Subversive Voices in the Tropical Paradise:
Decolonial Perspectives and Space-Time Narratives in Medoruma Shun's Fiction

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds

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September 2023

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Acknowledgements

People say that a PhD is very much a personal and solitary journey. Even more so if you start in October 2020, during one of the harshest lockdown periods the UK experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, despite all the difficulties and the additional challenges of doing a PhD during this time of pandemic, I never felt truly alone. On the contrary, I have been surrounded by so many people who helped me. I am immensely grateful to my supervisors, Dr Irena Hayter and Dr Jieun Kim, for their support, encouragement, and trust, and for positively challenging my ideas and perspectives. They made me a better researcher. Perhaps even a better human being. I would like to thank Dr Mani Sharpe as well for stepping in as a co-supervisor for most of my third year. Although we did not have many chances to interact, I am grateful for his support and comments on one of the first drafts of this dissertation's Introduction.

I am grateful to everyone I have met over the years who have offered me guidance, knowledge, and advice. In particular, I would like to thank Professor Reiko Abe Auestad for her comments and suggestions on my close reading of Medoruma's texts and for helping me reframe the overall argument of my dissertation. Likewise, I extend my gratitude to all the people I met at the 2022 PhD workshop organised by the European Association of Japanese Studies in Olomouc, Czech Republic. Each one of them contributed, in some way or another, to my PhD journey. Last but not least, all the people I met at the University of Leeds made me feel less lonely, and supported me with great conversations, trips, and nights out. They are too many to cite. A huge thank you to all of them.

Finally, there are people who hold a rather special place in my academic journey, and in my life more generally speaking. My family, of course, provided me with love and encouragement, and they have always been supportive, although I am pretty sure they are still trying to understand what I do. Then, Alessio, Mattia, Sherry, Chiara, Arianna, Mei. A special thanks goes to you.

Abstract

This thesis offers a widereading of the fictional writings of Medoruma Shun, one of the most prominent contemporary Okinawan authors, public intellectuals, and activists, to frame his oeuvre as a voice of protest against the sociopolitical conditions of Okinawa. By looking at the portrayal and interconnections between the understanding of space and time in the Okinawan context, this research illuminates the literary representations of the colonial encounter between the Okinawan communities and external authorities – e.g. the American army, the Japanese central government. In doing so, it argues that the depiction of indigenous space and time in Medoruma's fiction can be understood as an example of decolonial practice in Okinawan literature by emphasising the plurality of indigenous perspectives on their world and own positionality against the hegemonic political and ideological narratives proposed by mainland Japan and the United States in framing the Okinawa Prefecture. This dissertation aims to explore the multi-faceted literary depictions of the intersection of space-time narratives in Medoruma's fiction with the indigenous anti-colonial struggle. Chapter One analyses how Medoruma discusses the politics of memory regarding the Battle of Okinawa and navigates the re-telling of war memories and how such narratives reshape space-time as it is perceived by individuals and indigenous communities alike. Chapter Two scrutinises the depiction of American military bases and their effect on the local urban and natural landscapes, focusing on the reactions – tangible and imaginative – of the Okinawan characters. Chapter Three investigates the processes of constructing and deconstructing the stereotypical representation of Okinawa as an exotic other, looking at how Medoruma portrays Okinawan communities negotiating the Japanese mainlanders' representation and commodification of Okinawan culture. Chapter Four analyses how the author depicts the encounter between Okinawan characters and the manifold manifestations of the Emperor system. In so doing, it questions, through Medoruma's literature, the role of the Emperor system in the history of post-war democratic Japan and the different perspectives held by

Okinawan people and Japanese mainlanders regarding the Emperor figure, his role in the transformation of Okinawa into a colonial establishment, and the making of hierarchical structures based on the ideological reframing of the Emperor as a symbol of the Japanese nation-state. Ultimately, this thesis illuminates how Medoruma's oeuvre can be placed at a crossroads between anti-colonial discourses and decolonial methodologies, showing the complexities and specificities of the Okinawan struggle in their tangible and epistemological layers.

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Notes

Translations of Japanese-language materials are my own unless otherwise indicated. Japanese titles are followed by English translations in parentheses and the English translation is used thereafter in the main body of the thesis. In English titles the first letter of every major word is capitalised, while in Japanese titles only the first word is capitalised. This thesis uses the Chicago author-date system of referencing. Author names are cited with the given name followed by the family name. However, in the case of East Asian authors, those names are cited according to East Asian convention with the family name followed by the given name unless they are commonly known in the reversed order. The usage of the terms 'Okinawa(n)' and 'Ryukyu(an)' is dependent on the political and socio-historical contexts in which they are applied: as a general rule, 'Okinawa(n)' is used in all the instances that refer to the post-Ryukyuan annexation to Japan period (1872 – 1879), while 'Ryukyu(an)' is used in all the other cases. In the case of geographical descriptors (e.g. Okinawan, or Ryukyuan archipelago), the terms are used interchangeably. Okinawan names are transliterated according to the Japanese pronunciation. For the romanisation of both Japanese and Okinawan, the Modified Hepburn system is used.

Introduction

"Decolonizing […] does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes."

– Linda Tihiwai Smith (2012, 41)

"Every border implies the violence of its maintenance."

– Ayesha A. Siddiqi (2015)

At the beginning of 2023, the Naha Cultural Arts Theater NAHArt hosted a video exhibition entitled 'The Great Exhibition of That Day – Nostalgic Videos and Pictures' (*Ano hi no daihakurankai – Natsukashii no eizō to shashin*), informally also known as Expo 2023. In a small room adjacent to the main hall, eight monitors were installed to simultaneously showcase videos of different genres, mostly private 8mm films shot by Okinawan citizens that had been previously collected and digitally archived, creating a multiverse-like video exhibition. Apart from the biggest screen in the centre of the room, which showed in a loop a series of experiential short films directed by Okinawan artists, the rest of the small monitors surrounding the area displayed overlapping recordings that aimed to materialise memories of many people in the post-Second World War period. Together with more intimate accounts of family memories, events more central to the collective memory of the Okinawan population repeatedly appeared on the screens: the construction of the Okinawa Ocean Expo Aquarium – known today as Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium, the last day American passports were issued to the local population prior to the reversion of the islands to Japan, the first

commemoration of war victims at the Himeyuri Memorial Tower (*Himeyuri no tō*)[1], the chaos

following the shift from right-hand to left-hand traffic, and so on. All these amateur recordings form

a kaleidoscope of memories interlacing private and public, Okinawa and mainland Japan, Okinawa

and the United States, indicating to a certain extent how the post-war Okinawan experience cannot

be disentangled from the burdensome presence of external actors, such as the United States, and

the political transformations and repositioning of Okinawa in the geopolitics of the Pacific region.

This very local Expo mirrors another exhibition that was held at the same venue just a few months

prior – from September to November 2022, which instead displayed the private collection of curator

Masashi Obara regarding another kind of Expo, that is the 'human exhibitions' and specifically the

infamous 5th National Industrial Exhibition held in Osaka in 1903. In this, the way of living and the

folklore of what were considered less civilised Asian subjects, including Okinawans, were portrayed.

In organising this event, the NAHArt Theater aimed to explore various issues connected to the

present day, such as globalisation, racism, and colonialism, with the implicit understanding that

Japan has been, in this sense, one of the pivotal actors in such dynamics, often at the expense of

Okinawa. The Expo 2023 ended on February 4th, 2023, and marked the end of the celebrations and

discussions around the 50th anniversary of the reversion of Okinawa to mainland Japan in 1972.

As in many other significant anniversaries, the 50th anniversary of the Okinawan reversion to Japan

caught the attention of the political world, as both the central government and local administration

used the occasion to celebrate the unity between Okinawan people and the rest of the Japanese

citizens and reflect on current issues affecting the prefecture. The general population, both in

Okinawa and the mainland, became a spectator of such celebrations and a consumer of movies,

television dramas, documentaries, and books thematically centred on the Okinawan experience.

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[1] Built in 1978, the Himeyuri Memorial Tower commemorated the deaths of around 220 Okinawan female students (called Himeyuri students, or sometimes Lily Corps in English) conscripted by the Japanese soldiers to tend to the wounded and bury the dead.

The literary world was a particularly active sector in this enterprise: along with some non-fictional works – including a book recording the reflections of the current Okinawan governor Tamaki Denny (2022) on the future challenges of the prefecture facing the 50th anniversary of the reversion to Japan, Japanese publishing houses proposed to their readership re-editions of works by prominent Okinawan authors – most famously, a collection of essays, poetry and short stories by Okinawan artist Yamanokuchi Baku (1903 – 1963) was published right after the annual commemorations for the end of the Second World War – and anthologies of short stories including both Okinawan and mainland Japanese writers. In particular, the anthology *Okinawa. Hito, umi, tamentai no sutōri* (*Okinawa. People, Sea, Multifaceted Stories*, 2022) becomes a case in point to reflect on the unbreakable bond between Okinawa and the mainland, which further complicates the positionality of Okinawa vis-à-vis the rest of Japan. The curator of the anthology, Morimoto Kōhei, shop manager of the Naha branch of the bookshop chain store Junkudō and radio host, inserted in the collection short stories and essays from both mainlanders and Okinawan intellectuals as a way to reflect on Okinawa as a geographical and sociopolitical entity within the Japanese nation-state framework. Morimoto (2022, 350) himself, born in the Kanagawa prefecture, claimed to have moved to Okinawa out of a spiritual affinity to the complex history, and the topographical and cultural landscapes of the island, blurring the separation between Okinawa and mainland Japan again.

Against the backdrop of the 50th anniversary of the Okinawan reversion to Japan and its understanding both in Okinawa and mainland Japan, 'Okinawa' remains an ambiguous element that is both inside and outside the Japanese national framework, an 'other within' whose existence calls for a continuous re-questioning of national identity, what it means to be 'Japanese' and 'Okinawan', the presence and agency of minority groups in Japanese society, the idea of multiculturalism against the myth of Japanese cultural and ethnic homogeneity. If we look at how Okinawa is narrated, especially in its continuous reframing in the wake of important events such as the anniversaries of

the end of the Second World War and the reversion of Okinawa to Japan, the positionality of Okinawa can be understood as based on a logic of cultural and sociopolitical difference between Okinawa and the mainland that is hidden or emphasised according to the historical period and the instances that are the object of discussion of the local and central administrations. As I will mention later in this introduction, Okinawan, Japanese, and Western scholars discuss Okinawa's post-war conditions as a result of the gruesome Battle of Okinawa (March – June 1945) at the end of the Second World War, the subsequent military American administration until 1972, and the return to Japan afterwards.

The presence of American military bases still on the territory even after the reversion of the prefecture to Japan is one of the major controversial points on which debates have been going on for decades between local communities and the Japanese central government. During the 27-year United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR), the United States expropriated lands from Okinawan communities to build military facilities, which still cover around 25% of the prefectural territory, despite Okinawa only accounting for 0.6% of the total surface area of Japan (Ginoza 2007, 135). Such bases, as mentioned above, were not removed after Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972, supposedly because they were meant to be placed in the Japanese territory for defence purposes according to the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (*anpo jōyaku*) signed in San Francisco in 1951, and their removal and following relocation to the mainland would have raised the costs and fuelled the anger of local communities in other regions of Japan that were unwilling to accept the burden of maintaining military bases in their neighbourhood. The unequal distribution of the bases on the Japanese territory mirrors, to a certain extent, the power imbalance between mainland Japan and Okinawa, a burden that is considered unfair by more than 60% of the local population according to a recent poll carried out by the *Mainichi Shimbun* and the *Ryukyu Shimpo* ("60% of the locals say" 2022).

In considering this situation, scholars, but also public intellectuals, writers, journalists, and historians – both in Japan and in the Anglo-American context – tended to put Okinawa and Japan into a Manichaean relationship. In a very simplistic zero-sum game, you can be either on the side of the indigenous population, striving for a better future, for having their lands back, for claiming the right to be subject and not object of their own representation, to renegotiate in more equal terms the relationship with mainland Japan and the United States, or else, you are sided with the dominant party, which aims to exploit Okinawa for its own financial and political benefits, erasing the specificity of their history and including them as an exotic other within the Japanese national storytelling. It is the story of a monolithic group of indigenous Okinawan people who want their independence against an equally uniform mass of mainland Japanese citizens whose only scope is to reshape the Okinawan identity as subjected to the Japanese national narrative, making the former exotic ethnic others but still within the boundaries of the Japanese law.

However, their relationship is not that clear-cut and needs further problematisation. In their interactions, Japanese mainlanders and Okinawans mutually affect their understanding of a historically and culturally layered relationship in which constant redefinition creates the foundation for dialogues, cultural encounters and, ultimately, sociopolitical change. The image of the unsympathetic Japanese colonisers is just the other side of a coin on which Okinawan people are represented by the Japanese mainstream mass media as peaceful and laidback, constantly enjoying the blue sea and sky that their islands have to offer. These simplifications run the risk of removing all the nuances of a much more complex field and, in an attempt to defend the Okinawan population, sacrificing the diversity of their opinions, agencies, struggles, and individualities that still compose the variegated sociopolitical landscape of the prefecture. In reflecting on the status of today's Okinawan studies and the conceptualisation of 'Okinawa', sociologist Laura Hein concludes that '[t]oday too, defining Okinawan distinctiveness as ethnic indigeneity, for example, opens a

Pandora's box of disagreements on' themes that are central to the shaping of a local Okinawan identity such as 'how to define and measure ethnicity' and who deserves to be considered Okinawan and who does not, 'how indigeneity should intersect with citizenship', or 'which elements of modern life are compatible with various conceptions of Okinawan indigeneity and which are undermining of it' (Hein 2022, 509). Ultimately, despite those debates having the merit of energising and continuously addressing the struggles of Okinawan communities, 'the goal of finding a formula that satisfies all Okinawans is equally clearly impossible' (509). Conversely, it seems detrimental to examine the Okinawan situation through universals. The identities, the struggles, and the voices of communities living in and interacting within the prefecture call for an understanding that instead scrutinises the particularities, even the contradictions, of how Okinawa is presented, represented, and reproduced on the sociopolitical stage of post-war democratic Japan and beyond.

This dissertation aims to investigate the question of Okinawan identities and their interplay with the socio-political construction of the island as it is articulated in modern Okinawan literature. To do so, it will mainly analyse the fictional works of one of the most prominent Okinawan writers and prominent intellectuals, Medoruma Shun (1960 -), to explore how his narratives can interface with the Okinawan colonial landscape, the war legacy, the protest activities against the military bases, and the way local communities live within the system. In doing so, it will scrutinise the decolonial and decolonising possibility of Medoruma's text in looking at how space and time, of, to be more precise, the 'space-time' (*jikū*) is depicted, reshaped, and reconceptualised in his fictional work. In more specific terms, this research project addresses the following research questions:

- How does Medoruma Shun's fiction portray the multiplicity inherent in the Okinawan identity construction and their agency in the colonial establishment?

- How does Medoruma Shun depict the ways Okinawan space and time are narrated and re-negotiated by Okinawan communities and external authorities?

o   What does this say about the subjectivity and agency of social actors – both indigenous and non-indigenous – and their interaction in the making of 'Okinawa' as a politically and socially constructed space?

I will examine Medoruma's fiction as a part of the discourse that criticises the presence of external authorities on the island and deconstructs some of the cultural mechanisms that allow communities in Okinawa to be put into a hierarchical position not dissimilar to the colonisers/colonised taxonomy. In the end, this project investigates Medoruma's – and, to a certain extent, the totality of Okinawan – literature in its decolonising potentiality as a container of a number of counter-discourses that complicate issues of indigenous identities and their representation as a way to open up to multiple possibilities for the Okinawan future.

In scrutinising Medoruma's literature as a narrative method that approaches the (re)action of Okinawan communities to the colonial power structure and its ramifications, this dissertation attempts to enter a more theoretical – but, now more than ever, productive of material results in the lives of otherised and minoritised communities – discussion about the meaning of colonialism. What is 'colonialism'? How can it be articulated in the East Asian context? By considering these questions, it reflects on whether an Okinawan-specific colonial structure may exist and, if not, what this says of the current debate around the (post)colonial.

With this purpose in mind, this introduction intends to provide a short overview of the modern and contemporary history of Okinawa and mainland Japan with the aim of emphasising the multiplicities of voices and struggles within the Okinawa Prefecture. I will follow with a discussion on how the position of Okinawa in the Pacific region has been conceptualised by scholars, public intellectuals and politicians alike in colonial and postcolonial terms. I will then provide another approach regarding the power relationship between Okinawa, Japan, and the United States, connecting the

struggle of the Okinawan people to a framework of sociopolitical resistance illuminating anti-colonial and decolonial instances that aims to subvert the subalternity of the prefecture.[2] The introduction will conclude with a discussion on the reasons and the scope of this project, as well as the possibilities and limitations that choosing Medoruma Shun' literature as the main object of analysis entails.

I.1 Colonial Perspectives on Okinawa Prefecture

I.1.1 Positioning Okinawan Economy and Sovereignty into the Japanese Nation-State

If we look at all the regions that today are within the borders of the Japanese nation-state, Okinawa is perhaps the only one that saw so many political shifts during its history. During the Ryukyu Kingdom era (1429 – 1879), the Ryukyuan archipelago was alternately an independent, semi-independent or a vassal kingdom of nearby power forces. In the 17th century, it was both a tributary state of imperial Ming China and subjected to the Satsuma domain in Japan, in what is nowadays the southern area of Kyushu, which influenced the politics and maintained control over the kingdom from 1609 since roughly the beginning of the Meiji era (1968 – 1912). Even without considering the Ryukyu Kingdom era, in-between the 19th and the 20th centuries, in a span of fewer than one hundred years, the region was under the control of the Japanese empire first, then handed over to the United States, and eventually returned to Japan as a prefecture. In addition to this, the political status and identity of Okinawan people, as well as their positionality within the major political structures to which they belonged, was continuously reconfigured by the controlling authorities and

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[2] Here, and in the rest of the dissertation, I will use 'anti-colonial' to identify the praxis and exercise of opposition against colonial constructions (e.g. anti-base movements), whereas 'decolonial' refers to the practice of restructuring sociopolitical, cultural, ontological, and epistemological landscapes of colonial entities by local communities as opposed to external colonial authorities. However, at times the usage of one term would imply the other as well, as, using George J. Sefa Dei's words, '[a]nti-colonial and decoloniality are intertwined logics', inasmuch 'political and discursive practices for change must be anti-colonial in outlook and orientation', so that 'the anti-colonial becomes the path to a decolonial future' (Sefa Dei 2019, viii).

othered in reference to the rest of the population being part of the same nation-state. In his investigation of the status of Okinawa as a colonial entity in pre-1945 Japan, Richard Siddle summarises those years, stating that '[w]hen it served Japan's interests it was annexed, subjugated and Japanised; equally as not part of Japan proper (*naichi*) it was expendable and sacrificed in 1945' with its inhabitants regarded as 'backward and inferior'. And then, 'after enduring nearly 30 years of a new colonial master – the United States – the prefecture now shoulders the burden of an excessive military presence while remaining the poorest region of Japan' (Siddle 1998, 117). Marco Tinello (2022, 516) notices how Okinawa has been an 'enduring, even inescapable, meeting place and sticking point between empires [Japan and the United States] in the Pacific' long before the end of the Second World War. In fact, the newly emerged imperial power represented by the United States was the first country to have treaty relations with Japan, Ryukyu, and Korea in the late 19th century, and also 'the first government to prioritise its relationship with Japan by tacitly approving Japan's encroachment on Ryukyu in 1872, 1876 and 1878', showing the annexation of Ryukyu by the Japanese empire as illustrative of 'how, in a number of cases, Japan understood the importance of maintaining US (and other powers') treaty rights to obtain their tacit approval and, in turn, exploited this international consent to take a stronger stance towards East Asia' (530). Ryukyu/Okinawa, which for centuries has been a cultural and economic crossroad in the Pacific region, has been since the birth of the Japanese empire a nexus of overlapping imperial powers, instrumental for geopolitical and security reasons and as such exploited and disposed of by Japan and the United States.

This history of external domination and political assimilation is still part of the sociopolitical discourse of local politicians and employed as leverage to create a productive distinction between Okinawa and mainland Japan, although the living population cannot possibly remember the past as an independent kingdom and its cultural impact often is hidden by multiple layers of oppression and

change in command. During his Supreme Court appeal in July 1996, Okinawan historian and former prefectural governor Ōta Masahide (1925 – 2017) 'emphasised the military takeover of the "peaceful" Ryukyuan Kingdom by the Meiji regime in 1879' (Siddle 1998, 117), pointing out, in a way, that the cultural and political origins of the prefecture and their historical relationship with mainland Japan are still relevant in the Okinawan contemporary society and, as such, utilised by local administrations as a political instrument to negotiate their limited autonomy.

In the early 20th century, the position of Okinawa as a border within the Japanese empire could be conceived as a juxtaposition between two different colonial dynamics that depended on an oppositional understanding of the geographical position of the territories and how they were impacted by the political power balance between the centre and periphery. On the one hand, Okinawa was forced into a model that is defined by historians as a 'Japanese-type *ka-i* (sino-barbarian) system'. This model, permeating the entire network of early modern Japanese foreign relations, was borrowed from the Chinese view of *hua-yi*, where a civilised centre was surrounded by barbarians. In this case, the Japanese central state substituted the Chinese empire with its military power and Emperor system (Morris-Suzuki 1997, 15). The foundational element of this system is the logic of difference between geographic regions divided into concentric lines depending on their distance from the political centre. In Japan, as Tessa Morris-Suzuki (18) argues, '[t]he relationships with the Ainu and the Ryukyu Kingdom were important precisely because they represented the subordination of foreign people to Japanese dominion', and that '[e]verything about the relationship, therefore, had to be structured in such a way as to magnify the exotic character of the peripheral societies'. On the other hand, when the Japanese Empire came into contact with new political ideas imported from Europe and North America, such as the concept of historical progress, 'backwardness' substituted 'foreignness' as an attempt to reinterpret the borderlands of the empire. As it is explained by Morris-Suzuki (10), '[t]his reconceptualization of

difference was a crucial step in the formation of the image of Japan as a single, clearly bounded modern nation and of the Japanese as a single "ethnic group"'. In this new state model, Okinawa was hence inserted as a backward region that needed to be encouraged through cultural and economic policies that ought to stimulate its progression in time to reach the 'present' as it was experienced in mainland Japan rather than tame its foreignness and convert the customs and traditions of its inhabitants to enter into the domestic cultural sphere. Questions of national identities, cultural progress, and technological advancement intertwined in the effort of Okinawan communities to be perceived as Japanese. To aid indigenous communities in achieving this, the central government implemented assimilation policies that would help the prefecture to be a functional region of the Japanese Empire, but still, the entire process was hindered by a lack of sufficient resources and the identification of Okinawan people by Japanese mainlanders as second-class imperial subjects. Davinder Bhowmik (2012, 94-95) explains that '[d]espite rapid assimilations, which apparently the vast majority of Okinawans strove for in the Taishō period [1912 – 1926], objective factors such as an economy that had nearly ground to a halt, and subjective factors such as the pervasive fear of appearing to lag behind times, thwarted the efforts of the Okinawans to identify themselves as Japanese'.

If we look at it through the lens of economic development and how policies in that regard were implemented by the central government to stimulate capitalist conditions for the benefit of both the Japanese Empire and Okinawa, it is clear that there was a tension between capitalist modes of production pushed on by Japanese mainlanders and Okinawan ruling class and more community-based systems of production as experienced by local villages at the time. At the beginning of the 20th century, Okinawan communities of cultivators resisted the domination by mainland Japanese capital that aimed to reduce local autonomy, but also the local pressure of Okinawan elites which proposed to create locally controlled intermediate-level sugar cooperatives and alliances utilising

modern factories. Instead, small producers continued to prefer 'communal and exchange forms and relations of production', persisting in 'local village-based, low-grade sugar production' to secure non-selling alliances and, in so doing, 'secure more favorable terms for the sugar that they did choose to sell' (Roberson 2016, 221). According to Okinawan historian Wendy Matsumura (2015, 145), this constituted 'a significant act of anticapitalist refusal that obstructed the transformation of their work and lives into dead labor, a process that would have remade them into alienated producers of raw materials or sellers of their labor power'. Nonetheless, while economy and mass culture were flourishing in mainland Japanese urban centres such as Tokyo and Kobe (Itō 2008, 241), Okinawa experienced continued and severe economic duress in the early 1920s, 'when the price of sugar cane, the mainstay of the island's economy, plummeted worldwide' (Bhowmik 2008, 44), a situation that had further worsened because of the Taiwanese competition in cultivating the same products at a lower cost and thus demonstrating to be a more profitable economic asset for the Japanese colonial empire.

The Second World War, even before the tragedy of the Battle of Okinawa, proved to be a dangerous ground where Okinawan people, despite being conscripted into the imperial army together with their mainland Japanese peers, were repeatedly victims of discrimination. Laura E. Hein and Mark Selden (2003, 15-16) explain that 'Okinawans did share special hardships with Koreans and Taiwanese during the war, when they were not only drafted as soldiers but also conscripted as (forced) civilian laborers and deployed to the most dangerous outposts of the empire'. As the Japanese novelist Henmi Yō remembers in a conversation with Medoruma Shun, Okinawa-born soldiers were sent to the front line during the toughest battles to minimise the losses among mainland Japanese men. During the first phases of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937 – 1945), a majority of the Japanese army losses came from Okinawan-born and Korean soldiers, a fact that is often dismissed or ignored within the Japanese war storytelling, and that proves once again how

Okinawans were treated in the same way as colonial subjects despite being formally part of the Japanese domestic territory (Henmi and Medoruma 2017, 109). The Battle of Okinawa, the following 27-year period under the direct control of the USCAR, and the reversion to Japan without the removal of American military bases from the Okinawan territory demonstrate how the colonial legacy within Japan's territorial borders still 'continues to cast a long shadow over relations with the mainland' (Hook and Siddle 2003, 1-2). Even after Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972, and despite the efforts of the central government and Okinawan local institutions to achieve 'parity with the mainland' (*hondo nami*), the economy of the prefecture struggled – and still does – to keep up with the rest of Japan. Okinawa is today still characterised by 'four forms of dependence' that render the region subordinate to Japan rather than an integral part of it. Japanese politics scholar Gavan McCormack (2003, 93) identifies such structures of dependence as being 'a prefecture within the highly centralized Japanese nation-state', 'a "base zone" in which the US military presence is heavily concentrated', 'a "public works"-centred, regional political economy', and finally as 'Japan's premier "resort zone"'. These several layers of Okinawan subalternity – economic and military, but also cultural – marking the prefecture's contemporary history led scholars and public intellectuals alike to introduce Okinawa into colonial or post-colonial discourses depending on how Okinawa's relationship vis-à-vis mainland Japan and the United States is assessed as a specific point in history and which systems of subordination and exploitation are taken into consideration in the analysis.

I.1.2 What the Colonial Is in Okinawa

Up until now, I discussed the position of Okinawa within the modern history of the Japanese nation-state employing 'colonial' as descriptive of its political status. Admittedly, in the construction of the Japanese Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries, where indeed some territories – the Korean peninsula, Manchuria, Taiwan – were conquered and formally labelled as colonies, positioning Okinawa into the same pot is confusing, if not plain wrong. Up until after the Second World War,

when Okinawa was put under the American military administration, the prefecture was categorised

neither as an external colonial territory (*gaichi*) nor fully entirely part of Japan (*naichi* – the term is

still nowadays sometimes used by Okinawans to refer to mainland Japan), but as 'a kind of semi-

external territory (*jungaichi*) lying somewhere between the two' (Hong 2020, 22). Discussions on

the geopolitical position of Okinawa need to consider that the region has never been a formal colony

of the Japanese Empire, nor was it ever labelled a 'colony' during the American occupation.[3] To

further complicate the matter, Richard Siddle reminds us that, while the concept of 'colonialism' is

often employed as a rhetorical tool in political speeches and activism in Okinawa against the

American military bases and their relationship with mainland Japan, not all Okinawans agree in

describing the integration of the prefecture into the Japanese state as a 'colonial' dynamics. Despite

the unequal treatment between Okinawans and Japanese mainlanders, 'Ōta Chōfu [a prominent

Ryukyuan journalist in the late 19th and early 20th centuries] and many of his contemporaries saw

their incorporation into the state of Japan in terms of modernization and progress' (Siddle 1998,

132). Even today, Siddle argues, 'competing definitions of Okinawa as an internal colony or

modernizing region owe less to historical "fact" than to the "politics of memory"' (132). How can

we understand, then, the 'colonial' in the Okinawan context and its implications in Okinawan

literature as part of contemporary indigenous understanding?

While outlining sociopolitical discourses on colonialism, identity, and local history, this dissertation

distances itself from debates on the historical 'truth' and 'falsity' of competing definitions of the

Okinawan conditions and rather focuses on how such conceptualisations of 'colonialism' are

constructed and employed by scholars and Okinawan public intellectuals to propose a way to

position Okinawan identity against mainland Japan and the American administration, reshape local

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[3] However, while it is true that Okinawa was never formally defined a colony during the American occupation, Nicholas Evan Sarantakes (2001, 62) notes that American policymakers in private communications referred to Okinawa as such, and the way they administered the territory, their policies, and strategies mirror other colonial establishment at the time.

space and meanings attached to it, and explore alternative hierarchies and future possibilities. It is worth noticing that, even among the scholars who argue for the presence of a colonial-like establishment in Okinawa, there is not a univocal understanding of how this structure ought to be defined. Several researchers include the prefecture in a certain 'postcolonial geography' of the East Asian context.[4] The very definition of what 'postcolonial' should be is subjected to different interpretations: arguably, putting it in very simple terms, 'postcolonial' is what happens after the 'colonial', once the 'colonial' is overcome and the former colonial subjects independently re-organise their political structure as a non-subaltern entity. However, the 'colonial' always leaves traces of its past. According to Ukai Satoshi (1998, 42), '[t]he meaning of *post-* in such expressions as *poststructuralism* and *postmodernism* differs from the meaning of *post-* in *postcolonialism*' (emphasis in original), and likewise, Okinawan sociologist Nomura Kōya (2002, 118) stresses that 'postcolonialism means that colonialism is not dead, has not ended and must be ended' and that, while it 'is thought to be a thing of the past, it is deeply ingrained in our society and our psyche'.

The discussion about the meaning of 'postcolonial' as a label is not limited to the Okinawan context, but was put under the microscope in Anglo-centric debates as well. Peter Hulme (1995, 121) comments on the dual meaning of 'post' in 'postcolonial' explaining that it presents coexisting dimensions interconnected with each other. On the one hand, 'a temporal dimension in which there is a punctual relationship in time between, for example, a colony and a post-colonial state', and, on the other, a critical dimension in which 'postcolonial theory comes into existence through a critique of a body of theory'. While the academic discussion surrounding the meaning of the 'post' in 'post-

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[4] Both Western and Japanese scholarship popularised Okinawa as a postcolonial entity, analysing its relationship with Japan in a number of different contexts. Just to cite a few examples, Hoshino (2018) describes Okinawa as a 'postcolonial complex', while, if we just look at the area of literary studies, Okinawan literature has often been inserted within a broader tradition of postcolonial arts: Kina (2011) explores the 'postcolonial resistance' in Sakiyama Tami (1954 -)'s literature, Morton (2006) scrutinises the 'postcolonial Other' in Ōshiro Tatsuhiro's fiction, and, to further highlight the concept, Bhowmik's entry on modern Okinawan literature (2016) was included in 'The Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies'. In Japanese scholarship, Okinawan feminist movements have been contextualized as 'postcolonial actors' by scholars such as Kikuchi (2010).

colonialism' is itself a testimony of the efforts of unravelling the dynamics and the theoretical tenets under which postcolonial existence can be analysed, what Hulme considers the 'temporal dimension' of the postcolonial might be useful here to understand the ambiguity of such definitions in the Okinawan context. When Hulme refers to the 'temporal dimension', he undeniably puts 'colonialism' as a specific historical moment, and, I argue, geographically situates this process – and the conceptual and epistemological outcomes that come with it – into a Euro-centric West versus the Rest mechanism. Without meaning to polemise – there are, in fact, historical and sociopolitical motives as to why postcolonial studies tend to privilege Europe as the centre of the colonial enterprise, Japanese colonialism can perhaps be easily compared to its Euro-American counterpart, but its temporal and sociocultural roots are not the same. Terms that set in stone some of the mechanisms, geographical and political definitions of social entities and actors such as 'imperialism' and 'colonialisation' in the European context, when discussed in the East Asian framework collapse into each other, become more ambiguous and undetermined. Okinawa, and its multiple definitions of what 'colonial' and 'postcolonial' is in its context, is a case in point, as I will show hereafter. Anti-colonial discourses were not unheard of in the aftermath of the Second World War and during the entirety of American rule in Okinawa. The presence of leading public intellectuals and politicians such as Arakawa Akira (1931 -) (see Molasky 2003a) and Kokuba Kōtarō (1900 – 1988), who fought before and after the Okinawan reversion to Japan against the presence of US military bases and the framing of Okinawan people as subalterns of mainland Japan and the United States, demonstrates that anti-colonial stances and the struggle on a sociopolitical level were objects of discussion among Okinawan people throughout the post-war period, and possibly even before, although the political pressure and the ongoing arms race in 1930s Japan did not allow dissenting voices to be publicly

heard. [5] However, whereas it is rather evident that political discourses around colonial-like authorities were strongly felt by the local population during the American administration given that the prefecture was handed over to a former enemy of the Japanese Empire during the war, the reversion to Japan at the time was seen as a defeat, tantamount to yet another betrayal by the Japanese central state towards the prefecture. Arakawa Akira (2013, 2) argues that the very term 'reversion' (*fukki*) is misused by all the parties involved – Okinawans, Japanese mainlanders, and Americans – as it should have meant 'the transfer of administrative control over what was originally an independent Ryukyu Kingdom', but turned out to be 'nothing but an arbitrary act carried out to suit the purposes of the United States and Japan in 1972'. Furthermore, in warning against the normalisation of the face-value meaning of the term 'reversion' that renders transparent the historical reality of the re-annexation to Japan, Arakawa concludes that '[o]nly when we adopt this viewpoint can the root of the colonialism that continues to engender all of the structural discrimination wrought by Japan upon Okinawa be rendered clearly apparent' (2).

In this sense, Okinawan colonialism revolves around the placement and – lack of – relocation of American military bases from Okinawa to mainland Japan, which shows how Okinawa is subordinated to the military establishment built by the United States, but also the complicity of the mainland Japanese central government in maintaining politically and ideologically the status quo, refusing to relocate the bases on the mainland and, as such, perpetuating the role of Okinawa as a sacrificial lamb for the benefit of Japanese mainlanders. The mainland Japanese government even provides a Host Nation Support (or 'sympathy budget', *omoiyari yosan*) to keep the American military bases on the national territory. Former Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord stated

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[5] Although many voices have been silenced in the immediate prewar period, a few examples of the Okinawans' struggle to define their own position and identity vis-à-vis the Japanese empire can be found in the literary world. Okinawan novelist Kushi Fusako (1903 – 1986)'s 'Horobiyuku Ryukyu onna no shuki' ('Memoirs of a Declining Ryukyuan Woman', 1932) is a thoughtful account of the intersectional experience of Okinawan women in mainland Japan and incorporates themes of social discrimination and loss of one's home and culture due to their identity as Ryukyuan.

that Japan provides more than any other ally, making it less expensive to maintain forces in Japan than in the United States (Shimabuku 2012, 133). This creates a paradoxical situation in which the United States simply cannot afford to remove the military bases from the Okinawan territory. Saito Nakaganeku Nozomi (2022, 582) borrows Ginoza Aya's (2016) conceptualisation of 'dual empires' in Okinawa to scrutinise this system, where 'there is no one structure of domination but, instead, multiple nodes that cement the network of settler colonialism and settler garrisons'. This thread, questioning the interconnection between mainland Japan and the United States as a mutually helping power structure, was followed by other scholars such as Annmaria Shimabuku (2012, 134), who explains that 'Okinawa is not simply the crossroads of a double colonialism, where the colonialism of one state is simply layered on top of the colonialism of another, while both maintain their independence', but is rather a 'mutually dependent relationship of two colonialisms that work together with synergistic effects', a system that the author calls 'transpacific colonialism'. On the one hand, as mentioned above, Japan economically supports the presence of the United States, besides assisting in legislating and regulating Okinawa as a pivotal strategic region for the military interventions of the United States abroad. Moreover, attraction facilities are financed at first superficial sight to support the local population and stimulate the prefectural economy, but they also provide American soldiers with off-base entertainment that becomes more often than not a space for conflicts and incidents to happen between locals and external authorities. On the other hand, the United States provides an ideological framework for Japan to keep its dominant position appropriating Euro-American racism as the opportunity to justify racism in East Asia, which is 'not simply racism disguised as Pan-Asianism, but from the Okinawan standpoint, outright colonialism' (Shimabuku 136). In more practical terms, Shimabuku examines how the two external political entities support each other in maintaining the military bases on Okinawan soil:

By collapsing Okinawa's position into a Japanese state versus United States dichotomy, Japan is able to reap the benefits of a U.S.-Japan politics of passing the buck. When Okinawans bring grievances before the United States, the United States automatically answers that Okinawa should bring its problems before its own government, thus dismissing the problem as internal to the Japanese state. This is because the United States will only entertain bilateral discussions between the United States and Japan. However, when Okinawa protests to Japan, the Japanese simply transform the protest into an issue of conservative versus progressive politics internal to the nation-state, and completely overlook its character as a problem of Japanese colonial domination vis-à-vis Okinawa that occurs irrespective of the party politics. As a result, the Okinawan problem is conveniently stalemated – suspended in midair (*chūduri ni sareteiru*) – leaving Okinawa ridden with bases for over 60 years (136).

In this mechanism, Okinawan people are entrapped by the two governments, the Japanese and the American, and are unable to speak out against their current political situation as the two countries support each other in maintaining the status quo. This political discourse is further explored in historical sociologist Oguma Eiji's analysis of the Okinawan people's position against the cultural, ethnic, and political boundaries of Japan. Oguma argues that, because 'Japanese' is a constructed concept, '[t]he boundary between "Japanese" and "those who are not Japanese" is something that moves' (2014, 2). In the case of Okinawa, 'the Japanese government and the U.S. military include the people of Okinawa in "the Japanese" or exclude them as being "Okinawans" due to military and economic factors' (8). More specifically, Oguma explains, 'military value functions as a vector to subsume Okinawa into "Japan"', while, '[b]y contrast, economic cost works as a vector to exclude it' (5).

On another note, Nomura (2012) defines the situation in Okinawa as an example of democratic and unconscious colonialism, that is the establishment and maintenance of colonial dynamics by Japanese mainlanders whether they are conscious of it or not. Nomura (2012, 98) argues that 'it is possible to practice colonialism without designating a territory a colony', and that, conversely,

'colonialism can function even without the presence of a colony', concealing the actual sociopolitical conditions of local people and hindering their ability to protest against it. Nomura even suggests that it is the Japanese people who were actually enforcing the terms of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, whether they agree with it or not. Summing up, he states that 'by unconsciously forcing bases onto Okinawans, and by unconsciously sacrificing Okinawans, it becomes possible to unconsciously exploit benefits from Okinawans' (106). Japanese mainlanders experience what Italian literature scholar Lidia Curti (2007, 60) terms 'collective amnesia of the colonial enterprise'. In the case of Italian colonial history, this process is actualised by a mechanism of erasure of the colonial history from mass media and its narration of war history, while, on the other hand, in the Okinawan case the same result is reached through historical misrepresentations. In addition to the constant depiction of the Battle of Okinawa as a national tragedy in domestic mass media, school textbooks as well became a point of contention in re-narrating World War II and the role Okinawan people had in it. On March 30th, 2007, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology issued a textbook revision for history textbooks that aimed to reframe the mass suicides of Okinawan people during the Battle of Okinawa as voluntary instead of being military coerced (Olson 2016). On this topic, during a symposium in Osaka, Medoruma warned that 'the textbook revisions must be viewed in the context of the build-up in Okinawa of Japan's Self-Defense Forces' and its goal being 'to undermine the view of the Self-Defense Forces held in Okinawa and Japan as a whole, based on lessons learned from the Battle of Okinawa, that military forces do not protect people' and 'to elicit residents' cooperation in war waged by the U.S. and Japan together' (Rabson 2008a).

Japanese sociologist Takahashi Tetsuya (2012) considers the stance of the government, mass media and Japanese people towards the nuclear disaster in Fukushima and the US base issue in Okinawa. While the author identifies to some extent the responsibility of the Japanese population both inside

and outside Okinawa and Fukushima – as they chose to benefit from the economic growth and comfort given by the usage of nuclear energy and the protection offered by the military bases, he presses on the question of responsibility as a mass-mediated discourse and inserts Okinawa and Fukushima in an internal colonialist mechanism where they are part of the so-constructed 'system of sacrifice' fabricated by governmental policies and mass media narratives. In this, Takahashi describes, the 'interests of a certain group of people are created and maintained at the expense of the lives of others' and the sacrifice of local populations is 'usually hidden, beautified or justified as a "noble sacrifice" for the community'. Furthermore, Takahashi takes into consideration the definition of Okinawa as a 'colony', distinguishing the situation of Korea and Taiwan, Fukushima and Okinawa:

> It may be said that Korea and Taiwan were 'colonies' of Japan, that Okinawa is a sort of colony of 'Yamato' in Post-war Japan, and that Fukushima and the other regions where nuclear plants are located constitute some kind of 'colony' of the center and of the urban areas. But the meaning of the term 'colony' in these three cases is not identical (Takahashi 2012, 197, in Nakazato 2013, 184).

More specifically, Okinawa is positioned as an internal, domestic colony of the Japanese nation-state, not unlike Fukushima. However, as Nakazato contends, Okinawa should not fit into 'the realm of the "domestic"', but instead understood 'as the link between inside and outside, internal and external, as a site where colonialisms intersect' (Nakazato 2013, 184). That is, as Shimabuku reminds us with her definition of 'transpacific colonialism', the intersections between two colonialisms working together to support each other are fundamental to grasping the sociopolitical position of Okinawa as an in-between political entity.

This character of 'in-betweenness' is made evident on several levels, both in the inter-regional relationship that Okinawa has with mainland Japan and the United States – which is the theory exposed by Nakazato and Shimabuku among others – and within Okinawan communities themselves. Japanese sociologist Nishiyama Hidefumi (2019, 6) states that '[t]he postcolonial

conception that colonialism can be neither simply accepted nor refused helps to recognize the existence of multiple, often contradicting feelings and sentiments that Okinawans go through in the militarized island'. The colony becomes, using Ann Laura Stoler's words, a 'complex psychic space' (2009, 248) where Okinawan people are put into the position of deciding how to make a living in relation to the physical and psychological presence of the military forces, constantly renegotiating what must be disregarded as colonial situations and redefining their economic and social position vis-à-vis the American and Japanese presence. On another note, it is the identity of locals living in the Okinawan space to be subjected to scrutiny, their sense of belonging continuously reconfigured and reshaped by inter- and intra-community relationships. Mitzi Uehara Carter (2014, 648) makes clear 'how some mixed Okinawans navigate between racial "encampments" and how their sense of flux is distinctly shaped by memories of war, resistance to militarised encroachments on the island, diasporic disruptions to camp thinking, and transnational racial formations'. Paul Gilroy discusses several types of 'camps' and 'camp mentality', defining it as a particular type of belonging constituted by the consolidation of nationalisms that have 'shared patterns of thought about self and other, friend and stranger; about culture and nature as binding agents and about the technological institution of political collectivities to which one can be compelled to belong' (Gilroy 2000, 82, cited in Uehara Carter 2014, 648). Filipina sociologist Johanna O. Zulueta (2019, 12-13) further highlights the migration movements in-between Okinawa, mainland Japan, and Southeast Asian countries and argues that the colonial structure in Okinawa needs to be seen as a transnational project that involves governments other than the United States and Japan, such as the Philippines. As a consequence, community-making in the Okinawan islands does not stop at the three macro-categories of Okinawan people – here the colonised, and American and Japanese forces – conversely, the colonisers or the external authorities, but include several other people who migrated to Okinawa under different conditions and together created a more complicated mosaic

of cultures that would be impossible to simplistically reduce under the monolithic label of 'Okinawan people'. For them, narration and understanding of the Okinawan space present further challenges as their identities are often blurred and negotiated even without adding the extra process of narrating and reappropriating a political landscape that is already historically layered, a battleground for past and contemporary conflicts.

Whereas their analysis of the dynamics of Okinawan colonialism slightly differs, the above-mentioned scholars agree that the local population coexists within a political structure maintained by mainland Japan and the United States in mutual support. Again, the presence of two layers of colonialisms further deepens the Okinawan condition as a sociopolitical entity among external forces, among different understandings of local identities, and among communities and social groups that collaborate and compete with each other in a melting pot – a *chanpūru*, an Okinawan stir fry dish, is often utilised as a metaphor to indicate the mixed character of the prefecture – where locals are forced to live within systems of exploitation and misrepresentation that aim to place Okinawa in a position that is both inside and outside the Japanese national framework. Shimabuku aptly pointed out that the Okinawan 'transpacific colonialism' can survive only through the mutual collaboration between Japan and the United States, which makes this system a single colonial establishment rather than a juxtaposition of two different colonialisms. However, we also have to remember that the stance of Japanese and American people greatly differs when it comes to their relationship with locals. That is, different strategies of othering and subalternation are put into play to establish a colonial hierarchy, depending on the cultural, or even physical, difference between the indigenous population and groups of external authorities.

On the one hand, the Japanese creation of a colonial structure is based on the concepts of *jinshu* and *minzoku*, ideological constructions that show the tension between Japan and the West and their hierarchical positions in the world system. As Kawai Yuko (2012, 368) explains, while both terms can

loosely be translated with 'race', '[*j*]*inshu*, used interchangeably with the concept of *bunmei* [civilisation], was often used to advocate Japan's commonality with Asia and its united defiance of Western political practices based on the latter's racial order; *minzoku*, used along with the concept of *bunka* [culture], however, was more likely to be employed in the differentiation of the Japanese from other Asian people and in the building of a "new racial order" led by Japan'. Using this frame, whereas populations from Okinawa and Hokkaidō are arguably part of the Japanese *jinshu*, they were regarded as a different *minzoku*, which marked their belonging to a different, inferior cultural sphere that had to be tamed and absorbed into the national framework. While these cultural discourses were mainly circulated among the Japanese intelligentsia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, it is still possible to find traces of such forms of discrimination in discourses on Okinawan primitivism and cultural separation from the mainland – I will return on this in Chapter 1.

On the other hand, the colonial relationship between the American military and local populations is to be framed into a power discourse that includes Euro-centric ideas on race, physical differences, and another understanding of the positionality of colonisers within the colonial context. Second-generation Okinawan scholar Darrell Y. Hamamoto analysed the presence of American military bases and servicemen on Okinawan soil, focusing in particular on how the local population reacts to the way they are racially identified and their (self)stereotyping driven by the constant confrontation with the white American imagery. In quoting postcolonial scholar Frantz Fanon's classic *Black Skin/White Masks* (1967), Hamamoto (2006, 31) states that those same mechanisms, the celebration of the colonisers by colonised people, intervene among Second-generation Japanese Americans against the White American model, urging Okinawan people to consider as idols military personnel who would be regarded as mediocre in their home country. This power dynamic derived from the fascination of locals for White colonisers is, according to Hanna Arendt's theorisation of state violence in colonial Europe, one of the most significant products of Western imperialism: in

fact, imperialist systems such as the British one were able to expel violence from the home country pushing the bad seeds to seek glory in the colonies, and, in so doing, created a myth in which those same bad seeds are considered as outstanding individuals due to the social stratification of the colony (Arendt 1972, 138 and 150). Sociologist Akemi Johnson (2019, 49) quotes a *Time* article where it was clear that at a certain point in post-war Okinawan history, the region came to be viewed as a place of exile by the U.S. military, 'a dumping ground for Army misfits and rejects from more comfortable posts'. Subsequent adjustments were made by the military leaders to make Okinawa more attractive to young soldiers, eventually becoming an 'amusement park', an extension or replacement of the college days that the soldiers were not able to experience due to their role in the army, also stimulating the development of a flourishing sex industry that further solidified a hierarchy based on colonial power structures, gender, and race (48).

I.1.3 Liminal Identities, Border Islands, Ambiguous Colonialism

This overview demonstrates how complex and dynamic is the articulation of the colonial enterprise in Okinawa. While it is evident that the matrix of Okinawan subordination is to be traced back to the cooperation between mainland Japan and the United States, the perspectives and challenges taken on by local communities are socially, geographically, temporally and culturally dependent. That is, the plethora of actors involved and the instances taken into consideration call, once again, for this colonial establishment to be traced back to the particularities that composed it. Politics of identities, memories, and histories are intertwined as a product and reflection of the results that the presence of external authorities on Okinawan soil induces. Consequentially, different communities are entangled with a number of issues resulting from the presence of American military bases, for example, but also the injection of capital from the mainland. As such, not only do these communities employ a variety of strategies to resist the colonial power structure, but their very understanding of the problematics, their own position towards it, and their identity as someone

unwillingly placed into a circuit of violence and discrimination greatly vary, and become fragments of what is going on in Okinawa.

My understanding of what colonialism does entail in Okinawa connects the geographical and social positionality of Okinawan communities in Japan's nation-state with the ambiguity that the proliferation of competing definitions of Okinawan colonialism carries over the decolonial struggle of the local population. To do so, we need to look at the liminal position of Okinawa within the borders of Japan. Borderlands – herein border islands, referring both to Okinawa and Hokkaidō – constitute national boundaries that divide what is inside and outside, the political and cultural identities separated by a purposely decided national barrier. But even so, once colonial borders such as Okinawa and Hokkaidō were inhabited by communities whose identity is in a constant process of transformation towards an absorption into the social and cultural customs of the central state, and so displayed a certain degree of permeability. In discussing the Canadian borders in their literary representations, a country that shares with Japan a similar ambiguous positionality of minority groups within the nation-state construction against their claims of autonomy and independence, Canadian literature scholar Laura Peters (2003, 197) argues that Canadian writer Thomas King 'demonstrates how the colonial border and power structures still work to put the indigenous Other identity, if not under erasure […] then very firmly within the margins'. Again, in a comparative study between the Karafuto Prefecture (now Sakhalin Oblast in Russia) and Okinawa, Amano Naoki describes the instability that is inherent in being border islands. In particular, he argues that border islands – a term introduced by Amano to explain the geographical and sociopolitical condition of being an island at the borders of the nation-state – 'could be incorporated into the mainland at one time, but then they could be de-bordered and excluded in the future, in accordance with the governments' wishes', and terms it a status of 'uneasiness of border islands' (Amano 2019, 18). Such instability is also fuelled by the economic dependency of the borders on

large corporations and the central state apparatus, participating in processes of political internalisation and economic colonisation that are often inconsistent and uneven. That is, whereas they are politically incorporated into the homeland, they can be separated and economically excluded from the homeland market depending on the central government's policies (3). Okinawa, more than Hokkaidō, is an exemplary territory in this sense, as its political shifting continuously changed its affiliation with a central national entity, and in so doing, was alternately bordered and excluded within and without the Japanese national framework. Because of this, the experience of Okinawa and indigenous people since the 20th century can be likened to a floating territory in constant motion in-between being assimilated and excluded by the central authorities. In this sense, Okinawa can be described as a 'frontier' rather than a 'border', in the words of sociologist Anthony Giddens (1985, 65), who explains that '[f]rontier refers to an area on the peripheral regions of a state [...] in which the political authority of the centre is diffuse or thinly spread', and in so doing highlighting its ambiguous positionality in terms of the role it assumed on the ultimate geographical limits of the Japanese territory.

British anthropologist Iain Chambers defines identity as a concept that is permanently in 'transit' and '[lacking] a final destination', and, in particular, argues that migrant identity can be regarded as 'being rootless, of living between worlds, between a lost past and a non-integrated present' (Chambers 1994, 25 and 27-28). Although Okinawan communities keep residing in the same geographical area – excluding here the migrants whose experiences constitute the history of the Okinawan diaspora in mainland Japan, the rest of Asia, and South America, the constant changes in the sociopolitical landscape of the region, how they are categorised by external actors, and the fact that the islands were handed around by several political authorities over time make the Okinawan circumstances comparable to the migrant one, in a state of in-betweenness that forced the local population's identity construction as a counterpoint to the pressure exerted by Japan and the

United States, a situation that is not dissimilar to the mechanisms of identity-making ongoing in the Okinawan contemporary society. In describing the effects of 'transpacific colonialism', Shimabuku grasped the indeterminacy that afflicts the identity of communities living within the Okinawan political establishment, an ambiguity that obscures the dynamics that create and maintains hierarchical relations between locals and external actors. Furthermore, we must be aware that the liminality as shown in the sociopolitical situation and geographical position of the Okinawan population is productive of liminal individuals as well, both in more overt ways – mixed-blood children of Okinawan women and American servicemen are a case in point – and hidden ones, where instead multiple identities of indigeneity and Japanese citizenry are intermingled and generate fragmented selves. Shimabuku (2018, 144) addresses and subverts the problem of determining a single 'self' by reframing the fragility of the co-presence of multiple 'selves' embodied by mixed-races subjects as a constant motion in-between identities where the relationship with the *alegal* – the condition of being invisible to the sovereign power – is 'not an externality' but a 'rhythm felt immanently throughout'. It is the condition of a self that 'does not enclose with static boundaries, but is constantly engaged in the kaleidoscopic movement of overlapping in motion', and where '[b]orders and difference do not dissolve, but they simply develop a different relationship to the process of enclosure in which they continue to *matter*' (144. Emphasis in original).

In view of the indeterminacy and ambiguity inherent in the Okinawan condition, this dissertation aims to address literature as a way to illuminate the 'colonial' and counter its discourses and mechanisms, employing the portrayal of indigenous space and time in its relatedness with local communities as a decolonial option. In doing so, I will refer to the colonial ambiguity, in the strict sense of obscure liminality supported by the United States and mainland Japan and mirrored in the multiple selves as expressed in Okinawan communities, instead of keeping one of the above-mentioned definitions of colonialism and use it as a theoretical background for how Okinawan

literature expresses the sociopolitical concerns and the – artistic – voices composing the indigenous cultural landscape. Likewise, I do not intend to encompass all the definitions together in an attempt to show how literary storytelling approaches the distinctions and contradictions within the struggle of Okinawan communities. As mentioned before, different issues – while still resulting from the same origin, the presence of external authorities in the prefecture – need to be tackled with different strategies, and literature, as many other ways to illuminate and contribute to the local sociopolitical discourses, addresses the specificities that Okinawan writers feel close to them. To put it differently, literature performs the same function as other strategies employed by individual communities confronting the issues at stake: they raise their voice against certain problems, and aim to rectify certain wrongdoings challenging them in the most suitable way. Art, and specifically literary narration, cannot be a universal panacea, and as such, I do not intend to approach it that way. The next section will serve the purpose of being a starting point for a discussion about Okinawan literature, and, to be more specific, Medoruma Shun's oeuvre, and position his literary voice in the context of decolonising patterns. To do so, it is first necessary to understand what the decolonial constructions are in Okinawa, and how they develop as part of the contemporary Okinawan sociopolitical discourse.

I.2 Decolonising Strategies and Okinawan Literature as a Method

I.2.1 Decolonial Struggles, Indigeneity, Protests

The post-war Okinawan struggle revolves around the presence of American military bases on the territory, which results in a worrying number of incidents, accidents, issues of ecological nature, involving local communities and external authorities. Every politically informed speech, text, demonstration or debate around the Okinawa problem (*Okinawa mondai*) has in the obtrusive presence of the American army on the Japanese territory its – sometimes transparent, hard to

identify – theoretical backbone. As a result, 'decolonising' solutions in the Okinawan context have as their ultimate goal the removal – or moving to mainland Japan – of American military bases. The reason for this is twofold. On the one hand, the presence of the United States is seen as a very relevant issue for local communities, because of the increasing number of incidents that put at risk the life of entire communities living nearby the bases, but also because of the economic and urban developmental issues that having huge chunks of land occupied by military bases entail. On the other hand, anti-colonial discourses serve the purpose of countering the mainland Japanese rhetoric on the conditions of Okinawa and the significance of military bases for the entire nation-state.

Sociologist Ra Mason (2019) states that post-war Okinawa and the policy applied to boost the prefectural economy has been framed and articulated by the central government with three pivotal key terms, that are *development*, *burden*, and *deterrence*. In more detail, Mason (2019, 193. Emphasis in original.) argues that '[p]ost-reversion, the need for *development* was emphasized under Japanese governance, as was the *burden* bearing of US military facilities stationed throughout the prefecture', while undergoing a terminological shift in the post-9/11 years 'as the explanation that the regional security environment has become more severe has been used to reframe Okinawa as part of an essential new security strategy' that 'places a heavy emphasis on the *deterrence* embodied by US military bases on the islands'. Such buzzwords, continuously disseminated through Japan's state authorities, academics, and mass media outlets alike, obfuscate the history of Okinawa as an independent political entity and identify the prefecture as a victim of American subjugation, hence removing from the equation the essential role of Japan in creating and maintaining this political structure. As a counterpoint to how Okinawa has been made a virtually ahistorical agent, local activists, politicians, and public intellectuals make extensive use of anti-colonial strategies and discourses that challenge the 'production of ignorance' that, as Nishiyama (2022a, 546) argues, 'contributes to the maintaining of existing imperial spatial orders' and fosters dominant discourses

that 'often ignore, or disguise at best, the colonial foundation of military bases in Okinawa'. Such strategies often involve referencing the past of the Okinawa Prefecture as an independent kingdom, the significance of nature for the indigenous communities, and repeated links to how indigenous land was usurped by the American administration for the construction of military bases, without even considering the recurring commemorative events connected to the war experience of Okinawan populations. Again, Nishiyama (2022b, 553) suggests that 'these counter-narratives are forms of the decolonization of knowledge, which plays a crucial role in the demilitarization process of Okinawa Island'. While these operations often do not offer a practical, straightforward solution to the decolonisation of the Okinawan territory, which means the removal of military bases, they still serve the purpose of challenging the hegemonic and colonial claims of mainland Japan and the United States.

As for the possible political application of these counter-narratives aiming for an Okinawan decolonisation of knowledge, it is subject to dispute. Grassroots groups and non-governmental movements addressing the issue of Okinawan indigeneity have been active in domestic and international venues, mobilising the politics of indigeneity as a strategic tool for demilitarisation and decolonisation. For example, Gosamaru Miyazato, a representative of the Association of Indigenous Peoples in the Ryukyus (AIPR), 'introduced the concept of indigeneity and relayed their participation in the UN conference to a major local newspaper' to raise the attention of local readers regarding the Okinawan indigenous issue and the potentiality for this campaign to 'work towards the restoration of Indigenous Ryukyuan/Okinawa Peoples' rights to self-determination' (Ginoza 2015). Whereas 'self-determination' may induce us to think that the ultimate goal of Okinawan indigenous claims is political independence from both mainland Japan and the United States – and it is, as a matter of fact, the objective of some of these movements, that is not a necessary consequence. In quoting a study conducted in 2007 by Lim John Chuan-tiong, Ginoza (2015) concludes that

'Okinawan articulations of "Okinawanness", as opposed to "Japaneseness," reflected, in 2007, their resistance to state discrimination against Okinawans, rather than a cultural interest in and political aspiration towards independence'. Likewise, Nishiyama (2022b, 561) follows on this theme explaining that the decolonisation of knowledge does not necessarily involve an aspiration for political independence, but only its impact on how hegemonic discourses are constructed, despite the two elements – the independence aspirations and claims on indigenous forms of decolonisation – are often linked together.

Furthermore, indigenous claims are not exclusive to non-governmental agents or liminal political actors who work outside Japan's nation-state political arena but are present as well in the speeches of leading political figures in the prefecture, despite their close connection to the central government and its dynamics, at least on a formal level. In a 1996 Supreme Court hearing already mentioned earlier in this introduction, Ōta stated the following:

> [...][I]n Okinawa where the proclivities for ancestor worship are strong, land is not a mere plot of soil in which to grow crops. It is not a commodity, something that can be considered an object for buying and selling. If I may paraphrase further, land is an irreplaceable heritage graciously bequeathed to us by our ancestors or a spiritual string that ties us to them. My people's attachment to their land is firmly rooted and their resistance against the forcible taking of their land is similarly strong (Cox 2013, 57).

Claims of land rights have a long tradition within histories of struggle for indigenous self-determination all over the world, as both a symbol of what is materially lost to the advantage of imperial powers and the processes of cultural and tangible erasure that colonising entails. In the Okinawan context, the connection between land and communities is crucial as plots were transformed in the immediate post-war period into the very symbol – the military bases – of the external occupation that still affect contemporary Okinawan society. Besides that, the significance

of indigenous land for the local population is further accentuated by the rhetoric according to which individuals and their land belong to each other in a spiritual connection where land becomes a metonymy of the indigenous past and their attachment to ancestors.

In discussing the meaning of 'decolonisation' in his examination of the Okinawan struggle, Nishiyama (2022b, 553) clarifies that he means 'the process and act of undoing colonial forms of knowledge', which in the Okinawan context is 'often connected with concepts and ideas that draw from contemporary international norms' and, thus, 'they are still within modern epistemology'. What the author intends when using 'modern epistemology' is that set of epistemological tools – such as human rights, the recognition by the UN of indigenous status, and so on – that is Eurocentric in nature. Indeed, most of the challenges Okinawans face and the strategies employed to do so can include local demonstrations in a network of global activism of which claims are rooted in Eurocentric perspectives. Recent protests in northern Okinawa Island regarding the construction of the new Henoko base are a case in point. While the ultimate goal is demilitarisation, the demonstrations and the activities revolving around Henoko Bay and the solutions found by local communities to counter the American military enterprise can be seen as a part of a global environmental movement that has its foundation in how Western epistemologies understand the relationship between human beings and nature, rather than the spiritual relatedness depicted in the Okinawan indigenous world-building. It is worth noticing that in Northern Okinawa, 'dugongs [aquatic mammals endangered by the construction of the new military base in the Henoko bay] are considered to be the ancestors of human beings, and they are worshiped as messengers of the gods at traditional ceremonies', which is why during sit-in protests in Henoko 'elders give prayers toward the ocean as if they ask for help and strength from their ancestral spirits' (Chibana 2013, 148-149). This kind of emphasis on the interconnectedness of the natural world with human beings is not new in anti-colonial contexts. As Jason Allen-Paisant (2022, 22) argues in commenting on Aimé Césaire's

postcolonial writings, '[i]n asking us to think about creaturely, nonhuman life on its own terms', this perspective 'not only challenges certain "modes of knowledge" but, more importantly, affects our conception of what knowledge is'.

However, this seems to be more of a rhetorical device than anything else, a method to include the local in the global, and intersect the indigenous experience with global movements that still engage with authorities within the canon of a Western vision of the world. Actually, local social movements and advocacy networks make full use of their international connections to acquire knowledge – regarding how to counter military activities – and publicity. As sociologist Tanji Miyume (2008, 475) states, '[i]n January 2008, a U.S. federal court in San Francisco ruled that the U.S. Defense Department's plans to construct a new U.S. offshore Marine airbase in Okinawa violated the National Historic Preservation Act [which is part of the corpus of the United States' legislation] by not protecting a Japanese "national monument", the endangered Okinawa dugong'. Undoubtedly, in the context of this lawsuit, the dugong could be protected due to its status as a 'national monument' of Japan as it is being catalogued by the central government and recognised internationally by virtue of a shared sense of what ought to be considered 'culture'. This is without considering that the very expression 'Japanese national monument' should be inherently problematic for local communities, as it inserts an indigenous element of regional folklore into the broader national framework, and, in so doing, erase the specificities of the Okinawan way of existing.

Again, the appeals of non-governmental associations to be recognised as indigenous within the Japanese nation-state have the merit of aiming to protect Okinawan communities through special measures that are defined by international law – the Ainu population in Hokkaidō already reached the objective and as such benefit from its indigenous status. Even without accounting for the fact that such international laws are the fruits of a mutual agreement between countries in the Global North, and as such ultimately based on a Eurocentric epistemology, the notion of being indigenous

is intrinsically interwoven with the exclusionary act that being different implies. The indigenous is an other in the context of nation-states. Despite the literal meaning of the term of 'being autochthonous', 'being the earliest known inhabitants of a given area', we cannot make sense of this demarcation without positioning indigeneity as a result of colonisation. That means indigenous people cannot exist as such without the presence of external authorities that make them that way by means of conquering, segregation, and subalternation. In this sense, while the claims of Okinawan organisations are justified and serve the purpose of guaranteeing protection against the sociopolitical structure imposed by mainland Japan and the United States, indigeneity claims also establish an exclusion from and implicit subordination to mainland Japan. In this, as in many other aspects, the political activities of Okinawan communities and the discourses they push back as a counter-narrative to the statements of external authorities cannot escape dichotomic opposition between Okinawa and the Japanese nation-state. Whatever the results of their demonstrations, their past as an independent kingdom, the logic of difference underlying the relationship between them and the central state and the different understanding and way of existing between Okinawa and the rest of the Japanese population would still be there to remind Okinawan communities that they are different, an element out of place in the Japanese national body. In short, if 'decolonisation' is just this, the outcome would always be a choice between being an other with or without benefits, but an other nonetheless.

I.2.2 Decoloniality as a Method

Against this backdrop, this dissertation intends to broaden the definition of 'decolonisation' in the Okinawan context and specifically position Okinawan literature as part of the sociopolitical discourse. I argue that, in carving out its own role as a decolonial voice in the Japanese context, Okinawan literature proposes an opportunity for indigenous voices to branch out the dichotomy between Okinawa and the Japanese nation-state, and transform – to use the phrasing of Catherine

E. Walsh (Mignolo and Walsh 2018) – local communities from being an other to being an otherwise. If we return to Nishiyama's definition of 'decolonisation', that can be simply put as the 'undoing of colonialism'. In the Okinawan context, that would be the removal of American military bases, perhaps even a return to its own independence as a kingdom. If, as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (2014, 16) argue, '[c]olonialism is ethnocentrism armed, institutionalized, and gone global', someone might contend that in Okinawa there is not even a need for such an undoing, because Okinawa has never been a colonial ground proper, at least in Eurocentric terms. And even if it was, the simple removal of American military bases, or yet another monetary injection from mainland Japan, would suffice. However, it still stands that Okinawa would be a postcolonial subject, which means that the ways of being-in-the-world of local communities would be stuck at being a product of the former colonial structure, a third space that is a hybridisation that is neither Okinawan nor American/mainland Japanese, and that, in spite of local public intellectuals' efforts to offer creative solutions to 'decolonise' such being-in-the-world, is ultimately representative of the scars left by the former coloniser on the colonised territory.

That is unless another form of 'decolonisation' comes into play, which is what Aníbal Quijano defines as 'decoloniality' against the matrix of power represented by the modernity/coloniality framework. In discussing the historical formation of Latin America, Walter D. Mignolo (2001, cited in Wang 2012, 745) argues that coloniality cannot be detached from modernity, as the former is constitutive, rather than derivative, of the latter. In his view, modernity is a 'self-serving narrative of teleological and seamless progress, leading to ever more civilised and prosperous societies', a narrative that would necessarily need a less developed counterpart as a comparison and, more than that, land of conquest that would economically and culturally benefit the colonisers' society. Wang (2012, 746) sums that up by explaining that '[a]s Latin America is written into the history of modernity as uncivilized, backward, primitive, and therefore available for plunder and exploitation, the modernity

[…] is inscribed with the coloniality of power, which is played out time and again in the insurrections in the colony, in the ethnic rebellions in the metropoles, and in the tense and tender ties between the native and the colonizer'. Modernity, here, refers specifically to Western modernity in its ontological and epistemological entanglement with its colonial enterprise (see: Mignolo 2011).

In the Okinawan scenario, the creation of a Japanese nation-state during the Meiji period that closely resembles Western formations meant for the political entities in East Asia to be intertwined in the rise of a new world power, which resulted in either being somehow incorporated into its imperial project, being at war with it, or even both. This matrix of power, especially when it comes to the relationship between Okinawa and Japan, has little to do with how 'modernity' developed in Japan compared to the rest of the world, what kind of influences were received from the West, and how those were reshaped in the circulation of technological advancements, cultural and political ideologies, and societal restructuring. It is, instead, related to how the dominant power – in this case, Japan – built a set of intellectual instruments to interpret the geopolitics and cultural forces transforming the world and placed itself at its centre, otherising the communities that did not align with this way of being-in-the-world through an exclusionary mechanism that eventually shaped them into subaltern of the hegemonic force. In this, we must understand that there is an essential difference between *coloniality* – which has its opposite in decoloniality – and *colonialism*. 'Colonialism' is 'a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people [by] another' (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 116). In Okinawa, that is comparable to the presence of the United States and its military forces on the territory. And decolonising here would strictly mean the removal of military bases, perhaps a return to independence. However, *coloniality* is an epistemological 'complex structure of management and control', an 'underlying structure' that poses the dominant civilisation at its centre and relegates the rest to the peripheries, in a political and cultural subordinate position. Again, Mignolo (120) claims that the goal of decoloniality is delinking the

matrix of power constituted by the modernity/coloniality from local communities in order to 'engage in epistemic reconstitution' and in 'form of life that we like to preserve rather than be hostage of the modernity's designs and desires'.

As Mignolo and Walsh conclude, decoloniality is an option. I intend this in a double meaning. The first is that decoloniality is only one of the possible methods individuals can deal with colonialism/colonisation/coloniality. The second, even more important, is that decoloniality attends to a spectrum of actions and conceptualisations of ontologies and epistemologies that are not necessarily completely oppositional to modernity as intended in the Eurocentric perspective. This means that, in the Okinawan case, I do not intend to portray an indigenous being-in-the-world that is detached from the intrusion of external authorities, that was not transformed by and fruitfully complied with the presence of mainland Japanese and American social actors on the territory. That Okinawan community, self-centred and self-included in its own world, does not exist and probably never existed in the first place. New generations of Okinawan people are gradually losing command of their indigenous languages, and some of them are not disturbed by the presence of military bases, whether because affected by mainland Japanese rhetoric on the importance of keeping the region secure from external threats or because they are not touched by traumatic narratives intergenerationally transmitted regarding the Battle of Okinawa and the military violence that the war entails. Nonetheless, precisely because Okinawan communities are affected and transformed by their contact with external actors, it is crucial to take into consideration the fragmentation and the plurality of voices that compose it, often hindered by the same colonial dynamic that poses mainland Japan as the epistemic centre and the Okinawan community as a subaltern, homogenous entity. Here decoloniality serves the purpose of illuminating the Okinawan experience – and the multiplicity contained therein – against the ontological and epistemic centrality of mainland Japan and the United States that in the Okinawan context is symptomatic of the colonial establishment. It

is following this assumption that I intend to analyse Okinawan literature, specifically Medoruma

Shun's oeuvre, to understand what the possibilities are for a narrative that includes the specificities

and the multiplicities of the Okinawan experience in their struggle to position their voice within

paradigms of nation-state formations and maintenance, colonisation, modernity/coloniality and

decoloniality. In discussing postcoloniality and decolonisation, Fernando Coronil (1992, 99) suggests

that 'historical analysis of these crucial issues should attend to what de Certeau called the "poetics

of details," and explore their significance in the historical and social contexts in which they gain their

vitality, rather than use underspecified cases as examples that serve to construct postcoloniality as

a sweeping type', that 'sharply divides postcolonial from other societies and erases their

considerable heterogeneity'. I intend to follow this path and frame Medoruma's literature as a detail,

a single anti-colonial voice that does not aim to encapsulate an univocal stance towards the colonial,

but rather assumes its heterogeneity.

I.2.3 What is Okinawan Literature?

In the same way as for the formulation of 'Okinawan identity', the expression 'Okinawan literature'

has been continuously discussed and re-defined by scholars, in a quest that aimed to find a formula

that could take into account the cultural and historical layers of Okinawa, its relationship with

mainland Japan, and the contradiction of a literature that struggles to be both local and included in

the dynamics of Japan's nation-state and its literary circle. So far, definitions greatly differ: most

famously, Bhowmik (2008) borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari the category of 'minor

literature', and Michael Molasky (2003b) proposed that Okinawan literature can be understood as

regional literature that provides a radical extension to the Japanese literature corpus. As mentioned

above in this introduction, Okinawan literature – the same as the post-war Okinawan society – has

been situated countless times in colonial and post-colonial contexts, with some scholars even

arguing that Okinawan literature can be conceptualised as a 'third text' and, as such, an example of

decolonial writing (see: Ikehara 2017). This dissertation aims to depart from this perspective, for two different reasons. The first one is strictly methodological: it is almost impossible – and, I would argue, useless – to find a definition that can encompass the entirety of Okinawan texts. There would always be something escaping such definition, and that would require a corrective, and then another one, and so on and so forth. Bhowmik's definition of Okinawan prose as 'minor literature' is a case in point. In commenting on such categorisation, Tanji (2012, 114) claims that, although Bhowmik suggests that 'all Okinawan writers should be read as minor literature, only Sakiyama's writings are linked closely to the concept'. To a certain extent, this can be seen as proof that different writers perceive and portray Okinawa in different ways, which would call for a different categorisation for each writer. The definition given by Molasky perfectly exemplifies the other reason: in saying that Okinawan fiction is an extension of Japanese literature, Molasky is replicating – here in a literary context – the power relationship between mainland Japan and Okinawa. And although it is undisputable that Okinawa and mainland Japan belong to a certain hegemonic structure that affects how arts and literature are positioned within the Japanese domestic context, I do not feel comfortable providing a label that sets in stone the current political conditions of the prefecture. Not doing it is also an act of hope that things can be different, in one way or another. For similar reasons, I will avoid strictly defining Okinawan literature as colonial, post-colonial, or decolonial texts, as this would imply that the creative force of Okinawan writers is just the product of their resistance to the colonial structure – or, according to some, the product of coming into contact with external authorities. While this can be true to a certain extent, that would also defy the possibility for other options to exist, for Okinawan texts to detach themselves from the colonial experience. However, in this dissertation and elsewhere I have used – and certainly will in the future – the phrasing 'Okinawan literature', which necessarily calls for an understanding of what this is. What about it, then? What is 'Okinawan literature'? Taiwanese novelist Wu Ming-Yi (2019, 141)

discusses 'the literature of Taiwan' arguing that the definition does not take as its starting point the ethnic or national belonging of writers to the island, but it is rather 'because the authors (or their relatives) have had their Taiwan experience, and because they have written about Taiwan from their own perspectives'. Similarly, I suggest that 'Okinawan literature' does start from the way authors experience Okinawa and how they narrate it from their own perspective.

In conclusion, one last question needs to be addressed: why is this research project focusing on Medoruma Shun, among many other leading contemporary Okinawan writers? Medoruma has often been defined as a 'writer of action' (*kōdō suru sakka*) due to his activities as a public intellectual and frontman for the anti-base movement. Molasky (2003b, 167) argues that '[i]n assuming the role of writer and critic, Medoruma resembles intellectually ambitious, politically engages Japanese authors of previous generation', that he 'stands out from other Okinawan writers of his generation who seek to avoid political commentary' as he 'insists that there is no contradiction between writing fiction and social criticism, between the private artist and public intellectual'. In a recent conference, Bhowmik (2022) described Medoruma as a 'part-time author'. Given his recent full commitment to activism and non-fictional, journalistic writing, we could even argue that he became a full-time activist instead. In this sense, his oeuvre becomes significant as it is representative of the voice of an author whose role crosses the literary field and the sociopolitical commentary as an expression of the complex entanglement between representational forms and political struggle.

Another reason needs to be found in the way Medoruma Shun's literature has been examined so far by scholars in the field of Okinawan literature both in Japan and in the West. To cite examples of major works focusing on Medoruma's fictional works, Okinawan literature scholars such as Davinder Bhowmik (2003; 2008; 2012), Susan Bouterey (2011), Kyle Ikeda (2014), and Onishi Yasumitsu (2019) approach Medoruma's storytelling in its exploration of local war memories, how

they are reproduced and transmitted intergenerationally through his fictional works and, on a different cultural level, through the family retelling of war stories. To put it briefly, Medoruma Shun is overwhelmingly addressed as a 'second-generation war survivor', that is an individual who never experienced the war for biographical reasons but that, nonetheless, is affected by its traumatic legacy as a recipient of the previous generation's war memories. While the literary reproduction of war memories in Medoruma's oeuvre is fundamental for understanding the significance of his works in the Japanophone context – as a matter of fact, this dissertation inevitably engages with such pieces of literature as well, his contribution does not stop here. Medoruma is not only a war novelist; he depicts contemporary Okinawan society in its continuous renegotiation of its war legacy, the issues surrounding the above-mentioned Okinawa problem, and the interrelations of social actors re-constructing the conceptualisation of the space they inhabit and the time as it is reproduced and narrated by indigenous communities and external authorities.

Ultimately, this dissertation intends to overcome prior studies of which analysis of Medoruma's fictional works focused on his experience as a second-generation war survivor, and instead takes a closer look at his depiction of contemporary Okinawan society, how Okinawan communities are impacted by the results of the war and the American administration, as well as the continuous reconsideration and reassessment of indigenous space and time construction that are foundational of the colonial construction and its subsequent anti-colonial and decolonial opposition. As Mignolo (2018, 139-140) reminds us, the narratives that underlie the modernity/coloniality matrix of power follow two complementary trajectories, respectively the colonisation of time and the colonisation of space, arguing that these two colonisations 'were not military, financial, or state-politics activities', but rather 'conceptual, that is, epistemic'. To put it briefly, space and time are measured, quantitatively and qualitatively assessed by dominant powers and imposed as the only alternative to their political peripheries. In the Okinawan context, the prefecture is framed by the Japanese

nation-state according to principles that are regarded by Japanese mainlanders as univocal. Beyond mere land occupation by the American military, the Japanese nation-state decides what the geographical and temporal position of Okinawa is within the national framework and decides what to do with it – in terms of policies and ideological reframing – depending on these assessments. Medoruma's fiction, in its literary and predominantly critical values, addresses how space and time are re-produced by local communities and external authorities alike, portraying distinct possibilities for space and time to be conceptualised and reframed in Okinawan society.

I.2.4 Methodology, Limitations, and Chapter Breakdown

This dissertation develops as a wide reading of a selection of Medoruma's novels and short stories. By employing wide reading as an analytical tool, this research has the possibility of looking at both the macro-context, the historical, socio-political, and cultural framework that informs Medoruma's fiction, and the narrative methods and textual structures that weave into the reproduction of the indigenous epistemology in Okinawan literature and interact with Medoruma's authorial voice as a fictional writer and public intellectual. Michael Molasky (2003b) insists on Medoruma's dual nature. On the one hand, the writer narrates the traumatic memories of entire communities, representing their worldview, their relationship with the space around them, and the way in which they interact with members of the same community and external social actors. Medoruma builds up a literary depiction of indigenous epistemologies and ontologies through a kaleidoscope of multiple, at times vocally oppositional perspectives that still take part in forming the Okinawan indigenous experience. On the other hand, the anti-base intellectual and essayist, whose activities – both in the form of non-fictional writing and active participation in protests, attempt to raise awareness of the current socio-political situation in Okinawa and dismantle the colonial construction epitomised by the presence of American military bases on the territory. It is in the attempt to save these two souls and

explore how they mutually affect Medoruma's storytelling that this dissertation broadens the scope to include both macro- and micro-textual analysis by means of wide reading.

Medoruma's fictional works have been selected according to their possibility to allow an exploration of the fragmented ramifications of the Okinawa problem, the reaction of indigenous communities, and their participation in the construction/dismantling of the colonial establishment. While wide reading permits multiple connections with the history of Okinawa, mainland Japan, and the United States, the dissertation does not follow a chronological order. Instead, the chapter – and the fictional works analysed therein – are thematically divided to show how Medoruma addresses different issues belonging to the mosaic that composes the Okinawan contemporary society and, in so doing, understand how the author narrates and ultimately challenges the dominant perspective. On another note, precisely because the scope of this project involves broadening the reading of Medoruma outside his role as a second-generation war survivor, the popularity of selected fictional works among the Okinawan and mainland Japanese readership, literary circles, and scholars is taken into consideration only loosely, and was not a selection criterion: for this reason, chapters contain both widely discussed fictional works – for which an extensive academic literature review is provided – and lesser-known one – of which contextual analysis is, instead, purely based on the historical and sociocultural background, and, at times, paratextual information.

However, this method of analysis also calls for certain limitations that require further explanation. While this dissertation proposes to employ wide reading to encompass a series of issues and approaches that foreground and describe the formation of and discussion around Okinawan identity(ies), some of these discussions are only barely touched upon in my analysis and are not further explored. Perhaps the most prominent element that is only scarcely mentioned in this study and that, conversely, contributed and still illuminates the relationship between Okinawan literature and local identity is the topic of Okinawan language and the use Okinawan authors make of it. Rich

academic discussions pertaining to this issue have been carried out in the last years both in Japan and in the West (Morton 2004; Kina 2011; Ōshiro 2018). In this dissertation, the issue of Okinawan language and its relationship with indigenous identity is briefly mentioned in Chapter 3. Okinawan language(s) and its employment in Okinawan Japanophone literature is undoubtedly a salient theme that deserves its own space. However, while it is true that Medoruma makes use of Okinawan language(s) in his fiction, it is not an element as pressing as it is in the literary works of other Okinawan authors such as Sakiyama Tami and Ōshiro Tatsuhiro, whose narratives depict local languages as a vehicle for indigenous identity formation and affirmation against outsiders. In this sense, excluding a much more detailed linguistic analysis from my study is a deliberate choice that came with the selection of Medoruma as a case study. Other research angles, which again would deserve more scrutiny, have not been explored for more practical reasons, such as lack of access to primary and secondary sources. This is the case, for example, of the paratextual analysis of Medoruma's texts, only briefly mentioned for some of the works herein analysed.

The dissertation is divided into four main chapters. In Chapter One, I will explore how the politics of memory affect the relationship between mainland Japan and Okinawa, how a number of social actors differently employs the rhetoric surrounding it to position Okinawa within the Japanese nation-state framework, and how Medoruma's literature confronts memories and war narratives to portray what cannot be told, what remains hidden in the national storytelling. In this, I will scrutinise how the author navigates the re-telling of war memories and how such narratives reshape space-time as it is perceived by individuals and indigenous communities alike. Chapter Two will focus on how Medoruma frames American military bases and the consequences of their presence on Okinawan soil. Specifically, it intends to look at how urban and natural landscapes are affected by the activities of external authorities and the reaction – tangible and imaginative – of indigenous people constantly confronting the military establishment. In Chapter Three, I will analyse how

mainland Japan – here including the central government, mass media, public and private companies – repackages and commodifies Okinawan culture. This chapter will examine how Medoruma's fiction deconstructs the typical imagery of Okinawa proposed by domestic mass media and how indigenous communities react to the injection of mainland capital to transform the prefecture into an exotic entertainment zone for Japanese mainlanders to consume. Finally, Chapter Four will look at Medoruma's fiction in its commentary on how the Emperor system is entangled in the history of post-war democratic Japan and the different perspectives held by Okinawan people and Japanese mainlanders regarding the Emperor figure, his role in the transformation of Okinawa into a colonial establishment, and the making of hierarchical structures based on the ideological reframing of the Emperor as a symbol of the Japanese nation-state. Ultimately, this research aims to illuminates how Medoruma's narratives, through the depiction of Okinawan space-time, can show the complexities and specificities of the Okinawan struggle in their tangible and epistemological layers.

Chapter One: The Politics of Memory and the Collapsing of Space-Time: Forms and Networks of Intimacies in Okinawan Narratives

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Okinawan Temporalities in Japanese Mass-Mediated Discourses

On April 11th, 2022, the first episode of the Japanese television drama *Chimudondon* was aired on NHK. The series, the 106th Morning Drama (*asadora*) produced by the state-owned broadcaster and funded with the viewers' television licence fee, was broadcast every morning for 15 minutes until the start of the new Autumn TV programme block. *Chimudondon*, whose title can be loosely translated from the Okinawan language as 'Trembling Heart', narrates the life of its Okinawan heroine and her family, beginning in 1964 and following her growth – she grows up, moves to Tokyo, and starts working there cultivating the dream of opening an Okinawan restaurant – together with the evolution of the political position of the Okinawan prefecture. During its promotional debut and subsequent advertising campaign, the NHK producers described the series as a story that aims to explore themes such as 'family' and 'hometown' (*furusato*), not unlike other morning dramas in which the setting was other regions of the Japanese archipelago, although in this specific case the idea of 'hometown' can be considered somewhat problematic given the particular positionality of Okinawa within the Japanese sociopolitical discourse ("NHK Asadora Shuen Ni" 2021). Like other TV series set in Okinawa, most famously *Ryūkyū no kaze* (*Winds of the Ryukyu Islands*, 1993) and *Churasan* (2001), *Chimudondon* portrays a very stereotypical image of Okinawa, highlighting its blue sky and sunny beaches, and its characters and the relationships between them, relying on the shared Japanese mainlanders idea of Okinawan people as easy-going, gentle, and laid-back

individuals, a regional character that mirrors the beauty of its tropical landscape.[6] Once again, it is

nothing more than the umpteenth re-presentation of a product that follows on the heels of the

1990s Okinawa Boom, a phenomenon I will further explore in Chapter 3. However, more than the

depiction of the Okinawan islands in *Chimudondon*, the reason why it was premiered in 2022 is

particularly significant, broadcasting nationwide images of Okinawa and Okinawan characters for

more than half a year at a quasi-daily cadence to be watched by virtually every Japanese viewer in

front of a television set or application able to transmit the NHK channels. The morning drama was

aired specifically to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the reversion of Okinawa to Japan that took

place in 1972, and it is part of a series of events and commemorations that have the precise purpose

of both maintaining Okinawa in the Japanese historical framework and reflecting on the dark past

of the prefecture and its war legacy, again understood as a shared trauma that extends the

Okinawan experience to the entire Japanese population. Besides the creation of products catering

to Japanese and Okinawan people alike to establish a collective state of remembrance for the

upcoming anniversary, the event was properly celebrated on May 15th, 2022, with twin ceremonies

both in Naha, the capital of Okinawa, and Tokyo, where the Reiwa Emperor and Empress spoke in a

videoconference about their feelings towards the people of the prefecture. Moreover, the

anniversary was also 'marked by various efforts to collect oral testimonies and archived documents,

exploring the past, present, and future of the Imperial Household's relationship with Okinawa and

its people' ("The Emperor and Okinawa" 2022), pointing to a celebration of the union between

democratic Japan – in this case, represented by its most significant symbol, the Imperial Household

– and Okinawa upon the continuous reflection and negotiation of their relationship and the

complicated history of the prefecture. Following the example of the retired Emperor Heiwa, during

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[6] For an extensive discussion of morning dramas about Okinawa and their implications regarding local and diasporic identities, the construction of the mainlanders' stereotypical Okinawan images and the Japanese historical amnesia, see Ueunten 2007, Kühne 2012, and Fujiki 2013.

the traditional press conference in February for his birthday, Emperor Reiwa expressed his thoughts on his relationship with the Okinawan people and the war legacy, wishing that the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Okinawan return to Japan could be a new starting point for people to 'learn more about Okinawan history and culture, and deepen their understanding of the prefecture' ("Okinawa Fukki" 2022).

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Okinawa shares a similar geographical position with Hokkaidō, as well as a history of colonisation that re-shaped the regions and transformed them into effective borders of the Japanese nation-state. Arguably, Okinawa and Hokkaidō were still understood differently – and as such, differently treated – by the newly formed Japanese Empire. Whereas the conquering of Hokkaidō was carried out by framing the northernmost region as a *terra nullius* (ownerless land) that could be exploited by de-indigenizing the local Ainu populations and making them Japanese subjects (Roellinghoff 2020, 295), Okinawa was incorporated into the Japanese Empire expropriating the local government of their political power and subjecting the ruling class to the central Meiji state system. As such, the history of the Ryukyu Kingdom had to be taken into account and tamed to be inserted into the historical framework of the newly born Japan's nation-state, while Ainu communities could be just transformed into Japanese imperial subjects without bringing in their different sociocultural background. Simply put, whereas indigenous populations in Hokkaidō could be single-handedly ignored or regarded as uncultured and consequently educated to become Japanese, the history of the Ryukyu Kingdom was simply too cumbersome to disregard. That is why, compared to what happens to Ainu populations, Okinawan culture and history need to be addressed and learned – quoting here Emperor Reiwa's message during the 50th anniversary of the Okinawan reversion, and why so much effort is poured – into political rhetoric, mass media, private and state-led advertising campaigns – into framing Okinawa as part of Japan politically and culturally speaking.

This conceptualisation continuously enters political discourses where the position of Okinawa is often merely represented as a function of historical coordinates that relate Okinawa to mainland Japan. To return briefly to the morning dramas mentioned above, they are indeed a prime example of how Okinawa is depicted as an exotic other within the Japanese framework, stressing the cultural and geographical distance from the mainland but ultimately agreeing that those differences are still to be inserted within a shared – perhaps loose – idea of 'Japaneseness'. However, it is the usage of temporal references that further solidifies the belonging of Okinawa to a macro-historical narrative of Japan. Intratextually, so to speak, looking at how temporal references are used inside the narrative of *Churasan*, it is worth mentioning how certain dates are employed to strengthen the connection between Okinawan characters, Okinawa, and its history with mainland Japan. The main character was born on May 15th, 1972, the day Okinawa reverted to Japan from the American administration, a fact that is reiterated during the drama as proof that the protagonist's life is indeed guided by fate and what happens to her is 'meant to be'. If we move our gaze to the paratextual context, which refers here to when and how such television dramas were aired in relation to meaningful historical turning points in the relationship between Okinawa and mainland Japan, again *Chimudondon* premiered the year of the 50th anniversary of the Okinawan reversion, whereas *Winds of the Ryukyu Islands* interconnects temporal parameters both within and out its narrative as a means to support the 'Okinawa-as-part-of-Japan' concept. The original novel – written by the Taiwanese-Japanese author Chin Shunshin (1924 – 2015) was published in 1992, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the reversion of Okinawa. By the same token, the drama adaptation was aired the following year in a long preparation for the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II and coincidentally ended only nine days before the Okinawan Memorial Day on June 13th, 1993. Furthermore, the story is set in the Ryukyu Kingdom during the 16th and 17th centuries, when the kingdom had already only limited autonomy and was subject to the Satsuma domain's authority,

and in doing so, further consolidates the idea that Okinawa has always been under the Japanese

jurisdiction, in one form or another. In this context, it is the reiteration of certain key dates in the

recent history of the mainland Japan-Okinawa relationship that constructs or maintains a fixed

image of Okinawa as positioned within the boundaries of Japan's nation-state. To put it differently,

the audience's attention is re-directed towards pivotal historical moments that epitomise the union

between mainland Japan and Okinawa, such as May 15th 1972 as the date of the reversion of

Okinawa to Japan, conversely hiding – or rewiring those as parts of Japan's local histories – other

important moments in the local population's collective memory that would show the difference

between the historical experiences of Japanese mainlanders and Okinawans, without considering

the responsibility of Japan in issues that are still affecting Okinawa to this day.

1.1.2 The Role of Literature and Okinawan Authors as a Political Discourse

Literature as well does not escape this mechanism of reference to such historical coordinates that

shape the unity between mainland Japan and Okinawa. In the Introduction, I briefly mentioned how

the publications of several volumes regarding Okinawa during the 50th anniversary of the Okinawan

reversion to Japan could be scrutinised to understand the complex relationship between Okinawan

and Japanese actors participating in the public discourse surrounding the positionality of the

prefecture in Japan's nation-state. Then, the resulting picture shows a relational web where

Japanese mainlanders and Okinawans are not simply placed in an antagonistic position, but are

instead intertwined in the construction and maintenance of certain sociopolitical and cultural

discourses in such a way that it becomes difficult to disentangle the plethora of different stances

regarding their own identity, political ideas, struggles, and goals. More importantly, these

anniversaries and their commemoration remind us that Japanese mainlanders and Okinawan

communities are not monolithic blocks against each other, but entertain in much more intricate

relationships that become increasingly ambiguous the more those communities distance

themselves in time from the historical memory of turning points such as the Battle of Okinawa and the reversion to Japan, events that to a certain extent are foundational in the making of a shared Okinawan collective identity vis-à-vis mainland Japan. However, there is one other side of this coin, which is the fact that Okinawan literature, especially when read and commented on in mainland Japanese literary circles, is still framed and processed within this temporal framework, whether such literature proposes a counter-discourse on the positionality of the region in the Japanese nation-state post-war history or not. In 1995, following the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, Okinawan-born author Matayoshi Eiki (1947 -) was awarded the prestigious Akutagawa Literary Prize for the novella *Buta no mukui* (*The Pig's Retribution*, 1995), followed no more than two years later by Medoruma Shun and his short story 'Suiteki' ('Droplets', 1997). Ishihara Shintarō (1932 – 2012), writer and former Tokyo governor, praised Matayoshi's fiction arguing that it is 'a work that makes you feel the existence of one universe, Okinawa, which is small but solid, based on its cultural origins and staying away from the politics of Okinawa', besides pointing out the regional difference of the prefecture compared to the rest of mainland Japan and claiming that the success of the novella is given by how the 'distinctiveness of the climate (*fūdo*)' is expressed in the fictional work (prizesworld.com, 1995).[7] If we compare this novella and the comments it received with the victory of Medoruma's 'Droplets' in 1997, the obvious common ground is that both the authors and their stories are inherently connected with Okinawan history and culture. However, compared to *The Pig's Retribution*, 'Droplets' is heavily imbued with images and narratives that shed light on the war legacy of Okinawa, on how the war memories are reprocessed by the characters and on the trauma as it is experienced by Okinawan people, both those who lived during the war and those who were told war stories by their older relatives. Instead,

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[7] It has to be noted that Ishihara Shintarō was a well-known supporter of several right-wing nationalist causes, especially in connection to Senkaku Islands-related activism (Kreitman 2023, 226). As such, his comments can, again, be understood as yet another way to obfuscate Okinawan political issues that might be indirectly shown in Matayoshi's fiction.

if we go back to Ishihara's comments on *The Pig's Retribution*, Matayoshi's work is clearly *'staying away* from the politics of Okinawa'.

On the one hand, the two literary works and their reception by Japanese literary circles on the mainland show the tension between the different ways in which Okinawa is positioned within the broader Japanese national framework. On one side, the strenuous efforts to celebrate the Battle of Okinawa and the sacrifice of the Okinawan people during the war called for a perpetual reflection and remembrance of the past and the roles of Japan, Okinawa, and the United States in the last phase of World War II. The opposite stance aimed to deprive Okinawa of its political position, focusing instead on its cultural and geographical differences from mainland Japan as a way to enrich the – cultural – biodiversity of the Japanese nation-state. In the end, the conjunction between these two positions reframed Okinawa as an essential part of recent Japanese history, remembered and reconsidered only through the historical coordinates that connect it to Japan, but obfuscated the responsibility of the actors involved in the war and even more importantly, the post-war period both during the American administration and the subsequent return to Japan with the American bases still located on the Okinawan territory. On the other hand, the success of those Okinawan authors in mainland Japan also reflects on their role as public intellectuals, cultural ambassadors of Okinawan culture, and how they consider and portray the sociopolitical relations between Okinawa and the central state through literature. In discussing the role of Mexican writers in portraying the indigenous communities and their narratives, literary scholar Mato Shigeko (2010, 13) analyses the ambivalent position of minority voices within the paradigms of a broader cultural national sphere. On the one hand, they serve as 'indispensable agents to deploy a scrutiny about unforgotten, neglected voices', but likewise it 'cannot be denied that there is a close relation of the intellectuals to the cultural and socio-political hegemony in the process of creating a literary text and/or representing the other'. Simply put, the act of writing about themselves, about their own

community as a minoritarian fragment of much more powerful voices represented by the mainstream, which is represented by the majority of the population whose national identity is less – if not at all – problematised within the boundaries of their own nation-state, emphasises their existence, their identity, and their issues, as much as it makes them even more otherised than they already were. This tension holds true for the Okinawan case as well. While it is indisputable that Okinawan authors such as Matayoshi and Medoruma have entered mainland Japanese literary circles and that literary critics belonging to those same circles used their Akutagawa Prize award as a tool to catch the long wave of the ever-increasing presence of Okinawa on national mass media, they still offer a point of view outside the dominant perspective of Okinawa as a geographical area entrapped within its historical encounters with mainland Japan. In doing so, they contribute to the discussion of what Okinawa ought to be within the Japanese national framework. Then again, their prominence also coincides with the celebration of the relationship between Okinawa and mainland Japan, playing into the hegemonic categorisation of Okinawa only as a part of the recent history of the Japanese nation-state.

As previously summarised here and in the Introduction chapter, Okinawa has been temporally and geographically framed within the boundaries of Japan's nation-state, and its positionality is fundamental for the reconstruction of post-war narratives that re-evaluate the role of Japan as – at least partly – a victim in the context of World War II, despite the active role of the government in the colonial enterprise attacking and subjugating nearby Asian countries into the so-defined Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (*dai tōa kyōeiken*) and the increasing militarisation that eventually led to the conflict with the Allied forces. In this post-war narrative, Japan is remembered more for the nuclear bombs dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki than for its active role in the war crimes perpetrated in East Asia. The Nanjing Massacre (1937 – 1938) and the institution of the role of comfort women (*ianfu*), according to which women and girls were forced into sexual slavery by the

Imperial Japanese Army in occupied territories during World War II, are still the object of debate and historical revision. By the same token, framing Okinawan communities as Japanese highlights once again how Japan – here through the suffering of Okinawan people during the Battle of Okinawa, for example – was a victim of war brutalities often perpetrated by the American army. This narration is established at the expense of the war memories as they are transmitted and narrated by the indigenous population, and obviously at the expense of historical truth, as this formulation would necessarily demand concealing the responsibilities of the Japanese army and central government during the war. Nobel Prize-winning author Ōe Kenzaburō (1935 – 2023) in his *Okinawa nōto* (Okinawa Notes, 1970) 'traces Japan's oppression and exploitation, starting with the annexation of the Ryukyu Kingdom in the 1870s, and examines discriminatory policies toward the people of Okinawa Prefecture, culminating in Imperial Army atrocities against local civilians during the 1945 battle' (Rabson 2008a, 1). For the war account of Okinawa portrayed in the book, Ōe was taken to court by a former garrison commander and the brother of a late former commander as expressions such as 'compulsory mass suicides' of Okinawan civilians – forced directly by Japanese soldiers or instilling fear into them that the American army would be even crueller if they happen to capture them alive – during the Battle of Okinawa were considered defamatory. The lawsuit was dismissed on March 28th, 2008, by the Osaka District Court (1).

Nonetheless, this incident – like many other ones such as the history textbook controversy cited in the Introduction – makes clear that positioning Okinawa as part of Japan is instrumental to many nationalist political actors for hiding Japan's war responsibilities and ennobling the country's role in the world geopolitics thanks to its post-war democratic and pacifist revamping. And even when it is not a nationalist agenda to culturally capitalise on this repositioning of the Okinawa Prefecture, the island is still more often than not trapped in geographical and temporal structures that aim to maintain the region as a functional part of the nation-state, whether it is for economic, political, or

cultural reasons. Okinawa is an exotic, faraway land to visit. Okinawa is a prefecture in which land is painfully occupied by American military bases. Okinawa was devastated by World War II and the subsequent American military administration. Okinawa was returned to Japan and is now a Japanese prefecture. Again, it is irrelevant whether such discourses are circulated to defend Okinawa from the power imbalance vis-à-vis mainland Japan and the United States, or rather to belittle Okinawan prerogatives to gain more control regarding local issues that affect the prefecture. Okinawa is still spatially and temporally relational to mainland Japan, defined as a point in space and time whose existence serves the purpose of empowering Japan's nation-state, cleaning up its post-war image, protecting the country through the American military bases installed on the prefectural territory, and boosting the image of Japan as a technologically and culturally advanced country in opposition to the exotic, primitive traditions in Okinawa.

1.1.3 Okinawan Space-Time and Medoruma's Literature

In the previous chapter, I examined how the colonial structure and the contrasting decolonial stances in Okinawa are founded on opposing definitions of what indigenous land is, how such lands were appropriated by external actors and transformed into military bases that became the very symbol of colonialism and an eternal reminder of the militarist past experienced by local communities, and the challenges that indigenous populations face in reclaiming their lands. In this, layered understandings and conceptualisations of what the 'Okinawan space' is are crucial to reassess Okinawa as a sociopolitical space constructed, maintained, and negotiated by several social actors involved in the creation of local structures that aims to recalibrate the prefecture's position between mainland Japan and the United States. However, looking at Okinawan space is not enough. I discussed at length how Okinawa is a spatial as much as a temporal construct. This calls for a redefinition of the positionality of Okinawan communities against both indigenous land and its temporality, how it is constructed and narrated in mainland Japan, and what kind of counter-

discourses are enacted by Okinawan intellectuals and politicians to reimagine the Okinawan space-time in their own terms.

This chapter will serve a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it lays out the methodological background that informs the reading of Medoruma's texts, discussing how space-time is examined and motivated in prior literature, how the debate around its definition evolved in connection to how the Okinawan colonial establishment is interpreted, and how it can be employed to investigate the literary portrayal of Okinawan identity as a generative decolonial method and ultimately address the role of Medoruma's literature in depicting and transforming the relationship between locals and the space they inhabit. On the other hand, this chapter will further question how Medoruma's narratives enter into the interstice of competing interpretations of Okinawan space-time and the politics of memory that shape the role of Okinawa in Japan's post-war democratic nation-state. In doing so, this chapter will provide a first look at how Okinawan space and time are narrated, reassessed, and transformed in Medoruma's fiction to deconstruct the imagery proposed by mainland Japan and subvert the sociocultural hierarchy established in more than one hundred years of history through a series of political shifts that always saw Okinawa in a subordinate position.

More specifically, the first section will discuss how space-time is conceptualised in its colonial implications, how it is connected to the indigenous experience vis-à-vis the external authority, and its multiple layers of material and figurative understanding of indigenous land. Tally Jr (2019, 17) follows thinkers such as Henry Lefebvre and Edward Soja in arguing that 'ours is, and has been for some time now, an epoch of enhanced spatiality'. In his canonical essay 'Of Other Space', Michel Foucault (1986, 22) states that '[w]e are in an epoch of simultaneity', 'of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed'. Referring to the idea of simultaneity, in her seminal work *Discourses of the Vanishing*, Marilyn Ivy (1995, 5) underlines the co-occurrence of 'the problem of Japanese modernity with that of modernities elsewhere, and the shared temporality

that implies'. I further argue that this epoch of simultaneity does not only implies the coevalness of multiple modernities, but also of multiple temporalities that can escape global modernity and its homogenising trajectories that lead to advanced capitalism and the establishment of hegemonic structures based on imperialistic and colonial principles. Such a space-time construct, defined within its colonial parameters in the Okinawan context, re-articulates the experience of Okinawan people in their struggle against colonial authorities and their understanding of time, history, geography, and indigenous identity. Following this thread, the second section will discuss Okinawa as a space of possibilities where personal relations between indigenous communities develop and thrive in a structure that involves overlapping time and human networks, and space knowledge is allowed and enhanced through a sense of intimacy with local histories and geographies, an intergenerational connection based on ancestrality rather than antiquity.[8] I will discuss the short story 'Droplets' and the novel *Me no oku no mori* (*In the Woods of Memory*, 2009) to scrutinise how war memories are narrated by the author and how the relationship between remembering – and its politics – and space-time is portrayed to lay out a different conceptual framework where indigenous experience can be revealed without resorting to official Japan's nation-state war storytelling. Finally, I will take into consideration Medoruma's novel *In the Woods of Memory* and its narratives regarding war memories, how they are intergenerationally processed in contemporary Okinawan society and transposed into second and third-generation war survivors through family networks and personal histories that spread both locally and internationally.

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[8] In defining the difference between 'ancestrality' and 'antiquity', I want to highlight the structural differentiation in the relationship between pastness and individuals. In the case of 'antiquity', human communities become the recipient of traditions, tangible and intangible cultural artefacts, in a temporality that is indisputably unilinear, and as such, moving towards the future. Whereas, 'ancestrality' refers to the quality of being ancestral, receiving from one's ancestors and transferring the heritage to future generations. Here, temporalities are pluridirectional as indigenous communities continuously reconsider and remodel their relatedness to their ancestors and future generations, constituting a human network that overcomes the linearity of Western modernity and re-evaluates the fractures and movements of indigenous space and time and their connection therein.

Here, this chapter aims to discuss Okinawan identity as a category in which multiplicities are generated within the indigenous space-time construct that connects several social groups through shared active participation in the Okinawan space. Furthermore, it will introduce literary portrayal as a device to assess such identities, the struggle and negotiations within local communities and address commonalities and divergences in their relationship with space-time, memory and remembering. As Bhowmik (2010, 206) reminds us, 'critics have praised Medoruma for his continual experiments in narrative technique, and […] the passion with which he assumes the twin role of writer and intellectual'. As mentioned in the Introduction, Medoruma's position towards his role as a writer has undoubtedly influenced the way he portrays war memories and their impact on local communities, giving voice to the indigenous population and opening up a space for (self)reflection about the war and its legacies. Kyle Ikeda (2012, 37-38) argues that 'Medoruma's war fiction often depicts how the landscape and sites of war trauma constitute the intimately familiar surroundings in the daily lives of first- and second-generation survivors of the Battle of Okinawa', and, more importantly, it shows the author's position within the war storytelling of his family and own community. Arguably, 'Medoruma's experience of growing up in the very trauma sites of his parents' war past, his knowledge and understanding of the Battle of Okinawa is […] concrete, virtual, vicarious and geographically situated' (37), an experience that is reflected in the multiple voices depicted in *In the Woods of Memory*, where several Okinawan and non-Okinawan characters reshape their memories according to their individual and communal relationship with the traumatic sites of war. In looking at how several layers of reality are juxtaposed in the act of remembering and transforming war memories in 'Droplets', this chapter follows Ikeda's discussion about the mutual sensorial affection between trauma sites and Okinawan individuals, further deepening the analysis of the literary methods employed by the author to unveil what cannot be told due to trauma. However, it will also depart from this in proposing *In the Woods of Memory* as a case in point in

which Medoruma depicts a multifaceted Okinawan society and the different stances of individuals and communities interacting with the war legacy and the sociopolitical position of the region. Hence, it will expand on war memories not only as a crucial element for the indigenous understanding of reality and their being-in-the-world, but as a factor that transversally encompasses social actors both inside and outside Okinawa and re-unites them under the umbrella of a shared participation into the politics of memory surrounding the Battle of Okinawa. In doing so, this chapter serves as a starting point that will eventually inform the reading of the rest of Medoruma's fictional works examined in this research project and will show how the depiction of specificity within the Okinawan landscape functions as a decolonising option that dismantle the stereotyping of Okinawan people and its positionality vis-à-vis mainland Japan as they are broadcast on nation-wide mass media.

Ultimately, this chapter intends to lay out a theoretical understanding of the systems and practices of colonialism in Okinawa in their connection with how space-time is conceptualised and negotiated between indigenous communities and external authorities. The materiality of indigenous land, the re-mapping of the area by colonial actors, and the intimate relationship networks between local communities and the space they inhabit illuminate the Okinawan understanding – and, to a certain extent, the literary production – of their geography and layers of periods inherently imbued in it. In this sense, Medoruma's literature proposes a series of depictions of Okinawan space that stress the power relations between the social actors involved in the construction of a colonial establishment but also offer ways for the local characters to reappropriate their own space and engage with the enhanced possibilities that speaking with their voice give them in that specific sociopolitical landscape. In exploring Medoruma's literature within the framework of a colonial paradigm and, in so doing, identifying its decolonial possibilities, this dissertation does not want to single out such fictional works as exemplary of the Okinawan literature experience and describe them as the only possible outcome for Okinawan literature to be realised vis-à-vis the political position of the

prefecture, nor does it intends to claim that the ways space and time are depicted in Medoruma's oeuvre are the only solutions for indigenous authors to refer to their understanding of the spatial and temporal potentialities of Okinawa. Instead, it aims to indicate Medoruma's literature and its representation of space-time, war memories and indigenous identities as a definite result of the author's personal history in engaging with his local community, and, as such, with his specific literary method of understanding the territory and decolonising the Okinawan political structure.

1.1.4 Reassessing the Okinawan Space-Time: Bordering, Land, Ancestrality

As mentioned above, if we look at how Okinawa is discussed in mass media and official political speeches, it is clear that discourses surrounding Okinawa revolve around the historical shifts that made the region so different from the rest of Japan, but, at the same time, an integral part of the recent history of the nation-state. Three are the historical coordinates that are central to the narrative of the central government, local institutions, politicians, and public intellectuals, in one way or another: the Ryukyu Disposition (*Ryūkyū shobun*) in 1879, the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, and the Okinawan reversion to Japan in 1972.

The nomenclature 'Ryukyu Disposition' is often employed to refer to that set of events that led the Ryukyu Kingdom to finally be annexed to the Japanese Empire in 1879, although small steps in this direction began in 1872 when the kingdom saw its power increasingly reduced and its ruling class stripped of their political authority in favour of a more centralised system headed by the newly formed Meiji government. In 1879, for the first time, the Ryukyu Kingdom was officially annexed to the Japanese Empire as an internal region, although Okinawan people were still treated – and would be treated as such for a long time – as second-class citizens similarly to Taiwanese and Korean people who were instead under the colonial rule of the Japanese Empire. Still, in recent times, the Ryukyu Disposition has been instrumentalised in local political discourses to appeal to nostalgic feelings towards the vanished Ryukyu Kingdom and address the faults of the Japanese Empire in

reducing the Okinawa Prefecture to the sociopolitical condition it finds itself nowadays. However, while the imagery connected to the lost independent kingdom is the source of some nostalgia and a catalyst for a strong regional identity enhanced by the memory of this shared, distant past, as much as the hardship of belonging to a marginalised social group, it is difficult to gauge whether discourses surrounding the kingdom and its annexation are actually effective in redirecting the public opinion towards contemporary issues of the prefecture and stirring up the anger of indigenous against the policies enacted by the central government in Okinawa. Even so, the term itself is emotionally charged, and as such has been employed over time to define some of the pivotal moments in the relationship between Okinawa and the mainland. As Stanisław Meyer (2015, 30) points out, 'the verbal form of "*shobun*" (*shobun suru*) means "to execute [law]," "to deal with, to solve [a problem]," but also "to dispose, get rid of, throw away" and even to punish'. In the aftermath of World War II, when Okinawa was handed over to the American administration following the Battle of Okinawa, Okinawans even coined expressions such as 'the second *shobun*' and 'the third *shobun*' to identify the political shifts that happened to the prefecture in the post-war period. Following this connotation of the term, it eventually entered into Western scholarship as the 'punishment of Ryukyu' due to the translation of former Okinawan governor Ōta Masahide and for being frequently embraced in English academic literature as well (see McCormack and Norimatsu 2012, 16 and 242, cited in Meyer 2015, 30).

The Battle of Okinawa, ending on June 22nd, 1945 is still remembered and celebrated in the Okinawa Prefecture as the Okinawa Memorial Day. Fought between March 26th and June 22nd, the Battle of Okinawa saw approximately 160,000 casualties in a three-month span, between 84,166 and 117,000 belonging to the Japanese army, while at least 50,000 were the ones among the Allied forces. [9] On

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[9] There is a tendency among historians both in Japan and in the West to date the start of the Battle of Okinawa on April 1st as it is the day the American army landed on Okinawa Island. However, the 77th Infantry Division of the United States Army pre-emptively captured the Kerama Islands – an archipelago southwest of Okinawa Island – on March 26th.

top of that, 149,547 are the estimated deaths among Okinawan citizens, people who went missing or died by suicide – often compulsory and forced by the orders of Japanese soldiers, taking a heavy toll on the prefecture, of which roughly half of the registered population of 300,000 was lost during the last turmoil of World War II (Love 2006). To add insult to injury, on September 8th, 1951 the San Francisco Peacy Treaty was signed by Japan and the United States, putting an end to the American occupation of the country but, contextually, turning over Okinawa to the American military. This 'Day of Shame', as it is often called by Okinawan communities, is defined as such for 'both the Japanese government and Imperial Household were willing from an early date to trade away true sovereignty for Okinawa in exchange for an early end to the Occupation in the rest of Japan' (Dower 1993, 171).

The reversion of Okinawa to Japan on May 15th, 1972 was the culmination of negotiations between Japan and the United States – an agreement that was informally reached by United States President Richard Nixon and Japanese Prime Minister Satō Eisaku in late 1969, before being formally ratified by both the governments in 1971. The event was, at first, viewed favourably by Okinawan communities as it was the desired result of years of struggles that unified local communities in reversion protest movements since the 1950s, claiming their belonging to the Japanese cultural sphere and hoping for better living conditions after the end of the American military rule. Nonetheless, polls commissioned in Okinawa showed that Okinawan people had mixed feelings about the actual provisions of the reversion agreement, as the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty – which took effect on June 23, 1960 and was never amended even after the Okinawan reversion to Japan – still secured the continuation of U.S. military bases on the territory, a major controversial point in the relationship between Okinawa and mainland Japan still today. However, according to a late

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Subsequently, in this dissertation, I decided to use March 26th as a start date for the Battle of Okinawa to include the war experience of the Kerama Islands' communities.

November 1969 *Mainichi Shimbun* and *Ryukyu Shimpo* survey, '80 per cent of Okinawans favored the agreement' (Mendel 1975, 399). And although 1972 saw the final reunification of Japanese and Okinawan people under the same administrative system, surveys at the time of reversion among people living on the mainland and Okinawans reflected mutual suspicion and general distrust regarding the unification. In April 1972, a *Mainichi* survey showed that Japanese mainlanders and Okinawans 'agreed that their thinking and behavior patterns were different' and that 'they also felt it would take from three to ten years for the two groups fully to understand each other' (400). More importantly, a majority of Okinawan people 'felt that mainland Japanese did not appreciate the hardships endured by the Okinawans during the postwar U.S. occupation', and also expressed concerns that 'prewar Japanese governments had ignored or mistreated their prefecture and might do so in the future' (400).

Okinawan local institutions and the Japanese central government tend to measure Okinawan history using these two events – the end of the Battle of Okinawa and the reunification with mainland Japan – as points of a major historical shift in the sociopolitical dynamics of the prefecture vis-à-vis Japan, the United States and, broadly speaking, its position within the Pacific region. Hence, major celebrations were held in 1995 for the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa in Naha, and Japanese national television was bombarded with documentaries about the war's end, of which focal points were Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Okinawa. Again, the 50th anniversary of the Okinawan reversion highlighted the hopes of Okinawan communities for the demilitarisation of the island and the broken promises of the Japanese government for a return to normality and equal living conditions between mainland Japan and Okinawa. At a news conference on May 6th, 2022, a week before the celebrations, Okinawa's governor Tamaki Denny stated that the local government is 'worried about statements by national lawmakers that a Taiwan contingency would be a Japan contingency, and recent discussions that seem to assume Okinawa would be involved in an armed

conflict' (Kelly 2022) between China and Taiwan, so stressing once again the perennial threat of war among Okinawan people that complicated the manifold implications of local people re-elaborating the war legacy of their communities. To a certain extent, the presence of American military bases on the Okinawan territory is proof of the Okinawan war legacy and a threatening structure that locks Okinawa into a state of war alert for the future. Ronald Y. Nakasone states that Okinawa 'became a vital link to other nations in the region, of strategic importance militarily this time instead of commercially', as the Okinawan bases continue 'to be vital to American military interests in the coming years', such as in the 'Chinese civil war [1927 – 1949], the conflict between Taiwan and mainland China, the Korean War [1950 – 1953], the Vietnam War [1955 – 1975] and the Gulf War [1990 – 1991]'. As a result, 'Okinawans fearfully imagine that their home, a military bastion, will be targeted in future conflicts in the region' (Nakasone 2002, 12).

The current militarisation of the island, the continuous incidents regarding American servicemen and local communities, and the general atmosphere that the presence of military bases side-by-side with residential areas creates symbolically maintains Okinawa in a status of perennial warfare. This creates a paradoxical situation where Okinawa is progressively detached from how history is perceived in Japan's nation-state and how it is narrated in relation to the anniversaries celebrated through commemorative events, the building of monuments, and the production of documentaries and exhibitions re-telling the history of the region. On the one hand, the indigenous population is more and more distant in time from the events that are being remembered, shifting their importance from the personal attachment and connection of the communities to such historical shift to more ambiguous imagery that is supposed to create a shared sense of belonging and nostalgic attachment to something that is now in the past, cannot be regained, but ultimately forged a common identity in which indigenous communities can find themselves as an entity separated from the rest of Japan. On the other, the presence of the American military, who appropriated lands

belonging to local villagers and still maintains them for military purposes, functions as a reminder that 'the Battle of Okinawa has in many ways even now not yet ended, has not yet been brought to closure' (Roberson 2010, 1). The title of one of Medoruma's non-fictional works, *Okinawa 'sengo' zero-nen* ('*Postwar' Okinawa Year Zero*, 2005) demonstrates how local public intellectuals perceive Okinawa as a region that is still frozen in time in the immediate aftermath of World War II, emphasising its position as a militarised zone where conflicts and war memories go on unresolved regardless of how such memories are commemorated and narrated into the national storytelling.

However, it is not just due to the post-war urban reconfiguration of the island and the militarisation of urban areas that Okinawa is relegated to an indefinite past whereas the rest of Japan – especially the metropolises – projects abroad an image of the country that mixes up traditions and technological advancement. As we saw at the beginning of the chapter in discussing how the portrayal of Okinawa is advertised in mass media through the narratives of *asadora*, Okinawa is inserted in the *furusato* (hometown) discourse as many other rural regions of Japan. The first obvious result is that, once again, Okinawa is included among the group of rural areas of the Japanese nation-state that are opposed to the equally popular image of the Japanese landscape composed of interminable expanses of skyscrapers generated by an uncontrollable capitalist urban development. In this, Okinawa is equated to many other peripheries of Japan, again in an attempt to make it just another prefecture of Japan, mystifying its past and its sociocultural difference from the mainland. The very concept of *furusato* comprises a temporal and spatial dimension that distances it from the historical and geographical 'present' in which the sociopolitical centre of Japan participates together with the West. This temporal dimension is 'represented by the word *furu(i)*, which signifies pastness, historicity, senescence and quaintness', while the spatial dimension can be connected to the word *sato*, 'which suggests a number of places inhabited by humans', including 'a natal household, a hamlet or village, and the countryside' in its opposition with the city, and also

refers to a 'self-governed, autonomous area, and, by extension, to local autonomy' (Robertson 1988, 495). While in this sense the understanding of Okinawa as frozen in the past and in a border area of Japan is not dissimilar from other peripheries of the nation-state, the image of the prefecture has been further manufactured in an attempt to reposition the different traditions, material and intangible cultural assets of Okinawa within the boundaries of the nation-state and, in so doing, making them significant and beneficial for enhancing the possibilities of what Japanese culture is supposed to be and represent. Historian Harry D. Harootunian (2000, 298) explains how thinkers like Yanagita Kunio (1875 – 1962) and Orikuchi Shinobu (1887 – 1953) struggled 'with the conviction that there might just exist forms of life that were exemplary because they were "prototypical" or, better yet, archetypal since they derived from an indeterminate but archaic folkic experience which had managed to endure because it was complete and whole', a conviction that informed their entire intellectual production in the area of Japanese Folk Studies. Okinawa soon became central in the re-discovery of the inner, spiritual life of native Japan, reinforcing what Yanagita termed 'new nativism' (*shinkokugaku*). For his part, Orikuchi believed that Okinawa could be understood as a 'vast, living replica or even laboratory of seventh-century Japan in the present', backed up by Yanagita, who 'rhapsodized Okinawa as a singularly important source that was capable of providing inexhaustible possibilities for the continuing study of the folk because of the antiquity of life still existing there', which was to be attributed to the 'relative isolation of the island from foreign contact' (324-325). To sum up, Okinawa was regarded as a primordial Japan, a land to which one must return to understand how Japan was and, to a certain extent, how to regain the good, original traits of the Japanese population that were lost due to contact with the West. This ideological framework contains, for the most part, a Japanese version of the myth of the noble savage, which will eventually evolve into narratives of Okinawan pacifism that still today construct the imagery of the region.

Such a reconceptualisation of the prefecture under the banner of Okinawan primitivism went a long way in defining the positionality of Okinawa in the pre- and post-World War II period, but also how Okinawan communities themselves perceived their own identity against Japanese mainlanders. Eriko Tomizawa-Kay (2019, 106) explains how pre-war mainland artists, '[o]blivious to the complex history of the islands', 'sought simply to reify the land beneath an exoticizing gaze, to uphold it as a symbol of a primitive other'. While this exotic representational mechanism fits the desire of Japanese mainlanders to frame Okinawa as a primitive other, it is worth noticing that even Okinawan people recognised themselves in these representations. For example, the Okinawan poet Yamanokuchi Baku expressed satisfaction with how the mainland Japanese painter Fujita Tsuguharu (1886 – 1968) depicted Okinawan characters in his painting *Grandchildren*, claiming that 'only Okinawan people painted by Fujita look like real locals, capable of speaking in the genuine Okinawan dialect' (Yamanokuchi 1939, quoted in Tomizawa-Kay 2019, 106). On the other hand, in some instances, the same imagery connected to regional primitivism was opposed by the local population in an attempt to come closer to mainland Japan. In 1898, a few years after Okinawa was annexed to the Japanese empire, new restrictions were imposed on the activities of Okinawan shamans (*yuta*), as they were 'identified as being "a throwback" to Okinawan primitivism' and the local administration felt 'that the reliance of the population on *yuta* was retarding the prefecture's development' (Allen 2002, 231). In the aftermath of the Okinawan reversion to Japan, the Post-Reversion Movement – a group of Okinawan activists who contend that earlier anti-American nationalism and the activities of the Reversion Movements only aimed to substitute US colonialism with Japanese colonialism – 'embraced negative Okinawan stereotypes', such as laziness and primitivism, to 'counter the colonial discipline imposed by the United States and Japan' (Adams Jr. 2006, 81).

Relocating Okinawa to a Japanese past has come with a series of contradictions and tensions regarding how this pastness has been employed by Okinawan communities and Japanese mainlanders to reframe Okinawan identity and place it in a broader national framework. Space and time interlock into a reconfiguration of the Okinawan imagery that is exotic and rendered an other on multiple levels. At its spatial level, the geographical distance from the centre and the different climate from the rest of Japan make Okinawa an alien land to Japanese mainlanders, on a par with a foreign country. In its temporal layer, instead, the so-defined Okinawan backwardness brings the prefecture back into the Japanese cultural sphere in framing the difference between Okinawa and mainland Japan as a sociocultural, technological development lag. It should be said, however, that discourses of Okinawan primitivism as they were produced by Yanagita and Orikuchi are by no means mainstream in the contemporary representation of Okinawa, although in some cases the conceptualisation of Okinawa as a primordial Japan makes a come-back in how mainland mass media depict local folklore. Nonetheless, whether it is framed as Okinawan primitivism, locked into the mainland Japanese war storytelling, or inserted into a macro-context of 'cosmetic multiculturalism' – we will look at this in more detail in Chapter 3, the portrayal of Okinawa in spatial and temporal terms still belongs to the same matrix that ought to emphasise the exotic character of the prefecture for the benefit of the mainland, minimise its features as simply not aligned with the mainstream self-understanding of the national community – what is commonly defined as Japaneseness – and, in so doing, confine it to an in-between sociopolitical position where dynamics of inclusion and exclusion alternate to tame and restrict the protests of indigenous communities.

1.2 The Indigenous Perspective on Space-Time as a Site of Agency and Decolonial Methodology

1.2.1 Okinawan Memory and Imagination

As I already argued above, the temporal dimension is articulated together with – and through – how space is organised, controlled, and its meaning assessed. In her discussion on the space of 'occupation' in Okinawa, anthropologist Johanna O. Zulueta defines 'space' as a geographical area in the simplest sense, and further compares the occupation – mainly the presence of American military bases – of actual geographical places with the political situation of Okinawans within the national framework, claiming that '[t]his encroachment on Okinawa's territory as well as on local Okinawans' territorial rights may also be seen as an encroachment on Okinawa's voice in the national polity, and thus an "occupation" of the "place" of Okinawans in the Japanese nation-state' (Zulueta 2011, 135). She also refers to Doreen Massey's use of 'space', which is to be understood as:

> [...] the sphere of possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. Without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space. If space is indeed the product of interrelations, then it must be predicated upon the existence of plurality (Massey 2005, 9, cited in Zulueta 2011, 140).

Against this definition, historian Oscar V. Campomanes counters that the work of the cultural geographer and philosopher Yi-Fu Tuan on 'space' might be more fruitful in analysing the Okinawan context. In exploring the difference between 'space' and 'place', Tuan defines the latter as a '[s]pace charged with meaning or narrative', while the former, borrowing Campomanes's words, 'might be the term to use when referring, generally, to dimensional units or demarcations of all kinds, and when aspiring to a certain objectivity about one's descriptions or delineations of them

(Campomanes 2011, 151). Employing such definitions, the author argues, 'may help in accounting for the contingencies and contradictions that beset colonial and postcolonial discoursing over the milieux and environmental stakes of imperial encounters and power relationship (151), and in doing so redefine Zulueta's 'space of "Occupation"' as instead a 'place of [US] Occupation'.

While those definitions are useful for understanding the sociopolitical positionality of US military bases within the prefecture, they still suffer from limitations. In fact, they reflect on the consequences that the presence of the American military has on the life of local communities, the mechanisms of land appropriation and bordering that reorganise the urban and natural space of the islands, and the subsequent contact between locals and external authorities in Okinawa. However, they fail to properly take into account the counter-actions of Okinawans both in terms of activism and employment of imaginative forms of resistance. In a certain sense, such analyses reproduce once again, on a theoretical level, the power imbalance between locals and colonisers to the point that indigenous people can only be understood in their role as subjects of the colonial system, and as such unable to escape their condition of impotence vis-à-vis Japan and the United States. Indigenous lands are part of the politics of memory, they create storytelling that is modulated according to how the local population face the presence of external actors and, ultimately, such narratives shape a sense of community identity that strengthens human-to-human relations, as well as the relationship between human beings and the space they inhabit. The connection between indigenous communities and their land relies, then, on a system that is based on the linkage between living beings and their ancestors, the memory of a past that is shared among the entire community, the present condition of struggle against colonisers, and the possibilities to build alternatives for future generations to come. In describing the Okinawan context and the agency of indigenous people against the land usurpation by the American administration, Ronald Y. Nakasone (2002, 7) argues that:

> Memory and imagination subvert ordinary notions of time and allow us to interweave past, present, and future. To divide time into past, present, and future and to understand that time moves unidirectionally from the past to the future or from the future into the past is to stand outside time and change. Thinking about time in the abstract permits the imagination to anticipate the past and to remember the future. Memories retrieve the past and transport it to the present. […] When we anticipate the past, we construct the past with an eye to the present and thereby mold the present. […] We look back in time to understand the present; the present buildings on the past and invites the future. We look into the future and imagine where we want to be what we can achieve.

Ōe Kenzaburō defined the return to Okinawan sovereignty as an 'impossible possibility'. Nakasone returns to the very term to describe the agency of Okinawan people through memories and their inherent connection to their ancestors. In fact, 'the memories of their [diasporic Okinawans] immigrant ancestors link them to a past and a place', and for the people still living in the prefecture, the presence of military bases and the memories of the Second World War 'strongly color their imaginings of who they are', making this impossible possibility a 'memory of future imaginings' (8).

1.2.2 Re-Centring Space and Time in the Okinawan Experience

Time and space continue to be imbued in the indigenous understanding of Okinawan land, in a way that overcomes the simple reflection on the colonial structure and the militaristic presence of the United States, but encompasses instead war memories, their legacy, and how such memories shape indigenous identity and reinforce the sense of belonging of local communities through the very materiality of the land and its physical connection to the indigenous bodies. Especially in the southern region of Okinawa Island, where losses during the Battle of Okinawa were the greatest, unclaimed bones and corpses can still be found underneath the ground. In a conversation with a local taxi driver in Okinawa, literary scholar Norma Field (1993, 85) was told that 'every time you saw a tree with ripe fruit you could bet there was a rotting corpse underneath'. In the immediate

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aftermath of World War II, entire Okinawan communities were displaced and put into refugee camps to be supported by American troops. Combined with the great losses experienced by the population due to bombings and compulsory mass suicides, this creates a desolate post-war landscape where corpses were never retrieved, and entire communities were buried in mass graves without being properly identified. Gerald Figal (2007, 88) explains how '[b]one collection [*ikotsu shūshū*] campaigns of the late 1940s and 1950s have become part of the lore of the postwar generation of war survivors, graphically depicting the extent of human devastation the war had wrought as well as demonstrating the depth of community action to rebuild the island'. In this context, the land is significant not only because it is passed from generation to generation and hence symbolises the connection between the living population and their ancestors, but becomes particularly meaningful as the physical bodies of Okinawan ancestors still reside in it without having received a proper funeral. Kinjō Washin, a central figure in the Okinawa Izoku Rengō Kai (Okinawa Bereaved Families Federation), commented on how the ground is itself perceived as permeated with bodies and spirits, claiming that scattered flesh and blood of soldiers 'all turned into Okinawan soil' and that his skin 'crawls at the thought of stepping on soil that's the flesh and blood of soldiers', that, while tourists from mainland Japan cannot possibly understand the feeling, the bereaved families get it (91-92). This demarks a line of separation between mainland Japanese – including the central government and, supporting it, the American administration – and the local population's experience of their land. To further complicate the matter, the presence of Okinawan corpses in the soil is another point of contention between indigenous people and the American military, as the American administration is attempting to use earth from battlefields filled with human remains to build the foundation of the new military base in Henoko, unleashing the anger of entire communities who still visit the sacred ground to pray for their dead (Hibbett 2021). Even when bones were eventually collected and properly disposed of – through the establishment of ossuaries and

memorials, the existence of those Okinawan sacred grounds quickly became the object of a political dispute between the Japanese government and the American administration to take control over the region rather than a chance for Okinawan people to leave the war past behind. In the immediate post-war period, the establishment of sacred grounds in Okinawa, which aimed to commemorate the death of Japanese mainlanders and Okinawan soldiers alike, presented 'a proxy for Japan to assert its so-called residual sovereignty over the Ryukyus' (Figal 2007, 85). As Figal (86) argues, 'Japanese appeals to U.S. authorities to be allowed to care for the spirits of the war dead on the basis of a mutually recognised notion of sacred ground opened the way for mainland veteran and bereaved families' organisations, mainland prefectural government, and Tokyo to establish beachheads on Okinawa that served as an important presence for reclaiming the prefecture'. Furthermore, such sacred grounds, despite being constructed for the local population to honour their dead, underwent a process of 'nationalisation' after the prefecture was returned to Japan. Again, Figal (87) describes this nationalisation process as 'the redefinition and re-presentation of sacred ground in Okinawa from within a Japanese national imaginary, one that largely overwrites the organization of memorial space that was previously guided by local knowledge in the form of burial practices, territorial mappings of sacred ground, and historical representations of the war'. That is, the target of commemoration practices slowly moved from being the local population – whose majority of victims were represented by civilians – to Japanese soldiers, epitomising yet another way mainland Japan appropriated the meaning of Okinawan spaces and transformed it for the benefit of their own narratives.

Consequently, it is clear that the indigenous understanding of space cannot be restricted to the presence of military bases: if we just look into the manifold ramifications that the war legacy had on the prefecture, places such as the above-mentioned memorials and Okinawan sacred grounds have a transformative impact on local communities interacting with them. Furthermore, natural

landscapes, such as the Yanbaru forest in northern Okinawa, present multiple meanings connected to the war the American presence as they were used by civilians as shelters during the war, then as survival training camps by the American army between the 1950s and the 1970s, and are currently the location of military-related storages. The ocean as space is a contested territory where local communities fight against the pollution caused by the construction of new military facilities, but it is also related to mainland Japanese capital flowing into the prefecture for the construction of resorts as well as many other tourist facilities that are said to damage local industries besides jeopardising the natural environment. As Saito Nakaganeku (2022, 579) reminds us, '[r]esort development projects, military base construction, and rapid industrialization disturb human remains while implicating other remains such as coral in geographies of death and toxicity', and it is in this context that local communities struggle against how space and space discourses are produced by external authorities, since it is by '[r]emoving the material traces of indigenous ancestors and creating wastelands' that 'permit the illusion that these lands are available for development'.

1.2.3 Opening Up Indigenous Possibilities Through Literary Narratives

As mentioned by Nakasone, the local population's interaction with lands and the presence of the American military on the territory engages with the past, present, and future at the same time. It might be helpful to refer to Sadeq Rahimi's (2016) discussion on pantemporality and how this affects subjective experiences to have a better grasp of how 'space' is framed by locals as an element of sociopolitical agency. In quoting Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische (1998), Jouni Häkli and Kirsi P. Kallio (2018, 66) argue that, while 'all three [temporal conditions of human agency, which are past, present, and future] are present to some extent', 'one of the temporalities often predominates, thus giving rise to qualitative differences in the nature of human agency depending on whether it is enacting the past or rather orientated to the future as it seeks to respond to emergent events'. In the Okinawan context, attention is given to the temporal dimension of the past – which both

includes intergenerational war memories and closeness to ancestors – as an attempt to make a stronger case for future-oriented political activities against the occupation of local 'space'. In the *Okinawa Times*, Eriko Uehara Hopkinson writes that 'when the generation who survived the war has passed on, it is the *keikan* (landscape) that will connect the living to the deceased', making the landscape – and the remains buried within it – a 'vital connections to the past' (Saito Nakaganeku 2022, 583). Here I refer to the past not as iterational routine – 'habitual, unreflected, and mostly unproblematic patterns of action' (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 975), but rather in its more common understanding as history. Katharyne Michess and Sarah Elwood argue that '[h]istory as transmitted memories and past experiences carries a strong political potential when enlivened and mobilized in the context of present actions' (Häkli and Kallio 2018, 67). The temporal dimension is not the only way with which indigenous populations interact with the space around them. While their linkage with ancestors and memories shapes an intimate connection between local communities and the space on a diachronic level, inter-community relations and their specific understanding of non-human actors around them create another synchronic layer that strengthens the network of intimacies rooted in local knowledge and intergenerational experience. Brady, Bradley, and Kearney (2016, 173) discuss the relations between the Yanyuwa indigenous community in Australia and their lands and waters, stating that '[b]y emphasizing themselves as sea people, Yanyuwa activate a human-country relationship that is distinct and best described as kincentric ecology', which established that 'the world is not one of wonder, but rather familiarity' and '[l]ife in any environment is viable only when humans view their surroundings as kin; that their mutual roles are essential for survival' (Salmón 2000, 1329 and 1332, quoted in Brady, Bradley, and Kearney 2016, 173-174).

Okinawan 'space' is a multiplicity that cannot be confined to its relationship with colonial authorities and dynamics of (re)appropriation between locals and external forces. A variety of communities

within the prefecture interact with space in different ways, further complicating the question: what is 'space' to *whom*? In this sense, it is useful to return to the definition given by Doreen Massey where 'space' is a 'product of interrelations', and 'then it must be predicated upon the existence of plurality' (Massey 2005, 9). 'Space' itself cannot be seen only in its geographical, strictly spatial dimension, but must be interpreted in its indissoluble bond with the temporalities and their manifestation through memory and future imaginings. Again, Massey argues that 'space' should be understood integrally with time – as in a space-time construct – since social relations are not static, but rather dynamics (Massey 1994, 2). So far the geographical and temporal dimensions of the Okinawan space-time construct have been understood mainly through the cycles of appropriation and reappropriation within the colonial structure. I argue that the social relations contained within it must be broadened to include not only the relations between the members of the same community and between indigenous and external authorities, but also between those members and their ancestors, non-human actors and the land itself as an element constitutive of a plurality of agencies. In this sense, we can understand the Okinawan space-time and its experiential connection with the local population as affected by a sense of pantemporality and interwoven into networks of intimacies – characterised by affection or hostility, but nonetheless founded on a profound mutual recognition – between actors engaging within it.

In exploring how the space-time construct is elaborated within Okinawan fiction and, more specifically, Medoruma's literature, I define it as a form that contains multiplicities and thus allows for infinite possibilities. In the words of Caroline Levine (2015, 3), forms mean 'all shapes and configurations, all ordering principles, all patterns of repetition and difference'. This definition is indeed broad. However, it does refer to the potentiality of the work of form to make order in spatial and temporal terms, and, in so doing, demonstrate its absolute contingency to the existence and application of politics:

> Political struggles include ongoing contests over the proper places for bodies, goods, and capacities. […] Sorting out what goes where, the work of political power often involves enforcing restrictive containers and boundaries – such as nation-states, bounded subjects, and domestic walls. But politics is not only about imposing order on space. It also involves organizing time: determining prison and presidential terms, naturalization periods, and the legal age for voting, military service, and sexual consent. Crucially, politics also means enforcing hierarchies of high and low, white and black, masculine and feminine, straight and queer, have and have-not. In other words, politics involves activities of ordering, patterning, and shaping. Ad if the political is a matter of imposing and enforcing boundaries, temporal patterns, and hierarchies on experience, then *there is no politics without form* (3. My emphasis).

If politics cannot exist without forms, configuring space-time as a form is then an act that allows literary narratives to participate in the construction of alternative structures that can expand on possibilities that overcome the hegemonic order proposed by the coloniality/modernity matrix of power. It can make us consider the manifold affordances that this allows, its use as a social but also literary form, and point out inherent connections between understandings of space and their literary portrayal. Forms are 'limiting and containing', but a specific form 'can be put to use in unexpected ways that expand our general sense of that form's affordances' (6). In its understanding as a form that contains a multitude, the Okinawan space-time can afford possibilities for alternative futures that were not considered in its establishment as a finite land restructured by external authorities. Furthermore, such a construct becomes a permeable form that contains not only different narratives – reshaped and transmitted by locals as well as external actors but also a variety of layers that work together to constitute identity markers for the communities interacting with it. In its geographical, material, and historical layers, as well as the co-participation of forms-within-forms such as the 'spatial' and the 'acoustic' interacting between each other and with social actors, the Okinawan space-time maintains possibilities that retain at the same time the colonial

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reconfiguration by mainland Japan and the United States, but offer as well a margin for a decolonial approach, hence mirroring on a spatial and temporal level what Ōe defined as 'impossible possibility'.

The relationship between the Okinawan space-time and local communities is not unidirectional. It means that, while communities elaborate on the characteristics of the local space-time matrix through their own understanding of memories and their connection among each other, 'space-time' constitutes as well an element that shapes identities generated and transformed by the spatial and temporal coordinates imbued in the sociocultural layers of the prefecture. It also creates a network among people with different cultural backgrounds, oppositional sociopolitical views, diversified degrees of participation into the socio-historical framework of the island. External authorities are similarly affected by how space and time are produced by memories and their transmission within and beyond communities, despite their dominant position in the colonial establishment. To put it in a different way, colonisers, colonised, and the Okinawan geographical and temporal landscapes constitute a tripartite agency that alters the relationship among the three of them and continuously renegotiates the colonial structure and redefines the possibilities for acting upon it. In this context, the Okinawan space-time matrix is closely connected to the politics of memory, how such memories are framed into the national storytelling, how they are debated by different social groups both within and outside the national borders, and how different actors – indigenous, Japanese mainlanders, and American – engage with them. In this, indigenous literature plays a crucial role in setting out a field of discussion in which indigenous voices can be heard and obtain equal agency vis-à-vis mainland Japanese and American institutions, a situation that is often not viable in other circumstances due to the power imbalance involved in the political dynamics in Okinawa.

More specifically, Medoruma's literature, most notably the fictional works dealing closely with war memories and their transgenerational transmission, revived the discussion regarding how space-

time, memories, and the communities – here in a two-fold value of groups of individualities and human networks – interact and generate new perspectives on Okinawa and its positionality in the contemporary geopolitics. In the last section of this chapter, I will consider Medoruma's fiction – with a closer look at the novel *In the Woods of Memory* and the Akutagawa Prize-winning short story 'Droplets' – to scrutinise how memories, their intergenerational transmission, and the methodologies of their retelling illuminate how space-time, politics of memory, and the agency of Okinawan communities and external actors interact within the mechanisms of reproduction and transformation of colonial hierarchies in post-war Japan. On the one hand, I will examine how people entangled in the Okinawan context form connections that overcome national and cultural boundaries through the war legacy as a common denominator that affects parties regardless of their geographical and temporal closeness to Okinawa. On the other hand, this close analysis functions as a starting point for discussing how the literary representation of the Okinawan space-time and the character inhabiting it can be inserted into the macro-context of 'space-time' as a form that allows decolonial possibilities. In this case, as well as in the rest of Medoruma's fictional works I will take into consideration in this dissertation, literary portrayal and narrative are to be seen in their capacity to unfold in a descriptive way communities' identities, ideas, agencies and struggles that represent a way for indigenous people to negotiate their positionality within the Okinawan context, the hierarchical order established by the colonial dynamics and their active participation, together with external authorities and third parties, to the creation and re-elaboration of Okinawa as a ground for alternative futures to be unravelled.

1.3 Production and Transformation of Memories and Identities through the Okinawan Space-Time in Medoruma's Fiction

1.3.1 Magic Realism and the War Storytelling

When Medoruma caught the attention of mainland Japanese literary circles and readership, he did so due to the increasing interest of Japanese consumers in Okinawa and its cultural production and the concurrent 50th-anniversary celebrations of the end of the Second World War in which the Battle of Okinawa played a pivotal role. Without minimising the compelling and original portrayal of Okinawa constructed by Medoruma – which undoubtedly contributed to his popularity, arguably the narratives proposed by the Okinawan author coincided with a renewed interest in the war experience as lived by local communities, the effect of trauma on the survivors, the war legacy and its storytelling as a multilayered discourse involving different social groups, state-led institutions and mass media. From the perspective of the central government and a part of mainland Japanese public intellectuals – among whom we can include the literary critics in the Akutagawa Prize committee who judged Medoruma's 'Droplets', the narratives surrounding the war in Okinawa serve the purpose of close-knitting Okinawa and mainland Japan, transforming a very local experience such as the Battle of Okinawa into a national tragedy. It is no coincidence that the most popular fictional works written by Medoruma after 'Droplets' involved, to a certain degree, a retelling of war memories as a way to reassess, re-narrate and reframe the Okinawan experience during the Second World War through the lens of a community-based intergenerational transmission of memories that constitutes a substantial portion of the collective understanding of the war legacy.[10] In the academic debate, both in Japan and in the anglophone sphere, Medoruma Shun is recognised and analysed for his contribution to the depiction of war memories in literature.

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[10] In this group of works, it is worth mentioning the short stories 'Fūon' ('The Crying Wind', 1997) and 'Mabuigumi' ('Spirit Stuffing', 1998) (both discussed in Chapter 3) and the novel *In the Woods of Memory* that was serialised and published around the same years as *Niji no tori* (*The Rainbow Bird*, discussed in Chapter 2), which gained comparably less popularity both on the domestic and international market.

In discussing such works, some scholars – Tamara Kamerer (2014) and Bhowmik (2003) explored this aspect in their analysis of 'Droplets' – define Medoruma's storytelling as an example of magic realism. In an article that employs a mixture of quantitative and qualitative analyses, Kamerer (2014, 27) argues that, although it is difficult to find consensus about the definition of magic realism, Medoruma's works seem to follow the five key points that define magic realism as codified by Wendy B. Faris (1995), which can be summed up as a merging of magic and realistic elements that question concepts of space and time given by the laws of the universe as we know them (Bhowmik 2003, 312). Prior studies by Bhowmik follow the same pattern. In her book *Magical Realism and The Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy*, Amaryll Chanady (1985, 21-22) gives a definition that fits with the ongoing socio-political and literary struggles between Okinawa and mainland Japan, and states that magical realism understands the conflicting views as 'autonomously coherent', of which 'one [is] based on an "enlightened" and rational view of reality, and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality', a duality closely mirrored by the representational framework of the dominant Japanese gaze, which divides the rationalistic, Western stance of mainland Japan from the indigenous view of the world of Okinawan communities. On a superficial level, we could argue that the definition of 'magic' in opposition to 'reality' *per se* is inherently problematic if we want to analyse Okinawan literature, considering Medoruma's position as an indigenous writer acting within and writing through the eyes of his indigenous Okinawan community and whose understanding of reality is filtered through an alternative epistemology based on a different conceptualisation of the relationship between human and non-human. We would even be backed up by the author himself, who rejects the definition of magic realism as it is applied to him and the Colombian writer Gabriel Garcìa Marquez in an interview with Ōe published in the July 2000 issue of the literary magazine *Ronza*:

I think that Marquez's fictional world is seen as 'magical' only through the gaze of the West. For the people who live in that world, it is truly real. […] There is a method used when trying to represent a type of phenomenon that cannot be seen or perceived by the Western gaze: you construct an imaginary place and then accept all of the events that occur there as being real. It is from this point that literary expression begins. I imagine that Marquez's new approach to literature was born when he made this discovery. In Okinawa, too, one can take the reality before one's eyes, transform it through fiction, convince oneself that all of the events are truly possible, and then allow oneself to enter into that world. The idea for 'Droplets' began with this conscious approach to the material (Medoruma 2000a, 178-179, quoted in Molasky 2003b, 178. Emphasis in original).

On the same note, Ikeda (2014, 93) quotes Ōe's comments that the labelling of 'García Marquez's realism' as 'magical' stems from a Eurocentric attitude, adding that, for Medoruma, 'when the label "magical realism" is used to describe his works, it not only denies the reality of his fiction but also discredits the spiritual beliefs and modes of understanding that inform it'. Again, in discussing the interrelation between magic realism and indigeneity, Maggie Ann Bowers (2020, 50) argues that 'the danger is that the non-indigenous critic will interpret non-rational occurrences in such work as "magical" rather than recognising them as expressions of indigenous holistic epistemology', and in so doing have the 'potential for the reinforcement of racial and colonial attitudes'. The same argument proposed by Medoruma regarding the production and representation of Okinawan reality vis-à-vis what is considered to be 'real' to a Western gaze can be found in García Marquez's own personal conception of how the world is perceived in his home country, without a dividing line between what appears real and what Western, positivist readers world call the supernatural, the fantastic. Following this logic, it appears clear that for them the 'magic' in South America and Okinawa is just part of the faithful depiction of their society through the eyes of indigenous communities. In countering this argument, post-colonial literature scholar Jean-Pierre Durix (1998, 115) comments that '[i]n an increasingly urban society where the Western *logos*, the cult of progress

and efficiency have permeated most layers of society, it seems difficult to admit such a presupposition unreservedly' (emphasis in original). In the Okinawan context, and specifically considering Medoruma as a second-generation war survivor, the continuous political shifts in the island, the absorption of Okinawa into the Japanese nation-state boundaries, and the contact with American and Japanese mainlanders in a circuit of oppression within the colonial establishment make it impossible for Okinawan people – and their indigenous view of the world – to not be affected by the Western positivist epistemology. That is, from the perspective of indigenous individuals, it seems unlikely that what mainland Japanese readers consider 'magic' is not 'magic' for them as well and is instead part of their 'reality'.

We can argue at length about the discrepancies in definitions of 'magic' and 'reality' and how these are generative of oppositional agencies by colonisers and colonised – I will return to this in Chapter 3, as well as the validity and benefits of rebuking the term 'magic realism' to find a definition that can detach indigenous literary depictions of reality from the dominant Eurocentric gaze. However, here it is more productive to discuss why Medoruma said so, and how this literary mode of representation is connected with war memories, their transmission, and the ways politics of memory work in the storytelling constructed by mainland Japan and Okinawa. I argue that the importance of the so-called magic realism in portraying Okinawan space-time and the relationship characters have with the place they occupy in their own community, their memories, and the war legacy is to be situated in the ambiguity that such representation evokes for non-indigenous readers. In this sense, Western readers are put in a subaltern position as they cannot codify reality as indigenous people do, which leads them to address out-of-place elements as 'fantastic' or 'magical' precisely because they do not align with the positivist understanding of the world around them. This is not to say that Western readers cannot possibly understand 'magical' elements as part of the indigenous reality – in fact, the long tradition of Western scholars analysing the imbrication of

magical realism and colonial discourses demonstrates quite the opposite. On another note, mainland Japanese authors often introduced fantastic elements in their fiction, and are often defined as magical realist authors.[11] However, such elements are still considered 'fantastic' according to the Western perspective because they do not belong to the texture of their own reality as they perceived it. As Theo L. D'haen (1995, 195. Emphasis in original) explains, magic realist writing displaces the privileged, dominant perception of non-indigenous readers 'by first appropriating the techniques of the "centr"-al line and then using these […] "realistically", that is, […] to create an alternative world *correcting* so-called existing reality, and thus to right the wrongs this "reality" depends upon', and in doing so, '[m]agicl realism thus reveals itself as a *ruse* to invade and take over dominant discourse(s)'.

If we refer to Bakhtin's argument regarding how arts refer to the world through the depiction of languages and discourses therein, literature is 'incontrovertibly social, not because it represents the real but because it constitutes a historically situated "utterance"' that is a 'complex of signs addressed by one socially constituted subject or subjects to other socially constituted subjects' communicating between themselves and in conversation with the socio-historical circumstances to which they belong as members of their own community (Shohat and Stam 1994, 180). Depicting their outer – and inner – world through magic realism is also a self-referential statement of intent that aims to subvert the hierarchical relationship between Okinawan and external authorities laying out a system of knowledge that can be deciphered only through indigenous epistemology. In doing so, Medoruma asserts the agency and the validity of Okinawan epistemology against the Western gaze and shows that another way of portraying Okinawan space-time is possible. The stereotypical characterisation provided by mainland Japanese mass media and (non-)governmental institutions is

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[11] On this matter, my personal stance is to define the literary mode of representations used by, for example, Murakami Haruki as fabulism rather than magic realism, which denotes the insertion of fantastic elements in the texture of reality without the political overtone usually associated with magic realism proper.

deconstructed subtly providing the reader with a different representational angle from which the narrator sees not only the world as it is but also how the geographical and temporal layers manifest themselves in a dialogue with an indigenous human network and their senses. Without a doubt, Medoruma does not have the power to coerce his readers to process reality as he wants them to, which makes us return to the definition of 'magic realism' as a struggle to represent and delimit the 'fantastic' against the 'reality' in the opposition between indigenous epistemology and Western *logos*. Furthermore, we must take into account that this opposition is not binary. That is, while most probably the rationalistic Western epistemology is totalising and expressing its one-ness pushing at the margin other ways to see reality, indigenous epistemic culture is plural and its goal is not to become the new centre, but rather dismantle the dominant Eurocentric view and put in relation different systems of knowledge production and transmission on the same level. As María Ruth Noriega Sánchez (2002, 29) suggests, '[w]hereas realism [the Western *logos*] functions hegemonically, […] magic realism functions heterogeneously: its programme is not centralizing but ex-centric, creating space for interactions and diversity'. In Medoruma's narrative, memory transmission makes use of a magic realist imaginary in order to pluralise the voices and the experiences of the war and decentralise the hegemonic mainland Japanese storytelling of the Second World War where Okinawa is implicitly addressed as a subaltern entity to the mainland. In this, the significance of the transformative value of 'magic realism' in Medoruma's literature does not reside in its potentiality for tearing down the domestic corpus of narratives regarding World War II and the sociopolitical position of Japan in its aftermath, but lies in his attempt to put in communication two different views – mainland Japanese and Okinawan – and to construct a reality where the Western gaze can access local memories as a specific part of an indigenous system of knowledge and traditions, and not as an integrated part of major mainstream storytelling of the war as a national discourse.

1.3.2 Uncovering War Memories

In connection with this last point, it is worth noticing the close relatedness between the politics of memory – here including how such memories are narrated on national and local levels, how they are transmitted and reproduced to frame and ground social groups' identities and agencies in the sociohistorical layers of the war legacy – and how the trauma transforms war experiences and its narratives. For Medoruma Shun, who is a second-generation war survivor and never experienced the war, war memory cannot be disentangled from his ancestors' perspective and the centralised national modalities of narration imposed by mainland Japan that dictates not only what can be told, but also how it can be narrated. In the context of the Holocaust experience, Marianne Hirsch (1999, 8) defines postmemory as 'the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that they can neither understand nor recreate'. While the employment of magic realism in Medoruma's case can be seen as an attempt to bridge the knowledge and experiential gap between his authorial voice and first-generation war survivors, Okinawan communities differ from Holocaust survivors in the way they are affected by the local space-time construction as implicated in the remembering of their war experience and their position vis-à-vis the dominant narratives proposed by external authorities. As Kyle Ikeda (2014, 3) aptly explains:

> Okinawan war memory […] differ[s] from Holocaust memory and second-generation survivor understandings of the Holocaust in regard to different relationship and proximity to the sites of the traumatic past, the ongoing military presence of a wartime antagonist, and the reintegration into the nation of many of the perpetrators of wartime atrocities. Okinawan war survivors and their children have largely continued to reside in or near by the villages, sites, and communities where the Battle of Okinawa took place, whereas Holocaust survivors and their families have relocated, often overseas

to the United States or Israel. […] Hence, Okinawan war memory has been shaped by the experience of inhabiting former sites of the war, residing in close proximity to the military installations of its wartime opponent, and reintegration into the political and cultural sovereignty of its historical colonial oppressor, whereas Holocaust memory has been structured by the experience of exile.

It is the colonial experience, the presence of American military bases, and the proximity to war trauma sites that constitute for Okinawan communities another form of engagement with the war past and their indigenous memories. In this sense, rather than the lack of a tangible connection with the materiality of the traumatic sites as in the case of Holocaust survivors, it is the everyday involvement with the Okinawan space to generate in indigenous people a constant reflection and negotiation of narratives connected to the Battle of Okinawa and its sociopolitical consequences in its aftermath. This sense of mutual affection between Okinawan individuals and the local spatial and temporal coordinates is further enhanced by how prefectural institutions and the central government reframed the war trauma into a valuable asset that could be utilised for educational purposes as well as becoming part of the homogenising mechanism that aimed to uniform the mainland Japanese and Okinawan war experiences.

In approaching the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa, in 1993 the Okinawan Prefectural Government proposed a series of initiatives that had a two-fold goal of both assuring Okinawa a vital place in the international collective imaginary as a promoter of peace and reconciliation in the East Asian context and strengthening the agency and the representation of Okinawan voices in the Japanese nation-state framework. According to the Okinawan Prefectural Government, the 'peace education' aims to 'convey Okinawans' appeal for peace widely inside and outside the nation, and contribute to the establishment of permanent peace' (JICA 2006, 69). Such a programme was enacted in 1995 with the construction of peace monuments that are still today part of the cultural landscape of the island and function as a setting for remembering and commemorating events.

Together with this, a crucial part in promoting peace and war remembrance is played by Okinawan survivors themselves, who retell their accounts of the Battle of Okinawa in primary and junior high schools, as a means to transmit further personal memories that would otherwise be lost with their death. In Medoruma's 'Droplets', the main character Tokushō becomes a local celebrity, is visited by university research teams and newspaper reports, and occasionally even appears on television because of his ability to convey his own experience to the next generation. As we learn later in the short story, Tokushō tailors the story to his audience, enhances certain parts and removes others in order to maximise the emotional impact and, more than anything else, detach himself from his own trauma that would put him in front of his guilty conscience of abandoning a fellow soldier to die during the Battle of Okinawa. This scene clashes with the 'magic realist' part of the narrative: Tokushō is left bedridden with a foot assuming the shape of a melon gourd, droplets of limestone water constantly dripping from the big toe. Every night the character is visited by the ghosts of his fellow soldiers, who kneel in front of him and drink from his toe – this aspect becomes significant as a projection of the character's guilt because Tokushō's friend died during the war because the protagonist stole a flask of water from him while the soldier was injured. While the ghostly visitors could be explained as a PSTD (post-traumatic stress disorder) symptom – and, indeed, the haunting presence here is cited for juxtaposing the two types of memory transmission, elements such as Tokushō's condition, the limestone water and its miraculous effects discovered later on by Tokushō's community are not explicable by a scientific view of reality. The depiction of memory transmission – and reenactment – in Medoruma's fiction revolves around the objective of unveiling *what cannot be told* in a dual assumption: most straightforwardly, the bodily grotesque – itself a recurrent feature of magic realist literature, that is 'by nature something exceptional, something set apart or aberrant' (McElroy 1989, 6), is reintroduced in Okinawan society as a manifestation of a hidden trauma experienced by an indigenous character, and in so doing uncover certain tragic

narratives hidden or beautified in the mainland Japanese mainstream storytelling. On the other hand, the magic realist modality of representation imposes on the mainland Japanese – and Western – reader war accounts that would fail to meet the criteria for accurate history, namely being 'objective' and 'scientific', and that would be left out of the historical narrative. As Ikeda (2007, 105) argues, 'because the narrative accounts by Okinawan civilian survivors of the Battle of Okinawa have been attacked for being too sentimental or historically inaccurate, survivors who have published accounts of their war experiences have insisted on their historical accuracy and adopted many of the conventions of historical discourse'. In this context, the magical elements proposed in Medoruma's fiction are not only the expression of his voice as an author but also an expression of the experience of war survivors who did not conform to the narrative standards forced on them as a means to establish a coherent corpus of realistic war storytelling and that was deleted from the framework of national memories for this reason.

1.3.3 The Okinawan Landscape as a Traumatic Site for Transformation

However, magic realism is not the only method the author employs to depict the relationship between indigenous characters and the socio-historical and geographical Okinawan landscape. One of the chapters of *In the Woods of Memory* illustrates the complex implications of war memories for survivors, how they come in contact with traumatic sites – in this case, the forest – to reprocess their memories and how this is transmitted to later generations who did not experience the war. The chapter follows the story of Hisako, an Okinawan war survivor who left her community and moved to Tokyo after high school, and her attempt to retrieve her war memories following the death of her husband. Even when her husband Kōsuke was alive, Hisako used to dream about this cave in a forest – which we later find out to be a pivotal setting for the narratives surrounding a specific event that happened during the Battle of Okinawa around which the entire novel revolves, something she is unable to remember clearly due to her young age at the time. Despite this, when

she hears the news of a schoolgirl raped by three American servicemen in northern Okinawa – the rape incident is a reference to a news story that unleashed a series of protests among the Okinawan population in 1995, she 'suddenly had difficulty breathing, causing her husband and children to worry' (Medoruma 2017, 76). Here Hisako is unconsciously experiencing a collective trauma, the trauma that afflicted her own community during the Second World War when Sayoko – a school girl living in the same village as her – was raped by three American soldiers. Medoruma reconnects this eternal recurrence of traumatic memories in the Okinawan population to the returning question of '[h]ow much had things really changed since then?', which 'made her feel guilty for having so long avoided her memories of Okinawa and for not knowing what was happening in her own hometown' (76). In the following chapter, where Hisako goes back to Okinawa and meets her childhood friend Fumi, Fumi herself explains the impact that the news of the raped schoolgirl had on her life and shares the same sense of guilt and powerlessness showed by Hisako:

> But shortly after I retired, there was that incident where three American soldiers raped an elementary school girl. I was immediately reminded of Sayoko. Reading about the incident in the newspaper or seeing reports on TV always reminded me of her. I couldn't help thinking that in Okinawa, nothing's changed, not even after fifty years. But at the same time, even though I tried to pretend that I'd forgotten Sayoko, I started to feel guilty about trying to forget the war. As a teacher, I should've spoken with my students about the Battle of Okinawa, and the US military bases. Now that I'm retired, there's nothing I can do about that, but I've spent the past ten years regretting my silence… (101).

In her monograph *The Ontology of the Accident*, Catherine Malabou observes the impact that 'accidents' have on the human psyche, and how these change human biographies. In describing the effect of non-physical trauma on people and their transformation from pre- to post-accident human beings, Malabou (2012, 13) argues that, while the causes were explicable, the effects of those

accidents 'were absolutely unexpected', the metamorphosis 'become incomprehensible, displacing its cause, breaking all etiological links', and again, '[a]ll of a sudden these people became strangers to themselves', 'it was not, or not just, that they were broken, wracked with sorrow or misfortune', but rather 'the fact that they became new people, others, re-engendered, belonging to a different species'. In the case of Hisako and Fumi, as well as other characters depicted in Medoruma's oeuvre, the 'accident' of the Battle of Okinawa and the establishment of American military bases on the territory transformed their psyche and rendered them war survivors and subjects to the colonial establishment. Arguably, the only way they have to process their memories and make sense of their new identity is through their closeness to the traumatic space – what cultural historian Maria Tumarkin (2005) defines as 'traumascapes' – and through the sharing of collective memories within their community. Despite being close in age, the very difference between Hisako and Fumi's experiences – the former cannot remember what happened during the war, while the latter guides Hisako on a journey to re-discover her lost memories – is the geographical proximity to the Okinawan community and the place where traumatic events happened. To cite another example, in Medoruma's short story 'Heiwa dōri to nazukerareta machi wo aruite' ('Walking a Street Named Peace', 1986; further discussed in Chapter 4), the main character Uta, affected by dementia due to the death of one of her children during the Battle of Okinawa, struggles with her mental health and her position within the Okinawan urban community until she dies while going back with her nephew to the caves in the Yanbaru forest that represents the site of her personal trauma. In this sense, the forest is both a traumatic landscape and a place for the resolution of conflicts.

Trauma depicted and relived through the encounter between human actors and the sites that worked as the geographical and temporal settings for their memories to be fleshed out can provide an interpretative tool to understand how indigenous identity and agencies are entangled with and enabled by the interrelation between Okinawans and the space they inhabit. Returning to Fumi and

Hisako's journey to retrieve and renegotiate their war memories, it is by coming into contact with the cave of Hisako's dream and Fumi's storytelling that provides the only way for Hisako to solve her conflictual relationship with her trauma. Although sixty years have passed since the event, the very moment Hisako comes in contact with the cave, the natural landscape triggers feelings of anxiety and uneasiness as an echo of the collective memory experience by the Okinawan village:

> Hisako looked to where he [Yōichi, Fumi's son] was pointing. Through the woods full of trees so large you could barely get your arms around them, she could see a cave beneath a cliff. The scene of sixty years ago revived within her. Back then, so many trees had been blown up during the US naval bombardment that you could see the sky through the openings. Now, the cave's entrance was half hidden by the dense growth of brush and the outstretched branches of trees clinging to the cliff. The entrance was a dark gaping hole. In spite of the chirping birds and unceasing buzz of cicadas, the area around the cave seemed to be engulfed in silence. Hisako was struck by how much the trees had grown in sixty years (Medoruma 2017, 85).

The cave has a transformative effect on Hisako, who remembers the cave regardless of how it changed in the past sixty years, but it is the conjunction between the natural landscape and Fumi's storytelling that changes once again the psyche of the two Okinawan women. As if they went back in time, Hisako and Fumi start talking in a 'childlike tone of voice' and calling each other Hisa-*chan* and Fumi-*chan* (86). Here, in reshaping the mental state of the Okinawan characters interacting with the cave, the Okinawan space loses its temporal connotations, and becomes a somewhere where past, present, and future possibilities coexist at one in the mind of the people entering it. The Okinawan cave is produced as a crucial element for the making of local identities through war memories attached to it by war survivors. Geographer David Harvey (1996, 309, cited in Cresswell 2004, 62) argues that 'collective memory is often made concrete through the production of particular places but this production of memory in place is no more than an element in the

perpetuation of a particular social order that seeks to inscribe some memories at the expense of others', so that '[p]laces do not come with some memories attached as it by nature but rather they are the "contested terrain of competing definitions"'. Once again, this further complicates the relationship between the space and human actors as they affect each other. On the one hand, Okinawan war survivors make sense of their war memories through the narrative they attach to traumatic spaces, and in their encounter with the sites of a traumatic collective past, they are able to reassess their personal memories within the local and national framework of war storytelling. On the other, the very act of attaching particular memories to those natural landscapes becomes a strategy to reappropriate indigenous land against the presence of external authorities. In doing so, it also counter the presence of national sites of remembering – based on a nationwide framework of war storytelling, and as such focused on the commemoration of soldiers, mainland Japanese and Okinawan citizens alike – with intimate places for the memorialisation of individuals belonging to local communities whose existence cannot be disentangled from the particularity of the indigenous knowledge. In discussing how indigenous populations react to globalisation dynamics with a renewed interest in place and the local, anthropologist Arturo Escobar (2001, 169) states that '[s]ubaltern strategies of localization still need to be seen in terms of place' and that 'places are surely connected and constructed yet those constructions entrail boundaries, ground, selective connection, interaction and positioning, and in some cases a renewal of history-making skills'. Escobar discusses activists of the Process of Black Communities in their attempt to articulate a set of place-based identities against the forces of globalisation, establishing strategies that rely on attachments to territory, culture and ecology (Cresswell 2004, 84). To a certain extent, Okinawan trauma can be instrumentalised and rendered a viable option to fight back against external authorities' appropriation of land, or at least to maintain alive the corpus of indigenous knowledge

and experiences that make Okinawan space vital as a bonding element between local communities, non-human actors, and the natural landscape.

This is not to say that the Okinawan population as a whole consciously engage with local spaces as a way to counteract sociopolitical discourses maintained by the United States and mainland Japan regarding the prefecture. In most cases, as it is for Hisako and, to a certain degree, for Fumi as well, the mutual attachment between the Okinawan space and human beings is merely 'accidental', as it is ' accidental' the cause that created that relationship in the first place, namely the war experience. Furthermore, it has to be noted that the affection produced by the encounter between the indigenous space and local populations, which has a transformative effect on the traumatic memories of the human actors involved, does not necessarily evoke a positive intimacy with the territory, whether processes of local reappropriation are involved or not. It is necessary to lay out here two – perhaps oppositional – stances regarding the emotional effect that spaces have on human beings. In an earlier study, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1990, 93) coined the term *topophilia* to represent 'all of the human being's affective ties to the material environment' and argues that these ties 'differ greatly in intensity, subtlety, and mode of expression', concerning aesthetic responses but also feelings that 'one has toward a place because it is home, a locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood'. Robert T. Tally Jr (2019, 35) comments that in 'Tuan's joyous phenomenology, places are endowed with deeply personal and subjective meanings' and 'are invested with profoundly affective or emotional content for the subject that perceives, moves about, and in the broadest sense inhabits those spaces that have become demarcated and identified as places'. In expanding on Tuan's conceptualisation, Tally Jr (24) proposes the concept of *topophrenia*, which 'literally indicates a certain "placemindedness" while also by implication suggesting a condition of disorder or "dis-ease"', in order to 'look at the ways in which an affective geography of place would necessarily involve the less salutary or utopian visions of place, such as places of fear

or loathing that nevertheless condition our approaches to space and place in narrative'. This ambivalence between *topophilia* and *topophrenia* is particularly relevant in the Okinawan context, where not only specific places – as historically and geographically contingent areas, but space as a whole implies a past of violence, the contemporary presence of colonial mechanisms through the establishment of American military bases, and natural and urban landscapes that are the object of different narratives proposed by a number of actors in the prefecture as a way to culturally and geographically appropriate the territory. In this sense, the attachment of people involved in the Okinawan space alternates an intimate sense of belonging that shapes one's identity and the rejection of the war trauma.

1.3.4 Narrating the Indigenous Human-Environment Relatedness

Medoruma's narratives illustrate the indigenous landscape and the memories attached therein in a complex web of interrelatedness between (non-)human actors and the sociocultural mechanisms imbued in the geographical and temporal coordinates as conceptualised and reproduced by Okinawan survivors. Two elements further reveal how the transmission and representation of memories in Medoruma's literature expose a possibility to overthrow the hegemonic war storytelling produced by mainland Japan and imposed on Okinawan communities as a way to obfuscate their particular experience and harmonise the Battle of Okinawa into the Japanese nation-state imaginary.

The first one is the literary collapsing of space-time in the eyes of Okinawan characters, which requires a reassessment of the very spatial and temporal layers attached to Okinawa and how they are processed by the readers. In the two scenes mentioned above from 'Droplets' and *In the Woods of Memory*, the Okinawan characters re-modulate the space-time as they are emotionally affected by the encounter between their own memories and the outer – or inner – world that unravelled them. In 'Droplets', Tokushō revives his war memories through the spectral presence haunting him

during his sleepless night and embodies his guilt through the grotesque transformation of his foot. The narratorial strategy of magic realism allows Medoruma to conceptualise the constitution of space and time as a template that offers the integration of different ontologies – here the Western and the Okinawan indigenous proper – that multiply the possibilities of re-imagining and exploring individuals' trauma. In the essay 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel', Bakhtin suggests that the chronotope – the way temporality is manifested in the narrative in its interrelation with space – 'provides the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events' (1982, 250) and concludes arguing that serves the purpose of 'grasping the contours of history as they are inextricably connected to space' (Quayson 2020, 82). In Tokushō's encounters with the spectral entities, two temporalities – present and the war-time – collapse into the space of his own bedroom, expanding the perception of the space-time via a productive narratological instrumentalisation of the trauma to unveil hidden memories and emotions attached to them. An example of this is given during one of the nighly hallucinations experienced by Tokushō:

> Now the soldiers began to appear nightly […]. [T]hey would emerge, one after another, from the wall to Tokusho's left […]. The next soldier kneeled down and frantically began sucking on Tokusho's toe. […] This soldier had also grabbed Tokusho in the cave that day, begging for water. The tall soldier standing behind him, and the Okinawan soldier hidden behind him, and the one-eyed soldier who just now appeared out of the wall – all had been in the cave, extending their arms as they pleaded for water. *Tokusho felt as if he was being dragged back into the cave's shadows once again* (Medoruma 2000b, 263 and 273. My Emphasis).

Likewise, Hisako and Fumi's encounter with the cave generates yet another system of interdependency between memories and the perception of space-time that is not realised through the fantastic inserted in the reality – as least as perceived by the Western and mainland Japanese

gaze – but through the straightforward reconciliation of the traumatic events with the present emotive state of the two characters.

The interrelation between memories and space-time, as it develops in Medoruma's narratives, addresses as well the multifaceted connections between human and non-human actors in the indigenous understanding of the relationship between human beings and nature, their entangled agencies and mutual affection. I will further discuss how the agency of the Okinawan natural landscape interacts with the hierarchical order of the colonial establishment in Chapter 2, while I will touch upon how non-human elements are appropriated and reframed in the struggle between mainland Japanese and Okinawans concerning the mass-mediated narration of local folklore in Chapter 3. The natural landscape as an active agent in the Okinawan power dynamics is a recurring theme in Medoruma's fiction. Here I am specifically scrutinising how the natural element, in its interplay with human actors, affects their perception and transmission of memory. In *In the Woods of Memory*, the non-human factor intertwines elements of physical – and psychological – violence, perpetrators, victims, and their war memories in a circuit of violence. The natural element shows its agency in affecting the psyche of the characters of the novel, establishing a nonhuman bond between oppressors and oppressed as they are equally affected by the space around them. During the narration of Smith, one of the four American soldiers who raped Sayoko, a red fruit catalyses the attention of the two characters – the American soldier and the Okinawan rape victim:

> The girl was avoiding my gaze and staring at something behind me. I turned around there was that bright red fruit. Never in my life had I seen such a malicious-looking color. The finely divided chunks looked like clumps of blood. At that moment, something split open inside me. Once the thin membrane had ruptured, primal feelings erupted from deep inside and oozed through my body like a runny egg yolk (Medoruma 2017, 138-139).

The red fruit becomes a recurring motif in the mind of the American soldier when he remembers the incident during his recovery from a wound he received from an Okinawan boy seeking revenge for Sayoko's rape incident. As Kurosawa Masato (2022, 291-292) notices, the red fruit relives in the perpetrator's body assuming different forms: the soldier would imagine the red berries attacking him during the rape incident, and then it would become a clot of blood inextricably attached to his own body. The agency of the natural landscape would call for a different understanding of the mutual affection between the indigenous environment and the human beings interacting with it. Again, Kurosawa (293) comments that 'it is necessary to read the story with the perspective of a forest, which entangles people in various positionalities inside their respective bodies'. In 'Droplets', Tokushō embodies Okinawan nature through his melon gourd-shaped leg, a transformation caused by his hidden war memories. The grotesque represented in the character's body transformation has to be connected to an alternative (non-)narration of the trauma. Michael Steig (1970, 255) notes that the grotesque is 'an imaginative playing with the forbidden or the inexpressible'. The natural element is here implied into the retelling – and shaping – of war memories as they unveil the trauma in ways that are not accepted in the canonical narration of war, both because of the unreliability of the storyteller – and the events therein represented – and the very aesthetic nature of the tragedy, that ought to be a *narration* of the tragic rather than a *depiction* of it. Justin Snyder (2014, 525) comments that in US veterans' war stories, 'memories of grotesque death and injury were often closely associated with negative moral evaluations of the combat'. In the mainland Japanese narration of the war, where soldiers and their actions were often ennobled and glorified – or, at least, not portrayed in a negative light, there is no space for divergent memories that aim to portray the horrific body transformations and psychological wounds afflicting the actors participating in the war.

1.4 Conclusion

As a consequence of the framing of Okinawa into a hegemonic relationship with mainland Japan and the United States, the prefecture has been forced into spatial and temporal coordinates that defined the limits of indigenous agency and its subaltern position to external forces and their imagery. In the post-war period, the retelling of war memories and their transmission on a national level constituted a major structural and ideological framework for mainland Japan to constrain Okinawa into the nation-state boundaries set by the central government. Medoruma's literature poses a counter-discourse to how space-time is narrated in Okinawa through the colonial establishment, proposing a depiction of indigenous space and time that allows a plurality of communities and identities to come together through their relationship with the indigenous landscape and the memories attached therein. William J. T. Mitchell (1989, 91) discusses the role of space in literature arguing that '[l]iterature, as we have been told as least since Lessing's Laocoon, is a temporal art' and '[s]pace enters into literature only as dubious fiction, as a phantom in the minds of overimaginative readers, as an invasion from alien and rival art forms like painting, or as a necessary evil in the transmission of verbal art by the spatial, visible traces of writing'. Likewise, Mary Louise Pratt (1985, 120) comments that anthropologists tended to represent 'primitive' societies and cultural others as living outside time in a spatialized stasis, and we have seen in this chapter that this proved to be relevant for the Okinawan experience as well. While Mitchell (1989, 93) considers space as 'static, visual, external, empty, and dead', and only redeemable only if 'pushed into motion, temporalized, internalized, filled up, or brought to life by time and consciousness', I argue that in the Okinawan context the significance of both space and time as forms that can be literarily explored and expanded lies in their interplay with how they are perceived and narrated by the indigenous eye. The depiction of war memories in Medoruma's fiction demonstrates that their interrelation with Okinawan space-time expands the limits of national war

narratives and proposes a way for an indigenous agency and system of knowledge to create and establish in the national storytelling a different vision of the relationship between Okinawa and its external counterparts. In questioning the (re-)production of space and time in a non-univocal understanding, Medoruma complicates the position of social actors – Okinawan and colonisers – moving through space and time, in their creation and maintenance of connections between each other and with the local geographical and socio-historical landscape. Through this narration of war memories, the author affirms a polycentric view of the world where space and time – and the space-time nexus – can be perceived through a positivist Western gaze, but also be detached from this unilinear understanding of the world, so offering a multivocal epistemology where competing ontologies and representations of reality are equally productive and effective in the Okinawan sociopolitical discourse. It is in the entanglement of space-time constructions and politics of memory that Medoruma's literature finds an opening where decolonial possibilities can take place. However, as we will see in the next chapters, the depiction of space-time in Medoruma's fiction does not allude only to its transformative power in the emotion and war memories of locals and external actors, but affects a series of themes and perspectives that are foundational of the Okinawan colonial dynamics. That is because the literary portrayal of space-time is not only a narrative construction that enables the storytelling to proceed in a certain direction, but is also a methodology that enables Medoruma to investigate further the relational agency of indigenous communities in expressing their own view of the world against the dominant gaze of mainland Japan and the United States. Catherine Malabou (2012, 85) argues that '[w]hen I deny something, in other words, when I negate the evidence, I postulate without being able to affirm it, that everything could have been otherwise, that everything could have happened differently' and thus 'negation frees up the possibility of another story'. In rejecting the centrality of the Western- and mainland Japan-centric perspective, Medoruma resists and negates the colonial narrative and meanings attached to the

Okinawan space-time, and in doing so opens up to multiple possibilities – the otherwise – for indigenous communities to reassess their position, subvert the colonial mechanisms, and reappropriate the Okinawan landscape.

Chapter Two: Fighting in the Military Landscape: Role Reversal and Reclamation of the Okinawan Space

2.1 Introduction

> Recently in Okinawa, when the base problem is discussed, you often hear people talking about the realistic choice, the best choice, the better one. But no one discusses the worst choice. I wanted to think about it. It may be hopeless, even unavoidable, but still it is something that can be chosen, and I thought it could be something like that. It could be the most vicious act of terrorism, but it is not impossible if there is the will to do it, and therefore it can become the worst choice (Medoruma 1999, 10).

After winning the Akutagawa Prize in 1997, Medoruma Shun started to hit the headlines of major literary magazines as one of the most promising authors of the decade (Iwabuchi 2016, 112). His fame was undoubtedly linked to his portrayal of war memories, the retelling of individual experiences from Okinawan indigenous voices, and a re-analysis of the narratives surrounding the relationship between Okinawa and mainland Japan with the precise scope of intervening in the national storytelling of World War II that was at the time hegemonising the public discourse due to the recent 50th anniversary of the end of the war in 1995. Following 'Droplets', Medoruma published 'Fūon' ('The Crying Wind') in 1997 and 'Mabuigumi' ('Spirit Stuffing') in 1998, short stories that follow the same tone and themes as 'Droplets'. However, in 1999 Medoruma disrupted the status quo by publishing a short story in four parts on the nationwide newspaper Asahi Shinbun entitled 'Koza/"Machi Monogatari" yori' ('Koza/From "Stories of the Street"', 1999). The stories, focusing on the geographical area and historical relevance of the city of Koza – now Okinawa City, take a different approach to exploring Okinawan communities and their living conditions. It is no more about war memories, traumatic experiences set in the past, or depictions of indigenous villages coming to terms with their sociocultural differences with mainland Japan. It is instead an open

attack on the institutions and authorities controlling Okinawa, the militaristic landscape the prefecture finds itself in due to the presence of the American army, and the despair and hopes of a population that survived for more than fifty years to the abuse and tyranny of controlling external actors that transformed Okinawa into a colonial environment where violence is implied at every geographical and temporal level. One of the four parts of this short story, however, provoked the attention of mainland intellectuals and readership due to the way in which violent behaviours are portrayed and how the author tackles topics previously considered taboo in the mainstream mass-mediated representations of the Okinawan population. This short story is 'Machi Monogatari — Kibō' ('Hope').

'Hope' is set during one of the demonstrations held in Okinawa following the infamous 1995 schoolgirl rape incident. The main character and narrative voice, a mysterious Okinawan individual whose sex is not mentioned by Medoruma, kidnaps an American boy and kills him.[12] After disposing of the corpse by the roadside away from prying eyes, the protagonist takes the car and goes to the demonstration, eventually setting themselves on fire in the midst of the crowd. A few hours before the suicide, they had expressed a statement that sets the tone of the whole short story: 'What Okinawa needs now is not demonstrations by thousands of people or rallies by tens of thousands, but the death of one American child'. If we return to the quote at the beginning of this introduction, the title 'Hope' by no means represents the author's intention to resort to violence as a last attempt to solve the intricate situation between Okinawa and US military bases, but rather the condition of a population whose every effort has been ignored by the mainland and American governments. As Sō Kyung-sik (2001, 147) argues, Medoruma writes about a society where minorities have been robbed of the necessary imaginative force to even think of a 'worst method', and it is for this very

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[12] This set-up is possible as in Japanese the subject can always be omitted, and people's names and locutions such as 'ano hito' ('that person') are usually preferred to gendered third-person pronouns.

reason that he wanted to portray it in his fictional world. Likewise, Okinawan literature scholar Kuriyama Yusuke (2017, 1306) concludes his analysis of the short story by stating that 'in the current Okinawan political situation, the words "non-violence" and "peace" have been paradoxically transformed into words through which the stronger blocks the opposition of the weaker', and it is in this situation, where the weaker is deprived of every option, that it becomes significative that the terrorist act, previously considered the 'worst method', is renamed as 'hope'.

In the novel *Niji no tori* (*The Rainbow Bird*, 2017 [2006]), Medoruma takes the themes previously sketched in 'Hope' and expands the world in which these options are chosen, depicting a society where Okinawan characters assume different stances regarding the space in which they live and their relationship to the US military bases. The very idea of the 'worst option', illustrated through the killing of an American child to send a message to the Japanese and American governments, returns cyclically in the novel and is expressed to various degrees by several of its characters. In what *The Rainbow Bird* arguably surpasses 'Hope' is its ability to bring an additional level of layering to the paradoxical situation the characters live in, how they interact with the presence of American military bases and what influence has their space occupation upon the behaviour of Okinawan people. Although the novel is comparably less recognised in the contemporary literary Okinawan landscape, several scholars approached it by scrutinising its depiction of violence against the stereotypical view of Okinawan people as 'peaceful' and the sociopolitical conditions they are forced to bear as the weaker member in the (inter-)national relationship with mainland Japan and the United States. Postcolonial scholar Ozaki Bunta (2011) frames *The Rainbow Bird* within Franz Fanon's analysis of violence in postcolonial environments, showing how the long history of American presence in Okinawa enters a circuit of violence perpetrated by the colonisers and countered by locals, eventually affecting the attitude of the indigenous population towards places of power, external authorities, and even among themselves. In closely questioning the relationship that Mayu,

one of the main characters, has with violence – as a victim of bullies and his boss Higa, and as a sex worker and child murderer eventually – Ozaki assesses violence among the characters as an emancipation mechanism from the social roles constructed through the colonial establishment. Similarly, Kinjo Masaki (2012) approaches the analysis of the main characters through the lenses of violence, recognition, and love, three elements that shape the bond between the protagonists and subvert the image of Okinawan people as 'pacifists'. Onishi Yasumitsu (2019) further comments on the relationship between the characters and frame it within the Okinawan colonial hierarchy, where co-dependency blends with a state of subalternity, to the power imbalance between the Okinawan minority group, US military, and the central government of mainland Japan. This chapter expands on prior literature arguing for the importance of space organisation and reclamation as powerful tools to understand colonial power dynamics, and, in doing so, specifically explores the actions and limitations of the main characters in respect to how space is occupied and militarily rationalised.

In the first section, I will discuss how the American military bases are interpreted by the indigenous voices presented in the novel as a historically charged landmark with the urban space of the Okinawan island and a resource of economic revenues for Okinawan people at the same time. I will examine how locals and the military (un)consciously perceive each other along the borders between Okinawan and American societies represented by the barbed-wire fences that separate US military bases and what servicemen often call the 'off-base world'. In the following section, the analysis will move on to scrutinise the meaning of the rainbow bird that gives the title to the novel in relation to the natural environment. I will discuss the mechanism that shapes how meanings and storytelling are attributed to places and how these connotations become relevant to one's identity when interacting with space and its narration. In framing the Yanbaru forest as a pivotal space element of *The Rainbow Bird*'s narratives, this section intends to focus on how space narratives by native Okinawan people and American colonisers create an interplay of scattered myths that overcomes

the monolithic block of war memories. In the last section, I will go back to 'Hope' and expand on its murder scene, confronting it with the same discourse as it is unpacked in *The Rainbow Bird*. The 'killing of an American child' trope will be then examined in terms of gendered actions and dynamics of space appropriation and reclamation. I will argue that Mayu's interaction with the Okinawan colonised space subverts gender hierarchies within Okinawa itself and in its power relations with mainland Japan. In so doing, this chapter will assess the characters' understanding and reconfiguration of Okinawan space and time through their interfacing with the presence of American military bases.

2.2 Conflicting Discourses and Imaginative Spaces Along the Barbed-Wire Fences

2.2.1 Circuits of Violence and Parasitic Conditions

As mentioned above, *The Rainbow Bird* went almost unnoticed by literary critics and readers when it was published in 2006. In their personal blog, Kasumi Sminkey, a professor at Okinawa International University, recounts that after reading an article about the novel in the 2007 February issue of *Subaru*, they attempted to retrieve a book that was almost impossible to buy in Okinawan bookstores despite Medoruma being the most famous writer in the prefecture, and suggests that '[m]aybe the shocking content was the reason it wasn't on the shelves' (Sminkey, n.d.). Indeed, similarly to 'Hope', the novel approaches Okinawa through a realistic depiction of the conditions of people living on the island rather than projecting the traumatic experience of the Okinawan characters into their war memories, becoming a more problematic narrative to address for governmental institutions and public intellectuals.

In building on the paradoxical positionality of Okinawan characters vis-à-vis the effect of the American presence in the prefecture, the story follows the ill-fated relationship between Katsuya, who works for a local crime boss called Higa, and Mayu, a young girl who has been forced into

prostitution by Higa. Katsuya's role is to supervise Mayu, but, despite being her pimp, he is himself

a victim of Higa, who has terrorised Katsuya bullying him since their time together in middle school.

The story revolves around the everlasting shadow cast upon the island by the very presence of the

American military bases. The characters' actions are marked by hatred and violence. Bullying,

criminality, and physical violence lay the foundation for a portrayal of Okinawa that breaks with the

imagery of a tropical holiday destination that is often constructed and proposed by mainstream

media for their mainland Japanese audience. The publisher's blurb describes the novel as a

depiction of 'the darkness of Okinawa', a phrasing that suggests a two-fold assertion.[13] On the one

hand, 'darkness' is referred to a sense of moral decay and violence triggered by the military status

of the island, while on the other it offers a visual counterpoint to the island's depiction of sunny

beaches and eternal festivity. This juxtaposition reminds us of the postcolonial scholar Achille

Mbembe's assertion regarding the duplicity of democratic states and their violent tendencies within

the context of colonialism: modern democracy has two faces, and 'even two bodies – the solar body,

on the one hand, and *the nocturnal body*, on the other' (Mbembe 2019, 18. Emphasis in original).

Whereas the solar body is shown through the practices of democratic life as governments and

citizens exert it, its dark side is emblematically represented by the externalisation of violence

through the making and maintenance of colonial empires. In a parallel with the power relationship

between mainland Japan and Okinawa, we can argue that the latter embodies the oppositional

characters of democracy – light versus darkness – through its mainland portrayal as a tourist

attraction and, on the other hand, the recurring images of war memories and military occupation

that are implied in the daily experience of the Okinawan local population.

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[13] This publisher's blurb accompanied the 2017 reprint of the novel, but it should be similar if not identical to the one proposed in the first print edition.

In building on the paradoxical positionality of Okinawan characters vis-à-vis the effect of the American presence in the prefecture, the novel follows the lives of Katsuya and Mayu in their ambivalent inclinations to be subdued by the power exerted by Higa and, at the same time, escape their conditions of subordinates. In particular, Katsuya's position is affected by the prefecture's political conditions and the financial benefits the character manages to receive due to the arrangements between Japan and the United States, regardless of Katsuya's scorn for his family's way of living. In fact, Katsuya's family engages in commercial activities that profit from the presence of the American military. His father works in the housing industry and makes a living selling and managing house complexes around military bases, his mother owns a 24-hour snack bar full of slot machines, and his two elder brothers are employed as housing managers for their father's company. These commercial activities are arguably interconnected, whether by geographical or social proximity, with the American sphere of influence. Katsuya's life, as well as of the rest of the Okinawan population, cannot be disentangled from the military presence even when fighting against it, making such characters exist in a parasitic condition on American and Japanese shoulders from which they cannot possibly escape. In this respect, Medoruma depicts the main characters' points of view, blending personal stories and the colonial history of Okinawa, as it appears in the case of Katsuya, where narratives from his family history and collective memories regarding the Battle of Okinawa and the American occupation interweaves to shape his understanding of how space is reorganised and occupied in Okinawa.

As if to reprise the central role of intergenerational connection in his storytelling, Medoruma constructs the depiction of the Okinawan space through the juxtaposition between Katsuya and his father, representing two generations that experienced the history of post-war Okinawa differently and two individuals being on the opposite poles of the political spectrum regarding how to assess the relationship between the prefecture, the American and the mainland Japanese governments.

Katsuya's father works in the housing industry and is economically dependent on the presence of US military bases in Okinawa: he makes a living selling and managing house complexes around the military bases while also profiting from land that is used for military purposes by the American government and for which he receives rent money accordingly. The financial implications for Okinawan people receiving money for their land from the United States or Japan vis-à-vis their struggle in the anti-base movement do not escape the keen analytical eye of the author, and become a recurring theme on which most characters reflect throughout the novel. In this sense, Katsuya's father embodies the insistence on economic benefits for the Okinawan people and its inconsistency with the anti-base movement. Indeed, the political connection between financial profits and the protests undergoes a paradoxical reversal when the character, according to which 'philosophy or ideology […] is incapable of turning a profit', reveals that 'if the opposition movement doesn't heat up, the military rent won't rise, and the government subsidies won't increase' (Medoruma 2017, 185). Katsuya's father mirrors the rhetoric of American officials discussing the temper of Okinawan people in the context of the American military bases' presence on the island. Kevin Maher, State Department official in charge of the Japanese affairs office, once defined Okinawans as 'masters of manipulation and extortion', 'too lazy to grow *goya* (bitter melon)', and stated that 'by pretending to seek consensus, people try to get as much money as possible', all in the context of a lecture delivered by the official at an American university (Shimabuku 2018, 127). The logic of financial profits cannot be ignored in the political debate regarding the military presence of the United States, and in this sense, the characters Medoruma portrays serve as a reminder of the diverse political spectrum and contrasting stances of Okinawan people towards the American bases. On the other hand, it is also relevant to notice that in the novel's narrative structure, Katsuya's father is a morally ambiguous negative character, ultimately delegitimising his accusations of the anti-base movement and, in so doing, strengthening the position of Okinawan demonstrators.

Katsuya offers a point of view on the Okinawan political landscape that is to be attributed to his constant struggle between relying on the business possibilities offered by the American presence and his profound desire to dissociate from his family pattern. At the same time, his understanding of Okinawan spaces is heavily rooted in his family's memories and storytelling, often in a complementary rather than contrastive way. His observation of the world around him serves as a reminder of his personal experience, which is inherently connected to how Okinawan society is modelled in terms of urban landscapes. On one of his days working as a guardian for Mayu, Katsuya's stream of thoughts is abruptly interrupted by two American military trucks coming from the opposite direction on the street. A look at the military parking lot from which they were getting out makes him question 'how much such a plot could be rented for', which unleashes a series of memories about the relationship between his father and the two elder brothers (Medoruma 2017, 7). Katsuya's perception of his family is the locus around which the duplicity of the military discourse and financial gains vis-à-vis violence and subjugation is constructed. The character does understand the contradiction of his family's position on the matter, but he still fails to address it and hence remains in an in-between state where he is continuously subjugated by and dependent on his family's choices.

2.2.2 Sites of Protests through Acoustic Reappropriation and Transgenerational Storytelling

This discourse can be widened to encompass the space reclaimed by Okinawan civilians to exert their right to demonstrate. In a later scene, Katsuya gets on the street from his mother's snack bar and assists a rally heading towards the near Futenma Air Base. This is the description of what the character is observing:

> Demonstrators followed from behind with a banner at the head. As they exited the dimly lit school
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> on the road, the participants frowning, lit by searchlights, holding placards and wearing red
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> headbands. Demonstrators pushed up the placards and repeated the exact words in response to the

voice emitted from the speakers of the promotional car. A forest of red flags shone brightly under the searchlights. Chanting in chorus repeatedly denounced the assault of US soldiers on the elementary schoolgirl that happened in the north part of the island. The voice emitted from the speakers, and the chanting of the demonstrators bounced off the buildings across the narrow road and spread from the three-way junction towards the base. […] The demonstrators proceeded in an orderly manner towards it [the Marine Corps Command building on Ishinda Hill]. The riot police with shields were standing on the sidewalk on the base side at regular intervals, and the demonstrators were also controlled on the roadside. The demonstrators swayed every time a chant was emitted from the leading promotional car. So many people can do nothing but walk and raise their voices, Katsuya thought (101-102).

In this scene, Medoruma portrays Okinawan demonstrators chanting against the United States and proceeding towards the military residential area. Similar to other anti-colonial demonstrations, the space of protest becomes a colonial space shaped by individual actors – the Okinawan protesters, the riot police containing them – who participate in occupying the space and its acoustic layer. In an article regarding the protests in Paris against the Algerian War, Celeste Day Moore (2019, 462) argues that such colonial space is 'animated not only by the visual encounter with authority and suffering but also by its sounds', as the 'cries of fear and pain, the songs of protest, and the disembodied sounds of state authority'. Likewise, in describing how right-wing movements employ sonic activism, Nathaniel M. Smith (2013) highlights the use of sound trucks and chanting in the urban environment to sustain their social activism. Although pacific and controlled, the crowd exerts its territorial claims and disrupts the city's acoustic landscape, sending out politically charged messages. Again, Smith (40) argues that 'by tracing routes through the city, sound truck parades produce emotionally powerful territorial understandings of Japan'. Here, the author stresses how spatiality and sounds – which have as a focal point the sound truck – redraw activists' ability to voice their concerns and be recognised by mainstream society. In an Okinawan colonial landscape where

sound production is an integral part – and often the leading cause of disturbance among local communities – of the American military occupation, the connection between sounds and space reclamation seems particularly fitting. War experiences and colonial dynamics are relived through the visual and acoustic counterpoints represented by the fearsome technology displayed by the American government with its military presence on the island. For elderly people and the generation immediately following, aircraft sound is a reminder of the Battle of Okinawa, besides illustrating the 'extern of Japanese and US government complicity in perpetuating the iniquity of land occupation through its very nature as acoustical energy' (Cox 2013, 68). Sound trucks and chanting on the part of Okinawan people, even in the context of controlled demonstrations, make locals an active competitor for the space occupied by external authorities and contribute to forming a resistance movement that uses sonic activism to compete with the sound produced by the U.S. military bases. Moreover, the making of a credible antagonist to the American military for the reclamation of the Okinawan acoustic environment indeed supports a renewed understanding of the political and geographical landscape, where external authorities and activists equally compete in changing the sonic ecosystem of the prefecture.

The description of the protest observed by Katsuya juxtaposes the text with Katsuya's memories of his father's storytelling about the Koza riot (*Koza bōdō*) in which he participated when he was younger. This story offers a visual and acoustic counterpoint in Katsuya's mind:

> On that day, my father, drinking at a bar in the city of Koza, jumped out of the store when he was informed that a US military vehicle was being burned and participated in the riot. Despite being sought after by the US military base, he boasted that he had joined the crowd to overturn US military vehicles and set them on fire. A group surrounded a car with a horizontal plate number burning with black smoke, applauding and whistling. Some danced *kachaashii* as if the heat of the fire incited them. Whenever he talked about the power of the crowd heading to the Futenma base gate, my dad got

drunk with his story and always muttered, 'I wonder if it will happen again' (Medoruma 2017, 102-

103).

In a violent frenzy, the Okinawan crowd escaped the control of the American military and rebelled

against the symbols of their subjugation, namely the military cars that used to patrol the island until

the Okinawan reversion to Japan in 1972. The fictional account of the uprising in Koza, which took

place on December 20th of 1970, is commented on by Kinjo Masaki as a means to understand the

role of violence in the scene. Kinjo (2012, 36) argues that 'the singing and angry voices of the

rampaging rioters […] did not demand recognition from the state or law in the first place', hence

becoming 'a force that did not have any purpose vis-à-vis the outside and generated its power for

itself'. The Koza riot is here partly narrated through the description of a sound-making crowd. They

applaud, whistle, and even dance *kachaashii*, a traditional Okinawan dance. The crowd amplifies

the spectrum of its reach and overcomes the possibility of being restrained by authority. While the

crowd can be spatially confined, their contribution to the soundscape leaves a mark on the logic of

the power balance between colonisers and demonstrators. Sound reverberation extends a further

space layer on which authority cannot possibly act.

Nonetheless, the Koza riot turned out to be an extraordinary example in which the crowd could not

even be spatially restrained. The acoustic layer is then an appendix, not the only possibility for space

reclamation given to the demonstrators. And it is this specific distinction that offers further

significance to this recount of the Koza riot in its opposition to the demonstration witnessed by

Katsuya.[14] In contrast with Kinjo's statement that rioters' violence lacks a univocal meaning in terms

of political messages, it can be argued that urban spaces are politically occupied in both cases. Saskia

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[14] As it is discussed in Young 2020, the term 'Koza riot' is widely rejected by postcolonial scholars, as it implies only brutal, destructive and uncontrollable actions on the part of the Okinawans. Other terms proposed in substitution for *bōdō* ('riot') are *sōdō* ('uproar') in Gima 1979 and *hōki* ('uprising' or 'revolt') in Ueunten 2010. However, I have decided to maintain the term 'Koza riot' exactly because it captures the violent attributes given to the scene, other than the fact that it is the very term used by Medoruma in the novel.

Sassen (2011, 574) argues that '[t]he Street can […] be conceived as space where new forms of the social and the political can be made', that is 'giving the powerless rhetorical and operational openings'. In this case, the social and political constructs in the Koza riot and the present-day demonstration are almost antithetical, remarking rather than disrupting the power balance between rulers and dominated. In the Koza riot, the mob is uncontrollable, and its only focus seems to be damaging American properties. In this sense, Kinjo's argument on the absence of purpose in rioters' violence is revealed to be relevant precisely because the urban space occupation enacted by the Okinawan protesters escapes any meaningful social and political logic and turns out to be an isolated event that left a mark on participants' memory only rather than on the political continuity of the region. On the other hand, the present-day demonstration operates in the opposite direction. The protesters' actions are controlled and subjected to the confined space constructed by the riot police, leaving sound-making as the only possible escape from the authorities' control. Returning to Sassen's argument on the space of the protest, the urban environment in which the present-day demonstration is held functions as a space for enacting ritualised routines, namely repetition of protest practices that confirms the status quo rather than building new social and political meanings. Such routine represents the continuous anti-colonial struggle against space dispossession by external authorities, which is fought by challenging the ownership of the Okinawan space through a process of reappropriation of the soundscape against the noise of military aircraft. And while the routinised protest activities do not create – even temporarily, as in the case of the Koza riot – a new power structure within the colonial hierarchy, they still challenge the nature of the military space as a colonial appropriation and propose an interpretation of Okinawan space instead as a locus for undetermined possibilities of becoming through a reflection on the history of the land and its inhabitants.

2.2.3 Spatial Imagination as an Act of Resistance and Hope

Katsuya's position as an external observer allows him to have a different agency, one that belongs to an imaginative realm, compared to the protesters who are instead physically directed towards what is perceived as the locus of power in the Okinawa Prefecture. Katsuya attributes a meaning to the American military bases that overcomes the political discourse on land requisition and American occupation, and works in juxtaposition with his family's narratives of pre-war Okinawa as a necessary element of the Okinawan Village-Military Outpost binary system. In Holzkamp's words, meaning-making by human beings inserted in the societal context turns into the possibility of action, or – in the specific case of Katsuya – the possibility of transformation of an occupied space into an Okinawan belonging (Brockmeier 2009, 2222). Hence, narrative imagination becomes the form and practice of human agency through which Katsuya reconsiders the land occupied by American forces as Okinawan and seizes – at least conceptually – this space from the colonisers to create geographical support for his family's storytelling. However, Katsuya's reflections and mental (de)construction of the military space is still triggered by his physical presence along the perimeters of the American bases, which is in turn determined by the consequences of Okinawan counteraction to the military presence. Katsuya witnesses American life within the military borders only when he is stuck in traffic and observes what is going on – and looks like – the world inside the bases. In the first part of the novel, a residential area inside Camp Foster is described as follows:

> It was a Marine Corps base called Camp Foster. When he got to the car's line waiting for the traffic light, Katsuya looked at the base. In a corner of a residential area paved with lawns, the garden was illuminated by dusk, and the family of an American soldier was having a barbecue party. A laughing father was watching a pale blonde boy of about five years old and a girl toddling around. Their mother stood up from a white chair, reached out to the girl and picked her up (Medoruma 2017, 42).

The scene would be familiar in the outskirts of any American city. However, it seems out of place in the Okinawan context, so much so that Katsuya feels as if he is 'watching a scene from a movie' (42).

Katsuya, who can be rightly defined as a third-generation Okinawan war survivor, experiences what Kyle Ikeda (2012, 39) defines as *geographically-proximate postmemory*, where the transmission of war memories provides a layered understanding of the war only in the population who did not experience the war only in conjunction with the daily proximity with trauma sites. As a result, Katsuya conceives the American bases on two different levels: the first represents a militarised environment, hence recalling historical memories shared in the Okinawan community of the war period, which is the same meaning attached to war sites according to Ikeda. The second level is instead referred to as the space reconfiguration of Okinawan land actualised by the United States during the occupation period. Katsuya's gaze towards the daily life of an American family and the character's positioning in an outside space create quasi-oppositional connotations with the inside – peaceful versus riotous, everyday life versus extraordinary contestation. These elements perfectly inscribe the scene in a 'contact zone' as it is defined by Mary Louise Pratt (1991, 34), namely '[a] social space[s] where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths'. What Katsuya is witnessing is not just the life of an American serviceman and his family, it is the very potentiality of the American military in the capacity of colonisers to seize and transform the land of its Okinawan political subjects. The space along the barber-wire fences becomes a contact point between American and Okinawan people, who merge together in the possibility of looking at each other's world, but ultimately reinforce the geographical and cultural separation, and the power dynamics between colonisers and subalterns.

Katsuya is powerless in front of the space division of Okinawa and, like his parents, reiterates the impossibility of changing the geopolitical status of the island. His only act of rebellion towards the American authority is showing the middle finger to two American servicemen laughing at Okinawan people stuck in traffic (Medoruma 2017, 186). Nonetheless, Katsuya, through his grandfather's

storytelling, is still able to imagine and remap the area as it was before the requisition by the United States:

> Sendan trees were planted around the village market, and their shadows were always crowded with villagers who used to buy and sell goods and talk to each other. […] Near the market there was a place of worship to which the villagers were devoted, and a giant banyan tree spreading its branches. A wall of coral taken from the sea and a sweet water spring. A forest of Fukuki trees. Sacred groves where *kaminchuu* used to sing and pray all night long (184).

Elements from Okinawan folklore are placed in the space where now the American military base is built. The quasi-mythological, atemporal description of the Okinawan village contrasts the real-life depiction of the American suburb as it was constructed inside the military base. As Katsuya nostalgically remarks, 'everything has now vanished inside the military base, everything turned into a space for runways, storehouses, residential buildings and lawns' (184). It is worth noting that the American narrative for what concerns the land in which military bases were built differs from historical accounts of the post-war period. Land appropriation affected 240,000 Okinawan people, who were driven out of their homes and native villages to make place for the construction of US bases (Sellek 2003, 82). However, as previously mentioned in the Introduction chapter, US officials have repeatedly stated that the bases were built in the middle of 'rice fields', rejecting the Okinawan population's claims for land rights (Nishiyama 2022a, 4). In quoting İrvin Cemil Schick (1999, 49), Nishiyama (2022a, 5) argues that 'the cartographic production of ignorance is "the enabling of colonialism" because it makes certain parts of the world lands that are "awaiting discovery and eventual appropriation"'. In opposition to these claims, Okinawan landowners mapped the original position of their native villages and houses within the US bases borders in an attempt to create

material evidence of the cancelled Okinawan space.[15] Anthropologist Miyazaki Hirokazu (2004, 22) discusses the struggle of indigenous Fijians reclaiming their land and observes that '[…] for the Fijians I knew, as for Block, hope was a method of knowledge', or more specifically, 'a method of self-knowledge, that is, knowledge about who they were'. It is hope, not with the pessimistic connotations given by Medoruma but understood in Ernst Bloch's terms as what has 'not-yet' come and as an immanent arrival (9), that works as a propeller for the claims of Okinawans and their opposition to the 'cartographic production of ignorance' with their cartographic self-knowledge of the lands they used to inhabit. By the same token, Katsuya's description of the Okinawan village, based on his grandfather's storytelling, challenges the American narration and serves as a reminder of the abuses suffered by the Okinawan people. At the same time, despite his resignation to the island's socio-political conditions, Katsuya not only reminisces about a distant past but also transforms the landscape in front of him into a space of endless potentialities, of which being the site for an American military base is far from being the only possible outcome.

Katsuya's gaze proposes an alternative to the colonial establishment portrayed by the militaristic landscape built by the cooperation of the American and Japanese governments. His reinterpretation of Okinawan space as a prototypical pre-war village asserts the local communities as righteous owners of the land, hence making the American army an out-of-place presence in the context of the Okinawa islands. The description of the American suburbs within the barbed-wire fences of the military base stresses how the American lifestyle and cultural sphere clash with the tropical landscape surrounding them. Medoruma's depiction of the multiform properties of the Okinawan space underlines the bond between ancestors and descendants as a quasi-mythical place that returns in Katsuya's imaginative realm and in his grandfather's storytelling of the pre-war village. In

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[15] See: Nelson 2008, Chapter 4, for a detailed account of the public hearings that took place in Okinawa in 1997 where village maps drawn by *hansen jinushi* ('anti-war landowners') were instrumental to support their claims and conduct an effective opposition to the Japanese-American policies.

this case, the Okinawan space in the way it is culturally charged as a foundational intergenerational element cannot escape its opposition to the rationalisation of American bases, which on the contrary propose cultural values and norms that fully represent the presence of external authority in its militaristic and colonial form. However, the Okinawan space does not only filter and reproduce the relationship between locals and the American military in an antagonistic fashion. In the next section, I will discuss how space and its narrative, specifically addressing the conceptualisation of natural landscapes, can be explored as a connection point between Okinawan people and the American military, and how it can enable a reversal of the colonisers-colonised dynamics at play in contemporary Okinawan society.

2.3 In the Woods of Myths: Counterposing American and Okinawan Narratives in the Yanbaru Forest

2.3.1 Clashing (Post-)War Narratives in the Okinawan Forest

The Oxford English Dictionary gives as a first definition of myth 'traditional story […], which embodies and provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon'. Japanese sociologist Tanji Miyume (2006, 19) discusses how myths, in the Okinawan context, are used as a vehicle to consolidate the bond between members of protest communities through oral communication. In the same fashion, here I will employ the concept of myth as a collection of elements and stories that rely exclusively on oral storytelling, for which discussions about their truth or falsehood are irrelevant, and that is an expression of a community – Okinawan or American – and their sense of aggregation. Again, Tanji (20) notes how myth and history can co-exist, as fictional elements are often merged with historical facts, as to embody social and cultural forces that allow specific communities to gain political leverage on the territory. In the case of *The Rainbow Bird*, myths cannot be disentangled from the natural landscape as it is perceived by Okinawan and American

communities, and oral storytelling serves the purpose of claiming a space as their own due to the cultural meaning attributed to it by communities' narratives. N. Scott Momaday (1974, cited in Basso 1988, 102) observed that human beings appropriate the landscape, act and think in relation to, about and upon it, and construct its meanings through spoken words. As such, quoting Keith Basso (103), 'landscapes and the places that fill them become tools for the imagination', instruments for the myths to find their geographical location. In the context of the Okinawan anti-colonial struggle, landscapes and the narratives attributed to them are empowering tools for the building of communities and their identities, for affirming one's agency and maintaining or subverting positions within the colonial hierarchy.

In Okinawa, the protection of forests – and more broadly, the protection of the local natural environment and its inhabitants – is central to the activities of the indigenous protest communities against the post-Second World War reconfiguration of the Okinawan space by external actors. The main goal of such demonstrations is mainly environmental in its scope and purpose, but their rhetoric, the sociohistorical layers that enabled the birth of these activities, and the social actors involved call for a reframing that includes as an analytical tool the indigenous perception of the relatedness between human beings and nature and the implied agency of both the parties involved. Forests are complex environments where human and non-human actors interact and collaborate in creating a multiplicity of natural systems and narratives. Historian Tessa Morris-Suzuki can help us illuminate the plurality of meanings attached to forests:

> Forests, even more than woods, are 'lovely, dark and deep'; places where sunlight slants in delicate rays through the canopy; where hollows in trees shelter birds and nocturnal mammals; where multitudes of nameless insects pursue intricate lives amidst decaying leaf mould. Forests are places of fear and enchantment where ogres lurk, children are stolen away by malevolent spirits, and hermits perform rituals of ascetic purification. From another perspective, forests are treasure houses

of unmapped natural resources, medicine chests of cures for human disease. […] A forest, in other words, is at once a natural and cultural phenomenon (Morris-Suzuki 2013, 228-229).

The Okinawa forest as well is constituted by a series of clashing narratives that relate to the post-war colonial establishment and the struggle between Okinawans and external authorities, but also to the war period and the traumatic experience of indigenous communities, and again to local folklore, rituals, mythic storytelling. Central to the struggle of Okinawan communities is the presence of US military bases and the environmental risk that hosting such bases poses for local citizens and natural landscapes. The results of the American exploitation of the Okinawan environment are visible in the reorganisation of urban and natural spaces in the prefecture. Entire portions of pristine forests were seized by American authorities in the immediate post-war period and rendered survival training camps for American soldiers – particularly active during the 1950s and 1960s due to the concomitant Vietnam War (1955 – 1975) – and a storage location for nuclear weapons (Rabson 2013). On top of that, those forests host caves (*gama* in the local language) that were employed by the local population as shelter during the Second World War and became sites for remembrance for later generations, as well as sacred groves (*utaki*), places were religious rituals for local villages were performed and as such a central element for indigenous communities (Rots 2019a). Some of these places are located within the boundaries of the bases, and so rendered inaccessible to the local population unless the American military grants them access. In this sense, the Okinawan forest is intrinsically connected to local communities as a place where indigenous cultural practices and collective memories are enacted and reiterated, intimately affecting the indigenous understanding of the natural landscape, its historical and cultural layers, and its significance as a bonding element among the members of the Okinawan community.

The forest, specifically the Yanbaru forest in the northern region of Okinawa Island, has been the setting and arguably active character of a number of fictional works written by Medoruma. Because

of the geographical position of Medoruma's hometown Nakijin and the importance of the Yanbaru

forest as a shelter for local communities during the Battle of Okinawa, his storytelling frequently

represents the intimate linkage between indigenous characters and the Okinawan forest

environment.[16]

The Yanbaru region in the northern montane part of Okinawa Island is characterised by a subtropical

rainforest of around 300 square kilometres in area. The forest owes its importance to the presence

of specialised endemic animals and plants, most of which are endangered species due to the human

activity surrounding the forest (Itō, Miyagi, and Ota 2000, 305). The Yanbaru region is caught in the

crossfire of domestic and external authorities, whose activities are undermining the delicate balance

of the endemic biodiversity of the territory. The Northern Training Center (NTC), built in October

1975 by the American military government, occupies circa 7824 hectares of the Yanbaru forest,

according to a 2013 estimate, which includes two northern Okinawan villages – Kunigami and

Higashi (Takahashi 2018, 134). Noise pollution due to military activities disrupts the lives of endemic

species in the forest, further endangering their existence. As an example of this, the construction of

helipads – and the subsequent noise generated – disturbs the breeding season of the Okinawa

woodpecker (*noguchigera*), a critically endangered species indigenous to Okinawan forests, which

led to a halt to military works in the period between March and June. However, the area is employed

for military training as well, which means that, even if the construction of helipads is interrupted,

the frequent use of Osprey aircraft still affects the lives of the endemic species in the Yanbaru forest

(Medoruma 2020, 251). On top of that, the construction of helipads necessitates the deforestation

of considerably large sections of pristine forest areas, which further transforms the natural

landscape and influences the lives of animals, plants and human communities alike (Ikeo and Ogawa

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[16] Among the most prominent fictional works written by Medoruma where the forest assumes a relevant role, we can cite the novel *In the Woods of Memory* (discussed in Chapter 1), 'The Crying Wind' (Chapter 3), 'Walking a Street Named Peace' (Chapter 4) and *The Rainbow Bird* (here discussed).

2010, 379). On the other hand, even the forest area that is not posed under American jurisdiction faces environmental threats, as the national and prefectural governments continue their clear-cutting undergrowth activities, despite the opposition of local protest communities and international organisations (Itō, Miyagi, and Ota 2000, 305).

The Yanbaru region is also the home of any towns and villages that are regarded as economically vulnerable, especially in comparison to bigger cities in the southern area of Okinawa Island, which arguably represent the financial and political centre of the prefecture. Local communities are forbidden to make use of the majority of the forest area as the territory is either owned by the American military or administered by the Japanese government as a state forest (Takahashi 2018, 134). In addition to this, the everyday life of local residents, centred in the tiny community of Takae – of which population was around one hundred and sixty in 2010, is affected by continuous military activities that produce acoustic pollution and visually remind the war period. As one of the participants in the Takae anti-helipads sit-in protest commented, '[t]he helicopters are so close that we can see, from inside our homes, the faces of the American pilots when they take off from the existing helipads' (Ikeo and Ogawa 2010, 379). The constant presence of military noise in proximity to Okinawan villages impacts the health of the local population, considering especially the distinctive and possibly particular situation in Okinawa where the military footprint never disappeared from the prefecture since the Second World War, dooming Okinawan communities to be stuck in a perennial immediate post-war. According to a study conducted in 2010 by Aritsuka Ryoji, head of the Psychosomatic Internal Medicine Department at Kyodo Hospital in Okinawa, and Toyama Fujiko, formerly in the Okinawan Prefectural College of Nursing, it was noted an increased number of late-onset PTSD cases among Okinawan people – survivors in the Battle of Okinawa, so 75 years or older at the time of the study – living in proximity to the bases, aggravated by 'the noise of overflying military aircraft operating from the American bases' (Cox and Carlyle 2017, 123).

Another research by acoustic scientist Hiramatsu Kōzō concludes that 'there [is] an important link between psycho-somatic conditions, acoustic experience and the symbolic significance of aircraft' (Cox 2013, 59). The construction of the helipads might as well affect the entire population of Okinawa Prefecture since one of the significant effect of this is the 'increased possibility of contamination of the reservoir in Takae', which is the primary source of drinking water across the island (Ikeo and Ogawa 2010, 379).

Narratives surrounding the Yanbaru forest are almost entirely based on the military presence and a war legacy that is still central to the memories and storytelling of Okinawan communities. Yanbaru is still remembered as the place where the Okinawan population took shelter during the first month of the Battle of Okinawa when the conflict between the American and Japanese armies was particularly gruesome in the northern part of Okinawa Island before moving towards the prefectural capital of Naha in the south. On this point, Medoruma connects the Battle of Okinawa to the construction of helipads and how it affects the lives of Okinawan woodpeckers, stating that:

> The nesting period of Okinawan woodpeckers, which goes from March to June, is coincidental with the months when, 68 years ago, the fierce Battle of Okinawa took place. If you look back at the period when the Battle of Okinawa was fought, it also includes the dates of April, 28th and May, 15th. After having become a 'sacrificial stone' during the Battle of Okinawa, it was on an April, 28th that Okinawa was thrown away, and it was after a May, 15th that the Japanese Self-Defence Force was deployed in Okinawa in addition to the American military.[17] Even after 68 years, Okinawa is still threatened by the military bases and the war. It is fundamental to recognise this if we want to change this reality (Medoruma 2020, 253).

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[17] April, 28th 1952 was the day when the Treaty of San Francisco came into force, ending the American occupation of mainland Japan and officially putting Okinawa under the jurisdiction of the United States. This date is still widely regarded by Okinawan people as a 'day of insult'. May, 15th 1972 marked the end of the American administration in Okinawa and the reversion of the prefecture to Japan.

In the post-war period as well, the Yanbaru region was closely linked to the participation of the American army in military conflicts, as Okinawa was gradually becoming a cornerstone in the Pacific for its increased strategic importance in maintaining the balance among world powers during the Cold War. The Yanbaru forest has been employed since then as a survival training camp, the only one owned by the American military in the world, and has been particularly active during the Vietnam War when American servicemen were trained in Yanbaru before being deployed in the conflict. During the same period, the Okinawan forest was the testing ground for a number of chemical weapons that were eventually employed in Vietnam, in the context of the infamous Project 112. Former marine Don Heathcote, assigned to Project 112, stated that he 'was assigned for approximately 30 days to a crew in the northern jungles of Okinawa' where he 'sprayed foliage with chemicals from drums with different-colored faces'. The spraying of such chemicals – Heathcote believes they were experimental herbicides which include a forerunner to the toxic defoliant Agent Orange infamously utilised in the Vietnam War – 'killed large swaths of the jungle' and 'took an equally devastating toll on his own health' (Mitchell 2012, 2). Local residents were involved in the training as well, actively participating in the simulations of jungle battles conducted by the US Marine Corps. In this mobilisation of the local population, the Okinawan villagers were required to play the roles of locals in Vietnam and were placed in a simulated village called 'the Third World Village' (Takahashi 2018, 134). In so doing, the Yanbaru region gradually became a militarised zone where both indigenous communities and external actors were involved in a structured – although simulated – circuit of violence. The Yanbaru forest and its dualism as a military training camp and indigenous natural landscape stress, even more, the hierarchical system and the colonial dynamics intercurrent between American authorities and local residents, and transform the Okinawan forest into a space where instances of environmentalism and anti-militarism are central in the anti-colonial struggle for the indigenous protest communities.

2.3.2 Anti-Colonial Indigenous Agencies of the Yanbaru Forest

In the narrative structure of *The Rainbow Bird*, the Yanbaru forest affects the characters interacting with it precisely because of its multilayered set of meanings that connotates its relationship with the indigenous community. Katsuya's first contact with the historical significance of the Okinawan natural landscape goes back to his middle school year, when his social studies lessons were the only escape Katsuya had from being bullied by Higa and being socially isolated by the rest of his classmates, as the teacher was the only one to treat him as a human being (Medoruma 2017, 115). During one of the lessons, the teacher starts explaining about the Battle of Okinawa, the American military bases and the complex relationship between the United States and the prefecture. Kinjo (2012, 33) stresses the role of teachers in local anti-base movements, arguing how Katsuya's social studies teacher is performing as an activist, overcoming his nominal role as a lecturer. Katsuya himself notices that the teacher's intent seemed to be scaring his students and instilling into them a sense of repulsion towards the American soldiers, their bases and the war (Medoruma 2017, 115). However, contrary to the teacher's expectations, Katsuya's reaction is excitement, triggered by the imagery of American soldiers dispersed in the middle of the Yanbaru forest. The following story, set during the Vietnam War period, left a vivid impression on Katsuya's young mind:

> When the soldiers scattered in the mountains one by one, they lived in the woods for over a month without any equipment other than an army knife. They learned how to hide in nature and techniques such as scraping the carotid artery of other people in an instant or crushing their throat with just their fingers. They would catch small snakes and birds to eat them raw, swallow frogs alive, and identify edible and medicinal plants. They would endure hunger, sharpen their senses to feel the enemy's presence, hide in the shade of trees, bushes of grass and mud, and become one with the forest (114-115).

The story recounts the survival training to which American soldiers were subjected in the Yanbaru forest in preparation for the Vietnam War. The soldiers are portrayed as animals whose only method

to remain alive is to exert violence on other living beings, the same treatment that would be destined for their enemies once they are dispatched to the battlefield. This short excerpt calls for two considerations to be made in regard to the relationship between locals and external authorities, here colonised and colonisers. I argue that the teacher's narration presents a hidden hope for the American soldiers to be victims of the forest, which is a representation of Okinawa as a community inherently intertwined with its natural landscape. Frantz Fanon (1963, 50) describes the colony as a political entity based on systematic violence, and further explains that 'for the colonized, life can only materialize from the rotting cadaver of the colonist', and it is according to this very understanding that the American soldiers are observed and narrated with the implicit expectation of their death. On another note, the teacher dehumanises the soldiers, making them 'animal-like' for the political purpose of pushing his students to hate them and the system they represent in Okinawa. For French-Tunisian writer Albert Memmi (1991, 22), the dehumanising process is often employed by the colonisers on the colonised to exonerate themselves from the exploitation and violence mechanisms that are the very foundation of colonialism. In this case, the Okinawan character is reappropriating and reversing the same discourse. The teacher turns this rhetorical device against the colonisers to distance himself from the violence, deflecting the responsibility for the soldiers' death on themselves and on the natural environment of the Yanbaru forest instead.

The Okinawan forest represents for Katsuya a chance to get a new start in school and be rehabilitated in the teachers' and schoolmates' eyes. On a Sunday morning, Katsuya is asked by the teacher if he would join his school group for a day trip to the Yanbaru forest: this is an occasion for Katsuya to bond with his classmates outside the school environment using the opportunity of Higa's absence (Medoruma 2017, 151-152). The forest's natural beauty amazes Katsuya as 'the fresh green piercing and erupting from the hard bark of trees had not only yellow-green, but also golden, yellow, and reddish-brown leaves, and it bounced off the light brilliantly' and '[t]he mountains seemed to

rise and boil through the force of the spouting trees' (156). When the boy and his teacher reach the highest point in the forest, Katsuya perceives the 'countless lives' emerging from the green landscape around him. Yet, it is only when the teacher confirms that the same forest was once that survival training camp for American soldiers that Yanbaru assumes more complex connotations, suddenly becoming a 'forest that possesses deep, mystical shades of colour' (157). Katsuya's attitude towards the natural beauty of the Okinawan forest is enhanced by the implied violence suggested by the narratives about survival training. In his discussion on violence in colonial environments, Fanon (1963, 93) argues that 'the practice of violence binds them [the colonised] together as a whole, […] a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upward in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning'. In the case of *The Rainbow Bird* and its depiction of the Yanbaru forest, I argue that violence constitutes instead a tool that brings together not only the members of the Okinawan community but colonisers and colonised people altogether through the intersection of multiple narratives and meanings assigned to the natural environment.

Katsuya's understanding of his position within Okinawan society and the violence underpinning his working and personal relationships can be traced back to his contact with the narratives surrounding the Yanbaru forest and, more broadly speaking, the recurrent transmission of war memories and war-related experiences. In a later scene of the novel, Katsuya, crushed by the anxiety of dealing with Higa after Mayu jeopardised their crime schemes, takes drugs to help sleep and get a break from reality. While waiting for the pills to take effect, Katsuya starts watching a movie about a team investigating a meteorite crash in the Soviet hinterlands, where the five members of the team are all overcome by the same hallucination. In the scene, Medoruma portrays how Katsuya experiences the interrelation between the natural landscape and violence, placing the Okinawan character in a self-induced hallucinatory state where reality and movie scenes are blended together and indistinguishable from each other:

Katsuya wasn't sure if what he was seeing was the movie image of the investigative team's hallucination or his own drug-induced vision. His body was heavy and slack. He might even have been dreaming. Sound and color shudder and bleed as the vision flows onward, human against human, human against other organisms, mammals and birds, fish and insects and plants, all killing each other, then breeding then killing again. […] In the end the hallucinating members of the investigative team kill each other, their fallen bodies left to be devoured by animals and insects and bacteria. The last surviving member takes his own life. A flock of birds peck at his corpse before winging off between the dark clouds and toppled trees (Medoruma 2017, 166-167).[18]

In this excerpt, Katsuya's vision is rewired through his own memories and reimagination of the American soldiers' survival training camp story he was told by his social studies teacher. The narratives on death and destruction in the Soviet/Okinawan forest experience by Katsuya connect on an intimate level human and non-human actors participating in the natural environment, in a cycle of mutually exerted violence where no one can ultimately dominate each other. In the Taiwanese author Wu Ming-Yi's novel *Fùyǎn rén* (*The Man With the Compound Eyes*, 2011), the compound eyes' vision stands for 'the need to imaginatively transcend and multiply the human perspective, to construct new, posthuman perception and aesthetics sensitive enough to register the complex interconnections of our environment' (Prystash 2018, 511). Likewise, Katsuya's hallucination proposes the Yanbaru forest as an environment where human perception is decentralised and rendered a fragment of a reality that actively involves an intricate network of agencies mutually affecting human characters, animals and plants as essential elements composing the forest landscape. In the Okinawan colonial framework, and explicitly returning to the social studies teacher's story, the Yanbaru forest becomes a place where the hierarchy between human –

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[18] Translated by Sam Malissa (2018).

the American soldiers training for the Vietnam War – and indigenous actors – here represented by the natural environment – is subverted through the exercise of violence.

2.3.3 The Rainbow Bird

Violence is foundational to the way the interrelation of actors in the Okinawan forest is narrated, as well as it is implied in the dynamics of storytelling that shape the cycles of space reappropriation between colonisers and colonised. It is constitutive as well of the legends surrounding the Yanbaru forest, narrated by the characters in the novel, that revolves around the eponymous rainbow bird, a mythological creature that has an even more symbolic significance for Mayu since the rainbow bird is tattooed on her back. The bird is portrayed for the first time by Medoruma through Katsuya's eyes when he finds out about the tattoo on the woman's body. The description goes as follows:

> […] [T]he rainbow bird carved on Mayu's back was floating vividly on her burning skin. The bird, its beak pointing diagonally upwards towards her left shoulder, was wrapped in red, yellow, blue, green and purple feathers. Its rainbow-coloured wings spread over Mayu's shoulder blades. A long tail flowed through her waist and hips, its decorative feathers on the head sprinkled with a powder of light and formed an arc towards Mayu's neck (Medoruma 2017, 25).

The beauty of the rainbow bird tattoo is ruined by the scars of cigarette burns on Mayu's back, which gives away her past as a victim of bullying in her school years. On the other hand, Katsuya notices that one of the cigarette burns near the bird's beak makes it look like the rainbow bird is carrying a gem, blurring the border between physical violence and artistic beauty. Mayu's body, as the Yanbaru forest, is the place where conceptually and geographically the rainbow bird resides. If we return to the definition of the Okinawan forest as a traumascape, Mayu's body can similarly be remapped as a site of past violence where traumatic events are silenced, and only their marks remain as evidence of this legacy. Likewise, Katsuya, once he encountered Higa and was ostracised by his classmates, found salvation in the Yanbaru forest and its storytelling regarding the survival training camp, and

can only process the aesthetic beauty and vividness of the natural landscape through the lenses of violence. Katsuya's perception of the rainbow bird tattoo allows us to draw a parallel between the scene where the rainbow bird makes its first appearance on Mayu's body and Katsuya's first encounter with the Yanbaru forest on top of the mountain when he was a middle school boy. As the colours of the Yanbaru forest become brighter as soon as Katsuya realises the implied violence attached to the natural landscape, so the rainbow bird tattoo appears more vivid as it is attached to Mayu as a body that is exerting violence. In fact, Katsuya discovers her tattoo while Mayu is beating a naked client of hers as a form of retaliation for being a schoolteacher and buying sex from girls the same age as his students (25). In another scene, Katsuya observes Mayu's naked body in the aftermath of Higa's killing: looking at the tattoo on her back, Katsuya feels like 'the rainbow bird [is] moving its wings slowly to float into the sky', and, for a moment, imagines the bird being really alive (203). On the contrary, the colours of the rainbow bird tattoo seem to fade away when Katsuya looks at Mayu in her sleep, in a catatonic phase induced by the drugs given by Higa to control the women under his command better. As such, the rainbow bird embodies an immanent force that is catalysed through Mayu's naked body, an indigenous entity whose violence is exerted indiscriminately as part of the dangerous natural landscape.

The rainbow bird returns as a phantom bird that is said to inhabit the real Yanbaru forest. The existence of this indigenous animal is narrated among the members of the American army and transmitted within the community of soldiers taking part in the survival training camp. However, once again, Katsuya comes into contact with the American myth through the storytelling of his social studies professor. The story goes as follows:

> There is a phantom bird in the Yanbaru forest. It is about the size of a pigeon, it has a long tail of
> nearly a meter and decorative feathers on its head. The American soldiers would call it *Rainbow Bird*
> because its entire body is covered with colourful feathers. If you happen to see the bird in the woods,

you can be sure to return alive no matter how fierce the battlefield you put yourself in is. The soldiers

believe so (145).

As the Yanbaru forest itself, the rainbow bird is posited in an intersection between its aesthetic

beauty and its inherent attachment to narratives of war and violence. Furthermore, even in the

American military storytelling – in which it is supposed to be a soteriological figure and a bearer of

hope, the phantom bird still belongs to a circuit of secrecy and suspect among the American troops,

as it is presented in a twofold position of bringing both life and death:

> But I don't know if anyone has ever seen the bird. If you tell others that you have seen it, the miracle
>
> brought by the bird will disappear. So even if someone actually sees it, no one will say it, so I can't
>
> really prove its existence. But there is another reason: the man who sees the bird would survive for
>
> sure, but conversely, the rest of his unit would be wiped out. The only way for the others to survive
>
> is to kill the man who saw the rainbow bird. For this reason, no one who has seen the rainbow bird
>
> ever spoke about it. That's why you can't prove the existence of this bird. That's why it's a phantom
>
> bird (145-146).

The rainbow bird creates another dichotomy besides the one expressed directly in the text, namely

the hope-violence binary system, which fits into the cycle of natural space reappropriation and

meaning-making between colonisers and colonised. On the one hand, the rainbow bird – translated

in Japanese as *niji no tori*, but first and foremost introduced with a katakana transliteration that

aims to emulate its English pronunciation – belongs to the American community as the main

character around which their oral narratives revolve. On the other, the rainbow bird is posed as an

exotic creature, an indigenous beast mysterious and indecipherable that is inherently attributable

to the native fauna of the island. In this regard, it is worth noticing that the rainbow bird closely

resembles the equivalent species in the Yanbaru forest fauna, the Okinawan woodpecker, reversing

the position of the bird from being a victim of colonial mechanisms to being a hostile character who

subverts the hierarchy controlling the right of life and death over the American soldiers interacting

with the forest environment. Against Michel Foucault (1978, 139)'s suggestion that 'death is power's limit, the moment that escapes it', arguing that the biopolitical management exerted by the state over its citizens can be defeated with the act of dying, Mbembe's essay 'Necropolitics' (2003) shows that state – here colonial – power does not stop at the act of making life, but includes as well the right to expose to death and administer the remains of the deceased within its infrastructural warfare. Ultimately, Mbembe (2003, 37) asserts that it is only through the complete annihilation of the body – meaning the dissolution of entire corporeal beings – that the body 'escape[s] the state of siege and occupation', and further argues that '[s]elf-annihilation becomes an exercise of agency against the state' (Saito Nakaganeku 2022, 573). Here, I suggest that the rainbow bird – and, broadly speaking, the nature in the Yanbaru forest – reverses and reappropriates the right to expose to death and annihilate the colonial body, posing an alternative to decolonisation that does not involve self-annihilation as the only choice for escaping the colonial establishment.

However, the Yanbaru forest offers another solution for dismantling the colonial hierarchy between locals and external authorities, in assessing the forest as a site where locals and American communities compete with each other to appropriate the natural space through collective narratives and memories. On one side, the storytelling surrounding the rainbow bird and the military training strengthens the bond among members of the American army against the unknown natural environment around them. On the other, the presence of caves in the Yanbaru forest that were employed as shelters by Okinawans during the Second World War reconnects the forest to indigenous war memories, and in so doing, displays a salient sense of victimhood towards the American occupiers that is foundational of the local understanding of post-war Okinawan society. It is a conflict between oppositional ways of being-in-the-world, which, according to Paul Ricoeur (1979, cited in Basso, 1988, 100), is delineated precisely by the physical features of the landscape with which communities interact.

Nonetheless, *The Rainbow Bird* proposes yet another form of participation in the colonial landscape, where the salient features of the environment, such as the existence of the rainbow bird and the dangerous nature of the forest, become a contact point between American and Okinawan communities. In Katsuya's eyes, masochistically attracted by the circuit of violence and death in the social studies teacher's story, the narratives surrounding the Yanbaru forest exhibit a sympathetic view of the American soldiers. Jens Brockmeier (2009, 228) suggests that 'the point of narrative […] is that it articulates the human capability to permanently undermine cultural norms and restrictions'. In Katsuya's understanding, the sympathy he shows towards the American soldier presented in the teacher's storytelling debases the underpinnings of the colonial establishment and, in doing so, wipes out the hierarchy between locals and colonisers. Furthermore, I argue that the American military narratives and their myth-making posit an intersection where colonisers and colonised articulate a shared sense of victimhood expressed through the hope-violence dualistic meaning of the rainbow bird. In the last part of the novel, Katsuya escapes with Mayu after killing their boss Higa. At this point, Katsuya deliberately decides to go towards the Yanbaru forest to hide, instead of taking the opposite direction and escaping from the prefecture through the airport (Medoruma 2017, 214). Katsuya's choice echoes the experience of Okinawans during the Battle of Okinawa, where they were forced to hide in the Yanbaru forest to escape the American and mainland Japanese bombings. However it also ultimately reconnects to the American soldiers surviving in the training camps. Literary theorist Denis Donoghue (1998, 16) argues that sympathy can be reached only to the extent one can imagine being that person. Here, Katsuya and Mayu fulfil the role of the American soldiers looking for the soteriological rainbow bird, and through it, the salvation that cannot be achieved in the Okinawan urban landscape. In this sense, once again, the Yanbaru forest can be conceptualised as a contact zone between colonisers and locals, not as a border where the role of aggressors and dominated are crystallised, but rather as a space in which perpetual dynamics

of requisition and reappropriation of culture-bound landscapes are continuously renegotiated by the social actors interacting with it.

2.4 Women in the American Village: Violence and Sexual Encounters as Gendered Agency

2.4.1 Victimisation and Women's Agency in Okinawan Literature

As I mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Medoruma's short story 'Hope' left a mark in the history of contemporary Okinawan literature for its provocative depiction of Okinawan protests. The story, narrated from the perspective of a mysterious Okinawan individual who committed the crime of killing an American child, raised questions in Okinawa and mainland Japan regarding the anti-base protests and the role of both central and local governments on the matter. Even more, it showed that a violent outcome was possible in the prefecture despite the self-proclaimed pacifism of the Okinawan people. Scholars and literary critics commented on the short story highlighting its critical attitude towards the protestors, who are defined by the narrator as 'maggots who clustered around the shit of land rents and subsidy monies' (Medoruma 1999, 7). Medoruma's iconoclasm echoes in the comments of Chandralal Dileep (2006, 9), who argues that the author does not hide his disgust about the imagery of a tropical, healing island that is often portrayed in describing Okinawa, concealing an otherwise complicated geopolitical situation where Okinawan people are continuously troubled by the American presence. By the same token, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak discusses the possibility that 'Hope' can convey subalterns' political messages through violent methods. In this case, the killing of the American child and the eventual suicide of the narrator can be regarded as a 'plea to the political other to recognize equivalence, to respond, and, finally, to end oppression' (2009, 616). While the early literary criticism focused mainly on the association between terrorism and central power – on which discussions became extremely urgent in the

aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks, later analysis moved onto a more gendered perspective of the short story: Susan Bouterey (2011) notices that the narrator in 'Hope', although being automatically regarded as a man, is never described by the author in gendered terms, hence underlining a common misconception in literary criticism that only men can have an active role in the protest environment and commit such a crime. In a similar vein, Jeong Yujin (2010, 393) describes the oppositional relationship between 'women who were hurt' and 'men who cannot bear it any further', an argument that resonates with Michael Molasky (1999)'s discussion on Japanese occupation literature written by female authors, showing how an Okinawan gendered hierarchy shapes the reaction of the local population to the American oppression and what kind of agency is normatively attributed to each gender. However, Medoruma's short story admittedly does not develop further the women's perspective on participating in Okinawan political protests, nor unveils the psychological backlash of killing a child, precisely because the gender of the narrator is not presented to the reader.

The rhetoric surrounding the victimisation of Okinawan women has a long history in post-war Okinawa, as it has been used as an instrument by local institutions and public intellectuals, in one form or another, to gain the sympathy of mainland Japanese people and international audiences to gain leverage in their struggle against the American occupation, and later the duopoly maintained by the United States and mainland Japan. Latest in this series, the 1995 schoolgirl rape incident was instrumental for its powerful symbolic capacity as a means for contrasting colonial dynamics. As well as prior narratives of Okinawan victimhood, most notably the Himeyuri students' tragedy during the Battle of Okinawa, the incident was exploited to portray Okinawa as a sacrificed schoolgirl/daughter (Angst 2001, 243). To put it in Angst's words, '[the schoolgirl's] rape was transformed into a symbol of national subjugation with its own narrative', where 'media coverage of Okinawa spoke metaphorically of the rape in terms of the rapacious behaviour of imperialist powers acting on a

historically marginalized population' (246-247). The woman's body is so perceived as a synecdoche

to express the Okinawan subaltern position towards the Japanese and American administrations, a

transformation that is not only politically defined but transfers its overtones to the literary

representation of women in the macro-context of Okinawan literature as well. Most famously,

Ōshiro Tatsuhiro's 'Kakuteru pātī' ('The Cocktail Party', 1967) portrays the rape incident of the

protagonist's daughter as a pivotal element to unravel the intricate relationship between Okinawa,

Japanese, American, and Chinese people, and the clash of their different understanding of war

memories and responsibilities. Besides the very last scene – where, Bhowmik (2008, 103) argues,

the girl reclaims her right to have a voice projecting herself onto the landscape in a reenactment of

the rape scene, the novella is narrated from her father's point of view, focusing more on the

humiliation suffered by the family, or to be more precise Okinawan men in her family, rather than

on the actual victim of the incident. 'The Cocktail Party''s daughter rises to a representational model

of the Okinawan body violated by the American military, and in such a way is instrumentalised to

criticise the American colonial power in Okinawa. In his controversial essay 'Third-world Literature

in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', Fredric Jameson (1986, 69) argues that, because the so-called

third world is primarily defined by its experience of colonialism and imperialism, over-valorization

of the political concept of 'nation' and an exclusive emphasis on national as ideological to the

colonisers' setting are the only possible attributes to analyse the Third World literature. It is so

theoretically posited that 'all third-world texts are necessarily […] to be read as […] national

allegories', as it is aptly summarised by Aijaz Ahmad (1987, 5-6). It must be noted that Ahmad (1992)

refutes the existence of Third World literature claiming the epistemological impossibility of

retrieving a coherent framework of theoretical knowledge that can be attributed to a so-called Third

World as a single entity. Even in the specific case of Okinawan literature, Jameson's reductionistic

view risks downplaying the difference among the voices of the Okinawan literary community,

besides offering a perspective that puts indigenous literature as incapable of producing narratives that go beyond the simplistic allegorisation of their sociopolitical conditions. Nonetheless, if we accept Bhowmik's claim (2008, 61) that some instances of Okinawan literature can be read to some extent as a national allegory, if only for rhetoric purposes – in this sense 'The Cocktail Party' seems particularly fitting to me as a response to the American occupation of the Ryukyuan archipelago, Ōshiro's representation of Okinawan women falls directly into the metaphorical victimisation of the islands. At the same time, as the father seeking justice for his family becomes the focal point of the novella, the author portrays what was previously defined by Jeong as 'men who cannot bear any further', nullifying the contextual specificity of womankind in the colonial experience.

In a similar way, Medoruma's storytelling of sexual violence follows the same pattern. In *In the Woods of Memory*, Sayoko, an Okinawan girl raped by American soldiers in 1945, does not have a voice of her own, but is instead always narrated by other characters who witnessed the rape incident and were affected indirectly as part of the same community. Ikeda states that the novel 'conforms to masculine narratives of rape by constructing female sexuality in terms of purity and property requiring protection' (2014, 127), following the conceptualisation of Okinawan women as an allegory for the entire island vis-à-vis the American attackers. However, Medoruma further complicates the portrayal of the small village unveiling the acts of internal violence – after the rape incident Sayoko is once again violated by Okinawan men belonging to her same community – and the structured nature of their patriarchal society (127).

2.4.2 Affinities and Divergences in Woman Characters' Perspectives

The Rainbow Bird maintains an ambivalent position towards the description of woman characters and their attitude towards violence, specifically when sexualised. The protests that constitute the background for the Okinawan setting in the novel were ignited by the 1995 schoolgirl rape incident: while the schoolgirl does not appear as a real character in the novel, the imagery of her courage and

purity turns out to be the central focus for the Okinawan activists' anger towards the US military bases. In a scene where Katsuya is watching a live broadcast of the prefectural resident rally against the rape incident where the victim makes an appearance, the schoolgirl is compared to Mayu as two contrasting characters, as if '[they] live in completely opposite worlds' (190). Kinjo (2012, 30) argues that the schoolgirl's depiction as 'upright' and 'pure' enhances her opposition to Mayu's life, who was a prime example of what is commonly considered to be an innocent and honest girl like the rape victim before her moral decay. While the schoolgirl is perfectly inscribed into the hierarchical gendered perspective of Okinawan society where feminine purity is necessarily protected by men to maintain a relevant social position in comparison to the American settlers, Mayu's existence eludes the patriarchal standpoint. As the story progresses, the character firstly tortures one of her clients, then injures – if not kills, information is not provided by the author – another one, murders Higa and sets fire to his body, eventually kidnaps an American child, and kills her in cold blood before escaping with Katsuya towards the Yanbaru forest. Because of her prominently violent attitude, Mayu cannot be understood as a victim who must be defended and as such defies any possible juxtaposition with Okinawa as a victimised sociopolitical entity. If we go back to Kinjo's argument, the novel 'reveals a power relation in which various possibilities have not been narrated in the discourse of rage expressed in the male-centred society and anti-military movement' (30). As against the daughter in 'The Cocktail Party' and *In the Woods of Memory*'s Sayoko, Mayu is not to be reduced to an allegory of Okinawa's national unity, but rather examined as an individual character whose agency disrupts the gendered stratification of Okinawan colonial society. On the one hand, her murderous intentions can be understood as a rebuttal of the individual trauma experienced as a cog in the sex industry machine of the island. In this sense, her character challenges the American presence as the disproportionate volume of militarised sex work and violence is a direct consequence of the heavy militarism brought to the islands during the

occupation period (Takeoka 2020, 181). On the other hand, Mayu's behaviour re-articulates gendered dynamics where the power balance between Japan and Okinawa effectively creates an imagery of a masculinised Japan and, subsequently, a feminised, weaker Okinawa – which is then repackaged in literary form with archetypes such as 'victimised woman' and 'humiliated man'. Nonetheless, Mayu is not the only female character to be compared with the schoolgirl, although she is the only one to exert violence to affirm her individuality as an Okinawan woman. In one of the scenes where Katsuya reflects on the rape incident, the images of the schoolgirl violated on a beach in north Okinawa by American servicemen blend with the main character's childhood memories, taking him back to that one time his sister was raped by an American man in a park in front of his eyes. Katsuya's depiction of the event is narrated as follows:

> There were many old tombs in the park, and as Katsuya ran past them, he saw the back of a man crouching down a gravel path. Sunlight was reflected on his short golden hair. Black hair swayed around his shoulders in a dark green t-shirt. […] The eyes of Katsuya's sister, looking up and staring at his brother, were asking for help. […] His sister raised her underwear, which had been lowered to her knees, crouched down, fell silent and cried. When Katsuya stood up and tried to run to her, she shouted 'Don't come' and glared at him, and then suddenly walked towards Katsuya, wrapping her hand around his back and hugging him (Medoruma 2017, 106-107).

Looking at the scene from a male-centred perspective, hence focusing on Katsuya's feelings rather than his sister's condition, two of the elements previously discussed can be detected: Katsuya equates her sister's rape with the schoolgirl incident, implicitly affixing a broader meaning to the two women as victims of the colonial power. His memories are triggered by the sense of impotence that he feels as part of the Okinawan community of not being able to change the status quo, the power relationship between colonisers and colonised: it is, using Katsuya's own words, an island where 'it is already decided who the people who attack are and the people who are attacked' (106). The demonstrators protesting for the schoolgirl rape incident serve as a reminder to Katsuya of the

common fate suffered by his sister, the schoolgirl, and Mayu among other Okinawan girls who fell victim to American military behaviour. In imagining the schoolgirl's rape scene and blending it together with his memories of her sister's rape, Katsuya acts as a powerless male gaze that cannot beat the humiliation of watching his land and women brutalised by external forces:

> Suddenly, Katsuya saw a girl lying on the sandy beach at night, her limbs held by three U.S. soldiers. The eyes of a girl whose mouth is covered with a big black hand almost the size of her head change to the eyes of Katsuya's sister in elementary school watching Katsuya in the park. Sweat gushes all over the body. What flows down from the open eyes goes through Katsuya's chest. The staring eyes have changed to Mayu's eyes before Katsuya knew it (106).

In his imaginative realm, Katsuya connects the existence of the three women, and their role as victims of the colonising power, through their eyes. The victims' gaze, directed towards a helpless Okinawan man, reveals how the colonial establishment affects the power relationship between colonisers and colonised, and reinforces Katsuya's position as an ineffective member of a victimised local community.

The Okinawan boy – Katsuya in his childhood memories – helplessly witnesses her sister's rape, without 'being able to go towards her, or even raise his voice' (106) while his sister desperately looks at him for help. Here it is possible to trace back a motif that has to be connected to Katsuya as an individual rather than a representative of the Okinawan community: as in the scene where Katsuya imagines the American military base as a pre-war village that he only witnessed through his grandfather's storytelling, the rape scene is brought back to an intimate and personal sphere and it is so detached from any instrumental meaning applied to women's victimisation as a rhetorical device to resist the American colonisation. For Katsuya, his sister is not the personification of an exploited island, but the only family member who could understand him during his difficult childhood. Likewise, his rage towards the schoolgirl violated by the three American servicemen can be disconnected from his membership in the Okinawan community, and relate instead to a contact

point that triggers the scars of his past. On the other hand, Katsuya's sister gets to express her own voice, although in a less overt manner than Mayu. In the above-mentioned scene, she imposes her will on her little brother who is trying to get closer to her – she shouts 'don't come' at him and actually stops what he is doing, and then sets her own conditions on the encounter with Katsuya, effectively reversing the patriarchal hierarchy and showing command on the situation through her agency. Furthermore, in one of her later appearances In the novel, Katsuya's sister discusses with her mother the schoolgirl rape incident and the consequent protest rally:

> Kushiro [Katsuya's mother] said in a sarcastic tone: 'Yeah, it's bad for American servicemen to make a move on children, but, how can I put it? I think it's also bad for parents who send elementary school students to go shopping alone during the night, you know? I dunno, they lived here around the bases for like decades and can't even understand something like that?'. Hitomi [Katsuya's sister] stared at Kushiro's face and lashed out: 'You can't be serious! The American guys are the bad ones here! We're talking 'bout children here. Isn't it crazy to say that they're at fault?'. Kushiro faltered for a moment at Hitomi's tone, but she didn't seem to be convinced. 'I just don't get what the fuss is about. I mean, okay, those Americans harass children, but what do we want? Aren't we doin' business with them, getting' military land rent from them, eatin' 'cause of the bases, uh?'. 'That said isn't it crazier if we kept silent no matter what they do?' (173).

Hitomi rebukes Kushiro's statements that imply the American military has the power of life or death over Okinawan people in exchange for economic benefits for the island. In this very scene, the reader learns that Hitomi's husband and baby child are participating in the protest rally, making them a household that must be seen in an oppositional relationship with the family unit represented by Kushiro, her former husband and her brothers – except for Katsuya whose position lays in the middle, because of their different values regarding the American presence on the island. Their argument can be understood in contrast to Katsuya's attitude towards her mother's comments about the rape incident in one of Katsuya's previous visits to the bar. Although the character refuses

Kushiro's opportunistic behaviour – he thinks she endorses Americans because they help with her business, he does not speak his mind since his situation with Higa is not that different (97). On the contrary, Hitomi actively opposes Kushiro's statements and concretely acts on them participating in the protests with her family: in this sense, Katsuya's sister performs her agency because of her direct – and physical – experience as an American victim. However, Hitomi also represents the active citizenship dealing with American colonialism through peaceful protests, one of the members of the opposition movement – Medoruma comments in another context – who 'drag out their tired clichés, such as "Life is a treasure", and are praised to the gills for their polite behavior […] while people here are being raped and murdered […] yet the most they can manage here is to call a meeting – not a real protest – where they let off steam without doing a thing to paralyze the U.S. bases […]' (Medoruma 2000a, 58-59, quoted in Molasky 2003b, 170).

2.4.3 The Fast-Food Restaurant as a Site of Gendered Reappropriation

Whereas the agency of Katsuya's sister shows its limitations in performing her influence on Okinawan society within the framework of local protesters' activities, Mayu overcomes the ideological infrastructure that posits Okinawan people as subject to the American and Japanese military forces due to their pacifism. The protagonist uses violence – in Kinjo's words a powerful neutral drive detached from moral implications (Kinjo 2012) – as a way to assert her own presence in the dynamics of the islands and construct a different understanding of the relationship between Okinawa, the United States, and Japan. In this regard, we can return to what Medoruma defines as the 'worst method' – as oppositional to the 'best' and 'better' choices proposed at the time by Okinawa Governor Inamine Keiichi (1933 -) – as it was developed in 'Hope', and its juxtaposition with the very same option, the 'killing of an American child', as it is further deepened in *The Rainbow Bird*. Several characters imagine this possibility to send a message to the American and Japanese governments: in a scene where Higa, his henchman Matsuda, and Katsuya are watching the live

broadcasting of a protest rally on TV, the crime boss abruptly comments that 'it would be better to hang 'em all. We should line up all the American soldiers' children, strip them and hang 'em all with wire on the palm trees on Route 58', followed up by Matsuda who adds that he wishes for Okinawan people to seriously take into consideration the idea of expelling the American army (Medoruma 2017, 190-191). However, this possibility remains for them in the realm of imagination, as just a mere empty threat: they cannot act on it without consequences, which is losing their control of local businesses and their status within their community. In short, while being victimisers of their fellow Okinawan people, Higa and his criminal organisation are still in a disadvantaged position compared to the American external influence on the prefecture. On the other hand, Mayu follows the reverse path, being on one side a victim of Okinawan people – Higa in the first place, then her own clients – and an executioner of American families on the other.

In one of the final scenes of the novel, Katsuya and Mayu escape from a love hotel after having killed Higa and Matsuda, trying to leave behind them the police and – more importantly – Higa's henchmen. Their final stop before leaving for the Yanbaru forest and disappearing in its nature is a McDonald's fast-food restaurant, where both American and Okinawan families are enjoying their meal. It is in this environment that the 'killing of the American child' takes place. I argue that the McDonald's restaurant as a physical space presents a multi-faceted understanding in terms of its relevance in the dynamics between American and Okinawan populations and their hierarchy in the colonial system. On the one hand, the fast-food restaurant – and in particular the McDonald's brand – can be analysed as a converted space where colonisers and colonised act together side by side, in a similar vein as suggested by Pratt (1991) with her contact zone theory. Precisely because it is built in Japanese territory, film scholar Yoshimoto Mitsuhiro (1994) would argue that it is a case in point where Japan's 'neocultural imperialism' reappropriates and recontextualises foreign icons to make them consumable by the Japanese population. In this sense, the restaurant space would act as a

familiar environment for both American families, to which it suggests a patriotic pride in the international expansion of one of their own businesses, and Okinawan people, who conversely would rely on the cultural reappropriation and reconfiguration of the brand. On the other hand, Chris Ames (2016, 55) argues that 'Americanization is […] played out as a zero-sum game; every new McDonald's is another imperial victory for America, won at the expense of local culture'. In this optic, colonisation is imposed on local culture through the development of consumerist outposts that are falsely advertised as pivotal for the economic growth of the colony in place of local activities. Norma Field (1991, 40) argued that 'capitalism as exotic self-indulgence has replaced American masculinity as the expression of military occupation'. In this optic, Mayu's kidnapping and subsequent killing of an American child in a McDonald's parking lot assumes political undertones in the performance of her gendered agency, in addition to the more obvious political – yet personal – motives of the attack. Looking at it from a gender perspective, Mayu acts on the murderous imagination of Okinawan men such as Higa, hence taking the upper hand on the Okinawan patriarchal society and positioning herself as an effective menage for the American established order. The fast-food restaurant, formerly a space where the balance between colonisers and colonised was attained, is reappropriated by Mayu as a purely Okinawan space, where external elements can be physically removed without consequences and the American lifestyle easily disrupted through violent actions. The sex of the child killed – she is the daughter of an American serviceman – adds a further layer to the incident: feminist scholar Iris Marion Young (1980, 151) reflects on feminine mobility stating that 'feminine spatial existence is positioned by a system of co-ordinates which does not have its origin in her own intentional capacities', confirming the passive and restricted role of women in their domestic, or even Western environment as Laura E. Donaldson (1992) argues in her critique of feminist universalising. However, women of colonial settlers' communities experience an augmented sense of freedom, as their restrictions are removed, or at least softened, to underline

their superior agency vis-à-vis the local women's population. It is in this context that Mayu's killing of an American daughter asserts her own agency as an Okinawan woman while taking the freedom and life of a female member of the colonisers. The McDonald's space, a neutral space that is not filled with imageries of war and hence historically devoid of any implication as for the intertwined war past between American and Okinawan people, is transformed into the battleground where Mayu deconstructs the colonial patriarchal society and affirms her superior agency vis-à-vis the external forces that control the islands.

2.5 Conclusion

Medoruma's *The Rainbow Bird* explores the issue of violence in a colonial environment from a purely Okinawan perspective. The characters deal with Okinawan proto-villages, with the memories of the Battle of Okinawa, and the natural landscape of the Yanbaru forest that is the locus for their remembering and mourning as a community. Again, their opposition to the American military and their bases emerge within the context of a past of death and constant oppression, not to mention the erasure and falsification of war memories to justify the American settlement in the aftermath of World War II. In *The Rainbow Bird*, the characters reflect as a prism the fragmented and often conflictual opinion of local communities regarding the American presence: on the one hand, Katsuya and Mayu claim their place in the Okinawan society through reacquisition, whether through imagination or by force, of the space around them, retelling it or attributing to it meanings that detach the – geographical – space from the American presence. However, Katsuya's family demonstrates that the colonial space is also imbued with traces which is impossible to evade, leaving them to negotiate the economic benefits and the paradoxical condition of their existence. After all, anti-base sentiments are balanced with people for whom the very existence of the bases constitutes their only form of sustainment (Nishiyama 2019, 6). Massey (1994, 2) suggests the necessity of reassessing 'both social phenomena and space as constituted out of social relations'

and so seeing 'the spatial [as] social relations "stretched out"'. In this chapter, space has been analysed as a medium that allows characters to deepen their relationship with the colonial system and affirm their authority as natives vis-à-vis the external elements represented by the US and Japanese forces. Hence Katsuya substitutes an American base with the images of a pre-war village he could only know through his grandfather's storytelling, again the same character appropriates a myth that was circulating in the American army to reinforce the natural agency of the Okinawan landscape; conversely, Mayu herself become the peril for American settlers in a purely American setting – a McDonald's fast-food restaurant – in an attempt to stress her dominant position in the relationship with the colonisers. Narratives regarding space – and their implicit connection with temporalities attached to it – depict the social relationship between the colonised and the colonisers, and it is often instrumental in disrupting narratives that reiterate stereotypes and are detrimental to the living conditions of the native. *The Rainbow Bird* suggests a different literary mode of interpreting Okinawan space-time and its characters as political bodies continuously imbricated into the texture of colonialist discourses. Katsuya and Mayu interpret their traumatic experiences and interact with the manifestations of the Okinawan colonial landscape in an oppositional way: on the one hand, Katsuya navigates between the military and natural ecosystems of the island and re-imagines them imposing his narrative and subverting the power discourse between colonisers and colonised. Katsuya overlaps the temporal and spatial layers of Okinawan space in his attempt to reconstruct its meaning as a member of Okinawan society: the land on which American bases have been built is remapped as the geographical place where a pre-war Okinawan village community was settled. Katsuya challenges the nature of the military space as a colonial appropriation and proposes an interpretation of Okinawan space as a locus for undetermined possibilities of becoming through a reflection on the history of the land and its inhabitants instead. This future-oriented approach reminds us of Ernst Bloch's definition of 'hope' as a methodology that 'dwells in the region of the

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not-yet, a place where entrance and, above all, final content are marked by an enduring indeterminacy' (Bloch and Joron 1998, 341). Katsuya's interpretation of space extends along the predication of hope, in as much as hope 'is committed to change rather than repetition' and 'incorporate[s] the element of change, without which there can be nothing new' (341). While not actively resisting the colonial mechanisms, Katsuya's narrative becomes the driving force that reassesses the meaning of Okinawan space and proposes alternatives projected into decolonial futurities. On the other hand, Mayu's trauma and resisting position evolve in the opposite direction. We must be mindful that the novel is narrated through the point of view of Katsuya, hence not allowing the reader to access Mayu's thoughts directly. Medoruma once again reenacts the gender imbalance often showed in Okinawan literature: female characters can only be seen and represented through the male gaze, their voice can only be heard through the trauma of their male counterparts, their history be narrated only through the patriarchal perspective of their family history. However, it is Mayu's direct action towards the social actors of the Okinawan space that ultimately asserts the subversion of the internal dynamics between the American military and the local population. While her thoughts cannot be heard, her actions have an impact on the social equilibrium established by the American authorities and reverse the power dynamics between colonisers and colonised. In killing the American child, Mayu's body – like the Yanbaru forest with the military troops – exerts her decision of life and death on characters that are situated in a dominant position. And while the attack towards the American child is configured as an offence that cracks the colonial power, Mayu's killing of her unnamed client first and then of her boss Higa subverts another internal social order, the gender hierarchy, opening up to a re-evaluation of the gendered agency, especially through violence, in the context of Okinawan literature. Katsuya and Mayu's positions blend together into a puzzle of perspectives that narrates the resistance against the militarist establishment: in describing the reinterpretation of Okinawan space by the characters

portrayed in the novel by Medoruma, this chapter sought to analyse how the military presence affected narratives of war memories and contemporary living conditions in the process of identity-making of Okinawan characters in a literary environment. Along the same lines, the next chapter will introduce the Okinawan space as a transformative element, a subject of conflict where space and time interpretations and reconfigurations enter an interplay of commodification and strategic protection of traditional values and communal histories. In so doing, I will expand on the role of the narrative process in renegotiating the colonial environment, placing the focus on the logic of marketing and self-representation as it is questioned in Medoruma's oeuvre.

Chapter Three: Recording the Okinawan Space: Systems of Complicity and Resistance through the Mainlanders' Gaze

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored how the American army's presence impacted the Okinawan islands' geographical outlook, including its natural landscapes and urban organisation. The American bases, installed in the post-war period and maintained until today even after the prefecture was returned to Japan, affected the lives of the local population, their understanding of the societal mechanisms in which they interact, their sense of shared history in both communities and more broadly prefectural level, and their positionality vis-à-vis the space occupied by external authorities such as the United States and the Japan Self-Defense Forces. Medoruma's *The Rainbow Bird* portrayed the reactions of Okinawan people towards the violence and militaristic environment that the existence of the American army on Okinawan soil implies. And while it can be assumed that a hint of criticism towards the construction of Okinawa as a tropical paradise is present in the textual and paratextual structure of the novel to a certain extent, the story is eventually reducible to an opposition between two contrasting presences: on one side the local population, though depicted as a variety of voices sometimes even contradictory to each other, and on the other, the American military understood as the most manifest expression of the colonial structure within Okinawa.

However, the issues of the Okinawan contemporary society exposed by Medoruma's literature – and, I would argue, other eminent authors such as Matayoshi Eiki and Sakiyama Tami – encompass dynamics that are not limited to the creation and maintenance of a militaristic environment in the prefecture but include a total revamping of the image of Okinawa in the eyes of a mainland Japanese audience. In this, mainland mass media and governmental national and local institutions contributed largely to transforming Okinawa from the theatre of a war massacre as it was

remembered in the immediate postwar period to a dreamy tropical holiday destination for newly married Japanese couples and families. While the prefecture undoubtedly benefitted from its state-sponsored image reconstruction as a domestic Hawaii-like paradise (Tada 2004), local scholars and intellectuals alike point out that this constructed character of Okinawa as an eternally festive space 'obscure[s] the horrific colonial thralldom, the total devastation of the islands in WWII, the occupational rule and the sex trade until 1972, as well as the present problems with US military facilities […] and high unemployment rates' (Tanaka 2003, 430-431, cited in Kühne 2012, 218). The proliferation of images and narratives on Okinawa in the mid-1990s – the so-called 'Okinawan Boom' – bombarded the mainland Japanese spectatorship with pictures of the subtropical island, its blue sky and blue sea as an ideal cure for the stressful life back home. This phenomenon was unquestionably driven by the commercial interests of private companies that aimed to boost the revenues of domestic travel and offer a national alternative to other famous tropical islands such as Hawaii and Guam (Tada 2015).

In response to this process of exotification and stereotype construction, the work of Okinawan authors proposes counter images that break with the hegemonic perception of Okinawa in mainland Japan and establishes a series of alternatives with which Okinawan people can identify. Ina Hein analyses four different short stories by contemporary Okinawan writers that challenge the definition of 'Okinawa' given by mainland Japan through its mass media. In the article's conclusive statements, Hein affirms that Okinawan writers attempt to counter the dominant discourse on the Okinawan difference from the rest of Japan, frequently employing literary aesthetic devices such as magical elements, to oppose the 'Japanese presupposition that there *is* something like *one* Okinawan identity, by creating many different version of how Okinawa *might be*' (Hein 2010, 199. Emphasis in original). As we explored in the previous chapter, in *The Rainbow Bird* Medoruma focuses on military spaces and their possibility of becoming something else – albeit yet to be defined. The author's

attempt to pluralise the possibilities for indigenous communities to redefine their own identity and positionality vis-à-vis mainland Japan aligns with his efforts to portray a variety of local voices and perspectives to oppose the single exotic reality proposed through the Okinawa Boom narrative. And more than in his fictional works, it is in his essays and sociopolitical commentary that Medoruma shows his disgust for the portrayal of Okinawan people by the Japanese media. In the following excerpt from an article published by the Japanese national weekly magazine *Shūkan Asahi* – renowned for its attention to soft news, scandals and decorous stories about celebrities – in October 2000, Medoruma fiercely comments on all the elements that are considered uniquely Okinawan by the mainland Japanese audience and their reception by the Okinawan population:

The *Yamatunchū* (Japanese) have their favorite images of the *Uchinanchū* (Okinawans). There's the simple but good-hearted middle-aged man, his skin dark from the sun, an Orion beer in his hand; the sturdy, hard-working, cheerful old woman who suddenly grows sad when talking about the Battle of Okinawa, but then laughs away her suffering; the young man, who at first looks a little scary but turns out to be just a shy, simple islander; the young woman, always bright and cheerful. When told that these are the only kind of people in Okinawa, even those who normally read the newspaper and grumble about the *Yanayamatu* (rotten Japanese) end up feeling as if they must live up to the expectation and suddenly transform themselves into a 'good *Uchinanchū'*. A visitor arrives from the Japanese mainland, so they hold a beach party and break out the Orion beer (even though they always drink Kirin or Sapporo because Orion isn't really that good); they talk about Koza (present-day 'Okinawa City') before reversion; they bring along one of the local *Obaa* so that the old woman can complain about how the young people these days don't appreciate the horrors of war; and finally, the guest will say, 'In Okinawa, you can't end a party without dancing the *kachaashi,* right?' so they oblige and stumble their way through the unfamiliar movements (Medoruma 2000a, translated by Michael Molasky in Molasky 2003b: 169. Emphasis in original).

This exoticisation of Okinawa can be understood as a shining example of Orientalism at the expenses of the Okinawan communities. In describing the gaze of the West upon the Orient, Said (1979, 3) defines Orientalism as 'a corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it. [...] [I]n short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'. As previously stated, Ina Hein (2010) examined examples of counter images against this dominant essentialist discourse in Okinawan literature. Indigenous representation in arts, especially literature directed towards both Okinawan and mainland Japanese readerships, is a resonating example of local agency against the dominant Japanese gaze, a way to show their identity construction and their individuality outside the Japan-Okinawa binomial. In the words of Japanese art scholar Eriko Tomizawa-Kay (2018, 57), '[a]rt, that is, became a means of rectification: of countering the power of silence and the myth of the exotic with the trauma of history'. Because of this, it follows that an enormous number of studies already exist regarding how Okinawan authors challenge the Japanese gaze and their critique towards processes of self-Orientalism. An analysis of counter-discourses and portrayals in Medoruma's literature would be redundant. [19] This chapter will take a different approach. In analysing three short stories written by the author between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, it aims to look at how the actual process of media production and reframing of Okinawan culture take place, and how they are depicted in Medoruma's fiction in contrast with the world built at a community and prefectural level by the inhabitants who interact with outsiders that are attempting to objectify them for commercial purposes. In addition, it will investigate how Okinawan characters make use of their contacts with mainlanders, their diversified stances towards the way they are represented, and how their performative indigeneity can be connected with economic profit for the benefit of

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[19] See Dileep (2006) for a discussion about Medoruma's fiction against the tropes proposed on Japanese mass media. Works on Okinawan arts vis-à-vis its stereotypisation in mainland Japan include, among many others, Roberson (2010) on Okinawan pop music, Ko (2013) on Okinawan cinema, and Young (2020) on Okinawan literature.

both locals and Japanese mainlanders. To put it differently, instead of looking at how Orientalist discourses are (de)constructed, this chapter aims to go a step back and scrutinise how Okinawan communities and external actors act and react to the *process* of constructing, encapsulating, and commodifying Okinawan culture and its geographical layers understandings across different temporalities.

In her monograph *Imperial Eyes* (1992), Mary Louise Pratt describes the first experiences of British and Hispanic scholars and travellers analysing the so-called 'savages' in the New World and gazing upon them from a white colonial framework, so defining the 'colonial gaze' as a system of structural representation of the 'Other' as a way to assert dominance to conquered lands and their inhabitants. Mainland Japan's dominant gaze on Okinawa reprises some of the recurrent themes and mechanisms of Western imperialism and orientalist discourses, such as the mainland Japanese monolithic image of Okinawan people as simple-minded and innocuous, as described in Medoruma's lengthy quote cited above. However, as Yuko Kikuchi (1997, 343) argues, '[o]rientalism is not a rigid one-way phenomenon projected on to the Orient from the Occident', but rather a circular mechanism, a condition and environment to which different social actors – the one considered dominant, but also the one that is deemed subject to the colonial gaze – react and against which they constitute their own identity. It is within this framework that this chapter will further shed light on the tension of Japanese modernity against Okinawan primitivism, reassessing how Medoruma's fiction complicates Okinawan identity and recalibrates these oppositional elements through the encounter of multiple realities.

This chapter will explore three short stories where external elements invade the Okinawan space to capture a glimpse of a different reality and sell it to the mainland media. In Medoruma's narrative, the Okinawan space captured by mainland Japanese mass media assumes a fundamental role in conceptualising the landscape in which Okinawan characters perform their supposed alterity. In the

first one, 'Saigo no kamiuta' ('The Last Prayer', 2004), I will analyse the portrayal of two opposing ways of interacting and recording community traditions and their histories: on the one hand, the documentary-making of the Japanese photographer who aims to sell the best pictures of a traditional ritual to a mainland Japanese magazine, while on the other, the efforts of a town hall employee who prepares and collects surveys to keep alive the recent history of his community. In the clash between these two worldviews about perceiving and narrating Okinawa, I will address the significance of Okinawan religious rituals for maintaining the memory of local traditions against the proliferation of images representing local cultures within the Japanese nation-state as a way to portray Okinawa as an enhancement of an equal – albeit fictitious – multicultural society. The second section will examine 'Mabuigumi' ('Spirit Stuffing', 1998), focusing on the dynamics of economic development and advertising vis-à-vis the reality as it is perceived in a village community through its sense of shared history. Here, concepts of solidarity and remembering of war memories challenge the world knowledge of the Japanese invaders, again as two cameramen whose purpose is to take pictures of a particular event and create a scoop out of it. The last section will consider how war memories are recorded and re-framed by Japanese mass media as a national history to be aired on national television in the shape of documentaries. To do so, I will explore 'Fūon' ('The Crying Wind', 1997) and the friction between Okinawan and Japanese characters in evoking their shared war memories and reshaping them as commodified objects. In considering these three short stories, this chapter ultimately aims to offer a decolonial reading of the dynamics occurring during the commodification of Okinawan culture. It will unveil another way in which Okinawan space is being invaded and how external actors appropriate its portrayal, furtherly explaining the hegemonic structure between mainland Japan and Okinawa and reflecting on the literary depiction of Okinawan identity as internally fragmented and diversified in opposition to the simplistic representational category of 'Okinawa' proposed by Japanese mainlanders.

3.2 Competing Histories and Narratives in the Sacred Space

3.2.1 Okinawan Natural Sacred Space in Japan's Nation-State

In 2000, the same year as the 26th G8 summit was held in Nago, a city in northern Okinawa, nine of the most famous Okinawan monuments and landmarks were registered as UNESCO World Heritage Sites under the label of 'Gusuku (Okinawan castles and fortresses) Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu', recognising the independent development and cultural value of the island nation influenced by Japan and other Asian countries ("Invitation for World Heritage"). The registration confirmed the status of Okinawa as a domestic and international tourist destination both for its beaches and historical significance, following the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa that attracted curiosity throughout the entire Japanese archipelago. On the other hand, it also redirected visitors' attention towards sites previously unknown or underestimated. One of them is Sēfa Utaki, sacred groves employed for state rituals during the Ryukyu Kingdom period. As the historian Gregory Smits (2000) explains, a distinctive – at least in the Japanese context – gendered division of power characterised the Ryukyu Kingdom, in which the king, in charge of political affairs, was supported by a high priestess (*kikoe-ōgimi*) – usually a female relative of the king – who was conversely the ritual master of the kingdom. This system of dual authority was mirrored at regional and local levels so that virtually every village had a male headman and a priestess, called *noro* or *kaminchū*, who performed rituals for the community in a communal space defined as a sacred grove (*utaki*) (Rots 2019a, 159).[20] Although a certain number of sacred groves still exists, and related rituals are performed at a local level, the number of these sacred sites has exponentially decreased since the end of World War II: some have been demolished to make space for houses, tourist resorts and other facilities, others are within the boundaries of

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[20] While the Okinawan term *utaki* defines in a broad sense a sacred place inserted in a natural landscape, often a grove, cave, or mountain, I have chosen to maintain the English translation 'sacred grove' as it is customarily referred as such in academic literature.

American military bases, thus making them inaccessible, others again are simply gone forgotten with the progressive decline of rural communities (Rots 2019b, 298). In one scene of Medoruma's *The Rainbow Bird*, the school garden where Katsuya meets Higa and his gang for the first time is said to be a formerly sacred space, to confirm the extent of how many sacred spaces were converted to secular functions in the postwar period (Medoruma 2017, 51-52). Despite the progressive disappearance of sacred groves and their rituals, perhaps precisely because they are becoming an increasingly remote traditional practice, Okinawan religious rituals have seen a resurgence in popularity in Japanese media and the mainland Japanese imagination. In discussing vanishing traditions, anthropologist Marilyn Ivy (1995, 12-13) argues that '[t]hrough the powers of mass-mediated dissemination and spectatorship, a revived folk festival, for example, not only becomes a local representation of a cultural world where such festivity had its place but also becomes generally representative', as 'it generally reminds Japanese of what such festivals (*matsuri*) used to signify'.

Nostalgia for disappearing traditions in rural communities belonging to the Japanese cultural sphere is further complicated by the representation of Okinawa as a 'primordial Japan'. Okinawan-born linguist Iha Fuyu (1876 – 1947), considered by many the father of Okinawan studies, was the first to theorise that Okinawan and Japan shared the same linguistic, cultural and racial roots, further arguing that Okinawa better preserved those roots (Breaden 2003, 3). Following studies by folklore scholar Yanagita Kunio in the field of so-called Southern Islands Studies (*nantō-ron*) were greatly influenced by this image of Okinawa as a primordial Japan: Tanaka (2003, 421) explains the set of assumptions that informed the understanding of Okinawa as a proto-Japan, stating that 'Okinawa and Japan were at the same point of departure but, over time, they began to walk on the different historical routes of development; while Japan has experienced rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, Okinawa has not; and, as a consequence, old manners and customs, many of them lost in Japan, could be found in Okinawa'. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Okinawa has been

conceptualised as temporally backwards compared to the rest of Japan as a way to insert the prefecture in the same linear temporal understanding and, in so doing, framed as inferior to mainland Japan by means of a supposed lack of technological advancement and cultural modernisation – broadly speaking, Westernisation. Despite Tanaka arguing for 'different historical routes of development', from the perspective of a Japan-centric worldview – generative of centralised political power, systems of value and knowledge production – another way of developing is not admitted, the path towards modernisation in only one, and mainland Japan is the model that must be followed and eventually reached. In discussing the Ainu position in Japan, anthropologist ann lewallen (2016, 64) argues that 'Ainu were relegated to a category of not-quite-thereness' and that the 'realm of possible ethnic identities had been constrained' as they were either 'a premodern form or nonexistent'. Likewise, the Ainu poet and critic Sasaki Masao (1973, 8) considers 'Ainu' not as a *jinshu* (race) but rather as a *jōkyō* (condition, a set of circumstances). While the histories of Ainu and Okinawan people are considerably different, their position within the Japanese nation-state and its concept of national identity share the common trait of being framed as an 'other' that makes sense only as a manifestation of a point in Japanese history.

Returning to the Okinawan religious context in connection to such ideas of Okinawa as a proto-Japan, worship rituals in the *utaki* are described by folklorist Yanagita Kunio and Orikuchi Shinobu to have traces of what was defined 'ancient Shinto' (*koshintō*) (Okaya 2016, 89). While such intellectual processes mainly belong to a pre-Second World War conceptualisation of Okinawa within the Japanese cultural framework, traces of this can still be found in discourses regarding Shintō and its characteristics. For example, in *The Essence of Shinto: Japan's Spiritual Heart* – the book title itself is revealing of the essentialist image of Japanese religion the author attempts to portray – Yamakage Motohisa (2006, 69) mentions Sēfa Utaki as a significant place for religious rituals as the 'traditional, naturalistic forms of *kannabi* and *iwakura* [both the terms refers to natural

spaces where *kami* are supposed to be enshrined] have been left intact', so merging Okinawan and Japanese religious traditions in a timeline where the Okinawan expression of Japanese indigenous folklore is clearly antecedent and, because of this, 'intact'. These ideas are unquestionably expressions of a minoritarian group of people – most likely close to ultra-nationalistic political positions, but still represent a fragment of how Okinawa is imagined as temporally detached and subaltern to mainland Japan in certain cultural environments. Going in the opposite direction, Japanese sociologists Kadota Takehisa (2017) and Uda Takuya (2019) point out that guide tours to Sēfa Utaki appeal to an increasing interest in New Religious Movements (*shinshūkyō*) and their explanations tend to connect Okinawan folklore and religious traditions to concepts such as power spots (*pawā supotto*), places of high spiritual energy disseminated in several areas of rural Japan. These two opposite poles work together in placing the category of 'Okinawa' – in which a precise idea of Okinawan identity and its related cultural outcomes are encapsulated – within the framework of Japanese national identity: on the one hand, it calls on a sense of nostalgia for a distant tradition that might go forgotten if not for the intervention of Japanese mass media, while on the other, it identifies a linkage between the religious space of the natural landscape with power spots among many other scattered on the Japanese territory, so standardising sacred groves as exotic, yet another environment belonging to the Japanese cultural sphere.

3.2.2 Challenging the Mainland Japanese Gaze

This understanding of Okinawan sacred sites informs Medoruma's writing in his short story 'The Last Prayer', which was first published in the autumn of 2004 in 'I Feel: Dokusho Fūkei', a literary magazine distributed at a national level by Kinokuniya Shoten, one of the most popular book chain stores in Japan. The story revolves around making a special issue about sacred groves by a mainland Japan magazine and the tensions between Okinawans and mainland characters during the photo shoot. Tōma, a city hall employee whose job mainly deals with preserving the history and traditions

of his local community, is asked by a former classmate of his and by a Japanese photographer to assist them in putting together a magazine issue on Okinawan vanishing traditions and religious rites. To do so, Tōma contacts a local *kaminchū* who agrees to show an Okinawan ritual to the two documentarists. In the short story, which is almost wholly focussed on the ritual performance and the interjection of the two outsiders, Medoruma highlights the opposition between the Okinawan main character and the two documentarists in the way they intend the recording of Okinawan traditions, leading to a quasi-physical clash during the ritual performance. In fact, despite Tōma's recommendations to respect the sacred space and their role as guests during the prayer, the Japanese photographer oversteps the geographical and performative boundaries of the sacred space to capture better pictures of the *kaminchū* and in so doing sell a better-quality product to his mainland Japanese audience. In the following excerpt, we can comprehend which rules visitors are expected to follow and the photographer's reaction to them:

> Tōma went towards the corner of the open space, where Shirakawa and Kina [respectively the Japanese cameraman and Tōma's former classmate] were preparing for the photoshoot and warned them about the *utaki* and the ritual performance. Since the forest around the open space is sacred, other people besides the *kaminchū* are prohibited from entering. Picking or damaging the vegetation is prohibited as well. When she is praying, women are to be seated behind the *kaminchū*, and men behind women. Men cannot go past women. […] 'So, can I only take pictures of the *kaminchū*'s behind when she's praying?' [Shirakawa said]. […] 'Pretty much, since it is custom, you have to respect that' [Tōma replied]. 'Are you kidding me? I can't work like this!' (Medoruma 2013c, 335-336).

In the scene, Shirakawa laments that he cannot deliver a high-quality product working within these limitations. The two characters understand the event on two completely different levels: from Shirakawa's perspective, the fact that he can produce fine pictures is fundamental for the success

of his career, as he will shout out later in the story against Tōma's complaints. On the other side, Tōma is positioned outside the logic of the market and tries to protect the last fragments of Okinawan traditional culture. After all, the *kaminchū* performing the ritual is the last one since the decreasing of the rural population and the subsequent absence of a willing younger candidate to take up her role, Tōma explains (334). The difference in how they record and portray Okinawan history and traditions is based on their positionality regarding the power balance between mainland Japan and Okinawa, as we will see later in the chapter. Here we focus on the behaviour of Shirakawa confronting the boundaries set by the special status of the space and its sacred character:

> Behind the *kaminchū*'s shoulders, you could hear Shirakawa releasing the camera shutter, and the light of the flash reflected upon the old woman's white robe. Shirakawa passed near Tōma's side and, while going forward, kept taking pictures. When he passed through the men's seats and entered the women's row, Tōma tried to warn him against doing it, but he couldn't raise his voice so abruptly, since, he thought, it would disrupt the prayers of old Kiku. Shirakawa reached old Kiku's side, kneeled just one meter away from her and released the shutter. The camera flashed abruptly, it was clear he was disturbing the ritual, but old Kiku bent over her body and continued her prayer. […] Meanwhile, Shirakawa turned around the incense burner and started taking pictures of old Kiku from the front. […] Pointing the camera again towards old Kiku, who was looking directly in front of her with her hands clasped in prayer, Shirakawa released the shutter and left his position (337-338).

As mentioned before, Shirakawa attempts to create good quality material for his work and, in doing so, oversteps the boundaries defined by the Okinawan sacred space and almost disrupts the ritual. In fulfilling his role as a documentary photographer and providing images of Okinawa that his audience can readily consume, the character acts as a tourist by proxy towards his readership. It merges the two gazes of the content creator and its user. Rots (2019b, 172) suggests a correlation between Okinawan sacred spaces and Urry's famous definition of 'tourist gaze' (2002), according to

which modern tourism is characterised by the commodification of cultural heritage that leads to a transformation of places and practices in accordance with tourists' expectations, and at the same time a longing for a more authentic experience, an exotic alternative way of living that can only be encountered in a distant place far away from one's everyday life. In this optic, Shirakawa's transgression of rules in the Okinawan sacred space can be understood as a further effort to give to his audience the entire portrait of Okinawan folklore, inaccessible even to the local population that is instead limited by the rules laid out due to the perceived sacredness of the ritual and its importance for the community. Schroeder (1998, 2008) reminds us that 'to gaze implies more than to look at – it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze'.[21] In this case, the colonial gaze does not stop at the act of *looking at* the gazed object but involves a process of reproduction of the other in a fixed form that frames the subject as inevitably inferior to the hegemonic gaze of the coloniser. Shirakawa, in the act of taking pictures and organising them according to the established representational forms of Okinawa within the mainland Japan dominant gaze, maintains and supports the category of 'Okinawa' as an 'other' and profit from it. As Said (1985, 4) reminds us, '[t]he act of representing others almost always involves violence to the subject of representation'. It is, once again, the expression of external authority over a commodified other.

Later in the short story, Shirakawa and Tōma fight over Shirakawa's disrespectful behaviour towards the sacred space and the old *kaminchū*. When Tōma angrily insults the cameraman in his Okinawan language, Shirakawa talks back at him and shouts: 'What are you saying!? Speak proper Japanese!'

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[21] Theories on the gaze and the act of looking as a psychosocial relationship to power that redefines the hierarchical social order between gazer and gazed have been discussed throughout cultural conversations across disciplinary boundaries 'to such an extent that something akin to "gaze theory" has been tentatively articulated in the humanities' (Simonetti 2023, 1). It can be argued that the power relationship between gazer and gazed is not static. Most famously, Lacan's gaze theory (2006) put more emphasis on *being looked at* rather than *looking at* – the subject's encounter with the gaze of others can expose the subject to be vulnerable and dependant on others, but could also be a source of affirmation and pleasure as it confirms the subject's existence and identity, and in so doing restate the agency of the gazed subject and reinterpret the power relationship between the two.

(Medoruma 2013c, 338). Besides the mere racist nature of his comment, what I am emphasising here is Shirakawa's attempt to domesticate Tōma's language. If standard mainland Japanese is 'proper', it goes without saying that the Okinawan language spoken by Tōma is a modified, if not even incorrect, form of Japanese. The distinction between the categories of language and dialect relies on several criteria such as ethnicity, language genealogy and typology, separate linguistic innovations, orthography, and mutual intelligibility or lack thereof (Heinrich and Fija 2007, 1). However, in relation to the power imbalance between mainland Japan and Okinawa, the question becomes quintessentially political and ideological. To cite an old adage attributed to sociolinguist and Yiddish scholar Max Weinreich (1894 – 1969), 'language is a dialect with an army and navy', a statement that stresses how the boundaries between languages and dialects are strictly demarcated by the community power to impose one's own language as the standard one. Tojo Misao (1884 – 1966), the father of Japanese dialectology, constructed and popularised the idea that Ryukyuan languages were dialects of the Japanese language. His categorisation derived from the facts that 'the Ryukyu Islands were part of the Japanese nation state', 'because comparative linguistics had confirmed that the varieties of the Ryukyus were historically (genealogically) related with Japanese', and because 'classifying the Ryukyuan varieties as languages in their own right would imperil the idea of a homogeneous Japanese nation' (2). Shirakawa refuses Tōma's language as outside of the Japanese cultural sphere, and at the same time, produces material that confirms the alterity of Okinawan traditions.

3.2.3 Complicities and Pluralities in the Mainland Retelling of Okinawan Culture

However, Okinawan characters in the story do not share the same position towards how Okinawa is represented by mainland Japanese mass media. Together with Shirakawa, there is Kina, a former Okinawan classmate of Tōma, who moved to the mainland after graduating in Okinawa to work as a reporter (Medoruma 2013c, 331). Her presence stresses complex economic implications that

enter the discourse of the social actors' national identities and political positions interacting within the Okinawa-Japan relationship. Simply put, Okinawan people are not two-dimensional characters who only care about their community; diversified social groups within the prefecture compete for different takes on the political position of Okinawa against Japan, and to add fuel to the fire, the processes that led Japan to reconfigure Okinawa as a tropical destination in the 1960s emphasise the tourist sector and the commodification of regional culture as significant economic revenue for the prefecture. The discourse has similar connotations to the debate on American military bases and the financial returns for Okinawan landlords. The political significance of protests is problematised due to the benefits some Okinawan social groups would receive in supporting the status quo. However, as film scholar Fujiki Kosuke argues in debating the popularity of Okinawan-themed films produced in mainland Japan among the Okinawan audience, while the Japanese representation of Okinawa as an exotic other can be seen as problematic in connection to the mechanisms of orientalisation and self-orientalisation, the local audience 'may not be simply influenced by the ideology presented in films, but may actively engage with films and utilise them for their identity formation' (Fujiki 2013, 52). Creation and reception by Okinawan people of products that show an alleged internalisation of mainland Japanese ideology is open to discussion: against the assumption that the 'complicity' of Okinawan people in selling out Okinawan cultural images is partly to be attributed to economic reasons and partly to an appropriation of the mainland Japanese dominant gaze (Kawamura 2007; Tanaka 2003), Tada (cited in Fujiki 2013, 52) argues that 'the Okinawan audiences do feel nostalgia from the commercialised representations of Okinawa, yet at the same time, the audiences associate those images with their everyday life experiences in Okinawa and reaffirm their Okinawan identity'. If we go back to the character of Kina in Medoruma's short story, we can reframe the concept of 'complicity' – which aprioristically poses indigenous communities in a subaltern position by excluding the possibility that Okinawans can have an active

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role in shaping their own image with the collaboration of Japanese mainlanders – as a 'co-participation'. To put it differently, the short story explores the possibility as well that indigenous characters can choose to participate in the Japanese mainlanders' construction of the Okinawan image not only because it is contingent on their role in the colonial establishment – nor for mere financial benefits that would still enter that dynamic, but in an attempt to offer their support in portraying a faithful image of what they consider Okinawa to be. It is worth mentioning once again the positive side of *being looked at* by the colonial gaze, which is to be recognised as a distinct identity, regardless of its positionality and power relationship with the gazer.

Another Okinawan character presented as ambiguous regarding the commodification of Okinawan culture is the *kaminchū* herself, the main focus and object of representation in the magazine issue. In one of the final scenes of the short story, Tōma receives two copies of the magazine in which the article about the Okinawan ritual was published. In skimming through it, the main character notices the last picture taken by Shirakawa of the *kaminchū* from a frontal view, taken when the photographer breaks the rules of the sacred space. The caption reads as follows: 'Could the *kaminchū* be looking at the god in the forest of the sacred groves?' (Medoruma 2013c, 343). While Kina and Shirakawa, to a certain extent, portray a faithful reproduction of the ritual and arguably a more authentic version of what the Okinawan people participating could see due to the boundaries set by the sacred space, their production stops at the aesthetic and performative values of the rite. In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin declared that in the future, 'the caption [will become] the most important part of the shot' (Evans and Hall 1999, 7). The reading of Shirakawa's caption becomes rather problematic when we make sense of the picture exclusively for its documentarist value, when we understand the picture as providing 'indexicality', a relationship of causal contiguity between image and referent (Pinney 2008). In this sense, the old Okinawan woman cannot be anything other

than her role as *kaminchū* and her experience is reduced to her performance and contact with the sacred space.

For the West, essentialising the Orient means to assert its dominant gaze via simplistic representations and images, which says more about the West than the Orient the discourse sought to represent: in portraying the Orient as a 'primitive other', Orientalism positions the West as an 'enlightened' protagonist on the world scene and fuels its supposed superiority vis-à-vis the Orient. Contacts between Japan and other cultures are based on this very same concept: Lindsey Powell (2002, 70) affirms that '[t]he general theme [of popular travel literature in Japan] is that the Japanese travellers face all kinds of quaint cultural hazards and challenges to Japanese sensibilities as they travel away from their homes', which triggers a 'transformation towards learning what it means to be Japanese, not what it means to be Peruvian or Balinese'. Japanese popular travel literature is defined as a 'literature genre that tends to support the Japanese worldview of Japanese uniqueness and therefore can be seen, albeit ironically, as a kind of subgenre of the *Nihonjinron* literature' (emphasis in original). And Okinawa, despite its political position as a part of Japan, in a similar vein, enhances how Japan wants to be represented in the international community. Japanese cinema scholar Mika Ko (2010, 26) suggests that 'contemporary Japanese nationalism sometimes masquerades as "multiculturalism" and it praises internationalism and cultural diversity (at least on a superficial level)', a stance that was previously defined by Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2001) as 'cosmetic multiculturalism'. Morris-Suzuki argues that 'while the diversity of culture is enjoyed on the superficial level and used as a means to exemplify Japan's generosity and capacity to accommodate "other" cultures, "cosmetic" multiculturalism nonetheless neglects the political and economic rights of the bearers of these "other" cultures' (Ko 2010, 27). In the representational forms set by the dominant gaze of cosmetic multiculturalism, there is no space for other depictions beyond the ideas of eternal festivity and colourful nature that set both markers for difference and assimilation

necessary to include Okinawa in the broader framework of the Japanese nation-state. The juxtaposition becomes starker in the last scene of the short story when Tōma begins visiting the old woman in her house once a week. During their conversation, the old woman loses her sacred character. It is just another member of the Okinawan community: they discuss 'how the next spring will be, the two salesmen who come to her house at all times to make her buy a 400,000-yen futon set, the fact that she was scolded for this when her children came last summer' (Medoruma 2013c, 342). In the ending scene, as soon as Tōma leaves the old woman's garden after delivering the magazine, he can hear her digging the earth and taking care of her plants. This description leaves us with an image of the Okinawan woman that is starkly different from the one portrayed in the magazine. This is not to say that the magazine reported a fictional account of the woman, but rather a partial representation that served the only purpose of crystallising Okinawan people in pre-determined roles and so maintaining the ideal representation of the prefecture.

In the next section, I will consider 'Spirit Stuffing' to expand on the resistance and compliance of local communities vis-à-vis their contact with external forces from mainland Japan. In this context, I will scrutinise how Medoruma's literary aesthetic in portraying the Okinawan community employs magical realist techniques to oppose reality as perceived in the village by the dominant gaze of Japanese mainlanders. In addition, we will explore how locals can use indigenous perspectives on the world and the magical element to capitalise on their cultural assets and conform to the Japanese mainlanders' orientalist gaze.

3.3 Invaders of the 'Magical' World: Renegotiating the Indigenous World in 'Spirit Stuffing'

3.3.1 Commodified Narratives, Silenced Perceptions

'Spirit Stuffing' made its first appearance in the mainland Japanese literary magazine *Shōsetsu Tripper* in the summer issue of 1998, then published in a collection of short stories by the author with an eponymous title in the following year. The short story was awarded both the Fourth Shōhei Kiyama and the Twenty-sixth Kawabata Yasunari Literary Prize in 2000. Because of the latter, the story was republished again in the June 2000 issue of *Shinchō*, another mainland Japan literary magazine, together with the comments of the literary prize judges, proving how much the mainland Japan literary circle appreciated the fictional work. In this story, Medoruma thematises Okinawan war memories and their imbrication with folk traditions. 'Spirit Stuffing' portrays the life of a rural community in Okinawa and revolves around the event of Kōtarō, one of the villagers, losing his *mabui*. Losing one's *mabui*, one's spirit according to the Okinawan folklore, can be assimilated to losing consciousness. To retrieve his *mabui*, the village priestess Uta – a spiritual counsellor in the Okinawan traditions – is summoned to perform a *mabuigumi*. In this ritual, the priestess enters into contact with the victim's soul to convince it to return to his body. The ritual seems nothing out of the ordinary for the characters, mainly because Kōtarō has always been famous for losing his *mabui* five or six times a year during his childhood and at least one or two times every few years in his adulthood. However, when a hermit crab enters the mouth of Kōtarō's physical body, his family and the rest of the rural community suspect the situation is more complex than it seems to be. Meanwhile, the priestess performs the ritual on the soul of Kōtarō without success: in fact, the soul keeps looking at the sea and sits still under the tree where the man lost his consciousness, ignoring Uta's prayers. As the days pass, Kōtarō's body condition keeps worsening, and Uta starts questioning

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whether the strange behaviour of Kōtarō's soul has a deeper meaning, connected to the war history of the rural community in which both the village priestess and Kōtarō's parents had an active role.

'Spirit stuffing' was explored by scholars in discussing how Medoruma makes sense of war memories and their impact on contemporary Okinawan community members' individual and collective psyche. Kyle Ikeda (2014), who also translated the short story into English, discusses the work in comparison with Ōshiro Tatsuhiro's novella 'Kamishima' ('Island of the Gods', 1968). In arguing how Ōshiro's portrayal of war memories differs from Medoruma's writing style, Ikeda (2014, 82) states that Medoruma's short story 'accomplishes this effect [which is to 'closely identifying the narrative tone of the story with Uta's perceptions and thoughts'] through a sustained and consistent interpretation of all the other people in Uta's community from her perspective, partial adoption of Uta's idiolect, and the narrator's acceptance of Uta's perceived reality that challenges tenets of objective realism'. Further discussions on how the reality within the Okinawan community is perceived as an intersection between Okinawan folklore, war memories, and contemporary society are expanded by literary scholars Onishi Yasumitsu (2019) and Kurosawa Masato (2020). The former analyses the short story in terms of how its narrative is affected by the unifocal perspective on the village priestess and her recollection of war memories: in this sense, historical truth is challenged by the subjective retelling of the main character who unveils, through her point of view, the tragic past that affected the community portrayed by Medoruma. The character's subjectivity, a different perception of the world that includes elements of Okinawan folklore aligned with the 'objective' truth of reality, and the modes of war memories recollection narrated by Medoruma are hence explored by Onishi in connection with 'post-truth' and the increasingly blurred border between truth and falsehood (Onishi 2019, 139).

Onishi's analysis of the short story is based on the assumption that an 'objective', Western-centric truth or representation of reality exists and that every other modality of understanding and

depicting the world must be denoted as detached from reality, the product of an ambiguous transmission of narratives imbued with local mythical references. However, to understand the struggle between mainlanders and indigenous communities regarding the perception and reframing of indigenous space and its commodification it is necessary to conceive the opposing epistemological perceptions of Japanese mainlanders and Okinawan communities as equally valid. In this sense, my analysis aligns with Kurosawa, who discusses the interrelation between space and war memories, questioning the 'on-site-ness' of memories that can create spatial commonality between human and non-human. As Kurosawa (2020, 186-188) argues, the 'environmental things' surrounding Uta assist the village priestess' interpretation of the space in which the community is settled and help the human characters to make sense of war memories – through 'co-interpretation' – and finally create an ontological commonality that is referred as 'co-participation' between humans and the Okinawan environment. For the rural village in 'Spirit Stuffing', concepts such as *mabui* and the spiritual power of village priestesses are authentic expressions of the world where they live and, as such, are not opposed to 'reality' as the only possible mode of understanding the world proposed by the dominant external gaze. In short, their perception of the world is posed as a condition of existence rather than one of resistance against the rational and scientific view of reality. However, this does not mean that every Okinawan character reacts the same way towards how their indigenous reality is perceived externally and benefits from it. In 'Droplets', Seiyū, a comedic character who helps the bed-ridden protagonist, steals the limestone water dripping from the main character's toes and resells it for its miracle therapeutic effect. In 'Spirit Stuffing', a series of characters compete among themselves and negotiate the development of the village concerning the incident of Kōtarō losing his *mabui*. In one of the scenes, we get a glimpse of how local politics work as the main political actors in the community interact with the approach of the upcoming

village council election. During dinner, the presidents of some of the most influential associations within the community interrogate themselves about how to deal with the Kōtarō incident:

> 'After all, we're dealing with Yamato people, from mainland Japan, you know. And if they hear rumours about an *āman* [hermit crab] entering someone's body – why, this would really alarm them! It might even spook them into cancelling the plans for the hotel. And with other areas in Okinawa trying to attract hotel construction and investment, if word gets out about Kōtarō, then rumours will start spreading about our village. People will get the impression that strange things will crawl into your body if you stay here overnight. And as you all know, Yamato people get nervous about things like this, not to mention that most are prejudiced against Okinawa. So as you see, our bid for the hotel that we worked so hard for could go to ruin. And that's why, in this case, I feel we absolutely have to keep Kōtarō's condition a secret' (Medoruma 2011, 120).

In this excerpt, Ward Chief Shinzato discusses the economic impact of the Kōtarō situation on the village regarding the construction of a hotel by a mainland Japanese company. On the one hand, we can understand this discussion as indigenous complicity with progressive assimilation into the Japanese nation-state that would bring economic benefits for the rural area and close the gap between the periphery and centre. This development, however, would not be possible without the support of mainland Japan, both for the hotel construction and the subsequent tourist revenues coming from Japanese mainlanders. In this context, the Okinawan worldview, where a hermit crab entering into someone's mouth is an event belonging to the realm of possibilities – grounded in the indigenous reality, becomes a hindrance to the economic development of the island, as processes of representation of the other with-in the Japanese national community cannot abide other systems of knowledge production and understanding of the world that are not aligned with the dominant, colonial understanding of reality. On the other hand, some other participants in the discussion argue that the Kōtarō incident can be used in their favour: Kinjō, president of the Young Adults' Association,

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suggests that Kōtarō's condition could 'generate good publicity if word gets out', as 'just about everyone would want to see something as strange as that' and that 'if it hits the newspapers and makes the TV news, my guess is people will be coming to our village in droves', to which Uta angrily replies accusing Kinjō of trying to turn Kōtarō into a freak show (121). The commodification of Kōtarō's situation as a 'freak show' for tourists would assume another connotation that poses the Okinawan man in a subaltern position to both his community – whose main concerns revolve around the economic promotion of the rural area – and mainland Japanese tourists: deprived of his voice, Kōtarō becomes an object whose only value lies in the strangeness of his situation that can attract curious looks from outsiders. Regardless of the community choice, Okinawa still maintains a position of inferiority towards mainland Japan and its dynamics of assimilation. In short, the economic success of the village depends on how much mainland Japan is willing to accept and take advantage of Okinawa's perception of reality for financial purposes, given that Okinawa would still be understood in any case as a body foreign to the Japanese cultural framework.

3.3.2 Contrasting Worldviews within Okinawa and the Internal Centre-Peripheries Dynamics

In the final part of the story, Uta tries tirelessly to perform the *mabuigumi* ritual on Kōtarō's soul, but it is ineffective. Kōtarō keeps gazing at the sea while his body remains in his house bed with the hermit crab hiding in his mouth. The situation abruptly changes due to the arrival of two photographers – one from the prefectural capital Naha and one from mainland Japan – who came to document the community life but discovered Kōtarō's condition and attempted to get a scoop for their newspaper. As it is explained later to Uta by Kōtarō's wife Fumi, the two photographers open the bedroom door and start taking pictures with their camera flash, which scares to death the hermit crab and tries to hide deep in Kōtarō's throat, eventually suffocating him (129). As in 'The Last Prayer', the outsiders forcibly enter an indigenous space and disrupt the lives of the people inhabiting it: in this case, the intervention of the two photographers leads to Kōtarō's death, further

stressing his condition as a victim of the commodification of Okinawa by mainland Japan. Nonetheless, while the Okinawan characters are victimised, they are not passively accepting the mass-mediated depiction and reproduction of their own individual and community lives. Uta and Kōtarō's family expel the two photographers from the house and warn them to destroy the photographic material, hence refusing the possibility of being reproduced for commercial purposes. We can understand refusal as a political stance that changes the internal dynamics between Okinawan people and mainland Japan: on the one hand, refusal strengthens the bond within the community against what is outside, forging a sense of identity that is based on resisting outsiders' reframing and in a common understanding of reality and its narratives that is not shared outside of the group. In analysing the impact of the act of refusal on individual and community identity-making, Carole McGranahan (2016, 322) argues that 'refusal produces or reproduces community'. In the Okinawan context, the connections between the indigenous characters, already forged by a common understanding of their traumatic war memories, are further underlined by opposing the outsiders' gaze. Erica Weiss (2014) contributes to the discussion on the political implications of refusal against dominant actors by stating that 'refusal as a form of abstention forges a new kind of political space, one that bypasses the state' (McGranahan 2016, 322). Refusal is also generative. That is, from the perspective of the indigenous community, refusing to be represented by external authorities means that there is still an open possibility – or multiple possibilities – for being represented and that the choice in this regard is to be made by indigenous people themselves, hence empowering them against the hegemonic power of the coloniser's representative gaze.

Lastly, it is also necessary to note the two photographers' origins. While the one coming from the mainland enters a dynamic similar to what we already explored in 'The Last Prayer' with Shirakawa, the one from Naha invites us to reconsider the spatial and cultural relationships between the centre and periphery within Okinawa itself. Though it is not clearly stated in the text by Medoruma, Ikeda

(2014, 78-79) argues that '[j]udging from the description of the village, the type of language used by the story's characters, and written comments by the author, the setting of "Spirit Stuffing" is modelled on the author's hometown of Nakajin, located in the northwestern part of Okinawa Island in the Motobu peninsula'. Apart from the significance of Medoruma's hometown as a place where the use of local language and traditions still thrive (79), I argue that the position of the community within the Okinawan islands highlights issues of racism and internal dissonance in the geographical relations between local centres and peripheries that are recreated on a bigger scale in the power balance between the Okinawa Prefecture and mainland Japan. Nakajin-born author Shimota Seiji (1913 – 2003) remembers the racist behaviour of his city-dweller peers towards him during his school days, stating that 'there wasn't a more awful thought than thinking about being called "Yanbarā" [a slur for people from the Yanbaru region in Okinawa] by people from Naha' and that he was looked with contempt by people from Naha, Shuri and other cities in the southern regions of Okinawa for 'coming from the mountain' (Yamanokuchi 1957, 167). Like the Okinawan-born writer Sakiyama Tami, whose fictional works address the cultural politics involved in the essentialism enmeshed in the multi-layered hegemony and opposition between Japan, Okinawa and Yaeyama – the latter here representing the periphery within Okinawa (Chu 2015, 725), Medoruma deconstructs the image of Okinawa as a single community that is expressed univocally vis-à-vis mainland Japan and the United States, conversely shedding light on the local differences between communities within the archipelago and their power relationship, again conceptualised on a scale where the two poles are represented by mainland economic and technological development and indigenous backwardness.

The more central Naha and mainland Japan photographers can be understood as social agents perpetuating the commodification of meaningless, albeit aesthetically captivating, fragments of an ancient Okinawan culture long lost in the mainland. In replicating stereotypes and images of

Okinawan landscapes, of which aesthetics and cultural values seem so distant from Japanese mainlanders' perspective, the photographers aim to portray other colours within the Japanese nation-state palette, enhancing the idea of Japan as a progressive multicultural country. On the other hand, they exoticise Okinawa as an 'other within' and support a set of stereotypes that serves the only purpose for Japanese mainlanders to assert their own identity and values. The two opposing perspectives that we read in the discussion among the local politicians about hiding Kōtarō's condition are ultimately two sides of the same coin. Whether Kōtarō's status is concealed or promoted, the result still assesses the cultural and historical values of the local Okinawan community as an asset to sacrifice or commercialise for the economic development of the area. Once again, mechanisms of complicity and resistance among Okinawan people are continuously renegotiated in their relationship with the Japanese mainlanders, but also set the boundaries for outsiders to have access to a world – and a modality of perception of such reality – of which foundations are epistemologically discordant with the naturalist reality based on the Western *logos*. In the last section of this chapter, I will scrutinise how war memories, hitherto positioned just as a foundational premise for the condition of existence of contemporary Okinawan communities and individuals, are framed in a significant historical war narrative by mainland Japan through documentary-making activities and how indigenous space deals with such narratives in systems of solidarity and discordance between Okinawans and Japanese mainlanders.

3.4 Narrating War Memories, Appropriating War Memorials

3.4.1 Okinawan Unarticulated Memories in the Mainland Japanese Narration

Among all the short stories written by Medoruma, 'The Crying Wind' has the most complex publishing history, which led to several versions and adaptations of the story across different media. The first version was serialised in the *Okinawa Times* between June 25th 1985, and February 5th 1986. After 12 years, in 1998, the author reworked the short story and included it in the volume 'Droplets'

('Suiteki'), together with the eponymous short story and 'Okinawan bukku rebyū' ('Okinawan Book Review', 1997) – which will be discussed in the next chapter. In 2003, Medoruma adapted the story into a screenplay for a film directed by the mainland Japanese director Higashi Yōichi and released nationwide the following year. Eventually, the author adapted the screenplay and published it in its final form as a full-length novel – the first written by Medoruma – with the same title given to the film (*Fūon – The Crying Wind*, 2004). Given that the story was published in different outlets in a 10-year time span, several changes to the narrative were made by Medoruma – or the film director Higashi Yōichi – to address the different readership/spectatorship and reflect on the ever-changing sociopolitical relationship between Okinawa and mainland Japan, without taking into consideration the striking divergent reconceptualisation of the war period between 1986, when the first version was published, and 2004, the year when the movie adaptation was released to the public.[22] For the purpose of this analysis, I will focus on the 1998 version of the short story for two reasons: the first, strictly practical, is that it is the version most widely read and examined by scholars, both because it is considered the most refined and close to the ideas of the author and because of its popularity the year it was released. In this way, analysing this version will allow me to insert my analysis into the previous literary background. The second reason is connected to when the short story was released on a historical level: as mentioned above and in previous chapters, the end of the 1990s was a crucial period for what concern the presence of Okinawa in mainstream mainland Japanese mass media, the retelling of war memories and related commemorations involving both central and local institutions. In this sense, 'The Crying Wind' has to be scrutinised in conjunction with the sociohistorical context that influenced its storytelling and changes from the first version of the short

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[22] The death of Emperor Showa marked a breakthrough in the understanding and storytelling of the war period among Japanese society. The so-called Emperor Showa's 'Monologue', a series of memoirs dictated by Hirohito during the war period, was finally released to researchers in 1990, right after Emperor Showa's death (Mauch 2022). The event led to a re-evaluation of the war memories and responsibilities that touched upon a plethora of issues regarding minority groups – such as Okinawans – and gendered perspectives (Yoneyama 2003).

story, further emphasising the role of mainland Japanese documentarists in framing war memories for celebrative purposes in the mainland during the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II.

The narrative revolves around a local village in northern Okinawa and a sky burial site in its proximity. During the war, a Japanese soldier was placed on top of the site – we will later discover that one of the main characters and his father positioned the body there – and now only his skull remains to gaze into the open sea. The villagers keep a strict relationship with the unknown soldier because, every day, they can hear him 'crying': in fact, the wind coming from the sea passes through the skull. It produces a sound that resembles the crying voice of a human being. Medoruma portrays three main characters: Seikichi, a man from the Okinawan village, together with his father, places the corpse of the Japanese soldier in the sky burial site and now lives with a sense of shame and guilt because he robbed the dead body of a fountain pen; his son, Akira, makes a bet with his friends and put a mayonnaise jar with a tilapia fish inside next to the skull, to see if it would be alive in a week; Fujii, with his colleague Izumi, comes from mainland Japan as documentary filmmakers to record the story of the 'crying skull', but it is later discovered that Fujii has a deeper connection with the skull, as he thinks it could be a man to whom he owns his life back in the war. The three characters take part in the story about the burial site and its historical significance – at least for the local community – as a war memorial: Seikichi and Fujii, while the latter has never experienced the Okinawan battlefield, understand the site and Japanese soldier's corpse in it as a landmark where their war memories left a material scar on the natural landscape of the territory. For Akira, conversely, we will see how the site underwent a process of historicisation and hence became a 'sacred space' where the reality of the war mingled with ghost stories from the local folklore.

English and Japanese scholars alike inserted 'The Crying Wind' into a literature body that narrates and redefines how war memories are transmitted and negotiated among the Okinawan local population and mainland Japan. Among all the adaptations of the short story, it is the 1998 version

to be primarily scrutinised, probably because of the political undertones of the narration that opposes Okinawan people and media workers from the mainland in a context – where war memories were repackaged, commodified and nationally broadcast – that was palpably topical for readers who were then bombarded with documentaries and information about World War II, due to the coincident 50th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa and the end of the war in 1995. Japanese literature scholar Murakami Yōko (2007) comments that 'The Crying Wind' can be understood as a story about the impossibility of communication between characters, where experienced war memories cannot be narrated in-between Okinawan and mainland Japanese voices, and neither transmitted intergenerationally to second-generation Okinawan war survivors. Davinder Bhowmik (2012) discusses 'The Crying Wind' and 'Droplets' among other Medoruma's fictional works to question to whom war memories belong – 'Tokushō or the Himeyuri? Uta or NHK?', showing the 'clear tensions between and among local and national forces as they vie to narrate the past' (Bhowmik 2012, 16); Kyle Ikeda (2014, 322) follows Murakami's path in arguing that Medoruma's depiction of unarticulated memories serves the purpose of unveiling 'not only the content of traumatic memory but the very acts of conscious concealment, unconscious avoidance, and compulsive reenactment that survivors perform', so articulating 'acts of survivor silence and embodiment of their war memories'; finally, Susan Bouterey (2011) interprets 'The Crying Wind' through the lenses of postcolonial violence, posing the Okinawan natural space represented by the sky burial site near the local village in opposition to the Japanese kamikaze soldier who was placed there by one of the main characters' father during the war, assuming a binomial Okinawa/Mainland Japan that, as Nakaima (2016a: 93) criticises, oversimplifies the relationship between the characters and their positionality towards war memories and their narratives. This section will further investigate how indigenous epistemologies concerning space and sound are reprocessed by Japanese mainlanders to function as regional stories to be integrated into the national framework

of war memories. In so doing, I will examine how war memories, embodied as geographical spaces in the form of war memorials, are appropriated through images and sounds by Japanese mainlanders to articulate memories and stories that the characters were unable or unwilling to process. Against this mechanism, I will scrutinise the tension among Okinawan characters in negotiating and repackaging their war memories, inserting the indigenous community into the dynamics of commodification and strategic retelling of the Okinawan dark past for economic benefits.

3.4.2 Indigenisation of Dead Bodies as Postcolonial Space Reclamation

As mentioned above, 'The Crying Wind' revolves around the relationship the three main characters have with war memories and war memorials, namely the sky burial site near the Okinawan village. Susan Bouterey discusses the latter as composed of two oppositional elements: on one side, the natural cliff in the Okinawan forest and its usage as a sky burial site are seen as inherently indigenous, and the sky burial process seen as a traditional burying technique of local communities; on the other, the skull of the Japanese soldier is representing an external element, coming from mainland Japan, that symbolises the violence perpetrated during the Battle of Okinawa that led the soldier to be brought into the burial site to decompose. In this sense, one of the final scenes, where Akira mistakenly throws the skull off the cliff, is interpreted by Bouterey as a reclamation of the Okinawan natural landscape and the deletion of the external element by the new generation (Bouterey 2015, cited in Nakaima 2016a, 93). However, I argue that the skull, its physical appearance and sound properties are part of the indigenous space and are formulated as an integral part of the living experience of the local community, maintaining its connection with shared war memories through the perpetual repetition of natural sounds and the composition of the geographical space. In its first appearance in the short story, the sky burial site is described as follows by Medoruma:

It was the remains of an old wind burial site. When it was made was not clear even to village elders. They narrowed their eyes to reminisce about the old days when explaining that the bodies of the dead placed there turned into beautiful, white bones with the help of birds, crabs, and wharf roaches, along with the wind from the sea. [...] Now, however, the site was about to be covered by the shade of the thickly grown banyan and bindweed. Before the war, one could climb there on the sturdy stone steps against the face of the cliff. Villagers, several at a time, carried a coffin up the steps to send off the traveller to *gusō*, the afterlife. But bombardment from warships destroyed the stone steps, and the American forces that landed took most of the stones to use as materials for constructing bases. [...] The means for climbing now lost, the wind burial site gradually became hidden by the banyan, which jetted out from a crevice in the rock. It was never really forgotten by the villagers. Rather, it had become an important place in a different way from before (Medoruma 2009, 137-138).

The natural site is described not as a fixed environment, but rather as a series of movements where different actors – village elders, American forces, new generations in the community – try to make sense of a site that witnessed the most historical turning points in modern and contemporary Okinawa history and the nature is now reclaiming it. In her seminal work on imperial ruins and their effect on people interacting and living within them, Ann Laura Stoler (2013, 2) seeks to 'track the uneven temporal sedimentations in which imperial formations leave their marks' and attempts to question 'how empire's ruins contour and carve through the psychic and material space in which people live'. The sky burial site fits into the ongoing process of ruination brought by external authorities: the Okinawan space, charged with a fixed meaning of burial site since ancient times, was deconstructed by the American forces to build their military bases, making the place almost inaccessible to the local population, and was finally reclaimed by nature. While the present shape of the site could be intended as its final form, hence a return to its original state as part of the natural environment, the decomposition of the Japanese soldier's corpse still maintains the site into an

ongoing process of returning to nature or, to stress even more the colonial Okinawa-mainland Japan binary explored by Bouterey, to the indigenous Okinawan forest.

The connection between the Japanese soldier's corpse and the forest resembles the relationship between American soldiers and the indigenous natural environment I discussed in the previous chapter: to put it shortly, we are witnessing a reversal of the hierarchical order and power balance between the colonisers and the colonised, as the one who invaded the territory – in this case, the Japanese soldier during World War II – is now being absorbed by the forest and transfigured into an element of the landscape. After all, the corpse is undergoing the same burial process that led Okinawan people into the *gusō*, the indigenous afterlife. In this sense, the Japanese soldier is reclaimed by Okinawan people and enters their afterlife space as a nurturing for the indigenous soil and a pivotal element for understanding the meaning of the sky burial site as a local war memorial. As Nakaima (2016b, 163-166) also points out discussing the paratextual juxtaposition between the short story serialised in the *Okinawa Times* and the news published in the same newspaper, 'The Crying Wind' was published in the same issue where former Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone's visit to Yasukuni Shrine was discussed, hence highlighting the differences in commemorating the war dead between Okinawa and mainland Japan, among other issues concerning war remembrance and the idealisation of the Japanese Army. Japanese historian Satō Takumi (2014, cited in Nakaima, 2016b, 164) argues that the institution of memorial days and the civic rituals on those days in connection with the remembrance of the war dead assists in the reconfiguration of national identity around a shared past. It must be noted that Okinawa and mainland Japan have two different dates on which war dead are remembered: in Okinawa, the *Irei no Hi* (Okinawa Memorial Day, lit. 'the day to console the dead') takes place on June 23rd – the day after the end of the Battle of Okinawa, while the official date respected on a national level is August 15th, hence inscribing the war dead commemoration into the *Obon* period, a framework of festivities of Buddhist tradition for honouring

the spirits of one's ancestors. This disconnection is furtherly expressed in the way war dead are commemorated in Yasukuni Shrine and in Medoruma's fiction: while in the shrine war dead are honoured as patriotic heroes, which in a similar vein Japanese author Mishima Yukio (1925 – 1970) in the novella 'Eirei no koe' ('Heroes' Voice', 1966) aestheticised exalting the pureness of their ideals and their devotion to the imperial cause, Medoruma's depiction of the unknown Japanese soldier reflects the inescapable tragedy of the war and its victims. Furthermore, the Japanese soldier, whose name is never discovered though its initial 'K.' is carved on the fountain pen stolen by Seikichi, is placed in the Okinawan burial site by Seikichi's father in a fit of compassion and solidarity that equalised every war dead regardless of their side on the front.

The same sense of solidarity is expressed through the appropriation of the Japanese soldier's corpse as a natural element of the indigenous environment. In a way similar to 'Spirit Stuffing', natural elements belonging to the Okinawan biosphere contribute to the understanding of war memories and the present condition of the characters portrayed in the short story: on the one hand, the 'crab', which removed the rotten meat from the soldier's corpse and cleaned his bones through the years, uses the skull as a refuge and eventually attacks Akira when he put his finger in one of the skull holes. In the process of sky burial, the corpse interacts with the natural elements of the Okinawan space, and it is eventually broken down to become one of them. Rather than a destruction process, it could be better understood as one of assimilation. On the other hand, the wind coming from the sea supports the symbolisation of the skull as a war memorial for the local community, producing the sound – the crying voice – in passing through its holes. Because of the inaccessibility of the burial site, the sound produced by the skull is the only reminder of the war as it was locally experienced by the villagers and an element of aggregation that epitomises the common understanding of the world shared by the Okinawan community. Whether it has first-hand experience of the war or not, the indigenous community interacts with the crying voice and assigns it a meaning based on the

knowledge transmitted intergenerationally. Steven Feld (1994, 11) uses 'acoustemology' – a shortened term for 'acoustic epistemology' – as 'a special kind of knowing' in which 'sonic sensibility is basic to experiential truth'. On another note, Imada Tadahiko (2005, 5) suggests that 'we can conceivably learn the concept of acoustic ecology or soundscape in terms of contextual relationships'. In 'The Crying Wind', the main characters make sense of the crying voice in relationship with their war experience, the assumed shared history of the community, their physical proximity to the skull and the sound produced by it. Akira perceives the sacredness of the space due to war memories he cannot fully understand. Still, the change in the soundscape – the crying voice is not heard anymore because the mayonnaise jar he put next to the skull changes the wind direction – effectually materialises in his life the indigenous epistemology of the local environment and the linkage between his community and the past. For Seikichi, as for other elder members of the village, the wind sound is an eternal reminder of the war, besides being for Seikichi the remaining connection between him and his father as they moved the corpse together. Moreover, the high-pitched crying voice is blurred in Seikichi's mind with a high-pitched sound shot sending through sharp pain that assaults him in between his left temple and the back of his right ear (Medoruma 2009, 145). Again, individual experiences and shared memories juxtapose a complex mechanism of remembrance and repletion through the indigenous perception of sounds.

3.4.3 Broken Communications and the Failure of Mainlanders' Gaze

The crying voice of the skull attracted mainland Japanese filmmakers to create a narrative around the figure of the Japanese soldier's corpse to broadcast on national mass media. In this sense, the impossibility of understanding the thoughts of the unknown Japanese soldier becomes a gap through which the Japanese mainlanders can capture the local history of Okinawan war memories and insert it into a national framework. As it is stated by Izumi when he first introduces himself and his colleague, Fujii, to Seikichi, they plan to make a documentary out of the Japanese soldier's corpse

and his 'crying skull' so that someone could recognise him and his personal story be finally discovered:

> He [Izumi] continued, "I have heard that the skull is the remains of a member of the Tokkōtai, the Special Attack Corps. If possible, we would like to find clues to confirm if this rumour is true. If we learn more about the man's background, we would then be able to ask on television if anyone in the country knows of him. This would also provide some consolation for his soul" (143).

It is not a random soldier that Izumi and Fujii want to broadcast nationally, but rather the story of his 'crying skull' and the Okinawan space in which he was placed that could gain the interest of a mainland Japanese audience. It is an explicit aim of the two Japanese filmmakers to make a coverage of the Okinawan war history for their mainland Japanese audience to comprehend the part of the Japanese war history better, as Izumi explains that '[r]ight now, people on the mainland know almost nothing about the battle of Okinawa except the Himeyuri girl students' and that their purpose is for 'viewers nationwide to learn more about the experiences of Okinawans, who experienced the only part of the war that was fought on *Japanese soil*' (143, my emphasis). While culturally and historically Okinawa is posed as an external other – admittedly viewers nationwide know almost nothing of its local history, Okinawa is geographically and politically considered part of the Japanese state. Hence its narratives and memories are readily assimilable by the Japanese mainstream media. The mainland Japanese documentary production becomes a point of contention among Okinawan characters, who see this opportunity as a way to capitalise on their war memories but, at the same time, oppose the intrusion of mainland Japanese media into the indigenous modality of narrating their past. This tension is not overlooked in Medoruma's literature: in the short story 'Droplets', the main character Tokushō used to deliver war stories to elementary school classes every June, the month in which commemorations for the Battle of Okinawa are traditionally held. In the story, the character recalls that, despite the embarrassment he felt the first time, he

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became increasingly better at grasping what the audience wanted to hear and how he could convey it better for dramatic effect, even making his wife angry to learn that it would make up war stories for his profit (Medoruma 2000b, 271-272). This very tension between profit and war memories is not lost in 'The Crying Wind', where part of the community wants to make a show out of the 'crying skull' to attract visitors:

> "Because we're so far from Naha, our village doesn't attract many tourists", he [Imadomari] continued in the local language. "But if we become famous on TV, many people will come from the mainland. Think of the village's future. We can't live on agriculture alone. From now on, we also need to put efforts into tourism, too. You see? That's why the TV show is a good idea" (Medoruma 2009, 146).

As in 'Spirit Stuffing', villagers are pressured to be subdued to the logic of Japanese capitalism that understands Okinawa only as a tourist destination, stressing the regional difference – a gap that must be bridged – between the central Naha and Okinawan peripheries. In so doing, the community is making accessible a local space imbued with historical meanings for the villagers, but, even more than that, a space that for the local population assumed almost sacred connotations due to community reverence towards war dead and their linkage to the village history. The acoustic and spatial features of the cliff are a perennial reminder of the villagers' status as 'survivors' vis-à-vis the ones who did not make it through the war. Because of this dissonance in knowledge and spatial perception between people within and outsiders, the survivors 'felt uncomfortable about arbitrarily mentioning the war dead' and 'a sense of inviolable awe rose in everyone's heart when hearing the mournful wind sound' (147). The sacredness of the space is sublimated through the relationship between the villagers and the place, making every disturbance of the natural processes in the sky burial site an act against the community. While Akira is worried that he could receive a divine punishment for placing the mayonnaise jar next to the skull, he is more concerned by the fact that

the wind sound – a connective element among the villagers' understanding of the space they inhabit – is not heard any more in the village, hence depriving the community of a foundational component of the indigenous re-elaboration of landscapes as a perpetual remembrance of the war past.

On the other hand, Akira's disruption of the mutual engagement between the skull and the Okinawan natural environment rendered inaccessible to outsiders and insiders alike the sonic – and, in the last scene, also the visual – element that created the local war narratives and that could have been commodified through the co-interpretative efforts of villagers and Japanese filmmakers. Eventually, the skull, thrown off the cliff by Akira, returns to the sea and disappears from the lives of the villagers together with the 'mournful wind sound'. The incommunicability between the characters explored by Murakami Yōko (2007) is then transferred to another level: it becomes the impossibility to communicate and transmit the history of space and the people connected with it to outsiders, it is the failure to broadcast the complexities of local fragments of history that would have been simplified as belonging to the national framework of war memories. Fujii's work is ultimately reduced to a simplistic operation of appropriation of war memories to commercialise war narratives in a timely fashion. It is constrained by the boundaries set by the television station in which he is employed. Before being assigned the documentary on Okinawa, the station directors were pushing instead for filming in Hiroshima as '[it] would be better', because '[f]or one thing, the anti-nuclear movements intensify around August' (Medoruma 2009, 156). The fact that Fujii convinced his employers to shoot in Okinawa instead presents us with the idea that Okinawa and Hiroshima are already interchangeable Japanese spaces for war narratives to be told. The logic of consumerism flattens the individual character of local war memories and prevails over the necessity of narrating a story for its inherent importance to indigenous communities. By the same mechanism, external economic changes in Naha and mainland Japan push the villagers to capitalise on the peculiarities of their environment to attract tourism revenue – although, as the Japanese filmmaker Izumi

sneeringly remarks, '[in the village] there's nowhere to go except cheap bars' and that '[i]t is completely naïve of them to think they can attract tourists' (156).

3.5 Conclusion

The 50th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa redefined the power structure between Okinawa and mainland Japan once again. Systems of memorialisation, remembering, and reframing of the past show that narratives and historical facts are constructed and portrayed differently depending on the voices and perspectives within the Japanese nation-state, involving in this process the creation, maintenance and symbolisation of the 'Okinawa' category and its assimilation into the controversial Japanese war history. Mass media played a pivotal role in broadcasting a series of images that aimed to assign to Okinawa meanings to make it an 'other' within the Japanese nation-state framework and support a more progressive - although fictitious – multicultural image of Japan. The conceptualisation of Okinawa as a primitive Japan and its portrayal as an exotic tourist destination essentialise Okinawa as an oppositional element for Japanese mainlanders to fortify their status as a culturally and technologically advanced country, besides unifying its citizens under the banner of a single national identity vis-à-vis the distant 'other within'. In this discourse, we saw how the Okinawan communities and individuals portrayed in Medoruma's fiction challenge common misconceptions and pitfalls of Okinawa's depictions in mainland Japanese mass media, allowing us to look through the mechanisms of recording and framing of indigenous spaces and the subsequent frictions between local populations and mainland invaders that intertwine the protection of cultural properties with the logic of consumerism and profit for both locals and outsiders. More importantly, Medoruma depicts a series of Okinawan characters that position themselves differently in regard to the stereotyping of Okinawan identity and its construction by mainland Japanese mass media. Some characters, such as Tōma in 'The Last Prayer' and Seikichi in 'The Crying Wind', resist simplistic representations and the act of violence perpetrated by external actors to reframe 'Okinawa' as a

category within Japan. Others, such as Kina in 'The Last Prayer' and the villagers in 'Spirit Stuffing'

and 'The Crying Wind', actively engage with the dominant modalities of representation in return for

economic benefits. Medoruma's short stories make us reconsider the position of Okinawan people

within the representational processes of the 'other' within Japan: Hein (2012, 17) argues that

Okinawan authors are aware of the canon established in mainland Japan and employ narrative

strategies often found in post-colonial contexts, such as magical realism and mimicry. In this sense,

Okinawan authors are here 'writing back' against the set of stereotyping Okinawan images. However,

Medoruma portrays a different agency that does not put itself against the Japanese

representational model but works within the very processes of maintaining and supporting such

images of Okinawa. Rather than 'speaking back', the Okinawan characters are 'speaking with' their

Japanese counterparts. Medoruma fights against the simplifying mechanism of 'othering' where the

other is excluded from the construction of national identities and marginalised (Spivak 1985), and

proposes instead another model where Okinawa and mainland Japan are not positioned in a colonial

hierarchy but are instead equally empowered in the construction of images of Okinawa and

mainland Japan alike. Miyagi Etsujirō (1995, 27) argues that postwar Okinawa's 'occupation is also

cross-cultural contact', while Ota Yoshinobu (1997, 152) echoes this understanding of the

contemporary Okinawan society in stating that it is a 'highly creolized culture of contact zone'.

However, we must be careful when defining the dynamics of the so-called 'cross-cultural', which

would imply a mutual transformation of agencies and identities following the contact between two

communities. At least in the Okinawan context, this is hardly the case. What happens instead is that

it is the indigenous community to be transformed by appropriating the cultural tools of the

colonisers, in an attempt to survive its condition of subordination in the colonial system. James E.

Roberson (2011, 613) claims that 'cultural mimicry – maintaining difference and distinction in the

very act of copying – may be seen as self-empowering cultural appropriation on the part of the

colonized copier'. Regardless of the actual effects of colonial mimicry as an empowering mechanism for indigenous communities, the creation of this kind of 'hybridised' third space – where hybridity is only a unilateral permeation of colonisers' cultural assets into the colonised knowledge production – reflects the dynamics of hierarchical power between colonisers and colonised, Americans and Japanese mainlanders vis-à-vis Okinawan people. In Medoruma's literature, the encounter between external actors and indigenous people explores different possible interactions that pose the two parties in an equal position when it comes to representing and portraying the territory and its people. In doing so, the author deconstructs the dominant gaze of mainland Japan and participates in decolonising through the reappropriation of Okinawan images and engaging with the representation of Okinawan identity as it is disseminated in mainland Japanese mass media.

In the next chapter, I will further explore how the Okinawa/mainland Japan power structure is reflected in the multi-layered relationship and history between the Okinawan people and the Imperial House of Japan. To do so, I will analyse Medoruma's fictional works against the traditional mainland Japanese taboo of representing the Japanese emperor and the imperial family and question how such depictions shed new light on the historical responsibility of the emperor for the losses during the Battle of Okinawa and the reaction of Okinawan people to its transformation into a symbol of national unity in post-war Japan.

Chapter Four: Reclaiming Indigenous Space and Time Against the Void: Satirical Literature and the Emperor's Absence

4.1 Introduction

In 1995, during the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa and the end of World War II, Emperor Heisei visited Okinawa and attended a series of events that aimed to solidify the position of Okinawa as a bulwark of pacifism within the Japanese nation-state. During what was defined as the Memorial Tour (*irei no tabi*), Emperor Heisei paid homage to fallen soldiers and citizens in Okinawa, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, three crucial locations where the tragedy of the war fully manifested in the eyes of the Japanese people (Figal 2003, 71). The Memorial Tour is illustrative of how the symbolic figure of the Emperor was employed to reassess the war legacy and the complex relationship between the Imperial House and Okinawa in light of the debated war responsibility of his father Emperor Showa. As I noted in Chapter 3, discussions on the responsibility of the Emperor for the war and the Battle of Okinawa were re-ignited in the immediate aftermath of his death with the publication of the *Emperor Monologues*, a manuscript released for the first time in December 1990, where Emperor Showa recording his account of the war politics during the Second World War. In a certain sense, the controversies surrounding the political figure of Emperor Showa called for an intervention by his successor Emperor Heisei, whose presence as the first post-war democratic Emperor of Japan has always been connected with the reconstruction of the image of Japan both in domestic and international territories. Okinawa, as one of the Japanese war history centres and the main junction of the post-war relationship between Japan and the United States, needed to be addressed as an issue to be solved, and the bond between mainland Japan and the Okinawan people to be reinforced through the symbolic presence of the Emperor. During his years as Crown Prince and later as Emperor, Akihito visited Okinawa, came in contact with the local culture, and even learned *ryūka*

(Okinawan poetry) composition from a professor at Hosei University and published some pieces of his own as a result. In so doing, Akihito received appreciation from the Okinawan people, who held a favourable opinion of the Emperor and the Japanese imperial system (Medoruma 2017, 130). Medoruma argues that this is one of the multiple manifestations of the effort of the central government to politically and culturally reposition Okinawa within the Japanese nation-state storytelling. To him, 'the emperor is well used as a device to create illusions as if Okinawa share a common history with Japanese people, even in modern times, to create a sense of unity with Japanese people', but, he reiterates, 'this is nothing but an illusion' (131).

According to Japanese historian Kamiesu Tomokatsu (1996, 167), Okinawa was used by Emperor Showa and the military high-ranks to buy time and avoid an American invasion of mainland Japan, thus deliberately sacrificing the lives of Okinawan people embroiled in the fight between the Japanese and American armies. Besides Emperor Showa's responsibility for not stopping the war before the Battle of Okinawa took place, further questions on his responsibilities in the subsequent American occupation of Okinawa arose when the so-called 'Okinawa Message' – often referred to as the 'Emperor's Message' in Okinawa – was made available by the U.S. National Archives in March 1979 and published in the May, 1979 issue of the magazine *Sekai* ('World') (Rabson 2008b, 9). In the document, a memorandum sent on September 20th, 1946 to the Commander of the Far East Command General Douglas MacArthur by Terasaki Hidenari, at the time adviser to the Emperor, the Emperor expressed his opinion on the political future of Okinawa:

> Mr Terasaki stated that the Emperor hopes that the United States will continue the military occupation of Okinawa and other islands of the Ryukyus. In the Emperor's opinion, such occupation would benefit the United States and also provide protection for Japan. The Emperor feels that such a move would meet with wide-spread approval among the Japanese people who fear not only the menace of Russia, but after the Occupation has ended, the growth of rightist and leftist groups which

might give rise to an "incident" which Russia could use as a basis for interfering internally in Japan. *The Emperor further feels that United States military occupation of Okinawa (and such other islands as may be required) should be based upon the fiction of a long-term lease – 25 to 50 years or more – with sovereignty retained in Japan* ("Emperor of Japan's Opinion". My Emphasis).

The process of democratisation of Japan during the American occupation transformed the Emperor's image: his portrayal as a military leader, refined by the pre-war Imperial Agency through the publication of pictures of the Emperor in military garments during his rare encounters with the Japanese population, changed into a mere symbol of Japan as a nation, a human symbolic leader whose formal attire resembled his former Japanese subjects. With this transformation, Emperor Showa was then stripped of all political powers under the new constitution drafted jointly by the Japanese government and the American administration. However, the frequent meetings between Emperor Showa and General MacArthur indicate that the latter considered with high regard the Emperor's opinion and, even more than that, found in Emperor Showa a potent tool that could allow for a smoother transition towards a post-war, democratic Japan. On this point, MacArthur concluded a telegram to Dwight D. Eisenhower, at the time Chief of Staff of the Army, predicting grave consequences should the Emperor be indicted as a war criminal and stating that 'he is a symbol which united all Japanese' and that destroying him would mean the nation would disintegrate as well (Bix 2000, 568). For this reason, Hirohito's memorandum about the future of Okinawa was most welcome by the American administration, as a continuous American military presence in the Ryukyuan archipelago would be beneficial for both parties. On the one hand, Emperor Showa was concerned with the security of Japan once the American occupation ended on the mainland and demanded assurances from General MacArthur that the country would be protected from Russia and China now that Japan was not allowed to retain military forces by the constitution. On the other, the United States would maintain military control on a strategic section

of the Pacific that would let them better limit the political influence of the Soviet Union in East Asia, besides permitting a faster way of intervening in local conflicts such as the Korean War that broke near the end of the American occupation of Japan in 1950 and further complicated the political balance in the region. Hence, when the Treaty of San Francisco and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty were signed in 1951, the Emperor expressed great satisfaction with the results of the cooperation between the Japanese and American governments, an outcome that once again rendered Okinawa a *suteishi* ('sacrificial stone'), a pawn immolated for the defence of mainland Japan.[23]

Both in mainland Japan and Okinawa, the image of Emperor Showa and the imperial family around him radically changed in the post-war period. As Japanese sociologist Yoshimi Shinya (2000) argues, the Emperor system underwent a mass-mediated process where the Emperor was put in a triangular relationship with the media and the audience. However, Yoshimi (2000, 410) concludes, 'the different ways in which the "prewar" and "postwar" modern emperor systems interact suggests to me that the relationship between the two systems is indicative of a process of complicated change and continuity and is not a clean, simple break in the history of the modern emperor system'. The perception of the Emperor figure did not change overnight, but it instead became a complex system where meanings and historical attributes are assigned depending on how the Emperor's image is constructed and processed by the media and perceived by its audience. Again, according to the late novelist Mishima Yukio, 'the emperor is characterized by two contradictory, yet co-existing elements: "gentility" and "terrorism", or in other terms, "sacred" and "profane", or "peaceful spirit" (*nigimitama*) and "violent spirit" (*aramitama*)' (Takeda 1988, 3). These two opposing poles that live within the Emperor's portrayed image mirror his complicated legacy and reflect how the Emperor

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[23] The expression 'suteishi' has been a controversial point and target of internal censorship in post-war Okinawa, although according to Medoruma, the word 'symbolises "postwar" Japan-Okinawa relations", 'captures the essence of the Battle of Okinawa, and has been a keyword in the discussion of the Battle' (Medoruma 2012, 2-3). See: Medoruma 2012, for further analysis of the controversy surrounding the removal of the word 'suteishi' in the historical war narration within Okinawa Prefecture.

is represented in post-war narratives, the codifications of his depiction and the reactions, mostly violent, of the audience when these boundaries are broken. In November 1960, the Japanese literature journal *Chūō Kōron* published a short story by Fukazawa Shinichirō (1914 – 1987) entitled 'Fūryū mutan' ('The Story of a Dream of Courtly Elegance', 1960). The short story narrates a dream about a popular revolt where Japanese citizens overthrow the Japanese government, and the imperial family is ridiculed and executed in a series of summary beheadings. A few months later, a young man presented himself at the front door of the Tokyo Home of Shimanaka Hōji, president of the publishing company Chūō Kōron, and when the maid told him that Shimanaka was not home, he forced himself inside the house, killing the maid and stabbing Shimanaka's wife. A delegation of the Aikokutō (Greater Japan Patriotic Party) demonstrated at a Hibiya Park rally in Tokyo, intimidating the journal to cease publication and exile Fukazawa, who went into hiding right after the publication of the short story fearing for his life and stayed there for five years (Treat 2018, 176-177). The murder of Shimanaka's household maid – later known as the Shimanaka Incident – is said to be the starting point of the so-called chrysanthemum taboo, according to which the Emperor and the imperial family ought not to be represented in any literary and artistic form. Fukazawa then became one of the last voices to protest against the representation and mass-mediated veneration of the imperial family, sarcastically claiming to 'oppose the marriage of an heir to a commoner because he had been looking forward to continued inbreeding that would produce a royal family with small heads, bodies like wasps', limbs like those of hairless rabbits, and a need for thick eyeglasses' so that the Japanese people would 'realize what a truly special imperial family they had' (194). Fukazawa closed a short period of Japanese history – starting from the post-war period and ending in 1961 right after the Shimanaka Incident – where the Emperor could be represented and

discussed in mainland Japan, and his presence and meaning as a post-war symbol actively debated among public intellectual and artists through literary and artistic modes of expression.[24]

However, several of Medoruma's fictional and non-fictional works show continuity with Fukazawa's short story and its critique of the imperial family and what it sought to represent for Japan. Medoruma's series of essays on the Okinawan newspaper Ryūkyū Shimpō was called 'Fūryū mudan' ('Playful No-Talk'), clearly a pun on Fukazawa's 'Fūryū mutan', justified by the highly satirical tone and the political verve with which Medoruma comments on the Okinawan sociopolitical conditions vis-à-vis mainland Japan. Yet, it is in the fictional works that the common background and satirical prose shared by Medoruma and Fukazawa mostly come out. Medoruma can portray the imperial family – and, in so doing, break the chrysanthemum taboo in the Japanophone literature industry – precisely because of the specificity of Okinawan history in connection with the absence of Emperor Showa and the geographical and cultural distance between the Okinawan people and the mass-mediated imperial institution. Medoruma's fiction rarely portrays the imperial family directly but rather plays on the absence, the void left by the continuous refusal of Emperor Showa to visit Okinawa and his son Emperor Heisei's lack of acknowledgement of his father's responsibilities in connection to the current situation in Okinawa. In this way, the author depicts not only the Emperor as an absent figure, whose invisibility is historically and politically charged, but also the perception of the Okinawan people of the lack of the imperial presence, how this very non-presence reconfigures the relationship between Okinawa and mainland Japan, and the dynamics according

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[24] It has to be noted that there are a few exceptions to this for what concerns figurative arts. In 1982-83, Japanese artist Nobuyuki Oura presented a series of collages entitled 'Holding Perspective' – an artwork that was excluded from the Okinawa exhibition (Medoruma 2021, 149), which contained highly controversial portraits of Emperor Showa along with nude photographs of women. Likewise, in the 2020 art exhibition 'Tenran bijutsu: Art with Emperor', portrayals of Emperor Heisei are shown together with sexualized representations of the chrysanthemum, so creating a complex depiction of the imperial family as an object of sexual desire (Kaneko 2022).

to which the absent figure of the Emperor still makes an impact on contemporary Okinawan society and the relationship between Okinawan characters despite being geographically dislocated.

This chapter explores Medoruma's literary depiction of the encounter, or lack thereof, between Okinawan people and the imperial family as a way to investigate how contemporary Okinawan society is still affected by the legacy of Emperor Showa and their relationship with the imperial institution as a symbolic ambassador of the Japanese nation-state. In doing so, the chapter will develop as an analysis of three short stories where Medoruma portrays the cultural and political layers of the Emperor system as they affect Okinawan communities through a depiction of (non)physical encounters in-between Okinawan characters and the imperial family. In the first section, I will look at 'Okinawan Book Review' to understand how Okinawan journalists and mass media deal with the Emperor system and how local cultural products are affected by the Emperor's figure as a symbol of Japaneseness. Developed as a series of reviews of Okinawan books published in a fictional local newspaper, the short story approaches many themes that ultimately show the sociopolitical imbalance between Okinawa and mainland Japan. In exploring this fictional work, this section aims to grasp how the legacy of the Emperor system colonises cultural spaces and how the local intelligentsia position – consciously or not – Okinawa in a condition of subordination concerning the Emperor and the Japanese central government. The second section will examine 'Walking a Street Named Peace' and will focus on the geographical dimension of urban restrictions and boundaries that disrupt local daily lives when the Crown Couple visits the prefecture. Addressing the historical significance and the multifaceted layers of Naha's commercial streets and the limitations imposed on Okinawan people by mainland police forces during imperial visits, this section will analyse the colonial mechanism undergoing the reorganisation of urban mobility by external authorities, the physical encounter between the Okinawan audience and the imperial family, and the violence perpetrated by both actors in affirming their political position in view of the

historical narratives surrounding the Second World War and the Emperor's role. The last part will analyse how Okinawan urban spaces are depicted in the immediate aftermath of Emperor Showa's death. Through a textual analysis of 'Ichigatsu Nanoka' ('January the 7th', 1989), I will examine how mourning impacts the Okinawan city and clash with the Okinawan characters' understanding of the Emperor's death and how it affects their everyday life. In so doing, I will investigate the satirical element as a critical literary device that empowers Okinawan authors and opens up decolonial possibilities for Okinawan literature.

Ultimately, this chapter intends to offer a new perspective on the representation of the Emperor and the imperial family that – while published in a Japanophone environment – disrupts the literary tradition of mainland Japan precisely because of the complex relationship between the Emperor system and Okinawa. In this sense, Medoruma's fictional works are situated in an ambivalent position: on the one hand, they broaden the corpus of Japanophone literature depicting and critiquing the imperial figure, and doing so in the post-Shimanaka incident period, breaking with the chrysanthemum taboo that does not allow such representations. On the other, the fact that Medoruma breaks through the boundaries set by mainland Japanese publishing companies, writers, and readership alike poses a cultural distance between Okinawan and mainland Japanese literature that once again stresses the specificity of the southern archipelago. Lastly, it is worth noting that this chapter does not want to enter the long-standing scholarly debate about the war responsibility of Emperor Showa. As it was perfectly summarised by Peter Mauch (2022, 226-227), '[o]n one side of the debate are those scholars, including, for example, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Herbert P. Bix, who regard Hirohito as having played an active role in pre-war and wartime Japanese aggression and then, after the surrender, as having allowed men such as Tōjō and Konoe to shoulder the blame for Japan's lost war', while '[o]n the other side of the debate are those scholars, including Kyoto University's Itō Yukio, who believe that the emperor was unable to slow or prevent pre-surrender

Japan's aggressive course, and on these grounds argue that he did not bear the same responsibility for the war as did men like Tōjō and Konoe'. Whereas Okinawan intellectuals and authors, Medoruma included, are differently positioned on the spectrum regarding Emperor Showa's war responsibilities – and, as such, their stance might be reflected in their literary production, this chapter limits its scope to the literary portrayal of the Emperor vis-à-vis Okinawan people and the impact of the Emperor system on the prefecture, without taking into account the ever-present discussion about the historical truth and the extent of Emperor Showa's role during Second World War.

4.2 Seeking Help from the Outer World: Intellectuals' Positions on Tennōsei in the Okinawan Cultural Space

4.2.1 Cooperative Okinawan Voices and Indigenous Transmission of Okinawan Culture

'Okinawan Book Review' was published for the first time in the October 1997 issue of *Bungakukai* ('Literary World'), a mainland Japanese literary magazine that had already hosted Medoruma's short stories in the past, most notably 'Droplets' in the April issue of the same year, for which the author won the prestigious Akutagawa Prize. Among Medoruma's short stories, 'Okinawan Book Review' is undoubtedly one of the most complex in terms of storytelling and writing style: characterised by a structure that makes use of non-fictional writing and employing a polyphonic structure where different voices are both hidden narrators and characters, the short story conveys a narrative that heavily relies on paratextual information and prior knowledge from the part of its supposed readership. 'Okinawan Book Review' is fundamentally a collection of review articles on fictitious Okinawan books published in a fictitious local newspaper, written by unnamed literary critics and intellectuals. In doing so, Medoruma can explore different themes surrounding Okinawa and its relationship with mainland Japan, mainly focusing on how Okinawan culture is commodified both locally and nationwide – frequent are the references to shamanism and *yuta*, topics that became

mainstream in mainland Japan magazines during the 'Okinawa Boom' – and on the Emperor system and its perception among Okinawan intellectuals during the last years of Emperor Showa's reign and the beginning of the Heisei era.

The short story's textual framework and the author's almost obsessive focus on themes culturally connected to Okinawa are inserted in a parodical structure that exaggerates the relevance of local traditions for the mainland Japanese readership and their influence in the spread and reproduction of a certain image of multicultural Japan abroad. While the author is undoubtedly mocking specific trends where both Okinawan and nationwide companies attempted to catch readers' attention to local specificities for touristic purposes, it must be noted that the very publication of 'Okinawan Book Review' in *Bungakukai* positions the short story against the mainland Japanese literary circles and their critique towards contemporary Okinawan literature in view of the Akutagawa Prizes – which is sponsored by the publishing company Bungeishunjū, the same publishing *Bungakukai* – awarded in 1995 and 1997 to Okinawan-born author Matayoshi Eiki and Medoruma himself and the judgement they received for their fictional works. In this sense, the intellectual voices depicted in 'Okinawan Book Review' mirror the framework of representation and self-representation imbricated in the orientalist discourse as it appears in the Akutagawa Prize's judgements of the awarded Okinawan short stories (Hanada 2006). In his comment on 'Droplets', Japanese author Hino Keizō (1929 – 2002) praises the short story for its view on war memories and its detailed depiction of the main character's psyche. In the last part of his comment, he states that:

> It is an excellent modern, Okinawaesque novel. There might be people who would say, 'Okinawa? Again?'. However, we cannot see this kind of latent energy that resides in nature here on the mainland (*naichi*), particularly in Tokyo, a place that underwent an unfinished process of artificialisation (*jinkōka*) (Hino 1997, cited in Hanada 2006, 50).

It is, once again, the portrayal of a region that is an 'other' within the borders of Japan, a diverse body instrumental in the enrichment of the spiritual and artistic values of Japanese literature. Furthermore, as Hanada (2006, 50-51) notes, the use of the expression 'Okinawaesque', especially in opposition to mainland Japan – in which Tokyo is automatically considered its centre, again underlines the Japanese mainlanders' gaze towards an external environment, imagined, and framed in culturally essentialist terms.

On the other hand, the collection of fictitious book reviews presented in 'Okinawan Book Review' proposes a focus on essays rather than fiction. In doing so, Medoruma criticises mainland Japanese and Okinawan intellectuals' attitudes towards Okinawa-related research. On this, he discusses his relationship with local researchers and admits that 'my writings caught the curiosity of researchers working on postcolonial studies and multiculturalism, and that he was even asked to participate in university lectures', but that eventually 'when research trends change, they simply forget [about us Okinawans]' (Medoruma 2005, 177-178). To a certain extent, 'Okinawan Book Review' tackles the issue of local knowledge and intellectual production being the victim of commodification processes in academic and, more broadly, literary publishers' environments. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the post-Second World War period Okinawa has been the centre of advertisements and image restructuring to become a Hawai'i-like paradise and, as such, being the target destination for domestic travellers who wanted to experience tropical scenery at an affordable price and, more than that, surrounded by a familiar Japanese environment. These dynamics reached their peak in the 1990s when Okinawa was portrayed, exposed and explained in a number of media and publications, a phenomenon that was lately defined as the 'Okinawa Boom'. Academia was not excluded from this trend. Fieldworks and studies by Japanese anthropologists were re-converted and simplified for the publication of special issues of magazines that targeted general readers with pictures and sneak peeks of the local culture, with the aim of showing the difference between

Okinawa and mainland Japan as a fascinating feature and so convincing mainland Japanese tourists to visit the prefecture. The publication of Okinawan literary collections by mainland Japanese publishing houses is another example of this tension between knowledge sharing and commodification of an exotic and distant – but always inscribed within the context of the Japanese nation-state – culture, besides being one of the reasons for the popularity of Okinawan authors such as Medoruma Shun. And while such research trends popularised Okinawa as a theme both among the general audience and academia, it is worth noticing that, as in the case of Hawai'i, Guam and Saipan, 'this cultural commodification […] closes the windows to understand the lived experience and deep historical and cultural connections, while also allowing for the gentrification of the land and destruction of the local livelihood' (Takahashi 2020, 154). On the other hand, in discussing the academic discourse around the categorisation of 'Okinawan films', film scholar Fujiki Kosuke (2013, 49) argues that 'the Western representation of the Orient reveals more about the ideology of the contemporary Western society than the reality of the Oriental Other' and that '[t]hough ostensibly objective and apolitical, academia in the humanities by no means transcends such an ideology'. In the case of Okinawan studies, whether they are Western or Japanese, 'scholars who focus on the representation of Okinawa and the Okinawans in film would inadvertently run the risk of imposing their own expectations and political agenda on the representations of Okinawa', regardless of whether such expectation would conform with the exotic images proposed through the 'Okinawa Boom' or are opposed to it. In 'Okinawan Book Review', Medoruma attempts to portray this tension in how Okinawa ought to be narrated in mainstream media through a multi-level structure where voices of locals and outsiders are intertwined to create an international network of discussions that re-elaborates the position of Okinawa among intellectuals and readers. In this, the unknown reviewers, whose writing builds the entire textual structure of the short story, are portrayed in ambivalent positions concerning the materials, connected to Okinawan sociopolitical themes they

are reviewing. At times reverential towards the authors and the book they are sponsoring, at times more objective in their writing, Medoruma depicts Okinawan journalists as subjected to the same power dynamics undergoing in mainland Japan in relation to the treatment of political discourses. On this topic, Medoruma states that 'we should have no illusions nowadays that the Okinawan media is somehow different from the Japanese media' and that '[l]ike everywhere else, salaried reporters here are obedient to the powers-that-be in what they write' (Medoruma et al. 2019, 2).

4.2.2 Uranus, Yuta, Emperor System

In order to understand the structure and style employed in 'Okinawan Book Review', it is worth looking at how the text is constructed, which voices the author aims to portray, in which genre the short story can be included and the paratextual information, specifically regarding the literary and historical context in which the fictional work was published. 'Okinawan Book Review' is admittedly a complex text to decipher, even for contemporary readers, due to the many references to local sociopolitical discourses – it has to be remembered that the short story was first published in a mainland Japanese literary magazine, and so directed towards a general, mainland Japanese readership, and the frequent change in tone and writing style as the short story develops until its conclusion.

Due to its nature as a political commentary and a mockery of the attitude of local intelligentsia towards Okinawa-themed literature, 'Okinawan Book Review' can be defined as a parody and a satire at the same time. Roger Kreuz and Richard Roberts (1993, 103) argue that, while ultimately based on irony, satire and parody are literary genres in which implications are either internal to the text or rely on mental representations of the readers. In particular, in parody 'the audience does not need to go beyond the boundaries of the original work to consider societal implications as they do in satire' while understanding the latter would require a grasp of the period and place in which a text was written. In order for a text to be both satire and parody, the readers 'must keep in mind

at least three simultaneous representations', which are ' a representation of the events in the text itself, a representation of how events in the text imitate the original work, and a representation of how the events in the text have implications both beyond the text and beyond the original work' (104). Literary scholar Linda Hutcheon (1985) discusses how parody and its enunciation is constructed on both structural and pragmatic frames. If we look at the structural point of view, parody can be considered a bi-textual synthesis operating on two levels, a primary one, which is the surface, and the secondary, the implied one, of which superimposition gives the intended meaning of the text (34). The pragmatic frame is given by the text's ethos, which Hutcheon regards as 'an inferred intended reaction motivated by the text' (55). In his 'The Aesthetics of Parody', Russian formalist G.D. Kiremidjian (1969, 241-242) discussed the aesthetic of parody as a 'symptom of historical processes which invalidate the normal authenticity of primary forms', and its usage as a way to separate 'form and content to demonstrate their relatedness and even their identity' and to 'dramatize the pathos of their dissonance'. Returning to Hutcheon's analysis of parody, she points out that the comic trait is not always present in parodical texts, as 'many parodies today do not ridicule the background texts but use them as standards by which to place the contemporary under scrutiny' (Hutcheon 1985, 57).

'Okinawan Book Reviews', constructed as a series of fictitious books reviews on an Okinawan newspaper's column, plays on the internal dissonance between content and writing style, opinions on books and sociopolitical discourses, with sections contradicting each other and showing oppositional perspectives on the same events and characters discussed. The text can be understood as a juxtaposition of three narrative voices that have to be put in a hierarchical order: on the top level, there is Medoruma Shun himself, as the writer of the short story, but also as a self-reflective editorialist and essayist for Okinawan newspapers. Under him, there are the voices reviewing fictitious books for the local newspaper, whose anonymous presence is characterised by different

prose and position in the political spectrum depending on which book is reviewed and how they want to appeal to their readership. Finally, at the bottom level, there are the writers of the books reviewed, often quoted in the reviews as a means to convey their ideas on the Okinawan society, specific policies and events happening in between the publications of their books.

The short story collects fictitious book reviews on two main topics: the 'debate on *yuta*' (*yuta ronsō*) and the 'debate on the Crown Prince marrying an Okinawan woman' (*kōtaishi Okinawa muko ronsō*). These two themes are explored through the writing of two imaginary Okinawan authors whose books – some autobiographical in nature, others extended discussions on their ideas – are reviewed by unidentified local journalists in the eponymous newspaper column. The first author is Oomijari Ryūichirō, who began writing a series of books narrating his transformation into a *yuta*: according to the first book of the series, Oomijari says he realised he got supernatural powers right after dental treatment. Because of his sweet tooth since he was a child, at the age of 25, he ate twelve Ice BonBon – a popular ice cream product in Okinawa and Taiwan – at once, which made two of his teeth fall out. After undergoing dental surgery, he got an implant with metal bridges in his mouth, and from that moment on, he realised he could receive electric signals from Uranus (Medoruma 2013b, 140). The second author is Ooyama Meidō: an Okinawan public intellectual, he left for the mainland to help his family economically back in Okinawa and started working in the Kansai area when he was involved in a number of workers' and citizens' associations such as the 'Association for the Protection of the Rights and Lifestyle of Okinawan People in Kansai' (*Kansai zaijū Okinawajin no seikatsu to kenri wo mamoru kai*). After being arrested and released, he returned to Okinawa where he was once again involved in a series of different associations dealing with a variety of issues in contemporary Okinawan society, most of them supporting nationalistic ideas and the Emperor system in the prefecture – as an example, he is said to be the head of the 'Association for the Invitation of the Emperor in Okinawa' (*Tennō heika wo Okinawa ni omaneki suru kai*) and the

'Association of Citizens Against Teachers Against the *Hi no Maru* (the Japanese flag) and *Kimi ga yo*

(the Japanese national anthem)' (*Hi no maru – Kimi ga yo ni hantai suru kyōshi ni hantai suru kenmin*

no kai) (142). While apparently on the two opposite poles of the political spectrum for what

concerns the Okinawan position vis-à-vis mainland Japan – in fact, Oomijari supports the total

independence of Okinawa, while Ooyama holds a nationalistic view and embraces the complete

absorption of Okinawan people into the Japanese cultural sphere, they are eventually revealed to

be two faces of the same coin, suggesting that discourses on the position of Okinawa vis-à-vis

mainland Japan among local public intellectuals cannot escape their very cultural and political

subordination towards the central government and illusions of Japanese unity supported by the

Emperor system. In the review of the fictitious book *Tennō heika to Okinawa* by Ooyama Meidō, the

reviewer dwells upon the author's position against Ryukyuan independence movements – and, as

such, opposes the other main character of the short story, Oomijari, who later becomes the leader

of an independence demonstration. Ooyama's ideas on Okinawan identity are explained as follows:

> [The author] eliminates such misleading thoughts that are expressed simplistically in vague opinions
>
> such as the 'Ryukyu Independence Theory' and instead gives Okinawans a firm awareness and
>
> confidence in being part of the Yamato people. The author prays that the great spirit of the Emperor
>
> will spread far and wide in Okinawa, and appeals to the Crown Prince so that he takes an Okinawan
>
> woman as his Crown Princess (143).

The short story revolves around these two opposing conceptualisations of the position of Okinawa

within the Japanese nation-state: on the one hand, the Ryukyuan independence movement of which

forms of expression rely on continuous references to the local history and folklore, while on the

other, Okinawa as an integral part of the Yamato people and inextricably connected with the

imperial family. However, as we will see in the rest of the section, their opposing stances inevitably

require an aprioristic understanding of Okinawa as separated – and subjected – to mainland Japan.

Both the authors rely on external factors for the sociopolitical development of the region: Oomijari with his diplomatic relationship with the Uranian government, Ooyama with his hope for the Crown Prince to marry an Okinawan woman and thus strengthen the connection between Okinawa and mainland Japan. It is this point of contact between the two authors that eventually leads to the failure of their theories.

Oomijari's book series hints at Medoruma's satirical prose and the main target of his critique since its very title. The series is called *Okinawa ni totte tennōsei to wa nani ka?* (*What is Uranus to Okinawa?*), a play on words on a collection of essays about the Emperor system entitled *Okinawa ni totte tennōsei to wa nani ka?* (*What is the Emperor System to Okinawa?*) published by the *Okinawa Times* in 1976, a few years after the reversion of Okinawa to Japan, where local intellectuals discussed Emperor Showa's war responsibilities and his role in contemporary Okinawan history.[25] *What is the Emperor System to Okinawa?* is part of a series of debates that popularised the issue of the Emperor system in Okinawa after the Okinawan poet and political activist Kawamitsu Shin'ichi (1932 -) published in 1970 an essay entitled 'Thought in Okinawa on the Emperor System', a seminal work that highlighted how both the pre-war and post-war conceptualisations of the Emperor had a pivotal role in post-war Okinawan sociopolitical discourses in intellectual circles and on the political stage (Kawamitsu 1970, 78-82). In the fictitious book series *What is Uranus to Okinawa?*, Oomijari explains his conversion into a *yuta* and the evolution of his citizen movement, which aims to seek the independence of Okinawa from both the Japanese government and the American army through the help of the Uranian government. Oomijari and his movement oppose the presence of the American military bases because they are an obstacle to the realisation of true independence of the islands: in fact, it is stated in another documentarist book written by the fictitious Charlie Shimabukuro and reviewed as well in the short story, a Uranian is

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[25] The Japanese words for 'Uranus' and 'Emperor System' are homophones.

kept prisoner by the American army in the Kadena base in Okinawa, in a fashion similar to what conspiracy theorists say about Area 51 in Nevada (Medoruma 2013b, 159). While Medoruma's intent is to show the absurdity of the demonstrations in front of the Kadena base gates for the liberation of the Uranian prisoner, the events surrounding the incident that is supposed to have led to the capture of the alien by the American army are suggestive of the limitations and control imposed by the external authorities on the local population during the frequent military-related incidents taking place in post-war Okinawa. The incident is narrated as such in the short story:

> After listening to the statements from residents and base officials, Charlie Shimabukuro determined that, on the night of Independence Day on July 4, there was an explosion in the desert area in the northwestern part of the base. As soon as the base workers were put in a state of emergency, the residents of nearby towns as well were banned from going outside, and this alert system was maintained until dawn. However, the turmoil continued the next day. The residents were not informed of the details, and the media did not report anything. For this reason, some people circulated the rumour that the accident involved a nuclear explosion (159-160).

Citizens living near the American military base are put in a persistent state of 'high' alert, subjected to movement restrictions and constant fear of being involved in military accidents. Here, we are reminded of the 2004 helicopter crash on the Okinawa International University campus among the most discussed incidents in-between the local population, Okinawan police forces and the American military. Furthermore, Nakazato Isao (2013) argues that Okinawan citizens are permanent victims of the surveillance of external forces, more often than not, to protect them from dangers of which the American military is the prime cause. In his role as a *yuta*, Oomijari establishes the reasons and the methods by which independence has to be attained, making use of the Okinawan traditional cultural background. Medoruma proposes a substitution regarding *yuta*'s role in post-war Okinawan society that is functional to the political goals of Oomijari and his independence movement. *Yuta*

work as shamans and provide relief to their Okinawan clients, mainly proposing themselves as a bridge between the living world and their ancestors. In this sense, Oomijari operates a substitution between ancestors and Uranians, and in doing so offers a method for invisible entities – the Uranian government – to impact the political evolution of the region, whereas ancestors' influence is limited only to the familiar private sphere.

Nevertheless, his independence movement is strictly dependent on Uranus and its Uranian government, and it is here that Oomijari's experience comes close to the ideas of his intellectual opponent Ooyama. In fact, Oomijari plans to reject the Japanese and American governments and create an alliance with Uranus. He argues that the only way Okinawa has to reach political and economic independence is to become a commercial trade centre in-between Earth and Uranus. To do so, Okinawans should build a series of facilities that would facilitate a better understanding of Uranians by Earthlings, such as a Uranian embassy, a centre for cultural exchange, a Uranian tourist centre, and a centre for Uranian education, so that Okinawa can 'recreate the era of the Great Ryukyu Kingdom' (Medoruma 2013b, 174). The frequent use of the Japanese word *tennōsei* in the text – as in such expressions as *tennōsei no kami* ('the Uranus' gods') or even *tennōseijin no messeji* ('the message from the Uranians') which is evocative in Japanese of the Emperor's message that ceded Okinawa to the American administration in the immediate post-war period – works as a reminder for the readership of the urban and political reconfiguration of Okinawa after the absorption in the Japanese empire during the Meiji era. Oomijari's attempt to 'recreate the era of the Great Ryukyu Kingdom' is hence paradoxically closer to the recreation of the conditions instated by the Meiji government to make Okinawan people subjects of the Japanese empire. In addition, Oomijari's plan once again emphasises the idea that Okinawa cannot escape its condition of dependency on external political actors, whether they are the Japanese government, the American administration, or Uranus.

4.2.3 From Okinawan Daughter to Crown Princess

Ooyama's nationalistic ideas of the political and cultural unification between Okinawa and mainland Japan are akin to the same inferiority complex among Okinawan intellectuals that Medoruma aims to criticise. As mentioned above, his intellectual work focuses on the fictitious 'debate on the Crown Prince marrying an Okinawan woman'. To put it briefly, the idea is that the Crown Prince – not specified, but we can assume it is the current Emperor Naruhito according to the time references present in the text – should marry an Okinawan woman so that the Crown – and future Imperial – Couple can become a symbol of the union between mainland Japan and Okinawa. In this sense, Ooyama inserts Okinawa within the mass-mediated processes of imperial marriages in post-war Japan, a dynamic that involves not only the event itself – as it is ritualised, transmitted by mass media and perceived by the audience – but also the bride selection and the construction, through sociopolitical discourses and commentaries appearing on national television and magazines, of a relatable image for the future Crown Princess and a democratic portrayal of the Crown Couple. The 'debate on the Crown Prince marrying an Okinawan woman' is a reflection of how the Emperor system is constructed and supported by national mass media. According to Yoshimi Shunya (2000, 395), Fujitani Takashi (1996) and Taki Kōji (1988) demonstrated that 'the body of the emperor [is] the very centre on which the power to consolidate the formation of modern "Japanese" culture [is] based', and the modern Emperor system is articulated in post-war Japan as a joint portrayal where the main actors involved are the media and the audience. Moreover, the construction of the Crown Prince as an object of consumption is made possible through a gendered representation of the female members of the Imperial House. Muramatsu Yasuko (1991, cited in Yoshimi 2000, 409) analysed the coverage of the royal family in 1990 in the context of the Heisei's Emperor ascension ceremony and noted that the coverage of female members of the imperial family was much more detailed than what was reserved to their male counterparts. The popularisation of female members

of the Imperial House is undoubtedly connected to the public role Crown Princess and later Empress Michiko had as a product of her generation and representative of the modern Japanese mother and wife. Besides supporting his husband Akihito on numerous tours within Japan and abroad, Michiko made use of her degree in English literature – and, more specifically, her interest in children's literature – to take part in cultural events dedicated to children in which she could narrate her experiences and education. In 2002, she also made a solo trip to Switzerland so that she could deliver an address at the 50th anniversary of the International Board on Books for Young People, an event that further accentuated the independent role of Michiko in representing Japanese women (Ruoff 2022, 10).

The fictional writer Ooyama's theorisation of the imperial marriage with an Okinawan woman is purely based on a nationalistic view of the imperial family as a national body and synecdoche of the Japanese state: if the Emperor symbolises Japaneseness as a descendant of the 'Yamato people' (Medoruma 2013b, 143), entering the imperial family as an Okinawan representative makes Okinawa a fundamental part of this imperial structure under the myth of a single cultural identity. Coincidentally, the popularisation of female members of the Imperial House in post-war Japanese mass media adds another layer to Ooyama's hopes, in that the centrality of the empress' role could be reflected in Okinawa, finally garnering the attention of the mainland Japanese audience and restore the dignity of a region in which people were often disregarded as second-class citizens. However, Naruhito's engagement announcement and the subsequent imperial wedding in 1993 bring Ooyama's hopes and his own life to an end. In the last Ooyama's book reviewed and posthumously published, the reviewer gives an account of the author's last days of life: Ooyama's health, already declining due to old age, was devastated by the announcement of the imminent imperial wedding and, on his deathbed, resentfully announces that Okinawa will always remain the Emperor's infant (*tennō no sekishi*), unable to stand on its own feet and maintain an equal

relationship with mainland Japan (189). Medoruma satirises how Okinawan intellectuals view the Emperor system as the only way in which Okinawa can be lifted from its conditions, while the imperial family and the relationship with mainland Japan are the very same reason for the permanent subordinate position of the prefecture. This same tension will be central in the next section, where we will see how the author portrays the encounter between the imperial family and local people, their presence in Okinawa and how the urban landscape changes as well as the ways in which the Crown Couple is depicted and displayed for the eyes of Okinawans and Japanese mainlanders alike.

4.3 Attack on the Imperial Family: Impurity and Beautification of Mass-mediated Okinawan Spaces

4.3.1 The Emperor Walks in the City

In 1986, Medoruma published 'Walking a Street Named Peace' (from now on 'Peace Street') and won the New Okinawan Literary Prize. The short story gained the attention of scholars both in Japan and abroad because of the story's content, specifically concerning the presence of the Crown Couple and the depiction of the encounter between Okinawan people and the imperial family. Most famously, 'Peace Street' has been described by Japanese literary scholar Tomoda Yoshiyuki as an example of 'blasphemous literature', following the definition of the literary critic Watanabe Naomi, who defined 'blasphemous expressions' in Japanese literature as prose that aims to portray the Emperor and the imperial family in a negative light, or placing side by side such portrayals with expressions and images customarily perceived as impure in Japanese society (Tomoda 2011, 153). Among Medoruma's fiction, 'Peace Street' is the closest to Fukazawa's 'The Story of a Dream of Courtly Elegance' as a text that critically depicts the imperial authority, breaking with the chrysanthemum taboo and opening up new ways of literary expressions as a political critique. In this sense, the fact that Medoruma's short story was awarded the New Okinawan Literary Prize

despite its questionable contents epitomises to some degree the position of Okinawan literature in the broader Japanese context. On the one hand, a product of continuity with the mainland, if only just for the production of 'blasphemous literature' and the representation of a cultural space absorbed into the imagery of the Japanese nation-state. On the other, the historical specificity of Okinawa vis-à-vis the Emperor system and its responsibilities for the war and the subsequent American occupation let Okinawan literature recalibrate the values that do not allow the Emperor to be put on display and the context in which these representations take place.

'Peace Street' is set in Naha and narrates the preparations for the imperial visit to the prefecture on occasion for the annual blood donation campaign. The story follows the point of view of an elementary school boy called Kaju, who lives with his family in proximity to Peace Street, a market street that will be transformed into a passage point for the Crown Couple. Among Kaju's family members there is Uta, his grandmother, who suffers from dementia due to the tragic death of one of her sons during the Battle of Okinawa and becomes an element of disturbance among local vendors as she wanders around the market and touches products with filthy hands rendering them unsaleable. Medoruma depicts how police authorities reorganise the urban environment to accommodate the imperial family's presence and minimise the dangers of terrorist attacks and event disruptions. The author portrays the pressure that police officers put on local vendors – focusing on Fumi, an Okinawan fishmonger and Uta's old friend, who refuses to submit to authority – to close their shops due to the risk of an attack on the Crown Couple with knives belonging to the shop owners. Such pressures are put on Kaju's family as well, forcing Kaju's father to lock his mother Uta for the day, as her presence would cause disturbance during the parade. Eventually, Kaju sets her grandmother free, and she arrives at the parade on Peace Street, where the climactic encounter between the Crown Couple and Okinawan people occurs. Here, Uta throws herself onto the car where the Crown Couple are passengers and touches the back seat window with her filthy hands.

In so doing, the scene culminates in the portrayal of the Crown Couple defaced by the handprints across the car window, dirty with excrement and soil, leaving the audience astonished and excited while the staff of the ashamed Imperial Household try to clean the car and capture the Okinawan woman. The short story eventually ends with the death of Uta the day after the event, while she and Kaju are going towards the Yanbaru forest, the most significant place in Uta's war experience as she hid there during the bombings and lost her newborn baby. In the ending, Uta's trauma, which was only narrated by other characters during the short story, is then solved in the act of going back to the place where war memories belong, with Kaju's implicit hope of reuniting in death Uta and her long lost newborn baby.

Bhowmik (2020, 60) puts 'Peace Street' in comparison with Yū Miri's novel *JR Ueno-eki kōenguchi* (*Tokyo Ueno Station*, 2014), analysing how the main characters in both stories are put in front of imperial parades, how they understand their role as Japanese citizens and their personal history surrounding their positionality in regards to the Emperor's presence. On this topic, Bhowmik argues that 'both works reference the imperial system to as yet unresolved matters of history' and that 'Medoruma's portrayal of an ageing war survivor draws our attention to the issue of the Emperor and war responsibility, and Yū's novel concerns a narrator whose life may outwardly parallel the Emperor's, but whose abject poverty and lack of luck leaves him with no successor, and therefore no possibility of redemption, even in death' (60). Medoruma and Yū's main characters are framed by Bhowmik into a 'system of sacrifice' as was theorised by Japanese sociologist Takahashi Tetsuya. As working-class members in Okinawa and Fukushima, Bhowmik states, the characters are also part of an 'internal colonial' system in-between such prefectures and the central government. Takahashi (2012) claims that Okinawa and Fukushima – one because of the American bases, the other because of the nuclear power plants – are sacrificed by the state for the totality of Japanese citizens to be militarily protected and financially benefit from the energy produced by the power plants. Most

importantly, national mass media play a pivotal role in maintaining the status quo, as the sacrifice of local populations is 'usually hidden, beautified or justified as a "noble sacrifice" for the community' by mass-mediated sociopolitical discourses while the 'interests of a certain group of people are created and maintained at the expense of the lives of others' (Takahashi 2012, 27). In this case, Medoruma's Okinawan characters are put in front of the Crown Couple – the symbol of the Japanese nation-state – and the ritualisation of an imperial parade that disrupts the daily lives of locals to assert once again the power of the central government and the subordination of the peripheral region. On the other hand, Kyle Ikeda (2014) explores the unarticulated memories of such characters and their actions against the Crown Couple as a desperate expression of the unresolved war legacy that destroyed entire Okinawan families to defend the unity of mainland Japan. In particular, 'Peace Street' 'displays second-generation survivor understandings and awareness of the trauma and intense psychic damage that war survivors have suffered' (Ikeda 2014, 43). This section builds on such previous literature and aims to explore how the geographical space where the imperial parade is supposed to take place undergoes processes of nationalisation and beautification in concert with how Japanese and Okinawan mass media seek to represent the relationship between the imperial family and local populations. In addition, it will scrutinise how elements of dissonance and disturbance during the encounter between the Crown Couple and Okinawan people underline the complicated Okinawan war past and work as a trans-generational refusal, although unconscious, of the symbolisation of the Emperor as a unifying figure of the Japanese nation-state.

4.3.2 The Street Market as an Indigenous Space of Resistance

In *'Postwar' Okinawa Year Zero* (2005), Medoruma explains the reason why he chose 'Peace Street' as the short story's setting: during the 1980s, the author used to go to a cinema in Kokusai Dōri (International Street) and then walk through Peace Street on his way back home. Medoruma has always been fascinated by the history of that market street as, his grandmother told him, Okinawan

women who lost their husbands during the Second World War began selling fish to maintain themselves and their children (Medoruma 2005, 73). 'Peace Street' is a place where the resilience of post-war Okinawan communities has specific gendered connotations. In one way, the market is the centre of a local community and its dynamics changed in the immediate post-war period are an example of how the lives of Okinawan people were disrupted during the Battle of Okinawa – where the main actors involved were not only American soldiers but also mainland Japanese troops. However, if we look at the reason why it is significant for Medoruma to portray and *narrate* such scenery, the meaningfulness of the Okinawan women's history and activities in the market lies in the invisibility of their local storytelling vis-à-vis the national literary framework. In portraying the lived experience of Buraku communities, Buraku writer and activist Nakagami Kenji (1946 – 1992) 'seeks both to preserve "difference" from effacement by the mainstream society and to make audible the silenced subaltern voice' in the process of '"writing back" to the hegemonic centre' (Ishikawa 2011, 20). In the same way, Medoruma extrapolates an apparently insignificant detail of the Okinawan community's post-war life experience to insert such storytelling of resilience and suffering in the Japanese war narratives, aiming at both claiming back the centrality of Okinawan people within the collective national memories and differentiating their experience from Japanese mainlanders' ones.

Bhowmik (2020, 62) argues that the name of the market street was earned 'in 1948 from Naha city officials who were determined to look forward and forever leave behind them the devastating war'. Medoruma (2005, 73) builds on that and explains that the decision was grounded in the residual will of a devastated community, stating that the reason why the street was named 'Peace Street' is to be searched in the profound desire of *common people* after the war to overcome the difficult times and start anew. In the first description of 'Peace Street', Medoruma gives the geographical

coordinates of the street, narrating the walk that leads Kaju to find her grandmother Uta in the market:

> When Kaju left behind the barbed wire fences, he found himself in front of the D51 locomotive that was put on display. […] After crossing the traffic light, he went straight on the road next to the junior high school towards the farmers' market. While he gently dismembered the cabbage leaves stuck to the watered asphalt road, Kaju stopped and watched the old women sitting in front of a pile of peppers and beans. Then, slowly going ahead, he came to an intersection leading to a market named Peace Street (Medoruma 2013a, 203).

In this excerpt, we can see three different elements that compose the geographical and cultural space of the Okinawan city, which show the intricate urban development led by the external authorities involved within it in the immediate post-war period. On the two opposite poles, there are the military environment and the American bases – here signposted through the description of Kaju leaving behind the barbed wire fences – and the farmers' market, a place belonging to the Okinawan communities that should convey their hope for lasting peace. The third element is the D51 locomotive put on display in Yogi Park, Naha: the locomotive is an ambivalent representation of the Japanese modernity brought to Okinawa after its absorption into the Japanese empire and a landmark that retells the disrupted lives of Okinawan communities. The locomotive is posed on the remains of one of the two rail lines that served Okinawa in the pre-war Showa period and that were discontinued in 1944-45 during the aerial bombardments and ground fights that decimated the local transportation system. However, the D51 locomotive never operated on the Okinawa Rails: the model put on display was, in fact, transported from Kyushu by the Japanese National Railways the year before Okinawa was returned to Japan and symbolises the deep affection towards Okinawa shown by the efforts of the national railway employees in gifting the locomotive to Okinawan children and train fanatics, as it is stated on the information plaque affixed in front of the train

("Yaku 50-nen Mae" 2022). Peace Street and its surroundings are portrayed in geographical and cultural relationships with each other and mapped by the author so that the portrayal of the urban landscape can bring up the hybridised nature of the market street, how Okinawan people interact and move within the space and how it was constructed in conjunction by locals and external actors alike. Political scientist Sankaran Krishna (2014, 358) observes that '[d]ecolonization is not so much a political project as it is a slow and multifaceted unlearning of industrial, capitalist modernization itself'. In connection to this, the Okinawan fishmonger Fumi and the other market sellers act against the dynamics of incorporation into the Japanese capitalist market and resort to visual and acoustic strategies – an example, the transmission of Okinawan folk songs through radios placed along Peace Street (Medoruma 2013a, 216) – to mark the traditional value of the street vis-à-vis the processes of nationalisation that are slowly changing the urban landscape of Okinawan cities.[26]

Along with the rest of the city centre, the culturally charged Okinawan space of the market street is chosen by mainland Japanese authorities as a transition point for the encounter between the Crown Couple and Okinawan people. The parade, showing members of the imperial family to the population, works as a civil rite that, through the parade as a performance, makes the imperial system visible and easily consumable, and enhances the symbolic value of the Emperor as a point of convergence for all the Japanese citizens, besides showing support for local populations (Shimabukuro 1987). However, the presence of the Crown Couple was not always welcomed in Okinawa: during the first visit in 1975, while Crown Prince Akihito was bowing his head before the Himeyuri Memorial Tower, Molotov cocktails were thrown in his direction (Nagata 2020, 3-4), an incident that put police authorities in a state of high alert during the subsequent imperial visits. Such

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[26] In a later scene, Medoruma (2013a, 217) depicts the changes undergoing in the market juxtaposing Fumi with a middle school girl-like Japanese woman – described as probably from the mainland: while the old Fumi sells fish specialities for the nearby city of Itoman, the young woman claims to have the 'latest crab specialities from Hokkaidō', pointing out to a certain degree of nationalization and standardization of the market products led by the same Japanese capitalism Okinawan local farmers are attempting to fight.

parades became, especially in connection with the increasing popularity of the Crown Couple destined to be the very first Emperor and Empress reigning in a post-war democratic Japan, a way for national mass media to commodify the imperial family and, in so doing, broadcast the affection that Japanese citizens have for the traditional position of the Emperor despite the scandal-ridden figure of Emperor Showa. The commodification of the imperial family through their appearances in public, but also in magazines and TV programmes that attempt to give their audience a portrayal of the daily lives of the imperial family, serves different purposes for all the parties involved. Mass media capitalise on the publication of such stories concerning the imperial family, while for the Emperor and his family it is an occasion to show a more relatable image to the Japanese population, an image that seeks to distance itself from the pre-war Emperor Showa's portrayal as a military leader and come closer to the democratic image Japan wanted to convey internationally in the post-war period. Finally, such a commodification satisfied the morbid curiosity of domestic readers and viewers regarding the lives of the imperial family, a need that was at least partly created by mass media itself with the publication of such stories. In April 1959, the transformation of the 'royal wedding' into a mass-mediated event rendered the Crown Couple 'celebrities of the television age, familiar figures that the masses could easily relate to' (Igarashi 2021, 75). However, mass media broadcast not only the Crown Couple as a central focus of the event but also the space and the people around and interacting with them. In this way, the masses are put in front of a televised depiction of themselves engaging with the public figure of the imperial family, creating among the audience a 'sense of powerlessness in the face of media's ubiquitous presence', as media scholar Fujitake Akira would claim (Fujitake, cited in Igarashi 2021, 77). In addition, mass-mediated parades give the occasion to a nationwide audience to gaze at how people from different regions of Japan interact with the Emperor and which spaces are chosen for this interaction. To do so, the spectators' expectations are to be met through the cooperation between media agencies and the Imperial

Household: in this context, the Okinawan market space is reorganised to accommodate the event through mechanisms of beautification and elimination of impurities on the imperial performance stage.

4.3.3 Removing the Unhygienic, Erasing the Local Narratives

Police authorities mark Peace Street as an Okinawan market street as an 'other' that needs to be regulated and controlled due to its unpredictability and apparent danger for the Crown Couple. In one of the scenes during the day of the imperial parade, a single policeman is checking on the fishmonger Fumi, the only one refusing to leave her place for the day in order to sell her product (Medoruma 2013a, 254-255). It is clear that Fumi does not represent a risk for the Crown Couple or for the success of the event. However, while the clash between local shop owners and police officers concerns, at least on the surface, the risks of a terrorist attack on the Crown Couple, the real issue revolves around the very nature of the Okinawan market as a place dangerous for outsiders, autoreferential as it is created and maintained by Okinawan people and shared within its community, and hence a space that is necessary to appease and incorporate by means of beautification and disinfection. In one of the altercations between Fumi and a policeman, the latter refers to the impurity of the market and its position outside the laws in an attempt to threaten the fishmonger and force her to follow his orders to evacuate the area during the parade:

> 'Hey, old hag! Who gave you permission to sell here, by the way? You know, if I say a word to the health centre, you'll never be able to sell that rotten fish again, understand?'
> 'What…' […]
> 'Old Fumi, wait…'. Matsu, who was worried about the interaction between the two, touched Fumi's shoulder. […] 'Don't get angry, Fumi. I listened to what the policeman had to say. Isn't it better to do as he says?' […] 'You know, if they won't allow us to sell fish here, well, that would be a problem… We are all very concerned. Recently, many of those guys from the health centre came to see the

market. We even made the news… they stated we are 'unhygienic''.

That newspaper article was published about one week before. That day, an employee from the health centre came, asked a few questions here and there, and went away after buying some fish. A few days later, an article entitled 'Beware of Buying Fish from Street Vendors This Summer' and a big picture of Fumi were published next to each other (214-215).

In this excerpt, Medoruma depicts the street vendors as pressured by political and police authorities to conform to the national standard regarding product selling. From the perspective of the nation-state and its regulations on hygiene and food safety, the issue concerns the maintenance of a high enough hygienic standard for reasons of public health. However, for the Okinawan community working in the market, it is once again a disruption of their traditions and an imposition from the central state that utilises their supposed 'difference' as an element that needs to be suppressed, and as such, a way to categorise the local community as sub-par compared to the rest of the Japanese population. Later in the story, Fumi laments that they always sold the fish bought from fishermen the same morning, and no one ever had a problem with that. At first glance, the issue of the unhygienic conditions of the market is a health issue that the local government is attempting to solve. However, the notion of 'purity' – and its opposite, 'impurity' – is strictly connected to the political norms and regulations that the central government imposes, and are most likely based on scientific evidence rooted in the indigenous understanding of the world. In discussing this, Alan Filewod (2004, 95) argues that the 'trope of "purity" suggests that our exchange maps two worlds that overlay each other as transparencies'. On the one side, the first world is organised by 'systems of race, wealth, commodification and power'. On the other, the second – the (post)colonial subject – is shaped by the experience of imperialism and is 'always destabilized by the absence of formative principles, always "other" to the European project, *toujours déja* the impure and hybrid other that enables the very concept of Europe'. The same dynamics can be applied to the relationship between

Okinawa and mainland Japan as well, where the 'impurity' and backwardness of the Okinawan population are employed to show the modernity and safety measures scientifically applied in mainland Japan. However, in the case of Okinawa, the region is a distinct but internal part of the Japanese nation-state, hence the necessity to be regulated and incorporated, instead of being otherised to assert the cultural and political values of mainland Japan.

Vilde Ulset (2014) maintains that '[f]orced evictions and resettlement of central slums have become a common and inevitable part of the development of cities in the global South', a beautification process of the cities that is most often in relation to significant events. This is not news in Okinawa as well: on the eve of the G-8 summit in 2000, Okinawan people saw their movement limited – they were requested not to drive their cars during the event, meaning most of the population could not travel to work – and the government focussed on replacing old roadside signs with new ones and planting topical flowers so that 'most of the guests [would] see only the subtropical paradise that Japan would like them to see' (Taylor 2000, 129). In this context, the climactic scene of 'Peace Street', where old Uta throws her body on the imperial car and soils the window that poses a barrier in-between the Crown Couple and Okinawan people, represents a counterattack and a method of resistance against the conceptualisation of the unhygienic colonial body, in this case using impurity to deface the central authority. Uta's dementia is also created by the Battle of Okinawa, ultimately putting the responsibility for the attack on the Imperial Family itself. In her argument about women's voices in Third World environments against the notion of cultural impurity of female bodies, Therese Saliba (1995, 133) argues that 'indigenous women's bodies have come to signify, within indigenous male ideology, sites of cultural impurity, bodies polluted or sickened by "diseases" of Western influence' and that 'these women effectively transform their bodies into a site of rebellion' refusing to carry the burden of the postcolonial corruption. While it is arguably unconscious, Uta's dementia allows her to perform an attack against the Crown Couple as a symbol

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of national unity and ruin their mass-mediated image unveiling the 'impurity' that originated from the Battle of Okinawa and the post-war condition of subordination in the region. Medoruma's portrayal of this act of retaliation – which would not be possible without taking into account the war legacy and the Emperor's responsibilities – shows the decolonial possibility of the traumatised body resisting the normative power of the central government and overturning the mass media elaboration of a sanitised space for the Imperial Family to interact with its audience. Likewise, in the next section, I will scrutinise how the reorganisation of the urban landscape and the movement restrictions in the Okinawan city following the death of Emperor Showa are depicted in opposition to the space and time perception, cultural and historical background of Okinawan characters reacting to the national mourning.

4.4 Landscapes of Imperial Mourning: Urban Boundaries and Restrictions in the Okinawan City

4.4.1 Emperor Shōwa in the Okinawan Public Discourse

Discussions on the responsibilities of the Emperor for the Battle of Okinawa and the subsequent American occupation – of which results can still be seen today in the prefecture's sociopolitical landscape – have been central among intellectuals and political figures in Okinawa. For example, the programme guide for the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum published in 1996 states that '[t]hese deaths [of Okinawan people during the Battle of Okinawa] must be viewed in the context of years of militaristic education which exhorted people to serve the nation by "dying for the emperor"' (Rabson 2008b, 1). By the same token, after the reversion to Japan in 1972, 'Okinawan educators, students, political parties, labor leaders, anti-war activists, authors, journalists, and people with memories of the battle' expressed opposition, often through passionate demonstrations on the street, towards Hirohito and the Emperor system that enabled the war and the death of so many Okinawan soldiers and civilians (10-11). Similar protests against Hirohito

pointing out his war responsibilities also exploded in mainland Japan – as in the Okuzaki incident in 1969 during the New Year's public opening of the Tokyo Imperial Palace – and abroad, where Hirohito was welcomed in West Germany in 1971 with banners defining him 'Hirohitler', and so denouncing his central role in the Second World War (Macartney 2020). However, the relationship with the Okinawan community is further complicated by the complete absence of the Emperor: whereas the Crown Couple – and later Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko – visited Okinawa on numerous occasions, Emperor Showa has never set foot on Okinawan soil. Because Okinawa was put under the American administration in the immediate post-war period, the prefecture was excluded from the first post-war imperial tour between 1946 and 1954 to give moral support for the country's reconstruction (Kamiesu 1996, 176). Later in 1987, two years before Hirohito's death, Okinawa was designed as the site for the annual National Athletic Meet, a sports event traditionally attended by the Emperor, hence supposedly creating the occasion for Emperor Showa's first visit to Okinawa Prefecture. However, the Emperor's health condition worsened, and he could not attend the event. Despite the adverse reactions of the public when the news of the Emperor's visit came out, the physical absence of Emperor Showa in post-war Okinawa underlines the unresolved conflicts between the Okinawan people and the very ideology surrounding the Japanese nation-state and the Emperor as a symbol of its unity, a unity in which Okinawa is only a passive participant. In addition, the Emperor's absence further problematises his war responsibilities and the continuous status of Okinawa as a post-war region, a condition virtually inescapable without formal apologies by Emperor Showa. For instance, during the unveiling of the Cornerstone of Peace in 1995, a 71-year-old woman from Naha was quoted saying that 'I wish Emperor Showa had come here just once' as she 'wanted him to apologise to the people of Okinawa' (Rabson 2008b, 15).

Emperor Showa died on January the 7th, 1989. The event, which undoubtedly left a mark in recent Japanese history, followed a period of social self-restraint and anxiety among the population as the

life of the Emperor, a symbol and a bridge between pre-war militaristic and post-war democratic Japan, was coming to an end (Figal 1996). Such feelings did not signify a resurgence of pre-war ideas about the Emperor system. According to a survey conducted near the Imperial Palace in the aftermath of Hirohito's death, the opinion of Japanese people visiting the memorial was mainly divided into two categories: the first, people over fifty who experienced the war visited the Imperial Palace as a way to remember the legacy of the Second World War and affirm their position in its history. On the opposite side, people under thirty came to the memorial to experience physical proximity to the event and the Emperor's body, an experience that they would have perceived only through national mass media (Yoshimi 2000, 411). The mourning period – which started a few months before the actual death of the Emperor when it was clear what his fate would have been – exposed contrasting tendencies in how Hirohito's death affected the political world and the population. For the conservatives, the Emperor's death was an occasion to promote the Emperor system, creating a precedent for using the Japanese national flag and national anthem without particular opposition. His declining health re-centred the Emperor system and the discourse about the Emperor's role within Japanese mass consciousness. After September 19th, 1988, when it was announced Hirohito had a haemorrhage, the Emperor made a 'comeback' into Japanese society, whether Japanese citizens felt affection for him or not (Watanabe 1989, 275). For the general population, the event and the preceding period were a source of concern and discontent. Many Japanese were unhappy that social functions and rituals such as village festivals and year-end parties were cancelled for 'voluntary restraint' (Han 2004, 113). Nonetheless, Japanese society was hit by the sociopolitical and historical implications of Hirohito's death, which subsequently led to a mass media-driven wave of 'self-restraint' behaviour on the part of the general Japanese populace. On this topic, Okudaira Yasuhiro (1929 – 2015), founding member of the Article 9 Association for Defending the Constitution and Professor of Law at the University of Tokyo, commented with

surprise on the phenomenon of '*Tennō* fever' following the news of the Emperor's health, stating

that he would have never expected 'people from every corner of Japan to act with the degree of

unanimity that they displayed' and, based on this, explored the 'notion of the continuity of popular

consciousness concerning the *Tennō'* among the Japanese people (Watanabe 1989, 276).

Conversely, some critical voices opposed the idea of 'voluntary restraint', arguing that it was more

similar to an 'imposed restraint', which worked particularly well as the Japanese mass media at the

time did not criticise or question its voluntariness (Han 2004, 113).

The response to the Emperor's death in Okinawa was somewhat similar, although tinged with

distinct connotations due to the specificity of Okinawan war history and its relationship with the

emperor system. Steve Rabson notes that the *Ryukyu Shimpo* and the *Okinawa Times* – the two

most popular newspapers in the prefecture – announced the death of the emperor using the word

goseikyo, an honorific term used for the death of any person, instead of *hōgyo*, the term usually

employed to indicate the death of the emperor or empress, a choice that was said to be out of

'consideration for the special sensitivities of the people in the prefecture' (Rabson 2008b, 12-13).

This contrast in terminology further stresses the difference between mainland Japanese and

Okinawan people regarding their perception of the Emperor's figure in the post-war period (Shen

2017, 96). Likewise, the Emperor's death showed another tension within the urban configuration of

Okinawan cities, which is the presence of military bases and resorts built with mainland capital. It

was in the immediate aftermath of Emperor Showa's death that the financial unbalance between

Okinawa and mainland Japan was furtherly stressed, highlighting as well the oppositional stance

towards the emperor system of locals and mainland Japanese. In questioning the sociopolitical

conditions of the prefecture of Okinawa in late 1989, anthropologist Norma Field interviewed an

Okinawan supermarket owner named Shōichi, who lamented the impossibility of contending with

mainland capital – resorts, shops and business activities opened by mainland companies. He claimed

that '[w]e think of the resorts as new bases – one more place that's off-limits to us', and Field notes that 'when the emperor died, the new high-rise hotel was the only place in Yomitanson beside the U.S. bases that displayed the Rising Sun', thus connecting Emperor Showa's death, nationalism, and socio-economic imbalances (Field 1993, 67-68).

4.4.2 Re-modulating the Emperor's Figure and His Death

Medoruma's short story 'January the 7th' was published less than a year after Hirohito's death, in December 1989, to portray in a literary form how Okinawan people reacted and how their daily lives changed in the immediate aftermath of the Emperor's death. The short story appeared in the literary periodical *Shin Okinawa Bungaku* ('New Okinawan Literature'), a local magazine published by the Okinawa Times publishing company.[27] While 'January the 7th' offered an insightful portrayal of the different emotions of Okinawan people towards Hirohito and how his death affected the urban landscape and the political discourses around his figure, the short story went almost unnoticed in mainland Japan and abroad. Among the few scholars citing the fictional work, Tamara Kamerer inserts 'January the 7th' in a thread of short stories where violence is employed by Okinawan characters as a way to resist their subaltern position towards mainland Japan, as in the case of 'Hope' and 'Akai yashi no ha' ('The Red Palm Leaves', 1992) (Kamerer 2012, 54). However, I would argue that Medoruma's depiction of the Okinawan city and its inhabitants display the multi-faceted reactions of a society that is both within and outside the Japanese nation-state, where violence is only one of the possible outcomes of the war legacy in contemporary Okinawa.

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[27] The journal *Shin Okinawa Bungaku*, now discontinued, frequently held strong positions against mainland Japan, the Japanese central government and the American military occupation. As a prime example of this, in 1981 the journal published the 'Unofficial Constitution of the Republic of the Ryukyus' ("Unofficial Constitution" 1981), a provocative piece of writing that aimed to show dissatisfaction with the Reversion Agreement in-between Japan and the United States, according to which Okinawa had to bear the burden of hosting the American military facilities on its territory. The document is also illustrative of the existence of a Ryukyuan independence movement, as well as the journal's position as a place where fierce critiques against mainland Japan could be published, as in the case of Medoruma's short story.

As the title says, 'January the 7th' is set right after this date and narrates the wandering of an Okinawan character in the aftermath of Hirohito's death. The short story does not have a straightforward plot: Medoruma follows this character as he walks around the Okinawan city – which is recognised as to be Naha due to a few geographical references – and encounters different characters with whom he discusses and shares comments about the significant event of the Emperor's death. In this way, the author portrays the multi-faceted position of Okinawan communities towards the Emperor system and Hirohito, besides commenting on how the Okinawan landscape is remodelled through imperial mourning and moral regulations imposed by mainland Japan. In analysing this short story, this section will focus on two main elements: on the one hand, the positionality of Okinawan characters and the discourses around Hirohito's death as a way to reconsider the impact of the emperor system on local politics and ridicule the affection towards the Emperor and mainland Japan as against one's Okinawan identity. On the other hand, Medoruma's portrayal of urban restrictions and boundaries during the mourning period requires further consideration of interiorised mechanisms of colonialism and applications of regulations that restrict the movement of local citizens to make them participate in the national drama. These two aspects intersect and enable Medoruma – through the eyes of his main character – to explore a different sense of spatiality and temporality in the Okinawan city, depicting the urban landscape as a method to resist the mainland Japanese space-time structure locked into the event of Hirohito's death, and ultimately posing the short story as a literary expression of the Okinawan decolonial struggle.

'January the 7th' starts with the description of an Okinawan couple spending their leisure time in their apartment: they have sex, eat, drink, and take a shower. The woman, a moral counterpoint to the main character, keeps repeating that 'the Emperor is dead' without getting any reaction from her partner (Medoruma 2013a, 313-314). This first scene introduces the main character's detachment from what is happening in mainland Japan, the historical importance of the Emperor

system for both Okinawa and the mainland, and the cultural distance shown by Medoruma through the ignorant remarks of the protagonist: when he hears on the national news that the Emperor died (*Tennō heika ga hōgyo saremashita*), he does not know the meaning of the word *hōgyo*, and when receives the explanation from his partner, he asks her whether Hirohito was not dead already, as he thought the emperor had already died the year before (315-316). His partner replies that he could not possibly have passed away the year before, as the era's name in the traditional Japanese calendar has not changed. Here, the Okinawan couple perceives the Emperor's death not as a major event *per se* but rather as an occurrence that affects their categorisation of time and impacts their daily lives. While the conversation between the characters regarding the name of the new era and its connection with the Emperor appears to be facetious, their understanding of the matter resonates with the difference in time perception between Okinawans and mainland Japanese and its implication with the historic-political continuity of the nation-state. In discussing the new meanings of the traditional era naming system in the wake of the enthronement of Naruhito – which started the new Reiwa era in 2019, Japanese sociologist Suzuki Hirohito (2019, 56) argues that the names of Japanese eras formed a collective historical perception of the country based on the set of images surrounding the sociopolitical condition of Japan during such periods. Sentences such as 'Meiji people' or 'Taishō democracy' pinpoint a series of images and emotions that connect intergenerationally Japanese people through processes of remembering and later mass-mediated constructions of historical periods. As such, this system cannot be detached from the presence of the emperor system in the political and imaginative life of Japanese citizens, as it is the imperial succession to change the name of the Japanese era. The continuity of the Japanese era's name in the historical consciousness of the Japanese people guarantees the Emperor a central position in the construction of a post-war democratic Japan, despite the Emperor becoming a symbol devoid of any apparent political power. Hence, although the traditional era-naming system underwent a

process of commodification and commercial popularisation to a certain extent, imperial and temporal continuity still support each other in mainland Japanese historical consciousness and maintain a relevant position in the construction of one's national identity in opposition to communities outside this time categorisation system (62). While being formally part of Japan, Okinawan people have a different perception of post-war history, mainly because of the non-presence of the emperor in their lives and the American occupation that hindered the local population from experiencing major post-war events as mainland Japanese people. Japanese historian Yoshimoto Hideko (2017, 65) poses the 'Emperor's voice experience' (*gyokuon taiken*) as a pivotal moment for constructing post-war Japanese identity in building a quasi-personal connection with the Emperor and a significant event of remembrance for future generations. On August the 15th, 1945, the NHK radio announced through the voice of Emperor Showa – for most Japanese people, it was the first time hearing his voice – the end of the Second World War and the Japanese defeat. Most Okinawan people were detained in American internment camps on that day and, as such, were prevented from hearing the Emperor's announcement on the national radio broadcast. Some Okinawan people read about the announcement in the *Uruma Shimpō* – a local newspaper circulated among Okinawan people detained in American facilities in the immediate post-war period – on September 12th. The temporal displacement of the news spread among Japanese mainlanders, and Okinawan people distanced the two communities and their war remembrance civil rituals contingent on specific dates of which historical significance is shared by everyone, besides removing the Emperor's physical and acoustic presence from the Okinawan community consciousness.

In his encounters with other Okinawan characters and the urban landscape around him, we notice how the main character of the short story is linguistically, culturally, and ultimately even temporally and geographically detached from Okinawan society – seen in this case as an extension of mainland

Japan, even in its contradictions and different positionality vis-à-vis the Emperor system and the event of the Emperor's death. The character communicates with others with a mild Okinawan variation of standard Japanese, even when they speak to him in plain Japanese, as if he is unable or unwilling to align linguistically with the rest of society. In a few instances, the character needs help to decode the language around him and its impact on local cities in this imperial mourning period. In a scene, the character finds a pachinko parlour closed and reads the sign addressing the motives: again, he is unable to decipher the characters for the word *hōgyo* and is forced to ask a passerby to read them for him (Medoruma 2013a, 317). In another scene, he asks another Okinawan woman about the name of the new Japanese era, and the old woman helps him write the two characters composing the word *Heisei* (320).

As the story goes on, the character's interactions with the world around him showcase his unwillingness to conform to the imperial mourning and a prism of positions within Okinawan society towards the Emperor's figure, more often than not satirised by the author. Returning to the scene of the pachinko parlour closed, the character keeps asking himself what the connection is between the closed parlour and the Emperor's death: after a series of considerations, the character concludes that the Emperor must have been the 'honorary president of the Japanese Pachinko parlour association' and goes to an adult movie theatre instead (317). At first glance, the scene aims to portray the main character as a morally despicable individual and, as such, dissociated from the rest of society. In this sense, the narrative proposed by Medoruma is centred around the comedic element of a character that subverts the expectations of the readership and behaves in exactly the opposite way than how he should do as a Japanese citizen in a moment of national trauma. However, the parodical link between the Emperor and the pachinko parlour works also as a reminder of anti-emperor demonstrations that took place both in Japan and Okinawa. During a New Year's public event on January the 2nd, 1969, where Japanese people could come in close contact with Emperor

Hirohito, a Japanese war veteran named Okuzaki Kenzō (1920 – 2005) fired three pachinko pinballs aimed at the Emperor, missing him. The scene, and the whole story of Okuzaki, who was later described by national newspapers as a delusional man mentally wounded by his war experience, was captured in Japanese director Hara Kazuo's documentary *Yuki yukite shingun* (*The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On*, 1987), which became one of the few film productions recording a specific anti-emperor sentiment among the post-war Japanese population. In commenting on the attack with pachinko pinballs, Japanese historian Tanaka Yuki (2019, 2) argues that 'Okuzaki took this bizarre action [in order] to be arrested so that he could pursue Hirohito's war responsibility in the Japanese court system' and that 'Okuzaki is the only person in Japan's modern history to legally challenge the constitutionality of the emperor system, and indeed to provide a compelling analysis'. Likewise, during his conversation with Japanese writer and journalist Henmi Yō, Medoruma mentions a YouTube video where Okuzaki states that he wants to kill Emperor Showa and former Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei (1918 – 1993). In doing this, Medoruma nostalgically remarks that in those times, you could express that kind of opinion on national mass media and concludes by stating that he considers Okuzaki a far more well-adjusted individual compared to Hirohito and the military high ranks that continuously escaped their war responsibility until their death (Henmi and Medoruma 2017, 138-139). On another note, pachinko parlours are traditionally owned by ethnic Koreans – a survey in 2014 showed that circa 80% of them were (Scott 2014), creating a parodic contrast between the Emperor's supposed divine and indigenous origin and his position as honorary president of an outsiders' ethnic group. This reflection is also mirrored in the opposition between the historical origin of the Emperor as a political institution and how it is reframed as a core representation of Japaneseness. Whereas the Emperor epitomises the unbroken transmission of Japanese culture, much evidence suggests that the line of emperors originated in Korea and many other features of the political institution are clearly taken from China and

incorporated into the Japanese nation-state model (Ivy 1995, 24). The connection between the Emperor and the pachinko parlour as a synecdoche for the alien domesticated into the texture of Japanese society makes possible the deconstruction of the Emperor's symbolisation as a quintessentially Japanese 'thing', unveiling the multiple cultural and historical layers – often traced back to other East Asian countries – that constituted the figure of the Emperor in Japan in the first place.

The Emperor's figure, which is supposed to be revered, especially at the time of his death, undergoes processes of reappropriation and remodulation within the collective consciousness of Okinawan society. The Emperor is repositioned within sociopolitical discourses by the characters appearing in the short story, and his image, a mass-mediated reference to its symbolic presence in post-war democratic Japan, is displaced as a way to undermine the significance of the Emperor system in Okinawa. During his walk, the main character enters Peace Street, lively as always as if it cannot be affected by the Emperor's death due to its status of being a traditional Okinawan environment, and notices on the ground a picture of Hirohito published on the newspaper and stepped on by passersby (Medoruma 2013a, 320). The picture, displaced, forgotten and ultimately dishonoured by Okinawan people, is posed as a counterpoint to the portraits of the Emperor and Empress (*goshin'ei*) exposed in schools and public offices around Japan as a panoptic invisible presence of the Emperor in Japanese citizens' daily lives (Yoshimi 2000, 395). The juxtaposition becomes particularly relevant as such imperial portraits were introduced into the schools of Okinawa in 1887, earlier than in any other prefecture, as part of the policies that aimed to absorb Okinawa into the Japanese empire and make Okinawan people imperial subjects (Rabson 1996, 6). Hence, the positions of Okinawan people and the Emperor are reversed: while the imperial portraits are placed in a higher position to emulate the untouchability and the all-seeing eye of the Emperor's

figure, his picture on the ground is posed in an almost hidden location, and it is touched, and so devoid of any political or cultural power, by Okinawan feet.

Discourses around the Emperor's death in-between Okinawan characters further confine the Emperor to a subaltern position vis-à-vis contemporary Okinawan society. In a scene where the main character speaks with his taxi driver, they discuss the Emperor's death briefly: both the characters are uninterested in the topic – the taxi driver asks the protagonist what he thinks about the event, and he replies that he 'doesn't think anything of it', before changing the topic to their favourite soba restaurants in the area (Medoruma 2013a, 317). In another conversation with an Okinawan woman, they talk about her experience with spiritual counselling, their position regarding Okinawan religions, and whether the Emperor was going to the *Nirai Kanai* – the land of gods and afterlife in the Okinawan religious folklore. Again, the Emperor's death is rendered a frivolous subject of conversation, dismantling the ideological structure that centred the Emperor as an essential figure for the Japanese nation-state and constructed an atmosphere of mourning and self-restraint following his death.

Eeva Jokinen and Soile Veijola (2006, 259) argue that every landscape has 'a cultural narration – writing and reading involved', 'has grammar and a glossary' and 'it bears intertextual references'. In the case of the Okinawan cityscape, it is culturally restricted in its inhabitants' movements as a way to deal with the Emperor's death, mainland Japanese sociopolitical discourses about the emperor system interface with the Okinawan war legacy in a process of absorption into the Japanese nation-state and deletion of local indigenous elaboration of mourning. Looking at the work of mourning from a historical and social perspective, it may be expressed in the form of both official and unofficial practices: the former is represented by state-sponsored, nationwide commemorations and celebrations, besides political forms of redressing such as legal punishments for perpetrators and compensations for the victims, while the latter is non-institutional, often expressed by individual

voices through artistic works such as novels and film (Cho and Chae 2021, 1074-1075). In this context, activist and scholar Helene Vosters (2015) discusses how Canadian military commemoration constructed monuments and performances that were able to disappear the violence of settler-colonialism. Likewise, we can see in the Okinawan case vis-à-vis the Emperor's death an operation of substitution that cancels the Okinawan colonial experience and subjects its citizens to a mass-mediated national mourning process. Medoruma's short story, in his portrayal of the Okinawan characters' uninterested reactions and dialogues, deconstructs such mechanisms and gives voice to an alternative understanding of Okinawan positionality towards the national drama, and, in so doing, stresses the significance of local indigenous histories and grieving processes.

4.4.3 Breaking the Mourning Mood

In the final scene, the main character is drinking in a bar, and two Japanese mainlanders enter to ask for directions. The protagonist offers to walk the two mainlanders to their destination – and here, the two characters remark on the stereotype of Okinawans' generosity and friendliness. During the walk, they have the chance to discuss the stance of Okinawan people towards the Emperor and how Japanese mainlanders perceive their position: the protagonist is asked whether they still hold feelings of repulsion about the Emperor, to which the Okinawan character replies with a laconic 'not really' (Medoruma 2013a, 326). However, a few minutes later, the Okinawan character attacks the two mainlanders seemingly without reason and ends up being beaten by them. In the final scene, Okinawan passersby ask the protagonist whether he needs to go to the hospital. He bursts out laughing and ironically replies with 'Long live the Emperor' (*Tennō heika, banzai*) (329). Returning to Kamerer's argument about violence as a pivotal element of Medoruma's short stories, I argue that in 'January the 7th' violence still evokes an unresolved conflict between Japanese mainlanders and Okinawan people. However, the violence and fights in this short story are comedic, almost cartoonish in nature, highlighting the satirical element as a tool through which the urban

landscape of the Okinawan city is transformed from a grieving environment to a frenzy where hierarchies are subverted. In the multiple encounters of the main characters with Okinawans and Japanese mainlanders, the discussion about Emperor Showa's death is central to the tension between gloom and violence among Okinawan people, with the main character being the ironic counterpoint that shows the paradoxical attitude of locals towards the Emperor's death through his ignorance. In one of the most violent scenes of the short story, the main character is talking with a former classmate of his and his girlfriend in a coffee shop, when their conversation turns to the Emperor's death. As we can see in the following excerpt, the reaction of the main character's friend, and the subsequent intervention of the American soldier and local police, are telling of the frantic state in-between sadness, irony and violence that Medoruma aims to portray in the short story:

> I felt like I had to bring up the topic, so I said, 'His Majesty the Emperor is dead!'. I wondered what was going on, but he was staring at me with bloodshot eyes and his fists were shaking on the table. As for her, her face was bright red, and she looked from time to time to Ooganeku. […] Ooganeku overturned the table along with the coffee, pulled out the chair fixed to the floor and let out a roar of 'WOOOOO', and just went rampaging. Just when I thought he was going to throw a chair on the forehead of an American who was by my side, he twisted his waist and threw it at the store clerk who intervened to stop him. The store clerk, hit by the chair, went straight into the shopping window breaking it and was blown out into the street. […] [A] gunshot rang out, and the American soldier, who was flirting with the mainlander Nene, fired five shots in a row. The searchlights of the Okinawa Prefectural Police's armoured car shined on Ooganeku, who was still in a standing stance despite being hit by a bullet. Squeezing the last strength out of his red-stained body, Ooganeku ran towards the riot police's duralumin shields and shouted 'His Majesty the Emperor! Banzai!', then slipped on the sidewalk and died (322-323).

The scene, while portraying the violent behaviour of Ooganeku and his subsequent death at the hands of the American soldier, is described from the disillusioned and ironic point of view of the

main character who is not capable of understanding the emotions surrounding the Emperor's death, nor the historical implications of the event for Okinawan communities. The scene ends up with the customers being escorted out by the local police, and the main character wandering towards the next bar, almost unaffected by what happened to his former classmate in the coffee shop. In doing this, Medoruma proposes a narrative where every event happens in a sequence that, no matter how violent or exceptional it may seem, is ultimately meaningless and unaffecting. On the contrary, it serves the only purpose of showing the cynical and ironic attitude of the main character, for which the Emperor's death is just a hassle and the violence explodes around him in abrupt chaos. It is the portrayal of the Okinawan city as a chaotic environment that ultimately debases the Emperor's death and transforms the cityscape into a stage of meaningless violence and disorder similar to the dream setting depicted in Fukazawa's 'The Story of a Dream of Courtly Elegance'.

Medoruma's 'January the 7th' transforms the Okinawan cityscape into a space where Okinawan characters are free to suspend the grieving process forced by the mainland Japanese tragedy and subvert the hierarchical order between local people's indigeneity and the state, cultural periphery and central power. The main character walks through a circle of endless days and nights in apparent fragments of Okinawan cityscape that continuously substitute each other without giving the reader spatial and temporal coordinates to identify the character's movement. In this ungoverned space, the protagonist interacts freely with other individuals from every social class and cultural background, maintaining the same disinterested attitude regarding what happens around him. The comedic, satirical violence that occurs at the end of the short story again reveals the rage of a community that is trapped into stereotypical categories of 'peaceful' and 'friendly' attributed to them by the mainland and transforms a non-normative behaviour into an act of resistance. Finally, the reappropriation of the Emperor's figure and its insertion into the Okinawan religious framework – the old woman asking whether Hirohito would go to the *Nirai Kanai* – deconstructs dual concepts

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that are the foundation of the Okinawa-mainland Japan sociopolitical understanding, while the disparaging treatment that Okinawan passersby give to the late Emperor's portrayal subverts hierarchies between the established power of mainland Japan and the indigenous resistance against it through blasphemous acts. In configuring the Okinawan city as a deregulated space, Medoruma dismantles the national performance of mourning and, in doing so, gives a place for indigenous mourning to be expressed. Arif Dirlik (2001, 81) states that it is by mourning and finding in mourning 'an occasion for reflection' that 'we may work our way out of the spiral of violence that already has brutalized many, and now threatens to consume us all'. In the Okinawan case, sabotaging the grief around the Emperor's death and opening up spaces for Okinawan people to perform their historical remembrance poses Medoruma's short story as a literary device that undermines the colonial establishment and the dominant position of mainland Japan, ultimately constructing another platform for the reassessment of the Okinawan position on the East Asian stage.

4.5 Conclusion

As I have explored in the chapter, Medoruma's short stories can be understood as an example of 'blasphemous literature' in the Japanese context: they break with the 'chrysanthemum taboo' in the Japanophone literary tradition, depicting the Emperor, the Imperial Family, and doing such as a way to criticise the Emperor system and its implications for Okinawan society. On the one hand, Medoruma's fiction reprises themes already found in Fukazawa's 'The Story of a Dream of Courtly Elegance', the Japanese short story that started the period of literary self-censorship around the Emperor and the Emperor system. It would be easy to see Medoruma as a continuation of Fukazawa's literary tradition. However, the positionality of the two authors in the Japanese nation-state and its literary world significantly differs, as is reflected in Medoruma's fiction. While Fukazawa's work destroys the Emperor's image using the dream as a space for hierarchies and norms to be subverted, Medoruma's short stories are inscribed in a real sociopolitical space where

colonial dynamics are already applied and rendered daily routine for its inhabitants. 'Peace Street'

dismantles the Emperor system using the weakened body of an Okinawan war survivor to deface

the Crown Couple and subvert the internal dynamics of power between locals and the central state.

On the other hand, 'Okinawan Book Review' and 'January the 7th' use the satirical element to

deconstruct the dominant position of mainland Japan and substitute the established colonial space

with another, indigenous one, where the local population can reflect on its past, and its community

reconstruct their society based on their system of traditional shared values and histories. The

environment depicted by Medoruma in 'January the 7th' defines a space where ritualised forms of

deference and mourning are devoid of their significance as a re-enactment of decolonial practices.

In 'Okinawan Book Review', the use of parody can be seen as a 'moment of the exhaustion of old

forms and the adumbration of a new genre, a moment when the old forms both maintain their hold

and yet constitute the raw material for a new discursive organization' (Berman 1996, 430). The

discourse about the Emperor and the Emperor system is parodied and debased to criticise the

dominant establishment and the stance of the Okinawan people towards it. In doing so, Medoruma

proposes the destruction of moral norms to create once again a de-colonised space where the local

population can freely discuss endless possibilities of restructuring and reorganisation. Ultimately,

the author shows how Okinawan literature can depict indigenous people in their latent potential to

dismantle the colonial hierarchy within ideological and discursive structures posed outside protest

activities and circuits of violence enabled by the American military presence.

Conclusion

In looking at Medoruma's oeuvre among the rest of the literary production in contemporary Okinawan society, this research cannot possibly encompass the totality of the experiences, perspectives and voices of the individuals belonging to Okinawan communities, and people interacting with and living in the Okinawan archipelago more broadly speaking. As much as Medoruma's fiction can be illustrative of the sociopolitical conditions of the prefecture and its citizens, their struggle, and the power relationship between them, mainland Japan, and the United States, it still remains a single fragment of a much more complex mosaic that involves other literary voices as well as the positions of a variety of social actors, often proposing oppositional views. For several reasons – perhaps the most salient being his multiple roles as a writer, eminent anti-base activist, and highly vocal public intellectual, Medoruma could be singled out as an exemplary case that speaks of the interrelation between literature and politics, and how it is specifically his literary production to emphasise the colonial mechanisms and the wrongdoings of external authorities on the Okinawan soil. However, I argue that Medoruma Shun – and the wide reading of his texts herein – need to be understood not as a case study that aims to show what Okinawan literature can illustrate and achieve, but rather as the personal trajectory of a single authorial sensibility that implies the existence of equally significant, even contradictory, perspectives, or, as anthropologist Praveena Gullapalli (2008, 35) defines them, the 'heterogeneity inherent in the postcolonial condition'.

Such heterogeneity permeates the (post)colonial on multiple levels. It is differently articulated in its methodological and theoretical critiques, as Slemon (1994, 16-17) points out, arguing that 'post-colonialism', 'de-scribes a remarkably heterogeneous set of subject positions, professional fields, and critical enterprises' that 'have to do with a very real problem in securing the concept of

"colonialism" itself, as Western theories of subjectification and its resistances continue to develop in sophistication and complexity'. On a more pragmatic level, this heterogeneity is manifested through the variety of colonial establishments, power relationships, and sociopolitical discourses that are constructed in the manifold instances of what is called 'colonialism'. That is, despite the overarching theorisation of colonial tenets and the similarities that can be undoubtedly found in each case, colonial systems operate in different ways, sometimes in such ways that make them hardly recognisable as colonialism anymore. The East Asian context is a case in point in this sense, where the proliferation of 'semi-colonial' and 'quasi-colonial' terminologies in discussing the hegemonic apparatus of political and cultural domination over subaltern subjects speaks more of the inefficiency of analysing colonial mechanism with Euro-centric epistemological instruments than of the actual incompleteness of such political establishments. Okinawa, continuously moved in and out of the category of the '(post)colonial', highlights the inadequacy of understanding certain areas of the world using parameters and categorisations that were first established in another context. While it does not provide a definite answer to the issue, this dissertation aims to re-open the question of what 'colonialism' is, illuminating its theoretical possibilities and, above all, its limitations. However, people exist beyond, and in spite of, theories. And it is on a more microscopic view that the heterogeneity in the (post)colonial is represented by the several stances within the communities affected by the colonial establishment, often obfuscated and hidden by a colonizer-colonised binarism that tends to portray the two polar opposites as internally coherent in their antagonistic position.

Against this backdrop, this analysis of Medoruma's literature serves two purposes, each of which summarise one answer to the two main questions that function as a starting point and explicate the purpose of this dissertation. It offers an understanding of how literary narratives can work as an anti-colonial instrument in the way they illuminate and re-produce the colonial encounters, the

hegemonic mechanisms that ambiguously linger over Okinawa, a space where colonial dynamics and the imbalanced power relationship between locals and external actors manifest themselves in multi-faceted ways but that is yet not considered (post)colonial proper. Italian author Nicola Lagioia argues that '[t]he strength of literature is to illuminate areas, otherwise in shadow, like no other discipline can do' (Sanzone 2020). Medoruma's literature pinpoints the sociopolitical struggles, the hegemonic discourses, and the grand narratives produced by the dominant Japanese state power with the aid of the United States that affects the local population. Furthermore, it portrays indigenous stories obfuscated by the national storytelling of the war and post-war periods, generating a depiction of the prefecture that functions as a counter-discourse against the stereotyping of Okinawan images that often implies a univocal stance against the mainland, as well as the mass-mediated representation of the Okinawan communities and local landscapes produced by the political rhetoric on regional, domestic and international levels.

On the other, in emphasising the interrelation between Medoruma's portrayal of Okinawa and space-time narratives, this research aimed to address another salient feature of Medoruma's oeuvre, namely the portrayal of epistemic plurality in the understanding of space and time as a decolonial possibility, which makes possible the dismantling of hegemonic narratives underpinning the colonial establishment. Again, even taken as part of the political discourse, it would be far-fetched to pin on Medoruma's works the capacity to undermine the colonial structure. Literature cannot do it, nor does Medoruma attempt to do that through literature. However, through his literary production, Medoruma operates a choice to cast light onto different ways of perceiving reality and producing knowledge, their confrontation and solidarity with mainland Japanese and American narratives, their inconsistencies, negotiations, and crossings. Emphasising the existence of other indigenous epistemic and ontological perspectives – and the multiplicities contained therein – becomes a conscious political choice that is the uttermost expression of Medoruma's anti-

colonial stance, where 'anti-colonial' is not just for the liberation from the external authority – for example, the removal of American military bases, but a more encompassing liberation from the state of subalternity, and being the victim of hegemonic discourses produced by others. Walter D. Mignolo (2020, 12) summarises it stating that '[d]ecolonial liberation today doesn't consist of expelling the settlers from the territory (because they are almost all gone), but liberating ourselves from the mindset that allowed the settlers to settle in foreign territory and to implant their frame of mind (knowledge and ways of knowing) and leave it there after they returned to their own country'. While the Manichean construction of 'us-versus-them' is at times unproductive in the Okinawan context, Mignolo's analysis aptly points out the many facets through which external authorities exert and maintain their power other than the straightforward political rule over the land. Medoruma's literature gives voice to the silenced indigenous perspectives that are, through their very existence, a testament to the possibility of being otherwise. Slavoj Žižek (2023) reflects on the difference between *futur* and *avenir*, two words that can be loosely rendered in English as 'future' but have slightly different meanings in some other languages such as French and Slovene. *Futur*, he states, 'stands for the future as the continuation of the present, as the full actualisation of the tendencies which are already present, while *avenir* points towards a radical break, a discontinuity with the present – *avenir* is what is to come (*à venir*), not just what will be'. By portraying the plurality of perspectives in the Okinawan territory, where every perspective does not engage with the others in a hierarchical position but instead equally competes in the construction of the narratives about Okinawa, Medoruma's anti-colonial storytelling aims for a future that radically breaks with the past, an *avenir*, perhaps giving another meaning to what Kenzaburō Ōe had previously defined as 'impossible possibility'.

As previously mentioned in this conclusion, Medoruma's narrative is not the only option, nor is the decolonial the only possibility to go from here. His works might be the expression of the trajectory

of a single authorial voice, but still, it is an authorial voice that lives in conversation with many others, working together in their converging and diverging points as part of the same mosaic that composes the Okinawan literary – and cultural, sociopolitical – experience. In commenting on the ability of Okinawans to express their hopes for the geopolitical disposition of the prefecture approaching the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951, Iha Fuyū states that:

> Even if they are able to hope that their descendants will come to have this capacity [to determine their own fate] in the future, they themselves are in no position to command their descendants to be in possession of it... Rather, they must be prepared for the replacement of one tradition by another tradition. There is no other path but to throw themselves before the will (*ishi*) of those who are yet to come. In any case, no matter what political conditions they live, the question of whether or not Okinawans can become happy is one that not only exceeds the realm of Okinawan history, but it cannot even be momentarily breached. Only when the world has announced the end of imperialism, can Okinawans be liberated from this 'age of bitter suffering' (*niga yū*), and enjoy an 'age of sweet joy' (*ama yū*) (Shimabuku 2023).

Medoruma represents a single fragment in a long history of hardships. His intellectual work, as well as the works of his contemporaries in their similarities and differences, is the recipient of the will of his ancestors and transmits this will to the future generation, in the hope that this future would be for them an *avenir*, to return to Žižek's words. In this sense, his narrative could be understood as geographically and historically circumscribed into the very local history of the Okinawan communities, but it has the capacity to go beyond that. Italian author and journalist Roberto Saviano (Masala 2023) argues for the universality of literature in describing the local to speak about the global, stating that when an author decides to tell the story and the issues of a specific territory, 'what you find is a universal story', which includes 'stories about conflicts, families, power, anger, death, violence, and envy, so that that territory becomes the theatre of the world' and at that point,

the author is 'not telling the story of New York or Naples to the world anymore, but rather narrating the world through New York or through Naples'. Likewise, despite the extreme localisation of the Okinawan history and the heterogeneity implied in the (post)colonial, Medoruma allows Okinawa to become the theatre of the world, a contesting ground where, while differently connotated, the struggle of subaltern individuals against the dominant authority takes place, affirming the significance of the local indigenous experience to reassess, illuminate, and ultimately overcome the (post)colonial.

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