

A Tale of Two Stars: Understanding the Establishment of Femininity in *Enka* through Misora Hibari and Fuji Keiko

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Abstract

To date, most female portrayals and performances in the Japanese popular music genre of *enka* have been understood in terms of the homogenous ideal of the subservient, outdated image of “the traditional Japanese woman.” Yet, two of *enka*’s most important female singers, the “queen of *enka*” Misora Hibari and “the girl destined to carry *enka*’s star” Fuji Keiko, possess starkly contrasting images in the public imagination—something that tends to question the adequacy of homogenous understandings of *enka*’s femininity, based allegedly on Japanese tradition. In this paper, I examine the careers of Hibari and Fuji with a focus on the conditions of musical production and promotion, utilizing biographical accounts and critiques of these two singers. Through this analysis, I argue that dominant representations of female “subservience,” “outdatedness” and of the “Japanese-ness” in *enka* emerged out of contingent decisions that particular musical producers and singers made within the context of the Japanese music industry in the 1960s and 1970s. The argument offers a more recent historical origin for the stereotypical femininity of *enka*, highlighting the dialectical relationship between individual-level musical praxis and certain Japanese social discourses in those decades. These complex forces condemned Fuji in her late career to obscurity, while ultimately securing Hibari’s status as a national symbol of perseverance.

Keywords: *enka*, Japanese popular music, Misora Hibari, Fuji Keiko, identity construction and representation, contingency, femininity, nationalism

Introduction

When Misora Hibari, who had built up a reputation as the “queen of *enka*” [*enka no joō*], passed away from pneumonia on June 24, 1989, major newspapers and television outlets interrupted their regular reports and programming schedules to pay lavish tributes. “The Shōwa period has come to a close with her death,” commentators such as Sawaki Hidae proclaimed.¹ In other words, by the time of her death, Hibari (as she is still affectionately called by the Japanese public) had come to attain the status of national symbol, perhaps even more so than the Emperor himself who had passed away only months before.

Almost exactly twenty-four years later, Fuji Keiko, once dubbed as “the girl destined to carry *enka*’s star” [*enka no hoshi wo seotta shukumei no onna*], was found to have committed suicide by jumping off the thirteenth floor of her condominium building apartment in Shinjuku on the morning of June 22, 2013. As I explain later, if Hibari came to epitomize the female *enka* singer, Fuji (and her producers) gave birth to the contemporary form of *enka* recognized today, and was its first icon. Upon her death, obituaries in magazines and memorial publications expressed their remorse at “a wretched life” that had been “taken over by the imagery of the abused and helpless woman” she portrayed.² Some of these obituaries even commented, with a strong tinge of hindsight, on how fitting it was for her in those surroundings to take her own life.³

Written in pentatonic scales, the genre of *enka* consists predominantly of sentimental ballads of Japanese rural nostalgia (particularly of the Tōhoku region, as Occhi (2006) elaborates).⁴ It is commonly perceived in both popular and academic discourse as being the most “traditional” strand of Japanese popular music; *enka* represents “Japanese-sounding songs” that encapsulate *nihonjin no kokoro* [the heart and soul of the Japanese].⁵ Of course, this vague-sounding description signifies more the ambiguity of the genre term than any concretized musical form. Nevertheless, *enka*’s discursive value as a genre term loaded with ideological meaning is very difficult to understate.

Christine Yano suggests that an important code in understanding the musical forms and practices in *enka* is that of *kata*. Drawing upon

the term's use in other cultural practices such as flower arrangement, the tea ceremony, *kabuki* and martial arts, Yano argues that *kata* are "stylized formulas" and "patterned forms" that reflect the structured and repetitive nature of *enka* production, performance and consumption.⁶ According to Yano, *kata* has a highly gendered nature that interpellates characters and performers into stereotypical male and female representations akin to those in *kabuki*.⁷ In *enka*, female performances and portrayals are characterized by a subservient ("reacting to men's actions"), old-fashioned (sticking to "femaleness past") and nationally-framed ("traditional Japan") ideal of femininity.⁸ However, a comparison between Hibari and Fuji raises a crucial problem for the monolithic approach to understanding the concept of femininity in *enka*: how do we understand their very different public images, if both are supposedly representative of the same *enka* femininity?

A deeper investigation into Hibari's and Fuji's differing images provides an important standpoint for considerations of contingency in constructing and propagating images and identities (in other words, how the two singers were not solely pre-determined by *kata* and structure), even for seemingly formulaic genres like *enka*.

I begin by providing the theoretical foundation of my examination of Hibari's and Fuji's careers through a consideration of the concepts of "musicking" and image-making in Japanese popular culture. I then note the similarities in the critiques made of Hibari's and Fuji's performances and careers, before comparing their production and promotional decisions and career practices to understand more fully the ways in which their public images first converged and then diverged, and how the dominant image of *enka*'s femininity coalesced. I conclude by introducing a few research questions posed by the focus on the contingency of Hibari's and Fuji's careers and the origins of *enka*'s femininity.

Understanding Popular Music as Social Praxis

Much popular and academic discourse on *enka* has focused on arguing for the genre's "Japanese-ness," via the essentialist textual analyses of *enka* songs and performances that link observable *kata* back to supposedly "traditional pre-Meiji" Japanese cultural forms.⁹ However, these explanations of the "allegedly traditional Japanese" nature of *enka* ignore the fact that meaningful links between *kata* and tradition are not actually inherent, but are instead constructed through the enunciations and musical activities of producers, commentators and audiences who seek to highlight such links. The musicologist Christopher Small refers to these musical activities as "musicking": this refers not only to people's engagement with musical texts, but also to their engagement with each other through musical texts and activities.¹⁰ For Small, it is because of these engagements that musical meaning is to be found within the practical and social realms. In this respect, Yano's (1997) ethnographic account of the "image-making" practices governing the performances and public personas of *enka* singers is of consequence.

Much research on the Japanese popular music industry has described, in constructionist terms, the trans-media productive, marketing and consumptive machinations that allow music producers and management agencies [*jimusho*] to place young pop "idols" [*aidoru*] and "talents" [*tarento*] in a dominant position within contemporary Japanese popular culture.¹¹ As Yano notes, this approach towards musical and image production operates even for the greatest *enka* stars like Hibari.¹² Yano's analysis of production practices in *enka* explains how the singer, or more specifically his or her public image, is "created by those around him/her" [*mawari no tsukutta mono*] to "best suit the buying trends" of *enka*'s target audience of older Japanese.¹³ These *enka* consumers prefer *enka* singers and performances to portray certain images, such as the female possessing outdated subservient values deemed "traditionally Japanese." In other words, *enka* portrayals offer "a commodified identity—a Japanese self for sale" that is "derived from the past to make sense of the present."¹⁴

In providing such an explanation, however, Yano does not address how links between *enka* and a "Japanese" past from which notions of

“Japanese femininity” are derived: To quote Yano’s account, if “the past may be distant and irretrievable” how has it been “commodified and made available?”¹⁵ Despite describing actual production practices, Yano’s analysis of image-making in *enka* ultimately explains producers, singers and audiences as merely repeating a seemingly “natural” discursive structure of “Japan Past.”¹⁶ Yano seems to view *enka*’s image of “Japanese-ness situated in the past,” and its ideals of femininity, as a Japanese historical identity kept unadulterated by producers and its older audience.¹⁷ However, Yano’s data mainly describes producers’ and singers’ concerns and concessions (for example, creating stage names and fashion choices) when producing *enka* music.¹⁸ In other words, *enka*’s portrayal of the past and femininity result from social and practical engagements and negotiations about the genre, which is what Small (1998) is concerned with through the concept of “musicking.” This highlights the contingency of musical production in creating and defining images of femininity and the past.

It is with such concerns over musical production praxis that I examine the differing images of Hibari and Fuji, in order to understand how *enka* femininity has been shaped through “musicking” practices. However, I first introduce the careers of Hibari and Fuji by profiling some of their hit songs, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, and look at some critiques of their careers and performances.

Priestesses of Tears and Longing

Misora Hibari is today generally associated with *enka*, and seen as the most quintessentially Japanese of all popular singers.¹⁹ But throughout her long and illustrious career, Hibari displayed a chameleon-like ability to transform her public image and remain in the spotlight. Born Kato Kazue in 1937 to a fishmonger’s family in Yokohama, Hibari quickly became known as a child prodigy for her mimicry of the popular singers of the 1940s such as boogie-woogie songstress Kasagi Shizuko. Later, with her later with her parents’ enthusiastic support, she joined performing theaters around Yokohama and Tokyo.²⁰ Hibari’s imitations became so popular that by early 1950 she had toured the United States,

even before Kasagi was to embark on her own American tour. This seemed to worry Kasagi's management, who issued a cease-and-desist order to prevent Hibari from singing any Hattori Ryōichi (Kasagi's primary song composer) compositions.²¹

The dispute highlighted both Hibari's rising popularity and her lack of original numbers during this early period. As her film career (which I discuss later) began a shift towards more conservative "innocent girl" roles, Hibari began to perform original songs portraying similar conservative ideas.²² *Echigojishi no Uta* ["Echigo Lion-Dance Song," 1950], was her first hit to reference heavily the kind of nostalgic longing and rural imagery that would come to be a prominent motif in *enka* lyrics. Hibari's defining hit of the 1950s, however, was *Ringo Oiwake* ["Apple *Oiwake*," 1952]. The explicit reference to *oiwake*, a genre of traditional folk songs from northeastern Japan [Tōhoku], drew Hibari closer to the nostalgia-inflected rural tradition. In the song's monologue, Hibari dramatically laments the loss of a mother during the war while referring to scenic spots in rural Tōhoku.

But these two songs were only precursors to her two megahits in the 1960s, *Yawara* ["Gentle"] and *Kanashii Sake* ["Mournful Sake"]. Released as a single in 1964, *Yawara* went on to sell 1.8 million copies and won the prestigious *Nihon Rekōdo Taishō* [Japan Record of the Year] in 1965.²³ Singing of resignation and "bearing with it" despite tears, *Yawara* was released around the period of the Tokyo Olympics, and selected as the theme song of the homonymous drama that dealt with judo, a martial art that emphasizes gentle movements.²⁴ Released in 1966, *Kanashii Sake* is considered the signature song that, for Alan Tansman, "expressed the kitsch genius" of Hibari's emotional performances.²⁵ Particularly memorable are her deliveries of the song's monologue, in which she laments her inability to forget a forsaken lover, always with a deep sigh and tears streaming down her cheek.

While these four songs are her most memorable *enka* hits, Hibari also successfully released songs with other genre influences such as mambo (*Omatsuri Mambo* ["Festival Mambo," 1952]), jazz (*Minato-machi 13ban Chi* ["Lot 13, Port City," 1957]), Group Sounds (*Makka na Taiyō* ["Red Sun," 1967]),²⁶ and more general *kayōkyoku*²⁷ (*Ai Sansan*

["Shimmering Love," 1986]; *Kawa no Nagare no You ni* ["Like the River Flow," 1988]).²⁸ Yet, her image is so closely tied to *enka* that each of these songs have been forcibly (re-)categorized as *enka*, even though Michael Bourdaghs notes that "there is hardly anything Japanese-sounding about the composition itself."²⁹ By the time of her death, it seemed that "everything she touches (sic) turns golden Japanese."³⁰

In contrast to Hibari's versatility and longevity, Fuji Keiko seemed unable to escape from the shackles of her early success. Born Abe Junko in 1951 to struggling itinerant singers of *rōkyōku* (a form of Japanese narrative singing popular during the late 19th and early 20th centuries) in Iwate Prefecture, she spent her childhood in Hokkaido, where her parents performed. Fuji also began performing from a young age at the behest of her parents, when they chanced upon her humming at the age of ten.³¹ Fuji and her family moved to Tokyo after her graduation from middle school so that she could debut as a professional singer, following the encouragement of composer Yashima Hideaki, who had scouted her at a regional event.³²

However, Fuji was only taken in as an apprentice and groomed for a debut after meeting songwriter Ishizaka Masao (a pen-name, his real name was Sawanoi Ryūji) in late 1968.³³ Ishizaka would later provide lyrics for all of Fuji's early hits. Fuji's debut single, *Shinjuku no Onna* ["Woman of Shinjuku"], was released in September 1969. Marketed as "the girl destined to carry *enka*'s star," Fuji sang of female helplessness and despair in the treacherous urban jungle in her dramatically deep and husky voice.³⁴

The single initially did not sell well, although it was backed by an arduous promotional campaign that included Fuji performing the song around Shinjuku, Tokyo for twenty-five hours straight.³⁵ However, sales caught on at the start of 1970, prompting the successful February release of Fuji's second single, *Onna no burūsu* ["A Woman's Blues"].³⁶ The song described the unfulfilled hopes and despair of women in Tokyo. But Fuji's most recognizable song, the one that solidified her status as the dominant *enka* singer of this period, would be her next single, *Keiko no Yume wa Yoru Hiraku* ["Keiko's Dream Plays Out at Night"]. Released in April 1970, it was a cover of *Yume wa Yoru Hiraku* ["Dream

Plays Out at Night”], originally sung by Sono Mari in 1966. The single eventually sold 1.2 million copies, becoming the biggest hit of Fuji’s career.³⁷ Again, Fuji sang of the wretched young woman emotionally stranded in the Tokyo nightlife.

But Fuji’s time in the spotlight would be short-lived. Her next single in October 1970, *Inochi Azukemasu* [“I Give My Life to You”], started a long and gradual slump in sales from which she never really recovered. Despite a mini-revival in sales with the single *Kyōto kara Hakata* made [“From Kyoto to Hakata,” 1972], and even an attempted change in genre and Kanji name for *Hotarubi* [“Firefly Light,” 1981], Fuji faded away into obscurity in the Japanese popular music scene.³⁸ It was not until the mercurial rise in 1999 of her daughter, singer-songwriter Utada Hikaru, that she was widely recognized again as “Utada’s mother.”

In explaining Judy Garland’s iconic status in American popular culture, Richard Dyer suggested that Garland’s “emotional register of great intensity which seems to bespeak equally suffering and survival, vulnerability and strength, theatricality and authenticity, passion and irony” allowed many fans to identify affectionately with her.³⁹ Jonathan Mackintosh and Alan Tansman have analyzed Hibari’s iconicity as the “queen of *enka*” similarly, particularly describing her always-theatrical performances of *Kanashii Sake* as

The genius of a performer who makes staged emotion seem real—and indeed, feels it to be real herself. Such blending of artifice and reality reveals Hibari’s kitsch genius. Watching her perform, the viewer shuttles constantly back and forth between the extravagant illusion, the spectacle ... and the intensity that makes Hibari appear sincere to her fans.... Hibari trod a fine line between the real and the artificial.⁴⁰

However, Fuji’s performances and career have also been evaluated in similar terms. Ishizaka’s autobiography describes Fuji’s singing as “not just performing a role, but truly coming from the depths of her soul.”⁴¹ Much like Hibari, Fuji effectively blurred the boundary between the real and the artificial, such that author Yuyama Reiko writes, “the strong

negativity of the lyrics in her songs ... eventually came back and seeped into her own body.... [S]he was absorbed into the world of her own songs."⁴² Audiences still believed in a separation between Fuji Keiko the performer and Abe Junko the private person [*sugao*], but as Wajima illuminates, perceptions of both personas were filtered through the lenses of sorrow and misfortune she portrayed [*enji(sase)ru*] in her songs.⁴³ In this way, through her performances of stoic suffering, vulnerability, passion and irony, Fuji's blurring of real and artificial operated in a similar fashion to Hibari. Both singers acted as priestesses through which private tears and longing were given public voices.

Given these similar views on Hibari's and Fuji's *enka* performances, I suggest that the basis for their divergent images as *enka* singers lies in the wider ideological contexts and musical praxis surrounding their careers. I focus on their relationships with other players in the music industry, production strategies employed by their management agencies, and the general development of their ideological images in *enka*. The 1960s and 1970s loom large in this analysis, as the foundations for Hibari's and Fuji's images as *enka* singers were established amid a turbulent socio-musical environment.

Enka Femininity as Nationalist Ideology

While the nationalistic imagery of Hibari culminated in the late 1960s, the links between Hibari and the nation had begun earlier in her career. Deborah Shamon notes the strong criticisms by cultural critics of Hibari's early imitations of Kasagi and other popular singers of the 1940s. For example, the magazine *Fujin Asahi* claimed that "the sight of an innocent little girl so very skillfully singing boogie-woogie, which is drenched in evil, can only increase our sense of national defeat."⁴⁴

This controversial reception of her imitations, and also the more practical concern of a lack of original songs to perform (highlighted by the conflict with Kasagi's management), makes it easier to understand why Hibari's public image began to develop a more "wholesome" aspect referencing the "traditional Japanese female." This image shift was greatly helped by the success of her first starring role in the 1949 film

Kanashiki Kuchibue [*Sorrowful Whistle*]. Shmoon describes Hibari's portrayal of the war orphan Mitsuko as a pivotal moment in which Hibari started to take on the role of a national symbol, as she stands in for the thousands of women and girls in 1949 who after the war waited in vain for the return of their brothers, fathers and husbands.⁴⁵

Hibari's appearances in *Kanashiki Kuchibue*, and later *Ringoen no Shōjo* [*Girl of the Apple Orchard*, 1952], also provide clear examples of the trans-media promotional strategies employed by her management company, Shingei Pro. Indeed, Bourdaghs notes that *Ringoen no Shōjo* was Hibari's first film to be totally financed and produced by Shingei Pro.⁴⁶ For Bourdaghs, "Hibari's celebrated Japaneseness was the sophisticated product of modern marketing and technology."⁴⁷

Wajima attributes Hibari's musical versatility also to her management's mobilization of the trans-media networks that connected the entertainment industries, as she "basically took on whatever was fashionable at the time ... and was an all-round performer in both music and film."⁴⁸ He explains how *Yawara* latched onto the multi-media hype surrounding the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, particularly the judo and women's volleyball competitions in which Japan emerged victorious, and drew upon the then-popular *rōkyoku* musical style compositionally.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, *Kanashii Sake* utilized imagery of a lone female at a bar, a popular motif to express feelings of loneliness, longing and lament in Japanese popular music in the mid-1960s.⁵⁰ Wajima argues that the release of the Group Sounds (another hugely popular genre in the mid-1960s) number *Makka na Taiyō* not long after can also be easily reconciled within this understanding of Hibari's versatility.⁵¹ In fact, Wajima further argues that the listing of *Yawara* and *Kanashii Sake* as the *enka* numbers most emblematic of Hibari's career occurred only after the establishment of *enka* as a genre with nationalist connotations in the late 1960s.⁵²

The mid-1960s was a period of chaos for the Japanese music industry. First, younger musicians, influenced by the musical forms and self-production practices of recently-introduced electric rock and political folk music, challenged the musical practices of more conservative producers who preferred the popular music forms (generally known as

kayōkyoku), neatly segregated production roles, and exclusive working contracts with specific record companies that were first established in the 1920s.⁵³ Meanwhile, music intellectuals debated the ideological and geopolitical position that the existing recording industry occupied vis-à-vis Japanese national identity. The dominant leftist view accused the recording industry, which survived greatly unchanged from its prewar structure, as being “feudal” [*fūkenisei*], “counter-revolutionary” [*handōteki*], and “undesirable in a new” [*atarashii*], “progressive” [*shinpōteki*], and “healthy” [*kenzen*] modernity [*kindaiteki*] which privileged Western ideas [*yōfū*].⁵⁴ However, a counter-current of music intellectuals, disillusioned with the political failures of the dominant stream of leftist thought in Japan, turned such “progressive” discourse on its head, lauding *kayōkyoku*’s “grounded” [*dochakuteki*], “democratic” [*minshūteki*] and “ethnic” [*minzokuteki*] forms and practices.⁵⁵ In other words, *kayōkyoku* and its production system were praised for representing a kind of “unfairly marginalized Japanese-ness,” as a strand of the nascent genre of *nihonjinron* literature that sought to establish the superior uniqueness of Japanese practices and culture over the West.

Hibari’s image as a beacon of “Japanese-ness” was first coherently expressed as a central theme of this stream of anti-leftist musical critique. Wajima traces the roots of this image to Takenaka Rō’s best-selling 1965 book *Misora Hibari: Minshū no Kokoro wo Utatte Nijūnen* [*Misora Hibari: Twenty Years of Singing the People’s Heart*], in which Takenaka asks: “How have Misora Hibari and popular music retained our democratic and ethnic music tradition, under the Americanized culture of the Occupation?”⁵⁶ Guided by this overarching question, Takenaka emphasized within Hibari’s repertoire the more “traditional” numbers such as *Yawara*, while leaving out the more “Western” ones like *Makka na Taiyō*, thus setting a canon of Hibari songs.⁵⁷ The book’s influence on views of Hibari as a symbol of “Japanese identity and culture” can be seen through Takenaka’s observation of how his ideas on Hibari were unwelcomed by other music intellectuals when the book was released, only to be recognized as common sense afterwards.⁵⁸ Bourdaghs argues that this “Japan-West” dichotomy formed the dominant mode of the Japanese self-image until the 1990s.⁵⁹ Even

Hibari seemed to believe in and reproduce her nationalized image when she wrote in her 1971 autobiography, “I have always believed that I am singing the songs of Japan. I am a Japanese. Because of this, I must sing the songs of Japan.”⁶⁰ Hibari thus also contributed to a burgeoning *nihonjinron* discourse. While she continued to prolifically release and perform material with varied influences during the 1970s and 1980s, her image as a “Japanese symbol” was by then firmly entrenched.

This is not to say that Hibari’s image as a beacon of “Japanese-ness” and relationships within the media industry from the 1960s onwards were never problematic. For instance, when her brother Tetsuya was arrested for *yakuza*-related activities in 1973, Hibari’s steadfast refusal to remove him from her management team (by then dominated by her mother and other family members) drew much consternation and suspicion about her own *yakuza* involvement. Hibari would famously be blacklisted from NHK’s prestigious yearly special *Kōhaku Uta Gassen* [Red-White Song Festival], precipitating a switch to the year-end programs of other television stations.⁶¹ While the incident showed the close bonds she had with her management team, the *yakuza* rumors also further fuelled questions about her possible Korean ancestry, based both on the popular conception of *yakuza* groups being dominated by Zainichi Koreans and her friendships with other ethnic Korean personalities.⁶² However, both Bourdaghs and Wajima explain the persistence of these questions about the “traditional Japanese-ness” of Hibari (and *enka* itself) as a “seductive shadow” that resulted from the dominance of the Japan-West dichotomy through which intellectuals like Takenaka and the mass media created images of Hibari and *enka*.⁶³ The rumors provided, according to Bourdaghs and Wajima respectively, a “ghostly overtone” of the neglected issues of Japan’s historical links with Asia and the socio-political differences within Japan that Fuji would sing of at her peak.⁶⁴ At another level, these rumors surreptitiously indicated the foundations of post-imperial/contemporary Japanese cultural identity as ultimately resting upon debatable premises about identity frameworks (such as “pure ethnic stock”) established by a select group of cultural commentators and agendas.

The reappraisal of *kayōkyoku* and its production practices as “grounded,” “democratic” and “ethnic” also provided the ideological basis of a “Japanese” genre of popular music in contrast with more “Western-influenced” genres. The use of the genre term *enka* to refer to this “Japanese” strand of popular music was first seen in the popular 1966 novel *Enka* by Itsuki Hiroyuki.⁶⁵ Portraying the moral victory of the marginalized practitioners and “Japanese values” of the existing record production system, Itsuki’s novel provided a coherent and glorified picture of *enka*’s musical practices and thematic concepts. In 1969, Ishizaka acknowledged obtaining inspiration from the novel in creating Fuji’s marketing tagline (“the girl destined to carry *enka*’s star”) and public image.⁶⁶ In return, Itsuki lauded Fuji in 1970 as the embodiment of *enka*’s values.⁶⁷ In Ishizaka’s opinion, Itsuki’s glowing review sparked off other positive appraisals and helped propel Fuji to become the first “*enka* star” [*enka no hoshi*].⁶⁸

However, developments in Fuji’s career and *enka* in general during the 1970s would soon distance Fuji from an image of “Japanese-ness.” First, Ishizaka’s marketing strategy for Fuji focused less on the “Japanese-ness” of Fuji’s itinerant performer past, and more on the aspects of lower-class struggle. Particularly important were links to Shinjuku, both as a source of musical content and as a target audience.⁶⁹ Tapping upon Shinjuku’s reputation as a seedy hotspot for many struggling young Tokyoites who had moved in from the rural areas during the 1960s, as well as for the youth participants in the ultimately failed protests from 1968 to 1969 against the renewal of the U.S.-Japan security alliance treaty, Ishizaka painted Fuji as a spokesperson for these marginalized youths through songs like *Shinjuku no Onna*.⁷⁰

But this marketing approach would falter in the face of the major trends within *enka* as it matured as a genre. Particularly important from the 1970s was the increasing production of *enka* that de-emphasized the counter-cultural discourse of marginalization and disenfranchisement (signified by unfulfilled illicit love and *yakuza* bravado, among other themes), which were discredited with the failure of the late 1960s activism. Instead, *enka* producers began drawing upon ideas espoused

by intellectuals like Takenaka to foreground a sanitized and homogenous ideal of “Japanese-ness” centered on the ideological concept of *urusato*. The concept denotes a generalized nostalgia celebrating the authenticity and virtues of “traditionally Japanese” landscapes (particularly Tōhoku and the Sea of Japan coast) and of rural family values, including lifestyles such as that of the domesticated woman.⁷¹ These sanitized *urusato* ideals were most prominent in singer Koyanagi Rumiko’s hits, such as *Watashi no Jōkamachi* [“My Castle Town,” 1971] and *Seto no Hanayome* [“Bride of the Seto Inland Sea,” 1972]. Koyanagi’s songs were important components in the then-Japanese National Railways’ highly successful “Discover Japan” tourism campaign in the early 1970s that drew heavily upon *urusato* ideals and highlighted *enka* as a marker of “sanitized Japanese tradition.”⁷² This image would be further consolidated towards the close of the 1970s through *enka*’s increasing dependence on mature *salarymen* workers and housewife consumers, who felt disconnected from the newer teen-oriented genres of the period like idol pop.⁷³ Fuji’s representation of disenfranchised female urban youth in seedy Shinjuku was thus distanced from this “sanitized *enka*.” This “sanitization” also helped enhance Hibari’s reputation as an *enka* great, through “traditional” songs such as *Yawara*.

Individual factors also factored in determining Fuji’s inability to remain relevant within *enka*. Firstly, Ishizaka found it difficult to sustain the early hype that Fuji’s first three singles built up. In his autobiography, he explained his approach towards the writing (and the possible reasons for the commercial failure) of *Inochi Azukemasu* and the subsequent singles:

... I became afraid of the image that I had built up for “Fuji Keiko.” My work as manager was complete once I had succeeded in selling Abe Junko as “Fuji Keiko” to the public. If Fuji Keiko is “the girl destined to carry *enka*’s star,” then that star must be destined to fade away and die. Anything made artificially cannot possibly shine forever.⁷⁴

Fuji's own career choices did not help restore her popularity. As soon as early 1971, tensions developed between Fuji and Ishizaka. Fuji became worried that Ishizaka was not devoting enough effort to producing her music, and that he was even providing scandalous scoops to magazines without her knowledge.⁷⁵ Fuji explained these conflicts as a direct reason for her marriage to singer Maekawa Kiyoshi in June 1971.⁷⁶ The marriage affected her popularity as it shattered her public image of misfortune and wretchedness.⁷⁷ It also affected Fuji's performances, as she spoke of her reluctance to sing the songs *Koi Jingi* ["Righteous Love," 1971] and *Wakare no Tabi* ["Separation Journey," 1972]: the former because its lyrics of unfulfilled desire contrasted starkly with her upcoming marriage—and the latter because it alluded too directly to her impending divorce in 1972.⁷⁸ Further exacerbating Fuji's plight was her decision to remove a polyp in her throat in 1974, due to chronic voice problems. Fuji lamented how it caused her singing voice to become much smoother, taking away her ability to perform in the trademark huskiness of her early hits.⁷⁹ In 1975, with her relationship with Ishizaka at rock bottom, Fuji negotiated a switch in management companies. But she ran into similar problems with her new management and never received enough promotional backing to recover her early popularity, leaving her as an increasingly forgotten figure in Japanese popular music.⁸⁰

The importance and visibility of Hibari and Fuji in the embryonic stages of *enka's* discursive and formal development in the mid-to-late 1960s made them crucial to the formation of *enka's* feminine ideal. Their careers show that the imagery of *enka's* feminine ideal coalesced via complex dialectic negotiations at the macro socio-musical and the individual praxis levels, in a manner similar to Bourdieu's⁸¹ explanations of cultural production via habitus, field and capital.⁸² At the macro socio-musical level, while both Hibari's and Fuji's producers astutely tapped into popular sentiments about Japanese society, ultimately it was the portrayal of Hibari as a "national symbol" that proved more attuned, and even itself contributed, to the rise of a *nihonjinron* imagination of Japanese society and identity based on the ideas of internal homogeneity and a nationally-framed dichotomy against the "West." In contrast,

Fuji's image of the disenfranchised woman was rendered increasingly irrelevant. This difference was partly attributable to the individual decisions and praxis of both the producers and performers. Fuji's career decisions and poor professional relationships impeded her sustained popularity, while despite her scandals, Hibari enjoyed strong professional support through which she remained visible, if not center-stage. However, wider discursive developments in Japanese society and music such as the discourses of *nihonjinron* and *furusato*, which were largely outside the producers' and performers' control, were also crucial in determining Fuji's decline and Hibari's relevance. The uncertainty in Fuji's and Hibari's careers shows that the dominant images of a subservient, outdated and "traditionally Japanese" *enka* femininity were born out of highly contingent conditions and processes, in which the results of the negotiation of meaning and identities were not pre-determined.

Contingency in the Creation of Musical Identity

Through the careers of two of *enka's* most important stars, Misora Hibari and Fuji Keiko, I have attempted to explain how the dominant images of *enka's* female "Japanese-ness" as "out-dated" "subservience" became hegemonic after a period of negotiation and contestation that was most intense in the 1960s and 1970s. The historical origin I have provided critiques the structure-dominated understanding of *enka's* femininity offered by studies like those of Yano,⁸³ by highlighting the importance of the dialectical relationship between the music production practices and the wider socio-political and musical conditions in establishing musical meaning and ideology. The nostalgically-inflected imagery of a "Japanese traditional femininity" offered through Hibari's performances and public persona, an imagery that was somewhat calculated by her management, was important in allowing these feminine ideals to be coherently expressed and to gain wide support outside intellectual debate in postwar Japan. Moreover, the personal and professional problems of Fuji and her management were important in the failure of the alienation and disenfranchisement to remain her major

themes, preventing her from staying relevant to *enka* as it matured as a genre. At the same time, however, these decisions and praxis at the individual level of performance and production tapped into and were intricately tied up with wider socio-political and musical conditions, such as the pre-eminence of the discourse of *nihonjinron* and *furusato*, which influenced understandings of Japanese imaginations of self-identity and musical meaning, and in turn the images of *enka*'s femininity.

The divergent evolution of Hibari's and Fuji's images leave some interesting questions regarding popular cultural representation. First, how have the images of *enka*'s femininity, established by the 1970s, been sustained and kept hegemonic subsequently? An in-depth study of the motivations of *enka* producers and performers after the 1970s, through biographies and testimonies, may clarify later developments. Also, to what extent can creative agency be attributed to producers and performers in popular music production, given how production relationships change over the course of a career? Keeping in mind Small's and Bourdieu's theoretical frameworks, more substantial studies on musical production and promotion practices may provide a clearer explanation.

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Notes

¹ Nippon Geinō Retsudan, *Discussing Misora Hibari* 美空ひばりを語る, Tokyo: Nippon Geinō Retsudan, 1990. Video Recording.

² Inuhiko Yomota, “As Long as My Songs Exist: Fuji Keiko わが歌のあるかぎり 藤圭子,” in *Fuji Keiko Memorial: At the End of the Dream That Plays Out at Night* 藤圭子追悼—夜ひらく夢の終わりに, ed. Harumasa Abe (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2013), 47; Reiko Yuyama, “The Person Possessed by Her Songs 『歌』に憑依された人,” in *Fuji Keiko Memorial*, 77.

³ Sakai, Masatoshi. “The Genius who Sang the Screams of Defeat from Between the Lines 歌の行間から負けの叫びをうたった天才,” in *Fuji Keiko Memorial: At the End of the Dream that Plays Out at Night.*, ed. Harumasa Abe (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2013), 15-16.

⁴ Occhi elaborates on the prevalent use of Tōhoku imagery in *enka*. Debra J. Occhi, “Heartbreak’s Destination: Tōhoku in the Poetic Discourse of *Enka*,” in *Wearing Cultural Styles in Japan: Concepts of Tradition and Modernity in Practice*, eds. Christopher S. Thompson and John W. Traphagan, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 151-70.

⁵ Alan Tansman, “Misora Hibari: The Postwar Myth of Mournful Tears and Sake,” in *The Human Tradition in Modern Japan*, ed. Anne Walthall (Wilmington: SR Books, 2002), 223; Christine R. Yano, “Inventing Selves: Images and Image-Making in a Japanese Popular Music Genre,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 31, no.2 (1997): 115-116.

⁶ Yano, *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 24-25.

⁷ Yano, “Inventing Selves,” 123-125; *Tears of Longing*, 114-122.

⁸ Yano, “Inventing Selves,” 125.

⁹ See Toshiro Mitsutomi, *Melody Theories of the Japanese: From Enka to Classical Music* メロディー日本人論—演歌からクラシックまで (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1987); Fumio Koizumi, *The Framework of Kayōkyoku* 歌謡曲の構造 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1996); Yumi Aikawa, *On Enka* 演歌のススム (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2002).

¹⁰ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 13.

¹¹ See Hiroshi Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles: Idol Performance and Symbolic Production in Contemporary Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005); Hiromichi Ugaya, *What Is J-pop: The Expanding Music Industry* Jポップとは何か—巨大化する音楽産業— (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho and Stevens, 2005); Carolyn S. Stevens, *Japanese Popular Music: Culture, Authenticity and*

Power (London and New York: Routledge, 2008). Gabriella Lukacs defines *tarento* as “celebrities who perform in various media genres simultaneously” in *Scripted Affects, Branded Selves: Television, Subjectivity, and Capitalism in 1990s Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 13. As Patrick W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin note, this definition overlaps greatly with the role that *aidoru* also occupies in Japanese popular culture. “Introduction: The Mirror of Idols and Celebrity,” *Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture*, ed. Patrick W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 6.

¹² Yano “Inventing Selves,” 119.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 119, 125-126.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 120-125.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*,

¹⁹ Michael K. Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika, Sayonara Nippon: A Geopolitical Prehistory of J-Pop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 51-52.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 56. See also Yasuharu Honda, “Postwar”: *Misora Hibari and the Times* 『戦後』—美空ひばりとその時代 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1989), 150-57, and Eiji Ōshita, *Misora Hibari: Singing the Times* 美空ひばり—時代を歌う (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1989), 183-194.

²² Deborah Shamoon, “Misora Hibari and the Girl Star in Postwar Japanese Cinema,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35, no.1 (2009): 138-140.

²³ Akira Mori, ed., *Misora Hibari* 美空ひばり (Tokyo: Tokyo FM Shuppan, 1997), 311.

²⁴ Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika*, 70.

²⁵ Tansman, “Misora Hibari,” 216.

²⁶ Group Sounds was a short-lived genre in Japan in the 1960s, which combined electric rock sounds with compositional motifs and production practices from pre-existing Japanese popular music, known as *kayōkyoku*, at the time. See Yūsuke Wajima, *The Created Myth of “The Heart and Soul of Japan”: Postwar Popular Music History Based Around “Enka”* 創られた『日本の心』神話—『演歌』をめぐる戦後大衆音楽史 (Tokyo: Kōbunsha Shinsho, 2010), 30-38, and Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika*, 122-132, for discussions of the genre’s genealogy and demise.

²⁷ *Kayōkyoku* is a genre term used originally to generally denote all popular music that was produced by the Japanese recording industry from the 1920s to the 1960s. Later, it came to denote songs from the 1970s onwards of a less “Japanese”

orientation compared to *enka*, but were also produced within the pre-1960s record production system. See Wajima, *The Created Myth*, 24-26 for a discussion of 1920s-1960s *kayōkyoku* and Toru Mitsui for a discussion of *kayōkyoku* from the 1970s onwards. “Interactions of Imported and Indigenous Musics in Japan: A Historical Overview of the Music Industry,” in *Who’s Master’s Voice? The Development of Popular Music in Thirteen Cultures*, eds. Alison J. Ewbank and Fouli T. Papageorgiou (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 152-174.

²⁸ Wajima, *The Created Myth*, 122-123.

²⁹ Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika*, 84; See also “Misora Hibari ‘Like the River Flow’: 10 Million Votes for the Most Memorable Song 美空ひばり『川の流れるように』—心に残る歌 1000 万投票,” *Asahi Shimbun*, April 2008.

³⁰ Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika*, 84.

³¹ Sawaki, *One Shooting Star*, 80-87.

³² *Ibid.*, 99-101.

³³ Harumasa Abe, “Introduction: Fuji Keiko 1951-2013: The Blues Life of the Woman of Shinjuku, She Wilts Someday Wherever She May Live ‘Introduction—藤圭子 1951~2013—新宿の女のブルースな一世、何処で生きてもいつか散る,” in *Fuji Keiko Memorial*, 3.

³⁴ Masao Ishizaka, *Ties: Fuji Keiko and I きずな—藤圭子と私* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2013), 131.

³⁵ Sawaki, *One Shooting Star*, 127-28; Ishizaka, *Ties*, 159-161.

³⁶ Ishizaka, *Ties*, 161.

³⁷ Eiji Ōshita, *Fuji Keiko’s and Utada Hikaru’s Destiny: Sorrowful Diva 藤圭子と宇多田ヒカルの宿痾—悲しき歌姫(ディーヴァ)* (Tokyo: Īsuto Press, 2013), 277.

³⁸ For the release of *Hotarubi*, Fuji changed her stage name from 藤圭子 to 藤圭似子 (same pronunciation), possibly to signify a break from her previous musical style.

³⁹ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Educational, 1987), 155.

⁴⁰ Tansman, “Misora Hibari,” 216-217. See also Jonathan D. Mackintosh, “The *Homo* Cultures of Iconic Personality in Japan: Mishima Yukio and Misora Hibari,” *Idols and Celebrity*, 142.

⁴¹ Ishizaka, *Ties*, 120.

⁴² Yuyama, “The Person Possessed by Her Songs,” 76 [brackets mine].

⁴³ Wajima, “The Myth of Fuji Keiko: Fuji Keiko as an Idol 藤圭子という神話—アイドルとしての藤圭子,” in *Fuji Keiko Memorial*, 85.

⁴⁴ Fujin Asahi, “Children’s Welfare 子供の福祉,” *Fujin Asahi* 4:10 (1949), 10, quoted in Shamoan, “Misora Hibari,” 136-137.

⁴⁵ Shamoan, “Misora Hibari,” 139.

⁴⁶ Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika*, 65.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴⁸ Wajima, *The Created Myth*, 122-123.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 123-124.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 22-38.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 189, 198.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁵⁶ RōTakenaka, *Misora Hibari: Twenty Years of Singing the People’s Heart* 美空ひばり—民衆の心をうたって二十年 (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1965), quoted in Wajima, *The Created Myth*, 208.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁵⁸ Wajima, *The Created Myth*, 218-219.

⁵⁹ Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika*, 52, 73-74, 83.

⁶⁰ Hibari Misora, *Hibari Autobiography: Shadows and I* [ひばり自伝—わたしと影] (Tokyo: Sōshisha, 1971), 274-75, quoted in Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika*, 52.

⁶¹ Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika*, 80.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶⁴ Wajima, *The Created Myth*, 301-304.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 220. Itsuki used the kanji 艶歌, which denoted a “romantic” or even “erotic” nature to these songs. Wajima notes the fluid use of different kanji writings for *enka* to denote this strand of “Japanese” popular music during this period, such as the now common “performance song” 演歌 and also “grievance song” 怨歌. *Ibid.*, 220-221, 240, 256.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 258. Fuji’s promotional material used the kanji 演歌 exclusively.

⁶⁷ Hiroyuki Itsuki, “Romantic Songs and Support Songs and Grievance Songs” 艶歌と援歌と怨歌, in *Fuji Keiko Memorial*, 142-48. Originally published in *Mainichi Shimbun*. June, 1970.

⁶⁸ Wajima, *The Created Myth*, 258.

⁶⁹ Ōshita, *Fuji Keiko*, 144-155.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 103; Ishizaka, *Ties*, 149, 159.

⁷¹ See Robert J. Smith, "Making Village Women into 'Good Wives, Wise Mothers' in Prewar Japan," *Journal of Family History* 8, no.1 (1983): 70-84; Jennifer Robertson, "The Culture and Politics of Nostalgia: *Furusato* Japan," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 1, no.4 (1988): 494-518; Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁷² Wajima, *The Created Myth*, 298-300.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 304-308, 312-315.

⁷⁴ Ishizaka, *Ties*, 175.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 178-79; Sawaki, *One Shooting Star*, 144-145.

⁷⁶ Ishizaka, *Ties*, 181; Sawaki, *One Shooting Star*, 145.

⁷⁷ Ōshita, *Fuji Keiko*, 218-222.

⁷⁸ Sawaki, *One Shooting Star*, 152-156.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 172-181.

⁸⁰ Ōshita, *Fuji Keiko*, 241-246.

⁸¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randall Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) and *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 1996).

⁸² In *The Field of Cultural Production* and *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu argues against the "charismatic ideology of creation" that obfuscates the conditions of cultural production (*The Rules of Art*, 167), and proposes understanding it as a mesh of social, material and discursive processes.

⁸³ Yano, "Inventing Selves" and *Tears of Longing*.