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WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN 1970S JAPAN

Transgression and rejection

Chiharu Chujo, Nobuyo Aizawa

Introduction

Feminism in Japan owes much to Western influences, and in this sense has been transnational since its inception. The “first wave” of Japanese feminism in the late nineteenth century demanded access to education and political rights, which women largely achieved by the middle of the twentieth century. The “second wave” movement, called *Ūman Ribu* (from the English term Women’s Liberation), which emerged in the 1970s, mobilized feminists in Tokyo and in many provincial cities. The second wave had quite different features from the first, which had stressed women’s political and social rights. From the beginning of the second wave in the 1970s, an era also marked by student anti-war and environmental protest, the actors in the *Ūman Ribu* raised new questions, including those concerning female sexuality, reflections on “female nature,” and the role of mothers. Some militant actions were opposed, even by some feminists, as too disruptive and transgressive to the norms of the time.

In this chapter, we examine transgressive aspects in Japanese feminist movements in the 1970s by analyzing two particular actors: the Japanese feminist group Chūpiren, which promoted the legalization of the oral contraceptive pill in Japan; and the feminist musician Kobayashi Mariko, who called into question the power relations not only between men and women but also among women.

***Ūman Ribu*: Japanese feminist movements in the 1970s**

Two decades of social movements and large-scale New Left movements from the 1950s to the early 1970s inspired women in Europe and the United States to question the position of women in society. In addition to claiming women’s rights to enhanced participation in politics and society—represented by civil and voting

rights—many started to resist the restrictive social norms and values imposed on women. This wave of social movements, known as Women’s Liberation, expanded rapidly throughout the West during the 1970s. The movement denounced the gendered social norms that restrained women’s status and called for women’s social emancipation.¹ In Japan, a similar phenomenon came about during the same period. This phenomenon—led by Japanese women, was called and continues to be called—*Ūman Ribu*. Despite the anglicized term, however, the social context, impact on society, and the public reaction were quite different from those encountered by women’s liberation movements in the West.

Background

Ūman Ribu originated in an anti-war demonstration organized by feminist groups, which took place on October 21, 1970. These feminist groups were founded by women who had taken part in student movements alongside their male counterparts in the 1960s. However, as in Europe and in the United States, Japanese women in the student movements were assigned to roles such as providing meals or housing for male activists who were hiding from the police.² Some male activist group leaders even imposed “arranged” marriages (*miai kekkon*) on their members and “prohibited” married couples from having children—women were forced to abort in case of pregnancy.³ Facing these extreme constraints, some women activists contested their social positions and representations. After the first newly women’s demonstration on October 21, 1970, several other women’s demonstrations and events were organized throughout Japan. In 1972, an official feminist center, Ribu Shinjuku Center, supported by donations from feminists, opened in Yoyogi, Tokyo; its purpose was to facilitate stimulating exchanges between women. This center became a place where women could organize events, document and publish magazines or brochures, and consult experts on contraception, abortion, or divorce.⁴ The Ribu Shinjuku Center closed in 1977. Thus, *Ūman Ribu* was a phase of the feminist movement lasting from 1970 to 1977.

Although the *ribu* movement had representative activists such as Tanaka Mitsu, the movement was distinct in form from the earlier Japanese feminist organizations in that leadership was diverse and less centralized. *Ūman Ribu* included various feminist movements that were quite widespread throughout Japanese society. The massive document collection of the *ribu* movement, *Shiryō Nihon Ūman Ribu-shi* (The History of Ūman Ribu: documents),⁵ shows the wide diversity and democratization of feminist movements in the 1970s. Many feminist issues were addressed during this period, generating “forms of communication as varied as personal storytelling, artistic performances, or reports in local media.”⁶ As Shigematsu Setsu⁷ emphasizes, *ribu* did not aim to “expand the membership” nor “recruit” new members. These activities were not “led by political parties or trade unions,” but were rather organized by individuals.

Despite its heterogeneity of forms, the arguments of *ribu* mainly challenged the traditional family system that was based on patriarchy and capitalism. As Tanaka Mitsu argued in her influential 1970 manifesto, "Liberation from the toilet," women were subjected to a social structure in which they were oppressed because of their gender. In this structure, according to Tanaka, women represented only two things: maternity and sexual desire. She framed sexual desire as woman as whore or even "the toilet." In Tanaka's conception, the "mother" referred to maternal "benevolence," while the image of the "whore" used the female body as the object of male sexual desire. Men would assign the first role to women "whom they wish to marry," and the second to those "with whom they get rid of their sexual desire."

Ribu activists preferred to use a specific term to indicate the female subject: *onna*.⁸ Until the 1970s, most feminists had opted for terms related to women's gender roles, such as *fujin* (lady), *shufu* (housewife), or *haha* (mother). The term *onna* was, moreover, sometimes used by men as a pejorative denomination for the female subject. By rejecting terms rooted in patriarchal relationships, and preferring *onna*, *ribu* activists had criticized "the family system as a microcosm of Japan's male-centered (*dansei-chushin*) discriminatory capitalism" (*ibid.*) and had aimed to empower and liberate all "*onna*" subjected to such a system.

Thus, while the first wave of feminism in Japan at the end of the nineteenth century demanded women's rights to political and social participation, *Ūman Ribu* highlighted the position of women who were subjected to representations as mother or whore by male members of the family. *Ribu* activists contested these representations and gendered power relationships.

Chūpiren: a failed Japanese feminist movement of the 1970s?

In the 1970s, contraception was one of the main topics of *Ūman Ribu*. Curiously, most feminist groups opposed the use of the contraceptive pill in favor of the condom. The only feminist group that clearly called for the legalization and use of the pill was Chūpiren. An analysis of Chūpiren's justification for legalization of the pill, an attitude unique among Japanese feminists, allows us to see the differences between Chūpiren and current feminist thought, and pinpoints why Chūpiren's approach eventually failed.

What were Japanese feminists' attitudes toward contraception in the early 1970s?⁹ Why did they favor condom use over the contraceptive pill, a method that had already spread among many developed countries? There were two typical anti-pill discourses. The first insisted on the importance of being natural in the sense that the body should not be under the effect of drugs. The other discourse emphasized the inequality between women and men. Feminists feared that the unequal status of men and women would lead to women being forced to take the pill if it were to be legalized for contraception.

Instead of the pill, most feminists outside of Chūpiren advocated the male condom because this method entailed no obligations or side effects for women. In addition, they valued discussion between the partners in the heterosexual relationship. Condoms would help couples to share responsibility for preventing unplanned pregnancies. As it is impossible to use a condom without the cooperation of the male partner, feminists believed condoms could be a symbol of the male partner's willingness and active involvement in contraception. Chūpiren was alone in opposing this approach. Many feminist groups distrusted the contraceptive effectiveness of the pill and, moreover, held heterosexual cooperation as most important. In contrast, Chūpiren emphasized women's independence and autonomy.

Chūpiren was founded and led by a woman of strong character, Enoki Misako, in June 1972 and was dissolved in July 1977. Enoki served as the group's president; this was an uncommon organizational structure among Japanese women's groups. Most groups did not elect a president (that is, top-down leadership) because they valued equality among the members. The group's name, Chūpiren, is an abbreviation of a very long title, "Chūzetsu-kinshi-hō ni hantaishi piru no zenmenkaikin o yōkyūsuru josei kaihō rengō" (Women's liberation federation for opposing the abortion prohibition law and for the complete legalization of the contraceptive pill). Abortion had been legal in Japan since 1947 under limited circumstances, such as preservation of the mother's health and for economic reasons. Anti-abortion advocates at that time were attempting to eliminate the economic reasons clause. The main demands of Chūpiren were, as the name indicates, to oppose the proposals to limit access to abortion by eliminating the economic reasons clause and to demand the complete legalization of the contraceptive pill. All feminist groups agreed about expanding access to abortion, even if their arguments differed. Feminists were most divided about the contraceptive pill.

Chūpiren asserted that it was women who must decide whether or not to give birth¹⁰ and reminded the public that women had the right to demand an abortion.¹¹ For effective implementation of the abortion law, they asked that women also have access to all possible contraceptive options, including the pill.¹² They described the pill as "a perfect contraceptive drug"¹³ or "the safest and the most comfortable method."¹⁴ In addition, Chūpiren supported the drug as separating sexuality from reproduction. Thus, they demanded the total legalization of the pill, both for mitigation of menstrual pain, for which the pill could already be prescribed, and for contraceptive use, which was not yet legal.

Chūpiren and other feminist groups differed in two major ways. First, Chūpiren appreciated the contraceptive effectiveness of the pill, while other feminist groups did not think this was sufficient justification to use the pill for contraception. The latter insisted on the discomfort and fear of drugs. Chūpiren's president, Enoki had a pharmacy education; and therefore approached the pill from a scientific point of view.¹⁵ Second, Chūpiren's description of the pill as a drug that separated sexuality and reproduction framed the pill as a way to promote change in the unequal position of women and men in society. As Enoki wrote in *The Book about the Pill: You*

Can Buy It Now!,¹⁶ all women could get a prescription for the pill as a painkiller for dysmenorrhea and just use it to prevent pregnancy. Enoki explained how to take the pill for contraception. She also extolled the pill as beneficial for women; one chapter is entitled “The pill changes women in this way.”¹⁷ Enoki noted that the link between sexuality and reproduction had lowered the status of women, because their inability to control fertility themselves had put women under the control of men throughout history. Enoki also stated that women's ability to control their own fertility would lead to a change in their consciousness.

Chūpiren attempted to use mass media to publicize the group's demands. To attract media attention, they wore striking costumes, such as pink helmets that became their symbol, and they carried out radical performances. The use of the media as a method to promote women's rights was particular to Chūpiren. Other feminist groups did not support this kind of public spectacle.

Chūpiren and other feminist groups opposed one another in two ways. First, as noted above, they understood the pill differently. Chūpiren saw it as the best method of contraception and the other groups saw it as something artificial that disturbed the natural functioning of the female body. Second, they had different goals for women. Chūpiren wished to make women more independent and autonomous while other feminists retained the image of women as partners of men. For most feminists of the 1970s, the pill appeared to be a method that forced women to take on the burden of contraception, thereby making women alone responsible for pregnancy. This attitude was grounded in the notion of women's passivity. Support for the use of condoms for contraception symbolized collaboration between the sexes; in their view, the pill did not.

In contrast to this ideal of sharing the responsibility for contraception, Chūpiren stressed the idea that women should control their fertility independently by taking responsibility for contraception and sexuality. Thus, Chūpiren transgressed two dominant ideas of the time: one was the unfavorable attitude toward the pill shared by other feminist groups and the other challenged the social morals that led to an oppressive sexuality. Chūpiren tried to invent a new ideal for women and gender relations, but this ideal was not shared by most other feminists. The Chūpiren group thus remained a minority within the feminist movement. Even today, it remains marginalized in the history of feminism in Japan.

Kobayashi Mariko: a singer who irritated men

The *ribu* movement, which had reflected women's demands, also provided for the emergence of a new wave in the popular music scene. Some female musicians such as Moriyama Ryōko and Nakayama Rabi, who composed their own songs—which had been uncommon for women before then—became established in the folk music field in this period. However, the Japanese popular music scene was far from feminist. Rather, the Japanese music scene of the 1970s was characterized by the emergence of female pop “idols”.¹⁸ As Galbraith and Karlin noted, female idols, whose existence

consisted of illusory intimacy with the spectators, emerged in line with the development of the audiovisual industry and embodied the objectification of women.¹⁹

Despite this objectification, the concerns of most female musicians in Japan in the 1970s and 1980s remained unconnected to the concepts of feminism or anti-sexism. Kaneko Michiyo, one of the representative female singer-songwriters of the time, claimed that women would never surpass men in rock because of their technical inferiority.²⁰ Asakawa Maki, an artist named “queen of underground music,” considered herself a “comfort woman”²¹ to her male audience, a term with many, usually negative, connotations. (“Comfort women” referred to the sexual slaves of the Japanese military during World War II.) The sexism and misogyny in popular music remained very strongly rooted, requiring that performers conform to a range of defined and standardized artistic behaviors: either behave “like men”—erasing “female” behaviors—or play the role of “women”—occupying a place “authorized for women” (for example, as the pianist of the group, accompanying the (male) lead singer or as a self-composer-performer); alternatively, perform in a hyper-gendered way, as in the case of the idols.

Despite these gendered social limitations, some artists challenged the objectification of women’s bodies; this challenge was fiercely opposed by Japanese society and even by some feminists, as in the case of Chūpiren. We look into these struggles of musicians by examining a representative artist, Kobayashi Mariko, who was one of the rare female musicians to have a connection with Chūpiren.

Often compared to America’s Janis Joplin, Kobayashi was a blues musician who angrily sang out against women’s subordination. Born into a wealthy family in 1954, she was a victim of sexual violence. At the age of 12, she was physically and sexually abused by her brother. Her parents’ neglect and denial of this abuse made the situation more complicated. On one occasion when her brother was abusing her, Kobayashi told him that she would inform Chūpiren, which also struggled against sexual violence. This stopped him (at least for a while), since he was, at that time, in a relationship with one of the members of Chūpiren. Kobayashi later saw this Chūpiren member from time to time.²²

Kobayashi’s subversive and disruptive songs, but with a little humor

Outraged by the power struggle between women and men, Kobayashi established the Women’s Emancipation Study Society (Josei Kaihō Kenkyūkai) at her university. During this time, she continued to be subjected to increasing aggression from her brother, with whom she had to share an apartment because of financial reasons. This led her to leave university and begin to write songs about gendered power relations. One of these songs attracted the attention of the label For Life Records, and she was able to begin her work as a professional musician.²³ Her first song, *Asa okitara* [When I Got Up], told of the sadness of a woman who was rejected by her man. The coarseness of its expression was enhanced by her regional Kansai (West Japan region) accent and her humor:

| | |
|---|---|
| Asa okitara Otoko no taido ga kawatteta Mata ai o tashikame aimashou to ittara taihen kyōshuku desu ga jitai shimasu to iwareta | When I woke up, My man had become different . . . I asked him to verify our love again through practice. But then he said: “sorry, I am obliged to decline this invitation.” |
| Asa okitara otoko no taido ga kawatteta Tekubi kittaro ka chotto dake | When I woke up, My man had become different I want to slit my wrists but just a little bit. |
| Asa okitara otoko no taido ga kawatteta Tobioritaro ka ni-kai kara Tobioritaro ka Ni-kai kara? | When I woke up, My man had become different I want to jump out the window from the first floor. |
| Asa okitara otoko no taido ga kawatteta Senro de netaro ka riniamōtākā no senro de Densha uiteru | When I woke up, My man had become different I want to lie on the rails of the bullet train. The train won't touch me! |
| Sabishiku nattara mata kitene to ittara kodoku mo ī mondesu to iwa reta ajikanatoriumu nondaro ka nyūin kifū- kin morainagara | I told him to come back if he was lonely. But he told me that loneliness was not so bad. I want to take sodium azide as long as my hospitalization is covered! |

Kobayashi Mariko, “Asa okitara,” 1978

Each verse begins with a description of a rejected woman and then expresses her grief. However, these verses are accompanied by humor that mitigates the drama of the protagonist's situation. Yet that situation remains somewhat dramatic, as evidenced by the conversation between the two protagonists: while the woman addresses her love with words of tenderness, her partner responds harshly and distantly. The woman, shocked, immediately realizes that this rejection does not deserve to be lamented. In addition to the burlesque tone of the lyrics, the familiar language of the Kansai region, which is coarse compared to Eastern Japanese language, conveys a somewhat aggressive personality to her character, traits absent in most women musicians' songs at the time. As a result, the artist had to face the opposition of the music industry from the very beginning of her career. Her second single, entitled “Reipu, Firingu” (Rape feeling), was designated by official regulators as *yōchūi kayōkyoku* (a song that requires special attention) because of expressions considered “scurrilous.”²⁴ Her first album, containing this song and others that expressed a strong feminist viewpoint, were thus withdrawn from sale.

However, it would be incorrect to characterize these songs as “obscene,” as the lyrics of *Reipu Firingu*” show:

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Otoko wa kyō mo reipu firingu</i> | <i>Guys always want to rape us.</i> |
| <i>Omoitattara reipu firingu</i> | <i>They have this desire without their knowledge.</i> |
| <i>Shokuzen shokugo ni reipu firingu</i> | <i>Before the meal, after the meal, they want it.</i> |
| <i>Otoko wa itsumo yari-ppanashi</i> | <i>The guys do their dirty work and run away.</i> |
| <i>On'na wa itsumo yara re-ppanashi</i> | <i>And it's always the chicks who get screwed.</i> |
| <i>Yara re son!</i> | <i>They're getting screwed!</i> |
| <i>Sō wa sa seru ka yara rete tamaru ka</i> | <i>So do we let them do it, or do we stop them?</i> |
| <i>No More Rape!</i> | <i>No More Rape!</i> |

Kobayashi Mariko, “*Reipu firingu*,” 1978

To be sure, the lyrics of “*Reipu Firingu*” use crude and violent terms (rape, getting screwed). In her interview with the *Asahi News*, however, Kobayashi explained (Kobayashi and Igarashi 1980) that she intentionally used this language to “irritate men.”

The one with power does not hesitate to trample on the other's personality. And when this happens between a man and a woman, I regard it as rape. Let's be honest: the same goes for the blue joke. [. . .] These words never make women laugh, it's absolutely nothing funny for us. But they [the men] force us to laugh with them, without having the slightest idea of our unease. And if we laugh, what do they do? They get angry! I have a feeling that phallocentric society has created subjects that make women blush to better enjoy their discomfort.²⁵

These lyrics imply in fact that “the idea of rape (or violence) is part of men's daily lives” (toward women). For Kobayashi, the term “rape” thus refers not only to men's physical and sexual violence against women but also to the asymmetrical power relationship between the sexes. In using this provocative language, Kobayashi had two objectives: first, to encourage women not to bow to male domination; and second, to engender debate through her songs.

In another song, entitled “*Benjo no burūsu*” (Toilet blues), Kobayashi equates women with the toilet. The same metaphor was present in Tanaka Mitsu's famous manifesto discussed above, which included the two main gendered roles of women: motherhood and women's ability to satisfy male sexual desire. Women “deserving to be wives” are those with a maternal conscience, while women who serve to satisfy male sexual desire are condemned as whores. Tanaka compared this second role to a “toilet” (*benjo*) function, used by men as a “dumping ground.” In “*Benjo no*

burūsu,” Kobayashi picks up on this point and draws attention to the fundamental inequality that inspires women to struggle:

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>On'na wa benjo otoko no benjo</i> | <i>Women are toilets, men's toilets</i> |
| <i>Hageshiku to o tataki watashi o motomeruga</i> | <i>They knock on the door and claim my body</i> |
| <i>Yō ga sundara deteiku dake yo</i> | <i>But when they have finished their business, they leave in a hurry</i> |
| <i>Kirei na on'na wa ie no benjo hana o kazari migaite moraeru</i> | <i>Beautiful women are domestic toilets. They decorate them with flowers and look after them with care</i> |
| <i>Sore demo yappari otoko no benjo</i> | <i>But they're just a man's toilet.</i> |
| <i>Chiyahoya sa rete mo benki wa benki</i> | <i>Even well treated, they remain only toilet seats.</i> |
| <i>Watashi-ra busu wa eki no benjo</i> | <i>And we ugly women are station toilets</i> |
| <i>Kuso ga tsumatte mo sōji mo sa renai</i> | <i>Even if they're clogged, they're never cleaned</i> |
| <i>Kuso ga tsumaru yō ni kodomo ga tsumatte mo</i> | <i>Even when a child jams in it like shit would</i> |
| <i>Afurete kuru made hottarakashi yo</i> | <i>We're left stranded until it overflows</i> |

Kobayashi Mariko, “*Benjo no burūsu*,” 1978

Moreover, this song indicates that for Kobayashi, inequalities also exist between women: “beautiful women” are “domestic toilets” that are kept clean, while “ugly women” are compared to despised “station toilets.” This satire, which plays with the distinction between “beautiful women” and “ugly women,” refers to the very real social gap established between women based on their physical appearance, a prejudice with serious consequences.

Kobayashi was initially popular among Japanese feminists, because she stood out from other musicians, most of whom deliberately avoided addressing the question of the position of women in their lyrics. Outside the feminist “niche,” she acquired a larger audience for her cause, as others were drawn to her sexually charged and impertinent lyrics. However, as the *ribu* groups declined within the Japanese feminist movement, Kobayashi’s songs came under new criticism. Paradoxically, her most ferocious critics were other feminists. Disappointed by her rejection by a once-captivated audience, Kobayashi interpreted this as the decline of Japanese feminist movements, and the onset of what she considered to be a form of intellectual dictatorship. This situation ended in an ultimate affront: during a concert to which the artist had been invited by a feminist activist friend, men in the audience physically attacked her for what they perceived as violence in her texts. Her feminist friend did not defend her, however, and refused to file a complaint against those audience members who, according to the friend, were only hard on the musician “out of love.” The blues musician, plagued by injuries, decided to leave the music business in 1982.²⁶

Kobayashi left the music industry not only because of these kinds of reactions to her transgressive feminist music. Larger social forces that affected the music business also played a role. Japanese society was in the process of transformation into

a consumer society in the 1980s, and the music industry was gradually shifting toward pure entertainment. In the 1980s, the industry began to recruit women to A&R (Artists and Repertoire = talent scouts/agents) positions in music production. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1986 allowed (some) women to integrate into the workplace in popular music circles, and this had an impact on the role of A&R agents. Music critic Igarashi Tadashi points out that foreign companies also began to merge with Japanese companies, which had a considerable influence on the recruitment of singers. In this social context, in which women were a minority, they began to occupy some important positions in segments of the music industry. Despite women's gradual progress, popular music circles abandoned protest or avant-garde musicians in favor of more conventional artists, as evidenced by the rise of "idols" in the popular music world.

Changes in the music industry were not the only reason for Kobayashi's decline. Her rejection by feminists is intriguing. Reexamining her atrocious experience during the 1982 concert discussed above, we note that her friend, the *ribu* representative, defended the violence of male spectators, characterizing it as undertaken "out of love." Kobayashi experienced disappointing reactions both to her activism and to her musical activities; the majority of women (including feminists) were reluctant to appear to support her. In her book *Onna girai* (Misogyny), sociologist Ueno Chizuko describes a type of misogyny that women themselves encourage.²⁷ The sociologist denounces this so-called female misogyny, embodied, on the one hand, in "self-loathing" (*jiko-ken'o*), and on the other hand, in "alterization" (*tasha-ka*). The first indicates that women internalize resentment toward society, while the second denotes the idea that women, in order to escape the stigma of misogyny, attempt to distinguish themselves from other women who are subject to discrimination. In addition, in the second category, there are two different positions. One is to excel against other "ordinary" women, and the other is to abandon the label of "women," to abandon the gender norm imposed on women by society. Kobayashi seems, at first sight, to be in the second category. She seems to refuse a hyper-gendered norm and assume her "otherness" by distinguishing herself from other "ordinary" women. However, in her songs, under the guise of this otherness, the artist seeks to represent the power relations between men and women in Japanese society, in order to share these women's experiences—her critical viewpoint results from this stance. It would therefore be appropriate to conceive that it is indeed spectators, including feminists, who have altered her; by treating her as a woman fundamentally different from them, they refuse to put themselves on the same footing as the artist. By making Kobayashi's positioning more like that of the "other," it is in fact possible to conceive of her positioning as "something different." Through this alterization, spectators can "have a trivial pleasure" if we quote Ueno, to be entertained in this way, without ever having to take the trouble to identify themselves.²⁸ So, what can explain this alterization on the part of women? It could be seen as a sign of anxiety, or caution toward the backlash against feminism. Or, following the analyses of art history specialist Wakakuwa Midori, Japanese society seemed less anxious than indifferent toward feminism, even in the 1970s, during

which time the “second wave” of Japanese feminism was still at its peak, at least in academic and activist spheres.²⁹ According to Ueno, women's pathetic solution is to keep themselves engaged with phallocentrism and blame it on others.

This rejection of Kobayashi by the public is a clear indication of the ambivalence that Japanese feminists confronted in the 1970s and continue to face to this day.

Conclusion

We can find three common points between the two actors described above. First, both Chūpiren and Kobayashi Mariko endeavored to challenge the gendered power balance, especially about the question of women's sexuality. Chūpiren called for emphasizing women's initiative in controlling their sexuality. For this group, the contraceptive pill was more than a contraceptive method; it represented a means for women to control their own sexuality. Their commitment was thus based on the idea that making the pill more accessible would be linked to women's empowerment. Kobayashi Mariko, for her part, tried to reveal the gendered power relations through musical expressions and performances. As we see in Kobayashi's lyrics, such power relations are embodied in conversations between people after a sexual relationship, in the way men judge women's appearance, or in the tension between women oppressed by men focused on an esthetic norm.

Second, Chūpiren and Kobayashi's expressions are both particularly radical and transgressive. Chūpiren attempted to use the mass media to make their demands known. They showcased strange outfits, especially their pink helmets, or spectacular performances to attract media attention. Kobayashi, for the same reasons, introduced provocative words into her musical performances, aiming at revealing the physical and moral oppression in everyday life imposed on women by men or by phallocentric social norms. To describe how social repression to women is, in her eyes, violent, cruel and absurd, Kobayashi intentionally opted for bawdiness and coarseness. Her purpose, though, was not necessarily to insist on her point of view to the audience but to provide opportunities for the public to further discuss gender issues.

However, questions about women's sexuality were themselves too tricky to discuss in Japanese society at that time, during which *Ūman Ribu* had acquired a certain recognition, and thus had become a target for mockery or gender-bashing. This is the third common factor between Chūpiren and Kobayashi. Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks point to the risk of speaking “between-ourselves” as a function of committed music.³⁰ According to them, this kind of music could create a very narrow and exclusive space that would intimidate people who are unable or unwilling to recognize themselves. This is relevant to the case of Kobayashi Mariko's quite committed stance that caused “alterization” among women in Japanese society. Their remarks about musical experience could be applied to Chūpiren's radical “performances.” The committed actions of this transgressive group had supposed the intersection of individual experiences and commitments common to different individuals.

However, the dissociation in Japan between the question of sexuality and feminist engagement leads to another hypothesis: if women's initiatives concerning control of their sexuality were highlighted, there would have to be a tacit agreement between transmitters and receivers of this message on the value of these initiatives. Claims must first be located in the compromise between the two, despite their nature. In this context, it can be assumed that the majority of *ribu* protagonists were more cautious about their ways of expression. As a result, some *ribu* advocates came to express hostility to Chūpiren and Kobayashi's provocative expressions.

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, women's initiative to take control of their sexuality at that moment in Japanese history was a delicate subject, even for feminists. As Kobayashi Mariko testifies above, women were forced not to take the initiative even by telling a slightly sexual joke. On the contrary, they were expected to be embarrassed in the midst of phallogocentric pleasantries.³¹ Despite *Ūman Ribu*'s liberal slogans—such as “from a woman to have sex with to a woman who decides with whom she has sex” (*Dakareru onna kara daku onna e*)—many activists remained reluctant to accept these slogans, which also admits to a position of “a woman to have sex with.” That would explain how Tanaka Mitsu's autobiography, *Theory of Ūman Ribu in Disorder*, in which she acknowledged the ambivalence of the two women's positions—one that takes the initiative and the other that is taken in the heterosexual relationship—made a big impact on the women of the time. Such an ambivalent stance of *ribu* supporters can be observed through the rejection of Chūpiren and Kobayashi Mariko by many feminists.³²

Notwithstanding their objective to spread the idea of women taking the initiative about their sexuality, the debate on contraception remains largely sterile and marginalized in Japanese society today, at least outside the academic sphere. As for the music industry, few women dare to talk about the power struggle related to the issue of women's sexuality. This situation partly originates from the complex circumstances in *Ūman Ribu*, over three decades ago, when potential feminist allies felt compelled to acquiesce with the patriarchal ideas that favored men's control of sexuality.

Notes

- 1 Inoue Teruko et al., eds., *Iwanami joseigaku jiten* [Iwanami Dictionary of Women's Studies] (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 2002).
- 2 Tanaka Mitsu, *Inochi no onna tachi e- torimidashi ūman ribu ron* [To Women with Mind: A Disordered Theory of Ūman ribu] (Tōkyō: Pandora Gendai Shokan, 2001).
- 3 Nagata Hiroko, *Jūroku no bohō* [The Sixteen Grave Markers] (Tōkyō: Sairyūsha, 1982).
- 4 Inoue Teruko, Nagao Yōko, and Funahashi Kuniko, “Ūman ribu no shisō to undo kanren shiryō no kisoteki kenkyū [Thinking and Activism During Ūman ribu—Related Documents and Research],” *Tōzai Nanboku: Bulletin of the Wako Institute of Social and Cultural Sciences* (2006): 134–58.
- 5 Mizoguchi Akiyo, Saeki Yōko, and Miki Sōko, *Shiryō Ūman ribu shi*, Vol. I–III [Documents on Ūman Ribu History] (Kyōto: Shōkadō Shuppan, 1992–95).
- 6 Inoue et al., “Ūman ribu no shisō [Thoughts in the History of Ūman Ribu].”

- 7 Setsu Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows: The Women's Liberation Movement in Japan* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Aizawa Nobuyo, "Piru to watashitachi—Josei no karada to hinin no rinri [The Oral Contraceptive and Us—Women's Body and the Ethics of Contraception]," in *Ai, sei, kazoku no tetsugaku* [The Philosophy of Love, Sex, and Family], ed. Fujita Hisashi and Miyano Makiko (Kyōto: Nakanishiya syuppan, 2016).
- 10 Chūpiren, "Piru o kaikin seyō [Legalize the Contraceptive Pill]," *Neoribu*, no. 1 (1972) in Mizoguchi et al., *Shiryō Ūman ribu shi*, Vol. II, 248.
- 11 Chūpiren, "'Chūzetsu wa onna no kenri' wa sabetsu dewa nai [Claiming 'Women Have the Right to Abortion' Does Not Mean Discrimination to Handicapped People]," *Neoribu*, no. 28 (1973) in Mizoguchi et al., *Shiryō Ūman ribu shi*, Vol. II, 247–48.
- 12 During that time, the same pill was sold at the pharmacies as a painkiller for periods, but not as contraception.
- 13 Chūpiren, "Chūpi-en hossoku [Founding Chūpiren!]," *Neoribu*, no. 1 (1972) in Mizoguchi et al., *Shiryō Ūman ribu shi*, Vol. II, 244.
- 14 Chūpiren, "6.16 Chūpiren hossoku issūnen kinen shūkai" [June 16th, Chūpiren First Anniversary Meeting], 1973 in Mizoguchi et al., *Shiryō Ūman ribu shi*, Vol. II, 249.
- 15 Chūpiren, "Piru wo kaikin seyo," in *Shiryō Ūman ribu shi*, ed. Mizoguchi et al., Vol. II, 248.
- 16 Enoki Misako, *Piru no hon anata no piru wa sugu kaeru!* [The Pill Book: You Can Get Your Pill Right Away!] (Tōkyō: Tairiku Shobō, 1976).
- 17 Ibid., Chapter 10.
- 18 The term *aidoru*, from the word "idol," emerged in Japan with the French-Italian film "*Cherchez l'idole*," released in Japanese cinemas in 1964. The Japanese music industry often misused the term because it failed to capture the exact meaning of the term. Japanese stars were thus interchangeably called either *aidoru* or *sutā* (from the English star), indicating that they were celebrities. According to sociologist Inamasu Tatsuo, if stars were the stars of the time in the film economy, the helpers would be those of television. Stars were a category of commercial products whose charisma was supported and maintained by cinema, a medium that required that "you pay to access it." The physical distance between film stars and the public bestowed on them the rank of stars, distant and inaccessible figures. The position of this "noble" medium, at least in the view of spectators, was based on the reality of an economic exchange system. However, as television became more democratic, the stars broadcast on the small screen became closer to the public. Television created an "intimate space" within households. Tatsuo Inamasu, *Aidoru kōgaku* [The Aidoru's Engineering] (Tōkyō: Chikuma Shobō, 1989).
- 19 Patrick W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin, eds., *Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
- 20 Inoue Takako, "Taikenteki nihon rokku ron [A Study of Experimental Japanese Rock]," in *Shōgen! Nihon no rokku 70's* [Testimonies! Japanese Rock in the 70s] (Musashino: Artes, 2009).
- 21 Asakawa Maki, *Konna fū ni sugite iku no nara* [If Time Passes Like This] (Fukuoka: Sekifūsha, 2003).
- 22 In her email interviews with author.
- 23 The label was created in 1975 by four prominent folk artists (Komuro Hitoshi, Izumiya Shigeru, Yoshida Takurō, and Inoue Yōsui). At the time, it was quite rare for a music business to be directly founded by musicians, so this label had a significant influence on the popular music scene in the 1970s, as a symbol of musicians' autonomy from the music industry.
- 24 The label "songs requiring special attention" (*yōchūi kayōkyoku*) is established by two institutions: the "Disk Ethics Judgment Committee" (*Rekōdo rinri shinsa-kai*, abbreviated as Rekorin) and the "Japan Commercial Programs Association" (*Nihon minkan hōsōsō renmei*, or Minpōren). These agencies verify the ethical validity of the works,

- in accordance with freedom of expression as defined in Article 21. After examination, they determine the “songs requiring special attention” (*yōchūi kayōkyoku*) and those “to be banned from broadcasting” (*hōsō kinshi uta*), both of which are deemed unfit for broadcasting: Azami Toshio, *J-pop māketingu: IT jidai no ongaku sangyō* (Tōkyō: Chūō Keizaisha, 2001).
- 25 Kobayashi Mariko and Igarashi Fumio, “‘Otoko no kao ga hikitsuru yō na uta o’—josei kaihō o sakebitsuzukeru kashu—Shingā-songuraitā Kobayashi Mariko-san [‘Crispy Songs for Men’: ACI Kobayashi Mariko, the One Who Will Never Cease to Give Voice to the Emancipation of Women],” *Asahi Journal*, 22, no. 44 (31 October 1980): 34–39.
 - 26 After a decade of silence, the once-banned album was rereleased in 1993, and the artist gradually found her way back to concerts in small bars with an intimate atmosphere.
 - 27 Ueno Chizuko, *Onnagirai: Nippon no misojinī* [Hating Women: The Misogyny of Japan] (Tōkyō: Kinokuniya Shoten, 2010).
 - 28 *Ibid.*, 234.
 - 29 Wakakuwa Midori, “Bakku rasshu no nagare” in *Jendā no kiki wo koeru! Tettei tōron bakku rasshu* [Beyond the Gender Crisis! In-depth Debate on the Backlash], ed. Wakakuwa Midori, Katō Shūichi, Minakawa Masumi, and Akaishi Chiyoko (Tōkyō: Seikyūsha, 2006), 83–124.
 - 30 Richard Flacks and Rob Rosenthal, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (London: Routledge, 2012), 94–95.
 - 31 Sociologist Ehara Yumiko points out that the question of sexual harassment must be discussed in the context of the “dominant interpretation mechanism” on sexuality. The discussion about sexual harassment in contemporary Japanese society is often less focused on the act itself, than the intention of the actors in such situations and whether an act (supposed to be sexual harassment) is exercised toward a person against her/his will. This question is quite nuanced, as the subject’s interpretation of his/her act is at stake (if there is consent between them), while the subject’s intentions are seldom apparent in most such cases. Moreover, Ehara highlights that such discussions in Japanese society are based on dominant interpretations of women’s and men’s behaviors, which are mostly “sexist,” in the sense that they imply that only men can take the sexual initiative, and women are required to agree or not to agree with this initiative; if women do not resist, consent is assumed. This mechanism, denounced by Ehara in 1994, still remains problematic in Japanese society in the 2010s, as evidenced by the judgment of the Nagoya District Court in the trial on sexual abuse committed by a father with his daughter; he was judged not guilty, because his daughter did not “show acts of resistance.” Ehara Yumiko, “‘Sekusharu harasumento no mondai-ka’ wa nani o shiteiru koto ni naru no ka? [What Are the Implications of Making Sexual Harassment an Issue?],” in *Shinpen Nihon no feminism* [Feminism in Japan, New Edition], ed. Ueno Chizuko (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1994), 109–32; *The Asahi Shinbun*, on April 7, 2019, accessed April 10, 2019, www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201904070028.html.
 - 32 Besides, the hesitant stance of feminists can be explained by their complex relationship to the question of contraception and abortion. While abortion is technically illegal in Japan, there are several exceptions to the Eugenic Protection Law (established after World War II and revised as the Maternal Body Protection Law in 1996) that make abortion readily available. Protagonists of first-wave feminism, such as Katō Shizue, claimed women’s right to abortion (meaning their right to give birth or not) in particular circumstances, for those who suffered from sexual violence and starvation. However, this law was criticized by individuals who supported persons with disabilities as discriminatory to the sexuality of disabled persons. Since then, discussions about women’s right to take initiatives in reproduction have continued to confront the issue of the rights of people with disabilities. Kano Masanao, *Gendai nihon josei shi—feminizumu o jiku to shite* [The History of Women in Contemporary Japan from a Feminist Perspective] (Tōkyō: Yuhikaku, 2004).