Gimme Shelter: *Enka*, Self and Society in Contemporary Japan

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines a genre of Japanese popular music known as enka, and the manner in which devotees of the genre and other stakeholders approach and negotiate with it. Previous academic examinations of enka have tended to locate it as a static musical embodiment of nostalgic 'Japaneseness'. Relying upon field observations and discussions with enka devotees carried out in Tokyo and Fukushima, I argue that enka are in fact intensely ambiguous, and that the genre ultimately serves as a shelter for historically-specific listeners, one that is deeply implicated in the production of subjectivity and the social. Depending upon the manner in which they intertwine with other 'texts' in the listener's life, enka can act as a homogenizing agent, or as a conduit for heterogeneity and movement – or both. This research will contribute to the advancement of our understanding both contemporary Japanese society and the role of popular music within it.

Keywords: Popular music, *enka*, *karaoke*, society, Japan

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Introduction

Roji, Shelter, Consequence

On a cool summer evening in late June, the Susukino intersection on the south side of the northern Japanese city of Sapporo is bustling with intersecting flows of people – bar and club hawkers set to begin plying their trades, hostesses and other employees of the 'pink' sector who will soon be filing into the high-rise buildings that are honeycombed with floor upon floor of *kyabakura* drinking establishments and 'massage parlors', flashily-dressed 'hosts' who will soon begin soothing the frayed nerves of their female clientele, and, of course, the lifeblood of it all: the teeming masses of heterogeneous humanity – male and female, Japanese and non-Japanese – who flood the district night after night, seeking a momentary escape from the realities of their own day-to-day lives. Susukino is one of those so-called 'red-light districts' that is synonymous with neon and drink; indeed, the area survives on little more than its ongoing ability to provide the refuge that its patrons seek. It seems that, despite (or, more likely, because of) the particularly dark economic times that have descended upon Japan, and particularly upon Sapporo and the rest of rural (read: non-Tokyo) Japan, alcohol and its associated trappings remain very much sought-after commodities – although some purveyors now find themselves offering these at a discount.

The light changes, and the surging tides ebb for a moment. In the lull, my thoughts turn to the friend that I am to meet here this evening – my oldest friend, born and raised in a small agricultural town just outside of Sapporo proper, and the very embodiment of the heterogeneity that I see swirling all round me. A former high school bad-boy and guitar player in a successful Japanese band, he has lived life to extremes that

not many can claim, traveling and living in the world at large and pushing through any boundary that he could see. All grown up now, he itches to continue life on his own terms – but feels, somehow, that he cannot. Now a middle-manager in a medium-sized information technology firm, he has confessed to me more than once of feeling 'trapped'. The experience of having to shelve recklessness, passion and risk for rational 'responsibility' is common enough in contemporary society, perhaps, but my intensely intelligent friend is uncommonly particular in revealing the identity of his jailers – he is trapped, he says, into living life '*the Japanese way'*. "I'm Japanese, you know," he says. "It can't be helped."

Lurking behind my friend's confession is the specter of discursive narrative, that which fuels racialized and culturalized notions of 'belonging' and which tempts us to dance at the edge of the gaping yaw of fascism, what Georges Bataille has called that "most closed form of [social] organization."[1] This sort of narrative – what Nakagami Kenji has called the 'repressive machine' – seems entirely out of place in the in-your-face complexity of Susukino. Despite the tangible heterogeneity that surrounds me, however, I know the sort of gated, universalized imaginaries haunting my friend – what Sakai Naoki would term a 'discursive space',[2] a realm of interiority intolerant to the Other and disavowing of heterogeneity – to be lurking, ever threatening, under just the right conditions, to devour the heterogeneous and spiral into out-and-out fascism. These imaginaries are not overtly hostile, coming under the heels of jackboots or at the ends of bayonets; they are rather second-nature, a sort of "cultural unconsciousness",[3] driven not

[1] Georges Bataille, trans. Allan Stoekl, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927 – 1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).
[2] Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 4.
[3] See Harry Harootunian, "Review Article: Hirohito Redux", in Critical Asian Studies 33:4 (2001)

by malicious intent but by a drive for shelter, for camaraderie, even as they torment the very people that find themselves clinging to them. They are evidenced in the day-to-day experiences of many, including not the only many residents of this country (Japanese and non-Japanese alike) who have found themselves shut *out* of 'Japan' on the basis of their incompatibility with such narratives, but countless individuals, such as my friend, who find themselves trapped *within* the very same.

This tension between a tangible heterogeneity and the 'repressive machine' in contemporary Japan reveals the ambiguity of lived reality so often concealed by discourses of 'Japaneseness' and leads us to the type of questions that have haunted me for much of my own life in Japan - questions that have immense ramifications for all of those who make their home here. What sorts of mechanisms serve to facilitate and reproduce realms of repressive narrative? Where can we find what Katsuhiko Mariano Endo has called 'critical spaces',[4] those zones that potentiate an escape from narrative, the expression of difference, and which foster the capacity to flee the grip of the machine altogether? What are the desires that power it all? And, what potential consequence(s) might all this have for what is loosely called 'Japanese society' itself? These are not questions that can be answered by appeals to universalizing notions of 'Japanese culture' or 'Japanese history' – they can only be addressed by approaching that sphere of nearness which Naoki Sakai would term the realm of the trivial, the mundane, of the "'us', who are basically vulgar,"[5] and what Nakagami Kenji and Endo would call the *roji*.[6].

[4] Endo Katsuhiko, *Empire State of Mind*, Vol. 1 (forthcoming manuscript).
[5] Sakai, p.61.
[6] Alan Tansman, *History, Repetition and Freedom in the Narratives of Nakagami Kenji* (Journal of Japanese Studies, Vol. 24, No. 2), p.276.

The *roji* and its occupants – the untold numbers that comprise the non-elite, the surplus population, the *many*,[7] an altogether "oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor race"[8] – have been consistently overlooked in narratives of Japanese 'culture' and 'national history'. Such narratives tend to disavow the heterogeneity of the *roji* and the diversity of its occupants altogether,[9] squeezing difference out, or, to put it another way, forcibly and unilaterally *assimilating* such difference into themselves in the interest of pursuing the 'sameness' that is narrative's ultimate aim, the 'sameness' that is prerequisite in order to facilitate the production of a smooth and seamless 'national culture' and 'history'. Yet, this realm called the *roji* is of vital importance to anyone wishing to launch a meaningful investigation of life in Japan (or anywhere, for that matter), precisely because it is the (often competing) desires emerging from and shaping this vast, complex and ambiguous realm of majority that ultimately define what we call society.

The research that follows seeks to approach the *roji* through an examination of a particular form of Japanese popular music known as *enka,* a genre defined by one ethnomusicologist as "popular songs… that are said to have Japanese musical and spiritual characteristics,"[10] and audience negotiations with it. It aims to situate *enka* as an ambiguous lens through which to consider the desires of its listeners. Through a two-staged examination of the manner(s) in which the music can intertwine with the lives of

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[7] See Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
[8] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* Trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 108-09.
[9] Endo, *Empire State of Mind*, Vol. 1 (forthcoming manuscript).
[10] Ethnomusicologist Gondo Atsuko is quoted in Christine R. Yano, *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 29.

its devotees,[11] I will demonstrate that the *enka* genre is far less cut-and-dry than many of its commentators give it credit for, having both the potential to nurture and groom what Foucault, in his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, has called "fascism in the body",[12] that vital precursor and naturalizer of Bataille's closed society, and, on the other hand, the capacity to serve as a platform for the facilitation of heterogeneity, and even critique. I argue that, ultimately, listeners in the *roji* turn to *enka* as a shelter from the (often harsh) realities associated with contemporary existence, and that the type of shelter sought is deeply implicated in negotiations of subjectivity and the development of the social. Our ultimate aim is to approach questions of 'desire' and the 'social', of 'heterogeneity' and the 'repressive machine' through the lens of *enka* – in short, to move beyond narratives of 'Japaneseness' to lay bare *enka* as one of the many mechanisms/conduits through which questions of the self and society are negotiated in contemporary Japan, and to reveal some of the complexities involved in the generation of 'culture' at the level of the everyday, and to consider the form(s) that this shelter called *enka* takes, the consequences that it can have, and why.

Enka: The Heart and Soul of 'the Japanese'?

Sometimes melancholy, sometimes passionate, the *enka* genre is one that easily lends itself to an intertwining of sorts with the lives of its listeners. As we will see, the listener will not always necessarily find a link between the lyrical narrative of all *enka* works and his or her lived everyday realities, but this does not diminish the connection that the genre has to lives lived by its devotees at the level of the *roji*. *Enka* have a

[11] The use of the word 'devotee' is no hyperbole; terms like 'listener' or 'fan' simply fail to adequately capture the central role that the *enka* genre plays in the lives of the individuals with whom the present research deals, as well as the love declared by these individuals for the genre. I will thus use the term 'devotees' throughout.

[12] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guttari, *Anti-Oedipus* (New York: Viking Press, 1972) p.xiii.

tendency to flow among the listener's desires and affections like water flowing around stones in a stream, always caressing them, sometimes seeming to augment them or bringing them into sharper focus, even moving them a little further downstream. While this sort of 'affective' power of music is by no means unique to the *enka* genre, *enka* do play, as we shall see, a remarkably central role in the lives of many of its devotees, and it is this manner in which the genre intertwines with lived experience that underpins and drives the research to follow.

Contemporary *enka* are commonly associated with notions of 'Japan', and with universalizing notions of 'Japaneseness'. It is, to be sure, this ideological baggage that the genre has been saddled with that has helped to make *enka* a target of academic inquiry. But *enka*'s contemporary assigned status as the 'conservative' musical embodiment of all things 'Japanese' is radically destabilized by a historicity that is both ambiguous and complex;[13] earlier incarnations of the genre took on diverse and varying forms, including vehicle for social protest in the 1880s[14] (allowing those who "were not allowed to speak their opinions… [to] sing them"[15]). Such fluidity and ambiguity should put us in mind of the fact that, for much of their existence, *enka* did not constitute a genre at all, but were simply 'Japanese popular music', *kayōkyoku*. In fact, *enka* only really began to be carved out as a musical entity in and of themselves at the beginning of the 1970s. Although this initial differentiation was orchestrated by Japan's record industry as a means to define a 'Japanese music' amidst to the perceived new penetration of Other musics considered to

[13] For an historical overview of some of the earliest developments of the enka genre, see Yano's Tears of Longing and Jean Wilson, *Enka: The Music People Love or Hate* (in Japan Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 2, July-September, 1993).
[14] The *Dynamite Dong Ditty* of 1885, for example, even appears to advocate violence in its call for social reform: "If we can have liberty in this country/ I'll strive for the good and welfare of the people / If not, there will be the roar of dynamite." See John Whittier Treat, ed., *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), p. 112.
[15] Wilson, p. 287.

be 'foreign' – such as rock and folk[16] – this really tells only half the story. While a detailed analysis of the political and socioeconomic conditions underpinning the establishment of *enka* as a popular genre must be saved for another day, we must here at least declare our intent to move to a deeper level of analysis than that potentiated by the usual proclamations that something vaguely defined as 'cultural nationalism' facilitated the establishment of the *enka* genre, and take note of the fact that this development was in fact taking place against a variously stormy socioeconomic backdrop,[17] no doubt helping to fuel, in the Spinozian sense, a dive for shelter in a music of 'our own'. And while the establishment of a 'genre' called *enka* would seem to suggest that there now exists some clearly-defined border between *enka* and *kayōkyoku* as altogether different musics, in reality there is much overlap between them;[18] attempting to draw some sort of clear line of division between them is not only problematic, but also – and more importantly – utterly irrelevant from the standpoint of the devotee. For this reason, the terms *enka* and *kayōkyoku* will sometimes appear in tandem throughout our discussion, and where appropriate (such as in our upcoming discussion of a massive annual *enka* karaoke competition), the musical 'boundaries' of *enka* affixed by researchers will be stretched to allow consideration of works that might not be otherwise considered admissible to (usually arbitrary) imaginings of the genre.

There is, I think, an undeniable connection between contemporary *enka* and 'American' country music. Like country music, *enka* have become tightly bound to vague

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[16] John Whittier Treat, Ed., *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), p. 111.
[17] See Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S. – Japan Relations Throughout History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997), Chapters 11 & 12.
[18] This is true even in terminology: the *Kayō* in *Kayō Konsāto*, an *enka* extravaganza broadcast weekly on public television broadcaster NHK, for example, is derived from *kayōkyoku*

ideas of authenticity[19] and 'folk', and deeply implicated in ideas of narrating 'the nation'. According to some devotees, this connection with an imagined 'Japan' can be (at least partially) accounted for in the common portrayal in *enka* of what are perhaps best called (stereotypical) 'Japan-scapes' – lyrical and musical depictions of swirling snow, fluttering cherry blossoms, traditional festivals (effectively depicted through the use of thundering *taiko* drums in Kitajima Saburo's *Matsuri*, for example), songs explicitly set in specific geographical locations around the country, and so on. It is a connection bolstered by (televised) visual representations of *enka* artists in kimono and other performance aspects inviting associations with 'Japaneseness', and amplified by assumptions of sorts that *enka* represent an aesthetic best (if not solely) comprehended and appreciated by a 'cultural' (not necessarily, as we shall see, racial) community labeled 'the Japanese', making the temptation to declare *enka* the (unexamined) "heart and soul of the Japanese"[20] difficult indeed to resist.

And it is a temptation that has often proved to be unmasterable, not only for devotees of the genre, but for researchers, as well. While connections between the genre and imaginings of 'Japaneseness' are certainly regularly found *enka* industry literature,[21] scholars, for their part, have tended to be rather uncritical in endorsing this connection between *enka* and a community of listeners called 'the Japanese', having sought to

[19] The notion of 'authenticity' in these pages carries with it a certain aura of danger, and purposefully so. It is the danger inherent in smoothing out the wrinkles of heterogeneity and diversity in aiming to attain a smooth, and that presents the possibility of imagining a 'collectivity' that is built upon the repression of Otherness (that is, of the non-authentic). 'Authenticity' is, as we shall see in the pages that follow, a key precondition of passage to what I am preparing to call the 'interior'. See Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, Chapters 7 & 8.

[20] Wilson, p. 286.

[21] Particularly interesting is promotional literature for the new *Enka* Knowledge Proficiency Exam (*Enka Kentei*), organized by the *Enka* Knowledge Proficiency Exam Research Council in cooperation with NAK, which declares *enka* to be the music of the 'Japanese heart' and promises that *enka* will revitalize Japan [*enka ga Nippon wo genki ni suru*]. See the exam's official website at http://www.enkakentei.com.

establish and reveal this connection without much regard for what it actually *means*, or for the voices of the devotees themselves, the voices of those in the *roji*. Through so doing, well-meaning studies have served to reproduce and reinforce (albeit probably inadvertently) Nakagami's repressive narrative, shutting out heterogeneity and complexity in favor of connecting the dots of an assumed nation-centered discourse made manifest through music. Drawing a link between the *enka* genre and the experience(s) of life in Japan (hardly reducible to something called 'Japaneseness') is certainly not, as we shall see, invalid in and of itself, but doing so automatically and uncritically deprives one of the opportunity to ask vital questions, such as what the genre means to its devotees and why it occupies the role that it does in individual devotees' lives, and what sort of impacts negotiations with this cultural medium may have on 'self' and 'society'.

Indeed, it is precisely this sort of analysis of the lived aspects of *enka* that is lacking in preexisting studies of the genre. Christine R. Yano, for example, has authored the authoritative study of the genre in her *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song.* While Yano's work has carefully and exhaustively addressed the musicological and mechanical aspects of *enka*, it has done so against a backdrop of unifying all aspects of the genre – from composition to production to performance – under a singular, unifying thread called 'Japaneseness'. Indeed, Yano's central argument rests upon assumptions that *enka* constitute a medium that serves to connect 'the Japanese' to 'the nation', and that this subject group called 'the Japanese' is drawn to the genre out of a 'natural' sense of longing and nostalgia:

> "For contemporary audiences, *enka* has become the emblem of a constructed past, one in which men followed a life-long path and women followed their hearts. In this past, men became noble through single-mindedness and sheer effort… These were men of duty and honor, of life-or-death commitment. In this past, too, women loved one only, and

enduringly, until death and beyond… [These men and women] can pine for a Japanese self that can only be retrieved in the floating world of the spectacle, the stage, the dream… [*E*]*nka* has remained that internal place (or one of those places) where 'Japaneseness' still exists."[22]

It is no stretch to suggest that *enka* can constitute an apparatus of sorts, what Giorgio Agamben, building upon Foucault, has called the *dispositif*, a musical apparatus that has the ability to "capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions or discourses of living beings,"[23] a vehicle for the fortification of a soft-power that can reinforce universalizing notions of 'Japaneseness' at the expense of difference, and a mechanism that can steer us toward what we will define in the upcoming pages as an *interior*. This is, in a roundabout way, precisely the point that Yano seeks to make – that the *enka* genre serves to connect an uneasily-amalgamated subject called 'the Japanese' to a larger cultural imagining called 'Japan'. But this, in itself, is not really saying much, nor is it the aim of this research simply to re-state a point that has already been made. Rather, our goal is to move beyond this sort of knee-jerk *enka*/'Japaneseness' linkage, to situate the genre within the realm of ambiguity and human complexity, and to ask *why* the genre plays the role(s) that it does in the lives of its devotees.

Yano can hardly be criticized for finding a connection between 'Japan' and *enka*'s audience. In fact, as we shall see below, she is correct in locating a desire for 'Japan' in devotee motivations for partaking in the *enka* genre. She is correct, however, *for the wrong reasons*. Audience desires for 'Japan' do not, in the final analysis, have anything to do with 'cultural nationalism', or with some phantasmal, organic notion of

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[22] Yano, p. 183-185.
[23] See Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

'Japaneseness', what Yanagita Kunio might have viewed as the ever-enduring qualities of an essentially static "folk".[24] Nor does the 'Japan' associated with the genre in the eyes of the audience necessarily have anything to do with the 'Japan' and 'Japaneseness' imagined by researchers. Rather, as we shall see, desire for 'Japan' has everything to do with the search for shelter and *nakama* (articulated by the participants in this study as 'community' and 'camaraderie'); with finding refuge in what Paolo Virno would call, as we shall see below, the 'common places', or the 'general intellect'; and with a desperate attempt to halt the swaying of the boat and anchor life, to paraphrase one individual who participated in this research, in the only home that many have ever known.

It is clear that we must change our approach. An escape from assumption and culturalism can only be potentiated through stepping into the *roji* itself. We need only to take as our starting point the realization that *enka* are massively, almost indescribably important entities in the lives of many listeners – "nutritional supplements for the soul" in the words of one of the devotees with whom this research engaged, a "blessed relief" according to another – and then to ask why. Music has been demonstrated to be an escape for the listener,[25] and this particular genre is no different – it is, quite literally, a shelter. A shelter, that is, with consequences.

Theoretical Preliminaries

We know that music, self and society are all interconnected.[26] In order to potentiate specific and detailed analyses of the mechanisms that are at work constructing

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[24] See Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), esp. p. 305-328.
[25] See John Connell and Chris Gibson, *Sound Tracks – Popular Music, Identity and Place* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 71-72, 82-83.
[26] See Adamo's discussion of ethnomusicology in Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), as well as Craig A. Lockard, *Dance of Life: Popular Music and Politics in Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998).

society within the *roji*, however, we must move beyond prevailing approaches to media studies[27] and resist the temptation of the Adornian snare. Claims that "mass-mediated culture has chiefly served the interests of the political-economic power elite… *by programming mass consciousness* [my italics]"[28] render the audience little more than what Lawrence Grossberg has termed "cultural dopes",[29] and deprives its membership of an active voice in its encounter with the cultural form in question. Finding singular agency for 'social engineering' in some sort of variously-defined 'puppetmaster', manipulating, duping, 'leading' people as cattle to the slaughter, completely misses the complexity of the situation. As Deleuze and Guattari have stated, "there is only desire and the social and nothing else." [30] This is a powerful reminder that, while entities such as the media, the government, education and so on all have their own roles to play in determinations of the manner in which self and society are defined (as dispensers of visions, of imaginaries), actual social directionality does not come from above, nor is it somehow culturally predetermined.[31] Determinations of self and of society are a result of an intertextual[32] intermeshing of affects, of desires, of life experiences at the local level, and can only originate from this realm of the 'us' – that is, from within the *roji* itself.

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[27] For an overview of some of the common theoretical approaches employed in grappling with questions of popular culture and society, see Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, eds., *Media and Cultural Studies – Keywork*s (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).
[28] Lockard, p.55.
[29] Arnold Perris, *Music as Propaganda* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), p.17
[30] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 28.
[31] For discussions of the manner in which society is engineered at the level of the social, see Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998), p.55-115, and Sheldon Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
[32] Intertextuality refers to the manner in which texts – including what we would traditionally conceive of as 'literal', written texts, musical and verbal texts, and intangible texts such as life experience, etc. – only take on meaning in relation to other texts. For a full explanation, see Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

Naoki Sakai, in his *Voices of the Past,* makes clear this centrality of individual praxis in producing self, society, and culture. Sakai sees the *roji* as "a space within which acting agents perform. … The corpora of actors animate a given space and turn it into a situation [or *roji*]."[33] In stressing that "human bodies introduce directionality and the senses into an otherwise anonymous physical space,"[34] Sakai argues that "the actor's body is the mediating agent that integrates the… text and the situation";[35] indeed, it is this body that accounts for the inherent ambiguities in the manner that music is received and reproduced, ultimately nullifying the Adornian snare. The actor's body, as a singular contributing agent to the general text, is affected by the manner in which it encounters the world and the many texts that it encounters in ways not easily confined to discourse; the body's actions and reactions will change depending upon this affect, and upon the manner in which the various texts are organized and comprehended by it. Music is a vital lubricant in this process, and a medium that can serve to bind the various texts together in a cohesive structure, informing world outlooks and channeling and intensifying desire, strengthening and soothing, perhaps consolidating Foucault's fascism in the body, perhaps inciting revolt. We all have a 'soundtrack' to our lives, each compiled, over time, for unique reasons. Dismissing these soundtracks as merely tools of the elite is to miss an important opportunity to investigate lived reality at the level of the everyday.

Music is, in other words, inextricably intertwined with *affect*.[36] Affect is not a feeling or emotion that can be rationally labeled and packaged for discussion, but is

[33] Ibid. p. 134.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid. p. 135.
[36] See Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), especially his Introduction, for an overview of affect. For affect and music, see Eric Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect" in *M/C: A Journal of Media and Culture*, Vol. 8, Issue 6 (December, 2005).

rather an *intensity*, a movement of sorts "from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act."[37] There are two 'instances' of affect that will be of particular importance to our discussion – first, the manner in which one is affected by the world, and second, the manner in which one is affected by the music. The former drives the desires of the devotee in his or her negotiations with the music (determining what he or she 'seeks' therein), and the latter, always already filtered by the former, determines what the devotee takes away from the music – that is, the manner in which the text that is the music integrates itself first into the devotee's life experiences, augmenting or diminishing his or her capacity to act in given ways, and then, by extension, into the general text that is life or 'society' itself, serving to bolster repressive narrative or facilitate critique. This intertextual intermeshing of the self, the world and the music is none other than the intermeshing of affects, of desires, of life experiences at the local level discussed above, and is the driving force behind the engineering of life in the *roji*.

It is affect that informs and drives desire. To Deleuze and Guttari, desire is of central, vital importance in the human experience[38] – indeed, social and political bodies are themselves consequences of desire.[39] 'Desire' must be conceptualized in terms of Spinoza's *conatus* – the striving to persevere in existence, to survive on our own terms under conditions that are useful, or beneficial to us[40] – and indeed, desire is the resultant incarnation of *conatus* in consciousness, that which allows *conatus* to become a creative

[37] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), p. xvi.
[38] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guttari, *Anti-Oedipus* (New York: Viking Press, 1972) p.29.
[39] Jeffrey A. Bell and Claire Colebrook, eds. *Deleuze and History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p.24.
[40] Stuart Hampshire, *Spinoza* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987), p.67.

force.[41] *Conatus* is the result of passion and affect, which "determines us to do this or that, to think this or that, and thereby to make an effort to preserve our relation or maintain our power."[42] What we desire is thus the means to live on, to maintain ourselves in given circumstances – it is this that defines our essence, our *conatus*, and it is this desire that determines what the listener takes away from participation in the *enka* genre.

It is important to note, though, that this centrality of desire does not necessarily mean that we automatically seek to cast off all vestiges of oppression and control and live as untethered, free beings – indeed, desire *itself* is ambiguous, and as Deleuze and Guttari note in *Anti-Oedipus*, we can desire our own repression due to our positioning within the economic system.[43] Tomiyama's description of the lifestyle reform movement in wartime Okinawa – in which Okinawans actively sought to take on perceived aspects of 'Japaneseness' and repress aspects of their own culture as a means to ensure the value of their labour power, and therefore their survival – is an effective example of this,[44] and we will see desire's complex mechanisms at work in the pages that follow, as well, as they poise *enka* devotees on the very brink of critique, even while threatening to banish these very same devotees right back to the jaws of the repressive machine.

Evidence of desire's complexities can be found everywhere, including in questions of *language*, and the manner in which language can become intertwined with issues of *conatus* and survival. 'National language' played an integral role in the aforementioned Okinawan lifestyle reform movement, for example, and it will emerge

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[41] Edward Willatt and Matt Lee, eds., *Thinking Between Deleuze and Kant* (London: Continuum International, 2009), p.92.
[42] Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone Books, 1990), p.231.
[43] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guttari, *Anti-Oedipus* (New York: Viking Press, 1972) p.29-30.
[44] See Tomiyama Ichiro, *'Spy': Mobilization and Identity in Wartime Okinawa* (Osaka: Senri Ethnological Studies 51, National Museum of Ethnology, 2000), p. 126.

again to stalk our discussion of the role played by *enka* in the lives of its devotees, as well. In *Voices of the Past*, Sakai grapples with language's role as a potential cog in the repressive machine in his discussion of the "invention of the Japanese language as an ethnic closure"[45] (a closure which, as we will see, does not necessarily preclude the inclusion of a racial Other, provided he is willing to submit himself to the machinery of its discourse). Below, in our examination of audience reproduction of *enka* through analysis of amateur performance, we will see just how crucial the role of language in audience negotiations with the *enka* genre actually is.

But far and away the most urgent desire that we will confront here, that which ties this research together, is the desire for *shelter*. Life for the many in post-bubble Japan has been fraught with unease and fear, and overshadowed by a "perception of national peril that encompasses virtually all aspects of Japanese contemporary society",[46] and the situation has only worsened under the current global economic crisis. Japanese firms have increasingly been abandoning management schemes aimed at fostering a corporate 'family', and tossing workers into the street.[47] Wages, benefits and job security are all on the decline for 'regular' male workers, while there is increasing pressure on women to enter the workforce (usually on unfavourable terms) to supplement that household income in order to ensure family survival.[48] Homelessness is on the rise,[49] and the fear of losing one's job permeates among those who are employed.[50] This general fear and unease is amplified in rural Japan, where, for example, stresses over socioeconomic

[45] Sakai, p. 322.
[46] Tomiko Yoda & Harry Harootunian, eds., *Japan after Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 20.
[47] Ibid. p. 419.
[48] Ibid. p. 41.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid. p. 240.

uncertainties (such as relatively higher unemployment and relatively lower per-capita income) are manifested in suicide rates that are grossly unbalanced – the worst ten prefectures for suicides in 2008 were all rural (Osaka was 32nd, Tokyo 41st and Kanagawa 47th), and in the case of Fukushima Prefecture, the *roji* selected for investigation in this study (and 15th on the suicide list), the bulk of suicides in 2006 (38.4%) were workers, mostly in their 40s and 50s, who identified 'problems in economic life' as the main reason for ending their lives.[51]

If these official statistics are eye-opening, the voices of those actually in the *roji* are even more so. When asked in June of 2010 to compare contemporary socioeconomic life in Fukushima Prefecture with that of recent years, for which the aforementioned data had already been compiled, an elderly, still-working farmer and participant in the present study told me, for example, "that it's probably worse now… [I'm} past [my] working prime, you see… [but] I think that it's got to be really tough on those who are out there working today."[52] In this socioeconomic turbulence, it is, as we will see, precisely a sense of shelter, an anchor of sorts in uncertain times, that many are searching for. What is being sought is none other than what Virno has called "refuge" from contemporary conditions of existence, a "general intellect" from which to draw in attempting to anchor oneself in life.[53] As we will see, *enka* constitute precisely such a shelter for its listeners – a shelter that, depending on the context of what I would like to call 'lived intertextuality' (that is, the intertextual intermeshing of affects, of desires, of life experiences of historically-specific people, in geographically-specific locales), can serve to potentiate

[51] See Prefectural data online at http://wwwcms.pref.fukushima.jp/download/1/kenpokuhf_jisatsuyobo.pdf.
[52] An abridged transcript of this field discussion is attached to the present thesis as Appendix I. We will return to consider this discussion in greater detail in Chapter 3.
[53] See Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude.*

critique, or, just as easily, take the form of what Virno has called a 'horrifying' refuge,[54] as fear, unease and socioeconomic unevenness continue to rule the day in Japan.

And all of this – affect, *conatus*, desire – converges in what Deleuze and Guattari call 'becoming'. Indeed, the multiplicities of what we are loosely calling 'self' "are formed out of an ongoing series of different becomings,"[55] and it is these diverse individualities that go on to engineer 'society'. What historically-specific individuals are in the process of *becoming* – it is this, rather than overarching narratives of 'identity' or 'Japaneseness', that can lead us to a more concise and sophisticated understanding of where our world is at, and where it might be going. The point that is most demanding of our attention is, ultimately, "not what we are, but rather what we are in the process of becoming."[56] And music facilitates this becoming; it is, in fact, as we shall see, absolutely inseparable from it. More concisely, perhaps, music is nothing less than a *conduit* for becoming; an examination of the sort upon which we are about to embark will allow us to utilize music in approaching both the desires of the *roji* and the manner in which they are fuelling these vitally important processes of becoming.

Investigative Methods

As should be clear by this point, one of the fundamental arguments put forth by this research lies in the assertion that the *enka* genre itself is not necessarily predestined to function as a cog in some sort of machine generating universalizing notions of 'Japaneseness', but is in fact intensely ambiguous, with the potential to foster repressive

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[54] Virno, p. 34.
[55] Lori Brown, *Becoming-Animal in the Flesh: Expanding the Ethical Reach of Deleuze and Guattari's Tenth Plateau*, in *PhaenEx Journal of Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture* 2, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2007), p. 265.
[56] Gilles Deleuze, *What is a Dispositif?* in *Michel Foucault, Philosopher, Essays Translated from the French & German by Timothy J. Armstrong* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 163.

narrative, to be sure, but also to serve as a flashpoint for critique. In order to prove this point, we will examine the manner in which devotees of the genre actually negotiate with the genre and some of he meaning(s) that they take away from it. It is only through such direct engagement with individual fans of the genre that we will be able to establish any sort of grounded understanding of the role(s) that it plays in individual lives. In other words, I seek to set aside universalizing notions of 'Japaneseness' to reveal the role(s) played by this ambiguous cultural medium in channeling desires (that is, how it is 'used' and what sort of 'becoming' is potentiated through the music) in the lives of historically (and, for our purposes, geographically) specific listeners, and why.

In order to establish the fundamental ambiguity of *enka*, we will engage in a critical analysis of the *Kayōsai*, an annual *karaoke* contest produced by the *Nihon Amateur Kayō Renmei* (hereafter NAK), a highly organized *karaoke* and *enka* 'appreciation society' established in 1982 with roughly 30,000 members in Japan and around the world. The *Kayōsai*, which is open to participation by all NAK members, is, as we shall see, no small event – held in a large-scale concert hall in downtown Tokyo, it is a massive, nine-hour marathon of music that features 150 contestant/performers who have cleared preliminary elimination rounds in their home regions and reached the 'final showdown' of the passionately dedicated and enormously talented. It is professionally produced and emceed, and features performances by professional *enka* artists. The *Kayōsai* represented an opportunity for amateur *enka* aficionadi to mount a 'response' of sorts to their favourite music, to emerge from the shadows of passivity and actively represent, through song selection, comments made prior to performance, and so on, the heterogeneous manner(s) in which the devotee views *enka* and the role(s) that the genre

plays in his or her own life. As we shall see, however, the *Kayōsai* also presented us with clear examples of the manner in which *enka* can be yoked into the service of repressive narrative, serving as an apparatus that points the way to the interior. This sort of a 'rescuing' of *enka* from the clutches of universalizing assumptions about its nature and the establishment of its inherent ambiguity is a vital prerequisite to any meaningful consideration of the role(s) that the music plays in the lives of individual devotees at the level of the *roji*, and of any consequences that this may have.

Indeed, e*nka* is a music of the *roji*, and particularly of the rural *roji*. While it is true that, as Yano points out, *enka* are a fixture in the bars and pubs that dot the backstreets of urban centres such as Tokyo (themselves also *roji*, in the most literal sense) and that are frequented by salaried workers and other urbanites seeking a refuge of their own, they are even more a part of life – a music that is *there*, pumped into cafes and shops via *yusen* technology, sung at karaoke bars, prevalent on AM radio,[57] what has been called "music overheard"[58] – in rural and agrarian areas. The second task of this research will be to directly engage the *roji*, to speak first-hand with devotees of the *enka* genre, in an attempt to elucidate the role that is played by the *enka* genre in the lives of these listeners, and why. The account of this encounter with the *roji* that follows provides us with important insights into the manner in which subjectivity and the social are being engineered at the level of the everyday – through unmasking the desires that are at work there, and revealing what the devotees might be 'becoming' through the music. The *roji* selected for this research is Fukushima Prefecture, a largely agrarian prefecture some 200

[57] For the week of October 1, 2010, for example, *enka* accounted for 10% of the top 20 songs complied by AM stations in rural Aomori and Iwate Prefectures, and in Hokkaido. *Enka* were completely absent from the top 20 complied by Tokyo's main AM station, TBS.
[58] See Yano, *Tears of Longing*, p. 7.

kilometers northeast of Tokyo, where we will engage the membership of the Fukushima City Branch of the NAK. The voices of those in this *roji* are, as we shall see, more revealing than any theoretical, academic assumption could ever hope to be.

Final Remarks

Like the red-light district of Susukino, the very endurance of *enka* derives from the shelter that its patrons find within it. And like the learned philosophers of 'Japan' discussed by Harootunian in his *Overcoming Modernity*, who sought to find a way to transcend what they saw as the ravages of their own history in the 1920s and 1930s, the philosophers of the *roji* that this research seeks to give voice to are, in their negotiations with *enka*, reacting to the realities of their own historical everyday. They are seeking an escape, however fleeting, from the real. And, just as was the case with Harootunian's philosophers, the attempts by these philosophers of the *roji* to overcome, to find shelter, have consequences. It is this pairing of shelter and consequence, much more than any perceived connection between the genre and 'Japaneseness', that makes *enka* and audience negotiations with it an important topic of investigation – an investigation that must be mounted nowhere but within the *roji* itself.

The *roji* must not be glorified. To be sure, the *roji* represents the potentiality of none other than the heterogeneous, the Other, the 'difference' that Nakagami Kenji sees in contrast to 'discrimination' – but we would be missing the most important point of this research, and worse, falling directly back into the very universalizing tendencies that we know we must critique, by simply assigning the *roji* status as a site of resistance. If this is not a tale of puppetry or manipulation, neither is it necessarily a tale of bottom-up heroics from the grassroots, either, nor of some struggle to cast off the chains of repressive

narrative and discrimination. If, as Tansman tells us, the *roji* can be a threat to the center and a realm from which to speak could mean the destruction of discourse,[59] then the *roji*, while disavowed and forgotten in much academic discussion, is nonetheless a site of great significance and agency, the potential producer and anchor of the very narrative that threatens to cannibalize its heterogeneity and neutralize what Harootunian has called "the play of cultural difference",[60] capable of producing debilitating discrimination as well as searing critique. It is only within the *roji* that narrative and its potentially terrifying[61] consequences can be reproduced and to take on practical meaning (inching us closer to that gaping yaw), and it is only from within the *roji* that narrative and fascism can be critiqued. The *roji*, in short, is the realm of life, where society is ultimately engineered, and where, as Gonda Yasunosuke already recognized as early as the 1920s, culture is produced.[62] The task facing us is to reveal what type of 'culture' might be being produced in the *roji*, and to attempt to establish the context and enabling conditions for the development of this culture – in short, to reveal the mechanisms involved in the production of Deleuze and Guattari's "social" in the *roji*, what sort of dreams are being envisioned and fomented there, and why.

Enka are already ambiguous. The *enka* genre contains within it reinforcements of universalizing imaginings associated with the experience of being 'Japanese' on the one hand, and celebrations of the local, non-standard dialects and other factors that would

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[59] Alan Tansman, *History, Repetition and Freedom in the Narratives of Nakagami Kenji* (Journal of Japanese Studies, Vol. 24, No. 2), p.276.
[60] Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian, eds., *Postmodernism and Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), p. 75.
[61] See Tomiyama Ichiro's *'Spy',* for an example of such 'terrifying consequences'. Tomiyama's description of the lifestyle reform movement in wartime Okinawa – in which Okinawans actively sought to take on perceived aspects of 'Japaneseness' and repress aspects of their own culture as a means to ensure the value of their labour power, and therefore their survival, with horrifying results – is an excellent example of this sort of 'terrifying consequence'.
[62] Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity,* p. 160.

seem to work directly against any sort of singular 'Japanese' homogenization on the other. Thus, *enka* have always already had the potential to both reinforce *and* disrupt Nakagami's 'repressive narrative', those common-sensical notions of homogenized 'Japaneseness'. Sakai teaches us that it is an "unexpected juxtaposition of words [that] adds a new meaning to the original text to which reference is being made, and thereby transforms it."[63] I suggest that it is a different type of text – namely, the lived experiences of the listener – that intermeshes with the genre and disrupts the equilibrium of *enka*, dictating through 'lived intertextuality' whether internalization of the genre will serve to bolster and reinforce universalized imaginings of 'Japaneseness' or throw such common-sensical notions into irreparable instability.

Music is, after all, about 'becoming', and *enka* no less so. It is a double-edged sword, capable of potentiating an escape from the fascist life on one hand, but also of drawing "people… into a race that can go all the way to the abyss (much more so than banners or flags…)"[64] on the other. Harootunian warns us that the story of Japanese fascism is not yet complete.[65] This fascism comes not through the brute force of the bayonet or the boot, but through complex mechanisms of affect, desire, *conatus*, and the search for shelter – no longer can we rest on our laurels, content to turn a blind eye to this complexity in the name of 'Japaneseness', or of 'national history'. In order to bring this complex story into sharper focus, we must shift our gaze, and abandon the meta-narrative in the interests of revealing, as best we are able, Japan as the thing in itself, as the seething, teeming mass of ambiguous and conflicted humanity that it – and, indeed, that any 'society' – ultimately is. The voices of heterogeneity – the voices of the *roji* – must

[63] Ibid. p. 183.
[64] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 302.
[65] Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. xxxii.

be permitted to break through; that is what this study, within its limited scope,[66] seeks to achieve. By so doing, this research will be able to demonstrate that the *enka* of Japan, located within contemporary society, have the capacity, as a conduit for desire, to be a great ally of fascism – or its greatest foe.[67]

[66] I must stress that the scope of the research to follow is limited to the *enka* genre and a clearly defined segment of its audience in contemporary Japan; I by no means seek to draw generalized conclusions about the ambiguous human experience called 'Japanese society' on the basis of this limited research. Other realities in other *roji* can be revealed by other investigations of other musics – these investigations must, however, be left for another day.

[67] As we have already seen, 'fascism' is a term that appears with some regularity throughout these pages. It is a term that I have chosen carefully, and with due regard for the weight and baggage that it carries. By 'fascism', however, I do not wish to automatically invoke the larger, political fascisms that may immediately come to the reader's mind. Unless otherwise qualified, 'fascism' as it is employed herein is meant to speak to something much more 'localized'; it seeks to suggest *a rejection of diversity and repression of difference – in other words, an intolerance for Otherness – in the name of idealized, imagined uniformity* that is the result of historically-specific desires, and that can lay the foundation for precisely the larger fascisms of history with which the term is perhaps more readily associated. As we shall see in more detail the pages that follow, this 'fascism' is precisely the fascism found in wartime Okinawan communities by Tomiyama Ichiro in his '*Spy*', to which we have already referred. It is the sort of 'individualized' fascism that Foucault had in mind when he warned us of the dangers of 'fascism in the body', and it is what constitutes the building blocks for what we have already identified as Georges Bataille's 'closed society', in which, as Tomiyama has revealed, the ill-fitting Other is hunted down for extermination, and, as John Brenkman clarifies for us in his *Introduction to Bataille*, the heterogeneity of lived experience is bound "in symbols and representations of unity – the unity of classes and the unity of individuals in their racial and national identity."

Chapter One

'*You Don't Know Me*': Life, *Enka* and the Unpredictable

I walk the streets of the Shiba district of Tokyo in the early summer humidity, beneath a thick bank of cloud that threatens to obscure the top of the nearby Tokyo Tower. I am searching for the Tokyo Shiba Melparque Hall, site of the 26th Japan Amateur Song Festival (*Nihon Amachua Kayōsai*), the annual karaoke throw-down produced by NAK, which I have been invited to attend as an 'observer'. Unsure of what to expect but vaguely imagining another incarnation of the small-to-medium scale singing contests regularly held in villages, towns, and cities nationwide, I am astounded to round a corner and find a banner displaying NAK's logo and the title of today's event draped over the entrance to a massive, towering concert hall. From the rather intimidating security detail inspecting entrants' tickets to the dozen or so 'congratulatory' floral arrangements that have been sent to the venue by an array of record labels and professional *enka* artists, the pre-entrance ambiance gives every indication that, while the performers in today's event may be amateur, its production is most certainly not.

Armed only with an e-mailed invitation from the producer of the event, I am briefly detained by the (perhaps understandably) suspicious security detail at the main entrance before being rescued by my NAK contact and ushered inside. The grand scale of the *Kayōsai* is immediately apparent in the 'vibe' that envelops me – the lobby is a whirling maelstrom of costume hawkers, CD and cassette vendors, production staff bustling about in industry-standard dark suits (complete with radio earpieces), and participants who have come to this corner of Tokyo from across Japan and as far away as Hawaii and Brazil to take the stage and be heard. The atmosphere is somehow

carnivalesque, reminiscent of a summer festival or a shrine market with its stalls and kiosks and booths, and is marked by a thrumming undercurrent of palpable excitement, a strong indicator of just how important this event is to those in attendance.

Inside the 1500-seat main auditorium, the first performers have already taken the stage. I am immediately struck by how similar the stage set and production format is to that seen regularly in an array of televised concerts and performances which feature *enka* prominently, such as the annual year-end musical blowout *Kouhaku Uta Gassen*, the weekly amateur singing contest *Nodo Jiman*, and, in particular, *Kayō Konsāto*, a weekly *enka* showcase beamed into homes across the nation in primetime, each Tuesday evening at 8:00PM.[1] Like all of these programs, the proceedings are presided over by a professional emcee (two, in fact, who take alternating shifts over the multi-hour marathon of music) charged with introducing each performer, and often with situating the song to be sung within the wider context of the performer's life, dreams or desires. Each performer sings the first verse of his or her selected song, while video cameras pan and zoom, projecting the performer's image onto a massive screen overhanging the stage. This camerawork is nothing short of a carbon copy of that seen so often in the aforementioned televised *enka* performances – indeed, with the combination of the professional-grade sound engineering, the professional emcee work and the rapt, full-house audience, one would be forgiven for mistaking the *Kayōsai* for a taping of *Kayō Konsāto.*

But even more remarkable than the similarities in production between televised *enka* showcases and the *Kayōsai* are the similarities in appearance and performance

[1] The precise manner in which *enka* are packaged for delivery to their audience through televised means such as the programs mentioned here is a topic of considerable interest, but one that is beyond the scope of our present research. I will return to consider this topic at a later date.

between the *Kayōsai's* amateur performers and the professional *enka* artists featured each week on televised music programming such as *Kayō Konsāto*. Each performer takes the stage decked out in what can only be described as full *enka* regalia – in most cases this consists of kimono or evening gowns for the women, and evening wear of varying formality (from tuxedos to flashy 'gangster wear') for the men. Each performance overflows with emotion, and each individual performs with great passion, at times with eyes closed, clearly enveloped by the music, at other times with fist clenched or arm outstretched, as if beckoning to something or someone on a distant horizon that can only be seen in the mind's eye of the performer. As we shall see in the pages that follow, each performer brings his or her own life and experiences to the stage, and the *Kayōsai* becomes a way to 'talk back', to express, through music, some of the diverse meaning of the heterogeneous texts of their lives, that which cannot easily be reduced to or contained within discourse. This is no after-hours, alcohol-fueled office singalong; the professionalism apparent in both production and performance make it clear that this is an event of enormous importance to the participants.

And it is precisely because the event is of such great importance to those taking part in it that it is so deserving of examination herein. The amateur performances of the *Kayōsai* serve not only to reveal something of the individual listener's life experience, but also provide a window onto how the music intermeshes with these experiences, illuminating the manner in which it serves as a conduit for the becoming that we have already identified as such a vital result of the intermeshing of lived and musical texts. It is in these performances – and, as we shall see in the next chapter, the manner in which they are critiqued and 'managed' – that we will be able to get an inkling of the true complexity

and ambiguity of *enka*, and the potential consequences that the music presents for processes of becoming. These performances are important, in short, because they provide us with a porthole of sorts through which to peer upon the complexities busily engineering self and society at the level of the *roji*.

Karaoke and the Mechanics of Performance

As is now commonly known, karaoke is a form of musical expression (to call it a 'pastime' or 'hobby' would, I think, overlook the significance of the manner in which karaoke intertwines with the lives of many of its practitioners) that involves a singer or singers providing the vocal track over a pre-recorded, instrumental version of a given song. Originally emerging in Japan in the 1970s,[2] karaoke 'versions' of songs are now available in genres of all stripes, and *enka* is no exception. The (mostly) *enka* karaoke extravaganza that is the *Kayōsai* has been a yearly event since 1984, and was inaugurated just two years after the formation of NAK in 1982. As I have already suggested, the lived significance of music (including such en-masse opportunities for musical expression such as those offered by events like the *Kayōsai*) can only really be grappled with through a consideration of the historical conditions framing it, the lived texts that give the musical text meaning. What sort of lived historical conditions, then, were concurrent to the inception of the *Kayōsai* in the early 1980s?

Much of our discussion will demand to be grasped in terms of socioeconomic realities, and the inception of the *Kayōsai* is no different. Ito reminds us that the Japanese economy from 1973 was characterized by unstable cycles of crisis and recovery,[3] and, as Gordon points out, "the generation reaching middle-age [the age at which audiences,

[2] Brian Longhurst, *Popular Music & Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 191.
[3] Makoto Ito, *The Japanese Economy Reconsidered* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 8.

even today, tend to 'discover' *enka*[4]] in the 1980s had come of age in a time of intense political turbulence and astonishing economic transformation… [and] felt some discomfort at these trends."[5] But it is important to note that this discomfort was not simply a reaction to some new incarnation of 'modernity'. Beneath the veneer affluence and exuberance in the 1980s, many, both in the cities and in the countryside, were having their lives rocked by severe socioeconomic turbulence. We will return to this key point in much more detail later; for now, we need simply to recognize that, at around the time of the *Kayōsai's* inception and indefinitely thereafter, people were presented with a lived reality that was "directly opposed to the egalitarian economic tendencies and ideas of the period of high economic growth [1951-1973]."[6] It was, we noted in the Introduction, against precisely this sort of backdrop that *enka* was carved out as a genre unto itself, and it was within this same historical milieu that the *Kayōsai* karaoke extravaganza was born in 1984. In the pages that follow, we will come face-to-face with the manner in which *enka* ultimately acts as a shelter for its audience, and why. What should be noted here is that the *Kayōsai* most likely emerged as – and irrefutably remains – an extension of sorts of this very shelter, allowing individual *enka* devotees to express the realities of their own lives while taking refuge in a shelter which, as we shall see, presents intensely ambiguous consequences for individual processes of becoming.

Christine Yano frames her discussion of *enka* in terms of what she sees as the genre's grounding in the concept of *kata* (defined by Yano as 'patterned form'[7]). *Kata*, to Yano, constitute "not merely outward expressions of some inner substance of identity,

[4] Yano, *Tears of Longing*, p. 6-7.
[5] Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 303.
[6] Ito., p. 23.
[7] Yano, *Tears of Longing*, p. 24-27.

but a constant process of creating that identity, while simultaneously signifying and demonstrating it."[8] It is a "cultural logic that… gives force to [*enka's*] particular version of nationhood."[9] Karaoke, for Yano, represents "the technological reification of *kata*-driven expression", or "the audio-visual 'hardware' of *kata* that makes patterned vocal expression possible."[10] While it is certainly true that, at least for the amateur, the concept of singing 'well' necessarily involves attempts to model the voice after certain standards of proficiency,[11] Yano's summation of karaoke (at least in the *enka* context) as a patterned and entirely uni-dimensional vehicle that serves to reproduce "'Japan's' past… [in a manner that] becomes synonymous with embracing an organized, hierarchical arrangement of social roles, daily activities and regular large-scale events [such as the *Kayōsai* – indeed, Yano introduces NAK briefly in her work]" has the effect of banishing the devotee who has taken to the stage with something to *say* to a narrowly-defined, pre-determined realm of ideological reproduction, ignoring, in quasi-Adornian fashion, the complexities that the performers bring to the stage.

As we have already suggested, the role(s) that music plays in the lives of its listeners/practitioners can only be meaningfully considered through an acknowledgement of the intertextual intermeshing of the music with other texts in individual lives. As Sakai has argued, it is precisely this intertextuality that can serve to disrupt the 'common sense' of a discursive space[12] – the 'common sense', for example, of an assumed universality of desire supposedly represented within the *kata* that Yano sees in *enka*, or of the oft-heard

[8] Yano, *Tears of Longing*, p. 26, citing Jacob Raz.
[9] Ibid., p. 27.
[10] Ibid,, p. 141.
[11] Ibid., p. 142.
[12] See Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, Chapter 6. By way of example, Sakai raises the intermeshing of vulgarity and clever, intentional mistakes – such as the replacement of *Nyorai*, denoting Buddhist deities, with *nyorai*, or 'women coming' – with texts appearing to belong to the genre of authoritative classics serves to bring about questioning of the very authority to which the classics lay claim.

intonations of a supposedly inherent 'Japanesness' that have the ultimate effect of nullifying the heterogeneity of devotee negotiations with the genre. When the realities of this intertextuality – in our case, what we have already termed 'lived intertextuality' – are acknowledged, we are freed to see that within a discursive space, disruptive factors can be introduced that "force the sense-making mechanisms particular to that space to malfunction."[13] The disruptive factors at play in our discussion are worldviews and desires, fed by the manner in which the performer is affected by the world and by his or her own life. To proclaim karaoke performance to be a mechanism that is always already reinforcing a given discourse or 'ideology' (in Yano's sense) is premature, and ignores not only the diversity brought to the stage by the devotee, but also the opportunity to delve deeper into the cogs that are turning behind the music and that actually have the larger role to play in propping up imaginings of self and society. If, as Longhurst suggests, the performative aspects of karaoke are closely linked to the generation of subjectivity,[14] then we are presented with an opportunity to consider the manner in which the text that is music, intertextually intertwined into the lives of the listener, can both reveal and inform the way(s) that the listener feels about him- or herself, his or her life and place in the world, and why. This is an engagement that is elastic and potentially double-edged: the manner in which the listener is affected by the world can drive him into a universalizing shelter – or into a place of movement, of difference, and indeed of embraced Otherness.

Considering the unpredictability of the 'meaning' behind amateur musical expression requires first *freeing the performer to speak*, loosening the bonds imposed on

[13] Ibid. p. 181.
[14] Longhurst, p. 192.

the performer (or the listener) through researcher-imposed assumptions of robotic 'form' or Adornian dismissals of 'duping' and manipulation. The key to releasing the heterogeneity of an event such as the *Kayōsai* lies simply in paying attention to the intertextuality of the performance; this is the first step to allowing what Endo has called the voices of the *roji* – that realm from which, as we have seen, the social emanates – to break through, potentiating, perhaps for the first time, a meaningful social analysis that is not itself constrained by universalizing assumptions of 'culture' and 'history'. As soon as these constraints are released, we are presented with the fierce undercurrents of lived experience, and hints at the intertextual manner in which these can intertwine with music to generate what Foucault would call the 'fascist life', or potentiate critique.

For, as Deleuze and Guattari stress, musical expression is not a process that somehow exists separate from the subject, in a vacuum, transcending his or her lived experiences, to be taken or left without implication or consequence.[15] While I note the aforementioned, preexisting emphases on the centrality of *kata* in karaoke, I must insist, along with Deleuze and Guattari, that "[b]ecoming is never imitating."[16] As I have alluded to in the Introduction to our discussion, it is this notion of 'becoming' that provides a direct link between music with subjectivity, and thus, in light of Sakai's reminder that it is individual actors that animate and give direction to the *roji*, with the social, as well. Musical engagement, indeed, fuels the entire process, for through music, "one constitutes a block of becoming. Imitation enters in only as an adjustment of the block, like a finishing touch, a wink, a signature." [17] And indeed, as DeNora notes, music in general is nothing less than a fundamental building block of "subjectivity". DeNora is

[15] See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, esp. p. 302.
[16] Ibid. p. 305.
[17] Ibid.

adamant that "music [does not] simply act upon individuals, like a stimulus. Rather, music's 'effects' come from the ways in which individuals orient to it, how they interpret it and how they place it within their personal musical maps, within the semiotic web of music and extra-musical associations."[18] Deleuze, Guattari and DeNora provide what I take to be the most important 'link' in bridging musical engagement – expressive, such as karaoke performance, or not – with the production of subjectivity and the social; this link is vital not only to finding a broader significance in the *Kayōsai*, but in the role played by *enka* (indeed, by all music) in the midst of lived human history, as well. I hope that the reader comes away from our discussion of the *Kayōsai* with an understanding that the event constituted not a parade of *kata*-driven 'Japaneseness', as might be expected of a music said to be steeped in an "ideology [involving] a firm belief in a collective sense of the Japanese people,"[19] but rather an example of the ambiguities involved in processes of becoming through music – one that involved both heterogeneous cries from the souls of the participants, and the silencing effects of universalizing discourse. I hope also that our examination of the *Kayōsai* will serve to free the *enka* genre itself – and individual negotiations with it – from universalizing assumptions of essential 'Japaneseness' and assumed longings for a larger cultural imaginary called 'Japan', and help to locate the genre where it belongs – within the realm of the ambiguous, as an elastic conduit for becoming.

The Contestants

The *Kayōsai* featured 150 performers, and took place over a period of nine hours. When edited and transferred to DVD by the producers, the event barely fit onto three

[18] DeNora is quoted in Longhurst, *Popular Music & Society*, p. 256.
[19] Yano, *Tears of Longing*, p. 22.

discs. While we will devote the remainder of this chapter, and the next, to grappling with different aspects of the *Kayōsai*, given the immense scope of the event, an in-depth analysis of all of the performances of the day in the limited space of this chapter is simply not possible, and we must confine our discussion to just a few of the more representative performances of the day. I believe that, rather than engaging in extensive analyses of the individual *enka* works that were performed at the *Kayōsai* themselves, the best way to begin to reveal the heterogeneous potentialities of this music, that which we have stubbornly insisted upon above, is to consider the manner in which the music is actually employed by these amateur performers, and the manner in which it flows among the many and varied texts of individual lives.

Let us set the tone of the amateur *Kayōsai* performances by considering one performance that would likely have been entirely unremarkable had it not been for the manner in which the performer chose to frame it – that is, in terms of her own lived realities. Individual lived realities were absolutely central to the many and varied manners in which the amateur performers of the *Kayōsai* approached and negotiated with the music, and this fact was summed up extremely effectively and in very simple terms in the performance given by Entrant #91. Entrant #91 chose to sing *Akai Hana* [The Red Flower], released in 1991 as the last single performed by Chiaki Naomi prior to her retirement from music. Entrant #91 prefaced her performance by stating that she wanted to sing this work "out of a sense of gratitude both for the memories that I've made in the past, and in thanks for the person that I've now become." And *Akai Hana* is, indeed, a very reflective work:

昨日の夢を追いかけて	Chasing after dreams of yesterday
今夜もひとりざわめきに遊ぶ	This night I play again in the din, alone

昔の自分がなつかしくなり	I grow nostalgic for the person that I once was,
酒をあおる	And knock back a few.
騒いで遊んでいるうちに	Who knew that time would pass so quickly
こんなに早く時は過ぎるのか	As I was enjoying myself so noisily…

Without the insight provided by the entrant's pre-performance comments – the all-important portal that allows us a peek of the lived intertextuality ascribing meaning to the work in the eyes of the performer – we could very well be trapped into a hermeneutic analysis within which we would see nothing but 'nostalgia' for the past reflected in the lyrical content of a reflective work. But thanks to our intertextual approach, we are able to see that this work holds immense significance for the performer in her 'now', as well – that is, it is a factor in what she is now herself becoming. We do not know the precise context or conditions of this performer's life, what sort of 'play' she might have been engaged in or how it is contributing to her current being. And that is, really, much of the point – the conditions of life of these amateur performers for whom this music takes on such great importance *are largely unknowable*, and not confineable to discourse. All that we know for certain is that the performer finds great importance in this work due to its associability with her own life – such importance, in fact, that she associates it "with the person that I've now become." The point that we can take from this and which sets the stage for the discussion to follow is that, for the performers of the *Kayōsai*, the music brings their own lived experiences into a sharper focus, acting as a conduit that facilitates their becoming into whatever it is that the conditions of their own individual lives, combined with the affective power of the music, are potentiating. It also underscores the important point that must be made here at the outset – namely, that this music represents much more than mere *kata,* some sort of musical ideal to be emulated by the performers.

And as this representative performance hints at, there were all sorts of 'pasts', all sorts or 'presents' in evidence in Shiba and fuelling negotiations with the music on that muggy June day.

Enka speak longingly and lovingly of 'home', of lives lived at the level of a myriad of diverse locales, many of which constitute regions that we must view as the periphery, as nothing less than the *roji* itself. While Yano has effectively dismissed the potentially destabilizing effects of this musical centrality of the periphery, arguing that the local has essentially been usurped by the national in *enka*, with all of the diverse heterogeneity that is the non-Tokyo hijacked and amassed under a singular umbrella called 'Japan's *furusato'*,[20] I believe that it is precisely the active representation of this potential antithesis of universalizing narratives of 'Japan' – due in no small part to the heterogeneity of the contexts and conditions of lives lived there – that lends the *enka* genre its potentiality as a site of movement and critique. We must remember that it is individual actors – the *affected* – "that introduce directionality and the senses into an otherwise anonymous physical space."[21] As we have seen, all movement ultimately emanates from within the *roji*, and a loving focus placed upon these peripheries could potentiate movement toward a critique of the very umbrella-shaped domination of the center that Yano insists upon. At the *Kayōsai*, it was love for one's own *roji*, what might more generically be called 'the local', that ruled the day; one needed look no further than the passion that enveloped both voice and physical performance for evidence of the weight that some of these works and their contents held in the lives of those performing them.

[20] See Yano, *Tears of Longing*, pp. 17~21.
[21] Sakai, p. 134.

Entrant #39, for example, sang *Hiei no Arashi* [Storms at Mt. Hiei], a work released by Kitajima Saburo as a single in 2009. *Hiei no Arashi* is generally considered (by the music industry, at least) to be lyrically 'striking' – in fact, the work earned its lyricist, Ide Haku, the *Nihon Rekōdo Taishō* [Japan Record Award] for Lyrics at the 51st Japan Record Awards. But such distinctions did not much matter to the performer this day, who lives in Shiga Prefecture at the foot of the great mountain that is the subject of the song; this was a song that spoke of his home, and he was determined to escape form and pretense and convey its content "naturally [*shizen-tai de*]":

荒行千日 比叡の風を	One thousand days of austerities,
受けて歩いた 山道万里	I walked ten thousand ri through mountain paths,
暑さ寒さに 雨雪超えて	Through the winds of Hiei
無我の心に 咲く花を	Transcending heat and cold, rain and snow,
ああ	An undying light now illuminates
不滅の法灯が いま照らす	Ah…
	This flower growing in my selfless heart.

Entrant #39's passionate engagement with this song had nothing to do with religious affections or some preordained appreciation for lyrical nuance. Nor did it have anything to do with 'Japaneseness', or with 'cultural nationalism'. Rather, it had everything to do with love for a home characterized by a towering yet familiar presence in its very backyard, one that undoubtedly provided the performer with a reference point on the horizon as he navigated the waves of his own life. The judge charged with 'critiquing' #39's performance summed it up nicely:

> "You wore your life on your sleeve; yours was a powerful performance that reached your audience precisely because you make your life [at the foot of Mount Hiei]. This proximity between your life and the song made your performance overflow with emotion."

High praise indeed. This was, however, not *all* that the judge had to say. As we shall see in the pages that follow, the judges of the *Kayōsai* played a pivotal role in determining

the fate of the heterogeneity that was apparent in so many entrants' performances that day. The critiques leveled by Entrant #39's judge and others will be the main subject of our discussion in Chapter Two.

Entrant #39 was far from alone in performing works that embodied 'home'. Entrant #41, an agricultural worker from rural Yamagata Prefecture, northeast of Tokyo, chose to perform *Sakata-Minato* [Sakata Port], a song both written and performed (a relative rarity in *enka*) by Ōizumi Itsurō, with lyrics penned by Kinoshita Ryūtarō. Ōizumi is himself a native of Yamagata Prefecture, and worked in agriculture prior to launching his *enka* career (indeed, he continues to raise cherries in the Prefecture). Kinoshita was born in the tiny agricultural village of Funyū (later Shioya Town) in northern Tochigi Prefecture in 1938, and was noted for penning a catalogue of works that discussed life in specific geographic locales across Japan until his death seventy years later. This was a creative duo that, in this instance, at least, produced a musical story that #41 could relate to on an intensely personal level. He took to the stage with the simplest yet most profound of introductions for his performance: "This song is about my life."

白帆が頼り　北前船は	The Kitamae boat relies on its white sails;
止まるも行くも　風まかせ	Whether we go or not – all depends on the winds
お前が見送るョー　酒田港	You see me off, here at Sakata Port
紅花積んで　浪花を目指す	Loaded with safflower, we head for Naniwa (Osaka)
行く手は遠い　西廻り	Our route takes us the long way –
	Round the coast to the west.

The lyrics of *Sakata-Minato* are set in another time, when agricultural products were loaded onto sailing ships for transfer to the huge urban center of Osaka. Entrant #41, of course, is no ship's captain. Yet the song speaks to the realities of agricultural life in Yamagata and beyond, where people – such as, indeed, Entrant #41 – work long and

hard raising agricultural products for sale to the urban centers. It is the ability to "superimpose [*daburaseru*, in #41's own words]" the contents of the song over the performer's own life that gives the work such weight in #41's heart and mind, and it is this that defined the manner in which he performed it.

And as with Entrant #39, the intense 'closeness' with which #41 negotiated with his chosen work was not lost on the judges. The judge critiquing this performer's work spoke to the manner in which #41 bypassed imitation altogether to 'become' the contents of this particular *enka*, clearly – as we can detect from the lived 'texts' informing this devotee's performance – on his own terms:

> "Your kind, gentle approach to the song really came across well to the audience. Your expression, too, was very relaxed and matched the tone of the work well. *You really embodied enka from the depths of your physical being (karada no shin kara enka)*."

As the performer himself told us, it was the proximity of this song to his own life – indeed, his ability to "superimpose" the work over his own experiences – that fed this very close, very gentle performance; a performance that took him so far beyond 'imitation' that his judge came to see him as actually, physically embodying the work. Becoming, par excellence – although this sort of 'embodiment' can, depending on outlook (we note here the apparent conceptualization of this embodiment by the judge in terms of the attainment of a rather generic, idealized state called *enka*), serve vastly different interests, as well, as we will see in the next Chapter. What is important for us to note here is that, as far as the performer himself is concerned, this embodiment has nothing to do with any supposed 'Japaneseness' of *enka*, but was rather the product of the work coinciding with his own life experiences in the *roji*. We are thus presented with an important example of the manner in which a 'becoming' that stands opposed to the

supposed overarching 'Japanese subjectivity' of *enka* can be facilitated through the genre, thereby lending it validity as a potential medium of critique.

Other performances served to take common discursive elements of the *enka* genre and, in a manner reminiscent of the destabilization of supposedly authoritative classics in parodist literature noted by Sakai, proceeded to smash them against the rocks of unexpected concomitant life texts. Much has been made, for example, of *enka*'s supposed tendency to reinforce 'traditional' gender roles.[22] Existing literature insists that, in *enka*, "the audience sees women who adhere unquestioningly to established gender roles, who become victims to the vissitudes of men and society in general."[23] As we have already seen, however, the introduction of unexpected ideas into the discursive space can disrupt its sense-making mechanisms, serving to radically destabilize it. Entrant #117, for example, chose to perform *Onna* [Woman], a work that was written by the prolific *enka* composer Miki Takashi (who died in 2009 at the young age of 54, leaving behind him a vast legacy of works performed *enka* and *kayōkyoku* legends ranging from Ishihara Yūjirō to Teresa Ten to Ishikawa Sayuri) and lyricist Matsumoto Reiji, and released by Mikami Shizu as a CD single in 2006. At first glance, *Onna* appears to be just one more 'woman-needs-man, woman-lost-without-man' song:

Don't ever leave me 離さないで いつまでもそばにいて いいえ私は　かまわないわ 例え罪の　誹りを受けても おんな・・・　あなただけの おんなです	Don't ever leave me, don't let me go Stay always at my side No, I don't mind at all Even should I endure the slings of scandal Woman… I am your woman And yours alone

[22] Christine Yano, "Dream Girl: Imagining the Girl Next Door in the Heart/Soul of Japan" in *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal (English Supplement),* No. 19, 2000 (Special Edition), p. 124.
[23] Yano, *Tears of Longing*, p. 62

It is, however, when the work is examined intertextually in relation to the other 'texts' in the performer's life that its actual meaning (to the performer) becomes clear. Entrant #117 had recently lost her mother. The passion with which she sung, arm outstretched, as if beckoning into a different realm, is brought into a much different focus when we consider the manner in which she introduced her song to the audience: rather than addressing the audience, or the judges, she addresses (via the emcee) her deceased mother directly:

> "O Mother, called up to heaven! You always listened so intently to my singing, a smile on your face. I am going to sing my heart out for you today, too (*kyou mo isshoukenmei utaimasu kara*), so please, hear my song."

Entrant #117's heartfelt remarks immediately rob us of the ability to maintain assumptions about any sort of 'universal' view of *Onna* as no more than a recipe for idealized, sensuous womanhood as imagined in a male gaze. More importantly, they remind us that, as Sakai asserts, the text – any text – is meaningless on its own, and to approach what any musical text may mean to the performer necessitates placing it within the context of the realities of his or her life. Considered within the context rendered clear by the performer's own voice, lyrics such as "Don't ever leave me, don't let me go / Stay forever at my side… I am your woman, and yours alone" begin to take on entirely new implications – this was no faceless 'woman' delivering a moody love song to a faceless 'man', but was rather an lonely child, disguised by age and the fancy trappings of *enka*, bravely standing in the spotlight to deliver a public eulogy, a lament over a loss not easily understood, a cry for her mother to somehow return to her. The emcee, for his part, knew exactly what was going on. "I just know that your mother was listening," he said, causing

Entrant #117 to look back, startled, and bow quickly in gratitude as she left the stage. "Keep your chin up (*ganbarimashou*)."

And finally, we were presented with works that seemed to serve to draw people closer together amidst challenging conditions. Entrant #97, from Fukushima Prefecture (and herself one of the participants in the field research discussed in Chapter Three), chose to perform *Koise-Gawa* [The Koise River], which was released by Nakamura Mitsuko as a single in 2008. *Koise-Gawa*, like so many other works of the *enka* genre, speaks of an actually-existing, specific geographical locale – in this case, the work constitutes a love story of sorts, set against the backdrop of Ibaragi Prefecture's Koise River:

雨の雫は 心の雫	Drops of rain are the drops of the heart
あなたとわたしを 結ぶ糸	The threads that tie you and I together
明日をつなぐ この舟の	The final destination of this ship, which delivers us
行き着く先は 風まかせ	To tomorrow – left in the hands of the wind.
ゆれて ゆられて ふたつの花は	Rocking, and rocked, these two flowers –
どこへ流れる 恋瀬川	To where will they flow, with the Koise River?

Entrant #97 is not from Ibaragi Prefecture, nor do boats feature prominently in her life. But, like so many others at the *Kayōsai*, she chose the work that she performed because it is directly related to her own existence. Entrant #97 framed her performance in the following terms:

> "I want to say thanks to my husband for working so hard over the past 45 years. I hope that I'll be able to express my feelings warmly, and naturally, through this song."

As we will see in Chapter Three, in which we will consider the realities of the lives lived by *enka* devotees – including Entrant #97 – in Fukushima in greater detail, this performer's husband is *still* working hard, even after 45 years. So, for that matter, is

Entrant #97 herself – chronically self-employed, in fact, in an attempt to make ends meet for herself and her family in an economically marginalized region of Japan. Entrant #97 and her husband are nothing less than the pair of "flowers" described in *Koise-Gawa*, finding themselves "rocking, and rocked" in the currents of socioeconomic turbulence. This particular song, selected for performance by a historically-specific *enka* devotee from a geographically-specific region of Japan (about which we will learn much more in the pages that follow), suddenly begins to look very much like a conduit through which two people can draw nearer together, comforting each other and attempting to keep out a particularly severe historically-specific chill. Here we are presented with a preview of sorts, a hint of *enka's* propensity to serve as a shelter (a function that we will return to consider in detail in the pages that follow). This is a promise to persevere together, borne of a real sympathy for a loved one's long years of work and a brunt understanding of the conditions that necessitate it. As with the first performer examined in this section, the precise specifics of Entrant #97's desires are unknowable. But in this devotee's passionate and heartfelt performance, informed by the manner in which the performer has been affected by her world and by the music itself, we cannot deny being confronted with, at the very least, the possibility of movement and critique.

Innumerable other examples of performers expressing their own lives and realities through music occurred over the course of the day. Many, such as Entrant #53, who sang Fuse Akira's 1979 work *Karuchie Ratan no Yuki* [Snow in the Latin Quarter], or Entrant #68, who sang Yamamoto Jōji's 2009 release *Sen-Ri no Michi Mo* [Even the Furthest Road], or Entrant #129, who sang Misora Hibari's *Owari Naki Tabi* [The Never-Ending Journey], from 1988, chose to perform their selected works because they "reminded me

of my younger days (#53)", "speak directly to my heart (#68)" or simply because they "move me (#129)". Others had a wider social purpose to their performance, such as Entrant #67, who explained her choice of Yashiro Aki's 1991 release *Ai wo Shinjitai* [I Want to Believe in Love], which states in its chorus that "Life is not so bad / Only now have I finally learned that / The sun sets, but shall rise again / I want to believe in love") by suggesting that "it is precisely this type of a message (*kotoba*) that is needed in this day and age". Still others mounted performances that themselves could have been raised as examples of factors facilitating the entrenchment of the 'fascist life', such as #118, a firefighter, who took to the stage with the declaration that his aim was to "send a message" to his son and "all persons who have become full-fledged members of society [*shakai-jin*: in other words, 'working people']" and proceeded to "scold" – in the judge's words – the audience with a rendition of Hosokawa Takashi's *Sakura no Hana ga Chiru Gotoku* [As the Cherry Blossoms Scatter], a work released as a B-side in 1999 and re-released as a single ten years later, and which extols its (male, at least) listeners to "go boldly forth, men [*ike! Otoko yo*…], for this life is but a churning dream." And, in a turn sure to bring gratification to those who would insist upon a longing for 'Japaneseness' as the fundamental underpinning for the day's *enka* performances, there was also a single performer (Entrant #30) who selected the song that she sang (*Otsuu*, a work released in 2009 by Shimazu Aya but whose lyrical content is actually taken from a folk tale called *Tsuru Nyobo*) because she "liked the fact that it was taken from an old Japanese tale." Notably, however, this was the only performance that was explicitly linked by the performer to notions that could be associated with vague, larger cultural imaginings of 'Japan' at all.

***Enka*, Intertextuality, Heterogeneity**

Thus far in our examination of the amateur performances of the *Kayōsai* mounted by individual *enka* devotees, we have seen a wide array of intertextual, disruptive factors at play, and these have served to demolish any possibility of making broad-stroke pronouncements concerning the 'fundamental nature' of *enka*, the manner in which it is approached by its fans, or the desires underpinning audience negotiations therewith. Indeed, such broad assumptions are simply unsustainable in the face of what we are calling 'lived intertextuality'. As we have seen, this lived intertextuality disrupts the sense-making mechanics of the discursive space with its untidy intermeshing of lived experience and historical contexts, with the result that those who 'own' the texts ultimately take an entirely different meaning from their negotiation with the music than what might be assumed. This allows us to state with conviction that *enka* are not merely a uni-dimensional repository and reproducer of something vaguely called 'Japanesness', but rather have the capacity to serve as a potentiator of a becoming that is uncageable, and that shrugs off attempts at categorization.

Clearly, we are prevented by limitations of space from examining all 150 *Kayōsai* performances here. But were such examinations mounted, we be presented with a constant that is, in fact, not 'constant' at all. Music is, as we have noted, a conduit for becoming. In the amateur performances that we have examined herein, we can sense a becoming that is unknowable, and unpredictable. It is a becoming potentiated by the manner in which the performers have been affected by the intensity of individual life texts, and by the music, and evidenced again and again in the great passion with which these devotees approached their performances – they were a means for giving voice to

their own lives, intensifying their own experiences, and it made the becoming conducted through them exquisitely real, and as such utterly worthy (indeed, demanding) of our attention. For as Deleuze and Guattari teach us, "[b]ecoming produces nothing other than itself… What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes."[24] It is precisely this capacity to engender an unpredictable becoming that lends *enka* its potentiality as a facilitator of heterogeneity, and as a threat to the stability of universalizing discourse.

But as we shall see in Chapter Two, the heterogeneities brought to the stage by the performers were already locked in a battle to be heard over the muffling effects of the mechanics involved in what can only be termed an 'interiority'[25] of *enka* performance – all performers, as we have already noted, draped themselves in the accepted regalia of the *enka* world (a factor that is particularly notable because the costuming was maintained *only for the duration of performance*: by the time that the event was reaching its climax and the participants were called on stage as a group to hear the final results of the judging, all had changed into what might aptly be called 'civilian clothing'), and all faithfully executed the ritualistic interaction with the judges/audience, such as bowing before and after each performance, and so on, presenting us with examples of what Sakai has described as 'formalizing behaviour'[26] par excellence. The heterogeneous cries from the souls of the amateur performers of the *Kayōsai* were thus already in danger of being snuffed out even before they encountered what ended up constituting their most

[24] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 238.
[25] 'Interiority' here is taken to mean an assumed proper, correct and authentic way of doing and feeling that can crush heterogeneity and ambiguity. I see the 'interior' as a unified, unambiguous, homogenized realm, and it is precisely this sort of collectivity, this pure and transparent interior imbued with notions of propriety, correctness and authenticity that, when associated with *enka*, lends the genre its potentiality as a homogenizing agent. See Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, Chapters 7 & 8.
[26] Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, p. 169.

formidable opponent: the judges, who came seeking to clean up the messy unpredictability of heterogeneity. And, as we shall see in Chapter Two, the chief weapon in the judges' arsenal was none other than *national language*.

Chapter Two

'*Trapped in an Old Country Song*':

Interiority, *Enka* and the Specter of National Language

The swaying, swirling musical vibe of the darkened Melparque Hall is almost hypnotic as I am whisked along by story after musical story, told by dozens of exceedingly talented amateur performers who take the stage of the *Kayōsai* with something to say. These gifted performers draw the entire auditorium into a musical spell of sorts as they glimmer and shine beneath the hot spotlights and spin their tales. Gradually, the minutes turn to hours as voices boom and soar and I am drawn deeper and deeper into the beauty of the event.

But as slowly and surely as the time is slipping away, I am growing gradually more aware of an inaudible yet still very perceptible *hum* of sorts, a vague undercurrent that grows more and more defined as time passes. It is an undercurrent that seems vaguely threatening, though I am not sure yet how. It seems to murmur to me, urging me to recognize that what is playing out on the stage in front of us is not merely a one-sided story of heterogeneous musical 'becoming'. Bit by bit, the whisper turns to a murmur, and then to a mutter, and finally to a shout that refuses to be ignored. And in an instant, I am able to recognize this now pulsating undercurrent for what it is: the flip side of an ambiguous coin, the B-side of the record – namely, that which Deleuze and Guattari have called "the potential fascism of music."[1]

It is not necessarily a terrifically easy thing to recognize. As we have seen in Chapter 1, *enka* can serve its devotees as a medium of sorts, a means by which individual listeners/performers can channel and frame some of the texts that make up their own lives

[1] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 348.

and define their own existences. It is this aspect of the genre that that has been most apparent on the stage – the individual amateur performers of the *Kayōsai* were clearly affected both by these lived texts and by the music that they so love, and performing these works ultimately constituted one way by which to give voice to an unruly intermeshing of the forces of music and lived experience, channeling and intensifying desire, and potentiating a becoming that cannot be confined to discourse. Through recognition of this, we have managed, already in our discussion, to re-situate *enka*, rescuing it from the colourless world of the black-and-white and locating it where it rightly belongs, in the realm of ambiguous multiplicity. The so-called 'Japaneseness' that previous studies have declared so central to the experience of negotiating with and ascribing meaning to *enka* is not the omnipresent, all-defining dictator of the genre that it may seem to be. As we have seen, the meaning(s) that *enka* hold for its devotees are heterogeneous and diverse, and can be revealed only when individual works are examined intertextually.

But this sort of facilitation of the heterogeneous was not the only potential consequence of the intensely personal interactions with *enka* playing out in that darkened concert hall. Sakai asserts that music can serve as a "formalizing agent,"[2] removing spontaneity and direct action from what he calls the "subject of enunciation" (in this case, the singer) and depositing him within the realm of the collective. Indeed, "by following formal, ritualized patterns in accordance with musicality… the body of the actor loses its adherence to the performative situation and thereby its putative individualistic originality and spontaneity."[3] This is a point that is easily extended to the realm of musical

[2] Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, p. 169.
[3] Ibid.

participation among singular individuals – one need look no further, for example, than the thousands of fists raised in unison at a Nagabuchi Tsuyoshi[4] concert for clear and concrete evidence of the manner in which, "[t]hrough formalized behaviour, one's individuality… is shed: the original self of the person is replaced by the image of the self that is demanded of him."[5] This should put us in mind of the *potentially homogenizing powers of music itself* – active engagement with music such as participation in a karaoke contest like the *Kayōsai* is already necessarily a type of ritualized behaviour, since it demands adherence to pre-determined set of conditions; the singular individual "consciously suppresses her own 'spontaneous' initiatives and encases the movement of her own body within a given framework."[6] Combining such ritualized behaviour with notions of 'acceptable' norms and 'proper' identities can make it easy to internalize and reproduce the type of fascism that is itself a potential consequence of *enka*.

But exactly what does this so-called 'formalizing behaviour' serve? Put another way, what are those engaged in such formalizing behaviour – or those upon whom expectations to engage in formalizing behaviour are placed – being drawn toward? Formalizing behaviour draws individuals toward none other than the *interior*, an imagined realm that is intolerant to difference and that in fact demands search-and-destroy houndings thereof as a precondition for admission to its gilded inner sanctum.[7] *Enka* itself can represent an interiorized space, with expectations to be fulfilled and rules to be followed, and as an example of Agamben's apparatus – as *dispositif* – it can steer an

[4] Nagabuchi is a towering, sometimes polarizing musical presence in Japan whose works have the capacity both to foster homogenization and encourage critique. Nagabuchi's works and the role that they play in the lives of his listeners will be examined in detail at a later date.
[5] Sakai, p. 170.
[6] Ibid.
[7] See Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, Chapters 7 & 8.

individual toward to a larger interior, one that is rather vaguely defined as something called 'Japan' (we are not yet ready to define this entity called 'Japan', although its meaning will become clearer in subsequent pages – for now, in the context of this particular discussion, it is a larger cultural imaginary, an *interior*). And as we will see in the pages that follow, the chief agent of both of these interiors that was in evidence at the *Kayōsai*, that which was eager to snip off the loose ends protruding from the unruly mess of heterogeneity and suture up the slits that the sharp edges of heterogeneity have opened in the thin skin of discourse, was none other than *national language itself*, an agent which, as was made unexpectedly clear in one performance late in the day, lends itself remarkably well to an interconnection with such notions as 'national culture', and to the suppression of the heterogeneous.

The interconnectedness between national language and the interior is fundamental, and certainly not new. Edo period Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728), through introducing the concept of translation between Chinese and Japanese, "introduced the very possibility of the realm of interiority." [8] The concept of translation served to introduce notions of propriety, correctness and authenticity in reading, and through these conceptual introductions, "a new way of viewing the world and the possibility of imagining a new 'collectivity' [was] introduced." [9] This unified, unambiguous, homogenized realm is the 'interior', and it is precisely this sort of collectivity, this pure and transparent interior imbued with notions of propriety, correctness and authenticity that, when associated with *enka*, lends the genre its potentiality as a homogenizing agent. While *enka* are by no means *necessarily* an embodiment of a Japanese 'interiority', the

[8] Sakai, p. 221.
[9] Ibid.

devotee may, dependent upon the other texts in his or her life and the manner in which he or she is affected by the world, approach the genre as an idealized vision of a 'true' Japan, an interiority to which he or she should aspire. Through postulating and advocating this sort of an immersion within an idealized interiority, heterogeneity and ambiguity are crushed in favour of precisely the sort of notions of propriety, correctness and authenticity noted above, resulting in – albeit probably unbeknownst to its likely well-meaning proponents – a clearly homogenizing effort that can lay the groundwork for fascism.

One does not need to look far to find mechanisms at work creating and nurturing a musical 'interior' supposedly accessible through an apparatus called *enka*. As we have already seen, arguing the existence of just such an interior is, in a roundabout way, precisely Christine Yano's main point in *Tears of Longing*. As Yano correctly insists, the *enka* industry itself places considerable emphasis on connecting the music with something vaguely called 'Japaneseness'. Yano's examination of the production side of *enka* has established that the industry – record producers, artist promoters – sees itself as being in the business of creating "national culture", and placing the "heart/soul of Japan"[10] on stage. Other organizations involved is more peripheral roles as players on a broader field that can loosely be defined as the '*enka* industry' also stress connections with something vaguely identified as 'Japan' in their own literature: the promoters of the newly-established *Enka Kentei* (*Enka* Proficiency Test), for example, make clear in their promotional paperwork that "*enka* and *kayōkyoku* have [long] been widely adored as the

[10] Yano, *Tears of Longing*, P. 56.

music of the Japanese heart."[11] It is precisely when *enka* are hijacked to point toward this sort of a larger interior, with the promise that they can act as the rails facilitating expedited passage thereto, that the genre becomes a 'formalizing agent', and a potentially great friend of fascism.

The judging panel of the *Kayōsai* was itself comprised of *enka* industry professionals who have risen to the top of their fields through constructing, polishing and promoting an interiorized space called *enka*, precisely the one which, when 'properly' perfected, promises to grant access to a larger interior vaguely defined as 'Japan'. As might be expected of custodians of the interior, the judges had the effect of busily gathering together the unsightly loose ends of heterogeneity and spontaneity, in an apparent attempt to silence them under the steely glare of discourse. As was the case with our examination of individual amateur performances in Chapter One, an examination of the manner in which the judges approached their duties serves us far more effectively as a means by which to consider the potentially homogenizing mechanisms of *enka* than would an hermeneutic analysis involving the scanning individual works for signs and signals that can be interpreted in any number of ways. In attempting to get a sense of the other side of the ambiguous *enka* coin, then, let us consider the judges of the *Kayōsai*, and the manner in which they went about their duties 'guiding' and 'critiquing' the event's amateur performers.

The Judges

A *karaoke* contest would be nothing without a panel of knowing, learned judges. The judging panel of the *Kayōsai* was made up of 10 current and former *enka* industry

[11] The author obtained promotional material on the *Enka Kentei* at the *Kayōsai*. Information on this new 'proficiency test' can be found at the following website: http:://www.enkakentei.com.

bigwigs – they were lyricists, record label executives, producers, and artist managers, and between them, the group boasted the management of such *enka* greats as Toba Ichiro, Ishikawa Sayuri, Sakamoto Fuyumi, Sen Masao, Mori Masako and even golden boy Hikawa Kiyoshi under its collective managerial umbrella. The panel was presided over by Konishi Ryōtarō, a well-known music producer and critic (and, formerly, chief of the Japan Record Award selection panel and managing director of the Sports Nippon newspaper[12]) who has also written extensively on *enka*.[13] This was without doubt a panel of wise men, men who knew the music inside and out. But it is precisely their claim to a thorough 'knowledge' of something defined as *enka* and *kayōkyoku* that made the judging panel so dangerous to the heterogeneity brought to the event by the performers themselves.

The *Kayōsai* organizers did not make full biographical information available for all of the judges, nor could this information be tracked down from secondary sources in all cases. But a certain pattern could be detected among those judges for whom background details could be established. All were middle-aged or older, and many were born and/or raised in rural areas of Japan, including Kyushu, Hokkaido, Ibaragi and Miyagi. These were not individuals somehow born into the upper echelons of music industry power as elites; they started off as lyrical apprentices from the countryside (in one case) or local sales staff in rural branches of national production offices (in another), gradually honing and then perfecting their own grasp of an interior called '*enka'*. This panel of judges bears an uncanny resemblance to what we might call the quasi-elite, what

[12] The significance of Konishi's former service as chief of one of Japan's largest, mass-circulation sports and entertainment newspapers is not lost on the author, but space considerations prevent us from delving into a deeper examination of this here.

[13] Konishi's works, unfortunately unavailable outside of Japan, include 「美空ひばり・涙の河を超えて [*Misora Hibari: Beyond the River of Tears*]」and「女たちの流行歌 [*Women's Popular Songs*]」.

Tomiyama would call the "leaders",[14] a group of individuals themselves from the *roji* but who have found success in perfecting their own hold on the interior and the trappings associated with it. These 'leaders' became the very human embodiment of *enka* as apparatus, and, as we shall see, had the ultimate effect of silencing difference in their quest to 'help' the amateur performers reach the interior that the apparatus points to. And indeed, in a manner most befitting of our present discussion, at least one of the judges envisioned this interior as being (at least partially) constructed on a foundation of *national language*. In a 2007 interview with the Yomiuri Sports Hōchi Newspaper, the judge in question spoke of there being "a real fragmentation of musical genres these days, but [feeling] that this fragmentation could be transcended with a simple melody and the use of *beautiful Japanese* [my italics]."[15]

The judges were tasked with providing brief 'critiques' of each performer/performance, in 15-performer blocks, following the conclusion of each 'block's' performances. The apparent purpose of these critiques was to help the performer sing 'better' (that is, more 'authentically', in a manner more in line with the dictates of the musical interiority of *enka*). But as we have already alluded to, there was much more involved in the judges' critiques than simple musical instruction. The judges' critiques amounted to nothing short of *tutelage in 'authentic' being*; that is, they constituted no less than mini-tutorials in how to better carry oneself within the discursive space that is *enka* so as to better embody 'Japan's music', and, as we shall see in the case study that follows, even how to better embody 'Japanese' sensibilities and become a better resident of Japan. This process served to clip the wings of heterogeneity and

[14] Tomiyama, p. 135.
[15] The interview is available online at http://hochi.yomiuri.co.jp/feature/entertainment/20070925-479958/news/20100413-OHT1T00076.htm.

neutralize the Otherness apparent in so many of the performances that day. Sakai reminds us that, in order for an interior to be stable in its sense-making, "[t]he sociality [that is, the *unpredictability*] that is heterogeneous to the restricted economy of the interior must be controlled and eliminated."[16] This is precisely the role that was played by the judges of the *Kayōsai* – not out of a desire to manipulate or control borne of some sinister, malicious intent, but rather because the judges constituted nothing less than a human embodiment of the discursive potentiality of *enka* itself.

As we have already suggested, the judges' chief interest was in maintaining an interiorized space called *enka*. As we shall see in the brief snapshots below, they sought to accomplish this by fine-tuning all sorts of aspects of these amateur performances, but most significantly language. Performers were lauded for 'proper enunciation' of language, such propriety constituting the chief precondition – according to the judges – of the successful transmission of the 'essence' of the work with which they were engaged. Performers who did not navigate language to the judges' satisfaction were criticized. The entire point of such 'guidance' was to establish a means through which 'authentic expressiveness' could be potentiated – Entrant #67, for example, was lauded for the manner in which she "blended kindness and sadness" in her performance to communicate the 'true' essence of her selected work. Those who came closest to personifying this idealized interior were declared endowed with something called *uta-gokoro*, or a 'heart of song' ("*uta-gokoro* is written with the characters for *enka* and *kokoro* [heart], and pronounced *uta-gokoro*!" declared one judge). Proximity to the core of the interior was, at least for these human extensions of *enka*-as-apparatus, a very big deal indeed. Ironically, while all of this prescription and homogenization flew directly in the face of

[16] Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, p. 295.

the heterogeneity of meaning that the individual performers found in their works and the diverse manners in which they approached them, the walls of this 'interior' called *enka* were further fortified by intertextual factors such as the participants' own choices of costuming, the manner in which they engaged in the prescribed ritualistic interactions with their judges and audience, and so on,

But fine-tuning for the purposes of guiding one nearer to the core of that hallowed interior inevitably meant tuning the heterogeneous – the *different*, that which was alien to the interior – out entirely. Indeed, the sort of interior so earnestly proselytized by the judges can only be maintained through the minimization of such heterogeneity. Attempts to control and eliminate Otherness though putting *enka* to work in their role as a discursive apparatus, sterilizing the amateur performers for admission to a stabilized interior, were manifested in a myriad of ways. Sometimes this involved appealing to notions of the 'proper' gender identities associated with *enka*, which we alluded to in the preceding Chapter. Entrant #32, for example, was praised for the 'suitability' of her decision to sing *Kami no Piano* [The Paper Piano], a work released by the singularly-named Natsumi as a single in 2004. Following the entrant's performance, her judge gushed that "in terms of the aura that you bring to the stage, the song that you chose, and the way in which you sang it, I was put in mind of the so-called 'good wife, wise mother [*ryousai kenbou*]', so I think that this was a very good choice of song on your part (rather puzzling praise in light of the fact that, lyrically speaking, *Kami no Piano* is actually built around a narrative of how it is "Difficult to get by / In a single-mother home)." Here we have an example of an amateur performer being praised not so much for her vocal prowess *per se*, but rather for the manner in which she managed to evoke an aspect of the

enka genre that is held (by this judge, at least) to be an important factor in the construction of its interiorized space.

Notions of the phantasmal 'ideal woman' were appealed to in other ways, as well. Entrant #122, for example, was lauded for her handling of Ōtsuki Miyako's 2009 release *Hakanagawa*. The manner of praise that this entrant received not only stressed the importance to *enka's* interiority of some sort of idealized 'womanhood', but also acknowledged *and effectively dismissed* the heterogeneity brought to bear on the music by individual performers, as well:

> "Well, yours was the fifth rendition of *Hakanagawa* that we've heard today. Each of the [other four] entrants have performed their own interpretations of *Hakanagawa* (*sorezore no Hakanagawa*), but your *Hakanagawa* was, I think, best in terms of singing the *onnna-gokoro* [the 'heart of woman'], of getting that across."

Here we are presented not only with an assumption of the existence of some sort of universalizing feminine ideal called *onna-gokoro*, but with the assumption that one of the roles of *enka* is to embody this and communicate it to the audience. Such an assumption effectively serves to lock the performer of this work within a discursive space called 'womanhood', and serves to deny the sociality at play in individual negotiations with the music. The universalizing potentiality of *enka* revealed.

In other instances, the workings of *enka* as a discursive apparatus involved the issuance of directives aimed at dictating how specific types of *enka* 'should be', and who may or may not be properly qualified to sing a given song. Entrant #36, for example, sang *Hahako Jongara* [Mother & Daughter *Jongara*], a song released by Kozakura Maiko as a single in 2009. Set in the deep north of Aomori Prefecture, this is a work that belongs to a sub-category of *enka* known as *Jongara-bushi* (songs of the Tsugaru, or

Aomori region). Entrant #36 was from Kumamoto Prefecture, in Kyushu – about as far from Tsugaru as one can hope to get in Japan. Regardless, she tore into this song about a mother-daughter musical duo – mother on the *shamisen*, the de-facto instrument of Tsugaru, and the daughter on vocals – traveling the region in the face of blinding snow in a search for their husband/father with great gusto and strength of voice.

But gusto and strength of voice alone was not sufficient for the judge charged with critiquing #36's performance:

> "You had a strong vocal presence and gave a solid performance, but I think that your vocal qualities don't really fit well with a *Jongara-bushi*. These songs are what we [in the industry] often call Tsugaru-mono. A Tsugaru voice is a so-called *kan-no-koe*; that is, a high-pitched voice; that's the kind of voice that we want [in order to properly reproduce a work like this]. So from that standpoint, your vocal qualities are a bit off…"

Here we are confronted with a clear example of the construction of *enka* as an interior in and of itself – or, perhaps more specifically, an example of the exclusion of those not fitting the requirements of its discursive dictates. Whatever texts may be underlining this performer's desire to grapple with a Tsugaru-mono like this one are dismissed, and the potential unpredictabilities of intertextual negotiation with the music are overridden by a discourse that aims to dictate who is and is not qualified to approach the music, on the basis of narratives concerning 'authentic' performance. It is also worth noting that, conversely, locking non-Tsugaru voices *out* of a particular music can also have the effect of locking Tsugaru voices *in*. In this manner, too, the manner in which *enka* are approached and understood can serve as an agent of homogenization by potentiating a denial of the very diversity that individual actors necessarily bring to the stage. What we are approaching in these examples of *enka*'s associations with 'acceptable' narratives of an assumed interior is something very close to what Orikuchi might have called a "true

interpretation", which the thinker saw as a means by which "a harmony between life and national literature"[17] may be achieved and which, in its denial of the unknowable, "converged with a utopian fascism which was already seeking shelter in the fantasy of wholeness and timelessness."[18]

But it was *national language* that appeared again and again as the main mechanism through which discourse sought to neutralize the threat presented by the spontaneous. As Endo has noted, 'national language', along with (and as a pillar of) 'national culture', are key mechanisms by which the heterogeneous is suppressed and a closed social order is produced.[19] In *Voices of the Past*, Sakai grapples with precisely this aspect of language when he discusses the "invention of the Japanese language as an ethnic closure"[20] (a closure which, as we will see in subsequent pages, does not necessarily preclude the inclusion of a racial other, provided he is willing to submit himself to the machinery of its discourse). Historically, "the unity of the Japanese and the 'interior' were equated to the existing language and community without mediation [with the effects of eliminating] the sites of the unthinkable, [the standardization of] cultural institutions, and [the homogenization of] the language,"[21] and this sort of maintenance of the interior is precisely what is at stake here, as well.

It is difficult to overstate the centrality of questions of national language to the manner in which the amateur performers of the *Kayōsai* were 'judged'. Indeed, the entire event was underscored by an incessant, almost obsessive fine-tuning of pronunciations, enunciations, breathing, spacing and almost anything else that one might imagine to be

[17] Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 341.
[18] Ibid., p. 355.
[19] Endo*, Empire State of Mind, Vol. 1* (forthcoming manuscript).
[20] Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, p. 322.
[21] Ibid. p. 335-336.

associated with 'language'. As we have already seen, the judges praised 'proper pronunciation', declaring that it was the most authentic means by which to properly communicate the emotion wrapped up in a work. Entrant #62, for example, received particularly lavish praise for her handling of her song – praise that was based, however, almost wholly upon her successful navigation with language:

> "Your approach to the song is just [fantastic]… You handle the words with great care, and your voice carries really well, too. You're really, really good. Your words are clear and unambiguous [*meiryou*]. This is exactly what is required to sing [properly]; it's very important."

Entrant #68, as well, was praised for his proper handling of the words constituting the lyrical text of the song that he performed:

> "You have an extremely sharp and concise way of enunciating your words. This is just a superb trait to have in order to sing [properly]."

It must be stressed here that the judge did not say that these contestants' manner of singing itself was exemplary, but rather that they were *able to negotiate well with language*, and that this put both of the performers in a good position to be able to sing 'properly', or 'authentically'.

Far more common than commendations for effective handling of words and language, however, were criticisms and cautions against their 'inauthentic' application. In Chapter One, for example, we noted the manner in which Entrant #39 wove the realities of his day-to-day life at the foot of Mt. Hiei into his engagement with *Hiei no Arashi*, and the way in which the judge immediately picked up on this and lauded him for his ability to bring 'lived emotion' to his work. But no sooner was this potential for unpredictability in the form of individual life-texts released and acknowledged that it was immediately

jailed again, through stabilizing appeals to language. The judge's comments, which we have already seen in part in Chapter 1, continued in the following manner:

> "There was one thing that concerned me. When you are speaking [the judge caught himself here], er, rather, singing, you need to enunciate your words more clearly. If you would open up your mouth a bit more and enunciate properly [*chanto*], the words would be communicated to your audience all the more…"

It is growing more and more easy to envision individual performer prerogative for expressing his or her own realities through music being cut off through the workings of an idealized, proper 'national language'. One can but imagine the manner in which the requirements of language may have shaped the critique levied on Entrant #41, whom we also discussed in the preceding Chapter, should he have chosen to sing *Sakata-Minato* in his own Yamagata dialect, a closed-mouth, 'mumbling' dialect of cold Northeastern Japan which its composer and singer, Oizumi Itsuro, is known to employ to the point of being 'unintelligible'.

As we will recall, entrant #117 took to the stage with a passionate performance directed to her recently-departed mother. But as far as her judge was concerned, whether or not the performer was effective in transmitting her passion to the audience (and, it would seem, beyond) did not come down to the manner in which she framer her performance, nor to the desperate sort of sadness that was apparent in the manner in which she carried herself on stage, or even to her booming voice. Rather, it came down to her level of proficiency in handling the language of the work. Her judge said:

> "And the words, the lyrics… If you can be more precise in your pronunciation of the words, then I think that the contents of the song will really come across well [*uta ga sugoi yoku naru to omoimasu*]."

The manner in which this unique and passionate performance was reduced to questions of linguistic proficiency is significant, and presents us with a clear indication of the very key

role played by national language in the maintenance of the interiorized space known as *enka*.

Indeed, the ferocity with which the judges pounced upon the slightest transgression in 'proper' Japanese expression through language was remarkable. From the manner in which Entrant #125 was chided for 'inadequate spacing' between the words of Matsuyama Chiharu's 1980 release *Hitorijime* [You're Mine] to the way in which Entrant #61 was criticized for supposedly not pronouncing the words of a spoken section of Kasai Kaori's 2009 release *Osaka Te Kiero* 'robustly' enough, examples of judges critiquing and/or fine-tuning of entrant linguistic mastery could be repeated here ad nauseam. Again and again, 'authentic and proper' language usage was invoked as a means by which to convey the 'authentic' meaning of *enka* in the 'authentic and proper' manner. But the question could be asked – *so what?* Why is this fixation with language on the part of language given so much airplay in the context of our present discussion?

The seemingly all-consuming obsession with language and its proper delivery that we have seen throughout this Chapter is key to our discussion precisely because of the role that language can play in repressing the heterogeneous and fostering the type of universalization that can constitute "a staging platform for fascism."[22] Sakai ruthlessly demolishes any remaining assumptions that one may have concerning the apolitical and/or inherently innocuous nature of language: according to Sakai, "[l]anguage is the most explicit form of social control that is supposedly imperceptible to the person controlled… To speak is to adhere to formal rules that one can never change voluntarily… to erase one's putative identity in the face of these anonymous

[22] Harootunian. p. 258.

regularities… to cease to be oneself, to lose one's identity."[23] Kamei Katsuichirō and Kuki Shūzō, both philosophers of the pivotal 1930s and contributing architects to the establishment of an interiorized community called 'the Japanese', also clearly saw the role played by language in establishing and maintaining this sort of an organic community – Kamei lamented the degradation of communal "spirit" and the loss of "original values" evidenced in what he saw as a "decline of sensitivity towards words",[24] while Kuki, who aimed to capture, in freeze-frame, an authentic Japanese "folk as a national, collective subject", insisted that such a folk's "cultural existence" could be revealed through words: indeed, "[w]ords signified the 'concrete meaning' possessed by a folk capable of revealing the experience of their existence."[25] And it is clear that the judges themselves view language as a cornerstone in the construction of an interior called '*enka*', an interior that is itself strongly associated with a larger interior called 'Japan' – as we have already seen, at least one of the judges has explicitly stated that 'beautiful Japanese [*kirei na Nihongo*]' is an essential component of a good *enka*. We begin to get a sense here of the manner in which *enka* is employed as an apparatus imbued with ideas of 'language' and 'folk' and pointing to an interior that could be a hotbed for the fomenting of fascism. Indeed, music can be a powerful tool in the development of fascism precisely because "the synchronization of music and verbal utterance amounts to a firsthand constitution of collectivity… [which] implies not an assemblage of multiple subjects but a form of the individual's death."[26]

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[23] Sakai, p. 280~301.
[24] Harootunian, *Overcoming Modernity*, p. 71.
[25] Ibid., p. 232.
[26] Sakai, p. 170.

But I would be remiss here to allow the reader to settle into a comfortable, simplistic view of this discussion as a good-guy/bad-guy story. I must restate here that I am by no means suggesting some form of Adornian manipulation or duping on the part of the judges or the *enka* industry.[27] Neither the judges nor the industry itself are in the business of coercion, and the *Kayōsai* was not intended to serve some dark, sinister purpose, brainwashing contestants into a subscribing to a universalized space bound by a musical narrative called *enka*. We will recall that the judges of the *Kayōsai* are best seen as 'leaders' of sorts, as quasi-elites seeking to help others gain access to an interior that they see themselves as having already attained. But it is precisely such action by the quasi-elite that – albeit without malicious intent or 'intentional' intolerance of difference – can serve to quash the heterogeneous, suffocating diverse desires and unpredictable Otherness beneath heavy blankets of narrative and interiority. Let us conclude our discussion of the *Kayōsai* by examining in some detail a performance from late in the day that both demonstrates the intensely ambiguous nature of *enka* and the diverse manners in which it is employed, and demonstrates the manner in which the quest for the interior can serve to extinguish the very heterogeneity that we claim to hold dear. It is a brief case study that will put to rest any lingering doubts about the connection between national language and the construction/maintenance of the interior in the context of the *Kayōsai*, and that very powerfully underscores our assertion that *enka* can serve both as a great ally of fascism, and as its greatest foe.

[27] The reasoning behind the *enka* industry's tethering of its product to vague notions of 'Japaneseness' has to do with sales, with answering what it perceives to be the desires of its audience, with the desires and life experiences of the industry's top executives, composers, lyricists and so on, and is far too complex a question to be dealt with effectively in the limited space available to us here. I will take up a more detailed examination of the desires of the *enka* industry and its media backers at a later date.

Case Study: An Outsider Seeking 'In' Status

What constituted perhaps the most revealing interaction between *enka* devotee and *Kayōsai* judge came very late in the day, in the performance of Julio Fujita,[28] a Brazilian of Japanese descent currently living in Japan. Fujita was the 145th out of 150 performers to take the stage, and, like a handful of other contestants (such as Entrant #125, who sang Matsuyama Chiharu's *Hitorijime*), he chose to perform a song that might not be readily classified as *enka*, at least according to sterotypically-accepted standards. As we have already stated, however, *enka* themselves are in fact not easily constrained to a singular discursive formula, and the work's thematic content was very much in line with so many others performed over the course of the day. Classification aside, the interplay between this amateur performer and his judge captured the multifaceted roles and potential consequences of music and performance in a manner unparalleled by any of the other performances at the *Kayōsai*. It was a remarkable demonstration of an 'outsider' seeking 'insider' status, and hinted at some of the tradeoffs involved in buying into the 'culture club'.

Fujita performed *Itoshi Kimi E*, a work written and performed by Moriyama Naotarō, a folk/pop singer-songwriter born in Tokyo in 1976 to Moriyama Ryoko, herself a well-known folk musician. Naotarō is known for his simple yet passionate piano-and-vocals compositions, and *Itoshiki Kimi E* is a simple yet passionate song of love, like so many of the works performed at the *Kayōsai* that day:

いっそ 抱きしめて	I will hold you tighter
抱きしめて 話さないよ	Hold you tighter, and never let you go
このまま そばにいて欲しい	Please, just stay by my side;
何も問わずに	No questions now

[28] Not his real name.

いっそ 最後まで 最後まで	Please, give me more strength
信じられる力を 僕にください	Strength that I can believe in until the end
例えばそれが 偽りでも・・・	Even if it is a strength founded in lies…

Fujita came to the *Kayōsai* that day to sing a love song, to do what he could, to paraphrase John Lennon, to water that precious plant, to make that flower grow. "I would just be happy if this message reached the hearts of my family, indeed of all people!" he beamed. But he, like those who came before him, was already fighting to make his voice heard through the muffling effects of a thick blanket of formalizing behaviour. This was a stage that Fujita had walked before (he last performed in the *Kayōsai* nine years previously), and he was clearly aware of what was expected. He was draped in the proper *enka* regalia (in Fujita's case, a shimmering silver 'gangster suit' that outshone almost all of the other stage costumes of that day), and he diligently – though clearly rather self-consciously and in something less than sure-footed manner – went through the common ritual of bowing to his audience both prior to and after his performance. In other words, Fujita fully immersed himself in the 'culture' of *enka*, even though his selected work was not strictly of the genre. What seemed particularly significant about Fujita's reproduction of this formalizing behaviour – and, as we shall see, what ended up constituting the pivotal point determining the manner in which he was 'judged' – was the fact that Fujita had just made the decision to relocate his life to Japan, alone, taking up residence there barely a month before his performance at the *Kayōsai*.

Fujita sang sweetly, and with great passion. The judge charged with reviewing his performance commended Fujita on the 'sensitive' [*sensai*] manner in which he approached Moriyama's work – and then promptly reduced this sensitivity to questions of

language proficiency, bypassing the unruly affect informing Fujita's performance altogether. He said:

> "Your singing is very sensitive, very detailed. These nuances, the subtleties of the language that even the Japanese do not catch – I think that, conversely, you may have picked up on these precisely because you were raised in a foreign land. I understand that you are going to be living here in Japan from this spring, and given [your skills with these linguistic subtleties and nuances], I reckon that you are the best sort of person [*saikyou no hito*] to do so."

Fujita seemed particularly pleased with this compliment, barely containing a smile as he bowed deeply here. And indeed, he had every reason to be pleased with himself, for he had just been declared the 'best sort of person' to live in Japan; as an already-marginalized non-Japanese, this sort of enthusiastic 'acceptance' – vital, in his eyes, if he is to secure the means of his own day-to-day survival in this, his new home – would be a rare occurrence indeed. But the judge continued:

> "Generally speaking, however, you have a tendency to be too passionate in your expression [*chikara no hairi sugiru keikou ga arimasu*]. After all, you know, especially here in Japan, we have *wabi* and *sabi* and tend to prefer a 'moody' atmosphere, so now that you're going to be living in Japan, I would like to see you go and visit temples and take in the scenery in the countryside, and through doing so, to have you grasp what it means to be Japanese [*Nihonjin no kanji wo tsukande itadaku*]."

Here, at the end of the *Kayōsai*, what was in fact occurring over the course of the event – what Deleuze and Guattari have described as the (double-edged) 'becoming' of music – is brought into a fantastically clear focus. The act of judging sought to "deprive [Fujita's performance] of its creative potential, of its aleatory possibility to encounter the otherness of the Other."[29] It did so through appeals to closures created by language, and to the warm and fuzzy interior of 'culture'. And this quashing of the heterogeneous, of the Other, was carried out with a smile, and with the best of intentions – admission to the

[29] Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, p. 297.

interior was presented as a way to join the ranks of the 'best sort of people' to live in Japan, to avoid being left out in the cold, unable to survive. We will return to discuss this in more detail as we conclude our discussion, but we can state here with conviction that what played out before the audience's very eyes in the closing minutes of the *Kayōsai* was nothing less than a miniature 'negotiation', an interplay that demonstrated the conditions placed upon gaining admission to the 'inner circle', that 'family' to which thousands upon thousands had died to gain admission to in another era.[30] For the judgment did not serve just to deprive Fujita's performance of its creative potential – in a flash, it also robbed a people called 'the Japanese' of its heterogeneity, negating the Otherness of the other within. Most of all, it laid bare the very real connections that can exist between music and subjectivity – in other words, the consequences that music may have for becoming.

Conclusion

Nakagami Kenji spoke of seeing the word いちご [strawberry] written on a seaside billboard and being initially amused by the bubbly font in which the characters were inscribed, only to gradually come to feel rather uneasy, and eventually downright ill at being confronted with what must have seemed to him to be the crushing, overbearing nature of national language.[31] What Nakagami was sensing was precisely what Sakai has revealed in his own way – that is, the collusion that exists between 'national language' and 'national culture', and the manner in which language can serve the interests of the interior, shutting out heterogeneity and ruthlessly quashing the Other as it seeks to smooth out the unsightly wrinkles in its own persona. Indeed, this function of language as

[30] Endo, *Empire State of Mind*, Vol. 1, Chapter 1 (forthcoming).
[31] This episode, from Nakagami's *Monogatari no Keifu* (The Geneaology of the Tale), is cited in Endo's Empire State of Mind, Vol. 1 (forthcoming manuscript).

a passageway to the interior has been very recognizable throughout our discussion above. But the amateur performers of the *Kayōsai* were hardly swallowed up kicking and screaming in the gears of this oppressive machine.

This is an important observation, and one that will play a key role in the remainder of our discussion as we seek to consider just how and why historically-specific devotees approach the *enka* genre, and the potential consequences that this musical participation may have. Indeed, depending upon the other texts in the devotee's life, a seemingly repressive 'interior' may in fact be wholeheartedly embraced as a technique by which to ensure one's own survival. We might return to Ogyu Sorai, and the expectations that he placed upon his students, for help understanding this. In order to develop the faculties with which to 'correctly' evaluate the texts with which they were concerned, Ogyu sought to transform his students "into the Chinese of antiquity, a collective and united subject who Ogyu believed had produced all those canonical writings."[32] In his own words, Ogyu believed that "[o]nly when they have mastered *kiyo no gaku* will they have transformed themselves into real Chinese people."[33] Such a radical transformation into such an idealized and homogenized subject can only occur through the rejection of ambiguity and the suppression of homogeneity, and through the internalization of predetermined recipes for action and reaction in given situations. As Sakai notes, this involves obtaining in the body (it is here that we should recall the manner in which the judges declared Entrant #41 to be a 'physical embodiment' of *enka*, or the way in which others who had successfully integrated themselves with the interior envisioned by the

[32] Ibid. p. 229.
[33] Ibid.

judges were declared to be possessed by a mystical *uta-gokoro*),[34] and quite literally becoming one with the interiority in question – indeed, it was the "ability to regenerate certain patterns of behavior"[35] that Ogyu most valued, and his students' progress was "estimated according to whether or not one can act in a certain way when a relevant situation occurs."[36] The only way for Ogyu's students to lay claim to knowledge, then, was through *assimilation with the interior* – one had to familiarize oneself with and internalize the language and practices of Chinese antiquity.[37]

And here is where we must add the specter of *fear* to our discussion. According to Ogyu, "no matter how renowned a scholar of Confucianism might be, … if he could not perform properly, *he should be disqualified as a Confucian* [my italics]." Inability to assimilate to the interiority, then, meant the inability to survive as a Confucian scholar. If we transfer this to the context of contemporary society, we can very easily sense the fear of losing one's job, of not being able to survive unless one conforms to the perceived norms and ideals of the interior. It is this fear and unease – that which, as we shall see in the pages ahead, Paolo Virno would recognize as the fear and dread of contemporary existence – that helps to account for some of the potential homogenizing power of *enka*. As we have already seen, the *enka* genre is associated with the interiority that is vaguely identified as 'Japan', and the listener may perceive a reflection of proper, correct and authentic behavioural codes for 'the Japanese' in the genre, and internalize these out of the desire to ensure his or her survival in contemporary Japan. We will return to this possibility in the pages that follow.

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[34] Ibid., p. 245.
[35] Ibid. p. 231.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid. p. 235.

The *Kayōsai* held incredible potential. Its performers brought a wide range of diversity to the stage, singing of their own homes, of the difficulties of their own existences, of what they saw as 'deficiencies' in society, of their own lives and loves. The potential for significant movement was maddeningly near, for the diverse affects underpinning the event to infect all in attendance, jumping from performer to performer like fire candling through the treetops in the midst of a tinder-dry Canadian summer.[38] What was potentiated here was the formation of what Grossberg might call an "affective alliance", not in the commonly-held sense of diverse individuals coming together to establish a common identity under the banner of a particular work or genre of music[39] but in the sense of a "rallying point",[40] a fulcrum through which to organize the *roji* for movement and critique. It was, in short, the potential of becoming-Other.[41]

But the *Kayōsai* was, in the end, no revolutionary event. The potential for any real movement, for an organization of this particular *roji* around the diverse and heterogeneous becomings potentiated by individual negotiations with *enka*, appeared to sputter and then die within the homogenizing norms that were brought to bear on the performances by the judges, suffocating under the layers of formalizing behaviour that are prerequisite to any attempts to gain access to the interior. Sakai teaches us that "[w]hen one is entirely in the interior, one sees, talks and hears just as a member of that interior should. …But this scenario is feasible only if it is possible to master, familiarize, and internalize institutions or ideology to perfection. In other words, it is possible only on

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[38] See Shouse's, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect" for a compact discussion on the infective nature of affect.
[39] Deanna Campbell Robinson, Elizabeth R. Buck, Marlene Cuthbert and The International Communication and Youth Consortium, *Music at the Margins: Popular Music and Global Cultural Diversity* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), p. 258.
[40] Ibid., p. 266.
[41] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Common Wealth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p.x, citing Foucault.

the assumption that one could eventually be completely and exhaustively at home in these institutions, including language."[42] What the judges were offering the contestants at the *Kayōsai* on that muggy day in early June – as was particularly well-evidenced in the case study above – was nothing other than passage to the interior. As should be clear by now, however, that passage comes at a cost – such interiority "always necessitates the repression of heterogeneity and alterity on behalf of those who conform to it."[43]

And so, we have arrived at a point at which nothing can be assumed, no categorizations made. And that is, in a way, precisely the point. We have seen the fundamentally ambiguous nature and potentiality of *enka*, the manner in which it can act as a conduit for the expression of diverse and unpredictable realities, potentiating a becoming that is unknowable and not confinable to discourse. We have also noted the manner in which the genre can be yoked to point toward an interior, called into service as a trowel of sorts, smoothing out the plaster on the walls of an interiorized space, an interior in and of itself that is associated with – points to – a larger interiorized space that has been vaguely identified by *enka* industry stakeholders as 'Japan'. We should thus now be gaining a clear sense that *enka* can be ferociously double-edged, capable of giving voice to the heterogeneous murmurings of the *roji* on the one hand, and silencing them on the other. And such silencing, as we have noted above, does not constitute some necessarily sinister act. Failing to recognize this would be to fail to recognize the complexity of the present discussion. For as we have seen above, the judges of the *Kayōsai* were hardly manipulative coercers, but were rather doing their best to point the entrants toward an interior that they themselves found great value in. They were, as we

[42] Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, p. 303.
[43] Ibid., p. 317.

have already suggested, offering nothing less than expedited passage to the sanctuary of the interior.

But how might such an offer be received? In other words, how do individual, historically (and, for our purposes, geographically) specific devotees approach and internalize the genre, and why? What consequences might this have? And what does this larger interior apparently called 'Japan' – the elephant in the room – even *mean* to individual devotees of the *enka* genre? These are questions that cannot be answered through mere observation of an event like the *Kayōsai*. Any attempt to begin formulating answers for such questions must begin with a deeper consideration of the lived historical realities and desires of those with whom we seek to engage. It is time to get on the road again, to leave Tokyo's Shiba Melparque Hall behind for a different sort of *roji*. It is time to go somewhere where we can actually *talk* to people, and try to gain some of the insights that we need in order to meaningfully address the questions that I have outlined above. It is time to go to Fukushima.

Chapter Three

'*Come in Out of the Rain*': Shelter, *Enka* and the 'Communities of the Us'

The car zips through the familiar streets of the northeastern city of Fukushima, then gradually starts to leave the bright lights of its small urban center behind as the world outside my window trades modestly-sized office buildings for rural homes, and the many alleys and bars that dot the downtown core for darkened rice and fruit fields. We are entering a mildly run-down, heavily agricultural section of town, north of the commercial district, and we eventually turn off of Route 4 – the main thoroughfare that runs through the interior of Tohoku (Northeastern Japan) from Tokyo all the way to Aomori, in the extreme north – and bounce down a short gravel road to come to a stop in a parking lot across from a dark, wooden house. "We're here!" says Mr. Sato,[1] head of the Fukushima Branch of the NAK and my guide/chauffeur for the evening, and we head for the entrance. For a man in his mid-seventies, he has a remarkable spring in his step.

Mr. Sato has been head of the Fukushima Branch for years now – he is the second individual to head up the organization, having taken over from its founder more than a decade ago. Mr. Sato seems to enjoy his role, but is resigned to having to deal with unpleasant political and interpersonal bickering within the group. This is certainly no seamless, unified entity – it suffers from the same internal tensions, complaining and infighting that any group might be expected to. They do share a common interest, however, one that continues to bring them together in this cramped studio on the relatively impoverished edge of town – a love for *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, and particularly of singing, that they also share with other branches across Japan.

[1] Not his real name.

We step in through the front door, and I am led into a miniature karaoke studio has somehow been carved into this small rural home. The studio is the equivalent of perhaps 12 *tatami* mats in size, and is adorned with an electric keyboard, a heavy microphone and steel stand (think Steven Tyler circa 1989), a slightly beat-up television monitor and other standard trappings of karaoke. The walls of the studio are plastered with posters – many signed – of Japan's *enka* royalty; reigning among these are images of Misora Hibari (the so-called 'Queen of *Enka'*, who was a musical child prodigy credited with supplying much-needed 'encouragement' to an exhausted and traumatized public at the end of the Pacific War before cultivating an illustrious career as a sultry songbird until her death in 1989). This is where the Fukushima Chapter of the *Nihon Amachua Kayō Renmei* (NAK) holds its monthly meetings. The members whom I am to meet here tonight have put out oranges, watermelons, Japanese sweets, crackers and tea in anticipation of my joining their meeting, and despite my rather unceremonious invasion of their space and my obvious status as an outsider (in more ways than I can count), they seem genuinely happy to have me. One by one they trickle into the studio, speaking amongst themselves in a thick Fukushima dialect that would have been, for me, nearly impenetrable had it not been for my own years living in this town. Of the ten total members of this branch, there are six in attendance this evening, five women and one man: a number of the remaining male members were to attend as well, I am told, but, in an eerie foreshadowing of sorts of the discussion to follow, I learn that most male members are either still working (at 9:00PM), or are sick in hospital.

I have come here to delve deeper into the heterogeneity that was so apparent in the amateur performances of the *Kayōsai*, to move beyond 'observation' in an attempt to

ascertain just what it is that devotees of the *enka* genre take from the music, and why. The performances that I had observed at the *Kayōsai* had already revealed a much deeper level of engagement with the music than that alluded to by blanket, uni-dimensional assertions of fans of the genre negotiating with the music out of a desire "to reclaim the sources of their own Japaneseness."[2] My purpose in making this visit to Fukushima is to be able to sit down with fans of the genre and actually *talk* with them, to do my best to hear these voices of the *roji*.[3] As an informal 'chat' of sorts conducted by a former Fukushima City resident and taking place among members of a single group who already knew each other well,[4] this tactic had the decided advantage of being "less threatening for the interviewees… thus [encouraging] them to be forthcoming"[5] not only with their thoughts on *enka*, but with the realities of their lives that ultimately inform the manner in which they approach the music. My aim, in short, was to allow these historically- and geographically-specific individuals to open up and really share what the music means to them, the role that it plays in their lives, and why. Only on the basis of this sort of a discussion can we, as researchers, begin to shed the tiniest slivers of light on the actual 'meaning' of *enka*, and the consequences that it may have for self, society and 'becoming'.

The Fukushima Branch of the NAK, like its other 120 branches located across Japan and overseas, was established not through orchestrations carried out by NAK Headquarters in Tokyo, but through a coming together of *enka* devotees in Fukushima

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[2] Yano, *Tears of Longing*, p. 178.
[3] The discussion lasted around 90 minutes in total, was conducted only in Japanese, and was recorded, with the respondents' assent. An abridged transcript of the evening's discussion is attached to this paper as Appendix I.
[4] Martyn Hammersely and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 112.
[5] Ibid., p. 111.

who approached NAK with the hopes of setting up their own branch under the its organizational umbrella. Once at least ten such individuals have come together in a given area, the group may petition NAK Headquarters for Branch status. There are no particular benefits to NAK Branch status aside from the solidification of a means by which to "facilitate communication with one's *uta-nakama* [comrades in song]" and "enjoy life with karaoke within a larger circle of solidarity [*rentai*] called NAK, each for his or her own purpose."[6] Indeed, such solidification of *nakama* interconnectivity seems to be the factor of most importance to NAK members – according to organizational literature, the vast majority of NAK's membership join the organization through the invite of friends or other interpersonal connections.[7] The importance of this interconnectivity, this camaraderie called *nakama*, will feature prominently in the discussion to follow.

Just who are the members of the Fukushima Branch of the NAK? One of the six participants was male; the rest were female. All of the six in attendance that evening were employed – one (the male) as a full-time farmer, one as a self-employed abacus instructor, three as self-employed voice and karaoke tutors, and one worked two jobs, being both self-employed as a voice and karaoke tutor and a part-time retail employee. All were married; the female participants' husbands are also employed, and the average household income of those who were willing to share this information (three of the six) was 4,443,000 JPY. The membership was decidedly middle-class, but, like so much of the rest of Japan (and particularly rural Japan) in the post-bubble era, was struggling, each in their own way, to make ends meet. This strained subsistence/existence – much more than some vague notion of 'Japaneseness' – is, as we shall see, the text ascribing

[6] NAK promotional material, "INVITATION to NAK WORLD", provided to the researcher by NAK staff.
[7] Ibid.

meaning to membership negotiation with the genre, and in order to begin to gain an understanding of the importance of the music to these musical practitioners, we must begin with the historicity of the conditions in which it is grounded.

'Miracle' Lost: The Postwar Entrenchment of a Marginalized Fukushima

No one is quite sure exactly when the Fukushima Branch of the NAK was established; the best recollections of the group place the year at around 1990. This date is not without significance. We have already noted, at the outset of our discussion, the manner in which life in post-bubble Japan has been tossed about by the turbulence wrought by the collapse of the bubble economy and Japan's long descent into severe economic uncertainty. This turbulence and uncertainty is all the more pronounced in rural, agrarian areas such as Fukushima – indeed, since the end of the Pacific War, rural Japan has constantly found itself on the outskirts of 'development', feeding the so-called 'economic miracle' much more than being fed by it. While a detailed historical analysis of the economic marginalization of rural prefectures such as Fukushima is beyond the scope of this paper,[8] it is vital to grasp at least a general understanding of the historicity of the 'economic miracle' in rural Japan, as it will lead us to confront directly the realities of life in contemporary Fukushima Prefecture.

The postwar story of economic marginalization in Fukushima starts with land reform. Launched in 1946, under the guidance of the U.S. occupiers, this policy, put simply, sought to expropriate the landholdings of the landlord class, reparcel these and distribute them to farmers across rural Japan.[9] Much academic energy has been spent on

[8] But no less worthy of careful attention. I will take up this sort of extensive historical, socioeconomic analysis at a later date.
[9] Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, p.229.

lauding the 'emancipative' effects of land reform in Japan,[10] and indeed, rural villages in the postwar period were undoubtedly "considerably more prosperous than before the war."[11] At the same time, however, land reform in Japan had the effect of creating sink-or-swim rural communities engaged in petty production, whose buoyancy, as we shall see below, is very much dependent upon the central government in Tokyo. What actually occurred with land reform was the creation of a storage facility for the surplus population, a vast repository for the keeping of an industrial 'reserve army'. Indeed, as James Babb points out, "in the 1950s, agricultural and rural support programs were modest… and migration from the rural areas to the cities occurred on a massive scale (thus guaranteeing a steady supply of labour for industry)."[12]

And it was not only the out-migration of labour from farming communities that served to support the industrialization of Japan in this period. In 1946, again under the direction of the occupying forces, the Japanese government introduced rice pricing control measures aimed blatantly at promoting the industrialization of Japan at the expense of the rural population. The aim here was to prop up industrialization by keeping high rice prices from affecting an increase in the wages of industrial workers, and indeed, "industry was rehabilitated on the basis of compulsory delivery of cheap food."[13] Rice control policy was "successful during the 1950s in contributing to industrial development by keeping the price of a critical wage good from rising"[14] – so successful, in fact, that by 1960, after rice prices had dropped even further as a result of a decline in its consumption,

[10] See, for example, E.E. Ward, 1990, *Land Reform in Japan 1946-1950*, the Allied Role, p.103, and R.P Dore, 1959, *Land Reform in Japan*, p.239
[11] Dore, p.239
[12] James Babb, 1993 *Making Farmers Conservative: Japanese Farmers, Land Reform and Socialism* (in Social Science Japan Journal, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2005), p.193.
[13] Yujiro Hayami, 1972 *Rice Policy in Japan's Economic Development* (American Journal of Agricultural Economics, February, 1972), p.25.
[14] Ibid, p.26.

income disparities between agricultural producers and industrial workers were massive.[15] Rural farming communities were left behind in Japan's so-called 'miraculous' post-war economic recovery.

Subsequent federal support measures – including increases in government rice purchases and infusions of financial support from Tokyo – kept rural communities from drowning completely, although this was chiefly a political strategy, aimed at appeasing farmers and preserving LDP power through exploiting the rural electoral system and 'buying' agriculture's shift to the right.[16] These economic supports did, however, have the effect of improving – in relative terms – rural conditions of life during the period of high economic growth. As Ito has described, "[d]espite a reduction of working population in agriculture, the total number of farmhouses did not fall much below 6 million. A variety of consumer durables, such as electrical appliances, motorcycles and automobiles, were sold in large numbers to farmers' households, while rural houses themselves were built in a more modern style… during high economic growth [thanks to the introduction of welfare and agricultural product support policies], the Japanese economy actually moved toward an egalitarian economic order. Living standards in rural [areas] became more and more equal to those of urban areas for the first time in Japanese history."[17]

As the Japanese economy entered its long period of turbulence and depression after 1973, however, all of this changed. The tendency toward an equalization of lived conditions that had been seen during the period of high economic growth was halted in its tracks, and socioeconomic unevenness between urban and rural areas became more

[15] Ibid., p.30.
[16] Babb, p.192.
[17] Ito, *The Japanese Economy Reconsidered*, p. 5, p. 44.

pronounced in the late 1980s.[18] A skyrocketing yen "facilitated the importation of agricultural products and thus threatened Japanese agriculture, especially as it coincided with deep reductions, or even the abolition, of protective custom duties."[19] People in company jobs were asked to sacrifice more and more to 'cooperate' with firms as they sought to increase their competitiveness through reducing full-time hirings, wages, bonuses and overtime payments,[20] and many in Japan were left with the feeling that their standards of living had not improved to any great degree since the mid-1970s.[21]

And as Japan careened toward the collapse of the economic bubble in 1990, socioeconomic life went completely off the rails. This period has come to be characterized by "increasingly difficult conditions at work and worsening conditions of life for working people, as well as exacerbated socioeconomic unevenness",[22] when more and more have come to be haunted by the specter of the instability of their own existence. In the cities, many men sought to ward this ghost off by raising the value of his own labour power through "spending extraordinary, stressful hours – perhaps one hundred or more per week – at work," much of it in the form of "what people called 'service' [that is, unpaid] overtime to the firm."[23] Meanwhile, more and more women – such as those who shared their time with me in Fukushima – were forced to enter the workforce and sell their own labour power however they could in order to offset the costs of housing, education and so on amidst a harsh reality of stagnant earnings by their husbands (in the 1990s, around 70% of women aged 40 to 55 had jobs).[24] They certainly received little in

[18] Ibid., p. 21.
[19] Ibid., p. 60.
[20] Ibid., p. 20.
[21] Ibid., p. 19.
[22] Ibid., p. 20.
[23] Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, p. 304.
[24] Ibid., p. 64.

the way of assistance from an increasingly neoliberal state, which has tended to shift the burden of its budget crisis "onto the shoulders of weaker people through cuts in state expenditure for welfare and public education,… the introduction of a consumer tax in 1989… [and increases to costs associated with] medical insurance."[25]

Now, in the midst of Japan's seemingly endless economic downturn, Fukushima Prefecture, like the rest of rural Japan, is facing increasingly severe economic marginalization.[26] We have already noted the manner in which suicide has become a serious concern amidst incessantly bad economic news, and the numbers in Fukushima are bleak indeed. The average employment income in the Prefecture fell steadily over the most recent three-year span available from government sources[27] (Tokyo's average employment income, by contrast, actually increased over the same period), and unemployment in Fukushima remains ninth highest out of the 47 Prefectures.[28] As Mr. Sato alluded to early on in our discussion, jobs are scarce – according to the most recent data available, there was only one job available for every two job seekers in Fukushima in February of 2011 (only Hokkaido and Aomori fare worse).[29] People find themselves scrambling – even at relatively advanced ages – to survive and make ends meet. At 76, for example, Mr. Sato continues to farm full time, not out of some romanticized fondness for the land but because his very existence – and that of his family – depends upon it. And in a manner that is more revealing than any theoretical analysis could ever hope to

[25] Ibid., p. 22.
[26] Ito, p.33.
[27] National income figures are made available online by Japan's Cabinet Office, and can be found at http://www.esri.cao.go.jp/jp/sna/kenmin/h18/main.html.
[28] Unemployment figures are made available by individual Prefectural authorities. The figures quoted here are made available from the Fukushima Prefectural Government at http://www.pref.fukushima.jp/toukei/data/hitome/2009/ken/029.pdf. These numbers do not reflect the number of underemployed, or those working multiple part-time jobs to survive.
[29] These figures are made available by Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and welfare and can be viewed online at http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/houdou/2r985200000154nq-img/2r985200000154uj.pdf.

be, two of the female respondents themselves made very clear the challenges of survival that haunt Fukushima. “There’s no such thing as retirement age for the self employed!” snorted one, ruefully. “Yes, retirement’s still a long way off,” sighed another. Both (female) respondents were well into their sixties.

As we shall see shortly, it is precisely the turbulence, fear and uncertainties of life in contemporary Fukushima that acts as the background ‘text’ ascribing meaning and value to *enka* and *kayōkyoku* from the standpoint of the Fukushima membership of the NAK. Before we move on to discuss this further, let us consider some of what the membership had to say about *enka*, this genre that serves as such an important underlying text in the lives of these historically-specific listeners.

Vocalizing the Real, Seeking the Ideal: More Diverse Applications of *Enka*

More than anything, I had come to Fukushima hoping to discover why individual listeners held such affection for *enka*, and to learn about the role that it plays in their lives. Prior to launching into the group discussion aimed at achieving this goal, each of the members were asked to fill out a simple questionnaire, which sought to establish what each individual member’s favourite *enka* work was, and why it was important to him/her. Not all of the respondents provided answers for all of the question components, but the answers that were provided were revealing in their diversity. In fact, no two responses were the same, and each respondent found something different to love (hardly an overstatement, given one respondent’s jubilant declaration that “there is no end to my love for *enka*”) about his/her selected work, thus further destabilizing preexisting assumptions that a quest for authentic ‘Japaneseness’ constitutes the main driving factor behind audience consumption of the genre.

One female respondent, for example, stated that she was complete enraptured, not so much by lyrical content, but by the voice of Chiaki Naomi (a singer born in Tokyo in 1947 and active in musical genres outside of *enka*, as well as on the stage and screen), which she found to be endowed with great 'depth'. Another found herself carried away by the intense passion with which Korean *enka* and *kayōkyoku* artist Kim Yeon-Ja approaches her performances. Still another declared herself to be a devotee of the aforementioned 'Queen of *Enka*', Misora Hibari, proclaiming her admiration for the "wonderful singing voice and approach to music" that she displays in all of her *Hibari-enka* (a veritable sub-genre of *enka*, the very existence of which should be indicative of the astonishing number of works performed by Misora over her career). This respondent also identified the manner in which the lyrical content and settings of *Hibari-enka* "seem to rise up before my very eyes" as a key reason for her love of this artist, and cited the manner in which the 'feeling' forged within the story told by the main protagonists of these works come through to her.

Other respondents were more specific in terms of precisely what aspect of the lyrical content of their favourite works grasped and held their attention. One, for example, described being deeply moved by the images of snowy Northeastern Japan (of which Fukushima Prefecture is part) appearing in Ōtsuki Miyako's 1992 release *Shiroi Kaikyō* [White Straits] and Sakamoto Fuyumi's 2007 single *Yukiguni: Komako, Sono Ai* [Snow Country: Komako, My Love], in a manner suggestive of the intensity with which Entrants #39 and #41 sang of their own homes at the *Kayōsai*. The lone male in attendance that evening described an affinity for a song that seemed to fulfill an even more significant personal role in his life. This respondent identified Yamamoto Jōji's

2009 hit *Sen-Ri no Michi Mo* [Even the Furthest Road] as his favourite *enka*, citing the love between husband and wife that serves as its thematic content as the factor drawing him to it. He quoted the phrase "You are always a crutch for my soul / I can say it now – thank you" as that from amongst its lyrical content which meant the most to him; it is not difficult to see that this gruff, elderly farmer is finding in the music a means by which to express his perhaps hard-to-vocalize gratitude to his own wife.

And finally, one of the respondents – the senior 'teacher' of *enka* in the group – pointed to the fact that Kakyōin Shinobu's works incorporate *min'yō*, which this particular respondent sees as a manifestation of the "heart of Japan", as her chief reason for being drawn to this artist. Strikingly, though, this respondent declared her favourite Kakyōin work to be the 2003 release *Boukyō Shin-Sōma* [Longing for Home, Shin-Sōma], a work which portrays the lonely existence of a person from Fukushima Prefecture forced to ride the rails to find work in the capital, and his (we must assume that the protagonist is a male labourer) pining for 'home':

花は咲いても 淋しいものは	The flowers may be in bloom,
人の別れと 春の雨	But parting and spring rains bring loneliness
会津恋しや 遠い空	I miss the distant Aizu sky
帰りたくてもナー 帰れはしない	Couldn't go home, even if I wanted to
土産ばなしも ない今は	Not without something to show
ハアーはるか彼方は	Ah, far off in the distance
相馬の空か・・・	Is that the Sōma sky…?

These are biting lyrics, and a fascinating choice for a respondent seeing the 'heart of Japan' in the music. What we are forced to acknowledge here is the hint of a certain, identifiable 'tension'; a tension between "national culture" and the *roji*, between essentializing narratives of 'Japaneseness' and the sort of critique borne of local realities, and a tension that suggests that this concept called 'Japan' that is so casually bantered

about is not so easily defined. It is also a tension that suggests that, perhaps, discourses of a singular cultural entity called 'Japan' are not as omnipotent, all-pervasive and singularly defining of enthusiast desire as preexisting literature might suggest, or as 'leaders' such as the judges of the *Kayōsai* might assume. And it reveals to us the heterogeneity of a group of individuals far too easily amalgamated under a heading of 'the audience', demanding that we re-focus our approach to concentrate upon the historically and geographically specific. It is no more a coincidence that the respondent finding such significance in this particular work is from Fukushima Prefecture circa 2010, and is herself intimately acquainted with the lived conditions underlying the bite of the lyrics, than it is that the work's composer, Sakaki Shigeto, is from the small agricultural town of Tome, just outside of Sendai and just to the north of Fukushima Prefecture, or that its lyricist is from the small community of Kushiro in largely-agricultural Hokkaido. Yes, there is a tension developing here, a certain gathering of clouds threatening to spoil the picnic thrown by those hoping to celebrate a singular, collective 'people' under a collective 'Japanese music'. It is a tension that centers on questions of just *what Japan is*, at least to these Fukushima-based devotees of *enka*. These are questions that we will return to consider below.

The discussion that followed the completion of the questionnaires continued to reveal the fundamentally heterogeneous manner in which each of the respondents approached *enka*, and the range of applications that the membership had for the genre. Some discussed the manner in which they found themselves moved by specific lyrical content, while others lauding soothing or energizing functions of certain melodies, or of the voices of given performers. As was the case with many of the performers in the

Kayōsai, some in Fukushima looked for a reflection of their own lives and realities in the music, as was made clear in this representative exchange:

R4: [The songs that we gravitate toward] depends on each individual…

R2: We tend to choose 'good' lyrics [*ii shi*]. Many of the songs are just cookie-cutter copies of each other these days; it's probably not a nice thing to say, but they concern 'puppy love' [*horeta hareta*] and so on – that's all that seems to be out there; there's so many! I'm done with that sort of thing now.

[all laugh]

R2: So, I can't really get into that sort of work. It has to hit closer to home.

SA: I see. In other words, you're looking for songs that speak to your circumstances [*jibun ni atta uta wo*].

R2: Yes, yes. Once a person reaches my age – songs that discuss looking back over one's life, and so on. Songs like that are good, you see. Or married couple [*meoto*] *enka*, they're good, too; songs that fit your own age, the circumstances of your own life. Those are the types of songs that I would tend to choose.

At the same time, others expressed a desire to attain that which they feel themselves lacking, a quest to metamorphose – even temporarily – into a 'self' that they longed for, yet no longer saw as realistically attainable in the context of their own lived experiences:

R6: You see, we have relatively few chances to be put into those sorts of 'sad' situations [so often described in *enka*]. Such sad, passionate – we also don't have much in the way of passionate love, but I like that sort of an intense song. Deep, intense songs like that. It's like we are seeking that which we do not have through the music.

[multiple voices of agreement with this]

SA: That which you do not have.

R6: Yes.

R2, R3: Yes, that is exactly right.

In general, both the pre-discussion questionnaires and the discussion itself revealed a quest for beauty, a desire to give voice to both the real and the ideal, and above all a drive for a sense of *connection* on the part of the Fukushima Branch of NAK. These interactions also laid bare the existence of the same unpredictable heterogeneity of application and approach to the music that was in evidence at the *Kayōsai* in Tokyo: in the words of one of the respondents, "[t]he way that the song is interpreted, of course, is unique to each individual, I think."

But the evening's discussion revealed something else, as well, something quite specific that could not be detected through mere observation of amateur performance at the *Kayōsai* or of the interplay between amateur *enka* performer and *enka* industry judge. For all of the unpredictable heterogeneity that was clearly in evidence, the discussion kept returning to notions of 'Japan'. This 'Japan' was invoked by the respondents in a wide range of ways. Asked at the outset of the discussion to clarify how she felt about the lyrics of *enka*, one respondent effectively summed up the undercurrent of appeal to something called the 'Japanese heart' when she said, "Well, because I'm Japanese, you know… I can feel something in the lyrics."

One might be understandably suspect at this point that the present research is now in danger of contradicting itself, of validating the very claims that the function sought in *enka* by its fans is paramount to some sort of ethnocentric purification, a 'reset' button that allows listeners to get back in touch with their supposed fundamental 'Japaneseness'[30] that it seeks to repudiate. One might imagine that one hears the familiar, worn-out warning bell of Nationalism beginning to clang, tiredly, once again. But it is here that we must truly keep our wits about us, resisting the temptation to slip back into

[30] Yano, *Tears of Longing*, p. 126.

the black hole of dichotomy, the either-or, the knee-jerk reaction to proclaim the resurrection of the ghost of 'cultural nationalism' and *Nihonjinron*. We can start by returning to the aforementioned tensions between proclamations concerning the 'heart of Japan' and a critique of the realities of life therein that were laid so bare by Ito, and ask what this thing called 'Japan' might mean, not to *us*, as researchers, but to those on the ground, in the *roji*, with whom we seek to engage. This active pursuing of the voices of the *roji*, and this alone, will allow us to get into the utterly complex, utterly real thick of things, and will allow us to see both the potential and the danger inherent to 'becoming' through *enka*.

The actual nature of 'Japan' – at least in the lives of those whom this study seeks to address – was revealed in astoundingly simple yet thunderously significant terms, by the quietest, most shy voice in attendance that evening. It is this simple, quiet declaration that will take on crucial and central importance for the remainder of our discussion.

"Well," the respondent in question said, laughing self-consciously, "*Japan is all that I know*."

"Enka wa Hotto Suru"

As we have seen, there is a great deal of diversity in the manner in which the listener/practitioner of *enka* approaches the music. As was made particularly clear in Chapter One, audience negotiations with the genre – that is, what the listener/practitioner takes a song to *mean* – is entirely dependent upon the other texts in the individual's life. Zeroing in on intimate interactions with individual listener/practitioners has, however, revealed a unifying thread amidst all of this diversity called 'Japan' (a concept which, we will remember, remains to be defined for the purposes of this discussion). And these

interactions also revealed another 'common thread' of sorts, a shared reality that constitutes the condition from which the NAK Fukushima membership gravitates toward *enka* in the first place. That reality is none other than the unsettled (and unsettling) conditions of existence in contemporary Japan, and particularly in rural Fukushima Prefecture, which have been discussed at length above.

This key relationship between the music and the lived realities of the discussion participants was revealed in the late stages of our chat, as the evening was drawing to a close:

SA: Well, I really get a sense of your love for the music. Allow me to ask what is perhaps a difficult question. There are so many 'hobbies' available out there – why do you choose music? Why are these songs *important* to you?

R6: Well, I've tried lots of different things.

R2, R3, R5: Yes, yes.

R6: I did bowling when I was in my twenties, played lots of sports –

[others indicating that they have pursued many pastimes, as well]

R2: Music is something that you can really stick with [*jizoku*].

R4: You are free to sing –

R5: You can sing anywhere.

R6: Music is a relief [*sukkiri suru*].

R2: It's a stress release.

R6, R4: Yes, a stress release!

[enthusiastic agreement with this]

R6: Well, we are housewives, and there are a lot of occupations represented here [*ironna shokugyou ga arimasu ne*]. We are exhausted and all the rest of it, but by going into that zone [*soko ni itte*] and singing, the stress and all of that –

SA: From work, and from being a housewife, and so on?

R6: Yes!

SA: Singing provides you with relief from all of that?

R6: That's right!

R3: I feel just the same way [*watashi mo issho*]. [ongoing murmured agreement with R6's comments]

R6: Also, there are lots of different occupations; sometimes you will get people in a group that share the same occupation. People get trapped in their own little worlds [*doushitemo kataku naru*], you know [excited, sputtering now]. But if you bring all of these people with different occupations into the world of song – people can talk and sing together there, and it provides a stress release. Yes, relief from stress; at least for me.

R5: I'm the same way. When I was in my forties, I would feel ill and have to take to bed, once a month or so. My head would start spinning so severely that I couldn't get out of bed. I began to get relief from that after I started with the music.

R2: Yes, stress is just awful.

R5: I really felt that the music was relieving me of the stress [that was causing this]. I still have these episodes once a year or so.

R4: I think that it's being able to be passionate about something, and through giving vent to your breath and your voice –

…[further chatting about the spiritual and physical benefits that each respondent finds in music]

SA: It sounds like me that what you are describing is a sort of 'shelter' for the heart [*kokoro no amayadori*].

R5, R4: Yes, that's it!

What this crucial interplay reveals is the reality of the members' existence as members of what Paolo Virno has called the 'multitude'. Subject to the relentless permeation of fear and anguish wrought by contemporary existence[31] – and, as we have already seen, made all the more pronounced in post-bubble Japan – these individuals are

[31] Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, p. 30-31.

haunted by a sense of "not feeling at home."[32] It is as if Virno had traveled ahead through time in order to be in the room with us that June evening, and is lecturing directly to the members in attempt to provide a name and a context for their realities, when he says:

> "For the contemporary multitude… the condition of 'not feeling at home' is permanent and irreversible. The absence of a substantial community and of any connected 'special places' makes it such that the life of the stranger, the not-feeling-at-home… are unavoidable and lasting experiences."[33]

This exchange also lays bare the fact that, more than anything, *enka* represent a survival mechanism for these historically and geographically specific listeners, who are profoundly affected by what they term as the "stresses" of contemporary existence. While Yano makes brief mention of 'stress' as an underlying factor in audience motivation for consuming *enka*,[34] she is speaking largely of the hectic nature of urban commutes and the challenges of fast-paced financial trading – a world entirely alien to most *enka* listeners in any event, and especially to those in the marginalized countryside – and completely misses the point that the fear and anguish affecting *enka's* audience is deep, fundamental and, as we can see above, potentially debilitating crisis of existence. The 'stress' cited by the participants in the group discussion is none other than the fundamental unease identified by Virno as being such a key facet of contemporary existence, and it is this unease which the individual seeks to nullify, and from which he seeks to flee. This is a point that is pivotal to forging a solid understanding of the role played by music in becoming, and cannot be overemphasized.

The significance of this lived experience in determining the role(s) played by *enka* and *kayōkyoku* in the lives of the music's devotees, and the form of becoming that it

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[32] Ibid., p. 32.
[33] Ibid., p. 37.
[34] Yano, p. 125.

potentiates, can be revealed only by revisiting the mechanics of *affect*. Affect is none other than the ungraspable intensity that can drive and ultimately situate us in our ongoing battle to survive our dance with the world at large,[35] and the central role played by *enka* in the lives of the Fukushima membership is inextricably intertwined therewith – while largely beyond logical comprehension and the ability to 'express', it is precisely this affect that lies behind the listener/practitioners' eager attempts to explain that there is "something about the music." It is the reality of the members' lived experiences and the manner in which they experience the music as a soothing counterbalance thereto that fires the intensity which, in turn, to moves and situates them: indeed, "[i]ntensity and experience accompany each other like two mutually presupposing dimensions or like two sides of a coin."[36] As we have already noted, there are two instances of affect at work here – the manner in which the individual listener/practitioner is affected by the world, and the manner in which s/he is affected by the music. The manner in which the individual as affected by the world – that is, by the aforementioned realities of existence – is not difficult to discern, given the frank comments offered up by NAK Fukushima's membership. It is a sense of alienation, an awful feeling of *disconnect*, that sends these individuals careening into the embrace offered by *enka*. And once there, the individual is affected once again, this time by the music, and sent bouncing right back out into the world, armed with a new sense of community, of comradery, of *us*. This allows the listener to reach a state of manageability, a place from which s/he can tackle the world at large once again with reasonable confidence that, through the support provided in the music, s/he will survive the exchange.

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[35] See Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect".
[36] Brian Massumi, *The Autonomy of Affect*, p. 33.

With this in mind, it is clear that *enka* are fulfilling what Yimen Wang has termed a "therapeutic function"[37] among these listeners. The genre represents, indeed, nothing less than a *shelter* for its devotees. One participant in the group discussion summed up this important role that *enka* ultimately play in the lives of (at least these specific) listeners when she said, "*Enka wa hotto suru* [enka provide a blessed relief]." *Enka* are a relief precisely because they are employed by these individuals to act as an antidote for the condition of 'not feeling at home' – the music serves as a reference, as a rallying point, and as a conduit for a sense of *nakama*, by which one may feel 'connected' again, part of a 'community'.

R2: I am… reminded that interpersonal connections are so very important, and I am grateful for being able to have those. I have been lucky enough to be allowed into this community here *[nakama ni irete itadakimashita*]; you just can't do anything by yourself. Lots has happened with this group of people, and that has led to the person that I am today; that's what I think…

[murmured agreement with R2]

SA: The music reminds you of this?

[further murmured agreement]

R2: Yes; it's gotta be *enka*. That's the whole starting point [*shuppatsu ten*]

SA [to group]: Do you all feel the same way?

ALL: Yes.

R4: Yes, you know, you are getting that support, even when it is unseen [*kage de sasaeteiru hito ga iru*]. Your community [*nakama*] is more important than anything.

R2: This community has been through a lot together, haven't we?

[laughter]

[37] Yiman Wang, "Affective Politics and the Legend of Yamaguchi Yoshiko/Li Xianglan" (forthcoming chapter in *China, Japan and the Dynamics of Transculturation,* 2011).

R5: I am grateful.

As was made clear at the outset of our discussion, it is none other than affect that drives desire – a desire that is fueled by *conatus*, by a striving to survive in the world on terms that are not too disadvantageous to us. The membership of the Fukushima Branch of the NAK finds itself in the decidedly disadvantageous position of being swept along in the current of contemporary existence, overwhelmed (and, in at least one case, physically sickened) by the challenges of life and, in the words of one respondent, "trapped in their own little worlds." It should be no surprise, then, that what the membership of NAK desires – and finds – in *enka* is nothing other than *shelter*. Literally steamrolled by their encounter with the world, these individuals eagerly grasp at the chance to take shelter in what Virno calls the "common places", the "general intellect", which "alone are what exist in terms of offering us a standard of orientation, and thus, some sort of refuge from the direction in which the world is going."[38] This shelter is an intensely ambiguous one, imbued with diverse, almost limitless possibilities: it can continue to foster the unpredictable heterogeneities that we have noted as such an integral part of individual negotiations with *enka*, or, conversely, it can be built with bricks and mortar supplied by the *dispositif* – by the genre's incarnation as an apparatus that can serve to steer one toward the interior (an incarnation that was exemplified in the judges of the *Kayōsai*, to contextualize this in terms of our discussion), that which has no time for sociality, and which is entirely intolerant of the otherness of the Other.

'Japan' and the 'Community of the Us'

And it is here that we must return to grapple with the elephant in the room – an elephant described by the participants themselves as 'Japan'. What can we say of how

[38] Virno, pp. 33~35.

this idea called 'Japan' is construed, comprehended and used, at least by the subjects of our present discussion? As stated above, in order to come to grips with what this actually means and effectively assess some of its implications, we must do our best to approach this 'Japan' from the standpoint of those in this *roji*. In so doing, we can see that the 'Japan' that was invoked again and again over the course of our discussion that evening on the outskirts of Fukushima has nothing to do with 'cultural nationalism', nor ethnocentricity, nor *Nihonjinron* – rather, *it constitutes precisely the sort of 'general intellect' described above*. In the final analysis, what we have here is nothing other than *conatus* at work; we are witnessing a flailing attempt to grab hold of something, perhaps anything, to keep from drowning completely in the currents of contemporary existence. 'Japan' served as a proxy of sorts for the beauty, the emotion, and the 'connectedness' that the Fukushima membership found in *enka* as an elixir to provide strength in the struggle with the day-to-day – but not because the individual listener/practitioners are necessarily prone to nationalist sentiment, patriotic fervor or a certain longing for a past, 'wet', authentic self, but because, as we have seen, *'Japan' is all that these individuals know*, the only framework, the only mechanism that they have to work with, and the only umbrella that they see available to keep the rain off of their backs. Those with whom I spoke in Fukushima City on that warm June evening were not, in the final analysis, at all concerned with a larger national, cultural enclosure called 'Japan' that some researchers[39] insist upon seeing as fuelling listener desire for the genre – although the 'Japan' discussed there was still conceptualized in terms of the 'cultural' framework that these individuals have been given to work with (lending, as we shall see as we conclude our

[39] Yano is certainly not the only researcher to take this approach. Attempts to essentialize a Japanese 'folk' under the umbrella of *enka* are common within Japan, as well. See, for example, Yamaori Tetsuo, *Misora Hibari to Nihonjin* [Misora Hibari and the Japanese] (Tokyo: Gendai Shokan, 2001).

discussion, the genre some of its potential danger as a facilitator of the closed society). Asked what 'Japan' actually meant to them, the responses of some of the Fukushima NAK members were revealing. Indeed, 'Japan', to these people, was not an all-encompassing cultural entity to be pined after, but simply a catch-all repository for day-to-day experiences and interpersonal relationships, as the following exchange helped to reveal:

SA: You mentioned earlier that you get a sense of 'Japan' from the lyrics. What, exactly, does that mean? Do you all feel the same? Do you feel 'Japan' in the lyrics of *enka*?

R3: *Enka* is a genre that is defined by lyrics that speak of Japan's vistas, of culture [*fuudo*], of all sorts of human characteristics, you see.

SA: I see. [to R4] Please, go ahead.

R4: Even with the same song, there are instances in which someone might just be singing naturally, with regular feeling [*futsuu no kimochi de*], but someone else is listening to it in tears.

R2: Yes, the circumstances of the lyrics.

R6: Like if someone dies…

R2: Yes, that's right…

R4: So, depending on the lyrics – the circumstances of the lyrics – for example, if someone has lost their loved one… We were doing a *meoto enka* once, and a student began to cry uncontrollably, unable to sing. Becoming aware of that situation, and showing compassion to the affected person – this can also be called the work of a 'Japanese heart' (*Nihon no kokoro*), I think.

R3: Yes, I agree.

This elephant called 'Japan' is, to the membership of NAK Fukushima, nothing but an incarnation of the shelter sought by specific listeners in *enka*; it is facilitator of the agent of anti-disconnect identified by the membership as *nakama*, and an incarnation of

what I would like to call the 'community of the us'.[40] It was love between a farmer and his wife, it was one listener's snowy, beautiful Tohoku, and it was the expression of some of the realities of life in Fukushima itself, and the crises that can accompany it. But it was, first, foremost and most significantly of all, precisely Virno's 'general intellect', a steel vessel of sorts built for the purpose of withstanding the incessant blows of contemporary existence, and in this specific case, a sort of *roji* within the *roji*. And it is fostered, in its dizzying myriad of ways, through *enka*. The 'community of the us' is not a singularly-definable entity, somehow reversely reducible to a phenomenon called 'Japaneseness', but is limitless in its potential for multiplicity, being constructed by historically and geographically specific individuals bringing different experiences, desires and so on to bear upon it and investing these within it. It is not 'Japan' at large, and yet, to those seeking shelter within it, it *is* 'Japan', lock, stock and barrel – it is a common place, and potentially one of many bearing the same name. Such 'communities of the us' – in all of their potential heterogeneity – is all that I take 'Japan' and 'Japaneseness' to mean for the purposes of this discussion.[41] These communities are fluid, with boundaries that can shift and metamorphose dependent upon the desires produced by the affects/intensities resulting from temporally-specific conditions of life. The ultimate desire underpinning audience negotiations with *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, at least

[40] Unlike Haver's 'priveleged community of the Same', which is defined through the establishment of ill-fitting others (see William Haver, *The Body of This Death: Historicity and Sociality in the Time of AIDS* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p.19), what I view as the 'community of the us' is defined by those ascribing to it. Its boundaries and conditions of membership are intensely fluid and can change by the month, by the week, by the day as conditions of lived experience change. These are communities of the affected, and the tensions between different communities brought together by different affects/intensities and lived experiences will, I believe, determine the nature of what we call 'society' in the years to come. This concept will be further expanded upon in future work.

[41] While I note the plethora of words that have been written in an attempt to define some supposed 'Japanese experience', I find no use for them; as should be rendered very clear here, from just the briefest of discussions with the smallest of groups, 'Japan' can mean wildly differing things to different people, depending upon life experiences, the manner in which one is affected by the world, by the other texts in one's life, and so on.

as it was revealed in Fukushima, was the desire to find shelter and become 'us' by rallying round a common place defined by these individuals as 'Japan'. And this 'community of the us' could be *anything* – it could constitute an interior, suffocating difference and the heterogeneous, or just as easily, a rallying point from which to potentiate forward movement.

Like folk-rocker Nagabuchi Tsuyoshi, whose 2006 *Kamikaze-Tokkoutai* [The *Kamikaze* Special Attack Corps] reads like a fascist's dream,[42] these are individuals that are at great risk of being misunderstood by those who can see only a desire for vaguely sinister narratives of 'the nation' and of 'nationalism' in their consumption of *enka*. This misunderstanding derives from analyses carried out only in black-and-white terms, and without sufficient consideration for the complexities of affect and desire informing the manner in which the individual negotiates with the text. The consequences of this type of analysis is a relegation of these specific, heterogeneous actors to a limbo typified by lack of movement, to existence as a singular, uniform entity, mostly devoid of heterogeneity and voice by researchers who seek to *dictate* desire rather than *discern* it. Like Nagabuchi, whose artistic dealings with the special attack forces actually derive not from some sinister desire to glorify war and retread the paths trod by Imperial Japan but from a rather messy interrelation between the *tokkoutai*, 'home' (via the former squadron headquarters and current 'peace museum' at Chiran, Kagoshima, in Nagabuchi's home prefecture) and a frustration with the very states of contemporary existence in Japan that are identified by Virno, these *enka* aficionadi grapple with a 'Japan' that is both much

[42] The lyrics for *Kamikaze-Tokkoutai* can be accessed in many locations on the world wide web, including here: http://www.utamap.com/showkasi.php?surl=B22518. Nagabuchi's artistry provides an extremely valuable lens through which to consider lived experience, desire and the social since the 1970s. We are prevented by space from making any more than the smallest mention of Nagabuchi here, but I will return to discuss this artist and his work in the context of post-1970s Japan at a later date.

simpler and much more complex than many would immediately recognize, as can be revealed by even the most rudimentary consideration of the realities of their own lived realities. This 'Japan' is, ultimately, the only concept that they have to frame their desires, their frustrations, and their fears. Its meaning is fluid, and contextually-based. And it is precisely this that makes the 'common place' of 'Japan' located in *enka* and other musics both unspeakably dangerous and incredibly cool.

It should go without saying that the construction of the 'community of the us' in our discussion has hardly been limited to those in the *roji*. The judges of the *Kayōsai*, through their commentary, advice and critique, were busily involved in constructing their own 'community of the us', that which we have called the *interior*, and which, on the basis of their own lived experiences and desires, they surely believed would be of great service to the individual amateur performers, not conscious of the fact that it had the potential to choke and smother the very heterogeneity and complexity that these individuals sought to express. Failing to recognize this would be to condemn our discussion to the realm of what Atkins has called a "vulgarized version of Foucauldianism… the usually unstated, unexamined that institutions such as [the *enka* industry and its backers]… are inherently wicked and intent upon suppressing individual freedom and diversity,"[43] sending it careening into the realm of the abstract and away from the concrete conditions that underpin it. The judges, in their own way, *were sincerely trying to help*, working to assist the contestants in gaining admittance to the 'community of the us' that they had worked so hard at perfecting over the course of their own long careers. But indeed, *therein lies the danger*. It is the danger to heterogeneity

[43] E. Taylor Atkins, *Primitive Selves: Koreana in the Japanese Colonial Gaze, 1910-1945* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2010), p. 5.

posed by the quasi-elite, those whom Osugi identifies as persons "within the subjugated [who] join the subjugating class,"[44] or those such as the local teachers and officials[45] identified by Tomiyama as "leaders"[46] in the Okinawan Lifestyle Reform Movement, who set out, cheerfully and with the best of intentions, to kill the Other within,[47] or those such as the Korean rooming house managers of 1930s Japan, who did all that they could to channel their newly-arrived compatriots into harsh day-labour positions so as to 'assist' them with their survival.[48] It is also the danger of sympathy, of attempting to deploy a strangling embrace to draw all "into one body"[49] (which is as much a danger within the *roji* as it is a danger emanating from a quasi-elite), the danger of providing the Other with fast-tracked passage to the 'interior'. And it is, in short, the danger in extending a hand of help – only to find that it serves a poison pill.

And so, we are finally able to see the reality that, at least for these historically and geographically specific listeners in Fukushima Prefecture, the desire that underpins *enka* has nothing to do with a unified, singular longing for 'our authentic Japanese selves', or with reestablishing a connection to some misty aesthetic that the listeners are assumed to long for simply by virtue of their status as 'Japanese'. It has to do with a desire for *shelter* – a shelter that is, at least in part, conceptualized as 'Japan'. But there is no pining here for the 'Japaneseness' that philosophers such as Yanagita Kunio sought to ascribe to those in rural communities, effectively freezing them in time and depriving them of a

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[44] Osugi Sakae, *The Fallacy of National Statism* (April, 1918), p. 246, quoted in Katsuhiko Mariano Endo, Osugi Paper, conference proceedings from 2010 (p. 25).
[45] Tomiyama, p. 125.
[46] Tomiyama, p. 129.
[47] Ibid., p. 127.
[48] See Ken C. Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).
[49] Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On 'Japan' and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 74.

voice long before Yano did.[50] Rather, the 'Japan' invoked by the membership of NAK Fukushima has everything to do with *nakama*, with camaraderie, and with establishing a 'community of the us'. This 'community', this 'common place' means different things to different people – and it is this multiplicity that has potentiated the tolerance for the great diversity, heterogeneity and even tension that we have seen brought to bear on individual negotiations with the music time and time again over the course of this research. The rather biting critique inherent in *Bokyō Shin-Sōma*, penned by rural composers and lyricists and held in high regard by the Fukushima respondent, no less represents a 'Japan' defined as a 'community of the us' as might a work like Suizenji Kiyoko's *Nipponjin Da Ne, Enka Da Ne* (a work that does all that it can to bring a collective, singular people called 'the Japanese' together beneath an umbrella of miso soup, pickled plums and music).[51] In this manner, the 'Japan' of *enka* in which the listener finds shelter ultimately means radically different things to different devotees, dependent upon the perspective that comes from lived experience. The 'communities of the us' that it facilitates are thus defined and interpreted in different ways. And it is this, of course, that lends the 'becoming us' that occurs through *enka* its danger, and its 'cool'.

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At the end of the evening, one of the elderly female members of NAK Fukushima sided up to me, apparently eager to share in even greater personal detail what *enka* mean to her,

[50] Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 307.
[51] This is not, of course, to suggest that rural artists are more prone to writing songs that speak critically of the light of the countryside than urban artists (although it is perhaps worth pointing out that Hosokawa Takashi's megahit *Boukyou-Jangara*, which speaks of a lonely Tohoku labourer, drunk and screaming at the Tokyo sky that he feels has him trapped and perhaps the most immediately-recognized song of this sort, was also penned by a Hokkaido/Aomori duo), or that urban composers and lyricists do not produce works that are similar in their bite. It is simply to make the point that 'Japan' exists in *enka* in many forms

and why. Her comments effectively sum up the affects and the desires fueling the potentially ambiguous processes of 'becoming us' that occurs through *enka*:

R6 [sitting beside SA]: Would you like some tea?…I'm sorry that I haven't been taking care of you [referring to pouring tea, offering snacks, etc.]. I just get so carried away by the conversation; I love the music so, and I have my community [*nakama*] here, so I just start talking… it's so much fun.

…In my case, you know, I'm an abacus instructor; have been for almost 50 years. I am the head of all of the abacus teachers in Fukushima Prefecture. There's a lot that goes along with that. But when I soak up the songs [*uta ga jibun no naka ni haitte*], and with this community [*nakama*] – there is so much I can learn, so much I can gain from that. In my case, anyway.

There's a lot of stress involved in what I do; I have to deal with kids on a daily basis. I've been a teacher for 46 years – but there's just something about being a part of a group like this… I spend a lot of time with people that are younger than I am, and there are people older than me as well. I just love the community [*nakama*] and the setting [*ba*]… People of so many different occupations get together in groups like this one – carpenters, what have you. Getting everyone together and conversing – it's *fun*. You've always got to have something to look forward to, I think.

You know, my music *nakama* are just fantastic, and I have much to gain [from my involvement with this group]…

We can sense a real hope here. We can also sense a danger. This 'community of the us', with its focus on the macro, on 'home', contains within it boundless potential for movement and critique. But that does not mean that the 'community of the us' cannot be short-circuited, and called into the service of something much more sinister. It's proximity to discourses on 'culture' and 'national language' makes it potentially dangerous; indeed, its potential to be walled by these very entities keeps the desire for Culture (a powerfully homogenizing creature that demands capitalization; we will deal further with Culture as we conclude our discussion) very much alive. And it always threatens to become an interior of its own; as Deleuze and Negri teach us, "[w]hen a

minority creates models for itself [as in *enka*], it's because it wants to become a majority, and probably has to, to survive."[52]

Make no mistake – the form that this 'community of the us' takes on in a year, a month, a week from now will depend entirely upon the manner in which those finding shelter therein are affected by the world, and how their desires evolve. Virno reminds us that "evil expresses itself precisely as a horrible response to the risk inherent in this world, as a dangerous search for protection: we need only think about the propensity for entrusting oneself to a sovereign… or about the feverish elbowing to get to the top in one's career, or about xenophobia."[53] It is their dance with and the close proximity of *enka*-as-apparatus – as seen in Chapter Two – that makes the situation potentially dangerous. Where admission to the 'community of the us' is seen as dependent upon subscription to Culture, then Culture will be able to expand its hegemony. And it is precisely the malleable nature of 'Japan' in the eyes and hearts of the people that renders the situation so fluid, so unpredictable. Having established the inherent ambiguity of the *enka* genre, then, and having revealed the genre's pivotal role as shelter and the rather fluid and ultimately unpredictable nature of its construct, let us conclude our discussion by returning to consider some of the possible consequences involved in seeking shelter in this ambiguous, malleable music called *enka* in the context of contemporary Japan.

[52] Gilles Deleuze in conversation with Tony Negri, "Control and Becoming", in *Negotiations: 1972-1990*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 173.
[53] Virno, p. 33.

Conclusion

'*Where Do We Go From Here?*'

On January 28, 2011, Cairo and Alexandria were in flames. Tens of thousands of Egyptians, young and old, male and female, and fed up with the conditions of their day-to-day existence, had taken to the streets, unleashing their frustrations and discontent and thumbing their collective noses at government, military and police leadership. In an interview with Canada's CBC News, Moroccan-born author Laila Lalami said of the unfolding disquiet across Egypt (and, indeed, across the entire North African region):

> "These are young people who are sick and tired of the life that they are forced to lead. They've done everything that was asked of them – they got their education. They can't find jobs…. They are sick of it. They want lives filled with dignity. The [government] opposition hasn't delivered. And when [the youth] look to the West for help, they see foreign powers that are perfectly content to support these dictators while at the same time delivering lectures on democracy. So, it's impossible; you feel like you're on your own."[1]

The protests in North Africa and the Middle East were, of course, fueled by complexities irreducible to a singularly definable, catch-all 'root cause', and it is certainly not my intent to simplify them here. And yet, in the Egyptian protests and in Lalami's response to them, we can clearly sense an undercurrent of Virno's unease, of another incarnation of the very same global socioeconomic factors that are fuelling the dive for shelter among *enka* listeners in rural Japan. Such an explosive genesis of critique is as much a potential consequence of the realities of contemporary existence as is the subscription to reassuring 'common places' such as the 'communities of the us' that we referred to in Chapter 3; perhaps more than anything, the events that came to pass in Egypt in the early days of 2011 served to underscore the need to pay very careful attention to the realities of lives lived in their historical context in any attempt to come to

[1] Lalami's interview is available online at http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2011/01/27/f-laila-lalami.html.

grips with what we call 'society', and the direction(s) that the affect and desire that construct it might be leading us. That is precisely what this research, in its limited scope, has sought to do in the context of individual negotiations with *enka* in contemporary Japan.

The individual *enka* devotees considered by this research are, much like those on the streets of Cairo and Alexandria, none other than the individual actors whom Sakai teaches us animates a given anonymous space, giving it shape and definition – in other words, those within the *roji* who are at work busily constructing the social. They are those whom Virno has identified as "the many… those who share the feeling of 'not feeling at home' and who, in fact, place this experience at the center of their own social and political praxis."[2] They are those who, in order to survive, find and cling to a 'community of the us' in *enka*. And it is they who, in their own way, will determine the course of human history in the years ahead. In seeking to understand our world, we can no longer grapple with ideology alone; indeed, as Massumi teaches us, "[a]ffect holds a key to rethinking postmodern power after ideology. For although ideology is still very much with us, often in the most virulent of forms, it is no longer encompassing. It no longer defines the global mode of function of power. It is now one mode of power in a larger field that is not defined, overall, by ideology."[3] How people are affected, by the world, by the texts in their lives, and how their conatus seeks to situate them in order to protect them, how they 'help' one another – indeed, all of this emanates from the *roji*, and it is there that we must now look to understand the structure of our world.

[2] Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude,* p. 35.
[3] Massumi, *The Autonomy of Affect*, p. 104.

Like the philosophers examined by Harry Harootunian in his *Overcoming Modernity*, the philosophers of the *roji* approach *enka* with a sense of unease over the conditions of their own existence. As we have seen, the inception of the *Kayōsai* coincided with the emergence of a middle-aged demographic not only unsure of their footing amidst shocking political and economic transformations, but also stricken with a fear over their own survival and economic security (yes, even amidst the so-called 'exuberance'[4] of high-speed economic growth) that drove many to illness, and even death. This fear and unease, as we have seen, has only intensified in the post-1990, post-bubble era, and *enka* continues to be one of the 'common places' to which many turn for solace. The question that we are left to grapple with, then, is this: what form(s) does this shelter take, and what are its consequences?

This is a question that is not easily answered; the potential consequences of this particular shelter are not easily defined. As this research has shown, despite the many words that have been written about a connection between *enka* and a larger cultural imaginary called 'Japan', and despite a clear penchant on the part of producers and promoters for associating the genre with uterine notions of 'Japan', questions of *enka*, the desires fueling subjectivity and the social cannot simply reduced to a nostalgic, 'nationalistic' desire for a 'Japan' that is, perhaps, more a product of the researcher's imagination than of the listener's. The 'becoming' that is undertaken through the genre is, as we have seen throughout this work, multifaceted and diverse – individuals express their own lives and loves through the genre in a manner that seems almost completely dismissive of any overarching narrative of 'Japaneseness'. One can see in the music varied and passionate personal negotiations of life taking place that have nothing to do

[4] Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, p. 304.

with this larger cultural imaginary, be it in celebrations of one man's Mt. Hiei, another's Yamagata Prefecture or in rather scathing commentary about the socioeconomic realities of life in Fukushima Prefecture that were held as meaningful by another. Narratives of the 'Japanese woman' are usurped to speak to a dead mother, and *enka* become a soapbox for one to voice one's disenchantment with 'society'. On one level, then, the desire coursing through individual interaction with this music is not reducible to any easy definition or net 'packaging'. This heterogeneity of desire and affect, along with NAK's mission to support individual lives through providing a realm in which members can negotiate with the music in solidarity, yet "each for his or her own purpose", seems to provide us with a phone-booth exit from the Matrix of the fascist life. Foucault teaches us that, in order to potentiate just such an escape, it is vital to

> "[p]refer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems… It is the connection of desire to reality (and not its retreat into the forms of representation) that possesses revolutionary force."[5]

And yet, despite the conspicuous absence the sort of larger cultural imaginaries discussed by Yano in *Tears of Longing*, we are nonetheless returned, again and again, to a common place, a general intellect, and indeed a 'community of the us', one that has in fact been defined by these individuals as 'Japan'. But this is no danger in and of itself – not at all. As should be clear by now, the *enka* genre is no brainwashing mechanism, no Adornian organ of manipulation. The 'Japan' found in *enka* by devotees of the genre is not some ominous, dark realm of manipulation and black vans and blaring military music, as seems to be the unspoken fantasy of accounts of 'Japan' that speak of such

[5] Michel Foucault in his Preface to Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. xiii.

things as "state support"[6] for *enka* in foreboding tones. It is simply, in the simple-yet-profound words of our shy Fukushima research participant, *the site of the only life that most listeners have ever known.* What is at work here is not some sort of flag-waving, patriotic fervor, but rather a (perhaps desperate) desire to anchor one's own life in the only harbour that one has access to, amidst the chaos wrought by contemporary existence. It is, in short, *conatus* – we must take as the cornerstone of our understanding of the role that *enka* play in 'becoming' the fact that the quest for shelter is not somehow predetermined by the listener's 'Japaneseness', *but by the historical conditions of his or her own existence*. And it is, ultimately, *enka's* entanglement with *conatus* that lends it its great potential as a conduit for movement and multiplicity – and its capacity to reinforce the very fascism from which it would potentiate an escape. The wondrous – and the dangerous.

The 'danger' that we speak of here is not a danger inherent to *enka*, nor is it a danger inherent to something called 'Japan'. It is, rather, the *danger inherent to needing to belong*. This is the danger of Culture, Culture as the universalizing narrative, that which is intolerant of the Other; it is the Culture of the judges of the *Kayōsai*, that which serves, to paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari, to summon forth a 'pure race'.[7] It is the Culture that seeks to "erase the *roji* from the face of the earth and, in so doing, foreclose any possibility for us to work together with the people in the *roji* in order to solve the problems common to both of us."[8] It is not necessarily an ideology, an identity prescribed from above; it is rather a self-induced paralysis, a submission to soft power. And it is a

[6] See Yano, *Tears of Longing*, pp. 6-7, p. 89.
[7] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* Trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 108-09.
[8] Endo, *Empire State of Mind, Vol. 1* (forthcoming manuscript), p. 4.

danger that comes with keywords – potentially homogenizing but entirely malleable terms like 'Japanese culture', or 'the Japanese heart', or indeed, *enka-gokoro* or *uta-gokoro*, all of which we have run across in these pages.

The danger of needing to belong that is the danger of Culture is real, and it is historically identifiable. It is the danger that funneled thousands of those from that "oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic and irremediably minor race"[9] to the battlefields of Southeast Asia during the Pacific War, with the promise that "the entire Japanese nation… would finally recognize them as 'Japanese' if they went there, killed as many Americans and Asians as they could, and then honorably died for the emperor and his empire."[10] And it is most definitely the danger that we have noted in the cheerful efforts toward the extinction of the Other within in Okinawa, in the name of lifestyle reform and survival within the historical realities presented by those times. And while explicit longings for the larger cultural imaginary called 'Japan' were absent from our discussion with the *enka* devotees in Fukushima, this potential danger that can accompany it was most certainly not. For this is the danger inherent to any general intellect, of any common place – it lurks and slumbers, threatening to awaken and devour the heterogeneous if the construct of the 'communities of the us' so permits. The danger of Culture, of needing to belong, is ultimately the *danger of shelter*. It is danger of painting oneself into a corner, or locking oneself in to a site of belonging, by giving in to the temptation to construct the 'communities of the us' with the tepid comfort offered by the insulation of universalizing narrative. Worse, it is the danger of locking Others into the same, under the guise of trying to 'help'.

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[9] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p. 109.
[10] Endo, *Empire State of Mind, Vol. 1*, p. 6.

This is a potential consequence of the inextricable intertwining of *enka* and *conatus*. It is a danger that makes the mechanics of discourse distressingly powerful, and that threatens to snuff out the very heterogeneity lived by the individuals with whom this research has engaged, the heterogeneity brought to their negotiations with the music. The potential proximity of this consequence was alluded to in flirtations with the cold embrace of universalizing shelter were apparent in our Fukushima discussion, rendered apparent in invocations of the potential facilitators and harbingers of Culture, such as aforementioned terms like 'Japanese culture' and 'the Japanese heart'. But it could be seen skulking in other corners, as well. We have noted, for example, the manner in which 'national language' was called into the service of the universalizing, snipping away at the messy, loose ends of the unpredictability of affect and suturing up a nicely-packaged "closure."[11] But this was by no means a uni-directional undertaking, some sinister mode of homogenization brought to bear upon a fundamentally free-spirited group of amateur performers – indeed, at least some of the performers had worked extremely hard at internalizing these often meticulous and minute directives aimed at producing "beautiful Japanese", as was evidenced in the praise heaped upon *Kayōsai* entrant #108, who had, according to the judge, finally shown the fruits of the linguistic direction that the judge had been giving to him "for years".

This should not be surprising; we know that, in this age of the multitude, *language itself* is a common place. Virno tells us so. Here we can clearly see the penchant to "speak/think in the same way, on the basis of logical-linguistic constructs which are as fundamental as they are broadly general."[12] For the multitude set adrift and armed only

[11] Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, p. 322.
[12] Virno, p. 33.

with a framework vaguely identified as 'Japan' with which to orient oneself, it is hardly surprising that such national language should serve as a vital common place, those which "alone are what exist in terms of offering us a standard of orientation, and thus, some sort of a refuge from the direction in which the world is going."[13]And the tendency that we have noted for national language to act in the service of narrative, to function as a "general intellect… [that] drastically increases forms of submission"[14] must make us aware of the precarious position that the heterogeneity that is also brought to life through *enka* truly occupies.

And language's vulture-like perch was apparent in very specific terms in Fukushima, as well. The veneration that the NAK membership there held for "beautiful Japanese" was revealed, in a roundabout and fascinating manner, through a casual aside on non-Japanese *enka* performers. African-American *enka* artist Jelo, for example, while very clearly not Japanese himself, was declared to have 'the heart of a Japanese', due to his talent for singing 'Japanese songs'. The members of the group reported being strongly affected by Jero's songs [*tsutawatte kuru mono ga aru*], and non-Japanese performers in general were further lauded as 'passionate [*jounetsuteki*]' and as having a certain sense of melancholy [*aishuu ga aru*]. But significantly, the group proclaimed this effectiveness of foreign performers as being rooted in the fact that they are "*better at handling the Japanese language than the Japanese themselves*", since, according to the group, such performers needed to meditate upon the meaning of the words due to their status as a 'non-Japanese' [non-'native']. Similar comments were made about Brazilian and Hawaiian entrants at the *Kayōsai*. This suggests a 'community of the us' united not

[13] Ibid., p. 34.
[14] Ibid. p. 41.

necessarily by race or nationality or 'Japaneseness', but by *language*, or, put another way, by an 'ideal' represented by *kokugo* [national language]. In a matter perhaps running counter to the assumptions of those who would prefer to see these functions of narrative and the interior only in terms of race and racisms (not to suggest, of course, that these do not play their own role), we can see that foreigners are entirely acceptable– as long as they are not 'foreign'. Here, in this quest for perfected linguistic expression, we cannot but sense a certain lurking intolerance for the heterogeneous.

But we must make a different leap of sorts in order to get a true sense of the scope of the looming danger presented by this shelter within the context of our current global crisis. In doing so, we must revisit Julio Fujita, the Brazilian of Japanese descent who took to the stage in the closing minutes of the *Kayōsai* hoping to spread some love, but who instead became an unwitting pupil in a lesson on 'becoming Japanese'. While this may seem to most readers to be an almost laughable admonishment by the judge to tame passion and get out into the temple circuit in order to grasp what it means to 'be Japanese', we can surely nonetheless imagine, if we shift our gaze to consider this interchange from the viewpoint of this already-marginalized newcomer to Japan, the judge's admonitions taking on enormous significance to this new arrival, who must seek a buyer for his labour power in order to ensure his own survival. Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine individuals across all manner of *roji* eagerly gobbling up this sort of universalizing prescription for 'proper Japaneseness' in order to guarantee the value of their own labour power, particularly in the midst of their own harsh lived historical realities.

The functioning of *desire* that we can see here makes the mechanisms of narrative particularly powerful, and simultaneously threatens the heterogeneous – bringing us ever closer to the edge of that gaping yaw. This desire to lay hold of the tools that we think potentiate our own survival constitutes a key way in which we actively seek out fascism in the body as a survival mechanism, and this can bring us closer to the larger, political fascisms of history, "fascism as [a] political mechanism, or method, that tends to emerge in times of prolonged economic depression and seemingly-unstoppable increases in unemployment, just like our time right now."[15] We should recognize this, for we have seen it before. This is precisely the danger rained upon Tomiyama's Okinawa by socioeconomic unevenness, depression and a quasi-elite that was just trying to 'help'. And it is a danger that has already trapped many – such as my old friend in Hokkaido, whose story opened our discussion – into lives that they ultimately have no interest in leading.

It is here, then, at this junction at which the 'general intellect' becomes a pool from which to draw on in order to ensure the value of one's own labour power, that the danger posed to the heterogeneous by Culture and the need to belong is brought into its starkest relief. As was the case in Tomiyama's Okinawa, the interplay between Fujita and his judge represented nothing less than an example of 'self-improvement' – or, put more precisely, of the snipping away of the ill-fitting ends of heterogeneity, incompatible with Culture, aimed at ensuring the value of on Other's labour power within the interior, and therefore his very life. This is precisely the manner in which the general intellect fosters submission and silences Otherness. Particularly amidst the current economic climate, with its high unemployment and lack of jobs, this seemingly innocuous episode of

[15] Endo, *Osugi Paper*, p. 6.

interplay concerning music between judge and the judged should serve to furiously clang alarm bells for us, as an indicator of how easy it would be to silence the heterogeneous and facilitate fascism in the name of 'survival'. What Fujita was given in this exchange was a blueprint to follow to ensure his own survival "now that you're going to be living in Japan," and one that necessarily sought to devour his own Otherness in order to be admitted to the acceptable realm of Culture. And this quest for survival necessarily robs the individual of his very heterogeneity, that which he longs to communicate through the music, and leaves him but "an object to be governed not for [his] intrinsic value, but because [he] is the substratum of what really matters: labour-power as the aggregrate of the most diverse human faculties."[16] Here, Fujita has become one of those whose "own relation to the presence of others, that is to say, their own communicative faculty, their own possession of a language, reduced to wage labour."[17] But as it presents the possibility of survival, such fundamental reduction and homogenization can actually be *sought*, and *enka* can be yoked into service to potentiate it. Here we see musical 'becoming' as the quest for the commodification of labour power, and the dangers associated with it.

Of course, not all – or even most – of what we have seen in our present discussion has been about ensuring the value of labour power; indeed, for the older membership of NAK Fukushima, the desire has simply been for *nakama*, for camaraderie, and above all, for shelter. The interplay between Fujita and his judge and the manner in which it leads us to questions of the general intellect, survival (in its most practical incarnation) and intolerance for the Other is raised again here simply because it represents the sharpest,

[16] Virno, p. 83.
[17] Ibid., p. 63.

most focused example that serves to illuminate the potential danger underlying our entire discussion on becoming through *enka* – that is, the danger of Culture, the danger of needing to belong, and the danger of shelter. The problem that we are faced with is that, as we alluded to above, people can *want* Culture, even if it is not voiced in terms of the larger imaginings of Japan that Yano insists upon. Culture here does not necessarily equal 'Japan' – but it *does* equal a place to belong, a shelter. Butt and Eves, citing Brumann, capture the reality of the ever-lurking desire for Culture, and its potential consequence:

> "As Bruman has remarked, 'Whether anthropologists like it or not, it appears that people – and not only those with power – want culture, and they often want it in precisely the bounded, reified, essentialized and timeless fashion that most of us now reject.'… [S]ome of these assertions of cultural identity… lend themselves to deployment against other groups within the nation-state and can produce or heighten tensions."[18]

It is not at all difficult to locate this desire for Culture within the realm of the conditions of contemporary existence and the associated search for shelter, in which *enka* are so deeply implicated. And this drive toward shelter, this lurking desire for the velvet chains (but chains nonetheless) of Culture is what implicates *enka* in the fostering of Foucault's fascism in the body, the fascism that is "in our heads and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to… desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us."[19] The fascism in these individuals' bodies must herein be viewed as a self-induced strategy for survival, and one that can tie into larger, more sinister fascisms by hurtling us toward the denial of the Other and the realization of that closed society.

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[18] Richard Eves and Leslie Butt, *Making Sense of AIDS: Culture Sexuality and Power in Melanesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), p. 10.
[19] Foucault in his Preface to Deleuze & Guattai's *Anti-Oedipus*, p. xiii.

And so the pieces are in place for the construction of what Virno has called a "horrible response to the risk inherent in this world, a dangerous search for protection."[20] The shelter becomes the trap. It becomes a "horrifying strategy of salvation"[21] – precisely because of its universalizing nature, intolerance for heterogeneity and boosting of fascism. The 'horrifying' is the danger of becoming complicit, out of the need to belong. It is in the ease with which these shelters can be short-circuited, and maneuvered to feed into larger fascisms, the fascisms of history, "the Fascism of Hitler and Mussolini – which was able to utilize the desire of the masses so effectively."[22] It is the danger in clamoring for the 'insider status' sought by Fujita and, under specific historical circumstances, becoming complicit in discrimination, in death by overwork, in the extermination of the *roji*, and even in war.[23] It is all potentiated not by something inherent in *enka*, nor by something called 'Japaneseness', but by the conditions of contemporary existence. This is the reality that Harootunian points us toward when he warns us that the story of Japanese fascism is not yet complete.[24] This is, in the final analysis, a story that belongs as much in the realm of the political economic as it does in the ream of the musical.

There is definitely a tendency toward permitting the engenderment of fascism in the body in the name of shelter and survival among those with whom this research has engaged But while they are certainly overflowing with the potential to be so, *enka* – at

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[20] Virno, p. 35.
[21] Ibid. p. 34.
[22] Foucault in his Preface to Deleuze & Guattai's *Anti-Oedipus*, p. xiii.
[23] Young and Garon discuss the manner in which wartime endeavors of the Japanese state were bought into and supported by individuals seeking to take part in larger historical narratives of 'Japan'. See Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998), p.55-115, and Sheldon Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
[24] Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. xxxii.

least in the context of these NAK devotees – are no horrifying refuge; or at least, not yet. As we have seen, the heterogeneous has hardly been extinguished, buried though in may be in layers of performance mechanics, language and so on. Whether or not *enka* become portals to this sort of a horrifying refuge depends entirely upon the manner in which lived realities in Japan evolve amidst conditions yet to unfold ('future' is simply too strong a word – history can change on a dime), and the manner in which individual devotees react to these conditions and integrate them into their negotiations with the music. In other words, the potential consequences that *enka* and the shelter that is sought within it present for the processes of 'becoming' that we know to occur through music are wholly and entirely dependent upon the manner in which these actors construct and/or comprehend the 'communities of the us', the establishment of which is (these) listeners' ultimate desire (the function of the listener's *conatus*). We have already seen that these 'communities of the us' are loosely associated with conceptualizations of 'Japan' – not out of some vague 'cultural nationalism' but because 'Japan' is the only framework with which these individuals have to work. But this alone, as we have suggested, does not make them sinister; it is how 'Japan' is understood and utilized that constitutes the pivotal point; indeed, the closed society could potentially be as soundly constructed on the basis of narratives of 'Fukushima' or 'Yamagata' (to use to locales that have made appearances in the preceding pages) as they could on the basis of narratives of 'Japan'. As we have seen, a 'community of the us' – even one called 'Japan' – can mean *anything*. This makes the 'communities of the us' arrived at through this 'music of Japan' malleable, and predisposed to fluid and unpredictable definition, presenting us with potentialities both promising and perilous.

The danger of needing to belong is, in contemporary history, omnipresent and all-pervasive. As long as the need to belong persists – that is, as long as there persists a multitude that is defined by the feeling of not feeling at home, and its accompanying drive toward the common places, the general intellects – so will the danger. *Enka* are not in and of themselves somehow 'dangerous', nor are they a portal to some mystic 'Japaneseness'. As we have seen, this is a genre that gives voice to the heterogeneous as much as it is a genre that can constitute an interior. As is the case with all music, any 'meaning' that *enka* may have for the listeners of the roji can be ascertained only through coming to grips with what we have called 'lived intertextuality' – on their own, and in the absence of lived historical 'texts', they mean nothing. But in tandem with the need to belong, this danger that we have identified also as the danger of Culture and of shelter, they can present the potential to zip up heterogeneous 'communities of the us' on the basis of universalizing mechanisms like national language, and to potentiate the fortification of a larger Cultural community of the us called 'Japan' that could be short-circuited, under the right historical and socioeconomic conditions, to serve a much larger fascism.

Indeed, 'becoming us', the consequence of finding and taking shelter in an ambiguous music called *enka*, is a process not necessarily so easily captured or defined. There is a great deal of heterogeneity in the shelter that is *enka* – there is much celebration of local homes, of love, and so on. From the gruff, elderly farmer who saw the chance in *meoto-enka* to give expression to the communal love that he shared with his beloved wife to the women who saw their own snowy Tohoku represented in the music to the respondent who wanted nothing more than a soothing voice, it is clear that listener

uses of this genre and the becoming that it potentiates are almost limitlessly diverse. To grasp and embrace this diversity, to allow it to be given voice, to construct the 'community of the us' *upon its very basis* (in other words, to realize the potential of the *Kayōsai*, which ultimately suffocated under the weight of discourse piled upon its participants by well-meaning critique) – here we find the antidotes to the danger of Culture: the possibilities presented by *becoming*, not *being*, the potential to come together not as "heirarchized individuals" under the thumb of a general intellect, but as the actors envisioned by Sakai, truly free, perhaps for the first time, to animate that space called the *roji* and move it forward. The heterogeneous potentialities of becoming, especially when combined with the frustrations and anxiety and unquiet presented by contemporary conditions of existence, present us both with the potential for fascism and the potential for revolution. And when the *roji* begins to move, as we saw in Egypt in the early days of 2011, *anything* can happen.

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This research has sought to rescue music from the clutches of hermeneutics and 'cultural analysis' and relocate it in the realm of the social, of the economic and indeed of the political. In so doing, I have sought to provide a framework by which we might approach, in a meaningful way, some of the desires that are at work fueling the engineering of the social. I have also tried to transcend black-or-white assumptions that music "either supports or disrupts the dominant ideology and status quo expectations,"[25] returning it to the realm of the ambiguous and suggesting that both can happen at the same time, dependent upon the desires and dreams nesting in the *roji*. For music is hardly

[25] Deanna Campbell Robinson, Elizabeth R. Buck, Marlene Cuthbert and The International Communication and Youth Consortium, p. 27.

a mere reflective text; it is, as we have stressed throughout, a conduit for becoming, a means by which, through an intertextual intertwining with lived realities that is *never* imitation, self and the social are manifested.

The dreams that are engineered within the *roji* and that drive the "social" are a result of 'lived intertextuality'. It is this 'lived intertextuality' in the *roji* that must be examined in order to grasp the complex and ambiguous cross-section of humanity that is called 'Japan' as the thing-in-itself – and this revelation can begin to be accomplished through the lens of music. This intensely personal lived intertextuality can be refracted and refined through negotiations with cultural texts such as music – it is this that makes music such an affective experience – and can thus be approached through investigations of the manner in which the audience negotiates with the cultural text at the local level. At the same time, these cultural forms (especially music, which is so closely tied to affect) can constitute an extremely personal shelter for the individual, and the act of taking shelter can, as we have seen, potentiate 'becoming' and foster a "social" that can reinforce exclusive, repressive narrative on the one hand, and potentiate critique on the other – or, alternatively, facilitate both consequences at once. *Roji*, shelter, consequence – these are the notions to which we must turn in order to move past the increasingly tiresome claims of cultural essentialism. It is, indeed, the desires of those authoring the anonymous space called 'society', of those in the *roji*, that dictate the shape of the social.

This journey started out by asking the question: what sort of mechanisms might be involved in the constructing subjectivity in contemporary Japan? We have seen that *enka*, as a conduit for becoming, is precisely such a mechanism, but the mechanics involved cannot be reduced to simple ideology, nationality, culture or something called

'Japaneseness'. We have noted the manner in which different parties bring different experiences, assumptions and affects to bear on the music, the tensions that this can generate, the battles that ensue between the heterogeneous and the homogenizing and the myriad of desires, affects and experiences that fire the manner in which people actually negotiate with the genre, and the type of 'becoming' that it can engender. This is just one mechanism, and the scope to which this research is applicable is very small – I by no means seek to issue pronouncements meant to be somehow applicable to some organic, artificially-unified body called 'Japan's *enka* audience', for to do so would be to ignore the historically and geographically specific realities feeding individual desires, to which I have tried to draw the reader's attention. There are other musics, other locales, other historically-specific conditions to which this sort of an investigative methodology can be applied, and I must save such wider discussions for another day. But I hope that, in its limited scope, this thesis has managed to broach a new way of approaching questions of subjectivity and the social – by employing music and considerations of musical 'becoming' as means by which the complexities of life in the *roji* can be addressed and embraced, rather than smothered and disguised in narratives of 'culture' and 'history'. And I hope that, in so doing, we are better prepared to move a step closer to disentangling the complex and ambiguous threads that actually constitute 'Japan', and being able to consider where 'Japanese society' might go from here.

That being said, there is nothing particularly 'Japanese' about this story. As the world continues to struggle amidst a prolonged economic crisis and the experience of being the multitude continues to define lives, this is a story could play out anywhere, making this research applicable beyond just a Japanese scope. Bataille's fascism as that

"most closed society", 'national identity' not as some ungraspable cultural abstract but as an incarnation of an interiorized 'community of the "us"' – this is what threatens us today. But the 'community of the us' could also be a realm of action, of movement, one which, like the broader community of the membership of NAK as represented in the *Kayōsai*, hosts great heterogeneity and diverse 'becoming'. In the context of contemporary Japan, *enka* constitute nothing less than a prism, where music and lived experience are refracted and sent beaming out in directions that can only be determined by the lived realities of those seeking shelter therein. As we have seen, *enka* represent a medium that has the potential to foster critique – at the same time as it constitutes a mechanism that can encourage a 'turtling' inwards, for erecting breakwaters against the destabilizing onslaught of heterogeneity in the name of universalizing comfort. It is all dependent upon the desires of those in the *roji*, desires that are formed through interconnecting mechanisms of affect, conatus and the drive to survive; the consequences thereof is what engineers history – this is truly what is meant by Deleuze and Guattari when they assert that "there is only desire and the social, and nothing else." [26]

And so, here at the end of our discussion, we are returned once again to the question that has been lurking beneath the surface of this research from its outset: what form(s) does the shelter that is *enka* take, and what are its consequences? We must here resist our own temptation to essentialize, and embrace the fact that, as I hope that I have demonstrated above, it is not, in the end, an either-or question. It is an ongoing, fluid one. There can be no doubt that, with its mechanics of performance and standardized regalia, the manner in which it is yoked to declarations of proficiency (or lack thereof) in 'national language', and the manner in which it can be hijacked by universalizing

[26] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* p. 28.

narratives of propriety and Culture, *enka* present an effective interior, should its devotees wish to prescribe thereto. But as we have seen, the genre also permits the voicing and the celebration of the heterogeneous, of the Other. The fascist, and the liberatory. It is, in the end, Deleuze and Guattari to whom we must return to underscore what I argue to be a more comprehensive understanding of *enka* and the role it plays as a 'shelter' for its listeners. It is a music – and, perhaps more importantly, a musical *experience* – of "great ambiguity:

> [S]ound invades us, impels us, drags us, transpierces us. It takes leave of the earth, as much in order to drop us into a black hole as to open us up to a cosmos. It makes us want to die. Since its force of deterritorialization is the strongest, it also effects the most massive of reterritorializations, the most numbing, the most redundant. Ecstasy and hypnosis. Colors do not move a people. Flags can do nothing without trumpets. Lasers are modulated on sound. The refrain is sonorous par excellence, but it can as easily develop its force into a sickly sweet ditty as into the purest motif… And sometimes the two combine…"[27]

Deleuze tells us that we belong to the apparatuses, to the *dispositifs*, that we act within them.[28] The *dispositifs* cannot be transcended – but that does not mean that we are condemned to some sort of fixed identity established therein. If we can act within the apparatus, then we can *remix* it.[29] This is precisely what we mean when we say that everything is dependent upon the manner in which the 'communities of the us' are structured. And it is, in the end, what this thing that we have called 'becoming' through music is all about. Taking our cue from Foucault, we can "[f]ree [our] political action from all unitary and totalizing paranoia… [d]evelop action, thought and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction… [and we can] [p]refer what is positive and

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[27] Deleuza and Guattari, A Thousand Plateus, p. 348.
[28] Gilles Deleuze, *What is a Dispositif?* in *Michel Foucault, Philosopher, Essays Translated from the French & German by Timothy J. Armstrong* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 163.
[29] I am indebted to Katsuhiko Mariano Endo for opening my eyes to the potentialities of the remix in cultural studies. See Endo's comments in his *Osugi Paper*.

multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems." We know, from the heterogeneity of becoming already evidenced in *enka*, that this is possible. *Enka* are no fixed prescription for something vaguely called 'Japaneseness' – they are an apparatus, to be sure, but at the same time they beckon toward a heterogeneous odyssey through the diversities of life, loves, lived realities. They offer, in other words, the opportunity to become – through a juxtapositioning of the texts of one's own life with the texts of the music – that which cannot be confined to discourse. We have but to resist the false warmth, the empty salvation of narrative's shelter, that potentially horrifying refuge. To *become*, and to become the unknowable, the undefinable, the Other.[30] It is this, to borrow from Hardt and Negri, that promises to "open up the multitude's processes of productivity and creativity that can revolutionize our world and institute a shared common wealth."[31]

There is much cause for pessimism, to be sure. But the game isn't done just yet.

[30] It is precisely this sort of becoming that is a focus of discussion in Hardt and Negri's *Common Wealth*.
[31] Ibid., p. xiv.

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Appendix

Transcription of Group Discussion with *Nihon Amachua Kayō Renmei* (NAK) Members
June 9, 2010, 8:00PM ~
Fukushima City, Fukushima, Japan

The group discussion was held at the home of one of the members, in a small (perhaps 12-mat?) room that doubles as a 'karaoke studio'. The member is self-employed as a voice and karaoke tutor, and works out of this room.

Six members of the Fukushima Branch of NAK were present for this group discussion. There are, in actuality, ten members of this Branch, but the remaining four were unable to be present due to illnesses and work commitments.

One of the six participants was male; the rest were female. All are employed – one (the male) is a full-time farmer, one is a self-employed abacus instructor, three are self-employed voice and karaoke tutors, and one is both self-employed as a voice and karaoke tutor and works a part-time job. All are married; the female participants' husbands are also employed, and the average household income of those who were willing to share this information (three of the six) was 4,443,000 JPY.

This transcript is presented in abbreviated format – all portions of the discussion that can be thought to have any relevance to the research at hand are reproduced here, while segments deemed to be irrelevant have been omitted. The transcription is presented in English, translated from the original Japanese. Access to the original Japanese audio recording in its entirety is available upon request.

Discussant:
Scott Aalgaard – Primary Researcher (SA)

Participants:
Respondent 1 – Male (R1)
Respondent 2 – Female (R2)
Respondent 3 – Female (R3)
Respondent 4 – Female (R4)
Respondent 5 – Female (R5)
Respondent 6 – Female (R6)

SA: When I was living in Fukushima some years ago, the economic situation was quite poor; people were having a pretty hard time (*seikatsu wa kitsukatta*). How are things these days?

R1: I think that it's probably worse now. But still, things aren't impossibly bad – people are learning to get by in the present situation [*seikatsu ishiki ga agatte kiteiru*].

SA: I see. You are all doing alright, then, even in these poor economic conditions?

R1: Well, we're all past our working prime [*hatarakizakari*], you see.

R6: [Laughs ruefully]

R1: I think that it's got to be really tough on those who are out there working now.

R2: There's no such thing as 'retirement age' for the self employed!

R3: 'Retirement' is still a long way off.

…

SA: Many of you are self-employed as voice teachers. How are things for you these days? Are you getting lots of students who want to learn to sing?

R4: I don't know if you could say 'lots' – students choose teachers who are close by, in their own respective areas, right? These people don't move around a whole lot. You don't get students going over there to that teacher, then coming over there to this one, so really – the number of students quitting and the number of those joining up is the same in the end.

SA: I see.

R4: People are facing their own realities, and some end up quitting, right? Well, the number of students coming in is about the same. It's more or less stable throughout the year.

SA: So we could say that the situation is 'stable', then?

R4: Well, yes, but the problem is that we don't see much of an overall increase in the number of students [*demo fuenai kara, amari*]!

…

SA: So, all of you here like the *enka* genre, is that right?

ALL: Yes/That's right/I do like it

SA: You *really* like [*daisuki*] the genre?

ALL: [enthusiastically] Yes!

SA: You *love* [*aishiteru*] this genre!

ALL: [even more enthusiastically and energetically] Yes!!

R6: There is no end to my love for *enka* [*enka-kiri shiranai*]!

SA: …What is it that attracts you to the *enka* genre?

R5: I feel that there's something really good about the lyrics. The lyrics.

SA: I see. Do you mean that the lyrics are deep and meaningful [fukai] to you?

R5: Well, because I'm Japanese, you know [*Nihonjin dakara ne*] – I can feel something in the lyrics (*kanjiru mono ga aru*).

…

SA: So, I am hearing that the 'lyrics' are very important.

R5: Oh yes, at least for me.

SA: How about for the rest of you?

R4: Yes, I think so [others nod]. You see, enka lyrics contain within them the changing of the four seasons, depictions of husband and wife – married couple enka [*meoto enka*] – and can be rallying songs for one's own life [*jinsei no ouenka*], and so on.

SA: Rallying songs!

R4: Yes, such *enka* are surprisingly common. But, you know, lyrics have long followed a pattern of 5-7-5 [syllables], like *waka* poems or the works appearing in the *Man'yoshu*. Recently you get longer ones, lyrics that are like an essay, but real *enka* follow a pattern of 5-7-5.

SA: Uh-huh.

R4: And I really think that those lyricists are amazing. It's very difficult to sum everything [the content of the *enka*] up in such short verses. You have to know a lot of words, and have a real talent for literature [*bungakuryoku ga nai to*] to be

able to do that. And when a melody is attached to a work like that, it is easy to sing – you don't trip over your own tongue [*jiamari ja nai kara*]. Long works are, you know, really tough…

SA: Uh-huh.

R4: There are lyrics in which you can really feel the power that the lyricist has, that literary ability. In songs that one likes.

[others murmur agreement to this]

SA: You mentioned earlier that you get a sense of 'Japan' from the lyrics. What, exactly, does that mean? Do you all feel the same? Do you feel 'Japan' in the lyrics of *enka*?

R3: [laughs self-consciously] Well, 'Japan' is all that I know… [*Nihon de shika ikiteinai kara*]

SA: Of course, of course.

R3: *Enka* is a genre that is defined by lyrics that speak of Japan's vistas, of culture [*fuudo*], of all sorts of human characteristics, you see.

SA: I see. [to R4] Please, go ahead.

R4: Even with the same song, there are instances in which someone might just be singing naturally, with regular feeling [*futsuu no kimochi de*], but someone else is listening to it in tears.

R2: Yes, the circumstances of the lyrics.

R6: Like if someone dies…

R2: Yes, that's right…

R4: So, depending on the lyrics – the circumstances of the lyrics – for example, if someone has lost their loved one… We were doing a *meoto enka* once, and a student began to cry uncontrollably, unable to sing. Becoming aware of that situation, and showing compassion to the affected person – this can also be called the work of a 'Japanese heart' (*Nihon no kokoro*), I think.

R3: Yes, I agree.

… [chit-chat about *meoto enka*, the los of life partners and sharing tears]

SA: On the flip side, have you had students that have spoken of receiving 'strength' (*genki*) from enka?

[murmured affirmatives from the group]

R4: Yes, that happens, as well.

SA: I see.

R4: Energetic songs, and the like…

R6: Yes, there are lots of those.

R4: I have known people that have come out of hospital after being sick and hearing the songs, then deciding to take up *enka* themselves… So the reverse does occur, as well.

SA: I see. How do you feel when you listen to *enka*? Say, your favourite *enka* work? What sort of feeling do you get from listening to the songs?

R5: Understanding the lyrics…

[murmured agreement from the group]

R5: By reading the lyrics through over and over again, the song begins to become 'personal' for the listener [*dan dan to jibun ni toraete*]. Through the act of singing, the visual scenes of the song begin to float up before my eyes, and I begin to grasp the feelings of the narrator. In the end, the lyrics and the melody that the composer has provided fuse with oneself, and when this three-way fusion has occurred the song really comes alive! So, I read over the lyrics again and again. Then, through vocalizing the song ourselves, we are able to come to a gradual understanding of the lyrics.

SA: I see! So then it comes alive within yourself?

R5: Yes. And writing the lyrics out, as well… Well, at least in my case [laughs self-consciously]. By doing so, I can come to an understanding of the lyrics and become aware of the good aspects of the work. The way that the song is interpreted, of course, is unique to each individual, I think.

R4: Yes, that's right.

R5: So when you get a wonderful melody attached to wonderful lyrics –

R6: Yes, yes, yes!

R5: - and when you are able to sing it well, that's when the song really begins to move you [*hajimete kandou*].

[multiple voices of agreement with this]

R6: The songs don't necessarily match up with one's own individual life circumstances [*jibun no kankyou to attenai*]; that's why they are known as 'acting songs' [*enjiru uta = enka*].

R2, R4: [murmured agreement]

R6: You see, we have relatively few chances to be put into those sorts of 'sad' situations. Such sad, passionate – we also don't have much in the way of passionate love, but I like that sort of an intense song. Deep, intense songs like that. It's like we are seeking that which we do not have through the music.

[multiple voices of agreement with this]

SA: That which you do not have.

R6: Yes.

R2, R3: Yes, that is exactly right.

SA: Would you all say that you feel the same way?

R4: Well, it's not exactly that I am 'seeking' something…

[others murmur agreement with R6's statements]

R6: It's about 'acting' the songs.

R5: It's just like being an actor – even if one does not have direct experience with the content of the song, one should be able to 'act' it after reading through the lyrics.

R6: Yes, that's right. It's like 'acting' the feeling…

R5: I don't know if 'acting' is the right word – in our case, you know, we are heavily involved with singing the songs at competitions. We are concerned with how to get good evaluations for our singing. In order to get such good evaluations, we have to 'act' – the judges always tell us that we must sing in such a manner that the emotional aspects of the lyrics reach the audience… That is how to get good evaluations. We are always working on how to do that.

R6: …When one is involved in these *enka* appreciation societies, sometimes a new song's melody will just 'grab' you, and you think that it's a really great work.

You don't necessarily know at first if it's a good 'match' for you or not [*jibun ni atteiru ka dou ka wakaranai*], but through listening to the song repeatedly you gradually come to a point where you would like to try and sing it yourself. Things like that happen all the time.

SA: So, when a song 'grabs' you like that, is it because the work is connected to your own life on some level?

R6: Oh yes, there are definitely cases like that.

SA: I am hearing that, while the music is definitely important to you, the lyrics and thematic content are even more important.

R4: For us, yes.

[murmured agreement from others]

R4: I'm sure it depends on each individual, though.

R2: We tend to choose 'good' lyrics [*ii shi*]. Many of the songs are just cookie-cutter copies of each other these days; it's probably not a nice thing to say, but they concern 'puppy love' [*horeta hareta*] and so on – that's all that seems to be out there; there's so many! I'm done with that sort of thing now.

[all laugh]

R2: So, I can't really get into that sort of work. It has to hit closer to home.

SA: I see. In other words, you're looking for songs that speak to your circumstances [*jibun ni atta uta wo*].

R2: Yes, yes. Once a person reaches my age – songs that discuss looking back over one's life, and so on. Songs like that are good, you see. Or married couple [*meoto*] *enka*, they're good, too; songs that fit your own age, the circumstances of your own life. Those are the types of songs that I would tend to choose.

[murmured agreement from others]

SA: I see; so that is what you mean by songs that 'fit' you. [to R6] How about you? What sort of lyrics would you say fit you?

R6: I choose songs by melody rather than by lyrics. The flow of the melody, and so on.

SA: I see. What sort of melodies do you like?

R6: I don't like *meoto enka* and songs like that [laughs self-consciously].

ALL: Yes/there you go/everyone is different.

R6: Yeah, I just don't like them. I tend to go for the passionate, intense songs. The ones that really draw you in…

SA: Passionate songs! I see. [to R5] How about you?

R5: Well, lyrics are important as well, but I will choose songs that are a good match for my own voice. In terms of songs that resonate with me personally, I like songs that incorporate *minyo*, that put *minyo* between the verses.

R3: Yes, that voice quality is really great.

R5: Yes, this is the 'heart' of Japan.

SA: I see! So you have a tendency to choose music that could be called the 'heart' of Japan.

R5: Yes, that's right.

R6: Yes, the dialogue is really great! The dialogue that they include.

R5: Yes, it depends on the dialogue, of course, but I like the *minyo*…

R2: Yes, to have that in there…

R5: Just one stanza. I really like that.

R6: You just can't get around the fact that people are going to memorize the songs of artists that they like. In our case, for example, like we wrote [on the questionnaire provided by SA], we like Akimoto [Junko], Kim Yong Jae, and the like, so we end up going out to buy those albums and attempting to memorize the songs; we always choose songs that we like.

SA [to R2]: How about you?

R3: My situation is just as was just described [by R6]. There are a number of artists that I like, right? I will listen to their songs and come across some that I think that I can sing; then I will go out and pick up their albums and practice the songs. After all, you're not going to try to memorize songs of artists that just don't speak to you [*zen zen awanai you na*].

SA: Right; likes and dislikes are very important.

R3: Likes and dislikes, yes – but when I go to classes, to learn, I can't say that I don't like this song, that this song is good or bad; the song in question is one that everyone has to memorize, so it can't be helped [*shouganai*]. I will memorize the whole thing. But of course, there is such a thing as personal likes when it comes to the songs. It depends on the lyrics, as well.

R6: A lot of the old songs, from dozens of years back, are coming back these days, being sung by the younger artists. […]

SA: Yes! I wonder why that is?

R4: Well, I think that the really great songs [*meikyoku*] just endure.

R6: Yes, that is exactly right. They do last.

R4: It's something about the lyrics – they must be compatible with the Japanese heart.

[generalized murmured agreement]

SA [to R1]: How about you?

R1: I tend to prefer melody over lyrics… I usually gravitate towards songs that are sort of sad and nostalgic [*jojouka*], songs with scenery to them.

R2: Like *Furusato no Hanashi wo Shiyou Yo*.

R6, R3: Yes, that's a great one.

R4: Yes, beautiful music [*kirei na ongaku*].

R1: Lyrics are a close second, of course, but first and foremost it's the music…

R2: That one [*Furusato no Hansahi wo Shiyou Yo*] is experiencing a revival now too, isn't it?

OTHERS: Yes, yes.

R6: I'm the same way – I gravitate toward songs on the basis of the melodies. Lyrics are an afterthought, at least for me.

R1: The lyrics – as long as they have some meaning to them, that's fine, I think.

R5: I can memorize contemporary songs, but they tend not to stick with me very well sometimes [*toorinukeru koto ga aru*]. *Enka* from years past stick with me emotionally [*kokoro ni nokotte*], and I can still sing them, say, five or ten years after having heard them.

R6: Yes, that's right! Oddly enough, I can still remember songs from dozens of years back. When I go to try to sing songs from within the last 10 years or so, I find that I've forgotten them!

[laughter all round]

R6: Perhaps you're just more impressionable when you're young… I'm always forgetting the new songs. I will recall them after hearing them a couple of times.

[general laughter, agreement all around]...

R4: I volunteer at care facilities for the elderly sometimes, right? For those folks, the old songs [*natsumero*] are the best.

R6, R3: Yes, the old songs!

R4: They were so able once, and have now been reduced to… They don't appreciate you showing up with new songs to sing.

SA: The music is emotional support for them.

R2: They can relate to it.

[general agreement with this]…

R6: Of course, there are lots of good songs these days, but we don't really see songs with the staying power to last for years and years.

R4: I think that it's probably difficult in this day and age for the composers to come up with songs that have that sort of staying power. The industry used to have an artist come out with just one new song every six months or once a year or so. Now it's a war for sales [*shoubai gassen*], and these days a new song is put out every 3 months. So, the professional artists can't reach the point where they really make the work their own [*utaikomenai*]; it's tough. The *enka* industry is only thinking about the profits dangling in front of their noses. The record industry is the same.

[vociferous agreement with this; general criticism of the state of the industry]

SA: So, everything is about sales now.

R5: Yes, that's the kind of age that we're living in now. Lots of copying of melodies that I'm *sure* I've heard somewhere before…

[laughter, continued vociferous criticism]

R3: *Futari no Haru* is a good example of that…

R6: It's the industry that's at fault here [*gyoukai ga warui kara n*e]!

SA: Well, I really get a sense of your love for the music. Allow me to ask what is perhaps a difficult question. There are so many 'hobbies' available out there – why do you choose music? Why are these songs *important* to you?

R6: Well, I've tried lots of different things.

R2, R3, R5: Yes, yes.

R6: I did bowling when I was in my twenties, played lots of sports –

[others indicating that they have pursued many pastimes, as well]

R2: Music is something that you can really stick with [*jizoku*].

R4: You are free to sing –

R5: You can sing anywhere.

R6: Music is a relief [*sukkiri suru*].

R2: It's a stress release.

R6, R4: Yes, a stress release!

[enthusiastic agreement with this]

R6: Well, we are housewives, and there are a lot of occupations represented here [*ironna shokugyou ga arimasu ne*]. We are exhausted and all the rest of it, but by going into that zone [*soko ni itte*] and singing, the stress and all of that –

SA: From work, and from being a housewife, and so on?

R6: Yes!

SA: Singing provides you with relief from all of that?

R6: That's right!

R3: I feel just the same way [*watashi mo issho*]. [ongoing murmured agreement with R6's comments]

R6: Also, there are lots of different occupations; sometimes you will get people in a group that share the same occupation. People get trapped in their own little worlds [*doushitemo kataku naru*], you know [excited, sputtering now]. But if you bring all of these people with different occupations into the world of song – people can talk and sing together there, and it provides a stress release. Yes, relief from stress; at least for me.

R5: I'm the same way. When I was in my forties, I would feel ill and have to take to bed, once a month or so. My head would start spinning so severely that I couldn't get out of bed. I began to get relief from that after I started with the music.

R2: Yes, stress is just awful.

R5: I really felt that the music was relieving me of the stress [that was causing this]. I still have these episodes once a year or so.

R4: I think that it's being able to be passionate about something, and through giving vent to your breath and your voice –

…[further chatting about the spiritual and physical benefits that each respondent finds in music]

SA: It sounds like me that what you are describing is a sort of 'shelter' for the heart [*kokoro no amayadori*].

R5, R4: Yes, that's it.

R3: It can be a supplement [eiyouzai], too!

SA: Supplements! Stress relief!

R6, others: Yes, that's true.

SA to R1: How about you?

R1: [laughing] Nah, I go mountain climbing [when I need to relieve stress]!

[loud laughter all round]

R1: No, music is the most – by putting passion into music, all sorts of stress will just disappear [*naku naru*]. But I do like the mountains, so I head out into them, and when I'm walking along, tired, exhausted – I stop thinking about all that unnecessary stuff [*yokei na koto kangaenai*].

R2: Yes, you lose yourself [*muchuu ni naru*] when you're doing something that you like.

R6: You know, men like the mountains, they like the sea and fishing – that's true. Women, though, can't really get away with that sort of thing…

R4: And also – how to word it? – singing on stage in front of hundreds of people, having them pay intense attention to you [*patto chuumoku*]

R3, R6: Yes, singing on stage!

R4: That's a great way to feel young and energetic again [*wakagaeru*].

R5: It helps one have confidence in oneself.

[generalized agreement with R4, R5, ongoing repetative discussion of the 'power' of music]

…

R5: It's important not to make others feel bad, though, by becoming self-congratulatory and entirely self-absorbed.

R2: Yes, that's right – we are amateurs, after all.

R6: Yes, that's very true. We can't forget that.

…

SA: Do you all watch NHK's *Kayō Konsāto*?

ALL: Yes, we do!

SA: So, you like *Kayō Konsāto*?

ALL [in varying terms]: That's the only *enka* program [*utabangumi*] that we get up here! There are other programs on BS [a fee-based NHK satellite feed], but we don't get that.

SA: I see! So *Kayō Konsāto* is all that there is!

R3, R6: Yes, that's right – there's nothing else.

R5: There are other shows broadcast in the Tokyo area, but we don't get them up here.

R5: So, we watch it because that's just all there is.

[generalized agreement with this]

R6: They don't offer a lot of the programming out here in the countryside [*chihou*].

R1: That's right, there's not much of a selection.

R5: Tokyo probably gets a lot more.

SA: In general, and this will be my last question, when you watch *Kayō Konsāto* or listen to *enka*, do you feel impacted, or influenced, or encouraged in such a way that you feel that, as a person, you need to 'be' this way or that?

R6: When I was watching *Nodo Jiman* [an amateur singing contest broadcast every Sunday afternoon on NHK, nationwide], a woman of about 85 came out and did a really good job with her song. I thought that I would like to able to do that well when I reach her age.

ALL: [enthusiastic agreement with this sentiment]

R1: Hey, in my case, that's only about 10 years away!

[laughter]

R5: Yes, it's really about maintaining a good level of health.

R6: Health is always most important.

R3: Once you pass your 40s or 50s, your own health becomes most important to you. You just never know when you're going to collapse physically [*taichou kuzushite*]. And of that happens, then you won't be able to sing anymore, either!

SA: So, I am hearing that you feel encouraged to maintain your health and your strength?

[generalized agreement with this]

R2: I am also reminded that interpersonal connections are so very important, and I am grateful for being able to have those. I have been lucky enough to be allowed into this community here *[nakama ni irete itadakimashita*]; you just can't do anything by yourself. Lots has happened with this group of people, and that has led to the person that I am today; that's what I think…

[murmured agreement with R2]

SA: The music reminds you of this?

[further murmured agreement]

R2: Yes; it's gotta be *enka*. That's the whole starting point [*shuppatsu ten*]

SA [to group]: Do you all feel the same way?

ALL: Yes.

R4: Yes, you know, you are getting that support, even when it is unseen [*kage de sasaeteiru hito ga iru*]. Your community [*nakama*] is more important than anything.

R2: This community has been through a lot together, haven't we?

[laughter]

R5: I am grateful.

After the voice recorder was switched off, one of the respondents summed up the importance that the group seems to place on *enka* with a single, key phrase: "*Enka wa hotto suru* [*enka* take the weight off of my mind]."

There was also considerable discussion regarding non-Japanese performers of *enka*. The African-American *enka* artist Jelo, for example, while very clearly not Japanese himself, was said to have 'the heart of a Japanese', due to his talent for singing 'Japanese songs'. The members of the group reported being affected by Jero's songs [*tsutawatte kuru mono ga aru*].

Non-Japanese performers in general were further lauded as 'passionate [*jounetsuteki*]' and as having a certain sense of meloncholy [*aishuu ga aru*]. Significantly, the group pronounced foreign performers as being better at pronouncing the Japanese language than the Japanese themselves, due to the fact that, according to the group, such performers needed to meditate upon the meaning of the words due to their status as a 'non-Japanese' [non-'native']. Similar comments were made about the Brazilian and Hawaiian contestants at the *Kayōsai*, both by the group in general after the group discussion had concluded, and by R1, the group's 'chief', prior to the start of the discussion. This suggests a 'Japaneseness' united not necessarily by race or nationality, but by language, or, put another way, an 'ideal' represented by *kokugo* [national language]. Much ado was also made of my own Japanese abilities. Foreigners are acceptable, then – as long as they are not 'foreign'. Here we see a certain intolerance for heterogeneity.

Continued Discussion Following the 'Formal' Segment

…[general informal chatting]

SA: A question for the ladies, which you do not have to answer if you don't want to – are you all married?

R2-R6: Oh yes!

R2: Come on, we're over 60!

[laughter]

R4: Well, you know, there are those who have never been married even once.

R6: Yes, that's true.

SA: Do your husbands like *enka*, too?

ALL: Yes.

R3: My husband sings more than I do!

R2: My husband isn't too heavily involved, but yes, he does like *enka*.

R5: I don't know if my husband really likes the music or not [presumably because he is absent this evening]! Today he's gone down to the nuclear reactors at Onagawa. He's older than I am, but he's still working…

R3: Yes, they sing a fair bit, you know. Barring anything really unusual [*yoppodo na koto ga nai kagiri*], I think everybody likes the genre.

R6: But, you know, without the understanding of our husbands [*danna sama ga rikai shinakattara*] we wouldn't be able to sing.

R5: Yes, we couldn't come.

R6: That's most important. What with the family and all – being just the two of you and having a family is different, you know. If you have a family, you can't just go out and do whatever you want [*jibun de katte ni*]. Without that understanding…

[loud agreement with this from the other women]

R3: When I came to my husband's home as a bride [*yome ni kita toki*], the house had absolutely nothing to do with music; they weren't interested in it at all. So for a while, I couldn't pursue music myself… Well, I liked music, so I would sing in the bath and so on…

[laughter]

R3: Anyway, I didn't get involved in karaoke circles until I was in my late 30s. I didn't even start until then, but I certainly got addicted [*yamitsuki*] from that point.

[others express empathy with this]

R6: Yeah, you know, it's tough in your 20s and 30s – you get close to 40 and finally have a bit of time for yourself.

R2: You've got to raise the kids…

R6: Yes, and you've got to work, as well…

R2: I used to bring my kids with me! I'd bring the babies to the meetings… I can't cause inconvenience [*meiwaku wo kakeru*] to the people at home, you see [husband and inlaws], so I would just bring them along.

SA: What incredible passion for the music!

R2: At competition times, I would just let the kids play on the floor in the auditorium! I was off singing… Well, I had left the house and was there enjoying myself [*asobi ni iku*], so I couldn't cause them any inconvenience. But you've got to be willing to take it that far or you can't do what you want to do.

R3: Yes, a lot of the participants would have small kids with them…

R5: It's the mother-in-law's house, after all!

R2: That's right, it's Grandpa and Grandma's house – on the husband's side; in order to get their understanding, you can't be causing any inconvenience.

R6: When there's family, a mother-in-law, in the home, it makes it easier on the wife.

R2: People will talk, saying that you're off 'playing'…

R3, R4, R6: But it's true! We are off playing!

R6: If you leave the house to go somewhere, some people, especially Grandpa and Grandma, are going to call you on it, saying that you're headed out to play somewhere… Out in the countryside, if you're into singing, it would be treated as a scandal [*harenchi*]!

[laughter]

SA: So you have to be concerned about what Grandma and Grandpa, and the others in the neighborhood, think?

R6, Others: Oh yes, most definitely!

R5: Even for social dance, and things like that…

[generalized agreement from others]

R6: It is getting better these days, though. But still, for someone who has never gotten dressed up [*oshare shite*] and left the house before…

R1: You get that sort of reaction because you start up with this stuff in your 60s! If you were in your 20s or 30s those around you wouldn't make a big deal of it, you know [*mawari wa mondai ni shitenai*]. People [*seken*] wonder what the hell you're doing; they think you're nuts [*atama ga okashii*].

[laughter]

R2: Yes, we get that sometimes. People will say to me [sarcastically], 'Doing music, eh? Why, aren't you young!'

R4: Yes, that happens.

SA: Why do people say such things, do you think?

R5: Because we're old, I imagine.

R3: And because we're young, considering our age.

R5: Yes, they will say [sarcastically], 'Karaoke? Wow, you're young.'

R6: 'Bright eyed and young [*hatsuratsu*], aren't you?'

R1: People aren't taken aback [*teikou ga nai*] by younger folks doing this sort of thing; but once you're older…

R5: Yes, and all of a sudden!

R2: They're just jealous, you know.

R5: It [the talk] might have been too much to handle [*yatterarenai*] if we were out in the country. At least we're in the city here.

SA: Is it more severe out in the country?

R5: Are you kidding? In the country people know all about what's going on [*jijou ga wakatteiru*] in 50 or 100 households around them!

SA: Why do you think that people care?

R5: Well, in the end, people have too much time on their hands [*hima dakara*]. They've got nothing to talk about, so they sit around and drink their tea and talk what's going on in so-and-so's house, about what happened with somebody's bride and so on.

[general agreement with this]

SA: On the other hand, though, you would think that it doesn't matter at all which wife from which house was out doing karaoke.

R5: That's right.

R6: It doesn't matter at all.

R5: What's happening, though, is that those who are talking are jealous, because they can't do the same.

R3: In fact, though, there are far more requests [*moshikomi*] to put these music circles together out in the countryside these days than there are here in the city! No instructors come or anything, but they take it upon themselves to put the groups together.

…

R6 [sitting beside SA]: Would you like some tea?…I'm sorry that I haven't been taking care of you [referring to pouring tea, offering snacks, etc.]. I just get so carried away by the conversation; I love the music so, and I have my community [*nakama*] here, so I just start talking… it's so much fun.

…In my case, you know, I'm an abacus instructor; have been for 50 years. I am the head of all of the abacus teachers in Fukushima Prefecture. There's a lot that goes along with that. But when I soak up the songs [*uta ga jibun no naka ni haitte*], and with this community [*nakama*] – there is so much I can learn, so much I can gain from that. In my case, anyway.

There's a lot of stress involved in what I do; I have to deal with kids on a daily basis. I've been a teacher for 46 years – but there's just something about being a part of a group like this… I spend a lot of time with people that are younger than I am, and there are people older than me as well. I just love the community [*nakama*] and the setting [*ba*]… People of so many different occupations get together in groups like this one – carpenters, what have you. Getting everyone together and conversing – it's *fun*. You've always got to have something to look forward to, I think.

You know, my music *nakama* are just fantastic, and I have much to gain [from my involvement with this group]. Once per year, we have a teacher come from NAK to put on a workshop [*koushuukai*] for us. What I learn in those workshops is a real encouragement [*hagemi*] for me.