

# From Secluded Paradise to Hell on Earth Hino Ashihei's Imaginative Geography of Okinawa

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**Abstract** This paper focuses on the writings of Hino Ashihei (1907-1960) about Okinawa, a corpus of twelve works composed over a period of sixteen years that were inspired by three visits to the Ryūkyū Islands. Hino is best known as a writer of war novels, but these twelve works have received almost no attention, partly because they are not considered Okinawan literature since Hino was a native of Kyūshū. The aim of this article is to show that Okinawa is not merely a setting for these neglected writings but rather a complex representation that incorporates the author's gaze, his stance toward the region, and a topography of power. Moreover, this representation evolved over time to produce an array of at times contrasting images of Okinawa, whether as a tropical paradise, the shield of the nation, or a symbol of its occupation. On the other hand, the narrator's stance, which is characterised at first by the strength and assertiveness of a first-person narrator, underwent a progressive disengagement that was intended, by this article's interpretation, to introduce greater objectivity into Hino's prose.

**Keywords** Hino Ashihei. Japan and Okinawa. US-occupied Okinawa. Colonial gaze. Imaginative geographies. Othering.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Hino and Okinawa. – 3 Okinawa as the 'Other'. – 4 Okinawa as a Gendered Other. – 5 Hino's Imaginative Geography of Okinawa. – 5.1 Okinawa as a Tropical Paradise. – 5.2 The Front Door of Our Fatherland. – 5.3 The 'New' Okinawa. – 5.4 A Hell on Earth. – 5.5 Dynamics of Power and Exploitation. – 6 Hino's stance. – 7 Conclusions.



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## 1 Introduction

Hino Ashihei (1907-1960) is best known as a writer of war novels. Thus *Wheat and Soldiers* (*Mugi to heitai*, 1938), the first instalment of a trilogy, became a best-seller in wartime Japan and indeed created a model for contemporary war literature. In the postwar years, Hino also penned several works dealing with the issue of responsibility for the war, not least in response to the purge to which he was subjected from 1948 to 1950. The war novels, as significant as they are, are but one facet of Hino's wide-ranging writings, though his versatility often goes unrecognised. One less-explored facet of his work is travel literature. Hino was an avid traveller who saw in travel opportunities to broaden his horizons and to find new ideas. As he put it, "it is profitable to go twice or three times to places where you have already been. The first impression can prove mistaken on a second visit or can be transformed. My several trips to China and Okinawa are a good example of this" (Hino 1958, 6: 437).

In this paper, I focus in particular on Hino's writings about Okinawa, a corpus of twelve works composed over a period of sixteen years that were inspired by three visits to the Ryūkyū Islands.<sup>1</sup> There have been relatively few critical studies of Hino's oeuvre in general, and this material has received almost no consideration.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, these writings are also overlooked because they are not considered Okinawan literature, Hino being a native of Kyūshū. Nevertheless, they show a deep knowledge of Ryukyuan culture and are characterised by a distinctive gaze.

My aim here is to demonstrate that Okinawa is not merely a setting for these writings but rather a more complex kind of representation, one that encompasses otherness, gender, and power. Further, I contend that this representation - which is central to Hino's vision of Okinawa - evolved over time along with the author's relationship to the region. I begin by establishing the background of this relationship and proceed to a discussion of the representation of Okinawa that emerges from it.

**1** In this paper, I use 'Okinawa' and 'Ryūkyū' as equivalent terms to describe Hino's 'imaginative geography' without regard for the obvious geographical difference between them. Thus Hino, despite having visited only the main island of the archipelago, used 'Ryūkyū' and 'Okinawa' synonymously when relating his travels there.

**2** Tanaka Sōtarō (1971) mentions *The Torn Rope* only in passing. Ikeda Hiroshi's substantial monograph on Hino (2000) discusses only some of the works - *The Songstress*, *The Line-crossing Ceremony*, and *The Torn Rope*. While insightful in some respects, his analysis considers Okinawa as a setting rather than as a theme. Matsushita Hirofumi's (1996) thorough reconstruction of Hino's schedule in Okinawa in 1940 relies on evidence from contemporary newspapers. The only critical monograph on Hino written in English, by David Rosenfeld (2002), makes no mention of his Okinawa writings.

## 2 Hino and Okinawa

As just observed, Hino visited Okinawa three times. The first was from May 13-22, 1940, when he was accompanied by Ryū Kankichi and Kawahara Shigemi, writers for *Kyūshū bungaku* magazine, and the poet Nakayama Shōzaburō. These ten days spent in Naha and on the southern part of the main island, with a brief excursion to Kudaka Island, shaped Hino's impression of the region in ways that reverberate throughout his Okinawan writings.

In mid-September 1944, on his way back to Japan from India after the Battle of Imphal, Hino was forced to spend two nights in Naha when the airplane in which he was travelling had a mechanical problem. He was therefore afforded a glimpse of the well-fortified island just before US air raids on it commenced (which occurred on October 10) and less than a year before the Battle of Okinawa (April-June 1945).

Hino's third visit to Okinawa was from February 8-15, 1954, when he was invited to be a passenger on the inaugural Japan Airlines flight connecting Tokyo to Naha. The island - now under US control in accordance with the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco - differed strikingly from the one that he had seen ten years earlier, as is obvious from his subsequent writing. His earlier impression is well represented in the afterword to the collection of short stories published under the title *A Bowl of Snow* (*Ichiwan no yuki*) in 1948:

I miss the Ryūkyū Islands. The memories of that trip are difficult to forget. Now they have become a remote place, but the illusion of the Ryūkyū in my heart is always vivid. Now that I think of it, I have felt at times something akin to homesickness; and I have written some works that take place there. (Hino 1948, 253)

Far from being merely 'some', Hino's works dealing with Okinawa - directly related to his own experiences there - include eight short stories, one novel, two travelogues, and a stage play. The greater part of these writings appeared in magazines and was later republished into two collections, *The Ryukyuan Dancer* (*Ryūkyū maihime*), published in 1954, not long after his third visit to Okinawa, and *The Torn Rope* (*Chigirareta nawa*), published in 1956.<sup>3</sup> Some of them were eventu-

<sup>3</sup> The short stories include *The Island* (*Shima*, which appeared originally in the April 1945 issue of *Bungei*), *The Songstress* (*Utahime*, from the January 1949 issue of *Bungakukai*), *The Sango Theatre* (*Sangoza*, from the February 1949 issue of *Waseda Bungaku*), *The Tiger's Claw Flower* (*Deigo no hana*, published in *Bungei yomimono* in 1949), *The Dancer* (*Maihime*, from the December 1952 issue of *Shōsetsu shinchō*), *The Maiden from Yanbaru* (*Yanbaru otome*, from the June 1954 issue of *Shōsetsu shinchō*), *Unna Nabi* (from the April 1955 issue of *Shōsetsu kōen*) and *The Torn Rope* (*Chigirareta nawa*, from the September 1956 issue of *Ōru yomimono*). The first six of these stories appeared in

ally included in Hino's 1958 selected works' collection, in a section titled "Tales of the Ryūkyū" (*Ryūkyū monogatari*). Given that Hino himself edited this collection, the tales included therein probably represent what he considered to be the best and/or most important of his Ryukyuan writings.<sup>4</sup>

### 3 Okinawa as the 'Other'

At the time of Hino's first trip, Okinawa had long been a Japanese prefecture, having been annexed in 1879. Some recurrent features of Hino's Okinawa seem, however, to emphasise the difference between it and the Japanese mainland and thus to produce a sense of otherness. The first and most substantial of these features is the Okinawan dialect, which appears frequently in Hino's Okinawan writings apart from the first, *The Island*. The insertion of words or short sentences in the dialect – which are written using the *katakana* syllabary so as to stress their otherness – draws attention to the cultural distance between Okinawa and Japan and creates an exotic atmosphere. Emblematic in this respect is the short story *The Songstress*, written in 1948 but set in 1944. The story's narrator finds himself on Naha because of a malfunctioning airplane while travelling to Japan from India – the autobiography here is transparent – where he encounters a woman, a courtesan of the Tsuji pleasure quarter with whom he had had a brief liaison in the course of a ten-day stay four years previously. Glad at but also bewildered by this reunion, and amid memories of their earlier carefree time together, he is compelled to determine whether her apparent devotion to him is sincere. While visiting her at the brothel where she works and also lives, the courtesan speaks a few sentences in dialect that he had learned during his first stay as a kind of inside joke, thereby creating a sense of continuity and closeness between them. When, however, they are interrupted by another waitress who urges the courtesan to go entertain guests in another room, the double nature of the dialect becomes evident:

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*The Ryukyuan Dancer* along with an excerpt from the novel *The Line-crossing Ceremony* (*Sekidōsai*, serialised in the *Ōsaka mainichi shinbun* from February to August 1953 and published as a single volume that same year) and the two travelogues *To the Island of the Three-times "Lilies"* (*Mitabi "himeyuri" no shima e*, from the April 1954 issue of *Bungei shunjū*) and *Report from the New Ryūkyū* (*Shinryūkyūki*), apparently newly-written for the volume. The latter and the above six short tales were featured as well in the collection *The Torn Rope* along with the story of that title.

<sup>4</sup> The "Tales of the Ryūkyū" selection includes *The Island*, *The Songstress*, *The Sango Theatre*, *The Tiger's Claw Flower*, *The Dancer*, *The Maiden from Yanbaru*, *Unna Nabi*, and *The Torn Rope*.

When she was speaking to me, she did so in the excellent standard Japanese that she had been taught at the girls' school, but with the waitress she spoke fast in dialect, and I couldn't understand a single word. At times she seemed to yell at her, and her tone was bitter, but when she came back to me she adjusted her expression into a smile. (Hino [1948] 1958a, 262)

In this passage, the dialect, which was initially presented as harmless and seductive, becomes opaque and harmful as narrator glimpses all of the things that he fears in the unknown other: unintelligibility, hostility, and deceit.

Second, besides the dialect, Hino makes several references to traditional features of Okinawan culture that stress its otherness. Thus, his Okinawan writings frequently mention the *jabisen*, a musical instrument similar to the *shamisen* but made with snake skin, colourful dyed clothes known as *bingata*, and *awamori*, the distilled rice liquor unique to the region. He also draws attention to the traditional turtle-back tombs that can be found everywhere in the islands.

Third, and even more telling, are Hino's references to the traditional performing arts. The main character of *The Songstress*, the courtesan Sato, is famous for her mastery of *ryūka*, a genre of poetry that is chanted to the accompaniment of the *jabisen*. Hino inserts into the story the texts of several of her improvised poems in dialect with a translation into standard Japanese that serve to convey the woman's feelings. Significantly, the narrator explains that the rhythm of the Okinawan *ryūka* differs from that of the Japanese *waka*: whereas the latter conforms to a pattern of 5-7-5 7-7 syllables, the former is based on an 8-8 8-6 rhythm. While the practice of addressing love poems to one's beloved is a feature shared with mainland Japanese poetry, their utterly different rhythms, by contrast, create a sense of alterity.

Further, Hino in the short story *The Sango Theater* – the structure of which resembles a Noh play – describes in detail a passage from a *kumi odori*, the Ryukyuan traditional narrative dance, a play called *Hito nusubito* (*The Kidnapper*) and quotes lines from it. The setting of the story is the theatre of the title, a glorious building where Hino had witnessed unforgettable performances of *kumi odori* in 1940 and that has in the story been transformed into barracks. While visiting a friend billeted there, the narrator (who clearly represents Hino himself) spots a bearded handyman who seems somehow familiar. At length, he speaks to the man and recognises him as a famous actor whom he had seen on stage and befriended during an earlier visit. The war has destroyed not only the actor's career but the entire theatre industry as well. Unable to leave the place that has meant everything to him, however, the actor is now doing odd jobs for the Japanese army. In a flashback, the narrator recalls the actor's striking

performance in the role of a kidnapper of children. The actor comes to a tragic end, however, when he chooses to burn the theatre to the ground along with himself and his wife.

It is by contrasting Okinawan and Japanese culture in such ways that Hino creates his 'other'. Thus he depicts the Ryūkyū Islands as something exotic despite being part of Japan. This sense of otherness is expressed conversely in the expression that inhabitants of the region use to refer to Japan, 'Yamato', a word that invokes a past in which the islands were independent from the mainland.

#### 4 Okinawa as a Gendered Other

Okinawa is not only 'otherized' by Hino but also 'genderized' in that, apart from *The Sango Theater*, all of his Okinawa-related works of fiction feature a prominent native female character. Thus, in *The Island*, a recollection of a trip from Naha through the luxuriant natural beauty of Okinawa to the southern city of Itoman, the narrator is led by a local woman who tells him about her life and some of the island's customs. Similarly in *The Songstress*, which is set in 1948 and includes flashbacks to 1945 and 1940, the titular character helps the narrator to shop for traditional textiles and ceramics. Through her singing, he comes to appreciate *ryūka* poetry, and, more importantly, she teaches him the rudiments of her dialect. Given their embodiment of significant features of the region's culture, the main female characters in effect represent Okinawa itself.

Many other examples could be cited, but two more are sufficient to make the point here. The first is the main character of the short story *The Dancer*, a popular performer of *kumi odori* dance named Tamagusuku Toshiko. At the end of the war, Toshiko moves to Tokyo with her mother and sister, "fearing that, with the American occupation, customs would change dramatically and the genuine tradition of Ryukyuan dance, to which she had dedicated her life, was about to be destroyed" (Hino [1952] 1958, 302). Since she cannot support herself as a dancer in the capital city, she works part time as a waitress. Toshiko also frequents an Okinawan-style *izakaya* that serves as a gathering place for many 'expats', playing an active role in the Association for the Ryukyuan Arts. Nevertheless, she decides to alter her surname, trading the distinctive *gusuku* for the less exotic 'Tamaki' that those from mainland Japan find easier to pronounce. As the story progresses, she eagerly accepts an offer to join a dance company for a tour of Okinawa, convinced that this will be her opportunity once more to earning her living as a performer. However, before reaching the island, Toshiko is informed that she is to be a prima ballerina in an 'unconventional' form of Ryukyuan dance since, under the US occupation, the old is being discarded in favour of a

'new culture'. She is therefore compelled to perform a 'new Ryukyuan dance' that turns out to be nothing but a form of striptease. Moreover, she is trapped by her decision because the promoters have advertised the show as the "triumphant return of Tamagusuku Toshiko, the star of the Ryukyuan dance, pride of her homeland of Okinawa". Not surprisingly, the tour is disastrous. Pressed by the manager but reluctant to take part in a degrading spectacle, she ends up selling out her treasured art only to suffer harsh criticism and the deletion of her name from the list of respected Okinawan artists. In addition, her old master rejects her as his disciple, and her own brother, who still lives in her hometown, threatens to disown her. In the end, Toshiko has no choice but to abandon the tour - which she does with her brother's help -, return to Tokyo in defeat, and quit the stage forever.

As a performer of traditional Ryukyuan dance, Toshiko is a tangible manifestation of Okinawa's cultural heritage. It is therefore especially significant that she chooses (or feels compelled) to export her otherness to Tokyo and that she abandons the aspect of her name - and hence of herself - that is 'other'. Moreover, when she returns to her homeland, she is again forced to become an 'other' vis-à-vis her country people, being rejected by both her culture (in the form of the master) and her social group (in the form of her brother). Her story can thus be seen to epitomise the destiny of Okinawa itself, being marginalised by the mainland but, at the same time, essentially sold to the US.

The second example of Hino's use of female protagonists to epitomise Okinawa that I cite here occurs in the novella *The Torn Rope* (and, with some variations, in Hino's play of the same name), in which he vents his indignation at the situation in US-administered Okinawa. Among the main characters are the women of the Shingaki family, in particular the eldest daughter, Tsuru, who seems to personify the fate of Okinawa. The old mother, Kame, watches helplessly as her husband is taken into custody and transferred to Naha by plane for trial for his part in the forced seizure of farmers' lands on Ie Island. She is also forced to look on as US soldiers set her house on fire without giving her the time to save anything - and level the ruins with a bulldozer, so that she and other farmers must live in a tent camp.

Tsuru has watched her husband, a poet before the war, die in battle. The 'torn rope' of the title is, on the one hand, an allusion to Okinawa, which contains the word *nawa* (rope) and has been severed from mainland Japan after falling under US administration. In the story, the *nawa* is also the literal rope that Tsuru used to rescue her husband, blinded in the fighting, from a trench that is then 'torn' by a bullet from a US rifle and therefore fails to save the man's life. Tsuru keeps with her the remaining piece as the only keepsake of her dead beloved. Pressed by her parents after the war, she marries another man, who dies a few months later leaving her pregnant with his

child. The boy is then killed at the age of three by a US military jeep while playing on the street. As if this were not enough, Tsuru is then raped by two American soldiers, and she eventually hangs herself with the 'torn rope' that had once tethered her to her first husband when she discovers that she is pregnant as a result of the assault.

Elsewhere in the story, Tsuru's younger sister, Asako, has also come to Naha from Ie Island along with their brother Seiji. The three of them become involved with the US occupying force but, while Tsuru and Seiji try to keep their distance, Asako instead has friendly - and physical - relations with US soldiers (the narrative suggests that she becomes a *panpan*, a prostitute servicing US personnel). As the narrator remarks, "she cannot possibly be unaware of the extent of the misfortunes that the US Army has brought to the Shingaki family, beginning with the incidents at Ie Island. She can be called a traitor" (Hino 1958, 6: 370). Asako alone of her siblings, however, is able to find some measure of happiness when she eventually marries a former US soldier whose genuine interest in Okinawa has led him to study the local pottery and to support the farmers' protest against mistreatment by the US military.

These two stories are representative of Hino's deployment of female characters to represent Okinawa symbolically. That is, whether erotic, tragic, or both, the fate of these characters embodies that of Okinawa itself. Hino clearly wrote from the standpoint of a male inhabitant of the Japanese mainland; his gaze is not neutral in terms of power and gender. His gendering of Okinawa in this way inevitably depicts the region in a subordinate position, betraying a frankly patronising perception of it as erotic and exotic. Within this gender-biased framework, femininity is more effective than masculinity in eliciting and justifying the narrator's sympathy with the various characters. *The Sango Theater* is thus very similar structurally to *The Songstress*, in that the narrator encounters an acquaintance toward whom he once felt some affection only to realise how irrevocably things have changed for both of them. While this structure works well with the female character in *The Songstress*, the same cannot be said for the male character in *The Sango Theater*. It is in this respect significant that the actor in the latter story confesses to the narrator that he has had to prostitute himself to a female patron in order to continue his career on the stage. In other words, the actor's story has been made to parallel that of the courtesans.

## 5 Hino's Imaginative Geography of Okinawa

In the afterword to *A Bowl of Snow*, quoted above, Hino states that the 'illusion' of the Ryūkyū Islands was always vivid in his heart. The term that I have translated as 'illusion', *gensō*, describes a mental image of something that does not exist in reality. When he wrote this passage in 1948, Hino was clinging to memories of his past visits to Okinawa, being well aware that his remembrance of it was far different from the actual situation. He was unable to update his mental image of the region until his return there in 1954.

Given their chronology, half of Hino's Okinawan writings are based on this 'illusion' and the other half reflect the 'new Ryūkyū', as he referred to it in one of his travelogues. Such images - which can be seen as products of both experience and, more so, imagination - form part of an 'imaginative geography' of Okinawa, including as they do not only geographical and cultural features of the archipelago but also Hino's emotions about it and the dynamics of power among the various actors.<sup>5</sup> Here I retrace the evolution of Hino's 'imaginative geographies' of Okinawa, drawing particular attention to the transition from a positive image of a secluded paradise to that of an earthly hell.

### 5.1 Okinawa as a Tropical Paradise

The present image of Okinawa as a 'tropical paradise', as recent research has shown, is the product of a complex makeover and branding operations (Figal 2008, 2012) that embody cultural discourses of power and a 'neo-imperial' agenda (Kühne 2012). This image is, however, less an invention of postwar Japan than a continuation of strategies of representation that already existed before the war. As Kanda (2004) has discussed, in the late thirties, tourism to Okinawa increased significantly thanks to the development of maritime transport. The tourism industry thus helped to sell the notion of the islands as exotic rather than impoverished, that is, to transform a 'sago-palm hell' into a tropical paradise.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The concept of 'imaginative geography' was introduced by Edward Said in his seminal work on orientalism (1979, 1993); it can be defined as "Representations of other places - of peoples and landscapes, cultures and 'natures' - that articulate the desires, fantasies and fears of their authors and the grids of power between them and their 'Others'" (Gregory et al. 2009, 369).

<sup>6</sup> In the late Taishō period (1912-1926), following a series of famines and a drop in the price of the sugarcane that was the mainstay of the island's economy, the people were starving, and they eventually resorted to eating the fruit of the sago-palm (*Cycas revoluta*; *sotetsu* in Japanese), which required detoxifying it.

This is precisely the image created in *The Island*, the only piece of Hino's Okinawa writing that was published during the war. As mentioned, the story consists of the narrator's recollection of a trip through the island's natural beauty from Naha to the southern city of Itoman in the company of a female native. The main feature of a 'tropical paradise' is, of course, the environment, and in this case especially the flowers. A good example in this respect is a description of the landscape from the top of Santinmō Hill, which dominates the city of Itoman:

A strong wind that brings the scent of the salty water comes and brushes against my hot cheeks. I go around the hill and the morning glories, the tiger-claws, the thistles, the agave, the Japanese banana, and other flowers that are in full bloom, each with its peculiar color and shape. Just as the hearts of the island's inhabitants are closely connected to the sea, the flowers' hearts as well cannot be separated from it. The agave flourishes, its stem stretching like a spear from the center of its sharp blade-like leaves, but they say that, if it does not reach a point from which the sea can be seen, it never puts forth its yellow flowers. (Hino [1945] 1958, 329)

Another key aspect of the 'tropical paradise' trope is of course feminine beauty, which enhances its otherness and, at the same time, adds an erotic tinge to it. The female characters – the guide in *The Island*, Sato in *The Songstress*, and the fisherwomen Toshi and Omitsuru who appear in *The Tiger's Claw Flower*<sup>7</sup> and *The Line-crossing Ceremony*,<sup>8</sup> respectively – constitute an essential part of Hino's earlier imaginative geography of Okinawa. These characters also seem to maintain the vital connection to the sea that Hino ascribes to the Okinawan flora, as can be seen in the recurrent representation of them as mermaids (*ningyo*). Thus Sato, Toshi, and Omitsuru are all

<sup>7</sup> *The Tiger's Claw Flower* narrates the story of a marriage between a fictional Okinawan poet named Higa Zenpatsu and Toshi, a fisherwoman. When they are separated by the war, Toshi waits faithfully for Zenpatsu's homecoming even several years after the war. While immersed in the water during this period, she feels that she can communicate with Burma, where her husband is stationed, and so she begins to catch sharks. When Zenpatsu eventually returns with a girl whom he claims to be an orphan he has adopted, Toshi feels betrayed, and the pair become increasingly estranged over the course of the narrative.

<sup>8</sup> *The Line-crossing Ceremony* is a novel that revolves around Daishirō, a student of ichthyology at Tokyo Imperial University who goes to Okinawa to study a peculiar tropical eel. He hires Mankichi, a fisherman, to take him to the tropical waters and falls in love with his mistress, Omitsuru. During the journey, Mankichi tries to kill Daishirō but in the event perishes when their boat wrecks. Daishirō and Omitsuru take refuge on a tropical island, but he, having made an important discovery, is eager to go back to Japan and, at the end of the narrative, leaves Omitsuru on the island and sets out on the ocean, likely to perish.

depicted at one point or another bathing in the sea when they catch the eye of the main male characters. And while there is no such bathing scene in *The Island*, the narrator compares the unusually long fingers of the main female character to the legs of an octopus. The mermaid trope thus simultaneously enhances the eroticism of the female characters – and consequently their ability to entice the male characters and to reveal to them a hidden side of Okinawan culture – and expresses the unattainability of this ‘other’ and its strong connection to the natural world.

This trope is particularly evident in the story of Toshi in *The Tiger's Claw Flower*, who has been faithful to her husband over many years of separation while he returns from the war with a daughter by another woman who he claims to be an adopted. Her subsequent estrangement from him is manifested in part by her near transformation into a marine creature.

Showing her great anger and sadness, every day and every night Toshi plunged into the sea. The sea and the fishes were everything for her now. It was as if she were trying to forget by embracing her mermaid destiny. [...] Secretly, she went to embrace the shark. She put her hands, which were warm even in the water, on both sides and she pulled it to her. The skin of the shark was strong and smooth as she embraced it. What was she thinking during those moments? [...] The eyes of the mermaid were no longer directed towards Burma, and her scales were glittering like fire, as if they were inlaid with petals of the tiger's claw flower, reflecting the light of the paper lanterns that shone under the hedge. (Hino [1949] 1958, 300)

The ‘mermaid’ trope, then, can be regarded as a means of embedding the female characters in nature. A similar phenomenon occurs in *The Songstress* when the narrator meets the titular character again after four years apart: “the perfume of some southern flower emanated from the lush and beautiful body of Sato” (Hino [1948] 1958a, 260). This repeated interweaving of women and nature in his early Ryukyuan works, then, reveals Hino's imaginative geography of Okinawa to have been rooted originally in the notion of a tropical paradise in which nature, feminine beauty, and the sea coalesce into the object of his narrators' desires.

## 5.2 The Front Door of Our Fatherland

The tropical paradise was then jeopardised by the war, preparations for which had the effect of spoiling its natural beauty. Thus *The Songstress* opens with the characters' realization that Okinawa is indeed

changing. The extent of its disfiguration is dramatised in a comparison with the advertising depiction of Okinawa by the International Tourism Association as the land of 'Peach Blossom Spring' (*tōgenkyō*) in reference to a utopia that features in a Chinese fable.<sup>9</sup>

"Set at the southern end of the flowery Japanese archipelago, the land of poetry and deep emotions, the island of dreams. The coral reef, the *jabisen*, and the traditional dyed cloths; a paradise on earth [*tōgenkyō*] of lovely young maidens who hide in their hearts the heat of the Southern countries". These were the slogans of the International Tourism Association; but that aspect of the old days is completely gone from Naha. There is only the clatter of violent and dusty war, which is destroying the look of this town of dreams, covering everything with the anxiety that these are the last days. (Hino [1948] 1958a, 256)

Under the screw pines and *gajumaru* trees - the shadows of which used to protect the clandestine rendezvous of the lovers - armed soldiers now stand. The traditional turtle-back tombs are filled with munitions, and cannons are positioned in the precincts of the city. Its progressive militarization has affected as well one of its prominent charms, namely the Tsuji pleasure quarter. This well-known district, mentioned earlier, dates to the 17th century and had continued to thrive into the 1930s, when its exotic eroticism formed part of the Japanese imaginative geographies of Okinawa (Kanda 2004, 17-19). As Hino depicts it, however, with the growing presence of soldiers on the island, most of the parlours have been forced to become *ian-jo*, brothels reserved for the exclusive use of the Japanese military.

The war has affected Okinawa's cultural heritage as well. Thus all of the shops that just a few years before were sold traditional products had closed. Moreover, the Sango Theater - which, as discussed, had hosted the performances of *kumi odori* that Hino had found unforgettable in 1940 - had been transformed into barracks, as mentioned in *The Songstress* and further elaborated on in the story titled after the theatre. Observing the building filled with the stench of the horses' dung and ruined, the narrator experiences an overwhelming sense of hopelessness that prefigures the country's imminent defeat.

The main characters of these stories stand as the last remnants of something that is doomed to disappear. "Amid the armed city of Naha, fallen into ruins and thrown into confusion, only in this single room were the richness and beauty of former times left untouched"

<sup>9</sup> *Tao Hua Yuan Ji*, written by Tao Yuanming in 421 CE. The fable narrates the story of a fisherman who comes to a secluded, idyllic village whose inhabitants have escaped the turmoil of the Qin dynasty.

the narrator comments about Sato's place (Hino [1948] 1958a, 261). The actor Shikiya in *The Sango Theater* tells the narrator that "because of the disruption caused by the war, our art has been thrown into chaos. The Sango Theater is reduced to what you see, and the same holds for Shingaku Theater. The company is disbanded and the artists are scattered" (Hino [1948] 1958b, 285). Even his old master - hailed as the Okinawan Danjūrō - is missing, and it is unclear whether he is still alive.

Interestingly, the narrator of *The Songstress* relates that, when he heard the news of the air raids on Naha, he had listened with his teeth clenched in distress. "Of course it was not due to my concern for that one woman but because I listened with a burning sense of grief that the vast shadow of the war was finally approaching the front door of our fatherland" (Hino [1948] 1958a, 274). Occupied by Japanese Army soldiers - who had seized the sites connected with both tradition and entertainment - Okinawa was no longer a tropical paradise that inspired desire but had come to represent a last defence against impending defeat.

### 5.3 The 'New' Okinawa

Hino's image of Okinawa changed significantly in the first half of the 1950s as a result of his visit to the region in 1954. While the effects of that visit are apparent in the works written from that year onward - especially in the travelogue *Report from the New Ryūkyū* - some description of postwar Naha can be found in *The Dancer*, written in 1952, as well:

Naha, which had been destroyed by the air raids, showed no traces of the old days. Only a part of Tsuboya area was left as it was; otherwise, the appearance of the city had changed completely. Everything that had conveyed a Ryukyuan atmosphere had disappeared, and of course also the Tsuji district, the renowned popular attraction. The buildings, the people who walked the streets, the things that were sold at the market - everything had the air of the new times, and there was no evidence of the Naha of the past. The rows of kajumaru trees were few, and none of the women wore wide-sleeved or *bingata* kimonos. Whether young or old, they all wore Western-style dresses, and at the market were many American soldiers, tall and blue-eyed. (Hino [1952] 1958, 317)

It is noteworthy that this description cannot possibly have been based on any actual experience of the place since it was written two years before Hino's postwar visit to Okinawa. It is therefore a product of Hino's imagination and, presumably, second-hand accounts. Yet it is

possible to find in the *Report from the New Ryūkyū* some similarities with the description in *The Dancer*; for instance, the sense of disappointment at realising that the past atmosphere has disappeared:

I'm puzzled by the face of the new Ryūkyū. [...] There is not the slightest difference from the mainland in the way in which the houses are built, and the women who emerge from them are dressed in the Japanese way, with short hair. (Hino 1954, 274)

Hino's concern that the Okinawa that he had experienced was lost is understandable given the damage that the war had inflicted. In his disappointment, it is possible to detect the features of his prewar image of Okinawa. These were often the same features that, from his perspective, had made Okinawa 'other'. Thus he lamented the disappearance of the traditional aspects of Okinawan culture and the sites with which they were associated, the decreased variety of traditional cooking, the loss of the aged *awamori* during the bombings, the conversion of theatres into cinemas. Even the traditional performance of the *kumi odori* seemed on the verge of extinction.

Nor had the natural beauty escaped the bombing. Surrounded by flowers in a garden near his accommodations, Hino observes that, "[a]fter having seen Naha and Shuri devastated by the war, in this flower garden on the northern part of the island, I felt that my eyes and my heart had been cleansed" (1954, 271). He goes on to note that the pines that used to grow thick throughout the island have completely disappeared from its southern part because of the bombings. Moreover, after referring to Okinawa as the "southern end of the colorful and flowery Japanese archipelago", realises that the characteristic tiger's claw flower is nowhere to be found.

Most of all for him, however, the women have changed; they seem no longer to possess the exotic charm of the female characters of his earlier Okinawan writings. Faced with the loss of the region's otherness, Hino observes with bitter irony:

In these days, there are more than ten Ryukyuan restaurants and bar in Tokyo. When I went there, the women sported the traditional hairstyle, the room was decorated with the *bingata* clothes, and everything had a strong Ryukyuan atmosphere. "Looks like Okinawa has transferred to Tokyo and Tokyo has come to Okinawa" I said with a laugh. (Hino 1954, 274)

Along with this realisation of the massive loss of the 'old' Okinawa, another theme that arises in *Report from the New Ryūkyū* is the presence of the US Army. While this is not a major theme in the *Report*, it nevertheless contains in embryo the dissent that Hino will voice in years to come. Indeed, Hino conveys through most of the travelogue

a positive image of the American presence in Okinawa. Thus, for instance, he notices that the US Army has built Quonset huts over some of the traditional tombs, reportedly to protect them – an important gesture given the great respect that Okinawan people have for their ancestors. They had also presented to the city of Naha Perry Centennial Hall, which housed a detailed scale model of the Shurei gate (*Shureimon*) that was destroyed during the war.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the ruins of the temple Sōgenji now hosted a Ryukyuan-American Cultural Center, and Hino remarks that he felt his “heart warming at seeing that two countries that engaged in a fierce battle and killed each other’s people have overcome their past enmity and look forward to peace between them” (Hino 1954, 268). While Hino had the impression that everything now looked American, he was also puzzled by the fact he actually saw few Americans, and almost no soldiers, a striking difference from such mainland cities as Sasebo, Tachikawa, and Kure. Thus he commented specifically that he felt almost no ‘colonial atmosphere’.

In the very last chapter of the *Report*, however, realising that “in present-day Ryūkyū, there is no freedom”, Hino addresses generally the current US administration of the islands, which caused in their inhabitants

deep sadness for the fact that the Ryūkyū Islands are sundered from [the mainland], the feeling of anxiety that comes from not knowing when they will be returned [to it], the sense of despair from being fearful that the United States will never give them back. The crisis caused by the collapse of the prostitution economy, the requisition of land to expand the military bases, the hideous crimes, including robbery and murder, that increase every day – with all these and other things coming one after another, the sad eyes of the Ryukyuan people are turned to Yamato. And as for me, ‘one from Yamato’, seeing this state of affairs, I can no longer be the carefree traveler I was in the past. (Hino 1954, 297)

This show of sympathy for the Okinawan people makes clear the desperation of the current situation while leaving the agency of the US partially obscured. Hino remarked that Okinawa was looking to the Japanese mainland with a sense of hope, but he did not delve into the troubling issues that he mentioned, the land requisition and incidents of rape and murder. While his image of the ‘new Okinawa’ was positive overall with respect to the American presence, it neverthe-

**10** Contemporary footage of the Shuri Museum and Perry Centennial Hall has recently been made available by the Okinawa Archives Laboratory (*Okinawa ākaibu kenkyū-jo*): <https://vimeo.com/246043626> (2019-06-24).

less contained, as already mentioned, a seed of dissent that would soon grow into a more systematic critique of US policy and behaviour in the region.

#### 5.4 A Hell on Earth

To expand on the earlier description of the historical context of Hino's later Okinawan writings, according to the Peace Treaty of San Francisco, which came into force in April 1952, the US Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) was obligated to pay for land that had been expropriated for military use. In 1953, after an attempt to lease the land from the owners failed because they considered the compensation too little and the proposed lease (of twenty years) too long, the US military was granted the authority to use force to expropriate land in cases in which landowners refused to sign leases. Many farmers were dislocated and forced to live with their families in tents in areas that were unsuitable for agriculture. The subsequent struggle between the Landowners Union and USCAR led to a proposal by the latter for permanent leases secured through lump-sum payments that was perceived by the landowners as an American land grab and therefore rejected.

In an attempt to reach an agreement, a US committee headed by Representative Melvin Price, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, was created in July 1955 to investigate land issues in Okinawa. This investigation lasted four days. While the protesting landowners had had some hope that the outcome of the investigation would be favourable to them, the recommendations of the Price Report - which was issued in June 1956 - for the most part favoured USCAR. The resulting wave of mass protests culminated in a rally of 150,000 people in Naha.<sup>11</sup>

At the time of Hino's visit to Okinawa in 1954, the dispute was already in progress, though, as has been seen, he mentions the issue but briefly at the end of his contemporary travelogue. Moreover, it was some time before he began to discuss the issue in his writings, and he introduced it only gradually. Thus, in June 1954, he published a short story, *The Maiden from Yanbaru*, featuring a heroine named Nabe whose requited love for a young man from another village is hindered by her mother, with tragic results. Set in the forested northern part of Okinawa Island known as Yanbaru - which Hino had visited that same year - and apparently in the pre-Meiji era, this tale, with its abundant references to local folklore and customs, seems to

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed account of the dispute and its aftermath, see Kawato (2015, 42-53) and Sarantakes (2000, 91-111).

elaborate an alternative version of the 'tropical paradise' image in which 'tropical' is replaced with 'bucolic'.

The story *Unna Nabi*, published roughly a year later, in April 1955, appears to be a rewriting of *The Maiden from Yanbaru* in which the issue of the farmers' struggle becomes part of the narrative. The eponymous heroine is a famous eighteenth-century Ryukyuan poet (also known in Japanese as Onna Nabe), a master of the *ryūka* chanted poetic form that appears in *The Songstress*. In the story, the surrounding villages are oppressed by an old local administrator who, in the name of the king, Shōkei, issues various prohibitions, including one on the *mōasobi* that were the only form of entertainment available to young villagers.<sup>12</sup> Nabi's lover, Matsugane, is executed for objecting to the administrator's prohibitions. Moreover, in preparation for an anticipated war, the administrator issues an order to expropriate some farmers' fields to build a fort. When the farmers protest, he explains that they will be given money in compensation. This compensation proves to be insignificant, however, and, when the farmers renew their protest, the administrator orders his soldiers to suppress it, and several farmers are injured or killed. Even the visit of a high emissary from the king, in whom the farmers have placed their hopes, comes to nothing when emissary proves to be interested only in Nabi's performance, and he soon returns to the capital after increasing the problematic administrator's authority. Only the timely intervention of the king himself at last provides a just outcome, after which Nabi is able to marry and live a modest life in peace.

While this story is set in the eighteenth century, the strict regulations imposed by the local administrator, his misapplication of the king's directives in order to deprive the residents of entertainment, the violent expropriation of farmer's land, the inadequacy of compensation, and the failed negotiations with the emissary of the central government - all of these themes reveal this story as a kind of *roman à clef* addressing the contemporary situation in Okinawa, specifically the controversial US administration of the islands. In this respect, *Unna Nabi* can be seen as an experiment in rewriting, in creating a bridge between the 'contemplative' and 'analytical' stances of Hino's previous works, one that foreshadows the open dissent expressed in *The Torn Rope*, in which, as has been seen, Hino raises a litany of issues relating US-administered Okinawa.

As Hino makes clear in the afterword to the sixth volume of the self-edited selected works referred to above, Okinawa to him "seemed to deserve being called a hell" [*jigoku no na ni atai suru to kanjita*] (Hino 1958, 6: 441-2). In this respect, *The Torn Rope* can be regard-

<sup>12</sup> These *mōasobi* were traditional night-time gatherings of young men and women from various villages.

ed generally as a novel of denunciation for its vivid description of the forced expropriation of land in Iejima and of the miserable condition of the dispossessed farmers and repeated mention of the constant risk to local women of sexual assault by US soldiers. Indeed, the narrative mentions an actual incident in September 1955 in which two soldiers kidnapped, raped, and murdered one six-year-old girl and raped another. It also depicts the illegal gathering of scrap metal by impoverished female farmers, who often died in the process. Hino's view is well summarised by the novel's narrator: "Having been an island on which there was no crime, after the war, it has been transformed into an island of brutal crimes" (Hino [1956] 1958, 375). The majority of the fault, he asserted, lay with the US forces.

The novel and the slightly different play of the same name both end with the rally of the Okinawans that took place in June 1956. In the novel, a character named Chinen Yoshio, who works as a journalist for the *Ryūkyū Times*, is asked by his lover to join this rally; she asks him whether, despite his sardonic attitude, he is a patriot, to which he answers that he is perhaps the most patriotic man of all Japan and declares that he will not take part in the rally because

You see, no matter how much we clamor, the Americans won't move a hair. The more we clamor, the more they will have fun and laugh at us. Don't you see that the Japanese government cares more for the Yankees than for the people of Okinawa? It's inevitable, since they're weak-kneed. In the end, we all know that they'll be compelled to concede. To begin with, you should read carefully the text of that Price Report. It clearly shows contempt for the Okinawan people, or rather it makes fools of all Japanese people. They treat us like savages. They know that, whatever they say to the Japanese, no matter how unreasonable, they won't make a big fuss and they'll do what they tell them to do. (Hino [1956] 1958, 399)

Chinen's character and attitude seem to have been inspired by Hino's friends in Okinawa. In an article published in October 1957 in the magazine *Sekai*, Hino states that, when he arrived in the region in 1954, his friends - who used to be lively and eager - appeared to him quite withered. In this article, which deals with the situation in Okinawa, Hino further develops his critique of the treatment of Okinawa, beginning with the assertion that the newspapers downplay controversial incidents, for "[i]n Okinawa, there is no freedom of speech because of the US Army occupation" (Hino 1957, 146). He goes on to assert that he had composed the stage version of *The Torn Rope* in a fit of indignation over the findings of the Price Report but was nevertheless well aware that Japan was too weak to counter America's "monstrous frontier spirit". In the end, however, he claimed that his stance was motivated, not by anti-American sentiment, but by love

of freedom, peace, and equality - values that the Americans themselves claimed to hold in high regard.

## 5.5 Dynamics of Power and Exploitation

As has been seen, Hino's image of Okinawa shifted from a tropical paradise to an earthly hell in response to the occupations of both the Japanese and the US military forces. These representations naturally expressed his feelings and stance toward Okinawa. His Okinawan writings also map the dynamics of power among the various characters and forces at work within the narrative. It is in these respects that Hino's representation of Okinawa can be considered an evolving 'imaginative geography', a notion that, as discussed, includes the topography of power relations.

Thus Hino's imperial gaze informs his writing about prewar Okinawa.<sup>13</sup> While formally part of the Japanese Empire, the Ryūkyū Islands are perceived - and represented - as an 'other' land, with the otherness being manifested in its natural features, local folklore, and feminine beauty, as discussed above. Also as discussed above, the region is described in tourist pamphlets as 'Peach Blossom Spring', a 'tropical' other that is commodified for the pleasure of mainland Japanese. The asymmetry of power is both implicit and explicit in *The Island*, with the female guide from Itoman serving as a counterpart and informant for the narrator; her husband, it turns out, was drafted into the Japanese Army and died in the war for the Empire. In *The Songstress*, this asymmetry is even more apparent. Over the course of a ten-day stay, the narrator is able to access and enjoy every feature of the Okinawan paradise: nature, culture, and, most obviously, sex. Okinawa lies spread before him for his personal pleasure, as epitomised by the courtesan Sato. While their relationship is depicted as a love affair, the attitude of the narrator makes clear that it is anything but. Thus, when it occurs to him that she could have a husband or children, the narrator decides that he is uninterested in the issue and does not want to know. Moreover, he soon starts to feel caged by this 'relationship', to see Sato as a 'witch' who is entrapping

**13** In making this assertion, I am following the lead of Kawamura Minato, who has used the term "imperial gaze" to describe the attitude that Hino adopted toward China and that led him to depict the 'other' in reductive terms (Kawamura et al. 2008, 125-6). Cultural studies scholars have long used similar terms, going back to Mary Louise Pratt's (1992) seminal and significantly titled *Imperial Eyes*. Here I prefer 'imperial gaze' to the more common (e.g. Hunt, Lessard 2002) "colonial gaze" because Okinawa has never been a colony of Japan but rather has represented the remote periphery of the Japanese Empire. Hino's attitude toward China naturally differed significantly from his attitude toward Okinawa (see Romagnoli 2016).

him, and he is more than relieved when he is eventually able to return to the mainland. The transactional nature of their relationship is further revealed when he offers her money, which she refuses, and then some material goods instead, which she accepts.

In addition, during the narrator's second visit with Sato, the asymmetrical power dynamic is further complicated by the presence of the military. The narrator is no longer a mere visitor; he is now also a soldier, a part of the force that has taken control of the island and seized the sites associated with its pleasures. Thus it is revealed that, besides her affair with the narrator, Sato is the favourite of a high officer, who contrives an excuse to visit her. The narrator thus finds himself trapped in a set of power relations that grant him some advantage but that on his final visit compel him to obey his superior and leave the island – and Sato.

Japan's military defeat and the US occupation of Okinawa changed the situation dramatically for Hino. As discussed, postwar Okinawa appeared to him no different from Japan, having been stripped of its otherness. However, while formally part of Japan, Okinawa was at this juncture under US control. The various characters in *The Torn Rope* seem to exemplify possible strategies for dealing with the oppressive nature of the American occupation: fighting it through dissent and protests, as Shingaki Seiji does; adapting to it, as Asako does by fraternizing with US soldiers and eventually marrying one; remaining passive despite the indignities of the situation, as Chinen Yoshio does; or succumbing to despair and committing suicide, as Shingaki Tsuru does.

None of these strategies is presented as particularly successful, and Hino's Okinawa seems destined to be exploited as it was in the past. Indeed, exploitation is a theme that recurs in nearly all of Hino's Okinawan writings, a consistent feature of the relationships between Okinawa and its 'others'. The island has alternately been exploited for its natural resources – such as in the case of the sugarcane industry that collapsed and drove the local population to endure 'sago-palm hell' – and made to serve the mainland tourism industry. So also Sato in *The Songstress* is exploited by the narrator, who, as has been seen, is depicted more concerned for the country than for her when he hears about the air raids in Naha. Because Okinawa is Japan's 'front door', it must sacrifice itself to protect the mainland from invasion. Even after the war, Okinawa and its peculiar culture are exploited by Hino's unscrupulous Japanese characters, who give no heed to the potentially disastrous effects of their behavior provided that they reap their revenues, a theme especially apparent in *The Dancer*. Moreover, the very presence of the US military on the island is a form of exploitation, one symbolised in Hino's writings in part by the requisition of farmland.

As Ikeda (2000) has observed, Hino was probably not fully cognizant of the exploitative attitudes displayed by his protagonists in

the Okinawan writings composed before 1954. While the causal relationship is quite clear in the case of US-controlled Okinawa, the occupiers having transformed it into an “island of brutal crimes”, the same does not hold true for Japanese-controlled Okinawa during wartime. In Hino's writings about this period, he does not elaborate on the complex dynamics of power and exploitation with the same clarity. Thus, for instance, he seems not to recognise that the situation in Naha depicted in *The Songstress* resembles that in Japanese-controlled Hangzhou in the third chapter of his war trilogy, *Flowers and Soldiers* (*Hana to heitai*, 1939); thus, to cite one obvious similarity, both narratives conclude with the narrator deserting a woman.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the themes of the asymmetry of power and of exploitation are central to Hino's imaginative geography of Okinawa.

## 6 Hino's stance

When examined diachronically, then, Hino's Okinawan writings reveal a fundamental shift in perspective. *The Island*, based on Hino's 1940 travel experiences, can be categorised as an *inshōki* or ‘record of impressions’, a popular genre of Japanese travel literature, a key feature of which is the assumption that the narrator is autodiegetic. There is no room for doubt that the narrator's voice is Hino's in *The Island*, *The Songstress*, and *The Sango Theater*. Written with the stylistic features of the *watakushi-shōsetsu*, these narratives include explicit references not only to Hino's past and present circumstances – such as the details of his previous visit of Okinawa in 1940, involvement in the Imphal campaign, and forced stop in Naha in 1944 – but also to his status as a renowned writer. Furthermore, in *The Songstress*, in describing the room in which he meets the courtesan, the narrator observes that “the frame hung in the *tokonoma* featured the image of a *kappa* that I had drawn for fun long time ago” (Hino 1958, 6: 260), an explicit reference to Hino's own fixation on these creatures of folklore. The narration of *The Tiger's Claw Flower*, by contrast, is first-person though not autodiegetic, in that the author-narrator tells the story of the Okinawan poet Zenpatsu and his wife Toshi.

In the works written from 1952 onwards, however – with the obvious exception of the two travelogues – Hino opted for third-person narration. *The Maiden from Yanbaru*, which features an autodiegetic narrator at the beginning, might seem another exception; this narrator, like Hino himself, tells about his travel to the Ryūkyū in February and about a visit to the northern Yanbaru region. However, the narration soon switches to third-person in the form of an inset nar-

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the novel *Flowers and Soldiers*, see Romagnoli 2016.

rative about two other characters. In *Unna Nabi* – which, again, is a rewriting of *The Maiden from Yanbaru* – the narration is third-person throughout.

Hino's shift from an autodiegetic to a homodiegetic and finally a heterodiegetic narrator can be seen as a move toward greater objectivity, an effort to distance his persona from the events being narrated. By making this shift, Hino rendered his criticism more persuasive. This strategy can be traced back to *The Dancer* but is more evident in the later *Unna Nabi* and *The Torn Rope*. The quasi-journalistic style of *The Torn Rope* in particular undergirds a stinging indictment of the US administration of Okinawa that is not explicitly connected to Hino's persona. Hino's decision to recast the novella as a drama represents a further step in the direction of objectivity, in that the narrative is now delivered solely in the voices of the characters.

## 7 Conclusions

My goal here has been to identify trends in Hino Ashihei's Okinawa writings, a considerable corpus of texts written over a period of sixteen years. In particular, I have sought to demonstrate that, in these works, Okinawa is not simply a setting but rather a complex representation that incorporates the author's gaze, his stance toward the region, and a topography of power. In making this argument, I have referred to the concept of 'imaginative geographies'. I have further suggested that Hino's geography of Okinawa evolved while retaining a few constant features.

Hino's complex representation of Okinawa, then, was based on a gaze that evolved over time to produce an array of at times contrasting images. Thus he invokes the region at various moments as a tropical paradise, as the shield of the nation, and as a symbol of its occupation. This Okinawa is effectively 'othered' and gendered as well, with Hino's female characters embodying local characteristics and their fates the fate of Okinawa itself. The dynamics of power play a key role in this representation, which, even as it evolved, consistently placed Okinawa in the weaker position. The narrator's stance, on the other hand, characterised at first by the strength and assertiveness of a first-person narrator, underwent a progressive disengagement that is typified by the third-person narration until the narrative voice disappeared entirely in the stage version of *The Torn Rope*. I read this evolution as an attempt by Hino to introduce greater objectivity into his narration.

It is not clear how Hino's geography of Okinawa would have evolved if given the chance. Elsewhere in the afterword to the sixth volume of his selected works, part of which was quoted above, he speaks of his desire to write a long novel set in Okinawa as proof of his genu-

ine interest in and affection for the region. In the few years between the editing of his selected works and his suicide, though, this project was never attempted.

Two key issues remain to be examined in this regard that are beyond the scope of the present study. The first is the position of Okinawa in Hino's oeuvre. I have mentioned the novel *Flowers and Soldiers*, but many other of Hino's novels and short stories also involve the othering and gendering gaze that marks the Okinawan writings.<sup>15</sup> The second issue is the position of Hino's Okinawa in the discourse on Okinawan literature; as mentioned, his Okinawa writings are not considered part of this literature because he was not native to the region. Nevertheless, these writings evince a deep understanding of the Ryukyuan archipelago and are perhaps valuable for the very fact that they are informed by a gaze that is not Okinawan. This being the case, the works discussed here may well merit comparison with those of native writers as a means to explicate interrelations between centre and periphery. In any case, it is hoped that the present study will prompt further discussion of such issues as otherness and gendering in the work of twentieth-century Japanese authors.

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<sup>15</sup> One example is *The Flower and the Dragon (Hana to ryū, 1952-53)*, which narrates the story of Hino's parents in Kitakyūshū from the mid-Meiji period to the Pacific War.

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