

Eiki Matayoshi's *Pig's Revenge*: The Dismemberment of a Community

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Eiki Matayoshi's *Pig's Revenge* (*Buta no Mukui*) –the 1996 winner of the prestigious Akutagawa Prize—in an attempt to uncover a form of Orientalism by Okinawans against their fellow Okinawans. It argues that during the process of modernization, local communities throughout Okinawa experienced a series of transformations within which intellectuals have come to harbor ambivalent opinions about their home islands and cultures. Such ambivalent feelings characterize the attitude of the protagonist, Shokichi, towards the three food-devouring female characters who represent the backwardness and the provincial elements of Okinawa. This paper demonstrates how Matayoshi's *Pig's Revenge* presents Okinawa as a political and cultural “other” in relation to Japan. Readers sense in the person of Shokichi the same kind of sorrow and loneliness as held by the Okinawan intellectual elite—victims of discursive self-exclusion, who, born and raised in Okinawa, were nevertheless forced to adopt foreign perspectives through which to “discover,” ironically, what had always been theirs to begin with.

Introduction

When *The Okinawa Program* was first published in 2001 with its ambitious subtitle: *How the World's Longest-Lived People Achieve Everlasting Health—and How You Can Too*, the traditional culinary culture of Okinawa enjoyed more widespread popularity among English speaking people. Speaking on behalf of the people of Okinawa, which they call “Shangri-la,” the Willcox brothers claim, “Their low-calorie, plant-based diet high in unrefined carbohydrates not only meets the dietary recommendations of the U.S. national Cancer Institute (NCI) but exceeds them, and more than fulfills the criteria recommended by most other scientific and medical authorities” (6). While it is not my place here to examine the credibility of scientific data or the bold claims made in the book or elsewhere in support of the Okinawan dietary system, I would like to stress the fact that such statements often promote, or are often promoted by, certain cultural images of Okinawa that Westerners and Japanese alike have come to foster, somehow

mixing their admiration with a hint of condescension.

In *Okinawa Ryori no Chikara* (Power of Okinawan Cuisine), Asako Kishi also describes traditional ways of living on Okinawa under the same favorable light. Kishi says that there exist on these southern isles some qualities of living that have been long lost in modern Japanese society, due to selfish individualism rampant there. These “good old” aspects of life are what Kishi finds among Okinawans in their respect for their ancestors, in what is known as *yuimaaru* (generous spirit of mutual helpfulness), and also in their generous custom of sharing foods at the times of festivities and observances (43). In keeping such good old traditions alive for so long, Kishi claims, the happy islanders were able to sustain cultural integrity in an environment with no modern advantages such as supermarkets, convenience stores, or access to processed or packaged foods.

Such high opinions and praises about Okinawa coming from the Willcox brothers and Kishi, however, never completely reflect the

realities of Okinawa. Their observations communicate, rather, some negative feelings toward the societies they themselves belong to. Seemingly referring to Okinawa, their words actually evoke certain nostalgia for things lost through the process of modernization in the United States or mainland Japan. Thus, their praises, while seemingly addressed to Okinawa, in fact reveal their own ideals concerning what their own societies should be like. Last year, as many as five million people—mostly Japanese mainlanders—visited Okinawa, drawn to Ryukyuan history, traditions, and ancient customs quite distinct from their own, looking even for some spiritual insights or healing experiences. Perhaps, it is safe to suggest, however, that their yearnings will never be entirely satisfied by Okinawa alone, since their cravings emerge from a socio-cultural distance between these resort islands and their own modern societies.

In fact, these very words of praise from the Willcox brothers and Kishi may be easily turned against them and imply, instead, how backward Okinawa actually is. Wrapped in ambivalence, their statements at first may sound like pleasantries made with good intentions, but in fact can be found to hide dark prejudices. Statements of their kind typically rest upon an innate presupposition—itself never really questioned—that behind the subject and object of observation lies the binary opposition of strong over weak. As the subject always has power over the objects it observes and labels, the observations that the Willcox brothers and Kishi make are characteristic of the colonial conventions of discourse. Trapped in such a rhetorical power structure, the statements—no matter how well-intended—will never reveal the truth they claim to express. This is a familiar dilemma we face as soon as we try to describe those whom we define as members of the political and cultural “other.” Perceiving

such people as “them” and not part of “us” introduces a troubling obstacle over which we stumble on our way towards true understanding. The way we perceive the problem could predetermine our answer in ways we may have never intended. As is well known, Edward Said introduced the notion of “Orientalism” to describe this mode of contradictory thoughts or ambivalent feelings among western intellectuals in contact with the eastern cultures, societies, and peoples.

This paper examines Eiki Matayoshi's *Pig's Revenge (Buta no Mukui)*—the 1996 winner of the prestigious Akutagawa Prize—in an attempt to uncover a form of Orientalism by Okinawans against their fellow Okinawans. Some readers may find it difficult to accept, but I believe that it is easy, and in fact quite natural, for Okinawans to fall victim to self-directed discrimination through which they regard themselves either with contempt or envy, or perhaps, with both at once.

Ever since, or perhaps sometime before, the disposition of The Ryukyuan Kingdom, Okinawa has imported new thoughts and commodities from the West directly or through Japan. In the succeeding periods, ideas and values long held among Okinawans underwent massive and widespread modifications. Local communities throughout Okinawa experienced a series of fundamental shifts in the culture which forced intellectuals into ambivalent perspectives about their home islands and their native cultures. They were in love with “the good old” Okinawa even when they lamented its backwardness. They struggled to raise public awareness of folks while at the same time being caught up in the simple ways of their traditional living. A close look at the cultural history should convince readers that it would have been nearly impossible for Okinawan intellectuals to be completely free from such

Orientalist biases. Matayoshi's *Pig's Revenge* presents Okinawa as a political and cultural "other" in relation to Japan. The story is filled with a sense of sorrow and loneliness held by victims of discursive self-exclusion who, born and raised in Okinawa, were nevertheless forced to adopt alien perspectives through which to "discover" what always belonged to themselves.

Eating

Pig's Revenge is full of descriptions about eating foods. Generally speaking, descriptions of food consumption are often closely tied to broader observations of and opinions on the cultural customs and social values of which the customary manner of eating food is a part. For instance, the contributor of the last article of the third volume of *Okinawa Shoku no Dai-Hyakka* (The Encyclopedia of Okinawan Foods) states, "enjoying an active life as a positive individual has much to do with appreciating foods," stressing at the same time how important the mutual help between men and women is for the sake of good eating habits (206). It is the wife's role to prepare dishes, while the other members of the family are expected to appreciate and enjoy the foods on the table. This image of an ideal family unit—consisting of the mother as food caterer and of father and children as its consumers—serves a standard model for the bourgeois nuclear family. The encyclopedia further insists that the support from understanding husband is indispensable for bringing such an ideal into reality.

Even a quick reading of *Pig's Revenge* is enough to help readers see that this modern family ideal is notably turned upside down. Numerous scenes concerning eating highlight this point colorfully. In fact, the three main female characters in this novel—Miyo, Yoko, and Wakako—prepare dishes for themselves, and the foods are indeed mainly consumed only

by them. Their remarkable appetite seems to indicate their desperate vindictiveness against the bourgeois family ideal that they have miserably failed to achieve. For when it comes to marriage, they are clearly losers.

Miyo, the mistress of a drinking establishment, once aborted a child she had with her husband with whom she had lived for nine years. Yoko, one of Miyo's bar girls, lost her first husband. After that, she had an unhappy marriage with his younger brother, which ended when she happened to see him in bed with another woman. Shokichi, the main character, is secretly in love with Wakako, another of Miyo's girls, but she was once abandoned by her dental hygienist boyfriend after a miscarriage of their baby. The three women, with whom Shokichi takes a trip to his home island of Maja, are trying to heal their broken hearts by stuffing themselves with food. Their impressive eating seems to function as a substitutionary act for building an ideal family, in addition to being a symptom of the romantic traumas caused by their miserable episodes with men.

Let us, here, ask a fundamental question. What is eating? That is to say, what figurative meanings can we find in the act of consuming foods? According to Maggie Kilgour, the act of eating is a mode of incorporation. It involves two opposing functions: separation and identification. In the first function of separation, eating presumes two distinct terms—eater and eaten, victor and victim, strong and weak, etc. —which must be clearly set apart and never be equivalent or reciprocal. The former is expected to dominate or rule over the latter. In the second function of identification, however, its power structure is paradoxically turned upside down, leaving the two terms ultimately indistinguishable and easily reversible. Through eating, the eater keeps on living by taking the food inside. That is to say, the eater

is sustained physically by the eaten in a process “to become one with the other” (8). Thus, the two contradictory functions—separation and identification—must be kept in healthy balance in an ideal mode of consumption which Kilgour calls “communion.” This balance requires a harmonious coexistence between eater and eaten in which the eater must make sure not to eat up its foods, by allowing the latter to thrive on as long as it won’t pose threats. Thus, the relation between eater and eaten, just like those between victor and victim or strong and weak, rests on “a delicate balance of simultaneous identification and separation” (4).

Keeping that in mind, we find it significant that Shokichi warns the three women—Miyo, Yoko, and Wakako—not to tell the islanders why they had come to Maja Island. “These islanders don’t like the outsiders to visit their sacred mounds,” Shokichi explains, “They think we have no business, asking things to the islands’ gods” (31). Hearing this, Yoko says the islanders are cautious about their visit because “Wakako is so greedy.” She says, “the islanders are afraid she might rob them of all the happiness on this island.” Yoko then accuses her colleague of “coveting everything, even the customers, at the bar.” Hearing this, Miyo, their mistress, doesn’t even bother to stop their arguments, but instead unabashedly observes, “Can she really bring everything home? I wonder if the gods on this island have got so little” (32).

Without knowing it, the three women here refer to the delicate balance between separation and identification advocated by Kilgour. Maja Island’s “happiness” here no doubt involves the island’s cultural and economic environment as well as ceremonial customs. The “happiness” directly points to the entire livelihood of this small island. Against the engulfing socio-cultural forces from the outside, their “happiness” has to be protected through

maintaining the exquisite balance between eater and eaten in this small environment. As soon as they try to harvest every plant or hunt every animal on the island, life on the island would likely become unsustainable with terrible counterblows from the very nature that they had abused. The three women are completely oblivious to the fact that *they* are the intruders in this vulnerable living space, ready to acknowledge no responsibility for consuming “all the happiness on this island.” If the island’s happiness were to run out, these unrepentant thieves would blame the original scarcity of “happiness” on the island. Kilgour warns against no other than this form of gluttony. For Kilgour’s “communion” points to a sound manner of incorporation, harmonizing both functions of separation and identification. Once a healthy balance is lost from this activity, Kilgour states, the will to incorporate degenerates into a naked drive to consume all, and even into cannibalism, a murderous desire to kill and eat each other. While communion aims to incorporate the others and grow together in a healthy environment, cannibalism is motivated by a deadly desire to consume before being consumed.

According to Kilgour, however, there is always a danger of the former to transform into the latter. The consummation of loving relations, thus, might slip into greedy sexual consumption, and warm affection into cold aggression. And in fact, Matayoshi’s *Pig’s Revenge* is infused with this shocking motif of cannibalism.

Man-Eating

Close, anthropological studies on cannibalism reveal one interesting fact. According to W. Arens, there is absolutely no direct evidence to prove that man-eating has ever been practiced in any human communities. He claims that records of man-eating are all hearsay. Once

all data are organized, evidence clarified, he noticed that almost all records of cannibalism belong to either those living in the remote area with no communication to or from, or some distant ancestors who are described through mythologies to have lived during earlier tribal history. For the members of a certain community, these people are all possibly considered to be "the others." It would be absurd to conclude that they were in fact all cannibals. Considering this, Arens proposes to regard cannibalism not as a plain reality, but as a figurative marker used to distinguish the realm of culture from that of savagery. In trying to demonstrate how civilized they are, people invariably stress how different they are from the barbarians. That's exactly what's going on, Arens argues, when people point to others and call them "cannibals."

Arens writes, "the assumption by one group about the cannibalistic nature of others can be interpreted as an aspect of cultural-boundary construction and maintenance" (145). In short, people tend to show off how civilized they are by saying, "There live cruel cannibals over beyond our land." That is to say, the accusation itself—"They are cannibals"—doesn't describe any fact to that effect, but simply reveals that the accuser is strongly prejudiced against those being accused. This insight applies not only to tribal prejudices, but also to ethnic or sexual prejudices at large. In fact, a large number of records also blame those socially disadvantaged of being cannibals. Thus, colonial rulers have often called rebellious natives man-eaters, and also in the primitive patriarchal societies, men suspected women and children to live on human flesh while men were away. Almost all records of cannibalism, Arens says, claim that this damned habit belonged to those with less intellect or strength (26). Keeping the symbolic significance of cannibalism in mind, we now easily understand why.

Having said that, let us turn again to *Pig's Revenge*. Interestingly, in most scenes of eating in this story—and they are numerous—most of the women, and very few men, enjoy food and later suffer from it. The descriptions of their facial expressions while eating—notably those of their mouths—are also strangely exaggerated and even sensual.

The story opens with the account of Miyo as she awaits a ferry bound for Maja Island at the small port, describing how her vanilla ice cream turned reddish from her lip stick, and how her full lips lost their color and seemed curiously vulnerable (8). Another passage talks about a feast that later causes food poisoning. The foodstuffs the inn keeper offers in appreciation of bringing his drunken wife to the clinic the night before come in a black plastic bag containing "dark stuff, red stuff, flabby stuff, long stuff, or different stuff like that" (56). "The women's lips were all wet," Shokichi observes, "they ate a lot of pork, and drank a lot of *awamori*" (58). Recovering from food poisoning, Yoko and Wakako eat the fish soup, with their red lipstick "glossy with oil" (95). Equally interesting is the passage about how Miyo, together with the inn keeper's wife and a nurse, eats the squid ink soup with their mouths completely black (98). The story is indeed full of descriptions of women devouring their foods.

The dinner on the second day deserves special attention, served with the pork dishes that later cause the food poisoning. Interestingly enough, Wakako calls the feast "the last supper."

The women's lips were all wet, and they ate a lot of pork, and drank a lot of *awamori*. They became noisy, and frequently laughed loudly. Shokichi felt it strange to see the women with such slim bodies could eat and drink that much. Rib bones and leg bones from the pork soup began to pile up high,

falling from the dishes and rolling on the table. The women poured the soup down their throats along with the pale, eerie-looking oil floating on top. Yoko put her finger into the *awamori* glass and stirred the ice. Miyo sucked the meat down, mumbled, and skillfully spat white bones out of her mouth. (58-59)

This both humorous and eerie scene describes the women's repressed sexual desire, while laying a subplot for the group food poisoning. Symbolically, this passage performs an act of discrimination against women. It is interesting to note that Shokichi—the only man in the feast—is secretly feeling worried, being afraid that women might become upset because he is eating only the seaweed and the radish. The passage highlights a social and cultural distinction of a reluctant bystander over the eager cannibals. The resultant food poisoning from the banquet serves as a symbolic sanction against the savage women.

More important is the fact that this “last supper” scene is filled with images of cannibalism and sexual intercourse. Let us take a look at a rather long passage.

“This pig provides their own body so that we can live. You know how precious that is?

You can't do that, can you?” said Wakako.

“Providing the body sounds like man and woman,” Yoko said.

“That's why we should leave nothing over, even a drop of juice.”

[...]

“Is this pig male or female?” wondered Yoko.

“Which one do you prefer, Yoko?” asked Wakako.

“Male, of course. I feel like eating more that way.”

“We would be eating our kind, if it's female,” Wakako laughed.

“Pigs got their own god, don't they?”

Yoko asked Shokichi.

“Oh, yes.”

“My belly is full now. I wonder if their god just made me pregnant.”

“You always eat too much,” said Miyo.

“You see how easy it is to get pregnant this way. Don't you feel happy?”

“I'd rather not get pregnant no matter how much I have fun with men.” (59-61)

First, as the women discuss the noble pig serving itself up as food for others, the symbolic distinction between eater and eaten is momentarily removed, elevating the topic from eating to sex. Up to this point, the topic of their conversation seems to aspire to the ideal partnership between man and woman based on mutual devotion.

Actually, though, it doesn't. The conversation abruptly changes direction when Wakako begins telling others not to leave “even a drop of juice”—suggesting perhaps seminal fluids—and at the same time the distinction between eater and eaten becomes firmly reconfirmed, highlighting the subjective role of women as sexual aggressors as they go on having a bellyful or becoming pregnant.

Furthermore, on the fourth morning, when Shokichi is consuming the squid ink soup at the clinic, Wakako laughs at Shokichi and claims he resembles the black-nosed pig, clearly identifying him with the object of consumption.

If there were a pig god, he would be someone advantageous to the women—an entity who would completely gratify their sexual and culinary appetites. Miyo's last words— “I'd rather not get pregnant”— clearly indicates her selfishness. Getting pregnant not only suggests the bourgeois happiness they unconsciously search for, but also implicitly demands that the women take full responsibility for their sexual conduct. A selfish woman of huge sexual appetite, Miyo doesn't consider pregnancy to be an ideal state.

Her true personality as nymphomania is suggested in Yoko's question—“Do you ever refuse men?” (39)—or in Miyo's own confession: “Just by looking at your shoulder, Shokichi, I feel very aroused” (72). Wakako's words—“We would be eating our kind”—hide weariness about exploiting men, which she fears will eventually lead them to infighting over men. “The women's eyes were glaring, and their lips, having lost lip stick, had a dull, oily gloss around them” (61). In fact, the three women—Miyo, Yoko, and Wakako—are now competing against each other over Shokichi, their only man. Thus, the “last supper” scene effectively employs a cannibalistic motif in order to describe the anxiety of the women over happiness and sex.

The “last supper” may remind some readers of the communion Jesus Christ held with his disciples immediately before his death. At this most famous supper in history, Jesus “took bread, and, having said the blessing, broke it and gave it to the disciples with the words: ‘Take this and eat; this is my body’” (Matthew 26.26). He also raised the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22.20). With its central theme of sharing bread and wine, Jesus' last supper no doubt serves as a model for Kilgour's “communion” which is, again, about a healthy coexistence between eater and eaten. In stark contrast, the “last supper” of the women in *Pig's Revenge* is characterized by a cannibal greed for consuming everything—a vice against which Kilgour sends out a warning. The women's “last supper” thus parodies the communion of Jesus and his disciples.

The story's pathos

As is often said, comedy is a tragedy viewed from a distance. When we emotionally get too close to, or identify with, the protagonist, shar-

ing his joys and sorrows, we shed tears. If we view him from far away, his joys and sorrows will seem to amount to trifling or laughing matters. Tragedy demands from audiences an aesthetic fusion with main characters, while the comedy requires a certain psychological distance from them.

In *Pig's Revenge* the author keeps readers a comical distance away from the female characters. For that reason, we may certainly find it humorous as we watch the women fight over Shokichi. What's interesting, here, is that this humorous tone is made possible by Shokichi's refusals to share food or bed with any of the women. This physical distance between Shokichi and his women is directly responsible for our psychological distance from the story's world. That, in fact, explains why *Pig's Revenge* doesn't neatly fit into the categories of tragedy or comedy.

In the case of tragedy, the protagonist commonly experiences a form of fusion with something he has abhorred as he realizes that the hateful thing or person is, in fact, himself. In the famous Greek drama, for example, Oedipus is appalled as he discovers that his worst nightmare has come true: He had murdered his own father and married his mother.

In contrast, the comic stage approves of differences among all living things—especially those between men and women—and the world is experienced as an exquisite symphony played in a wonderful diversity. A man meets a woman, and they are united after certain twists and turns of events. Jane Austen, for example, concludes her *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) with a marriage between Elizabeth Bennett and Fitzwilliam Darcy. They marry because she and Mr. Darcy are polar opposites, thus perfectly complementing each other. The tragedy, therefore, leads to a disastrous fusion while the comedy aims at a fruitful alliance.

Which dramatic effect, then, does *Pig's Revenge* aim for? As mentioned earlier, Shokichi always tries to remain a neutral bystander in the middle of the excessive consumption he witnesses at the women's feast. This is clear as we look at the numerous scenes concerning eating on Maja Island. Overwhelmed by the bulimic women, Shokichi shies away from the dishes the women prepare during the trip to the island. On the ferry, he experiences a violent seasickness while the women are having fun eating baked sweet potatoes: He feels "his stomach twist and turn, and [feels] something gushing out of his chest through his throat" (10). He cannot bring himself to eat well at the first banquet on the first day. Early that evening, he withdraws to his room "as if to shake the protests from the women" (40).

Shokichi can't eat the pork dishes prepared on the second day, either. At the pork feast, he thinks the women "are always eating," and is worried "if he can really give a ritual prayer on behalf of the women." He is depressed: "He doesn't have much appetite and can only eat the radish and seaweed in the pork soup" (59). On the third day, looking at the plastic bag containing the inn keeper's catch from the previous day, he finds the fish "eerie with its scales glossy in drab white, its back darkish, and its belly grossly pale" (70-71). Shokichi also feels no appetite for the fish soup prepared for the fourth morning. "The bowl was full of floating meats. Among them, he saw pieces of the ashen skin with chain patterns. . . . He could not help imagining diarrhea bacteria seemingly stuck on the fat, which would be deadlier than the ones on the pork" (94-95).

There is no doubt Shokichi is unconsciously trying to avoid the perverse world of the three women. In fact, he doesn't seem interested in having a physical relationship with any of the three desirable women. He may not

wish to welcome the advances of Miyo and Yoko, whom he seems to have no interest in, but even when Wakako, a woman whom he really likes, comes to his room in the middle of night, he fails to have sex with her. At first, Wakako responds to his caresses many times with soft sighs, but as he sees her seemingly fall off to sleep, Shokichi too falls to sleep himself. "A timid man, Shokichi couldn't go any further" (92-93).

At the end of the story, Shokichi remembers what had happened during the past few days, and he "felt a surge of affection for the women. They seem ridiculous, but they are trying their best to survive" (103). "A surge of affection" here betrays the sexual distance Shokichi manages to keep from the women, suggesting that his desire for them is now replaced by a certain religious enlightenment. For him, however, the women still seem "ridiculous," and this also implies that he is standing on a moral higher ground, looking down on them as they are "trying their best to survive." This psychological distance allows Shokichi to feel a form of affection towards the women, but this feeling doesn't even seem to approach the sexual attentions men commonly reserve for women. It seems the feeling here is akin to the sort of love we may feel for animals or other lower life forms in the food chain. He is in fact doing his best not to place himself on the same ground where the women stand. He might be satisfied to have experienced a certain religious growth, but his newly acquired attitude towards the women will, no doubt, prove off-putting for them who have been demanding physical relief from Shokichi the man. An awkward man, Shokichi is not ready to deal with the desperate advances the women are making. This issue of Shokichi's impotence is key to appreciating the work's pathos, as well as its major theme: the sense of sorrow and loneliness among Okinawan

intellectuals.

The story, thus, moves on while leaving intact the psychological distance between the cannibalistic women and the innocent bystander Shokichi. This distance gradually assumes a form of an aesthetic scheme without which the story would completely lose its humorous tone.

The greatest aesthetic scheme devised in *Pig's Revenge* is that the novel neither accomplishes the disastrous fusion common to tragedies, nor does it achieve the fruitful alliance usually expected in comedies. If the author had chosen to unite Shokichi with Wakako in the end, the story would have been a commonplace tragedy or comedy. If, on the one hand, Shokichi had been described as being emotionally inseparable from Wakako, completely sharing in her horrors and pains we would have had a tragedy. If, on the other hand, he had been shown as a man desperately in love, struggling to fill her emotional emptiness or to heal the wound of her heart, we would have had a straightforward comedy, instead.

Matayoshi didn't include any of these motifs in his tale. This is because he intends to explore both the tragic and the comedic elements of storytelling. Throughout this story, readers keep a comic distance from the women while experiencing a tragic identification with the protagonist, Shokichi. For that reason, *Pig's Revenge* turns out to be a work both uplifting and mildly depressing. This is the very mechanism that enriches the story's pathos. This tragicomic scheme assures a form of intellectual kinship between readers and Shokichi while divorcing their sympathy from the female characters in the novel. Matayoshi's approach draws his audience uncounsciously into schemes of discrimination and objectification of women as these female characters in his story represent the supposed backwardness of Okinawa. Thus, the feminine elements of Okinawa in the novel

no doubt constitute an inner Orient.

Shokichi as a Pseudo Psychic

By keeping his distance from the women, Shokichi gains the status of an intellectual leader who symbolically rules his community. His newly acquired symbolic status is exemplified in his "unheard-of" act of making his own sacred mound (107). Shokichi is given the task of reloading the displaced *mabui* (soul) into Wakako because he has always been interested in the *yuta* (Okinawan shaman). When a stray pig suddenly enters Miyō's bar, he acts like a *yuta* and manages to make everyone feel safe. But here is an embarrassing truth behind Shokichi's heroic action.

The ritual of reloading *mabui* (soul) is usually performed in Okinawa by the traditional psychics called *yuta*. Shokichi has always been very interested in them. [...] He skipped classes and frequented the university library where he pored over books about survey interviews with the *yuta* and the real case studies about reloading the *mabui*. But, Shokichi had no idea about what to do or how to do it right then. To him, the psychics' accounts seemed too illusive, not at all simple, and their stories wildly incoherent. There was no way Shokichi could offer the same performance. (16)

It is very interesting to note that Shokichi learns about the *yuta* only through library books, and doesn't really understand, or is even less able to practice, their rituals. His lack of first-hand experience significantly parallels the same sort of ignorance among Okinawan intellectuals who have always understood and managed their local politics and events only through the knowledge and skills they had acquired from modernized mainland Japan or the West. Symbolically, such a cognitive approach gives rise to ambivalent relations between the subject

of and the object under observation, in which the two are constantly thrown into turmoil, at once being identified and separated. Historically, that is since its modern emergence, Okinawa has had to respond to some conflicting demands: On the one hand, the intellectual elite in Okinawa actually belong to the society they observe, and on the other hand they must always attempt to divorce themselves from that society since their observations, conclusions, and attitudes are borrowed from foreign lands.

In fact, similar forms of conflict characterize the development of modern novels in Okinawa introduced after the disposition of The Ryukyuan Kingdom. Modern literature in Okinawa, on the one hand, has played the role of contributing elements of “good old” culture and customs to mainstream modern literature and discourse of mainland Japan where these features had supposedly been lost. On the other hand, Okinawan writers have also struggled to show that they too, as modern men, shared similar sorts of sophisticated psychological dilemmas with their Japanese counterparts and, just like them, were capable of maintaining the will to surmount those difficulties. In short, the most significant political and social mission handed to modern Okinawan writers has been to spell out the message that Okinawans, just like other Japanese, were perfectly capable of perceiving and describing their own culture and customs in the same objective manners. Just as it has been in mainland Japan, the theme permeating Okinawan literature has been the mode of modern selfhood.

Conclusion

Although it's not generally well known, Eiki Matayoshi wrote a fascinating novel called *Tree-Climbing Pigs* (*Ki Nobori Buta*) immediately before his *Pig's Revenge*. According to the author himself, the novel “inspired *Pig's*

Revenge,” and is “personally an important work providing a basis” of the latter work. “It's an immature work,” he admits, but he goes on to say that “the seed can be higher in nutritious value than the tree or the flower” (142). A close reading reveals that this novel not only serves as “a point of departure” (142) for *Pig's Revenge*, but also stands in perfect contrast with the later work—it being the perfect negative, as in photography, of *Pig's Revenge*.

Tree-Climbing Pigs is the polar opposite of *Pig's Revenge* in terms of narrative structures. For instance, the main character of *Tree-Climbing Pigs* is Shoko or Masako, a woman, whose name uses the same Chinese character “正” (read as “sho” or “masa”) as in Shokichi, a man, of *Pig's Revenge*. The story is told in the third-person objective point of view with her as the main character, describing a chain of troubling events that occur as her father tries to sell a banyan tree to a resort developer. The intruder in her community, in this story, is an old woman named Kamado who has returned from Bolivia. Shoko patiently deals with the old woman as she causes a series of problems pretending to be a *yuta*. Shoko convinces her to relocate the worship spot together away from the banyan tree area to a remote uninhabited island, thus trying to maintain the symbolic order of her community. The scene in the novel in which a pig tries to stick its nose between Shoko's legs seems to suggest that the pig is a masculine symbol as it is in *Pig's Revenge* (57). Here, however, we must not forget that the intruder in this story is not a man, as in *Pig's Revenge*, but the old woman Kamado. *Tree-Climbing Pigs* tells a story of how this old woman “milks” the unsuspecting, pious folks to her own advantage. Shoko's house is equipped with a pig pen and is running a small public restaurant commonly known as “Pig Restaurant.” The scenes of eating, unlike those in *Pig's Revenge*, are described in a humble and

peaceful mood.

Most interesting is the middle part of the story where Shoko dreams about a group of pigs around the banyan tree. In the dream, the images of the pigs gradually overlap those of the neighbors in her town, suggesting that pigs, here, represent the community which she is a member of. In the novel's conclusion, Shoko's effort ends in vain as Kamado sets fire to the pig pen that belongs to Shoko's father, leaving several of the poor animals dead—an event that seems to foretell the collapse of the community as a whole. While *Pig's Revenge* digresses into comic relief at the end, *Tree-Climbing Pigs* is permeated by some indescribable fear and sorrow. Putting the quality of the work aside, we must conclude that the latter work is a far more serious study, than the former, of the Okinawan society which is now undergoing massive changes, and in that very sense, *Tree-Climbing Pigs* may prove “higher in nutritious value” indeed, to borrow the author's own words.

As with *Tree-Climbing Pigs*, *Pig's Revenge* studies the situation of Okinawan society as it is being engulfed by tsunamis of modernization. The two stories dramatize clashes between the intellectual force for modernization, which is personified in Shokichi, and the indigenous desires of the community, which are represented by the scandalous women. Both novels represent a communal future as a mixture of both an open-minded, creative positivism and a violent, destructive cynicism. Sadly, however, what dominates *Pig's Revenge* is something other than creative energies or spirits of enterprise. Scattered on the pages, for instance, are pitiful images of disease-stricken pigs being torn apart into poisonous pieces of meat. There we find, under cover of humor, sad figures of men and women who, though drawn to each other, end up consuming one another in deadly conflicts. A deep psychological fissure indeed runs through

the human community presented in the novel. The story is thus filled with the senses of alienation and powerlessness that have been shared among the political and cultural leaders of Okinawa who, deeply imbued with foreign Orientalism, could not help feeling alienated in the midst of their own homeland.

Finally, *Pig's Revenge* manages to evoke a healing laughter among the readers because they also share the same form of Orientalism as that which permeates the novel. Their sense of alienation and consolation, in fact, forms the opposite sides of the same coin. In the bucolic denouement, for instance, Wakako proposes that the other women not fight over Shokichi because he “belongs to the gods” (120). Here, we tend to overlook the fact that through these words, Wakako tries to hide her frustration and disappointment over the night of her failed sexual advance to Shokichi. In an earlier scene, Wakako says that her “technique of refusing men is superb,” claiming “the trick is to make the man feel superior” (39). Therefore, her words of deifying Shokichi, here, must be understood as being spoken with vengeance, carrying a hidden message that *she* is the one who refuses Shokichi, a non-practicing male. She may be expecting that as far as she can keep his ego inflated, this harmless man would behave in way that is advantageous to her as well as to the other women. In short, Shokichi, being a pseudo *yuta*, is a pig god at best. This is why we cannot help thinking this happy ending is a hastily-patched scheme, a form of *deus ex machina* designed to save the narrative from the same total breakdown as that found in the human relationships depicted in the novel. In fact, *Tree-Climbing Pigs*, in which Matayoshi doesn't employ such technical devices, end in the dark episode of arson by crazy Kamado, predicting a disastrous breakup of the entire community.

Yet, readers are likely to see *Pig's Revenge*

as superior to the previous work, *Tree-Climbing Pigs*. That is because we are also unconsciously searching for a cathartic reading of the novel. It's vital to note that the word "*mukui*" in the title could both be understood as revenge or reward, remarkably demonstrating that our reading could just go one way or the other. Unsuspecting readers naturally search for a reward in the story while suppressing a troubling truth in the novel about their disintegrating society. No one is ready to believe that Okinawa can be represented by the sorry pigs being cut to pieces.

The unenviable task of literary criticism, however, is to pay careful and constant attention to every detail during the terrible dismemberment.

Note

All quotations from Matayoshi and other Japanese

writers are translated from the original by the writer of the present essay.

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又吉栄喜「豚の報い」—共同体の解体

浜 川 仁

要 旨

小論では、又吉栄喜著「豚の報い」(以下「報い」)に、沖縄人による沖縄人に対するオリエンタリズムを探り出していきたい。沖縄は、琉球処分以来日本本土を通して、または外国から直接先進国の文物を受け入れてきた。その中で、沖縄人の思想や価値観も大きく変わってきた。財界や政界のエリートたち、特に文化思想的影響に直にさらされた知識人たちは、郷土に対し極めて両義的な感情を抱くようになっていった。この羨望と軽蔑の入り混じった感情が、「報い」の中では、食事を貪る女性たちを観察する主人公正吉の精神態度を特徴づけている。又吉の「報い」に見出されるのは、このように沖縄の後進性を象徴する、他者としての女性であり、正吉によって代表される有識者たちの孤独と疎外感が、この作品からは滲み出ている。彼ら知的リーダーたちは、近代の沖縄に生まれ、そこで生きながら、認識の上ではいつのまにか外にはみ出してしまい、そこから沖縄を「発見」せざるをえなかったと論ずる。