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Fractious Memories in Medoruma Shun's Tales of War 目取真俊の戦争作品におけるまつろわぬ記憶

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Medoruma Shun (1960-), a fiery critic and one of Japan's most imaginative fiction writers, joined tens of thousands who participated in the September 9, 2012 protest against the deployment of MV-22 Osprey aircraft in Futenma, Okinawa. In his blog he mentions Okinawa Governer Nakaima Hirokazu's decision not to join the protest. This he follows up with the speculation that politicians in Tokyo will use Nakaima's absence to point to divisions in the island prefecture, a common ploy to dismiss unity among large numbers of Okinawans. Several of Medoruma's fictional works, ranging from early stories such as "Taiwan Woman: Record of a Shoal of Fish" and "Prizecock" to mature works such as "Hope" and Rainbow Bird make reference to the ongoing protests in Okinawa. The 9/9/12 protest, the largest in Okinawa's history, will surely make its way into a future story. One critic says the spontaneous formation of a crowd in "Droplets,"[1] analyzed below, smacks of Okinawa (Okinawa teki).

Medoruma Shun, a prominent Okinawan intellectual, was not widely known in Japan until 1997 when he won the prestigious Akutagawa Prize, though he had been receiving regional literary prizes since the early 1980s. Medoruma was born in Nakijin, a northern Okinawan town steeped in history. Located on the Motobu peninsula, which juts northeasterly off the coast of the East China Sea, Nakijin abounds in crops such as sugarcane, watermelon, leaf tobacco, greens, and, as Medoruma writes about in his debut story, "Gyogunki" (Taiwan Woman: Record of a Shoal of Fish, 1984), pineapple. In the 11th-12th centuries, known as Okinawa's three-mountain (*sanzan*) period, Nakijin was the residence of the Hokuzan king. Remains of the town's castle, awash every January in Japan's earliest-blooming cherry trees, demarcate what was once the center of the culture and economy of northern Okinawa. Geographically removed from Okinawa's capital city Naha, Nakijin was a world apart from the life Medoruma would live in the south where he studied literature at The University of the Ryukyus, under the tutelage of Okamoto Keitoku and Nakahodo Masanori.

The ruins of Nakijin Castle

The language of Medoruma's childhood and that of his entry into the adult world of the university are distinct and separable. Reminiscing on his grammar school days, Medoruma relates that in 1969 he was ordered by his teacher not to use the local dialect. Instead he was encouraged to replace a good part of his daily speech with standard equivalents. The memory of his teacher's strictness, the otherworldliness of the replacement phrase—common enough in such media as television or manga—but not in Medoruma's everyday speech—left him suffused with shame. The self-loathing Medoruma experienced as a result of adhering to his teacher's commandment led him, perversely, to refrain from using standard language outside the classroom from the time of the incident to the point that he entered university.[2]

In an essay on Okinawa's peculiar linguistic quandary, published a year after he received the Akutagawa Prize, Medoruma notes that, from the mid-1980s forward, the boom in things Okinawan, striking to mainlanders and islanders alike, began with amateur theatre productions. One that was particularly notable was a 1986 production by the troupe Gekidan Sōzō.[3] What remained in Medoruma's mind long after the curtain went down on this particular performance was how playwright Chinen Seishin, noted author of the script *Jinruikan* (*House of Peoples*, 1976), made conscious use of three types of language: local dialect, standard Japanese, and a hybrid of the two. Medoruma speculates that the rapidly changing face of Okinawa, post-reversion, is the reason that dialect, suppressed in the prewar by state authorities keen on bringing Okinawa into the national fold, and in the Occupation period by local schoolteachers who advocated reversion and therefore similarly suppressed local dialect, re-emerged anachronistically in society.

In tandem with local theatre productions, Okinawan dialect captured the nation's and islands' imagination through the publication of the bestselling *Okinawa Keyword Column Book*; comedy groups that appeared regularly on television as well as stage; film director Takamine Go's dialect-rich movies *Paradise Views* (1985) and *Untamagiru* (1989);[4] the enduring success of older musicians such as Kina Shōkichi, who had emerged in the 1970s; and newer musical groups such as Rinken Band[5] and the Nenes. Further, on the literary front, from the mid-1980s, young writers from Okinawa began to publish their fiction in several mainland literary journals (i.e. *Kaien*, *Bungakukai*, *Subaru*, and *Shinchō*) and garnered literary prizes in rapid succession.[6]

As the proliferation of dialect in multiple forms of media in the 1980s shows, Medoruma's attentiveness to language, particularly the dying dialects of the Ryukyus, is far from anomalous. "Unchanging dialect, changing Okinawa," he writes wistfully, though surely his is a romanticized view of local language as pristine and ideal, a stark contrast to the injurious effects of twentieth-century modernization on cultural formations.[7] Despite Medoruma's obvious penchant for dialect, which he has regularly used since his debut piece, "Taiwan Woman: Record of a Shoal of Fish," his earlier works have a smaller percentage of words in dialect glossed in phonetic script to aid the reader than do his recent stories, a fact Michael Molasky attributes to the growth of Medoruma's readership beyond the reefs of Okinawa.[8]

After graduating with a degree in Japanese literature, Medoruma took a number of jobs, mostly as a high school teacher in various locales throughout the prefecture. Like his predecessors, Medoruma has worked full-time while pursuing his writing. Unlike most aspiring writers, however, for well over a decade, Medoruma has, to the best of his ability, consciously chosen to remove himself from local literary circles in a sincere effort to instill discipline into his life as a writer. Eschewing not only literary events, but even casual conversations about literature, Medoruma craves a 'degree of severity' he believes will bolster his craft and keep it from getting soft.[9] The Henoko heliport controversy, in which residents in the northern city of Nago were made to choose between accepting an unwanted military installation in its jurisdiction or losing a huge incentive package, forced Medoruma out of hiding and take a teaching position in Nago. However, his subsequent public appearances relate strictly to his concern for local politics and the rights of Okinawans rather than literary matters. Indeed it is his disciplined nature that has kept Medoruma out of the limelight and from retracting his stated wish *not* to be categorized as a writer of Okinawan

literature.[10] Baffling as Medoruma's position is, he elects to distance himself from other intellectuals in Okinawa and separates his writing from the genre of Okinawan fiction, even as he continues to produce work that clearly demonstrates deep ties to the island and (unwanted) connections to fellow Okinawan writers.

Medoruma Shun

Critics have cited a host of reasons for Medoruma's distinction among contemporary writers, from a literary style that "fuses earthiness with refinement, and brooding intensity with a gentle humor," to his continual experiments in narrative technique, and finally to what is surely the crux of Medoruma's success—the passion with which he assumes the twin role of writer and intellectual.[11] As with exemplars such as Ōe Kenzaburō and Nakagami Kenji who preceded Medoruma in their performance of similar dual roles in Japanese society, what best characterizes Medoruma is the doubling of his pen as a sword. This doubling explains why reading Medoruma's fiction can be such an exhausting endeavor.[12] It is not only that unfamiliar words impede the (mainland) reader; the cumulative weight of Medoruma's thorough probing of the psychology of his characters, his knack for guileless storytelling leavened with issues of contemporary concern, and the linguistic discord reflected in his writing all contribute to making his fiction serious reading despite the pleasures it affords, and its contemporary appeal. What follows are analyses of Medoruma's three most important works that thematize war: "Suiteki" (Droplets, 1997 [2000], "Mabuigumi" (Mabuigumi, 1999 [2011]), and "Gunchō no ki" (Tree of Butterflies, 2000). In each work of this thematically linked trilogy Medoruma makes clear the long lasting effects of wartime trauma on the lives of his characters. The aim of my analyses is twofold: First, I will show how in each story survivors of the Battle or their descendents physically bear the burden of war memory. Second, while these characters unburden themselves of repressed memories in the course of the works, there is no resolution to the trauma of war; it bleeds into the lives of the postwar generation.

Fractious Memories in "Droplets"

The publication of "Droplets" (*Suiteki*, 1997) marked a turning point for both Medoruma and for Okinawan literature. Ironically, Medoruma, who had long since removed himself from literary circles, found himself in the glare of national attention following his receipt of the Akutagawa Prize. Moreover, the consecutive prizes Okinawa garnered in 1996 and 1997 led an ever-increasing number of scholars throughout Japan to reflect on the subject of Okinawan literature, a topic dealt with previously mainly by scholars in Okinawa. The theme of war in Medoruma's stories was hardly new. As the sole Japanese prefecture that experienced extensive and devastating land combat in World War II, Okinawa had long provided writers with gripping material for narratives of war. Among such narratives, "Kame no kōbaka" (Turtleback Tombs, 1966 [2000]), written by Ōshiro Tatsuhiro, is perhaps the benchmark by which subsequent narratives of the Battle of Okinawa would most often be compared. A grim tale of one family's survival in a cramped ancestral tomb, "Turtleback Tombs" conforms to conventions of war narratives in both its realist fiction form and its weighty content. Medoruma's "Droplets" and its sequel "Mabuigumi," on the other hand, provide fresh twists on the representation of war in Okinawan literature. Though by their very nature the content of these stories makes them a solemn tribute to Okinawa, which suffered devastating losses in the Battle, the innovative and occasionally irreverent method Medoruma adopts to tell his tales of the walking wounded rightly place him at the cutting edge of fiction writing in Okinawa today.

For a writer born in 1960, well after the end of the war, the obsessive war motif in Medoruma's fiction, from "Fūon" (Sound of the Wind, 1985) to *Me no oku no Mori* (The Forest in my Mind's Eye, 2009), might indeed seem curious were it not for the fact that Okinawa is awash with war memorials, war widows, and military bases, instilling in its residents a greater degree of historical awareness of war and its legacies than in the main islands of Japan.[13] In contrast to the vast majority of Okinawan battle narratives, which as Nakahodo Masanori points out, were first penned by soldier participants, then ordinary citizens, and finally authors, and which dealt blow by blow with the events of the battle, Medoruma's war writing focuses on the residual effects the battle has had on the individuals who survived it.[14] While Ōshiro, too, depicts the war's intrusion on a particular family in "Turtleback Tombs," his narrative remains ensconced in the typhoon of steel that pummeled the island in April 1945. It is this past tragedy that gives the work its punch, whereas the appeal of Medoruma's work lies in his ability to delineate shadows the war casts upon contemporary Okinawa.

Beginning with the story's Kafkaesque opening, "Droplets" departs wholly from the previous tradition of war narratives in Okinawa. In this unlikely story of a man who awakens to find his leg swollen to the size of a gourd and whose big toe emits water that phantom soldiers come nightly to imbibe, Medoruma injects large doses of grim humor. Some of the sources of this humor are the author's use of local dialect in the speech of his country bumpkin protagonist Tokushō and other villagers, and his employment of a comedic subtheme featuring a rascally character, Seiyū, who hits on the idea of marketing the toe water that contains Viagra-like properties. While some might object to Medoruma's use of humor and a magic realist mode to write about war, it is this wildly imaginative aspect of Medoruma's fiction that has made him one of Japan's most highly regarded authors and has protected him from the perils of treading the dangerous ground of history and memory.[15]

In his discussion of public memory and modern experience, Geoffrey Hartman writes that books are the main bearers of public memory while nonverbal arts such as painting and memorials serve as cultural reference points. These arts, neither unified nor bounded, influence personal identity. Hartman argues that at present 'information sickness' has left the individual wading through a sea of media representations which cleave rather than bridge public and personal experiences. Certainly technology alone is not to blame for this desensitizing trend. The passage of time also diminishes the reality of traumatic experiences such as war. How does one keep memories of the past in active recall when these memories are in constant jeopardy from both unnatural media reiterations (e.g. repeated clips of World Trade Center attacks) and natural weathering? In the reversion period, war discourse in Okinawa became systematized. In part this was to present to the mainland a unified face of loyal prewar subjects who are tragic victims of war.[16] The quintessential icon of such suffering was the Himeyuri, or Maiden Lily Student Nurse Corps, a group of 219 female student recruits, nearly all of whom died in the crossfire between Japanese and American soldiers. The subject of several film and narrative depictions, the Himeyuri have instilled in the minds of Okinawans and mainland Japanese alike the idea of Okinawans as victims. As Linda Angst puts it, the symbol of the female student nurses has become the canonical narrative of postwar Okinawan identity.[17]

So seductive is Medoruma's yarn of a farmer whose bizarre bodily transformation throws an unnamed yet vaguely familiar northern village into confusion that one is tempted throughout to read the work as a quaint folk tale. Chock full of symbols such as gourds, water, and flowers, the work seems to emerge organically out of Okinawan soil, to which critics, since the story's publication, have tried to attach various readings.[18] "Droplets," they would argue, like countless Japanese folk stories before it, is an Okinawan-inflected cautionary tale of the ruin that befalls individuals who lack moral compunction. That is, Tokushō's illness is, as his wife Ushi reminds him not once, but twice, his "comeuppance for tryin' to profit off people's sufferin' in the war."[19] As the narrative unfolds, Medoruma connects—through ghosts that serve as a bridge between past and present, and lime in water spouting from the big toe of Tokushō's leg that is suggestively shaped like a gourd—the protagonist's present ailment to his suppression of war memory and the embellished versions of battle experience with which he regales school children during yearly commemorations of the war's end.

The Battle of Okinawa, Medoruma refuses to forget, has left the island with many individuals at pains to put on a cheery front, all the while dying inside. Midway through the story, as Tokushō begins to have flashbacks of his experience in the caves, the story's theme of war becomes fairly obvious. Telltale signs come earlier, in the first page: "Tokushō's right leg, which had already ballooned to the size of a medium-sized wax gourd, was moist whitish green, and

his toes fanned out like the heads of a family of tiny snakes."[20] The relationship between gourds and war is a subtle one, lost on many readers unaware that in the immediate postwar period, enormous gourds proliferated, nurtured by soil enriched by the corpses of war dead. Another hint of an intermingling of past and present comes in the scene in which Dr. Ōshiro, the local physician, reports that the liquid taken from Tokushō's leg for laboratory examination is simply water with a trace of lime. As in the story's fantastic beginning, the properties of the water contain an element linked to wartime, namely lime from the many natural limestone caves used for hiding during the Battle of Okinawa.

Sponge Cucumber Gourd

In a telling comment, Hino Keizō, one of the Akutagawa Prize committee judges, describes such passages as the story's final image of a dazzling hibiscus attached by a long vine to an enormous gourd as 'Okinawan' (*Okinawa teki*).[21] Kuroi Senji, another judge, similarly cites the spontaneous appearance of a crowd of villagers driven by curiosity to gather around Tokushō's home in hopes of learning more about his illness as the work's most striking feature. Such masses, Kuroi explains, have long been absent in Japanese fiction.[22] In Hino's comment, it is the oddity of "Droplets"—tropical flowers and vegetation redolent of the subtropics—that marks the work as 'Okinawan.' For Kuroi, presumably accustomed to stories of alienated city dwellers, the foreignness of crowd formation is what makes the work regional. Both judges' comments, patently orientalist in their dismissive categorization of difference, nevertheless elucidate Medoruma's knack for creating a vibrant place where, depending on one's point of view, strange things do happen. The burden of modernity, Hartman explains, is exacerbated by media artifice, provoking in individuals a strong desire for 'local romance,' stories that evoke particular places in the collective memory (e.g. *Winesburg, Ohio*).[23] Were such stories to feature traumatic events of the past, surely they would stubbornly resist the steady effacement of history outside the world of the text. For critics such as Hino and Kuroi, "Droplets" is a balm for weary metropolitan readers, a text that beckons the afflicted with the tantalizing promise of a cure, much as the postreversion marketing of Okinawa-as-resort welcomes tourists with open arms.

In one of many such essays, Medoruma rails against the portrayal of Okinawa—by mainlanders and Okinawans alike—as an island whose culture heals through its 'gentleness' (*yasashisa*):

> Thanks to mainland subsidies the economy has developed, and Okinawa's 'complex' is a story of the past….Performances by poets who put on 'Okinawan art' that caters to the expectations of mainland mass media by playing the samisen and doing the *kachāshī* in front of the elephant cage fill the television screen and newspaper pages. I think it's a poet's duty to destroy the image of 'Okinawa' the mass media produces, and represent his own 'Okinawa.' Where's the 'mainland criticism' in circulating images of Okinawa produced by prejudice—samisen and *kachāshī,* karate and Ryukyuan dance?….Words like *tēgē* and *chirudai* are praised to the skies, and catchy phrases such as 'Okinawa's culture of gentleness' are thrown about….I'm completely fed up.[24]

As Suzuki Tomoyuki explains, Medoruma abhors the idea of Okinawa as 'cultural,' and bemoans the fact that, in recalling its cultural memory, Okinawan society has become completely oblivious to what is politically important. For this reason, Medoruma administers his stories of Okinawa with a dose of what Suzuki terms 'ill will' (*akui*), injecting a necessary corrective to the shopworn notion of 'gentle Okinawa.'[25]

It is Medoruma's 'ill will,' or spirit of contrariness, that prevents one from readily consuming "Droplets" as one might the bulk of cultural products by and about Okinawans. While judges like Hino and Kuroi may explain away the strange occurrences that take place in "Droplets" as conforming to Okinawa's distinctly exotic culture in an effort to understand (before dispensing with) the story, Medoruma disallows such easy digestion of the work by embedding it with multiple traps. One pitfall occurs in the story within Tokushō's own story of the buried past, which features Seiyū, the protagonist's shiftless cousin who greedily capitalizes on the water from Tokushō's toe once he witnesses its magical power. Seiyū's 'miracle water' marketing scheme succeeds to the point that his suitcase and bank account burst with money he envisions squandering in massage parlors from Kyushu to Tokyo. When the water loses its effectiveness, leaving Seiyū's customers disfigured rather than 'healed,' an angry mob forms to beat him senseless. Just as Tokushō dispenses lies to schoolchildren through his artfully constructed stories of war heroism, so too does Seiyū deceive his audience with sham water cleverly packaged in brown medicinal bottles affixed with gold seals and red lettering, surely a sly reference to the countless variety of similarly packaged vials ubiquitously sold in Japan to invigorate spent businessmen. Seiyū and Tokushō's moral lapses cause each much anguish; the former is beaten, while the latter suffers a debilitating illness that leaves him bedridden. Abiding by the conventions of fables, then, Medoruma rewards good and punishes evil—or does he?

In the story's most dramatic scene, Medoruma pits Tokushō against Ishimine, a phantom soldier whom Tokushō instantly recognizes as the close friend he abandoned in a cave during the Battle. The story's very literal climactic scene, in which the physical sensation of Ishimine's tongue on Tokushō's foot causes him to ejaculate, not only showcases Medoruma's tongue-in-cheek wit, but it also underscores the work's complexity. The nightly phantom soldiers' visits stir up in Tokushō deeply repressed memories of his cowardice and force him to realize his own self-deception. When at last he understands this, Tokushō asks Ishimine for forgiveness. The narrator imbues the highly charged scene with an unmistakable trace of homoerotic desire:

> 'Ishimine, forgive me!'
>
> The color had begun to return to Ishimine's pale face, and his lips regained their luster. Tokushō, despite his fear and self-hatred, grew aroused. Ishimine's tongue glided across the opening on his toe, and then Tokushō let out a small cry with his sexual release.
>
> The lips pulled away. Lightly wiping his mouth with his index finger, Ishimine stood up. He was still seventeen. A smile took shape—around those eyes that stared out beneath the long lashes, on the spare cheeks, on the vermillion lips.
>
> Tokushō burst into anger. 'Don't you know how much I've suffered these past fifty years?' Ishimine merely continued to smile, nodding slightly at Tokushō, who flailed his arms in an effort to sit up.
>
> 'Thank you. At last the thirst is gone.' Speaking in well-accented, standard Japanese, Ishimine held back a smile, saluted, and bowed deeply. He never turned to look back at Tokushō as he slowly vanished into the wall. A newt scampered across the wall's stained surface and caught an insect.
>
> At dawn, Tokushō's wail echoed throughout the village.[26]

This critical passage raises several issues, none of which is easily solved, and which do not aid in reading the story as a generic tale of a village temporarily disturbed by immorality.

One question that comes to mind is why Medoruma takes pains to differentiate Ishimine's speech in the passage. Even during a magical episode such as this one, Medoruma's attentiveness to language remains painstakingly accurate. While the speech of Tokushō, his wife Ushi, Seiyū and other older Okinawans is

marked with a heavy local dialect throughout, the few words in the text voiced by Ishimine are carefully rendered into standard Japanese, conforming entirely to the reality of wartime, when prewar edicts prohibiting the use of local dialect were pushed to an extreme through the execution of those deemed spies for speaking in dialect.[27] Medoruma's language specificity, easy to overlook, brings the specter of wartime ideology into the text, making it clear that his writing is not generic, but geographically precise.

Another point to note is that Medoruma, who has posited Tokushō as an aggressor for his self-serving wartime (in)action rather than another in the cast of Battle victims, shows that his protagonist has also suffered terribly from keeping secret his past behavior. Tokushō's decades of silence end in a wail heard throughout the village. The scene's final line underscores Medoruma's efforts to give voice to a dying generation long bound and gagged by painful secrets. This scene in particular, and the story as a whole, muddies the distinction between victim and aggressor. It also explains why Tokushō indulges in escapist pleasures.

Through the discord wrought by the idiosyncratic, private memories that Tokushō relives and the standard communal memories of the Battle of Okinawa such as the Himeyuri trope, the story resists any pat reading. Even the conclusion offers no satisfying answer to questions raised in "Droplets." Most disturbing of these is why Tokushō remains fundamentally unchanged even after he has painfully relived his past and acknowledged his betrayal of Ishimine. The reader is by no means assured that Tokushō will rectify his errant ways; in fact, Medoruma suggests otherwise by having Tokushō return to his former vices of drinking, gambling, and womanizing. The story's formalistic ending—the picture postcard image of a vibrant hibiscus tethered by vine to an enormous gourd that Tokushō beholds with moist eyes—may well satisfy critics seeking local color, but it does nothing to diminish the reality of Tokushō's unwillingness to reform. The order that settles upon the village after Seiyū's expulsion and Tokushō's 'recovery' is superficial at best. Medoruma's rather bleak conclusion may simply indicate that the story has shifted from a fantastic to a realistic mode; however, given the author's predilection for critique, it is far more tempting to read the ending as an open rebuke of Tokushō's habits and perhaps even of Okinawans themselves, who, content in escapist pleasures such as the playing the samisen and dancing the *kachāshī*, share his apathy.

Medoruma's focus on water, the shared element in Tokushō's story of repressed war memory and Seiyū's parallel tale, represents one of the author's first attempts to incorporate indigenous culture in his fiction. Water figures prominently in the work as evidenced by its title and the contents therein, suggesting that Medoruma is probing folk beliefs of Okinawans, who according to Nakamatsu Yashu, revere and worship the spiritual power of water.[28] However, Kawamura Minato counters this view by pointing out that such beliefs in water are not unique to Okinawa: rather, they reflect a more universal faith in the sacredness of water.[29] Kawamura's quibble notwithstanding, by interjecting a nativist element in his writing, Medoruma is by no means paying homage to an ideal ancient state in which water imbibed by village elders courses through the blood of children. The story's emphasis on water naturally causes readers to place it squarely within the tradition of legends involving sacred water, but Medoruma refuses to reduce his motif to a single symbolic meaning. Seiyū's discovery that what he sold customers eager to recapture their youth was simply plain water shows clearly Medoruma's fondness for contrivance, his deferral of absolutes, and his penchant for illuminating hidden traces.

It is the story's smallest details—the trace of lime found in the water Dr. Ōshiro takes from Tokushō's toe, the echo of Ishimine's perfectly accented standard Japanese—that function like chinks in an armor, destabilizing the grand narratives of battle so well rehearsed and glibly repeated in classrooms, film, and text. The presence of lime in Tokushō's body, which utters through its grotesque transformation what Tokushō cannot voice about his past, is indisputable proof that he personally experienced war and that his particular hell is contained within the limestone walls of a cave in which he left his closest friend for dead. Tokushō's story, eclipsed by public memories of the war, ultimately speaks itself through the body.

The Lure of the Distant Shore in "Mabuigumi"

"Mabuigumi," can be read as a sequel of sorts to "Droplets" since the author's method and the story's content include many of the elements that contributed to Medoruma's Akutagawa Prize-winning text, yet it is eminently engaging even when read as an independent piece. Not only does Dr. Ōshiro reappear in "Mabuigumi" as the village physician, but the setting—an unidentified, yet familiar (to Medoruma readers) village—forms the larger textual space in which the author focuses again on the supine body of one villager whom he connects to the Battle through key flashbacks. "Mabuigumi," a work that recounts the failed attempts of Uta, an elderly woman invested with spiritual power to summon back the 'dropped' spirit of a middle aged man named Kōtarō, whom she loves as dearly as a son, won Medoruma the Kawabata Prize for its skillful depiction of Okinawan beliefs. As in "Droplets," Medoruma wages a battle between two forces. Rather than depict a clash between public and private memory, Medoruma pits the indomitable weight of tradition against those mechanized forces that have come to erode long held communal values.

Fond of sake and the samisen, like Tokushō, Kōtarō, who is married with two children, is a rather ordinary man, though uncommonly prone to the dislodging of his spirit that accounts for his lying inert on a sickbed through the narrative present. As she has so many times in the past, Uta, who serves as the village shaman, labors to summon back to Kōtarō's body his willful spirit. Up to this point, the plot is indistinguishable from earlier stories containing references to 'dropped spirits' such as those written by Ōshiro Tatsuhiro. Medoruma tweaks the formulaic 'dropped-then-recovered spirit' motif by colorfully filling the cavernous void left by Kōtarō's spirit with an enormous island

crab (*āman*) that makes the male body its abode.

Hermit Crab

A startling predator with fierce pincers, the crusty crab figurally rends the superficially smooth aspect of contemporary Okinawan society. As the story unfolds, the narrative retreats into the past where we learn that, during the Battle, Uta and Kōtarō's mother, Omito, stole away one night from the safety of the caves to hunt for food. Spying the eggs of a sea turtle, Omito began to collect them for sustenance just minutes before she is killed by artillery fire. Uta witnessed a sea turtle enter the ocean that tragic night in 1945, and it is a sea turtle she sees again when she follows Kōtarō's spirit to the ocean shore where it sits gazing at the vast beyond.

Though he does not use the Okinawan term, the great expanse that transfixes Kōtarō is surely the paradise for the dead known locally as *nirai kanai*.[30] One of the clearest tensions in "Mabuigumi" is the struggle between the shred of life still remaining in Kōtarō's form and the cavern of death in which his mother, Omito, and thousands of other Battle victims lie. In another of his bleak conclusions, Medoruma shows that the distant shore of death has a greater pull on Kōtarō's wandering spirit than does Uta's well-attested powers. In Uta's failure to shield Kōtarō from the clutches of death—represented through the symbol of Omito, bifurcated into the twin forms of hermit crab and sea turtle—Medoruma's pessimism is unmistakable. Kōtarō's eventual death underscores a perennial point of Medoruma's that tradition cannot but crumble before the atrocities of the twentieth-century. Unlike Ōshiro's "Turtleback Tombs," in which Ushi's dying prayers suggest that she and other victims of the Battle will enjoy an afterlife with their ancestors, Medoruma shows that war vitiates Okinawa's traditional belief system.

In the opening passage of "Mabuigumi," which seems unrelated to the story's darker theme of war's impact on the psyche, the narrator dwells on a small detail—the waning tradition of morning tea drinking—a custom that, like spirit recalling, has fallen by the wayside in the wake of modernization:

> Uta was sitting in the open veranda, gazing at the brilliance of her dew-drenched garden, growing brighter in the morning sun, when the calisthenics music from the radio in the community center nearby began to play. She sneered *humph* and sipped her tea through a chunk of raw sugar in her mouth. For generations the elderly had started the day with a cup of tea before getting to work. But in early April the Senior Citizens' and the Children's Associations had begun encouraging morning calisthenics in front of the community center. They claimed the sessions were good for such things as bringing together children and seniors, and for an "Early to Bed, Early to Rise" campaign. A month after the sessions began, members of the Senior Citizens' Association had begun wearing exercise outfits totally inappropriate for their age, and merrily making their way to calisthenics. Naturally they urged Uta to join them. No matter how hard they tried, however, she curtly responded, "I won't go," and continued with her morning tea.[31]

Though the number of senior participants dips after a retired friend of Uta's slumps to his death following a bout of 'healthy' morning radio exercise, soon afterward, crowds of elderly return to the civic hall for more rousing national calisthenics. From this subtle aside on the rapid disappearance of morning tea under the onslaught of centralized culture, Medoruma segues to the heart of story, which underscores another absence—that of faith in contemporary times.

In a dramatic showdown, the collective will of villagers who circle Kōtarō's bed to shield him from the intrusive lens of cameras held by two mainland filmmakers shooting on location in Okinawa locks horns with Uta, who belatedly arrives on the scene to help Kōtarō. The narrative's far-fetched, tragicomedic climax occurs when the island crab, startled by camera flashes, scurries inside Kōtarō's mouth and lodges itself in his throat causing Kōtarō's untimely death. In a fit of rage, Uta, who has cared for Kōtarō since Omito's death, lunges after the crab, but to no avail. Finally, a fellow villager is able to hack the elusive crab to pieces with a scoop and hoe just seconds after Uta realizes that the feisty crab must be a reincarnation of Omito, and that it, like the sea turtle, signals, through a reunion of mother and son in death, a restoration in the natural world.

The intensity with which the villagers fight to kill the crab stems not from the kind of fierce loyalty to Kōtarō that Uta possesses, but rather from fear that if the cameramen were to document the odd presence of a crab making its home in an Okinawan man, a lucrative hotel construction project would be shelved, leaving the village economically vulnerable. Medoruma uses strong language directly aimed at mainland readers to indicate Uta's wrath toward the cameramen after Kōtarō and the crab die, whereupon she proceeds to smash their cameras: "You are never to tell anybody what happened here tonight. If this old lady finds out otherwise, I swear I'll hunt you down all the way to Yamato and beat you to a pulp!"[32] These haunting words contain a pointed critique of mass media's infiltration of village life, alluded to in the story's opening radio exercise scene and driven home in the climax.

As in "Droplets," a semblance of order returns to the village following the expulsion of the predatory crab, yet the story delivers no moral victory. Medoruma's anti-hero, Kōtarō, dies; hotel construction will surely continue apace; formations of efficient groups of children, seniors, educators, and village officials will march lock step in time to precise instructions delivered nationally by a NHK radio broadcaster.[33] The story's poignant conclusion, in which Uta is left bereft on the shore after Kōtarō's death, magnifies in its final line the full impact of mechanization, whether in the form of light morning exercise or heavy artillery fire:

> As Uta looked around, she noticed the leaves of the *hamasūki* swaying ever so slightly, and heard the sound of *āman* crawling through a nearby *adan* thicket. The *mokumaō* forest at the high-water line was like a barrier separating the ocean from the village. Uta was the sole person on the beach. Suddenly overcome by loneliness, she couldn't bear it any longer and went down to the water, letting the waves wash her ankles as she waded in the gentle surf. The light of sea fireflies faded in and out in the warm waves lapping the shore. Uta stopped, turned toward the horizon, and brought her hands together. But her prayer never reached its destination.[34]

Yet again, one's expectations are betrayed as the logic of this fable-like story refuses to grant Uta the one wish that would permit her to continue in her role as the village priestess. Medoruma beguiles his readers with clever contrivances—a certified healer, a mythic sea turtle, a predatory hermit crab—yet neither Uta nor the sea creatures are ever securely attached to any convincing symbolic meaning. Nor, in the end, are they any match for the war that engulfs them.

Considering that they are narratives of war, "Droplets" and "Mabuigumi" make for surprisingly enjoyable reading, due in large part to Medoruma's irreverent ploys. To be sure, ingenious inventions such as drops of water trickling from the toe of an impossibly large, gourd-shaped leg, or a lusty crab staking its territory in a human body serve to entertain; they also force one out of conventional ways of thinking about war, memory, and identity. Deep beneath the surface comedy of the texts lies a tension that Medoruma claims is the essence of literature, at least in the writing he most admires by Nakagami Kenji, Ōe Kenzaburō, and Murakami Ryū.[35] One is struck by the full force of unresolved tension in "Droplets" when Tokushō seethes with anger in a confrontation with his fallen comrade Ishimine, asking, "Don't you know how much I've suffered these past fifty years?"[36] Tension also comes to the fore in "Mabuigumi" when Uta threatens to kill the cameramen who have come to document a village secret. In both stories cultural memory, that suspect version of history, which the island projects to others in its assertion of group identity, clashes with a different kind of memory, one that is contestatory, idiosyncratic, political. Uta destroys the cameramen's film because what for the men is a priceless shot that reveals to the mainland an unauthorized, hidden glimpse of Okinawa is for Uta her past. In short, the tension that lies at the heart of Medoruma's battle narratives rises from the question of who owns memory—Tokushō or the Himeyuri? Uta or NHK? While Medoruma gives voice to the former in each case, these stories show clear tensions between and among local and national forces as they vie to narrate the past.

Circuits of Memory in "Tree of Butterflies"

One of the longest and most harrowing of Medoruma's battle narratives is "Tree of Butterflies." Published in 2000, this story relates the deep and abiding love a dying old woman named Gozei has for a man named Shōsei, who, last seen in the midst of war, is presumed dead. After a long absence, Yoshiaki, the story's protagonist, finds himself in his hometown where his arrival coincides with the town's harvest festival. As the annual festivities take place, Yoshiaki is slowly drawn toward traditions in which he had long been uninterested. These include music, dance, and the performance of melodramatic but beloved plays that depict rampant prewar discrimination toward Okinawans. The connection between Yoshiaki's quest for self and Gozei's love is faint, but it becomes more distinct as the work unfolds. Ultimately, it is Yoshiaki's ties to Gozei and Shōsei's generation that emerge as Medoruma's primary concern. The transmission of memory, ever problematic, particularly when related to war, was a raging issue among Okinawan intellectuals as the new millennium drew near, and one that clearly informs Medoruma's writing of "Tree of Butterflies."

Two separate but related debates that contribute to a fuller understanding of Medoruma's work filled the pages of local and national newspapers in 1999 and 2000. As both involve identity politics, they are naturally quite complex; here, I sketch only pertinent details to amplify tensions readers drawn into Medoruma's absorbing story might easily miss. The first controversy, centering on proposed changes for Okinawa's new Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum, which opened in April 2000, bore heavily on the issue of cultural memory. In short, committee members who had since 1996 drawn up guidelines for the museum's designs and exhibit captions were treated to a shock on 11 August 1999 when *Ryukyu News* reported that the museum's content had been changed without the committee's knowledge.[37] LDP Governor Inamine Keiichi's defeat of Ōta Masahide in 1998 ushered in a far more conservative administration, which sought early on to tone down what it perceived as inflammatory content in the museum's exhibits. This whitewashing of material included the removal of a gun from a proposed exhibit on the daily lives of civilian refugees during the Battle of Okinawa. The display was to have portrayed a Japanese soldier commanding a mother at gunpoint to stifle her child's cries lest she be made to kill her child. Also airbrushed out of the designs was a Japanese soldier who was to appear in a cave scene in which he handed an injured Okinawan soldier cyanide-laced milk so that he would adhere to the Japanese military's order that its citizens, particularly its soldiers, should kill themselves rather than surrender. Further changes were made in terminology. 'Sacrifice' (*gisei*) replaced 'massacre' (*gyakusatsu*); 'war of attrition' (*jikyūsen*) replaced 'sacrificed stone strategy' (*suteishi sakusen*); and 'Asia-Pacific War' (*Ajia-Taiheiyō sensō*) replaced 'The Fifteen Years War' (*jūgo-nen sensō*). In every case the former term is more benign than the latter. Understandably, many Okinawans were outraged by the fact that a peace museum in Okinawa was itself now part of a national attempt (as in the 1982 school textbook controversy)

to conceal the facts of Japanese wartime violence toward Okinawans.[38] Eventually Inamine was forced to bow to Okinawan public pressure and allowed the original displays with some compromise.[39]

The second debate concerned a joint proposal commonly referred to as the 'Okinawa Initiative.' This initiative was presented at a conference in March 2000 by three University of the Ryukyus professors—Takara Kurayoshi, Ōshiro Tsuneo, and Maeshiro Morisada—each a key player in Governor Inamine's administration. As Julia Yonetani states, the Initiative "constituted an attempt to articulate an Okinawan historical and political position more in concert with the aims of the U.S.-Japan security partnership and Japanese government policy."[40] What angered so many about the professors' proposal was that underlying the steps they outlined for Okinawa's future economic success was an undeniable acquiescence to the national policy of accepting the bases that former Governor Ōta had vehemently opposed at least since the 1995 schoolgirl rape.[41] Not only did the Initiative accept the idea that Okinawa would shoulder the preponderance of U.S. bases in Japan, it also sanctioned the construction of a new base in Nago, which a majority of residents opposed in spite of massive financial compensation promised them.[42] The Initiative, along with the government's continued national cash-for-bases policy and its selection of Nago as the site for the 2000 G-8 summit, was, Yonetani explains, a strategy to "'absorb' Okinawans' sense of identity and desire for political autonomy."[43]

Without a doubt, Medoruma has emerged as the most prominent intellectual to voice his dismay at the conservative turn of the tide that has swept Okinawa in recent years. The steady stream of political essays published by Medoruma since 1999 effectively quells any doubt as to his preeminence in matters of public concern. Like Ōe Kenzaburō and Nakagami Kenji, Medoruma expends creative energy in writing compelling fiction, all the while fighting for deeply felt political causes. Given his longstanding disdain for the public eye, Medoruma's decision to abandon his reclusive life in remote Miyako Island to take a teaching position in Nago could not have been easy. His return to northern Okinawa, where he spent his childhood, marked a turning point in the author's life, one that has become increasingly decisive with every new essay and blog entry that detail his efforts to keep the idyllic north free of the U.S. military presence that has bedeviled central and southern islanders. Medoruma and many other Okinawans' opposition to the bases reflects resentment toward the government in Tokyo as much as it does toward officials in Washington.[44] Indeed, as savvy politicians have long recognized, cries over the 'Okinawa (i.e. base) problem' (*Okinawa mondai*) have generally resulted in outflows of cash and public works projects from Tokyo. This point was driven home by Inamine when he emerged victorious over Ōta largely because he pointed out how economically vulnerable Okinawa would be without the resources the national government had curtailed in its zeal to punish the former governor (and Okinawa) for refusing to sign leases that guaranteed the renewal of bases. It was into this political cauldron that Medoruma stepped when he left quiet Miyako for once quiet Nago.

Inamine employed a convincing argument to support his gubernatorial design choices for the new Peace Museum. His assertion that there existed multiple interpretations of the Battle may not have won him the changes in exhibit content he sought, but the Governor's reasoning unwittingly served to support Medoruma's fictional enterprise. That is, as Medoruma fills in what Inamine strategically leaves out of representations of the past, he too, is putting forth a different interpretation of the Battle. Inamine's blatant censorship did not stop with attempts to remove indications of violence toward civilians by Japanese soldiers, or with changes in terminology. He also sought to sweep from memory less known atrocities that occurred in so called 'comfort stations' by pressing for the removal of a map that indicated their placement throughout wartime Okinawa.[45]

Hibiscus tiliaceius

It is precisely this aspect of the Battle that Medoruma devotes his attention to in "Tree of Butterflies" through a gripping exploration of female psychology in the character of Gozei, who serves as a sex slave to Japanese military officers during the war and as a prostitute to American soldiers during the Occupation. Lest one think that his is yet another portrayal of Okinawa-as-victim, Medoruma pointedly includes references to Korean sex slaves who are below Gozei in hierarchy, given that their sexual services are restricted to lower-ranking enlisted men. While Gozei is a thoroughly developed character who gives voice to what politicians such as Inamine have tried to suppress, Medoruma characteristically leaves some things to the imagination by placing side by side with Gozei's detailed story the far less specific tragedies of unnamed Korean sex slaves. As in many of his other stories, Medoruma is careful to acknowledge discrimination within Okinawa, even as he writes more broadly of the wartime state's ill treatment of Okinawans, its second-class citizens.[46]

That Medoruma is attempting to write unwritten stories is clear once Yoshiaki begins to investigate his family lineage after Gozei mistakes him three times for Shōsei. As he learns, Shōsei is a distant relative of his, and it is Yoshiaki's resemblance to the older man that confuses Gozei, who is lapsing into senility. A broken but still coherent stream of scenes from the past intrude violently into the narrative present revealing the horrors of Gozei's life as a sex worker employed at the Morning Sun (*Asahi*) 'inn' where Japanese soldiers resided during the war. Shōsei, who was thought to be feeble-minded, nonetheless outwitted the authorities by falsifying an injury in order to avoid conscription. One of the few civilian men left in the village, he worked as a servant at the inn. In the course of their employment, Gozei and Shōsei became lovers. Their only relief from harsh servitude came in stolen moments savored under a *yuana* tree clustered with masses of yellow blossoms that look like butterflies from a distance. Yoshiaki learns these particulars from a ninety-year old gentleman named Uchima who had previously served as ward chief. In a telling line, the narrator discloses that none of these details are recorded in the "Village History" that Uchima proudly shows Yoshiaki during their conversation. The perilous nature of these memories is underscored as one is made aware that even the orally transmitted history of the ostracized pair would have been lost had Yoshiaki not promptly queried Uchima about his ties to Shōsei. Well advanced in age, Uchima is, until Yoshiaki hears the tale, the sole repository of memories deliberately left unmentioned in village history. Just as Governor Inamine excises from public memory any disturbing hint of comfort stations in the exhibits of the Peace Museum, so too does Uchima leave for posterity only sanctioned memories secured in his prized "Village History."

In the story's final battle scene the soldiers evacuate the inn to take shelter in a nearby cave where they remain trapped with Japanese, Okinawan, and Korean sex slaves, and Shōsei. As tensions heighten, the soldiers' already callous behavior worsens, resulting in one among them taking Shōsei, who is suspected of being a spy for speaking in dialect, from the cave at gunpoint. Inside, Gozei lies in the mud sexually degraded. She is unable to move, let alone rise to Shōsei's defense. Despite her repeated wish to die, Gozei is treated infinitesimally better by Japanese soldiers than either the Korean sex workers or Shōsei. The guilt she suffers for this partiality remains with Gozei for decades. After the war ends, Gozei makes the imprudent decision to remain in the village so that Shōsei, his whereabouts unknown, would know where to find her. Disparaged for her sexual involvement with both Japanese and American soldiers, Gozei is a social pariah, yet she stubbornly refuses to start a new life elsewhere because of her deep feelings for Shōsei. She spends her remaining years living in a hut no bigger than a goat shed, eking out a living by collecting and selling aluminum cans. In a particularly haunting scene of Yoshiaki's recollections of childhood, he painfully recalls the harsh treatment meted out to Gozei after she returned Yoshiaki, who had been lost, to his family. Owing to her past, virtually all the adults suspected foul play and roundly censured her. For months afterward, Gozei avoided the accusing eyes of the villagers. Violence among fellow villagers, hinted at in many of Medoruma's early stories, such as "Taiwan Woman: Record of a Shoal of Fish," lurks in the shadows of "Tree of Butterflies," surfacing most clearly in the villagers' open rebuke of Gozei based simply on her past and their inability to see her as a victim.[47]

Gozei's declining mental state leads villagers to secure a room for her in a nursing facility where Yoshiaki is her sole visitor. In the three-week span of the narrative, Yoshiaki comes to a finer understanding of himself through encounters with Gozei who awakens in him repressed memories and a desire to know more about his family and culture. In his first brush with Gozei at the harvest festival, Yoshiaki realizes that "the music of the island in which he had been born and raised flowed through his blood."[48] And, as Gozei lies bedridden at the story's conclusion, Yoshiaki painfully recalls that the reason he has always detested brown sugar, the traditional island sweet, is because of its association with Gozei who, after rescuing him as a child, had given him a lump of sugar to calm his fears. It is also as she lies dying that readers are presented with Medoruma's skilled rendering of Gozei's heart-wrenching psychology. The

following lengthy quote shows that despite her imminent death, Shōsei, and by extension, Yoshiaki, remain etched in Gozei's mind In this first part of the quote the narrator fuses the *yuana* blossoms with Shōsei and Gozei's lovemaking, makes brief mention of Gozei's Korean female friend's act of kindness, and underscores the pain Gozei experiences from the brutality of servicing Japanese soldiers:

> 'Gozei! Gozei!' Shōsei called from far off. No, he was very close. Bathed in moonlight, the clusters of yellow butterflies on the hibiscus tree seemed on the verge of taking flight. When she went in the shade of the tree she was immediately drawn in by a strong force, and for an achingly short time, his hot tongue played at her throat, and his firm left hand pressed her back. She buried her face in his chest, and, choked with the scent of the forest and tide, she whispered in his ear, 'I never thought a woman like me could feel this way being held by a man.' She gently held his hands and stroked his hair. 'Gozei! Gozei!,' he said in a voice she could hear from the depths of the darkness. 'It's ok,' she said, recalling how Shōsei embraced her, coated in sweat down to the innermost folds of his body by the skin-clinging muggy night air. I had already oozed into the dirt. The Korean woman was saying something. She pressed something in my mouth. It was a piece of brown sugar. My saliva overflowed and I felt the thin shred of life inside me grow. 'I'm ok now, thanks.' The woman grasped my hand and stroked my fingers. Sensations throughout my body abated, and even the sharp pain in my pelvis went away. 'Gozei! Gozei!' Kneeling down, beaten Shōsei raised his head to look at me. A shadow stood at the entrance to the cave, his back to the moonlight. 'Ah. You know all about what kind of a person I am.' I could see the figure of a girl walking along the road to a whorehouse, carrying a single bundle wrapped in cloth. 'Go back. Don't take another step.' I couldn't do it. No matter how narrow or twisted the path, even if it led to a dead-end, I just kept going. 'Gozei! Gozei!' Pressing my forehead to Shōsei's chest, I stared at the hibiscus flowers that had just fallen to the ground, and laughed aloud. Opening the front of my kimono, I listened for the voice that sent blood rushing through my body and warmed it so. Turning my eyes away from the 'I' that ridiculed me, I prayed that the special time would continue only under this tree.

In the second part of the quotation the narration shifts from wartime to the postwar when Gozei staunchly refuses to leave the village in which she is ostracized. Once again, the narrator fuses the story's title imagery, the blossoms of the *yuana* tree, to the now ephemeral Gozei:

> 'He's got to be alive somewhere. How do you know that he's dead when you haven't seen it with your own eyes? Do you really believe he's dead? Is that the reason you've lived by the hibiscus tree?' Waiting for him…pulling a cart, collecting empty cans and selling them to the brewery for a few coins to live on…. A road so glitteringly white from limestone dust I can't keep my eyes open. I'll never walk that road again. Wearing rubber sandals, my feet tainted white. The figure of a young boy crying at the roadside appears before me. For the first time ever I held a child who clung to me, crying. The feel of his thin arms around my neck. I never thought my own heart could hurt so much at hearing his cries in my ear. 'Is this what children smell like?' I thought, pressing my nose against his thin chest. I felt awful that my washcloth was dirty, but that's all I had, so I used it to wipe his face and the back of his neck, then put a piece of brown sugar in his mouth. Thinking that I musn't frighten the child who had finally stopped crying, I put on an unfamiliar smile, seated him in the cart, and took him back to town. Afterward his parents gave me hell, but that brief time was the happiest I've had since I began living in the village. If only I could have had your child…. 'Gozei! Gozei!' Do I have any cause for regret? In the end, my body and soul become viscous and murky, and, like the river near the hibiscus tree, I mingle with all the ephemera in this world to become one with the ocean. Trickling from my palm, seeping out my hair, coursing over my thighs, flowing from my eyes and ears, from my slack cells, one by one, matter dances in the air, like coral eggs. At last, a spirit emerges from my mouth as from a hollow tree, and, taking a butterfly shape, it flutters in the room, then escapes through the glass window, dancing toward the moonlit sky.[49]

Encapsulated in this remarkable stream of consciousness is no less than the life story of Gozei into which the narrator also embeds the critical and formative experiences of Shōsei and Yoshiaki.

Just as deftly as the narrator weaves the life stories of Gozei, Shōsei, and Yoshiaki, culminating in poignant portraits of three individual selves, so too does he craftily suggest the impossibility of constructing an impenetrable self. Returning home from his visit to the nursing facility, Yoshiaki mentions in passing that his father should rewrite the faded characters inscribed on the memorial tablet dedicated to Shōsei in order to reaffirm his identity. In the story's revealing last line, Yoshiaki's father, taciturn throughout the story, vehemently opposes Yoshiaki's suggestion:

> Since there were no bones for Shōsei, ten years or so after the war, I went to the beach with my father, picked up several fragments of coral that resembled bones, put them in a new urn, and placed it in the family tomb.[50]

Washed by the tide, the smooth coral fragments that lie one on top of the other at the bottom of the urn in the dark tomb, serve as a powerful yet temporary substitute for Shōsei, whose brutal wartime experiences, together with his lover Gozei's, would otherwise be expunged from history. It is precisely such perilous memories, which wash over fractured shards of identity, like tides over coral, that impel Medoruma to continue writing about a war he never experienced, but which he knows full well has not ended in the lives and consciousness of the Okinawan people.

Since his debut in 1984, Medoruma has written persistently about Okinawa generally, and the Battle, in particular, despite having been born 15 years after the end of the Pacific War. The small size of the island prefecture; the huge civilian casualties the Battle exacted; Japanese soldiers' treatment of Okinawans during the Battle; issues of student mobilization; and the brutality endured by the comfort women make the fierce ground conflict the central theme of postwar Okinawan fiction. Whereas earlier writers, such as Ōshiro Tatsuhiro, wrote of individuals in the midst of the grim Battle, Medoruma extends the tragedy of 1945 to the present day, showing clearly the residual effects of war in contemporary Okinawa. By so doing, he forges a link between himself, spared from war, and the vast majority of his family and acquaintances who lived through it and then, more often than not, repressed their darkest war memories. Not only does Medoruma imaginatively draw the past into the present, he does so by using to comic effect the physical bodies of his characters. Despite the wry humor of his works, these bodies are solemn and contemplative spaces through which Medoruma engages in a never-ending war.

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Notes

1. A translation of "Droplets" by Michael Molasky appears in *Southern Exposure: Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson eds., Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2000, 255-285. Translations of "Taiwan Woman: Record of a Shoal of Fish" and "Hope" are forthcoming. *Rainbow Bird*, a novel length work, has not been translated to date.

2. Medoruma Shun. "Yūshitai," *Gunzō,* 56, 11 (October 2001), 324.

3. Medoruma Shun. "Uchināguchi to Yamatoguchi no aida de," *Bungei*, 1998/5, 37 (2), 192-193. The name of the production Medoruma recalls so vividly is *The Koza Version of the Depths* (*Kozaban donzoko*).

4. See Aaron Gerow's essay, "From the National Gaze to Multiple Gazes," in *Islands of Discontent*, Laura Hein and Mark Selden, eds., 273-307.

5. In his analysis of Kina's "Shimagwa Song" anthropologist James Roberson explains that in both of Kina's versions of this song he implores his audience to remember their island spirit and never to forget the language of Okinawa. The song's second verse follows: Don't throw away/Never throw away/The spirit of the Islands/Don't throw away your heart/Don't forget our Okinawan language/We are the spirit of these Islands. See Roberson's essay, "Uchinaa Pop: Place and Identity in Contemporary Okinawan Popular Music," in *Islands of Discontent*, 214; 192-227.

6. The authors Medoruma cites as frequent prize-winners are Tabata Mitsuko, Eba Hideshi, Kohama Kiyoshi, Yamazato Teiko, and Nagadō Eikichi. He rounds out his list by including Sakiyama Tami and Nakawaka Naoko, distinguished, as is Medoruma himself, for receiving the critically important Kyushu Art Festival Literary Prize.

7. "Uchināguchi to Yamatoguchi no aida de," 192. Although Medoruma uses the phrase, "unchanging *uchinā*, changing Okinawa," (*kawaranai uchinā to kawatteiku Okinawa*) in which *uchinā* may best correspond to the ancient island kingdom, and Okinawa as the newly admitted modern prefecture, in the context of the essay it is clear that Medoruma is using the term *uchinā* broadly to include forms attached to the island, namely, its dialect.

8. Michael S. Molasky, "Medoruma Shun: The Writer as Public Intellectual in Okinawa Today," in *Islands of Discontent*, 191.

9. Medoruma Shun and Ikezawa Natsuki, "Zetsubō kara hajimeru," *Bungakukai*, 1997/9, 179.

10. In this rare interview, Medoruma bluntly tells Ikezawa Natsuki, "I don't want my fiction to be categorized as Okinawan literature." Ibid.,176.

11. Ibid., 168.

12. Takeuchi Mitsuhiro describes the labor required of Medoruma's readers as stemming from, but not limited to his use of dialect: "First dialect derails a reader, forcing a complete halt. At the same time the text puts a stop to one's thought, it demands new ways of thinking. The reader is forced to read, thinking all the while. It's on this account that one is wiped out each time one finishes a mere short story. See "Bunka no mado," *Rekishi hyōron*, 2000/7, 603, 60.

13. See Gerald Figal, *Beachheads: War, Peace, and Tourism in Postwar Okinawa*,

Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

14. Nakahodo Masanori, *Okinawa no senki*, Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1982.

15. For a reading of "Droplets" through a magic realist frame, see Davinder L. Bhowmik, "A 'Lite' Battle Narrative: Medoruma Shun's 'Suiteki,'" *Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies*, 4, (Summer 2003).

16. Suzuki Tomoyuki discusses this aspect of the reversion period in his lengthy but nuanced article, "Guwateki akui—Medoruma Shun to Okinawa sen no kioku," *Shakai shirin*, 48 (1), 2001, 1-53.

17. Linda Angst, "The Rape of a Schoolgirl," in *Islands of Discontent*, 142.

18. For a sampling of such reviews see the judge's comments upon the announcement of Medoruma's award in *Bungei shunjū* 1997/9, 426-431.

19. Medoruma Shun, "Droplets," *Southern Exposure*, 272.

20. Ibid, 255.

21. *Senpyō*, *Bungei shunjū*, 1997/9, 427.

22. Ibid.

23. Geoffrey Hartman, "Public Memory and Modern Experience," *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 6/2 (1993), 244.

24. Medoruma Shun, "Okinawa no bunka jōkyō no genzai ni tsuite," *Kēshi kajī*, no. 13, 28-29.

25. Suzuki develops this idea in his essay "Gūwateki akui—Medoruma Shun to Okinawa sen no kioku," *Shakai shirin*, 48 (1), 2001, 1-52.

26. “Droplets,” *Southern Exposure*, 281-82.

27. Tomiyama Ichirō has explored the complexity of the Japanese state’s treatment of Okinawans as both national subjects, and potential spies, owing to their occasional, and possibly rebellious use of dialects unintelligible to mainland soldiers. In English, see Tomiyama Ichirō “‘Spy’: Mobilization and Identity in Wartime Okinawa,” *Japanese Civilization in the Modern World XVI Nation-State and Empire*, Senri Ethnological Studies, 51, Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000, 121-132. In Japanese, see Tomiyama Ichirō, *Kindai Nihon shakai to Okinawajin*, Tokyo: Nihon keizai hyōronsha, 1990, *Senjō no kioku*, Tokyo: Nihon keizai hyōronsha, 1995, and *Bōryoku no yokan*, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002.

28. Nakamura, Yashu. *Kami to mura*, Tokyo: Fukurosha, 1990.

29. Kawamura Minato, *Kaze o yomu mizu ni kaku mainoritī bungaku ron*, Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2000, 75.

30. According to the *Kōjien* (5th ed.), *nirai kanai* is a paradise believed by Okinawa and Amami islanders to exist far beyond the ocean. William Lebra defines the term, which he romanizes *Nīrē kanē*, or *Girē kanē*, based on local dialects, as follows: “A name found in early accounts, said to be an island in the eastern seas, the place of origin of the Okinawan people.” See William P. Lebra, *Okinawan Religion*, 221.

31. Medoruma Shun, “Mabuigumi,” translated by Kyle Ikeda in *Living Spirit*: Literature and Resurgence in Okinawa, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011, 112.

32. Ibid., 132.

33. NHK, an abbreviation for Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai, or Japan Broadcasting Corporation, is Japan’s quasi-national broadcaster.

34. Ibid., 134.

35. Medoruma Shun and Ikezawa Natsuki, “ Zetsubō kara hajimaru,” *Bungakukai*, 1997/ 9, 185-86.

36. Medoruma Shun, “Droplets,” *Southern Exposure*, 281.

37. Gerald Figal discusses the Peace Memorial Museum controversy in the context of his overview of the peace movement in Okinawa. See Gerald Figal, “Waging Peace on Okinawa,” *Islands of Discontent*, 65-98.

38. For details of the 1982 textbook controversy, see Ienaga Saburo, “The Glorification of War in Japanese Education,” *International Security*, 18/3 (Winter 1993-1994), 113-133.

39. Julia Yonetani, “Future ‘Assets,’ but at What Price? The Okinawa Initiative Debate,” 246.

40. For an analysis of both the Initiative and the ongoing base problems, see Inoue Masamichi, “Gurobaruka no naka no ‘Okinawa initiatibu’ ronsō, *Shisō*, 2002, 1, 933, 246-267. For an in-depth view of the military base issue, see Inoue’s book, *Okinawa and the U. S. Military: Identity Making in the Age of Globalization*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

41. On September 4, 1995, a twelve-year-old Okinawan schoolgirl was gang-raped by three American servicemen in a sugar-cane field on the outskirts of Kin village in Okinawa prefecture. The incident, horrific in itself, was compounded by the fact that it occurred during the closing days of a summer that marked the fiftieth-year ceremonies commemorating the end of World War II. The timing of the incident, the girl’s young age, and the geopolitically entangled location of the crime all contributed to capture the imagination of local, national, and international audiences. Six weeks later, on October 21, in one of the largest protests in the island’s postwar history, 85,000 Okinawans gathered together to rally against the American presence. Governor Ōta Masahide, buoyed by this unprecedented show of support, refused to sign the renewal of base leases, confounding officials in both Tokyo and Washington. In large cities throughout Japan, thousands protested to show their sympathy for the plight of Okinawans unduly burdened by military bases. Abroad, the rape of a young girl was likened to the rape of the island prefecture, not only by Americans but also by Japanese who first invaded the region in 1609, annexed it in 1879, and sacrificed the island in 1945. For an excellent in-depth article on this incident, see Linda Angst (2003) “The Rape of a Schoolgirl: Discourses of Power and Women’s Lives in Okinawa,” in *Islands of Discontent*, pp. 135-60.

42. Julia Yonetani, “Future ‘Assets,’ but at What Price? The Okinawan Initiative Debate,” in *Islands of Discontent*, 251.

43. Gerald Figal, “Waging Peace on Okinawa,” in *Islands of Discontent*, 91-94.

44. I should add that Medoruma also points his fingers at Okinawans who enjoy financial gain from land leased to the U. S. military. Local profiteering serves as a backdrop for Medoruma’s novel, *Rainbow Bird*.

45. In his essays Medoruma has often referred to the extreme violence Okinawans displayed toward Okinawans during wartime. While this type of cruelty is less known than the ill treatment of Okinawans by Japanese soldiers, it is not unrelated in that Okinawans lashing out at their fellow islanders may have done so to show their loyalty to the state. Medoruma voices through Gozei his recognition of such cruelty in “Tree of Butterflies,” and describes his own mother’s experiences of being denied shelter by other Okinawans during the Battle in his essays.

46. Recently, Medoruma has begun to write about the centrality of war in his family. His mother’s experience, in particular, taught Medoruma that Okinawans were both victim *and* aggressor in the Battle. See Medoruma Shun, *Okinawa sengo zero-nen*, Tokyo: Nihon hōsō shuppan kyōkai, 2005.

47. Medoruma Shun, *Gunchō no ki*, Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 2001, 182.

48.. Ibid., 223-225.

49. Ibid., 226.

50. Ibid.

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