

Counterfeiting China: Japanese Orientalist Pop Songs, 1931-1945

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ROUGH WORKING DRAFT: NOT FOR CITATION OR CIRCULATION

Li Xianglan or Ri Kōran (Yamaguchi Yoshiko), the Japanese singer/actress who infamously “passed” for Chinese in wartime mass culture, is perhaps best remembered for her role in the 1940 film, *Shina no yoru* (China nights). Her embodiment in that movie and others of Japanese fantasies about the ideal Chinese woman render her into a fascinating case study of Asian-originated forms of mass-culture Orientalism, one that helped produce the structure of feelings needed to support Japanese expansionism during the 1930s and 40s. Desires that could not be summoned up domestically could still be solicited via her supposed foreignness. As an early review of the film noted, its hackneyed plot sustained interest only because of the exotic setting. “For example, if the sailors’ hotel in Shanghai or the Manchurian location shots were replaced by a Tokyo apartment or Inogashira Park [in suburban Tokyo], it would be so puerile we couldn’t bear to watch it.”¹ At the same time, the film presented the fantasy of a China that desired Japan. As Yiman Wang has argued, Ri Kōran’s act of passing “conjoined Japan’s pan-Asian entertainment and imperialism,” thereby playing “a crucial role in the

¹ Review of “Shina no Yoru,” *Kinema Junpō* 721 (11 July 1940), 57. All translations of Japanese-language materials here are my own, except where otherwise noted. Asian personal names are given with family name first, personal name(s) second.

symbolic power representation by convincingly passing as a Chinese waiting to be transformed into a Japanese.”²

In this paper, I will take up a popular music genre closely associated with Ri Kōran, but one that aimed at a subtly different effect. I will look at three singers in particular: Watanabe Hamako, on whose hit song the movie *Shina no yoru* was based; Hattori Tomiko, who played a Japanese woman in that same film (for which her brother Hattori Ryōichi composed the score); and Kasagi Shizuko, who as Ryōichi’s protégé would emerge in the postwar era as the Japanese Queen of Boogie Woogie but who began her recording career a decade earlier. In the late 1930s all three recorded *tairiku merodei* (continental melodies), a genre that enjoyed enormous popularity in the years following the outbreak of full-scale warfare between Japan and China in 1937. These songs incorporated Orientalist elements, both musically and lyrically, to signal fantasy forms of Chineseness. Moreover, Hamako and Tomiko in particular would sometimes appear in Chinese dress with Chinese hairstyles and all three would occasionally sing phrases in Chinese. Hamako even recorded cover versions of Chinese songs. Despite these flourishes, however, no one would ever mistake these singers for Chinese. Their performances included elements believed to be Chinese, but unlike Ri Kōran they made no attempt to “pass.” In fact, a large part of the enjoyment of their performed Chineseness lay in the unmistakable fact that the singers were Japanese. In other words, these performers engaged in a game of masquerade, and their songs produced pleasure by

² Yiman Wang, “Screening Asia: Passing, Performative Translation, and Reconfiguration,” *positions* 15:2 (2007), 319-343. The quoted passages appear on 328-329.

openly acknowledging their counterfeit status. What sort of Japan-China relationship did this genre of explicitly counterfeit culture entail?³

In taking up the “tairiku melodies” as an instance of counterfeit culture, as a lie that paradoxically admits its own falsity, we are entering the realm of what George Lipsitz would call “dangerous crossroads.” In looking at how post-colonial artists appropriate the commodities of popular culture to perform new imaginary identities, identities that are not yet able to exist as political realities, Lipsitz argues that they engage in “strategic anti-essentialism.” By engaging in masquerade, they appropriate “a particular disguise on the basis of its ability to highlight, underscore, and augment an aspect of one’s identity that one can not express directly....The key to understanding each of these groups is to see how then can become ‘more themselves’ by appearing to be something other than themselves.”⁴ Lipsitz celebrates musicians from socially and economically marginalized groups who resort to masquerade—for example, the working-class African-Americans in New Orleans who perform each year as Mardi Gras Indian “tribes”—in order to signify forms of identity that are otherwise silenced.

As Lipsitz acknowledges, this strategy is double-edged. The “key question,” he writes, is to determine “which kinds of cross-cultural identification advance emancipatory ends and which ones reinforce existing structures of power and

³ “Counterfeit” here is something akin to what Miriam Silverberg describes as the parodic aesthetics of the “phony” (*inchiki*) in 1930s Asakusa performance culture: see Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 235-253. I also have in mind Derrida’s use of the term, but as will become apparent below, I am more cautionary about its deconstructive potential: See Jacques Derrida, *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1992).

⁴ George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (London: Verso, 1994), 62-63.

domination?”⁵ Clearly such a distinction is necessary, and any cultural form must be carefully historicized to begin the process of drawing it. But counterfeit cultures also suggest that in fact a clear distinction may not be possible: counterfeit cultures are often both emancipatory and oppressive at the same time. The Mardi Gras Indians, for example, do not sit well with many Native Americans. As one critic of Lipsitz has noted, “...hybridity is no guarantee of postcolonial self-determination; it is as available to the colonizing practices of capital as it is to local strategies of resistance.”⁶

The tairiku melody boom in Japan took place from about 1931 to 1943. Edgar Pope, author of a fine dissertation that is the most extended study to-date of the genre, has identified 500 songs that were released during the boom, with the peak coming in 1938-1940.⁷ These were precisely the years when the unruly “erotic grotesque nonsense” culture that Miriam Silverberg has explored was increasingly the target of state suppression.⁸ In what was proclaimed a period of national crisis, with the potentially subversive pleasures of the body seeing stricter regulation, Japanese popular audiences turned to tairiku melodies for the sort of intense embodied pleasures and emotions that music, especially dance music, provided. That pleasure came with complex ideological layering: enjoying this music meant literally to internalize it, allowing the rhythms and melodies of the songs to reorganize the listener’s body at the most intimate level. At the same time, paradoxically, the exoticizing elements that characterized the genre solicited

⁵ Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads*, 56. See also Lipsitz’ discussion of American minstrelsy on 53-56.

⁶ Rosemary J. Coombe, *The Cultural Life of Intellectual Properties: Authorship, Appropriation, and the Law* (Durham: Duke UP, 1998), 215.

⁷ Edgar W. Pope, “Songs of Empire: Continental Asia in Japanese Wartime Popular Music.” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Washington, 1993), 3.

⁸ Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*.

an act of externalization, a pushing away of the music as alien and foreign. In sum, through the acts of “musicking” performed both by musicians and their fans, tairiku melodies provided embodied modes of performance that both blurred and reinforced the boundaries between Japan and China.⁹ Enjoying this music meant both transgressing and enforcing racialized boundaries. The inherent ambiguity arising out of this counterfeit status allowed the music to speak to multiple real social contradictions, transforming them into a source of intense pleasure for Japanese listeners, and for continental Asian fans as well. This intense pleasure was often enlisted in service of the ideological mission of the Japanese fascist state, yet it was also potentially dangerous to that state: embodied pleasures have a way of leading to undisciplined outcomes. It was this aspect that led to the virtual banning of tairiku melodies by the early 1940s, a fate similar to that suffered by the Chinese counterpart to the genre, the hybrid “yellow music” of 1930s’ China that Andrew Jones has analyzed.¹⁰

In trying to understand this genre and the sorts of desires and politics it invoked, I have found it useful to turn to recent studies of American blackface minstrelsy.¹¹ Obviously, there are enormous cultural and historical differences between tairiku

⁹ I follow here Christopher Small in trying to conceive of music less as a noun than as a verb, a communal activity in which agency exists simultaneously at multiple locations: performers, composers, listeners, record buyers, ushers, etc. See Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1998).

¹⁰ Andrew F. Jones, *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham: Duke UP, 2001).

¹¹ On American blackface minstrelsy, I have relied on Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993); Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Daphne A. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006).; and David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991), esp. 115-131.

melodies and the blackface performances carried out on the New York stage in the 1840s and 50s or on the Hollywood silver screen in the 1920s and 30s, differences that we ignore only at tremendous risk. But there are also intriguing parallels that make me want to pursue the comparison to see what it might tell us about the *tairiku* melodies.

Moreover, as we will see, there are direct historical connections between the genres, and their juxtaposition also helps us situate early twentieth-century relations between China and Japan within a more global framework. Blackface minstrelsy was a primary technology by which marginal American ethnic groups—be they Irish immigrants from the 1840s or the children of Jewish immigrants in the 1920s and 30s—performed into being their own status as white, that is, as civilized. By appropriating in parodic fashion the racist stereotypes of African-American appearance, speech, and culture, these groups transgressed the color line, only thereby to redraw the line, this time with themselves situated on the white side of the boundary, the side of civilization and enlightenment. At the same time, the genre provided an outlet for transforming potentially explosive social contradictions—ethnic, class, and gendered—within the so-called white community into sources of carnivalesque pleasure.

Blackface minstrelsy has been proclaimed America's first vernacular form of national popular culture. In the U.S., the "development of a distinctive national identity," one distinct in particular from its former colonial masters in Europe, derived "from a proclaimed intimacy between whites and peoples of color," an intimacy that was at the same time a form of exclusion.¹² The *tairiku* melodies, I will argue, functioned similarly as a technique for performing into being Japan's own status as a civilizing

¹² Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 25.

power, as the honorary whites of East Asia, even as it celebrated colonial intimacy with continental Asia. It likewise functioned as a channel for eliciting the desires and defusing the painful contradictions that this civilizing mission required. As a parodic appropriation of Chinese cultural forms, *tairiku* melodies helped reconfigure ideologically Japan's relations to China in a way that made pleasurable sense to the very consumer-subjects (to borrow Silverberg's phrase) who were being called upon to sacrifice their own pleasures, and their own lives, in the imperial mission of the Japanese nation-state. At the same time, the pleasures and desires that it produced were potentially dangerous to that mission, since they could not be so easily policed. In fact, this riskiness was crucial to the effectiveness of the genre: *tairiku* melodies had to be potentially dangerous in order to produce the intense affect that imperialism required. This was precisely the game that a counterfeit culture enabled, one that a realist or supposedly authentic culture could not support.

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A number of historical starting points are available for my paper. We could begin in the 1840s and 50s, the period in which American blackface minstrelsy first emerged and when the Opium War and the Perry Expedition brought to a crisis point the reorganization of the previous Sino-Centric geopolitical order in East Asia. When Commodore Perry's fleet landed in Japan in 1853 and again in 1854, they bore numerous curious gifts for their unwilling Japanese hosts. Perhaps the most curious of these was the "Ethiopian Concert," a blackface minstrel show performed by members of Perry's

crew.¹³ A tradition of blackface performance was quickly established in Japan, one that continues to this day.¹⁴ Travel narratives written by Japanese who journeyed to the West in the 1860s and 70s show how quickly the lesson of minstrelsy was learned: frequent descriptions of savage “darkies” show how the possibilities for achieving honorary whiteness by Japan were grasped. As Masao Miyoshi notes in his discussion of disparaging comments toward Africans and African-Americans made by members of the 1860 Japanese embassy to the U.S.,

In their identification with the white Americans, they were prepared to reject any people the white Americans scorned. Thus American racism did not bother them much, nor did white supremacy, since the Japanese would be like the whites some day.¹⁵

The reverberations of Perry’s minstrel show would reach the American side of the Pacific, as well. One of the first exhibitions in the U.S. of Japanese curios in the years following Perry’s mission was held at P.T. Barnum’s Great American Museum in New York City—at the time a primary performance venue for blackface minstrel shows.¹⁶ Moreover, this was not the first time Japan had entered the imaginary field of American blackface performance: H.J. Conway’s largely pro-Southern theatrical version of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was staged at the Boston Museum in 1852, and we know from correspondence between the playwright and theater manager that they considered at one

¹³ The program for the concert is available on line at: http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027j/black_ships_and_samurai/core_encounters_west.html

¹⁴ John G. Russell, “Consuming Passions: Spectacle, Self-Transformation, and the Commodification of Blackness in Japan,” *positions* 6:1 (Spring 1998), 113-177.

¹⁵ Masao Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them: The First Japanese Embassy to the United States (1860)* (Berkeley: U California P, 1979), 64.

¹⁶ The Barnum Japan exhibit is mentioned in Christine Guth, *Longfellow’s Tattoos: Tourism, Collecting, and Japan* (Seattle: U Washington P, 2004), 12-13. On Barnum’s role in promoting blackface minstrelsy, see Lott, *Love and Theft*, 75-77 and Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 52.

point including Japanese elements in their staging of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel.¹⁷

This intertwining between Japan and blackface would persist. One of the most influential portraits of Japan in nineteenth-century American popular culture came from "Madam Butterfly," originally a short story by John Luther Long (1897), then adapted into a successful Broadway play by David Belasco (1900), and finally into Puccini's opera version (1904). In its language and structure, Long's original short story clearly translates elements from blackface minstrelsy. The heroine Cho-Cho-San's mangling of English is supposed to represent a Japanese accent, but seem much closer in form and tone to blackface. In a comic sequence, she performs for her loyal maid, imagining the day her beloved Pinkerton will return. She describes how she will introduce him for the first time to his own son¹⁸:

"Well,"—she was making it up as she went,—“when tha's 's all done, he loog roun' those ways lig he doing 'mos' always, an' he see sump'n' an' he say: 'Oh, 'el-lo! Where you got that chile?' I say: 'Ah—oh—*ah!* I thing mebby you lig own one, an' I buy 'im of a man what din' wan' no bebbby with those purple eye an' bald hairs.' An' he as' me, 'What you pay?' Americans always as' what you pay. I say: 'Oh, lem me see. I thing, two yen an' two sen. Tha' 's too moach for bald bebbby?'”

¹⁷ Conway ultimately rejected the proposal to use what he calls “the Jappanese [*sic*] idea” in his play. See Bruce A. McConachie, “H.J. Conway's Dramatization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: A Previously Unpublished Letter,” *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 2, (May, 1982), pp. 149-154. A 1907 production in Japan of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Li Shutong and Ouyang Yuqien, two pioneers of Chinese modern drama (itself based on an earlier Japanese *Shinpa* [new school drama] production of the play), is conventionally identified as a turning point in the rise of modern theater in China. See Siyuan Lu, “The Impact of *Shinpa* on Early Chinese *Huaju*,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 23.2 (2006) 342-355; and Carol Martin, “Brecht, Feminism, and Chinese Theater,” *The Drama Review* 43.4 (1999) 77-85.

¹⁸ John Luther Long, “Madame Butterfly,” *The Century Magazine* (January 1898), 374-392. The passages quoted below all appear on 380.

Notice the language here not only sounds like blackface burlesque of African-American English, but also that Cho-Cho-San explicitly uses the notion of buying and selling human beings as part of her performance. Shortly thereafter, still for the benefit of her maid, she grabs not a banjo but a samisen and sings a ditty that Pinkerton has taught her, the narrator informing us that she performs “making it as grotesque as possible the more to amuse him.”

Another potential starting point for this paper comes with developments in modern mass media taking place in 1915, the year after the establishment of the first recording studio and record pressing plant in China.¹⁹ D.W. Griffith’s epic *Birth of a Nation* was beginning the process of bringing blackface racist fantasies from the theatrical stage to the new medium of film, while in Japan Matsui Sumako became Japan’s first modern recording star. Sumako’s recording of “Katchūsha no uta” (Katchūsha’s song), the featured song in her appearance as the heroine in a popular stage version of Tolstoy’s “Resurrection,” sold 20,000 copies. The first Japanese-produced record to sell in mass quantities, it was based in part on racial masquerade, as Sumako played a white woman, as she had in several other theatrical productions. This masquerade also spelled the beginning of the end for gender-crossing in the modern Japanese theater: Sumako was the major figure in the transition from the ‘barbaric’ use of biologically male *onnagata* actors for female roles to the use of biologically female performers on the dramatic stage. Her performance was a crucial turning point in Japanese popular culture’s rise to a self-conscious modernity: that is to say, her performance of proper gender boundaries on the stage and in the recording studio was an

¹⁹ Jones, *Yellow Music*, 53.

important turning point in the civilizing process in Japan, in Japan's performance of the role as the honorary white power of East Asia.²⁰

Another starting point lies with the 1924 Immigration and Alien Exclusion Act of the United States. This severely limited American immigration to groups that were not thought to be sufficiently white—including Asians (especially Japanese: Chinese immigration had already been banned by earlier laws) and Eastern Europeans, especially Jews. For Jewish immigrants to the U.S., the overt racism of the new immigration law was one sign of rising anti-Semitism, a trend that increased the urgency of assimilation into mainstream white American society. This assimilation was carried out in mass culture by the blackface songs of such popular Jewish performers as Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor, and George Jessel. By temporarily becoming black, these performers helped acquire the status of white for Jewish immigrants and their children.

For Japanese musicians, on the other hand, the 1924 law meant that travel to the U.S. to learn the new music of jazz firsthand became increasingly different. As a result, to learn their musical chops after 1924 they increasingly traveled to Shanghai, the jazz capital of East Asia in the 1920s and 30s.²¹ Ri Kōran, Watanabe Hamako, and Hattori Tomiko all performed in Shanghai, often in musical revues staged by Hattori Ryōichi, who spent most of the war years in the city working together with Japanese, Chinese, and other Western and Asian musicians. Tairiku melodies were in many ways the mixed-blood child of the lively Shanghai musical scene. That city also gave birth to many

²⁰ On Matsui Sumako, see Ayako Kano, *Acting Like a Woman in Modern Japan: Theater, Gender, and Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

²¹ On the role Shanghai and other continental Asian locales played in the development of Japanese jazz, see Ueda Ken'ichi, *Shanghai bugiugi 1945: Hattori Ryōichi no bōken* (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomo Sha, 2003); and E. Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan* (Durham: Duke UP, 2001), esp. 127-163.

aspects of postwar Japanese popular music as well: it was in Shanghai, for example, that Hattori Ryōichi first encountered the sheet music for the song “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy,” setting him off into experiments with that new up-tempo jazz style that would lead to such postwar hits as Kasagi Shizuko’s “Tokyo Boogie Woogie.” It was also in Shanghai that Ryōichi became close friends with the Chinese composer Li Jinguang, whose song “Ye Lai Xiang” would become an enormous hit in 1949 for Yamaguchi Yoshiko (the former Ri Kōran), with Ryōichi acting as arranged and producer.²²

Finally, I might start my narrative of tairiku melodies with the crackdown on dissent and decadence in Japan during the mid 1930s. Dance music in popular jazz-derived genres was increasingly targeted for suppression and restrictions. The revision of Japan’s censorship laws in 1936 extended the domain of works requiring pre-publication censorship to the new media of records, and numerous songs were banned as injurious to public morals—including Watanabe Hamako’s 1935 debut single, “Wasurecha iya yo” (Don’t you dare forget me).²³ Police monitored live performances and dancehalls as well for conduct deemed unbecoming for imperial subjects, and in particular Western jazz came in for scrutiny and censure. Dancehalls were all finally shut down in November, 1940 and public performances of jazz became largely impossible after Pearl Harbor.²⁴

In sum, by 1937 it had become increasingly difficult to express directly the erotic and political pleasures of the body in the sorts of jazz songs that had boomed earlier in the decade. Popular music saw a shift similar to that which Silverberg identifies as taking place in popular film magazines such as *Eiga no Tomo* during the period:

²² The 1949 version had lyrics translated into Japan; earlier, during the war years when she was still known as Ri Kōran, she had recorded the song in Chinese.

²³ Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 26.

²⁴ Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 172.

By the second half of the 1930s there was a shift from emphasis on *eros* to emphasis on empire.... By the late 1930s, *Eiga no Tomo* attempted to eroticize empire through an attempt to let go of Hollywood fantasies, through the redefinition of the priorities of Japanese spectators, andthrough an engagement with the everyday on the Chinese continent.²⁵

The tairiku melodies emerged at this point to provide pleasures of a potentially less dangerous sort, one that seemed to mobilize bodily desires in service of the imperial mission by creating a fetishistic fantasy version of Asia as an object for desire. But this counterfeit genre was not completely safe: even tairiku melodies were viewed suspiciously by censors and other government officials. Government censor Ogawa Chikagoro in 1941 wrote:

Every company has a large number of songs about Shanghai. They are full of sentimentalism and eroticism---falling lilacs, the scent of horse chestnut trees (I doubt whether there ever are any such trees in Shanghai!)...and the nearly obligatory appearance of a *guniang* weepily playing her lute around the window of a tea house. This sort of thing might pass in lyrical poetry, but it has no *spirit*.

Such music, Ogawa complained, had “a profound influence over the masses” and made it almost “impossible to extract the vulgarity from these songs.”²⁶ In other words, even in the fetishistic, explicitly colonizing and racializing form of the tairiku melodies, the bodily pleasures produced through musicking were simultaneously a disciplining and an opening onto unruliness, a site where dangerous social contradictions might erupt unexpectedly: released at the height of an imperial war of expansion, they hinted at the possibility of civil war.

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²⁵ Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 131.

²⁶ Quoted in Baskett, *Attractive Empire*, 119; translations by Baskett. The original source is Ogawa Chikagorō, *Hayariuta to Sessō: Jihenka ni okeru kayō no shimei* (Tokyo: Nihon Keisatsu Shinbunsha, 1941), 179.

Let me turn now to my three singers and their songs in an attempt to trace through some of the tangled strands that went into tairiku melodies. I cannot pretend to provide a comprehensive survey of the genre or of its significance, but I do hope tentatively to open up some of the questions it raises that help us see the complexity of this openly counterfeit genre.

Watanabe Hamako (1910-1999), the recognized queen of the genre, was born and raised in the former port-treaty city of Yokohama, meaning that already from childhood she lived in a contact zone between China, Japan and the West.²⁷ The second daughter of an English teacher at a woman's college, she was educated at a missionary school, where her musical talents led her teachers to recommend she pursue advanced training. In 1930, she enrolled in an elite musical conservatory, Musashino Ongaku Gakkō (forerunner of today's Musashino Academia Musicae), graduating in 1933. Shortly thereafter, she signed a recording contract with Nippon Victor and made her debut as a popular singer. As jazz music boomed in Japan, it was not unusual for conservatory-trained singers to be recruited to sing blues and other dance numbers: Awaya Noriko, the "Japanese Queen of the Blues" who debuted in 1937 with "Wakare Blues" (Parting Blues, composed by Hattori Ryōichi) and who recorded several tairiku melodies, was also a formally trained singer, as were Fujiyama Ichirō, Futaba Akiko, Satō Chiyako, Kirishima Noboru, and many others. Already trained in the standard scales and harmonic forms of

²⁷ Details on Watanabe's life come from her autobiography, *Watanabe Hamako, Aa wasurarenu kokyū: Watanabe Hamako fuoto jijōden* (Tokyo: Senshi Kankō Kai, 1983), and from Nakata Seiichi, *Monten Rupa no yoru wa fukete: Kikotsu no hito Watanabe Hamako no shōgai* (Tokyo: NHK Shuppan, 2004).

Western music, such singers only needed to acquire the rhythm of popular dance music in order to succeed in the newly risen genres.²⁸

In 1935, as I've already noted, Hamako had her first hit, "Wasurecha iya yo," a song that came in for censorship for its supposed excessive sensuality. In 1937, Hamako joined the Nippon Columbia record label, and it was there that she would enjoy her greatest success. In 1938, she paid her first visit to China in a morale-boosting tour for Japanese troops organized by a Japanese newspaper. Shortly after returning from that tour she recorded what would become her biggest hit: "Shina no Yoru" (China nights). She quickly became recognized as the queen of tairiku melodies. She scored another hit in 1939 with a Japanese-language adaptation of "Heri Jun Zai Lai" (Japanese: "Hōri Chun Tsairai"; music by Yen Lu, lyrics by Bei Ling), previously a hit in China for singer Zhou Xuan. Hamako spent the remaining war years traveling back and forth between Japan, China, Korea and Manchuria. On August 15, 1945, Hamako heard the Emperor's surrender broadcast while on tour in Tienchin, China. She spent several months in a repatriation camp there, performing regularly for Japanese (Chinese troops insisted she change the lyrics of her best-known "Shina no Yoru" to a more respectful "Chūgoku no Musume")²⁹ and finally returned to Japan in May, 1946.

In the postwar era, she continued to record, including such Orientalist numbers as "San Francisco Chinatown." She is perhaps best remembered today for her 1952 hit, "Monten Rupa no Yoru wa Fukete" (Night Deepens at Monten Lupa), a song composed by two members of a group of convicted Japanese Class B and C war criminals awaiting execution in the Philippines. Hamako visited the convicts at New Bilibid prison in the

²⁸ Nakata, *Monten Rupa no yoru*, 45-46.

²⁹ Nakata, *Monten Rupa no yoru*, 116.

Philippines on Christmas, 1952, and the following year her efforts and those of other supporters led to the prisoners being allowed to return to Japan, their death sentences commuted.³⁰ Her death on December 31, 1999 symbolically brought to a close Japan's turbulent twentieth century. Her body was sent to the crematorium holding a Chinese-style fan in her hand.³¹

Her 1940 hit “Soshū Yakyoku” (Suzhou Serenade; music by Hattori Ryōichi, lyrics by Saijō Yaso) is “often cited as the best of the tairiku songs, and is certainly the one that has been best remembered in the postwar years.”³² The song was initially composed for the film *Shina no Yoru*, where it was sung by Ri Kōran and her male co-star, Hasegawa Kazuo. For the record version, Watanabe sang in duet with the popular male singer, Kirishima Noboru (who also recorded several tairiku melodies). Initially an enormous hit, like so many tairiku melodies the song was eventually banned for being “decadent and sentimental.”³³

The lyrics evoke images of moonlight, weeping willows, and floating down the waterways of Suzhou. The first and third verses are sung by the female, while the middle verse is sung by the man, and if we connect these voices to the film version, Watanabe sings here in the guise of a Chinese woman, while Hasegawa voices the role of her Japanese male lover. We imagine a fleeting romantic encounter with a native woman in an exotic locale, a fantasy that the music of the song only strengthens. The melody signals Chineseness in numerous ways: Watanabe sings her lyrics in Japanese, but in a

³⁰ Nakata, *Monten Rupa no yoru* provides extensive information on this incident. See also John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: Pantheon, 1999), 514-515, for a less celebratory version.

³¹ Nakata, *Monten Rupa no yoru*, 18.

³² Pope, “Songs of Empire,” 371.

³³ Pope, “Songs of Empire,” 382.

nasal tone at the upper range of her soprano voice and with frequent melisma and vibrato, producing a warbling sound that Japanese listeners thought resembled typical Chinese singing styles (these techniques are much less pronounced in the passages sung by Kirishima). Likewise, the violin played at the opening and during the bridge imitates a Chinese bowed lute, we hear a muted gong at the fade out, and the song includes multiple other instances of Western instruments counterfeiting what were thought to be Chinese sounds. The pentatonic melody also signifies Chineseness, and while published scores for the song identify it as being in the key of B-flat Major, the song also flirts with the relative minor key of G minor. Hence, Pope argues that the song is marked by an ambiguous minor/major key, which he argues is a common musical marker of Chineseness in tairiku melodies. These Orientalizing gestures themselves were in many ways counterfeit: composer Hattori acknowledged that his song borrowed as much from American Tin Pan Alley Orientalism as from actual Chinese sources.³⁴

Like minstrel songs, tairiku melodies pretended to voice the emotions and thoughts of a racialized other. Moreover, like minstrel songs, tairiku melodies tend to belong to two broad types. A typical minstrel show would feature in its first half rowdy songs adopting the position of a “black dandy” in a northern urban setting, and sentimental and romantic ballads set on southern plantations in the second half (the 1854 “Ethiopian Concert” on Matthew Perry’s flag ship was no exception). This standard division was well-known in Japan. A 1939 review in a Japanese music magazine of a recent album of compositions by Stephen Foster noted, “Among his works are some that are the despairing, mournful howl of the negroes, while others display their other face:

³⁴ See the musical score for “Soshū yakyoku” in *Nihon no uta*, 8 volumes (Tokyo: Nobarasha, 1998), 2:321-322; and Pope, “Songs of Empire,” 376-379.

optimistic, cheerful songs.”³⁵ “Suzhou Serenade” parallels the former style, its nostalgic sadness and romanticism recalling such Foster compositions as “Old Black Joe,” “Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming,” or “Old Folks At Home,” works that by 1940 were already well-loved in Japan.

In minstrel shows, the counterfeit nature of these mournful ballads allowed working-class audiences to give voice to resentful sentiments that were likely too dangerous to voice directly.³⁶ In other words, a kind of civil war was already being fought out in the conflicted bodies performing on the minstrel stage.³⁷ Working class audiences in 1850s New York, undergoing economic hard times, used blackface culture to both express and deflect class rage. As Lott notes, “Minstrelsy was a prime example of the sometimes contestatory character of plebeian culture, articulating class difference, intentionally or not, by calling on the insurrectionary resonances of black culture.” Blackface was a performance strategy of “corporeal containment”: the potentially insurrectionary pleasures of the body were allowed expression, but only so as to contain them again, so that class hatred was translated into racial hatred and “anticapitalist frustrations stalled potentially positive racial feelings and significations, revealing in the end the viciously racist underside of those frustrations.”³⁸ Moreover, it provided “the

³⁵ Noguchi Hisamitsu, “Fosutaa no meikyokushū o kiite,” *Rekōdo ongaku* 13:8 (August 1939), 90-94. This passage appears on 92. Noguchi concludes his very celebratory review by recommending the new Foster recordings as an album that belongs in every Japanese home and proclaiming Foster “the American Schubert.”

³⁶ Pope makes a similar case for the ways that “exoticism” in popular culture such as tairiku melodies can give voice to notions that “ideology” tends to silence. This is particularly the case, he argues, in the face of the “stress” produced by modern urban life in Japan. See “Songs of Empire,” esp. 46-52 and 106-112.

³⁷ Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*, 22.

³⁸ Lott, *Love and Theft*, 87, 118, and 135.

emotional form to mourn the loss of the old” by serving as “the transitional object whose emotional linkage to a world left behind facilitated movement forward and away.”³⁹

Tairiku melodies seem to have functioned in similar ways. As E. Taylor Atkins notes in an important recent article on Japanese appropriations of the song “Arirang” during the Korean colonial period, what seemed on the surface to be a song about Korea actually gave indirect voice to social antagonisms in metropolitan Japan. “Arirang” to Japanese listeners “served as both an ethnographic lens through which to gaze on the Korean psyche and a mirror for self-reflection. In the context of colonial rule, observations gleaned through the lens might be useful for drafting cultural policy, yet the mirror revealed uncomfortable truths about Japan’s abandonment of traditional lifeways.”⁴⁰ In other words, the song that Korean colonial subjects used to lament loss of national sovereignty sounded to Japanese ears like a lament for the contradictions and traumas induced by modernity.

“Suzhou Serenade” provided intense pleasure by giving voice to social resentments in a historical situation marked by rigid suppression of dissent. At the same time, the songs projected China as a place where, for better or worse, such antagonisms did not exist—thereby creating both a positive utopian and a negative primitivist imagery. The painful strictures that an industrializing capitalist economy and an increasingly authoritarian state imposed on mass audiences were expressed in potentially troubling ways yet also transformed into a source of intense, seemingly harmless, pleasure. As a result of the disciplining Japanese consumer-subjects had undergone over the course of

³⁹ Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 147.

⁴⁰ E. Taylor Atkins, “The Dual Career of ‘Arirang’: The Korean Resistance Anthem That Became a Japanese Pop Hit,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 66:3 (2007), 645-687. This passage occurs on 647.

several decades, they had been forced to surrender the pleasures of a Sino-centric order, including musical forms that did not translate well to modern Western-originated modes of transcription; they had been submitted to industrial disciplining and increasing class conflict, especially in the years of the Great Depression; they had been forced to adopt standardized national language and thereby surrender the pleasures of speaking in local dialects; they had been subjected to normative modes of gender and sexuality that rendered illegitimate forms of pleasure and lifestyle that had earlier seen wide acceptance; they had been forcibly mobilized to supply the troops, labor, and capital needed to carry out the state's expansionist policies. The counterfeit performance of Chineseness in "Suzhou Serenade" gave voice to the resentments and rage that these sacrifices had provoked, it opened up potentially dangerous forms of pleasure by linking Japanese to Chinese bodies, yet it at the same time it solicited consumer-subjects to desire their own domination as cogs within the new world order the state was attempting to produce. Moreover, under conditions of a capitalist culture industry, the record offered itself as a therapeutic commodity that promised to dull the pain. "The costume that constituted that constituted the actor's fetish—I am what I am not—was from another angle the commodity fetish, the magical power of the object to gratify need."⁴¹

The dangerous crossroads along which the song traveled allowed Japanese listeners to play at being Chinese females, blurring their identities as Japanese only to reinforce them. These tendencies were not unique to Japan, of course: "Suzhou Serenade" also achieved popularity in the English-speaking world under the title "China

⁴¹ Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 50.

Baby in my Arms.”⁴² According to composer Hattori, the song also enjoyed wide popularity in China, where listeners and performers no doubt derived equally dangerous pleasures and desires from it. In all of these settings, it was the counterfeit nature of this *tairiku* melody that allows it to flirt with what would be too dangerous to express directly in a medium that laid claim to realism and authenticity.

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The careers of Hattori Tomiko (1917-1981) and her brother Ryōichi were intertwined from the start. The two were raised in Osaka, the jazz Mecca of Japan early in the Shōwa era (1926-1989). The youngest daughter in a poor but highly musical family of five children, Tomiko joined the all-female Takarazuka Theatrical Troupe in the early 1930s to study voice.⁴³ She would subsequently appear as a chorus girl in a number of Takarazuka Reviews in Osaka and Tokyo. In September, 1935 she made her recording debut, singing her brother’s jazz chorus number “Asa no Kōcha wo Meshiagare” (Drink Your Morning Tea!) for the Nittō label. In 1934, she followed her brother to sign with the Nippon Columbia label, where she debuted with “Kotori Musume” (Little-Bird Girl), another of her brother’s compositions and the first of the “girl” numbers for which she would become known.⁴⁴

In 1938, composer Koga Masao lured Tomiko away to Teichiku records, and it was with that label in December, 1938 that Tomiko would release what became her signature number, “Manshū Musume” (Manchuria Girl).⁴⁵ Tomiko would subsequently

⁴² Minami Yōji, CD liner notes to Watanabe Hamako, *Shina no yoru* (Nippon Columbia COCA-10763, 1993).

⁴³ Hattori Ryōichi, *Boku no ongaku jinsei* (Tokyo: Chūō Bungeisha, 1982), 93-95.

⁴⁴ Hattori, *Boku no ongaku jinsei*, 131-136.

⁴⁵ Hattori, *Boku no ongaku jinsei*, 177-178.

go on to co-star in both the 1940 film *Shina no Yoru* and in the 1940 Enoken musical-comedy spectacular, *Songoku* (The Monkey King, alongside Watanabe Hamako and Ri Kōran), set in a highly Orientalized fantasy version of ancient China, where she played a young Chinese maiden.⁴⁶ She frequently performed and was photographed in Chinese dress during this period.⁴⁷ During the war, she traveled to China, often in the company of Watanabe Hamako, to appear in morale-boosting shows for Japanese troops at the front lines. In China, she also linked up with her brother in Shanghai.⁴⁸ She would continue her work as a singer and actress in the postwar years, frequently recording her brother's compositions—including the 1949 release “Bye Bye Shanghai.” She accompanied Ryōichi, Watanabe Hamako and Kasagai Shizuko on their triumphant 1950 American tour.

“Manshū Musume” (music by Suzuki Tetsuo, lyrics by Ishimatsu Shūji) belonged to a lineage of 1930s “musume” songs with lyrics often set in exotic colonial locations: “Shūchō no Musume” (The Chieftan's Daughter, 1930), “Shima no Musume” (Island Girl, 1932), “Hanauri Musume” (Flower Girl, 1934), “Oshare Musume” (Stylish Girl, 1936), “Banana Musume” (Banana Girl, 1937), “Shanghai no Hanauri Musume” (Shanghai Flower Girl, 1939), “Kanton Musume” (Canton Girl, 1940), “Pekin Musume” (Peking Girl, 1940), “Nankin Musume” (Nanjing Girl, 1941), etc.⁴⁹ As Pope notes, the songs often featured a female vocalist singing in the first person, voicing the desires of a young

⁴⁶ Baskett, *Attractive Empire*, 124-128. On *Songoku*, see also Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 263-265. See also Fig. 37 in Silverberg's volume for a photograph of Enoken performing in blackface in a 1930s Tokyo musical revue.

⁴⁷ Pope, “Songs of Empire,” 356.

⁴⁸ Hattori, *Boku no ongaku jinsei*, 207.

⁴⁹ Michael Baskett, *The Attractive Empire: Colonial Asia in Japanese Imperial Film Culture, 1931-1953*, Doctoral Dissertation (University of California-Los Angeles, 2000), 114-116.

girl—age sixteen seems standard.⁵⁰ “Musume” songs usually feature cheerful, bright melodies, while the lyrics often rely on a sense of innocence or cuteness to produce a kind of indirect, disavowed eroticism.

In Tomiko’s hit number, the “musume” is a sixteen-year-old girl stuck in the middle of the Manchurian winter, dreaming of the coming spring when she will finally marry her beloved Wang. Censors considered the song decadent, but supposedly allowed it to be released on the condition that it not be heavily promoted.⁵¹ The record nonetheless became an enormous hit, and its refrain, “Wan-san, mattete chōdai, ne” (Mr. Wang, please wait for me, okay?), became a popular catchphrase of the day. Tomiko revived it in her 1950 recording “Harō, Wan-san,” where it became “Harō Wan-san, mattete” (Hello, Mr. Wang, wait for me). The lyrics to “Manshū Musume” are in Japanese, though a couple of Chinese words are thrown in for flavor. Musically, the song conveys Chineseness through many of the same techniques found in “Suzhou Serenade”: pentatonic melody, a nasal warbling vocal style, gongs used to provide color, and Western instruments masquerading as Chinese counterparts. Again, though, the song is clearly a counterfeit: no one would mistake the singer or the composition for being “authentically” Chinese.

As Pope notes, unlike “Suzhou Serenade,” this and the other “musume” songs do not suggest romance between a Chinese woman and a Japanese man. Here, both lovers are explicitly Chinese. Knowledge that the singer was “really” a Japanese woman, however, and that she was expressing desire for a Chinese man, probably lent the song a

⁵⁰ Pope, “Songs of Empire,” 348-351.

⁵¹ Footnote to musical score for “Manshū musume,” *Nihon no uta* 2:194.

risky erotic charge for contemporary listeners.⁵² But even if we accept the lyric's premise that the female character is Chinese, it is clear that the song exoticized its singer in ways that were ideologically effective in late 1930s Japan. In other words, the counterfeiting of China is used here to give expression to social antagonisms that troubled 1930s Japan. Again, we can turn to blackface minstrel songs to try to understand the desires, fears, and pleasures that this counterfeit song was attempting to solicit and manage. As Michael Rogin notes, "Blackface made new identities for white men by fixing the identities of women and African Americans."⁵³ In response to anxieties provoked by changing norms for gender and sexuality, American minstrel shows of the 1850s often staged parodic and grotesque romances between supposedly black females and males (all roles played, of course, by white men). In the "doubled structure of looking" that such sequences enacted, white spectators could fantasize about spying on black figures looking at one another. The grotesquely performed female bodies allowed white male spectators to access forbidden pre-Oedipal pleasures (and terrors) of the body, and simultaneously gave outlet to various forms of the unspeakable: white male desire for black male bodies, for example, and white male misogyny directed at white females.⁵⁴ In the face of industrial capitalism's challenges to existing modes of masculine self-identity, blackface provided a source of fetishistic enjoyment to male spectators anxious about their own status as patriarchs.

Similarly, "Manshū Musume" hints that Chinese, especially Chinese females, retain something that Japanese (and Japanese females in particular) had lost, a something

⁵² I am grateful to Richard Calichman for point this out.

⁵³ Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 52.

⁵⁴ Lott, *Love and Theft*, 146-153.

on which Japanese male listeners might well stake their own masculinity. In the face of the aggressive “Modern Girl” who militantly demanded sexual, political, and economic autonomy, and in the face of rapid changes in economic and social structures that rendered older modes of masculinity untenable, anxieties about gender and sexual norms were part and parcel of the crisis situation perceived by Japanese consumer-subjects in the late 1930s. That the audience for “Manshū Musume” also included many Japanese females as well as males complicates matters, as well. Moreover, a 1940 article in a Japanese music magazine written by a soldier at the front reported that he often heard Chinese children sing the song.⁵⁵

A 1933 article on Chinese jazz published in a Japanese music magazine suggests reasons why “Manshū Musume” would a few years later prove so popular among Japanese listeners. The article celebrates the great diversity of musical performance venues and performers available in Shanghai, which far surpassed those that could be found in Tokyo. Nonetheless, as it surveys the works of composer Li Jinhui and performers such as Wang Renmei and Li Minhui, it finds that in terms of technique and intelligence, Chinese jazz musicians lag behind those in Japan. This lag, however, might in fact work to the benefit of the Chinese musicians.

Westerners who compare Chinese [*shinajin*] and Japanese all say the same thing: while in terms of degree of modern culture they overwhelming respect Japan, in terms of humanness they sympathize more with the Chinese. Japanese are indecisive and self-conscious, while Chinese are unrestrained and emotional. In jazz performance, Paul Whiteman has said, emotions and sentiment are of primary importance.

⁵⁵ Fukuhara Akio, “Sensen tsūshin,” *Rekōdo Ongaku* 14:2 (February, 1940), 68-69. Fukuhara writes that “Manshū Musume” was the second mostly popular song among Chinese children he encountered. The first was “Aikoku Kōshinkyoku” (Patriotic March). He also mentions hearing children sing “Shanghai no Hanauri Musume” and “Shina no Yoru.”

The reason the inferiority of their [Chinese] compositions ends up winning sympathetic acceptance as something charming is that their melodies and songs give off the emotionalism that is in the Chinese national character. When Chinese feel pain they say that it hurts, and when they want to laugh they just laugh. It is enjoyable [*omoshiroi*] to feel such undistorted emotions. And this is what Japanese simply cannot do. We have been taught that even when we are happy, it is more virtuous to act as if we were not happy. Accordingly, when we listen to Japanese popular songs, we can see too clearly the technique: a sad song is sung in a self-consciously sad manner. I've never heard a single melody that made me feel so good I spontaneously wanted to dance. This is why Japanese jazz performances are lousy.⁵⁶

The patronizing descriptions of Chinese simplicity and emotionality echo the words the blackface minstrel performers and fans used to describe African-American culture and song. The apparent sympathy that the counterfeit culture of minstrelsy showed for African-American music parallels that of this 1933 Japanese jazz critic, who follows the above passage by directly linking Chinese jazz to Stephen Foster, the king of minstrel composers:

That's why it is so remarkably pleasurable to listen to Chinese jazz. I enjoy its truly bright and cheerful spirit, its carefree melodies. The pure humorousness of the Chinese ethnic character more than makes up for the technical deficiencies. [...] Since the Shanghai Incident, I've managed to listen to ten new records of Chinese popular songs. Among them was a jazz arrangement of Foster's "Oh Susanna" sung in Chinese by Wang Renmei. It's the same old unvaried accompaniment, but listening to it I sense a genuinely intimate ease [*hedate no nai kokoroyasusa*] and an uninhibited gentleness, and I feel such pleasure I can't help but smile [lit.: can't prohibit myself from smiling: *bishō o kinjienai*].⁵⁷

Like Wang's "Oh Susanna," "Manshū Musume" provided the fantasy image of a feminized China, a realm where women were still women: emotional, obedient, and dependent. The song solicited, that is, the fetishistic desire for a world where men could

⁵⁶ Kawaguchi Shigeru, "Shina no jazu," *Rekōdo ongaku* 7:7 (July 1933), 105-107. This passage appears on 106-107.

⁵⁷ Kawaguchi, "Shina no jazu," 107.

still act as men: a pleasure that could now only be had in Japan, fleetingly, by buying and enjoying the commodity that was the song.

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Kasagi Shizuko (1914-1981) is best known for her string of postwar boogie-woogie songs, which provided the musical soundtrack for the American Occupation period (1945-1952). But her recording career dates back to the 1930s. Another product of the lively 1920s jazz scene in Osaka, she debuted there in 1927 as a chorus girl in the Shōchiku Musical Review. The following year, she moved to Tokyo to further her career, and in 1934 she made her recording debut. In 1939, she linked up with Hattori Ryōichi, and he would subsequently compose or arrange all of her recordings until her retirement as a singer in the mid 1950s. She became the dominant female singer in early postwar pop, with such hit numbers as “Tokyo Boogie Woogie” (1947), “Jungle Boogie” (1948, featured in Kurosawa Akira’s film *Drunken Angel*), and “Kaimono Boogie” (Shopping Boogie, 1950).⁵⁸

It is her 1940 recording of a Hattori composition, “Hotto Chaina” (Hot China) that I will take up here. If it were included in an evening of blackface minstrel performances, this number (like most of Kasagi’s hits) would clearly belong to the rowdy first half of the program. The lyrics tell of a lively Chinese night-time festival; rather than provide a narrative, they catalog a series exotic images, both visible (e.g., female *guniang* performers) and audible (e.g. “Chinese cymbals, jang-jang-jang”)—but mostly, they repeat a series of phrases and onomatopoeiac sounds: “Bonbo bonbo,” “*wasshoi*” [a

⁵⁸ Details on Kasagi’s career can be found in the CD liner notes to Kasagi Shizuko, *Bugi no joō: Kasagi Shizuko* (Nippon Columbia 72CS-2894-96, 1988); Hattori, *Boku no ongaku jinsei*; and in Kasagi’s autobiography: Kasagi Shizuko, *Utau jigazō: Watashi no Vugiugi Denki* (Tokyo: Hokuto Shuppansha, 1948).

rhythmic phrase often chanted at Japanese festivals], and above all “China.” The music uses many of the sound cues for Chineseness we’ve seen in the other two songs, and Pope argues that its melody echoes that of the Chinese folksong “Taikosen” (Chinese: Tai Hu Chuan, 太湖船 Lake Tai Boat Song).⁵⁹ But in this song, the Orientalist features seem more ornaments attached to a song that is at its core not Chinese, but rather hot jazz, perhaps in its Shanghai variation. Kasagi’s singing style is brassy and energetic, playfully syncopating the breakneck rhythm, and with the exception for a couple of throw-away lines in which she deliberately mirrors the Orientalist coloring of the orchestral accompaniment, she does not mimic the stereotype for a Chinese singing voice.

Kasagi was in particular famous for the way she used her body in performance, and given her close association with African-American genres such as the blues and boogie-woogie, she did not escape the processes of exoticization and racialization in her career. These transformed her into a sexualized spectacle. Kasagi frequently expressed discomfort with this aspect. She adopted a strategy in her performance of standing back and lampooning the very stereotypes she was supposed to be portraying, a self-knowing winking that give the lie to the lyrics she is singing: another kind of counterfeiting. It is reminiscent of the manner in which Billie Holiday appropriated the trite—and often racist—lyrics of Tin Pan Alley songs, using her performance to transform them into something else, unleashing a “capacity to speak the unspeakable, to convey meanings that differed from and sometimes contradicted the particular terms employed to express them,” thereby establishing “an almost magical control of the tired words, revitalizing

⁵⁹ Pope, “Songs of Empire,” 237-239.

them and pushing them toward a criticism of the very cultural context out of which they were born.”⁶⁰

In “Hot China,” rather than adopt the pose of a Chinese woman, Kasagi seems to appropriate the position of a Japanese man, enjoying the sensual pleasures of China. This masquerade, along with the over-the-top quality of her singing performance in the song, has the effect of distancing the singer from the exoticism that she is nonetheless mouthing. Moreover, given the overtly American sound of the music and the use of the English name for “China” in the lyrics and title (though “Shina” is also used), we get the strong sense that she is taking up and parodying the role of an honorary white man. She is, that is, appropriating Tin Pan Alley and Hollywood Orientalism through her counterfeit performance, opening up through her masquerade a new realm of impossible pleasures.

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Blackface works, Daphne Brooks argues, by “conserv[ing] the performance of ‘whiteness’ and ‘blackness,’ holding them in tension with one another and grotesquely exposing the mutual constitution of the former with the latter.”⁶¹ I have argued here that *tairiku* melodies work similarly. Perhaps the best theorist of this counterfeit culture in Japan was the novelist Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, who himself frequently engaged in an ironic exoticization of Chinese culture.⁶² In his 1928 novel, *Some Prefer Nettles* (*Tade kuu mushi*), the hero Kaname, unable to generate sufficient desire to keep him interested in his wife, pursues a sexual relationship with Louise, a Eurasian prostitute. As with so

⁶⁰ Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, 168-169.

⁶¹ Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*, 29.

⁶² On Tanizaki’s exoticizing appropriation of China, see Thomas Lamarre, “The Deformation of the Modern Spectator: Synaesthesia, Cinema, and the Spectre of Race in Tanizaki,” *Japan Forum* 11:1 (1999), 23-42.

many of Tanizaki's works, Kaname's desire is fetishistic, characterized by equal parts of attract and disgust. This is how Louise is described:

Indeed, almost her whole body was covered with a delicate coating of white powder—Kaname had had to wait more than a half-hour for her to finish powdering herself after her bath. She said that her mother had some Turkish blood, and that she felt she had to hide the darkness of her complexion. As a matter of fact, though, it had been the dark glow of her skin, with its faint suggestion of impurity, that had attracted Kaname.⁶³ (161).

Louise is undeniably a product of the Japanese empire, formal and informal: apparently the daughter of a Russian and a Korean mother, she has drifted through the empire all her life and even dreams of leaving Japan for Harbin. What is it that makes her so desirable to Kaname? Is it the whiteness of her body powder, the powder that after sex with her “seemed to sink deep into his skin” (164), rubbing her whiteness off onto him? Or is it rather the “dark glow of her skin” that shows through the white powder? “Kaname admired the natural golden brown of her skin, but even so he was unwilling to break the spell of the white coating...” (170).

It is, I think, precisely the oscillation between the two that drives Kaname's desires and pleasures, an oscillation that derives from the counterfeit nature of her performance. The blatant falsity of her whiteface performance allows Kaname to desire both whiteness and Asian-ness—and to feel simultaneously disgust for both. This is the sort of fetishistic enchantment that drove tairiku melodies: the very counterfeit nature of the performance of Chineseness allowed disgust and fascination both with China and Japan.

⁶³ Junichiro Tanizaki, *Some Prefer Nettles*, trans. Edward G. Seidensticker (New York: Vintage International, 1995), 161. Further quotations from this translation will be identified parenthetically.

Moreover, despite (or perhaps because of) the counterfeit nature of the genre, tairiku melodies do establish a relationship, or rather, a series of often contradictory relationships, between Japan and China. Riding the transnational currents of the globalizing culture industry, a song like “Suzhou Serenade” or “Manshū Musume” opens up a contact zone, a site for musicking available to persons in both Japan and the Asian continent—even if the relationships established on that site are antagonistic and mutually opaque. Japanese tairiku melodies found fans in China, Manchuria, Taiwan and elsewhere. Anti-Japanese nationalist rejected the songs and denounced their local fans as collaborationists, but such denunciations could not entirely erase the pleasures the songs solicited. The relationality becomes even clearer when we consider a song such as “Heri Jun Zai Lai,” a “yellow music” hit in China for Zhou Xuan that was subsequently a tairiku melody hit in Japan for Watanabe Hamako. When Japanese film director Yoshimura Kōzaburō visited Shanghai in 1940, shortly after the song’s popularity had peaked in Japan, he found the same melody on everyone’s lips. Yoshimura is already aware of the nationalist spin that some had given to the songs lyrics: that for some, the “you” whose return the singer pines for might signify Chiang Kai-Shek. Yoshimura hopefully argues, however, that probably for most Chinese, the “you” means peace, an end to war.⁶⁴

Even as he tries to contain them, though, Yoshimura has inadvertently acknowledged the existence of alternate ways of enjoying the song. Tairiku melodies existed on a dangerous crossroads. To be effective ideologically in covering over social

⁶⁴ Yoshimura Kimisaburō, “Chū-shi rokeeshon yuki,” *Eiga no Tomo* 18:5 (May 1940), 82-83. Yoshimura’s claims rest on racialized stereotypes of Chinese culture: Chinese lack any “nuance” and are solely interested in utilitarian, materialistic matters, and the ongoing war interferes with their ability to pursue those interests, he writes.

antagonisms, these counterfeit songs had to provide an opportunity for voicing intense desires and pleasures—which, once unleashed, might develop in unpredictable directions. As Pearl Harbor neared, America was increasingly viewed as the enemy, and American popular culture, notably jazz music (a term widely used for all popular dance music), was banned. A 1940 article in a popular film magazine celebrated on patriotic grounds the ban on jazz music in Japan, but it picks out a strange target for special condemnation.

Together with the edict banning all luxury goods, a total ban on escapist, frivolous jazz-style popular songs has been announced in the record industry. This is a fine development, and like the order banning luxury goods its enactment comes if anything too late. It will be a great relief when we no longer hear in the streets such lyrics as “in a certain Chinese town” or “a China girl did such-and-such in Shanghai,” all sung to a melancholic, *fin de siècle* tune.⁶⁵

The article goes on to insist that the blame for the omnipresence of *tairiku* melodies in Japan lies not with the masses, who turn to such music “instinctively,” in response to the increasingly hectic pace of modern life, but rather with the composers and record companies who supply them with such poison. Nonetheless, it is not so much the American origins of jazz that come under attack here (in fact, the article mounts an interesting defense of some American jazz as being worthy of serious appreciation) as the decadent, false enjoyment that *tairiku* melodies have provided for too many Japanese. In attempting to provide ideological medicine for the social antagonisms of 1930s and 40s Japan and Asia, the music threatened always to reveal that the enemy was us.

⁶⁵ Noguchi Hisamitsu, “*Rekōdo jazu kinsei sonota*,” *Eiga no Tomo* 18:10 (October 1940), 102-103.