkyū*, Vol. 93 (2018): 117-35.

<sup>97</sup> Shimizu Ikutarō, "Nihonjin no shizenkan: Kantō daishinsai," in Shimizu Ikutarō, *Ryūgen higo* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2011), 181-82. Appended to the 2011 edition of *Ryūgen higo*, this essay originally appeared in Itō Sei and Shimizu Ikutarō eds., *Kindai Nihon shisōshi kōza 3: Hassō no shoyōshiki* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1960), 9-62.

exception that in turn provided the basis for subsequent rule.<sup>98</sup> But for Shimizu, what therefore obtained in the wake of the earthquake was not a phenomenon of genuine rumor, but rather one of propaganda masquerading as such.

In spite of Shimizu's theoretical distinction, however, it was clear enough that this propaganda not only *behaved* in much the same way as "genuine" rumors, but did so by exploiting fault lines of racial animus and suspicion that had been scored into the postwar urban soundscape and cracked open in the "darkness" of the quake's aftermath. In those intervening days, Shimizu himself recalled a population reduced to a primordial state, "as they were 5,000 years ago." Within this "darkened void," he argued, the people reverted to a state of survival, implying a primarily *oral* state in which the assurance of communal safety rested upon the power of the voice.<sup>99</sup> Here, one suspects Shimizu is referring to the necessity of hearsay in the task of collective "self-preservation," thereby creating a natural susceptibility to propaganda. But in locating a collective "self" within the realm of primordial orality, Shimizu seemed to elide the extent to which this sense of selfhood found definition *in opposition* to the merely vocal. Indeed, as the vigilante voice tests demonstrated, the most prevalent mode of "self-defense" relied on separating the bare utterance (*phone*) of the colonized from the meaningful speech (*logos*) of the national language. More than simply a tragic byproduct of confusion or insecurity, the performance of these phonetic shibboleths staged a vulgar reenactment of the origin of political community—quite literally from a state of bare life (*zoe*) to political life (*bios*)—whereby the primal scene of racial ascription through the voice could serve to draw the boundaries of

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<sup>98</sup> Kusano Hyōichirō, "Chian ijirei ni tsuite," in *Chian ijihō kankei shiryōshū*, Vol. 1, ed. Ogino Fujio (Tokyo: Shin Nihon Shuppansha, 1996), 132-35.

<sup>99</sup> Shimizu, "Nihonjin no shizenkan," 179.

sensibility that constituted the "Us" and "Them" of the public order.<sup>100</sup>

Ultimately, then, the rumors' provenance or inherent falsehood mattered less than their capacity to reinforce a sensuous division between the self-apparent national body and the voices that constituted its surplus. Once defined, this division found affirmation in the so-called "vigilante trials" that followed the massacre itself.<sup>101</sup> In brief, the majority of the defendants received light sentences, if any, on the basis that they simply acted to protect the people of their local community. In press coverage, meanwhile, supportive voices echoed the notion that *jikeidan* were out to defend them against an outside threat.<sup>102</sup> Citing the historian Murai Osamu, Andre Haag notes that these refrains molded the massacre into the folk tradition of "stranger murder" (*ijin goroshi*), which further insulated the social order of the "abiding folk" (in the ethnologist Yanagita Kunio's terms) against the estranged voices of the colonized.<sup>103</sup> In this way, the blame for the massacre was thus displaced onto the "people" (*minshū*) as if it were an expression of the *vox populi*, at which point the people were in large part absolved for their actions. Out of this catastrophic ferment, and for ruthlessly political ends, a voice of the "people" had thus taken on a coherent form.

Furthermore, by obscuring the extent of official involvement, the state and the police succeeded in relegating the historical record of the massacre to the same outlaw status as

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<sup>100</sup> Haag, "Fear and Loathing in Imperial Japan," 3. See also Sonia Ryang, "The Tongue that Divided Life and Death: The 1923 Tokyo Earthquake and the Massacre of Koreans," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, Vol. 5, No. 9 (2007).

<sup>101</sup> On the vigilante trials and the assignation (and justifications) of vigilante "responsibility," see *Kantō daishinsai to Chōsenjin gyakusatsu*, 74-83. For a fuller account of the issue of civilian versus government responsibility for the massacres, see Yamada Shōji, *Kantō daishinsai no Chōsenjin gyakusatsu: Sono kokka sekinin to minshū sekinin* (Tokyo: Sōshisha, 2003).

<sup>102</sup> Kang Tök-sang, *Kantō daishinsai* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1975), 176-78.

<sup>103</sup> Murai Osamu, *Nantō ideorogī no hassei: Yanagita Kunio to shokuminchishugi*, expanded edition (Tokyo: Ōta Shuppan, 1995), 54-60, cited in Haag, "Fear and Loathing in Imperial Japan," 6.

"groundless rumors, gossip, and false reports."<sup>104</sup> This double move allowed for the massacre to be attributed not to the voice of state apparatus, but rather conveniently to rumor—an untraceable, groundless voice from nowhere, believed by "nobody and everybody at once." As such, the figure of rumors' acousmatic "orality" helped to delimit the vocalic contours of a "new *gemeinschaft*" that fit neatly within the folk ideology of the *kokumin* so espoused by Miki Kiyoshi and others in the years to come.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, for the Communications Ministry, it pointed to a community of vocal ties that might serve to acclimate an even more expansive instrument for the diffusion of state communication: radio broadcasting.

As with the post-quake rumors, the inchoate state of Japan's airwaves in 1923 meant that the boundary between "official" and "unofficial" lines of communication was nebulous at best. But while this ambiguity may have signaled anarchic, transnational potential—a liberated sphere of vocal intercourse—the aftermath of the earthquake revealed the realm of the senses to be a powerfully countervailing force in defining an imagined vocal community against the schizophrenic effects of colonial encounter. If properly regulated, then, the radio offered a means of harnessing the vigilante orality of rumors and voice tests in the service of broader political consolidation. In Anna María Ochoa Gautier's terms, this amounted to the formation of a nationalized vocal community that would double as a form of "vocal immunity" against rumors' more subversive potential; in short, by channeling the viral economy of rumor into a more tractable framework, the technology of broadcast promised to turn this constitutive yet "undesirable form of the self" into a "vocally articulate one."<sup>106</sup> However, given the violent associations of the former, officials would need to frame the institutionalization of radio in more

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<sup>104</sup> Kusano, "Chian ijirei ni tsuite," 132-35.

<sup>105</sup> See Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*.

<sup>106</sup> Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 171.

explicit *contrast* to the post-quake rumors: as a remedy for, rather than an extension of their social logic.

It was on the basis of this disavowal that officials were able to present radio broadcasting as a solution to the "problem" of rumor. In the aftermath of the earthquake, the Peace Protection Act prohibiting the spread of "groundless rumors" joined a slate of emergency measures in forming the basis for a sweeping expansion of the Wireless Telegraphic Communications Law that would clear the way for the establishment of NHK. Such a move was especially pressing, the Communications Ministry argued, in light of the collapse of terrestrial communications during the earthquake. In fact, news of the disaster first reached international ears via the dispatches of a long-distance radio plant in the coastal city of Iwaki, one of only several in the country at the time. According to the *Far Eastern Review*, the "splendid service rendered by the radio plants during this period of great anxiety" prompted the government to redouble efforts to establish a wireless infrastructure and modify the existing communications laws in order to do so.<sup>107</sup> As Gregory Kasza notes, however, domestic observers understood that it was not simply a matter of international communication, but more so "the torrent of rumors and panic after the disaster that highlighted the radio's potential utility to the state."<sup>108</sup>

As a result, officials and journalists alike reframed this crisis of colonial capitalism as a conjoined crisis of media and public harmony for which the radio could offer a salve. A popular refrain after the quake held that, "If only there had been radio, we would never have been taken in by such groundless rumors."<sup>109</sup> This sentiment furnished the task of radio broadcasting with an urgency that sped the process of its development and consolidation into a nationalized communication network. Within less than three years, NHK was established on the premise that

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<sup>107</sup> "Radio's Part in Japan's Reconstruction," *Far Eastern Review* (October 1923): 647.

<sup>108</sup> Kasza, *The State and Mass Media in Japan*, 78.

<sup>109</sup> Takeyama, *Rajio no jidai*, 15.



the radio offered a service of a fundamentally "public character," and would thus warrant state control.<sup>110</sup> Notably, one of the main planks of this advocacy was the value of the radio for the standardization of *kokugo* pronunciation, as well as its capacity to assimilate regional diversity by gradually folding subsidiary stations into the larger network of centralized broadcast. In this way, the radio offered (in theory) a means of shifting the voice of the "people" from the unstable grounds of rumor to an apparatus that could graft it onto the construction of a larger and more stable social body.

Consequently, as broadcasting power increased in concert with the state's imperial advances on the Asian continent, the Communications Ministry leaned even more heavily on the provisions of the Second Wireless Telephone Act to ensure that communications between home and abroad were strictly monitored. As the playwright and critic Sakamoto Masaru wryly observed in March of 1931, "Any time [Japanese Communist Party co-founder] Katayama Sen speaks, it sharpens [the censors'] nerves, and when an amateur hobbyist can pick up a signal not only from Vladivostock but from Eastern Siberia, it quickens their pulse."<sup>111</sup> Although there was still "no way to establish 'customs' for the atmosphere," he mused, the surveillance he described would increase dramatically after Japan's invasion of Manchuria in September 1931, as would the enlistment of radio in the service of imperial propaganda.<sup>112</sup>

This service intensified over the next several years to the degree that the radio found

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<sup>110</sup> Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai ed., *Hōsō gojūnen-shi*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1977), 10.

<sup>111</sup> Sakamoto Masaru, "Rajio wa dare no mono ka," *Chūō Kōron* (March 1931): 231.

<sup>112</sup> In this remark, Sakamoto presaged Rudolf Arnheim's more well-known observation that "wireless . . . passes all customs-officers, needs no cable, penetrates all walls and even in house raids is very difficult to catch." See Rudolf Arnheim, *Radio*, trans. Margaret Ludwig and Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), 233.

colloquial mention by the mid-1930s as the "handmaiden of the state" (*seifu senshō*).<sup>113</sup> The journalist Kiyosawa Kiyoshi summarized this state of affairs in his 1935 article on "The Radio's Reactionary Turn":

When radio first appeared, everyone expected that [its] waves would . . . encircle the globe in no time at all. With the appearance of this powerful assailant of national borders, many ignorant and unthinking aesthetes of national purism thought that it would bring rapid destruction. But in fact, the opposite has been the case. Reactionaries of every country have recognized the expansive role that radio could play, and succeeded in bringing it under their control as *a stimulus for collective, feudalistic instinct* (emphasis mine).<sup>114</sup>

Here, Kiyosawa averred that the same was true in Japan, where radio listening had diffused rapidly into homes, classrooms, and workplaces. At the same time, however, the weekly litany of lecture programs and "self-improvement courses" struck Kiyosawa as patronizing to the point of insulting the intelligence of its listeners, whose sentiment he summarized by way of an apocryphal joke: "Walking down the street recently, I heard a radio switch on. Someone said, 'This program sounds like the *children's hour* broadcast,' to which another passerby replied, 'Don't they all?'"<sup>115</sup> Meanwhile, the radio's imagined *topos* seemed to have grown only more extensive and diffuse with the expansion of the nation's imperial borders. As Ji Hee Jung notes, broadcasts from colonial territories increased in number and frequency from the mid-1930s onward, piping music "full of exotic atmosphere" into the metropole alongside children's plays, lectures, and human-interest stories designed to trumpet the development of the empire.<sup>116</sup> As such, Kiyosawa argued, whatever utopian potential the radio may have once signaled, its promise now spoke more to the interests of ideologues and "cowardly finance-capitalists" than to any

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<sup>113</sup> See Takeyama, *Rajio no jidai*, 86. Or as the critic Yoshimoto Akimitsu more bluntly put it, the radio was held firmly "in the palm of the Communications Ministry" (*teishinshō no shōchū ni aru*). See Yoshimoto Akimitsu, "Rajio wa yanagawa-nabe da," *Chūō Kōron* (September 1935): 210.

<sup>114</sup> Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, "Rajio no uyoku-ka," *Chūō Kōron* (September 1935): 207.

<sup>115</sup> Kiyosawa, "Rajio no uyoku-ka," 206.

<sup>116</sup> Jung, "Imagining an Affective Community in Asia," 209-10.

immediate concern of the "people" (*minshū*).<sup>117</sup>

Worse still, its degree of sonic saturation seemed only to render the soundscape of local life noisier and more indistinct. As Hasegawa Nyozeikan lamented, the public would soon have "little chance of being afforded the degree of sensitivity that the ears of feudal commoners had in distinguishing the different throats of performers."<sup>118</sup> Yet Hasegawa's statement belies the extent to which he and other listeners had indeed developed a mode of listening that was, if not as "sensitive" as its feudal antecedent, at least possessed of a resonant collective "instinct" to detect difference in the voices of others. Indeed, if one recalls the scene of overhearing in Kafū's *Strange Tale*, it is clear that the narrator's aversion to the radio lay *not* in its oft-held homogenization of the urban soundscape, but rather in the way it seemed to channel and even amplify its sonic heterogeneity, therefore troubling his sense of which voices did or did not belong in the city of his own nostalgic imagination. So too with Nii Itaru, whose noticeable exclusion of colonial subjects from his roster of "voiceless" city-dwellers constituted a doubly ironic act of silencing.

Rather than betraying instances of discrete prejudice, however, these subtle transpositions bespoke the extent to which the colonized population had been deprived of subjective interiority, reduced to vocal musculature, and made into conduits of mere sound or "noise" to be renovated or removed at will. Colonial difference, thus defined, could readily be transmuted into a matter of discrepancy between sound and source—the unwelcome proximity of distant or foreign-sounding voices—or in short, as a problem of schizophrenic. And with the ensuing advent of broadcasting so quick to follow, it is therefore possible to grasp how this dilemma seemed to migrate from the voice of the colonial stranger to the estranged voice of the radio. In this way,

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<sup>117</sup> Kiyosawa, "Rajio no uyoku-ka," 208.

<sup>118</sup> Hasegawa, "Rajio bunka," 99.

Kiyosawa may indeed have been justified in fearing that radio would act as a "stimulus for collective, feudalistic instinct." What he may not have anticipated, however, was how the radio could also serve as a *negative* stimulus—a new sonic Other against which to define the vocal culture of the "people"—and thus as an ironic catalyst for the re-sharpening of "feudal" ears.

### *Conclusion*

Within the context of this interwar moment, I have attempted to show how rumor and radio can be heard not in ontological contrast, but rather along a continuum—as successive mediations of colonial estrangement—wherein "what is propagated" through rumor becomes, in Blanchot's terms, "the movement of propaganda itself."<sup>119</sup> Put differently, if the phatic contours of rumor served in 1923 to outline a phonetic community of the "people" against the racial and linguistic disorientations of colonial encounter, then the advent of national broadcasting represented an institutional enlistment of this acousmatic imagination toward the more encompassing vocalic body of the *kokutai*. To this task, moreover, the "wireless community" of broadcast submitted the "groundless" vocality of rumor to the same immunizing techniques that had been enacted against the errant sonorities of the colonial stranger: apprehending the social potency of the voice only to the extent that the restless energies of its phonic surplus could then be subdued, "grammaticalized," or otherwise shorn of their "unintended outcomes."<sup>120</sup>

By the same token, however, the radio's attendant fealty to the grammar of state policy ensured that its voice bore an ever-diminishing relation to the surrounding frequencies of everyday life, such that its critics came to regard the wireless by the mid-1930s as a material threat—an "inner enemy"—to the very sense of aural community that its planners invoked. Paradoxically, that is, the voice of the radio came to inhabit the same dissonant register as the

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<sup>119</sup> Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, 243.

<sup>120</sup> Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality*, 171.

voice of the colonial stranger: a sonic foil against which to define a legible vocal community through the discriminating shibboleths of the ear. For indeed, in their acts of overhearing what whispers passed on the street, the aural *flâneurs* of the late 1930s seemed ironically to re-enact the very modes of auditory surveillance by which the colonized had been targeted, and to which they themselves were now subject under the vagaries of totalitarian rule. While different in motive, this mode of overhearing entailed listening for sonic cues of affinity and difference—which voices seemed stranger than others, which ones may or may not have corresponded to their perceived places of origin—and paying tacit heed to the function of rumors in reinforcing these divisions.

As such, while it may have pursued resistant ends, this tenor of focus on a self-apparent orality of the "people" against the seemingly ontological dissonance of the radio voice reveals that the sensory experience of social estrangement under colonial capitalism had not been re-examined so much as recast in media-theoretical terms. Consequently, while Kafū and his contemporaries sought to counter the wireless propaganda of the state through the audition of a "vocal culture grounded in place," their own critical language betrayed a vocal culture carved out through colonial violence, and aural techniques shaped by the very means of communication and control that they sought to escape.<sup>121</sup> However, in order to better understand how—in just over a decade—the voice of the radio came to be heard as so paradoxically foreign to that of the "people," it is necessary to examine in more detail how the early exponents of public broadcasting sought to immunize and "grammaticalize" this demotic register in the first place. To this end, the next chapter will turn to the mid-1920s development of radio poetry: an endeavor that witnessed a coalition of poets, rhetoricians, and state officials attempt to put the sensibilities of the concurrent "people's arts" movement toward a new genre of broadcast verse that might

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<sup>121</sup> Yoshimi, "*Koe*" *no shihonshugi*, 21.

serve in turn to bring the unwieldy energies of the post-quake vocal public into sympathetic resonance with the radio's nationalizing project.

## CHAPTER 2

### ENCHANTMENT OF POLITICS, POETICS OF ENCHANTMENT

"By reciting poetry, one makes it their own—at a corporeal level—one joins in union with it. Those who hear it recited, meanwhile, are struck by the power of poetry transformed into elemental sound. Through this sound, poetry is purified, refined to its very essence. And so, recitation must not be taken lightly."

—Takamura Kōtarō, "On Recitation Poetry," 1942

By the evening of September 1st, 1923, the poet Saijō Yaso's house was almost entirely engulfed in flames. The Kantō earthquake had struck just before noon that day, and already rumors were swirling that the rising waters had swallowed up most of the islands in Tokyo bay. Meanwhile, the city itself was a "sea of fire." Saijō worried for his brother in Tsukishima, and for his friends and relatives living in the *shitamachi*. More urgently, however, he worried for his own safety; to escape the conflagration, Saijō scrambled to the top of a hill overlooking Ueno, "filled with evacuees clutching what little they could carry." People were "drained, desperate, terrified," he recalled, and as night fell, "the unrelenting noise of the day gave way to a tense, fearful silence." And then:

As the night neared its most despairing depth, a boy near me, no older than sixteen, reached into his pocket and pulled out something shiny: a small, silver harmonica. After pausing for a moment, he put it to his lips and blew.

Fearing that the boy's playing would draw consternation from the crowd, Saijō recalled an urge to reach over and put a stop to the tune. Yet as the boy played on, Saijō noticed "something phenomenal" taking place.

The harmonica's simple melody, buoyed elegantly by the winds of the late summer night, caused no anger at all. The tune alighted delicately upon our ears, soft and still . . . and soon whispering voices began to rise from the crowd. Then, as if to break the tension, someone yawned, stretched his legs, and stood. He brushed the debris from his trousers

and began to walk around. Others joined. If I had to describe the scene in a single sentence, it was as if a single, heavenly thread of spring breeze had passed through a tangle of wintry netting.

The boy's impromptu recital lasted only a moment before the hillside resumed its prior silence. But in that brief instance, it imparted to Saijō "the deepest" of revelations: "Folk tunes are wonderful things," he whispered to himself. "Even the tawdriest of melodies could bring comfort, joy, even exaltation." It was precisely then, he claimed, that he first felt compelled to "put [his] work toward the welfare of the masses."<sup>1</sup>

At first glance, one is struck by this parting reference to the "masses" (*taishū*), foreshadowing the term's wider discursive advent in the latter half of the 1920s. For while the term carried more explicit class associations at the time of the earthquake (often linked to the "proletarian masses," or *musan taishū*), it would later become broadly synonymous with shifts in urban demography, new patterns of cultural production and consumption, and the expanded media ecology of middlebrow popular culture to emerge in the early Shōwa years. What makes Saijō's account especially vital, however, is his choice to narrate the revelation of this latent social formation through the modality of sound. With vision diminished by the night's depth, the passage homes in on a moment of rapt audition, on both the part of Saijō himself as well as those around him; in his attention to a man's relieved yawn, the hum of whispering voices, or the faint rustling of bodies taken to signal the lifting of some invisible pall, the sound of the harmonica recedes against the sound of the crowd's own listening. What strikes Saijō as "phenomenal," then, is not just the simple elegance of the boy's folk melody, but its capacity to effect a subtle yet profound shift in atmosphere: to resonate audibly among its surrounding bodies, and thereby to form, momentarily, an audible public.

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<sup>1</sup> Saijō Yaso, *Saijō Yaso: Uta no Jijoden* (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1997), 24-26.



But if Saijō himself seemed surprised that this new impression of the urban public would reveal itself through the ear, such a modality was, in another sense, entirely foreseeable. As colonial and regional labor migration had increased in the years leading up to the earthquake, an anxious awareness of the metropole's "surplus population" brought with it a growing recognition among poets of an attendant surplus of signification beyond the *logos* of the written word. Through speech and song, poets and pedagogues alike began to delve more earnestly into the nuances of the Japanese language in its embodied, sonorous articulation: its stress and intonation, the rounding of its vowels, the passage of air across consonants, the affect and mannerisms associated with its multifarious regional inflections. In fact, Saijō himself was already well known outside of poetry by 1923 as a writer of children's songs (*dōyō*), including the notably successful "Kanariya," which had been set to music by Narita Tamezō and released as a record by Nipponophone in 1920.

In this sense, the epiphanic tenor of Saijō's retelling betrays more than a hint of authorial invention. Indeed, the boy's unnamed melody might well have struck close to one of Saijō's own works, or even that of a colleague; over the preceding years, Saijō's fellow affiliates of the children's literature journal *Akai Tori* had penned lyrics to some of the earliest successes in the emergent industry of recorded "popular song" (*ryūkōka*), with Noguchi Ujō's wildly popular 1922 work "Sendō Kouta" being only the most recent example.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, as was evident in the appeals of these early hits to the vernacular of regional folk songs (*min'yō*), Saijō and others had begun to take seriously that the growing diversity of Tokyo's migrant soundscape signaled a new domain of aural reception to rival the scope of the reading public. More than a strictly personal reminiscence, then, Saijō's account seems to distill a wider shift in consciousness that

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<sup>2</sup> See also Kitahara Hakushū's 1918 "Sasurai no uta" and Sōma Gyofū's lyrical contribution to the infamous "Kachūsha's Song" (1915).

began to take hold within the poetry community (*shidan*) during the final years of the Taishō era: the dawning awareness of an "audience" (*chōshū*) in its most literal, or audile, sense.

At the same time, if such sonic awareness bespoke a changing social reality, it also echoed profound political consequence. As shown in the previous chapter, the introduction of radio technology and the attendant surge of loosely regulated, amateur activity across 1922-1924 begat a sphere of "wireless" vocal intercourse that demanded as swift a public reckoning as the raft of "groundless rumors" that emerged in the quake's aftermath. Moreover, these rumors' grave outcome laid bare the power of aurality not only to adjudicate markers of identity and belonging, but to shape the very precincts of public being at the nexus of language, sound, and the body. It followed, then, that if poets like Saijō were to have a hand in the reconstruction of culture and public life after the quake, they would need to reacquaint the act of versification with its phatic, embodied function. To rethink, in Donald Hall's terms, the act of "publication" not merely as publishing in print, but literally *making-public* through the act of vocalization, and generating a new listening public in turn.<sup>3</sup>

For Saijō and his peers, this demanded the revival and reform of poetic recitation—a movement to wed the more recent formal innovations of lyricism and free-verse to the spirit and practice of poetry's bardic tradition—as a means of socializing verse in sung, spoken, or shouted form. To this task, the conditions of post-quake Tokyo offered an ideal staging ground; as inexpensive venues sprouted from the city's wreckage, opportunities for poetic recitation multiplied in turn, allowing poets of all stripes to channel the turbulent rhythms and sonorities of

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<sup>3</sup> Donald Hall, "The Poetry Reading: Public Performance/Private Art," *The American Scholar* 54:1 (Winter 1985): 63. My use of the term "listening public" is also indebted to Kate Lacey's 2013 monograph of the same name. In it, she writes: "The listening public is . . . an always latent public, attentive but undetermined. Any intervention in the public sphere is undertaken in the hope . . . that there is a public out there, ready to listen and engage." See Kate Lacey, *Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

the present that seemed so far to elude convincing expression in print. More crucially, however, the concurrent advent of public radio broadcasting presented a material medium through which to bring this oral poetry to an even more expansive cross-section of the populace, and to thereby harmonize its disparate intensities toward a communal sense of "public resonance" (*kōteki kyōmei*).

It was at this intersection of performance and new media that a movement for poetic recitation (*shi no rōdoku undō*, as it came to be known) took shape over the ensuing decade. By joining their trajectory to that of broadcasting, however, its associated poets had therefore to reckon with the political calculus involved in shaping the audible parameters of radio's emergent public, especially as the escalation of acclamatory social movements signaled a more polyphonous body politic than the state was willing to accommodate. What the movement's more prominent advocates proposed, then, was a radio-friendly mode of recitation that might, through various formal refinements, convey the impression of an informal, unadorned poetic voice—one shorn of embellishment, polished down to its most genuine and universal essence. By the same token, however, I argue that this mode of recitation served thereby to naturalize, or *enchant* a narrower political vision of post-quake public life by framing the state's attenuations of audible speech—the filtration of dissent, opacity, or innuendo—as steps toward a radiogenic ideal of clarity, neutrality, and noiseless transmission.

### *I. The People Yet to Exist*

Prior to the Kantō earthquake, the tenor of the *shidan* resonated broadly with the cultural mood of democratism that had swept Japan in the wake of World War I. Galvanized over the course of 1917-1918 by the October Revolution abroad and the widespread "rice riots" at home, the ensuing years saw the proliferation of labor unions, a rise in agrarian political organizing, and

a concomitant resurgence of the movement for expanded suffrage. Drawing upon shared energies, a wide-ranging "people's art" movement took center stage in the literary and performing arts, while liberal intellectuals like Yoshino Sakuzō, Kawai Eijirō, and Hasegawa Nyozeikan placed an overarching emphasis on the social welfare of "the people" (*minshū*) in their own calls for constitutional and legislative reform.<sup>4</sup> As such, the free-verse poet Kawaji Ryūkō felt assured in declaring in 1918 that "the recognition of individual rights, equality among people, and the abolition of class-based prejudice have so pervaded literature, politics, indeed every corner of contemporary thought, that such ideals ought now be taken as cornerstones of our culture."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the humanist social visions that had been fermenting variously in the writings of Ishikawa Takuboku and the Shirakaba school seemed now to enjoy an even greater sense of cosmopolitan currency, amply evident in the raft of postwar primers on poets and writers like Walt Whitman, Romain Rolland, and Edward Carpenter.<sup>6</sup>

It was in this milieu that the "people's poetry group" (*minshū-shi ha*)—primarily composed of Shiratori Seigo, Momota Sōji, Fukuda Masao, Satō Sōnosuke, and Tomita Saika—rose to prominence.<sup>7</sup> Evinced in collections like Momota's 1918 "Muddy Highways" (*Nukarumi no kaidō*), Tomita's 1918 "Child of the Earth" (*Chi no ko*) and Shiratori's 1919 "A Love of the

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<sup>4</sup> See Germaine A. Hoston, "The State, Modernity, and the Fate of Liberalism in Prewar Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 51:2 (1992).

<sup>5</sup> Kawaji Ryūkō, "Minshū oyobi minshū geijutsu no igi," *Yūben* 9, no. 3 (1918): 156-64.

<sup>6</sup> While Whitman's introduction to Japan had come earlier via Natsume Sōseki, Arishima Takeo, and others, Okkotsu Akio notes that the true "Whitman boom" in Japan did not occur until 1918, as part and parcel of the postwar wave of "democratic fever" that swept the country. See Okkotsu Akio, *Gendai shijin gunzō: Minshūshi-ha to sono shūhen* (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1991), 301. Of the *minshū* coterie, Tomita Saika was particularly instrumental in introducing the work of Whitman and Carpenter to Japan, publishing the Japanese translation of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (*kusa no ha*) and an edited collection of Carpenter's poetry (*Kapenta shishū*) in 1919 and 1920, respectively. Meanwhile, Ōsugi Sakae translated Romain Rolland's key text "The People's Theatre" (*Minshū geijutsuron*) in 1917.

<sup>7</sup> The appellation of the "people's poetry group" (*minshū-shi ha*) refers mainly to the coterie of poets who contributed to the journal *Minshū*, which ran from 1918-1921. At the same time, the "group" label was more of an ascription than a term of self-identification for these poets, and many critics have since noted that its implied coherence belied a fair degree of formal and ideological variance among the poets themselves. Still, it nonetheless serves as a useful designation for the poets presently mentioned.

Earth" (*Daichi no ai*), the group's associated poets succeeded largely by virtue of melding the cosmopolitan humanism of the Shirakaba school and Kawaji Ryūkō's colloquial free-verse (*kogo jiyūshi*) into misty, Whitmanian odes to the virtues of the common man and the rugged, earthen poetics of his pastoral habitus. Writing in 1918 about his own collection "Farmer's Language" (*Nōmin no kotoba*), Fukuda Masao offered a strident summation of this ethos: "It is in the most plebian (*shominteki*), pure, and plain language that one finds the truest revelations of rural life [and thus] the closest expression of that poetic inspiration which resonates in the breast of every man."<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Shiratori opined that "the *shidan* ought to be led by a poetry of free expression . . . one attuned to our true *humanity* [and] to the eternal voice that beckons from the deepest strata of nature and society."<sup>9</sup> In these and other effusive pronouncements, the *minshū* poets thereby appointed themselves not only the inheritors of Kawaji's free-verse poetics, but as those best suited to awakening its latent, democratizing potential.

Kawaji, for his part, maintained a sympathetic if measured posture toward the notion of a "people's poetry." In 1917, when Kawaji helped to establish the *shiwakai* (poetry forum), a consortium of the leading poets in Tokyo, he brought along Shiratori, Tomita, and Fukuda to form the group's nucleus.<sup>10</sup> And later, when Kitahara Hakushū, Saijō Yaso, and other more lyrically-minded members of the *shiwakai* began to criticize what they viewed as the *minshū* poets' unrefined prosodic sense and broad, hortatory style—"prose with line breaks," or as

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<sup>8</sup> Okkotsu, *Gendai shijin gunzō*, 39.

<sup>9</sup> Shiratori Seigo, "Kokuminteki shijin wo gyōbō su," *Bunshō Sekai* 3 (1918).

<sup>10</sup> As Inoue Yasufumi recalled, "At the time of my own entry into the *shiwakai*, the group consisted of Iwano Hōmei, Takamatsu Yoshie, Chino Shōshō, Horiguchi Daigaku, Hinatsu Kōnosuke, Murō Saisei, Shiratori Seigo, Kawaji Ryūkō, Tomita Saika, Fukushi Kōjirō, Yanagisawa Ken, Sangū Makoto, Satō Sōnosuke, and Saijō Yaso. . . . At that time, Momota Sōji was still in Osaka, Yamamura Bochō was in Mito, and Takamura Kōtarō, Ikuta Shungetsu, Kitahara Hakushū, and Miki Rofū didn't show up. I couldn't say for sure who came up with the idea to start the group, or who decided to name it the *shiwakai*, but my impression was that Kawaji, Tomita, Yanagisawa, and Shiratori represented the core of the group." See Matsunaga Goichi, *Nihon nōmin-shi shi*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1967).

Hinatsu Kōnosuke derisively put it, "the equivalent of political tracts in *faux-verse* form"—Kawaji penned pieces defending the individual merits of Shiratori and his colleagues, as well as the intentions underpinning the "people's art" movement as a whole.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, however, Kawaji acknowledged the shortcomings of the movement's generalized sense of populism, most evident in the core ambiguity of their *raison d'être*:

Is a people's art (*minshū geijutsu*) one that is bestowed upon the people, or created by the people themselves? . . . Does it represent art's *rustication* (*fūka*), or simply its mediocre reduction? . . . And finally, who are these *people* anyway? Is it you and I? Is it a matter of class distinction—between the aristocracy and the commoners, for instance? Or, might one say, all of the above? . . . What I'm getting at here is that this thing called "the people" is not an *actually-existing* social class, but rather a *conceptual ideal*. (emphases mine).<sup>12</sup>

Here, Kawaji's rhetorical line of questioning seemed less intent on discrediting the project of *minshū* art than pointing to its laudable effort to contain multitudes—to read its ambiguous subject position as an aspiration to "awaken a consciousness of the whole (全) within the individual part (個)" in hopes of raising the poetic endeavor to more transcendent heights.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, he argued, if the chimerical term *minshū* fell short of representing any actual socioeconomic formation, it did so in service of inviting a new social consciousness to take shape through the act of *poiesis*: in short, by positing "the people" as a latent totality, the movement invited the catalytic expression of a "true people's art" to materialize from any and all corners of society. However, on whether or not the *minshū* poets possessed a "genius" that could inspire such a grand awakening—at the level of "a Whitman or Tolstoy," for instance—Kawaji was reticent.

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<sup>11</sup> Hinatsu Kōnosuke, *Meiji Taishō-shi shi* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1929), quoted in *Gendai-shi sōran vol. 3: Ririshizumu no henyō*, ed. Uchibori Hiroshi, et al. (Tokyo: Nichigai Asoshietsu, 1997), vi-vii.

<sup>12</sup> Kawaji, "Minshū oyobi minshū geijutsu no igi." Here, Kawaji seems largely to be writing in response to Honma Hisao's influential 1916 publication, "The significance and value of people's art" (*Minshū geijutsu no igi oyobi kachi*). In turn, Katō Kazuo's 1919 work *Minshū geijutsuron* would further expound on the prefigurative force that the term "minshū" implied.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. See also Momota Sōji's 1916 collection "One and the Whole" (*Hitori to zentai*).

Meanwhile, for their critics in the symbolist wing of the *shiwakai* (Kitahara, Saijō, Hinatsu, and others associated with the journal *Kanjō*), the *minshū* poets' efforts amounted only to the "mediocre reduction" of which Kawaji had warned. Far from considerations of poetic genius, that is, many felt that the work of the *minshū* coterie barely qualified as poetry at all. In particular, Kitahara assailed Shiratori's work for "disrespect[ing] the internal prosody and true rhythm" of free-verse, going so far as to rewrite one of Shiratori's poems without line breaks in order to unmask its essentially prosaic character. To this, Shiratori retorted that he did not expect for poets like Kitahara and Saijō, "in their crisscrossing of classicism, colloquialism, and bad imitations of children's music, [to] recognize free-verse poetry when they see it."<sup>14</sup> But more importantly, he continued, Kitahara's expression of sonority and rhythm in his own works relied upon an almost dictatorial degree of direction over how his poems should be read, to the point of appending specific instructions for the "correct" location and length of breaths and caesuras. As such, Shiratori argued, if Kitahara himself could not convey the purportedly inherent rhythm of his own poetry without recourse to annotations, his attempt to speciously "demonstrate" the *minshū* poets' prosaicism on paper served only to showcase the futility of expressing (much less adjudicating) the true musicality of language through writing alone. In this rejoinder, Shiratori in fact pointed precisely to one of the key dilemmas that would galvanize the recitation movement over the coming decade. In the moment, however, it did little to resolve the so-called "people's poetry debates," which culminated in Kitahara and many of the *Kanjō* poets withdrawing from the *shiwakai* in 1921, leaving the group as a de facto outpost for Kawaji and the *minshū* coterie.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For a collation and account of this exchange, see Itō, *Gendai-shi kanshō kōza*, Vol. 6, 356-371.

<sup>15</sup> For a more illuminating discussion of prosody and form in Meiji-Taishō free verse, see Scott Mehl, "The Beginnings of Japanese Free-Verse Poetry and the Dynamics of Cultural Change," *Japan Review* 28 (2015): 103-132. For a comprehensive picture of the "people's poetry debates," see Itō, *Gendai-shi kanshō kōza*, Vol. 6.

Just as the *minshū* poets drew criticism from the *shidan*'s aesthetes for writing mere "political tracts," however, they managed also to alienate leftist critics for failing to pursue their social politics to more substantive ends. For in spite of having inspired many young proletarian writers through their sympathetic portrayals of the common man, poets like Tomita Saika and Momota Sōji went to great lengths to shield themselves from any accusation of overtly Marxist designs, to the point of strangely disavowing any real sense of efficacy in their social vision. As Momota stated:

The true *minshū* cannot be so simply summed up in materialist terms. We don't want to lend the name of our movement to those who expect to see reforms of the social system, redress of income inequality, or struggles against the capitalist class by needy and poorly compensated workers. . . . Rather, the true *minshū* represents new life, a whole humanity, love, understanding, and a true country.<sup>16</sup>

Here, if Kawaji might have framed such a posture as an inclination toward the loftier ideals of a universal humanism, those to the left of the group (particularly Tsuboi Shigeji, Ono Tōzaburō and those associated with the anarchist journal *Aka to Kuro*) observed a more insidious erasure of structural difference from the prevailing consciousness of "democracy," serving at best to render the term ineffectual, and at worst, tacitly endorsing a static and exclusionary vision of the *demos* itself.<sup>17</sup>

Often, this aversion to "materialism" manifested in a reluctance among the *minshū* poets to allow the social tumult of the moment to disturb the relatively placid contours of their verse.

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<sup>16</sup> Okkotsu, *Gendai shijin gunzō*, 47.

<sup>17</sup> The particularly sharp criticism that the *minshū* poets earned from the *Aka to Kuro* poets had also to do with the latter's impression that the *minshū* group had embarked from a promising ethos of environmentalist anarchism (owing largely to their debt to Edward Carpenter), but had forsaken the more material and coalitional politics of such a perspective in favor of a more "petit-bourgeois" focus on the "inward self," and an anodyne, "moralistic lyricism." See Ono Tōzaburō, "Aka to Kuro no nagare," *Kindai bungaku* (August 1950), in *Ono Tōzaburō chōsakushū*, Vol. 3, 418. Still, it is worth keeping in mind that poets like Shiratori and Fukuda were also a significant influence on the early advent of proletarian poetry, made evident by their invited inclusion in the path-breaking proletarian arts journal *The Sower*. See, for instance, Itō Shinkichi, "Shiratori Seigo no sekai: minshū-ha no puroretarian shi-teki senkusei," *Bungaku* 53 (1985): 42-51.



In Shiratori's poems, for instance, the upheavals of the rice riots and the ongoing immiseration of the countryside find frequent mention, but still fail to meaningfully disrupt the sense of abiding quietude that elsewhere pervades his own rural imaginary. In his 1922 poem "Antique Loom" (*Kofūna hataori*), Shiratori returns to Miyagi prefecture to find his hometown bathed in "pristine silence (*tōmei na shizukasa*)," punctuated only by the calming, rhythmic hum of rural livelihood:

Filtering through the weathered screen  
 spring sun lights off in golden rays,  
 and by chance, a *tan, tan, tan*  
 comes from the second floor next-door  
 the sound of an antique loom  
 in thick and rounded tones  
 like the heartbeat of  
 the town this bright afternoon.

Furubita shōji wo suite  
 haru no hi wa kin iro ni utsutteiru,  
 omoi gakenaku mo, tan tan tan to  
 mukai no ie no nikai kara  
 kofū na hataori no oto ga kikoetekita  
 nibui marumi aru oto de  
 kono akarui gogo no furu eki no  
 shinzō no kodō no yō de aru.

In this scene of overhearing, the *acousmètre* of the antique loom brings not "disequilibrium or tension," but a sense of reassuring continuity, as if rendering audible the enduring vitality of the town.<sup>18</sup> "Who is the one weaving," Shiratori wonders, "A wife or daughter I might know?" The question goes unanswered, allowing a more generalized projection of memory to take the place of the person behind the screen. What matters, then, is not the present identity or situation of the laborer, but rather the immemorial tradition she represents:

*tan, tan, tan, tan,*  
 always and forever, this sound of weaving,  
 unceasing, perhaps, until the sun's sinking  
 in each interval  
 chirping birds of light  
 so sweet and warm the sound of the loom  
 can be faintly heard

tan tan, tan, tan,  
 itsumademo itsumademo  
 hataoru oto ga suru,  
 hi no shizumu made yamenai no de arō ka  
 sono oto no aima ni  
 hikari no tori no saezuri ka  
 yasashii hogarakana osa no oto ga

Here, the slight metrical variations in each line are interwoven through the stanza's repetitions and simply patterned assonance, anchored in the mind's ear by the persistent thumping (*tan*) of the loom. In such instances, the lack of dynamic or inventive rhythm that Kitahara criticized on

<sup>18</sup> Michel Chion, "The Acousmètre," in *Critical Visions in Film Theory: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Timothy Corrigan et al. (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011), 162.

formal grounds registered for critics like Tsuboi as a flattening of the uneven realities of modern rural life, thereby stripping the irruptive potential of politics from the warp and weft of communal harmony.<sup>19</sup>

In this sense, as Tsuboi Hideto and Okkotsu Akio have suggested, the *minshū* poets' formal rift with the *Kanjō* coterie belied a shared bourgeois sensibility, insofar as their ideal of popular art was chiefly a project in cultural edification: less a task of attuning to already-existing poetics of popular expression than of bringing their fictive *minshū* into existence by crafting a new poetic model out of "raw material" extracted from (primarily) rural experience.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, in place of a more dynamic social or rhythmic sense that might channel the jarring displacements underfoot, the *minshū* group summoned a timeless pastoral, complete with an archetypal cast of rural *volk*—the weaver, the flinty mason, the solitary ploughman, the village elder—whose purported oneness with their land and labor elided the real conditions of their alienation, or worse, harbored troublingly essentialist overtones. While broadly sympathetic to the plight of the countryside, then, the romantic sentimentality of "people's poetry" remained at a certain remove from the increasingly vocal agitations of the rural and working classes, leaving portents of violence just out of earshot.

Against these conditions, the irruption of the post-earthquake massacre only affirmed the skepticism of the movement's detractors. Indeed, the horrific display of violence in the quake's aftermath sundered the faith of many in the humanist mythos of "the people" that the *minshū*

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<sup>19</sup> While Tsuboi Shigeji acknowledged Shiratori's empathy for rural communities and his resolute pacifism, he nonetheless takes Shiratori to task for "taking a hands-off approach" to the structural challenges facing his countrymen, such that "his privileging of poetic spirit translated ultimately into indifference to real struggle." See Itō Sei, *Nihon kindai bungaku taikei*, Vol. 54, 27.

<sup>20</sup> See Tsuboi Hideto, *Kankaku no kindai: Koe,shintai,hyōshō* (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press, 2006), 234-239. Here, one can also cite Shiratori Seigo's third principle of *minshū* poetry: "A broad capacity to collect (*shuzai*) the full range of human and material resources that have hitherto been neglected by poets." See *Gendai-shi shi sōran 3: Ririshizumu no henyō*.

poets had sought so ardently to cultivate. Now, with farmers, townsfolk, and other constituents of the vaunted *minshū* standing trial for mass murder, both the idealism and the representational tropes of the movement seemed decisively naïve, and even inadvertently complicit in fostering the rhetorical framework for the culprits' defense. In his play *The Skeleton's Dance* (*Gaikotsu no buchō*), the veteran poet and playwright Akita Ujaku portrayed the would-be vigilantes, and by extension the Japanese as a "people," as "hideous skeletons . . . marionettes with no life of [their] own." Meanwhile, poets and dramatists like Tsuboi Shigeji and Senda Koreya came away from the massacre with their sense of subjectivity shaken, questioning the putatively humanistic social culture that could lead so many to reflexively reject the humanity of the colonized.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, however, the sheer scale of the disaster demanded a project of collective reckoning in the *shidan* that extended beyond the *minshū* group to encompass the wider social imperative of poetry and its role in the oft-discussed "reconstruction" (*fukko*) of public life. In this sense, even those poets who, like Saijō, had dismissed the work of the *minshū* group came to recognize that their social consciousness, however credulous it may have seemed, was now well-suited to tackling the questions at hand: What new sense of poetic purpose could be wrung from the coil of this social crisis, and what form would it take?

## II. From the Study to the Stage

For Kawaji, the moment called for a coming-together of the *shidan* that might in turn translate into a gesture of solidarity between poets and the stricken populace. In November, the

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<sup>21</sup> Born, Itō Kunio, the influential stage director Senda Koreya (1904-1996) changed his name to commemorate a "moment of political awakening" in which he was accosted by vigilantes outside Sendagaya station and mistaken for a "Korean malcontent" (*futei senjin*) in the wake of the earthquake. As Cody Poulton notes, Senda was one of many in the theater community who were politicized by the post-quake violence, particularly in light of the murder of prominent leftist writers like the playwright Hirasawa Keishichi, Osugi Sakae, and his partner Ito Noe. See Cody Poulton, *A Beggar's Art: Scripting Modernity in Japanese Drama, 1900-1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 121-22.

*shiwakai* published "Earthquake poems: On Disaster" (*Shinsai shishū: saika no ue ni*), a volume dedicated to memorializing the experience of the earthquake and documenting, as its editors put it, "the cruel ruin of our capital city."<sup>22</sup> True to its task, the volume collected eighty-six entries from poets across the formal and political spectrum, displaying both a symbolic détente between various coteries, as well as a largely unprecedented sense of public engagement on the part of the *shidan*. But as poet-lyricists like Saijō were increasingly aware, the prospects of a more public poetry extended well beyond the realm of print, insofar as the emergent masses were not only avid readers, but just as crucially—and in far more instances of everyday life—active listeners. Meanwhile, if the city's wreckage challenged the swift resumption of print publishing, it also signaled opportunities to build new public spaces, performance venues, and ways to reconceive the sociality of the literary arts. In short, what the conditions of post-quake Tokyo seemed to demand was not so much a break with the prevailing script of postwar humanism as much as its transposition into a new social and sensory register.

With this in mind, Akita Ujaku and his peers in the theater community offered a useful model. Over the course of 1920-23, Akita had been involved in an array of recitation events and "poetic drama" (*shigeki*) performances alongside members of the left-wing "worker's theater" troupe (*rōdō gekidan*), with his own newly-formed "vanguard theatre" (*zeneiza*) company staging underground poetry and drama readings across the spring and summer of 1923.<sup>23</sup> And

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<sup>22</sup> Shiratori Seigo, Kawaji Ryūkō, Momota Sōji, "Editors' afterword," *Shinsai shishū: saika no ue ni* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1923), in *Korekushon Modan Toshi Bunka 26: Kantō Daishinsai*, ed. Wada Hirofumi (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2007), 465.

<sup>23</sup> On Akita Ujaku's activities between 1920-23, see *Ujaku Jiden*, 77-99. These early performances took place at the "storehouse theatre" (*dozō gekijō*), a literal storehouse attached to Nakamura in Shinjuku. Members of Ujaku's influential *zeneiza* would go on to form the proletarian "trunk theatre" troupe the following year, traveling to work sites to perform for striking laborers, etc. Also, Hirasawa Keiichiro organized the 'worker's theatre troupe' (*rōdō gekidan*) in 1920. Also, because poetry readings had been a feature of salon groups since the Meiji era of *shintaiishi*, it's fitting that Akita Ujaku would be instrumental

while these activities tended to dovetail more with the popular theater movement, the months following the earthquake saw the emergence of an ideal venue for a more public realization of poetry in/as performance: in the summer of 1924, Akita's colleagues Hijikata Yoshi and Osanai Kaoru opened the Tsukiji Little Theatre (*Tsukiji shogekijō*), exploiting the looser building codes and inexpensive overhead costs of post-quake Tokyo to construct what Osanai hoped would be a modern theater for "the people."<sup>24</sup> The *minshū* poets took note, and in September 1924, on the one-year anniversary of the earthquake, the *shiwakai's* in-house journal *Nihon Shijin* ran an advertisement for "Poet's Day: A Recital of Poetry by the Poets Themselves," to be held the following month at the new Tsukiji venue.<sup>25</sup> With an impressively multi-generational roster of poets, the performance promised an analogous integration of poetry, music, and theater, channeling the epochal spirit of "total art" (*sōgō geijutsu*) toward an embodied realization of poetry's inherent "voice."<sup>26</sup>

The event itself, which Kawaji ostentatiously (and rather dubiously) declared to be "the first meeting of pure poetic recitation in Japan," drew an audience of more than five hundred people, "filling the already 'Little' theatre to its full capacity."<sup>27</sup> In addition to Kawaji and the *minshū* poets, the matinee performance featured recitations by Akita Ujaku and Noguchi Ujō, as well as Shimazaki Tōson, Yosano Tekkan, and Yosano Akiko (by then the eminent doyens of the poetry world), followed by a program of vocal music by Ogino Ayako with piano accompaniment by the composer Yamada Kōsaku. Though a more detailed program does not

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in popularizing this practice, as Shimazaki Tōson was one of his heroes. See Poulton, *A Beggar's Art*, 135.

<sup>24</sup> See Poulton, *A Beggar's Art*, 122-26.

<sup>25</sup> *Nihon Shijin* Nov. 1924. See also Tsuboi, *Koe no shukusai*, 34.

<sup>26</sup> The program included Ryūkō, Seigo and Masao (among others) alongside Hakushū and Hinatsu, *Myōjō*-era representatives Shimazaki Tōson and the Yosanos (Akiko and Tekkan), with musical accompaniment by Yamada Kōsaku.

<sup>27</sup> Tsuboi, *Koe no shukusai*, 35.

survive, it is likely that this latter portion featured works that Yamada had adapted from poems by Kitahara and Saijō, further strengthening the event's display of rapport between poetry and song. Taken as a whole, then, the inaugural "Poet's Day" was heralded as a success, if most vocally by its organizers; in rhapsodic tones, Satō Sōnosuke cast the gathering as a clarion call to poets across Japan, signaling the urgency and promise of this prospective vocal turn. "From the study to the stage!" He proclaimed, exhorting poets to hear the event as an inducement to move "from the eye to the ear, from silent reading to reading aloud, [and] toward the formal recital of poetry as its own musical form."<sup>28</sup>

As brazen as it was, Satō's provocation seemed to resonate. The following year, Osanai and Hijikata invited the *shiwakai* to host another recitation event at the Tsukiji Theater, for which Satō issued an even more grandiose announcement:

We invite everyone—those on the political left, those hidden away in their studies, those toiling in the fields—to partake in a 'day celebrating the poetic spirit.' . . . Having advanced a new and passionate movement of the lips and the rhythms of the voice . . . we herald the spark that has been lit under the hidebound life of 'the poet,' and the endeavor of 'poetry' to reach out to everyday life, from the stage to the streets . . . to emit, like radio waves (*denpa*), the flame that burns in the rhythm of the voice. . . . And as we wish for this movement to resonate with ordinary people (*ippan no hitobito*), we invite any and all to come and make this wonderful day, this 'celebration of poets,' even more beautiful.<sup>29</sup>

The resulting "Poets' Celebration" (*Shijinsai*) claimed an even more ambitious and diverse program than the year before. In addition to recitations, the event also celebrated the poet Kawai Suimei's fiftieth birthday, with a series of commemorative lectures and a keynote address by Kawai himself, as well as a program of "Ryūkyūan music and dance."<sup>30</sup> Further still, the participation of *Kanjō* poets Kitahara, Miki Rōfu, and Hagiwara Sakutarō—all of whom had

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>29</sup> Satō Sōnosuke, "Jūyonendo 'Shijinsai,'" *Tsukiji shogekijo zasshi*, November 2, 1925, 51.

<sup>30</sup> This portion of the event was likely spearheaded by Satō Sōnosuke, who had traveled to Okinawa in 1922 to research and collection folk songs. The experience in turn galvanized his involvement in the budding *shin-min'yō* (new folk song) trend in the *shidan*, which would gain mainstream currency in the latter half of the decade.

been absent from the previous year's performance—lent the proceedings a desired sense of collective purpose that transcended the internecine politics of the *shidan*.

For Kawai, however, the most memorable moment of the night occurred when he called the young anarchist poet Hagiwara Kyōjirō to the stage to recite selections of his recently published work, "Death Sentence." With his friend Tsuboi Shigeji in tow, Hagiwara burst onto the stage, banging gongs and delivering a "recitation that involved more screaming than reading."<sup>31</sup> Kawai's response was tactfully restrained, citing the frenetic display as evidence of the young poets' admirably "aural" sensibility. For Kaneko Mitsuharu, however, the performance was dumbfounding: "Both Tsuboi and Hagiwara were reciting separate poems simultaneously," such that "one could hardly understand a word they said." Still, he recalled, "if this was what the new poetry was all about, I couldn't help being impressed."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in the context of the event itself, with an earlier portion of the program devoted to lectures on "techniques of dramatic recitation" by the Tsukiji Theater's repertory actors, Hagiwara and Tsuboi succeeded in shattering the reverent atmosphere of the afternoon, making a sonic weapon of verse in the militant spirit of the credo they espoused in the journal *Aka to Kuro*: "Poetry is a bomb!"<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the stunt shrewdly called the bluff of the *shiwakai's* "open" invitation; if Satō had called for poets of all stripes to participate, to light a "spark" under the *shidan* and to channel the energies of the "streets" (*gaitō*), Hagiwara and Tsuboi's explosive poetics of urban dissonance—

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<sup>31</sup> Tsuboi, *Koe no shukusai*, 38.

<sup>32</sup> Kaneko Mitsuharu, "Hagiwara Kyōjirō no koto," *Hagiwara Kyōjirō no sekai* (Hagiwara Kyōjirō zenshi-shū iinkai, Shichōsha, 1958), 13.

<sup>33</sup> The brash slogan "Poetry is a bomb!" (*Shi to wa bakudan deru!*) appeared on the cover page of the anarchist poetry journal *Aka to Kuro*, which was produced between 1923-24 by Hagiwara and Tsuboi alongside Okamoto Jun and Kawasaki Chōtarō. For the reprinted edition, see *Aka to Kuro* (Tokyo: Tōji shobō, 1963). Also, as an envoy of poetry's experimental avant-garde, Hagiwara and Tsuboi's performance might not have been out of place in the context among their cohort in the MAVO group, which had formed the same year.

what Nakano Shigeharu somewhat critically labeled a new school of "screamers and noise poets"—technically fit the bill.<sup>34</sup>

As such, while Kawai and others were not as scandalized as Hagiwara and Tsuboi may have hoped, the pair's antics threw into relief the persistent sense of bourgeois propriety that belied the populist espousals of the recitation event. Namely, in spite of Satō's rhetorical overtures, the *shidan* remained beholden to a placid notion of "poetic spirit" that seemed less invested in exploring the radical extremities of this purported "vocal turn" than in submitting the poet's voice to various techniques of elocutionary discipline. Meanwhile, the Tsukiji Little Theatre was still a far cry from the "streets" or the popular stages of troupes like the *rōdō gekidan*, with Hijikata and Osanai's European-style productions catering to an audience that better resembled the literary salon than the public square.<sup>35</sup> However, Satō's second announcement made clear that the Tsukiji Theater was only a starting point for the wider ambitions of the recitation movement; if its initial directive pointed "from the study to the stage," the ensuing movement from the stage to the "streets" would unfold across the very "radio waves" (*denpa*) that Satō had invoked for rhetorical effect. Over the next several years, that is, the advent of radio broadcasting would turn Satō's grand vision of the poet's voice—as a street-level force in the *poiesis* of public life—into a material possibility.

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<sup>34</sup> Hagiwara Kyōjirō on noise: "A poem is not just some music I hear inside myself, but the rattling of a train mixed with the noise of the streets. It is also the sound of a printing press and the squeak of a pen on a sheet of paper, the buzz of a swarm of midges.... Let our spirit, smoking like a grenade before the explosion, fly forever in a turbulent whirlpool!" See Hagiwara Kyōjirō, *Shikei senkoku*, 2nd edition (Tokyo: Chōryūsha shoten, 1926), 4. On Nakano's appellation of "screamers and noise poets" (*kyōkanshi-ha arui wa zatsuonshi-ha*), see Murata Hirokazu, "Kōsa suru shi-seishin: Hagiwara Kyōjirō 'Shikei senkoku' to Nakano Shigeharu 'Roba' shosai shiron," *Ronkyū Nihon Bungaku* 90 (2009): 9-10.

<sup>35</sup> Citing Soda Hidehiko, Hoyt Long notes that the theater's "raised and open seating inscrib[ed] the ideal of equal access to the theater hall itself." See Hoyt Long, "Performing the Village Square in Interwar Japan: Toward a Hidden History of Public Space," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70 (2011): 767. However, the theater's ethos in its early years amounted to more of a compromise between Hijikata's more radical populism and Osanai Kaoru's interest in populist ideals cast through the prism of high art. See Poulton, *A Beggar's Art*, 128.



### *III. Enchantment of Politics*

In September 1926, Tomita Saika accepted an invitation from the Tokyo Broadcasting Station (JOAK) to give an evening radio lecture on "poems that sing of autumn" (*aki wo utaeru shi*). The featured works would comprise Tomita's own curated selection of seasonal odes, including Kanbara Ariake's "Aki no uta" (Autumn song), Shimazaki Tōson's "Akikaze no uta" (Song of autumn wind), Saijō Yaso's "Susuki no naka" (In silver grass), and Ueda Bin's translation of Paul Verlaine's "Chanson d'automne" ("Rakuyō" or "Fallen leaves"). Rather than heeding JOAK's request to "incorporate" recitations of the selected works into a lecture framework, however, Tomita chose instead to invert the format by "turning the focus of the lecture toward the act of recitation itself." This would entail, he explained, "a full-throated incanting" of each poem (*ōkina koe de rōgin shite*), periodically interleaved with accounts of poetry's bardic origins: "To tell of how the first poems were intoned *viva voce*, or how Homer once roamed with harp in hand, singing his own poetry to its tune."<sup>36</sup> More than simply fulfilling JOAK's expectations of an "arts lecture" to precede the evening broadcast's slate of musical entertainment, Tomita conceived the program as a performance in itself, and therefore an occasion to bring the burgeoning endeavors of the recitation movement to the attention of an emergent listening public.

To this end, Tomita's overture was especially well timed. Less than one month earlier, the flagship Tokyo Broadcasting Station had merged with its two counterparts in Osaka and Nagoya to form the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (*Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*, or NHK), a nationalized

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<sup>36</sup> ---, "Rōgin iri kōen," *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, September 5, 1926. Notably, Tomita reads none of his own poems.

radio network under the administration of the Communications Ministry.<sup>37</sup> While still inchoate, then, the listeners that greeted Tomita's evening lecture represented a national audience, whose cultivation as such was now a ministerial priority. At the level of scheduled content, this imperative resulted in a roster of programs designed to "educate the sensibilities" of the public, or as Kawaji Ryūkō proposed, to create a standard repertoire of "good sounds" (*yoi oto*) that would engender "agreeable, discerning personalities" among its listeners.<sup>38</sup> These sounds ranged from "children's hour" lectures to musical programs featuring traditional *gidayū* singing, *rakugo* storytellers, and western orchestral music—a telling distillation of the programming directors' own moorings in the Meiji-Taishō curricula of "sentimental education" (*jōsō kyoiku*).<sup>39</sup> For Tomita, meanwhile, to receive such an invitation so soon after NHK's formation could only signal that poetry and recitation should likewise figure integrally in the cultivation of this national listening public.

Just as importantly, however, Tomita's intentions struck clearly upon the radio's potential—as a purely aural stage—to present the recitation movement in a manner closest to what he and his peers imagined: as a return to a literature of "the living voice" that had so far eluded poets under the presumed hegemony of print, but which now seemed imminently feasible within the growing realm of sound media. Where Satō Sōnosuke had earlier bemoaned the monkish status of contemporary poets "hidden away in their studies," the advent of radio recitation portended a wide-reaching restoration of poetry's originary basis in song, and thus its proper place within the open plazas of public life: as when, for W.B. Yeats, "literature belonged to a whole people, [and] found [its] way to men's minds without the mediation of print and

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<sup>37</sup> By the end of 1926, there were 361,066 registered radio subscribers in the country. See *Nihon hōsō-shi* Vol. 1, appendix. See also Masami Ito, *Broadcasting in Japan: Case Studies on Broadcasting*, 9.

<sup>38</sup> Kawaji Ryūkō, "Kodomo to chikuonki, sono hoka," *Shinchō* (March 1924): 30.

<sup>39</sup> See full schedule of September 5th broadcast in ---, "Rōgin iri kōen," *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, September 5, 1926.

paper." In this vision, poets would depart their monastic cloisters and once again find company with "singers, players, and minstrels" in the public square, while verse would in turn be reacquainted with "men who have music in their voices and a learned understanding of its sound."<sup>40</sup> Or, as the author Katō Asatori proposed, poetry would migrate from its current, "private epoch" (*shiteki jidai*)—what he described in 1918 as a state of "unsinging, concealed language" traded among privileged readers—to an era of "public resonance" (*kōteki kyōmei*), in which the "truly modern poet" would be able to "harmonize their own lived rhythm with those of their audience, thus bringing their respective pulsations ever closer to a state of mutual assimilation."<sup>41</sup> The oncoming era of radio as a "public utility" therefore beckoned the same epochal role for poetry: in Katō's phrasing, a "literature of the streets" (*chimata no bungaku*) that simultaneously bespoke the "whole people" of the nation (*minzoku*).

At the same time, Katō noted that this public was not "in itself a settled entity," but rather something in a "perpetual state of creation, constantly morphing, changing, and taking on new forms."<sup>42</sup> Consequently, the advent of poetry's "public" era did not hinge upon the delivery of poetry *to* an existing public so much as the constitution of that very public *through* the poetic act itself. As with the lingual kinship between *poesis* and creation, that is, the "singing" of poetry would likewise fulfill its valent function as a form of incantation, summoning a latent public into being in a manner befitting poetry's affinities with "prophétie," "magical formula," and other modes of supernatural efficacy assigned to the rhythmic intonation of the voice.<sup>43</sup> But if, as Dana

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<sup>40</sup> W.B. Yeats, "Literature and the Living Voice," *Samhain* 6 (1906): 8-9.

<sup>41</sup> Katō Asatori, "Bungei no shiteki jidai," *Yūben* 9, no. 6 (1918): 169.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Noting the polyvalence of the term *enchanter*, which merges singing (*chanter*) with the incantatory power of the voice, Nikolai Tolstoy writes: "'to sing', 'chant', 'recite' is applied not only to poetry, but to charms, magical formulas. . . . Its equivalent in Latin *canere*, 'to sing', and, *carmen*, 'a song', are closely associated with prophétie and magical incantations. . . . In the original context these words for poet and poetry were indissolubly connected with magicians and magic." See Nikolai Tolstoy, *The Quest for*

Gioia claims, "the aim of poetry—in this primal and primary sense as enchantment—is to awaken us to a fuller sense of our own humanity in both its social and individual aspects," it likewise betrays a political function, insofar as any such realization necessarily expresses a particular vision of social order "predicated," in Chantal Mouffe's terms, "on the exclusion of other possibilities" of social identification.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, the incantatory force of poetry can doubly serve to naturalize the contingencies involved in the *poiesis* of the social order: to "enchant our vulgar reality" (*enchanter la vulgaire réalité*) by way of occulting the vulgarities of its political formation.<sup>45</sup>

Such a function aligns closely with what Alfred Gell calls the "technology of enchantment," a phrase he uses to describe the role of art in the (re)production of social relations. Put simply, if art can be understood in an anthropological sense as one of many technical activities that are "essential to the reproduction of human societies," Gell argues that certain art can function to "enchant" one's perception of social life: to "persuade" people, by means of aesthetic attraction, "of the necessity and desirability of the social order which encompasses them."<sup>46</sup> In order to do so, however, such art relies conversely on an "enchantment" of its own technical construction: by obscuring or mystifying the more banal techniques of its creation, such

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*Merlin* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 236. Jane Bennett likewise claims: "[T]he word enchant is linked to the French verb to sing: chanter. To 'en-chant': to surround with song or incantation; hence, to cast a spell with sounds, to make fall under the sway of a magical refrain, to carry away on a sonorous stream." See Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 6.

<sup>44</sup> See Dana Gioia, "Poetry as Enchantment", *Dark Horse Magazine*, Summer 2015. On "the political," Chantal Mouffe writes: " Things could always be otherwise and therefore every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities. . . . It is in that sense that it can be called 'political' since it is the expression of a particular structure of power relations." See Chantal Mouffe, "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces," *Art & Research* 1, no. 2 (2007): 2-3.

<sup>45</sup> Dana Gioia attributes the expression "enchanter la vulgaire réalité" to the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, but offers no further citation. See Gioia, "Poetry as Enchantment." The phrase elsewhere appears as attributed to Apollinaire in Serge Bernstein and Pierre Milza, eds., *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle* vol. 1 (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1990), 170.

<sup>46</sup> Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment, the Enchantment of Technology," in *The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams* (New York: Berg, 1999), 43-44.

that the beholder struggles to comprehend its "coming-into-being" as anything less than a "magical" process. Depending on the situation, this sense of wonderment may attend impressions of individual genius that seem to exceed the earthly agency of the spectator, as in the way a portrait can be said to capture the "essence" or "soul" of its likeness. Just as often, however, this sense of supernatural power implies a greater spiritual, communal, or even linguistic endowment that transcends even the artist's own individual agency, pointing back to the efficacy or givenness of a wider, more encompassing social totality.<sup>47</sup> In this way, Gell argues, art can serve to occult the material or political machinations necessary to reproduce the social order it inhabits, obliging us to "see the real world in an enchanted form."<sup>48</sup>

The status of the artist, then, as "half-technician and half-mystagogue," is in this sense particularly descriptive of the poet-singer, and doubly so for the poet-broadcaster at the moment of radio's infancy as a mass medium. For while radio was linked from its inception to print capitalism in its service to the consolidation of nation and empire, it stood apart from the newspapers by virtue of the unique phenomenology that sonic transduction seemed to generate. Between 1923 and 1925, essays proliferated around the novel experience and implications of emergent sound media; like many writers, the novelist Nanbu Shūtarō confessed in 1924 to being "utterly enchanted" (*sukkari yowasareta*) by hearing recordings of Chopin for the first time, while newspaper coverage of radio broadcasting in its early years seldom failed to note the marvel of its capacity to yield a sonic stage relatively free of "interference" and "noise."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Henry Bilal suggests that "secular rituals . . . invoke the authority of some concept larger than the individual: the state, the community, tradition," upon which Marit MacArthur posits the "ritual" of the poetry reading, and its tendency to manifest (in North American contexts) in the near-liturgical monotony of "poet voice." See Marit MacArthur, "Monotony: The Churches of Poetry Reading and Sound Studies," *PMLA* 131, no. 1 (2016): 42.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>49</sup> Nanbu Shūtarō, "Chikuonki to watashi," *Shinchō* (March 1924): 25-27. For newspaper and magazine commentary on the "striking lack of interference" in early radio broadcasts, see Takeyama, *Rajio no jidai*,

Broadcasters in turn worked to heighten this sensation of immediacy and "liveness" by delivering their reports as if on the "scene" (*genba*) of the events described, while programs like Tomita's evening lecture aspired to a register of affective intimacy redolent of aspirational bourgeois interiors like the family parlor. For Gotō Shinpei, NHK's first director-general, it was this sensuous modality—"of the ear rather than the eye"—which promised that broadcast content would "permeate the national populace" not merely by way of "academic knowledge," but rather at the level of "common sense."<sup>50</sup> Paradoxically, that is, what made the radio so conspicuously enchanting to listeners (and so attractive to state officials) was the degree to which, as a medium, it seemed able to elide the presence of its own mediating mechanisms.

Yet by extension, what notions of transparency and fidelity worked to "enchant" the technical operations behind the radio encounter went hand in hand with the occultation of its function as a state apparatus. Unlike print media, for instance, radio was distinguished by a "categorical prohibition of political argument," under the pretense that wireless broadcasting—as a public-interest monopoly—would remain strictly neutral, or "nonpolitical" in nature. In practice, this directive proscribed topical debate, substantive discussions of policy, and even the reporting of actual events that may have cast the government in a negative light. Meanwhile, its innocuous schedule of children's songs, arts lectures, and musical entertainment belied a meticulous regiment of curation and oversight; ministerial censorship was a matter of course, as was its assurance that all broadcast content adhere to a sanctioned vision of "social education"

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132-35. It's also worth noting that such appraisals were in many cases wishful thinking; just as many editorials complained about the poor sound quality of early record players and radio speakers, but noted that further advancements in technology would surely improve upon present limitations. In this sense, as Tsuboi Hideto suggests, even the apparently poor quality of early sound media had just as much of a galvanizing impact on listening practices, in that the listener would be even keener to imagine the sensation of unmediated proximity that the technology itself seemed to promise. See Tsuboi Hideto, "Rajio hōsōkyoku," in Wada Hirofumi, ed., *Rajio hōsōkyoku, Korekushon modan toshi bunka* (Tokyo: Yumani Shōbo, 2008), 779-790.

<sup>50</sup> Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai, ed. *Nihon hōsō-shi*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1965), 62-63.

and "the improvement of family life."<sup>51</sup> The result, as Gregory Kasza notes, was an "allegedly nonpolitical neutrality" that predictably reflected and reinforced the views of the state.<sup>52</sup> When framed in terms of its sonic signal, however, this expectation of non-interference and transparent fidelity proved useful in naturalizing the notion of the radio's ostensible neutrality at an instinctive, even ontological level.

Meanwhile, such "common sense" notions proved equally useful to poets of the recitation movement, many of whom continued to tout their poetic vision as an expressly non-partisan alternative to the fractious poetic milieu of the mid-1920s. In likely reference to the dozens of small-press coterie journals (*dōjin zasshi*, or "little magazines") that had come to crowd the landscape of the post-quake *shidan*, Shiratori Seigo claimed, "the poetry world has grown increasingly *noisy*, yet with little in the way of genuine poetry to show for it." What was needed, he argued, was a "middle path" to cut through the antagonisms "on both the right and left" of the political spectrum—in effect, a central frequency with the requisite range and bandwidth to ensure a true signal could resonate clearly and without interference among the broadest swath of the population.<sup>53</sup> That this bandwidth was both supplied and delimited by the state seemed to matter less to Shiratori and Tomita than the fact that their movement had found a footing on a platform that seemed to transcend the "noise" of the *shidan*'s formal and political ferment, pointing beyond its tangle of competing coteries toward a putatively consensual nation of listeners.

At a more basic level, however, the radio's ostensible degree of transparency and fidelity to source promised to assuage one of the dilemmas that had plagued the *minshū* poets over the preceding decade: the challenge of conveying the rhythmic sonorities of free-verse that otherwise

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<sup>51</sup> See Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai, ed. *Nihon hōsō-shi*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1965), 62-63.

<sup>52</sup> Kasza, *The State and Mass Media in Japan*, 94.

<sup>53</sup> Shiratori Seigo, "Shidan no genjō (part two)," *Asahi shinbun*, July 24, 1924.

failed to register on the page. For indeed, with a new mode of literary "publication" now possible through sonic transduction and broadcast, the status and expectations surrounding the poet would come to dovetail, as the critic Kamitsukasa Shōken imagined, with that of the vocal performer. In this way, a poet reciting the work of another—as in Tomita's reading of Saijō—would more closely mirror the performance of a musical score, presenting in itself an interpretation that could then be assessed for its degree of fidelity and skill. Or in the case of a poet reciting his own verse, Kamitsukasa argued, the reader would find even greater access to the work's putative emotional center. "Instead of reading a printed or typed copy," he mused, "one could surely get a better sense of an author's true feeling and intentions behind the work if they were to read aloud from their own handwritten draft."<sup>54</sup> In short, by virtue of the poet-performer's sonorous presence, the voice on the radio or gramophone could be taken as isomorphic to that of the figural "voice" of the poetic text; through its breaths, timbral inflections, and intonational contours, one could properly deduce the corresponding emotional and symbolic relationships that imbued its outward form.

For those poets whose own musicality (or lack thereof) had been the subject of such scrutiny, this mode of delivery offered a chance to definitively disprove their alleged prosaicism, while poets like Kitahara and Saijō likewise seized the opportunity to produce instructive renditions of works as they "should" be sung. In this sense, Kamitsukasa's linkage of the voice to the "handwritten draft" bespoke a resonant commitment to the author as an essential arbiter of meaning, whose vocal performance—as a kind of sonic signature—implied one degree of further proximity to the embedded *logos* of the text. Yet unlike the handwritten manuscript, which would seem, in its errata and annotations, to demystify the technical operations behind a given work, the sensuous encounter with radio recitation promised instead to conjure the very essence

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<sup>54</sup> Kamitsukasa Shōken, "Chikuonki to geijutsu kakumei," *Shinchō* (March 1924): 22-24.



or aura that seemed to animate the text's true meaning, such that it would register to the ears as naturally as if, in Friedrich Kittler's terms, it "were originating in the brain" of the listener himself.<sup>55</sup> By thus "enchanting" the written work, or giving embodied expression to its inherent musicality and pathos, the true efficacy of recitation would seem to be less a matter of technique than of some ineffable form of transference or transduction: an activation of the very vibrational matter inhabiting the intoned word.

This basic faith in the power of "poetic presence," vouchsafed by the poet's audible voice, underlined what Raphael Allison has more recently theorized as the "humanist" ethos of poetic recitation: the capacity of "the reading," in short, to "claim creative authenticity and endurance by reuniting the poet with the moment of *poesis*, returning him to the poem's ontological source" and thus "reanimat[ing] the dead letter of text."<sup>56</sup> In this formula, the recitation poets shared a characteristically humanist ethos of the voice as "coextensive with the self," and therefore significant of, in Michael Davidson's terms, "unmediated access to passional states, giving testimony to that which only *this* poet could know."<sup>57</sup> But unlike their contemporaries in the burgeoning avant-garde, whose pursuit of psychic interiority or environmental metabolism aimed to transcend even the author's own conscious intentionality, the poets of the recitation movement aimed instead to assert a greater degree of authorial agency over the work's intended meaning.<sup>58</sup>

Rather than an obstacle between the author and his own psychic process, the printed page stood

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<sup>55</sup> Kittler describes "An unimaginable closeness of sound technology and self-awareness, a simulacrum of a feedback loop relaying sender and receiver. A song sings to a listening ear, telling it to sing. As if the music were originating in the brain itself, rather than emanating from stereo speakers or headphones." Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 37.

<sup>56</sup> Raphael Allison, *Bodies on the Line: Performance and the Sixties Poetry Reading* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 42, 50.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Davidson, *Ghostlier Demarcations: Modern Poetry and the Material World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 196-97. Cited in Allison, *Bodies on the Line*, xiv.

<sup>58</sup> For example, one might point to Hirato Renkichi's futurist exercises in channeling the surging, electrified vibrations of the urban soundscape in "Excerpt from 'Gassō' (A Theme for Orchestra)."

obstinately between author and audience, and the ability of the former to convey the sense of musical intention behind the lineation and poetic markers of the text. By contrast, the technology of sound transduction and broadcast seemed to offer a direct conduit between the two, allowing the poet's "aural reenactment" of the written work to smoothly traverse its ever-growing horizon of reception.

What sustained this notion, however, was the same illusory sense of immediacy that allowed the radio to guard its own ideological operation, or to obscure the processes of filtration, staging, and selection that shaped the contours of the voice issuing forth from the speaker. In this way, the attraction to this fictive "neutrality" (the radio voice as a guarantor of authorial presence and intentionality) yoked the humanism of the recitation movement (and the precipitating endeavor of "people's poetry") to the interests of the state, inviting their mutual articulation via the desired transparency of broadcast sound.<sup>59</sup> But just as NHK officials recognized that the radio's own enchanting prowess hinged upon an analogous vocal posture of neutral transparency among its broadcasters, the recitation poets had also to devise a complementary poetics of enchantment: a modeling of the voice that would ensure the "resonance" of poetic intention with the sensibilities of its emergent public. For this, they turned not only to the renovation of existing recitative practices, but also to practical theories of oratory and elocution that had found similarly renewed investment in attendance of the nascent wireless age.

#### *IV. Poetics of Enchantment*

If the advent of national broadcasting in the late 1920s foretold a coming renaissance for poetic recitation, it also found the practice itself in a state that could be charitably described as

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<sup>59</sup> Jason Camlot discusses a similar "conflation of the human elocutionary model of 'natural' voice with that of the 'natural and pure' voice of the phonograph" during the latter's advent in the late 19th century. See Camlot, *Phonopoetics*, 38.

eclectic, or in Sasaki Mikirō's blunter assessment, "haphazard" (*detarame*).<sup>60</sup> Namely, given the relative dormancy of recitation across the mid-Taishō years, there was little in the way of consistent convention—formal, social or otherwise—governing how a poem should be vocalized. What recognizable registers of modern poetic elocution did exist were largely holdovers from the study-group gatherings that Yosano, Shimazaki, and other members of the *Myōjō* coterie held in the first decade of the twentieth century, none of which had been substantively revised in light of the *genbun'itchi* reforms and advents of symbolism and free-verse. In Takamura Kōtarō's rather caustic retelling, the few recitals that did take place in the intervening years were small, insular affairs—"held for poets by poets"—that involved participants "with untrained voices, declaiming their works in shrill, pretentious tones peppered with annoying flourishes." Worse still, some performances "were so inept that anyone listening would suffer secondhand embarrassment," even if the speaker happened to be well-regarded otherwise. "Often I'd wonder," he continued, "how a poet capable of writing such excellent verse could give so little thought to its recitation."<sup>61</sup>

As such, while many agreed by the mid-1920s that poetry would benefit from a revival of its "living voice," there was little consensus on how such a voice should sound. Even at the Tsukiji performances, which Kawaji Ryūkō had billed as the "first meeting[s] of pure poetic recitation (*junsui shi no rōdoku*) in Japan," Kawaji himself recalled with some dismay that Tomita, Fukuda, and other *jiyūshi* poets elected to perform their own works in a style of "shintaishi-esque chant (*rōgin*) that was closer to singing than reading" (*'yomu' to iu yori 'utaware'ta*). Here, Kawaji referred to the high-elocutionary mode that commonly attended fixed-

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<sup>60</sup> Sasaki Mikirō and Yoshimoto Takaaki, "Hyōhakusha no chishi: Sakutarō wo megutte (taiwa)," *Kokubungaku* 34, no. 7 (June 1989): 8.

<sup>61</sup> Takamura Kōtarō, "Rōdoku-shi ni tsuite," in *Takamura Kōtarō zenshū*, Vol. 8 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1958), 100.

verse forms such as *waka*, *tanka*, and the Meiji-era *shintaiishi* (new-style poetry).<sup>62</sup> Like *shigin*—the chanted recital of *kanshi* (Chinese or Chinese-style poetry)—*rōgin* involved a slow, melodic pattern of intonation (*fushimawashi*) characterized by undulating "peaks and valleys" of pitch, while allowing for a greater degree of prosodic interpretation than the former. For poets like Shimazaki Tōson and Kawai Suimei, whose participation at the Tsukiji events served as a link between the present milieu and the Meiji-*shintaiishi* generation, such a register would have been entirely appropriate.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, their very presence seemed expressly designed to evoke an earlier historical moment—when communal practices of "sound-reading" (*ondoku*) and "performative recitation" (*rōshō*) had yet to be displaced by their silent counterpart—which the current recitation poets sought to restore.<sup>64</sup> But as Kawaji noted, "there was something unnatural about hearing colloquial free-verse read in this elevated, incantatory style (*rōgin-chō*)." It would be better, he felt, "if such poems were more simply recited (*rōdoku*)," though neither he nor his colleagues had yet developed a style of delivery that would properly suit the form.<sup>65</sup>

This quandary carried over into the repertoire for Tomita's inaugural poetry broadcast, which bypassed free-verse entirely in favor of selections in 7-5 or 5-7 metered form; with the

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<sup>62</sup> The diversification of length and diction in *shintaiishi* nonetheless preserved (for the most part) the traditional patterning of 7-5 and 5-7 forms.

<sup>63</sup> Kawai Suimei himself was a central figure in brokering the transition from late-Meiji *shintaiishi* to colloquial free-verse. In June 1907, Kawai started the publishing company Shigusha, which published the journal *Shijin*, and worked with Kawaji Ryūkō and Hattori Yoshika as the latter two developed the vernacular style that would set the template for better-known free-verse practitioners like Hagiwara Sakutarō and Takamura Kōtarō. See Terui Eizō, *Kokuminshi to rodokuhō* (Dai-ichi Kōronsha, 1942), 49.

<sup>64</sup> In his essay "From Communal Performance to Solitary Reading," Maeda Ai discusses the late-Meiji transition from the prevalent culture of oral recitation and "sound reading" (*ondoku*) to a more hegemonic paradigm of "silent reading" (*mokudoku*) that attended the rise of *genbun'itchi* discourse and the concurrent decline of the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement (*Jiyū minken undō*). In it, he notes that the "performative recitation" (*rōshō*) of Chinese classics not only "helped to give shape to a communitarian space" for readers in various institutions of civil society (schools, political associations, e.g.), but also to generate sympathy for the *Jiyū minken undō*, in that many works within the "political novel" genre were written in a style of "sonorous simplified Chinese" that was "highly suited for oral recitation." See Maeda Ai, *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity*, ed. James Fujii (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 229-233.

<sup>65</sup> Tsuboi, *Koe no shukusai*, 35.

exception of Saijō's "Susuki no naka" (itself composed in lyrical fixed meter), the night's selections all predated Kawaji's innovations in *jiyūshi*, from Shimazaki and Ariake's *shintaiishi* to Ueda's strictly-metered rendering of Verlaine. The following year, in April 1927, Tomita delivered yet another recitation broadcast (this time from Osaka's JOBK) with a similar roster of selections: Shimazaki, Saijō, and Ueda (this time his translation of Carl Busse's "Über den Bergen"), in addition to works by Susukida Kyūkin, Miki Rofū ("Utsushimi"), and Kitahara Hakushū ("Joshūmon hikyoku"). With the Miki and Kitahara selections, Tomita edged closer to the present, even venturing with the latter into freer lyrical verse. Yet as suggested by the program's title—"Shi no Rōei"—his recitation style continued to adhere to a rarefied register of melodic chant that did little justice to the more flexible rhythms and colloquial diction that defined more recent free-verse, and much of his own poetry by extension. Far from serving as a "coextensive" or inherent conduit of self-expression, it was Tomita's own physical voice that seemed ironically to obstruct the very mode of plainspoken, vernacular verse that had catalyzed the energies of the recitation movement in the first place.

In one sense, such an impasse might have validated earlier criticisms of the *minshū* coterie; indeed, there was some apparent irony in the notion that the most "prosaic" of free-verse poets would be the ones to return the art to its basis in song. As Tsuboi Hideto suggests, however, this dilemma cut straight to the modernist paradox at the heart of the recitation movement: though its diverse cast of poets shared a desire to engender an idyllic realm of "public" orality (populated with the sung refrains of Yeats' minstrels and bards), they were just as compelled by an imagination of "pure" (*junsui*) voice that emerged precisely from the paradigm of silent, or "private" reading—personal, transparently communicative, free of mediation or artifice. A "voice without a voice," as Takamura Kōtarō put it, which resonated "unheard" in the

mind's ear.<sup>66</sup> In practice, then, the same poets realized that if a resolution to this paradox—a dialectical sublation of the heard and unheard "voice"—could not be expected to arise naturally, it would have to be invented. In other words, the physical utterance of a seemingly natural, vernacular poetics would need be fashioned every bit as deliberately as the elevated modes that had governed the delivery of fixed-meter verse.

To this end, the cultivation of a more neutral mode of literary recitation (*rōdoku*) emerged as a suitable compromise. By embarking from the premise of the silent page as much as the spirit of the sung form, this model represented an effort to marry the more flexible prosody and vernacular register of free-verse to the sonorous embodiment of recitation as "enchantment" (*rōgin*, *rōei*, *shigin*, e.g.). Such a balance, it seemed, could thereby offer the former's assurances of private interiority (Takamura's "unheard" voice) in concert with the public communality of the latter. Having returned from sojourns abroad in the mid-1920s, poets like Kawaji and Saijō claimed that a similar style of literary recitation had become an object of keen interest in Paris; Kawaji praised the Parisians' attention to new methods of poetic elocution, while he and Saijō both remarked upon the striking popularity of poetry recitals at the Comédie-Française and the monthly meetings of the *matinée poétique*.<sup>67</sup> Of the latter, Saijō found himself especially impressed by seeing "audiences young and old utterly transfixed" by poets like Jean Cocteau,

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<sup>66</sup> Takamura writes: "Now, in modern poetry, our ears are deficient; we hear the voice [of the poet] through our eyes, and this voice without a voice, as it were, resonates internally through silent reading, and thus the world of poetry opens before us. Modern poetry is more and more a specialist's art; its language has become increasingly complex, its techniques more advanced, to the point where its meaning is actually compromised by its vocal utterance. Poetry borne of the voice has now become ironically adverse to that very voice." See Takamura, "Rōdoku-shi ni tsuite," 101.

<sup>67</sup> See Oguma Hideo, "Shi no rōdoku wo sakan ni seyo," in *Oguma Hideo zenshū*, 421.

suggesting that the same balance of literary prowess and popular appeal might be reached through further study in Japan.<sup>68</sup>

Equally inspired by his experiences with the *matinée poétique*, the classical singer Terui Eizō returned to Japan eager to help cultivate *rōdoku* as a more refined (and accessible) recitative mode. In April 1929, Terui joined Tomita and the vocalist Ogino Ayako in delivering "An Evening of Poetry" (*shi no yū*) on JOBK, the most ambitious program of its kind thus far. Opening with a lecture by Tomita on the "the poetry of various countries," the 2.5 hour program then embarked on an extensive tour of Western verse, with original-language readings of various European and North American poems by Terui as well as a number of academic expatriates.<sup>69</sup> While most selections were innocuous enough, however, a JOBK station director intervened to cut the broadcast during the university professor Orest Victorovich Pletner's rendition of the Russian symbolist Aleksandr Blok's epic poem "The Twelve," due allegedly to its "revolutionary phrasing and ideas."<sup>70</sup> As a consolation, Pletner later recited the work for the evening's participants off-air, which made such an impression on Okuya Kumao, the head of JOBK's literary arts bureau (*bungeika*), that he set to work thereafter in petitioning his supervisors to adopt *rōdoku* broadcasts as a more regular feature of their programming.<sup>71</sup> Though it is unclear what details of Pletner's performance so moved Okuya, one suspects that the poem's famously

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<sup>68</sup> Saijō Yaso, "Natsu no amachua: Shi to dōyō," *Asahi shinbun*, June 22, 1926. See also Saijō Futabako, *Chichi Saijō Yaso* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1978), 74, 89-90.

<sup>69</sup> The American writer Glenn W. Shaw read Poe's "The Bells," geographer Francis Ruelland contributed readings of Verlaine, La Fontaine, Alfred de Musset, and Paul Claudel (the poet and French ambassador to Japan from 1921 to 1927), and the linguist Robert Schinzinger recited Goethe and Schiller. For the full program, see Tsuboi, *Koe no shukusai*, appendix, 37.

<sup>70</sup> As Tsuboi Hideto notes, the allegation of Blok's "revolutionary phrasing and ideas" was especially ironic given the poem's famously ambivalent stance to the October Revolution. One suspects that the station director mistook the poem's polyphonic nature and satirical characterizations for a more straightforward endorsement of revolutionary politics, while Okuya clearly grasped the poem's more nuanced allusions to various societal archetypes of post-revolutionary Russia. See Tsuboi, *Koe no shukusai*, appendix, 41.

<sup>71</sup> See Okuya Kumao, "Sutēji to bokkōshō? Maikurofōn no geijutsu ryōiki joron," *Kaikan geijutsu* (August 19, 1935): 94-97.

dramatic lyrical composition—inviting numerous theatrical stagings in Russia across the 1920s—pointed to the vast terrain of expressive potential that recitation could afford when freed from the strictures of a fixed metrical form.<sup>72</sup> In a strangely fitting turn of events, then, Pletner's private, "unheard" reading would help set the stage for the recitation movement's next phase of public broadcast, while at the same time presenting Terui and others with a model of precisely which "phrasing and ideas" to avoid in the future.

In the spirit of Pletner's reading, Terui sought similarly to explore a palette of vocal inflection beyond the received practices of chanted verse. Unlike the dense, layered polyphony of "The Twelve," however, Terui promoted a model of *rōdoku* that privileged accessibility and immediate comprehension. Such qualities were indeed vital, he argued, if a speaker hoped to convey a poem's intended meaning through sound alone. In the case of broadcast, however, these principles dovetailed with what Okuya perceived to be recitation's broader pedagogical utility. Namely, given the radio's capacity to model a dependable standard of pronunciation for the national language (an effort many felt had been the most inconsistent and piecemeal aspect of *kokugo* education thus far), radio poetry promised to deploy standard phonation to exemplary, even enchanting effect.<sup>73</sup> In so doing, it might therefore aid not only classroom instruction, but the wider cultivation of shared linguistic sentiment in the home or on the street. Just as earlier generations had intoned the Chinese classics as if they represented a "spiritual language" (*seishin no kotoba*), Okuya and Terui now hoped to foster the same affective attachment to the embodied rhythms and tonalities of *kokugo*.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> See Ludmila Shleyfer Lavine, "Aleksandr Blok's 'The Twelve': The Transformation of 'Commedia Dell'Arte' into an Epic," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 49, no. 4 (2005): 570-590.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-107. See also "'Shi no rōdoku' hōsō kiroku," Osaka Chūō Hōsōkyoku Bungeika, September 10, 1935. NHK file 10, courtesy of NHK museum.

<sup>74</sup> Maeda, *Text and the City*, 231.



As such, rather than sculpting a melodic prosody redolent of *shigin*, Terui emphasized attention to phonation, space, stress-accents, and timbral variation as a means of enlivening the inherent features of the language as it was (or ought to be) "naturally spoken." Good recitation, he believed, succeeded upon transparent diction, robust, unaffected delivery, and a distribution of pacing and intervals that would reflect and reinforce the emotional economy of a given text; in later methodological compendia, Terui advised on how to time one's breathing in swift passages that conveyed urgency or intensity, or how to adapt one's cadence to more languid or elegiac sections without growing monotonous.<sup>75</sup> While some of these techniques drew upon traditional recitative devices like *tatamikake* (in *tanka*, the quick or "restless" delivery of a phrase), however, Terui's models came more from theater, oratory, and the burgeoning study of "broadcast language" (*hōsō yōgo*). In practical terms, he stressed the importance of proper accent in distinguishing homophones, citing the work of radio announcers to systematize their pronunciation through accent guidelines to eliminate as much ambiguity from their broadcasts as possible. Unlike announcers, however, Terui noted that poets would not be able to rely on explanatory techniques like reading out the left and right-hand radicals of less familiar *kanji*.<sup>76</sup> For this reason, he argued, recitation poetry would need to be written or selected with a careful ear to any homophonic potential that would distract from, rather than enhance, the meaning of a given work.

This principle extended to Terui's ambivalence toward poems written in regional dialect, insofar as non-standard accents, while they "could infuse a work with charming local color," also compromised radio poetry's utility to *kokugo* standardization. Accordingly, he later argued, poets with particularly "severe" (*kitsui*) dialects should at least be able to modulate their accentual

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<sup>75</sup> See Terui Eizō, *Shi no rōdoku: Sono yurai, riron, jissai* (Tokyo: Hakuuisha, 1936), and Terui Eizō, *Kokuminshi to rōdokuhō* (cited above).

<sup>76</sup> Terui, *Kokuminshi to rōdokuhō*, 76.

patterns in "public venues (lectures, performances, educational settings and other group events) where standard (Tokyo) dialect was expected." Only in cases where dialect poetry was sufficiently infused with a "strong love of country" did Terui grant exception, insofar as "such a poem would not truly resonate in the listeners' breasts otherwise."<sup>77</sup> In this way, Terui sought to resolve the "problem" of regional difference by treating such vocality as phonic surplus to be selectively included to add tonal color to the standard broadcast repertoire. By removing such expression from its contextual structure and replanting it as a form of sonorous ornament, such inclusion would thereby allow public broadcast to maintain a safe difference, or as Dylan Robinson puts it, "to make space to accommodate" such "cultural expression while enervating [its] political and cultural impact."<sup>78</sup>

By extension, Terui noted that poems best suited for recitation ought to evoke a strongly "aural feeling" (*onkan-shi*), such that a work's meaning could translate in both the "aural and linguistic sense" (*onkan to gokan*). In the simplest terms, this entailed poems that could not only be understood without the visual aid of the text, but whose merits would be best revealed through the ear. Though this did not necessarily foreclose classical diction, he noted, poems that delved more into the visual semantics of script—palimpsestic layering of meaning through esoteric *kanji*, non-standard readings, and the creative juxtaposition of *ateji* and *furigana*—remained better suited to "the eye."<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, works that made expressive use of more familiar

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<sup>77</sup> Terui, *Kokuminshi to rōdokuhō*, 155-156.

<sup>78</sup> See Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 8-9.

<sup>79</sup> For instance, Terui cites Susukida Kyūkin's "Ah, Yamato ni shiaramashi kaba," which he describes as "a beautiful poem with great national feeling, but one better suited to silent reading 'through the eyes' than recitation." This is because, he argues, "the beauty of its classical diction doesn't register immediately to our contemporary ears." By contrast, he cites Hagiwara Sakutarō's "Take" (bamboo) where, as he explains, "though it employs classical diction, one also finds an aural sensibility that is rooted in a language more familiar to the modern ear, such that it marries its aural sense and linguistic sense quite well." See Terui Eizō, *Kokuminshi to rōdokuhō*, 71.

language stood the best chance of "conveying the true beauty of *kokugo* and the richness of its use in everyday life."<sup>80</sup> Here, Terui cited Shiratori's poems in particular for their capacity (as Kawai Suimei put it) "to wring vitality from their apparent artlessness (*soboku*)." Though an assured craftsman, that is, Terui held that Shiratori's greatest skill (notwithstanding Kitahara's objections) was in "creating the sensation that his poems could be written by anyone." Or rather, to give the impression that the poem's enchanting effect was less a product of Shiratori's own technical genius than a transduction of the inherent genius of the language itself. Were one to attempt to improve or embellish their colloquial form—"to paint in their rough corners"—their attraction would be lost, just as incanting them in a self-consciously reverent mode of *rōgin* or *rōei* would paradoxically break their naïve spell. If properly realized, then, the techniques that Terui proposed would succeed similarly by their failure to register as such; rather than betraying the speaker's training and deliberation, the resulting voice would convince the listener of its pure, spontaneous arousal, as if the poem were being composed, verbally, on the spot.

In this sense, much of Terui's methodology could have been lifted from any number of contemporaneous essays on oratory and eloquence (*yūben*), which shared the same objective of translating the immediate force of a speech's content through a freer and more intuitive principle of spoken rhythm. In lieu of specific intonational patterning, the elocutionary techniques of oratory involved a prosodic flow that could traverse the dramatic contours of a well-composed argument, rising with points of emphasis, receding in moments of reflection or concession, and folding into a fuller repertoire of volume, inflection, and stress in order to pursue an argument to a forceful conclusion. Furthermore, as with Terui's romantic vision of *rōdoku*, many treatises on *yūben* held that such technical skills relied equally upon their own occlusion. As the educator and activist Hirata Nobu put it, *yūben*'s art of "personal expression" (*jinbunrashii hyōgen*) was most

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<sup>80</sup> Terui, *Kokuminshi to rōdokuhō*, 384.

difficult to achieve insofar as it could not be presented as such. That is, if the "overly conspicuous display of technique necessarily prevents mutual feeling from arising with one's audience," oratory must therefore be conceived as an "art of artlessness," by which (with proper discipline) one might hope to be ranked as "artless" in the noblest sense: as honest, forthright, and possessed of a sincerity arising not from conscious device but rather from an "unconscious" expression of one's character (*jinkaku*).<sup>81</sup>

Meanwhile, if such methods of enchantment seemed only to imply a kinship between *rōdoku* and oratory, the two fields found explicit linkage on the pages of the journal *Yūben*.<sup>82</sup> As a publication devoted to speech and eloquence, the journal allotted ample print for poetry and essays by poets alongside the speeches and editorials of politicians and public speakers—in a given issue, Kawaji or Yosano Akiko might share the page with renowned orator-statesmen like Ozaki Yukio or Nagai Ryūtarō—while poets who published in the journal just as often likened their own endeavor to that of public speech. In an August 1925 issue, for instance, Shiratori brings the romantic figure of the poet-orator into crystalline focus in a short poem entitled "Audience" ("Chōshū"):

He who moves the audience  
 In a silent August wood  
 When a gentle breeze blows in  
 Green leaves seem to sparkle in unison.  
 The rhythm of the audience's spirit  
 quickens the beat of the orator's breast.

Chōshū no kandō suru sama  
 Shizukana hachigatsu no hayashi  
 Bimyō ga fuki iru toki  
 Midori no ha ga issei ni kagayaku yō da.  
 Sono chōshū no tamashii no inritsu ga  
 Enzetsusha no mune wo sarani takanaraseru.

<sup>81</sup> Hirata Nobu, "Kotoba no geijutsu," *Yūben* 16, no. 7 (1925): 280-81.

<sup>82</sup> The *Yūben* journal (1910-1941) was started by Noma Seiji, founder of the Kōdansha publishing house, known then as the Dai-Nihon Yūbenkai [Great Japanese Oratorical Society]. For more on the journal itself, see Roichi Okabe, "American public address in Japan: A case study in the introduction of American oratory through the *Yūben*," In R. J. Jensen & J. C. Hammerback eds., *In Search of Justice: The Indiana Tradition in Speech Communication* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 37-51. For more on the development of *yūben* in Japan from the Meiji to the Taishō period, see Massimiliano Tomasi, *Rhetoric in Modern Japan: Western influences on the Development of Narrative and Oratorical Style*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

He who moves the audience  
Listening to the sound of waves nearby  
On the sand, listless, parched boats  
are now bravely pushed out to sea.  
With such joy is the voyage of the human soul  
Spurred forth by the words of a pioneer...

Chōshū no kandō suru sama  
Kaichō no on wo soba chikaku kikinagara  
Sunaji ni munashiku kawaiteiru fune ga  
Ima isamashiku umi e oshidasareru.  
Ningen no tamashii no kōgai no yorokobiyo  
Senkusha no kotoba ni shigeki sarete...<sup>83</sup>

Any regular reader of *Yūben* would have been intimately familiar with the image Shiratori invokes in the second stanza: that of the Greek orator Demosthenes, "honing the strength of his voice against the crashing waves of the seashore," embodying the discipline and perseverance required not only for effective public speaking, but for the role of public leadership that such a vocation entailed.<sup>84</sup> This seaside figure found frequent mention in *Yūben* across the early 1920s; against the social and political ferment of the moment, the journal's contributors seemed eager to adopt an avatar who was capable of setting waves of popular sentiment in motion without being drowned out by their ensuing roar. For Shiratori, meanwhile, this rhetorical ligature bound his vision of the public poet to an analogous task: to channel the potent yet inarticulate energies of collective outcry into singularly legible speech, and in so doing, to imbue the former with a sense of navigable purpose.

Just as often, however, *Yūben*'s contributors invoked Demosthenes to highlight the basic importance of "training" the voice's physical attributes. Without going so far as to recommend his particular method of resistance-training, orators like Inui Kiyosue argued that "the effective use of intonation, timbre, and accent" demanded a physical grasp of the "vocal organs" that had fallen ironically into neglect among many Taishō rhetoricians.<sup>85</sup> As with poetry, however, Inui

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<sup>83</sup> Shiratori Seigo, "Chōshū," *Yūben* 16, no. 8 (1925).

<sup>84</sup> Takada Kunikazu, "Hatsuon no kenkyū," *Yūben* 8, no. 8 (1917): 257-72. See also Yamamori Riichi, "Yūben wa jinkaku no hyōgen de aru," *Yūben* 17, no. 2 (1926): 232.

<sup>85</sup> See Inui Kiyosue, "Koe no dashikata to tsukaikata," *Yūben* 18, no. 2 (1927): 188-93. On Demosthenes' own "training" regiment, Takada Kunikazu writes, "Demosthenes honed his speech against the crashing tumult of the waves at the seashore—a kind of speech training that is practiced even now by *geisha*, who cultivate a winter voice' (*kangoe*, or 寒声) through training outside in the cold wind. And not just *geisha*

and others noted that the recent advent of radio and commercial recording had helped to revive attention to the issue. In a 1927 essay entitled "Voice and Character," Iseki Jun'ichirō noted that the affordances of radio had already registered profound effects in world politics; Calvin Coolidge's radiogenic voice was widely cited as a crucial element of his success in America's 1924 presidential election, while in Japan, Nagai Ryūtarō and Ozaki Yukio had turned their rhetorical talents toward the gramophone and radio in the mid-1920s to produce speeches advocating for the constitutional expansion of male suffrage.<sup>86</sup> On the one hand, these instances served to illustrate a basic, if neglected truth: for Inui, that effective rhetoric came down to the aurality of language and the versatility of vocal inflection. On the other hand, however, Iseki sensed the radio's role in brokering a crucial shift in the voice's rhetorical value; where once oration depended on techniques of projection and fixed patterns of delivery, the microphone's listening ear could transduce a more naturalistic poetics of political speech, whereby even the most unremarkable voice could become one's "greatest weapon."<sup>87</sup>

To Iseki's point, the new media seemed indeed to favor a more earnest and plainspoken vocality; one that might even be considered ineffective by other standards. Coolidge, for example, was not known as an especially dynamic speaker, and possessed a nasal, "wire edge to his voice" that paled in person against the "bell-like resonance" and "delightful rhetoric" of his opponent John Davis. On the radio, however, Coolidge's "twangs and shrills disappear[ed] somewhere along the aerial," leaving a "'clear, natural, well modulated voice' which was easily heard and understood." It was this delivery—"forthright and unsophisticated," alongside an aversion to long sentences and "unusual" words—that seemed to send Coolidge's utterance

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either; recently, I heard an anecdote about the young orator Aoki Tokuzō, who would conduct his own *kendo*-like 'mid-winter training' for speech-making in the schoolyard at night." See Takada, "Hatsuon no kenkyū," 258.

<sup>86</sup> Iseki Jun'ichirō, "Onsei to jinkaku," *Yūben* 18, no. 3 (1927): 190-93.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

"straight to the popular heart," and Coolidge himself to the White House.<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile, Ozaki was well known as an enchanting orator, even leading his opponents to suspect that he used "hypnotism or some sort of magic" to sway them to his cause. But like Coolidge, Ozaki's efficacy owed less to ornate rhetorical flourishes than to his "calm" and disarming affect.<sup>89</sup> In his 1928 recorded speech "On General Suffrage," he stutters occasionally and pauses to collect his breath, displaying the somewhat deliberative flow and labored enunciation that characterized many early speech recordings. Yet what does cut through is the impression of a direct, sincere personality, no less believable for its decades of public cultivation.

Naturally, this shift in the "personality" politics of public oratory—from the avowedly declamatory toward the naturalistic—mapped closely onto that of *rōdoku*.<sup>90</sup> As with recitation, earlier treatises on elocutionary method in Japan borrowed extensive pedagogical language surrounding emphasis, intonation, and cadence from the parlance of traditional recitative arts. For example, in a 1917 essay on "Pronunciation research," Takada Kunikazu explained breathing technique via expressions from *gidayū* and *ha-uta* ("stealing a moment," or *ma wo nusumu*), and cited texts like the *Wakan Rōeishū* in outlining the standard semantic associations of various tonal inflections (high-flat tone, or *heichō*, for expressing solemnity or gravitas, rising tones, or *noborichō*, to indicate expectation or disbelief, and so on). In contrast, the essays that populated the *Yūben* journal in the mid-to-late 1920s stressed transparent, "natural" communication, praising politicians like Ozaki for his avuncular tone, his conciliatory phrasing, and his ability to strike a balance between conversational intimacy and rousing, declarative poise. In short, if the

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<sup>88</sup> John L. Blair, "Calvin Coolidge and the Advent of Radio Politics," *The Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society* 44, no. 1 (1976): 33-36.

<sup>89</sup> Ozaki Yukio, *The Autobiography of Ozaki Yukio: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in Japan*, trans. Fujiko Hara (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 313-15.

<sup>90</sup> Jason Camlot similarly observes a shift toward a more naturalistic, less "mechanical" style of elocution in concert with the advent of sound media in the early 20th-century United States. See Camlot, *Phonopoetics*, Chapter 3.

advent of radio invited the listening public to draw a direct link between "vocal sound" (*onsei*) and personal interiority—to insist that "your voice *is* your personality"—it followed that the best way to achieve Katō Asatori's ideal of "general resonance" (*ippan no kyōmei*) was to follow the same model of dialectical synthesis that *rōdoku* attempted: to make public speech appear "as private and personal as possible," so as to give listeners a convincing impression of the physical and the figural "voice"—the signifier and its signified—brought into holistic and singular union.<sup>91</sup>

#### *V. The Intimacy of Mass Address*

For both reformers of *rōdoku* and *yūben* alike, the consciousness of radio's growing influence seemed therefore to animate a poetics of the "living voice" that dovetailed with its renewed sense of political scope and import. In the case of orator-statesmen like Ozaki, for instance, the case for popular suffrage found fitting expression via technology that could so readily merge the affordances of intimacy and mass address; at once capturing and projecting the most minute and personal of sonorous inflections across such vast distances, the new media suited Ozaki's particular blend of demotic and dignified vocality, and by extension, its representative embodiment of popular politics. At the same time, however, the sound booth likewise demanded certain curtailments of expressive possibility, not only at the level of the radio's narrow sanctions for acceptable content, but also in the sonic sterility of the studio and the microphone's own attenuations of the voice's audible spectrum. In lieu of extemporaneous or highly gestural delivery, sound media's early adopters seemed accordingly to favor a poetics of measured, *heichō*-level tone whose gravitas bespoke a requisite preference for compromise and negotiation, clarity over conflict.

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<sup>91</sup> See Iseki, "Onsei to Jinkaku," 190, and Katō, "Bungei no shiteki jidai," 170-71.



Like the temperate unfolding of his oratorical style, Ozaki was himself a consummately moderate liberal, averse to posing too direct or disruptive a challenge in favor of greater expressive range. Indeed, while he advocated for an expanded franchise, Ozaki was less than anxious for "an unrestricted popular vote," for fear of what the "people" or the "masses" would produce if granted direct involvement in politics without "proper education and guidance."<sup>92</sup> Describing the resurgence of the suffrage movement at the turn of the 1920s, Ozaki recalled his alarm at the rice riots and subsequent mass rallies in Hibiya Park, fretting over the dangers of "crowd psychology," and the "loss of individual control" that seemed imminent within the tumultuous energies of the movement.<sup>93</sup> Thus, as "the cry for the right to vote swelled like a tidal wave" over the next several years, Ozaki (already late in his career) enlisted his efforts as a mediated and mediating voice, parlaying his own august rank and reputation as a public speaker to temper the passions of the people, or to broker the popular outcry by channeling it into a narrower bandwidth that could be plied, paced, and better distributed through exposition and reasoning.<sup>94</sup>

His was, in this sense, a Meiji sensibility of public, enlightenment-style governance wed to a Taishō-era commitment to the brokered pursuit of "democracy" through measured

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<sup>92</sup> Ozaki, *Autobiography*, 330. See also Ozaki Yukio, "Fusenjisshigo no kyokumen dakai," *Yūben* 16, no. 4 (1925): 6-9. In the latter, Ozaki writes: "In the event that no change comes in spite of the passage of the suffrage law, there will be many voices springing up to lament the politics of governance. Especially when it comes to the labor unions, which have been . . . advocating for direct action. Our sympathies reside with them to a point. Beyond that, though, if we place all of our hopes on suffrage, what gains are made will no doubt be followed by certain disappointments. It goes without saying, then, that in order to foster genuine change, there ought to be proper education and guidance."

<sup>93</sup> It's also worth noting that politicians and reporters assigned disproportionate blame for the "mob mentality" (*bōminsei*) surrounding the 1918 rice riots to marginal groups like the *burakumin*, while the general rise of social anomie over the next several years found a convenient scapegoat in the specter of subversive colonial subjects, and the chimerical figure of the "unruly Korean" (*futei senjin*) in particular. On the former, see Kurokawa Midori, *Tsukurareta 'Jinshu': Buraku sabetsu to jinshushugi* (Tokyo: Yūshisha, 2016), 117. On the latter, see Chapter One.

<sup>94</sup> Ozaki, *Autobiography*, 332-33.

constitutional reform.<sup>95</sup> In the context of post-quake Japan, however, as state-level anxieties over colonial subversion and communist conspiracy translated into violent political suppression, this brand of *realpolitik* resulted in the most cynical of compromises: the dual passage of universal male suffrage through the 1925 General Election Law alongside the draconian Peace Preservation Laws (*chian ijihō*, or PPL), which aimed to insulate the general integrity of the "imperial body politic" (*kokutai*)—and "private property" more specifically—by outlawing "radical" forms of leftist expression. While seemingly opposed in spirit, the two laws served as companion pieces, with the latter making explicit what the former seemed to imply: that the granting of this limited "electoral voice" would ensure, in Mladen Dolar's terms, "that the collective outburst of the acclamatory voice [could be] broken down, nipped in the bud, seemingly deprived of its essential qualities and its spectacular effects."<sup>96</sup>

For the recitation movement, this attenuation of the "acclamatory voice" registered nowhere as acutely as for the "screamers and noise poets" of its radical fringe. In particular, while poets like Akita Ujaku and Hagiwara Kyōjirō had played a galvanizing role in earlier recitation events, their efforts grew increasingly ancillary to that of Tomita, Kawaji, and Terui, whose focus remained fixed on official channels of broadcast. Without access to the airwaves, however, many left-of-center poets continued to pursue the craft of recitation toward earnest and often innovative ends, notably in the musical stagings of the proletarian theater movement. Ono Miyakichi, one of the leading exponents of worker's theater, stressed "the power of poetry" as a

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<sup>95</sup> Describing the difference between the Liberal Party (*Jiyūto*) and his own Constitutional Progressive Party (*Kaishinto*), Ozaki writes: "While members of the Liberal Party enjoyed making radical speeches and sought to bring about innovation and reform as quickly as possible, the Progressive Party sought to bring about change in measured stages and tried to achieve its objectives in a moderate manner. Due to this difference it was customary for us to criticize the Liberal Party men for their naiveté and lack of pragmatism, while they in turn rebuked us for what they called our timidity and excessive caution." See Ozaki, *Autobiography*, 60.

<sup>96</sup> Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 112.

feature of farmers' singing groups, while leftist composers like Hirai Shinzō incorporated *rōdoku* into vibrantly syncretic theatrical works that interwove poetic verse, choral and solo singing, *sprechchor*, and children's songs.<sup>97</sup> In part, this approach echoed Bertold Brecht and Kurt Weill's interests in musical "miscellany," seeking similarly to incorporate "existing bourgeois musical forms" in a manner that reflected the aural milieu of the working classes more faithfully than doctrinaire programs of "work songs."<sup>98</sup> Even more fundamentally, however, the poet Noboriguchi Yoshito noted that the standardization and "direct accessibility" of revolutionary poetry should not supersede its capacity to embody the full range of the voice's expressive possibility; "Some poems can be spoken, others sung, some shouted," he argued, "but above all, recitation (*rōdoku*) must entail individual freedom."<sup>99</sup>

However, to say nothing of the radio's unwelcoming stance toward "radical" poetic expression, the state's tightening strictures on public speech frustrated many efforts to further pursue the avenues of experimental and coalitional possibility that had been opened in the initial forays of the recitation movement. In the wake of the February elections of 1928, the first to be held after the General Election Law's passage, the proletarian poet Oguma Hideo issued a call to "actively promote poetic recitation," encouraging his peers to "take every opportunity" to "socialize" their work among "the masses through voice, sound, and gesture."<sup>100</sup> That spring, however, the state used the powers of the PPL to exact a crippling reprisal against the left, rounding up more than 1,500 known or suspected communists in what became known as the

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<sup>97</sup> Ono founded the *zenjo* theater (with the poet and playwright Senda Koreya). See also Ono Miyakichi, "Puroretaria to ongaku," *Ongaku Sekai* (April 1930): 12-15. Interestingly, Ono also performed alongside Yamamoto Yasue in the first radio drama production in Japan in 1925, "In a coal mine" (*tankō no naka*), which was written and developed by Osanai Kaoru.

[https://www2.nhk.or.jp/archives/tv60bin/detail/index.cgi?das\\_id=D0009060004\\_00000](https://www2.nhk.or.jp/archives/tv60bin/detail/index.cgi?das_id=D0009060004_00000)

<sup>98</sup> Senke Ryōhei, "Puroretaria no tame no ongaku to sono undō," *Ongaku Sekai* (April 1930): 40.

<sup>99</sup> Noboriguchi Yoshito, "Shi no rōdōku ni tsuite," *Puroretaria shi* 1, no. 9 (1931): 46-47.

<sup>100</sup> Oguma Hideo, "Shi no rōdōku wo sakan ni seyo," *Oguma zenshū*, 421.

"March 15th Incident." In turn, while police presence had been a fixture of proletarian recitals since the movement's inception—leftist singer and *utagoe* movement founder Seki Akiko recalled there being "more policemen than there were attendees" at her first performance in 1926—the scale and severity of political suppression following March 15th only increased as the movement grew, closing off opportunities for performance as often as young poets like Oguma worked to create them.<sup>101</sup>

While the proletarian arts movement did manage to regain momentum after March 15th, police raids and event cancellations plagued organizers over the next several years, leading ultimately to the arrest of Ono Miyakichi in 1932.<sup>102</sup> Under these conditions, smaller recitation gatherings offered a means of sustaining the more radical margins of the poetry community in the face of worsening print censorship. In characteristically defiant tone, Oguma tried to cast this underground recitation culture in hopeful terms—as a way of compelling poets to "further conceive their vocation beyond the narrow venues of publishing"—even if it meant gathering in small cafes and upstairs rooms.<sup>103</sup> In a cruel twist, however, this also meant that many of the same poets who had worked with the *minshū* coterie to actualize poetry's public voice had now to pursue this vocation in private, once again consigned to the cloisters that they had sought so actively to depart.

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<sup>101</sup> Seki Akiko, "Rōdōsha no mae ni utatta no keiken," *Ongaku Sekai* (April 1930): 43-44. For more on Seki and *utagoe*, see Jun Hee Lee, "Rather a hundred singing laborers than a single professional: Imagining the Japanese masses in the *utagoe* movement, 1948-present" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2020).

<sup>102</sup> Because of the frequency of cancellations, many plays from this period existed only as scenarios; if they were performed, they were often done so only as read-throughs. On the cancellation of events, one could point to Sakamoto Masaru's play in 1931, for instance. Meanwhile, after Osanai Kaoru's death, the Tsukiji Little Theater dissolved amid conflicting political visions in the spring of 1929. Left-leaning actors like Maruyama Sadao and Yamamoto Yasue went with Hijikata to organize the *New Tsukiji Troupe* (*Shin Tsukiji gekidan*), but would later become involved in the recitation of "patriotic poetry" from 1941-43.

<sup>103</sup> See *Oguma kenkyū*, 89.

Meanwhile, the same period saw broadcast recitation poised to reach its widest audience yet. Support for radio poetry grew within the mainstream of the *shidan* over the course of 1932, allowing the JOBK *bungeika* director Okuya Kumao to make the case for a series of regular recitation programs for national broadcast. From October 1933 to the end of 1935, JOBK aired eleven installments of Okuya's "*shi no rōdoku*" series, each featuring different selections read with the frequent accompaniment of the Osaka Radio Orchestra. Across the span of these broadcasts, Terui and others' theoretical designs began to coalesce into a formal repertoire of Japanese "recitation poetry" (*rōdoku-shi*) that promised, like its oratorical counterpart, to achieve a degree of resonance to match the character and scope of the listening public that NHK had worked to shape. Though these specific programs left no recorded trace, however, Columbia Records began in 1934 to produce a series of poetry records for broadcast and sale over the next several years. From these, one can form an impression of the style of *rōdoku* that had slowly developed from the *shiwakai*'s recitals at the Tsukiji Theater up to the final installment of the JOBK series in December 1935: one which resembles, to an extent, the kind of polyrhythmic balance of "public and private" that Katō Asatori had proposed, and that Terui, Okuya, and others had helped to put into technical practice.

Listening to Kawaji, Kitahara, and Saijō recite their own poems, one can detect a shared effort to distinguish the recital of colloquial and *jiyūshi* works from that of classical or traditional fixed-meter forms. In his recording of the short free-verse poem "Trip" (*Tabi*), Kawaji forgoes the high-toned solemnity of *rōgin* in favor of a more buoyant recitative that gamely traverses the poem's colorful vernacular. Only the slightest elevated lilt betrays itself in Kawaji's voice, if not simply to demarcate its poetic register, then to evoke the nostalgia of the poem's journey along the French coastline (a remembrance of Kawaji's 1927 trip to Monte Carlo). Detailing palm

trees, casino vouchers, and the smell of cigars, the accents of each word find animated emphasis, such that Kawaji's pitch bounces restlessly up and down across each line like the pistons of the narrator's train, "skirting the Mediterranean coast / drunk from the ten o'clock sun."<sup>104</sup> This style extends to his jaunty reading of the prose poem "The Guest" (*kyakujin*), which shows even less fealty to the reverent flow of traditional *rōei*. And while its brisk clip may have derived in part from the task of fitting all thirty-seven lines onto the last minute-and-a-half of shellac, it nonetheless succeeds in staking out a stylistic register that seems entirely suited to Kawaji's well-honed colloquial diction.

In Kitahara's case, the distinction between *rōdoku* and *rōgin* falls along a wider spectrum. For poems of more identifiably fixed meter, Kitahara hews closer to the elevated chant of *rōgin*, while those with greater prosodic variation invite more naturalistic inflections. In "Fragments" (*Danshō*), his stylized *rōgin* delivery glides regally across the *shintaiishi*-esque combinations of fives and sevens, while the slightly more flexible form of "Prelude to 'Memories'" (*'Omoide' joshi*) allows for a subtler deployment of *rōgin*'s tonal tropes; though Kitahara relies largely on a high-flat tone to translate the poem's lyrical reverie, he punctures it briefly with more direct hints of emotion—a sudden, quizzical break in the voice at the moment of "a certain sadness" (*nanikashira samishii kanji*), a similar uptick in pitch at a key qualifier in the penultimate line: "and yet" (*soredeite*)—adumbrating a sense of personal presence glinting through the cracks of *rōgin*'s formal veneer. In Kawaji's terms, these revelatory moments might be "the unvarnished sounds of content crying out," rendering "the howl of our subjectivity" transparent in "the language itself."<sup>105</sup> More likely, however, they reveal Kitahara's famously meticulous hand, performing such "artless," self-signifying moments with the deft intention of a veteran public

<sup>104</sup> "Ressha wa chichūkai no kaigansen de /gozen jūji no nikkō ni yotteiru." See *Bunka wo kiku: Jisaku rōdoku no sekai*, (Columbia Records COCP 36585-6), liner notes, 28.

<sup>105</sup> Okkotsu, *Gendai shijin gunzō*, 19.

speaker. As if to confirm these suspicions, the more exploratory free-verse of "Ducks" (*Kamo*) and "The Trappist's Cow" (*Torapisuto no ushi*) triggers an almost parodic display of vernacular emoting which, while closest in theory to Terui's poetics of *rōdoku*, edges closer to the theatrics of radio drama.

Meanwhile, in his 1936 recording of "My mother's room" (*Haha no heya*), Saijō puts Terui's principles of studied artlessness to more fitting use in an especially candid work of free-verse. In an imagined, one-sided dialogue with his ailing mother, Saijō employs polite *desu/masu* endings and rote, honorific phrasing, relying on only a few carefully chosen motifs—late spring foliage, afternoon light shaded by the onset of evening—to suffuse his quotidian phrasing with "a low rumble of foreboding" (*sokokimi no warui senritsu*). "Gomen-kudasai, okaasan, / hisashiburi de anata no oheya e hairimasu," he begins in neatly subdivided tones, adding an inexplicable gravity to his otherwise perfunctory greeting: "Pardon me, mother, / this the first I've entered your room in quite some time." As he proceeds to recount shared memories that haunt the room, his voice lingers mid-line at an elevated pitch before tilting subtly downward, each thought falling like the last against his mother's silence before trailing into reminiscence. "Okaasan," he repeats, blunter and more urgently each time, perhaps to retrieve her attention, or to spark some glint of recognition in her failing, "owl-like" eyes. Throughout, Saijō's phrasing hovers at the brink of drama, pitched just enough above everyday speech to "enchant"—for Gioia, to "heighten attention [and] relax emotional defenses"—yet familiar enough to enfold poet and listener into a shared aural space, as if both were sitting in the same bedroom. In this intimate surround, Saijō's own proximity to the microphone allows the recording to transduce each sibilant peak as though it were a whisper at the edge of the ear. "It's just the two of us here," he confides, to both his mother and the listener at once.

With these recordings fresh in the ear, it is clear that while the ideal of a naturalistic, vernacular mode of recitation had not become as hegemonic by the mid-30s as some studies suggest, the soundscape of recitation (pace Sasaki Mikirō) was far from "haphazard."<sup>106</sup> Rather, these examples reveal a form of *rōdoku* that retains certain residual attachments to its more incantatory counterparts, yet stands apart by virtue of a studied posture of unadornment—evinced in more familiar inflections and intonational cadences—that would seem to evoke a more direct sense of the poet's personal involvement. This model, one we might term *vernacular enchantment*, would therefore seem to capture the foregoing vision of public and private in sympathetic resonance, suited likewise to the strange intimacy of mass address that the radio afforded.

Yet in this intimacy, one also detects a strangely solitary, airless quality in the readings themselves. In part, this impression stems from the sound of a voice captured in the "dead" conditions of a sound-absorbent room, deprived of all but the slightest reverberation, and thus suspended in a vacuum-sealed silence. Moreover, each imagined setting finds the poet alone or in the unspeaking presence of another, seeking out the comforts of memory to allay the anxious uncertainties of the present. For Kitahara and Saijō, this nostalgic drift toward their Meiji upbringing seems to imbue each wistfully elongated syllable, while in the escapist fantasy of

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<sup>106</sup> Drawing on Tsuboi, Marianne Tarcov suggests that the national poetry broadcasts "favored" a "more modern, conversational style of reading." See Marianne Tarcov, "Unveiling Open Secrets of Hometown, War, and Mass Culture in Twentieth-Century Japanese Poetry" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2016). However, based on the Columbia recordings and the available program information (compiled by Okuya Kumao in "'Shi no rōdoku' hōsō kiroku" [1935] and the appendix of Tsuboi 1997), these broadcasts seemed more to resemble a spectrum, whereby poets employed *rōgin*-style delivery for traditional/fixed verse forms, and tended more toward vernacular *rōdoku* for poems with more flexible prosody. Likewise, Tarcov suggests that Kitahara, "when reading either his tanka *or* his free verse, performs them in a musical, chant-like manner that emphasizes their use of 7-5 syllabic rhythm" (emphasis mine). See Tarcov 2016, 69. However, as argued above, Kitahara can be heard to modulate his recitation style from something closer to *rōgin* in the case of fixed-meter works to a more vernacular style of *rōdoku* for free-verse selections or passages.



"Trip," the more animated contours of Kawaji's voice evoke not his current circumstances in Tokyo but rather a distant image of his earlier travels.<sup>107</sup> What strikes one about these recordings, then, is not so much a sense of immediate resonance but a peculiar lack thereof; faced with the strain of communication or the surrounding tumult of the social world, each poet sounds a retreat into their own sense of interior, anechoic rhythm, as if attempting to insulate an increasingly narrow, "protective space" of bourgeois interiority that had yet to be "pried open" by the very mass media they had elected to embrace.<sup>108</sup> However, as the liberal preconditions for this insulation continued to erode, the performance of such interior "passional states" would only pull them paradoxically further into the state's mechanisms of ideological reproduction.

Ironically, the only apparent obstacle to further ideological enlistment was the realization that the JOBK poetry series was, by the station's own metrics, relatively unpopular. In a report from September 1935, Okuya noted with some resignation that, "over the last three years, we have not seen popular support for this unique form of radio art," and confessed that the program had failed to resonate beyond a small community of "high-brow" listeners. If further "research and experience" was therefore necessary, however, Okuya declared that "it would be meaningless to solicit feedback from the so-called masses," unless the station wished to field "even more requests for *naniwabushi* and *manzai* comedy." What needed fixing, in other words, was not the *bungeika*'s own elite posture and condescension to popular tastes, but, as ever, the

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<sup>107</sup> In the case of Kitahara, Marianne Tarcov argues that his apparent preference for the high-register mode of *shintaiishi*-esque *rōgin* betrays a certain nostalgia for the more enlightened public culture of the Meiji era. See Tarcov 2016, 69-71. Meanwhile for Saijō, the litany of familiar objects in his mother's room—his father's oil paintings, a Dutch mahogany clock—is no less redolent of a Meiji-era upbringing. However, as mentioned in the previous footnote, Kitahara's choice to recite his fixed-meter works in a *rōgin* style does not necessarily suggest, as Tarcov argues, an "ambivalence" to the more "modern" vernacular style of *rōdoku*, but rather a desire to maintain a stylistic distinction between the recital of free and fixed-verse poems.

<sup>108</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 172.

unrefined "aural sensibilities" of the masses themselves. Until such sensibilities could be sufficiently cultivated, radio poetry's task of public *poesis* would remain, as would the public itself, in a state of "incompletion" (*mikansei*).<sup>109</sup> What Okuya and his colleagues failed to take seriously, meanwhile, was that the radio's listening public was not incomplete, but diversifying in ways that were outpacing and circumventing their own pedagogical aims.

Still, this limited appeal did not stop leftist critics from assailing the broadcast poets for lending their voices to an apparatus that had, since the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident, become a nearly-exclusive propaganda outlet for the state. The proletarian poet Sano Takeo decried the "enlistment of bourgeois cultural outlets like the radio in Japanese capitalism's drive toward fascism," while poet-lyricists like Kitahara and Saijō found explicit censure for their hand in abetting the "fascistification" (*fasshoka*) of mass culture.<sup>110</sup> More than simply barking out overtly propagandistic content, that is, Sano's critique pointed instead to radio poetry's more pernicious capacity to inflect the voice of state power with a disarming literary accent, to lend it the intimacy of a whisper, and to thereby "enchant" or naturalize the increasingly coercive measures of public censorship and control that attended the state's imperial advances.<sup>111</sup>

If Sano's polemic painted the politics of the recitation movement with a rather broad brush, however, there was little doubt that the radiogenic techniques of *rōdoku*, like those of *yūben*, bespoke a willingness to concede certain expressive liberties in order to achieve the impression of a cohesive, publicly resonant signal, even if it meant filtering out many of the poetic and political energies that had helped to spur its formation. Indeed, while poetic recitation

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<sup>109</sup> "'Shi no rōdoku' hōsō kiroku," Osaka Chūō Hōsōkyoku Bungeika, September 10, 1935.

<sup>110</sup> Takeo Sano, "Burujoa shijin no fasshoka: Kitahara Hakushū, Saijō Yaso wo hihan suru ronbun no josetsu," *Puroretaria Shi* 2, no. 2 (1932): 34.

<sup>111</sup> Moreover, Shiratori Seigo traveled to Korea in 1932 and helped to produce a month-long radio program in colonial Seoul on "Impressions of Korea and its poetry (*shika*)." See Hori Madoka, "Shiratori Seigo to sensō: 'kokumin no koe' made no kyori," *The Korean Journal of Japanology* 99 (2014): 259-71.

had earlier indicated anything from reverent chant to indiscernible screams, Okuya's JOBK programs served to temper the practice into a form more befitting of Terui's moderate (though increasingly nationalistic) rhetorical vision. As a result of this refinement and formalization, however, the resulting model of seemingly direct, unaffected, and natural recitation sounded strangely distant in practice from the poetic vision that the *minshū* poets had proposed. In addition to the group's representative figures (with the exception of Tomita) being largely absent from the program's repertoire, the largest representation of vernacular poetry (via Kawaji and Takamura Kōtarō) tended to lack the sense of regional difference and provincialized utopianism that imbued even the most mawkish instances of *minshū* verse. Where accented traces did appear—in works like Miyazawa Kenji's "The Morning of our last farewell" (*Eiketsu no asa*), for instance—their inclusion followed the same extractive logic that attended other broadcasts of provincial and colonial *min'yō*: as tokens of a safe difference, whose impertinent or defamiliar energies could be tempered by their placement within NHK's supervisory framework.

Ultimately, then, what reached the airwaves was not the unrefined vocalicity that catalyzed the energies of the recitation movement, but rather the *impression* thereof, honed and curated to fit within the parameters of national broadcast. In this sense, the radio poets had joined the ranks of other radio actors and announcers who sought similarly to construct a sense of *ersatz* immediacy and liveness through language and vocal affect. And so, in its trajectory from the stage to the studio, the formal development of recitation poetry came to dovetail closely with the *telos* by which NHK officials framed the development of radio as a whole: as a process of improvement by way of noise reduction, through which the filtration of various unruly distortions and opacities of language might reveal the *logos* of the originating message in its truest clarity. Meanwhile, this logic served likewise to abet the state's disavowal of its own

mediating role, insofar as the radio's exclusion of any dissonant articulation of sociality (the "political" in Mouffe's terms) could be similarly framed as a function of its transparent, self-effacing neutrality.

However, officials like Okuya recognized that if a new sphere of aural sensibility was to form within these parameters, listeners would need to feel that these attenuated contours of public speech were not only natural or inevitable, but desirable as well. To this end, the sympathetic endeavor of the recitation movement, shot through with the humanism of the "people's poets," offered a means of transmuting this vulgar political calculus into a poetics of studied unadornment—an art of artlessness—that could perform the state's curtailments of public expression as a poetic distillation of the people's voice, "purified and refined to its very essence" (*tōta sare, senren sareru*). But if the resulting mode of *rōdoku* flattered the sensibilities of its advocates, it also betrayed the rather austere sonority that such refinements had produced. Shorn of the more striking peaks and intensities of its wider sonic milieu, the radio-friendly voice of vernacular enchantment evinced a narrower affect of compromise and concession—suitable perhaps for its medium of diffusion, yet just as unpromising for its popular appeal. For this reason, its particular synthesis of "public and private rhythm" would fail, for the moment, to resonate further.

### *Conclusion*

It would take another five years, and the full-scale mobilization of cultural production under total war, for radio poetry to reach the degree of "public resonance" that its advocates had envisioned, if not in the form they had foreseen. Under the banner of "patriotic poetry" (*aikoku-shi*), the height of the war years saw the state enlist for propaganda purposes what the recitation movement had cultivated over the preceding decade: a mode of vernacular enchantment that

could distill in poetic clarity the Japanese language as it was "naturally spoken," while instilling through "the material qualities of the words, their resonance and rhythm . . . the feeling of community."<sup>112</sup> For the *minshū* coterie, these principles had stemmed from a humanism and civic conscience that anticipated a democratic era yet to come, while poets like Saijō and Kitahara imagined a greater role for poetry within the burgeoning media ecology of popular song. When cast in service of the war effort, however, the realization of these visions retrospectively resembled a rejection of modernist experimentation and progressive politics in favor of a fascist aesthetics of the sonic *gemeinschaft*, bound together through a spiritual unity that manifested in the presumed transparency of *kokugo*. In this light, Tsuboi Hideto has argued that the foregoing ideals can be read as a conceptual blueprint for poetry's strikingly pervasive enlistment in the war effort—a "return to the voice" that cleared the path for a concomitant "return to Japan."<sup>113</sup>

Yet in the recordings themselves, one finds only a mimetic outline of these anterior visions; far from evincing a "return to the voice," what made it to broadcast was in most cases a circumscribed impression of all that seemed possible via the sonorities of the performed word. Just as Saijō had accordingly shifted the focus of his lyricism toward the more spirited terrain of popular music, the *brut* poetics of the *minshū* group found outspoken inheritors in proletarian poets like Oguma Hideo, while echoes of Hagiwara and Tsuboi's "noise" poetics would later resound in the postwar avant-garde. In this sense, the wartime advent of "patriotic poetry" can be heard not as the logical or inevitable endpoint of this post-quake vocal turn, but rather as one trajectory among many stemming from the polyphonous ferment of its formation. Meanwhile, the foreclosure of certain avenues of poetic agency invited the creation of others—a point that Oguma voiced in the face of his own censorship with apt vulgarity:

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<sup>112</sup> Maeda, *Text and the City*, 231.

<sup>113</sup> Tsuboi here interpolates Hagiwara Sakutarō's well-known (if ambivalent) call for a "return to Japan" (*Nihon e no kaiki*). See Tsuboi, *Koe no shukusai*, 161-62.

If they cut off my hands, I'll write with my feet.  
If they cut off my feet, I'll write with my mouth.  
If they gag my mouth,  
I'll sing with the hole in my ass.

Te wo kiraretara ashi de kakōsa  
Ashi wo kiraretara kuchi de kakōsa  
Kuchi wo fusagaretara  
Shiri no ana de utaōyo.<sup>114</sup>

Taken as metaphor, Oguma's verse captures in abject detail the straitened conditions that he and others faced at the hands of state censorship and the violence of the PPL. What it discloses in a more literal sense, however, is a map of embodied possibility that Oguma himself would rephrase in politer terms elsewhere; "Your body emits a fine voice" (*kimi no nikutai wa yoi koe wo hassuru*) he averred in 1935, chiding colleagues who equated their various exclusions from publishing and broadcast to a loss of "voice," while inviting them to consider a more oblique and protean repertoire of sonic agency calling forth from the body itself.<sup>115</sup> To wit, just as the constituent elements of the voice—lips, lungs, larynx—represented only a selection of the body's "vibrant matter," so too did the poet's voice form only one element of a wider aural ecology to emerge in the recording, broadcast, and performance culture of the 1930s. Within this vibrant field, the refrains of popular music called forth as much from the limbs of musicians and dancers as they did from singers' lips, enchanting listeners with improvisatory sound acts that invited (in Deleuze and Guattari's phrasing) the formation of "[new] organized masses" out of "elements devoid of so-called natural affinity."<sup>116</sup> In the next chapter, I consider how a transpacific cast of popular performers set about auditioning such formations, both sonic and social, through the musical vernacular of interwar mass culture.

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<sup>114</sup> Oguma Hideo, "Genjitsu no toishi," in Oguma Tsuneko, ed., *Oguma Hideo zenshū*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Sōjusha, 1978), 241. For English translation, see David G. Goodman, trans., *Long, Long Autumn Nights: Selected Poems of Oguma Hideo, 1901-1940* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 1989), 46.

<sup>115</sup> Oguma Hideo, "Haiboku no utai-te ni atau," in *Shinpan Oguma Hideo zenshū*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Sōjusha, 1990).

<sup>116</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 349. Cited in Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, 6.

## CHAPTER 3

### VOICES OF A DIFFERENT SHADE

"The leading characteristic of the voice-body is to be a body-in-invention, an impossible, imaginary body in the course of being found and formed."

—Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 2000

"What spurred jazz's global diffusion was not simply that it appealed to the present, but rather that it was both the progeny *and* progenitor of the present itself."

—Nii Itaru, "A social critic's view of music," 1930

In the spring of 1933, a voice calls out from a Ginza storefront speaker: "Hitori temo, sabishi ka nai no yo." The phrase, sung in a broad, unpolished contralto, ambles leisurely down a flight of chromatic steps before landing just under middle C. Beneath the melody, a piano and guitar trot alongside one another at a window-shopping gait, tempting passersby to slow down long enough to hear the singer through to her next chorus. For those who choose to linger, the band's rhythmic attraction shifts quickly back to the curiosity of the voice; the words themselves may sound familiar, but their phrasing seems somehow bent, stretched, and dipped in ways that suggest a different phonetic logic behind their formation. The voice belongs to a *jazu* singer, to be sure, but not one like Awaya Noriko, Amano Kikuyo, or any of the classically-trained vocalists or Asakusa Opera veterans who had tried their hand at the new style over the previous few years. Rather, the voice on the record betrays hardly a hint of classical training, but boasts a casual facility in its idiom that strikes far closer to the recent American "hot jazz" recordings than anything yet produced in Japan. Without the assuring presence of a physical body, then, the listener is left to wonder: from whom, or from where, might such a voice arise?

When the voice rejoins the band after the solo break, it yields a partial clue. It sings in untroubled English: "Now I'll sing sweet love songs all of the time, if you'll just come and be my sweet daddy mine." From these lines, one can surmise that the singer is a native English speaker, having perhaps sung the Japanese of the first chorus from a romanized lyric sheet before slipping into her more fluent tongue. "I ain't got nobody," she continues, "and nobody ever cares for me." This closing couplet, paraphrasing the title of an American vaudeville standard, betrays the present recording (entitled *Hitoribocchi*, or "All Alone") as a "bilingual" cover of the former.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, however, it doubles as a winking nod to the condition of disembodiment underlining the voice's more enigmatic allure. With no body to accompany it, the voice coyly invites the listener to create one anew; various potential figures begin to materialize in the mind's eye, each one dissolving into a diaphanous outline through which another appears. In this moment, the voice's re-embodiment is a task left open for the imagination to complete.

Before the listener can settle upon a definitive shape, however, the record's promotional materials might swiftly direct the eye to the singer herself: Kawahata Fumiko, a young Japanese American (Nikkei) performer from Los Angeles, new to Japan but apparently well-known in the U.S. as a Broadway revue dancer. Across a series of photographic portraits, one finds a diminutive teenager adorned in various costumes: a demure evening gown, a sequined chorus-line outfit, a stage tuxedo. With this array of discrete poses, each listener could be presented with not one but *several* prospective bodies to match the voice on the record, no two of which are alike, yet all of which seem to vie for explanatory privilege. Is this the voice of the elegant songstress, the ebullient chorus girl, the androgynous dandy? Or perhaps, are no fewer than *all* of them necessary to complete the voice's acoustic portrait? Far from yielding an answer that might

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<sup>1</sup> "Hitoribocchi" appears to have been released in April 1933 (Columbia 27471-A). The B-Side was the single "Nakasete-chōdai."



demystify or "de-acousmatize" the sound from the speakers, the visual revelation of Kawahata herself seems only to enchant it further, as if defying the proposition that her slight frame could singularly account for such an outsize sonic impression.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, the perceptible gap between the audible voice and its visible bod(ies) would seem here to counter Theodor Adorno's contention, printed five years earlier, that the female voice in its gramphonic transduction sounds somehow "needy and incomplete" without its corporeal attachment.<sup>3</sup> To the contrary, it appears not so much that Kawahata's gramphonic voice is in need of a body, but rather that no *one* body suffices to contain it.

Such imagined multiplicity would indeed seem to be the desired effect not only of Kawahata's diverse portraiture, but of her textual description as well. As the promotional copy informs the listener, "Miss Kawahata is said to have a face like Sylvia Sidney, a voice like Marlene Dietrich, and a dance like Josephine Baker." Here again, one confronts a diverse cast of figural candidates, none of whom stand in entirely for Kawahata herself, yet all of whom are meant strangely to cohere within the same vocalic frame. But with such specific referents, the voice's attendant intrigue seems to dilate from the previous query ("Who speaks?") to a more vexing array of uncertainties: what is it about Kawahata's sonic presence that draws these various figures—disparate in race, nationality, and language—into such intimate overlap? And what is it about Kawahata herself—her status as a Nikkei performer; the conditions of her arrival in Japan—that prevents her voice from being attributed to, or occupied by, a singular body?

In order to address these questions, it is necessary to consider the wider context surrounding the Japanese debut of Fumiko Kawahata, the enigmatic Nikkei child star, in the

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<sup>2</sup> Michel Chion uses the term "de-acousmatize" to describe the loss of acousmatic aura that attends the revelation of a voice's site of emission. In concert with Dolar, however, I suggest in this instance that the body's revelation does not rob the voice of its enigma, but rather creates further questions concerning its provenance. See Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 28. See also Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 67-71.

<sup>3</sup> Theodor Adorno, trans. Thomas Levin, "The Curves of the Needle," *October* 55 (1990): 54.

spring of 1933. First, it is worth noting that the release of Kawahata's first several singles for Japan's Columbia Records imprint coincided with a watershed moment in the development of jazz in Japan. For while *jazu* had been an urban buzzword since the late 1920s, its initial prevalence owed mainly to its pliable capacity to index most things cosmopolitan or *au courant*, from popular music to food, women's fashion, or simply the cacophony of the city soundscape. To the extent that *jazu* did identify a discrete musical genre, early impressions thereof relied largely on the interlocution of a few well-traveled critics—namely Iba Takashi, Horiuchi Keizō, and Shioiri Kamesuke—whose cultivated tastes favored the "sweet" orchestral arrangements of white bandleaders and composers like Paul Whiteman and George Gershwin. Crucially, most Japanese listeners would not encounter the sound of "hot" (read: Black and creole) jazz records by Louis Armstrong, Jimmie Lunceford, or Cab Calloway until the start of 1933—the very moment that Kawahata embarked on her own career in Japan.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, that same spring saw another development that would shape the course of Kawahata's career—and that of Japan's burgeoning jazz age—in an oblique yet no less critical regard. Shortly before "Hitoribocchi" hit store shelves, Columbia released another English-language record, albeit one of a distinctly different sort: a recording of the diplomat Matsuoka Yōsuke's "Farewell Message" to the League of Nations, first delivered on the eve of his departure from Geneva at the end of February. The speech announced Japan's formal withdrawal from the League over what Matsuoka's delegation decried as the racialized double standard of the Western powers in condemning Japan's incursions into Manchuria.<sup>5</sup> Over the next several months, Japanese politicians and journalists expounded on these grounds, citing indignities like

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<sup>4</sup> Hosokawa Shūhei, "The Swinging Voice of Kasagi Shizuko: Japanese Jazz Culture in the 1930s," *Japanese Studies Around the World* (March 2007): 159-85.

<sup>5</sup> See Thomas Burkman, "Japan and the League of Nations: An Asian Power Encounters the "European Club," *World Affairs* 158, no. 1 (1995): 45-57.

the rejection of Japan's "racial equality clause" at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and the United States' 1924 Johnson-Reed Act barring immigration from Asia. In turn, the mass media set about eulogizing Japan's newly-earned pariah status as a righteous cause; in addition to Columbia's release of Matsuoka's "Farewell" speech, Kitahara Hakushū penned lyrics for a celebratory single entitled "Dattai-bushi" (Withdrawal ditty) and the Asahi Shinbun enlisted the composer Eguchi Yoshio to score a popular tune commemorating the paper's now-famous headline: "Good Riddance to the League" (*Renmei yo saraba!*). In a strange twist, then, the sentiment behind Kawahata's "Hitoribocchi"—"I may be alone, but I'm not lonely" (*hitori temo, sabishi ka nai no yo*)—may well have struck a timely chord.

What appears at first to be a merely suggestive coincidence, however, reveals upon closer scrutiny a complex web of entanglements that joined the budding transpacific network of the interwar jazz age to the shifting cultural and sonic imaginary of the Japanese empire. In short, while the timing of Kawahata's debut at the outset of Japan's "hot jazz" era may seem incidental to the racialized geopolitics of the nation's imperial advance, this chapter argues that neither development can be fully understood apart from the other. More specifically, however, it observes in this imbrication a peculiar logic of the vocalic body at work. That is, if the cultural apparatus of Japan's empire—now set defiantly apart from its Anglo-European counterparts—beckoned the formation of imperial bodies that might harmonize its racial, linguistic, and cultural multiplicity, then the polymorphous presence of Kawahata's gramophone voice—its capacity to summon not just one but *multiple* figurations at once—presented a potent model thereof. At the same time, however, the racialized timbre and inflections of such a voice (its granular "skin," in Pooja Rangan's terms) allowed for the audition of unforeseen frictions, intimacies, and even coalitional acts that seemed to echo past the empire's own volatile borders. As such, this chapter

asks what a voice like Kawahata's might reveal about the sonic and gestural liaisons of Black and diasporic performance in Japan's jazz age, and what such errant crossings might have signaled for the listeners of an empire nearing the threshold of its autarkic vision.

### *I. The "Amber-Colored Josephine Baker"*

Fumiko "Alice" Kawahata is not a well-known figure in histories of Japan's interwar era, nor is her impact on Japanese music or popular culture especially well documented. But for a brief yet pivotal moment—from the spring of 1933 to the summer of 1935—she was a household name. In this short two-year window, Kawahata recorded dozens of singles for Columbia and Teichiku Records, starred in two Nikkatsu films, toured extensively from the home islands to Korea and Manchuria, and designed, choreographed, and starred in the inaugural revue performance of the Nihon Gekijō (Nichigeki) theater. Marquee performers like Mizunoe Takiko and Nakagawa Saburō sought to emulate her dancing, and now-legendary singers like Dick Mine and Kasagi Shizuko took identifiable cues from her beguilingly "non-native" style of vocalizing in Japanese. By any standard, then, Kawahata's rise to fame was stunning in both its rapidity and scope. But what makes such success all the more remarkable is that Kawahata's career in Japan was, by most accounts, an accident.

When Kawahata arrived in Yokohama in the fall of 1932, she expected that her first trip to Japan would be a brief one, mainly to visit relatives in Okayama. As such, neither she nor her family had any plans to stay longer than a few months, let alone seek out connections in the country's entertainment industry. If anything, the sojourn represented a hiatus for the seventeen-year-old Kawahata, who had been touring professionally in the U.S. as a revue dancer over the previous several years.<sup>6</sup> However, her reputation as a Nikkei child star seemed nonetheless to

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<sup>6</sup> Kawahata Fumiko, "Watashi no jijoden," *Chūō Kōron* (March 1934): 284-87.

precede her arrival, as did certain personal connections from the west coast. While staying in Yokohama, Kawahata's mother Haruyo ran into an acquaintance from Los Angeles, Eijirō "George" Hori, who had moved to Japan earlier that year to open the country's first tap dance studio. Learning that the famous "Fumi Kawahata of Lil' Tokio" was in Japan, Hori beseeched Haruyo to extend their stay and allow him to introduce Fumi to some of his newly-made industry connections. Perhaps with some apprehension, Haruyo agreed, and soon the word had spread throughout the industry that Kawahata Fumiko, the pioneering Nikkei star of Broadway, was now in Tokyo and poised to stage a "homecoming" debut. For Kawahata, meanwhile, the thought of what such a homecoming would look or sound like remained an open question.

Born in Hawai'i in 1916, Fumiko Kawahata (born Fumie Tachibana) moved to Los Angeles at the age of three with her mother Haruyo, a Hawai'i-born Nisei (second-generation Japanese), and her infant brother Jōji. Haruyo had decided to make the move after divorcing Fumiko's biological father, and remarried an Okayama-born Issei (first-generation) grocer named Kawahata Jūhei soon after settling in L.A.'s Little Tokyo neighborhood. Shortly thereafter, the family relocated to a more spacious Nikkei enclave in nearby Boyle Heights, where Fumiko (going by "Fumi") entertained other children in the neighborhood with impromptu vaudeville routines and improvised tumbling acts on the front lawn. Taking note of her daughter's talents, Haruyo enrolled Fumi at a local dance studio, where the precocious nine-year old made astoundingly swift progress; within a year, she was performing in theaters and music halls around Little Tokyo, delighting audiences with her command of "Harlem-style" routines like Earl Tucker's famous Snakehips dance as well as her facility in contortions and acrobatic high kicks.<sup>7</sup> Graduating over the next few years to larger stages in L.A., she eventually attracted the

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<sup>7</sup> Morioka Kiichi, ed., *Kawahata Fumiko panfuretto* (Tokyo: Katayama Kazuo Jimusho, 1933), Section G.

attention of a representative from RKO Productions, who signed her in 1929 to a multi-year contract and a spot in the company's touring revue circuit. At the age of thirteen, then, Kawahata became the first performer of Japanese descent to sign such a high-profile deal in the U.S., and only the third ever to appear on Broadway at the famed Palace Theater.<sup>8</sup>

Upon relocating to New York, Kawahata was able to swiftly parlay her appeal as an exotic wunderkind into accolades as RKO's "Oriental Baby Star." Over the next two years, she shared billings on Broadway and throughout the country with the top draws of the day, from the Marx Brothers to James Cagney and Sophie Tucker. While in New York, however, Kawahata later noted that she sought mainly to "develop a fluency in the trademark rhythms of Black dancers."<sup>9</sup> To this end, RKO arranged for Kawahata to study tap dance under Billy Pierce, a Black choreographer whose midtown studio was known as a training ground for the signature dances of the Harlem Renaissance. While it is unclear how often Kawahata studied with Pierce himself, however, numerous articles mentioned that she also received coaching from no less an authority than Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, who at the time had just finished a successful Broadway run with the stage revue *Blackbirds of 1928* and was well on his way to becoming one of the highest-profile Black entertainers in the country. Whether from Robinson or Pierce, then, Kawahata's tutelage at the Manhattan studio furnished her with an impressive credential to add to an already rich gestural repertoire that included (per a New York Times write-up) dances like "the Black Bottom, the Charleston, and the Siam waltz."<sup>10</sup> But for her largely white audiences,

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<sup>8</sup> The first two to appear on the Broadway stage were the actor Sessue Hayakawa and the opera singer Miura Tamaki. See Morioka, *Kawahata Fumiko panfuretto*, Section G.

<sup>9</sup> Kawahata, "Watashi no jijoden," 286-87.

<sup>10</sup> See *Kawahata Fumiko panfuretto*, as well as ---, "Zen'ei wo seifuku shita warera no bebii sutā: Tensai jazu dansā Kawahata Fumiko," *Fujokai* 52, no. 7, 143-45. It is possible that articles in Japan confused Billy Pierce and Bill Robinson, or perhaps played up the ambiguity stemming from their shared names. It is not implausible, however, that RKO would have arranged for Kawahata to train with Robinson, who

such varied prowess on the part of a young Asian girl often registered in racialized terms as a knack for mimicry, or a novel ability to shape-shift from one choreographic or ethnic figuration to another. At the very least, such a perception seems apparent in her reported capacity to simultaneously embody Sylvia Sidney, Marlene Dietrich, and Josephine Baker—a tagline derived from an RKO director's assessment after witnessing Kawahata's eclectic routine.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, however, the telling association with Baker in the realm of dance suggested that Kawahata's versatile subjectivity hinged upon a similarly orientalized appeal, which in turn seemed to fold her gestural proximity to blackness into a more generalized embodiment of the exotic. It is perhaps for this reason that her comparisons to Dietrich and Sidney ultimately proved less durable than her oft-quoted evocation of Baker, whose own stage shows in Paris likewise bespoke a deftly entwined articulation of both "naked" primitivism and orientalist *tapisserie*. In fact, by the time of her arrival in Japan, Kawahata's nickname in the press had shifted from the "Oriental Baby Star" to the "Amber-colored Josephine Baker"—a less than subtle migration meant seemingly to conflate a sense of burgeoning sexuality on the one hand and a more miscegenous fluency in Black movement on the other. In short, if Baker's ambiguous ethnic presentation in Europe offered a twofold spectacle of primitivism and orientalism—tellingly evinced in the alternation of nicknames like the "Black Pearl" and the "Bronze Venus"—then Kawahata's "amber-colored" presentation seemed to offer American audiences a similar if mirrored appeal.<sup>12</sup> Setting aside the politics of this mirroring in its American context, however, what concerned Kawahata in the fall of 1932 was how her particular shade of exoticism might translate in Japan.

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was known to frequently work with and teach younger dancers. See Brian Siebert, *What the Eye Ears: A History of Tap Dancing* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2015), 385.

<sup>11</sup> See Morioka, *Kawahata Fumiko panfuretto*, Section G.

<sup>12</sup> Cheng, *Second Skin*, 160-61.

Likely owing to George Hori's overtures in Tokyo that fall, news of Kawahata's Broadway pedigree soon reached the ear of Ōtani Takejirō, the co-founder of the Shōchiku production company. Ōtani, who had helped to finance Hori's tap dance studio, sensed a lucrative opportunity in Kawahata's extended residence, as well as a crucial advantage over his rivals in the increasingly competitive field of revue entertainment. Over the previous few years, Japan had been gripped by the same revue fever that was then sweeping Europe and America, with troupes like Ken'ichi "Enoken" Enomoto's Casino Follies competing with Shōchiku in Asakusa and the Osaka-based Takarazuka Revue making inroads in Tokyo.<sup>13</sup> For Ōtani, then, the prospect of signing the "amber-colored Josephine Baker" signaled a place for Shōchiku at the top of a crowded heap. To complicate matters, however, Kawahata remained technically under contract with RKO, and so was reluctant to sign onto any long-term deals elsewhere. As a compromise, it was proposed that Kawahata stay at least as long as the spring season as a "dance instructor" for the Shōchiku girl's troupe (*Shōchiku shōjo kagekibu*), and so through this nominal arrangement, Kawahata and her mother took up residence in Tokyo at the turn of the new year.<sup>14</sup>

Without wasting a moment, Ōtani and Hori began preparations for what would become Kawahata's "homecoming" debut (*kichō kōen*) at the Shōchiku-run Tokyo Gekijō on February 26th, 1933. With the onstage support of Asakusa Opera veterans Amano Kikuyo and Takata Seiko as well as George Hori's "tap-dance team," the program promised to showcase Kawahata

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<sup>13</sup> 1931 was a banner year for the popularity of large-scale theatrical revues in Tokyo, as Iba Takashi seemed to suggest in marking the year as the "arrival of the revue era" (*revyū jidai tōrai!*) in the inaugural issue of the journal "Revue Era" (*Revyū jidai*). For more on the revue and entertainment culture of interwar Japan, see Makiko Yamanashi, "Revue as a Liminal Theatre Genre: A comparative, interdisciplinary approach to contexts and characteristics of revues in transitional modern times" (PhD diss., Universität Trier, Fachbereich II, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Norikoshi Takao, *Arisu: Burōdowei wo miryō shita tensai dansā Kawahata Fumiko monogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1999), 156-58.



not only as a world-class dancer, but as a solo vocalist as well.<sup>15</sup> To the latter task, however, Ōtani and others encountered a rather significant sticking point. Namely, while Kawahata's talents as a dancer were unquestionable, her skill as a singer had never been part of her main appeal. Otherwise positive reviews from the U.S. rarely mentioned her singing voice, while what vocal training she did possess likely amounted to a juvenile proficiency in belting loud enough to fill a vaudeville hall. Moreover, her lack of Japanese fluency ruled out any convincing renditions of the latest domestic popular songs (*ryūkōka*). As such, Kawahata faced the task of not only refashioning herself as a headlining singer in Japan, but also (and more crucially) reframing the expectations around what such a singer should sound like.

To this task, ironically, it was precisely her lack of Japanese fluency that seemed to offer the most promising avenue of appeal. Indeed, the formula of a non-native speaker singing in charmingly stilted Japanese had recently proven successful for the emergent recording industry; over the previous two years, Japan's fledgling Columbia Records imprint (formerly Nipponophone) had released a popular string of novelty records featuring the eccentric Tokyo-based journalist Burton Crane singing bawdy Japanese numbers ("Sake ga nomitai" [I want to drink sake] and "Boku iro-otokoda!" [I'm a ladykiller!], among others) with blithely Americanized pronunciation.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, such records offered a fitting soundtrack to the wider interwar culture of so-called *ero guro nansensu* (erotic grotesque nonsense), and especially the "nonsensical" proliferation of foreign loanwords, playful neologisms, and translingual wordplay that bespoke the heady atmosphere of cosmopolitanism and consumerism permeating the

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<sup>15</sup> ---, "Modan tobitsuku," *Yomiuri shinbun*, February 20, 1933.

<sup>16</sup> For a full list of Burton Crane's singles for Columbia, see the following web site: <http://camp.ff.tku.ac.jp/tool-box/pmlibrary/bc-songs.html>

country's urban centers.<sup>17</sup> Across the late 1920s and early 1930s, critics sounded off on the trappings of *modanizumu* (particularly the youth culture of "modern girls"—*modan gāru* or *moga* for short), while the landscapes of post-quake Tokyo's reconstructed commercial districts thrust before the eyes a colorful *mélange* of western architectural façades and billboards emblazoned with brash *katakana* renderings of coming attractions and import products.<sup>18</sup> For her patrons, then, a voice like Kawahata's—exotic, vibrant, unrefined—may well have suggested the perfect aural analogue for a city bathed in the lurid glare of the modern.

In all likelihood, at least, it was this prospect that prompted George Hori's contacts at Columbia to approach Kawahata with an offer for a short-term recording contract, which she promptly accepted at the end of the year. For Columbia, however, Kawahata's non-native charms seemed clearly to differ from a white American like Burton Crane, whose bar-trick Japanese singing was played largely for laughs. By contrast, the visibility of Kawahata's racial extraction drew her prospective appeal into a more alluring realm of the exotic—an uncanny play of the foreign *and* the familiar—whose pleasures and perils were only beginning to be explored in Japan's young industry of recorded song. By the same token, however, Kawahata's prospects as a recording artist seemed likewise to hinge on Columbia's ability to market her accent not simply as a marker of foreignness or native English proficiency, but rather as the index of a particular idiomatic fluency that might place her both among *and* ahead of her Japanese counterparts.

Here jazz, or *jazu*, offered just such an idiom. By the time of Kawahata's arrival in Yokohama, jazz was a fixture not only of the country's urban soundscapes, but of the prevailing cultural discourse as well. Over the previous several years, the music that had been percolating in downtown Osaka and Kōbe since the early 1920s had traveled eastward to the dancehalls, cafes,

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<sup>17</sup> See Miriam Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Norikoshi, *Arisu*, 171.

and imaginations of Tokyoites from across social and class strata. Meanwhile, as the locus of jazz performance in Japan shifted from port cities to inland urban centers, the first wave of local Filipino jazz bands that had brought the music ashore from aboard Pacific Ocean liners gave way to Japanese studio ensembles with record label and radio financing like the Columbia Jazz Band and JOAK's Corona Orchestra. In 1928, the first Japanese *jazu* vocal recordings were released—Futamura Teichi and Amano Kikuyo's Japanese-language renditions of "My Blue Heaven" (*Aozora*) and "Song of Araby" (*Arabia no uta*)—setting the template for the domestic production of jazz-inspired orchestrations with Japanese lyrics: a formula that would reach a breakthrough with the success of the notorious 1929 hit "Tokyo March." With interests piqued by the latter's evocations of "listen(ing) to jazz and downing liquor into the night," young and middle class urbanites flocked in growing numbers to see live bands at newly-built dancehalls and frequented cafes playing import recordings. Meanwhile, erudite critics took it upon themselves to weigh the various merits and maladies of *modanizumu* that jazz seemed to represent. In a given essay, one might find jazz rhythms compared to the frenetic pulsations of the modern city, an analysis of the "Fordist rationalization" of the jazz combo's streamlined instrumentation, or the physicality of social dance framed as a catalyst for shifting gender sensibilities.<sup>19</sup> In just a few years, the sounds and signals of the new music had so pervaded the urban cultural imaginary that to "dismiss jazz" was, as the critic Horiuchi Keizō put it, "to dismiss modernity itself."<sup>20</sup>

By 1933, then, *jazu* served not only as a wildly overdetermined cultural signifier, but also, as E. Taylor Atkins notes, a broad musical canopy that housed everything from "Tin Pan

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<sup>19</sup> An illustrative sample of such criticism can be found in *Ongaku Sekai* (October 1929). For example, see Horiuchi Keizō, "Jazu riyū" (19-20), Shioiri Kamesuke, "Modanizumu no ongaku: jazu!" (26-31) and Nagai Tomomi, "Jazu ni tsuite" (35-38).

<sup>20</sup> Horiuchi Keizō, "Preface," in Shioiri Kamesuke, *Jazu ongaku* (Tokyo: Keibunsha, 1929), 5.

Alley tunes" to "'symphonic jazz,' tango, rumba, *chansons*, and Hawaiian music."<sup>21</sup> Here, one should note that jazz in the U.S. was no less inclusive of such stylistic diversity, nor were its generic parameters in any lesser state of flux. Nonetheless, such flexibility meant that Kawahata's Broadway experience may indeed have seemed sufficient for her to claim a credible purchase as a *jazu* performer. Furthermore, her relative inexperience as a singer could be counted similarly to her linguistic profile as an ironic advantage against the emergent cast of Japanese *jazu* vocalists. For indeed, while singers like Futamura and Amano were experienced and technically skilled, their conservatory training proved an awkward fit for the timbral and rhythmic orchestrations of their first *jazu* recordings. More than their Japanese accents, in other words, it was their Western classical accents that rendered their deliveries markedly stiff by the genre's standards. By comparison, Kawahata's relatively untrained voice sounded limber, youthful, and spontaneous—far closer in spirit to *jazu* as the Japanese public understood it.

As such, if Kawahata's command of Japanese may have been weak by conversational standards, its musical presentation offered domestic listeners the attractive prospect of hearing their own language resonate through the tonal, accentual, and rhythmic contours not just of American English, but of jazz itself. Through the combination of her musical and linguistic personality, that is, Kawahata presented a vocal profile that neither Amano Kikuyo nor Burton Crane could match: the capacity to perform a fluency in jazz that could translate into both English *and* Japanese, and thereby announce to listeners that to be Japanese in appearance was not to foreclose a fluid command of this modern and quintessentially cosmopolitan idiom. In light of the vagaries of studio recording, however, the ironic fact remained that Kawahata had first to develop such a command herself, or as her first advertisement for Columbia aptly put it,

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<sup>21</sup> Atkins, *Blue Nippon*, 65.

to go from a "headliner in the New York dance world" to a "jazz singer of the genuine article, made in Japan." (*Nihon no umeru honkaku-teki jazu shingā*).<sup>22</sup>

## II. Trans(e)ductions

Kawahata's February 26th "homecoming" debut at the Tokyo Gekijō was by all accounts a tremendous success. Attendance on the night was high, while subsequent reviews issued praise that bordered on poetic revelation. In one writeup, the dance critic Nagata Tatsuo rhapsodized:

[Kawahata] is like a burning hibiscus petal. Her art of 'variety dance' is near perfection, and in her buoyant footwork and onstage composure (*yoyu*) she evinces the tempered discipline of a veteran performer. Meanwhile, when she demurely shades her gorgeous face with her white-feathered fan, she engenders an alluring entwinement of sensuous rapture and savage heartbreak. . . . Without exaggeration, I cannot think of a single jazz dancer in Japan who could match Kawahata in either skill or confidence.<sup>23</sup>

With such a fulsome reception, one could scarcely imagine Kawahata having any trouble securing further theatrical bookings. At the same time, however, it is worth noting that Kawahata's onstage debut at the Tokyo Gekijō was not her first appearance before the Japanese public, nor was it even her largest audience to date. In fact, her first and arguably more consequential public showcase had occurred one week earlier, over the airwaves, from the orchestral studio of JOAK's Atagoyama station. This radio performance, broadcast on the afternoon of February 20th, was presented as a preview of Kawahata's stage debut, but likewise offered (in the phrasing of a companion article in the *Yomiuri Shinbun*) the "first chance for the country to make the acquaintance [of] this famed vaudevillian known as the 'amber-colored Josephine Baker.'"<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, Columbia was already at work promoting the March release of her debut single, running full-page ads in journals like *Ongaku sekai* and Osaka's *Kaikan*

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<sup>22</sup> Advertisement for Columbia Records, printed in *Kaikan geijutsu* January 1, 1933. Compiled in *Kaikan geijutsu* Vol. 2, Issue 1.

<sup>23</sup> Norikoshi, *Arisu*, 174.

<sup>24</sup> ---, "Gogo reiji gofun—Jazu dansu to uta de zenbei wo seifuku: Kyō Dietrich hari de Nihon hatsuen Kawahata Fumiko-fu no dokushō," *Yomiuri shinbun*, February 20, 1933.

*geijutsu*. In this cross-promotional scheme, Kawahata's radio concert would serve to advertise her theatrical premiere, which would in turn generate interest in her inaugural Columbia release. More than a single evening at the theater, then, Kawahata's Japanese "debut" was an extensive and distinctly transmedial affair, orchestrated to reach audiences far beyond the Tokyo Gekijō via the national circulation of photography, print, and transduced sound.

But if the majority of these listeners—largely a cross-section of cafe-going students (both male and female) and middle-class *bourgeois* urbanites with home radio subscriptions—were more likely to encounter Kawahata through sound and print media than onstage, she and her promoters had therefore to devise various media techniques that might engender a sense of corporeal attraction to rival what critics like Nagata had experienced in person. In her radio debut, for instance, Kawahata performed live with the venerable Corona Orchestra under the direction of leading jazz arranger and conductor Kami Kyōsuke, singing all eight vocal numbers that she would bring to the stage a week later. For listeners at home, the Yomiuri and Asahi Shinbun printed accompanying programs with lyrical synopses of each English-language song, as well as a full-figure photograph and short promotional biography of Kawahata herself. Meanwhile, though they may not have been able to witness Kawahata's dancing firsthand, listeners could still enjoy an evocative description by the JOAK-affiliated music critic and theater impresario Iba Takashi, who had attended a dress rehearsal earlier in the week. "The lines that flow from the movements of her smooth, slender figure form an image of elegance and eroticism in perfect harmony," he wrote, as if tracing out only the most suggestive lineaments of a figure to be animated in the mind of the listener. What therefore materialized over the airwaves was neither a secondary experience nor a merely vicarious one, but rather a uniquely intimate

and stimulating encounter in itself—an outsize first impression made personal by the listener's own imaginative co-production.

To add to this sense of intimate connection, the Yomiuri Shinbun printed the full lyrics to Kawahata's sole Japanese-language selection in the program, "Mikazuki Musume" (New Moon Gal), for listeners to sing along with at home. The song, an adaptation of the Tin Pan Alley standard "Shine on Harvest Moon," would be released in turn as the A-side of her inaugural single for Columbia. This choice of song was a canny one, not only for the Japanese title's invocation of new beginnings, but also in light of Ruth Etting's recent revival of the 1908 original for the 1931 Broadway season of the Ziegfeld Follies. At the same time, however, Kawahata's choice to sing the tune entirely in Japanese was a significant gambit. Indeed, if she were at all unsure of how the theoretical charms of her *jazu* accent might translate in practice, the record's sales would surely deliver a swift verdict. Meanwhile, the Japanese "translator" for the song, the writer-lyricist Mori Iwao, seemed only to double down on this wager in his lyrics:

Aenai naka wo yōyaku aeta futari ni  
nantaru koyoi wa kurai yoru deshō  
Kowai kara kaerimashō to furueteimasu  
Muri mo nai, kata agemo  
torenu musume damono  
Kagayake, mikazuki, awaku tomo,  
itsu mata aeru no ka, wakaranu futari yo

Anata no eigao ga mitai noyo  
Kagayake, mikazuki, awaku tomo

When two should finally meet after so long  
Why must it be on so very dark a night?  
'I'm scared, I think I'll go,' she said shivering  
What can you do, she's just a young gal  
who's hardly even come of age  
So shine on new moon, even if you're pale,  
for these two, who know not when they'll  
meet again  
For I so want to see your smiling face  
So shine on new moon, even if you're pale

Offering more of a thematic interpretation than a direct translation of the original, Mori paired identifiably feminine phrasings (*anata no eigao ga mitai noyo*) with oddly archaic expressions (*nantaru koyoi wa*) that would have sounded strange coming from any young woman in Japan, let alone a Nikkei singer like Kawahata. Of course, anyone familiar with Mori's earlier work as the lyricist for Burton Crane's "Sake ga nomitai" would have recognized a similar attempt to play

up the curiosity of the singer's non-native accent with equally curious phrasing. Yet given Kawahata's more uncanny embodiment of affinity and difference, Mori may have also hoped that such lyrical incongruities might strike a chord with the inventive and often irreverent slang of young female listeners.

Fortunately, Kawahata and Mori's wager paid off handsomely. The song was an immediate hit upon its release, and as the jazz critic Segawa Masahisa recalled, "speakers along the Ginza blared the record *ad nauseam* well into the summer."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the poet and Columbia staff lyricist Fujiura Kō (a student of Iba Takashi) attributed such success precisely to the pairing of Kawahata's unassimilated vocality and Mori's equally strange diction. If Mori's lyrical choices appeared eclectic and even a bit clumsy on paper, he argued, it was for this very reason that they seemed perfectly to fit Kawahata's endearingly "awkward" (*tado-tadoshii*) phrasing.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, one hears in the recording itself just how closely Mori sought to match his Japanese lyrics to the rhythm of the original English, resulting in unconventional phrases and accentual patterns that nonetheless seem to flow naturally through Kawahata's nonchalant delivery. In the final chorus, Kawahata even slips the English word "So" into the title refrain, at once approximating the cadence of the original ("So shine on" becomes "So *kagayake*") and rendering the song's translingual sonorities even more explicit. In turn, the record's B-side "Iro Akari," an interpolation of the recent Ted Lewis hit "In a Shanty in Old Shanty Town," established the bilingual verse structure (first verse in Japanese, second in English) that would become Kawahata's signature formula on subsequent releases.

With this successful cycle of "debut" performances behind her, Kawahata swiftly booked several more theatrical engagements, the next being a Shōchiku-sponsored guest appearance in

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<sup>25</sup> Segawa Masahisa and Ōtani Yoshio, *Nihon jazu no tanjō* (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2008), 82.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-43. See also Noriko, *Arisu*, 171-72.



April at the Osaka Kabukiza where, according a review in *Kinema Junpō*, "her presence completely overshadowed the other girls" in the Shōchiku troupe (which at the time included a young Kasagi Shizuko). Two months later, Kawahata returned to the Kabukiza to star in the "Manhattan Madness" revue, where the critic Uchida Kisao remarked that the "inimitable tenacity" of her dancing more than compensated for her "rather unskilled" singing voice.<sup>27</sup> In spite of the latter criticism, however, Kawahata continued to produce hit records for Columbia across the spring and summer—"Aozora" (My Blue Heaven), "Nakasete chōdai" (Sigh and Cry Blues), and "Hitoribocchi" (I Ain't Got Nobody), among others—such that her profile as a recording artist seemed increasingly to rival if not surpass her reputation as a stage performer.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, Kawahata gamely embraced her new sonic persona. On each successive release, one could hear her finding ever more inventive ways to enliven her limited vocal range—adding hints of vibrato, ad libs, and winking inflections—in a manner that suggested a keen sense of the how the studio's expressive affordances might help her to cultivate a more dynamic, ebullient vocal style to match her burgeoning renown as a *jazu* singer.

In so doing, Kawahata found herself in the company of a global wave of singers whose styles took similar advantage of the capacity of studio microphones to better capture and amplify the subtler and more intimate dynamics of the voice. In the U.S., "crooner" had recently become a catchall term for young male singers like Bing Crosby and Rudy Vallée, whose "soft" voices registered alternately as romantic to fans and emasculated to detractors.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, critics cited a similar inversion of gendered expectation in the sultry, low-octave tones and plaintive

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<sup>27</sup> *Kinema Junpō*, April 21, 1933. See also *Kinema junpō*, June 11, 1933 (see *Arisu*, 178).

<sup>28</sup> Segawa and Ōtani, *Nihon jazu no tanjō*, 141-42.

<sup>29</sup> See Timothy Taylor, Mark Katz, and Tony Grajeda, eds., *Music, Sound, and Technology in America: A Documentary History of Early Phonograph, Cinema, and Radio* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 316-24.

sentiment of torch singers like Helen Morgan, Ruth Etting, and Ethel Waters.<sup>30</sup> For her part, Kawahata mostly eschewed breathy sentiment for a broader vaudevillian vocal posture (more redolent of Etting and Waters than Morgan or Crosby), but nonetheless found her Dietrich-esque lower range and conversational phrasing better suited to the sensitivities of the microphone than her counterparts from the Asakusa Opera. In this respect, she joined a new cohort of "microphone singers" like Matsudaira Akira, Fujiyama Ichirō, Nakano Tadaharu, and Awaya Noriko in steering the vocality of Japan's popular music away from its premium on operatic prowess and toward a richer tonal palette of humor, intimacy, and mood.<sup>31</sup>

As in the U.S., this shift followed closely upon recent advances in sound technology, and the heightened receptivity and dynamic range of electrical microphones and playback devices in particular. As Japan's incipient record industry established itself at the end of the 1920s, premier companies like Columbia, Victor, and Polydor equipped their studios with the latest Telefunken condenser microphones, which Iba Takashi described as responsive enough to "pick up even the lightest billow of an actress's skirt."<sup>32</sup> For playback, meanwhile, tympanic soundbox gramophones gave way to electric models like Victor's Electrola and Columbia's Grafonola, whose magnetic pick-ups and vacuum tubes were able to transduce and amplify sound waves with both greater sensitivity and volume. With these upgrades, Iba noted that the new record companies were swiftly outpacing the country's radio stations, which continued to rely (as late as 1929) on indelicate carbon microphones that could barely register the steps that stations like JOAK had taken to improve the acoustics of their performance spaces.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Shimizu Shunji, "'Crooner' to iu kotoba ni tsuite," *Kinema Junpō* (January 1936): 216.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Iba Takashi, "Maikurofon, pawā-tama, tōkī," *Ongaku Sekai* (November 1929): 12-15.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* Here, Iba was speaking from firsthand experience; as a representative for JOAK, he knew of the station's attempts to retrofit the studios at Atagoyama, and often expressed frustration at the difficulty of securing better equipment for musical broadcasts.

But if Iba granted that advances in electrical transduction would better serve the full reverberation of a classical orchestra, he and other like-minded critics also echoed American commentators' fears that the condenser microphone could become a crutch for those singers who lacked the training or perhaps the vitality to project their voices within the resonant conditions of a concert hall. *Kinema Junpō* editor Uchida Kisao found it "absurd that anyone would take pride in using a microphone" onstage, while the theater critic Yoshihara Eiko insisted that popular vocalists, whether singing *ryūkōka* or *chanson*, ought to focus on making their delivery "more robust."<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, having forged their musical identities within the parameters of the Western conservatory model, Iba and his colleagues in the music establishment (*gakudan*) were as reluctant as their Anglo-European counterparts to see established vocal techniques displaced by the more personality-based attraction of upstart "crooners." In particular, the slender, sinuous vocality of Fujiyama Ichirō's 1931 hit "Sake wa namida ka tameiki ka" (Is Sake a Teardrop or a Sigh?) rankled critics especially in light of the Fujiyama's classical training.<sup>35</sup> More tellingly, however, it was Iba's euphemistic reference to the "billowing of an actress's skirt" that seemed to disclose a deeper set of concerns over the microphone's more intimate affordances, and what seductive visions they might yield in turn.

Such concerns indeed formed a noticeable undercurrent in debates surrounding popular music, and the controversial 1929 hit "Tokyo March" in particular. Inspired by the populism and musical affinities of his fellow poets in the *Minshū* coterie (as discussed in Chapter Two), Saijō Yaso had written the lyrics to "Tokyo March" with the broader aim of penning a new brand of

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<sup>34</sup> For a representative *zadankai* (roundtable discussion) on this issue featuring Iwami Tameo, Uchida Kisao, Sakajima Tadashi, Yoshihara Eiko, and others, see "Josafin Bēkā zadankai: Hadaka no jo-ō wo chūshin ni," *Kinema junpō* (January 1936): 169-74.

<sup>35</sup> For instance, Iba scoffed at the prospect of "taking broadcast time away from classical *lieds* for . . . songs like 'Sake wa namida ka tameiki ka.'" See "Rajio yōgaku hōsō hihan zadankai," *Ongaku Sekai* (January 1932): 33.

urban folk song—a regional anthem of sorts for his native Tokyo—that could partake in the concurrent energies of the neo-folksong (*shin-minyō*) movement.<sup>36</sup> In this spirit, his lyrics sketched a lively and provocative portrait of young romance in modern Tokyo set to the composer Nakayama Shinpei's melodic, *minyō*-inspired jazz trot. Upon its release, however, Iba Takashi led a chorus of critics in assailing Saijō's lyrics as crass and patronizing, and Nakayama's music as "sentimental" and atavistic in its deployment of *minyō*'s minor-pentatonic tonalities. In this sense, Iba's criticisms resonated with many of Saijō's peers in the poetry world (*shidan*) who viewed the song—with its elementary meter and cloying references to jazz and urban nightlife—as an opportunistic bit of pandering at best, and a betrayal of his own poetic talents at worst.<sup>37</sup> But as Hiromu Nagahara has observed, Iba's vague yet persistent aversion to the song's "sentimental," "weak," and "effete" qualities betrayed a deeper-seated sense of masculine anxiety that seemed only to increase in the years to follow.<sup>38</sup> Namely, like the American critics who decried crooners as degenerates and effeminate "whiners," Iba's greater complaint pointed tacitly to an increasingly audible strain of feminized excess (figured as masculine lack) emergent in the aural sensibilities of mass media.<sup>39</sup>

In this regard, "Tokyo March" was far from the most suggestive example on record. For instance, in the Saijō-penned 1933 hit for Miss Columbia, "Juku no Haru" (The Spring of my 19th Year), the recording elicits a tactile intimacy that borders on the sensuous. In Eguchi

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<sup>36</sup> See Saijō Yaso, *Uta no jijoden*, Chapter Two.

<sup>37</sup> To this point, the poet Satō Ichiei wrote in 1930 that "Saijō Yaso, author of *Gold Dust*, has relinquished his carefully cultivated image as a symbolist lyric poet, and along with [Kitahara] Hakushū, now has no value apart from popular songwriting." This sentiment, as Kamimura Naoki notes, reflected a larger sense of "scandal in the *shidan* that a high-brow poet like Saijō would stoop below his station to partake in the vulgar realm of popular entertainment." See Kamimura, *Saijō Yaso to sono shūhen* (2003), 102.

<sup>38</sup> Hiromu Nagahara, *Tokyo Boogie Woogie: Japan's Pop Era and its Discontents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 45-56. Nagahara also offers an illuminating account of the critical controversy surrounding "Tokyo March," and Iba Takashi's objections in particular.

<sup>39</sup> Taylor, Katz, et al., *Music and Sound Technology in America*, 319-20.

Yoshio's spare, chamber-style arrangement, the song's main instrumental voices—flute, string bass, and Hawai'ian steel guitar—are placed so close to the microphone that each assumes its own corporeal presence and personality. Atop the warm, ligneous resonance of the bass, the flute chases ribbons of countermelody around the lithe figure of the steel guitar. Meanwhile, Miss Columbia's voice—smoother than Satō Chiyako's punchy soprano on "Tokyo March"—distinguishes the song's more seductive mood through a profusion of unvoiced consonants (*sumire tsumi-tsutsu chiru hakuro ni*) that seem to link each phrase by a series of whispered threads.<sup>40</sup> Combined with the recording's prominent low end, this arrangement imbues the song's minor tonalities with a dusky timbre that doubly evokes the low-lit ambience of tango or *chanson* alongside the deep hues of Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo." For many male listeners, then, there was little doubt that such furtive access to the sounding body exerted a distinctly erotic charge; for the poet Murō Saisei, hearing "a woman's fleshly voice (*nikusei*) through the gramophone" compelled an urge to "reach out and touch the singer's beautiful skin."<sup>41</sup> And as if to put a finer point on Murō's sentiment, Horiuchi Keizō surmised: "If the red-light districts continue to decline, radio and records will no doubt have to take over the city entirely."<sup>42</sup>

Yet while the pleasure quarters were a frequent (and even nostalgic) point of reference in the male appraisal of *ryūkōka* recordings, critics like Iba were just as concerned with how the sonic allures of *jazu* and popular music were becoming imbricated in the social lives of young female listeners. As the writer Akemi Ishiguro suggested, "modern girls" were conspicuously drawn to jazz, and not simply because it fit within their putatively occidental tastes; unlike the contemplative, "overcast" classical music of Northern Europe, he argued, "such girls prefer

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<sup>40</sup> Kamimura Naoki also praises Saijō's clustering of voiceless consonants for creating "an elegant, lyrical flow." See Kamimura, *Saijō Yaso to sono shūhen*, 111-12.

<sup>41</sup> Murō Saisei, "Wakabadoki no kūsō," *Shinchō* (March 1924): 29.

<sup>42</sup> Horiuchi Keizō, "Rajio to rekōdo," *Chūō Kōron* (June 1933): 191.

sounds that assault the body directly." Jazz, framed in tacitly racialized terms as music better suited to "rhapsody than reflection," therefore satisfied what Akemi and others perceived as an insatiable appetite among young women for new avenues of sensory stimulus and mediatized pleasure. More than simply representing one of their many interests, however, critics were keen to suggest that jazz and so-called modern girls were coterminous to the point of constituting one another; as the oft-cited slang verb *jazuru* (to "jazz") implied, young women did not simply consume jazz as much as they *metabolized* it through their own speech, bodily gestures, and social rhythms.<sup>43</sup> But if Akemi saw this as an "assault" on the body, Nii Itaru proposed a model of "resonant feedback" (*kyō'ō*), wherein the new music not only "permeated the everyday senses" of female listeners, but drew from their "social patterns in order to reproduce its own rhythms in turn."<sup>44</sup> Jazz in Japan was, in this sense, both "progeny *and* progenitor" of a present that had announced itself most audibly in the body of the modern girl.<sup>45</sup>

In broad terms, this co-figuration of jazz and the *modan gāru* functioned—like the archetypal figure of the "flapper" in the U.S.—as an index of greater and more diverse female participation in the work force and public sphere, as well as for the feminine-coded patterns of fashion, entertainment, and conspicuous consumption associated with the broader post-quake advent of "mass culture."<sup>46</sup> Moreover, as Miriam Silverberg argues, this discursive construction

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<sup>43</sup> As Atkins, Miriam Silverberg and others have noted, the slang verb *jazuru* had a predictably diverse range of meanings. For instance, the 1930 Tokyo edition of the *Dictionary of Modern Words* defined *jazuru* as "to make merry with jazz, to mess around, to talk rubbish, to be noisy, to live without cares dancing nonsensically, like jazz." See Atkins, 102, and Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 240.

<sup>44</sup> On music's "permeation of everyday sensibilities," see Nii Itaru, *Modan gāru no rinkaku*, 160. On the "resonant feedback" of musical and social rhythms," see Nii Itaru, "Shakai-hihyōka no mita gakudan," *Ongaku Sekai* (March 1930): 9. An illustrative passage: "Gendai no ongakka wa sono shakaisei to no kanren ni oite rizumu wo sōzō shinakerebaranai-hazu de aru."

<sup>45</sup> Nii, "Shakai-hihyōka no mita gakudan," 8.

<sup>46</sup> On the modernist encoding of mass culture with the figure of the feminine, see Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," in Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 44-64.

painted the *moga* as provocative but only obliquely political—for Nii Itaru, a demographic "lacking an organized movement [or] theory"—thus effectively "displacing the very real militancy of Japanese women" in the 1920s, from the civic appeals of the female suffrage movement to the radical anarchism of the Bluestocking group.<sup>47</sup> Yet while no critic could assign the *moga* a discrete or ideologically coherent political agenda, most agreed that there was *something* about the younger generation that was profoundly disruptive to the hitherto masculinist sensibilities of public life, and which seemed, like popular music, to continually outrun their own descriptive efforts. Unlike the earnest manifestoes of the suffragettes, that is, the mercurial agency of the modern girl was all the more transgressive insofar as it seemed impishly to beckon yet rebuff the language of the public discourse.

Kataoka Teppei, for instance, distinguished the *modan gāru* foremost by her "startlingly free expression," but heard such freedom more in the body than in words; echoing Siegfried Kracauer's account of the Tiller Girls, Kataoka effused over the "pristine melody of her legs," and beseeched his readers to "listen to the music of these women" as they "harmonized the rhythms of contemporary culture, advancing ever forward into a new era of womanhood."<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, when critics overheard so-called modern girls' speech, it struck many as coyly defiant of their comprehension. "Their way of speaking," according to Nii Itaru, arrayed itself in "suggestively layered hues, double entendre, [and] innuendo," suggesting a savvy deployment of public language against itself or in service of unrulier sensibilities.<sup>49</sup> What Nii and others described, then, was an impulse to submit language to the same gestural erotics of the body, or rather to regard language as one piece of a bodily repertoire that moved, like jazz, in a double-

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<sup>47</sup> Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 59-70. See also Nii Itaru, "Modan gāru no rinkaku," in *Modan Toshi Bunka*, 170.

<sup>48</sup> Kataoka Teppei, "Modan gāru no kenkyū," 41.

<sup>49</sup> Nii, *Modan gāru no rinkaku*, 161, 165-66.

voiced, improvisatory fashion so as to "intimate an equally suggestive future" that could be sensed if not fully apprehended in discourse.<sup>50</sup> In these terms, the modern girl found affinity with popular music by virtue of a shared sonic logic—for Alexander Weheliye, a capacity to "render futurity audible in [the] circumvention of strictly mimetic technes"—and thus evinced a structure of feeling that was neither apolitical or even pre-political as Nii had it, but rather "antepolitical" in Fred Moten's terms: indexical, that is, of an agency heard not in the symbolic fixity of individual notes or phrases, but rather in their more labile relations of rhythm and resonance, sensation and sociality.<sup>51</sup> An agency, in short, more vibrational than verbal.

Whether in reference to jazz or the modern girl, then, what seemed to pervade the public discourse at the turn of the 1930s was a gendered concern over the shifting relations of voice, aurality, and meaning in the early era of mass sound media, and the increasingly tenuous capacity of the critical establishment to make sense of these relationships. For indeed, while critics from the *shidan* and *gakudan* alike continued to premise their writings on a presumably stable union of voice and language (*phone* and *logos*), the film economist Ishinomaki Yoshio noted that the advent of commercial recording and sound film—what he dubbed the new "voice" industry—had animated a burgeoning awareness of "human language as raw acoustic material" that could be isolated, spliced, and re-embodied in ways that stretched the voice's semiotic valence far beyond the pale of authorial intent.<sup>52</sup> In turn, Saijō Yaso's newfound success as a lyricist for singers like Satō Chiyako and Miss Columbia signaled a clear inversion of the presumptive hierarchy between *phone* and *logos* that prevailed especially among his peers in the poetry recitation movement. Rather than enlisting the voice as a transparent conduit of poetic

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 172-74. The phrase: "Anjiteki-na mirai wo mo sashi-shimeshiteiru."

<sup>51</sup> See Weheliye, *Phonographies*, 11. On the "antepolitical," see Fred Moten, *The Universal Machine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 79.

<sup>52</sup> Ishinomaki Yoshio, et al., *Tōkī-ron* (Tokyo: Tenjinsha, 1930), 8-14, 75. The above quote: "Ningen no kotoba mo mata, onkyōteki sozai de aru."



interiority, that is, Saijō seemed content for his lyrics to trail the voice's own sensuous contours, or simply to blend into the more pleasurable sonorities of the recording itself. As such, if one follows Weheliye's suggestion that the foregrounding of such "sonic materiality" was the "phonograph's most radical gesture," it is no surprise that Saijō's liaisons with the new voice industry were enough to justify his effective banishment from the *shidan*.<sup>53</sup>

Ironically, however, Saijō did succeed in promoting a kind of urban folksong, if not the kind that his colleagues in the *shin-minyō* movement had in mind. Indeed, without trying to recreate the untrammelled, pre-literate folk rhythms that the *minshū* poets had sought out in the provinces, Saijō's lyrics nonetheless resonated through the streets, storefronts, and cafes of the city, passing between shellac grooves and the lips of students, waitresses, and salarymen alike: a mediatized orality not of the putative *minshū*, perhaps, but one undeniably of the *taishū*. Moreover, one rarely needed to purchase the actual recorded commodity to learn the latest tune. As Saijō's daughter Futabako later noted, for instance, the true bellwether of a record's popularity was not to be found in purchasing figures, newspaper coverage, or radio surveys, but rather in the voices of service workers. As a teenager, she recalled, it was not until she overheard a young cafe waitress absent-mindedly humming "Hanakotoba no Uta" that she grasped how thoroughly her father's songs had suffused the city's sonic lexicon.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, as Kawahata Fumiko's national profile grew, it was said that her shows attracted so many female fans from the service industry that nearby cafes would be forced to close early due to staff shortages.<sup>55</sup> Here, despite (or rather *because of*) their apocryphal nature, such accounts revealed in the circulation of popular songs an aural economy not far from that of rumor—in Fred Moten's phrasing, "an

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<sup>53</sup> Weheliye, *Phonographies*, 36.

<sup>54</sup> See Saijō Futabako, *Chichi Saijō Yaso* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1975), 284-85. "Hanakotoba no Uta" (Song of flowered words), penned by Saijō with the composer Ikeda Fujio, was a 1936 duet for singers Matsudaira Akira and Fushimi Nobuko.

<sup>55</sup> Norikoshi, *Arisu*, 227.

affective speaking that comes from nowhere, as if said by nobody," yet belonging thus (for Miki Kiyoshi) to "everybody at once."<sup>56</sup>

When Kawahata sang "I ain't got nobody," then, her voice did not signal loneliness so much as a feeling aptly phrased in her follow-up single, a bilingual cover of "I'm Yours" ("Anata no mono"): "I am only what you make me / come take me, I'm yours."<sup>57</sup> Namely, if Kawahata's gramophonic voice seemed to exceed the bounds of a single figure, it therefore beckoned an ever-widening array of listeners to fashion one of its many vocalic bodies as their own. In turn, the sound of Japanese listeners singing along with growing fluency to Kawahata's idiosyncratic idiolect—everyone from "modern girls and boys" to "female students, bob-haired *shitamachi* maidens, and working wives"—bespoke an enlivening of the urban senses to what otherwise aberrant rhythms and accents could be made desirable and even emulable in song.<sup>58</sup> In short, if listeners could not *see* the body of Kawahata the dancer in the flesh, they could still sense (in Barthes' terms) "the body in [her] voice" as it sang, and indeed its resonance in their own bodies as they sang along with it.<sup>59</sup> Yet by the same token, such apparently autonomous operations of the voice—its transductions and transits from one mouth to another—likewise compelled mediators like Iba and Nagata to yoke its potency to writing, as if to harness and guide its otherwise volatile paths of resonance toward a stabler discursive grounding. In this way, just as *flâneurs* like Nii Itaru sought studiously to transcribe and parse the sonic surplus they overheard in both jazz and women's speech, Iba and Nagata's praise for Kawahata's "discipline,"

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<sup>56</sup> Moten, *The Universal Machine*, 69. For Miki Kiyoshi's phrasing, see Miki, *Uwasa*, 84.

<sup>57</sup> The Johnny Green/E.Y. Harburg ballad "I'm Yours" was a hit in 1930 for vocal group the Biltmore Rhythm Boys, accompanied by Bert Lown and his Hotel Biltmore Orchestra.

<sup>58</sup> See *Yokosuka nichì-nichì shinbun*, January 29, 1934.

<sup>59</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 188.

"composure" (*yoyu*), and balance of "elegance and eroticism" served doubly as an assurance that her own "overflowing allures" (*afureruyō-na iroke*) would not spill too far past the proscenium.<sup>60</sup>

At the same time, however, Columbia's marketing team was more than willing to capitalize on the alluring possibilities that their technology seemed to afford. In the advertisement for her first Columbia single (fig. 1), Kawahata—dubbed the "Josephine Baker of the East who sings just like Dietrich"—is photographed in an elegant yet revealing waistcoat, allowing the exposed skin of her arms and upper torso to vie with the shimmering fabric for the viewer's attention. Rather than returning the viewer's gaze, however, Kawahata instead casts a smiling glance at a parrot perched on her right shoulder, perhaps in response to some amusing bit of echolalia on the bird's part. Here, the viewer is presented with an oddly fitting visual metaphor for their first encounter with Kawahata's gramophonic voice: as if emerging from this ventriloqual scene, the voice on the record seems to exist somewhere between original and copy, *most likely* attributable to Kawahata's visible body yet not definitively so.

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<sup>60</sup> Iba Takashi, "Yūbi to Ero no Gacchibikan," *Yomiuri shinbun*, February 20, 1933.



Fig. 1, "Kawahata Fumiko rekōdo," *Kaikan geijutsu* (January 1933), 70.

Meanwhile, the photograph itself is placed at a slant, jutting outward from the top of a gramophone placed to its lower left. Doubling as an ad for Columbia's new Electric Grafonola 300, the layout seems therefore to present Kawahata's own image as an apparition conjured by the workings of the machine itself.<sup>61</sup> With its "top-class British pick-ups, pentode vacuum tubes, and dynamic speakers," the copy tempts its buyer with the promise that the new technology's "performance-quality" sound is enough to bring listeners (like Murō Saisei perhaps) into tantalizing reach of "the singer's beautiful skin." Yet with her bare arms so prominently

<sup>61</sup> For another image of the Grafonola Model 300, see <https://chikuonki.jp/columbia-300>.

displayed, one cannot help but note the stark contrast between Kawahata's conspicuously tan complexion and the striking white of her gloves—the latter redolent not only of Baker and Dietrich's famed tuxedo poses, but of the blackface minstrel's wardrobe as well.<sup>62</sup> To the extent, then, that such media sought to present Kawahata as an audiovisual palimpsest of Dietrich and Baker—or simply as a jazz singer more broadly—it necessarily trafficked in a host of racialized signifiers that in turn raised new questions across the Pacific. How, in short, was Kawahata to wear her skin in Japan, and what tones were Japanese listeners inclined to see and hear in it?

### *III. What the Ear Sees*

At the start of 1934, Kawahata seemed poised for even greater success than she had achieved the year prior. In the months leading up to the new year, she had undertaken the massive task of planning and choreographing her own feature revue entitled "Dancing 1934" (*Odoru 1934-nen*), which premiered on New Year's Eve as the opening-night gala for Shinbashi's new Nihon Gekijō (Nichigeki) theater. At the time, the venue was a showcase in "ultra-modern" theater design, boasting a four thousand-person capacity, one thousand square meters of stage space, moveable sets, opulent dining rooms, and a sixty-piece orchestra pit.<sup>63</sup> In turn, Kawahata's show matched the splendor of the hall with a rotating cavalcade of casino-themed set pieces, each one populated with a troupe of thirty dancers (including many of Kawahata's "trainees" from the Shōchiku *shōjo kagekibu*) in addition to the young star's own commanding stage presence. At just eighteen years old, Kawahata's preternatural achievement

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<sup>62</sup> As Nicholas Sammond argues, white gloves were "quite common in blackface minstrelsy," variously connoting "the false gentility of white manners on a black body . . . or more generally a pretense to superiority. Recalling the hands of both the master and the house slave, the white hands of control, they controlled little; for all his pretensions to taste and sophistication, Zip Coon always remained a clown." See Nicholas Sammond, *Birth of an Industry: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Rise of Animation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 26.

<sup>63</sup> ---, "Fumi Kawahata to Headline Tokyo Theater Premiere," *Rafu shimpo*, October 16, 1933.

not only drew sellout crowds, but led newspapers in both Japan and California to wonder if potential film offers from Tōei or Nikkatsu might tempt her to stay in Japan even longer.<sup>64</sup>

No sooner had Kawahata's two-week run finished, however, than news shifted to another highly-publicized residency at the end of the month: starting on January 27th, a nineteen-year old Black "radio singer" from Berkeley named Midge Williams would be performing a week-long engagement at Tokyo's famed Florida Dancehall alongside a tap-dance act composed of her three brothers (John Louis, Charles, and Robert). Billed as the "Williams Quartette," the performance represented the Florida's first booking of an African American touring act, and the inaugural performance of a Black female jazz vocalist in Japan. Anticipating high demand, the venue charged an "unheard-of" thirty *sen* per ticket (almost the price of a gallery seat at the Nichigeki) and still managed to pack the floor for all five nights.<sup>65</sup> Clearly, what Kawahata offered Tokyo audiences in Broadway-style extravagance was matched only by what the Florida's promoters advertised as a genuine taste of the Harlem nightclub experience.

Ironically, however, none of the Williams siblings had visited Harlem themselves, nor had they even toured beyond the west coast prior to their Pacific voyage. The tour itself was the brainchild of the Oakland-based pianist and arranger Roger Segure, who had signed on as the group's manager one year earlier. Having traveled previously in East Asia, Segure was acquainted with the transpacific touring circuit that had coalesced over the course of the 1920s, and which now linked performers on the west coast with destinations like Shanghai, Manila, and Tokyo. Struck by the Williams' collective talents, Segure therefore arranged to accompany the group on an Asia-Pacific tour that extended from premier venues like Shanghai's Canidrome Ballroom to Tokyo's Florida dancehall. Stopping first in Honolulu in late July, the Williams act

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<sup>64</sup> For reports of crowd size, see *Kinema junpō*, 11 January (1934). See also ---, "Fumiko Kawahata to Dance at New Gigantic Theatre in Tokyo Soon," *Rafu shimpo* 10 December, 1933.

<sup>65</sup> Segawa Masahisa, *Jazu de odotte: Hakurai ongaku geinōshi* (Tokyo: Seiryū shuppan, 2005), 117-18.

devoted most of the ensuing tour to performances in China, and even found mention in Langston Hughes' account of his trip to Shanghai in the summer of 1933.<sup>66</sup> But while the Quartette were virtually unknown to Asian audiences in comparison to other foreign headliners (the Florida had hosted Charlie Chaplin in 1932, for example), they nonetheless presented a well-honed act that reflected several years of experience on the California vaudeville circuit with the Fanchon and Marco company. Incidentally, this touring history overlapped in part with Kawahata Fumiko's own tenure in Fanchon and Marco's 1928 "Oriental Idea" revue, making it possible that Williams knew, or at least knew *of* the Nikkei entertainer with whom she now shared the Tokyo spotlight.

Regardless, Williams quickly acquainted herself with the same cast of characters who had helped to facilitate Kawahata's success over the preceding year. Following her Florida residency, Williams entered the Columbia studio in February to record five sides with the accompaniment of the Columbia Jazz Band: *Lazy Bones*, *Bye Bye Blues*, *St. Louis Blues*, *Paradise*, and *Dinah*. For each, she followed the same bilingual template that Kawahata had popularized—first verse in Japanese, second in English—and worked also with Mori Iwao and Horiuchi Keizō on the songs' Japanese "translations."<sup>67</sup> Once again, the formula was a success;

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<sup>66</sup> The Williams Quartette arrived in Shanghai shortly after Hughes' departure in July 1933, but Hughes later noted that "the young radio singer Midge Williams and her dancing brothers had been in China that spring." See Langston Hughes, *Autobiography: I Wonder as I Wander*, in Joseph McLaren ed., *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes*, Vol. 14 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 252. Writing well after the fact, Hughes seems mistakenly to recall that their tour preceded rather than followed his time in China. Nonetheless, Hughes became a vocal supporter of Midge Williams after her return to the U.S., and wrote lyrics for the song "Night-Time:" her theme song during her brief 1936 stint on Rudy Vallee's NBC radio hour. Hughes also collaborated as a lyricist on several arrangements with Roger Segure as well, including "Love is Like Whiskey, which Midge Williams recorded with the "Jazz Jesters" in 1938. See Bruce A. Glasrud and Cary D. Wintz, *The Harlem Renaissance in the American West: The New Negro's Western Experience* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 95-100.

<sup>67</sup> Segawa, *Jazu de odotte*, 118. See also Uchida Kōichi, *Nihon no jazu shi: Sengen sengo* (Tokyo: Suingu Jānarusha, 1976), 113-115. By this time, Kawahata counted at least three of these songs—*St. Louis Blues*, *Paradise*, and *Dinah*—in her repertoire, and had already recorded *St. Louis Blues*. Kawahata would go on to record "Bye Bye Blues" in 1935. See Hosokawa Shūhei, "Japan Meets the Boss of the Blues," *The Common Reader: A Journal of the Essay* 1, no. 1 (2016): 91. It should also be noted, however, that such

most notably, Williams' bilingual rendition of "Dinah" inspired a flurry of domestic covers over the next ten months that peaked with a career-making rendition by Dick Mine, known thereafter as "the Cab Calloway of Japan."<sup>68</sup> As if to further justify the title, Mine recorded yet another version of "Dinah" the following year, this time with the accompaniment of the much-heralded new residents of the Florida dancehall: A.L. King and his Florida Rhythm Aces.

As the next African American jazz outfit to visit the Florida after the Williams Quartette, the Rhythm Aces were similarly billed as coming "directly from the Cotton Club."<sup>69</sup> But just as before, such a description had less to do with the band's actual origins than with the utility of the Harlem nightclub as a metonym for jazz and African American performance more broadly. In fact, as Edgar Pope notes, the group's bandleader George Warmack—a.k.a. A.L. King—performed mainly around Lake Erie (Cleveland, Buffalo, and southern Ontario) throughout the 1920s, and worked with a number of bands with ties to the Pacific touring circuit. For his part, Warmack made a point to impress Midwestern audiences with these connections by threading orientalized themes into his various projects; in addition to performing an extended residency at Cleveland's Far East Chinese and American Restaurant, Warmack also recorded a version of "Shanghai Shuffle" for Okeh Records in 1925 (his only known recording) and led a band called "The Sensational Algerians" in 1928.<sup>70</sup> Even before arriving in Tokyo, then, Warmack betrayed a sharp ear not only for the various points of resonance between jazz and orientalist exotica, but also for the fortuitous routes that such fluid identifications might open for his own band.

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overlapping repertoires were more the rule than the exception at the time; in addition to the "Dinah" boom (see below), standards like "My Blue Heaven" and "Song of Araby" spurred countless covers.

<sup>68</sup> "Dinah" was also a hit for Cab Calloway. See Edgar W. Pope, "The Many Faces of 'Dinah': A Prewar American Popular Song and the Lineage of its Recordings in the U.S. and Japan," *The Journal of the Faculty of Foreign Studies, Aichi Prefectural University* 43 (2011): 155-190.

<sup>69</sup> Hosokawa, "The Swinging Voice of Kasagi Shizuko," 165-66.

<sup>70</sup> See Edgar W. Pope, "Tracing the Footsteps of George Warmack, a.k.a. A.L. King: An American Bandleader in Prewar Japan and the U.S.," *Journal of the Faculty of Foreign Studies, Aichi Prefectural University* 52 (2020): 185-202.



With this knack for fluid self-presentation in mind, it is plausible that Warmack himself had a hand in promoting his band's fictive Cotton Club connection. Yet if such advertising catered to Tokyo audiences' broadly-established association of jazz with Black culture, it also arrived at a moment when Japanese listeners were hearing many Black jazz artists for the first time. Indeed, as Atkins notes, the limited access in Japan to "race records" by Black artists in the 1920s meant that many local listeners—like their white American counterparts—heard jazz primarily through the strains of Gershwin, Paul Whiteman, and other white interpreters. Moreover, while jazz's most vocal advocates in the late twenties—Iba, Horiuchi, and Shioiri Kamesuke especially—acknowledged the genre's Black and creole origins, they nonetheless echoed Whiteman's social-Darwinist portrayal of jazz as evolving (through the intervention of white arrangers like himself) from its "barbarous" folk-art roots into a more "civilized" symphonic form.<sup>71</sup> Beginning in the early 1930s, however, the wider availability of records by Louis Armstrong, Ethel Waters, and Duke Ellington allowed many Japanese listeners to hear for themselves what sounds had only previously been notated or described, often in dismissive or overtly racist terms, by a small contingent of critics. As elsewhere, then, the result was not only an appreciation for the orchestral sophistication of composer-arrangers like Ellington and Fletcher Henderson, but also an almost simultaneous shift in public interest toward the "hot" and increasingly swing-oriented arrangements of the former alongside newer artists like Jimmie Lunceford and Cab Calloway—in short, the sound of the Cotton Club's marquee acts.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Atkins, *Blue Nippon*, 105. See also Shioiri Kamesuke, *Jazu Ongaku* (Tokyo: Keibunsha, 1929), and Ono Miyakichi, "Puroretariāto to ongaku," *Ongaku Sekai* (April 1930): 12-15.

<sup>72</sup> In addition to the Florida's high-profile bookings, this shift in emphasis is also evident in journals like *Ongaku sekai*, *Kinema junpō*, and *Rekōdo ongaku*, where Hosokawa Shūhei cites the first known reference to Duke Ellington in the June 1933 issue. See Hosokawa, "The Swinging Voice of Kasagi Shizuko," 163. Moreover, Segawa Masahisa recalls that Polydor began releasing records by Jimmie Lunceford in roughly the same period (1933-35). See Segawa and Ōtani, *Nihon jazu no tanjō*, 95-97.

Like many white listeners in Europe and the U.S., however, Japanese commentators often expressed such interest through a familiar litany of racialized reductions. While some reviewers raved about the "transcendental" sound of the A.L. King Orchestra, for instance, others simply described their "timbre and technique" as "proper to negroes," leaving readers to determine for themselves what such a description might actually mean.<sup>73</sup> Likewise, in his account of the Williams Quartette's performance, the tap dancer Hayashi Tokio (one of George Hori's protégés) praised the show as a "vibrant" (*azayakana*) display of the Black personality's profoundly musical nature," citing the Williams brothers' skillful soft-shoe routine and Midge's scat singing (referenced initially as "trumpet singing") as evidence of "a fresh flavor that we Japanese could scarcely hope to imitate." Of course, this latter pronouncement did not prevent Hayashi and others from approaching the Williams Quartette between sets for informal tutorials, which Midge and her brothers graciously provided.<sup>74</sup> Still, such qualifiers did succeed in subtending the very notion of *jazu* fluency with an assumption of racialized difference that would serve to color even the sonic and gestural attributes of performers who otherwise appeared phenotypically Japanese.

In this regard, the jazz critic Ōtani Yoshio argues that Dick Mine presented the clearest instance in the interwar period of a Japanese jazz singer trading in the more recognizable tropes of "Black sound" (*kuroi saundo*). With his talent for singing behind the beat and augmenting his Japanese lyrics with ad libs, casual vibrato, and more stridently swung inflections, Ōtani suggests that Mine cultivated a distinctly "Black style of singing" (*utaikata mo kokujin ppokatta*) that bespoke not only a careful study of Cab Calloway's recordings, but also a firsthand exposure to the respective styles of Midge Williams and A.L. King.<sup>75</sup> Here, the "blackness" (*kurosa*) that Ōtani ascribes to Mine's singing seemed to derive from a relatively isomorphic correspondence

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<sup>73</sup> Hosokawa, "The Swinging Voice of Kasagi Shizuko," 166.

<sup>74</sup> Segawa, *Jazu de odotte*, 118, 130. See also Atkins, *Blue Nippon*, 80.

<sup>75</sup> Segawa and Ōtani, *Nihon jazu no tanjō*, 95-97.

with vocal techniques (back phrasing and tightly-coiled vibrato especially) that listeners would have associated with singers like Calloway and Williams, and thus with Black vocality more broadly. However, what such limited associations obscured was the extent to which Mine took crucial cues from Kawahata as well, whose off-kilter Japanese inflections inspired Williams' bilingual phrasing in turn. As such, while Ōtani's characterization aims to imply a case of racial mimicry on Mine's part, it likewise reflects a wider paradigm of what Nina Eidsheim and Mendi Obadike refer to as "sonic blackness," wherein the reductive encoding of various vocal inflections as generically "Black" would incline the listener to perceive similar sounds in the future as such—even in "acousmatic" instances where no Black body is immediately visible.<sup>76</sup>

Joining Eidsheim's formulation to Rey Chow's synesthetic notion of "skin tones," Pooja Rangan posits the "skin of the voice" as an effect of the "racialized and gendered perceptual frames that mediate the production and reception of vocal sounds." Owing to the various ideological imbrications of "looking and listening," she argues, "minoritized" voices tend to be "circumscribed in advance as an objectified *skin*," and can thus find their "corporeal encumbrances"—accent, timbre, and other incidental inflections—subject to modes of racialized scrutiny analogous to (and bound up with) those which might be visited upon the body's visible surfaces.<sup>77</sup> Conversely, however, Rangan notes that "idealized" or otherwise unmarked voices are generally spared such scrutiny, and thus serve—like the Pythagorean screen—to insulate their speaker from similar profiling. In this sense, if the grain of Midge Williams' or Cab Calloway's voice registered to Japanese listeners as racialized "skin," then Dick Mine's impressions thereof served paradoxically to render his own voice—coming, as it did, from an

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<sup>76</sup> See Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre & Vocality in African American Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), and Mendi Obadike, "Low Fidelity: Stereotyped Blackness in the Field of Sound" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2005).

<sup>77</sup> Pooja Rangan, "The Skin of the Voice," in Rey Chow and James A. Steintrager, eds., *Sound Objects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 132-46.

otherwise unambiguously Japanese body—as unmarked or "idealized" in comparison. Put differently, Mine's putative ability to adopt an identifiably "Black" vocal affect invited Japanese listeners to assume that his own "natural" singing voice was so free of timbral pigmentation to begin with, so transparently Japanese in its own right, that Williams' and Calloway's own conspicuous skin tones would filter through it with minimal refraction.

Here, one might be tempted to make a similar case for Kawahata, who regularly punctuated her performances in Japan with songs like "Negro Blues" alongside her set piece medley of "Harlem-style dances" like the Charleston, the Snakehips, and the Black Bottom. Often it was this part of the show that found mention in reviews, which in turn deployed the same roster of adjectives—fresh, inimitable, and vibrant (*azayakana*)—that were most often reserved for Williams and the A.L. King band.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, Kawahata's analogy to Josephine Baker continued to cling to her promotional materials like a second name, inviting listeners to frame each solo performance or recording as a shadow duet with her émigré counterpart. Even the photographs in Kawahata's promotional pamphlet (fig. 2) seem to evoke an oblique sense of Baker's proximal presence. Regardless of the outfit or pose, Kawahata finds herself frequently lit from angles that throw short, sharply-defined shadows against the wall; as if summoning Baker's figure to inhabit the outlines that Kawahata's movements appear to mirror, such framing likewise implies that no pose is complete without the reminder of its figural double.

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<sup>78</sup> See Uchida Kisao, *Kinema junpō* (11 June 1933). The phrasing: "Nihonjin no odorite ni wa nakatta shinsenmi" [A fresh flavor that Japanese dancers did not have]. See also Morioka, *Kawahata Fumiko panfuretto*, Section G. Also in *Kinema junpō*, Josephine Baker's *La Revue Nègre* is described in terms of its "fresh" (*shinsen*) qualities.



Fig. 2, Kawahata Fumiko panfuretto [Kawahata Fumiko pamphlet], September 1933

So too with Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, whose tap routines figured prominently in both Kawahata's stage repertoire as well as her sound recordings. For the encore of her "Evening of Jazz" performance at the Hibiya Auditorium, Uchida Kisao described Kawahata, replete in a top hat and tailcoat, performing a tap dance sequence to the tune of "Swanee River"—a clear homage to Robinson's signature Stair Dance routine.<sup>79</sup> In turn, one can hear Kawahata's emulation of Robinson's steps on her recording of "Sweet Jennie Lee"—one of many "tap records" that Columbia produced in the mid-thirties in an attempt to capitalize on the style's popularity.<sup>80</sup> On the record, Kawahata's footwork is only briefly audible; in the final shout chorus, the horns drop out every three bars to allow Kawahata's tap shoes to punctuate the downbeat of each measure with a series of syncopated figures that spur the song to a close. Yet even in this fleeting instance, what the ear sees is a distinct impression of both Kawahata and

<sup>79</sup> Uchida, *Kinema Junpō*, 11 July 1933. One can also watch footage of Robinson performing his Stair Dance to the tune of "Swanee River" in the 1932 film *Harlem is in Heaven*.

<sup>80</sup> Segawa, *Jazu de odotte*, 125-126. The effect on Kawahata's record is muted compared to Hayashi's tapping on Nakano Tadashi's 1935 cover of "Bye Bye Blues." In the latter, Hayashi's shoes are audible to the point of distraction, as if to upstage the band with the routine he had learned specifically from the Williams Quartette. See <https://rekion.dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/8275149/1>.

Robinson at once: through the gestural apprenticeship of the former, a perceptible trace of the latter appears in an almost superimposed form, as if showing through an aural palimpsest.

One could conceivably argue, then, that such cases amounted to a racialized mode of aural mimesis (approaching aural minstrelsy) similar to what Ōtani described in the case of Dick Mine. Yet where Mine's putative renderings of "Black sound" rested upon (and likewise reinforced) the impression of an otherwise unmarked vocal persona, Kawahata's Nikkei profile was markedly opaque in contrast. As her own promotional biography averred: "When compared to the color of Baker's black skin, it seems only fitting that the Japanese maiden Kawahata Fumiko's yellow skin would take on an amber hue (*kohaku iro*)."<sup>81</sup> In turn, while the Columbia yearbook described Kawahata's voice as "distinctive," it did so by way of an expression that translated more literally to "a voice of a different color or shade" (異色ある声).<sup>82</sup> To recall Rangan's phrasing, then, what Kawahata's sonic "skin" invoked was not simply an acousmatic blackness, but rather an oblique shade of difference—a palimpsestic filtering of blackness through yellow skin—that implied not so much a sense of mimicry (or even hybridity) as much as one mode of racial alterity cast in the light of another.

But if these promotional materials only hinted at why Kawahata's Nikkei status would color her audiovisual complexion in such marked contrast to a singer like Mine, other profiles made their reasoning more explicit. In his description of Kawahata in the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, Iba Takashi admitted that while Kawahata possessed "the grace of a Japanese maiden," her true appeal was unquestionably that of the "charming 'Merican Jap'" (*airashii meriken jappu*).<sup>83</sup> Here,

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<sup>81</sup> Morioka, *Kawahata Fumiko panfuretto*, Section A. The full quote: "Josefin Bēkā wa yūmei na kokujin no onna no odorite de aru. Sono kuroi hada no iro ni kurabete, nihon musume Kawahata Fumiko no kiïroi hada wa kohaku-iro to yobu no ni fusawashii."

<sup>82</sup> Nihon Chikuonki Shōkai, ed., *Nicchiku (Koromubia) sanjū-nenshi* (Tokyo: Nihon Chikuonki Shōkai, 1940), appendix, 9.

<sup>83</sup> Iba Takashi, "Yūbi to Ero no Gacchibikan."

the majority of Iba's readers would have readily grasped the term's pejorative meaning, while just as many likely recognized the abbreviated phrasing ('Meriken Jappu') from the author Hasegawa Kaitarō (a.k.a Tanji Jōji)'s popular series of mid-1920s short stories of the same name. In them, Hasegawa offered semi-fictional portraits of decidedly non-elite Japanese sojourners in the United States, most of whom had fallen into lives of itinerancy after experiencing various forms of exclusion in both white American society and Nikkei settler communities alike.<sup>84</sup> As such, Iba's description placed Kawahata in the company of a distinctly marginal cast of wanderers and vagabonds for whom the Japanese-American experience was a continual struggle to navigate the encumbrances of their "yellow skin."

In so doing, however, Iba suggested that it was precisely this shade of otherwise invisible difference that accounted for Kawahata's distinctly exotic charm in Japan. Indeed, to identify Kawahata wholly as a "Japanese maiden" would have been to assign her an unmarked status (and thus eliminate any trace of exotic appeal) by harmonizing her physical, cultural, and national traits into a stable, assimilable form. The label *jappu*, however, served not to deny her ethnic heritage, but rather to assign it a non-normative "skin" through a simulated white gaze, thereby rendering her particular experience of Japanese racial identity marginal and separate from that of Japanese nationals. In this sense, what set Kawahata's voice apart from her Japanese counterparts was not that it simply "sounded Black" (*kokujin ppokatta*), but rather that it sounded a more inscrutable strain of *difference* that was at once racialized yet unassimilated into a singular category of identity. In short, its difference was figured as both excessive and elusive—in transit between markers of Japanese, Black, and diasporic Asian ascription, yet reducible to none.

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<sup>84</sup> For a discussion of Hasegawa's 'Merican Jap stories, see Kyoko Ōmori, "Detecting Japanese Vernacular Modernism: Shinseinen Magazine and the Development of the Tantei Shōsetsu Genre, 1920-1931" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2003), 202-214.

Yet by the same token, this complex ascription likewise foregrounded the mutual experiences of insult, exclusion, and caricature that Kawahata and her Nikkei counterparts shared not only with Black performers, but with other Asian populations in the United States. For Kawahata, of course, such experiences needed little reminder. Having come of age in the shadow of rulings like *Takao Ozawa v. United States* (1922) and the Asian Exclusion Act (1924), the juridical reality of the Nikkei community's "nonwhite" status meant that any career trajectory she might choose, even one as unique as an entertainer, would be circumscribed in advance. Meanwhile, her formative years on the vaudeville stage afforded Kawahata a backstage pass to a living laboratory of orientalist stereotypes that made little attempt to distinguish let alone dignify the bodies of Asian performers. Revue productions with names like "Ching-a-Ling" often used Chinese and Japanese as interchangeable or conflated signifiers (especially in the kinds of acrobatic or contortionist acts through which Kawahata earned her early success), while companies like Fanchon and Marco opted to fit as many ethnic clichés as possible into the spectacular set pieces of their "Orientale" and "Far East" revues.<sup>85</sup>

But while Kawahata's mother Haruyo allowed her daughter to perform in more vaguely orientalized postures—her outfits for Fanchon and Marco resembled a generic cross between the gypsy and the Middle Eastern belly dancer, for instance—she drew the line at Fumiko performing "detestable Chinese roles" (*keibetsu subeki shinajin no yaku*). In fact, according to an article in *Fujin Kurabu*, it was this very policy that dashed at least one potential film offer:

Approached by the film director King Vidor with a possible role for Fumiko, Haruyo replied: 'My daughter will not appear in any movie in which she is made to wear Chinese clothes.' In turn, Vidor assured her that he would not make her a Chinese character. Upon receiving the script, however, Haruyo found a scene set in a 'Shanghai Hotel,' where a tea girl tap dances for an American sailor before falling rapturously into his arms.

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<sup>85</sup> See Robert Charles Lancefield, "Hearing Orientality in (white) America: 1900-1930" (PhD diss., Wesleyan University, 2005), 252-268.



Reading this, Haruyo flew into a rage. 'It's not enough that I said she wouldn't play a Chinese character,' she railed, 'but to dance around like a sailor's plaything? There is no way I would let my child perform such a lewd impersonation.' The studio offered more compensation, but Haruyo declined, stating that such a role would be a disgrace to the Japanese nation (*kokujoku*). 'We don't need your money,' she declared. 'My family is too well-off to warrant your charity.'<sup>86</sup>

Here, it is unclear whether Haruyo's objection derived more from a rejection of such damaging Chinese stereotypes or from a refusal to have her Japanese heritage demeaned to the point of racialized identification with the former. In the language of the article, however, it is clearly the latter that takes precedence. As if to assure Japanese readers that their "overseas brethren" (*kaigai dōhō*) were conducting themselves with the empire's dignity in mind, the article paints Haruyo's indignation as that of a well-to-do settler unjustly mistaken for a colonial servant. At the same time, such framing served also as a reminder that Japan, for all of its imperial advances, had still to contend with the global color line, which for W.E.B. Du Bois placed "black, brown, and yellow folk" together under the heel of white hegemony.<sup>87</sup> Within this schema, even a Nikkei maiden like Kawahata could be taken for a *meriken jappu*, and thereby cast with an "amber" appearance as redolent of the Shanghai tea girl as the body of Josephine Baker.

In this sense, the shifting patterns of Kawahata's audiovisual "skin" seemed to echo the same chords of social kinship that linked, for Du Bois, the "children of Africa" to those of "yellow Asia and the South Seas."<sup>88</sup> This kinship, Du Bois argued, derived not only from the "social heritage of slavery," but from the "discrimination and insult" that afflicted Asia and the West Indies as much as Atlanta or Brownsville, and which conjoined the suffering of Black Southerners and Japanese immigrants in the U.S. through various legislative "bargains" in the 1920s. Du Bois often noted, for example, that west coast senators had helped to defeat the 1924

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<sup>86</sup> Morioka, *Kawahata Fumiko panfuretto*, Section F.

<sup>87</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 89.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill on the condition that their southern counterparts would support their own bill for Japanese exclusion. But while other Black intellectuals like Langston Hughes went further in likening the situation of Japan's colonial subjects to their own experiences under Jim Crow, Du Bois remained convinced throughout the 1930s that the Japanese empire represented a liberating force: one that could precipitate a "colored revolt against white exploitation" around the world. Naturally, it was Du Bois' reasoning that resonated with Japan's own imperial ideologues, many of whom painted their project in Asia as one of interracial solidarity against Anglo-European hegemony. And though Kawahata may not have heard her own voice in such pronouncements, it was precisely this project that would occupy much of her remaining time in Japan.

#### *IV. Imperial Itineraries*

In February 1934, Kawahata set out for Manchuria. Her itinerary included a string of performances in Harbin, Changchun, Shenyang, and Fushun, followed by stops in the Kwantung Leased Territory (Dalian) and Korea (Pyongyang and Seoul).<sup>89</sup> The two-week tour, organized by Columbia, found mention in the press as a "comfort" (*imon*) tour for the benefit of soldiers, officials, and settlers on the continent, but served just as importantly to build a broader colonial audience for Kawahata as a recording artist. Compared to her New Year's engagement at the Nichigeki, however, this run of shows was a relatively modest affair. In lieu of a full orchestra and revue troupe, Kawahata was joined only by her dance partner Shirahata Ishizo, the pianist Koizumi Shin'ichi, and two supporting dancers (Horiuchi Sachiko and Fujima Kanyaju). Still, the tour followed closely on the heels of the Nichigeki run, and so left Kawahata with little time to rest after a busy year of recording and performance. Moreover, her RKO contract—still in

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<sup>89</sup> Norikoshi, *Arisu*, 231.

abeyance from the year prior—continued to loom over each additional commitment she made in Japan. With these factors in mind, a trip to Manchuria in the middle of February might have seemed like a strange enticement for the young star to forestall her return to California. What so compelled Columbia, then, to send Kawahata to the continent, and why might she have agreed?

To the latter question, one suspects that the prospect of immediately resuming her rigorous touring schedule with RKO would have seemed no more attractive to Kawahata than signing on for yet another tour with Columbia. Moreover, with a lucrative recording career and a potential film contract with Nikkatsu on the horizon, the thought of returning to a more minor role as the RKO troupe's token "oriental dancer" may well have struck Kawahata as a step backward. Still, her achievements in Tokyo had come with their own costs; in addition to the stress of balancing numerous large-scale stage productions with a relentless touring and recording schedule, Kawahata had also to contend with the persistent meddling of government censors and the Tokyo bureau of the Special Higher Police (*Tokubetsu kōtō keisatsu*, or *Tōkō*). Given the high profile of her Nichigeki revue, for instance, the latter had demanded that Kawahata include a token patriotic number—"Spirit of Nippon"—which Uchida Kisao aptly criticized for seeming "tacked on" to the rest of the show.<sup>90</sup> In contrast, the smaller scale of the February tour may have promised not only a more manageable stage show, but also a slightly greater degree of creative leeway than the Tokyo Police saw fit to offer.

Once in Harbin, however, the political significance of the tour's timing came quickly into focus. According to reports in Harbin's local papers, Kawahata's February 22nd performance at the Heianza theater coincided with a notable diplomatic event: George C. Hanson, the long-serving U.S. consul general in Manchuria, had recently been reassigned to Moscow and was serving out his final days in the Harbin office. Known variously by colleagues as the "mayor of

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<sup>90</sup> Uchida Kisao, *Kinema junpō*, January 11, 1934.

Harbin" and even the "uncrowned emperor of Manchuria," Hanson was a colorful and charismatic presence in the city—the type for whom a jazz concert presented the perfect occasion for a send-off.<sup>91</sup> When Kawahata took the stage, then, she greeted an audience filled with representatives from Harbin's numerous foreign consulates; more than a concert, the evening better resembled a diplomatic summit.<sup>92</sup> Further still, this informal send-off for the "uncrowned emperor" Hanson fell just one week prior to the March 1st coronation of Puyi as the "Kangde Emperor" (*Kōtoku Kōtei*) of Manchukuo—an event that many viewed as Japan's latest bid for the international recognition of Manchukuo's statehood. Yet while the U.S. and Britain remained unmoved in their official stance of nonrecognition, discussions between Japan and the Western powers were friendly enough over the course of February that one *Time Magazine* reporter wondered if even the U.S. might "be ready for a change of heart."<sup>93</sup>

If only in the public perception, then, Kawahata arrived in Manchuria at a moment when a certain measure of amity seemed possible in advance of Japan's effective withdrawal from the League of Nations, and where the soft-power diplomacy of a jazz performance might not have seemed too far-flung.<sup>94</sup> At the same time, however, Japanese officials had spent much of the previous year consolidating economic and political control in the region, trading earlier promises of an Open Door policy in Manchuria for their own bloc of imperial influence.<sup>95</sup> Under these circumstances, a performer like Kawahata embodied a uniquely double-sided appeal. In one

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<sup>91</sup> Shortly after his transfer to Moscow, Hanson suffered a nervous breakdown and was sent back for treatment in the U.S. aboard the President Polk steamship, where he shot himself en route. See "Foreign Service: Suicide of a Consul," *Time Magazine*, September 16, 1935.

<sup>92</sup> *Harubin shinbun*, February 23, 1934, quoted in Norikoshi, *Arisu*, 228-29.

<sup>93</sup> Errol MacGregor Clauss, "The Roosevelt Administration and Manchukuo, 1933-1941," *The Historian* 32, no. 4 (1970): 600.

<sup>94</sup> Although Japan announced its exit from the League of Nations in March 1933, its withdrawal would not become effective until March 1935, fueling speculation in the interim about a potential "crisis of 1935-36." See Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1934, The Far East Volume III, Document 46 (862i.01/286).

<sup>95</sup> Clauss, "The Roosevelt Administration and Manchukuo," 601-02.

sense, her presentation as a Nisei-Nikkeijin jazz star bespoke a cosmopolitanism in line with the multilateral possibilities of the moment: a platonic instance of the Nisei as a cultural "bridge of friendship" from "the East to the West" that likewise opened pathways of transnational capital and political cooperation.<sup>96</sup> Yet by virtue of this versatility, her movements resonated just as closely with Japan's own autarkic ambitions. Just as the modern city of Harbin represented a microcosm of global culture under Japanese control, Kawahata's diverse audiovisual repertoire embodied a singular capacity to contain multiple, often conflictual bodies in one: a multicultural, multi-racial palimpsest of voice and movement whose impression of harmonic (and even synesthetic) synthesis fit squarely within the empire's own assurances of co-prosperity and "harmony among the five races" (*gozoku kyōwa*).

Yet while many American observers heard Japan's rhetoric of Asian co-prosperity as a post facto excuse for an imperial land grab, Black internationalists like Du Bois envisioned Japan's ambitions as a geographic and historical bulwark against the encroachments of white colonial hegemony, and as the model for what a more equitable non-white empire might accomplish without the interference of the western powers.<sup>97</sup> During a visit to Manchuria in 1937, Du Bois met with Matsuoka Yōsuke, then the president of the South Manchurian Railway Company (SMRC), but better known as the dramatic orator who had led the Japanese delegation

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<sup>96</sup> One month after leading the Japanese delegation's exit from the League of Nations in Geneva, Matsuoka Yōsuke traveled to San Francisco to address an audience of nearly 5,000 Nikkei attendees at the Dreamland Auditorium. During his speech, Matsuoka addressed the second-generation (Nisei) attendees directly, asserting: You were born in America and you are American citizens. At the [same] time, your forefather were Japanese and in your veins flows the blood of the Yamato race." As such, he continued, "Your destiny lies in the interpretation of the East to the West . . . You can be the bridge of friendship and understanding between Japan and America." See ---, "Matsuoka Holds Packed House of 5000 Japanese as he Floods Auditorium with Irony, Humor, and Oratory," *Shinsekai Nichinichi shinbun*, April 12, 1933.

<sup>97</sup> See Yuichiro Onishi, *Transpacific Antiracism: Afro-Asian Solidarity in 20th-Century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa* (New York: New York University Press, 2013). See also Reginald Kearney, "The Pro-Japanese Utterances of W.E.B. Du Bois," *Contributions in Black Studies* 13 (1995): 201-17.

out of Geneva in 1933. In his column for the Pittsburgh Courier, Du Bois described Matsuoka as a kind and surprisingly soft-spoken man who had spared the time to meet with him "not because I represented power, influence or publicity, but because I was a colored man interested in the development and independence of the colored peoples of the world." Moreover, both concurred that "colonial enterprise by a colored nation need not imply caste, exploitation and subjection which it has always implied in the case of white Europe." In spite of their rapport, however, the meeting ended on a note of tension. Having so far advanced from "feudalism into industrialism," Du Bois asked, "May it not be possible . . . for Japan to make that further inevitable change from private property to public welfare?" In Du Bois' column, the question remained unanswered.<sup>98</sup>

For Langston Hughes, however, there was nothing uncertain about the Japanese government's hostility to communism, nor was there any question that the state regarded the mutual articulation of racial solidarity and anti-colonialism as evidence of bolshevist influence. Hughes had witnessed such confluences firsthand on his own trip to Korea and Japan in the summer of 1933, where undercover police shadowed him throughout much of his journey, and ultimately questioned him outright about his associations with left-wing writers in Japan and elsewhere. In fact, many of the Japanese writers who welcomed Hughes during his time in Tokyo (including several involved with the Tsukiji Little Theater) found themselves in police custody as a result, while Hughes himself was effectively deported from the country after a tense interrogation at Tokyo's Metropolitan Police Headquarters.<sup>99</sup>

Before returning to the U.S., however, Hughes was able to register many striking homologies between the racism of the Japanese empire and that of the United States. Noting

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<sup>98</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, "A forum of fact and opinion," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 5, 1937. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

<sup>99</sup> Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, 259-274. See also Takao Kitamura, "Langston Hughes and Japan," *The Langston Hughes Review*, 6, no. 1 (1987): 8-12.

Japanese violence toward Chinese laborers in Shanghai and the depictions of Korean criminality in the metropolitan press, Hughes sensed little of the virtue Du Bois identified in Japan's imperial mission, nor could he find any demonstrable evidence of racial co-prosperity. "Both the Japanese and the Koreans were colored races," he wrote, "but I saw clearly that color made no difference in the use of race as a technique of hurting and humiliating a group not one's own." As such, Hughes heard only a bitter irony in his interrogators' promise that "Japan [was] trying to make Asia free of that Jim Crow . . . which the white nations [had] imported." To this notion, Hughes simply recalled that in all of his global travels, it was "*only* in Japan, a colored country," where he had "been subjected to police interrogation and told to go home and not return again."<sup>100</sup>

Here, Hughes presented a cogently transnational formulation of race relations that began not with the faculty of sight, but rather with the underlying structures of colonial-capitalist subjugation that linked the experience of the Jim Crow South to that of the Japanese empire and elsewhere. In addition to complicating Du Bois' thesis of the global color line, then, Hughes pointed also to the ways in which colonial prejudice could therefore find racialized expression beyond markers of visual difference. Indeed, as this study more broadly argues, racialization in the Japanese metropole unfolded through spheres of audition that turned the linguistic, accentual, and timbral contours of the voice and its sounding body into frequencies of difference whose resonance often surpassed that of visible phenotypes. But where Hughes might have argued against the salience of color in such instances, the case of Fumiko Kawahata made clear that sonic difference, in all of its synesthetic articulations, remained complicit with chromatic orders of vision that extended (in Du Bois' phrasing) from Africa and America to "yellow Asia and the South Seas." In other words, if Hughes observed that racialization in Japan failed to hew along

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<sup>100</sup> Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, 275. See also Jang Wook Huh, "Beyond Afro-Orientalism: Langston Hughes, Koreans, and the Poetics of Overlapping Dispossessions," *Comparative Literature* 69, no. 2 (2017): 201-221.

the visual parameters of the American color line, Kawahata's case revealed a distinctly *audiovisual* paradigm of race in Japan that was refracted in turn through the prism of empire.

Moreover, it should be noted that empire here refers as much to the Anglo-European context as it does to Japan's, insofar as the mobile signifiers of the former tended to inflect the representational tropes of the latter. Indeed, the very currency of Kawahata's "amber-colored" complexion relied upon a sensory economy of *ero guro nansensu* that traded regularly in overlapping tropes of primitivism and blackness transposed into the key of Japan's imperial Orient. One had only to turn to pictorials like *Gendai ryōki sentanzukan* [modern pictorial of the bizarre and avant-garde] or *Hentai fūzoku gakan* [pictures of perverse customs] to find exoticized depictions of Asian, African, an Oceanic bodies, which together implied the mutual articulation of the erotic and the grotesque.<sup>101</sup> In them, images of Thai court dancers and Chinese opera masks appear alongside South Sudanese women with elaborate scarification marks, while photographs of African Pygmy tribes are juxtaposed with Vanuatu Rom dancers of Melanesia. Just as prevalent, however, are images of skyscrapers, cafes, and revue theaters, as if to note that such metropolitan totems grew from the same modernist desire to indulge in both *ero* and *guro*, orientalism and primitivism, decadence and abjection—in Anne Anlin Cheng's terms, the "fundamental doubleness founding colonial value, especially at the site of the raced body."<sup>102</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, the body most often displayed therein was that of Josephine Baker.

For Cheng, such doubleness spoke tangibly through the "very fibers" of Baker's skin, whose shade seemed to "waver between idealized goldenness and abject darkness" depending on the vagaries of its filmic and photographic framing. Through plays of light and shadow, Cheng

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<sup>101</sup> When searching these specific titles for reference, use 現代獵奇尖端図 and 鑑変態風俗画 in lieu of their romanized renderings. Both pictorials are reprinted in their entirety in Wada Hirofumi, ed., *Korekushon modan toshi bunka 15: Ero guro nansensu* (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2005).

<sup>102</sup> Cheng, *Second Skin*, 152.



argues that such mutability decoupled the skin from the seemingly intractable qualities of the flesh, exploiting the tensile interplay "between body and its framing" to heighten Baker's racially ambiguous appeal. Critics speculated in turn over the intrigue of her racial extraction, while Baker herself, if "either too dark or too light/'yellow'" for certain roles, shrewdly parlayed such indeterminacy into performances that indulged both primitivist and orientalist fantasies at once.<sup>103</sup> Uchida Kisao, who had seen Baker perform in Paris, noted in a *Kinema Junpō* roundtable that such versatility duly surpassed various Black revue singers of the era, to which Yoshihara Eiko added that "the Baker who performs Negro dances and the one who dances the Argentinian [tango] are one in the same"—possessed of both refinement and abandon, that is, yet limited to neither. Citing such mercurial agency, then, the roundtable echoed e.e. cummings' appraisal of Baker as a "creature neither infrahuman nor superhuman, but somehow both." In short, as Iwami Tameo put it, Baker's appeal was ultimately that of the "stranger" (*étranger*).<sup>104</sup>

So too with Kawahata, whose comparisons to Baker denoted a similarly supernatural capacity for figural reinvention. Owing to the striking diversity of her wardrobe and repertoire, no single image of Kawahata ever seemed to solidify or take precedence, just as no single name could capture the full extent of her migratory movements. Depending on the language and location of the publication, Kawahata found mention as Fumiko, Fumie, Fumi, or Alice, while her last name was frequently miswritten as "Kawabata" (the common rendering of 川畑).<sup>105</sup>

Meanwhile, her stage shows were exercises in protean versatility; on a given night, Kawahata

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 31, 133.

<sup>104</sup> See Iwami Tameo, et al., "Josafin Bēkā zadankai: Hadaka no jo-ō wo chūshin ni."

<sup>105</sup> Across the 1930s, one finds numerous English-language articles in Nikkei newspapers that variously refer to "Kawahata" and "Kawabata," with the latter (and more common) reading appearing with more frequency. However, in his column for the *Rafu Shimpo* on August 25th, 1935, James "Bean" Takeda notes in an apparent correction from a story the previous week that "Fumi Kawahata spells her name with an 'h,' and not with a 'b' as is commonly spelled." See Bean Takeda, "Typtown Talk," *Rafu Shimpo*, August 25, 1935, 12. This is confirmed by the writer Norikoshi Takao, who interviewed Kawahata for his 1999 work *Arisu*, which he translated into English as *Alice: The Story of Kawahata Fumiko*.

could dance the "German waltz, the Parisian tango, and the Harlem medley" in addition to singing her hits to the tune of jazz piano and ukulele alike.<sup>106</sup> In this sense, Kawahata's talents onstage found even greater potency through the gramophone and the radio, which allowed her acousmatic voice to summon and inhabit an even greater array of vocalic bodies. Like Baker, then, it was Kawahata's very indeterminacy that became her most identifiable feature onstage and on record, making her sheer vocalic multiplicity her most singular asset in turn.

But while Kawahata's popularity resonated deeply with Baker's in the metropolitan imagination, Columbia was just as keen to promote Kawahata to colonial audiences as well. In fact, Kawahata's February 1934 tour was not her first visit to the colonies; in the fall of 1933, she had undertaken an extensive tour (sponsored also by Columbia) that stretched from southwest Honshū to Pyongyang and Seoul. In turn, she would later perform in Karafuto and Taiwan, traveling at least twice more throughout the continent in the process.<sup>107</sup> In so doing, Kawahata joined many of her peers in the Japanese music industry in building a touring circuit that not only grew in concert with the nation's imperial borders, but also entwined the industry's budding commercial interests with the state's investment in the empire's "musical cultivation." Iba Takashi, one of Kawahata's most vocal promoters, had himself traveled through Manchuria and Korea under such pretenses in 1930, giving performances and lectures along the same South Manchurian Railway route that Kawahata later followed in 1934. Naturally, the SMRC sponsored Iba's tour, which was initially slated to include Horiuchi Keizō and Shioiri Kamesuke as well. While the latter two had to drop out of the trip for circumstantial reasons, however, it is telling that the three most prominent Japanese advocates of jazz—and later of Kawahata's

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<sup>106</sup> Segawa includes a full program of the stage show from Kawahata's fall 1933 tour. See Segawa, *Jazu de odotte*, 142.

<sup>107</sup> See Shogo Muto, "Fumi Kawahata, star of Tokyo's revue stage and screen returning for rest and friends in LA.," *Rafu Shimpo*, February 13, 1935. See also ---, "Fumi Kawahata to dance for soldier camps," *Rafu Shimpo*, March 11, 1935.

career—were the very same figures tasked with spreading their musical sensibilities to the front lines of "Japan's sphere of influence" (*nihon no seiryoku han'i*).<sup>108</sup>

While it is unclear how widely such sensibilities traveled beyond the empire's settler enclaves, however, one can nonetheless grasp how the diverse musical canopy of jazz—and Kawahata's sonic fluencies therein—would have harmonized with the syncretistic *ethos* of empire's cultural consolidation. As Yiman Wang argues, for instance, such modes of musical performance often served to sublimate the more vulgar imperatives of imperial inclusion within the seemingly natural affinities of rhythmic and harmonic resonance.<sup>109</sup> Meanwhile, Ji Hee Jung notes that institutions like NHK enlisted the embodied synchrony of broadcast sound in order to conjure a shared sense of "affective community" from the "simultaneous copresence of diverse places and peoples under the purview of the empire."<sup>110</sup> In this spirit, Kawahata's gramophonic voice functioned similarly to invoke a sense of community at once affective and acousmatic in its formation; by inviting listeners to render multiple vocalic bodies co-present in the moment of audition, such a voice afforded just as many opportunities for identification in turn. At the same time, however, this very indeterminacy also bespoke the volatile nature of Japan's policies of imperial inclusion. Over the course of the 1930s, such policies were prone to "oscillate between assimilation and exclusion" according to the vagaries of territorial expansion, political resistance, and the conflicting visions of Japan's own imperial institutions.<sup>111</sup> As such, what Kawahata's performances seemed more accurately to express was the contingent and improvisatory mode of

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<sup>108</sup> Iba Takashi, "Mansen ryokō nikki, part 3," *Ongaku Sekai* (March 1930): 51.

<sup>109</sup> Yiman Wang, "Affective Politics and the Legend of Yamaguchi Yoshiko/Li Xianglan," in Katsuhiko Endo, et al., *Sino-Japanese Transculturation: Late Nineteenth Century to the end of the Pacific War* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 159.

<sup>110</sup> See Jung, "Imagining an Affective Community in Asia," 208-10.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Tierney, *Tropics of Savagery: The Culture of Japanese Empire in Comparative Frame* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 103.

subjectivity that such policies demanded: in short, the performance of an imperial subjecthood that was itself subject to perpetual revision.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, such fluidity prefigured a raft of chameleonic performers that would pervade Japan's imperial culture industry in contrastive yet complementary ways across the late 1930s and early 40s. For instance, the ability of the film star Yamaguchi Yoshiko (a.k.a. Li Xianglan, or Ri Kōran) to "pass" as Chinese in her roles for the Manchuria Film Association similarly bespoke the state's duplicitous espousals of inclusion and interracial harmony. Meanwhile, the "continental melody" (*tairiku merodii*) boom of the late 30s ushered in the Sinitic masquerades of singers like Watanabe Hamako and Kasagi Shizuko, who made no secret of their Japanese identity, and thus, as Michael Bourdaghs argues, offered metropolitan listeners an experience of colonial intimacy that could be simultaneously kept at arm's length.<sup>112</sup> In contrast, however, Kawahata's appeal derived neither from "passing," nor from the assurance of an underlying or "unmistakable" Japaneseness. Indeed, critics like Iba made sure to remind listeners that Kawahata's vocalic movements were not to be confused with those of a "Japanese maiden." Rather, her preternatural abilities were often described as *nihonjin-banare*: a sly phrase that purported to praise a level of talent beyond that of ordinary Japanese performers, but which translated more concisely as "un-Japanese."<sup>113</sup> Echoing Baker's simultaneously "superhuman" and "infrahuman" ascriptions, then, critics and promoters placed Kawahata both beyond and below her Japanese peers—an inimitably virtuosic performer, yet one no less reducible as a *meriken jappu*. As such, if Kawahata's amber skin tones might have struck complex yet open-

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<sup>112</sup> Michael Bourdaghs, "Japan's Orient in Song and Dance," in Katsuhiko, et al., *Sino-Japanese Transculturation*, 167-87.

<sup>113</sup> ---, "Kawahata Fumiko musume no myōgi: Joen ni wazahi sareta wo otomu," *Yomiuri shinbun*, March 1, 1933.

ended chords of identification with international observers and colonial audiences, the above descriptions assured the metropole that such embodiments would remain "un-Japanese."

Still, as Bourdaghs notes, "embodied pleasures have a way of leading to undisciplined outcomes."<sup>114</sup> Indeed, Iba and his colleagues in the *gakudan* may have hoped that jazz in Japan would develop in concert with their own visions of social-Darwinist progress: away from the rustication of blues and *miny'ō* and toward the refinement of "Rhapsody in Blue." Yet if Kawahata's repertoire was any indication, metropolitan listeners were drawn as much to the lean, exuberant sounds of "Dinah" and "St. Louis Blues" as they were to the orchestral splendor of the revue stage. Moreover, though Iba was enamored enough of Kawahata's Broadway credentials to presume that she might successfully mediate between "erotic" mass attraction and "elegant" cosmopolitan charm, audiences seemed just as taken by her strangely subaltern appeal. In July 1934, Kawahata made her screen debut in a Nikkatsu comedy entitled "A Young Couple's Trial Separation" (*Wakafūfu shiken bekkyo*), in which she played an adventurous "modern girl" navigating the boundaries of a new marriage. While seemingly tailor-made to resonate with her female fan base, the role was written in fact by Hasegawa Kaitarō, the author of the *Meriken Jappu* series.<sup>115</sup> Yet far from appearing "un-Japanese," Kawahata's figuration of the *meriken jappu* seemed instead to merge with her embodiment of the *modan gāru*, inviting audiences to identify and even embrace the alterity of the former in the shape of the latter. In short, the more critics sought to distance Kawahata from her audience, the more her fans—students, *shitamachi* maidens, and working wives alike—heard shades of their own bodies in her voice.

To borrow Miriam Silverberg's phrasing, such casting therefore served to recall that the modern girl, in her embodied multiplicity, "was modern because she was in motion," and that to

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<sup>114</sup> Bourdaghs, "Japan's Orient in Song and Dance," 169.

<sup>115</sup> The film was directed by Abe Yutaka, and co-starred Mizukubo Sumiko, Sugi Kyōji, and Suzuki Denmei, the oft-held "Clark Gable of Japan."

be in motion was to move between spaces of belonging and difference, finding definition in one through shaded contours of the other.<sup>116</sup> If Kawahata sang in a voice of a different color or shade, then, it was one that linked the errant sonorities of the modern girl to the complex timbral patternings of race, migration, and colonial difference that lent Japan's late-imperial jazz age its distinctly synesthetic tones. And while these patterns may have dovetailed with the imperatives of empire, they served just as crucially to score, in Daphne Brooks' terms, a "long countermelody" to the state's shifting rhetorical overtures: one that not only rendered the empire's internal contradictions doubly audible, but also evinced sonic formations of transpacific intimacy and even coalitional possibility that resonated beyond its borders.<sup>117</sup>

With these latent counterpublic soundings in mind, Kawahata's second and final Nikkatsu film—"Backstreet Symphony" (*Uramachi Kōkyōgaku*)—could not have been more aptly named. As a jazz musical, moreover, the film served also as a curtain call for the diverse network of collaborators Kawahata had cultivated over the preceding two years; Dick Mine, Shirahata Ishizo, and Suji Kyōji all made appearances, while Kawahata's dance pupil Chieri Miyano found her biggest spotlight yet. Even more notably, the film proved successful enough to receive top honors at the first-annual "All Japan Film Awards."<sup>118</sup> Kawahata herself, however, was not present to accept her prize. Shortly after finishing the film in May of 1935, Kawahata and her mother boarded the *Asama Maru* bound for California, leaving only a swirl of rumors in their wake.<sup>119</sup> Without wasting a moment, news outlets printed conflicting reports that she was

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<sup>116</sup> Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 97.

<sup>117</sup> Daphne A. Brooks, *Liner Notes for the Revolution: The Intellectual Life of Black Feminist Sound* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021), 79.

<sup>118</sup> The "Zen Nippon Eiga Konkūru," produced by the Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun and the Osaka Mainichi Shinbun, was the precursor to what is now known as the Mainichi Film Awards. See "Uramachi kōkyōgaku," Nikkatsu, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.nikkatsu.com/movie/13326.html>. See also Norikoshi, *Arisu*, 239.

<sup>119</sup> See Shogo Muto, "Fumi Kawahata."

returning to fulfill her RKO contract, moving to Paris to study dance, or perhaps getting married in the U.S.<sup>120</sup> In a strange sense, then, it was as if the diverse vocalic personae that Kawahata had conjured into being over the previous two years—the Broadway wunderkind, the Baker-esque cosmopolitan, the newlywed *moga*—had each taken on lives of their own. And as with the acousmatic effect of her recordings, Kawahata's physical absence in Japan seemed only to render such imagined bodies more potent, promiscuous, and open to invention; like the rumors themselves, Kawahata's voice seemed now to belong to nobody and everybody at once.

### *Coda*

As is often the case, the reality of Kawahata's departure was both more straightforward and more complex than these rumors suggested. Upon returning to the U.S., she traveled to New York to finish her RKO contract, after which she informed the San Francisco-based *Nichibei Shinbun* that she hoped to go back to Japan, which she had grown to "like a lot in fact better than America."<sup>121</sup> In the meantime, however, Kawahata faced dispiriting prospects in New York. Having outgrown her previous appeal as RKO's "Baby Star," she had also to confront an increasingly hostile climate for Japanese American performers amid worsening diplomatic relations between the two nations. As a result, Kawahata took to performing the very kinds of "detestable Chinese roles" that her mother had previously denounced; in the fall of 1937, the *Nikkei* reporter Larry Tajiri noted with some disappointment that Kawahata could be found

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<sup>120</sup> A number of articles in Japan even circulated a bizarre rumor that Kawahata was engaged to Nakaoka Kon'ichi, the man who assassinated Prime Minister Hara Takashi in 1921, and who had been released from prison in 1934. See, for instance, Larry Tajiri, "Village Vagaries," *Nichibei shinbun*, July 26, 1935.

<sup>121</sup> ---, "Fumi Kawabata, Nisei Dancer, Denies Reports of Betrothal, Returns to America To Fulfill RKO Stage Offer," *Nichibei shinbun*, May 30, 1935.

performing at "Minsky's Oriental burlesque house in downtown Manhattan" under the pseudonym "Ming Toy."<sup>122</sup>

True to her word, then, Kawahata returned to Japan in 1938 for what she likely hoped would be a return to illustrious form. As Segawa Masahisa notes, however, she largely failed to regain her previous popularity.<sup>123</sup> In part, such a fate was due to the state's increasing hostility to jazz, dance music, and "decadent" sounds after 1937; citing wartime exigencies, the government shuttered dancehalls like the Florida in 1940, and even banned "continental melodies" for fear of enfeebling the masses now charged with defending the home front. Furthermore, Kawahata found her earlier niche now occupied by singers she herself had influenced. In particular, her success had opened the door to a raft of other Nikkei performers—Rickey Miyagawa, Helen Honda, Taft Beppu, and Betty Inada, among others—who found similarly fraught success as translators of (African) American jazz.<sup>124</sup> More broadly, however, singers like Dick Mine and Kasagi Shizuko (whom Kawahata had previously "overshadowed" onstage) now commanded the spotlight with singing styles clearly redolent of Kawahata's Nikkei jazz accent. While Kawahata continued to tour and record until the spring of 1939, then, the contours of her vocal personality could be heard more on the lips of others—her phonic signatures, once eccentric, now an increasingly ingrained preference among metropolitan listeners.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Larry Tajiri, "Village Vagaries," *Nichibei shinbun*, September 11, 1937.

<sup>123</sup> Segawa and Ōtani, *Jazu no tanjō*, 24-25.

<sup>124</sup> All of these performers merit individual studies in their own right, but at present, the most valuable resource on interwar and wartime Nikkei musical activity remains George Yoshida, *Reminiscing in Swingtime: Japanese Americans in American Popular Music, 1925-1960* (San Francisco: National Japanese American History Society, 1997).

<sup>125</sup> According to Norikoshi Takao's interview with Kawahata, she stopped performing in Japan after a final continental "comfort" tour in March 1939. She then married Tamura Taihei, and the two relocated to Qingdao briefly before the outbreak of the Pacific War, at which time they returned to Tokyo. Over the next several years in Tokyo, Kawahata had two sons, Taichi and Kennichi. After the war, Kawahata returned to L.A. with her two sons, filed for divorce from Tamura, and retired from show business. Until her death in 2007, she lived privately, going by her biological father's last name, Tachibana. See Norikoshi, *Arisu*, appendix.



Rather than signaling a loss of voice, however, such phonetic migrations bespoke the extent to which Kawahata's sonic agency, like Baker's "virtuosity of movement," confounded any singular containment or articulation, and thereby signaled the possibility for different aesthetic and even social formations to be envisioned in sound.<sup>126</sup> In order to see these possibilities, however, one had to listen not only for the stylistic syncretism of jazz, nor simply for the role-playing antics of various singers, but rather for the micropolitics of bent phrasing, the errant clap of metal toes, or the slight accents that tugged at the ends of vowels. In short, through the voice and its "corporeal encumbrances," one could sense the frictious intimacies of a new sonic formation—an ad-hoc coalition of vocalic bodies-in-invention—that joined Kawahata's "awkward" phrasing, Midge Williams' Japanese ad-libs, and Dick Mine's cooing vibrato within its emergent lexicon. More than a mere chain of stylistic influence, these overlapping gestures revealed a transpacific network of traveling performers whose improvisatory sound acts had as much to do with negotiating the affordances of concert stages and sound studios as they did with navigating the itineraries of imperial policy. And in turn, what their popularity suggested was the formation of an interwar soundscape in which the strange and minor qualities of such voices—their "migrant curvatures," in Moten's term—had helped to carve out space for more unruly registers of musical vocality to unfold up to and beyond the postwar years.<sup>127</sup>

Indeed, the residual effects of this vocal ferment echoed across sound recordings in the years to follow, if not elsewhere in the written record. For while news and magazine features offered only skeletal glimpses of their movements, one could still hear clear shades of Williams' "vibrant," bilingual scat-singing and Kawahata's "un-Japanese" phrasing in the "swinging voice" of Kasagi Shizuko, the jazz inflections of Eri Chiemi, and many singers who followed

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<sup>126</sup> Cheng, *Second Skin*, 162-63.

<sup>127</sup> See Moten, *The Universal Machine*, 70.

thereafter.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, their continuing presence in recorded form allowed the ongoing possibility of mediated yet no less visceral contact with the texture of such sounds: the encounter, in Steven Connor's phrase, with sound "as skin: both as that which touches and that which is touched."<sup>129</sup> But if such skin could therefore be racialized through the "knit(ing) together of seeing and hearing," then seemingly incongruous voices like Kawahata's—those which failed to match their physical frames—could also confound such associations by throwing their very sources into question, and thus tempting listeners to imagine "new ways of having or being a body" in turn.<sup>130</sup> In this sense, it was on the vibrant surface of the voice, the very fibers of speech and song, where these migrant curvatures continued to bend the ears of their listening public, if only suggestively, toward some other future yet to be heard.

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<sup>128</sup> Hosokawa Shūhei also notes that at least one review in 1940 described Kasagi Shizuko's performances as "nihonjin-banare." See Hosokawa, "The Swinging Voice of Kasagi Shizuko," 179.

<sup>129</sup> Steven Connor, "Edison's Teeth: Touching Hearing," in *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening, and Modernity*, ed. Veit Erlmann (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004), 163.

<sup>130</sup> Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 43.

## CHAPTER 4

### HEARD AND UNHEARD SOUNDS

"My project is an essentially literary endeavor. It is not work I intend to pursue in the realm of physics. Of course, it may well be irrelevant to ask after the distinction between literature and physics . . . as both aspire to learn the truth of things. Still, the object of study in my present work is the same as that of literature: Language and music."

—Kanetsune Kiyosuke, *The Structure of Japanese Language and Song*, 1938

"The world of sound is the world in its flow of time. As such, it is a continuous world; only when glimpsed does it appear as a series of instants."

—Sakuma Kanae, "Phonation and Pronunciation," 1914

Opening a December 1936 editorial for the Sunday edition of the Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, the musicologist and critic Kanetsune Kiyosuke struck an uncharacteristically martial tone. "Sing Japanese songs in a Japanese voice!" (*nippon no koe de nippon no uta wo!*), he began his entry, with the prominent refrain of *nippon* conspicuously rendered each time in blunt *katakana* script. After a beat marked by a long dash, however, Kanetsune swiftly qualified his injunction. "In saying this, you must not mistake me for some unhinged nationalist (*chimayotta kokusuironsha*); this is just my musical preference."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, he explained, even if he were a European in another time and place, Franz Schubert's neighbor perhaps, he would still feel the same way upon hearing a Japanese song on a trip to the Orient. But being a Japanese writer in Tokyo in December of 1936, Kanetsune avowed an especially keen impulse to address what he deemed a dire issue in contemporary musical performance: the endangerment of "Japanese" vocality itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Nihon no koe to uta," *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, December 11, 1936, 7.

In voicing this concern, Kanetsune found himself among a chorus of sympathizers. A few months earlier, Hasegawa Nyozeikan had penned his polemic against the growing ubiquity of mass sound media, targeting the impact of sound recording on "original" vocal practices and the aural injuries wrought by the "cloudy, unrefined" noise of the radio—a complaint that Nagai Kafū would rephrase shortly thereafter in *Bokutō kidan*. Meanwhile, if Kafū's concern with vanishing local voicescapes could be traced to earlier writings like the 1927 entry "Voices of the street" (*Chimata no koe*), the physicist and writer Terada Torahiko devoted one of his final essays in 1935 to eulogizing the bygone voices of local peddlers and street vendors, whose "perishing melodies" and "hoarse flutes" (*shagareta fue*) carried with them "the poetry of the streetscape and so many dreams of the past."<sup>2</sup> If such hoarseness once signaled the end of a day's work, the essay implied, it now bespoke what Adorno diagnosed in 1934 as the "decline" of the "humane and the artistic" in the phonographic era—the last weary rasps of voices still "tied to their place and time."<sup>3</sup>

Worse yet, these accounts suggested, the diffusion of mass sound media was now working to replace such voices with deracinated sounds from across and even beyond the Japanese archipelago. Buoyed by the expansion of the imperial culture industry, Japanese singers like Matsudaira Akira and Watanabe Hamako recorded popular variations of the Korean folk anthem *Arirang* across the mid-30s, presaging the Chinese "continental melody boom" to follow, while the radio also confronted domestic listeners with sounds coming directly from the Asian continent itself. For some writers, this newfound aural proximity was exhilarating; in a 1935

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<sup>2</sup> Terada Torahiko, "Monouri no koe," originally printed in *Bungaku*, May 1935. Reprinted in *Terada Torahiko zuihitsu*, Vol. 5, ed. Komiya Toyotaka (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1948). See also Nagai Kafū, "Chimata no koe," in *Kafū zenshū*, Vol. 13, ed. Nagai Sōkichi (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Theodor Adorno, "The Form of the Phonograph Record," trans. Thomas Y. Levin, in *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 56–61. First published as "Die Form der Schallplatte," in *Eine Wiener Musikzeitschri* 23: 17–19 (December 15, 1934).

article, the journalist Narusawa Reisen rhapsodized about the experience of tuning into evening broadcasts from Nanjing, where the "utterly entrancing" voices of Chinese female announcers drifted mellifluously from the speakers "like leaves of silver and gold . . . tracing out wistful emotions through unbroken strings of sound."<sup>4</sup> For the aforementioned critics, however, such novel encounters only proved that the very media which had earlier promised to strengthen the aural bonds of the nation now seemed intent on crowding out Japan's autochthonous vocalities with sounds and voices from elsewhere.

As such, Kanetsune's invocation of a seemingly embattled yet underdefined "Japanese voice" (*nippon no koe*) may well have resonated across a widening range of discontents. For his part, though, Kanetsune had a more specific target in mind. "Western modes of vocal performance," he argued, had come to pervade Japan's musical soundscape, both in education and wider culture, to such an extent that they had attained the status of a prescriptive standard. They were now assumed, in other words, to constitute the "correct" way of singing, even in the context of repertoires that might be better suited to vocal modes "born naturally in Japan."<sup>5</sup> In many instances, Kanetsune noted, these non-native techniques were part and parcel of modern performance more broadly, suited to concert venues whose acoustics likewise demanded Western techniques of stage projection. But unlike those critics who linked such conditions to the broader ailments of modern sound technology, Kanetsune argued that advances in electrical recording and amplification actually obviated the need for Western modes of "vocal strength-training," and in fact allowed singers a greater range of expressive possibility. Softening his tone, then, Kanetsune rephrased his initial demand as a proposition: "What if Japanese musicians went ahead and tried to sing in their Japanese voices just as they were (*nippon no koe no mama de*)?"

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<sup>4</sup> Narusawa Reisen, "Rajio kanwa," *Bungei shunjū* (January 1935).

<sup>5</sup> Kanetsune, "Nihon no koe to uta."

Here, Kanetsune's more innocuous phrasing still betrayed a number of premises in need of further questioning. First, by positing the "Japanese voice" as a natural, *a priori* alternative to a similarly given "Western" counterpart, Kanetsune tasked his readers with determining both the nature and basis of this Japanese voice, as well as its attendant boundaries. Was it presumed to be an instinctive, neutral default for native speakers, and if so, could it still be taught or learned? Could a singer like Kawahata Fumiko, for instance, claim to sing in her Japanese voice "as it was" (*koe no mama*), or did she exhibit the very "Western techniques of vocalization" that Kanetsune sought to critique? And what, for that matter, did this "Western" vocality entail? Did jazz fit within its parameters, or did it complicate them? From these definitional questions, meanwhile, followed the issue of how exactly Kanetsune hoped to implement his proposal. Given the mechanisms of performance, inscription, and entrainment through which the Western voice had secured its purported dominance in Japan, how did Kanetsune envision its undoing?

These questions were crucial insofar as Kanetsune's rhetoric, in spite of his protestations, seemed clearly to resonate with growing strains of nativist discourse—resurgent across art, philosophy, literature, and political thought—that viewed language and orality as the main conduit through which to articulate a unitary, ethnonational consciousness of "Japan." In poetry, the recitation movement had become infused by the late thirties with the ideological imperative (shared by scholars and state officials) to instill affective and even spiritual bonds between the population and the "national language" (*kokugo*). In turn, the folkloric appeal of an oral *gemeinschaft*, having been fortified in the face of colonial and capitalist crisis, found its scholarly extension in the field of "native ethnology" (*minzokugaku*), and the work of Yanagita Kunio and Orikuchi Shinobu in particular. Moreover, Kanetsune had himself figured formatively in both developments, and could therefore be viewed as an exponent—a forerunner even—to what

Tsuboi Hideto has described as a regressive "return to the voice" at the end of the 1930s. Reading further into Kanetsune's writing and research from the period, however, one finds evidence of a more complex and unruly sonic imagination at work: one which carved out an eccentric niche at the fringes of music, poetics, and acoustic science, and which thereby created a space to envision, I argue, something other than the "Japanese voice" it invoked.

### *I. Objectifying Sound*

In his 1950 autobiography *Unfinished Solo*, Kanetsune portrayed his path to music research and criticism as unfolding with a strange sense of inexorability, "as if by inertia (*zuruzuru bettari*) or some predetermined will."<sup>6</sup> Born in 1885 to a former samurai family in the castle town of Hagi, Yamaguchi Prefecture, Kanetsune described both his father and grandfather as keen aficionados of popular music (rare, he noted, among men of their caste) and recalled his grandfather entertaining the family over long evenings with tipsy renditions of regional folk tunes (*min'yō*), lyric ballads (*kouta*) and melodic narrative songs (*nagauta*). Accompanying him was Kanetsune's older sister, a *shamisen* and *koto* instructor, who later purchased a piano organ that would stir Kanetsune's interest in Liszt, Schubert, and Beethoven. Were such a musical household not formative enough, however, Kanetsune recalled his own musical consciousness taking shape through a series of contingent events across his early life—overheard melodies, chance meetings with musicians and teachers—such that his ultimate career in musicology seemed "less a product of internal design than of a confluence of exterior forces at work."<sup>7</sup>

Yet for all of his repeated references to predestination and "fate" (*unmei*), Kanetsune was far from passive. Through relatively obscure today, Kanetsune was a widely recognizable figure in Japan's interwar musical discourse, known as much for his foundational contributions to

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<sup>6</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, *Mikan no dokusō* (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1996), 97.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

comparative musicology and folklore studies as for his garrulous and often controversial presence in music and cultural criticism. In the former regard, Kanetsune's research into regional folk songs (or *min'yō*, hereafter) across the 1910s and 20s drew admiration from contemporaries like Yanagita Kunio, while his studies in psychoacoustics, phonetics, and the musical practices of East Asia preceded and often rivaled the better-known work of Tanabe Hisao (1883-1984), Japan's oft-held "first musicologist."<sup>8</sup> Unlike his peers, however, Kanetsune never held a formal university appointment, and instead relied on wealthy patrons, teachers' unions, and income from short-term teaching positions to fund his research. Furthermore, Kanetsune often overshadowed his own scholarly accomplishments by penning satirical essays that rankled the sensibilities of colleagues like Tanabe, and which earned him descriptors ranging from "oddball" (*kijin*) and "peculiar" (*ippu kawatta gakusha*) to "incendiary" (*bakudan otoko*).<sup>9</sup> Still, if this combination of irreverence and interdisciplinarity seemed to cost Kanetsune academic prestige, it earned him fans among established literati like Ōya Sōichi and Hagiwara Sakutarō, while his public wit impressed a younger generation of writers in turn; as the novelist Katō Shūichi later averred, "It was in the writing of Kanetsune Kiyosuke that I discovered literature."<sup>10</sup>

It was also at this intersection of music, science, and literature where Kanetsune first struck upon his interest in the voice. In 1907, Kanetsune enrolled in Kyoto Imperial University's newly-formed College of Letters (*bunka daigaku*), where he set out to study Latin, German poetry, and Greek mythology.<sup>11</sup> During his coursework, however, his interest drifted toward

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<sup>8</sup> For more on Tanabe Hisao (as well as his designation as Japan's first musicologist), see Suzuki Seiko, "Gagaku, Music of the Empire: Tanabe Hisao and musical heritage as national identity," translated by Karen Grimwade, *Cipango - French Journal of Japanese Studies* 5 (2016): 1-28.

<sup>9</sup> Gamō Mitsuko, ed., *Ongaku kakutōka Kanetsune Kiyosuke no shōgai* (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 2013), 540.

<sup>10</sup> Katō Shūichi, *A Sheep's Song: A Writer's Reminiscences of Japan and the World*, trans. Chia-Ning Chang (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 40.

<sup>11</sup> Recounting his decision to enroll in the College of Letters, Kanetsune also wryly recalled that the College, formed only one year prior, did not yet require an entrance examination for admission. See



lectures by the psychologist Matsumoto Matatarō (1865-1943), who had arrived at the university a year earlier to establish the second laboratory of psychology in Japan. A student of Japan's first psychologist Motora Yūjirō (1858-1912), Matsumoto was also a proponent of "new psychology," emergent at the turn of the century, which entailed the scientific study of the mind—in contrast to literary introspection or earlier philosophical speculations over the "inner self"—through an emphasis on experimental methods for analyzing observable behavior and sense perception.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Kanetsune learned, Matsumoto had inaugurated his own work in this field through the study of sound, having earned his doctorate from Yale in 1896 with a dissertation, supervised by E.W. Scripture, on the sensory perception of acoustic space.<sup>13</sup>

With this connection in mind, Kanetsune thought immediately of his own experience with music. In addition to taking in the vibrant performing arts of the old capital, Kanetsune frequently spent evenings in a tea shop above the Kagiya confectionery, listening to recordings of the *kouta* singer Fujiwara Shimeji.<sup>14</sup> Struck by the physical objectification of Fujiwara's voice—now visible as "grooves on a record"—Kanetsune wondered if its sound, and his relationship to it, could now be explicable beyond his own subjective impressions, and even

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Kanetsune, *Mikan no dokusō*, 91-93. Shortly after Kanetsune's arrival, the philosopher Nishida Kitarō relocated to Kyoto in 1910 (taking over Matsumoto Matatarō's position) and over the ensuing decade (with the arrival of philosopher Tanabe Hajime in 1919) turned the newly-formed College of Letters into the locus of the Kyoto School of philosophy (*Kyoto gakuha*). This formative period of the Kyoto School corresponds roughly to Kanetsune's period of graduate study at the university (1910 to 1925).

<sup>12</sup> See E.W. Scripture, *The New Psychology* (London: W. Scott, 1897). On the influence of New Psychology on literature in Japan, see Michael Bourdaghs, *A Fictional Commons: Natsume Sōseki and the Properties of Modern Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 55-60.

<sup>13</sup> Matsumoto Matatarō, "Researches on Acoustic Space," *Studies from the Yale Psychological Laboratory* 5 (1897): 1-75.

<sup>14</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Kyōdai zaigaku no koro," *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, January 23, 1940, 7. The *kouta* records that Kanetsune references here of the *geisha* singer Fujiwara Shimeji are likely the same ones produced in 1909 by the Japan-American Phonograph Corporation. These and other early recordings from Japan have been recently compiled by Robert Millis and released in 2021 on Sublime Frequencies as "Sound Storing Machines: The First 78rpm Records from Japan, 1903-1912" (SF 115).

measurable via the quantitative methods that Matsumoto described.<sup>15</sup> While dutifully completing his thesis on the role of the Fates in Greek mythology, then, Kanetsune embarked concurrently on his own experimental analysis of recorded *kouta*, which he published as "Thoughts on Shamisen Performance" (*shamisen honte kō*) in the university journal *Geibun* in 1911.

Upon reading the piece, Matsumoto informed Kanetsune that similar inquiries concerning music and psychoacoustics were well underway in Europe and America, but that applying such methods to the study of Japanese music and vocal arts would make a worthwhile topic for a doctoral dissertation. Echoing Matsumoto's appraisal, Kyoto University president Kikuchi Dairoku noted that no modern Japanese scholar had yet devoted such comprehensive scientific attention to the country's own musical traditions, and offered to put Kanetsune in touch with Tanaka Shōhei, an acoustician well-known in Japan and Germany for his research on harmonic and intonational systems.<sup>16</sup> Kanetsune obliged, and began his doctoral studies at Kyoto University shortly after his graduation. Not content to limit his purview to Japan, however, Kanetsune spent his first year of graduate school cobbling together resources to fund a short research trip to Korea in the winter of 1912, where he produced the first transcriptions of Korean religious, aristocratic, and popular music using Western staff notation.<sup>17</sup> Returning to Japan, Kanetsune then set to work producing and analyzing his own wax-cylinder recordings of Japanese *min'yō* over the next several years, carving out a place in the nascent field of native ethnology (*minzokugaku*) as he developed his own ambitious dissertation project on "The

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<sup>15</sup> Kanetsune, *Mikan no dokusō*, 99.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96.

<sup>17</sup> Lee Jisun notes that Kanetsune's research, published in 1912, can be regarded as the first comprehensive study of Korean music in Japan, preceding Tanabe Hisao's better-known work by roughly a decade. See Lee Jisun, "1910 nyeondae ilbon in ui Joseon eum ag yeongu: Kanetsune Kiyosuke ui 'Chousen no ongaku' eul jungsim eulo," *Korean Music History* 50 (2013): 387-390.

History, Psychology, and Physical Structure of Oriental Music and Language" (*Tōyō no ongaku oyobi gengo no rekishi to sono butsurijō shinrijō no kōzō*).<sup>18</sup>

In notating and analyzing *min'yō* recordings in terms of their pitch, tone quality, and rhythm, Kanetsune availed himself of resources at Kyoto University as well as the University of Tokyo Laboratory of Experimental Psychology (*Tōdai shinrigaku jikken shitsu*), which held various instruments for research in electroacoustics, including phonographic recording and playback devices, tuning forks, audiometers, resonators, and a "traveling tonometer" (*Reisetonometer*) that the musicologist Erich von Hornbostel had developed for field transcription.<sup>19</sup> With access to these instruments, Kanetsune sought to expand upon the efforts of scholars like Hornbostel and Otto Abraham to "objectively" notate and analyze non-European music, and their research on the "tone system of Japanese music" in particular.<sup>20</sup> To this end, however, Kanetsune decided that he would need firsthand exposure to the tools and methods that were being developed in Germany, and so resolved to study abroad at the University of Berlin.

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<sup>18</sup> Kanetsune submitted this title for his dissertation research in 1914, likely marking an early instance of "Oriental Music" (*tōyō ongaku*) as a coherently-bounded conceptual field of study in twentieth-century Japan. See Gamō, *Ongaku kakutōka Kanetsune Kiyosuke no shōgai*, 533-34. This is significant insofar as the coinage of the term *tōyō ongaku* is frequently attributed to Tanabe Hisao. For instance, Tsuge Gen'ichi writes that "the term *tōyō ongaku* appeared for the first time in 1929 as the title of Tanabe's chapter contributed to the book entitled *Bijutsu-Ongaku*." See Tsuge Gen'ichi, "Tōyō Ongaku Gakkai and Music Research in Japan," *Yearbook of Traditional Music* 32 (2000): 158. Tanabe's association with the term is understandable given his leading efforts in legitimizing the study of the subject within the Japanese academy, and his formation of the Tōyō Ongaku Gakkai in 1936. However, Tanabe's failure to credit Kanetsune in his accounts might be due at least partially by Tanabe's apparent antipathy to Kanetsune, dating back at least as far as 1917. Likewise, Kanetsune made little attempt to endear himself to other first-generation Japanese musicologists like Hayashi Kenzō and Kishibe Shigeo, and had also shifted his focus away from the concept of *tōyō ongaku* by 1936.

<sup>19</sup> This information is drawn from Hirokazu Yoshimura's comprehensive inventory of psychological apparatuses held at psychology laboratories in pre-WWII Japan. See Hirokazu Yoshimura, "Early Psychological Apparatuses Stored in Japan: Imported, Replicated, and Reformed Apparatuses before World War II," *Japanese Psychological Research* 58 (2016): 32-45.

<sup>20</sup> Otto Abraham and Erich M. von Hornbostel, "Studien über das Tonsystem und die Musik der Japaner," *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* (February 1903): 302-360. Abraham and Hornbostel based their study on the analysis of performances by Sada Yakko and Kawakami Otojirō's musical theater troupe in Berlin 1901. See Benjamin Steege, "Between Race and Culture: Hearing Japanese Music in Berlin," *History of the Humanities* 2, no. 2 (2017): 361-74.

To fund his sojourn, Kanetsune sought out the financial support of Ōhara Magosaburō (1880-1943), a wealthy businessman and philanthropist from Okayama Prefecture who spent much of the 1920s establishing private enterprises—the Ōhara Institute for Social Research (1919), the Kurashiki Labor Science Institute (1921), and the Ōhara Museum of Art (1930), among others—aimed at promoting cultural education and social welfare.<sup>21</sup> Appealing to Ōhara's avowed commitment to intercultural exchange, Kanetsune managed to secure enough funding to purchase a third-class ticket to Europe and reserve a modest stipend for his first several months. Arriving in Germany in March of 1922, he then enrolled as an auditing student at the University of Berlin, and used his connection with Tanaka Shōhei to contact Carl Stumpf's Berlin Institute of Experimental Psychology, where he began work as a research assistant in June.

Carl Stumpf (1848-1936), whose two-volume work *Tonpsychologie* ("Tone Psychology," 1883 and 1890) was by this time a foundational text in both psychology and acoustics, had formally retired from the University of Berlin by the time of Kanetsune's arrival. However, Stumpf continued to lecture at the university until 1927, and was actively engaged in research on speech and phonology in the early 1920s that yielded the studies *Singen und Sprechen* (Singing and speaking) in 1924 and *Die Sprachlaute* (The sounds of speech) in 1926. For Kanetsune, this systematic, empirical inquiry into the originary relationship between language, music, and vocal sound aligned precisely with his own research interests, and the intimate exposure to Stumpf's tools and methods at the Institute proved galvanizing in turn. Yet while Kanetsune had hoped to work more directly with Stumpf, the senior scholar seemed to have little time to spare for the young student from Japan, and reportedly noted the following to a colleague:

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<sup>21</sup> Gamō, *Ongaku kakutōka Kanetsune Kiyosuke*, 112-113. For more on Ōhara's philosophy of private philanthropy and civic activism, see Noriko Aso, *Public Properties: Museums in Imperial Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 129-138.

[Kanetsune's] is a mind that has room only for matter (*busshitsu*) and its physical laws. He has yet to truly understand the German philosophical spirit ('*deutsche philosophie*' *no seishin*). If he's not careful, his scholarship could prove to be dangerous.<sup>22</sup>

This brief, enigmatic critique left Kanetsune much to ponder. Perhaps his eagerness to pursue scientific research on the voice—to attend objectively to the oscillation of its sounds, the observable contours of its frequencies—came across as too positivistic, too adherent to the divisions between mind and matter that Stumpf sought to overcome in his own work. Indeed, Stumpf was unequivocal with regard to his own experimental research in "musical science" that "philosophy . . . always remained mistress of the house."<sup>23</sup> As a result, perhaps, Stumpf might have presumed that Kanetsune would be too quick to forgo the ethical imperatives of philosophy for the sake of empirical insight. Whatever the reason, though, Kanetsune took the criticism to heart. "Hearing that," he later recalled, "I gave deep thought to his words. Deep, deep thought. And I still do."<sup>24</sup>

Even without becoming Stumpf's close collaborator, however, Kanetsune's two years in Berlin proved enlightening both within and beyond the Institute. After his stipend ran out, Kanetsune supported himself through various musical odd jobs: one stint punching holes in player-piano rolls, and another transcribing and notating Japanese and Chinese recordings in the Prussian State Library's "Sound Department" (*Lautabteilung*).<sup>25</sup> In his free time, meanwhile, he attended lectures, concerts, and poetry recitals sponsored by the Communist Party of Germany

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<sup>22</sup> Kanetsune, *Mikan no dokusō*, 111.

<sup>23</sup> Carl Stumpf, "Autobiography [1924]," in *A History of Psychology in Autobiography* Vol. 1, ed. C. Murchison (Worcester: Clark University Press, 1930), 396.

<sup>24</sup> "Watashi wa, kono hanashi wo kiite, fukaku kangaeta. Ima mo, fukaku fukaku, kangaeteiru." Kanetsune, *Mikan no dokusō*, 111.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 103. On the formation of the Prussian State Library's "Sound Department" and its relationship to Carl Stumpf and Erich von Hornbostel's Berlin Phonogram Archive, see Britta Lange, trans. Benjamin Carter, "Archive, Collection, Museum: On the History of the Archiving of Voices at the Sound Archive of the Humboldt University," *Journal of Sonic Studies* 13 (online).  
<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/326465/326466>. Accessed on 23 April, 2022.

(KPD). As a devotee of the poet Ishikawa Takuboku (1886-1912) and a supporter of Yosano Akiko's pacifist stance during the First World War, Kanetsune was sympathetic to socialist causes. However, he was mainly interested in the events as spectacles of the voice. "During these recitals," he wrote, "I was utterly fascinated by the *sprechchor*: a chorus of voices that spoke instead of sang (合唱ではなく合話)." In one especially memorable instance, he recalled:

A laborer dressed in his work clothes, and about ten other men and women similarly dressed, performed Goethe's famous poem "Prometheus" as if they were reading it from the page. . . . At the last line of the poem, the point when Prometheus most bravely defies Zeus, a spotlight lit up brilliantly like the morning sun, illuminating a red flag raised at the center of the stage. At that moment, the audience of thousands sprang up at once and launched into "The Internationale." The sound of those voices—beautiful, full of joyous vitality—made my heart skip a beat. I had never witnessed anything like it.

After the performance, Kanetsune pondered how something like *sprechchor* might sound in Japanese. Given the preponderance of vowels and the relative weakness of consonant sounds in Japanese speech, he mused, the effect would be markedly different; less punctuated, more layered and diffuse. "Still, it would certainly make for a fresh new endeavor."<sup>26</sup>

In Kanetsune's retelling, the placement of this epiphanic moment so soon after Stumpf's secondhand admonition seems unsubtly to imply a sense of epistemic reckoning: an impulse to reconcile a prior posture of disenchanting materialism with something approaching Stumpf's ideal of a "beneficial relationship" between scientific and philosophical or aesthetic spirit, where philosophy and natural science represented distinct yet mutually enlightening enterprises.<sup>27</sup> For indeed, while Kanetsune had at first articulated his interest in vocal sound in the empirical idiom of "new psychology," Stumpf's own investigations better resembled what David Trippett describes, citing Andreas Daum, as "'strategies for enchantment' in the discourse of nineteenth-century science," or the pursuit of psychology as a "counter-narrative to humanity's

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<sup>26</sup> Kanetsune, *Mikan no dokusō*, 111-12.

<sup>27</sup> Stumpf, "Autobiography," 397.

desacralization as a linear process."<sup>28</sup> At the very least, it was this sense of enchantment that Kanetsune seemed to take with him upon his departure from Germany. "When Yosano Akiko left Europe," he wrote, "she described it as 'a fall from heaven' (*tengoku wo otsu*). For me, however, it was the opposite. . . . When I returned to Japan, I wanted to find heaven there."<sup>29</sup>

## II. A Critical Burlesque

After returning to Japan in April 1924, Kanetsune set about completing his dissertation, retitled as "A Consideration of Japanese Music" (*Nihon no ongaku ni tsuite no ichi kansatsu*), and received his doctorate from Kyoto University at the end of 1925. Notably, this change in the thesis title reflected a narrowing of focus from its previously transregional scope—a shift likely influenced by Kanetsune's growing interest in regional *min'yō* and other forms of local vernacular expression. In a tragic turn of events, however, the vast amount of *min'yō* materials that he had collected and stored in Tokyo prior to his trip to Germany—including 120 wax cylinder recordings that he had personally produced—were lost in the aftermath of the Great Kantō Earthquake, a development that Yanagita Kunio later lamented as a major setback to folk studies in Japan.<sup>30</sup> Rather than pursue a university position, then, Kanetsune redirected his writing and research over the next several years toward a broader general audience.

Ironically, this more accessible posture came at an opportune time in Japan. Over the mid-to-late twenties, a wave of populist energy and folk consciousness took hold among the country's intelligentsia, extending from the "neo-folk song" (*shin-min'yō*) boom to the proletarian arts movement across poetry, music, and theater. Energized by his experiences at the KPD events

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<sup>28</sup> Andreas Daum, "Science, politics, and religion: Humboldtian thinking and the transformation of civil society in Germany, 1830-1870," *Osiris* 17 (2002): 116, quoted in David Trippett, "Carl Stumpf: A reluctant revolutionary," in Carl Stumpf, *The Origins of Music*, ed. and trans. David Trippett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 28.

<sup>29</sup> Kanetsune, *Mikan no dokusō*, 115.

<sup>30</sup> Yanagita Kunio, *Min'yō oboegaki* (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1940), 6-7.

in Berlin, Kanetsune was especially keen to endear his work in folk studies to the proletarian cause, having earlier secured a generous research stipend from the *Keimeikai*, Japan's first teachers' union, for his research and field work.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, he maintained a feverish pace of publication in the late 1920s across a range of outlets, channeling the public spirit of the moment into research articles and critical essays for journals like *Minzoku geijutsu* (Folk arts) and *Kaizō* (Reconstruction) as well as newspaper editorials and books on music for general-interest readers.

It was also in this more public capacity that Kanetsune began to develop a reputation as an idiosyncratic and often irreverent writer, partial to humorous, conversational prose and equally prone to anecdotal digressions and ironic flourishes of hyperbole. Early reviews of works like his 1929 *Introduction to Music (Ongaku gairon)* found critics and fellow scholars split on the question of whether or not to take Kanetsune seriously; while one reviewer complained that the book was "neither systematic nor introductory," another praised it for "offering theoretical explanations in the style of a light chat" (*mandan wo nitte jitsu wa riron wo toku*).<sup>32</sup> But if much of this confusion arose from the jarring tension between his eminent title (*hakushi*, or "doctor") and his desultory tone, Kanetsune seemed eager to revel in the ambiguity. While often including erudite and strikingly esoteric references to science and aesthetics in his essays, he took frequent opportunities to remind readers of his broader ignorance on most topics. "I'm one of the masses" was a common refrain, as were repeated insistences that his arguments were not those of an independent scholar, but simply the musings of a "humble music lover." In this way, if detractors sought to dismiss him as a dilettante, Kanetsune was even quicker to cast himself as such.

At the same time, Kanetsune used this rhetorical positioning to provoke a lively and often contentious series of debates over the role of music within the broader movement for proletarian

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<sup>31</sup> On the *Keimeikai*, see Kaori Okano and Motonori Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan: Inequality and Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 24.

<sup>32</sup> Gamō, *Ongaku kakutōka Kanetsune Kiyosuke*, 538.



arts. In February 1930, Kanetsune published an essay in the progressive journal *Kaizō* on "The Class-character of Music," in which he proposed to offer a historical-materialist account of the economic and institutional conditions that structured the production, performance, and reception of musical sound. Whether with regard to the reliance of major symphonies on capital infusions, or in light of the steep economic preconditions for accessing much less appreciating European classical music (concert tickets, music lessons, and in many cases a more-than-passing knowledge of European languages), Kanetsune opined that there was "no question whatsoever" that music possessed a class-character (*kaikyūsei*), and that the prevailing musical idiom in Japan (Western art music) was one that catered accordingly to bourgeois tastes.<sup>33</sup> However, insofar as the "inherent characteristics of music itself (*ongaku sono mono no honshitsu*)"—namely the various relations of tonality expressed in scales and intervals (*onkai* and *onsei*)—could not be taken as the exclusive property of a certain class, Kanetsune argued that the very sounds that had been hitherto organized to suit "bourgeois pleasures" might still be dialectically repurposed and recontextualized in the interests of the proletariat.

In terms of its general premise, this critique played as an extended riff on the Marxist philosopher Tanabe Hajime's essay "On the so-called 'class character of science,'" which had appeared in the previous month's issue of *Kaizō*. But where Tanabe's essay tasked social scientists with recognizing the class position of their own discipline within the larger social structure it sought to critique, Kanetsune sought further to elaborate how the uniquely physical and affective properties of musical sound might abet the broader pursuit of class struggle within the superstructural domain of the arts.<sup>34</sup> In particular, Kanetsune argued that *min'yō* and work

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<sup>33</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Ongaku geijutsu no kaikyūsei ni tsuite," in *Kanetsune Kiyosuke chosakushū*, Vol. 5, eds. Gamō Mitsuko, Tsuchida Eizaburō, et al. (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 2008-10), 4.

<sup>34</sup> In his essay, Tanabe summarizes his thesis as such: "As a discipline, social science (generally speaking) takes society as a whole as its object of analysis. However, in referring to 'society as a whole,' one refers

songs (*rōdōka*) represented the de facto musical expressions of the proletariat, insofar as the logic of their rhythmic and melodic organization tended to align closest with the embodied patterns of labor and livelihood that shaped the "mental and emotional lives" (*seishin seikatsu*)—and therefore the aural preferences and dispositions—of the emergent working class. However, he granted that there were still enough formal similarities between "proletarian" and "bourgeois" music to allow for the former to incorporate and develop upon certain melodic and stylistic conventions of the latter, provided that this dialectical syncretism followed in tandem with the lyrical incorporation of "poetry infused with sufficient class consciousness."<sup>35</sup>

Taking the notoriety of recent popular songs (*zokka*) like "Tokyo March" as an example, Kanetsune also noted that "some moralistic old professors" had attempted to ban popular song lyrics that they deemed objectionable (with Saijō Yaso's lyrics as their prime target) and replace them with more "patriotic" content extolling values like *jingi chūkō* (humanity, justice, loyalty, and filial piety) and *kinken chochiku* (thrift and savings). "Of course, nobody thinks this sort of thing would actually work," Kanetsune opined. "If such songs were actually produced . . . the only people actually singing them would be traveling salesmen hawking insurance and postal savings accounts." In contrast, Kanetsune felt that if folk and popular songs featured lyrics that

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to a society that is ordered by the installation of one particular class into a position of dominance, and the attendant subordination of all other classes in turn. As such, if a theory which seeks to critique this social condition seeks simultaneously to maintain its own position within a certain status quo, that theory will inevitably serve to abet policies that benefit the interests and security of the ruling class. . . . Because social science is possessed of this disposition, it cannot rid itself of its sociohistorical constraints, but must emerge as a class science that seeks to free itself from the injustices of the present social structure. Once that liberation has been realized, and that class has become the dominant one, the theory of the attendant discipline will reach its logical stage of maturity. This is the class-character of science." Tanabe Hajime, "Iwayuru 'kagaku no kaikyūsei' ni tsuite," *Kaizō* (January 1930), quoted in *Tanabe Hajime zenshū*, Vol. 14 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1964), 210, 212-13.

<sup>35</sup> Kanetsune, "Ongaku geijutsu no kaikyūsei ni tsuite," 26.

bespoke the actual experiences and feelings of the ever-growing proletariat, their development and circulation "would surely play a leading role in the class struggle."<sup>36</sup>

In the wake of its publication, the essay prompted a swift backlash within Japan's music establishment (*gakudan*). Hattori Ryūtarō, a music critic and director of the NHK orchestra, emphatically rejected the premise of the essay, arguing that musical art was, in its essence, possessed of an "absoluteness" (*zettaisei*) that superseded, and thus rendered incidental, any consideration of its surrounding material or economic conditions.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, the composer Iida Tadazumi granted the validity of discussing the division of labor between performers, composers, teachers, and industry personnel, but balked at Kanetsune's suggestion that certain melodic and harmonic progressions were, if not ontologically "bourgeois," redolent enough of a bourgeois musical habitus to signal or signify the latter's values by association. To this, Iida echoed Hattori's formalist stance, adding that musical sounds did not strictly possess meaningful semantic "content" (*naiyō*), and therefore could not be reduced to (or governed by) the signifying logic of language.<sup>38</sup> Based on this reasoning, however, Iida concluded on a conciliatory note that

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 26-28.

<sup>37</sup> See Nakai Shunji, "Ongaku no kaikyūsei ni tsuite: Kanetsune hakushi no shoron wo bakushiawasete, Nii, Hattori ryōshi no kenkai ni oyobu," *Ongaku Sekai* (April 1930): 16-17.

<sup>38</sup> In this section of his argument, Iida concedes examples like program music and other works that incorporate poetic language. Likewise, he notes that musical sound, although separate from language, does nonetheless aspire to an analogous form of coherence in "the formal relationships between notes." Still, "in spite of efforts in modern symbolist composition to render it otherwise," he argues, "music does not entail a search for concrete validity (*datōsei*) . . . and rather is furnished with unique characteristics that cannot be likened or explained with reference to writing or script." Iida Tadazumi, "Kaikyū ongaku no mondai: shakai no jōbu kōzō toshite no ongaku ni tsuite," *Ongaku sekai* (April 1930): 35-36. In this sense, Iida comes close to anticipating Adorno's later argument that the relationship between music and language represents a perpetual dialectic in that music "without any signification . . . would resemble an acoustical kaleidoscope," but that music still refuses to "pay the price of unambiguousness, which has gone over to the signifying languages." See Theodor W. Adorno, "Music, Language, and Composition" (1956), trans. Susan H. Gillespie, in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 114.

musical sound was therefore transcendent enough of vulgar ideology to stir higher-order emotions that might ultimately "yield the liberatory spirit necessary for class struggle."<sup>39</sup>

Here, Iida's belief in a certain transcendent quality of musical sound was one that Kanetsune, in spite of his provocative presentation, seemed at least in part to share. For this very reason, however, Kanetsune's essay also drew pointed responses from a number of leftist critics advocating for a more diverse repertoire of proletarian music in turn. The critic Senke Ryōhei, for instance, objected to Kanetsune's "rather vague" notion that *min'yō* and "work songs" represented the "closest thing to a truly proletarian music," citing Otto Klemperer's well-received performance of *The Threepenny Opera* in Moscow as evidence that "works of higher artistry are neither foreign nor mysterious" to the working class. Moreover, Senke criticized Kanetsune's discussion of popular music (*zokka*) for failing to devote adequate attention to genres like jazz, the popularity of which further confirmed (for Senke) that "the people [were] far from satisfied by work songs, folk ballads, and other forms of *min'yō*."<sup>40</sup>

At the same time, other Marxist critics felt that Kanetsune had not taken his materialist framework far enough. In particular, the writer Nakai Shunji argued that Kanetsune's apparent belief in the inherent capacity of musically-organized sounds to "transcend" class in their formal relations—similar to Tanabe's faith in the "class-transcendent essence" of the natural sciences (*honshitsujō ni chōkaikyūteki-na mono*)—derived from a fundamental misidentification of "abstracted forms" with "concrete sound."<sup>41</sup> In other words, while sounds could be assigned or associated with certain symbolic or "abstracted" (*chūshō sareta*) formal values, such as the note

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<sup>39</sup> Iida, "Kaikyū ongaku no mondai," 35-36.

<sup>40</sup> Senke Ryōhei, "Puroretaria no tame no ongaku to sono undō," *Ongaku Sekai* (April 1930): 40-41.

<sup>41</sup> Here, Nakai refers to Tanabe's contention that the natural sciences, "while class-bound in their emergence, are essentially transcendent of class (*shizen kagaku ga 'hasseijō kaikyūteki de arinagara, honshitsujō ni chōkaikyūteki-na mono de aru'*)." See Nakai, "Ongaku no kaikyūsei ni tsuite," 19.

value of C for instance, such values could not be considered identical or universally fixed to actually-existing sounds. Moreover, Nakai argued:

Insofar as the concretely-embodied (*gushō*) sound of the note C first enters the ear via a specific organ of emission, be it a human voice or some other instrument, its audible trace inevitably bears the material imprint of that organ. Thus every sound, by virtue of its very audibility, has a concrete, objective situatedness in the world, and therefore cannot be heard or thought apart from the economic conditions [and] relations of its production.

In this sense, musical sounds were not merely manifestations of universal forms, but were in fact always situated, contested, and thus political, insofar as they owed their very audibility to materially-grounded modes of production and reception. As such, Nakai continued, "to assume the actual, concrete existence of an abstracted form like "C" would be to assume the existence of an inaudible music (*kikoenai ongaku*)," one that could somehow resonate without being actually played, sung, or even heard. "Such thinking has no objective basis in acoustics, much less economics, politics, or historical materialism," he concluded, but was merely another expression of the bourgeois desire to assert the universality of its own subjective values.<sup>42</sup>

Kanetsune, meanwhile, seemed to take the criticism in stride. In a response entitled "Who will discover the class-character of music," he addressed Nakai's critique directly, noting that he "put no stock in the notion of such purely 'eternal truths' (*eien no shinri*), much less ones that could take on substantive form (*hontai*) in music or elsewhere," but that he could not therefore conclude, as Nakai did, that "bourgeois and proletarian listeners hear the same C note (or C-D-C melody) differently." Such a hypothesis, he explained, would require further empirical research, insofar as the sensory perception of sound depended on a host of physical and psychological factors that could not be reduced to class position. Still, Kanetsune did admit to certain lingering debts in his thinking to Romantic-era critics like Eduard Hanslick, who held that "music could

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

have no inherent meaning apart from the organization of its sounds."<sup>43</sup> This brand of formalist aesthetics, he conceded, did not allow for substantive considerations of class politics, and had therefore to be revisited in the present moment. To this task, however, Kanetsune was encouraged by the impassioned responses that his essay had provoked; having intended to create a space for such debate to unfold, he was "eager to hear to what emergent scholars had to say."<sup>44</sup>

Through this charitable gesture, Kanetsune seemed to offer readers a furtive glimpse into his critical strategy. That is, if his arguments appeared both overly provocative and under-theorized, or jarring in their juxtaposition of high theory and lowbrow rhetoric, such presentation may well have been purposeful: interpretable as an attempt to enact the very challenge to bourgeois values that he proposed. In an essay entitled "The Death of the Master," Kanetsune argued that the most insidious aspect of bourgeois musical propriety (and what had prompted the *Kaizō* essay) was its valorization of individual virtuosity, and the attendant deification of so-called "master" (*meijin*) performers and composers.<sup>45</sup> Kanetsune noted that such impulses reached a peak in 1927, the hundredth anniversary of Beethoven's death, with critics speculating over whether composers like Strauss, Stravinsky, or Paul Whiteman might be considered "the next Beethoven." For Kanetsune, it was precisely this kind of mentality that demanded critique. However, insofar as the erudite critic was as much a product of the bourgeois imagination as the virtuoso musician, his own mode of criticism could not simply flatter or reproduce the same pieties it sought to upend. Rather than staging a display of critical "mastery," then, Kanetsune seemed instead to perform a burlesque—whether the putting-on of a "light mood" in the classical

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<sup>43</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Ongaku no kaikyūsei wo tare ga hakken suru ka," *Asahi shinbun*, May 31, 1930.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Meijin no metsubō," in *Kanetsune Kiyosuke chōsakushū*, Vol. 5 (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 2008-10), 83-105. My use of the term "burlesque" is also indebted to conversations with the ethnomusicologist Hosokawa Shūhei, who used the term in a similar fashion to describe Kanetsune's critical approach.

sense, or a grotesque mélange of high and low, Kanetsune aimed not to impress but to gleefully provoke, or as Nakai Shunji put it, "to shake the *gakudan* out of their slumber."<sup>46</sup>

In this regard, Kanetsune staged his most notorious performance with the March 1935 essay "Superstitions of the Music World," or what became known in the press as the "useless pianist theory" (*pianisuto muyōron*). The essay was the result of Kanetsune's more extensive research into acoustics in the early thirties, during which time he established a partnership with the physicist and acoustician Taguchi Ryūzaburō (1903-1971). Based at Tokyo's National Institute for Science and Chemistry (*rikagaku kenkyūsho*), Taguchi was at the time researching the use of sound-on-film technology to analyze speech and phonology—a method Kanetsune hoped to incorporate into his electroacoustic analysis of *min'yō* performance.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, however, the two developed an ancillary project on the acoustical properties of the piano, and the specific question of whether or not the more refined playing techniques of master pianists—their so-called "touch"—had any influence on the instrument's physical sound.

In order to conduct their experiments, they recorded and analyzed the sounds of performances ranging from that of the well-known virtuoso Iguchi Motonari to that of an automated player-piano, and used high-speed photography (*chōkō sokudo shashin*) to capture and compare the striking of the piano keys, the depression of the dampers, the action of the

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<sup>46</sup> Nakai, "Ongaku no kaikyūsei ni tsuite," 16.

<sup>47</sup> In using graphic forms and methods for phonetic analysis, a number of methods were in use in the 1930s, including E.W. Scripture's "kymographic" method of transcribing waveforms directly onto prepared paper, either from microphone input or from phonographic playback of speech recordings. Meanwhile, the ability to record sound waves directly onto photographic film was viewed as far more convenient and accurate, and allowed for comparative audiovisual analysis. However, it was frequently noted (as late as 1941) that the use of sound-on-film technology was "prohibitively expensive for most phonetic laboratories." As such, the availability of such resources at Taguchi's laboratory would have been a boon for Kanetsune's research. See R-M.S. Heffner, "An Adjunct to the Graphic Method," *American Speech* 16, no. 1 (1941): 33.

hammers, and other variables of movement.<sup>48</sup> In so doing, they determined that the only variable that the pianist had control over was the speed with which he touched the keys, but that no degree of technical flare could affect the overall timbre of the instrument; once the key was struck, it was the hammer that was responsible for producing the tone.<sup>49</sup> Because of this, they concluded, the "touch" of the pianist, for all of its associations with intention, discernment, and subtle finesse, could not physically make a piano *sound* better, or indeed any different, than any other method of triggering the hammer. Or, in Kanetsune's more flamboyant phrasing, "Whether Iguchi plays it, or whether a cat jumps on the keys, the piano's *sound* remains the same."<sup>50</sup>

For Kanetsune, such a notion was liberating. Given the onerous expectations placed on "proper" training and the years of bodily discipline (and discouragement) involved in upholding the superstitious notion of "touch," this acoustic revelation served to actualize his hope in "The Death of the Master" that younger generations might dispense with such myths and "become [their] own Beethovens" in turn. For the *gakudan*, however, the findings were tantamount to heresy. Iguchi Motonari issued a statement denouncing the results, and claimed that he was tricked into participating in the experiment. Meanwhile, scholars and critics assailed the project for maligning the pianist as "no better than a parrot or a machine," and for celebrating the deplorable "mechanization" of musical performance that seemed already underway in the era of

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<sup>48</sup> ---, "Pianisuto muyōron, sūshiki-iride happyō ongakukai ni tōjita 'bakudan dōgi' ronsen iyoiyo honbutai e, ensōka wa ōmu saisei to mohō nomi: Kanetsune-hakushi kataru," *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, March 22, 1935.

<sup>49</sup> Similar experiments can be found elsewhere during the interwar period, including a number of American studies on the question of the pianist's "touch" in the mid-1920s. However, though these earlier studies largely reached the same conclusions as Taguchi and Kanetsune, they tended to be more generous in their assessment of the role of the pianist in facilitating the creation of chord-based tonal colors that depended on the manifold ways one could combine key strokes and the use of the dampers to generate unique overtones correspondent to transitions between chord voicings. For instance, see Donald N. Ferguson, "The 'Secret' of the Pianist's Beautiful Touch," *The Musical Quarterly*, 10, no. 3 (1924): 384-399.

<sup>50</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Ongakukai no meishin" [Superstitions of the music world], collected in *Zankyō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1937), 315.



reproducible sound. The climax of the controversy would not occur until April 11th, however, when a group of dissenters including Iguchi, Tanabe Hisao, Horiuchi Keizō, and Nomura Kōichi met Kanetsune for a debate at a cafe in Ginza, which a reporter captured in surreal detail:

The critics and musicians argued that both live performance and the reproduction thereof had their own respective values, but that Kanetsune was wrong to rely only on acoustic research to discuss something as sonically complex as music. . . . However, Kanetsune, who had steeled his nerves with several rounds of beer, was unfazed by his opponents, and ended up confounding and deflecting their arguments in his typically eccentric manner. . . . Horiuchi Keizō, who had ducked out of a lecture to attend the meeting, ultimately left in frustration, saying 'This is not a discussion.'

After another circuitous two hours, the article described the debate as ending in a "draw," with Kanetsune, "still in high spirits, adjourning the meeting with a rather baffling final word: 'I am young, and I want to spread my wings and fly freely!'"<sup>51</sup>

With this closing statement, Kanetsune seemed to acknowledge that his latest provocation had likely extinguished any lingering chances of gaining acceptance in the *gakudan*. Still, his interest in acoustics went deeper than simply riling his colleagues. Indeed, while Kanetsune had seemed reluctant to fully embrace the historical-materialist perspective that he had earlier invoked in the "Class-character of Music," the controversy of the "useless pianist theory" revealed that the material study of acoustics presented an equally potent framework through which to listen past the aesthetic horizons of *gakudan* toward a wider repertoire of sonic and social agency. To this latter task, if his focus on the piano had mainly to do with dismantling the bourgeois myths of the music world, it was in the realm of vocal performance where Kanetsune located the more constructive dimension of his project, specifically as it concerned the "emergent

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<sup>51</sup> ---, "'Boku wa wakaindesu' to ronteki wo kemuri ni maku: Rei no 'pianisuto omō-ron' de watariau Kanetsune-hakushi," *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, April 12, 1935, 13.

arts of the emergent class."<sup>52</sup> At the same time, however, it was also in this realm where Kanetsune proposed his riskiest rhetorical gambit: a theory of the "Japanese voice."

### *III. The Structure of Japanese Language and Song*

If Kanetsune's case for *min'yō* as the de facto music of the "emergent class" (*shinkō kaikyū*) was met with skepticism by many advocates of the proletarian arts, what did resonate was his interest in the voice. On this point, a number of critics and composers were in fact sympathetic to the value of *min'yō*, insofar as many believed that primarily vocal art forms like folk songs, lieds (*kakyoku*), and poetic recitations held a distinctly embodied and affective charge that could appeal "directly" to the masses without excessive orchestration. Even Senke Ryōhei, who felt that *min'yō* offered too limited a musical palette for modern proletarian tastes, nonetheless shared Kanetsune's attraction to the power of *sprechchor* to rouse a chorus of spirited voices. Moreover, the proletarian composer Ono Miyakichi noted that *min'yō* offered an eminently practical vehicle for raising class consciousness, in that they represented the most visceral expression of "song" (*uta*) as an immediate extension of everyday life. "Indeed," he suggested, "all that is required to sing *min'yō* is a human throat."<sup>53</sup>

For Kanetsune, then, vocal expression became a logical site for both analysis as well as advocacy. In the inaugural 1930 issue of the left-wing poetry journal *Shi-genjitsu* [Poetry-reality], Kanetsune made a case for poetic chant (*rōgin*) as a method of bringing "emergent poetry" to the "masses" (*taishū*). "Emergent classes seek out emergent arts," he wrote, and while chanted poetry "dated back to the time of Sappho," such a form could likewise yield expressive practices "at once ancient and brand new"—grounded in the primeval power of the bardic

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<sup>52</sup> The phrase "emergent class" (*shinkō kaikyū*) is one that Kanetsune frequently employed, in some cases in explicit reference to the proletariat, but in other cases to gesture more generally to the "masses" (*taishū*). See, for instance, Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Shi no rōgin," *Shi-genjitsu* (June 1930): 156-157.

<sup>53</sup> Ono Miyakichi, "Puroretaria to ongaku," *Ongaku Sekai* (April 1930): 15.

tradition, yet imminently resonant with the social realities of the present. For instance, Kanetsune likened the potential of *rōgin* to that of the *sprechchor* and *sprechgesang* (intoned speech) techniques he had encountered in Germany, where the latter could be employed to stirring effect in proletarian venues (like the KPD concert) or in more "complex" musical settings like Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*. Furthermore, by occupying a middle zone between speech and song, Kanetsune argued that *rōgin*-esque chanting offered a template for new intonational and rhythmic inventions that could heighten both the semantic (*naiyō*) and sensuous (*kankakujō*) dimensions of words in a manner distinct from either speaking or singing.<sup>54</sup>

In this sense, Kanetsune's proposal echoed the efforts of the burgeoning recitation movement to develop forms of "vernacular enchantment" that could enliven poetry's popular appeal beyond the printed venues of the *shidan*. As described in Chapter Two, for instance, poets like Tomita Saika and Kitahara Hakushū engaged extensively with the affordances of recording and broadcast in order to cultivate a mode of demotic recitation (*rōdoku*) that still evinced an elevated, incantatory aura. Yet while such efforts focused on the adaptation and renovation of existing poetic forms, Kanetsune was more intent on grasping how speech and song related to one another at a fundamental level, and how a better understanding of this relationship might aid in the development of "new art forms" attuned to the shifting rhythms of the contemporary life and labor.<sup>55</sup> To this task, his research on the acoustics of *min'yō* offered a crucial entry point.

After losing his materials in the Kantō earthquake, Kanetsune spent nearly a decade pursuing other research before a second financial grant from Ōhara Magosaburō allowed him to begin earnestly rebuilding the *min'yō* project in the mid-30s. With this support, Kanetsune was able to hire two research assistants, Miyauchi Tamako and Sakai Emiko, with whom he set about

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<sup>54</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Shi no rōgin," *Shi-genjitsu* (June 1930): 156-157.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

collecting, recording, and analyzing dozens of folk-singing samples from the Kantō area with access to the same sound-on-film transcription tools that he and Taguchi Ryūzaburō had utilized in their research on the acoustics of the piano. As such, while Kanetsune had relied in his earlier experiments on E.W. Scripture's 1906 method for magnifying and tracing the "speech curves" inscribed on phonograph recordings, he was now able to record the voices of performers directly onto celluloid film, which allowed for more detailed rendering and analysis of the samples' waveforms.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, the sound quality of gramophone records had so improved over the intervening decade that Kanetsune was able to extract and analyze the waveforms of folk and popular song recordings with a considerably higher degree of accuracy. With this more reliable sonic information, he then employed the Fourier series to plot and render detailed graphic visualizations of the melodic, rhythmic, and timbral contours of each voice sample.

On the basis of these more fruitful experimental methods, Kanetsune quickly realized the potential of the project to take on a more ambitious scope. For while his initial goal had been to record and analyze a representative cross-section of *min'yō* recordings, the relative crudity of earlier "graphic methods" for both notation as well as electroacoustic transcription meant that the pre-1923 project's value was largely in archival preservation—a tragically ironic assessment given its ultimate fate. By contrast, the technology available to phonetic research by the mid-30s allowed one to visualize the oscillations of the voice at a level of accuracy and detail unavailable even to the naked ear. As such, Kanetsune could envision a project extending from the formal analysis of *min'yō* to encompass a comparative study that had been previously confined to the realm of speculation. Namely, he wondered how the waveforms of a given phrase or vocal melody might differ depending on whether it was sung, spoken, or recited, and what the

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<sup>56</sup> See Kanetsune Kiyosuke, *Nihon no uta to kotoba no kōzō* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1938), 167. On E.W. Scripture's method, see Thor Magnusson, *Sonic Writing: Technologies of Material, Symbolic, and Signal Inscriptions* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), 130-31.

differences or similarities across these three modes might reveal about the underlying musicality of the Japanese language itself.

Kanetsune published the results of this broader inquiry in 1938 as *The Structure of Japanese Language and Song* [*Nihon no uta to kotoba no kōzō*], in which he claimed to demonstrate the fundamental link between the intonation (*sprachmelodie*) of Japanese speech and the basic attributes of *min'yō*-derived musical melody. To explicate this link, Kanetsune had expanded his source base from *min'yō* to include recordings of school songs (*shōka*), prose readings, and recitations of *tanka* and *haiku*, the graphic visualizations of which he compared to a selection of *min'yō* melodies in terms of intonation, rhythm, and accent. On the basis of this audiovisual data, he noted that the refrains of folk songs displayed melodic and metrical patterns that were largely correspondent to the intonational and rhythmic characteristics of poetic verse as well as "non-musical" samples of speech and recitation. Likewise, forms of "prosaic" (*inbun*) vocalization and "everyday speech" (*futsū no kaiwa*) seemed to differ from sung forms more in degree than in type; while spoken phrases lacked the degree of rhythmic fixity and pitch range of sung melody, they still possessed intonational tendencies—the linked contours of vowel sounds, for instance—that carried over in the transition from speech to song (see Fig. 3 & 4). As such, Kanetsune proposed that Japanese folk song could be regarded as an extension of recitative form (*rōdoku*), and thus "a variety of the Japanese language itself" (*nippon no kotoba no isshu*).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Kanetsune, *Nihon no uta to kotoba no kōzō*, 175.

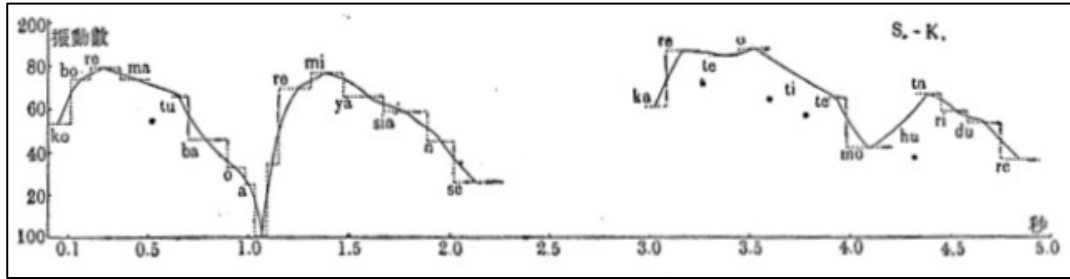


Fig. 3

"Dodoitsu melody" (*Kobore matsuba wo*), recited in "prosaic style" by SK, a printmaker from Tokyo

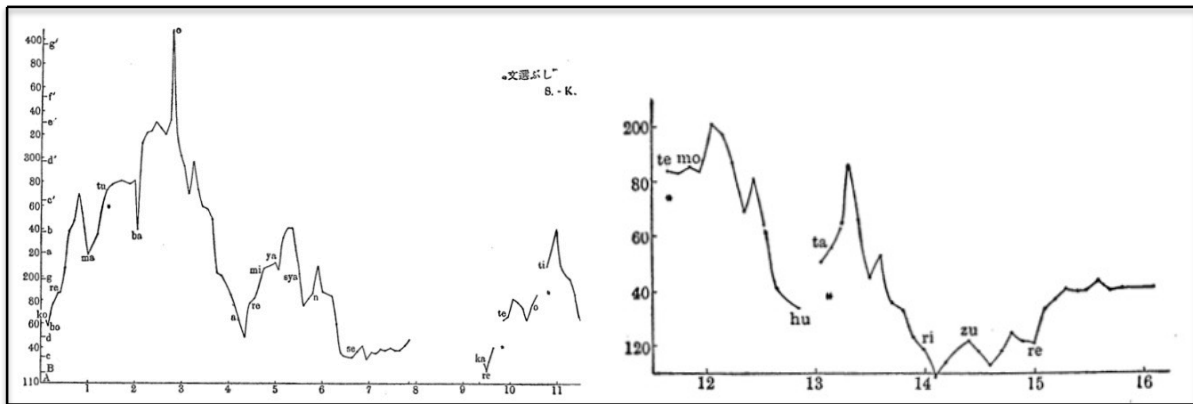


Fig. 4

"Dodoitsu melody" (*Kobore matsuba wo*), sung by SK<sup>58</sup>

In examining these relations between language and song, Kanetsune acknowledged the clear debt of his work to predecessors like Herbert Spencer, Karl Bücher, and his own mentor Carl Stumpf. For instance, Spencer's 1858 essay "The origin and function of music" translated the views of philosophers like Herder and Rousseau into the language of evolutionary theory to argue (*pace* Charles Darwin) that musical expression derived from the tonal characteristics of the speaking voice in excited or aroused states, making song a form of "emotional speech intensified and systematized."<sup>59</sup> Likewise, Karl Bücher's 1898 work *Labor and Rhythm* (*Arbeit und*

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 109, 197.

<sup>59</sup> Herbert Spencer, "The origin and function of music," *Essays: Scientific, Political, and Speculative* (London: Longman, et al., 1858), 359-84. In contrast to Spencer, Charles Darwin argued the reverse position in his 1871 book *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*—in brief, that human language evolved from song, and the imitation of animal courtship sounds in particular.

*rhythmus*) proposed that the rhythmic basis for music and verse arose from the embodied movements and vocal refrains of communal labor—a premise that Kanetsune cited in framing *min'yō* and work songs (*rōdōka*) as the most elemental forms of Japanese musical expression.

Strikingly, however, Kanetsune's thesis diverged markedly from that of Stumpf, who argued in *The Origins of Music* (1911) that music and language could not be conceived along a developmental continuum, either from language to music or vice versa. Notwithstanding the many similarities between speech and song, Stumpf held that musical expression differed qualitatively from spoken language in that singing required definite tonal intervals—"fixed steps"—whereas speech was characterized by unfixed, "continually gliding pitch movement." Moreover, while the intonational contours of speech might seem to approach melody, Stumpf argued that the capacity to correlate relationships between fixed intervals marked a modality of thinking that differed fundamentally from that of linguistic communication. As such, he averred, "that which essentially separates music from speech cannot be extracted from speech."<sup>60</sup>

For Kanetsune, Stumpf's thesis held true as far as "Western vocal music" was concerned. Indeed, he noted, singers in the European classical tradition tended to "use their throats to emulate instruments" (namely the piano) whose intervals were necessarily separate and "discontinuous." Likewise, his graphic renderings of Western soprano-style singing showed that the shapes of vowel sounds differed markedly between spoken and sung registers, further suggesting (contra Spencer) that singing and speech occupied qualitatively separate domains.<sup>61</sup> However, Kanetsune felt that Stumpf's framework failed to account for the vocal techniques of Japanese folk singing, and thus autochthonous Japanese vocality more broadly, in that *min'yō*

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<sup>60</sup> Carl Stumpf, *The Origins of Music*, ed. and trans. David Trippett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 58-63. In Stumpf's view, the origin of music lay not in spoken language, but in vocal practices of "signaling" from long distances, and from the evolving ability to separate and "correlate" the sustained pitches of different signal cries.

<sup>61</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Nihon no koe to uta."

vocality did not attempt to resemble "instrumental" sound, but instead employed the tremulous accent patterns and "continually gliding pitch movement" of spoken language. Rather than abiding by the "scalar" logic of Western music, in other words—where the voice advanced stepwise from one note to another "as if along the rungs of a ladder"—he argued that Japanese singing followed the "vector" logic of speech, where the voice unfolded "in a fundamentally continuous (*renzoku*) fashion" along an unbroken temporal line of intonational "peaks and valleys" (*yama to tani*).<sup>62</sup> Owing to this sense of continuity, one had therefore to conceive Japanese vocal music not in terms of discrete spatial intervals, but rather in terms of the more fluid, durational "melody of language" (*kotoba no merodii*).

In *The Origins of Music*, Stumpf did grant that forms of "intoned" and monophonic "sing-song speech" (*singendes sprechen*) were widely practiced among "primitive peoples," as were techniques like portamento, or the "extensive sliding of the voice." Likewise, he admitted, E.W. Scripture's graphic study in *Speech Curves* showed that even the best singers displayed some degree of "precarious fluctuation" on a held note, making a truly sustained pitch virtually impossible in practice. Nonetheless, he insisted that it was still in the "spirit and rules of music" for singers to aspire to the establishment of fixed pitches.<sup>63</sup> On the first point, Kanetsune concurred with Stumpf's evolutionary premise, granting that Japanese music was by this standard

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<sup>62</sup> Kanetsune, *Nihon no uta to kotoba no kōzō*, 129, 167-69. Here, Kanetsune's image of the "ladder" plays on the German word for "scale," *tonleiter*, or tone-ladder. Moreover, Kanetsune's doubts regarding the applicability of Western *leitern* (scales or "ladders of use") to account for the ordering of the Japanese tonal system recall Hornbostel and Abraham's 1903 work "Studies on the tone system of Japanese music," in which the two consulted Isawa Shūji's theory of Pythagorean intonation to account for the basis of a "Japanese scale." However, based on their source music—the recorded Berlin performances of Sada Yakko and the Kawakami troupe in 1901—they were forced to conclude that "the Pythagorean intonation intended in theory was replaced in practice with a kind of temperament left ultimately to the musicians' own ear," and was thus "inevitably imperfect" in rendering an accurate notation of the performance. See Abraham and Hornbostel, "Studien über das Tonsystem und die Musik der Japaner," 317.

<sup>63</sup> Stumpf, *The Origins of Music*, 58-63. Stumpf also noted that portamento and vibrato were of course widely practiced in Western musical traditions as well, but served to embellish phrasing that otherwise adhered to discrete intervalic movement.



a "primitive" tradition. However, this did not suggest to Kanetsune that such a tradition was therefore un-musical, but rather that Stumpf's thinking was so constrained by the spatial and "scalar" logic of Western notation that he could not properly grasp the musicality of vocal traditions that evaded representation via the five-line staff. Indeed, the types of microtonal inflections that characterized Japanese vocal techniques—portamento, *yure* (wavering tone), *kobushi* (melodic embellishment) and other flickering undulations of pitch—could not be adequately rendered simply as discrete notes, and thus demanded a system of transcription that could better express their subtle nuance and unfolding, continuous quality.

Here, Kanetsune stopped short of acknowledging that the very system he was after seemed already to present itself on the page. In illustrating the inadequacy of the Western staff to express the intonational lineaments of the "Hachiōji weaving song," for instance, he placed his visualization of the song's pitch contour directly above the scalar staff rendering, as if to propose the graphic frequency curve (*kyokusen*) as a more accurate form of notation (see Fig. 5).<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Kanetsune, *Nihon no uta to kotoba no kōzō*, 201.

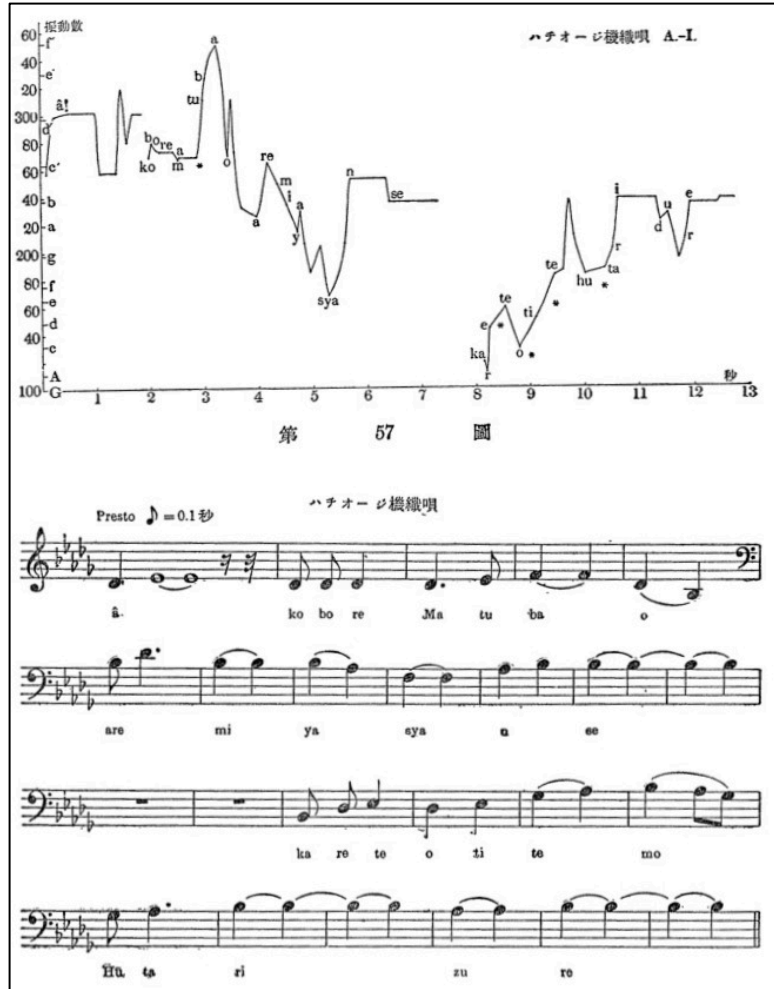


Fig. 5, "Hachiōji hataori-uta," graphic rendering versus Western notation

Moreover, Kanetsune noted that the appearance of the modern frequency curve did in fact resemble systems of notation "that [had] long been used as aides-mémoire" in traditional Japanese poetic recitatives as well as Buddhist liturgical chant (*bokufu*).<sup>65</sup> Still, he claimed that the curve itself did not offer much practical utility as a performance guide, but was compelling more as a "psychological impression" in the literal sense of a psychic inscription (*shinriteki na inshō wo kaita mono*). That is, by giving visual form to certain inflections of the voice that were too subtle to parse even with the naked ear, the graphic curve seemed paradoxically to capture

<sup>65</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Nippon no uta wa naze ni seiyō gakufu ni kakenai ka," *Zankyō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1937), 398-403.

both an objective (*kyakkanteki*) and intuitive (*shinriteki*) psychological impression of musical sound—as a complex, continuously unfolding, durational phenomenon—that had hitherto escaped convincing symbolic representation. Put differently, the graphic curve lent form not only to the voice's previously unseen features, but to its unheard melodies as well.

As with Rilke's 1919 essay "Primal Sound," in which the poet likened the grooves of the phonograph to the human skull's "coronal suture," this notion of phonography's "psychological impression" fit squarely within what Friedrich Kittler frames as an early twentieth-century moment of epistemic reckoning with what many regarded as "the absolute faithfulness of phonography"—its putative capacity to bypass symbolic and even conscious systems of mediation and allow for the direct, sensuous inscription of the real.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, Thor Magnusson has described this moment as a turning point in music from the nineteenth-century episteme of "symbolic representation" (via musical scores) to an "electronic episteme" in which sound could be "inscribed on recorded media as waveforms . . . isomorphic to the molecular movement in the air of the sound itself."<sup>67</sup> Yet as Magnusson notes, this "shift from symbol to signal" did not weaken the *Werktreue* ideal of fidelity to the authority of the score, but served instead to frame such ideological commitments within the pursuit of greater objectivity. Often this objective aim appeared in arguments for visualizing sound; for Taguchi Ryūzaburō, the ability to "see the voice with the eye" via the oscillograph enabled harmonic analyses that were previously compromised by subjective risks of "mishearing."<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the apparent lucidity of phonographic transcription, seemingly immune to the selective biases and discriminations of the ear, cast renewed doubt upon the capacity of Western notation to apprehend non-Eurological musical

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<sup>66</sup> Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 89.

<sup>67</sup> Magnusson, *Sonic Writing*, 7.

<sup>68</sup> Taguchi Ryūzaburō, "Ningen no onsei wo me de miru kenkyū: Koe no uraomote wo kagakuteki ni saguru," *Yomiuri shinbun*, September 2, 1936.

traditions. Even Stumpf granted that there were many "vocal practices" (though mostly primitive ones in his view) that were "poorly conceived by signs," and thus benefited from both phonographic preservation and representation.<sup>69</sup> But if neither he nor Kanetsune saw value in graphic notation beyond phonetic research, others were keen to explore its broader potential.

In 1928, the Canadian psychologist Milton Metfessel published *Phonophotography in Folk Music*, in which he proposed a method of "pattern notation" using photographic waveforms to score songs in the African American folk tradition. Existing notation systems had failed to capture the nuances of this corpus, he argued, in that "The Negro is especially prone, in his general habit of going to extremes in vocal matters, to insert . . . a number of patterns closer to the type case of speech than that of song." With a system based on his technique of "phonophotography," however, it would henceforth be "possible to notate all the twists, quavers, trills, breaks in the voice, quick slurs, erratic tempi, and other similar features, so often a part of folk singing."<sup>70</sup> For his study, then, Metfessel collected and notated a range of songs like "Swing Low Sweet Chariot," "By and By," and "John Henry," and paired his scores with close-up photographs of singers' mouth movements to further aid in phonetic analysis (see Fig. 6 & 7).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Stumpf, *The Origins of Music*, 148. See also Alexander Rehding, "Wax Cylinder Revolutions," *The Musical Quarterly* 88, no. 1 (2005): 123-60.

<sup>70</sup> Milton Metfessel, *Phonophotography in Folk Music: American Negro Songs in New Notation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1928), 44. See also Milton Metfessel, "The Collecting of Folk Songs by Phonophotography," *Science* 67 (1928): 28.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 68,70.

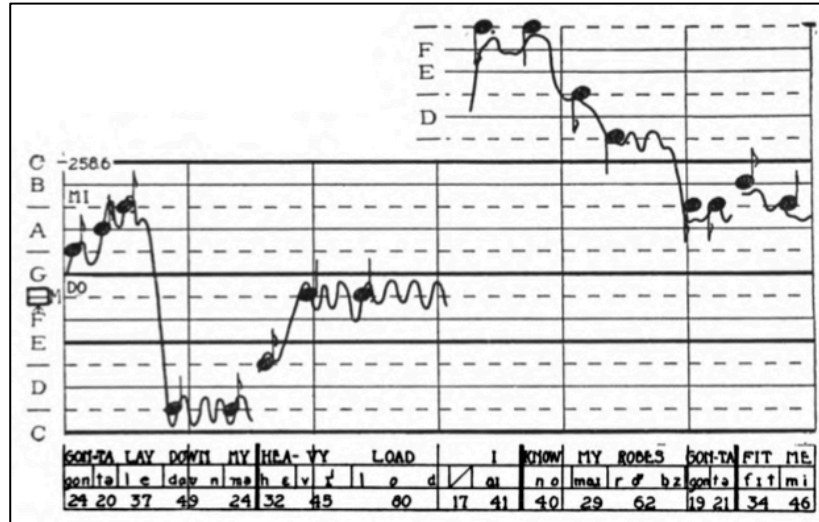


Fig. 6, Graphic score of the song "By and By"



Fig. 7, "Hampton Institute singer" performing "By and By"

In the years to follow, ethnomusicologists like Charles Seeger and Mantle Hood elaborated their own techniques of "objective notation," with Seeger devoting particular energy

to developing the Melograph in the 1950s. But while Hood later observed that such notation formats were no less "pertinent to the study of Western music," early twentieth-century scholars tended to analogize phonography's inscription of the "real" with its power to thereby capture voices of non-Western alterity, or what had hitherto registered as noise in the European symbolic realm.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, Metfessel's focus on adjoining his notational endeavor to a broader study of the psychological and physiognomic traits of Black performance accorded with the aims of early comparative musicologists like Hornbostel and Abraham to glean, through "folk melodies," the "cultural and psychological racial traits" of non-Western societies.<sup>73</sup> For these scholars, the step from phonography to ethnography, and from vocal to racial typology, was a logical one to take.

As such, just as Hornbostel and Abraham had based their assessment of the "Japanese tone system" on a 1901 performance by the Kawakami Otojirō musical theater troupe in Berlin, Kanetsune was quick to frame the vocal characteristics of Japanese *min'yō* as metonymic of the "Japanese voice" (*nippon no koe*) in general. In the three years leading up to the publication of *The Structure of Japanese Language and Song*, Kanetsune published a number of articles summarizing the findings of his research, often generalizing folksong vocality as expressive of the "Japanese voice" in its most "unaffected" (*kazarike no nai*) form. Recalling Metfessel's descriptors, this Japanese or "Japanese-style voice" (*nippon-fū no koe*) was for Kanetsune a "beautifully pliant one" (*yawarakana utsukushii koe*), possessed of "flickering mid-vowel trills" and lithe figures of melodic undulation (*fushimawashi*) arising organically from the *sprachmelodie* of the language itself. In contrast, he identified Japanese "imitations of Western vocal techniques" in terms of their "instrument-like quality," noting that such sounds struck

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<sup>72</sup> Magnusson, *Sonic Writing*, 149-50.

<sup>73</sup> Otto Abraham and E.M. von Hornbostel, "On the Significance of the Phonograph for Comparative Musicology," trans. Ray Giles, in *Hornbostel Opera Omnia*, ed. Klaus Wachsmann, et al. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 185-86.

many Japanese ears as "shrill and piercing" (*kanakiri-goe*), like a strangled goose."<sup>74</sup> Rather than straining for imitation, then, Kanetsune proposed that Japanese singers rely instead on "their own throats and bodies" to sing in a voice more intimately linked to the rhythmic and melodic patterns of everyday life.

When viewed in light of essays like "The Class-character of Music," "The Death of the Master," and "Superstitions of the Music World," this latest provocation clearly reflected a longer effort to bring the resources of folk studies and acoustics to bear on a materialist critique of bourgeois musical culture. Through his framing, however, Kanetsune seemed to sequester in ethnonational terms what were otherwise broadly relatable insights about the nature of vocalicity and sense perception. Indeed, Kanetsune's method of analyzing longer vocal phrases instead of discrete formants (what he termed a "macroscopic" approach) echoed Stumpf's suggestion that melodic perception arose from the gestalt quality of full phrases rather than the perception of individual parts—a holism in accord with the philosopher Henri Bergson's theory of intuition.<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, Kanetsune's acoustic illustration of the voice's contiguous, durational quality (irreducible to discrete intervals or "rungs on a ladder") further evoked Bergson's account of temporal perception as *durée*, which the philosopher had also likened to the rhythmic continuity of a musical phrase; where Bergson described the succession of psychic states as forming a "continuous or qualitative multiplicity" as with "the notes of a tune melting . . . into one another," Kanetsune's phonograms showed the same "psychological impression" of frequencies unfolding through mutual penetration, where "the sound of a C is no longer a C in the next instant, but is always in a state of continuous transit from one peak or valley to the next."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Kanetsune, "Nihon no koe to uta." Reprinted as "Nippon no koe, Nippon no uta" in *Zankyō*, 393-97.

<sup>75</sup> Trippett, "Carl Stumpf: A reluctant revolutionary," 41.

<sup>76</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F.L. Pogson (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1910), 100. In terms resonant with Bergson's notion of

In this sense, if Bergson seemed to trace his image of the "continuous multiplicity" of consciousness from the pendular oscillations of an acoustic waveform, Kanetsune used the same oscillations to form a resonant impression of voice, language, and song. Rather than generalizing his observations, however, Kanetsune maintained the East-West binary in which so much related scholarship had been framed, thus allowing the "Japanese voice" to embody a more organic and authentically-lived alternative to its inauthentic and discontinuous "Western" counterpart. In so doing, Kanetsune found himself among a wider chorus of Japanese thinkers raising similarly vitalist notions of ethnic self-definition through the interlacing of orality and national language.

#### *IV. The Return of the Voice*

While the 1938 publication of *The Structure of Japanese Language and Song* met with a relatively muted response, the shorter companion articles Kanetsune published over the preceding few years found wider circulation and interest. In his 1937 essay "Fundamental principles of prosody in Japanese poetry," the poet Hagiwara Sakutarō cited Kanetsune's piece in the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, "Why we can't write Japanese songs on a Western staff," as a "significant piece for us poets, rich with suggestive and inspiring implications."<sup>77</sup> In particular, Hagiwara credited the article with lending empirical support to his conviction that the prosody (*inritsu*) of Japanese verse inhered not only in the number of morae in a metrical phrase (*gosūritsu*), but also in the phonemic stress patterns unfolding in and across the phrases themselves. Amplifying the Bergsonian tenor of the original article, Hagiwara paraphrased Kanetsune's observation that Japanese "songs" (*uta*) unfolded in an "un-mechanical (*hikikaiteki*) and naturally fluid fashion,

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"qualitative multiplicity" and *durée*, Kanetsune writes of the "fundamental contradiction in trying to notate a continuous frequency in a discontinuous fashion, where the intervals on a piano go up and down 'steps' or 'rungs' with no relation to time. The distinction of language is its temporality, wherein the sound of a C is no long a C in the next moment, but is always in a continuous state of transit between from one peak or valley to the next." See Kanetsune, *Nippon no uta wa naze ni seiyō gakufu ni kakenai ka*, 398.

<sup>77</sup> Hagiwara Sakutarō, "Nihon shiika no inritsu ni kan suru konpon genri, *Chūō Kōron* (June 1937): 165.



where each note is inseparably linked in uniquely organic relation to the other." This "organic linkage" (*tsunagari*), he continued, was why "true melody" in Japanese *uta* was inexpressible via the Western staff. Most crucial to Hagiwara, however, was the notion that *uta* drew this prosodic logic from spoken Japanese, where the stress and pitch patterns of phonemes were not "mechanically fixed," but relational and thus contingent upon their placement in a phrase:

As Dr. Kanetsune observes . . . the dictionary pronunciation of the word *inochi* has a stress on '*chi*.' But in a line like *waga inochi nani wo akuseku*, the accent on '*chi*' vanishes, and the word becomes completely flat and stressless. Regardless, however, the reader's 'inner ear' (*shinrijō no chōkaku*) still perceives the stressed '*chi*.' Scientifically speaking, such an effect is an illusion (*sakkaku*), yet the prosody of Japanese poetry and prose (*shibun*) succeeds precisely on the basis of this inner psychological impression.

As such, Kanetsune's phonographic illustration of this notion confirmed for Hagiwara that Japanese accent and intonation could not be represented in "purely auditory" (*jun chōkakuteki*) terms, but instead relied on a "mental image sketch drawn from the psycho-acoustic imagination (心理的聴想)." In other words, to rely just on the outwardly audible mora-count as a basis for Japanese poetic rhythm was to ignore the second "inner rhythm" (*senritsu*) of the whole phrase—a "psychological reverberation" (*shinriteki yoin*) unheard yet deeply felt.<sup>78</sup>

In failing to account for this "inner rhythm" based on the natural stress patterns of the language, Hagiwara argued that much of Japan's modern poetry—from Meiji *shintaiishi* to Iwano Hōmei's "new prose poems" and Kawaji Ryūkō's "new metered verse" (*shin-rikkakushi*)—amounted only to skeletal forms with no musical content or life-force to them. Similarly, Kitahara Hakushū and other advocates of vernacular recitation argued that the vocalization of verse demanded a harmonization of poetic meter and the "natural" rhythms of speech, while Kitahara's frequent collaborator Yamada Kōsaku claimed that most attempts to set Japanese poetry to Western vocal music had failed precisely by sacrificing the inherent intonation

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

(*yokuyō*) of standard Japanese in favor of unnatural approximations of Western melodic phrasing.<sup>79</sup> However, while Yamada avowed that his basing of "standard Japanese" on Tokyo speech excluded a range of regional dialects, Hagiwara and others in the recitation discourse of the late-30s were inclined to speak of the national language (*kokugo*) in more essential terms; for Hagiwara, the need to attend to the unique oral features of *kokugo* extended to "all matters of Japanese culture," while proponents of oral recitation increasingly promoted their endeavor as one of "abandoning delusions of Western imitation" to arouse a "native Japanese spirit" through the "stirring vitality of the Japanese voice" (*seirōgōkaina nihon-tekina koe*).<sup>80</sup>

As Tsuboi Hideto argues, this phonocentric "return to the voice" (*onseisei e no kaiki*) bespoke the desire of many poets and intellectuals in the late 1930s to rescue a sense of spiritual and subjective wholeness from the perceived discontinuities of an ersatz Western modernity (whether evident in the "strangled" voices of modern singers or the splintered and "skeletal" textuality of modern[ist] verse) by invoking a native oral tradition rooted in the enduring culture and climate of the nation.<sup>81</sup> For the educator Ueda Shōzaburō, "the national language [was] borne of Japan's climate (*fūdo*)," and therefore demanded a pedagogy attentive to its uniquely-evolved properties.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile, in a 1939 primer on "Reading in the spirit of *kokugo*," Hattori Isao argued that the originary echoes (*hibiki*) of the Japanese language had "over centuries permeated the history of our national ethnos (*minzoku*) to the point where such sounds have formed the foundation of the nation's own upbringing—indeed its very existence as such."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> For example, see Yamada Kōsaku, trans. Frances K. Watson, "Accent in poetry from the perspective of song composition," *Japan Forum* 30, no. 3 (2018): 337-351.

<sup>80</sup> The latter quote can be found in Nishikawa Kōyō and Matsumura Bakufū, *Kanshi, waka no rōgin-hō: Furoku, kokon aigin meisakushū* (Tokyo: Shinkō ongaku shuppansha, 1937), 9-10.

<sup>81</sup> Tsuboi, *Koe no shukusai*, 161.

<sup>82</sup> Ueda Shōzaburō, "Hōsō to Rōdoku," in *Kyōiku no shinseiki* (Tokyo: Keibunsha, 1939), 157-60.

<sup>83</sup> Hattori Isao, *Yomikata to yomasekata: Kokugo no seishin to yomi no taidō* (Tokyo-Osaka Kyōiku Kenkyūkai, 1939), 150.

In order to revive this formative resonance, scholars like Ueda and Hattori advocated a standardization of pronunciation and accent via recitative training, for which the centralized apparatus of public radio seemed especially conducive. Indeed, the *tanka* scholar Nishikawa Kōyō added (citing Kanetsune) that poetic recitation benefited particularly from broadcast transmission in that "the sinuous lines of intonation in *rōgin* cannot be expressed in Western notation."<sup>84</sup> Further still, if the accent of Tokyo's elite Yamanote dialect could not necessarily claim prescriptive authority by ancient standards, the sound of *tanka* recitations relaying outward from Tokyo's JOAK station seemed to serve the task of imbuing the modern standard (*hyōjungo*) with an air of "native spirit" (*minzoku seishin*). In so doing, regional or otherwise non-standard dialects could be framed as variants of an originary and holistic Japanese "voice" re-animated through the "elegant, decisive, and correct" intonation of canonical and classical texts.<sup>85</sup>

For Hagiwara, this philological impulse (what Eric Hobsbawm has elsewhere termed "philological nationalism") manifested similarly in an oft-noted "return" to classical poetics.<sup>86</sup> Unlike the naïve metrics of modern verse, Hagiwara claimed that Japan's earliest poets (*kajin*) expressed a keen attention to "inner rhythm" through the notion of *shirabe* [flow], a term that evoked precisely the image of organic continuity which linked poetry to the sensuous flexures of speech (and which, it might be noted, seemed to evoke the curve of Kanetsune's phonograms). In tracing his vitalist reading of *shirabe* through classical texts like the *Man'yōshū*, however, Hagiwara also flirted with the ideas of Tokugawa-era nativist scholars like Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), and particularly the theory of "sound-meaning" (*ongiseatsu*): the notion, borrowed

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<sup>84</sup> Nishikawa and Matsumura, *Kanshi, waka no rōgin-hō*, 95.

<sup>85</sup> Hattori, *Yomikata to yomasekata*, 159. This formulation of regional dialects as variants stemming from a common root also found support in the work of Yanagita Kunio on dialect diffusion. See Tsuboi, *Kankaku no Kindai*.

<sup>86</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 56.

from Buddhist hermeneutics, that each sound in the *kana* syllabary possessed divine meaning, and that the exegesis of works like the *Man'yōshū* could reveal the "utterances of the gods."<sup>87</sup>

Likewise, treatises on poetic recitation in the late thirties frequently invoked the analogous concept of *kotodama* [the spirit of words] as a way of describing the incantatory power of *kokugo* in its intoned form. For instance, Hattori Isao argued that the voice was the ideal conduit for "animating the true spirit and affective locus of our national character" insofar as "vocal sound [held] the mysterious power to convey the soul," connecting speaker and listener in a "telepathic communication of essences" (*ishindenshin no seimei kōtsū*).<sup>88</sup> Against these more strident claims, one could argue that Hagiwara's interest in notions like *ongisetsu*—and his late-period classicism in general—had more to do with plumbing the potentials of poetic language than with summoning the soul of the nation. Whether via modernism or nationalism, however, this esoteric pursuit of pure *logos* laid fertile ground for the enunciative logic of authoritarianism, if understood as a regime of oppressive transparency in language—one in which (for Devin Fore via Barthes) "thing and sign, world and representation, exist in perfect correspondence with one another," such that there can be "no more lapse of time between naming and judging."<sup>89</sup>

In Mladen Dolar's phrasing, this dystopic expressivism of fascist language turned a perverse mirror on the utopian fantasy of the nation as oral *gemeinschaft*, "in which all members can hear each other, and the fundamental social tie is a vocal tie."<sup>90</sup> But if *kokugo* scholars and educators like Hattori Isao seemed to invoke notions like *kotodama* and "native spirit" more as

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<sup>87</sup> On Motoori Norinaga's conception of *ongisetsu*, see Michael Marra, *The Poetics of Motoori Norinaga: A Hermeneutical Journey* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 15-16. With regard to Hagiwara, Yasu Satoshi likens the poet's interest in *ongisetsu* to the question raised in Plato's *Cratylus* dialogue as to whether linguistic signs bear arbitrary or intrinsic relations to the things they signify. See Yasu Satoshi, *Hagiwara Sakutarō to iu media: Hiki-sakareru kindai / shijin* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2008), 195-200.

<sup>88</sup> Hattori, *Yomikata to yomasekata*, 155-156.

<sup>89</sup> Devin Fore, *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), 169.

<sup>90</sup> Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 112.

post-hoc rhetorical justifications for their own pedagogical research, the illumination of an autochthonous Japanese oral community found its more earnest pursuit in the field of folk studies and native ethnology. As Gerald Figal notes, the work of the pre-eminent folklorist Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962) was "preoccupied with recovering a 'voice' of the folk through largely, though not exclusively, extra-archival sources."<sup>91</sup> In Yanagita's case, such sources entailed his own field transcriptions and retellings of village folktales, firsthand accounts of local tools and customs, and studies of regional speech and dialect diffusion, such that the "voice" of the abiding folk (or *jōmin*, for Yanagita) served as both a figurative shorthand for their symbolic representation in the nation's discursive imaginary as well as a literal description of the speech practices he worked to document. Meanwhile, the poet and ethnologist Orikuchi Shinobu (1887-1953), an avowed disciple of Yanagita, devoted particular attention to the importance of oral tradition in transmitting an immemorial "folk experience" across literature, religious ritual, and everyday speech from antiquity to the present. Far from mere metaphor, Orikuchi regarded the voice as the very crucible in which the folkic roots of national culture were forged.

As Harry Harootunian observes, this notion of an "enduring folk life invariably functioned like an invisible realm that coexisted with the visible world of power and change and recalled an earlier nativist division of labor between things seen and unseen." What distinguished the modern moment, however, was that "the two realms—a double structure—[now] occupied the same place," coexisting as syncopated temporalities in the sensuous realm of language and cultural production.<sup>92</sup> In this regard, the unheard "inner rhythm" of language that Hagiwara sensed in his dual structure of Japanese verse was for Orikuchi the very reverberation of "archaic experience" itself: one that had been "transmitted to successive traditions" through "patterns of

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<sup>91</sup> Gerald Figal, *Civilization and Monsters: Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 212.

<sup>92</sup> Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, 311.

rhyming repetition" and other embodied gestures of the voice.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, Kanetsune's thesis that poetry and song (*uta*) represented variants of vernacular recitation bore resonant parallels with Orikuchi's contention that oral lyric poetry (the basis, in his view, for national literature) derived from the recital of epic tales and narratives.<sup>94</sup> For Orikuchi, however, these tales were ones handed down to storytellers (*kataribe*) from the gods themselves, transmitted in states of possession, and thus imbued with rhythms of the body and the spirit at once. In this formulation, the colloquial speech patterns that Kanetsune located in common with sung melody were themselves rooted in incantatory utterances, always-already poised for re-enchantment.

For Harootunian, this esoteric view of language as an oral conduit for ancient folk experience "converged with a utopian fascism which was already seeking refuge in the fantasy of wholeness and timelessness by invoking the model of the *gemeinschaft* [based on] the archaic agricultural community."<sup>95</sup> As shown in Chapter One, this formation announced itself in swift and brutal fashion in the wake of the Kantō earthquake, where police and vigilantes weaponized the orality of rumors and accent tests to demarcate the racial boundaries of the "people" (*minshū*) in the face of colonial encounter. Moreover, once the passive, diffuse orality of rumor had allowed responsibility for the massacre to be absorbed by the anonymous collective subject (the rumored "we" of the "people"), that same sense of organicity found various reclamations among intellectuals in the late 1930s; where Shimizu Ikutarō heard the voice of rumor as an infrasonic mode of critique among the masses (*taishū*), scholars like Miki Kiyoshi conceived its phatic logic as the basis for a "new *gemeinschaft*" that was "'infrapolitical, if not infrasocial,' an organic totality identified with the folk" and transmissible across the broader cultural sphere of Japan's

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>94</sup> Kanetsune, "Nippon no koe, Nippon no uta," 394.

<sup>95</sup> Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, 355.

empire.<sup>96</sup> Crucially, meanwhile, if terms like the "people" and the "masses" bespoke the era's agonistic tensions and potentialities, the figure of the "folk" evoked a demotic formation outside of political time, notably unreflective of the colonial ferment through which its voice was forged.

For this very reason, however, it is worth noting the centrality of colonial crisis to the formative language of the "folk." Indeed, it was only months after the 1923 massacre that Orikuchi penned Part Two of "The Origins of National Literature," a text central to his notion of the Japanese language's archaic, orational provenance.<sup>97</sup> In it, Orikuchi introduced the figure of the *marebito*, or the "holy visitor," a class of itinerant deities who in ancient times would enter village communities on rare occasions, either to impart blessings or spiritual insight from "lands beyond the sea" (*tokoyo*). In so doing, the *marebito* was always "heard and not seen;" as a spirit, it would speak through the body of an oracular narrator (*kataribe*) whose enchanted speech would serve to imbue the cadence of each phrase with a vital connection to the divine.<sup>98</sup> It was this form of incantatory narrative, Orikuchi suggested, that inspired the earliest court chronicles, and thus the canon of proto-national literature to follow. Yet at the same time, the ancient figure of the *marebito*, as a voice of alterity, could not but recall the more recent fate of the colonial stranger, the *futei senjin*, against whose unvoiced speech a "Japanese voice" had been communally defined.<sup>99</sup> In this sense, if Hagiwara's elaboration of an intuitive "inner rhythm" and

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 398.

<sup>97</sup> See Orikuchi Shinobu, "Kokubungaku no hassei (Dai-ni kō)," in *Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1995).

<sup>98</sup> Alfonso Falero, "Orikuchi Shinobu's *Marebitoron* in Global Perspective: A Preliminary Study," *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy: Japanese Philosophy Abroad* (Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture, 2010), 278.

<sup>99</sup> This connection between Orikuchi's *marebitoron* and the 1923 massacre has been insightfully drawn by a number of scholars including James Fujii (1993), Murai Osamu (1981, 1995) and Sonia Ryang (2003). Also worth noting is that in this first reference to *marebito*, Orikuchi cites a number of Okinawan folk performance rituals, echoing the shift toward the theory of "southern origins" that Yanagita also began to pursue after serving as a colonial administrator in Korea, where the vehemence of the 1919 anti-colonial movement broke his belief in the ethnocultural rapport between Koreans and Japanese. See Murai Osamu, *Nantō ideorogii no hassei: Yanagita Kunio to shokuminchi shūgi* (Tokyo: Ōta Shuppan, 1995), 29-30.

"true melody" based on Kanetsune's exteriorized renderings of speech and song seemed to echo the folkic valorization of *kokugo*, it did so by tellingly restaging the very encounter with language-turned-other in which Orikuchi, writing from the scene of colonial crisis, located the strange, numinous, and distinctly alterior potency of the voice.

#### *V. A Voice of No Return*

In Orikuchi's retelling, the oracular narrators (*kataribe*) who channeled the primal sound of the *marebito* had once held court positions, where their incantations buoyed belief in the animate power of words (*kotodama*). When the political fortunes of their patrons waned, however, they were cast out into the countryside as itinerant performers, finding company among other minstrels, beggars, and outcast wanderers. Thus disenchanting, the sacrality of their vocation gave way to its value as entertainment, their benedictions vernacularized and transmuted into popular ritual. In this way, Orikuchi's *marebito-ron* seemed not only to analogize the more recent migrations of the colonial stranger, but the status of vocal performers as well, who even in the modern era continued to draw historical and contemporary associations with "riverbed beggars" (*kawara kojiki*), prostitutes, and fringe-dwelling residents of the urban demimonde.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the modern mass culture industry that facilitated the now-nightly visitations of radio singers and storytellers to households across the country also presented listeners with an ever-growing cast of performers from overseas, whose voices inflected the language with hitherto unheard rhythms, timbres, and strange patterns of intonation.

In this regard, one could point to the performances of singers like Midge Williams and Kawahata Fumiko, to say nothing of the many Japan-born performers who worked to cast their

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<sup>100</sup> Such perceptions are widely discussed in scholarship and popular writing on music and entertainment in Japan, but for an especially animated treatment thereof, see Ei Rokusuke, *Geijintachi no geinōshi: Kawara kojiki kara ningen kokuhō made* (Tokyo: Banmachi shobō, 1969).



voices in the *jazu* idiom across the 1930s. In their bilingual covers of "Shine on Harvest Moon" and "Dinah," for instance, Kawahata and Williams mapped Mori Iwao's Japanese lyrics to the rhythms of the original tunes with little apparent regard for the accent patterns of Tokyo dialect. In songs like "Dinah" especially, one found the putatively "natural" stress patterns of the language blithely redistributed across each four-beat bar line by Williams' syncopated phrasing, resulting in a succession of markedly foreign accents unfolding literally behind the beat of standard Japanese. Meanwhile, Kawahata's Japanese delivery in "Mikazui Musume" danced deftly around the prosodic expectations of each phrase without ever aligning entirely; with each elastic embellishment, Kawahata's voice sounded increasingly fluent in a translingual cadence of her own making. Yet far from the "shrill" or "discontinuous" quality that Kanetsune attributed to "Western-style vocalization" in Japan, the non-native vocality of these recordings—while unquestionably distinctive in rhythm and accent—still seemed to possess many of the same features that purportedly distinguished the "Japanese voice" from its foreign counterparts.

To be sure, Kanetsune made clear that his complaint with "Western vocality" pertained primarily to European art music in the classical tradition, and the Anglo-European basis for vocal education that extended from conservatories like the Ueno School of Music to standard "school song" (*shōka*) curricula across the country. What is less clear, however, is how Kanetsune might have responded to the voices of singers like Kawahata—identifiable with the "West" yet versed in a Black vernacular idiom distinct from the "Western" tradition embraced by Japan's post-Meiji *gakudan*. For his part, Kanetsune did pen a number of articles on jazz from the late-20s onward, and professed a fascination with the genre's unique instrumentation and "zeal."<sup>101</sup> Yet only rarely did his thoughts on the genre extend to the voice; in an essay on "Popular Music" (*Ryūkōka*), he

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<sup>101</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Jidai wo riido suru mono: Sekai wo jazu ka shita Paul Whiteman," *Asahi shinbun*, May 28, 1934.

remarked briefly upon Awaya Noriko's 1936 rendition of "Gloomy Sunday," noting that the song "came off rather strangely when sung in Japanese" due to Awaya's apparent inattention to the melody (*fushi*) of her native tongue.<sup>102</sup> Here, Kanetsune's lack of nuance may have stemmed from a broader failure to attend seriously to the genre, which he viewed mainly as dance accompaniment—meant to be "heard with the feet."<sup>103</sup> Yet at the same time, it is equally likely that Awaya, a classically-trained soprano, exhibited precisely the kind of "instrument-like" pitch sustain, *chiaroscuro* tone, and neatly-divided phrasing that Kanetsune deemed "unnatural," both to Japanese-language singing and to the jazz idiom itself; as he remarked in an earlier essay, the last thing jazz needed was for "its sound to be reduced to a matter of mechanical logic."<sup>104</sup>

Indeed, Kanetsune argued, it was due to such "mechanical logic" that NHK's recent "Songs of the Nation" (*kokumin kayō*) radio program seemed to arouse so little genuine enthusiasm among the masses. The program, spearheaded in 1936 by JOBK arts director Okuya Kumao (also responsible for promoting the poetry broadcasts discussed in Chapter Two), promised a weekly offering of wholesome and edifying Japanese-language pop songs, specifically as a corrective to the more vulgar or suggestive domain of *ryūkōka*. Reflecting Okuya's more refined sensibilities, however, the program's flagship singers—Okuda Ryōzō, Seki Taneko, Nagata Genjirō—were unanimously trained in the classical tradition, with Seki having studied under the German soprano Margarete Löwe. Subject to yet another top-down mode of Western-style music education, then, Kanetsune suspected that most listeners would find it a

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<sup>102</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, *Ongaku to seikatsu: Kanetsune Kiyosuke zuihitsu*, ed. Sugimoto Hidetarō (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999), 153. "Gloomy Sunday" was the English title given to the 1933 song "Szomorú vasárnap," composed by the Hungarian pianist Rezső Seress and sung by Katalin Karády. Awaya Noriko's version, entitled "Kurai Nichiyōbi," was released in 1936, the same year Paul Robeson recorded the first English-language version. The song would gain greater prominence among English-speaking audiences with Billie Holiday's rendition in 1941.

<sup>103</sup> Kanetsune, "Jidai wo riido suru mono."

<sup>104</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Jazu hanabi," *Asahi shinbun*, August 20, 1929.

tedious chore to "have to listen to such systematic, rule-bound music all day," particularly with other genuinely popular alternatives available. Echoing the sentiments of radio skeptics like Kiyosawa Kiyoshi and Hasegawa Nyozeikan (discussed in Chapter One), he remarked, "I have yet to hear anyone tell me that *kokumin kayō* is at all trendy."<sup>105</sup>

In contrast, Kanetsune pointed to the popularity of *geisha* singers like Michi Yakko and Katsutarō Kouta, whose voices (untrained by the aforementioned standards) possessed a nasal timbre that may have grated against ears accustomed to Western *bel canto* tone, but nonetheless evinced palpable "tenderness" and "rich feeling" owing to their many winsome imperfections and informal quirks. "One couldn't say if such singers are able to sing *do-re-mi*, or if they even know what *do-re-mi* is," he claimed. Yet it was precisely this "amateur" quality that struck Kanetsune as especially resonant for the Japanese masses (himself included), who likely related more to the comical phrasing and conversational intimacy of Michi Yakko's trebly inflections—the suggestive lilt and winking '*ne*' endings of her 1937 hit "Sore nanoni," for instance—than to the austere refinements and sculpted tones of singers trained in the Euro-American conservatory model. In a similar vein, Kanetsune praised the crooner Fujiyama Ichirō's song "Tokyo Rhapsody," which contained an endearing whistle chorus, for appealing to listeners who may have lacked formal vocal training, but "still felt the urge to sing along."<sup>106</sup>

Here, however, if such intimately accessible vocal features were for Kanetsune reflective of the colloquial *sprachmelodie* of the "Japanese voice," they were equally characteristic of the voice in its recorded form. In the case of Katsutarō, for example, Kanetsune admitted to having never heard her voice outside of "its electrical reproduction." Still, "such a voice, having been boiled and baked into shellac, had a soft, full warmth to it," refreshingly "approachable and

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<sup>105</sup> Kanetsune, *Ongaku to seikatsu*, 149.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-54.

unpretentious (*muri no nai*)."<sup>107</sup> Moreover, it had been Kanetsune's encounter with the recorded voice of the *kouta* singer Fujiwara Shimeji that compelled the initial research for his doctoral thesis, and indeed the electroacoustic methods he would continue to pursue thereafter. As such, it could be argued that the most salient features of Kanetsune's "Japanese voice"—the flickering mid-vowel melisma, the wavering lineations of pitch, and above all the intimate co-articulation of spoken and sung melody—had as much to do with the intimate affordances of recorded sound as they did with any unified ethnolinguistic endowment of "Japan."

Of course, vocal techniques like *kobushi* and *yure* had long featured in the vocal repertoires of Japanese court and popular music traditions. Still, the acoustician Obata Jūichi noted that Japan's adoption of electrical recording after 1927 served to amplify the subtleties of such techniques in hitherto unheard ways, and likely led certain singers to exaggerate them further in order to distinguish their "softer" vocal styles from those of "concert-trained" performers.<sup>108</sup> Further still, concurrent advances in electrical playback also led singers and musicians in the West to incorporate a greater degree of vibrato and tremolo in their performances, in part (as Mark Katz argues) to offer "a greater sense of the performer's presence on record."<sup>109</sup> More than a mutual sense of ethnonational affinity, then, what seemed to attract Kanetsune to singers like Michi Yakko, Katsutarō, and Fujiyama Ichirō was that they were skilled "microphone singers"—adept at conveying a sense of intimate, informal presence and personality via technologies that could "capture the slightest trembling of the throat."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, *Ongaku to seikatsu*, 142-148.

<sup>108</sup> Obata Jūichi, *Kikoeru oto, kikoenu oto* (Tokyo: Tettō shoin, 1934), 99-100. The music critic Horiuchi Keizō puts the date of electrical recording's introduction in Japan slightly earlier; he suggests that gramophone manufacturers first began to undertake methods in electrical recording (*denki fukikomi*) in 1925. See Horiuchi Keizō, "Rajio to rekōdo," *Chūō Kōron* (July 1933): 188-191.

<sup>109</sup> Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 93.

<sup>110</sup> Taguchi Ryūzaburō, *Oto to seikatsu* (Tokyo: Yamato shoten, 1941), 19.

In this sense, the recording artists that Kanetsune favored were ones that succeeded not in effacing the material or mediatic conditions of their vocalicity, but rather in exploiting them in order to arouse or amuse listeners in living rooms, cafes, or outside storefronts. In Jacob Smith's terms, that is, such voices were vital precisely in their capacity to "create new performance frames keyed to the intimate spaces of media reception."<sup>111</sup> Crucially, however, this sense of intimacy did not necessarily translate into the kind of linguistic transparency that folklorists like Orikuchi or *kokugo* advocates like Hattori Isao proposed, nor did it suggest that the voice would serve to animate an affective attachment to "national character," whether through the intoned solemnity of *rōgin* or the unifying contours of standard Japanese. Such had indeed been the purpose of the *kokumin kayō* program, which Kanetsune dismissed not only for its fealty to Western-style vocalization, but for its insistence on a prescriptive moralism out of step with (and even hostile to) popular sentiments. Rather, by accentuating the informalities and conversational inflections that might have otherwise read as imperfect or immodest to entrained ears, singers like Michi Yakko reveled in mining the noisy materiality of language for its suggestive and even subversive potential; such was especially the case, Kanetsune noted, in "Sore nanoni" and other so-called "*ne* songs" (*ne-kouta*), which were banned from broadcast for wringing sexual innuendo from lyrics tinged with the feminine ending *ne*. Far from a transparent vector of meaning, what such songs foregrounded was the voice as a malleably material object, made stranger and more alluring by its phonographic transduction.

But where folklorists like Yanagita therefore viewed *ryūkōka* as crass, commercial simulacra of more authentic folk expression, Kanetsune heard the humor and errant vitality of such songs as extensions of *min'yō* in the realm of urban mass culture. In this regard, Kanetsune diverged at once from his peers in folk studies as well as from his own earlier views; having been

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<sup>111</sup> Smith, *Vocal Tracks*, 133.

chided by Senke Ryōhei for offering proletarian listeners only a chorus of *min'yō* and *rōdōka*, he now seemed to embrace songs that captured vernacular expression more in a dynamic, processual present than in a museal past. And by extension, what this implied was a view of language as a continuously-evolving structure of becoming, wherein singers like Kawahata Fumiko could, by infusing the rhythms of Japanese pop vocality with their own migrant curvatures, exploit the potential for new accents and counter-languages to take shape therein. In this conception, then, if the errant, technologized voices of popular song rendered certain "inner rhythms" of the language audible, they were not to be found in the standard dialect of bourgeois musical refinement, nor in the erstwhile parlance of an ancient "folk," but rather in the latent sonorities of the modern "acoustical unconscious"—the material cadences and emergent structures of feeling embedded in the currents of contemporary media culture and social life.<sup>112</sup> Put differently, the "Japanese" voice that Kanetsune had in mind was not one that bespoke the *kokumin*, but one that resonated intimately (and thus evolved in concert) with the masses.

Taken in these terms, one could thereby detect a sly degree of misdirection in Kanetsune's very invocation of "Japan." In his essay "Japanese Music," for instance, Kanetsune proclaimed that "everything that now permeates our everyday lives in present-day Japan ought to be taken as 'Japanese'" (*nippon no mono*). That is, "if Western clothing, pork cutlets, and the radio can be considered 'Japanese,' then so too can the piano and the violin, or jazz instruments like the saxophone or the vibraphone." What did or did not fall under the heading of "Japanese" was in this sense unrelated to race, language, nationality, or cultural tradition, and descriptive only of what "permeated the everyday lives" of people living in the country at the time. While some things might strike "older readers [as] bafflingly foreign," he continued, distinctions

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<sup>112</sup> For a recent theorization of the "acoustical unconscious," see Robert Ryder, *The Acoustical Unconscious: From Walter Benjamin to Alexander Kluge* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022).

between native and non-native amounted only to "differences in perspective."<sup>113</sup> By extension, then, the "Japanese voice" could be similarly understood not as a symbol of some singularly pre-given entity, but rather as one of many sounds subject to each listener's own interpretation.

Of course, given Kanetsune's years of research into what would seem to be a singularizing typology of the "Japanese voice," this rhetorical sleight of hand invited a range of readings. For instance, one could argue that this syncretistic reading of "Japan" betrayed the fact that Kanetsune had by this time painted himself into a rhetorical corner; by aligning his critique of bourgeois musical values so closely to a critique of the "West," any proposal for undoing such cultural entrainments had therefore to pass through the oppositional prism of "Japan," and thus enter into a discursive register poised for appropriation by the state. In this sense, even if Kanetsune sought to oppose his more eclectic vision of "Japanese music" (*nippon ongaku*) to the prescriptive domain of *kokumin kayō*, such a move still recalled the ultimately chimeric attempts of various popular or anti-state nationalisms to carve out a cultural space distinct from that of the overarching imperial imaginary, or as Harootunian notes, to "lastingly challenge the state's capacity to appropriate whatever version it wished to project as its own."<sup>114</sup> Indeed, such appropriation loomed on the horizon even for *ryūkōka* singers like Fujiyama Ichirō and Michi Yakko, who by the end of the decade were lending their own voices to the *kokumin kayō* radio program. As such, Kanetsune's rhetorical gesture could be framed as an ironic admission that any cultural object or practice, however unruly on its surface, could still be subsumed by the empire's enframing logic, shorn of its eccentricity, and recast as a possession thereof.

At the same time, however, if *everything* could be counted as "of Japan" (*nippon no mono*), then so could nothing at all. In other words, if Kanetsune sensed what was at stake in the

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<sup>113</sup> Kanetsune, *Ongaku to seikatsu*, 161-62.

<sup>114</sup> Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, 311.

late 1930s in his discussion of things-Japanese, then such radical inclusivity might have also served an effort to rob the very utterance of "Japan" of any authoritatively essential or transparent meaning, or at least to open it to the same devices of opacity, parody, and double-voicing upon which he had built his public career. When writing *nippon*, for instance, Kanetsune insisted in his essays after 1937 on forgoing the standard *kanji* rendering (日本) and instead printing it in the phonetic *katakana* script typically reserved for writing foreign loanwords. Rendered in this fashion as ニッポン, its visual effect struck closer to ヴィオリーネ (violin), フォックス・トロット (foxtrot), or other non-native words appearing in print advertisements or on the labels of SP records, obliging readers to linger on them for their full duration, to sound out each graph, or to test their degree of strangeness or familiarity on the tongue. Rather than yielding immediate meaning, that is, *katakana* demanded the activation of the voice as a threshold for recognition, if not identification; for many readers, *katakana* loanwords would go untranslated, existing only as visualized speech: strange sonorities captured in print. By therefore rendering "Japan" less as symbol than as acoustic signal, then, Kanetsune seemed intent not only to resist the word's presumably transparent attachment to an inherent *logos*, but also to render its phonic exteriority conspicuous, even obtrusive on the page. Thus materialized, "Japan" appeared in each instance within the equivalent of quotation marks, as if inviting the reader to reconsider its self-evidence, to evaluate its meaning manually, or to (mis)pronounce it as they saw fit.

As with Kanetsune's own research on the visible contours of the voice, then, such a move therefore rendered "Japan" not as a locus of symbolic interiority or self-identical expression, but rather as an acoustic object of analytical scrutiny and critique. But of course, such scrutiny relied upon a degree of objectivity that was for Kanetsune always in doubt. As often as he claimed to be a "third-party observer," he reveled in undercutting such pretenses with editorial flourishes,



personal digressions, and often self-contradictory addenda.<sup>115</sup> Meanwhile, if his acoustic materialism drew the ire of the *gakudan*, it was also shot through an avowedly romantic impulse to find poetry in the prosaic, or to extract musicality from language in ways that endeared his work to aestheticized discourses of "national purity" which he dismissed as the chauvinistic, retrograde dogma of "old men."<sup>116</sup>

In broad terms, Kanetsune seemed therefore to embody the impossible position of the critic as simultaneously inside and outside of the formations he sought to criticize—a paradox he attempted both to acknowledge and defuse by identifying variously as a dilettante, amateur, gadfly, or simply as an eccentric (*kijin*). At bottom, however, what such identifications seemed to denote was an itinerant, avowedly performative critical voice not unlike that of Orikuchi's *kataribe*, who, like Georg Simmel's figure of the "stranger," could be "fixed within a certain spatial area" without "belonging in it from the outset." Owing to its eccentricity, that is, the voice of the *kataribe* bore no obligation to "suppress its own materiality," but could rather exploit the latter to a range of potent and provocative effects.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, in Simmel's terms, what sustained these effects was the capacity of such a voice to embody a certain "objectivity," if understood not as an aloof or dispassionate remove, but as a "particular proportion of far and near, indifference and engagement." Positioned both within and against the prevailing codes of the majority, in other words, this critical voice could be poised to rephrase such codes in

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<sup>115</sup> Kanetsune, "Ongaku geijutsu no kaikyūsei," 4.

<sup>116</sup> At the close of his essay "Japanese music" (*Nippon ongaku*), Kanetsune writes: "In the past, old men would throw stones at people wearing Western clothes. So now I ask any nationalistic old man reading this (*kokusuishugi no rōjin shokun*), will you stone me as well?" Kanetsune, *Ongaku to seikatsu*, 166.

<sup>117</sup> James A. Fujii, *Complicit Fictions: The Subject in the Modern Japanese Prose Narrative* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 250.

previously unheard and even counter-hegemonic dialects. For Simmel, then, such "objectivity"—whether glossed as eccentricity or conspicuous materiality—"can also be called freedom."<sup>118</sup>

In parallax fashion, Hagiwara Sakutarō argued in his December 1937 essay "Return to Japan" (*Nihon e no kaiki*) that modern Japanese intellectuals represented a class of "strangers" (*étranger*) consigned by their cosmopolitanism to lives of rootless wandering among other vagabonds (*hyōhakusha*), beggars, and bards. As with Orikuchi's *kataribe*, the only recourse for Hagiwara's *étranger* was therefore to intone "a song of lonely spirit" (*yorubenaki damashii*) that might conjure the fictive image of a "return" to some prelapsarian wholeness no longer attainable in reality.<sup>119</sup> However, where Hagiwara viewed such a fate as a tragic irony, Kanetsune likely saw it as a liberating one. For indeed, this impossibility of return afforded critics—as well as poets and singers alike—a voice that was simultaneously *in* but not *of* Japan, and thus capable of the same imaginative counter-languages that the wandering *kataribe* might perform. Yet if Orikuchi regarded such performances as reverent ritual, for Kanetsune they were a burlesque—a return of language not to a rarefied register of the past, but to the more restive and irreverent vernacular of the present—where envisioning a unified "voice of Japan" might ironically reveal an unheard suite of linkages, multiplicities, and ways of sounding otherwise.

### *Conclusion*

In his 1934 work *Audible and Inaudible Sounds* [*Kikoeru oto, kikoenu oto*], Obata Jūichi explained that the modern study of acoustics entailed drawing a distinction between sound (*oto*) as the "sensory phenomena of our aural faculties" and sound in a broader physical sense: as "vibrations in the atmosphere" (*kūki no shindō*) that surround and stimulate the former. In other words, if the first meaning on its own implied that "sounds we cannot hear do not exist," then the

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<sup>118</sup> Simmel, "Excursus on the Stranger," 602-603.

<sup>119</sup> Hagiwara Sakutarō, *Nihon e no kaiki* (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 1938), 18.

latter suggested that "even vibrations unheard in one time or place would still qualify as sound."<sup>120</sup> Therefore, he continued, insofar as acoustic science was concerned with explicating sound in this latter sense as "vibration" (*shindō*), its tools and methods of analysis held the promise of transcending the limited faculties of human audition and disclosing the operations of a more capacious, continuously unfolding world of sound.

For Kanetsune, it was precisely this potential to tune into unheard sounds, or to hear commonly-heard sounds differently, that brought the insights and instruments of acoustic science to bear on his interest in the voice. In pursuing this empirical approach, however, Kanetsune's stated posture of "objective description" was shot through from the start with an irrepressibly ideological aim.<sup>121</sup> Against what he viewed as the pious myths of the bourgeois music world, Kanetsune framed his acoustic materialism in the service of cultivating the sonic and thus social agency of the "emergent class"—as a means of imploring the masses to abandon the ways of listening that had hitherto occulted the operations of aesthetic production, and to regard themselves as "the future composers of a glorious, as-yet unfinished tenth symphony."<sup>122</sup> To this task, techniques like oscillographic inscription and waveform notation functioned as implements for drawing out the acoustical unconscious of the living present, wherein the tacit spaces between discretely-partitioned musical values might be revealed as unheard lines of continuity between song and language, language and labor, and labor and social life. At root, Kanetsune's project of visualizing the structure of Japanese language and song seemed concerned, in Sofia

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<sup>120</sup> Obata, *Kikoeru oto, kikoenu oto*, 1.

<sup>121</sup> Kanetsune, *Nihon no uta to kotoba no kōzō*, 137.

<sup>122</sup> Here Kanetsune alludes to Beethoven's unfinished tenth symphony, suggesting that the *gakudan's* chimeric speculations over the "next Beethoven" ought to be supplanted by a more egalitarian project of encouraging any and all members of the masses to "be their own Beethovens." See Kanetsune, *Ongaku to seikatsu*, 162.

Lemos' phrasing, with "conjoining [the] senses with the unsound, the not-yet-audible, and the silenced," in whose idiom a more democratic counter-language might emerge.<sup>123</sup>

Yet like the European scholars from whom he drew inspiration, Kanetsune framed this project in terms that resonated closely with the global tenor of nationalism and racial scientism that suffused the era. Consequently, in spite of attempts to distance his claims from those of "nationalistic old men" (*kokusuishugi no rōjin*) in his own country, Kanetsune's research nonetheless found approving citation in works that heralded the genius of the national language in precisely the kinds of mythified and backward-facing terms that he had earlier assailed in the *gakudan*. For his part, Kanetsune seemed intent on militating against this outcome by leaning into his reputation for eccentricity, and in using his critical language to render the "Japanese voice" strange by extension, whether via rhetorical framing or in the phonic materiality of the text itself. Still, by gnomically describing his broader project as an essentially "literary" one—as an inquiry, that is, into the musicality of language and vice versa—Kanetsune could not but echo the avowed impulse of folklorists like Orikuchi to divine the "origins of national literature" in the "patterns of utterances, cadences, and rhythm derived from . . . narrative or epic poetry."<sup>124</sup>

In this regard, Kanetsune's effort to visualize the vocal materiality of *kokugo*—or as Obata Jūichi put it, to "take a scalpel to the language" and lay its supposed essence bare—served for some to vouchsafe the intrinsically vital force of its spiritual inheritance.<sup>125</sup> Yet insofar as this method of visualization did so by rendering the oscillations of speech and song in a Bergsonian image of "continuous or qualitative multiplicity," it therefore outlined a "vector" logic of the voice that ran counter to the very premise of such partition or individuation, whether at the level

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<sup>123</sup> Sofia Lemos, "Listening to time at sound's limits," *The Contemporary Journal* 3, March 31, 2020. <https://thecontemporaryjournal.org/strands/sonic-continuum/sonic-continuum-introduction>.

<sup>124</sup> Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, 344-46.

<sup>125</sup> Obata Jūichi, "Kanetsune Kiyosuke-shi cho 'Nihon no kotoba to uta no kōzō,'" *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, June 6, 1938, 4.

of formant or phoneme, language or nation. In other words, by heroizing the "Japanese voice" as a site of such qualitative multiplicity, Kanetsune ironically succeeded in rendering its very curvature as a surreptitious line of flight: as a materialization of continuities that cut across discretely segmented or spatialized frames of containment, and thus pointed toward paths of resonance that extended well beyond the nation's cultural, linguistic, and racial borders. When placed in the context of Japan's imperial jazz age, one might have therefore heard the capacity of the "Japanese voice" to contain the sonic grammar of its own disidentification, or to allow the vocalists of the era to draw different articulations of identification and belonging from the entangled lineaments of speech and song. Meanwhile, if such vibrant articulations went unheard in one time or place, there was no reason to doubt their capacity to reverberate elsewhere, to stir different bodies, or to create others anew.

## EPILOGUE

In a short editorial in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* from the eve of 1942—the last he would publish in the newspaper until the end of the war—Kanetsune Kiyosuke invoked a familiar image of peaks and valleys (*yama to tani*) to describe Japan's looming conflict with the Allied powers: "At first one scales a peak hastily in hopes of proceeding more easily down the other side. The nation has seen many such oscillations, to be sure, and seems now to be embarking on another." Yet it would be "reckless," he warned, to therefore march ahead blindly. As if to channel the lessons of his acoustical research, Kanetsune suggested that what was needed in the present moment was not an advancement of fixed steps, but a more flexible path of "thoughtfulness and care."<sup>1</sup>

In the years that followed this modest appeal, Kanetsune maintained a steadfast posture of disengagement from the imperial war effort. Over the course of the Pacific War, Kanetsune distanced himself further from the mainstream *gakudan* and worked as an affiliate researcher with Ōhara Magosaburō's Japan Labor Science Institute (*Nihon rōdō kagaku kenkyūsho*), where he published *Labor and Music (Rōdō to ongaku)* in 1943.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, when not engaged in his research, Kanetsune would decamp to the mountain town of Karuizawa to escape the heat of Tokyo's summer months. Toward the end of the summer of 1942, the novelist Katō Shūichi recalled seeing Kanetsune on one occasion near Shinano-Oiwake station in Karuizawa: "With disheveled hair the color of snow, the scrawny old man was wearing an informal kimono with a string instead of an obi around his waist. . . . strolling buoyantly along in the wind with a

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<sup>1</sup> Kanetsune Kiyosuke, "Kyō e no kotoba: Hatten no michi," *Yomiuri shinbun*, December 30, 1941, 4.

<sup>2</sup> On Kanetsune's time at the Japan Labor Science Institute, see Gamō, *Ongaku kakutōka Kanetsune Kiyosuke no shōgai*, 542.

bamboo cane in his hand." Recognizing Kanetsune immediately, Katō averred that he could just as easily have been mistaken for "Hanshan and Shide in a Zen painting."<sup>3</sup>

As Sugimoto Hidetarō suggests, this stance of disengagement placed Kanetsune "in the company of those who were painted as national traitors (*kokuzoku*) during the Pacific War."<sup>4</sup> However, while Kanetsune seemed unbothered by such a characterization, many of his peers in the *gakudan* like Tanabe Hisao, Horiuchi Keizō, and Nomura Kōichi moved quickly to insure their wartime livelihoods by taking on leadership roles in state-organized organs of cultural mobilization like the Association for Japanese Musical Culture (*Nihon ongaku bunka kyōkai*).<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, organizations like the Japan Society for Education in Music (*Nihon kyōiku ongaku kyōkai*) were enlisted under the 1941 National Ordinance Regulation Articles to "promote the practice of proper pronunciation and listening . . . and to cultivate sharper aural sensitivities to pitch, volume, timbre, rhythm, and chord structure."<sup>6</sup> For the framers of the ordinance, such skills were indeed necessary not only to provide students with a general "education of the senses," but to cultivate the capacity of the home-front population to detect the sounds of enemy voices and incoming aerial attacks.

Especially active in this project of "aural defense training" were Obata Jūichi and Taguchi Ryūzaburō, with whom Kanetsune had worked at the National Institute for Science and Chemistry in the mid-30s. In 1936, Taguchi and Obata had taken the lead among a broader

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<sup>3</sup> Katō, *A Sheep's Song*, 40-41. Here, "Hanshan and Shide" refer to two mythic Tang dynasty monks who were thought to be human incarnations of the bodhisattvas Monju and Fugen. Known equally for their jovial compassion as for their disheveled appearance in tattered rags, Hanshan and Shide have long been revered as enlightened eccentrics whose blithe manner fittingly expressed the unencumbered mindfulness of Zen practice.

<sup>4</sup> Sugimoto Hidetarō, "Kaisetsu," *Ongaku to seikatsu*, 366.

<sup>5</sup> On wartime organizations like the Association for Japanese Musical Culture (*Nihon ongaku bunka kyōkai*), see Tonoshita Tatsuya and Chōki Seiji, eds., *Sōryokusen to ongaku bunka: Oto to koe no sensō* (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> See Kamita Seiji, "Sensō to onkan no shakaishi: Kokumin gakkō to mōkyōiku wo jiretsu toshite," in Tonoshita and Chōki, *Sōryokusen to ongaku bunka*.

consortium of physicists, phonetic linguists, and musicologists to form the Acoustical Society of Japan (*Nihon onkyō gakkai*, or ASJ), an interdisciplinary organization devoted to the scientific and social study of voice and sound. As noted in the Society's flagship journal, such an institutional body was "long overdue in bringing these respective fields into mutual dialogue," insofar as a subject of such complexity and contemporary relevance "demanded nothing short of a comprehensive and integrated (*sōgōteki*) scholarly forum."<sup>7</sup> At the same time, however, this call for integration also anticipated the imperatives of mobilization for total war (*sōryokusen*), under which countless fields of knowledge formation underwent similar consolidation and enlistment in the service of "national defense" (*kokubō*).

In service to this cause, Obata and Taguchi devoted a great deal of effort to developing classroom exercises for identifying the sounds of enemy aircraft in anticipation of aerial bombing raids; in one particularly inspired proposal from 1944, Obata used the pitch contour of an oscillogram to assign note values to the characteristic engine sounds of American war planes, which he then transcribed into Western staff notation. The result was a series of playable piano figures corresponding to aircrafts like the Boeing B-17 (See Fig. 8).<sup>8</sup>

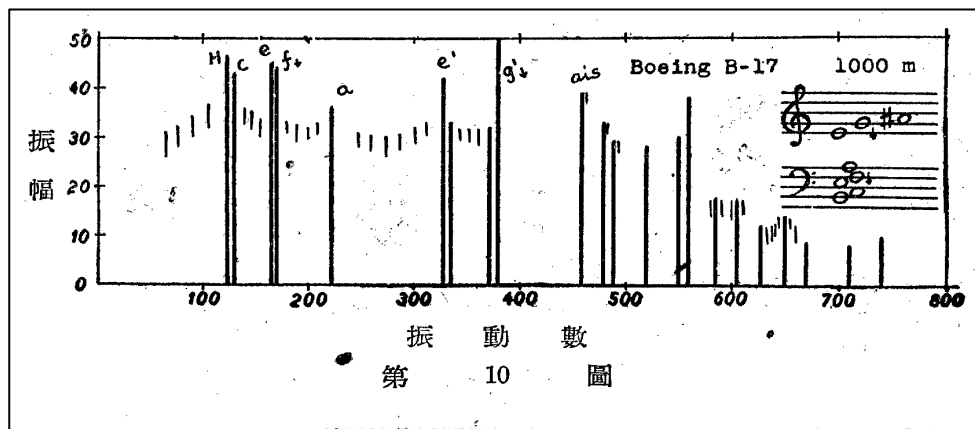


Fig. 8, Oscillogram pitch contour and correspondent notation for Boeing B-19 (Obata 1944)

<sup>7</sup> Ishimoto Mishio, "Hakkan no kotoba," *Nihon onkyō gakkaiishi* 1, no. 1 (1939): 2.

<sup>8</sup> Obata Jūichi, "Tekki narabi ni rikugun gen'yō bakuonshū (onban) ni tsuite," *Nihon onkyō gakkaiishi* 5, no. 6 (1944): 1-8.



Meanwhile, Taguchi and other ASJ members published reports on speech and phonation that ranged from acoustical analyses of foreign and regional dialects to studies on the anatomical formation of vowels and consonants, enemy uses for radio and microphone technology, and the standardization of adjectival terms for representing vocal (and other) sounds.<sup>9</sup> In a sense, what inquiring concerns over sound, language, and technological mediation had served to animate the aesthetic and political theorization of the voice in the 20s and 30s now served to inform the wartime weaponization of the ear.

However, while wartime exigency served as a catalyst for the instrumentalization of this mode of "sound studies" (*onkyōgaku*), the work of groups like the ASJ would prove equally useful to the project of postwar reconstruction. In the years following Japan's defeat and occupation, the ASJ reformed under the banner of the UNESCO organization's mission to cultivate "the safety and solace of human life" through the arts and sciences and to advance peace through the promotion of "world culture" (*sekai no bunka*).<sup>10</sup> In postwar volumes like *Various Sounds (Oto no iro iro)*, Taguchi channeled this ethos by introducing young readers to a more innocuous and culturally-oriented domain of acoustic inquiry through chapters like "Sonic trips through Japan," "Human voices," "Voices of Nature," and "Traversing the world of sound." Meanwhile, related studies in the ASJ journal discussed ways of reducing urban noise pollution and preserving various sonic heritage sites—forests, temples and shrines, places of aural interest mentioned in famous *haiku*, and even regional dialects—in a manner that would anticipate

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<sup>9</sup> On the latter, see Ōnishi Masao, "Oto wo hyōgen suru keiyōshi ni tsuite," *Nihon onkyō gakkaiishi* 5, no. 10 (1944): 2-16.

<sup>10</sup> Satta Kotoji, "Onkyō to jinsei," *Nihon onkyō gakkaiishi* 7, no. 2 (1951): 1.

initiatives like R. Murray Schafer's "World Soundscape Project" in the late 1960s.<sup>11</sup> Like the latter, however, such endeavors were as much about preservation as they were about rebuilding by subtraction; that is, to construct a carefully curated map of Japan's "natural" soundscape was in part to insulate the postwar nation from the echoes of a more discordant past, to say nothing of the social and political discord of the present.<sup>12</sup>

Today, the reverberations of Taguchi's research—along with that of the postwar ASJ and the World Soundscape Project—can be felt in initiatives like "One Hundred Soundscapes of Japan" (*Nihon no oto-fūkei hyakusen*), organized by Japan's Ministry of the Environment in the late 1990s, and more recently in the Sony-sponsored "Sound of Kyoto" film project from 2020.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Schafer's 1977 treatise *The Tuning of the World* has become a foundational text for a ever-growing body of scholarship on voice and sound in the contemporary humanities and social sciences. Over the past two decades especially, "sound studies" has achieved a considerable degree of scholarly and institutional legitimacy as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry, and now claims consortia like the Great Lakes Association for Sound Studies along with peer-reviewed journals like *Sound Studies*, *Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies*, and *Resonance: A Journal of Sound and Culture*. Echoing the integrative (*sōgōteki*) mission statement of the ASJ,

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<sup>11</sup> See Taguchi Ryūzaburō, *Oto no iro iro* (Tokyo: Sanjū shobō, 1952), and Morita Sakae, "Tokyo tonai no gaitō sōon: Nihon onkyō gakkai sōon taisaku iinkai hōkoku," *Nihon onkyō gakkaiishi* Vol. 9, no. 4 (1953): 208-30.

<sup>12</sup> There have been a number of incisive critiques of R. Murray Schafer and the World Soundscape project in recent years, including many that highlight Schafer's often reductive attitude toward issues of racial difference, marginality, and indigenous politics that otherwise impinged upon his valuation of which sounds did or did not "matter" for the sake of preservation. See, for instance, Ari Y. Kelman, "Rethinking the Soundscape: A Critical Genealogy of Terms in Sound Studies," *The Senses and Society* 5, no. 2 (2010): 212-234, and Edwin C. Hill Jr., *Black Soundscapes White Stages: The Meaning of Francophone Sound in the Black Atlantic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> For more on the "One Hundred Soundscapes of Japan" project and the "Japanese Soundscape Study Group" (*Nihon no oto-fūkei kentōkai*), see the online pamphlet *Nokoshitai 'Nihon no oto-fūkei hyakusen'*, published by the Japan Ministry of the Environment (Kankyō-shō), accessed June 2, 2022. [https://www.env.go.jp/air/life/nihon\\_no\\_oto/02\\_2007oto100sen\\_Pamphlet.pdf](https://www.env.go.jp/air/life/nihon_no_oto/02_2007oto100sen_Pamphlet.pdf). On the "Sound of Kyoto" project, see "FS7 II visualizes the Sound of Kyoto," accessed June 2, 2022. [https://pro.sony/ue\\_US/insight/filmmaking-stories/fs7ii-sound-of-kyoto](https://pro.sony/ue_US/insight/filmmaking-stories/fs7ii-sound-of-kyoto).

these venues have all enunciated various versions of the same shared goal: offering "a forum for . . . emergent ideas, theories, and topics" that cut across a wide array of disciplines, and which signal fruitful points of cross-connection and "resonance" in turn.<sup>14</sup>

It is in this same interdisciplinary spirit that I have so far attempted to examine the aesthetics and politics of voice and sound in interwar Japan. Indeed, I have proceeded from the conviction that such an approach—one that attends to multimodal connections across literature, music, performance studies, and media history—is entirely necessary in order to begin to appreciate the many sonic imaginations of the era, and to attend to the inventive vocal practices of those who lived through it. However, it is also with an ear to this longer history of instrumentalization and institutional "integration" that I have tried to proceed with an emphasis on thoughtfulness and care: to acknowledge, in short, how the present study fits within the genealogy of sonic thinking it has so far recounted, and to account for the material conditions that have set this genealogy, along with countless others, in motion. To do so, I hope, serves not only as an act of scholarly accountability, but as an invitation to listen further—to perceive in fuller terms how these histories persist within the present, and to tense our ears to what possible futures might echo from them.

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, see Veit Erlmann and Michael Bull, "Editorial," *Sound Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 1, no. 1 (2015): 1.

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