

# 琉球大学学術リポジトリ

## 崎山多美のクジャ連作における「淵」を翻訳する

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## Translating the “Abyss” in Sakiyama Tami’s *Kuja* Stories

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But too often we forget. We no longer know how to call. We speak silence. Our tongues are unbreathable. The names go out. In the darkness things no longer pass. Our tongues are deserted. We live there no more. We forget ourselves. And all of the gardens become phantoms. (Cixous, 1979, p. 74)

I listen to the frenzied, distant voice bearing its chain of ghastly images, in the hope of the first light of dawn that unnervingly never reveals so much as a glimmer.<sup>1)</sup> (Sakiyama, 2006, p. 85)

### Introduction

Since the cultural boom of the 1990s increased the demand for and availability of published works by Okinawan writers, and recent political debates such as the construction of a U.S. military helipad at the scenic bay of Henoko have contributed to the region’s media visibility, Okinawan literary and cultural productions continue to garner widespread interest. At the same time, it is increasingly apparent that the majority of this interest, both national and international, comes to these productions through Japan and the Japanese language. As a result, works by Okinawan writers, musicians, and artists have been hailed and consumed as an output that diversifies the offerings of their Japanese counterparts, attesting to a new, more multicultural Japan yet relegating Okinawa to a subsidiary position in the process.

Against this backdrop, the implications of reading fiction from Okinawa as a sub-genre within Japanese Literature has been called into specific question (Kina, 2011). As Kina relates, since the 1990s, “[t]he existence of Okinawan literature as an accepted alternative genre in Japanese literature was thus expected to play an integral role in shifting the institution of Japanese literature towards becoming multicultural” (Kina, 2011, p. 15). That Okinawan literature sits awkwardly in this position is owing to the complex movements of assimilation within Okinawa’s history, especially those practices pertaining to language and language reforms.<sup>2)</sup> As a result of repeated efforts throughout

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Okinawa since the Meiji period to standardise language and thus the identities who seek expression by means of that language, the heterogeneity of the region’s voices has been persistently threatened. In an increasingly globalising world, the struggle ensues for Okinawan voices to survive. As Kina writes, “[t]he fact that the indigenous Okinawan languages are dying does not mean voices of Okinawan people are dead” (Kina, 2011, p. 13). However, giving voice to Okinawan stories in Japanese produces a double bind. On the one hand, while Okinawan narratives have gained legitimacy within a Japanese canon, this celebration simultaneously runs the risk of homogenising and appropriating the efforts of Okinawan writers whose works seek to confront the categories of Japanese and Okinawan literature.<sup>3)</sup>

Sakiyama Tami (1954–) is a writer of especially exciting and challenging fictional prose and literary essays. Born on the island of Iriomote in the far southwest of Okinawa, Sakiyama moved throughout the prefectural islands of Ishigaki and Miyako in her teens, ultimately settling since the late 1960s in Koza, now a district of Okinawa City on the main island flanked by the many central U.S. military base facilities. Drawing on the sights and sounds of these surroundings, Sakiyama’s literary oeuvre has plotted a similar trajectory to the author’s own geographical movement. While her earlier novellas from the 1980s and 1990s suggest a quasi-nostalgic sense of loss and disorientation that comes from leaving one’s island or *shima*, a word that in Okinawan contexts also connotes a sense of “community,” Sakiyama’s more recent fiction since 2006 takes place within the flickering neon of the decaying military-base town.

Given the background against which it is written, many engagements with Sakiyama’s fiction have situated it within the designation of Okinawan literature. However, the geographical shift within Sakiyama’s writing has been accompanied by an increasingly attuned satirical and socio-critical tone. As Davinder Bhowmik explains in *Writing Okinawa: Narrative acts of identity and resistance*, Sakiyama’s writing repeatedly subverts and resists replicating landscapes, plotlines, and characterisations expected of literature from the region, causing her to occupy both an “unsettled and unsettling position in the genre of Okinawan prose fiction” (Bhowmik, 2008, p. 178). In this context, the translingual tongues and shifting landscapes of Sakiyama’s literature acquire significance for the ways in which they demonstrate a means of radically heterogenising, deconstructing, and de-centering the foundations on which such definitions as national and regional are built. Such fiction imparts a challenge, to be read in ways that not only resist the appropriation of Okinawan fiction by the Japanese literary mainstream, but also beyond an Okinawan context, without denying the obvious specificity with which this context endows such writing.

### **Inciting Other Tongues**

If Sakiyama’s writing might be read beyond the paradigm of Japanese and Okinawan literatures, then this is most evident in the distinctive language with which her narratives

write forth. Sakiyama's essays demonstrate her attentiveness to the many vernaculars that she heard while growing up near a migrant community on Iriomote and through her own movement through the prefecture, and attest to a long-held desire to represent those sounds in text (Sakiyama, 2004).<sup>4)</sup> However, this turn to the forgotten languages from her childhood does not seek to resurrect a single, pure form of dialect to pit in opposition against Japanese. Rather, in her 2002 essay "In-citing with island words," Sakiyama pledges her resistance to such ghettoisation of the "island words" of Okinawa, and her desire to "conceive of a literary language of my own" that is able to "counter the appropriation (*kaishū*) of Okinawan vernaculars by standard Japanese, by erecting the relation between these two heterogeneous languages as my own language of heterogeneity itself" (Sakiyama, 2002, p. 169).<sup>5)</sup>

On the other side of this desire to recover lost sounds, therefore, Sakiyama's radical approach belies a more destabilising and destructive agenda, as she likens her "writing strategy"<sup>6)</sup> to a "suicide bomber" with the task of planting island words into the "heart of the Japanese language" like "bombs" (*ibid.*, p. 170). In Sakiyama's hands, the diversity of Okinawan "island words" is transformed into artillery that, if tactically deployed, has the ability to interrupt and terrorise the monolithic standing of the Japanese language. Sakiyama's call to "guerrilla warfare" is clearly written with her hybrid tongues firmly in cheek. However, this keen wit included, the inventive and reinventive strategies deployed in her writing are imbued with a revolutionary potential that can at once create, destroy, and even self-destruct.

In order to highlight the political character of Sakiyama's writing that deterritorialises the Japanese language and even dialect itself, her prose has been considered alternatively in relation to the idea of minor literature outlined by Deleuze and Guattari in their study of Kafka (Bhowmik, 2008), and as a kind of "border tongue" in the vein of Gloria Anzaldúa (Kina, 2011). In this article, I read Sakiyama's methods of "inciting" the Japanese language vis-à-vis another revolutionary mode of writing: namely, *écriture féminine*.<sup>7)</sup> As put forth by Hélène Cixous, *écriture féminine* functions as a political strategy that appeals to women to come to writing as a means to rediscover their selves (and their others) that have been concealed and repressed by the culture of men. Just as *écriture féminine* heralds a "new insurgent writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history" (Cixous, 1976, p. 880), so the terroristic strategies of Sakiyama's writing strike against Japanese as the patriarchal language that has suppressed the languages and narratives of Okinawa, and particularly of Okinawan women. By erupting and disrupting officially accepted structures of language and narrative, *écriture féminine* envisages:

"a place . . . which is not economically or politically indebted to the vileness and compromise. That is not obliged to reproduce the system . . . . If there is a somewhere else that can escape the infernal repetition, it lies in that direction, where *it* writes itself, where *it* dreams, where *it* invents new worlds." (Cixous & Clément, 1996, p. 72)

Set precariously between the lands of the living and the dead from wherein the forgotten ghosts of the past emerge to claim their place in history, in the world of *Kuja*, Sakiyama constructs a narrative of rupture and repeating that writes just such a place.

### **The *Kuja* Stories<sup>8)</sup>**

Sakiyama Tami’s “*Kuja* series” comprises seven short tales published in the literary journal *Subaru* intermittently between January 2006 and March 2008.<sup>9)</sup> *Kuja* is the *machi*, or base town, against which each story takes place, although it could also be said to occupy these stories as a character in its own right. The name *Kuja* implies a mashed-up (in Japanese: *guchagucha*) refiguring of the Koza and Goya wards of Okinawa City, an area close to the Kadena U.S. military facility that became a noted haunt for off-duty GIs seeking R&R. While the area has been home to Sakiyama for years, it is only in recent years that she has overcome her hesitancy to represent it in her fiction (Kina & Sakiyama, 2012b). As she explains in a letter relay with Kina, “[*Kuja*] came about because I sensed a deep trench lying between Koza and Okinawa City. It is not that I simply wanted to embed the historical vicissitudes peculiar to this regional city. Rather, I wondered whether I could bring “*Koza*” to life in these short stories as a literary sign (*kotoba*) loaded with a more universal breadth” (Sakiyama, 2011).

There is therefore clearly some relation between the fictional setting of *Kuja* and the suburb of Koza. However, through its textual depictions of faded signs and squalid back-alleys, Sakiyama’s characterization of *Kuja* upturns the tropical image of Okinawa into its black-and-white negative form, playing upon seedy underworlds and ghostly otherworlds that lie bubbling beneath its surface. This sense of something lurking below—and its impending release—is enhanced by the alternative, phonetic rendering of the text’s urban spaces as *machi*, which echoes the root of the Japanese verb “to wait.” There is a clear social criticism here, not least against soulless regeneration projects within Okinawan cities.<sup>10)</sup> However, as the generic term *machi* infers, Sakiyama’s textual rendering of *Kuja* also exceeds such regional specificity. In fact, in the stories discussed here, the site and signs of *Kuja* not only encompass the central Okinawan base town but also draw upon cultural traditions and dialects from across the prefecture, including Miyako Island to the south. In this way, *Kuja* presents a radically heterogeneous space that refuses to be bound to any singular representation of Okinawa.

Sakiyama’s writing repeatedly lays bare a concern with the responsibility to remember and transmit stories that the grand narratives of national history overlook. Her work also deals with the impossibility for younger generations of recalling a past that one has never directly experienced, particularly the land battle of Okinawa and the upheaval of Okinawa’s reversion in 1972.<sup>11)</sup> As is common in much of Sakiyama’s writing, these seven stories cast light—and shadow—upon the themes of death, the past, memory, and responsibility. Ghosts and uncanny phantasms haunt Sakiyama’s oeuvre, and in *Kuja*, the spirits have taken over. While these stories only rarely address directly Okinawan experi-

ences of war, occupation, and tourist exploitation, their characters and landscapes are indelibly scarred by legacies of violence, trauma, and abandonment.

Although a full reading of the Kuja stories requires due attention to be paid to each of the seven narratives in turn, this paper focuses on the first and last works only: *Kotōmu duchuimuni* [A One-Woman Show in an Is(olate)land Dream] (2006), and *Kuja kisōkyoku hensō* [Variations on a Kuja Fantasia] (2008). Whereas the central five stories contain no direct coincidences of characters or plotlines, their relation being strictly thematic and intertextual, the seventh story reads explicitly as a continuation of the first. And yet, as a stated “variation,” the latter story also stages a textual interplay with the first that complicates this narrative succession, opening a space of rupture and repetition that resists the neat tying of narrative threads and thus any attempts to appropriate the voices carried therein.

### ***Kotōmu duchuimuni*: Narrating the Abyss**

*Kotōmu duchuimuni* (hereafter *Kotōmu*) follows a freelance photographer from the Japanese mainland referred to only by the generic first-person pronoun, Ore. Through repeated images of blackness and “mud-water,” and the onomatopoeic representation (*sozororo*) of something brewing underneath, the opening sequence of *Kotōmu* sets a foreboding atmosphere wherein Ore appears caught, as though in a dream:

A war cry (*otakebi*) erupting from a throat ripped open, like the distant roar of a crazed monster—*Uaaawh, aaawh, cawcawh, aaw-eeh, aaaawh, aaw-eeh*. I have the sense that someone, somewhere, is struggling to make their imprisoned whereabouts known, aimlessly facing the empty sky, tortuously flailing their snake-like arms. If I listen closely, there is a mournful sense of separation in that cry. A crazed spirit, searching for his corpse that one day suddenly vanished from sight, scratching and plucking the dark, empty sky, screaming with the full might of his throat. (Sakiyama, 2006, pp. 84–85)

With this cry “clung about his neck,” Ore awakes with a jolt, and ascertaining his whereabouts as a run-down theatre, he proceeds to trace how he came to be there. Initially in a flashback, we learn how Ore has travelled to Okinawa in search of the *fuchi*, a term commonly translated into English as “abyss” and that symbolizes the dual signification of an area of deep, stagnated water and an inescapable and difficult bind.

Inside the abyss, however, Ore finds himself unable to take his photographs, since at each attempt, the landscape shifts and blurs as though resisting his gaze.<sup>12)</sup> Determined to seek out the “epitomical abyss (*fuchi no fuchi*)” he boards a bus headed for Cape Hedo at the northern tip of the island. When the bus takes an unannounced detour, however, Ore is instead transported to the deserted town of Kuja. Drawn in by a mysterious flyer advertising a show by a theatrical troupe also named ‘Kuja,’ Ore makes his way inside a small theatre. Although his patience is tried and his suspicions are aroused by the almost empty venue, Ore is drawn in by the curious presence of a young girl casually smoking a cigarette on stage. When she opens her one-woman show (the *duchuimuni* of the work’s

title) with a welcome greeting in Okinawan (*gūsōyō*), this “foreign language casts a dazzling punch” that transfixes Ore in his seat (p. 89).

The girl is Takaesu Maria, a name inscribed by her multi-ethnic roots as the daughter of an Okinawan woman and Filipino-American soldier. Told in language that switches at speed between standard Japanese and Okinawan dialects, Maria’s hybrid speech conjures the past narratives of *Kuja*, of the roles played by the local military bases in the wars of Vietnam and Iraq, and the impact on the town of the U.S. occupying forces. From within these stories emerge the lives of *Kuja*’s women, including Maria’s grandmother, who was killed when she stepped out in front of a car following the implementation of new road rules by the U.S. military occupiers, and a girl that Maria encountered as a child, whose shaking and cowering could only attest to what traumatic experience had befallen her.<sup>13</sup>)

Listening to her performance, Ore senses that in *Kuja*, “the undying memories of those soldiers who fought in the land battle back then hang in the air” (p. 93). Yet as these memories shower over him, a “line of shadows” and “mud-water in which hangs the stench of death” (*ibid.*) wash over his eyes like waves, forcing him into an uneasy sleep. As the narrative oscillates between Maria’s direct speech and Ore’s “muddied dreams,” Ore is compelled to reach for his camera, when he is shaken by Maria’s piercing gaze. As he tries to regain focus, Maria has already disappeared from behind the lens, and Ore “sinks dizzily into the world behind the black curtain that had suddenly descended” (p. 95). When he awakes, there is no sign of what has passed, and he nervously heads back out into the town.

The parody of Ore’s search for the abyss amid the famously idyllic resorts and azure seas of Okinawa and the text’s repeated descriptions of black, muddy water is immediately explicit. Sakiyama’s prose plays on this slippage by writing Okinawa in *katakana*, a phonetic script used for foreign or buzz words that also recalls travel-agent posters keen to exoticise the region and create tourist demand. In contrast to the tropical stereotype, *Kuja* portrays an alternative Okinawa that does not match the picture-postcard image. Ore further disrupts this image when he describes the abyss as “the place that rises up between two sceneries at odds with one another . . . the rupture into which the abandoned ones of the world sink, the pit of the world, a border from which one gazes back at the world” (p. 86). There is a striking parallel between *Kuja*’s abyss and the earlier desire of Sakiyama’s island words to counter their appropriation by Japanese “by erecting the relation between these two heterogeneous languages as my own language of heterogeneity itself” (Sakiyama, 2002, p. 169). As the subverted image of an Okinawa plunged into the abyss, *Kuja* emerges in language as a site of irreconcilability, a point to which this paper will return.

As a site irretrievably “at odds” with itself, the abyss-like landscape of *Kuja* cannot help but resist Ore’s attempts to pin it down. Yet while Ore soon loses interest in capturing this scenery on film, the stand-off continues when he comes up against Maria’s one-woman show. If *Kuja* is the site of “undying memories” of the battles fought there, then as their narrator, Maria appears as the “corporeal embodiment of memories accumulated

through the ages in Kuja” (Kina, 2008, p. 60). Yet as Matsushita Yūichi points out, Maria’s disappearance from view without a trace at the novella’s close proves this body to be ethereal (Matsushita, 2010, p. 114). In this way, Maria seems able to remain as elusive to the camera lens as the external abyss.

That is not to say, however, that Maria’s role is as a mere photographic subject. Rather, while the landscape can only shift and blur before Ore’s gaze, Maria’s appearance upturns the expected dynamic of spectator/performer, or photographer/photographic subject. Her highly charged mix of tongues arrests Ore, forcing him to remain in his seat and listen. Moreover, this polyvocal onslaught “moves in constant flux from Japanese to the language of Kuja and back, transforming each as it goes” (“*Kuja kisōkyoku hensō*,” p. 174). Such language echoes Sakiyama’s own terrorising strategy of prose, enacting direct violence against the homogenisation of national and regional language and against a standardised historical narrative that seeks to silence the voices on its periphery. The force of this heterogeneous speech paralyzes Ore and casts over him a veil of sleep that disrupts his vision of the present, churning up instead the forgotten backdrop to Kuja: memories that refuse to die completely, and a cultural legacy forever shaped by a continued foreign military presence.

The site of Kuja emerges as these memories are inscribed into language, yet this inscription cannot take place without an audience. Through Ore’s encounter with Maria, the narratives trapped beneath the landscape’s surface are unleashed, their voices beckoning through the six subsequent stories. While the central five narratives of *Kuja* appear independent from the first, it is with the seventh, “*Kuja kisōkyoku hensō*,” (hereafter “Variations”) that the reader is reunited with Ore and the structure of the series is revealed. The word *hensō* usually refers to variations in a musical sense, and this story develops the previous narrative of *Kotōmu*, which identifies itself briefly as a *zensō*, or prelude (p. 89).

### ***Kuja kisōkyoku hensō*: Translating the Abyss**

It is now Ore’s seventh day in Kuja (inferring the six days, or six stories that have passed). Ore’s attempts to take photographs have now been thwarted by his lost sense of perspective and the perpetually shape-shifting landscape. Furthermore, Ore cannot shake off the reverberations of Takaesu Maria’s stories that, told in “Kuja-speak (*kuja-go*), seemed to be neither performance nor imagination” (p. 170). No longer burdened by his photographic desire, however, Ore is instead “drawn into the abyss that I cannot see” (p. 169), whereupon Kuja begins to reveal itself to him. As the story takes an increasingly fantastical turn, Ore stumbles upon tens of small grave-like mounds beneath the grass, tended to by an old lady and a redheaded teenager with a “non-human air” (p. 172). These mounds appear to cast a gaze back at Ore, yet unlike the other landscapes of the abyss, “invite this outsider into the memories of the Kuja darkness” (p. 171).

Before long, a small community has gathered to hold a *yunkui*, a ritual ceremony commonly held on Miyako Island.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, such practices as *utūrī* (a Miyako custom of



toasting wherein the same cup is taken, refilled, then passed from one person to the next), and words such as *shinka* (“friends” or “family”) suggest a relocation to this other island, despite the fact that Ore has only travelled on foot. Caught within this mixture of accented tongues, Ore finds himself able to translate their words thanks to his encounter with Maria, whereupon he “transforms into a banyan tree, only opening his earholes widely to listen” (p. 179). Although the songs elude his translation, represented in the text only through phonetic scripts, Ore feels able to capture their nuance. Yet when the members begin to relate their memories of the past, Ore draws nearer to hear: “Whispered like a game of word association, they were a series of private confessions. Some that reached my ears were translatable . . .” (p. 184). Among these confessions, the narrative and Ore’s ears give precedence to that of an old man caught in the struggle with memories of his own past: “I don’t want to remember, I didn’t want to remember, but I finally did remember it . . . a memory that fills me completely with dread . . .” (p. 185).

As Ore listens on, the man recalls witnessing the horror of mass suicides during the land battle of Okinawa, a process that ultimately leads him to confess the role that he took in the slaughter. The man’s torrential confession mirrors the force of Maria’s soliloquy from the earlier text. Yet while Maria’s language makes visible the lives of individual women in *Kuja*, the old man’s retelling of the caves wherein Okinawans sought shelter from the encroaching battle recalls a more visceral horror of war and plays into contemporary debates in Japan and Okinawa over historical responsibility and remembrance. Listening to the man’s admission, Ore begins to hear the voices of the dead who haunt history (and his story), and before long he is participating in the community’s ceremonial dance, a process that unlocks the way to recall his own forgotten past. It dawns upon Ore that the ceremony’s purpose is “to reclaim words that have been oppressed and usurped and to reawaken the memories of darkness” (p. 187). Yet when a bulldozer tears into the ceremonial space, Ore struggles to find a language that might fight the invasion until he finally curls his body into “the shape of a bullet . . . opens his blocked throat, and lets rip” (p. 189).

As the longest of the *Kuja* stories (19 pages compared with an average of 13) and the series’ culmination, “Variations” demands a deep textual engagement in its own right. Yet as a continuation and adaptation of the first *Kuja* story discussed above, the narrative is most distinctive as a work in and of translation. In contrast to the unidirectional assault of Maria’s hybrid “*Kuja*-speak,” the voices of the *shinka* pull in Ore so that he learns to listen, and subsequently translate, the silent stories of the community. Ore comes to realise that while the members do not communicate orally with one another, the ceremonial dance of the *yunkui* enables them each to reclaim their own language out of suppression and raise their memories from the dead. Moreover, Ore realises the restorative significance of the ceremony for a traditional community facing potential crisis. “I wondered whether the only means to burst out of this present moment of crisis was this peculiar ceremony they called *yunkui*” (p. 188). The ultimate moment of danger presents itself in the text’s final pages, with the encroaching legion of bulldozers. Yet as the singular narra-

tive gives way to polyvocal confessions that shift, split, and overlap with one another, the text also suggests the sense of crisis inherent in the act of telling, namely the danger of appropriation. For it is telling that Ore is unable to find a language suitable for protesting the bulldozers. When he does find a voice, the call that he makes is not represented in language, but rather, the text simply ends.

Closing the final narrative in this way, Ore's scream at once casts an eerie silence over the series. Yet the implied scream also tears open a point of rupture out of which the alternative histories of Kuja, once silenced and repressed, are able to burst forth. As this point of rupture interplays with the gap out of which the abyss of Kuja rises, Ore's silent scream comes to signify the heterogeneous languages and polyvocal narratives of Kuja that, even while defying representation, desire to make their claims for the need to remember their ghosts, and the perils of closing one's ears. Yet Ore's cry does not simply provide a point of breakage. It also enacts a folding-back onto the opening scene of *Kotōmu*, and the series as a whole, by echoing the "war cry" of the "crazed spirit, searching for his corpse" that pervades his first nightmarish vision.

From the onset of the Kuja stories, therefore, Ore appears already dead, chasing his own disembodied voice, which in turn "scratches and plucks" at the darkness in search of the body to which it once belonged. In this distinctly uncanny move, Ore's cry seems to call out to himself as an Other within, to the Other of his subconscious, thus confirming the dismantling of his identity as a mainland Japanese male into a plural, heterogeneous space wherein the alternative and repressed (hi)stories of Kuja are set into motion. Ore thus ends the narrative as he had already begun it: as divided, doubled, fragmented, and conflicted as the visions and memories that beckon him deeper into the abyss.

In the *Kuja* stories, the act of translation does not assume that the translated text will automatically reach a universal audience. However, as elaborated by Lisa Yoneyama (Yoneyama, 2003) in her combined reading of Benjamin's work on history and on translation, the task of the translator as a critical historiographer might be defined as transferring the memories of the past to future generations, even when she has no direct experience of the event herself. Through his encounter with the abyss and Maria's Kuja-speak therein, Ore is called upon to lend an ear to the ghosts that echo around him. Failure to do so threatens to condemn the dead to death, as Tetsushi Marukawa identifies in similar narrative structures in Sakiyama's earlier works (Marukawa, 2004). That is, not simply to lose the dead from our lived present, but also to lose them from our past, to erase them from history as though they had never existed at all.

As Ore is propelled further into the abyss of Kuja, he learns to open his ears to the voices of the dead that have been ignored by larger historical narratives. Focalised through Ore, Kuja thus becomes the site of a threefold interaction: the intervention of "dark memories" from past narratives into an equally murky present; the inscription of Kuja-speak into a Japanese narrative text; and the subversion of touristic expectations to uncover hidden, darker depths. In the role of translator, Ore finds his ability to translate the words that he hears waver. Yet within the abyss of Kuja, the *yunkui* provides a space

in which the relations between the past and the present, the living and the dead are evoked and negotiated. Moreover, Ore’s relinquishment of his photographic desire marks a shift of intention that allows the stories of *Kuja* to be told on their own terms. Only with this balance restored can the community have a chance of continuing into the future, of which Ore’s interruption of the narrative with a wordless scream is symbolic as it freeze-frames the bulldozers ready to tear through the ceremonial space.

## Conclusion

In *Kuja*, the literal and figurative ghosts of the past, once silenced and forgotten, have now returned to demand to be remembered in the present. Through their textual interplay, these two stories mirror and re-write one another irrespective of their place within the literary series. This structure allows the ghosts of *Kotōmu*, and the other interlinking stories of *Kuja*, to haunt the subsequent “Variations” and vice versa. As such, a complete reading of either text can never be achieved, as each cycle opens the way for new stories to emerge from within the gaps. It is precisely through this irreconcilability between the two narratives that either one refuses to be contained.<sup>15)</sup> Through its dual function, Ore’s scream thus signals the beginning of the narrative cycle while it also enacts a rupture in the text that pauses the closing scene of *Kuja* just in time to keep the bulldozers and the devastation that they seek at bay. The bulldozers may never retreat, but so long as Ore’s scream can hold out, nor can they encroach any closer.

The abyssal structure of the *Kuja* stories therefore reveals the full significance of *Kuja* as the epitome of the abyss, for the sequence of all seven stories constructs a narrative that continually writes and rewrites itself *en abyme*. On a similar effect in the poetry of Mallarmé, Derrida writes: “in the act of inscribing itself on itself indefinitely, mark upon mark, it multiplies and complicates its text, a text within a text, a margin in a mark, the one indefinitely repeated within the other: an abyss” (Derrida, 1981, p. 265). In *Kuja*, the “abyss” that “rises up between two sceneries at odds with one another” describes not merely the landscape setting of these stories, but also the overlapping uses of “*Kuja*” to name the text, their narrative space and its resident theatrical troupe, and the structural interplay and network of conflicting narratives that thread through, supplement, and are revenant throughout the series.

In the same way that the last story unfolds as the continuation of Ore’s journey and transformation initiated in the first, the opening narrative of *Kotōmu*, in turn, is already darkened by a shadowy trace of something yet to come that haunts uncannily, calling back upon Ore in his dream. Instead of replicating the dominant perceptions of Okinawa, however, unlike the “infernal repetition” of patriarchal narratives from which Cixous’s writing demands escape, the abyss-like structure of the *Kuja Stories* never fully repeats itself yet never comes full circle. Rather, it unfolds through the narratives it calls and that call back through it, as the space in which those silenced histories are able to live on, always in translation, in an interrupted relay that, echoing the designation of *écriture*

*féminine*, “lies in that direction, where *it* writes itself, where *it* dreams, where *it* invents new worlds.” Any attempt to define or describe certain works of fiction is problematic, accompanied with its own risks and limitations. Yet by reading the *Kuja* stories through the lens of *écriture féminine*, the above discussion suggests an alternative positioning through which Sakiyama’s writing might fleetingly escape the binds implied by Okinawan literature, while simultaneously showcasing the ways in which that writing disrupts and reinvigorates the key concerns of the genre.

## Notes

- 1) All translations from Japanese texts are my own unless stated otherwise.
- 2) For a comprehensive overview of assimilative practices in Okinawa that were not only imposed from above (“top down”) but also voluntarily undertaken by the local people (“bottom up”), and the impact that they had upon regional languages and identities, see Steve Rabson, “Assimilation policy in Okinawa: Promotion, resistance, and ‘reconstruction.’” Japan Policy Research Institute (JPRI) Occasional Paper at the University of San Francisco Pacific Rim 8 (1996) <http://www.jpri.org/publications/occasionalpapers/op8.html>. See also Alan S. Christy, “The making of Imperial Subjects in Okinawa,” in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 1(3), (1993): 607–639.
- 3) Kina’s concerns echo Alan Christy’s description of the folklorist debate over the preservation of Okinawan language and culture in the face of assimilation in the prewar era. Christy writes: “[P]rewar defenders of Okinawan culture often inadvertently contributed to the diminution of Okinawan cultural identity even as they loudly proclaimed it. Whether or not Okinawan culture existed in its own right and accord, the ‘always already Japanese’ formulation was essential in transforming utterly incomprehensible Okinawan ‘languages’ into Japanese ‘dialects.’ Other cultural practices also became subsets of Japanese and cultural practices, even if they were praised for their ‘purity’” (Christy, 1993, p. 633).
- 4) Within this volume of essays by Sakiyama, entitled *Kotoba no umareru basho* [The Place Where Words Are Born], of particular interest are: “‘*Oto no kotoba’ kara ‘kotoba no oto’ e*” (From ‘words of sounds’ to ‘sounds of words’” (pp. 110–116) and “*Kotoba no fūkei—‘appa’ to ‘anna’ to ‘obaa’ no hazama de*” [Landscapes of Language—In the rift between ‘appa’ and ‘anna’ and ‘obaa’] (pp. 117–122). Sakiyama, Tami. (2004). *Kotoba no umareru basho* [The Place Where Words Are Born]. Tokyo: Sunagoya Shobō. The latter of these has also been translated into English. See Tami Sakiyama, “A landscape of words: The one in between appa, anna, and obaa,” in Elizabeth Mackenzie (ed.), *My Postwar Life: New Writings from Japan and Okinawa* (Chicago; San Francisco: Chicago Quarterly Book Review, 2012), 189–205.
- 5) The title of Sakiyama’s essay “*Shimakotoba de kachāshī*” is itself a notable example of her wordplay. *Kachāshī* is the name of a traditional Okinawan dance, often performed on festive occasions including wedding receptions—a sense that Bhowmik captures in her translation, “A Wild Dance with Island Words” (166: 2009). However, *kachāshī* is also a verb in Okinawan comparable in meaning to the Japanese *kakimazuru*, literally “to scratch and mix up.” When written in phonetic *katakana* script (as Sakiyama’s title is), the verb roots in both Japanese (*kaki*) and Okinawan (*kachi*) each have the double meaning “to scratch” and “to write.” It is this double sense of “stirring up” and “writing” that my translation as “in-citing” attempts to convey.
- 6) The Japanese word *sakusen* (strategy) may be written two ways. In Sakiyama’s rendering (作戦), the first character is also that of *sakka*, or “writer” (作家). Since *sen* is written with the character denoting “war,” perhaps these writing strategies may be best read as literary battles.
- 7) Kina also evokes feminist literary criticism from the 1980s in situating Sakiyama’s written works, like those of Anzaldúa, within the project to reinvent language as expounded by many writers of the time, Elaine Showalter among them.
- 8) Throughout my discussion, *Kuja* refers to the fictional setting while the italicised *Kuja* refers to the title

of Sakiyama’s series of stories. Where the name appears briefly in single quotation marks (‘Kuja’), this indicates the town’s theatre troupe.

- 9) The full list of stories reads as follows (English translations are my own): “*Kotōmu duchuimuni* [A one-woman show in an i(solate)land dream],” *Subaru* 28.1 (2006): 84–96; “*Mienai machi kara shonkanē ga* [Shonkanē from an invisible town],” *Subaru* 28.5 (2006): 130–44; “*Akō-kurō genshikō* [Passing Through Twilight Phantasms],” *Subaru* 28.9 (2006): 240–52; “*Pingihira zaka yakō* [Night-flight on Pingihira Hill],” *Subaru* 29.1 (2007): 140–51; “*Figuru kaji nu fukiba* [When the Figuru Wind Blows],” *Subaru* 29.5 (2007): 140–51; “*Mapirōma no tsuki ni tatsu kage wa* [What Shadows Stand in the Midday Moon],” *Subaru* 29.11 (2007): 197–212; “*Kuja kisōkyoku hensō* [Variations on a Kuja Fantasia],” *Subaru* 30.1 (2008): 168–89. The seven stories have never been published under a sole heading; the term “Kuja series” (*Kuja rensaku*) was first suggested by Kina (2008).
- 10) Motohama Hidehiko situates Kuja as a critique of the ongoing gentrification of Okinawa’s suburbs that has replaced GI bars with mass consumer culture epitomized by American brands. See Motohama, Hidehiko. “Okinawa” to iu porunogurafi [“Okinawa” as pornography]. *Subaru*, 27.2, (2007): 197–204.
- 11) In a three-part letter relay printed in the *Okinawa Times* in April 2012, Sakiyama and Kina, who was only five years old in the year of reversion, address head-on the issue of first-hand experience. To quote Sakiyama: “‘First-hand experience’ is undoubtedly an important element for proof of an event. But in order to embody first-hand experience as experience, the kind of thinking that arouses awareness of the meaning of past experiences in the present time needs to have the power of sustainability” (Kina & Sakiyama, 2012a).
- 12) A detailed consideration on the significance of the gaze in *Kuja* is beyond the scope of this article. However, Eri Watanabe rightly highlights the interplay between Ore’s desire to capture the landscape on film and the “anonymous, uneven” gaze cast over Okinawa by the capital/ mainland and by tourism. See Watanabe, Eri. *Yume no kotoba no riariti—Sakiyama Tami “Kotōmu duchuimuni”* [The reality of dream language: Sakiyama Tami’s “Kotōmu duchuimuni”]. In Hirota Ichiyanagi & Morio Yoshida (Eds.), *Gensō bungaku, kindai no makai e* [Towards fantastic literature and devil worlds]. Tokyo: Seikyusha (2006): 187. Once established in this opening story, the structure of the gaze and attempts to resist and subvert it recur in subsequent narratives, most keenly in the shape-shifting “mud-woman” of *Akō-kurō genshikō* [passing through twilight phantasms].”
- 13) The pairings of elderly grandmother types and young girls, and tropes of prostitution and implied sexual assault, are reworked throughout the seven stories of Kuja, creating an intertextuality that binds and sets apart each narrative.
- 14) The *yunkui* is traditionally intended to redress imbalance in the world and restore former prosperity (the name is thought to be related to the Japanese, *yo no koi*, 世の乞い). Ritual cycles and oral tradition are especially common features of Sakiyama’s earlier fiction. For example, her longer 1994 novel, *Kurikaeshigaeshi* [Repeat-repeating], is set against a reworking of Mircea Eliade’s *The myth of the eternal return* (1971), and focuses on the moral dilemma of whether to bring secret and forgotten rituals to light.
- 15) My readings of Sakiyama’s fiction are informed by Derridean deconstruction, the notion of irreconcilability and survival informed specifically by Jacques Derrida’s essay entitled “Living On/ Border Lines.” In Harold Bloom (Ed.), *Deconstruction and Criticism*. (1979). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

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## 崎山多美のクジャ連作における「淵」を翻訳する

ヴィクトリア・ヤング

1990年代の「沖縄ブーム」以来、「沖縄文学」は、文学のジャンルとしての地位を確立するようになる一方、沖縄の作家による文学作品を、主流文化が同化または着服／横領 (appropriation) するという状況ももたらすことになった。2006年から2008年の間に文芸誌『すばる』に発表された崎山多美の「クジャ連作」は、米軍基地の陰で「淵のマチ」として存在する「クジャ」という場を描いた7つの短編小説で構成されているが、それらは、主流文化が沖縄文学に抱く期待に抵抗し、さらにそうした期待を転覆する描写で知られている。本稿では、崎山の言う「淵」の意義に注目

### Translating the “Abyss” in Sakiyama Tami’s *Kuja* Stories

し、フェミニスト文学批評におけるエクリチュール・フェミニンという概念や「翻訳」の理論を援用しながら、崎山の文学に対する新しい読みの可能性を探りたい。

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