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2003

From the National Gaze to Multiple Gazes: Representations of Okinawa in Recent Japanese Cinema

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national governments were still pushing for the project to go ahead, in opposition to a local plebiscite on the issue (*Okinawa Taimusū*, 20 November 2001, 1).

76. David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

77. One consequence of this connection is a pervasive ambivalence toward the United States within Japanese nationalist discourse.

78. Kang and Yoshimi, *Gurobarizumu no enkinhō*, 83.

79. Gabe Masaaki, presentation at Daiwa House, London, 29 March 2001.

80. Gavan McCormack, presentation at Daiwa House, London, 29 March 2001.

81. See Miyamoto Kenichi and Sasaki Masayuki, eds., *Okinawa: 21 seiki no chōsen* (Okinawa: Challenges of the Twenty-first Century) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000).

82. McCormack, "Okinawa and the Structure of Dependence."

83. Medoruma Shun, "Uminari no shima kara: Henoko o migroroshi ni suru na" (From the Island Where the Oceans Roar: Do Not Leave Henoko to Die), *Shūkan Kinyōbi* 333 (8 September 2000): 24.

84. Takara-Kuroyoshi, "Kichi no sonzai: Sekkyoku hyōka" (Positive Evaluation of the Bases), *Asahi Shimbun* (interview), 15 May 2000.

85. Arakawa Akira, *Okinawa: Tōgō to hangyaku*, 259.



From the National Gaze to Multiple Gazes

Representations of Okinawa in Recent Japanese Cinema

Aaron Gerow

The 1995 Japanese film *Goodbye Japan!* (*Sayonara Nippon!*) directed by Tsutsumi Yukihiko,¹ begins with a quote that would bring to mind the story of Okinawa to anyone even slightly familiar with its historical plight:

A long time ago, people of this island were independent and proud. Their wealth lay in nature: the beautiful sea and coral reefs. But with time, the nature they loved and worshiped was ruined by the evil hand of development. Their long history of being ruled by foreigners is a history stained with humiliation.

The film visualizes the plight of this island, a part of Okinawa Prefecture, from the very start. Far not only from mainland Japan but also from the Okinawan main island—and subordinate to both—it suffers severe hurricane damage but is ignored by the government and the media, and it receives neither help from national agencies nor even a consolation visit from the Okinawan governor. After years of such neglect and insensitivity (symbolized by a developer's ill-considered attempt to build a resort on sacred land), the mayor and many of the islanders decide to declare independence from both Okinawa and Japan, a bid that, despite the threat of Self-Defense Force air strikes, succeeds at the last minute after the wily mayor tricks the American military into supporting their effort.

The fact that this fictional movie about secession from Japan was made by commercial mainland capital and released throughout the Japanese archipelago may prompt surprise and make one wonder about its political stance. Critics might point out that, given that the island featured in *Goodbye Japan!* is a make-believe atoll, Akaonekoshima, the film obfuscates the reality of Okinawan suffering and grievance by transferring that history onto a fictional island which, through its comic antics, degrades the true pain of memory. Yet one can certainly also imagine alternative appropriations, perhaps by Okinawan spectators themselves, particularly those from smaller islands, that take derisive pleasure in an imaginary secession from the mainland.

Placing *Goodbye Japan!* among several other recent films that depict Okinawa, I would like to weave my way through such interpretations to ask why mainland filmmakers and producers create a film about the plight of Okinawans—that is, a film about Japan's other? What textual strategies articulate and differentiate Okinawa and Japan? How are audiences being addressed? What valences—political, cultural, and economic—do such cinematic representations of Okinawa and Japan evince? The last decade has seen a significant number of films involving Okinawa, including movies shot there, or featuring Okinawan characters, or invoking the prefecture. The reasons behind this increase include the boom in things Okinawan in the 1990s, particularly the rising popularity in mainland Japan of music from Okinawa (see the chapters by Steve Rabson and James Roberson in this volume), as well as the media focus on political issues such as the conflict over American bases, rapes of Okinawan women by GIs, and the performance of mainland concern for Okinawa in the G-8 summit (see the chapters by Linda Angst and Julia Yonetani).

It is my contention that Okinawa figures so prominently in contemporary Japanese cinema above all because it functions as a productive space for negotiating identities that have come into crisis in the postbubble, post-Aum Shinrikyo era. This can be seen by inserting these texts into the larger representational topography of both recent cinema and present-day Japanese culture, in which depictions of the marginal and the non-Japanese have proliferated. The films discussed here engage in such depictions out of a perception of anxious discontent in a time of economic and social crisis, but many end by validating Japanese identity, even when appearing to criticize some of its aspects. This is evident as far back as *The Tower of Lilies* (*Himeyuri no tō*, 1953, dir. Imai Tadashi) and Imamura Shōhei's *The Profound Desire of the Gods* (*Kamigami no fukaki yokubō*, 1968), which, despite their leftist politics, still function within a hegemonic nationalist imaginary, identifying both sameness and difference in Okinawa in order to confirm the self-sameness of Japan. Today, even an ostensibly nonpolitical film like *Goodbye Japan!* works off such feelings of discontent, mak-

ing Japan the enemy and Okinawa the hero, yet it does so through a mode of representation that uses an "Okinawan" example to regenerate Japanese national identity. Similarly, *Free and Easy 11* (*Tsuri baka nisshi irebun*, 1999, dir. Motoki Katsuhide) and *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef* (*Umi sora sango no iitsutae*, 1991, dir. Shiina Makoto) play off the touristic dissatisfaction with home to present a pleasurable spectacle of difference, but one that reincorporates the Okinawan other into the Japanese self through a consumable narrative of renewal. *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef* and *Goodbye Japan!* both offer spectators a vicarious identification with marginals victimized by Japanese elites, yet only in a fashion that excuses them from association with these Japanese; the films' identification with Okinawans becomes a means of imagining a rejuvenated Japan. In these works, Okinawa often shifts back and forth between being Japan and being other, between being an object of identification (sometimes because it is different) and being too different to identify with. Ultimately, however, these representational processes work to reconfirm Japan's centrality and Okinawa's marginality.

These same crises in Japanese identity, however, have also empowered select Japanese films to criticize the national myth of homogeneity, recognize heterogeneity, and develop forms of cinema that respect the otherness of others. A number of filmmakers have produced significant films focusing on ethnic minorities in Japan or social marginals who do not fit the dominant national image, including Okinawans. Two directors discussed here, Sai Yōichi and Kitano Takeshi, make similar but still-diverging cinematic choices that permit them to approach Okinawa either to problematize the national myth of homogeneity or to reveal its ultimate emptiness.

Representing Okinawa in film is thus itself a site of struggle between conflicting forces. Combining textual analysis with an examination of the discourses with which texts are imbricated, it is my purpose to map the geography of this representational battlefield, eliciting the political, cultural, and economic valences of images of Okinawa, but always within a larger intertextuality that encompasses many other mainland films. In many works, Okinawa becomes the object of articulations of consumer desire and Japanese national identity on the level not simply of what is represented but also of cinematic structure. In these movies, filmic form renders otherness readable, understandable, and part of the familiar world of conventional distinctions between self and other. In contrast, and in conscious opposition, filmmakers like Kitano and Sai utilize a variety of cinematic styles to articulate Okinawa in its otherness and opacity, as part of a project to undermine the Japanese "self." Theirs is a struggle not merely of information about Okinawa but also over cinematic forms of expression.² Kitano tries to counter nationalist essentialism with

nothingness and Sai with specificity, but both with a style that implies a form of detachment from their characters and stories. Looking at Okinawa from, as it were, afar, they respect the Okinawan other as other, and as opaque. However, their approach retains the danger of rendering Okinawa unarticulated and thus meaningless.

I will end by focusing on Takamine Go, whose recent work *Tsuru-Henry* (*Mugen Ryūkyū: Tsuru Henri*, 1999) offers a possible solution through strategic use of a collage of media and perspectives that avoids both the force of nationalist modes of knowing and the nihilism of detachment. Neither declaring what Okinawa is nor refusing to articulate it, the multiple positions in *Tsuru-Henry* not only bring the issue of representation to the foreground but wander through a deft mixture of fictional and real, past and present, Okinawan and non-Okinawan that deconstructs Japanese homogeneity, celebrates heterogeneity, reworks memory, and posits an Okinawan politics of collage.³

FROM ETHNOGRAPHER TO TOURIST: THE "ORIGINAL" OKINAWA

Okinawa has been a site for Japanese cinema since the 1930s. *The Vindictive Snake* (*Shūnen no dokuhebi*, 1931, dir. Yoshino Jirō) was made by Okinawans in Okinawa, and Toyoda Shiro's *Oyake Akahachi* (1937) was probably the first film made in the prefecture by a Tokyo studio.⁴ In the years since, two dominant Japanese patterns of representing Okinawa cinematically have been the nationalistic and the touristic. *The Tower of Lilies* directed by Imai Tadashi in 1953 and Imamura Shōhei's *The Profound Desire of the Gods* represent Okinawa within a national imaginary. Interestingly, both are works of political protest (Imai's against war, Imamura's against Japanese capitalist modernity), but both also efface Okinawan differences in the process of constructing a unified oppositional (i.e., antiwar or anti-capitalist), but still Japanese, identity. *The Tower of Lilies* tells the famous story of the elite school girls who committed group suicide rather than surrender to Americans soldiers toward the end of the Battle of Okinawa. Imai's 1953 hit film, the most famous of the four movie versions, helped immortalize the girls, but to some critics the film portrayed mainland conceptions of the war rather than Okinawan ones. Matsuda Masao has argued that in *The Tower of Lilies*, as well as in other war films set in Okinawa, "Okinawa was only manipulated as the perfect place for declaring the tragedy of war; in a word, Okinawans wandering about the Okinawan landscape amidst the ravages of war were . . . just given the role of objects [of that tragedy]."⁵ The film was powerfully antiwar, but Imai, by obfuscating the differences between Japanese and Okinawans, not only

hides the history of Okinawan suffering at the hands of Japanese but also uses the war to unify the postwar Japanese nation through images of a people sharing the same suffering.

Imamura Shōhei's *The Profound Desire of the Gods* similarly offered a critique of Japan, this time of its pursuit of high economic growth, yet treated Okinawa as the primitive object of an ethnographic gaze. Imamura's work throughout the 1960s, including *The Insect Woman* (*Nihon konchūki*, 1963) and *The Pornographers* (*Jinruigaku nyūmon*, 1966), valorized the preternatural desires that he saw as seething underneath, thus exposing the hollowness of postwar Japanese capitalism. *The Profound Desire of the Gods* used an Okinawan island as the site for a tale of an incestuous brother and sister ostracized from the closed community who are eventually killed for attempting to escape its confines; their nearly animal-like existence provides a contrast to the modernity that reasserts itself at the end of the film. Yet Imamura's ethnographic perspective on Okinawa, by equating its primitiveness with his "insect women" of Japan, is reminiscent of that of prewar ethnologists like Yanagita Kunio and Origuchi Shinobu who located Okinawa at the beginning of a narrative of Japanese origins.⁶ This cultural nostalgia always posed the danger of rendering Okinawa in a Japanese version of an Orientalist palette, and in Imamura's case, the Okinawan self is rendered more natural, more original than the Japan of the high-economic growth era, often in order to imagine a Japanese self in opposition to Western modernity. The filmmaker Takamine Go, who was raised on Miyako Island, where the film was shot, reacted strongly to the movie, commenting, "The film doesn't try to see Okinawa as anything other than an ethnological object, and just endeavors to copy that Okinawa."⁷

Go's anger toward the film spurred not only his decision to begin filmmaking but also his critique of the ethnological perspective in his first feature work, *Paradise View* (*Paradaisu byū*, 1985). One of that film's characters is a Japanese ethnographer visiting Okinawa, who is rendered not only linguistically isolated (he is the only one using standard Japanese in the film) but also hopelessly antiquarian. As he seeks to preserve lost rituals and teach islanders Heian poetry (perhaps seeing in them the living remnants of the Yamato past), the ethnographer, while hoping to join the "natives" through marriage, seems unable to deal with their interest in modernization and their different articulations of desire. (Takamine's most recent work, *Tsuru-Henry*, continues his critique of nationalist perspectives.)

In recent years, many Japanese directors have retained that nationalistic pattern of representing Okinawa cinematically and joined it to a touristic vision. The two patterns are intricately intertwined, though not always without tension. The former, evident in *The Tower of Lilies* and *The*

Profound Desire of the Gods, utilizes Okinawa as a mirror to create and confirm articulations of Japanese national identity. Unlike those older films, the latter acknowledges that the national imaginary of homogeneity cannot satisfy all desire and portrays Okinawa as a consumable spectacle of difference. The first thus revolves more around sameness and the second around difference, but both operate within a dynamic of the sameness and difference of Okinawans and Japanese—usually with Japanese the intended audience. On one side, the sameness of even this “southern land” (*nankoku*) is affirmed in a process that reinforces the homogeneity and unity of the imagined Japanese national community. On the other side, Okinawa’s difference is stressed in order to reflect on the Japanese self, becoming an idealized image functioning either to confirm cultural superiority or to fashion an alternative (as in counterculture appropriations of the islands). Either way, the structure is one of binary oppositions. These are often two sides of the same coin, and they operate in most films as a complex play of desire and envy, creating otherness, but only as a function of the same.

Quite a number of recent films, such as *Shaking the Movie: The Okinawa Scam* (*Shakkingu the Movie: Okinawa daisakusen*, 1999, part of a series directed by Izumi Seiji about large-scale debtors who scam even bigger badies in order to pay off their debts), readily reduce the island to an exchangeable sign of the pleasurable exotic, commodified for consumption by the eye. Since they could have used any other location, Okinawa becomes simply another exotic locale exhibiting no significant difference from other locales, except for its pristine beaches and bright blue skies. Some films, however, present Okinawa as a touristic commodity significant in its difference, but never to the point of upsetting the logic of the nationalist imaginary. Two examples from the 1990s are *Free and Easy 11* and *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef*.

The former is an episode in the popular “Free and Easy” film series based on a “salaryman manga” by Yamasaki Juzō and Kitami Ken’ichi centered on the character Hamazaki Densuke (affectionately known as Hama-chan), a rather inept but lovable employee of a construction firm who is such a fishing fanatic that he devotes more energy to the rod and reel than to work. The fantasy constructed in the stories, and one possible reason for the manga’s and film series’ success is that Hama-chan’s skill with the rod enables him to become the fishing “teacher” to his own company’s president, Suzuki Ichinosuke (known to Hama-chan as “Su-san”), thus offering spectators a vicarious reversal of the corporate power structure. The film focuses on Hama-chan’s comedic adventures, but it also offers viewers the spectacle of travel. Most episodes feature a trip to some picturesque fishing spot in Japan, with Okinawa the destination of film number eleven.⁸ Films that use locales are usually supported by local

tourism boards and incorporate recognizable touristic images into the visuals. The alliance between tourism and film production appeared as early as the late 1950s in works like Nikkatsu’s “Rider on the Plains” (“Wataridori”) films, but it is epitomized by the extremely popular “Tora-san” (“Otoko wa tsurai yo”) series produced by Shochiku, in which a bumbling but lovable itinerant peddler, Kurama Torajirō, travels back and forth between his birthplace of Shibamata, Tokyo, and various beautiful spots in Japan. (Tora visited Okinawa in the twenty-fifth episode.) “Free and Easy” is closely related to that series, since it is produced by Shochiku, scripted by Yamada Yōji (the director/creator of Tora-san), and was first released in double features with Tora-san films.

The Okinawa that Hama-chan visits in *Free and Easy 11* is an exchangeable commodity: just another attractive destination for the tourist fisherman and the audience to visually consume (as in Aichi’s Irago Point in the first film, or Iwate’s Kamaishi in number six). The logic of tourism, combining attractive authenticity, renewal, and inevitable return home, is played out in this use of Okinawa. Clearly the intended audience is mainland Japanese. After a company colleague, Usami, transfers to the Okinawa branch and buys an old Okinawan fishing boat (*sabani*), Hama-chan’s envy spurs a desire to go to Okinawa even if it is, as he jokes, over his wife’s dead body. Su-san’s business trip there gives Hama-chan this opportunity, and Okinawa proves heavenly. However, the old engine of Usami’s *sabani* fails, leaving him and Hama-chan stranded on a deserted island with only one palm tree. Okinawa now turns into a sunny hell, one humorously spiced with Hama-chan’s homosocial delusions that Usami is his wife. His only wish now is to return home.

Okinawa thus promises the fulfillment of a fantasy that mainland Japan is unable to fulfill, one tied to a nostalgic past (the *sabani*’s engine is hand cranked), which invites the tourist to leave home and country. The experience of exotic otherness and authenticity is only meant to be temporary: At best, it reminds one of home, reaffirming the authenticity there; at worst, it reconfirms that the other is not the self (the *sabani* is too old and conks out in the rain, Okinawa is too hot, etc.). Okinawa’s difference thus functions primarily as a space of renewal that ultimately demands a return to the mainland. This narrative of renewal is given specific form in the film in the case of Su-san. He has left Tokyo troubled: An American business consultant has recommended that the company undergo restructuring, a step that would necessitate firing many employees, especially someone as lazy as Hama-chan. However, the president’s encounter in Okinawa with a fortyish woman taxi driver, who has inherited her small taxi company after her husband’s death, offers him a reencounter with the Japanese corporate ideal of company as family. She actually cleans and cooks for her drivers, doing the best she can to keep the

company together. Su-san's faith in Japanese business practices—dying out in Tokyo but still alive in Okinawa—is restored and he returns to Tokyo to snub the American and reconfirm his parental care for his employees, including Hama-chan. Against a background of real-life company restructuring, increased unemployment, corporate and government corruption, and a perceived decline in social stability in the 1990s, such cinematic tours of Okinawa promise fictional recuperation for weary mainland spectators.

In *Free and Easy 11*, tourism is a national practice shifting back and forth between sameness and difference. Okinawa is both the other that reminds one of the benefits of home, and the lost self that, once found, restores Japanese uniqueness. Visiting Okinawa reunifies the nation, first, because it is reinserted through the "Free and Easy" series into a chain of commodified equivalences with other parts of Japan, and second, because it reconfirms common memory and history. Episode 11 does not ignore the war or the U.S. military bases. The driver takes Su-san to visit the peace memorials, and military jets are clearly present in at least one shot. Neither item is stressed or leaves any significant mark on the subsequent narrative, but both occasion a unity between Okinawan and mainlander. Su-san actually tells the driver that he was a military construction officer stationed in Okinawa for a time during the war. The potential conflict raised in such an admission—recalling the oppression of Okinawans by the Japanese military during the war—is elided by the driver's change in attitude: She is instead happy to hear that and now treats Su-san not as a customer but as a friend, inviting him to her house for a home-cooked meal. Both are now Japanese, even if this means ignoring the specific tragedy of Okinawa (note that Su-san declines to visit the memorial to the school girls of *The Tower of Lilies*; narratively this is because he is too depressed by the corporate decision pressed upon him, but it also implies he is tired of hearing wartime stories).

As is perhaps appropriate to a fishing movie, Okinawa is best symbolized by fish. At one point, there is a cut from Usami and Hama-chan deliriously catching an abundance of tropical fish to some fish underwater. While the muffled voices of the two are still audible, as if we are hearing them from underwater, we then see Su-chan and the diver watching these fishes in an aquarium. The spatial connection is, of course, impossible, but associational montage and the sound bridge set the stage for Su-san's comment: "When one sees these fish swimming freely in the aquarium, one gets doubts about fishing." The spatial association implies that these words are directed in part at Hama-chan, critiquing his compulsion to catch fish, and thus underlines the fact that, despite the film's English title "Free and Easy," the text never fully backs his preference for fishing over work obligations. Su-san's concern also relates to Okinawa, for, al-

though he, too, desires to come to Okinawa to fish and consume the idyllic Okinawa just as Hama-chan does, Su-san reins himself in and limits that consumption (the tourist must never "go overboard" or "go native," as Usami and Hama-chan seem to do in their native *sabani*). The tourist must return home and leave the site alone before its authenticity is destroyed. The irony, of course, is that the fish he calls "free" are contained in a tank, just as the touristic Okinawa is free and authentic only to the degree it is confined to the mainland discourse of authenticity.⁹

An independent production, *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef* has fewer financial ties to tourism, but it offers more of the touristic pleasure of visual spectacle than does *Free and Easy*. The story focuses on a single mother, Etsuko,¹⁰ who, unhappy about her relationship with a boyfriend, returns from the mainland to her home on a small Okinawan island with her young teenage daughter Kaori in tow. The film shifts back and forth between different characters on the isle, including Etsuko's parents, her former classmate Kenzō, and especially Takashi, a boy Kaori's age whose father has died at sea. While becoming friends with Kaori, Takashi is also learning the fishing trade from his grandfather, and it is his trips to sea with Kaori and the other children that offer the most striking views of beautiful Okinawan nature. The narrative, at its source, feeds off the touristic fantasy of immersion and renewal before return. One of the central plot lines is Kaori's shift from outsider, ignorant of local customs and teased by the island children, to acceptance by the group, and thus participation in a deep experience of another land and culture that any tourist would dream of. At the same time, Etsuko, defined by her clothing as a city woman despite her Okinawan birth, also ultimately finds energy (*genki*) in her visit to Okinawa, and thus the ability to return to the mainland and continue on her own.

The paradox of *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef* is that its visual aesthetics and music render Okinawa traditional and natural only through a contemporary set of "artificial" signs. The film values the transmission of traditional knowledge of nature, but in terms of its own film style, there is nothing in its knowledge (articulation) of nature that is analogous to this traditional form; little differentiates it from a skillful Discovery Channel documentary. Note that Shiina has made a small movie career out of pursuing similar themes (the value of traditional knowledge, the importance of harmony with nature, etc.) in spaces such as Mongolia (*White Horse [Shiroi uma*, 1995]) as well as other natural locales in Japan. Okinawan dialect and music does repeatedly appear on the soundtrack of *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef*, but, interestingly, those aural signs of specificity disappear at many crucial moments when music is called on to participate in the narrative enunciation. A good example is when the children go diving at sea, a pivotal scene emphasizing the bounty of the ocean and

the coral reefs that define and defend the island. The musical score, far from emphasizing a special Okinawan relationship with nature, uses a recognizable, globalized, new age style featuring flowing synthesizers that offers spectators a clear emotional reading of this narratively and visually spectacular moment.

The otherness of Okinawa in these two films is restrained and corralled by their styles of representation and rendered familiar and comprehensible within mainland codes. Difference, even when it is promoted in a touristic gaze, is ultimately domesticated within universalized signification systems like music or the narrative formulae of *Free and Easy* that render Okinawa understandable and assimilable to mainland audiences. Otherness itself, one could say, is not wholly other—incomprehensible and unknowable—but is instead readily legible to an implied reading community that, in the end, is homologous to the Japanese nation. I will argue later that the cinema of filmmakers like Kitano, Sai, and Takamine resists this representational containment of otherness, preserving its alterity. Before investigating their work, however, I want to explore a narrative of apparent respect for otherness that ultimately fails to undermine either the nationalistic or the touristic containment of Okinawan otherness.

THE OTHER REVIVING US: OKINAWA AND MAINLAND DISCONTENT

Quite a number of recent Japanese films use Okinawa to criticize some aspect of mainland Japan. One of the subplots of *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef*, for instance, revolves around mainland businessmen inconspicuously buying up land on this quiet, pristine island in order to construct a large-scale resort. Some of the residents sell their land; others get enraged and chase the necktied salarymen down the street. The film never makes this a central issue, however, and thus refuses to become a work of environmental protest; its concern is with the transmission of traditional knowledge and communing with nature. Yet the resort development hovers in the background as a potential threat to end this legacy of nature and knowledge and ruin this island paradise. Audiences, by identifying with Etsuko, Kaori, and their friends and family, but also through a privileged opportunity to overhear two of the businessmen insult the Okinawans for their backwardness, are positioned on the side of the islanders in this possible conflict. *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef* is by no means a political film, but it nonetheless constructs a spectatorship that ostensibly identifies with the margins against mainstream corporate Japanese.

This brings us back to a question originally posed of *Goodbye Japan!*: Why would a Japanese film take the side of “non-Japanese”—that is,

Okinawans—against Japan? And why would it assume that Japanese spectators desire this identification? In the genre of political cinema, articulation of an unfavorable image is designed to spur spectator action, but clearly neither *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef* nor *Goodbye Japan!* depicts haughty mainland Japanese in order to call for political change.¹¹ Indeed, the representational processes within *Goodbye Japan!*, far from undermining conventional articulations of self and other, utilize sympathy for the other as a means of rejuvenating a deteriorating national imaginary.

Goodbye Japan! sets up a series of binary oppositions that, in one form or another, are often present in Japanese films on Okinawa, but which appear here in more exaggerated form. The island is embedded in spacious, picturesque nature, while the Tokyo visible in the film is a mass of traffic jams. The islanders are a deeply religious people, who observe the taboos and follow the advice of their priestess (*miko*), while mainland construction companies violate sacred land and even the Okinawan bureaucrats who visit the new “nation” in the film ridicule its “backward” spirituality. Akaoneko’s culture celebrates its natural abundance, but the Okinawan governor is portrayed as a fat glutton who merely consumes and wastes. The extremity of these oppositions contributes to the comedy (though to my mind, it conforms too much to stereotypes of Okinawa to be truly funny). Yet what is more important to this study is the absence of “regular” mainlanders from these oppositions. While everyday Tokyo is included in some of the contrasts, in general, the counterpoint to the Akaoneko residents is the bureaucratic and governmental elite of Japan. The opposition in *Goodbye Japan!* is less “Akaoneko versus Japan,” than “Akaoneko versus the Japanese bureaucracy.”

There is a long tradition in postwar mainstream cinema of criticizing the elite, especially in war films, in which officers and politicians are condemned for their misuse of power and authority. Responsibility for the war is often projected onto such figures, thus clearing nonelite Japanese (and the emperor) of guilt. *Goodbye Japan!* mirrors these texts, as well as other contemporary discourses criticizing the bureaucracy, but the opposition it relies on is slightly different: Instead of the conflict “Japanese versus the bureaucrats,” it is reformatted as an antagonism between an ethnic or cultural other and the bureaucrats. Structurally, spectators are encouraged to identify neither with Okinawans as essentially the same as Japanese nor with Japanese mainlanders in opposition to Okinawans who are “different,” but rather with Okinawa against representatives of the Japanese bureaucratic elite.¹² There is a touch of the touristic attraction to the exotic other, but the other in this case is actively rebelling against what is supposedly the national self (to Japanese viewers). Precisely because ordinary Japanese are missing in

the opposition "Akaoneko versus the Japanese bureaucracy," we must ask what the film offers to them.

A clue can be found in another contemporary genre that similarly encourages Japanese spectators to identify with the other: the *kaijū* or monster in monster films. Kaneko Shūsuke, in his remakes of the "Gamera" films (e.g., *Gamera the Guardian of the Universe* [*Gamera daikaijū kūchū kessen*, 1995]) and in horror movies like *Crossfire* (*Kurosufaiya*, 2000), in particular has pursued a certain tradition in the monster genre of siding with the monster. In Kaneko's hands, Gamera is a hard-to-understand creature, battling even worse monsters, but often at the cost of slaughtering thousands of innocent people. Gamera's otherness is thus foregrounded, something evinced by the fact that Gamera is hated by most people in the narrative. Nonetheless, the film's spectators are given the "minority" position of sympathy for his predicament. A similar structure can be found in *Crossfire*, a horror film about a race of oppressed peoples with the power of pyrokinesis (the ability to start fires mentally). The heroine Junko, a descendant of these fire users, is, like Gamera, an essentially good person in possession of horrible powers that are not always in her control. We spectators identify with her and her desire for normalcy and equality, but when she tries to halt a series of brutal thrill killings, she becomes the monster to all the authorities represented in the film. This is a melodramatic turn, but it is clearly aligned in the film with a history of systematic oppression of the minority by the majority. *Crossfire*, like *Goodbye Japan!*, asks its spectators to side with the "other" against the representatives of "good" society.

One can sense in these films dissatisfaction with a post-Aum, post-bubble Japan of corruption, widespread unemployment, crime, and insecurity. Yet *Crossfire*'s sympathy for the other in no way undermines the basic binary opposition between self and other. In fact, since the evil mastermind behind the thrill killings turns out to be Hasegawa, a top police official, the articulations of self and other are merely reversed. The conventional modes of representing the other (as inhuman, irrational, etc.) are all transferred onto Hasegawa and his ilk, and socially valorized qualities are confirmed in the "monster." Spectator identification with the other is then less a first step in breaking down the structures of identity that created the monstrous other (using the different to define the self) than a convenient means of distancing the viewer from corrupt authorities and the forces that oppressed Junko's ancestors in the first place. Although contemporary criticism of corrupt established authority probably lay in the background of *Crossfire*, the film in effect seeks a renewal of the corroded self by appropriating the purity of victimization of the other.

Goodbye Japan! operates essentially along the same lines. The Okinawan governor and officials are not monsters, but they are definitely opposed to the "we" constructed for the spectator through conventional structures of identification. Perhaps this framing of Okinawan bureaucrats alleviates the guilt of ordinary Japanese in the oppression of Akaoneko (Okinawa) and enables them to identify with the purity of the rebellious islanders. What is renewed through this identification with the other is precisely the nation, the one ruined by these wasteful and destructive forces. The film is, after all, the story of the birth of a nation, of "love for the land" (which, to Oshire, defines a person), and of fighting and dying for that nation. These values, as popular nationalists like the influential manga artist Kobayashi Yoshinori currently complain, are precisely what is lacking in a contemporary Japan rendered weak, by affluence, Americanism, and the pernicious influence of the left. *Goodbye Japan!* promises fulfillment of the nationalist desire for these values without the historical baggage of war and oppression. (The memory of wartime Japan's military offenses against Okinawan "imperial subjects" is interestingly elided when Self-Defense Force jets prepare to bomb these Akaoneko others who are supposedly part of the nation.) Just as *Crossfire* simply transferred the self onto the other, *Goodbye Japan!*, by creating a new nation apart from Japan, projects a reborn Japan away from its history and onto this Akaonekoan/Okinawan space.

It is significant that the central symbol of not only the Akaoneko state but also the cinematic representation of that space, is the sun, which appropriately sits in the middle of its national flag, just like Japan's. Akaoneko is a model of what Japan should be (or should have been): full of people, defined through identification with the soil, who love the nation, respect the environment, are self-sufficient, and behave as pacifist world leaders, capable of manipulating the Americans. Conveniently, they are also in possession of oil. As such, the "independence" depicted here is really the manifestation of Japanese fantasies. While nationhood causes a loss of innocence (symbolized by the loss of Sachiko, the child-like oracle, at the end), it reaffirms a culturally essentialist conception of identity, as well as other markers of the state, such as masculinity (Oshire, with his many lovers, is praised as the most "proficient" of world leaders), patriarchy (Oshire evinces knowledge of the sacred texts superior to that of the female *miko*), and capitalism (since the discovery of oil ensures the island's future riches). The title speaks of a farewell to Japan, but note that graphically, a Japanese expression, "sayonara," is followed by a hybrid mix, in which *katakana* syllables, often used for foreign loan words, spell *nippon* (an old-fashioned reading of the national name). Perhaps, then, the projection of nation onto Okinawa is precisely a farewell to this corrupted mixture and a return to the culturally pure.

DETACHING FROM THE APPROPRIATED OTHER

Goodbye Japan! paradoxically supports an independent Okinawa in order to confirm a unified Japan. This stance, however, is not simply a result of its narrative decisions. While the film could have been more critical of this point by inserting everyday Japanese into an opposition "Akaoneko" versus "Japan," the cinematic structures of the film themselves fail to implicate spectators in the governmental neglect depicted by the movie. Instead, through point-of-view shots and other filmic devices, audiences are inserted into an unproblematic identification with the islanders that, by placing them on the side of the Akaonekoans, not only excuses them from being the target of the movie's (minimally) critical gaze but also allows them to temporarily forget their own difference from these other people (in experience and memory) and vicariously enjoy the birth of a "true" nation.

The film's offering of a vicarious experience of otherness, soon to be reinserted into the national fold, is due significantly to its usage of two visual styles dominant in contemporary Japanese cinema and television, one a contemporary version of the classical Hollywood style,¹³ the other a valorization of spectacle. Both ultimately reduce alterity to the understandable codes of the nation. In the first case, a version of the classical Hollywood style remains prominent in films like *Free and Easy 11* and in present-day Japanese television drama. As with the classical style, the central ideological imperative is narrative clarity, in which cinematic devices are mobilized to analyze, emphasize, and then reemphasize narrative points for the viewer. Cinematic devices such as editing, framing, and variable camera distance thus analyze the scene for maximum narrative lucidity and ease of understanding. Ambiguity is strictly forbidden in a unified narrative with definite closure. Everything is ultimately explained for the audience (it is, in many ways, a cinema of the obvious), which can merely follow along passively. Within this style, what characters think and feel is rendered readily accessible, through point-of-view shots, music, and other codes of characterization. As a mode of knowledge, this style refuses all forms of alterity—except, of course, when it has been accommodated within character codes of, for instance, "evil" or "monstrosity" (as is the case with Hasegawa in *Crossfire*).

The other style, that of spectacle, does not necessarily obey the commands of narrative clarity but may reinforce national ideologies in different ways. Purely visual, as opposed to narrative, pleasure is predominant here, as the mise-en-scène, camera aesthetics, and editing are manipulated to visually offer viewers the new, the beautiful, the stimulating, and the stunning. Understanding what is seen or said is less important than aesthetics and spectacle. This style has become prominent in recent Amer-

ican film largely due to the influence of television (especially commercials and music videos) and the changing economics of film making and viewing, but Japanese cinema of the 1970s through the 1990s has largely maintained the classical style. However, young directors such as *Goodbye Japan!*'s Tsutsumi Yukihiko utilize spectacle to reify and visually commodity the object of their glances, reducing the films to the (often national) codes of what the viewer can consume and find visually pleasing.¹⁴

These two styles work in different directions—one toward narrative, the other toward spectacle—even though in today's cinema they are often combined. What is important here, however, is the fact that each effectively delineates others within cinematic codes of knowledge and visibility that appropriate the other by implied spectators whose boundaries are seen to overlap those of the nation. Audiences, by going along with these codes, can end up confirming them and the national boundaries they imagine. And, alternative representations of Okinawa—for instance, those hoping to narrate the truth of Okinawa's suffering under American or Japanese domination—cannot easily avoid the implications that style poses on their own political project. Films such as *Gama: The Getto Flower* (*Gama: Getto no hana*) or the documentary *The Untaught War: Okinawa—The Fight of Ahagon Shōkō and Iejima Island* (*Oshierarenakatta sensō: Okinawa-hen—Ahagon Shōkō, Iejima no tatakai*), for instance, do tell much about the history of the Battle of Okinawa and postwar Okinawan struggles over the memory of that event and its lingering effects (the American bases, etc.). As an exercise in remembering, for instance, *Gama* effectively depicts the tragic contradictions wartime Okinawans faced, such as discrimination by Japanese and "suicides" more forced than voluntary. However, by being filmed in the same classical style as *Free and Easy*, even *Gama*'s more "truthful" narrative may, within the political dynamics of style in contemporary Japanese cinema, leave Okinawa appropriable within codes of national knowledge.

A number of contemporary filmmakers have consciously chosen alternative styles precisely because they see stylistic decisions as politically important. Their focus has been on how to depict the other in its otherness. While not all have taken up the question of Okinawa in their films, a brief introduction to their stylistic choices provides a crucial context to understanding not only why Okinawa has become an issue in recent cinema, but also how Okinawa has been alternatively represented and the meanings of those different styles. One young director, Aoyama Shinji, for instance, has declared that cinema should revolve around "the sole point of how to treat the other from a political perspective," which, to him, means depicting it as something that "cannot be generalized or universalized"—that is, as something never fully knowable.¹⁵ Directors such as Hashiguchi Ryōsuke and Suwa Nobuhiro have sought out cinematic

means to respect the other through what I call the “detached style” to counter universalizing assumptions that the other is just like us and knowable. Whereas a more classical style would use close-ups and point-of-view shots to analyze narratively the scene and give spectators access to character psychology and emotion, thereby formulating an identity between viewer and character, the detached style maintains distance from the characters through long shots and a lack of point-of-view editing. There is also less use of analytic editing. Viewers are thus denied easy access to the individuals on the screen, who remain opaque and indeterminate. Filmmakers instead prefer long takes that maintain the ambiguity of the scene and demand that viewers read the image on their own. Asked to interpret for themselves, viewers remain detached from the individuals in the film, but never completely indifferent. They do concentrate on what is going on, but what matters is that this concentration refrains from invading or appropriating the other. In some films, such as Hashiguchi’s *Like Grains of Sand* (*Nagisa no Shindobaddo*, 1995) and Suwa’s *M/Other* (1999), this style is actually coupled with narratives that describe the harm created by knowing others, by violating their right to be different and free of prying eyes. The choice not to look, or at least to pull the camera back and let the characters act on their own is in many ways a cinematic style embodying an ethical stance toward the “Other.” That project is aligned with other efforts to use Okinawa as a way both to critique the oppression of nationalistic knowledge in Japan and also to celebrate the possibilities inherent in difference and heterogeneity. While dominant representations of Okinawa place it in a shifting position between Japan’s other and self, ultimately to confirm the nation, these alternative representations seek to separate Okinawa from the self, precisely in order to respect its otherness and undermine the homogenizing processes of the nation.

A HETEROGENEOUS JAPAN

Okinawa and the Ethnic Mix

Some of the directors who depict Okinawa, such as Sai Yōichi and Kitano Takeshi, utilize elements of the detached style as part of this larger effort to free the different, the individual, the other in all its forms, from nationalistic modes of representation. Neither Sai nor Kitano is exclusively concerned with elucidating the specific difference of Okinawa; rather, they use Okinawa to contest the versions of cultural homogeneity and essentialism that are at the heart of Japanese national ideology. Their concern is less with articulating Okinawan identity than dearticulating Japanese identity through forms of cinema that foreground otherness. Their approaches are

varied and produce different results, but both share elements of the detached style. Sai celebrates heterogeneity by undermining the tendency of homogeneity to generalize all that are different. Kitano figures Okinawa as an empty space, often associated with death, that can denude Japanese identity itself.

As mentioned before, many films use Okinawa as a locale that essentially could have been filmed somewhere else. This could be said of the films of Sai Yōichi,¹⁶ but in his films, this “somewhere else” is not a Japan of cultural and ethnic homogeneity. His films can be accused of using Okinawa for his own purposes, but unlike Imamura, for instance, he self-consciously undermines the “Japanese” position surrounding his films. Sai, a *zainichi* Korean, has always portrayed a heterogeneous Japan even in such seemingly innocuous teen pics as *The Flowering Asuka Gang* (*Hana no Asuka-gumi!*, 1988), an interest that perhaps stems not only from his heritage but also from his work as an assistant director for Ōshima Nagisa, who has a long history of decentering Japanese national identity through depictions of social marginals like Koreans (*Death by Hanging* (*Koshikei*, 1968) and Okinawans (*Dear Summer Sister* [*Natsu no imoto*], 1972). Sai is known for his award-winning comedic look at *zainichi* society, *All under the Moon* (*Tsuki wa dotchi ni dete iru*, 1993), but he is also the mainland director most consistently drawn to Okinawa. He has shot a total of four films in the region: *Rest in Peace My Friend* (*Tomo yo, shizuka ni nemure*, 1985), *Via Okinawa* (*A-Sain deizu*, 1989), *Attack* (*Shōgeki*, 1991), and *Pig’s Revenge* (*Buta no mukui*, 1999).¹⁷ The first three are basically genre films, but all share a concern for the chaotic, material/physical side of Okinawa.

Via Okinawa, for instance, is a narrative of Okinawan rock and rollers around the time of reversion based on the lives of Kyan Yukio and his wife Marie. Most of the story is set in a rock club catering to the American military (the “A-sign” of the original title refers to the permit the American military gave to clubs that GIs were allowed to enter). The band, The Bastards, plays American rock tunes for GIs, many of whom are about to be sent to Vietnam. Yet while there are plenty of fights between patrons and the band, there is no simple binary dividing Okinawan from American, nor any allegory of national conflict. Just as there are fisticuffs, there are also friendships between Okinawans and Americans; while the heroine Eri rejects her mother’s invitation to come to the United States, she also is enamored of American rock. Yomota compliments the film’s “cultural creolization of the rockers’ experience, incapable of being perfect in either Japanese, Okinawan, or English.” In the end, Sai neither idealizes this melting pot nor laments its lack of purity.

The nonsymbolic depiction of Okinawans as “minorities who don’t belong to any community”¹⁸ concerns Sai most, sharply distinguishing him

from Miyamoto Amon, whose debut film *Beat* (1999) was set in about the same time and place. *Beat* neither critiques the Japanese myth of homogeneity nor employs the detached style. With "story help" from Matayoshi Eiki, the narrative of a meddlesome Okinawan bartender and the bar hostess he loves but can't quite measure up to, features interaction with GIs (somewhat sympathetically depicted) fearfully awaiting their call to Vietnam. Yet Miyamoto's mixture of historical reality and fantastic situations (e.g., a car flying through the air), coupled with stylish, often rhythmic editing, a garish color scheme, and artificial set design for the entertainment district, shapes his film as national allegory. One shot featuring a traumatized Takashi (the bartender), alone in a spotlight surrounded by darkness, dissolves to a map of Okinawa, with the island compositionally occupying the same spot on screen as Takashi. This obvious equation between Takashi and Okinawa ostensibly marks his character and experiences as those of Okinawa, and it is within these depictions that an Okinawan identity is performed. Takashi's experience is certainly that of trauma, a lack of power related to his tendency to escape when the going gets tough. The film implies that the solution to his trauma, and thus that of Okinawa, lies in a bold assertion of identity tied to place (the decision to stay put). That assertion is represented by the use of mortar flares, stolen from the American military, at both the beginning and the end of the film. Takashi launches the first, but the second both stops Takashi from leaving and brings Okinawa to the attention of the American astronauts circling in space. Through this phallic discharge, Okinawa has been recognized by the other. Yet as with *Goodbye Japan!*, there is always the danger that this confirmation of identity or nationhood translates less into an assertion of Okinawan independence than a reassertion of Okinawans' Japanese identity. Recognition by America has long been a Japanese cultural fantasy, and thus the astronaut's sighting of Okinawa, by furthering a slippage between Okinawa and Japan that pervades the film, can equally be a confirmation of Japan. In the end, without a clear difference asserted between Okinawa and Japan, Takashi can equally be the sign of the mainland, rendering Okinawa merely the subordinate space for playing out national desires.

Sai avoids Miyamoto's pitfalls by refusing the allegorical impulse through a style, influenced by the detached style, that is thoroughly grounded in the chaotic mundane. Take, for instance, his most recent film shot in Okinawa, *Pig's Revenge*, based on the Akutagawa Prize-winning story by Matayoshi Eiki (figure 10.1). The opening scenes, in which a herd of escaped pigs invades a bar and sends one of the young hostesses, Wakako, into a state of shock, invites a reading of essential Okinawan difference when the bar madam immediately asserts that Wakako has lost her "mabui" (Okinawan for "soul"). If this were *Goodbye Japan!* this would



Figure 10.1. Sai's *Pig's Revenge* resists categorizing Okinawan difference.

Source: Aaron Gerow film still.

be an assertion easily accepted, but in *Pig's Revenge*, Wakako simply gets up a minute later, as if nothing happened, in spite of the others' discussions about calling a *yuta* ("medium") to help her. Sai does not deny these spiritual beliefs, especially when the madam, Wakako, another hostess Shoko, and their customer, Shōkichi, travel to an island to pray at its *utaki* ("shrine"), but he renders them matter-of-factly, without explanation or characterization. Sai's select use of long shot, long take scenes, such as the lengthy scene when Shōkichi and Wakako meet and kiss on the porch, reinforces this sense of the unelucidated everyday. Since the camera is quite far from the two characters, who are partially in shadow, we are not quite sure what to make of their kissing and then their sudden parting. Especially since a romantic relationship doesn't really develop between the two, we are left with incomplete access to the characters' motivations and actions. Simply put, they and the other characters are so concretely mundane, with little abstract explanation or meaning attached to them, it is hard to insert them in allegorical categories like "Okinawa" or "Japanese." Yomota Inuhiko contrasts Ōshima, whose stories are "in the end

events in a conceptual world traced along a historical temporal axis, to Sai, whose "world is spatial and physical."¹⁹ We can only look at his characters from without, in space, their physicality preventing abstraction into a conceptual world.

The *utaki* the characters eventually pray to is not even an established one, but one Shōkichi just built for the bones of his father, who, after dying at sea twelve years before, was by custom given only a temporary above-ground burial. Shōkichi hopes that if they pray to his father, his father will become a god and help them. This is a very practical sense of religion. Note the difference between Shōkichi and Takashi in *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef*, both of whom lost their fathers at sea: While Takashi resolutely works to carry on his island's heritage, Shōkichi remains ambivalent and confused—not taking over his father's profession, yet feeling he must bury him; reminded by elders about his father's wandering soul, yet ultimately creating a *utaki* on his own in his own way.

As Yomota notes, Sai's depiction of ethnic minorities "is in no way based on a humanistic desire to historically enlighten Japanese spectators, nor does it have a nationalistic motivation." Rather, by taking up "what postwar Japan has tried hard to ignore, such as the bases in Okinawa, left-wing internecine killings, the ennui of a lowly cop"²⁰—by showing the differences elided in national and cultural generalizations, Sai focuses on singular realities which resist national metaphors and metanarratives. Sai's approach to difference recalls Naoki Sakai's distinction between specific difference (*sai*) and categorical difference (*shūsa*) when discussing the relationship between language and nationalism. At its most basic, cultural difference is on the level of the incomprehensible, something without limit. It is the process of language, and specifically articulation, that renders difference into categorical difference, and makes it comprehensible, limited, and acceptable by those who use the language. Categorical difference is the basis of the concept of race and ethnicity, so, to Sakai, nationalism, and its attendant ideology of discrimination, fundamentally arises through this process of rendering difference categorical.²¹

Sai Yōichi, I would argue, uses elements of the detached style to counter an analogous process in cinema; precisely by distancing his camera and his narrative stance from his Okinawan characters, he endeavors to resist the processes of categorization and limitation that render the other comprehensible and thus within national categories. It is, in effect, his emphasis on materiality which blocks the process of transforming his characters into signs of ethnicity. In a sense, Sai's conception of ethnicity is less as essence than as practical construction, where identity is an ungeneralizable factor of creation and inheritance, negotiation and acceptance. Whether Sai's perspective on Okinawa is that of an outsider is not the point. His cinema counters Japanese cultural essentialism and homo-

geneity by focusing on material specifics, the nonconceptualized differences that cannot be reduced to all-encompassing metanarratives such as the nation and its other.

Okinawa, Death, and the Limits of Nothingness

Kitano Takeshi (also known as Beat Takeshi), in his early films before *Fireworks* (*Hana-Bi*, 1998), also uses elements of the detached style to block the processes that appropriate Okinawa into the national imaginary. In fact, his camera aesthetics in *Boiling Point* (3-4x10-gatsu, 1990), and *Sonatine* (*Sonachine*, 1993) are so detached from the Okinawan other that it becomes denuded of any substance, with the result that any essential or national identities built in a dialectic of sameness and difference with Okinawa are themselves rendered empty. In Kitano, Okinawa becomes a space approximating death, one signaling the death of Japan itself.

The association between Okinawa and the borderline between life and death is evident in other films. For instance, Shimizu Hiroshi's black comedy *Ikinai* (1998) is all about a tour group who travel to Okinawa precisely in order to die, so that their families can earn the insurance money and pay off mounting debts. Miike Takashi's *The City of Lost Souls* (*Hyōryūgai*, 2000) ends with the main character trying to escape from Japan, only to be shot dead on an Okinawan beach.²² Death on the border of Japan is not unusual in recent Japanese film; in fact, the inability to escape Japan is a prominent theme. Aoyama Shinji's debut film *Helpless*, for instance, features talk of the British television show *The Prisoner*, especially the episode in which Number 6 escapes The Village only to be tricked into returning to it.²³ The implication is that Aoyama's hero is helpless precisely because Japan is The Village, a closed society with no escape. Contemporary Japanese cinema in fact abounds with images of characters on the margins fleeing to the border areas of Japan, only to die there.²⁴

Kitano Takeshi has developed the theme to the fullest that Okinawa is a liminal space in between life and death that reveals the emptiness of Japan itself. Okinawa has appeared in two of his films, *Boiling Point* and *Sonatine*, both times as a free space of play in contrast to the confined world of Tokyo. While the mainland city is a realm of dark lighting and confinement, both spatially and socially, the Okinawan beach is a bright expanse where Kitano's characters, who have in effect escaped from the mainland, can frolic in a virtual return to childhood. This opposition could replicate the touristic discourse of rejuvenation were it not for the fact that Okinawa here is an impossible space, equivalent to death, for characters too empty to be rejuvenated. In *Boiling Point*, two members of a sandlot baseball team, Masaki and Kazuo, venture to Okinawa to buy guns to rescue their manager, an ex-yakuza who has run afoul of the mob.

Yet as Yomota notes, there are no shots of them moving between Tokyo and Okinawa.²⁵ In fact, the shift to Okinawa is extremely jarring: One of them declares he is not going in one shot, while the next reveals them already there. This technique helps literally cut out a separate space for Okinawa that is both utterly mundane and unreal. An Okinawan gangster, Uehara, helps them acquire guns, but only by shooting an aloha-shirted American soldier willing to sell guns within yards of a U.S. military base. Uehara takes his share, leaving Masaki and Kazuo with large weapons and a dead body in plain view to all in the base. Impossibly, no one notices as they clumsily carry their weapons past the base fence; nor does anyone stop them when they wander around the airport with the barrel of a rifle clearly visible. These function, in part, as typical Kitano gags (some directed at the Americans), but they also render Okinawa a space where the normal rules of social action do not apply, where the abnormal is treated as the mundane. In particular, what is lacking here, as in the aftermath of the killing of the aloha-shirted soldier, is the reaction of others, something most notable in *Sonatine*. A mob lieutenant, Murakami, is sent to Okinawa with some men to help in a gang war, only to find out his boss is scheming to eliminate him. In the ensuing battles, all the killings take place without anyone, Okinawan or mainlander, screaming, crying, or batting an eyelid. This is not Japanese or yakuza stoicism but rather the absence of both other and self: other, in the sense that people don't respond to the doings of others, acting as if the other does not exist; self, in the sense that identity can only be constructed in a dialectic with the other. Without that reactive mirror of the other, the self is void.

Kitano's camera is so detached, then, that it fails to impart an internal life to its subjects. While Kitano does use more close-ups than other directors who employ the detached style, the faces seen are lifeless and deadpan, and the often abrupt editing fails to articulate them smoothly into a unity of space, narrative, and individual identity. He frequently uses long shots and rarely relies on point-of-view editing, so spectators have little access to these characters, who remain distinctly other: opaque, distant, and incomprehensible. They are in effect near death, with Okinawa a playful Valhalla enhanced by Kitano's close association of play and death. In Kitano's films, there is a pleasure in being nowhere, at no time—the pleasure of playing on the Okinawan beach—but it is always a short step away from annihilation: Murakami dreams of smiling as he shoots himself on the idyllic beach, and the mob's assassin also strikes there first. This deadly but pleasurable emptiness is, as I have argued elsewhere, not unrelated to issues of national identity.²⁶ As Uehara and his lieutenant head off for a showdown against a mob boss, they eliminate or abandon their others—those outside their male yakuza world—one by one: first the American GI, then a black woman, then the Tokyoites

Masaki and Kazuo, and then Uehara's moll. Generically, the film resembles 1960s Toei yakuza films, in which the hero must throw off the girl in order to participate in the male camaraderie of the revenge attack. But given Uehara, with his ambiguous but aggressive sexuality (he makes no distinction between raping his male lieutenant and raping a woman), and the lack of cathartic reaction shots, this elimination of the other practically performs the *reductio ad absurdum* of masculine Japaneseness, revealing its inherent emptiness. The films seem to argue that the relentless logic of the same, of appropriating the other within the self, paradoxically results in the denuding of Japanese identity itself. In Kitano's early films, where all identities, including the ethnic and the national, are rendered null, the opposition between Tokyo and Okinawa is ultimately ambivalent: Okinawa's freedom is ultimately death, while Tokyo is just as void of the other as is the pristine white island beach. To Kitano, Okinawa is both a space of escape and the pleasure of death, the confirmation of the meaninglessness of identity and the impossibility of escape.

This use of Okinawa as a liminal space between life and death speaks little of the people who live there, but it reveals the emptiness of a mainland Japan that has no concern for the everyday existence of others like Okinawans (and Koreans, Burakumin, Ainu, etc.). Kitano's Okinawa is undoubtedly a creation of certain Japanese desires, but instead of a space of redemption or rejuvenation, it simply promises the end of it all for the weary Japanese. Kitano turns the Japanese gaze on Okinawa back on Japan, to reveal nothing there.

Thus, various mobilizations of the detached style in representations of Okinawa operate to free its inhabitants from cinematic processes that assume knowledge of Okinawa and tie it into mainland assumptions about cultural essence, homogeneity, and national identity. The stylistic choices of Sai and Kitano reemphasize the point that politically progressive representations of Okinawa cannot be effected simply by creating more accurate or authentic content but must work against dominant cinematic styles that can appropriate those "more accurate" images within cinematic codes of national understanding. I do not, however, wish to assert a one-to-one correspondence between style and politics or to argue that there is one style that best represents the Okinawan other. Film style is inherently multivalent, and it only assumes a political tendency in interaction with surrounding discursive conditions. The detached style, for instance, can operate to cinematically respect the otherness of the other in part because it is in contrast with dominant styles, like the classical or the spectacular, which appropriate the other. This multivalency, however, suggests potentially problematic articulations of the detached style, some of which are evident in particular films. With Sai's work, for instance, the detached style renders his characters mundanely physical, but by denying access to their psychology, it can

potentially render the thoughts and feelings of the characters irrelevant for a viewer or even assert their absence altogether. Indeed, Kitano did that in his early films, albeit in a critique also directed at Japanese. However, in another problem, his association of death with the border can imply that life outside Japan is impossible (an implication played out in his more nationalistic *Brother* [2001]²⁷). Separating the camera and the viewer from the Okinawan other protects it from the power of interpretation of camera/viewer and so maintains the otherness of Okinawa, but often this is achieved at the expense of communication, conveying a lack of involvement. That distance also can turn into aesthetic detachment, again rendering the other into spectacle. Such detachment is evident in *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef*, which sometimes uses a narratively slower, more distanced camera style to evoke the leisurely pace of island life and insert its characters in the landscape, thereby unfortunately equating the islanders with the beautiful waves and island landscape.

The main problem with the detached style is that detachment is a spatial operation that demands a point from which the object is detached. The other is spatially freed from the operations of the interpreting subject, but there is still a site/sight from which it is being viewed. This geography interpolates a viewing subject, defined as that which watches, against an other that is watched. The danger, then, is that the detached style can reproduce, especially in relation to a cultural other such as Okinawa, a version of "us" (the viewers) versus "them" (the Okinawans being viewed). Some of the most interesting filmmakers—such as Aoyama—in contemporary Japanese cinema, however, use elements of the detached style to critically address the problem of reinforcing the binary of the other against the nation. Takamine Go, especially in his most recent work, *Tsuru-Henry*, has used a different approach, the multiple perspectives of collage, to upset the viewer/viewed binary, encourage difference against homogeneity, and propose a wandering form of Okinawan identity that strategically uses articulation of that identity to mold, reshape, and reinterpret place and memory.

COLLAGE AND THE ARTICULATION OF OKINAWA MEMORY

Takamine Go is one of the few directors born in Okinawa to enter the commercial industry. We should not, however, focus on his work simply because of the location of his birth. The only other significant commercial filmmaker born there, Shinjō Taku, has been condemned by some film critics for creating "banal images [of Okinawa] on the level of 'Yamato-uchinā'"²⁸ and thus a form of "self-orientalism" in which Okinawans adopt the mainland's vi-

sion, performing stereotypes in a form of self-abnegation.²⁹ Takamine's work is important because it successfully challenges the dominant representations of Okinawan identity that Shinjō accepts, using representational strategies to contest and reshape definitions of that identity.

Takamine began making experimental films while studying art in Kyoto. He is best known for the 35mm commercial films *Paradise View* and the award-winning *Untamagiru* (1989), both of which are almost entirely in Okinawan dialect. His early work, like *Sashin-gu* (1972), *Okinawan Dream Show* (*Okinawan dorimu sho*, 1974), and *Okinawan Chirudai* (1978), combined an articulation of Okinawan public history with issues of personal memory, influenced in part by the fact that Takamine's father died around the time that Okinawa reverted to Japan. His own life bridges different geographies; while he is a staunch proponent of Okinawan culture, he has not lived there for over thirty years (he resides in Kyoto). I will, however, concentrate my analysis on his most recent work, *Tsuru-Henry*, which was made on video then released theatrically (figure 10.2). This

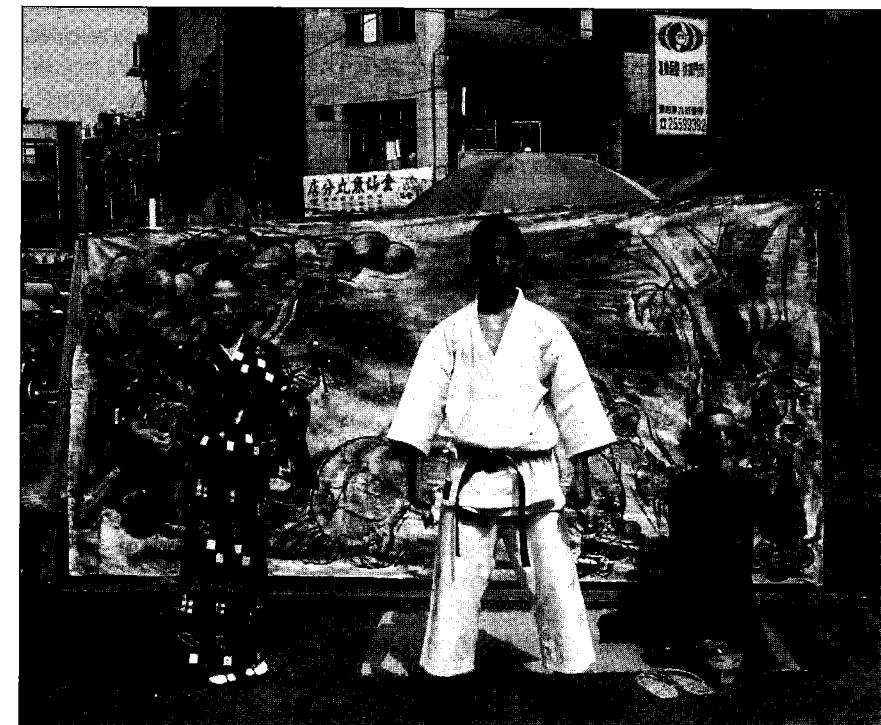


Figure 10.2. Takamine's *Tsuru-Henry*: guerrilla performances for a multietextual moving Okinawa.

Source: Aaron Gerow film still.

work not only stresses the heterogeneity of Okinawa, disturbing any simple designation of self and other but also, far more than Sai or Kitano's films, foregrounds the problem of textuality and representation, thus emphasizing Okinawa as an issue of performance. In Takamine's politics of collage, historical realities and Okinawan memories are recombined to produce a rebellious subjectivity that evades both nationalistic and touristic discourses.³⁰

Tsuru-Henry has less a story than a set of intermeshing texts that question the nature of textuality itself. Tsuru is a popular Okinawan singer who does live "guerrilla" radio performances across the islands (she is played by the singer Ōshiro Misako), by suddenly showing up in a location, hooking up a transmitter, and beginning to play. One day she finds the script for a movie, "Love's Love," in a tree. Visiting its author, the director Mekaru and learning that he has no interest in filming it, she decides to make it herself, using her karate expert son, Henry, to play the lead character, James. James, according to the script, is the product of the union between an Okinawan woman and a high commissioner of the U.S. Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR), who goes to study film at UCLA in order to find his father. He finds out too much, however, and has his memory wiped out by the CIA (how, we don't know) before being sent home. *Tsuru-Henry* follows Tsuru's efforts to produce "Love's Love," but it is never just the story of the making of this film, since *Tsuru-Henry* and "Love's Love" overlap in crucial ways. Henry, according to Tsuru's not always reliable account, is also the son of a USCAR high commissioner. James and Henry are thus equated in a cinematic structure that consciously breaks down the borders between the "real" and the "fictional" worlds. In fact, Mekaru's script in the fiction is a version of a story Takamine intended to film in reality but could not because of financial and other considerations, taking the border-crossing between fact and fiction to another level. *Tsuru-Henry*, which includes many scenes of Henry shooting the film and even a sequence with cartoon drawings of the film's staff, is partially a fictional documentary of its own generation.

Just as *Tsuru-Henry* reflects on itself, different texts and media appear in this film mirroring and overlapping one another. These include Okinawan songs, painted posters (by Takamine himself), photographs, 8mm archival footage, drawings, performance art, and finally a theatrical staging. Utilizing the combinatory effects of video, Takamine presents visual images on screen in collage form, either through double and triple exposures or shots of collaged texts (like the script, which contains words, photographs, and drawings). *Tsuru-Henry* is also replete with songs in different styles and languages, and the verbal texts are overlapped as well: The dialog often shifts from standard Japanese to Okinawan to Chinese to English, sometimes in midsentence. Takamine's film is a veritable rain-

bowl of cultures, as the series of rainbows and prisms on screen attest. But it is also a multiplicity of perspectives, of different texts (some of which are not Takamine's) that prismatically refract the vectors of vision and undermine any effort to construct a singular viewing subject. Far more than Sai's and Kitano's films, the unity of the text itself is under question as many visions and voices resound throughout *Tsuru-Henry*.

The basic division of "us" versus "them," implied in the detached style, is problematized through a more nomadic form of identity. Kosa, Mekaru's neighbor, at one point kids Tsuru about depending on another person's script, asking, "Don't you want to free yourself from the 'Base as Salvation Economy and the Dependency Culture'?" The question echoes debates within Okinawa over the problem of the economic dependence of Okinawa, which lacks a strong productive foundation, on the U.S. military bases. While Takamine is certainly critical of the bases, he uses Tsuru's reply to Kosa to critique the "us" versus "them" binary assumed in that statement. Tsuru says, "I am a Ryūkyūan folk movie wanderer once known as 'Movin' Tsuru'; by character, I can't ignore a scenario I've picked up." She thus asserts a freedom to strategically move between positions and identities, a situation that many Okinawans find themselves in as a matter of necessity but that Takamine seems to assert they can strategically use. The nickname "Movin' Tsuru" (*katsudō no Tsuru*³¹), in its polysemy, actually implies multiple identities: moving Tsuru, Tsuru of the movies, and even activist Tsuru. As an artist, she constantly moves in space, performing just about anywhere, willing to use just about anything. At one point, she even appropriates the infamous "Zō no ori"³² to broadcast her show, to distinctly collage-like effect: Her song gets mixed both with American army radio and a Chinese rendition of "The Internationale" that the listening station is monitoring. This is not presented as an affront to the purity of her Okinawan song, since later in Taiwan she does another show deliberately combining her Okinawan lyrics with other musicians singing in Chinese.

The film's refusal to distinguish identities essentially through a narrative of origins extends to its playful use of DNA. Mekaru studies DNA to confirm his origins, claiming that he descends, on his father's side, from a nationalist leader who escaped to China in 1879 when the Ryūkyūs were forcibly annexed by Japan, and on his mother's, from the adopted child of Commodore Perry. He laments that he is like a "*machibui* rolling stone" (*machibui* being both an Okinawan word for "chaos" and a central motif in the film), and claims this chaotic mixture of different tendencies "is without a doubt determined by the genes of Commodore Perry and the Okinawan nationalist." The assertion is of course symbolic of differences in Okinawa's past that have mixed to form the present, but the association with DNA is absurd: He could not possibly bear the genes of the *adoptive*

parent of his ancestor. Critiquing essentialized conceptions of identity, the film asserts that Mekaru is confused not because he combines two essentially different genetic lineages but because of the way his origins have been articulated historically. Mekaru is associated in the film with James, the mixed-race child who is himself linked with other characters like Henry, who plays him in "Love's Love," and Kosa, who plays him in theatrical performance. The confusion James and Mekaru experience is in part allegorical of Okinawa, but given James's lack of identity (the different actors, the different voices), his representation of Okinawa is only of an Okinawa whose identity itself is unrepresentable, preserving its otherness, but without either asserting a subject viewing it from afar or aligning the film's viewers with that subject. James's voice-over admits to this lack of identity when he declares, "I am not an American. I am not a Japanese. I might not even be an Okinawan." Takamine echoes this himself; having lived in Kyoto for the last thirty years, he is sometimes described as a mainlander by Okinawans and as an Okinawan by mainlanders.³³

Music is central to Takamine's work, but the mixing of sounds and music rarely matches rhythms on the aural register, let alone creates a utopian synthesis between bodies and sound.³⁴ Music is only one element in the narrative world of the film, and in the collage of *Tsuru-Henry*, it collides and overlaps with other elements. During the final theatrical performance, the opera singer Kaneshima Reiko suddenly stands up from the audience and begins singing. The audience reaction, "Ah, that opera singer's come again," is both bemused and detached, glad to have her there, but not necessarily joining in the chorus. Without a love story to unite all these disparate elements, *Tsuru-Henry* emphasizes the confusion of a colonized culture as well as the thrill of manipulating elements in a collage.

The latter is in effect what Tsuru does, and thus she becomes a model for what *Tsuru-Henry* and Takamine are attempting. As mentioned earlier, she is a guerrilla performer who has no problem in using the material of another; she has little desire for authentic, original expression. Yet at the same time, she is not merely inheriting the texts of others. As is noted in the film, she rewrites Mekaru's script, drawing in new texts such as the theater performance, and even broadcasting on her own without permission from her station. Her activism is less one of original creation than articulation, taking what is already there and shaping it through collage, action, and performance. Her texts (and *Tsuru-Henry* itself) thus do not presume a unified point of knowledge—in the form of an author, a viewer, or a nation—that restricts Okinawa to the homogenizing, essentializing, identifying gaze. Rather, they wander through different points, strategically multiplying and combining different

views of Okinawa and expanding them often in productive directions (e.g., potential solidarity with Taiwan and the rest of Asia, suggested by Tsuru's trip to Taipei).

That Takamine's Okinawa is similarly a process of articulation is evident from the film's theme of memory. Memory, particularly the memory of what has been lost, is often an important subject in Takamine's films, but in *Tsuru-Henry*, the loss of memory is central. This loss can be related to American rule and the accompanying *machibui*, both of which can be seen as tragic states. Takamine is keenly aware of the disappearance of not only the memory of the war and the American occupation but also of Okinawan cultural heritage. *Tsuru-Henry* offers reminders of this history, as well as a virtual catalog of famous Okinawan songs. Yet unlike his earlier films, *Paradise View* and *Untamagiru*, which sometimes work toward preserving the purely Okinawan, the film consciously avoids a serious program of historical recollection, in favor of a more jesterlike play with Japanese and American identities, and the possibilities of rearticulating Okinawa. Takamine remains conscious of the historical background of Okinawa's chaotic *machibui*, but his solution here is not the assertion of an ideally unchaotic state but rather positive use of memory within life as a "rolling stone." In Tsuru's rewritten story, James learns from his mother that his American father was in fact a supporter of Okinawan independence, knowledge that the CIA wanted to suppress. He learns this, however, only after he has caught fire and just before he walks into the sea to die with his mother. This tragic end, which several commentators have felt invokes the memory of Buddhist monks who immolated themselves in protest of the Vietnam War, is partially rendered as an absurdly everyday event: a man actually comes up to the burning James and asks him for a light—and James obliges. James's effort to remember his father is also contrasted to Henry, who has no interest in learning about his father. Memory in *Tsuru-Henry* is less an absolute necessity than a matter of practical choice and action within a struggle over the past.

This past is constantly reinterpreted and revived in the film. Toward the conclusion, *Tsuru-Henry* shows 8mm footage of the aftermath of an anti-American riot in Kōza in 1970, mixed with James's voice-over and a musical imitation of Jimi Hendrix by Tsuru. Nakahara Shogo describes how the continuation of the music into the riot footage gives it "the color of a carnival." This device not only reinterprets the riot, it detaches its images from the existing definitions of the riot "in a political context as a necessary protest against the power structure of ruler and ruled." Nakahara does not reject those definitions but praises Takamine's effort to "defamiliarize" present versions of memory and reconsider the original event.³⁵ The effect of Takamine's collage of memories, then, is to render the past strange, to take it out of both the realm of forgetfulness and the

confines of existing discourses, in order that it may be seen anew, realigned with other factors, and even reinvented.

The best example of this in *Tsuru-Henry* is the *rensageki* performance at the end. *Rensageki* was a popular form of performance mixing scenes on stage with scenes filmed; in a performance, these staged scenes and scenes on film using the same actors would be presented alternately in a kind of "chain" (the "rensa" of *rensageki*, which is sometimes translated "chain drama") to compose a single story. This performance form was quite popular on the mainland in the 1910s until theater fire safety regulations, which banned the showing of films (which were made of flammable stock in those days) in stage theaters unequipped for motion pictures, made them more difficult to perform. Yet while *rensageki* largely died out in the mainland, except for some avant-garde appropriations, the form continued well into the 1960s in Okinawa, and it was one of the few kinds of film produced locally. *Tsuru-Henry* revives this form, but, in Takamine's words, "That is not just a reproduction of old-time *rensageki*, but an attempt to bring it back to life as a new mode of expression."³⁶ Thus, while the stage scenes are shown in *Tsuru-Henry* in what is practically a documentary of a theater performance, the film scenes not only use different "actors" (Kosa for the stage James, Henry for the film James), they are not shown to the audience in the world of the film, but directly to us. This new kind of *rensageki*, mixing stage and video, in some ways epitomizes the style of *Tsuru-Henry* itself. Takamine's text then, in its very form, is both the embodied memory of the Okinawan past and a restructuring of that past to intersect with a variety of present-day forces. In this process, Okinawa, like Tsuru, wanders between the past and the present, bearing the burden of the past yet taking multiple views to rework it into new forms of expression.

CONCLUSION

I have shown how dominant representations of Okinawa in contemporary Japanese film enact for spectators the power relations that render Okinawa both different and the same within Japanese national identity, ultimately confining it to regimes of knowledge that rob Okinawa of its alterity. The films of Sai, Kitano, and others remind us that cultural resistance against such depictions can never simply be on the level of offering more accurate and authentic images but must contest cinematic structures that reinforce the nationalist tendency to appropriate and absorb the other.

Takamine's work, however, makes the argument that the struggle over representations of Okinawa is not just over how the islands are repre-

sented or a matter of delineating "good" and "bad" cinematic strategy. While, as we have seen, mainland representations of Okinawa try to revive a unity in the Japanese national imaginary, Takamine, the jesterlike guerrilla artist, deftly advocates an Okinawa that celebrates its own shifting collage of political positions. In his own way, Takamine is adding a voice to debates over political action in Okinawa itself. He seems to argue for the mobilization of multiple "hows," of a kaleidoscope of perspectives that not only frees Okinawa from mainland definitions, but also prevents the self-defeating problem of creating essentialized and permanent self-definitions of Okinawa. Against an Okinawa confined by mainland representations, he and Movin' Tsuru sing overlapping songs of a movin' Okinawa.

NOTES

1. When available, I have used official English titles. Otherwise, translations are my own.
2. I concentrate here on analysis of textual strategies and their intertextual and discursive contexts, to emphasize these often conscious tactics. I plan a subsequent study of the reception of these films.
3. Takamine's real name is Takamine Tsuyoshi, but he often uses the reading "Go" as his directing name.
4. Two lists of films related to Okinawa can be found in Nakae Yūji and Nakae Motoko, "Okinawa eigashi," in *Okinawa poppu karucha*, ed. Tenku Kikaku (Tokyo: Tokyo Shōseki, 2000), 154–75; and Iki Ichirō, *Eizo bunkaron: Okinawa hatsu* (Naha-shi: Henshu Kobo Toyo Kikaku, 2000), 55–57.
5. Matsuda Masao, "Ryūkyū eiga no tame no memorandamu: Okinawa wa ika ni egakarete wa naranai ka," *Gendaishi techō* 34, no. 10 (October 1991): 110. The film scholar Yomota Inuhiko relates this mode of representation to conceptions of the nation:

In [*The Tower of Lilies*], there is absolutely no idea that Okinawans during the war were subject to linguistic and ideological identity formation under the discriminatory gaze of mainlanders. The young women, up to the instant of their deaths, use the same standard Japanese as mainlanders. . . . Undoubtedly Imai Tadashi believed that the mentality of these Okinawan girls was completely identical to that of mainland girls.

In this representation, the purity and lack of difference of the Okinawan Lilies molded them as the "representatives of Japanese defined as war victims." Yomota Inuhiko, "Okinawa to eiga," *Geijutsugaku kenkyū* 11 (2001): 52.

6. See Alan Christy, "The Making of Imperial Subjects in Okinawa," in *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

7. Yomota Inuhiko, *Nihon eiga no rajikaru na ishi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999), 151.

8. *Free and Easy* 11 is actually the thirteenth film of the series because of two special unnumbered episodes.

9. For more on tourism as the experience of signs of authenticity—as a simulacrum of signs—see John Frow, *Time and Commodity Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

10. It is interesting that both Etsuko and the driver in *Free and Easy* 11 are played by Yo Kimiko, a *zainichi* Chinese actress born in Yokohama who has repeatedly been cast as Okinawan or in Okinawan-related productions (her other Okinawan works include Sai Yōichi's *Via Okinawa* and the NHK *asaren* morning drama set in Okinawa, *Churasan*), suggesting an equation of *zainichi* and Okinawan that emphasizes their difference from the Japanese and also erases differences among such “non-Japanese” as *zainichi* and Okinawan.

11. Shiina screens his films in public halls coupled with discussions, which could politicize reception. Note that the rental videotape of *The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef* actually begins with an advertisement for *The Deep Sea World* (*Shinkai sekai*), a video documentary on the natural mysteries of the ocean. In its video context, the film is located in the nature documentary genre.

12. A similar identification with Japan’s other is evident in Yukisada Isao’s *Go* (2001). While *zainichi* Koreans have historically been victims of virulent racism in Japan, in this commercially successful film, the teenage *zainichi* Korean hero essentially becomes the cool rebel in the vein of James Dean, suffering from Japanese racism but eventually winning the Japanese girl. The film’s success may indicate dissatisfaction with existing forms of Japanese identity among young Japanese, but it also negates the *zainichi* challenge to Japanese identity by reducing it to the conventional formulae of youth cinema.

13. See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson’s *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

14. For the relation of this aesthetics (in the case of Iwai Shunji) with a form of “consumer nationalism,” see my “Consuming Asia, Consuming Japan,” in *Censoring History*, ed. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 2000).

15. Aoyama Shinji, “Yo wa ika ni shite Gareru shito ni nari shika,” *Cahiers du Cinema Japon* 21 (1997): 166–75. For a longer analysis of Aoyama’s stance, see my “Aoyama Shinji,” in *Fifty Contemporary Film Directors*, ed. Yvonne Tasker (London: Routledge, 2002).

16. The director Takamine Go has made this argument about *Sai*. See the interview “*Sashin-gu kara Untamagiru made*,” *Eiga jidai* 2 (1992): 104–5.

17. *Sai*’s 1985 *Someday. Someone will be killed* (*Itsuka dareka ga korosareru*, 1984), while not filmed in Okinawa, features a male lead character who is Okinawan.

18. Yomota, *Nihon eiga*, 180.

19. Yomota, *Nihon eiga*, 178.

20. Yomota, *Nihon eiga*, 172.

21. See Sakai Naoki, “Joron—Nashonariti to bō(koku)go no seiji,” in *Nashonariti no datsukochiku*, ed. Sakai Naoki, Brett de Bary, and Iyotani Toshio (Tokyo: Kashiba Shobō, 1996), 9–53.

22. *The City of Lost Souls* multiplies the signs of identity as a part of a general critique of the image of homogeneous Japan. In a wonderful parody of the signification of national identity, one of the first scenes features a bus full of captured illegal immigrants driving on the right side of the road through the desert. On the

screen appears the explanatory title “Saitama Prefecture,” just as the bus passes a billboard for curry featuring a geisha and Mount Fuji. The image is humorously absurd—Saitama is no desert, vehicles drive on the left side of the road in Japan—but it thoroughly mocks the signs of national identity—place names, “geisha,” and “Mount Fuji”—in order to reveal their status as mere images and ones that are always mixed (curry plus geisha).

23. *The Prisoner* was the brief running but highly acclaimed “sequel” to *Secret Agent* starring Patrick McGoohan as a secret agent who, when he announces his intention to leave the service, is kidnapped and placed in The Village, a clean but thoroughly bureaucratic prison town where all inhabitants have numbers for names (the hero is “Number 6”), are constantly monitored, and cannot escape. Rarely has television offered such a compelling and disturbing vision of the jail that is the modern nation-state.

24. Iwai Shunji’s *All about Lily ChouChou* (*Riri Shushu no subete*, 2001) also depicts Okinawa as an encounter with death, but its meeting with the Okinawan other also becomes the starting point for the bullying and killing that ensues in the narrative, as if it is the other that ruins the idyllic Japanese country and lives of the heroes of the film.

25. Yomota, “Okinawa to eiga,” 54.

26. For more on Kitano’s deconstruction of the nation in his early films, which is abandoned in *Fireworks* (*Hana-Bi*, 1998), see Aaron Gerow, “‘Nihonjin’ Kitano Takeshi,” *Yuriika rinji zōkan* 40, no. 3 (February 1998): 42–51.

27. This definition of Japanesehood through death is never fully articulated in the Okinawan films because of the liminality given to Okinawa itself. If a clear geographic distinction between the inside and outside of Japan is established, as there is in *Brother*, in which racism also serves to reconfirm divisions between Japanese and Caucasians, life apart from Japan is considered death, even if life in Japan entails suffering.

28. Matsuda Masao says this of Shinjō’s *Okinawan Boys* (*Okinawa no shonen*, 1983); Matsuda, “Ryūkyū eiga no tame no memorandamu,” 113. “Yamato-uchinā” refers to the Japanese (Yamato) version of Okinawa.

29. Yamashiro Masaë levels this charge against Shinjō’s 1998 feature *Hisai*, a film scripted by Ishihara Shintarō about a Japanese man who, upon visiting an Okinawan island to plan a resort, is murdered by the secretive islanders after he learns of their esoteric rites (*hisai*). To Yamashiro, Ishihara’s attempt to see in Okinawa a purer, more premodern identity that could act as “a mirror for Japan,” ends up merely imagining a connection with the land predicated on exoticist visions of the sexuality of the other: “Okinawa o sudorisuru ‘Okinawa’ eiga,” *Inpakushon* 108 (June 1998): 141. The film scholar Yomota Inuhiko is also critical of *Hisai*: “Here Okinawa is not presented as the self-made energetic chaos emerging from within, but only as a mysterious, threatening realm spied upon from the outside.” Yomota, “Okinawa to eiga,” 56.

30. Thanks to Ōgawa Takao and Ōnishi Ikko of the Shimin Producer’s System for lending me a tape and materials on this work.

31. Although the original term is in Okinawan, my analysis here is based on the Japanese equivalent provided in the official pamphlet.

32. The U.S. military listening station in Yomitan which, because it looks like a tall, circular cage, is somewhat paradoxically called “The Elephant’s Cage” (*zō no ori*).

33. See, for instance, Nakayama Marumi, "People: Takamine Go eiga kantoku, *Asahi gurafu* (27 August 1999).

34. This nonutopian use of music sets *Tsuru-Henry* apart from *Nabbie's Love* (*Nabi no koi*, 1999), even though they share multiple cultures and even actors. Nakae Yōji's film is about love on an Okinawan island, where, on the one hand, the young Nanako is drawn to the wandering mainlander, Fukunosuke, and, on the other, her grandmother Nabbie, forced by island customs to separate from her lover SunRa long ago, finally escapes with SunRa when he returns from exile. The pleasure offered by the film stems in part from the wide variety of music, ranging from Okinawan folk to Irish folk to European opera, played almost continually. In fact, its vision of Okinawa is of a space where everyone sings and plays an instrument, where no one is so repressed they can't suddenly break out dancing. The place of music in Okinawan everyday life is, of course, central, but the world offered here is distinctly utopian. It is, in effect, a musical in the classic sense, presenting not only a utopian synthesis of body, rhythm, and sound, but also a mythical union through song of two opposing paradigms represented in the couples. As Yomota notes, this can have two potential valences, one touristic (a singing and dancing Okinawa served up for the touristic gaze of tired Japanese) and one ideal (a utopia to either be proud of or aim for), thus problematically addressing itself to both mainland and Okinawan spectators. See Yomota, "Okinawa to eiga," 60.

35. Nakahara Shogo, "Kioku no monogatari," in *Mugen Ryūkyū Tsuru Henri* (Okayama: Shimin Purodyuda Shisutemu, 1999), 12. This is the official pamphlet for the film sold at theaters.

36. Ogura Mushitarō and Takamine Go, "Futsu no eiga wa toritakunai," *Yuriika* 31, no. 10 (September 1999): 275.

SELECTED JAPANESE FILMS THAT FEATURE OKINAWA

- Ah, The Tower of Lilies* (*Aa himeyuri no tō*), dir. Masuda Toshio, 1968
- All about Lily ChouChou* (*Riri Shushu no subete*), dir. Iwai Shunji, 2001
- Attack* (*Shūgeki*), dir. Sai Yōichi, 1991
- Beat*, dir. Miyamoto Amon, 1999
- Bodyguard Kiba* (*Bodigado Kiba*), dir. Miike Takashi, 1993
- Boiling Point* (3-4x10-gatsu), dir. Kitano Takeshi, 1990
- The City of Lost Souls* (*Hyōryūgai*), dir. Miike Takashi, 2000
- Dear Summer Sister* (*Natsu no imoto*), dir. Ōshima Nagisa, 1972
- Extreme Private Eros* (*Gokushiteki eros, renka* 1974), dir. Hara Kazuo, 1974
- Free and Easy 11* (*Tsuri baka nisshi irebun*), dir. Motoki Katsuhide, 1999
- Gama: The Getto Flower* (*Gama: Getto no hana*), dir. Osawa Yutaka, 1997
- Goodbye Japan!* (*Sayonara Nippon!*), dir. Tsutsumi Yukihiko, 1995
- Hisai*, dir. Shinjō Taku, 1998
- Ikinai*, dir. Shimizu Hiroshi, 1998
- The Legacy of the Sea, Sky, and Reef* (*Umi sora sango no iitsutae*), dir. Shiina Makoto, 1991

- Nabbie's Love* (*Nabi no koi*), dir. Nakae Yōji, 1999
- Okinawa Gang War* (*Okinawa yakuza sensō*), dir. Nakajima Sadao, 1976
- Okinawan Boys* (*Okinawa no shonen*), dir. Shinjō Taku, 1983
- Okinawan Chirudai*, dir. Takamine Go, 1978
- Okinawan Dream Show* (*Okinawan dorimu sho*), dir. Takamine Go, 1974
- Okinawan Islands* (*Okinawa rettō*), dir. Higashi Yōichi, 1972
- Oyake Akahachi* (*Oyake Akahachi*), dir. Toyoda Shiro, 1937
- Paradise View* (*Paradaisu byū*), dir. Takamine Go, 1985
- Pineapple Tours* (*Painappuru tsuazu*), dirs. Makiya Tsutomu, Nakae Yōji, and Toma Hayashi, 1992
- Pig's Revenge* (*Buta no mukui*), dir. Sai Yōichi, 1999
- The Profound Desire of the Gods* (*Kamigami no fukaki yokubo*), dir. Imamura Shōhei, 1968
- Rest in Peace My Friend* (*Tomo yo, shizuka ni nemure*), dir. Sai Yōichi, 1985
- Shaking the Movie: The Okinawa Scam* (*Shakkingu the Movie: Okinawa daisakusen*), dir. Izumi Seiji, 1999
- Sonatine* (*Sonachine*), dir. Kitano Takeshi, 1993
- The Stormy Petrel* (*Umitsubame Jo no kiseki*), dir. Fujita Toshiya, 1984
- Tora-san's Tropical Fever* (*Otoko wa tsurai yo: Torajirō haibisukasu no hana*), dir. Yamada Yōji, 1980
- The Tower of Lilies* (*Himeyuri no tō*), dir. Imai Tadashi, 1953
- The Tower of Lilies* (*Himeyuri no tō*), dir. Imai Tadashi, 1982
- The Tower of Lilies* (*Himeyuri no tō*), dir. Koyama Seijirō, 1995
- Tsuru-Henry* (*Mugen Ryūkyū: Tsuru Henri*), dir. Takamine Go, 1999
- Untamagiru*, dir. Takamine Go, 1989
- The Untaught War: Okinawa—The Fight of Ahagon Shōkō and Iejima Island* (*Oshierarenakatta sensō: Okinawa-hen—Ahagon Shōkō, Iejima no tatakai*), dir. Takaiwa Jin, 1998
- Via Okinawa* (*A-Sain deizu*), dir. Sai Yōichi, 1989
- The Vindictive Snake* (*Shūnen no dokuhēbi*), dir. Yoshino Jirō, 1931