

ELEMENTS OF OKINAWAN TRAUMA IN THE LITERATURE OF MEDORUMA SHUN

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Section 1: Introduction - Where Does Okinawa Come From?

The Okinawan Islands, dotted along the southern tip of the Japanese archipelago, should be known for their coral beaches and hyacinth groves. They're not. They're known for having been the only bit of Japan actually captured during the Second World War. The Americans are still there. It was directly occupied until 1972 and Okinawa's main island still has the highest concentration of U.S. bases outside the continental United States.

-Cleo Paskal, "Why I Burned the Flag"¹

*Does a bomb have grandchildren? Us.
Does a piece of shrapnel have grandparents? Us.*

-Mahmoud Darwish, Memory for Forgetfulness

A U.S. Navy ship, one out of a fleet dispatched throughout the Pacific on various business, docks at the port in Naha on the main island of Okinawa. The commander of this fleet is aboard another ship at another port in another country. The crew find themselves with time on their hands and a port town seemingly at their disposal, so they hit the town ready for a night of drinking and carousing. One sailor, William Board, along with two of his shipmates, descends upon Naha on a self-assigned mission of procurement and plunder. The sailors roam the streets, taking cigarettes, alcohol, and food from local houses and demanding the townspeople produce for them female companionship—
"Where are the women?" They continue on from door to door, terrorizing the inhabitants with their selfish demands.

¹ Cleo Paskal, "Why I Burned the Flag," *Traveler's Tales Japan*, ed. Donald W. George and Amy G. Carlson (Palo Alto: Traveler's Tales, Inc., 2005), 360-363. This is article is based on an interview with Chibana Shoichi, of whom more will be said later. More information can also be found in Norma Field's *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor*.

Breaking into one house, the three sailors find a frightened old woman cowering in a corner with her teenage niece. Seizing upon a perceived opportunity, Board brandishes a knife and separates the aunt from the young girl. His friends pin the old woman down and Board attempts to rape the girl. The screams of the women draw a group of Okinawan men including the young girl's older brother. Enraged, the Okinawan men chase the foreigners from the house and through the streets. Board's two companions are caught first and beaten by the angry mob, but he leaves them and continues to flee until he reaches the water. He stops, cornered, caught between a furious group of Okinawans and the sea. The older brother tackles Board to the ground and beats him to death with a rock. This is a true story², and its theme not an uncommon one for the people of Okinawa. This, however, took place in 1854, which means the incident occurred not in the Japanese prefecture of Okinawa—the name by which it would come to be known almost two decades later—but in the Ryukyu Kingdom. The sailors mentioned belonged to a fleet led by Commodore Mathew Perry on an expedition to Japan and the Ryukyus in order to establish trading ports in the Pacific. This marked the first rape

² This account is my retelling of the same account as it appears in "U.S. Base Problems in Okinawa, Japan: Identity, Place, and Social Movement in the Age of Globalization" by Masamichi Inoue. Inoue attributes his fuller version of this account to various sources, including Masatoshi Uehara's *Ryukyu to Okinawa no jiken to gaiko*, Kurayoshi Takara's *Okinawa rekishi monogatari*, and *Okinawa ken shiryō: Zenkindai 2 – Perii rako kankei kiroku 2*

incident of an Okinawan by an American service member and augured the many forms of rape that would come to Okinawa at the hands of foreigners from that point on.

American military presence on the island has lent itself primarily to crime and violence of all sorts, with Okinawans being the victims nearly every time. For example: “in a period of only six months in 1949, [a journalist] reported G.I.s killing twenty-nine Okinawans and raping another eighteen,” and later, after reversion to Japanese control, “U.S. servicemen were implicated in 4,716 crimes between 1972 and 1995.”³ The record of crimes against Okinawans, perpetrated by Americans is extensive.⁴ Within that record one would find that even 100 years after the first reported incident of “American on Okinawan” rape—importantly, involving a U.S. serviceman raping a very young Okinawan female— not much had changed, and sexual violence especially was still an unfortunately legitimate concern for Okinawans. But behind those numbers lie horrible memories, most of which were left buried within the victims. Statistics speak only one side of a story, and numerical data is incapable of conveying the pain that accompanies the incident it records. This thesis will attempt to go beyond the numbers and explore the devastation of the individual and community that these numbers coldly represent. While statistics speak to

³ Chalmers Johnson , *Blowback*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000).

⁴ A detailed account of all these events, from the questionable to the blatantly criminal, including violations of human rights, is far beyond the scope of this thesis, and only relevant incidents will be discussed here. A good starting point for the reader interested in the variety and implications of the injustices Okinawans faced specifically at the hands of the U.S. military can be found in Chalmers Johnson’s *Blowback*, cited above.

the frequency or quantity of horrible events, nothing is conveyed of the magnitude of the individual occurrence—this is where I hope to focus my argument. Using the writings of Medoruma Shun, as well as theoretical writings on trauma and memory, I hope to portray Okinawa as an island, and Okinawans as a people, traumatized by a terrible past. At the same time, it is necessary to remove temporal barriers in order to place trauma in Okinawa not as merely the memory of a terrible past, but as a terrible past that occupies a continuous present. Trauma brought about by occupation and all the “trappings” of imperialism and war, and trauma itself as a *form of occupation* on the individual and community is an important parallel, and this will be expanded upon below and in later chapters.

Moving along, it should be noted that this thesis does not seek to attack American actions on Okinawa—that is not the point of this thesis. In order to put things into perspective, let us return to the past: It’s 1944 and Tomi Kinjo and family are forced to flee to northern Okinawa due to massive U.S. aerial bombardment in the south. Her husband helps the family to Nakijin in the north and leaves them in the care of an old man named Hokama before returning to his assigned duties at a headquarters back in the south. He will be killed in battle shortly after. Tomi, her family, and Hokama’s family hide in the mountains during the day to avoid being captured and killed by American soldiers. They live off of roots and water and whatever else can be scrounged up while on the run. At night, they return to a little hut in the hills below, and this goes on until the hut is

destroyed either by American bombs or passing soldiers. Tomi and the rest are forced to move to Hokama's farm house. During this time, Tomi is informed that a local spy has told the Japanese soldiers hiding in the nearby mountains that a young Okinawan woman is staying at the Hokama house—the soldiers are planning a “visit” tonight. It is pitch black as Tomi, her infant daughter, and Hokama's wife make their way into Hokama's potato field in order to hide from the coming “invasion.” Scared to death, Tomi prays that the baby won't make a noise and give them away as the soldiers approach. She can see flashlights fluttering around the house before the lights drift back toward the mountains. Suddenly her mother screams from the house, and Tomi bolts through the darkness expecting to find her family killed. She finds Hokama bleeding from a head wound inflicted by the Japanese soldiers. They had demanded the old man produce the young women they were told they would find there. Instead, Hokama pointed to Tomi's elderly mother, claiming she was the only “young woman” in the house. The soldiers beat the old man's head with a staff and made a hasty retreat to their mountain hideout. Years later Tomi would recall that night in the field and shudder with fear. This event, surely one of many from the war, remained deeply rooted in her consciousness.⁵

These two stories specifically emphasize the problem of sexual violence as inflicted by an occupying or invading power-bearer (be it American or Japanese) onto a weaker or

⁵ This story is recounted and commented on by Medoruma Shun on his blog *Uminari no Shima kara* (see references). The story is originally excerpted in *Sengo goju shunen kinenshi umuikakete*, published by the Naha War Bereavement Association.

overpowered subject, in this case Okinawans and specifically Okinawan women. But the type of violence presented above should not be thought of as specifically sexual or as only involving individuals. Instead we should consider the array of invasive and violent actions of subjugation perpetuated by those in power on those made to succumb to that power, at the individual, communal, and of course national level. In short, we must focus on the dynamics of power and the exertion of force. To assist in this aim, let us borrow the following from Linda Angst:

The Battle of Okinawa was a tragic consequence of the long process of inscribing onto Okinawa a status of inferiority critical to an emergent national identity. From the time of Satsuma's colonization of the islands in 1609, Okinawa was gradually positioned as "Japanese," but always with qualification. Natural, primitive, and passive, Okinawa remained in the Japanese imagination an unchanging relic of Japan's own cultural past—a necessary and perfect reverse (gendered) image to a Japanese political identity of cultural, technological, and moral superiority...the positioning of Okinawa as the feminized, disempowered past was a sign of progress, of the overcoming project of modernity by which the new Japan identified itself⁶

⁶ Linda Angst, "Gendered Nationalism: The Himeyuri Story and Okinawan Identity In Postwar Japan," *PoLAR: Political/Legal Anthropology Review*, 20, no. 1 (1997): 100-113,

Here the balance of power is laid out on the national level, a macrocosm of the events taking place on the communal and individual levels. Regarding the binary produced by placing Okinawa as the inferior “feminine” to a superior Japan, it may be necessary to read this not only as feminine/masculine but as subjugated/dominant. The latter implies that the placement of Okinawa as the “subjugated,” for example, is not something natural but that “subjugation” is a position in which Okinawa was placed, whereas feminine and masculine seem to assume natural endowments. To this it should be added that the U.S. military—present during and since the Battle of Okinawa—can replace the Japanese in the role of “superior masculine” to the Okinawan “disempowered feminine.” Japan and the U.S. not only took turns in the subjugation and occupation of Okinawa, but more often worked simultaneously to this end.

Recalling Tomi Kinjo’s account above it is plain to see that rape was not the only form of violence or devastation faced by Okinawans during the battle. First, Tomi faced not one but two enemies: The U.S. and Japanese military. The U.S. represented a “known” or “anticipated” enemy—and Okinawans were taught by the Japanese Army that capture by or surrender to the Americans would result only in torture, rape, and death regardless of age or sex. The Japanese Army, thus, was meant to represent the protector, the friendly force that the Okinawans could rely on. But the Japanese did not give the same trust they demanded of their subjects. A long colonial period had been spent trying to rid Okinawans of traditional, “backward” customs, including the Okinawan language—

one scholar aptly describes colonial Okinawa as being treated like “a retarded child in need of special disciplinary action.”⁷ By the time the war came to Okinawa, those caught speaking the Okinawa language were often summarily executed as spies by the “friendly army” (友軍 *yūgun*). Ironically, the Japanese also *made* spies out of the Okinawans, and used these spies to obtain information on and keep control of the Okinawan communities they inhabited. More often than not, as Tomi’s story attests, these spies helped the Japanese obtain whatever they wanted or needed, be it food, shelter, or young women to rape. Whatever trust the Okinawans had in the friendly army was quickly shattered as the ravages of battle revealed the true nature of the protectors.

The crimes that are recounted in the stories above—rape, theft, violence, the waging of war—make clear the unequal dynamics of power and shed light on the turbulent history of Okinawans as a subjugated people. As such it follows that the history of Okinawa is the history of repetitive violence and traumatization. I would further like to put forth the Battle of Okinawa as the culmination of a long period of subjugation and enforced inferiority that stands out in its degree of sheer violence. The effects of the battle have seeped into and stained the very fabric of society, leaving Okinawa merely an outpost fortress of the American military complex, a constructed bastion of exotic retreat for mainland Japanese tourists, and, for Okinawans, an unwelcoming home. Indeed even

⁷ Norma Field, *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 34.

the U.S. occupation following the war becomes immediately reminiscent of the Japanese colonial period, with the same forms of subjugation and violence continuing uninterrupted, just under a different guise. The war itself continues on Okinawa as the war-making force that captured the island continues to occupy and project its power from and, too often, upon it.⁸ Essentially, Okinawa remains a locus of trauma at the individual and group level—it is, I contend, an “island of trauma” and presents not only an ideal but a necessary vantage point from which to undertake studies of trauma in any shape or form.

This thesis will deal specifically with trauma as manifest in the literature of Medoruma Shun, whose stories focus on the Battle of Okinawa and its aftermath as an unremitting occupying force on the psyche of his characters. What I will attempt to illustrate is how what I will call Medoruma Shun’s *literature*—his fictional short stories, essays, and blog posts—comprise a form of testimony to traumatic memory that speaks the untold experiences of the terrible events in Okinawans’ past. At the same time, I want to demonstrate that this literature is itself a function of trauma, both born of traumatic memory and a manifestation of what we may assume has laid latent within an Okinawan subconscious until recently: namely, the devastating direct effects of the battle as well as the harrowing quotidian that has been silently, invisibly held captive by unspeakable

⁸ The idea of the war continuing on Okinawa is put best by Medoruma Shun in his non-fictional narrative *Okinawa sengo zero nen* (*Okinawa “Post-war” Year Zero*). This subject is also dealt with in “*Seishin no shokuminchika wa owaranai*” by Nomura Koya.

memory. To this end I will rely on a number of sources, but my thoughts throughout have been ignited and continually guided by the work of Christopher Nelson and Kyle Ikeda. Nelson has written extensively on memory and performance in post-war Okinawa. His thought-provoking work on trauma and the ways (such as theater, or *Eisa* dancing) in which Okinawans come to grips with a terrible past have opened up my mind to the possibility of Okinawan literature, specifically that of Medoruma Shun, as a form of “performance,” a way in which Okinawans can find a voice for something that has remained voiceless. Ikeda’s work deals specifically with the second-hand accounting of trauma taken up by Medoruma Shun and, as such, has been infinitely helpful as a guideline for the study of trauma in Okinawan literature as well as a wonderful exploration into the possibilities of Okinawan literature. Guided as well by Ikeda, I intend to take a step back and look at the interaction, or reflection, between Medoruma Shun’s fiction and non-fiction (his literature overall, that is) and the analogous reflective duality of literature and reality and the possibilities of literature as historical witness. Section 2 will introduce the reader to theories of trauma and their application in the case of Okinawa and Okinawan literature. The idea of transgenerational trauma will also be presented in order to promote the relevance of Medoruma Shun, a descendant of survivors of the battle, who crafts his fiction from first-hand accounts passed down to him.



Referring to citizenship and nationality in peace and war, and in the aftermath of the latter, Norma Field has said that “civilization is a thing of luxury. When times get hard, most of us grow impatient with abstract explanation and need tangible people to blame,” and in most cases “the flag is always a convenient, and too often deadly, simplifier.”⁹ And so, perhaps driven in part by similar sentiment, a supermarket owner in a village in Okinawa determined to set one such flag on fire. Scaling the wall at a sports event in Yomitan village, Chibana lowered the Japanese flag, the *Rising Sun*, and, before a crowd of mainland Japanese, local Okinawan, and maybe more than a few American military servicemen, burned it.¹⁰ He later calmly turned himself in. His actions brought the wrath of Japanese right-wing extremists, who only sought to exact revenge for his actions, and the confused consternation of friends and family, who for the most part had difficulty understanding why he did it. Not that Okinawans need to be reminded of what the *Rising Sun* symbolizes, but what possessed Chibana, a vital figure in their tight-knit Yomitan community to go so far?

As though it were not enough to have suffered under the banner of one empire, Okinawans are now condemned to live under the banner of two. Neither banner can

⁹ Norma Field, *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 276.

¹⁰ This account is given remarkable treatment in *Ibid.* for English readers, and can be read in Chibana’s own words in *Yakisuterareta Hinomaru – kichi no shima, Okinawa Yomitan kara (Burned and Discarded Rising Sun: From Yomitan, Okinawa, Island of Bases)*.

conceal the abjectness behind its presence in a place like Okinawa—indeed, the stark punctuation of the *Rising Sun* against the Okinawan sky, side by side with the *Stars and Stripes*, for many, recall memories of a foreign presence that promised peace but brought war; memories of incessant bombardment and entire villages destroyed and families lost; of the mangled corpses of loved ones; of the order to kill one another and oneself lest one be captured by the enemy, tortured, raped, and killed having missed the chance to give oneself the much more enviable, much more honorable death for the emperor for whom the flag waves. Perhaps these thoughts also went through Chibana’s mind as he put his lighter to the *Rising Sun*. Chibana had dedicated himself to uncovering the truth about an incident—one of many—of “compulsory group suicide”¹¹ that occurred in a cave in his village. The survivors of the incident had kept silent their terrible secret for nearly forty years, but thanks to the patient efforts of Chibana and a few others, people began to share their accounts. In fact, it was a few of the older members of the community who approached Chibana about simply lowering the flag during the sports event (burning it was Chibana’s idea). The Tokyo government insisted on flying the flag at the event and threatened to move the sports event to a more compliant venue if this request was refused. So, these older individuals sought out Chibana’s help.

¹¹ “Compulsory group suicide” reflects Norma Fields nuanced rendering of the characters for “group suicide” (集団自決) which emphasizes the act being forced, committed under duress, and not entirely self-determined, as the latter two characters purport. For a detailed, albeit introductory description of these group suicides, see Hirofumi Hayashi’s *Okinawa sen ga tou mono*.

In this way Chibana's actions serve as a form of witness to traumatic memory. Not only did Chibana begin to actually bear witness to individual traumatic memory by speaking with survivors of the compulsory group suicide, but by burning the flag and defending himself in the aftermath, he also demanded communal attention to what was indeed a community memory. In terms of trauma, there is interplay between the community and the individual in which the individual can be irreparably scarred by a group/community (i.e., a group of Japanese soldiers preying on a single young woman; or a group of right-wing extremists setting fire to a supermarket owned by a purported "traitor;" or by the forced silence of an individual whose terrifying account is unacceptable in the group's official account of an event, therefore it is left unheard), or in which the community can be damaged by an individual (i.e., an omnipresent yet invisible emperor) or symbol (i.e., the *Rising Sun*). Chibana set on fire not only a flag but a symbol of oppression; oppression of identity, of personal or communal history, and oppression of memory. And so, in a way, the act of burning the flag can also be seen as a form of public remembrance in that it instantly demanded attention toward a specific history, one that had been categorically ignored and denied a place in what might be considered "official" histories.

The flames consuming the Japanese flag reignited suppressed memories and symbolized the resurgence of deferred hopes—hope for the return of peace to Okinawa, hope for answers, hope to at least be treated equally. The marginalization of Okinawa

had begun and been more or less a symptom of its status as a subsumed portion of the Japanese mainland, but the accompanying disillusionment that Okinawans felt grew more pronounced when the reality of their situation became clear. Not until a few years after the longed-for reversion to Japan did Okinawans hear the details of the Japanese government's and Emperor Hirohito's determination for the "postwar" role of the Ryukyu islands. In an address to the U.S. government from Tokyo:

...the emperor hopes that the United States will continue the military occupation of Okinawa and other islands of the Ryukyus... such occupation would benefit the [U.S.] and also provide protection for Japan... The emperor further feels that [U.S.] military occupation of Okinawa [...] should be based upon the fiction of a long-term lease [...] with sovereignty retained in Japan.¹²

With that message the Okinawans were handed over to the U.S. military to begin the arduous dual occupation that continues to this day. Within the message, "Okinawans" are not referred to at all—their opinions on matters such as this had never been considered anyway—but only "Okinawa," as an object, a possession of Japan, gets mentioned. This failure to attend to history would have serious repercussions in the coming decades as base related problems and second-class treatment became a repetitive phenomenon on the island.

¹² This message is quoted in "War Memories Die Hard in Okinawa" by Masahide Ota.

This repetition of violence is symptomatic not only of continued mistreatment at the hands of a higher power but of the horrific events of the Battle of Okinawa. Former Okinawa governor Masahide Ota, a survivor of the battle has stated that “the battle of Okinawa inflicted deep wounds on the minds of the local people, which still twinge each time something happens to bring back old memories. The Okinawans’ way of seeing things, thinking, and living was irreversibly changed by the war.”¹³ In order to begin a process of healing, these wounds, rooted deep in traumatic history, must be dug up and the repressed memory given voice. However, just as Okinawans were overlooked in the message above, so too were the memories and experiences of many discounted and ignored in the period following the war. On one side there are narratives that do not fit into an accepted history or could degrade the status quo. The Japanese mainland went on to perform a miraculous economic comeback after the war while Okinawans found themselves yet again under occupation by a foreign power. Their memories, experiences, and most of all grievances could not be addressed to the benefit of this economic miracle and so, as had been done before, they were ignored. On the other hand, some memories are so terrible, insidious in their control over their subject, that they are locked away so as not to burst through the fabric of feigned normalcy. This type of memory as well fails to find voice in “official” accounts of the war, of battles, of diplomacy and politics, and therefore it is further repressed in its demand to remain silent.

¹³ Masahide Ota, "War Memories Die Hard in Okinawa," *Japan Quarterly*, 35, no. 1 (1988): 11.

But despite repression and silencing, these memories tend to come to the forefront. Actually, they need to come out, to show their ugliness and have a form of truth known—or at least to counter assumptions that what is presented is the whole story, and that what is silent does not exist. Section 3 will take up this topic by exploring literature in Okinawa as witness to trauma and as a form of history that explores the shadows and reports on that which was left unspoken. First an overview of Okinawan literature, its history and evolution in the postwar period, will be given in order to situate Medoruma Shun's fiction as a specific and useful voice of the traumatic effects of the Battle of Okinawa. Medoruma Shun is not the only Okinawan author to deal with the Battle of Okinawa, but he does bring a unique approach to thinking about the history of the lead-up to and the events of the battle itself. Specifically, and in keeping with the idea of traumatic memory as a force occupying the present that will be explored in Section 2, Medoruma Shun deals with the Battle of Okinawa as a current problem, even now, close to seventy years after its finish. This seems to inform all of Medoruma Shun's writing, and makes his fiction that much more vivid in its depiction of characters possessed by the horrors of war and of the consequences of a failure to confront history.

In the final chapter, a few stories by Medoruma Shun will be analyzed in an effort to pull the topics discussed in Sections 2 and 3 out of the text itself. By looking at these stories we will, in essence, be introduced to the inhabitants of Okinawa, and we will be able to see the powerful currents that flow under the everyday and influence the actions

of people and communities. In fiction as in reality there are seldom happy endings, and in the case of trauma it is from the rock-bottom of despair confronted that one can look up and find hope. Medoruma's stories give a look at the history of Okinawa that does not often find its way onto the pages of history books—it is the history of individuals and, by extension, of the Okinawan community that shares in a common trauma. The weight of this trauma on the individual, however, is not eased in any way in being shared by a community, for each must carry his or her own weight.¹⁴ But in sharing the trauma through witness, the endeavor of literature, perhaps the burden can begin to be lifted.

¹⁴ Former governor Masahide Ota, mentioned above, specifically addresses the weight of traumatic memory in an interview with author Natsuki Ikezawa in *Okinawa kara hajimaru* (Starting from Okinawa) (in my translation): “My personal experiences in the war share many commonalities with the experiences of others from my generation. I cannot deny that in everything I’ve done, everything I do, and everything I intend to do lie the seeds of my war experiences, and it is safe to say that everything starts from there. These war experiences are particularly heavy for me.”

Section 2-1: Trauma and Okinawa

It was well said of a certain German book that "er lasst sich nicht lesen"-it does not permit itself to be read. There are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told. Men die nightly in their beds, wringing the hands of ghostly confessors, and looking them piteously in the eyes-die with despair of heart and convulsion of throat, on account of the hideousness of mysteries which will not suffer themselves to be revealed. Now and then, alas, the conscience of man takes up a burden so heavy in horror that it can be thrown down only into the grave. And thus the essence of all crime is undivulged.

Edgar Allen Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*

What haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others.

Nicolas Abraham, *Notes on the Phantom*

Modern Okinawan history is the history of violence and of trauma. I am referring to trauma in the sense of a terrible or shocking foreign presence invading, occupying, and taking control over the psyche of a subject. Trauma in this sense is obviously analogical to physical invasion and occupation, of which Okinawa has suffered through several times. The twentieth century has, indeed, not been kind to the island. Thrust into the role of second-class imperial subjects under Japanese colonialism—although technically a prefecture, thus an “equal part” of Japan—the Okinawan people were mobilized under a foreign banner to provide service to a foreign leadership as well as to fight in a foreign war in which their only role was to give all, to die, without question. Their own dreams deferred, and promises not only unfulfilled but erased after the fall of the Japanese

empire, Okinawa then found itself under the ostensibly benevolent guidance of a far more powerful—and far more foreign—occupying force: the U.S. military. The legacy of this occupation is alive to the present. Throughout the process of Japanese colonialism, the transition from and then back to Japanese power, and the continuation of American occupation, the Okinawan people have succumbed to many violent and tragic events. The long colonial period was driven by racism, physical and psychological violence that included the erasure of collective identity and tradition, as well as the implementation of a form of servility in which Okinawans were forced to identify themselves with a national body into which they would never truly be accepted.

The ghosts of these traumatic events still haunt Okinawa, and one way in which they make themselves known is through literature. This section will provide a description of trauma and its manifestations and functions in order to be able to locate these within the stories to be used as case-studies below. It is perhaps best at the outset to give the operable definition of the word “trauma” by which this essay will abide throughout. I will rely here on the explanation of trauma laid out by Kai Erikson in his “Notes on Trauma and Community”. “Trauma” as used here will refer to an attack on the body, specifically the mind, “that results in an injury or some other disturbance.”¹⁵ It is important to note here that this incident, the ‘inception’ of a disturbance through trauma, originates outside the

¹⁵ Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," *American Imago*, 48, no. 4 (1991): 455.

body/mind, not from within. It is not like a cancer that develops within the body, although the effects of the two may possess similarities. Instead it is an intruder that, as we will see, possesses its host not unlike a parasite. In effect, trauma is an *occupation* of the subject—here the subject is *occupied* by a foreign agent in the form of alien and incomprehensible memory. It is also important to keep in mind that definitions and explanations of traumas have been ambiguous at times in their reference. Does trauma refer to the actual attack on the mind or to the state of the mind as a result of that attack? This essay will use “trauma” in both ways—as an “attack” and as a resultant “state”—and rely on context to guide the reader’s understanding of which is which.

The instance of trauma comes like a lightning bolt and leaves the “traumatized” in a state of vacillation between restive distress and deep depression. Accompanying these states are “feelings of helplessness, loss of various motor skills, and a general closing off of the spirit as the mind tries to insulate itself from further harm. Above all, trauma involves a continual reliving of the original experience in daydreams and nightmares...and in a compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances.”¹⁶ This last symptom—of repetition of the original experience and the seeking out of similar experiences—is one thing that sets trauma apart from other mental and physical illnesses. The victim, the “traumatized,” will constantly return to the site of trauma in the form of flashback, nightmare, etc. Not only that but she will constantly place herself in such situations as if desiring to repeat the

¹⁶ Ibid, 457.

incident over and over again. The loss of motor skills is also significant, especially in the case of *Suiteki*, one of the stories analyzed in this thesis. In this story, Medoruma uses magic realism to portray a protagonist physically disabled by traumatic memory, showing such memory to be something like a living entity, a parasite, linked to the past but thriving on its host's present. The connection of traumatic memory to physicality and bodily function is another characteristic of trauma that sets it apart from "ordinary" memory.

This idea of trauma was noted and expounded upon by Sigmund Freud, who went on to develop a theory of repetition compulsion which stemmed from the incomprehensibility of the initial trauma. Freud determined that "the painful repetition of the flashback can only be understood as the absolute inability of the mind to avoid an unpleasurable [*sic*] event that has not been given psychic meaning in any way."¹⁷ Usually there is a natural inclination toward pleasure, so it was notable that the mind possessed a determination to return to displeasure in the case of suffering from trauma. Essentially what happens is that the mind is "attacked" by a terrible shock for which it is unprepared. This shock pierces through the layers of consciousness protecting the psyche and invades the inside as an alien force. Since the mind was not prepared to mediate the stimuli produced by the shock, the experience remains unmediated and has now entered the mind as an unknown event. The mind works and reworks over this unknown event in an

¹⁷ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 59.

effort to prepare for and understand it retrospectively. This is what is called repetition compulsion, the tyranny of which is that the return to the traumatic event can in itself be traumatic. So the sufferer re-traumatizes herself in the constant repetition of his/her trauma.

Freud also notably proposed the theory of the death drive which may add insight to our understanding of his theory of trauma. Derived from its similarity to “awakening from a nightmare,” the awakening from the inanimate state before being brought into life is representative, according to Freud, of a trauma. This awakening into life was something for which one was unprepared—similarly to the inception of shock into the consciousness as mentioned above—and the drive is a desire to return to this inanimate state, a state of “death.” Freud aptly uses the analogy of a dream or nightmare, for sleep itself is essentially a representation of a return to the inanimate state from which awakening can be traumatic. According to Cathy Caruth, “the trauma of the nightmare does not simply consist of the experience *within* the dream, but in *the experience of waking from it.*”¹⁸ Waking into consciousness here is symbolic of *surviving and passing beyond death*, and therefore survival itself is representative of a form of trauma. “Survival” here is the incomprehensible event for which the mind was initially unprepared and to which it is doomed to return to in repetition.

¹⁸Ibid,64.

It is perhaps not without significance to draw attention to the correlation between the description of the inception of trauma and the subjugation of a people, such as is exemplified in Okinawan history. In the same way that the shock of trauma pierces the layers of consciousness to invade the psyche, so does the colonizer pierce the autonomous sphere of “identity” surrounding those who will be colonized, invading from the outside as it were. The tyranny of traumatic memory, as it not only occupies the mind but maintains physiological controls, is thus immediately reminiscent of the effects of a foreign power occupying a collective and enforcing its own control of the actions of the group. Furthermore, in searching for connections between the fundamental theories of trauma in psychoanalysis and socio-cultural theories of memory, it may be noted that the “awakening” as a form of trauma bears similarity to the “false beginnings,” of which more will be said in a subsequent section. It is in such examples that the ideas laid out by Freud show their relevance outside of individual psychology, and it will be important to keep this idea in mind as we return to the description of trauma used in this essay.

Another interpretation of traumatic inception and the symptom of repetition comes from a lesser known contemporary of Freud, Pierre Janet. According to Janet, the “memory system [is the] central organizing apparatus of the mind, which categorizes and integrates all aspects of experiences and automatically integrates them into ever enlarging and flexible meaning schemes;” the “subconscious” is the “collection of automatically stored memories, which form the map that guides subsequent interaction with the

environment”¹⁹. Traumatic memories, however, are stored separately and do not possess the same malleability as regular memories. This is because the “shocking” experience did not fit itself into predetermined memory models that exist in the subconscious. This also speaks to the foreignness of the traumatic memory and its function as an outsider within the psyche. Alien memories work in much the same way as any alien agent would within the human body and mind, and by extension, in much the same way as an alien presence within a society—there is dissociation, dislocation, and often rebellion in repetition.

Janet also noticed the tendency of the sufferer to repeat their traumatic instance. It was noted that this was brought about “automatically in situations which are reminiscent of the original traumatic situation.”²⁰ The repeat of trauma induced stress and a state of dissociation in which the trauma was repeated. This reenactment of the trauma occurred because the memory was initially incompatible with existing stored experience. Moreover, the initial shock was believed to have opened up pathways in the mind through which all subsequent “shocking” stimuli would flow, activating the same traumatic memories, during states of severe stress. This was, in effect, like a trauma “trip wire,” by which the repeat of trauma is evoked by similar situations of stress or shock.

¹⁹ B.A. Van Der Kolk, and Onno Van Der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," *American Imago*, 48, no. 4 (1991): 426.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 431.

Interestingly, it is also notable that the traumatic memory in these cases is not governed by temporal boundaries. The state in which the trauma is repeated is enacted automatically. It is not as a recollection of a past event—as implied by the term “flashback”—but as a memory alive in the present, pulled into the “now.” The traumatic memory is not categorized as a past experience in the subconscious storehouse because, according to Janet, the experience was not compatible with the existing memory frameworks. The dissociation of the traumatized subject manifests in a feeling of “not being *there*” to directly experience the shocking event, and thus the shock itself does not exist as something that took place at a certain moment and remains instead unregulated in the memory. According to Freud, the past becomes present because the traumatic instance was not mediated by the consciousness into a comprehensible event in history that could be accorded the same status as standard memory. Because of the extremity of the traumatic event, it is said to cause a “speechless terror” that “cannot be organized on the linguistic level and this failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols leaves it to be organized...as somatic sensations, behavioral reenactments, nightmares and flashbacks.”²¹ These sensations do not fall into the realm of memories of the past, and thus are relegated to a fixed status that does not conform to the specificities of time.

The speechlessness of trauma is a significant point. Melding theories of traumatic repression and speechlessness, and using the example of Comfort Women in Korea—an

²¹ Ibid,442.

example not irrelevant in the case of Okinawa— Choi Chungmoo describes the avenue by which the traumatized arrive and remain in the torturous grip of silence as a form of exile. The pain within the body has no external reference, no object outside the body, and this lack of objective reference “prevents this pain from being rendered into language.”²² As discussed above, the unavailability of articulation, or affective language on which to map painful experience results in the separate categorization of such experience not as memory of past events but as a traumatic memory that haunts the present. Through repetition the mind seeks a way to find articulation for or comprehension of what it has experienced, often leading to re-traumatization and seldom leading to actual comprehension toward healing. In the case of the Comfort Women, their experience has been repressed and kept hidden until recently. According to Choi, even the resurfacing of these memories caused traumatic incidents. The tragic past of the Comfort Women did not fit into existing nationalist discourses and “directly [assaulted] the masculine desires of the Korean nation to overcome the emasculation that Japanese colonialism [had] left on the male psyche.”²³ Because of this, the Comfort Women discourse was adopted into the national discourse leaving the Comfort Women themselves as mere symbols of a

²² Chungmoo Choi, "The Politics of War Memories toward Healing," *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)*, ed. T. Fujitani, Geoffrey White, and Lisa Yoneyama (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 398.

²³ Ibid

national shame. Their voice overridden, they were again left voiceless and stuck with their traumatic memory.

The co-opting of memories deemed incompatible with or unacceptable within the national discourse, and the traumatic effects of this phenomenon, are not specific to Korea. In the following section we will discuss how the overriding national memory and erasure or silencing of individual or group memory in Okinawa has the effect of enabling a type of compulsive repetition in the form of the “false beginning.” The false beginning is evidence of the failure of a group to access and attend to their history; it also speaks to the importance of the diversity of forms of public memory and the role literature can play as a voice for otherwise silent historical narratives.

The significance of this event, of silent or silenced memory, is in the consequences of having received inadequate witness to the expression of one’s trauma. Trauma is a wound that demands attention; it is a memory that seeks articulation and comprehension. This cannot be done by the sufferer alone—a witness is needed in order to share in the traumatic experience and provide the comprehension that the traumatized is unable to grasp. The problem for the listener is that in listening to the trauma of another, she is in a sense looking for something that does not exist. Dori Laub elucidates this process by observing that

massive trauma precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, malfunction. The

victim's narrative—the very process of bearing witness to massive trauma—does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence²⁴

Laub goes on to describe the method of witnessing in which the listener must take part in the traumatic testimony while simultaneously maintaining a separation so as to witness herself experiencing the trauma sharing it with the one speaking it. Through this process, the listener becomes a mechanism—a mediator—by which the traumatic, fragmented experience is drawn out of the traumatized consciousness and inscribed with meaning. By doing this the traumatic memory becomes something comprehensible, understandable and placed in a temporal context, and can be appropriated accordingly as a memory of a past event. The appropriation of individual or collective *personal* memories by nationalist discourse is a betrayal and a denial of the necessary act of bearing witness.

The Comfort Women example may also assist with an understanding of the effects of communal trauma. The Comfort Women represent a group, a community of women, seemingly bound together by a common experience. The communal element found in trauma can be ascribed to the effect trauma first has on the individual. From the moment of traumatic experience, the traumatized can be said to begin a new history, set apart

²⁴ Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening," *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Shoshana Feldman and Dori Laub, MD (New York: Routledge, 1992), 57.

from their previous history, to which the reference is the traumatic incident. The traumatized is no longer the same person, and from the traumatic moment onward they feel that through their trauma “they have been set apart and made special... marked, cursed.”²⁵ Thus the communal sense derives from being able to truly understand in others and have understood in oneself what can absolutely not be understood by “outsiders.”

Communal or social trauma, shared by a group, can be caused by natural or human-initiated disasters. The results of the latter have the most profound consequences in that along with the standard symptoms of trauma comes distrust in society—the traumatized community comes to the realization that the community itself is no longer the source of support that it once was, and this is exacerbated by the fact that one’s traumatized self is already “marked, cursed” as an outcast from society anyway. The tragic experiences of the Comfort Women can certainly be attributed to a human-initiated incident: put bluntly and generally, Korean women were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Army for Japanese soldiers. The same happened to Okinawan women as well. The trust of the Okinawan people, as with their Korean counterparts, was placed, voluntarily or by necessity, in the authority of the Japanese imperial government and, by extension, the Japanese Army, and this trust was violently betrayed by both. The

²⁵ Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," *American Imago*, 48, no. 4 (1991): 458.

traumatizing factors in this situation are not limited to the physical and sexual violence inflicted on women. Beyond that lies the denial of the incident intertwined with the inability to find a voice to speak the trauma and a witness to receive it. As is often the case with human-initiated disasters, the perpetrator(s) become invisible behind the law, the nation, or any number of de-humanized barriers to witness. Speaking in the context of a traumatic incident caused when a corporation's careless actions affected a whole town of people, after which the corporation avoided blame and hid behind its lawyers, Kai Erikson elucidates these adverse affects of this "dehumanization" of source of blame:

But most of the time [...] the company draws into its own interior spaces and posts lawyers around its borders like a ring of pickets [...] Those who manage corporations (or ... those who are hired to defend them) generally speak of them as if they were *things*, bloodless and inorganic. But victims of accidents rarely forget, even when company officials manage to, that corporate decisions are made by human beings and that corporate policies reflect the views of human beings. And it can be profoundly painful when the people in charge of a company at the time of a severe mishap deny responsibility, offer no apology, express no regrets, and crouch out of sight behind that wall of lawyers and legalisms.²⁶

Similar to the layers of consciousness that, according to Freud, surrounded the elements of a human's life, Kai proposes layers of trust surrounding the people in a community. In

²⁶ Ibid, 464.

both cases, the traumatic force pierces through these layers and invades the inside of the person or people affected. As a result, the traumatized lose their trust in the community, in society and the supposed rules that govern it, in the authorities that set and enforce those rules, and, in extreme cases, in moral, ethical, and even spiritual forces. In the case of Okinawa, it is not difficult to see how the effects of Japanese colonialism, war and occupation, could leave the inhabitants of the island in such a state of shock.

One of the more sinister aspects of trauma is that it can affect those who did not directly experience the initial traumatic event. The generations that followed those who experienced the Battle of Okinawa and the terrible events leading up to it have “been haunted by silences that take the form of an ‘unhappy wind’, ‘a hole’, or some other intangible, invisible force ... [reflecting] the notion that an unresolved trauma is unconsciously passed from one generation to the next.”²⁷ Freud first alluded to the existence of a form of communication between the unconscious of two individuals; and from this, as well as Freud’s determination to link the conflicts of the modern individual with the original traumatic experience of early man, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok²⁸

²⁷ Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 11.

²⁸ Nicolas Abraham, and Maria Torok, "Secrets and Posterity: The Theory of the Transgenerational Phantom," *The Shell and the Kernel*, ed. Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

formulated a theory of the “phantom,” a traumatic haunting that is passed down unconsciously and unwittingly from one generation to the next.

This “phantom” is not to be confused with repression or introjection, as these have libidinal basis within the subject, whereas the phantom is a foreign formulation the origin of which the subject has no knowledge. According to Abraham and Torok, the speech and actions taken by a phantom through its subject do “not refer to a source of speech in the parent. Instead, they point to a gap, they refer to the unspeakable.”²⁹ In other words, it is not by something in the speech of the parents that gets taken up, or introjected, by the child, but something insidious *missing* from the speech that “obstructs [the] perception of words as implicitly referring to their unconscious portion.”³⁰ The unspoken, horrible memory or fear locked inside the parent then, for example, gets passed along to the child as something missing—thus the phantom returns as a witness to something hidden inside another unconscious. On the social level, the misappropriation of history or silencing of the past, as exemplified by the Comfort Women above, provides the impetus for the passage of transgenerational trauma in the form of phantoms.

Keeping in mind the idea of trauma as an outside element invading the psyche, it is important to understand that the phantom is also a foreign object in the subject it haunts. What this means is that the subject is occupied not by his own trauma but by the trauma

²⁹ Ibid. 174

³⁰ Ibid.

of another. In dealing with the patient deemed to be possessed by such a phantom, psychoanalysts make sure to deal with the phantom trauma as an alien entity, not attributing the actions or speech caused by the phantom to the subject it possesses. To treat it as a condition of the subject can have an adverse, exacerbating effect on the symptoms that the phantom will display as based on the repressions and introjections of the possessed. Thus a phantom must be dealt with before the analyst can attend to the conflicts belonging to the patient's direct experience. Keeping these aspects of transgenerational trauma in consideration will allow for a nuanced understanding of the role of Medoruma Shun's fiction as a form of public memory which will be discussed further in the following section.

Lastly, the use of the term "phantom" or "haunting" conjures up imagery of death and ritual. By extension, and as illustrated by Nicholas Rand his introduction to the phantom theory of Abraham and Torok³¹, it seems that the return of a phantom implies a return of a deceased individual with business left to settle, or whose secrets taken to the grave shackle him to the earth; or the implication rests as a fault of the living, who perhaps did not properly perform their duty in providing the dead with the ritual passage to the afterlife. As is often the case, in order to exorcise these spirits, their past—the horrible truth surrounding their death, for example—must be unearthed and given meaning. In the same way, the phantom of traumatic experience that has been passed

³¹ Ibid., 167

down from one generation to the next can only be exorcised by giving voice to what remained unspoken, by giving meaning to what was incomprehensible. This speaks to the nature of trauma as a wound that demands witness, and just as trauma has been passed down through the generations in silence, so too has it been passed down in forms of testimony. Literature is one form of testimony through which the inexpressible events of trauma in Okinawan history have found expression.

Section 2-2: Medoruma Shun in Okinawan Literature

*Okinawa is just as much a “throw away” of Japan today as it was sixty one years ago. In order to get away from this “throw away” status, it is necessary to continue to think of the Battle of Okinawa as a **current** problem.*

-Medoruma Shun³²

Since the end of the Second World War, people have reflected on the magnitude of what happened. What were the causes? What were the effects? In Asia, members of various countries continue to seek answers to explain the predicament they were left in due to the actions of members of other countries. One way that this reflection occurs is through literature. The writer and intellectual read, reread, write, and then rewrite the past, changing perspectives and taking new routes all to get to the heart of an elusive issue. While the heart of an issue may seldom be revealed, the process by which one attempts to make it clearer is in itself an important part of understanding. In Okinawa especially, the events of a very personal episode of that war, the Battle of Okinawa, have become the subject of a wide and still growing literature that seeks to untangle the mess in which Okinawa finds itself in the present. One Okinawan author in particular stands out as one of the most notable writers in modern Japanese literature from Okinawa:

Medoruma Shun. Medoruma is active in social criticism and in writing essays as well as

³² Shun Medoruma, "Okinawa sen no kioku," *Bungakukai*, 60, no. 5 (2006): 15, quoted in my translation, emphasis also mine.

fiction that attempts to portray the war from different perspectives and the survivors' trauma as a living entity that grows and disrupts the everyday. Before delving into his writing we will look first at the "problem" of Okinawan literature and difficulties faced by "Okinawan writers," as well as how Medoruma Shun stands out among his peers. This will also allow us to examine how Medoruma Shun crafts a narrative that takes the war as an event of the past and places it firmly in the present; we will also take a look at how he portrays characters and their actions as a way of critiquing the current situation in Okinawa.

First we turn to the "problem" of Okinawan literature. The "problem" here is in classifying Okinawan literature as "Okinawan literature." Michael Molasky draws our attention to this issue in the article "Medoruma Shun: The Writer as Public Intellectual in Okinawa Today." How should Okinawan literature be classified? Does it need to be classified? Can it not just be literature? Molasky problematizes Okinawan literature classified as minority literature or as regional literature while recognizing the double bind that "all classification entails some form of bias but ... classification is nonetheless inescapable..."³³ Minority literature assumes that the literature and circumstances of Okinawans are the same as other Japanese "minorities," and furthermore marginalizes

³³ Michael Molasky, "Medoruma Shun: The Writer as Public Intellectual in Okinawa Today," *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*, ed. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 162.

Okinawan literature from a greater Japanese literature. Molasky also points out that Okinawans would not consider themselves to be minorities, thus this label is imposed on them from an 'other'. This informs their identity and also ties into the problem brought about by the other form of classification: regional. There are many "regions" in Japan, but Okinawa is different. As the people of a formerly independent kingdom first colonized and then subsumed into the Japanese empire, Okinawans maintain an identity separate from "Japanese;" most Okinawans consider themselves to be Okinawan. This is a characteristic not shared by other regions in Japan. To classify a literature as regional also assumes that its impact is only substantially felt by people within that region. Again, for Okinawa, this is not the case. As we will see, Medoruma Shun is peculiar in that his stories capture a wider audience. To this, Molasky argues that Medoruma Shun, like his contemporaries, is an Okinawan writer and at the same time a Japanese writer, since his work is regularly published for a wider Japanese audience who, overwhelmingly, reside outside of the set "region" of Okinawa.³⁴

In years following the war, the literature produced in Okinawa underwent changes in terms of style and theme. Early on, before the reversion to Japanese sovereignty, Okinawan literature sustained a more political bent. Fiction did not begin to emerge on a substantial level until later. In *Writing Okinawa*, Davinder Bhowmik analyzes this issue and refers to Medoruma Shun for reasons as to why this was the case. According to

³⁴ Molasky, "Medoruma Shun: The Writer as Public Intellectual in Okinawa Today," 164

Medoruma, fiction in the American occupation period was sparse due to “Okinawa’s late modernization,” “the devastation of the Battle of Okinawa,” and the “protracted occupation characterized by censorship, the suppression of free speech, and the fostering of a cultural policy of Ryukyu-American ‘friendship’.”³⁵ After reversion, fiction emerged more steadily. During this period, the underlying theme was the pursuit of an equal economic footing with the mainland. Bhowmik points out a trend in fiction to deal with changing geographical landscapes and widespread construction projects funded by the Japanese government as a way to bring the newest prefecture up to speed. At the same time authors began to handle indigenous cultural elements in their fiction, as these were slowly being removed from reality.³⁶

It was in this literary environment that Medoruma Shun emerged and in which he would flourish. Medoruma had been actively publishing in the early 1980s, winning a few local literary awards in Okinawa, but it wasn’t until he won the Akutagawa Prize in 1997 that he reached a national level of fame. Around this time he turned his attention also to social criticism, but in the meantime he continued to produce works of fiction that raised urgent questions about the present circumstances of the effects of the Battle of Okinawa. Medoruma’s works, as we will see, deal with the often traumatic memory of the battle and the ‘side-effects’ that survivors still deal with in the present. His stories portray a

³⁵ Davinder Bhowmik, *Writing Okinawa: Narrative Acts of Resistance*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 128

³⁶ *Ibid.* 129

memory, a past, unencumbered by temporal bounds. The traumatic memory of his characters consumes their present, leaving them in the grip of a past that will not let go and that they cannot let go of. Although he claims to be a realist, Medoruma is considered a surrealist writer and his stories are known to feature the supernatural in the physical world, not only questioning the afterlife but also the boundaries between worlds. The literary critic Heishiki Busho attributes Medoruma's winning the Akutagawa Prize and his subsequent successes to a tendency among publishers and readers to want just such a story. In *Bungaku hiho wa naritatsu ka*, Heishiki argues that authors and publishers recognized a trend developing toward philosophical works and works that tied to the idea of an afterlife. He further attributes this to the needs of an aging generation at the "end of a century" as well as to misguided youth of the type that get caught up in cults like the Aum Shinrikyo³⁷. The trend in books that dealt with this tended to achieve a noted level of popularity.³⁸

While that may be true on some level, there are features of Medoruma's work that are relevant and important for more than just pseudo-intellectual pleasure. For example, could this popularity—or perhaps notoriety even—be attributed to Medoruma Shun's

³⁷ Although beyond the extent of this thesis, it might be interesting to further explore this supposed trend in philosophical literature and surrealist works that question the afterlife. Could this be evidence of something like a latency period, in which new generations seek answers to questions never asked by their predecessors?

³⁸ Busho Heishiki, *Bungaku hiho ha naritatsu ka*, (Naha: Border Ink, 2005), 277-80

literature symbolizing the end of a period of latency, in which the traumatized individual and/or community are the focal point of the narrative? In basing his stories on first-hand accounts passed on to him by his family, it would seem that Medoruma Shun's fiction is merely illuminating something that has been hidden or repressed—giving articulation to something that, to this point, remained unspeakable. In this way Medoruma's literature appeals to the readers because it speaks to something they have in common, something for which they had no words but could only *feel*. More will be said on this in a later section.

Another way in which Medoruma's fiction stands out is in its weighty endeavor.

According to Molasky,

“his fictional method ... not only allows for a representation of Okinawan life in its full complexity but also attempts to intervene against those forces that threaten it ... Medoruma is no rosy-eyed idealist merely intent on ‘celebrating’ Okinawa’s distinctiveness, nor is he a captive of nostalgia who wishes to return to the imaginary purity and peacefulness of rural life from an earlier era. On the contrary, he is above all committed to interrogating and revealing the underpinnings of Okinawa’s present-day condition...”³⁹

³⁹ Molasky, "Medoruma Shun: The Writer as Public Intellectual in Okinawa Today," 179

The way he does this most clearly is through his depiction of the memory of the Battle of Okinawa. The Battle of Okinawa stands out in Okinawan history as the destructive culmination of over half a century of foreign domination and oppression. The decades following the war, according to Medoruma Shun, are polluted by the aftereffects of this battle that completely destroyed Okinawan villages, homes, and lives. In his unique treatment of the Battle of Okinawa, Medoruma uses memory—specifically oppressive, nightmarish memory—as a way to blend the past into the present. As he argues in *Okinawa sen-go zero nen*, although the war is officially over, the effects of the war ripple into the present. Especially for survivors of the Battle of Okinawa, but also for anyone paying close attention to the situation on the island, the war is not over. While Medoruma does not attempt to offer a solution, the process by which he analyzes the present manifestations of an event that happened over fifty years ago allows for a deeper understanding of the complexity of meaning in everyday life and what it is to live with the burden of the past in the present.

Medoruma's work draws heavily from second-hand accounts of the war, some of which were passed down to him by his own parents, who both lived through the Battle of Okinawa. While Medoruma highly values personal accounts of the war, he is not uncritical of these. *Suiteki*, the work we will look at later, deals with the construction of false memory, or perhaps the "commodification" of memory as something to be "consumed" by another. Kyle Ikeda is perhaps clearer on this:

“...recollection and narration of past events or experiences are never simple matters of merely recalling or describing what happened; rather, these ... need to be understood as functions of the conditions of narration and recollection, conditions which must be analyzed, along with the content of what is narrated or remembered, in order to understand and evaluate the significance and meaning of the narrative produced or memory recalled.”⁴⁰

War memory, like any memory and probably more so for its traumatic inception, can be problematic. Recollection of this memory can be hindered or governed by outside circumstances as well. Many of Medoruma Shun’s fictional characters deal with deep-seated trauma. Some cannot release their memory for fear of shame, others for lack of clarity or “gaps.” Others perhaps deal with issues that do not present themselves in the everyday consciousness, but lurk deeper in the recesses of the mind. Some narratives might contend with the received historical record and be discredited or manufactured into something more acceptable. Fiction, however, is governed differently, and with this different set of possibilities, Medoruma is able to probe into parts of the Okinawan psyche that have not yet been seen.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Kyle Ikeda, "Unspoken Memory and Vicarious Trauma: The Battle of Okinawa in the Second-Generation Survivor Fiction of Medoruma Shun," *Proquest Dissertations and Theses* (2007):4

⁴¹ Ibid. 5

While historical records provide valuable information, personal accounts must be used to supplement these. Medoruma strongly advocates this, and gives examples in *Okinawa sengo zero nen*. In one section, Medoruma discusses how he visited a museum in Kagoshima commemorating a Japanese Army Special Attack Unit, the members of which were all killed during the war. The museum, a manufactured set of images and materials representing the theme, showed plenty of photos and letters, uniforms, and other relics displayed to construct a story of the sacrifice of the unit. It explained (and glorified, in his estimation) why they died, but did not explain how. For that he had to rely on his grandparents account. He goes on to show that the lack of information about how the Special Attack Unit perished was not the only thing that was missing. While looking at the displays he came across information on the Korean members of the Special unit. Here he questions why there is no information on why a Korean would be compelled to fight as a Japanese for the Japanese empire.⁴² Medoruma consistently urges the reader to make the effort to look at a situation through another perspective. This is evident in these examples, and will be shown later as well.

In another example, Medoruma speaks again to the importance of witness narratives, but also to the “community” of memory and perspective. While watching footage of Afghanistan being bombed on television (after September 11), his mother, seeing the mountains and hillsides, where the Taliban are hiding, being bombed is

⁴² Shun Medoruma, *Okinawa sengo zero nen*, (Tokyo: NHK Publishing, 2005), 81

reminded of the Battle of Okinawa. Like the Taliban, and certainly Afghan civilians, Okinawans also hid in the mountains and caves during interminable artillery strikes from American guns. What struck Medoruma by his mother's comment was that due to her own similar, or "shared," experience, she was immediately able to view the situation from a different perspective. Although the bombing technology used by the U.S. was lauded for its pinpoint accuracy (so as to reduce civilian casualties), Medoruma recalls Al-Jazeera and other Middle East news agencies reporting on the damages done to the civilian population. Despite that, what he and many others in faraway Japan saw was mostly, if not only, the bombings from the perspective of the U.S., via U.S. footage.⁴³ All of these techniques and methods (alternative perspective, memory, identity, representation) are used by Medoruma in his stories to provide a different view of the Battle of Okinawa and the "remains of the Battle" in everyday Okinawa. In this way Medoruma corroborates the acceptable, the historical, with the visceral.

Fiction as Public Memory: Toward a True Beginning

The significance of Medoruma Shun within "Okinawan Literature" cannot be underestimated. In using existing narratives of the Battle of Okinawa in the form of first-hand accounts, historical record, and the interpretation of the lineage of trauma

⁴³ *ibid*, 92

extending into the “postwar” period, Medoruma creates fiction that acts as a form of public memory and social history. As a social history, his stories further become a form of witness to the traumatic experience of survivors of the devastating effects of history in Okinawa; and in bearing witness, the stories themselves become an acceptable narrative of trauma that can speak to others who, although they may not have directly experienced the Battle of Okinawa firsthand, have lived with the haunted experience that transcends generations and lives in the continuous present.

The importance of witnessing, and of allowing for varied interpretations and perspectives of a complicated and chaotic past, is the same for the collective as it is for the individual. Just as the traumatized individual must work through his past, finding access to memories that do not allow for articulation, in order to avoid the compulsive repetition of an unexplainable experience, so too must the traumatized community attend to its collective experience. Christopher Nelson, in writing on the liberating effects of engaging the past through ritual and performance in Okinawa, has determined that failure to acknowledge the collective past “can lead to the conversion of historical experience of loss into a structuring sense of absence, an ahistorical originary account that authorizes repetitions of violence and ideologies of subjugation.”⁴⁴ In short, the community can find itself in an endless cycle of distress if it cannot connect the incomprehensibility of

⁴⁴ Christopher Nelson, *Dancing with the Dead: Memory, Performance, and Everyday Life in Postwar Okinawa*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 4.

experience to adequate articulation. We see some semblance of this in the redundant march of Okinawan history for the past century, beginning with the abolishment of the Ryukyu Kingdom and the creation of Okinawa Prefecture in the late nineteenth century. The establishment of Okinawa as a prefecture of Japan was followed by the colonial period and the inherent discrimination and subjugation that came with it. Following the Battle of Okinawa and the end of the Second World War, Okinawans again found themselves second-class citizens in their own home, given up to the U.S. and placed under foreign occupation. In 1972, Okinawa was handed back over to the Japanese government and was once again more or less a colony of Japan, with the Okinawans finally becoming Japanese citizens, but still not quite Japanese.

Going from colonization to occupation and then back to a form of acceptance into the erstwhile empire while still under occupation by a foreign power—and notably, a former wartime enemy—is evidence of Okinawan history being studded by “false beginnings.” The beginning referred to here is that “form of oblivion” explained by Marc Auge⁴⁵ as a necessary means of forgetting. The process of forgetting the immediate past is an important step in beginning, the beginning being a departure into a new future for the one who successfully “forgets.” But this type of oblivion, of forgetting in order to begin, first requires remembering what to forget. Recollection becomes a complicated endeavor in this respect because it is contingent on the collective knowledge of the past

⁴⁵ Marc Auge, *Oblivion*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 83.

and, according to Paul Connerton, “present factors tend to influence—some might want to say distort—our recollections of the past, but also [...] past factors tend to influence, or distort, our experience of the present.”⁴⁶ Connerton further asserts that every beginning is laden with a moment of recollection—a beginning cannot be a wholly new experience, and must recall something. In the case of Okinawa, these beginnings become false in that there is no departure into a new future of experience, but in reality the same discrimination and subjugation of the past continues endlessly into the present, only subtly changing guises.

In order to work toward a “true beginning”—if that is even possible—in which the community can unhitch the burden of shared experience and work toward embarking into a new future, recollection and remembrance is necessary, as is a subsequent “weeding out” of those pernicious elements of traumatic memory that reenact a constant present. In the postwar period, “official” history—including government-authorized accounts of past events, surveys compiled by historians based on syntheses of primary and secondary materials, etc—has perhaps been the retainer of what could be considered an objective record of the past. However, “official” histories are subject to the same problem of bias and absence that plague “unofficial” accounts, and to place those “unofficial” histories as counterpoint to those deemed “official” assumes a uniformity and authority in the latter.

⁴⁶ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.

Fiction and literary narrative would likely fall under the “unofficial” category, but according to Davinder Bhowmik, “to avoid pitting literary narrative against official history, which may or may not even exist, it makes better sense to consider certain literature as a form of public memory.”⁴⁷ So it can be argued that Medoruma Shun’s fiction functions as a form of public memory through which accounts of the Battle of Okinawa that were not included in other, often “official,” histories can find voice and reach an audience that would otherwise not know what those accounts—and their *absence*—mean.

To enact a “true beginning” Medoruma Shun’s fiction as public memory fulfills a twofold duty. Marc Auge tells us that while there is a duty to remember, there is also a duty to forget.⁴⁸ The duty to remember belongs to succeeding generations, those not directly affected by the terrible past, and the duty to forget is that of the survivor, who must forget in order to move on. Medoruma Shun belongs to the generation of descendants of survivors of the Battle of Okinawa, which may lead one to question the veracity of his memory of the war and its devastating effects. However, Okinawa is “awash with war memorials, war widows, and military bases”⁴⁹ and Medoruma’s fiction derives primarily from first hand accounts from family members and other survivors. Thus,

⁴⁷ Davinder Bhowmik, "Literature as Public Memory in Contemporary Okinawan Fiction," *Japaneseness versus Ryukyuanism*, 8 (2006): 111.

⁴⁸ Marc Auge, *Oblivion*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 88.

⁴⁹ Davinder Bhowmik, "Literature as Public Memory in Contemporary Okinawan Fiction," *Japaneseness versus Ryukyuanism*, 8 (2006):113.

he occupies a position from which he can draw from survivor testimony and first-hand experience as well as the remnants of the battle that can be found in the everyday, haunting the present. Recalling the above discussion of transgenerational trauma, it is apparent that Medoruma Shun's fiction acts as not only an intermediary in the witnessing of the trauma of others, but also as an exorcism of the phantoms that continue to haunt successive generations of Okinawans. In this way, these stories perform the duty of providing witness to the unspeakable accounts of the survivor, allowing them to rid themselves of those hideous memories that would otherwise have consumed their lives; at the same time, they speak to those who survive the survivors, whose duty it is to hear the parts of history that were unaccepted, unfathomable, and left untold, and whose duty it is to remember.

Section 3: Living in the Past, and Other Forms of Trauma

Wo es war, soll ich werden

-Sigmund Freud⁵⁰

At this point we turn directly to the writings, or what I will refer to as *the literature*, of Medoruma Shun in order to pull apart what has been discussed of trauma and memory in the previous section. The literature of Medoruma Shun, as it were, includes short story-fiction as well as nonfiction, and I will try to look at both in a way that does not relegate certain features of writing about trauma to only fiction or as characteristic of only non-fiction, and so forth. I will also try to present his fictional writings as a reflection of his essays and non-fiction in that both are linked by common themes. What I would like to make clear is that Medoruma Shun's literature overall is a "traumatic literature" in that it speaks the trauma (or "traumatic memory") of Okinawa and of Okinawans. What I will do is use three short stories—*Suiteki* ("Droplets"), *Fuon* ("The Crying Wind"), and *Heiwa dori to nadzukerareta machi wo aruite*⁵¹ ("Walking the Street Called Peace Boulevard")—as the locus from which Medoruma Shun's literature can be seen as a sustained work on trauma in Okinawa. I realize that focusing on three short stories appears to go immediately against an indiscriminate reading of fiction and

⁵⁰ Most often translated as "Where it was, shall I become", or some variation thereof. This statement will, I hope, have resounding implications throughout this section in terms of the place of trauma for the individual, and the individual's path to coping with it.

⁵¹ Hereafter referred to as just *Heiwa dori*.

non-fiction as I previously stated was the aim of this section. But the necessary distinction here is that the stories are *not distinct* from the other writings—the fiction is indistinct from the nonfiction. In other words, Medoruma Shun’s stories are what I consider to be a reiteration of reality (or, perhaps instead, an *iteration* of what Lacan calls the *Real*?⁵²) in that his stories are based on survivor accounts passed down to him by relatives that survived the Battle of Okinawa and the frantic end of the oppressive colonial period leading up to it. In his non-fiction he recounts the stories his *fictional stories* are based on—blending the fictional and non-fictional just as he blends reality with fantasy within his stories. This creates what I see as an inextricability that is significant to reading, as mentioned, not only Medoruma’s fiction and/or nonfiction, but his writings altogether as a *traumatic literature*.

The elements of this traumatic literature will provide the structural basis for this section. In what follows we will look at Medoruma’s use of the Okinawan language, his stylistic tendency toward “magic realism”, the theme of the past as an occupying force in the present, as well as guilt, shame, and responsibility as the various ways in which trauma manifests in complex ways throughout the literature. These elements, or

⁵² I have in mind here Slavoj Žižek’s presentation of the complicated relationship of reality and the Real, from *How to Read Lacan* (2006): “if what we experience as ‘reality’ is structured by fantasy, and if fantasy serves as the screen that protects us from being directly overwhelmed by the raw Real, then *reality itself can function as an escape from encountering the Real.*” (emphasis in original, pg. 57). In this manner I want to consider Medoruma Shun’s writing as an attempt toward teasing out the Real that is hidden behind the veil of reality, while at the same time constructing this “Real” in the safe, acceptable context of a fictional reality.

ingredients, will be analyzed individually, but it should become apparent that the elements elide and overlap—each becoming not individual items but an interconnected formation of “expressions” of traumatic memory, or of *struggles to express*. In this sense I would like to propose, as a thought with which to proceed through the exploration that follows, Medoruma Shun’s literature as the end of a latency period in which Okinawan traumatic memory had not been fully or adequately articulated. Although the war has been covered at length in many other sources, Medoruma seems to be one of the first to deal with the deep psychological toll the Battle of Okinawa has had and retains on the individual Okinawan as well as the unsettled nature of Okinawans and Okinawa in a “postwar” Japan. This follows from the brief genealogy presented in the previous section (2-1) in which we placed Medoruma Shun within a growing and ever-changing Okinawan literature. At this point, perhaps it is important to see traumatic literature as itself an element of a greater trauma and the traumatic literature of Medoruma Shun as a signal of the end of a period of latency in which many experiences and memories remained hidden, forgotten, subdued. This point will be taken up later, as will the implications that what might accompany the end of latency could be an explosion—as opposed to a “seeping”—of the past into the present.⁵³

⁵³ We may see examples of this in the form of redoubled but ever-changing activism surrounding the constant efforts of the Japanese and American governments to maintain the U.S. military stronghold primarily on Okinawa.

Before proceeding on to the analysis of the aforementioned elements of trauma, let us first consider where to place the *literature* of Medoruma Shun, and where to place *traumatic literature*. In the previous section we were presented with the problem of classifying literature, and specifically of classifying Okinawan literature as a minority or minor literature. According to the rules laid out by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in “What is a Minor Literature?”⁵⁴ it would seem that Okinawan literature as a Minor Literature is problematic—what is an Okinawan Literature?—but Medoruma Shun’s *traumatic literature* seems to fit the mold. Is it made by a minority in a major language? Yes, Medoruma Shun’s mother tongue is Okinawan, and his work is written mostly in Japanese. But here we run into a problem: Medoruma uses the Okinawan language for the dialog of his Okinawan characters, and a whole section of his blog is written entirely in Okinawan (although using the Japanese writing system, which might suggest either a futility or an appropriation of an erstwhile linguistic tool of aggression). This will be discussed in more detail later not only in terms of the impossibility of classification, but in the implication that this impossibility of classification lends itself to a discussion of traumatic expression.

Second, is it political? Yes, but perhaps not. If we accept that “in *great* [read: not Minor] literatures...the question of the individual (familial, conjugal, etc.) tends to be connected to other, no less individual questions, and the social milieu serves as

⁵⁴ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Robert Brinkley, “What is a Minor Literature?,” *Mississippi Review*, 11, no. 3 (1983): 13-33.

environment and background”⁵⁵ then it could be argued that Medoruma’s literature could, if read outside the context of Okinawa, find itself outside of the “Minor” classification. But at the same time, it cannot—or perhaps *should not*—be read outside of this context, because the “environment and background” is indelibly linked to the individual—it *is* the individual, each individual—in that trauma has bound the individual(s) in Medoruma’s literature to their background, inescapably. In other words, all background, context, has seeped into and invaded the Okinawan psyche. This will not only be taken up later as well, it is the fundamental principle of trauma at which I would like the reader to arrive: trauma occupies the individual, it keeps their vicious past alive and shades their present with it. And the third rule: does it have collective value? Unequivocally yes. What haunts the individual haunts the collective—indeed, haunts anyone connected to or familiar with the Okinawan past—as well to some extent. But the point here is not to apply the rules of Minor Literature to Medoruma Shun in order to find classification for his writing, but to show that within a given classification, or perhaps I should say amongst an array of constituent parts, one theme seems to emerge: trauma.

In a prefatory note to the “What is a Minor Literature?” article cited above, the editor notes from Deleuze and Guattari’s work on Kafka and Minor Literature that “the Castle has many entrances” and that

⁵⁵ Ibid, 16.

Among these entrances, none seems privileged; no sign over the entrance announces that this is the way in. The reader...will choose an opening and map the passage he finds himself following. The map will change if a different entrance is chosen. Of importance, however, is not simply the condition of relativity to which any interpretation is subjected as a result... [but] the political strategy which 'the principle of multiple entries' involves. Multiplicity 'blocks the introduction of the enemy... the attempts to interpret a work which does not offer itself to anything but experimentation',⁵⁶

It is at this point which I think Medoruma Shun's literature is set apart from the classification. It would seem that while this literature does indeed have many entry points (language, magic realism, and the rest of the "elements" to be discussed later) all entrances lead into the same grand hall, not a labyrinth of passageways as the editor suggests. All entries point toward a traumatic memory that occupies the text in not a parasitic but almost symbiotic relationship: the literature is fed and determined by the trauma that was in turn the basis for its creation. The two, I will attempt to reveal, are inseparable.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 13.

Language Barriers

Language plays an important role in Medoruma's literature, and *Suiteki* provides solid examples of this. In *Suiteki*, the reader is treated to a wide range of topics and perspectives by which to view Okinawa, everyday life, and war memory. *Suiteki* is a story about Tokusho, an old man, survivor of the Battle of Okinawa, living in a small, northern Okinawan village. Tokusho is left paralyzed by an unexplainable affliction. His leg swells to the size of a "winter gourd" (*shibui*) and his toe begins to leak lime-tinged water. Each night, as Tokusho lies paralyzed, ghosts of his comrades who died during the Battle of Okinawa enter his room, line up at his bedside, and take turns sucking the water dripping from Tokusho's toe. In the morning they are gone. Early on in the story, after introducing the reader to Tokusho's predicament, we are given a few insights into rural Okinawan life via Medoruma's use of language. The main characters speak the Okinawan language, a form of speech practically incomprehensible even to Japanese readers but for it being written phonetically using the Japanese writing system including Kanji by which some form of meaning can be conveyed. The narration as well includes Okinawan terms to describe geographical features, which Michael Molasky attributes to "a desire to resist those outside forces that threaten to absorb the village into an undifferentiated national culture" and "underscoring the incommensurability of Okinawa's local landscape."⁵⁷ This, whether incidentally or on purpose, on one hand plays into the classification of Okinawan

⁵⁷ Molasky, "Medoruma Shun: The Writer as Public Intellectual in Okinawa Today," 181

literature as “regional” literature (by highlighting regional characteristics most familiar to members of said region); On the other hand, it emphasizes the distinctiveness of the region, and allows the author to impose his own method of classification. In other words, Medoruma could be appropriating the “regional” classification and playing with it by using “regional” characteristics in a story he knows will most likely be read more widely by those outside the region than within it.

The usage of Okinawan language not only sets the Okinawan “tone” of the work, it implies also a certain type of Okinawan; namely, the older and/or rural, more traditional Okinawans of the type that still use Okinawan language in everyday speech and favor traditional over modern methods. Heishiki Busho sums this up nicely (in my translation): “The protagonist is an extremely normal Okinawan villager” who “farms for a living and converses in dialect with his wife, and believes that a university hospital will be ‘the end’ even when afflicted with an unexplainable sickness and would instead rather use folk remedies or a shaman.”⁵⁸ Here Medoruma is constructing a setting around this “everyday Okinawan” protagonist whose veracity in war experience-testimony he will later bring into question. The character Tokusho is most likely based on any number of Okinawans from whom Medoruma has received second-hand testimony, including his own parents. This close attention paid to the language emphasizes the importance of seeing these characters not as Japanese and not as just any Okinawan but as a specific type of

⁵⁸ Heishiki, *Bungaku hiho ha naritatsu ka*, 287

Okinawan, and more specifically a generation that carries the heaviest burden of memory in the post war years.

Still, more than just an attempt at depicting an “authentic” rural Okinawa, Medoruma’s use of the Okinawan language in his literature⁵⁹ is indicative of a deeper issue. The Okinawan language itself is a repressed object, symbolic of a form of subjugation. In the decades before the Battle of Okinawa, speaking the Okinawan language was prohibited along with many other customs deemed backward. During the battle, those caught speaking in Okinawan were often labeled as spies and executed by the Japanese soldiers. As such, the language itself, while it did not disappear completely, saw an increasing dearth of speakers in the postwar period. However, in more recent Okinawan literature and culture, the Okinawan language has seen a resurgence of popularity. In Medoruma Shun’s literature, which is both a testimony to traumatic memory and a symptom of trauma itself, the use of the Okinawan language appears as a sign pointing to something long hidden that is now resurfacing, demanding attention. At the same time, his use of the Okinawan language symbolizes a wound, a suffering that is embodied in the very instrumentalization of Japanese language as a vehicle for Okinawan sounds. The Japanese written language, the erstwhile *standard* of all Japanese, including imperial subjects and minorities, and indeed *any* other written language must be used to

⁵⁹ Writings in the Okinawan language are not limited to Medoruma’s fiction, but can be found in non-fiction works such as *Okinawa sengo zero nen* and an entire section of interviews and essays on his blog.

transmit the Okinawan language, for it never developed a writing system of its own. In this sense, within Medoruma Shun's literature as an *Okinawan literature*, or an Okinawan literature within a *Japanese literature*, the Okinawan language itself, much like Okinawans and Okinawa itself, is bound inextricably to the "greater" Japanese language/nation.

By extension, the Okinawan language as subjugated/repressed, bound to the Japanese language, carries with it the same implications as Okinawan literature bound within Japanese literature. While it could be emphasized that the use of the Okinawan language serves to enhance the Japanese language and enrich Japanese literature, it could also be said that Okinawan pollutes the Japanese. Medoruma Shun considers both of these assertions as two sides of the same coin.⁶⁰ Both assume a standard, higher Japanese language within which the Okinawan language is a marginalized component the actions of which, whether favorable or unfavorable to the Japanese language, are nonetheless subordinated. The inherent violence in this subordinated relationship reveals itself throughout Medoruma Shun's literature.

One example comes from *Fuon*. In this story, Seikichi, an Okinawan villager who, like Tokusho, survived the Battle of Okinawa, is approached by Fujii who has come from the mainland to Okinawa in order to film the "Crying Skull" for a war memorial documentary being produced by the television station where he works. The skull is part of the remains of a Japanese attack pilot who was shot down over Okinawa. The body

⁶⁰ Shun Medoruma, "Ryukyu-Okinawa bungaku," *Bessatsu Kan*, 79, no. 6 (2006): 256,

was retrieved by Seikichi and his father during the battle, placed in an open-air burial site facing the sea, and left to decompose. Years later, when only the bones remain, the wind blowing through a bullet hole in the skull produces a wailing sound that rings throughout the nearby village and, for Seikichi, causes an overwhelming rush of memory that is often painful and incapacitating. However, as Seikichi talks to Fujii, we see a conversation that takes place in two different levels: Seikichi speaks a rougher Japanese than Fujii's polite, "standard" Japanese. As they are speaking, Seikichi becomes at first uncomfortable with Fujii's tone, and then is "irritated with himself for feeling overwhelmed by Fujii's fluent standard Japanese."⁶¹ It would seem that Seikichi is upset at himself, frustrated, for possessing a lesser fluency in Japanese than Fujii. But this assumes that there is a standard, "perfect" form of the language. And by this standard, any deviations, mispronunciations or elisions of syllables, misused grammatical structure, would be attributed to an "Okinawan" style of speaking.

In this way, the very use of language in Medoruma Shun's literature is a depiction of occupation as brought about by the suppression of language and linguistic identity. The Okinawan characters in these stories, the quoted Okinawan speech in interviews and other non-fiction, is often and perhaps deliberately non-standard. The sound of the Okinawan language, where it resembles the Japanese language at all, produces a sense of

⁶¹ Shun Medoruma, "The Wind Sound," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, December 2009, translated by Kyoko Selden and Alisa Freedman.

slurred speech or thickly accented drawl. This contributes to the forming of an Okinawan subordinated to a higher linguistic master, the *standard* Japanese language. The Okinawan speaker, or *attempted* speaker, of the standard Japanese language is thus portrayed as one with an inability to reach the standard. This is, I believe, in a sense representative of the conundrum of the assimilation of Okinawans into the Japanese empire during the early so-called prefectural—perhaps it is best to say “colonial”—period. The goal of “becoming Japanese” was ever unattainable due to the inherent backwardness that was inscribed upon Okinawans by setting them against an impossible—because imagined—*standard*. Yet in Medoruma Shun’s literature, the use of Okinawan language is not merely representative of subjugation—it is symbolic of the function of trauma itself as it seeps, drop by drop like the water that drips off of Tokusho’s toe, onto the page amidst a much more prevalent “normalcy” represented by the Japanese language. It throws off the reader as it ruptures the flow of Japanese words, its seeming incomprehensibility coherent enough to point to something. Like traumatic memory, the Okinawan language here is a repression resurfacing, calling for witness, and seeking articulation.

Magic Realism and Traumatic Reality

Another technique commonly attributed to Medoruma is the use of magical realism or “surrealism.” Medoruma himself has contested this label as he believes it

disregards the “reality this style of literature creates.”⁶² According to Medoruma, “fiction is not something expanding from a far-fetched falsehood. Reality itself is filled with things that are rich and complicated, can surpass our expectations and are often mysterious, and these elements are realized within fiction.”⁶³ This technique seems particularly useful in dealing with representation of trauma and specifically the representing and expression of traumatic memory and experiences of others, which is what Medoruma’s literature endeavors to do. Jenni Adams, referring to Holocaust literature that, like Medoruma’s literature, is challenged with handling respectfully as well as adequately portraying the traumatic experience and the suffering of previous generations, offers a concise appraisal of the value of magic realism: “Magic realism... offers an important strategy in attempts to continue the project of holocaust representation into the post-testimonial era, permitting a form of literary engagement with these events that nevertheless acknowledges its ethical and experiential distance from the real.”⁶⁴ Magic Realism not only provides testimonial, it surpasses this and allows for a personal, almost visceral understanding of traumatic experience and repressed memory that testimony alone cannot provide. Thus

⁶² Ikeda, "Unspoken Memory and Vicarious Trauma: The Battle of Okinawa in the Second-Generation Survivor Fiction of Medoruma Shun", 148

⁶³ Shun Medoruma, and Natsuki Ikezawa, "Zetsubo kara hajimeru," *Bungakukai*, 51, no. 9 (1997), 184, in my translation.

⁶⁴ Jenni Adams, *Magic Realism in Holocaust Literature: Troping the Traumatic Real*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 1-2.

magic realism can assist in the construction of secondary accounts of events as well as in the articulation of the inexpressible element of trauma that surround(ed) these events.

Adams also uses a two part definition of magic realism that proposes both an ontological duality and an acceptance of the seemingly unreal within the text. The former consists of two ontologies: one ontology that appears to mimic reality as a reader might experience it, i.e., a reality that abides by the rules of the universe as we understand them. The second ontology is one that contradicts these rules—the rules of the first ontology—from within the same reality. If we consider this ontological duality within the reality of the text along with the dualistic operation of magic realism according to Adams (proposed in the previous paragraph: specifically that it allows for a freer engagement with traumatic events while simultaneously acknowledging their “distance from the real”) we are presented with an interesting function of magic realism. It would seem that magic realism itself sets up a number of binary dualisms: between real and unreal (or *surreal*), reality and unreality, expressible and inexpressible, and so forth. If magic realism presents a binary in which surreal-ness is presented in seeming opposition, or counter to a proposed reality, and if we recall the previous section’s depiction of the traumatized individual as “marked, cursed” and set apart from (or *against*, in a contentious distrust of) society, we might conclude that magic realism itself is a superbly suitable method for speaking trauma. In other words, the surreal secondary ontology as the traumatic that confronts, opposes,

and occupies the reality of a text. Magic realism becomes a mode by which trauma is inherent and brought to the forefront of a narrative.

The use of this “magic” realism allows Medoruma to seamlessly connect the past and the present, and to viscerally capture individual, subjective reality to contrast with what is perceived. Probably the most direct examples of this are the scenes featuring the ghosts that visit Tokusho nightly throughout *Suiteki*. These are ghosts of Tokusho’s fellow soldiers who died during the battle that Tokusho survived. Not only did they die, their final moments were wrought with agony compounded by lack of, among other things, water. Fetching water was Tokusho’s duty, a duty he readily shirked when moving outside the safety of the cave became next to impossible due to heavy bombardment. Their appearance in the present suggests the still-fresh wounds of the Battle of Okinawa that fester inside Tokusho, and the connection to reality is strengthened as these ghosts drink from the water dripping from Tokusho’s foot. Clearly, the ghosts that haunt Tokusho at night are representative of the ghost of traumatic memory and of shame (at having neglected not only one’s duty but one’s fellow soldiers) that has haunted Tokusho since the war.

The spiritual world and the past are interacting here with the physical world in the present, with the critical connection being the very real water that passes from Tokusho’s swollen foot to the questionably real (in that only Tokusho can perceive them, and at first

thinks he must be dreaming) ghosts of his comrades.⁶⁵ The water is important in that it connects not only Tokusho to a form of unbelievable, inexplicable reality, but it connects the story itself with a reality. Davinder Bhowmik provides further clarification on this point in “Plain Water With A Twist of Lime(Stone),” and goes on to describe the importance of the water itself. The water dripping from Tokusho’s swollen toe, after being inspected, is shown to contain traces of lime. According to Bhowmik’s research, “the properties of water contain an element linked to wartime, namely lime from the many natural limestone caves used for hiding during the Battle of Okinawa.”⁶⁶ One way to read this would be to imagine water as symbolic of Tokusho’s past, repressed and falsified, manifesting in a physical deformity and intensifying to the point that it literally seeps out into the present. The ghosts drinking from this wound—coincident with Tokusho’s initial disbelief, then fear, and finally acceptance and acknowledgement of his visitors’ purpose—is a demonstration of confronting one’s memory and the terrifyingly emotional, sometimes incapacitating process that culminates in nothing more than an

⁶⁵ The use of ghosts presents an intriguing approach to the examination of traumatic memory and its manifestations in literature. Consider also the description of transgenerational trauma in the form of a phantom. Perhaps there is a specific functioning of ghosts when a battle, war, or massacre of some sort becomes the instance of traumatization. For another example of this outside of Okinawa but within the context East Asia see *The Guest* by Hwang Sok Yong. The protagonist in this story, while visiting his hometown in present-day North Korea, is frequently visited by the ghosts of his brother and other friends and relatives who fell victim to the vicious internecine civil conflicts leading up to and continuing throughout the Korean War.

⁶⁶ Davinder Bhowmik, "Plain Water with a Twist of Limestone: Magical Realism in Medoruma Shun," *Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies*, 4 (2003): 313

acknowledgement. Indeed, the final night of Tokusho's affliction, as his toe is being sucked by the ghost of his friend Ishimine (who was left to die while Tokusho ran to safety), Tokusho yells at Ishimine how much he has suffered. This instance is also an admission of guilt, and is coupled with a sexual release as Ishimine finishes the last drops of water, thanks Tokusho, and the ghosts disappear.

While *Suiteki* is considered Medoruma's primary work of magic realist fiction, I would argue that his other stories do not "differ" in any way for their lack of "magic", or their lack of the secondary "surreal ontology." In other words, *Heiwa dori* and *Fuon*, despite a lack of fantastical elements (e.g., the swollen leg, the miracle water), utilize magic realism in its functioning as a means of setting trauma at the forefront of the narrative. In *Fuon*, Seikichi is set apart from the community, like Tokusho, because he suffers a deep trauma from both his experience during the war but also due to his guilt over having "defiled" the spirit of the dead. After placing the body of the downed fighter pilot in an open air grave, the young Seikichi returned later to take a ball pen that he noticed on the corpse earlier. He kept the pen for about thirty years, unable to return it and unable to confront his guilt. But his memory is painfully awakened by the crying of the wind as it blows through the bullet hole in the skull that still rests in the open air grave. This dissociation from the community (which, coincidentally, actually places him closer to Fujii, toward whom he feels opposed, in that Fujii is also suffering a similar dissociation as he struggles with his own conflicted memory of the war) is also what sets

Seikichi apart as one marked by a trauma. Seikichi himself becomes the surreal element, as the bearer of a repressed terrible memory awakened by a crying skull, in opposition to his surroundings, to “reality.” It is in these ways that magic realism—and indeed fiction itself, if we consider Medoruma Shun’s thoughts on magic realism and reality—has the ability to harness the deeply personal side of traumatic memory, and place the trauma itself, as an occupying element, as the central element in narrative.⁶⁷

Marked, Cursed, and Living in the Past

As we have just seen, the surrealist narrative, and fiction itself, provide the author with a way to approach in a new way a topic that has not been covered extensively for a long period of time. Magic realism allows Medoruma to not only highlight trauma and its symptoms within a narrative but also to depart from the standard narrative often based on a chronological timeline or single point in time. Medoruma’s stories, *Suiteki* especially, bring the past and present together, layering them, connecting them; more specifically though, they depict a place and people for whom the past often *is* the present. Although most war stories are inherently speaking of the past while in the present, Medoruma’s stories take the war out of the past and spread it across the present. In other words, Medoruma does not just use characters in the present to discuss an incident in the past;

⁶⁷ Due to the constraints of historical narratives, “official” histories, and other accounts of wartime experience and memory, trauma has not been adequately depicted in this way. For more on this, see Kyle Ikeda “Unspoken Memory and Vicarious Trauma: The Battle of Okinawa in the Second-Generation Survivor Fiction of Medoruma Shun”.

he takes that past incident, and/or the effects it had, and places them physically into the present. The result is a narrative that some scholars argue can revive worn-out memory or memory that has become desensitized from overload.⁶⁸

One important characteristic of trauma as form of living in the past, or as a past that occupies the present, is that of being isolated from a larger group. Recalling the discussion in Section 2 of the traumatized being “no longer the same person, and from the traumatic moment onward they feel that through their trauma ‘they have been set apart and made special... marked, cursed’,”⁶⁹ we can read the ‘marked’ as one who repeatedly lives a horrible past within the present that is commonly shared by the group. But we must also consider the communal aspect of trauma in which a group *within* a group can be marked by a similar experience and thus share a sense of inclusiveness—though not necessarily camaraderie or a happy “togetherness”—that sets them apart from the larger community. Also, according to the theory of transgenerational trauma discussed in section 2 (and that will be further developed later), it is important to keep in mind that the traumatized “community” does not necessarily need to consist of members who each *directly* experienced the initial shocking incident. By extension, can a “place” also be set apart, or ‘marked, cursed’ as well as the individual? I will try to address this as well in this

⁶⁸ Bhowmik, *Writing Okinawa: Narrative Acts of Resistance*, 142

⁶⁹ Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," *American Imago*, 48, no. 4 (1991): 458.

section: how does Medoruma Shun's literature portray an individual, a community, and indeed an Okinawa that is caught in the web of a traumatic past?

First let us consider that Okinawa itself is an island 'marked' by its "traumatization"—indeed a repeated traumatization—over the past century and a half, but reaching a horrifying apex in the life-threatening terror of the Battle of Okinawa. Okinawa was the only part of the Japan and Okinawans the only "Japanese" that suffered a land battle. At the end of the war, the defeated Japanese government allowed the victors to install a military base complex on the tiny island while the mainland began reconstruction. At this point, having been completely devastated during the war, Okinawa was reconstructed as well, but in the trappings of war and militarism. Today not only do bases occupying large sections of the best pieces of land in Okinawa, the military base as well as military training operations take place side by side with Okinawan everyday life. In addition to runways that lie alongside elementary schools and universities and the consequent danger of aircraft or equipment literally plunging into the quotidian reality of school life already exacerbated by the noise of jet engines, Okinawans also need to beware of military explosive ordnance both left underground from the battle and used in everyday training ranges that, like the runways, abut schools and residences.⁷⁰ In this way,

⁷⁰ See Medoruma Shun "Heiwa naki shima de tudzuku 5/15 heiwa koushin" (*Shakai Hyoron* 2009) and *Okinawa sengo zero nen* for more detail on the unusual state Okinawa finds itself in due to live fire training operations, artillery lobbed over highways into the hills of adjacent training ranges causing fires and other environment damage, as well as noise pollution and a myriad forms of military intrusion on the lives of Okinawans.

Okinawa is marked in its uniqueness as a fortress for the U.S. military in the Pacific, and cursed in its subjugated role as victim to the many forms of intrusion into the everyday that the military complex causes.

The continued military presence in Okinawa, beginning with the military government installed by the U.S. following the end of the war and perpetuated by the military base system that has remained in full force ever since, itself constitutes not only an everyday reminder of Okinawa's ongoing past—it *is* a manifestation of the past. Just as the military essentially continues to occupy Okinawa, so the military presence as manifestation of wartime and a militaristic past occupy Okinawans' present. This permeates the fabric of everyday life for the community and the individual, and in Medoruma Shun's literature we find examples of the ramifications of an inability to properly confront such a past and the influence the past exerts on the life of certain individuals. Here, in accordance with Ruth Leys' signification, "[the] experience of trauma, fixed or frozen in time, refuses to be represented *as* past, but is perpetually reexperienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present."⁷¹ *Heiwa dori* is a story about an individual, and elderly Okinawan woman named Uta, who suffers from her experiences during the Battle of Okinawa. During the Battle, starving and hiding in a cave, Uta watched her baby son die of sickness and malnutrition. Now in the present of the story she is presented as a crazed woman constantly hiding in the park from the soldiers she believes are searching

⁷¹ Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 2.

the area, or groping the wares of street-side fruit vendors with feces-stained hands looking for food to bring to her son whom she believes to still be waiting for her in the caves.

It is obvious that Uta is cursed by constantly reliving this terrible past experience in the present, but the reader is not given any indication that she merely has “episodes” in which she briefly revisits her experience before returning to a normal state in the present. When Uta is not depicted in a crazed state, she is sleeping, the only exception being when her grandson, Kaju, decides to run away with her to the caves where she thinks her infant son, long dead, is still waiting. That Uta silently agrees and the two begin to travel northward to the cave is symbolic of her past being her present—she is stuck at the point of traumatic inception, hiding terrified in the caves trying to protect her baby. In a way she never left the caves—actually, within the story her bedroom is described cave-like—so her trip to the caves is really only a return for her. Also symbolic of this is her incomprehensible, almost indifferent interaction with signs of the present. Initially, Kaju and Uta walk Peace Street (literally *Heiwa dori*) toward a bus stop. Uta passes, and sometimes stops to look at, street signs and movie posters, all signaling a present far removed from her wartime experience, but these have no effect on her and she does not seem to process their temporal implication; nor does the bus that they take to reach the caves at the close of the story—Uta cannot get on the bus by herself but is instead helped on by a young woman. Could this not signal her mental subordination to a past that

cannot, or does not allow her to, incorporate these present objects into her reality in some meaningful way? Furthermore, Uta is set apart within the text in that the story is narrated from the perspective of her grandson, Kaju, or her other son Seian, or other non-familial characters. Thus we are not privy to Uta's thoughts, nor is Uta ever a focal point within the text except in regard to the trauma she embodies, that occupies her.⁷²

Similarly suffering the past in the present is Tokusho in *Suiteki*. In *Okinawa Bungaku to iu kuwadate*⁷³, Ikuo Shinjo provides a sophisticated explanation of how the past and present relate in *Suiteki*. According to Shinjo, Tokusho himself seems to be a part of the past existing in the present. Shinjo uses the example of Tokusho as a *shonen*, or "youth," in that, basically, Tokusho has not grown past, or out of, his experiences in the war (in the same way Uta does not seem to have grown past her time hiding in the caves). In other words, his memory has held him back like a weight—specifically the memory of how he left his friend to die. This overwhelming memory has locked Tokusho into the past; although he accumulates years into the present, he does not grow. This is alluded to in the fact that he and his wife have no children, and the only sexual relationship appears between Tokusho and the ghost of his friend Ishimine (who appears the same age as when he died; significantly, while still a *shonen* himself).

⁷² For more on Uta's role within the text as well as the role of perspectives, see Kyle Ikeda "Unspoken Memory and Vicarious Trauma: The Battle of Okinawa in the Second-Generation Survivor Fiction of Medoruma Shun".

⁷³ Ikuo Shinjo, *Okinawa bungaku to iu kuwadate*, (Tokyo: Impact Shuppankai, 2003), 116-140

In this way, Tokusho, and by extension anyone who suffers with traumatic memory in similar ways, is different from society and forced to live the war into the present, continuously, as eventually manifest in his swollen leg. Thus, according to Shinjo, “youth” in *Suiteki* represents a battle with forgetting which makes this a story that transcends temporal and spatial boundaries, placing it in the realm of the omnipresent. Furthermore, Tokusho is removed from the present as the main character, being immobile and more or less inactive in the present of the story. In other words, Tokusho can experience the present (i.e., he can hear people around him and he knows that he is conscious), but he cannot take part in it. The only time throughout *Suiteki* in which the incapacitated Tokusho can be said to have any interaction with his surroundings is when he is visited by the ghosts, who are actually part of the past. Because Tokusho has not “grown” into the present, his experiences are still guided by and in reaction to his past, his memory.

A slightly different approach to Shinjo’s analysis would be to account for the layering of temporalities in the case of Tokusho’s occupation of the past and the present simultaneously. Our attention is drawn to the line of gawkers that form to witness Tokusho’s incredible malady. The lines are explicitly tied to situations in the past where similar lines were formed to receive rations from the military occupier, linking the present and the past in reverse chronological order; or, perhaps more aptly, in a “line.” But *Suiteki* rejects this linear expression of time with the appearance of the ghosts that come to quench their thirst with the water from Tokusho’s foot. Tokusho, although unable to

move or react, can perceive the sensations aroused by the ghosts, symbols of the past, licking his foot, physically, in the present. The surreal becomes normalized and the distinction between reality and the unreal breaks down to the point where Tokusho becomes accustomed to the ghosts and drifts in and out of sleep during their visit. At other times, however, he must root himself in (or perhaps remind himself of his place in) the present, by reciting the lyrics to folk songs, in order to keep from losing his mind.⁷⁴ Instances like this, however—that is, singing folk songs to get his mind away from the situation at hand—could also be seen as a way of avoiding the past, and in doing so denying the present it occupies.

Before moving on, it is important to examine the implications for the future of a past that not only occupies the present but, as shown by Tokusho and Uta, seeps into and intrudes upon the present. These stories are taken from personal accounts of experiences and the effects of the Battle of Okinawa by survivors with whom Medoruma Shun spoke—especially *Heiwa dori*, Uta and her experiences mirroring almost exactly those of Medoruma's own grandmother.⁷⁵ Given these stories' connection with reality, could they not also in turn augur if not influence a future of the effects and expression of trauma on Okinawa? We see traces of this already. In *Fuon*, just as the wind through the bullet hole in a skull pierces the peaceful quiet of a village in Okinawa, recalling the dreadful scenario

⁷⁴ Shinjo, *Okinawa bungaku to iu kuwadate*, 133

⁷⁵ Shun Medoruma, *Okinawa sengo zero nen*, (Tokyo: NHK Publishing, 2005), 81

that brought it there, so does the screech of jets overhead and the rumble of artillery do the same in an Okinawan reality. Just as the past elides, interacts with, and often manipulates the present in the literature of Medoruma Shun, so the past functions in the real Okinawa from which Medoruma's literature derives influence. Or as Christopher Nelson puts it:

In Okinawa, like perhaps anywhere else, the past exists uneasily alongside the present. It can pass unnoticed, occasionally rising for a moment of recognition, slipping away again under the weight of the routine tasks of daily life. And like the unexploded bombs that still lie close to the surface of the Okinawan landscape, it can erupt into the present, casting its shadow over a future not yet experienced. Memories, wrenching and traumatic, can tear the fabric of the everyday, plunging those who experience them into despair and even madness⁷⁶

This idea of the past exploding into the present has very real implications not only for the bombs that do, occasionally, explode from the landscape, but also for the traumatic past that explodes from the individual. One manifestation of this is the madness of Uta—smearing feces all over the fruit stalls as she frantically tries to procure food for her long dead child, all while hiding from soldiers. Another possible scenario comes from the next generation in the form of retaliation. One example is of Kaju, Uta's grandson. As the

⁷⁶ Christopher Nelson, "In the Middle of the Road I Stand Transfixed," *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present*, ed. Maria Hohn and Seungsook Moon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 280.

Crown Prince and Princess are scheduled to arrive in Okinawa for a blood drive, the secret police make preparations for their procession through the streets of Naha. One officer is assigned to Kaju's family, and specifically to ensure that Uta is locked in her room and unable to disrupt the procession. Incensed by the treatment of his grandmother, Kaju determines to spit on the Prince's vehicle as it passes him. His explosive retaliation is undermined, however, by Uta herself, who was able to escape her room and retaliate on her own, by breaking out of the crowd and smacking her feces-stained hands on the Prince's car.

Is it possible, or even likely, that an oppressive, traumatic past can occupy the present in a way that manifests as explosive retaliation? The opening story in the first section shows us the example of William Board by an Okinawan man furious over the attempted rape of his younger sister. This is but one example, and exceptional in that Okinawans have not been known for their retaliation even in the face of almost routine abuse by U.S. service members. But perhaps this signals a period of latency, and the activism of Okinawans who are not content to suffer the plague of military bases and base-related incidents on their island—as it grows slowly more virulent⁷⁷--is a sign of an

⁷⁷ Here I am thinking of recent postings on Medoruma Shun's blog "Uminari no shima kara" (<http://blog.goo.ne.jp/awamori777>) regarding the ongoing protest of new base construction (and the consequent environmental damage it causes) in northern Okinawa. In the posts, Medoruma enjoins protestors to protest in a way that truly expresses their anger and anti-base sentiment, in a way that makes the bases a liability for the U.S. so that they are forced to remove them. Erstwhile protest in the form of chanting and formal gatherings, he believes, will only be scoffed at and nothing will change.

explosion of the traumatic past not from the individual but from the community.

Medoruma Shun proposes an extreme retaliation in his short story "Hope." The setting is an Okinawa on military lockdown as authorities look for the murderer of a three year old American child. A note left by the killer proclaims that "What Okinawa needs now is not another thousand member protest, nor the gathering of tens of thousands, but the death of but one American child." The narrator, shortly after, reveals himself to be the killer, and his plan to kill a child developed as a result of his disgust over the uselessness and powerlessness of a protest demonstration following another incident caused by a service member (alluding to the mass demonstration following the 1995 rape incident). What Medoruma seems to be proposing here is not necessarily the actual killing of a child as a form of retaliation, but a consideration of the seeming uselessness of protests as they exist on Okinawa, the need for new activism, and perhaps even the repercussions for a failure to attend to the past. Surely the killing, and "eye for an eye," would not usher in the "new beginning" as discussed in a previous section, but merely perpetuate the past in an ongoing pattern of violence. However, the idea itself, the fact that this idea was written into existence, speaks to the manipulative nature of repressed memory and the gruesome possibilities of a trauma left unacknowledged.

Repression, Denial, Responsibility, Guilt

Another significant theme that Medoruma deals with in his literature is repressed and silenced memory, and especially the way one can be affected by guilt, shame, or

regret because of troublesome memories. Many of Medoruma's works deal with memory left silent, that slowly eats away at the owner until it cannot be withheld any longer; and through examining this suffering individual and his dealing with memory, Medoruma offers an analysis of the individual's responsibility to a public memory, or communal history, of the legacies of the Battle of Okinawa. *Suiteki* provides a useful example of an individual wrought with painful memory but also, as Kyle Ikeda carefully notes, acts in contrast as it deals with the "practice of publicly narrating war."⁷⁸ Tokusho's war experiences are, for the most part, well known throughout the community. He is often invited to speak at schools or memorial events to commemorate the battle, and has gotten so used to the "ritual" that he knows how to tell the story the way the audience wants to hear it. Part of his anguish is at being able to use and profit from the suffering of others. But it is also because he does not share his personal memories of the war, the *true* memories in which he failed to bring water to his dying fellow soldiers, and later left his wounded friend to die. Thus, his memory consists of a construct, made for the public, while the truth is covered up and hidden. The repression of his truth, which consequently is the denial of witness to the experiences he cannot articulate, continues to eat at him until he arrives in the present of the story and finds himself paralyzed and forced to confront the past in the form of his ghostly visitors.

⁷⁸ Ikeda, "Unspoken Memory and Vicarious Trauma: The Battle of Okinawa in the Second-Generation Survivor Fiction of Medoruma Shun, 79

This falsifying of his wartime experience not only covers up the truth, keeping it hidden from the listeners but also, importantly, from Tokusho himself, is itself a symptom of his traumatic memory. He knows he is lying, or at least putting a more appealing spin on the truth, but he cannot bring himself to tell what really happened. Part of that is guilt, but also an inability to honestly see the truth himself. In other words, the trauma is the lie and the lie is the trauma. The lie only exacerbates his grief, but the more he feels himself unable to lie any longer, the harder it becomes for him to tell, and to confront, the truth. From Tokusho's wife's perspective, another way to look at Tokusho's conundrum is that speaking his trauma at all, whether fabricated or not, is a lie.⁷⁹ This is in keeping with the functionality of traumatic memory. Its incepting event is so shocking that "the mind is split or dissociated...as a result, the victim is unable to recollect and integrate the hurtful experience in normal consciousness" and is instead "haunted or possessed by intrusive traumatic memories."⁸⁰ So not only is Tokusho unable to speak his true experience, instead of suffering in silence he creates a palatable story that he can share with the community. The more he tells the story, the more proficient he becomes in entertaining an audience, under the guise of conveying traumatic experience. It is interesting that sharing his wartime experience—even if it is not entirely true—would be so destructive. But his story's fluidity, its articulation itself is the problem—what he should be sharing is a

⁷⁹ Shun Medoruma, and Natsuki Ikezawa, "Zetsubo kara hajimeru," *Bungakukai*, 51, no. 9 (1997), 183.

⁸⁰ Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 2.

disjointed account of an experience he himself cannot detail in an attempt to *arrive at articulation*. If, as Slavoj Žižek⁸¹ posits, the “factual deficiencies of the traumatized subjects report on [his] experience bear witness to the truthfulness of [his] report, since they signal that the reported content ‘contaminated’ the manner of reporting it,” then we can assume Tokusho’s fluency in recounting his experience is nothing more than a disavowal, or subjugation, of the truth.

The repression of a traumatic truth has repercussions from the passive to the violent, and for the individual as well as the community. In *Fuon*, Seikichi’s experiences during the war, as well as his guilt over having stolen a pen from a corpse (and thus defiled its spirit), are left locked inside of him. He speaks to no one about it. In *Heiwa dori*, Uta’s traumatic memory is only apparent in its expression through her unusual actions—otherwise she doesn’t speak of it, or at all. In contrast to these individuals are Tokuichi, in *Fuon*, and Sotoku in *Heiwa dori*. Both characters represent a pathological selective forgetting of the events of the Battle of Okinawa so that what remains is little of the truth of personal memory and the complexity of emotions that color each individual’s experience. Tokuichi is a well-off member of the community, well-educated before the battle and assigned to a higher-level post than the poorer Seikichi, who spent the battle running and hiding. Tokuichi has decided to sponsor a film crew from the mainland to come down and take footage of the crying skull for a war memorial documentary, but he

⁸¹ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence*, (New York: Picador, 2008), 4.

secretly hopes that the exposure will bring tourists and their money to the rural northern village he and Seikichi live in.⁸² Sotoku, despite having lost most of his family in the war, has come into wealth from having his land rented by the U.S. military via the Japanese government. In *Heiwa dori*, he goes from door to door passing out Japanese flags to be waved from the side of the street as the Crown Prince and Princesses processional passes. Both not only disavow the circumstances wrought on the island by the Japanese and the U.S. military but replace the silence that remains with self-interest and patriotism. This forced dissociation of the truth, or of a valid experience, and a publicly acceptable, if false, truth, is symbolic of the dissociative effects of traumatic experience and could be considered as influenced by the same. The betrayal of the truth here, it should be noted, may not be intentional, but more so a defense mechanism of traumatic repression—regardless of this, the consequences are the same.

The stories of Seikichi and Uta, as well as Tokuichi and Sotoku in contrast, call into question the same responsibility of the individual and the community to handle fragile memory as is raised in *Suiteki*, which becomes a criticism of the construction of public

⁸² Within Medoruma Shun's literature, the media is always portrayed as an exacerbating agent within the narrative. In *Suiteki* the local news outlets interview Tokusho, allowing him to spread his fabricated version of his experiences during the war. In *Mabuigumi* (*Spirit Stuffing*, translated by Kyle Ikeda), a film crew from the mainland is invited to document a strange occurrence in which a giant crab inhabits the mouth of a local man who has lost consciousness—the film crew startles the crab and it gets stuck in the man's throat. This criticism of the media is apparent in Medoruma's nonfiction as well and would provide an interesting point of analysis beyond the scope of this thesis.

memory, and the treatment of memory as something of a commodity. Tokusho's increasing experience at storytelling is apparent in that he becomes able to read his audience and respond accordingly, giving them exactly what they want—even if the reality of the memory needs to be adjusted in the process. Through this process, a standard memory comes to be accepted, leaving deviations from that standard a problem for owners of memory that does not fit the norm. Michael Molasky offers the problem of memory in Okinawa as such:

“While oral histories can restore perspectives occluded by more conventional sources, they can also end up ... sanctioning misleading and self-serving personal narratives. Precisely because public memory in Okinawa is valued for challenging the hegemony of Japan's national war narrative, it is easy to overlook how Okinawans have constructed their own public memory in part through dubious testimony. [*Suiteki*] thus offers a critique of Okinawans' desire for a relatively painless public memory ... that permits cathartic tears without recurring nightmares.”⁸³

It is apparent that Medoruma is pushing for honest reflection and the necessity of dealing with the past, but in order to do so he is calling into question responsibility during the war. But, here again, Medoruma takes a different stance than his predecessors. He is not questioning Japan's responsibility for the war as a nation, nor the

⁸³ Molasky, "Medoruma Shun: The Writer as Public Intellectual in Okinawa Today," 184

leaders that drove the country into war. While the “blame” for traumatic and terrifying experience could be attributed to outside agents (i.e., the nation, the government, etc), Medoruma is highlighting the individuals responsibility as well. Heishiki Busho elaborates on this point in *Bungaku hihyo ha naritatsu ka*. Up to the point when *Suiteki* was published, the role of the individual civilian during and after the war was left unquestioned; the individual was at most considered an innocent pawn, involuntarily thrust into wartime conditions. Instead, the national government and those high-level decision makers and people “in-charge” became targets of criticism. While there is merit to analyzing the responsibility of the nation in exposing its people to the horrors of war and forcing them to participate, *Suiteki* turns the critique toward the individual. Busho says that the act of making Tokusho’s swollen leg release water for the sole purpose of relieving thirsty battlefield ghosts clearly makes this story a statement about the responsibility of the member of the nation instead of the nation itself. Medoruma is raising the issue of one’s actions during the war and lifestyle in the “postwar” period. It becomes a question of personal ethics and morality, and also the responsibility toward memory. It is not a question of how the intellectual, or the villager, or any specific type of individual following a given ideology would conduct his or herself during a war; but only, according to Busho, how a “naked human being under extreme circumstances” would react.⁸⁴ In the case of Tokusho, an average Okinawan villager, we see an individual

⁸⁴ Heishiki, *Bungaku hihyo ha naritatsu ka*,287

driven to the point where his own safety becomes paramount. Overtaken by fear, he neglects his duties (i.e., bringing water to his dying comrades), and in a final act of desperation, leaves his mortally wounded friend to die alone so that he, Tokusho, can catch up with a small band of survivors heading for what they think will be the safety of the coast. Along the way, Tokusho hears the blasts of grenades used by other Okinawans and Japanese soldiers killing themselves lest they be taken hostage by the approaching Americans. He selfishly berates these individuals, fearing that their “noise” will draw the attention of the enemy and imperil him as well.

This lack of responsibility, this inability to confront and release oneself from the grip of traumatic tension manifests itself through anguish and the guilt of the individual, and often occurs as a form of punishment, as in *Suiteki*. However punishment, anguish, anxiety, and other variations of neuroses are all in some way derived from an intrinsic sense of guilt.⁸⁵ This guilt is developed as a result of traumatization, either as a guilt over having survived a life-threatening event, guilt based on the dissociation of oneself from a reality, or guilt over the inability to confront or handle a terrible memory that begs to break out but does not allow itself to. This is why, for example, Seikichi is struck with

⁸⁵ I am not speaking here of the commonly used notion of a “guilty conscience” but instead basing this idea on Freud’s position of guilt as a “production of culture” and an inherent, primal element in human nature, responsible for “civilization and its discontents”. This comes, of course, from *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). Freud believed that this sense of guilt “remains to a great extent unconscious, or comes to expression as a sort of uneasiness or discontent for which other motivations are sought”. I would like to extend this to trauma, and guilt as a derivative function of trauma manifest in many ways (psychosis, anxiety, grief, sadness, etc.)

discomfort, literal pain, when he hears the sound of the crying skull. It calls out not only to recall his memory but almost as if to chastise himself for carrying such a memory. It is also the reason Seikichi holds onto the pen he took from the attack pilot's corpse and cannot tell anyone about it nor get rid of it. The pen, like the moaning of the skull, becomes an object of his traumatic memory, laden with all the guilt it brings. Thus he cannot share this pen with anyone—most of the time he hides it from himself, only to bring it out at different times.

This story is based on a personal experience Medoruma Shun had when his grandmother showed him a U.S. military hat she had kept ever since the war. The hat belonged to her son, Katsuya, who was fond of wearing it; he died shortly after the war much the same way as Uta's son in *Heiwa dori*. The grandmother had held onto this hat for decades and finally approached Medoruma to express her desire to have it buried with her. When she passed away and he told the family about her wish to be buried with the hat, the family was shocked. Not only had they never known about the hat, it was the only remaining object that gave any indication of Katsuya's existence—no photos remained. Surely this keepsake had powerful sentimental value for the grandmother⁸⁶, which is why she chose to have it with her even in death. But it also signals the expression of traumatic guilt—perhaps the guilt over losing a child—in the form of a memory object that has remained repressed and hidden from even those closest to the

⁸⁶ Shun Medoruma, *Okinawa sengo zero nen*, (Tokyo: NHK Publishing, 2005), 75.

one who possesses it. This memory so fragile yet so wrenching had to be taken to the grave if not confronted in life for it was still an occupying part of the grandmother's existence. It possessed her and, perhaps naturally, would continue to possess her throughout eternity.

The occupying nature of trauma and its expression through guilt is intricately tied to a communal and transgenerational functionality of trauma in *Heiwa dori*. Fumi is a street vendor and longtime friend of Uta's. Uta is something of a protective older sister to Fumi, and helped her set up her stall and protected her from extortion in the early years after the war. As Fumi recalls Uta's experiences during the war—starving, near-death, shell-shocked from constant bombardment, and losing her son—she begins to internalize the account and loses the ability to discern between experience as something belonging to Uta and something belonging to herself. She feels as though it all happened to her, but does not understand why and cannot shake the grief that accompanies these memories that are not even her own. Similarly, Uta's grandson Kaju finds himself tormented by what he thinks the poor treatment of his grandmother, who is to be locked in her room so that she cannot disrupt the Crown Prince's procession with her psychotic outbursts. Actually, Kaju is haunted by the ghosts that occupy Uta's silence about the war, a silence in stark contrast to her vivid episodes that blatantly signal traumatic memory that she apparently does not attend to when lucid and conscious. Kaju breaks the lock off of Uta's door, meant to keep her hidden in her cave-like room,

and in his distress stabs himself in the arm with the nail from the door lock, drawing blood. He then concocts a plan to spit on the Crown Prince's car as it passes down Peace Boulevard.

The community, lined up along Peace Boulevard awaiting the procession, is perhaps still in a period of traumatic latency. They stand and wave Japanese flags, symbols of the empire and of the Crown Prince who will soon pass before them. The Prince is visiting in support of a blood drive in which Okinawa is said to have one of the highest donation levels in all Japan. These Okinawans, succeeding a generation that also sacrificed large amounts blood for the emperor during a battle brought to their island, stand on the street and crane their necks in anticipation as the sleek black vehicles approach in convoy. All the while excited to receive recognition from the imperial palace in the form of a visit by the Crown Prince and Princess, and on the other hand anxious under the pressure of the vast security measures taken, the plainclothes special police patrolling the masses, these individuals watch in awe as something unspeakable occurs. As if the veil of silence meant to cover the past began to slip, revealing the façade beneath, a disheveled old woman bursts from the crowd barely clothed and charges the Crown Prince's vehicle. Hands covered in her own excrement, she pounds on the vehicle repeatedly, smearing shit on the windows and doors as the shocked royalty stare out in horror from inside the cab. She is finally taken to the ground by several police officers—it takes more than one because she is surprisingly strong despite her age—and restrained,

then pushed back into the crowd. She returns home and eventually she is forgotten, perhaps only to reveal herself suddenly later on—such is the nature of traumatic memory. But she, like the terrible past, cannot lie dormant forever without a difficult toll on society. She is the collective unconscious that speaks out, cries out, not to be healed but to be understood and acknowledged. There is no healing, only acceptance. *Woe es war, sol lich warden*. What Uta represents—indeed what Tokusho and Seikichi and Medoruma Shun’s literature itself represents—is an unconscious trauma, an “unbearable truth” that we cannot attempt to repair, only “learn to live with.”⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Slavoj Zizek, *How to Read Lacan*, (New York: Norton, 2006) 3.

Conclusion

It was probably a Friday night and most likely around 8 p.m. that Tim, Sarith and I stood in the parking lot of our barracks waiting for the taxi we had just called. We were young Marines on Okinawa, and the long, hot workday was over, as was another week of unrelentingly boring work and early morning physical training. All that was on our minds was getting to *Fujiyama*, a local rock bar, as soon as possible to have some drinks, listen to some music, and forget about the overwhelming dullness that would return the following week. And so we found ourselves waiting in the parking lot as the sun went down. The taxi rounded the corner and approached us altogether too slowly. This was cutting into drinking time. Frustrated, we got into the taxi. Tim didn't remember the name of the bar, so he tried to give the driver directions in the slow, childlike English that Americans believe all foreigners understand. The driver didn't understand. He repeated each word slowly, carefully, and incorrectly. He had no idea where we wanted to go. As I tried to muster the courage to try out some of the Japanese I had just started learning, Tim lost his mind and blurted out, "Goddamnit! These people want to work on an American base, why the fuck don't they learn English!" I was dumbfounded by this comment and the irony of it coming from someone of Mexican descent. I fumbled through some directions in Japanese, putting the driver out of his misery, and we found our way to the bar before they ran out of liquor.

Tim's comment haunted me. All other memory of that night was washed away by rum and coke, but I clearly recall grappling with the implications behind expecting *our* Okinawan driver to speak English if he wanted to work on *our* base. It would be a few years before I would dedicate myself to seriously studying the Japanese language and Okinawan culture, but I believe that this incident was the catalyst that set me on the course to where I am today. The questions still plague my mind: *Why are we (Marines, Americans) on Okinawa? Why do purportedly friendly relations between America and Japan not usually manifest as such on the ground, on the individual level, in Okinawa?*⁸⁸ *Why should it have naturally been expected that an Okinawan taxi driver on Okinawa speak English, when nearly no Americans on Okinawa take the initiative to learn any Japanese?* These eventually lead to more nuanced ponderings into the distinctiveness of Okinawans within Japanese history, as well as the deep, lingering effects of a battle that occurred over sixty years ago, the latter I knew about only due to its significance in Marine Corps history. The U.S. serviceman on Okinawa may have a different historical perspective on the events that transpired between April and June of 1945, but the battle was no less traumatic for the Americans involved. At the end of the war and the announcement of Japanese surrender, a Marine on Okinawa recalled "Sitting in stunned

⁸⁸ Refer to *Blowback* by Chalmers Johnson for an overview of the consequences of the U.S. presence in Okinawa. Johnson also criticizes the still popularly held belief that the U.S. presence on Okinawa is favorable in terms of the money and jobs generated by the base complex, and that removing the bases would leave the Okinawan economy devastated. Tourism, Johnson contends, is the primary economy of Okinawa, and the military base presence actually undermines what could be a far more profitable tourist industry.

silence...so many dead. So many maimed... So many dreams lost in the madness that had engulfed us. Except for a few widely scattered shouts of joy, the survivors of the abyss sat hollow-eyed and silent, trying to comprehend a world without war.”⁸⁹ In terms of trauma, Americans involved in the battle are equally cursed to share in the communal experience of dealing with the “madness” of the past.

If we consider the nature of transgenerational trauma, and the family-like structure of the U.S. military system, could it be said that the traumatic experience of past battles is in some way shared by the young serviceman who has yet to acquire firsthand experience, and is perpetuated by the system itself? New Marines are inculcated with Marine Corps history from the beginning of their training. They are taught of battles, victories, and heroic actions, but what is left out of all of this is the personal toll on the individual as well as the destructive effects Marines of the past have had on their enemies and victims. Perhaps this cannot be taught, or that trying to teach it would undermine the physical and psychological “hardening” Marines must undergo in training. But is something not spoken through this maintained silence? Does the “phantom” not get passed on in some way to successive generations, along with customs and traditions? Although beyond the scope of this thesis, it should at least be addressed that a fuller investigation into traumatic memory in Okinawan history and literature would surely need

⁸⁹ E.B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

to take into consideration the *complicity* of U.S. (and Japanese) actors in the initial instance of traumatic inception. Not only from the standpoint of Okinawans as victims of the U.S. and Japanese who conducted, as if from outside, the horrifying events of the Battle of Okinawa, but as Americans, Japanese, and Okinawans all caught up in the “abyss” and left “marked, cursed” by their experiences there.

In this way I hope to have made clear that the locus for all trauma in the study of Okinawan history and literature is the Battle of Okinawa. In the literature of Medoruma Shun, characters and subjects are laden with the memory of terrible experiences that all rotate endlessly around the axis of this overwhelming event. In the same way that “all roads lead to Rome,” all of the elements of trauma we have discussed, the deformity of both the landscape of Okinawa as well as the landscape of the Okinawan conscious all take root in the battle. In other words, everything before the battle was leading up to it, and everything after can be reduced to a result, a consequence, an “aftermath” which continues unabated into the present. It was to this realization that I arrived, after a circuitous intellectual journey kicked off, I still believe, by a thoughtless comment made by a friend toward an Okinawan taxi driver. Wanting to explore further into the area of trauma, traumatic memory in narrative, and the psychological manifestations of repressed experience led me to take on the study of Medoruma Shun’s writings on the everyday effects of the Battle of Okinawa, which has culminated in this thesis. I envision this study not as a comprehensive account of trauma in Medoruma Shun’s literature, nor as an

authoritative essay on trauma theory and memory and narrative, but merely as an elucidation on an issue that seems to be only now beginning: the end of a period of latency in which Okinawan history and the effects of colonialism, subjugation and war were not adequately addressed, the manifestations of which took the form of explosions of protest intermixed with pernicious though often silent discontent; and the beginning of an examination of the traumatized individual and/or group and the realization of the necessity for new avenues by which to approach the problems that face Okinawa as a result of deep-seated traumatic memory.

This thesis has attempted to expand upon but also diversify existing discourse in Okinawan studies regarding literature and memory. I have relied heavily on the work of Kyle Ikeda, who examines specifically “Vicarious Trauma” in Medoruma Shun’s literature which is constructed primarily of second-hand accounts of the Battle of Okinawa and the experiences of an Okinawan living amongst the ubiquitous reminders of the war that are still visible in Okinawa: crime/rape incidents, children of mixed ancestry, the numerous peace memorials and activities, and the military base complex itself to name but a few. I have tried to expand upon Ikeda’s work by exploring the interaction between Medoruma Shun’s fiction and non-fiction, and between his literature and the reality of Okinawa, with each being a reflection of each other. Christopher Nelson’s work on memory and performance as a form of coping with said memory in postwar Okinawa has been equally helpful in guiding my thinking about the manifestation of trauma and the effects of history

and memory. Here I have tried to use this discourse to specifically examine Medoruma Shun's literature—perhaps itself as a form of performance—as a way Okinawans can confront and learn to acknowledge and cope with a traumatic past. My hope is that I have at least demarcated a “common ground” between their respective discourses that does not attempt to contend or take a critical stance but only equally support both while opening up a new discourse as a result. In the end, however, the intention of this thesis has all along been, in some small way, to simply shed more light on the “situation” in Okinawa. Medoruma Shun's literature, I feel, provides a more than adequate vehicle by which to consider Okinawa as place traumatized, cursed to live in a continuous past, forced to remain under foreign military occupation—not matter how ostensibly benevolent the attitude of this foreign force, it's complicity in the shocking events of the Battle of Okinawa leave both sides stunned. There is a heavy antagonism that seems to still possess both sides, despite the auspices of friendly relations. Okinawans find themselves in the middle of this: secondary citizens according to the Japanese and members of the erstwhile enemy to the American unfamiliar with the history; either way, not quite welcome in their own home.

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