

# 琉球大学学術リポジトリ

## アメリカの大学における近代沖縄の文学と映画の教育実践

メタデータ	言語: 出版者: 琉球大学国際沖縄研究所 公開日: 2019-07-24 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: Bhowmik, Davinder L., ボーミック, ダビンダー・L メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12000/44731">http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12000/44731</a>

# Teaching Modern Okinawan Literature and Film

Davinder L. Bhowmik\*

## 1. Introduction

In Spring 2015, I taught an entire course on Okinawan literature to undergraduate students for the first time. In previous courses, whenever possible, I had incorporated some Okinawan material in my courses. This I did for several reasons: to introduce students to the breadth of writing from Japan, to include less commonly taught literature, and to avoid Tokyo-centrism in my courses. Despite the fact that since the early 1990s my research had focused on Okinawan literature, it would take a full twenty years before I could teach an “all Okinawa” literature course. In this essay, I discuss the constraints involved in teaching such a course, the process by which a corpus of translations sufficient for me to offer a course materialized, and the outcome of my course in its first iteration.

First, it must be said that given the difficulty of achieving proficiency in Japanese, most American undergraduates only just begin to read short stories, and this with considerable help from dictionaries, in their final year of study. Since reading primary texts in Japanese severely limits how much one can assign, unless works are available in translation, it is impractical to teach a course on Okinawan literature to undergraduates. In the early 1990s, other than the occasional story published in an obscure journal, the only literature from Okinawa available in English was *Two Okinawan Novellas*, translated by Steve Rabson. The novellas contained, Ôshiro Tatsuhiko’s “The Cocktail Party” and Higashi Mineo’s “An Okinawan Boy,” are quite excellent. However, alone they hardly make a course. Clearly, far more literature in translation was necessary, and to my delight, it arrived. The 2000 publication of *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, co-edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, marked a turning point in the availability of classroom materials for teaching centered on Okinawa. With *Two Okinawan Novellas* and *Southern Exposure*, I now had enough material to teach a robust unit on prose and poetry from Okinawa for a course I had regularly taught on ethnic minority literature in Japan. This was progress.

---

\* Associate Professor, University of Washington    ワシントン大学准教授

A second constraint in offering a full course on Okinawan literature is the underwhelming number of translations into English from Japanese published each year. In a seminal article on the politics of translation, Edward Fowler explains that while sales of translations into Japanese from English are brisk in Japan, the reverse is far from true in the United States. Albeit dated, the figures Fowler gives—six translations a day from English to Japanese and one every six months from Japanese to English—reveal a huge imbalance.<sup>1)</sup> To add insult to injury, this situation is compounded further by reportedly slower sales of literature in the United States in recent years.<sup>2)</sup>

Fowler further explains how the golden age of translation into English of Japanese literature, in which work after work by Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, and Tanizaki Jun'ichirô appeared in the 1950s, constructed an exoticized and aestheticized image of Japan quite antithetical to the prewar image of Japan as expansionist and war-mongering. The newer image of Japan created by works such as Kawabata's *Snow Country* or Tanizaki's *Some Prefer Nettles* neatly fit Cold War rhetoric in that the United States, together with its enemy-turned ally, could fight against the threat of communism.<sup>3)</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s as cultural studies took root in the United States after its theorization for three previous decades in England, the carefully crafted image of Japan set by translators of the golden age was disturbed by translations of authors as varied as Murakami Ryû, Nakagami Kenji, Ôshiro Tatsuhiro and Matayoshi Eiki. The range of literature from Japan continued apace at the start of the millennium with *Southern Exposure* and *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Koreans in Japan* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2010) edited by Melissa Wender.

Heartened by a sudden proliferation of writing from Japan, I naively believed that “someone” would surely translate more literature from Okinawa; I simply had to wait patiently for its magical appearance. Literature from Okinawa, much of which I had written about in *Writing Okinawa: Narrative Acts of Identity and Resistance* (Routledge, 2008), I reasoned, was too important not to be translated. After a few years of waiting, it became clear that if I wanted more material available to teach, I would have to take the initiative to make it available in English. Thus, at the University of Hawai'i's inauguration of the Center for Okinawan Studies, held in 2008, when Steve Rabson expressed a wish to co-edit with me a volume to follow *Southern Exposure*, I gingerly accepted the opportunity.

Michael Molasky, co-editor with Steve Rabson of *Southern Exposure*, had warned that the time invested in producing an anthology could be spent writing a scholarly book. My department chair, too, confirmed this sobering fact when I met with him for our annual meeting. He stressed the importance of my publishing a second book for promotion and the relative unimportance of a translation project. Clearly, an institutional bias against translation still exists, despite the great strides translation studies scholars such as Lawrence Venuti and David Belos have made toward furthering the idea of translation as an act of interpretation and not shadow work. Thus, as vital as an anthology of literature in translation would be for my teaching, my co-editing it would not count much for pro-

motion; in fact, my involvement in creating such an anthology would negatively impact my completing the scholarly work necessary for promotion. Undeterred, I pressed on.

The anthology became a side project to my day job of teaching, researching contemporary Okinawan authors, and other university work. Steve and I began by contacting colleagues and students we knew had already translated an Okinawan piece. We quickly received several stories by Medoruma Shun and Sakiyama Tami, both of whom are critically acclaimed contemporary authors. Also, to our delight, Bob Tierney had just completed a draft of Chinen Seishin's *The Human Pavilion*, a play that brilliantly encapsulates Okinawa's postwar history. To round out the volume, we commissioned translations of poetry and other historically important prose works such as Yamagusuku Seishin's 1911 "Kunenbo Orange Trees" and Ôta Ryohaku's 1949 "Black Diamonds" from colleagues who expressed an interest in participating in the project. With the inclusion of these two works, the former about a division between pro- and anti-Chinese camps in Okinawa during the time of the Sino-Japanese war, the latter on the fight for independence in Indonesia as viewed by an Okinawan man, our anthology amply covered the modern period.

Together with a dozen or so translated works in hand and a prospectus for the anthology, we pitched the project to Pam Kelley at the University of Hawai'i Press.

By then, *Living Spirit: Literature and Resurgence from Okinawa*, the exceedingly handsome volume of writing on Okinawa edited by Yamazato Katsunori and Frank Stewart and replete with photographs by the late Higa Yasuo, had been published. Naturally, Pam wanted to know how our anthology differed from *Living Spirit* to determine whether our anthology might be considered redundant. While I would like to believe that the co-editors' expertise in Okinawan literature was key in convincing Pam to take on the anthology, important, too, was that, with *Two Okinawan Novellas* and two anthologies of literature from Okinawa, it would be possible to offer an entire course, which would enlarge the scope of modern Japanese literature in university curricula. That our anthology tilted toward the contemporary period, which sells well, also helped make the case for its publication.

With a tentative go ahead from UH Press, Steve and I proceeded to clean up the manuscript draft, which Pam then sent out to readers. Fortunately, their reports were positive, and we received a contract after agreeing to make changes based on the readers' suggestions. Steve worked on securing permissions while I revised the Introduction and scoured images suitable for a cover. As is the case with most books involving permissions, we encountered two or three stumbling blocks, which took some time to resolve. In addition, with events in Okinawa unfolding on a daily basis, particularly in regard to the Henoko relocation controversy, I had to revise the Introduction at every opportunity we were given to make changes. Teruya Yuken's generously giving us permission to use an image of his *bingata* piece "You-I You-I" made much of labor involved in assembling the anthology worthwhile. When seen from afar, the *bingata* dyed kimono featured in the piece seems rather traditional, but a closer look reveals an intricate design studded with modern jet fighter planes, Osprey helicopters, soldiers, and parachutes. The brilliant piece

neatly encapsulates the themes of our anthology, now officially titled *Islands of Protest: Modern Okinawan Literature from Japan*.

## 2. Teaching Representations of Okinawan Literature and Film

In Spring 2015, twenty years after I began my own study of Okinawan literature, I finally had enough material to teach a course in my research specialty. The texts I chose for the course were the previously mentioned *Two Okinawan Novellas*, *Southern Exposure*, and *Living Spirit*. Because *Islands of Protest* would not be published until early 2016, I put pdf drafts of the anthology's content on a course website restricted to students to pilot the translations. I also decided to include a work of diasporic Okinawan literature that won the 2008 Canada-Japan Literary Award, *Odori*, by Darcy Tamayose, and for good measure, Sarah Bird's 2014 novel *Above the East China Sea*.

Since I had advertised the course as a study of Okinawan literature and film, the latter medium strategically included to appeal to many students' seeming preference for visual arts and the language of film rather than literature, I added two films to the course syllabus: *Level Five*, a French film directed by Chris Marker, and *Sonatine*, a Japanese film directed by Kitano Takeshi. These choices might strike one as odd given the availability of lighthearted films on Okinawa such as *The Pig's Revenge* or *Hotel Hibiscus*, but I intentionally sought these outliers to unsettle stereotypes students would invariably encounter in their study of Okinawan literature.

With a full class of thirty students enrolled in Topics in Japanese Culture: Modern Japanese Literature and Film from Okinawa, I began the first day of class in typical fashion by introducing myself. After giving my name, area of research, courses taught, and so forth, I told student of my having lived in Okinawa for several years as a child and teenager and how I considered Okinawa to be my "hometown." Then, when students introduced themselves, I made sure they included their own hometown, partly to help me learn who they were but also to make the point that what we were going to study in the course, literary and filmic production, was, in essence, the cultural expression of a particular place: Okinawa, Japan.

My course was comprised of undergraduates at various levels with a majority of juniors and seniors. Half had some knowledge of Japanese or were Japanese majors while the other half came from a variety of disciplines, with a number of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors. In later weeks, it became apparent that the course material resonated most with two students, one from Taiwan and another whose mother was from Miyako Island. Others may also have made connections between the subject of the course and their family background, but judging from their participation in class, the course materials made an impression on these two students in particular. I should also note I had three international students from Japan, one from Kobe University and two from Waseda University. Hearing their perspectives made for a richer course, and it was satisfying to see how certain preconceptions of theirs changed over the period of

the course.

In keeping with the spirit of “syllabus week,” I generally finish my first day of class early after finishing introductions and reviewing the course syllabus. However, on this first day, I used what I think is the perfect piece of literature with which to dive into course content on Okinawa: Yamanokuchi Baku’s poem “A Conversation.” I asked students to read the lines in turn and then had them think about the relation between the poem’s poet and his addressee. We then talked about the poet’s reluctance to answer the addressee’s question “Where are you from?”; the unspoken range of stereotypes by which the poet’s hometown is known (karate, awamori, the Chieftans); and finally the many ways the poet evades a direct reply (the south, near the equator). By the end of the first day of class, then, students had a strong sense of the theme for the first half of my course: identity.

For day two of the course, I had students read Yamagusuku’s “Kunenbo Orange Trees,” which offered me the opportunity to discuss Okinawan fiction as a modern genre before launching into an analysis of the story. In this class, students learned that a key difference between Ryukyuan literature and Okinawan literature is that the latter, a modern genre, is written in Japanese. Since students are reading works in English, they often forget that what they read was originally written in Japanese. Thus, I must alert them to the dual nature of Yamagusuku’s writing—predominantly standard Japanese with dialogue represented by some variety of local language. Together with an assortment of maps of Japan, Okinawa Prefecture, and Okinawa Island, I showed scans of the original language of the text using PowerPoint slides. Then, as much as possible, throughout the early weeks of the term, I returned to the issue of language to ensure that students understood that during the prewar period, one of the key ways writers from Okinawa assimilated to Japanese culture was through the mastery of the Japanese language. Without knowing about prewar Japanese imperial education’s imperative that Okinawans assimilate by learning Japanese, it would be difficult if not impossible for my students to understand the loss of indigenous culture.

Students next read my translation of Ikemiyagi Sekihô’s “Officer Ukuma.” The reason I chose to translate this text years ago is that it so neatly illustrates the conundrum a native elite, the subaltern Okuma, faces when he manages to rise above his station by becoming a police officer. The story also provides a clear example of literary irony. Success, the theme of so much pioneering modern literature in Japan, can only be read as ironic in “Officer Ukuma.”<sup>4</sup> It ensures Okuma’s break with his village, and it matters little to his brawny colleagues from other parts of Japan who overshadow Ukuma. The story offers me a chance to unsettle undergraduate students from their studied focus on precisely how their university degree will translate to employment after graduation. I am not sure how successfully I unsettled students about this preoccupation, but I do know the story left in them an indelible impression of how costly in terms of cultural identity Ukuma’s material success is.

The remaining prewar works students read were Kushi Fusako’s “Memoirs of a Declining Ryukyuan Woman” followed by Kushi’s subsequent defense of the story, and a

prose piece by Yamanokuchi Baku, “Mr. Saitô of Heaven Building.” These pieces work well together since they share in common the notion of “passing.” In “Memoirs,” the protagonist’s uncle hides his identity as an Okinawan, and in “Mr. Saitô,” Saitô, a Korean in Japan, enjoys a close relationship with his employee Baku, who is from Okinawa. Their difference from mainstream Tokyo society forges a bond between the two.

By the time students read Ôshiro Tatsuhiko’s “Turtleback Tombs,” prior readings in the course, such as “Officer Ukuma,” had primed them to recognize the price modernization costs an Okinawan family caught in a ferocious clash between the United States and Japan. The family’s flight to its ancestors’ turtleback tomb, Ushi’s adherence to rituals, and the author’s use of an experimental dialect consolidate the idea of the indigenous culture that war ravages in the spring of 1945.

The Battle of Okinawa that rages in “Turtleback Tombs” formed the background to the last set of readings before the students’ midterm examination. This set of readings consisted of a trilogy by Medoruma Shun: “Droplets,” “Mabuigumi,” and “Tree of Butterflies.” Students appreciated the move to the contemporary period, closer to their own, yet came to recognize how, for Medoruma, the effects of the Battle linger in the bodies of his characters, from Tokusho in “Droplets” to Uta in “Mabuigumi” and finally to Gozei in “Tree of Butterflies.” In “Droplets,” Medoruma’s inclusion of the Himeyuri, the Blood and Iron Corps, the natural features of Okinawa as exemplified by traces of limestone in the water that emits from Tokusho’s toe, linguistic differences in the speech of Ushi, Dr. Ôshiro, and Ishimine, and fine details such as the scene in which a gecko ravishes an insect, shaking off the magic realist elements of the story all the while intimating how larger powers invariably consume the small and the weak (read Okinawa), or the story’s climactic scene in which Tokusho and his intimate, Ishimine, confront one another, dazzled students because of the fresh twists on battle narratives. The contrast drawn between private and public memory in “Mabuigumi” pushed students to reflect on official and unofficial histories. The exaggerated, climactic scene in this story, the dislodging of an island crab sought by news and cameramen from mainland media, is a far cry from the story’s bleak final scene in which Uta, reminiscent of the character Ushi in Ôshiro’s “Turtleback Tombs,” offers futile prayers. The last story of the trilogy was perhaps the most difficult to teach. Gozei and Shosei are marginalized characters in a community already marginalized, and caught betwixt and between larger forces in the Battle of Okinawa. The eponymous butterflies allude both to the yuna tree with butterfly like blossoms and butterflies, symbolic of the freedom so-called “comfort women” did not possess in their enslavement to the Japanese military during the Battle of Okinawa. My students responded favorably to this powerful story and appreciated how Medoruma shows why the Korean sex slaves of the story occupy a position beneath even the marginalized Okinawan woman Gozei. By depicting widely disparate characters, Medoruma shows that the issues of occupation, war, and memory, the focus of much of his writing, are not restricted to Okinawans alone but rather are shared concerns.

To mark the halfway point in my roughly chronological course in which the Battle of

Okinawa fell midway, I assigned students to view Chris Marker's *Level 5*, a film whose premise is to create a hypertextual video game by which to reverse the outcome of the Battle through several links that take the viewer to the famous photo of an Okinawan girl's white flag surrender, the flag raising at Iwo Jima, a woman jumping off a cliff in Saipan, bombing raids in Borneo, Himeyuri nurses, and Korean women. The film serves at least two purposes. First, it contains much of the discourse surrounding the Battle, and secondly, the film's framing, characterized by a voiceover by the film's French actors, Laura and Chris, prompts me to question students about narrative structure. That is, I asked if the ironic framing, with actors' voicing in the background and images of the Battle in the foreground, diminished the voice of the Okinawans. Who tells the story of the Battle? How is it told? For whom is it told? These questions on the ethics of narration became a central concern in the second half of the course.

Whereas the prewar works discussed in class drilled into students the theme of identity, reading postwar Okinawan writing brought to their attention the prevalence of the Battle of Okinawa as a theme in literature even with the passing of seventy years since Japan's defeat in WWII. Though identity and war were the most prominent themes of the course, several stories in the syllabus related to the theme of the environment, a subject of great interest. As early as in our discussion of Yamagusuku's "Mandarin Orange Trees," in week one I emphasized the importance of local color as exemplified by the eponymous *kunenbo* oranges. Shima Tsuyoshi's story "Bones" added to students' list of local language, *gajumaru*, or banyan, the tree to which an old woman clings even as the roar of construction surrounds her. Perhaps the most vivid story on the theme of the environment was Yamanoha Nobuko's "Will o' the Wisp." This story, in which an unborn fetus and her mother converse as they are caught beneath the sea, features spectacular underwater scenes prompting a discussion of the prefecture's famous coral reefs and abundant sea life threatened today in Oura Bay, in eastern Nago, near Henoko.

Medoruma's writing offers the clearest example of the lingering effects of the Battle on individuals today. However, by highlighting Koza as the setting of Higashi Mineo's "Child of Okinawa" and several of Sakiyama Tami's stories, students became aware of the military-base town as a legacy of war. One of the benefits of having five class sessions devoted to Sakiyama Tami ("Round Trip over the Ocean," "Island Confinement," "Swinging, Swaying," "The Tale of Wind and Water," "Passing into Twilight Alley," and "Landscape of Words") is that students were disabused of the cultural stereotypes of Okinawa perpetuated by media (and which Yamanokuchi Baku incorporates in "A Conversation"). Sakiyama's dystopian fiction offered the class no tropical islands in which to heal or recuperate, nor any island girls resembling ones featured in travel posters. Rather, students learned about the internal tensions wrought by depopulation, girls and women abandoned by American soldiers, and a collision between standard and local languages.

Matayoshi Eiki's "The Boar George Gunned Down" sparked a robust discussion, one of many, on another question that would preoccupy students for the remaining weeks of class: What is Okinawan literature? That George, a young American soldier, is the char-

acter in whom most readers' sympathies lay, disoriented students, accustomed by this point to viewing Okinawan characters as the focus of course material. Tentative definitions of Okinawan literature included such explanations as "writing by Okinawans about Okinawa." Matayoshi's story, despite its focus on an American soldier, alerted students to the rampant violence occurring in base towns in Okinawa during the Vietnam War. The story fit our working definition of Okinawan literature because Matayoshi was Okinawan, the story was set in Okinawa, and its central theme, war, was a major theme of postwar Okinawan literature.

The students' working definition began to crumble after reading Darcy Tamayose's *Odori* and Sarah Bird's *Above the East China Sea*. How could *Odori*, written by a Canadian author, be considered Okinawan literature, I asked. Some believed that since Tamayose is of Okinawan descent, her novel "counted." This naturally led to discussion of whether a blood connection was necessary or whether it was possible for anyone to write imaginatively on anything. If *Odori* did not convince students of the possibility of the latter, then Sarah Bird's expansive story, in which she deftly intertwines the lives of two teenage girls, one a contemporary American military brat the other a wartime Okinawan villager, did. Given its length, the novel was the students' final reading assignment. Even though students knew well in advance they were to read the novel by the final week, I feared that our being at the end of the term would result in some not finishing it. To my pleasant surprise, most students reported that the novel was engaging enough that they had read it to the end.

In our final discussion, I asked students the questions around which I had structured the course: What is Okinawan literature? Who can write Okinawan literature? How does one write Okinawan literature? With *Odori* and *Above the East China Sea* under their belt, those students who had been resistant to the idea of a non-Okinawan authoring a work on Okinawa seemed to come around to the idea. This breakthrough allowed me to spend remaining class time on the ethics of writing about Okinawa. To broaden our discussion, I gave other examples of literature in Japan on social issues. These included atomic bomb literature, Minamata literature, and 3/11 literature. Having dispensed with the notion that experience was essential (being Okinawan, being bombed, being diseased, being irradiated), we proceeded to discuss how to write ethically about Okinawa. Because students had previously read Yamanoha's imagery rich "Will o' the Wisp," they clearly recognized the unborn fetus conversing with her mother in Bird's novel as a narrative device borrowed from Yamanoha. Was this borrowing artistic license? Did creative writers not have to acknowledge their sources the way others do? To her credit, Bird lists Southern Exposure (in which "Will o' the Wisp" appears) as a reference in a postscript. Is a general acknowledgement acceptable, or should Bird have cited the precise story from which her narrative device was adopted? How would Yamanoha know her work was a source of inspiration for Bird?

We decided that if an author evinced empathy for Okinawa and its people, we could excuse some shortcomings. In this spirit, the class hit upon a rather generous way to come

to terms with Bird's borrowing of Yamanoha's narrative device. Rather than view the motivation for Bird's novel as speaking *for* Okinawa, we could read her borrowing as an effort to speak *with* writers from Okinawa. A close reading of the novel did show that while two subjectivities are the focus of the work, one American the other Okinawan, the author's sympathies lie ultimately with Okinawa and its people.

To show students a final representation of Okinawa in film, I had them view "Sonatine," in which a *yakuza* leader is sent to Okinawa to help break up gang warfare. The students observed repeated scenes of sandy beaches absent any local people, the *kariyushi* wear of the *yakuza* members, and the bright sunshine that flooded the film. We talked about how the film appeared to be another example of how Okinawa serves as a place of healing and rejuvenation for the urban weary. Brawny, masculine men at play on the beach confirmed this impression, and yet, Kitano's detached style, the characters' expressionless faces, and their silence amidst gunfire and mayhem did not fit "Okinawa as tourist destination" discourse. Taking a cue from Aaron Gerow's analysis of the film, I asked students to think of Okinawa as a liminal place, between life and death. Then, the scenes of play could be read as a prelude to death. Instead of a place of rejuvenation, Okinawa became a dead space. Gerow writes of Okinawa, "[I]t simply promises the end of it all for the weary Japanese. Kitano turns the Japanese gaze on Okinawa back on Japan, to reveal nothing there."<sup>5)</sup>

In retrospect, leaving students with the idea of Okinawa as a dead space was a rather bleak way to end the course. It pushed, to an extreme, against the stereotypical representations of Okinawa with which we had begun the course ten weeks earlier, when I read aloud Baku's list of things associated with Okinawa in "A Conversation." By emphasizing the empty space of Okinawa in Kitano's film, I did not mean to imply that for artists, Okinawa is a blank slate in which they can inscribe whatever they so desire. Rather, my intention was to show the range of possibilities in writing about Okinawa, from a space of redemption and healing on one extreme and a space of death on the other end of the spectrum. More important than the endless possibilities of writing on Okinawa, the "what" question, or the question of "who" writes, is how one writes about Okinawa ethically.

### 3. Conclusion

Many things had to happen for me to teach my first course on the literature and film of Okinawa. The politics of translation Fowler writes of had to be bracketed to allow for the arrival of more diverse literature from Japan necessary to destabilize notions of Japan as exotic and inscrutable. Fellow colleagues and I made an investment in time to edit and translate, taking us away from work deemed by our senior colleagues as more scholarly. The joy of having in hand materials in English on subject matter about which one is passionate is immeasurable. Now that a critical mass of Okinawan literature is available in translation, it has finally become possible to teach the subject adequately.

It would be overly sanguine of me to state that with a corpus of material available, the

problems of teaching Okinawan literature have vanished. How literature from Okinawa is framed remains a thorny issue. Is it regional literature? Ethnic minority literature? Minor literature? Japanese literature? Japanese-language literature? Diasporic literature? American literature? Japanese-American literature? Canadian-American literature? World literature? These questions of frame, however, only become possible to ask when students have a body of literature available in a language they can read and in which they can ascertain key thematics.

Undoubtedly, questions about the translations, such as the following, will also arise. Why does Ushi in “Droplets” sound like an Appalachian hick? At the end of “The Human Pavilion,” when an Okinawan family joyously reunites, how can their speech, which is represented entirely in local language in the original, be depicted in English? Why isn’t all of the island language of Sakiyama Tami included in “Swinging, Swaying”?

After all, as Walter Benjamin reminded us as early as 1923 in “The Task of the Translator,” “. . . no translation, however good it may be, can have any significance as regards the original.”<sup>6</sup> Such a bald pronouncement together with the many constraints involved in translating foreign literature makes one incredulous that anyone would rise to the task. Not to do so, however, is to continue to simply circulate a stale body of skewed translations from the golden age of translation produced at a time when it was necessary to exoticize Japan.

Today, with a veritable embarrassment of riches from Okinawa, including *Southern Exposure*, *Voices of Okinawa*, *Living Spirit*, *Islands of Protest* not to mention *Into the Light*, an anthology of writing by Koreans in Japan, and the long awaited *For Dignity, Justice, and Revolution: An Anthology of Japanese Proletarian Literature*, edited by Norma Field and Heather Bowen-Struyk, students can undo the false notion of cultural homogeneity and learn how ethnicity and class intersect and transcend the nation.

## Notes

- 1) Fowler, E. Rendering words, traversing cultures: On the art and politics of translating modern Japanese fiction. *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 18, no. 1 (Winter 1992), p 4.
- 2) Huffington, A. (2015). 2015 book publishing industry predictions: Slow growth presents challenges and opportunities for authors. Retrieved December 2, 2015 from <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>.
- 3) Fowler, pp. 5–11.
- 4) Here, I am thinking of *risshin shusse*, a dominant theme of Meiji period literature, as in Mori Ôgai’s “The Dancing Girl.”
- 5) Gerow, A. (2003). From the national gaze to multiple gazes. In L. Hein & M. Selden (Eds.), *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, p. 295.
- 6) Benjamin, W. (2012). The task of the translator. In *The Translation Studies Reader*. London; New York: Routledge, p. 16.

---

## アメリカの大学における近代沖縄の文学と映画の教育実践

ダビンダー・L・ボーミック

本稿は、アメリカにおける沖縄文学研究の蓄積が、実際の大学教育の中でどのように還元されているのかを具体的に示すために、筆者がアメリカの大学生に沖縄文学と映画の授業を開講するに至った経緯を回顧するものである。課題の一つには、英語に翻訳された沖縄文学の作品を確保する必要があったが、その解決に向けて、結果的には私自身がその翻訳に従事することとなった。その甲斐あって開講された授業は、「沖縄文学とは何か」「沖縄文学を書けるのは誰か」「どのような倫理的観点によって書かれているのか」といった問いを中心に進めた。さらに、原爆、水俣病、3.11などの社会問題を扱う日本文学にも議論を広げた。

講義日程の前半では戦前の作品、後半では戦後の作品に焦点を当てた。学生は前半の授業でアイデンティティの問題に関する作品を読み、後半では、戦後生まれの作家も含めた圧倒的な数の文学作品において沖縄戦が描かれていることを理解した。さらに、沖縄文学がどのジャンルに当てはまるか、すなわち、それは地域文学か、民族的少数派の文学か、日本文学か、日本語文学か、ディアスポラ文学か、アメリカ文学か、日系アメリカ人文学か、世界文学かといった、広義の問いについても議論した。

---