

University of Vermont

ScholarWorks @ UVM

---

UVM Honors College Senior Theses

Undergraduate Theses

---

2015

## The Forest in the Depths of Her Eyes: Sayoko's Silence and Art-Making as a Reparative Force in Medoruma Shun's Me no oku no mori

Alisa Holm

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/hcoltheses>

---

### Recommended Citation

Holm, Alisa, "The Forest in the Depths of Her Eyes: Sayoko's Silence and Art-Making as a Reparative Force in Medoruma Shun's Me no oku no mori" (2015). *UVM Honors College Senior Theses*. 94.  
<https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/hcoltheses/94>

This Honors College Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Theses at ScholarWorks @ UVM. It has been accepted for inclusion in UVM Honors College Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UVM. For more information, please contact [donna.omalley@uvm.edu](mailto:donna.omalley@uvm.edu).

**The Forest in the Depths of Her Eyes:  
Sayoko's Silence and Art-Making as a Reparative Force  
in Medoruma Shun's *Me no oku no mori***

An Honors College Thesis  
by Alisa Holm  
The University of Vermont  
December, 2015

Thesis Examination Committee:  
Kyle Ikeda, Ph.D., Advisor  
Jennifer Dickinson, Ph.D., Chairperson  
Sarah E. Turner, Ph.D.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis provides a literary analysis of an important novel by Okinawan writer Medoruma Shun, *Me no oku no mori* (In the Woods of Memory, 2009), a work which makes a significant contribution to the international body of trauma literature about war survivors, in this case first and second generation survivors of the Battle of Okinawa whose psyches have been deeply affected by the Asia-Pacific War over the course of sixty years after its official end in 1945. This examination adds a new perspective to previous literary analyses and critical discussions of the novel, by focusing on artistic expression and its ability to act as a reparative force, as revealed by Medoruma's depiction of Sayoko, a wartime rape survivor suffering seemingly permanent psychological damage, who engages her past through artwork. I argue that art-making serves a vital, reparative purpose, allowing Sayoko to confront, articulate, and transmit aspects of her traumatic experiences that cannot be easily linguistically coded. I suggest an analysis of the poetic essentiality of the title of the novel and its connections to hidden memory, the gaze, eye contact or aversion, and perspective as a starting point for understanding how while art can serve as a tool for healing, Sayoko also faces numerous limitations in making her traumatic memory known.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of my understanding of Okinawa was the result of spending time in Naha and Ginowan and visiting Yagaji and Zamami Islands in June 2015. I am grateful for the help of my parents for making the trip possible. I am indebted to Matsunaga Mitsuo and his daughter who showed me various caves, memorials, and other historic sites in Okinawa. I am also grateful to Iha Eriko, who helped me to understand the works of art at the Sakima Art Museum.

I would like to thank Takuma Sminkey, the author of the translation of *Me no oku no mori*. If it were not for being introduced to your translation in Ikeda Sensei's class, I would probably never been inspired to write this paper. Also, thank you for helping me to understand this novel on a deeper level.

I would also like to show gratitude to Professors Jennifer Dickinson and Sarah E. Turner not only for their support in reviewing my thesis, but for their inspiring enthusiasm for the subjects that they teach.

Most of all, I would like to thank my faculty advisor Professor Kyle Ikeda for his assistance and dedicated involvement in the creation of my thesis. Ikeda Sensei, thank you very much for your support and understanding over these past few years. Your courses have opened my eyes to new ways of perceiving the world.

2015年の6月に、私は卒業論文の研究の為に沖縄に行きました、これを実現させてくれた父と母に心から感謝の言葉をこの場を借りて送ります。沖縄という場所や社会を、那覇と宜野湾で過ごし、屋我地島や座間味島を訪れることで理解を深めました。

沖縄で生活をしていた期間中、出会った全ての人々に感謝の意を表したいと思います。中でも松永さんと娘さんのお二人に対し、とても恩を感じています。お二人には様々な洞窟や記念碑、歴史のある場所を見せて頂きました。それと、佐喜眞美術館の美術展示品を理解する際、伊波さんにとってもお世話になりました。

「眼の奥の森」の英語翻訳版を出版した作家琢磨素民喜さんにも感謝しています。この本に池田先生の授業で出会えていなければ、この論文を書くきっかけは生まれなかったでしょう。この書籍を深く理解する際に、助言をして頂いた事に、深く感謝しています。

委員会の一員であるディキンソン先生とターナー先生にも論文の審査の支持だけではなく、教えている科目への情熱にも感謝しています。

何よりも、支援と献身をして頂いた私の指導教師である池田教授に心から感謝申し上げます。池田先生、ここ数年に渡り、サポートと理解を示してくださり、心からありがとうございます。先生の学科が、私に新しい世界に気が付けるきっかけを作ってくれました。

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>CHAPTER ONE: The Islands of Okinawa 1945 / 2015</b> .....	6
1.1 Summer, 1945 .....	6
1.2 70 Years After the War .....	8
1.3 Medoruma Shun and Memories Inherited .....	9
<b>CHAPTER TWO: The “Eye” in the Title <i>Me no oku no mori</i></b> .....	12
2.1 The Storage of Memories at the Back of the Eye .....	12
2.2 The Eye and Nonverbal Communication .....	13
2.3 The Eye and Artwork .....	15
<b>CHAPTER THREE: Sayoko’s Silenced Voice</b> .....	17
3.1 The Impact on the Community .....	18
3.2 Compounded Violation, Re-Victimization and Abuse.....	20
3.3 Dangerous Coping Mechanisms .....	22
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: Sayoko’s Voice Emerges</b> .....	28
4.1 Sayoko’s Drawings as Restorative Sequence .....	28
4.2 Environments and Mediums .....	37
4.3 Articulation versus Transmission.....	40
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: A Multiplicity of Memories as Kaleidoscopic Image</b> .....	42
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	46
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	48

## INTRODUCTION

戦争でね、たくさんの人が死んだりだけじゃなくて、生き残った人の中にもね、ずっと苦しんでいる人がいるんだよ。そのお姉さんにとってはね、その人の家族にとってもね、戦争はまだ終わってないかもしれないさ・・・・・・・・。 <sup>1</sup>

Sensō de ne, takusan no hito ga shindari dake janakute, ikinokotta hito no naka ni mo ne, zutto kurushindeiru hito ga irundayo. Sono onesan ni totte wa ne, sono hito no kazoku ni totte mo ne, sensō wa mada owattenai kamoshirenaisa.....

In war, you see, it's not just that many lives are lost. The lives of the survivors are often ruined, too. For that girl and her family, the war still isn't over . . . <sup>2</sup>

*Me no oku no mori* is a novel of rape, retaliation, and recurrence. It is about a war that has never ended in the minds of the survivors and subsequent generations. Written by award-winning author Medoruma Shun and published in 2009, the story is set on a small island in northern Okinawa where an entire village becomes immersed in the chaos of war. Ten distinct chapters are narrated through various points of view, from the perspectives of the victims to those of the perpetrators. Set against the backdrop of the first and last site of land warfare with the presence of a large civilian population in Japan during Asia-Pacific War, the Battle of Okinawa of 1945, each chapter reveals scenes of the horrific experiences witnessed by individuals during the war as well as the turbulent memories that haunt them sixty years later. Namely, the novel presents characters who are involved in, witness, or hear about two key violent events that are presented in its first chapter: the rape of young Sayoko by four American soldiers and the subsequent retaliatory attack on them by a single villager, Seiji. Under the surface of all the madness is the tragic tale of poor Sayoko, who faces ostracization from her community, re-victimization by villagers, and abuse by her father, causing her to suffer from seemingly permanent psychological damage. As a result, she turns to despair-driven coping mechanisms of dissociation and self-harm.

This is not a story without hope, however. Amidst the darkness shines the light of healing and recovery for survivors. At an institution in southern Okinawa, far away from the American military bases of the north, Sayoko gains the strength to confront her past. Gray-haired and with

---

<sup>1</sup> Shun Medoruma, *Me no oku no mori* (Tokyo: Kageshobo, 2009), 175.

<sup>2</sup> Shun Medoruma, *Me no oku no mori*. Translated by Takuma Sminkey as *In the Woods of Memory*. Unpublished Manuscript, last modified December 3, 2015, 97

her mind grown weary after years of pain and suffering during and after the war, she is spurred by the suggestion of her health caretaker to wield paper and crayons as the tools to express her emotional world in a way that is both physically and mentally safe. Her artwork enables her to forgo her reliance on the destructive coping mechanisms of her past. The novel suggests that by means of making drawings of her darkness Sayoko is able to reach some measure of serenity, even if it may only be provisional. The changes in Sayoko's artwork over time in the novel indicate it will continue to develop in the future, reflecting personal growth and in turn promoting it.

The depiction in the novel of self-expression through artwork as a source of strength and resilience for Sayoko resonates with my own experiences with art-making as well as research on the reparative effects of artistic expression. From the moment I noticed the strength that artwork gives Sayoko, I began to see myself in her character, for it is by expressing myself through painting that my burdens become easier to bear. This introspection led me to see Sayoko as representative of the power that creative expression holds for providing relief of mental suffering for survivors of traumatic experiences. To gain a deeper understanding of the real life application of art-making as a tool for the treatment and diagnosis of trauma, and to aid in my analysis of Sayoko's artwork, I consulted numerous publications by experts who have written extensively on treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as well as the scholarly research conducted by working specialists in art therapy. Though I have never been a patient of art therapy, visual art has always played a vital role in helping me to move beyond personal challenges. A paintbrush can be a source of power, while paintings become vehicles for emotions and containers for tears. They allow for space to breathe. And when I have no words for my sorrows, they allow me to express my story in visual form.

My primary intention of this thesis is thus to bring attention to the important role that artistic expression plays in *In the Woods of Memory* for the character Sayoko and its ability to act as a reparative force. I raise this topic not only because of their personal significance for me, but also in an effort to build upon already extant critical literary interpretations of *In the Woods of Memory* made by Kyle Ikeda, Suzuki Tomoyuki, and Takuma Sminkey, whose works have situated the novel within the wider scope of Japanese and world literatures, the history of Okinawa's place in the Asia-Pacific War, and the contexts of the present day challenges faced by the prefecture as well as theories about trauma and its transmission. Their work, however, has

not yet included analysis of Sayoko's drawings, nor have they approached the novel through the lens of art-creation and its restorative effects. By applying insights from scholarship and research on trauma-informed art expression, I argue that Sayoko's silenced voice is presented and transmitted through her drawings, revealing in visual terms the inadequacy of words for expressing her feelings and state of mind.

Before beginning this discussion, I provide an introduction to the problems faced by Okinawans during and after the war, as well as the ways that Medoruma Shun has been connected by his parents and grandparents to memories of the war in Chapter One "The Islands of Okinawa: 1945 / 2015." In Chapter Two, I provide groundwork for my analysis of Sayoko's artwork, by exploring the multiple meanings that the title of the novel *In the Woods of Memory* in the original Japanese *Me no oku no mori* (lit. Forest at the back of the eye) might express, from the storage of memories to the witnessing of visual memories then from the function of eye contact to aversion of the eyes, and ultimately to the viewing of artwork. Next, in Chapter Three, I approach the ways that Sayoko's memory is restricted from being narrated, with the symbolism of the title in mind. Readers discover that her ability to communicate the horrors of her past is constrained by the nature of her traumatic experiences as well as the reactions from her family and community, who not only turn a blind eye to her suffering but also perpetuate violence against her.

In Chapter Four, I focus on the methods by which the reader is conferred Sayoko's traumatic memory through descriptions of her artwork in the tenth chapter of the novel. I look at the usage of symbolization in her drawings as a method that allows her to come to an understanding of her trauma and to communicate it to her sister. In doing so, I am mostly concerned with the implications this has for our understanding of the transference of traumatic memories that cannot be linguistically coded but can be expressed visually. I argue that through the inclusion of detailed descriptions of Sayoko's artwork in the text, Medoruma acknowledges the fact that traumatic memory is often bound tightly to the body and the senses and therefore may be more easily expressed by severely traumatized individuals through alternative forms that can more readily appeal to the immediate senses of sight and touch that characterize the visual arts. He eloquently illustrates the potential that art-making holds for the development of understanding and reconstitution of the gestalt of traumatic events as well as the creation of positive alleostasis, or coming to terms with past events, in traumatized individuals. This



provides a foundation for readers to understand how art-making can be therapeutic and reparative. I conclude this chapter by seeking to explore the ways that the recollection, articulation, and ultimately transmission of Sayoko's traumatic memories are shaped and limited by the nature of her wartime experiences and the conditions of the public and private environments in which they are expressed.

In Chapter Five, I ask readers to step back to look at the construction of the novel as a whole. I propose the analogy of the novel's construction as that of a kaleidoscope of interconnected memories belonging to the characters in the novel. I make this analogy to convey that Medoruma's literature has the capacity to challenge readers to "turn the kaleidoscope" to view various perspectives related to the psychological impacts that war and violence have on various individuals. As readers progress through the novel, they gain new perspectives and their overall image, or understanding of the two key events, changes in a similar fashion to how the colors and geometric shapes of the kaleidoscope change as it is turned.

Throughout the novel, the reader encounters various characters who, like Sayoko, experience psychic breakdown in the face of traumatic recollection of extreme violence. Their moments of unending tension seem to remain fragmented and never become completely resolved. The result is a sense of hopelessness, which is enforced by Medoruma's depiction of the cyclical nature of violence and the continuous nature of trauma. Though the reader may initially come to the fearful conclusion that the various ways by which war memory is transmitted between individuals and across generations as represented in the text are insufficient, I emphasize the importance of raising the critical issues of problems related to violence and trauma, to which there are no simple solutions. Medoruma demands that his audience look into a kaleidoscope of memories and engage vicariously with his characters to internalize their stories, thereby developing new ways of thinking about and responding to history, memory, and personal responsibility in concrete, ethical terms.

Thus, while in this thesis I primarily focus on how Sayoko's healing is made possible by art-making, I believe that its broader horizon is bringing to light the ability of art and literature to make the unacknowledged known and visible by challenging viewers and readers to view events in a new light. It is hoped that our negotiation of the individual perspectives we gain by reading Medoruma's text might open us to the challenges of ending the cyclical violence faced by nearly all societies today. Though uncovering ways of accomplishing this goal might seem to be a

utopian aspiration, it is nonetheless vital that we continue to strive to make space for the public narration of victims' memories in all its forms, whether it be oral testimony, literature, or the visual arts. By doing so, we may further our understanding of silenced voices so that we can recognize our responsibility to find better ways to address past violence and the trauma that can follow it, as well as resist, counter, and prevent further atrocities or acts of violence.

## CHAPTER ONE: The Island of Okinawa: 1945 / 2015

*Me no oku no mori* is set on a small unnamed island in northern Okinawa. Though it is not explicitly stated, the geographic descriptions in the text of a peaceful strait of ocean that is of swimmable distance and separates the island from the mainland suggest that it is Yagaji, a small island that lies off the coast of northern Okinawa.<sup>3</sup> The story begins in May 1945, a month or so after the United States Marine Corps ground forces landed on the island. In an effort to provide context that may be needed for readers to understand my discussion of the text, the aim of this chapter is to address the problems faced by Okinawans during and after the war as well as to begin to introduce the ways that Medoruma Shun has inherited the memories of the war as a second-generation survivor.

### 1.1: Summer, 1945: “A Concentration of as much Hell as there ever was”

For residents of the islands of Okinawa prefecture, Japan, the summer months are not only a time of blazing heat and festivals, but also the busiest time of the year for local newspaper companies. I realized this on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, when I attended the ceremony outside the Peace Prefectural Museum in southern Okinawa that marked the 70th official anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa.<sup>4</sup> Employees from companies such as the *Okinawa Times* and the *Ryukyu Shimpo* weaved through the crowds, passing out newspapers filled with testimonies by and interviews with survivors as well as articles about the enduring impact that the war has had on the prefecture. That day, the *Okinawa Times* described the Battle of Okinawa as a “concentration of as much hell as there ever was.” It was the first – and last – site of land warfare in Japan during the Asia-Pacific War with a large civilian presence, and the bloodiest battle between Japanese and US forces.

During the war, Okinawan citizens struggled to survive. Caught in the crossfire between Japanese and American soldiers, they often were the first to die. Neighborhoods were turned into warzones as American military shells rained down across the landscape. High school students,

---

<sup>3</sup> Takuma Sminkey’s homepage, “Me no oku no mori,” accessed December 10, 2015, <http://takumasminkey.com/readingokinawa/styled/styled-10/>.

<sup>4</sup> June 23<sup>rd</sup> is the day that Gen. Ushijima Mitsuru and Lt. Gen. Cho Isamu committed suicide and coordinated Japanese military resistance came to an end. It is the officially recognized date of the end of the Battle of Okinawa. However, the official surrender papers were not signed until September 7, 1945.

mobilized by the Japanese Imperial Army into groups such as the boy's 'Blood and Iron Corps' (Tekketsu kinnōtai) and student nurse corps for girls such as the 'Himeyuri (Princess Lily) and 'Shiraume' (White Plum) Corps became wrapped up into the unspeakable horrors of war.<sup>5</sup> Despite cultural assimilation policies enforced by mainland Japan on Okinawa since the start of the 1900's, which limited its cultural practices and native language use, Okinawans were still perceived at the time of the war as different from, and inferior to, mainland Japanese, so some Japanese soldiers used this to justify executions of Okinawans for speaking the Okinawan language, which they could not understand, deeming Okinawans "spies of the enemy."<sup>6</sup> In some areas, groups of civilians were ordered, expected and forced by Japanese soldiers to commit what they called *gyokusai*, the path of the "crushing of the jewels," a euphemism for forced mass suicide, the act of which was meant to serve the emperor and the Japanese nation. Thus, entire village communities hiding in caves faced their deaths rather than surrender to the American military. At the same time, civilians were forcibly evacuated from their homes and sent as refugees from the south to the north into regions that were rampant with malaria, resulting in thousands of deaths.<sup>7</sup> These are only a few of the horrific experiences faced by Okinawans during the Battle of Okinawa. In the end, the battle claimed the lives of more than 130,000 islanders, about one-fourth of Okinawa's entire population at that time, with civilian deaths surpassing military combatant deaths for both sides (US and Japan) combined.

The postwar Japanese government agreed to allow Okinawa to remain under US occupation in exchange for mainland Japan's political independence via the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951 and the US-Japan Security Treaty in 1952. Many Okinawans saw this as a harsh reminder of Okinawa's troubling historical relationship with Japan. The prefecture saw inferior treatment under Japan's prewar colonial policies, wartime military policies, and the actions of

---

<sup>5</sup> In Medoruma's *Me no oku no mori*, two boys from the village, Seiji's friends Kiyokazu and Munenori, are mobilized to fight in the Blood and Iron Corps (English translation 13). Fumi's father and older brother are also conscripted into the Defense Corps.

<sup>6</sup> Medoruma reminds us that even Okinawan's themselves were discriminatory against those who could not speak "standard Japanese" (*hyōjungo*), as the two boys conscripted into the Blood and Iron Corps in the novel taunt Seiji for his inability to speak it.

<sup>7</sup> A 1949 Bulletin by the US Army Medical Department revealed that malaria was considered only a minor problem in Okinawa before the war. However, after a month of battle, livestock and other animals were decimated, leaving humans as the only source of blood for *anophelines*, the parasites which carried the malaria disease, and creating a high risk of malaria transmission (Downs, 652-55). Northern Okinawa saw a particularly high increase in the population of anophelines, and in Medoruma's *Me no oku no mori*, both Kayō's parents and only son die of malaria.

the Japanese Imperial Army on the battlefield.<sup>8</sup> These memories were coupled with the fact that many Okinawans believed that their homeland had been sacrificed during the end of the war in an effort to bide time for mainland Japan.

It was only after many years of protests aimed at persuading policy-makers toward reversion that Okinawa again became a prefecture of Japan in 1972. Unfortunately, despite the passage of time, today Okinawans remain just as caught up in the problems wrought by the US military and Japanese government as they were 70 years ago as old problems persist and new ones continue to emerge.

## **1.2: 70 Years Later: The Tears over the Ravages of War Never Dry**

Every year on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, Okinawa's *Irei no hi* (the day to console the dead), local memorial services are conducted to commemorate and remember the battle. Buses are filled with groups both young and old making their processions across the island, stopping to pay their respects at tombs filled with the ashes of the dead and at memorials that scatter the landscape, erected at the various sites where remains were discovered in the post-war period. Okinawans are also aware of the many caves and other sites still filled with the bones of victims who remain in anonymity: lives lost, gone un-commemorated. Faced with the passing of time, changes in the landscape, and lack of funding to collect extant war remains, these are some of the places that Okinawans say are still filled with the tormented souls of the dead.<sup>9</sup>

For Okinawans, the grief of losing loved ones and the trauma of surviving horrific events has not disappeared, even 70 years later. Rather, they are persistent and, compounded by the enormous problem of the numerous US military bases that remain on the islands, bleed into the lives of the post-war generations. Built through forced seizure of citizen's land that began in 1953 and resulting in many Okinawans being dislocated and forced to live in tents that the US military distributed, the bases became part of the United States military strategy, in subsequent

---

<sup>8</sup> Mainland Japan's Satsuma-han took control of the Ryukyu Islands in 1609 and with the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Ryukyuan sovereignty was lost. By 1879 the Kingdom was annexed, putting full control of the Ryukyus in Japan's hands. This led to dictations by the Japanese government such as educational and political reform, and with the start of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, assimilation practices and policies were enforced, threatening Okinawan indigenous systems of education, religion, as well as making the official language of the prefecture Japanese. The discriminatory treatment sent waves of Okinawans to Hawaii, Peru and Brazil.

<sup>9</sup> In his article "Geographically-Proximate Postmemory," Ikeda discusses Okinawan spiritual beliefs which teach that "sites of death that have not been properly handled through ritual can become resting sites for *mabui* [spirits] that have not been sent off to the other world." (Ikeda 52).

wars in Korea (1950-53) and Vietnam (1960-75) as well as more recently in US attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> Today, the bases remain as a result of the Status of Forces Agreement between Japan and the United States. The record shows that they are shockingly expansive.<sup>11</sup> 74% of all of the land area of US military facilities in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa, a prefecture that accounts for only 0.6% of the country's total landmass. Around 30,000 troops and an equal number of American dependents and employees reside on the bases among the 1.2 million Okinawans. The bases have brought with them a slew of problems for Okinawans over the years, including noise problems created by the Air Bases Kadena and Futenma, which are surrounded by residential and commercial areas, as well as threats to safety, such as aircraft and vehicle crashes outside the bases and the explosion of stray missiles outside of the training areas. There have also been incidents of violent crimes by US military servicemen. One of the most well-known instances was the 1995 rape of a twelve-year-old Okinawan girl by three U.S. servicemen, which led to massive anti-base demonstrations in the prefecture.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the incident was only one in a long list of hit-and-runs, physical assaults and murders, sexual assaults and other crimes against Okinawans by US personnel since 1945.

Thus, while June 23<sup>rd</sup> is a day that commemorates the most devastating event in Okinawa's history, it is by no means the only time Okinawans are faced with the war past. Rather, they are confronted with its legacy day by day, and many fear what the United States' future wars will bring for the prefecture.

### **1.3: Medoruma Shun and Memories Inherited**

While the newspaper companies print thousands of copies of their yearly reports to pass them out to the massive crowds that gather at Okinawa Island's southernmost tip on June 23<sup>rd</sup>,

---

<sup>10</sup> Yuko Kawato, *Protests Against U.S. Military Base Policy in Asia*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 43.

<sup>11</sup> SOFA was concluded in 1960 and also gave privileges for the US military to make use of Japanese facilities. Okinawa has been in a long battle for the revision of SOFA, and the Prefectural Government submitted bills to revise the agreement in 1995 and 2000. However, it has not been only the Okinawan government calling for them. 14 other prefectures that host US bases are also involved, spurred in part by SOFA's lack of environmental protection provisions. It also disallows the Japanese government the right to on-site investigations within US military facilities, and exempts US forces from responsibility to deal with environmental cleanup. The Japanese government has made general operational changes to SOFA over the years rather than amendments.

<sup>12</sup> In one of the largest protests in Okinawa in postwar history, 85,000 people rallied in Ginowan in October 1995 against the presence of the United States military on the islands. The protests led to the call to revise SOFA, due to the fact that the agreement gave US service members a measure of extraterritoriality.

more often than not, memories of those traumatic experiences are not transmitted through the conventional media. Instead, they can be passed down from generation to generation in the private sphere of a family. Medoruma Shun, though born 15 years after the end of the war, incorporates into his stories the memories of the war passed down to him by his parents and grandparents. Medoruma's impressive stories have led him to be awarded one of Japan's most sought after literary prizes, the Akutagawa Prize, in 1997 for his short story *Suiteki* (Droplets). He was also the recipient of the respected Kawabata Yasunari and Kiyama Shōhei Prizes for his short story *Mabuigumi* (Spirit Stuffing) in 2000. An established award-winning author, Medoruma Shun, has moved beyond writing stories that focus solely on war memory of first-generation survivors, and has incorporated aspects of transgenerational dialogue in his 2009 novel *Me no oku no mori*.

*Me no oku no mori*, like many of his other works, is filled with rich description of the island's topography, language, and music, which has been inspired by his having grown up there. In a rare 2004 interview, Medoruma reflected on growing up in Nakijin, a rural village in northern Okinawa. "When I was a child," he remembers, "the bones existed right next to our everyday lives... Now that bone collection and removal of unexploded bombs have been conducted, the scars of the Battle of Okinawa have disappeared... Because the bones existed, however, the villagers never forgot the war".<sup>13</sup> Medoruma's characters struggle in the post-war with continuing to live at the sites where the traumatic events of the war occurred. Kyle Ikeda describes these sites as having a "psychic toxicity" present in the landscape and surroundings, which forces war survivors to confront the past and aids in recall of suppressed memories.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, Medoruma's literature deals with the way war memories are both recalled and suppressed, the difficulties first generation survivors face in passing on their memories, and the fate of subsequent generations to grapple with the uncertainty of the unresolved and unarticulated memories of the past. The persistent and repressed nature of trauma is revealed in his stories; memories are both inescapable and inaccessible and the trauma of the past finds its way into the lives of characters across both temporal and geographical distances.

---

<sup>13</sup> "Eiga: 'Fuun' wo megutte: Interview with Medoruma Shun." *Wander*, no. 36, 2004, 46-59.

<sup>14</sup> Kyle Ikeda, "Multisensory Memory and the Sites of Trauma in *Me no oku no mori*" in *Okinawan War Memory* (Routledge: 2013), 124. Ikeda also points out the "ameliorating effect" distance has for the characters in the novel, particularly the character of Hisako.

While addressing the social landscape of Okinawa, where memories of the past remain part of the present, Medoruma is also not afraid to confront issues of contemporary concern, delving into issues of Okinawan politics. He is committed to revealing the troubling conditions of present-day Okinawa that are linked to the post-reversion hegemony of Japan and the United States. But Medoruma has disdain for all forms of social discrimination and is also critical of the commodification of social memory in Okinawa by Okinawans, through the depictions of themselves as “peace-loving” and “nonviolent.” His numerous short stories have dealt with discrimination within Okinawa in many different forms, such as against Taiwanese and wartime comfort women, by the political center of Naha against the rural periphery, and against citizens with Hansen’s disease (leprosy).<sup>15</sup>

Medoruma’s literature is also based on his close relationship with his parents and grandparents, who relayed many stories of the war to him that he has used as source material for his imaginative stories. In his 2005 book, “*Postwar*” *Okinawa Year Zero*, Medoruma writes about his mother’s experience as a ten-year-old girl during the war in her village on Yagaji Island, the same island that where *Me no oku no mori* seems to take place. His mother’s memory is also hauntingly similar to those of the story: she remembers her village being terrorized during the war by US soldiers who raped a young girl on the island, and she recalls often seeing soldiers walking through the village in their underwear.<sup>16</sup> Ikeda suggests that we interpret the novel as “a record of, or being based on, Medoruma’s own experience of witnessing his mother’s attempts to articulate her buried and suppressed war memories.”<sup>17</sup>

In *Me no oku no mori*, Medoruma addresses the taboo subject of wartime sexual violence and the retaliation, or lack of retaliation, against it by making it the center of his story. With this overarching theme in mind, I would like to turn to an analysis of the title of the text in Chapter Two and the overall organizational construction of the text later in Chapter Five, both of which convey depths of meaning that help us understand a complex story.

---

<sup>15</sup> Michael Molasky, “Medoruma Shun: The Writer as Public Intellectual in Okinawa Today” in *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003). Molasky has pointed out Medoruma’s resemblance to two politically engaged Japanese authors of previous generations, Oe Kenzaburo (1935-) and Nakagami Kenji (1946-1992). He also likens Medoruma to the Okinawan poet and journalist, Arakawa Akira (1931-), as both authors are critical of Okinawan’s depiction of themselves as “peace-loving Okinawans.”

<sup>16</sup> Shun Medoruma, *Okinawa Sengo Zero-Nen* (Tokyo: Nihon Hoso Shuppan Kyokai, 2005), 59.

<sup>17</sup> Kyle Ikeda, “Multisensory Memory” in *Okinawan War Memory*, 124.



## CHAPTER TWO: The “Eye” in the Title *Me no oku no mori*

Art involves the making of images, whether they are in the visual form of a physical painting or the images that appear in the mind of a reader through the artistry of the written word. Since the title is the first impression readers are given of the novel, it is apparent that Medoruma constructed it so that it would project a special image that is memorable enough to draw readers in. We might infer that the objective of writing an effective, well-constructed title is to ensure that when readers close the pages of the book, the image evoked by its title serves to intensify its poetic message, at which point their consideration of the title may promote their understanding of the meaning of the novel as a whole. In this chapter I aim to identify and analyze the meanings that may be gleaned from the original Japanese title of the novel *Me no oku no mori* as well as from the English translation, *In the Woods of Memory*. I suggest that the title can be viewed both in terms of the storage of memory “at the back of the eye,” as well as in association with the concepts of eye contact, theories about the concept of the “gaze,” and most importantly, as preliminary groundwork for my analysis of Sayoko’s artwork in Chapter Four.

### 2.1: The Storage of Memories at the Back of the Eye

To begin to understand how the title *Me no oku no mori* might be interpreted by the reader in multiple ways, it is helpful to break the original Japanese title down into its key components. The first word, *me* (眼), refers to the eye or pupil as a biological term. In Japanese, the plurality of the noun is determined based on context or by using a counting modifier, so the title could refer to a single eye or multiple eyes. The next element is the word *oku* (奥), which means *interior*, the *inner part*, or *in the depths*. The third component is *mori* (森), the word for *forest(s)* or *wood(s)*. The components are connected by the word *no* (の), which signifies possession. By putting the elements together, we can make interpretations of the novel that go beyond the English translation.

Takuma Sminkey’s English translation of the title as *In the Woods of Memory*, attempts to convey the original title’s reference to hidden memory. A literal translation of the title into English might be, *The Forest at the Back of the Eye*.<sup>18</sup> Sminkey has pointed out that in Japanese,

---

<sup>18</sup> Ikeda authored the translation of the title as *The Forest at the Back of My Eye* in his 2013 book, *Okinawan War Memory: Transgenerational Trauma and the War Fiction of Medoruma Shun* (123).

when something is described as being “at the back of the eye” (*me no oku*), it means that it is stored in memory. In the novel, stored memories are made accessible to some characters only upon closing their eyes to sleep at night. For example, the character Hisako, who witnessed her friend Sayoko’s rape as an impressionable ten-year-old girl, is confronted by nightmares that she has difficulty making sense of 60 years after the war. When Hisako closes her eyes at night, it is not nothingness that she “sees.” In sleep, the body goes through the process of physical recovery necessary for survival. But it is also in sleep that the mind retreats into the subconscious and is confronted with visions and alternate experiences. Jung has defined the dream as an “impartial spontaneous product of the unconscious psyche, outside the control of the will.”<sup>19</sup> The complexity of dreams has been interpreted by some as obscure workings-through of our memories and the problems that we are faced with in daily life.<sup>20</sup>

Sminkey has taken into consideration the fact that making the connection between memory and the title *Me no oku no mori* may be an immediate reaction for Japanese readers, and identified this connection for non-Japanese speaking readers with his translation *In the Woods of Memory*. Though it is a powerful title, it unfortunately sacrifices the vital incorporation of the word “eye,” (*me*) which I believe may be representative of not only the concepts of conscious and unconscious memory but also how memories remain shrouded from the onlooker and only become “visible” by means of the deliberate or triggered accessing of the “mind’s eye” by the self. If we consider the title *Me no oku no mori* from the perspective of numerous representations of the power of the “gaze” throughout the novel, be it the gaze of society or individuals, the title takes on new meaning as being grounded in the phenomena of the response of an onlooker to the expression of nonverbal emotion and communication through eye contact.

## **2.2: The Eye and Nonverbal Communication**

The importance of expressing and interpreting emotions and psychic states through the eyes and eye contact is reflected in Medoruma’s depiction of character interactions in the novel. The cortical cells in our brains respond to eyes and eye-shaped patterns, and eye contact has been known to produce physiological arousal. Across cultures, eye contact is used to make character

---

<sup>19</sup> Carl Jung, *Civilization in Transition*, in *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*. Translated by R. Hull (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964) X 149.

<sup>20</sup> Clara E. Hill, *Working with Dreams in Psychotherapy*. (New York: Guilford Press, 1996) 98.

judgements and to gain insight into mental processes.<sup>21</sup> By interpreting the word *oku* (奥) as *in the depths of* rather than *at the back of*, the title might hint at characters' fixation on the expression of the eyes: characters interpret and absorb emotion in each other's eyes. When Sayoko's eyes dart back and forth between Fumi and the soldiers, Fumi "can tell that she is terrified" (English translation 4). When she later sees the "terrified look" in her brothers' eyes, she goes to comfort them (9). Kayō, the ward chief, reads Seiko's eyes as "full of undisguised hostility and menace" (23). J's grandfather sees a "deep sadness frozen in the depths" of Sayoko's eyes (85) and the bullied junior high school girl who appears in chapter nine of the novel notices the man's eyes that "beckoned her" but "weren't smiling" (100). These connections that are made through eye contact are only a few of the instances in the novel that illustrate how characters interpret and inscribe meaning based on the emotion that they see projected from another's eyes.

The inclusion of the word "eye" in the title introduces us to the complex topic of seeing, or not seeing, as well as being unwilling or unable to see. The "forest" that may be witnessed in the depths of another's eye is also misconstrued and misunderstood. What meaning, if anything, can be understood in the eyes that is more powerful than words? Can the gaze itself be understood as an aspect of language, or does expectation play a larger role in what we perceive than what is "actually there"? We live in a sighted world; that is, culturally, sight is deemed an indispensable asset that is closely connected to our ability of accessing and navigating communication in the societies we are members of. And yet, for sighted people, the brain produces images in a similar way to the way that the body produces breathing. No thought is required for visual navigation; nevertheless, we are taught to interpret and inscribe meaning to our world through our vision. What happens, however, when glances are misconstrued? At what point do our "eyes play tricks on us," leading us to see things that are not there? In *Me no oku no mori*, Medoruma portrays how communication is rich, complex, and varied and how eye contact may be perceived as a complex form of nonverbal communication.

Characters in the novel deliberately avoid eye contact to escape confrontation. The junior high school girl can't help but look down when Tamiko's eyes meet hers, and later she turns her eyes down to avoid confrontation with her bullies (94). The ward chief, Kayō, turns his eyes

---

<sup>21</sup> A. Mccarthy, K. Lee, S. Itakura, and D. W. Muir. "Gaze Display When Thinking Depends on Culture and Context." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 2008, 716-29.

away when the Japanese-American interpreter questions him (115). The villagers, other than a few children, all turn their eyes away from the American lieutenant's gaze as they are gathered in front of the cave where Seiji hides. It is only the woman who tells the story of Sayoko's rape that stare straight into the eyes of the American lieutenant (115). The meaning of the aversion of the eyes is ultimately culturally defined, but as shown in the novel, it can be representative of fear or submission.

Characters also lower, avert, and close their eyes to prevent unwanted memories from flowing back to their consciousness. Ikeda explains this with examples from Medoruma's short story "Fuon" (The Crying Wind), reminding us that "an innocent glance at the landscape can set off recollections and memories from the war for first-generation survivors."<sup>22</sup> When Hisako, returning to the island for the first time 60 years after the war, sees a US military base beside the road, she lowers her eyes to avoid seeing any American soldiers and having the memories of the past come to life (English translation 36). Though anxious, Hisako must then remind herself of the purpose of her visit: to confirm the truth of her nightmares with "her own eyes and ears" (41). Thus, Medoruma shows that the closure of one's eyes can have multiple meanings. Falling into dreams might reveal sub-conscious or repressed memories while Hisako sleeps, but they come even more vividly to life when she confronts the landscape in the reality of the daytime.

It is through the many instances of characters seeing and avoiding seeing that Medoruma deals with the mystery of the human eye, the implications of and dangers of eye contact, and the ultimately complex phenomenon of visual memory, only one of several interconnected cognitive systems that form the whole of human memory. He emphasizes the importance of sight to society by including the character Seiji, who is blinded when American soldiers tear gas him. Seiji's lack of sight accentuates his rejection from the community, which casts him to the periphery and limits his participation in the social sphere.

### **2.3: The Eye and Artwork**

The symbol of the eye may also play a key role in understanding why Medoruma includes such a lengthy, detailed description of Sayoko's artwork in the novel. Seeing Sayoko's drawings enables her sister to get a glimpse of access into Sayoko's longstanding inaccessible

---

<sup>22</sup> Kyle Ikeda, "Geographically-Proximate Postmemory: Sites of War and the Enabling of Vicarious Narration in Medoruma Shun's Fiction," *International Journal of Okinawan Studies* 3, no. 2 (2012): 48.

memory. In both English and Japanese, when we say that we are viewing something from a certain person's perspective, we often say that we view it "from the eyes of the person" (誰かの目から見る – *dareka no me kara miru*). In other words, we naturally view the world through the lens of our own eyes, depending on our particular life experiences. For the most part, however, we remain unconscious of the fact that we do so. Accordingly, we often fail to recognize that our perceptions are closely tied to our individual identities, which have been constructed on the basis of how we have been able to make sense of our experiences in the world. Unfortunately, we thus may also forget or fail to understand that others, who have unique identities based on the reality of own life experiences, have distinct worldviews which may be quite different from our own.

One of the functions of art is to communicate a unique viewpoint that is generally divergent from those held by others. Because Sayoko has been silenced by her inability to communicate through the spoken word, no one can know for sure what the particulars are of how she sees the world through her own eyes. In terms of her inner world, Sayoko's health caretakers can make at best only hypothetical assumptions deriving from their clinical practice. The fact remains that Sayoko's inability to communicate in spoken words makes her invisible to all others, including any family member who deeply cares about her.

As Sayoko's loving sister, Tamiko has struggled for years to understand what Sayoko has experienced so that she can re-establish and maintain a personal relationship with her. Significantly, it is through the vehicle of visual artwork that enables Tamiko, 70 years after the war, to finally view and begin to understand the reality of the deep trauma Sayoko has experienced for such a very long time. Given that through her artwork Sayoko is able to express her truth from the viewpoint of her own eyes in accordance with her identity as a survivor of war-related trauma, Tamiko can assure herself for the first time ever that her new-found understanding of Sayoko's memories is valid.

### CHAPTER THREE: Sayoko's Silenced Voice

In his discussion of the text, Ikeda remarks that *Me no oku no mori* is different from Medoruma's previous works in that the novel depicts "conscious war memory transmission by survivors" as well as "conscious engagement with recovering the unlived war past on the part of second- and third-generation war survivors."<sup>23</sup> Medoruma does this by presenting a variety of perspectives held by characters with individual chapters devoted to their inner thoughts. First-generation survivors like Kayō and Tamiko attempt to tell their story of the war through interview or public speeches, while second-generation survivors like Fumi's son, Yōichi, and the character of the unnamed author learn about the war past from their relatives. Through her artwork, Sayoko too is able to transmit her traumatic experience, but this ability comes only after years of being completely silenced and never being able to speak of her past.

In this chapter, I focus on illustrating the complex nature of Sayoko's traumatic experiences by drawing from examples in the text. By doing so, I intend to highlight that the reason Sayoko's voice is silenced from speaking about her past is more than the result of the initial reaction to sexual violence. Rather, it is exacerbated by a variety of other factors such as the exodus from her community, the negative reactions of her family, the tragic loss of her child, and the sad fact that her family is forced to move away from the island.

I feel this examination of Sayoko's psychic pain to be necessary in order to understand the ways that Sayoko's voice is eventually revealed later in the novel, not through the linguistic mode of narration but through her artwork. The silencing of Sayoko in the novel ultimately acts as an example of how silencing of the victim has tragic results: we can never really know the true number of rapes suffered by victims around the world, nor can we put in clear and concrete terms the extent of the inner destruction caused by sexual violence. In developing understanding of Sayoko's traumatic experience, it is important to be mindful of both her identity as a seventeen-year-old girl whose role is to watch over the younger girls in the village as well as the backdrop of the war itself as a challenging and terrifying environment in which families have been uprooted, civilians are confronted with the oppression of both the American and Japanese militaries, and so many have witnessed death in front of their very eyes – all while struggling to survive.

---

<sup>23</sup> Kyle Ikeda, *Okinawan War Memory*, 124.

Amidst such an environment, Sayoko is raped by a group of American men, who speak to her in a language that she cannot understand, while the four younger girls, Fumi, Hisako, Tamiko, and Fujiko, overhear the disturbing noises made by Sayoko and the soldiers during the violent event. The series of connected events that follow her rape accumulate to the point of consuming Sayoko. Many of Sayoko's experiences and multiple traumas are communicated to the reader through the voice of the character Tamiko, Sayoko's sister, when she gives a speech at a junior high school in Okinawa.

### **3.1: The Impact on the Community**

The violence of rape affects not only the individual but also the entire community. There is no one way survivors feel in the *acute phase* that follows sexual assault, but aside from physical injury, they may feel humiliated, unclean, ashamed, confused, and guilty, among other feelings. Fumi describes Sayoko as having “not only been kicked and beaten” but as having “suffered a profound violation of her body and soul” (English translation 5). To make matters worse, while Sayoko is suffering the immediate response to the horrific experience of being sexually assaulted, the rape disrupts the entire community, adding to her mental disarray. The very next day following the rape, the entire village is described as being “under a heavy strain” (6). Young women hide in the back room of their homes, while men must stand guard on the beach and roads. A huge bell made from an unexploded shell is hung from the banyan tree in the center of the village. Everyone is constantly on edge. Conversation decreases, and laughter ceases entirely. The villagers all seem to know about what has happened to Sayoko, as the village men repeat in “hushed tones what they'd heard from Sayoko's father” (16).

In times of war, non-combatant civilians of the nation one is at war with, including women, are often equated to being “enemies”, which allows soldiers to rationalize that they can commit horrific acts of violence such as gang rapes with little or no guilt. While the destructive impact of rape on the community reflects the reality that wartime rape not may only be the result of the collapse in social restraints or the mayhem of armed conflict, it can also be caused by a deliberate desire on the part of combatants, in this case the four American soldiers, to intimidate and demoralize the ‘enemy community.’<sup>24</sup> While Okinawan citizens were generally not members

---

<sup>24</sup> See the United Nations OCHA/IRIN publication, “the shame of war: sexual violence against women and girls in conflict,” 38.

of the Japanese imperial army, and therefore not the actual ‘enemies’ that the US military were targeting, in the novel in a conversation between the American soldiers, Medoruma portrays how Japanese soldiers and Okinawan civilians alike, are considered enemies by the Americans. In short, they care little about making the distinction between who is Okinawan and who is Japanese:

ジャップめ、胸の中で吐き捨てたあとにマクロリーの言葉を思い出した。この島は以前は日本ではなくて、だから住民も元は日本人ではなかったんだ、とマクロリーは言った。じゃあチャイニーズだったのか、とキンザーが訊いた。それとも違って、元はリューキュウという独立した国だったらしい。マクロリーは答えたが、キンザーは小さくうなずいただけで、それ以上の関心を示さなかった。僕も興味はなかった。<sup>25</sup>

Jappu-me, mune no naka de haki suteta ato ni Makurōri no kotoba o omoidashita. Kono shima wa izen wa nihon dewanakute, dakara jūmin mo moto wa nihonjin dewa nakattanda, to Makurōri wa itta. Jā Chainīzu datta no ka, to Kinzā ga kiita. Soretomo chigatte, moto wa Ryūkyū to iu dokuritsu shita kunidatta rashī. Makurōri wa kotaetaga, Kinzā wa chīsaku unazuita dake de, soreijō no kanshin o shimesanakatta. Boku mo kyōmi wa nakatta.

Fuckin’ Jap! I muttered to myself, triggering a memory of a conversation between a couple of fellows in my outfit:  
—Originally, this wasn’t part of Japan, said McCrory. So the natives weren’t Japanese.  
—So what were they? asked Kinser. Chinese?  
—No, replied McCrory, it was an independent country called Ryukyu.  
Kinser gave a slight nod, but he didn’t show any further interest. I wasn’t interested either.<sup>26</sup>

While the specific intent of the American soldiers cannot be fully discerned from the text, the impacts of their actions on the community are made clear. Aside from the wildfire of fear that is sparked throughout the community, the attacks also lead to Seiji’s retaliation against the Americans, which causes even more conflict and uproar in the village, and ultimately results in Seiji being left wounded and blinded. This conflagration from the single event of Sayoko’s rape to the near death of her childhood friend, Seiji, exacerbates the pain of Sayoko’s traumatic experience.

---

<sup>25</sup> Shun Medoruma, *Me no oku no mori*, 143.

<sup>26</sup> Shun Medoruma, *Me no oku no mori*. Translated by Takuma Sminkey as *In the Woods of Memory*. Unpublished Manuscript, last modified December 3, 2015, 76.



### 3.2: Compounded Violation, Re-Victimization and Abuse

Sayoko is left unable to deal with her trauma as a result of both personal and social psychosocial effects – the stigma attached to sexual violence means that she may feel she has no one to turn to – as well as the reactions she faces from the community and from her own family, leaving her silenced and helpless. Her community speaks in hushed voices about her family, and as if dealing with the aftermath of something as harrowing as gang rape is not challenging enough, her trauma is exacerbated when she is sexually abused again:

母親が着物を手にして小夜子姉さんを追っかけて、なかなか捕まえきれないものだから、青年達が手助けする降りをして小夜子姉さんを捕まえて触ろうとして、そうすると小夜子姉さんは泣き喚いて暴れてね、その様子を見るのがどんなにつらかったか。島の青年達もアメリカー達とまったく同じだと思ったさ。<sup>27</sup>

Hahaoya ga kimono o te ni shite Sayoko-nēsan o okkakete, nakanaka tsukamae kirenai monodakara, seinen-tachi ga tedsuke suru furi o shite Sayoko-nēsan o tsukamaete sawarou toshite, sōsuruto Sayoko-nēsan wa naki wameite abarete ne, sono yōsu o miru no ga don'nani tsurakattaka. Shima no seinen-tachi mo Amerikā-tachi to mattaku onajida to omotta sa.

Sayoko's mother would chase after Sayoko with clothes in her hands, but she couldn't catch her, so the teenage boys would pretend to help, and then fondle Sayoko when they caught her. Then she'd start screaming and punching and kicking. It was so painful to watch! Those teenagers were no different than the Americans.<sup>28</sup>

This re-victimization and violation of Sayoko by the community leaves Sayoko with a traumatic experience is only magnified. It is further worsened when Sayoko becomes pregnant with a child by one of the village men and her father's reaction to the birth of the child leaves her devastated. After about a month, the baby boy is put up for adoption, and then speaking about the baby after the fact becomes taboo in the family household. Though Sayoko wants her child, he is taken from her. This moment in the novel might remind the reader that Sayoko's memories seem

---

<sup>27</sup> Shun Medoruma, *Me no oku no mori*, 96.

<sup>28</sup> Shun Medoruma, *Me no oku no mori*. Translated by Takuma Sminkey as *In the Woods of Memory*. Unpublished Manuscript, last modified December 3, 2015, 53.

to never be passed on: not to those around her, and now, not to her child. The inability to pass on her memories here is rendered absolute and without question.

If we consider the culturally-related ways by which the self is oriented by one's relations with others, Sayoko's understanding of her own identity is strongly threatened by repeated victimization and abuse within the community. Markus and Kitayama remind us that in many cultures, the self can only be realized through "participation in cultural practices."<sup>29</sup> Cheek and Hogan expound, "The self-concept is not a stable structure but a highly malleable reflection of the ongoing processes of social interaction".<sup>30</sup> It might be useful to recall the title of the novel at this point, and the complexity of the "gaze" and eye contact. In *Being and Nothingness* (1956) Jean-Paul Sartre deemed the gaze a battleground where the self is defined and redefined. It is only by means of confrontation with the gaze of "the Other" that we become aware of our self as object. "Insofar as I am the object of values which come to qualify me without my being able to act on this qualification or even to know it," says Sartre, "I am enslaved." Confronted by the "othering gaze" of her community, and unable to leave the house, Sayoko is left with a diminished, even shattered sense of self that imprisons her as a tainted outsider. Within this configuration, the gaze has the power to render one powerless not unlike Medusa freezing her onlooker forever in stone. At the same time, however, the gaze has power-giving properties. Sartre also writes, "I see myself because somebody sees me." With this in mind, Sayoko could have a chance for the healing of her mind and body, should someone in her community help her in her time of need of attachment, connection, and integration with others. The only people left to turn to are her family members, but even these family relationships prove threatening, as illustrated by the physical and mental abuse Sayoko is subjected to by her father as Tamiko reveals in her speech:

その歳の離れたお姉さんは米兵達に乱暴されてしまったね、それが原因で体と心の調子を狂わせてしまって・・・・・・・・。それが酷くなったのはね、アメリカ兵のこどもを妊娠していると思ったお父さんにさんざん叩かれてね、一番苦しんでいるのはお姉さんだったのに、アメリカーの子どもを産むくらいなら死ね、とまで言われたらしくね。<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Hazel R. Markus and Shinobu Kitayama, "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation." *Psychological Review*, 1991.

<sup>30</sup> J.M. Cheek and R. Hogan. "Self-concepts, Self-presentations, and Moral Judgments." *Psychological Perspectives on the Self* (1983), 253.

<sup>31</sup> Shun Medoruma, *Me no oku no mori*, 173.

Sono toshi no hanareta onēsan wa beihei-tachi ni ranbō sa rete shimatta ne, sore ga gen'in de karada to kokoro no chōshi o kuruwa sete shimatte. Sore ga hidoku natta no wa ne, Amerika-hei no kodomo o ninshin shite iru to omotta otōsan ni sanzan tataka rete ne, ichiban kurushinde iru no wa onēsandatta no ni, Amerikā no kodomo o umu kurainara shine, to made iwaretarashiku ne.

Well, those soldiers raped that older girl . . . And they destroyed her body and soul . . . What made her even worse, though, was that her father beat her pretty badly. You see, he thought those Americans made her pregnant, and even though the girl was the victim, he told her that she was better off dead than giving birth to an American.<sup>32</sup>

Here the reader discovers that Tamiko also lives in “constant fear” of her father, suggesting that there was little the women in the family could do to stop his rage (106). Thus, without a community, friend, or even family member to turn to, Sayoko remains isolated and disconnected without a sense of safety or security. Her lack of support and inability to deal with the exacerbated trauma leads her to mental breakdowns and dangerous coping mechanisms.

### 3.3: Dangerous Coping Mechanisms

Sayoko is described as exhibiting unusual behaviors, which include bolting from the house with bare feet made white from the powdery limestone gravel of the road, breasts exposed, and waving her arms madly “as if fighting with some invisible force” (52). Her eyes wide open and bloodshot, she screams and scratches and inflicts wounds to herself between her legs. Sayoko’s act of running into the woods, combined with her acts of self-harm, may be viewed as a repetitive re-enactment coping mechanism. Laurie Vickroy describes trauma survivors as “splitting,” that is, “occupying dual positions, both inside and outside their pasts.” She remarks that in such a state, victims of trauma may “reenact the past without recalling it.”<sup>33</sup> The feelings of powerlessness experienced by survivors of trauma have been directly linked to repetition, acting out, and self-destructive behavior (mutilation, provoking an abuser into action, or

---

<sup>32</sup> Shun Medoruma, *Me no oku no mori*. Translated by Takuma Sminkey as *In the Woods of Memory*. Unpublished Manuscript, last modified December 3, 2015, 95.

<sup>33</sup> Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002, 28.

provoking rejection.)<sup>34</sup> The harsh abuse that Sayoko faces from her father may also cause her to be reminded of the initial trauma, and may send her into a “fight, flight, or freeze” circuitry. While these scenes of acting out shock the villagers, what is hidden from view is Sayoko’s life of depression: living locked up in her house, refusing to eat and almost never sleeping, and, as is revealed by Tamiko, attempting suicide many times. All of these detrimental behaviors can be read as attempts at soothing and controlling the suffering that Sayoko is both unable to manage internally and unable to voice.

Although the method by which Sayoko tries to kill herself is not explicitly stated in the text, we might consider her flight into the woods as being connected to her desire for death. My understanding of this consideration has developed from Asato Eiko’s description of the sacred forest in Okinawan tradition where, when a woman dies, her spirit is said to go back to the forest.<sup>35</sup> Asato explains that the spirit is then transferred to another woman through ritual, resulting in a reincarnation. In this way, the forest might be seen as a place of contact between this life and the afterlife; accordingly, Sayoko’s solitary race into the trees may be explained as either the feeling that she has already died or the desire to become a spirit. The act of being deeply drawn to the sanctity of the sacred forest is likely informed by Medoruma’s knowledge and interest in traditional Okinawan religious beliefs, recalling Medoruma’s protagonist in his 1999 short story “Umukaji tu chiriti” (Carried off with the Shadows) who, after being violently raped and killed, goes into the forest to an *utaki*, or holy site in the forest, as a *mabui*, or spirit.<sup>36</sup>

In hopes of avoiding the hostile stares, disapproving looks, and disparaging whispers of their fellow villagers, Sayoko’s family moves away from the island. It is with this move that Sayoko is able to distance herself from the site of her trauma. Ikeda, who situates the novel within the context of second-generation war survivor memory, what he calls “geographically proximate postmemory” contends that characters who are physically distant from the sites of trauma, which have a “psychic toxicity” present in the landscape, experience an “ameliorating

---

<sup>34</sup> Van Der Kolk, B. A. “The Compulsion to Repeat the Trauma: Re-enactment, Revictimization, and Masochism.” *Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 12, no. 2 (1989), 389-411.

<sup>35</sup> Asato Eiko, “Okinawan Identity and Resistance to Militarization and Maldevelopment,” in *Islands of Discontent*, 238.

<sup>36</sup> Takuma Sminkey authored the English translation of the title of the short story as “Carried off with the Shadows” on his webpage, *Reading Okinawa*. Accessible at <http://takumasminkey.com/readingokinawa/styled/styled-18/>. (Date accessed: December 18, 2015).

effect,” while reconnection to the sites leads to an intense, multi-sensory memory recall.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Ikeda points out that although a site may be symbolic of a traumatic past, it may also be connected to feelings of love or happiness that existed before the war.<sup>38</sup> In other words, according to Ikeda, sites have multiple meanings, so if we consider this notion in Sayoko’s case, we can discern that while moving away from the island may allow her to stabilize, it may also disallow her to confront and work through what happened or to be (re)connected to her pre-trauma past and identity.

Eventually, Sayoko finds stability through a job at a dressmaking shop, where she works into her 30’s and 40’s. The steady work, involving tactile working with the hands, provides her with mental stability. However, we learn that when big company stores drive the shop out of business ten years after Okinawa returns to Japan (1982), Sayoko again becomes a recluse who returns to old former patterns of disorientation:

... ある日急にお姉さんはまたおかしくなってしまった。大声で泣き喚いたり、押し入れとかトイレに隠れて何時間も出てこなかったり、いきなり外に飛び出して走り回ったりしてね。それまで隣の家までしか行ったことがなかったのに、夜中に家を抜け出して、十キロ以上離れた公園で泥だらけになって座っているのを見つけられたこともあったというさ。<sup>39</sup>

Aru hi kyū ni onēsan wa mata okashiku natte shimatta. Ōgoe de naki wameitari, oshiire toka toire ni kakurete nan-jikan mo dete konakattari, ikinari soto ni tobidashite hashirimawattari shite ne. Sore made tonari no ie made shika itta koto ga nakatta no ni, yonaka ni ie o nukedashite, jū-kiro ijō hanareta kōen de dorodarake ni natte suwatte iru no o mitsuke rareta koto mo atta to iu sa.

...One day, she suddenly went crazy again. She’d scream and yell, hide in the bathroom or closet and not come out for hours, or suddenly dash out of the house and run around. Up until then, she’d never gone anywhere except to the shop next door. Now she’d sneak out late at night and then be discovered sitting covered in mud in a park over ten kilometers away.<sup>40</sup>

The trauma experienced by Sayoko can be classified into three types: cumulative, additive, and summative. The nature of Sayoko’s trauma as revealed by the novel is based on not

---

<sup>37</sup> Kyle Ikeda, “Multisensory Memory” in *Okinawan War Memory*, 124.

<sup>38</sup> Kyle Ikeda, “Geographically-Proximate Postmemory,” 49.

<sup>39</sup> Shun Medoruma, *Me no oku no mori*, 175.

<sup>40</sup> Shun Medoruma, *Me no oku no mori*. Translated by Takuma Sminkey as *In the Woods of Memory*. Unpublished Manuscript, last modified December 3, 2015, 96.

just the deep psychic pain of being a victim of repeated sexual violence but also is the sum of a variety of horrific experiences. In the midst of war, not only is she led to feel deep shame for what happens to her, but also she experiences rejection and abuse from her community and family, all of which lead her to threaten her own safety through the dangerous coping mechanisms of dissociation, self-harm, and attempts at suicide. Thus, her trauma is both cumulative – she falls victim to sexual violence numerous times, which results in greater impact – and additive: she is exposed to additional different types of trauma.<sup>41</sup> To this, it can be added that the impact of Sayoko’s trauma is *summative*, a term Kammerer and Mazelis use to describe the “combination of event(s) plus impact” that individuals “carry forward through time inscribed in memory, sense of self, and behavior.”<sup>42</sup>

Some reviewers and critics have noted the similarity between *Me no oku no mori* and William Faulkner’s *Sound and The Fury* due to their use of juxtaposed narratives that move back and forth through time, an observation that is supported by the fact that Medoruma himself has acknowledged Faulkner as an inspiration for his work.<sup>43</sup> In a 1998 interview in *Edge*, Medoruma reflects on his use of Okinawan language and dialect (*uchinaaguchi/hōgen*) in his stories. He explains that as an author would write a character living in a major city by speaking in the common language, using characters speaking in dialect in his writing is not a particularly difficult problem. Rather than simply using the language in conversation between characters, he remarks that attempting a Faulkner-esque depiction of the breaking down of consciousness (*ishiki ga kondakushita jōkyō*) and writing it in dialect would bring his work to a more interesting level:

... 例えばフォークナーなどがやったみたいに意識が混濁した状況とか、  
例が神ダリーになって分裂症的に頭の中で言葉が錯乱状態になるとか、そ  
ういったものを方言を駆使しながらやっていくというレベルでの方言の使

---

<sup>41</sup> See Finkelhor, 1990, 2005. Turner and Lloyd, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> According to Kammerer and Mazelis (2006), “the impact of trauma is cumulative – the more times a traumatic event is experienced, the greater the impact; additive – exposure to different types of trauma is correlated 2 with greater impact; and summative – the combination of event(s) plus impact is what individuals carry forward through time, inscribed in memory, the sense of self, and behavior,” 5.

<sup>43</sup> In *Okinawan War Memory*, Ikeda points out how Katskata-Inafuku Keiko compares the text to William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* with its “juxtaposed narratives and focalization” (126). In his review of the novel, Koshikawa Yoshiaki also compares Medoruma’s work to Faulkner amongst other famous authors (García Márquez, Kenzaburō Ōe, and Nakagami Kenji), stating that similar to Faulkner’s fictional Yoknapatawpha County which based on Lafayette, Mississippi, Medoruma’s *Me no oku no mori* is set in a fictional version of the actual Yanbaru forest in Okinawa (*yanbaru no mori*). (Koshikawa’s review is accessible via the Kageshobo Publishing Company website at <http://www.kageshobo.co.jp/main/books/menookunomori.html>.)

用というところまでいくと、難しいし、その分面白いとも思いますけどね。そういったレベルで標準語なり共通語なりの体系を崩していくという形での方言使い方ですね。会話レベルでの方言の問題というのはそんな難しいことでもないし、たいしたことではないです。<sup>44</sup>

... Tatoeba Fōkunā nado ga yatta mitai ni ishiki ga kondaku shita jōkyō toka, tatoeba, Yuta ga kami dāri ni natte bunretsu-shō-teki ni atama no naka de kotoba ga sakuran jōtai ni naru toka, sōitta mono o hōgen o kushi shinagara yatte iku to iu reberu de no hōgen no shiyō to iu tokoro made iku to, muzukashīshi, sono bun omoshiroi tomo omoimasukedo ne. Sōitta reberu de hyōjun-go nari kyōtsū-go nari no taiki o kuzushite iku to iu katachi de no hōgen tsukaikatadesu ne. Kaiwa reberu de no hōgen no mondai to iu no wa son'na muzukashī kotode mo naishi, taishita koto de wa naidesu.

I think that it would both be difficult and interesting to take situations such as when *yuta* [female spirit mediums in Okinawa] fall into *kamidari* [the trance-like state, lit. ‘god descends’] and in a schizophrenia-like way, the words inside her mind put her in a state of mental confusion -- or where characters are in a state of disordered consciousness, as authors such as Faulkner have done -- and write them entirely in dialect.<sup>45</sup> Using dialect on such a level, can breakdown the structure of the so-called “standard” or common language. Simply using dialect on a conversational level is not that difficult and not that big of a deal.<sup>46</sup>

Medoruma continued to explain in the interview that while he used Okinawan dialect in his short story, “Suiteki” (Droplets), it was only used on what he calls a most basic, rudimentary level (*shohoteki reberu*). He expressed that utilizing Okinawan in the format of a novel would allow him to suddenly and vividly bring forth Okinawan in a way that is not simply to give the reader a taste of the Okinawan atmosphere, but to present it fully, even if readers may not know what it means. Medoruma does this in *Me no oku no mori* in various places, namely in the fifth chapter that is told from the point of view of Seiji as an old man who reflects on his memories of Sayoko and the past. The chapter is presented in a stream of consciousness style with voices in Seiji’s head written entirely in the Nakijin dialect, the representative example of Kunigami

---

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Shun, Medoruma. “Uchinaguchi no jisei to tokimasa. Kotoba o “ibutsu” no youni” Edge, no. 7 (1998): 36.

<sup>45</sup> For *yuta* and *kamidari*, see Mario Incayawar, *Psychiatrist and Traditional Healers: Unwitting Partners in Global Mental Health*. (Chichester, UK: J. Wiley and Sons: 2009)

<sup>46</sup> Medoruma refers to using dialect (*hōgen*) likely referring to the Nakijin dialect of the Kunigami language of Northern Okinawa which is one of the six Ryukyuan languages that was designated severely endangered by UNESCO in 2009. Ryukyuan languages have a history of being considered dialects of the Japanese language for socio-political reasons, however they are distinct languages and not mutually intelligible with Japanese.

language, one of the recognized Ryukyuan languages, through the use of furigana, or Japanese ruby characters that are printed alongside the kanji (ideographic characters).

While it is clear that Medoruma has drawn inspiration from Faulkner in his use of stream-of-consciousness narrative and dialect, we might guess that he draws other inspiration from Faulkner's literature, particularly in his depiction of characters that are fixated on past events. Ruminating on this comparison, I am curious as to how Sayoko fits in in terms of the impact that her traumatic experiences have on her ability to reconcile her conscious awareness of the past, present, and future. Jean-Paul Sartre argues that because Faulkner's characters are committed to the past, they are helpless.<sup>47</sup> Freud described such a fixation on the past when a person is brought to a stop by a traumatic event: he or she abandon all interest in the present and future, he explained, and "remain permanently absorbed in mental concentration upon the past."<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Sayoko is in such a way powerlessly obsessed with the past, but unable to see her future, and living within an unclear, muddled present. But while Sartre describes Faulkner's characters as seeing "clearly only the past with an obsessed back-ward looking gaze," and focusing on only the events that are already over, "*Fui. Non Sum*,"<sup>49</sup> Sayoko's past does not take on a "super-reality" with "hard and clear" contours in her mental processing, but is in as equal disarray as her present and future. Sartre goes on to explain Faulkner's characters as living in a present filled with gaps through which "things of the past, fixed, motionless and silent as judges or glances come to invade it."<sup>50</sup> Sayoko experiences a similar existence – the anxiety, depression, and dissociation brought on by her wartime experiences seem to destroy all hopes for living peacefully – all while the specifics of the past, namely her pre-traumatic identity, cannot seemingly be clearly recalled. Her reality becomes not *Fui. Non Sum*, but *Non Fui. Non Sum*— I was not, I am not. It is not until Sayoko is relocated to an institution in the south, and her caretaker suggests that she take up drawing, that Medoruma provides us with evidence of her being able to begin her process of mental re-stabilization, allowing her to once again experience living in the present, with hope for the future.

---

<sup>47</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, "A Propos de *Le Bruit et la fureur*," *La Nouvelle Revue française* (1939): 52

<sup>48</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Lecture XVIII Fixation to Traumas: The Unconscious in Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (W.W. Norton & Company: 1977. Orig. 1916): 342.

<sup>49</sup> "I was. I am not."

<sup>50</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, "A Propos de *Le Bruit et la fureur*," 52



## CHAPTER FOUR: Sayoko's Voice Emerges

“It is probable that art originally developed as a means of expression of, and relief from, traumatic experience. The arts abound at times of nightfall, death, birth, war, and natural disaster, for they help to encapsulate terror. If psychological trauma is the origin of art, is it any wonder that the creative arts therapies hold so much promise as a reparative force?”<sup>51</sup>

As shown in the previous chapter, Medoruma's character Sayoko is prevented from narrating her experiences. When both public and private environments (the village community and Sayoko's family) prevent her from working through her past, and even enact re-victimization through further abuse, she is left “voiceless.” In this chapter I will address the importance of the environment that the narration of traumatic memory occurs in. While Sayoko suffers most of her life in painful silence, it is in the tenth chapter of the novel that she inhabits an environment that allows her to address her emotions.<sup>52</sup> I also want to raise the question of the form or the medium of the narration of memories. Sayoko's drawings that appear in this chapter are the first time the reader sees her as a character who is able to safely put her energy into transmission of her emotions, an act of creativity that Johnson calls having promise of becoming “a reparative force.” Medoruma emphasizes this by providing at the end of this chapter, the one and only moment in the whole of the text that we hear words come from her mouth.

### 4.1: Sayoko's Drawings as Restorative Sequence

In his book, *Me no oku ni tsukitate rareta kotoba no mori: Medoruma Shun no "bungaku" to okinawasen no kioku*, Suzuki Tomoyuki examines the ways by which memories are recalled throughout the novel, and argues that Medoruma's construction of each chapter brings the reader on a journey through the mental processes that characters undergo in remembering the past. One of the examples he provides is Kayō who screams after witnessing a vision of Seiji and Sayoko. He points out that when Kayō is confronted by the past, it inverts the reality that he has constructed through the repression of memories:

---

<sup>51</sup> David Read Johnson, “The Role of the Creative Arts Therapies in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Psychological Trauma,” *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 14, no.1 (1987): 13.

<sup>52</sup> Chapter 9 in the original Japanese version, Chapter 10 in the English translation.

彼自身の生活を守ってきた薄い被膜のような意識の殻を，出来事の記憶が内側から蹴破り，〈真実〉を露わにってしまったからである。<sup>53</sup>

Kare jishin no seikatsu o mamotte kita usui himaku no yōna ishiki no kara o, dekgoto no kioku ga uchigawa kara keyaburi, shinjitsu o arawa ni shite shimattakara dearu.

This was because the memory of past events exposed the truth by destroying the membrane-like shell of consciousness that protected his way of living.

Suzuki emphasizes this as the moment that the reader comes in contact with the intentions of the text. He continues in his analysis to point out that the chapters are organized by characters moving towards the acquisition of a challenging “vision” (ヴィジョン) that is acquired as a visual hallucination (*genshi* 幻視):

語りはその最終地点において、抑圧されていた記憶が露わになる瞬間や、漠然と漂っていた記憶痕跡が明晰な像を結ぶ瞬間を準備しており、その地点に向けて力動的に進んでいく。それは、「虚偽的」と言ってもよい意識の被膜を破って、目の背けようのない「事実」が露呈する瞬間、この物語が語ろうとする〈真実〉の現出する場面である。そのようなヴィジョンは、しばしば「幻視」として獲得される。<sup>54</sup>

Katari wa sono saishū chiten ni oite, yokuatsusareteita kioku ga arawa ni naru shunkan ya, bakuzento tadayotteita kioku konseki ga meiseikina zō o musubu shunkan o junbi shite ori, sono chiten ni mukete rikidō-teki ni susunde iku. Sore wa, ‘kyogi-teki’ to itte mo yoi ishiki no himaku wo yabutte, me no somuke-yō nai ‘jijitsu’ ga rotei suru shunkan, kono monogatari ga katarou to suru shinjitsu no genshutsu suru bamendearu. Sono yōna vujon wa, shibashiba, ‘genshi’ to shite kakutoku sareru.

At this final point the narrative prepares for the moment that oppressed memory is revealed and dynamically progresses towards the point where traces of memory that have been drifting vaguely are connected to a clear image. That is, the scene where truth appears, which the narrative is trying to talk about, is where the deceptive membrane of consciousness is broken and the facts that cannot be avoided are exposed. This “vision” is not uncommonly acquired as a visual hallucination.

---

<sup>53</sup> Tomoyuki Suzuki, “Convergence of Memories : Acquisition of “Vision” and Return of “Voice” in *Me no oku ni tsukitaterareta kotoba no mori: Medoruma Shun no “bungaku” to Okinawasen no kioku*, (Tokyo: Shobunsha, 2013), 156.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

Similar to what Suzuki finds present in Medoruma's narratives, Cathy Caruth has described the possibility of traumatized individuals becoming "possessed by an image or event" that returns "against the will of the one it inhabits."<sup>55</sup> Suzuki presents the "vision" at work in the chapters of the characters Kayō, J's grandfather, and Hisako as example. The second person "you" (Kayō in chapter three of the English translation) is immobilized by an apparition of Seiji and a vision of Sayoko running mad. J's grandfather sees a nightmare-like vision of Sayoko and her baby, covered in blood. Though Hisako's memories are fragmented, she too witnesses visions of Sayoko running madly towards the woods in her nightmares. Suzuki even identifies the unnamed author, who is almost completely disconnected from the events of 1945, as experiencing a kind of "vision" at the end of his chapter, when he smells blood, and hears the sound of the ocean after coming in contact with the harpoon head that Seiji used to attack the American soldier.

I propose that we are also given description of the rousing of Sayoko's memory and are brought back to the reality of her traumatizing event with a "vision" through her artwork as it appears in the tenth chapter of the novel. Since the drawings appear near the very end of the chapter and are presented to the reader in a specific sequence that shows progression from start to finishing point, they seem parallel to Suzuki's analysis of the development of each chapter. The arrangement in which the drawings are hung on the wall further illustrate their sequence and it is made clear that they have been created over a period of time. When Tamiko visits her sister, the final picture in the sequence is a new one that "wasn't there last week, so it must've been drawn and taped up recently" (English translation 110). The sequence of Sayoko's drawings and what they represent becomes symbolic of her progression towards mental re-stabilization, which seems to support Suzuki's observations of other characters facing the challenge of overcoming unavoidable memories of the past with the confrontation of a "vision".

There are three pictures that Tamiko observes on the wall above Sayoko's bed. They all seem to contain imagery of a deep part of the forest (*fukai mori no oku no yōdatta*). Tamiko initially recognizes the first of the three as being the cheeriest (*ichiban akarui kanji ga shita*) with its use of bright green and yellow scattered across the page. But as she looks more closely at

---

<sup>55</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. (1995): 5.

the picture, her interpretation of it changes as she notices the more ominous elements that are incorporated into it:

…ただ、真ん中から右寄りに真っ黒に塗りつぶされた穴のようなものがあった。黒のクレヨンで執拗に塗ったそれを見てると、実際にそこに深い穴が空いていて、近づくものを飲み込もうとしているように見え、薄気味悪くなってくる。それだけでなく、姉の心にも同じような穴が空いていて、いや、姉だけでなく、自分の心にも同じ穴が空いていて、その穴があるために自分達は不安に怯えつづけている、そういう思いにかられ、いい気持がしなかった。

…Tada, man'naka kara migiyori ni makkuro ni nuritsubusareta ana no yōna mono ga atta. Kuro no kureyon wo shitsuyō ni nutta sore wo mi teru to, jissai ni soko ni fukai ana ga aiteite, chikazuku mono wo nomikomou to shite iru yō ni mie, usugimiwaruku natte kuru. Sore dakedenaku, ane no kokoro ni mo onaji yōna ana ga aiteite, iya, ane dakedenaku, jibun no kokoro ni mo onaji ana ga aiteite, sono ana ga aru tame ni jibun-tachi wa fuan ni obie tsuzukete iru, sōiu omoi ni karare, ii kimochi ga shinakatta.

…but a section stretching from the middle to the right had been colored over in black, forming what looked like a hole. As I stared at the tenaciously scribbled over area, I got the creepy feeling that it really was a hole, sucking up everything that drew near. It occurred to me that a similar hole was in my sister's heart—and in mine, too—always making us feel scared and nervous. Suffice it to say, the picture didn't cheer me up in the least.

(Eng. Trans. 109)

By looking closely at her sister's artwork, Tamiko discovers a depth of emotion that Sayoko seems to be expressing. She notes the asymmetry of the composition: while her eye is at first drawn to the bright colors, it travels to the black scribbled area stretching from the middle to the right of the picture. The unequally proportioned elements, combined with the bold nature that the black area is scribbled in (*shitsuyou ni nutta*), may be what has lead Tamiko to the unsettling interpretation of the image as a “hole, sucking up everything that drew near” (*chikaduku mono wo nomikomoutoshiteiruyouni mie*). The symbol of the black hole might also conjure visual connections for the reader to the eerie image of spirit-filled caves that is prominent throughout the novel. Apparently, Sayoko has opened herself to beginning to tell her story through her artwork.

My interpretation of this first drawing is that it is a representation of Sayoko's deep emotional pain. Van der Kolk describes a "speechless terror" that is involved with exposure to trauma, where the experience leads survivors to be "out of touch with their feelings."<sup>56</sup> This description might be rephrased as "the mind and body experience separation in the face of trauma", so creative art processes that utilize movements of the body can be a way to release tension by calming the nervous system. This first drawing has perhaps given Sayoko space to breathe and to enter a subliminal space of discomfort while waiting for transformation.

The second drawing that Tamiko sees is to the left of the first, and is a drawing with dark tones with spirals made with innumerable circular movements. She describes it as the one that uses the darkest colors (*ichiban kurai shikichou*), covered with dark green, ultramarine blue (*gunjou*), dark brown, and black lines. Tamiko's interpretation of a circle created from dozens of spirals that look as if they had been scribbled around and around again dozens of times (*nanjuukai mo guruguru to nurimashita*) with a red crayon changes as she ponders the image:

その左隣の絵は一番暗い色調で、濃い緑や紫、群青、焦げ茶や黒の線で画用紙が覆い尽くされている。右の絵の黒い円と対応するように、真ん中から左上に赤い円があった。濃い赤のクレヨンは何十回もぐるぐると塗り回したようなそれは、何かの木の実かと思えたが、木々の間から見える夕日にも見え、また、こちらの様子をうかがう生き物の目や血溜りのようにも見えて、同じように薄気味悪かった。

Sono hidaritonari no e wa ichiban kurai shikichō de, koi midori ya murasaki, gunjō, kogecha ya kuro no sen de gayōshi ga ōi tsukusa rete iru. Migi no e no kuroi en to taiō suru yō ni, man'naka kara hidariue ni akai en ga atta. Koi aka no kureyon o nanjūkai mo guruguru to nuri mawashita yōna sore wa, nanika no konomi ka to omoetaga, kigi no aida kara mieru yūhi ni mo mie, mata, kochira no yōsu wo ukagau ikimono no me ya chi tamari no yō ni miete, onajiyōni usugimiwarukatta.

The picture to the left was the most somber one. Thick lines of dark green, purple, navy blue, dark brown, and black covered the entire page. The section from the middle to the top left was filled with a dark red circle, corresponding to the black circle in the other picture. Dozens of spirals scribbled with a crayon, the circle at first reminded me of some kind of fruit. But then I thought it might be the evening

---

<sup>56</sup> B.A. van der Kolk, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and the Nature of Trauma" in *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*. Accessed December 18, 2015. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3181584/>.

sun, visible through the trees. After a while, however, it seemed to have transformed into the eye of a glaring serpent, or even a pool of blood. The picture was as creepy as the first one.

Tamiko recognizes that the red circle could represent elements that can refer to various emotional interpretations. The spiral forms that it is made of are reminiscent of the red fruit of the screwpine tree, an iconic part of the summer landscape in Okinawa, which Sayoko stares at while she is raped in the thicket of screwpine trees. This feature of the drawing, combined with the fact that Tamiko also identifies the form as looking like the evening sun visible between the trees (*kigi no aida kara mieru yūhi*), suggests that the image is a depiction of Sayoko's initial site of trauma that we are made witness to in the first chapter of the novel. It is the incorporation of the red circle as also signifying the eye of a creature staring in this direction (*kochira no yōsu o ukagau ikimono no me*) and the pool of blood (*chitamari*) that also lead me to consider this image as a drawing of Sayoko's "vision." Unlike the characters Suzuki points out as examples, Sayoko not only confronts her vision but also records it in the form of a drawing, enabling her to begin to work effectively through it.

This is not the only place in the novel where the fruit and setting sun are used as a simile to represent the moments of beautiful light that suddenly turn into stark darkness, signifying the intense moment of peak violence. In the midst of the confusion of Seiji's chapter, the two elements also appear together: "...in the darkness of the woods, the red fruit of the screwpine looked like a setting sun..." (64). The setting or evening sun is significant for both Seiji and Sayoko as both of the events that take place in the first chapter of the novel – Sayoko's rape and Seiji's attack – occur against the backdrop of the setting sun. It is a time of day that is described in the Okinawan language as *akou-kurou* (アコウクロウ), the moment between light and darkness when the sun's last rays pass over the horizon. This beautiful time of day is also representative of both of the character's traversal from their brighter pre-attack and darker post-attack lives.

In this second drawing, Sayoko has utilized symbolization (the red fruit, the setting sun, and the dark trees) in her artwork, which allows her to make connections to the past. Such a capacity for humans to symbolize has long been a key feature recognized

in the psychodynamic literature.<sup>57</sup> By referring to the site of her initial trauma in her drawing, Sayoko begins to reconstruct the individual parts that make up the entire constellation of her traumatic memory. This beginning step is an important one in her process of healing, as has been suggested by John Wilson: the step where the survivor recognizes trauma elements as being linked together into a “gestalt”, where the individual parts as well as the whole of the trauma complex are made visible in a manner not previously acknowledged in the immediate aftermath of the traumatic impact.<sup>58</sup> The use of symbolization in her artwork can also be seen as a variation on “information transmission,” as the symbols become clues for the viewer, in this case Tamiko or Sayoko’s caretaker, to understand that which Sayoko cannot verbalize.

The last drawing that Tamiko sees taped to the wall is described as being the most recent of the three. It displays more complexity of its elements, including what appears to be human figure forms. It contains similar imagery of the dense dark woods of green and purple, but is described as creating an impression that is different from the other two drawings (*hoka no nimai to wa chigatta inshou o ataeteita*), due to a two-centimeter thick blue horizontal line that is above the woods:

その二枚のしたに貼られた絵は、先週来たときにはなかったもので、最近描いて貼ったものらしかった。緑や紫を塗り重ねた暗い森の上に、二センチ幅くらいの青い線が水平に塗られている。その青色が他の二枚とは違った印象を与えていた。

Sono ni-mai no shita ni hara reta e wa, senshū kita toki ni wa nakatta node, saikin kaite hatta monorashikatta. Midori ya murasaki o nuri kasaneta kurai mori no ue ni, ni-senchi haba kurai no aoi sen ga suihei ni nura rete iru. Sono aoiro ga hoka no ni-mai to wa chigatta inshō o ataete ita.

The picture below the other two wasn’t there last week, so it must’ve been drawn and taped up recently. In this one, a horizontal blue line about two centimeters wide was drawn above dense woods of green and purple. The blue created a unique impression.

---

<sup>57</sup> John Wilson and Boris Drozdek. *Broken Spirits: The Treatment of Traumatized Asylum Seekers, Refugees, War, and Torture Victims*. (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004), 313

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

After having established the overall look of the image in her mind, Tamiko goes on to describe two strange forms (*kimyouna katachi*) drawn in brown crayon. She contemplates their meaning, considering that they might be human figures:

画面の右下に茶色のクレヨンで描かれた二つの奇妙な形があり、最初外国の文字のように見えたそれは、よく見ると人の形のようにだった。二人の人が寄り添うようにしてうずくまっている、そういうふうに見える。二人で草むらに隠れているのか、何かを探しているのか、それとも体を温め合っているのか。小さな丸と歪んだ線で描かれたその形は、森の中に迷い込んでしまい、途方に暮れているように見える。もし一人が姉なら、もう一人は誰なのか。大きくなった赤ちゃん坊なのだろうか・・・

Gamen no migishita ni chairo no kureyon de kaka reta futatsu no kimyōna katachi ga ari, saisho gaikoku no moji no yōni mieta sore wa, yokumiruto hito no katachi no yōdatta. Futari de kusamura ni kakurete iru no ka, nanika o sagashite iru no ka, soretomo karada wo atatame atte iru no ka. Chīsana maru to yuganda sen de kakareta sono katachi wa, mori no naka ni mayoikondeshimai, tohō ni kurete iru yōni mieru. Moshi hitori ga anenara, mō hitori wa darena no ka. Ōkikunatta akachan bōna no darou ka...

In the bottom right corner were two strange figures [shapes] drawn with a brown crayon. At first they looked like foreign letters, but on closer inspection, they seemed more like human figures, crouching and cuddled up to each other. At least that's what they looked like to me. *Were they hiding together in the grass? Were they searching for something? Or were they just trying to keep each other warm?* Drawn with small curves and crooked lines, the figures seemed to have wandered into the woods and lost their way. *Assuming one was my sister, who was the other? Was it her child, all grown up?*

By looking closely, Tamiko determines that the two shapes that look like foreign letters are human figures that are perhaps curling up to each other, hiding, searching for something, or trying to keep each other warm. Though her interpretation of this final drawing is inconclusive in that she can't seem to figure out who or what the two human-like figures represent, it is quite revealing that she wonders whether one of the figures is Sayoko's child, all grown up. Tamiko identifies the figures as having a very close, loving relationship – but it is left up to the reader to deduce who they might be. Fortunately, Medoruma gives us a clue by linking the image to what happens next:

・・・そう思いながら青い帯に目をやり、ふと気づいて窓の外を見た。  
「その風景を見て、それまで森の上の空だと思っていた絵の青い帯が、海を表しているのかもしれないと思った。」



...sō omoinagara aoi obi ni me wo yari, futo kidzuite mado no soto o mita. ‘Sono fūkei o mite, sore made mori no uenosorada to omotte ita e no aoi obi ga, umi o arawashite iru no kamo shirenai to omotta.

Considering that possibility, I gazed at the thick blue line. Suddenly, it occurred to me to look outside... From this angle, the ocean was above the trees. I realized that the blue line, which I had assumed was the sky [above the forest], was probably the ocean.

Tamiko looks out the window and immediately makes the connection between the ocean view outside the window and images in the drawing. Startled, she spots Sayoko outside staring at the ocean. The thought that comes to her mind is that it is unusual for her to be out on her own. When she goes out to meet Sayoko, she looks at her face and quickly realizes that she “couldn’t remember the last time she looked so peaceful.” As she is thinking this, she sees Sayoko’s lips move, but doesn’t catch what she says. Sayoko, still staring out at the ocean, doesn’t answer when Tamiko says, “Huh? What?” Despite not being repeated, the words echo in Tamiko’s ears with the sound of the breeze. She hears, in the Okinawan language, “*chikarindou, seiji*.” “I hear you, Seiji.” Sayoko’s words take us into her inner emotional world as they drift over the ocean, wherein she remains emotionally close to Seiji.

Though a conjecture, the link between the final drawing and this scene of Sayoko finally expressing her inner thoughts in voiced words probably suggests that the figures represented might be that of Sayoko and Seiji united together in the woods. What may be more certain, however, is that the drawing is an indication of Sayoko’s mental process towards positive alleostasis, or re-stabilization following her trauma. She is now able to leave her bed on her own and gaze at the ocean for the first time in a very long while. The ocean is a powerful symbol that seems to bring peace to Sayoko as she responds to Seiji’s voice far off in the distance.

Our reading of the symbol of the ocean as it appears in Sayoko’s drawing might also be augmented by the significance of the ocean in Okinawan culture. For Okinawans, the ocean has various meanings as it is representative of vitality, purity, and holiness, but it is also a symbol of danger, masculinity and solitary lifestyles. Since soil conditions of the islands in Okinawa make farming difficult, and the hot and humid climate makes storage of food unreliable, the ocean provides a vital source of food and may be seen as

the lifeblood of the culture.<sup>59</sup> In *Me no oku no mori*, the villagers are highly dependent on fish for survival as much of the vegetation has been destroyed by American bombing. Seiji is *uminchu* (lit. man of the ocean) and works together with his father to distribute fish and shellfish to families in the neighborhood, and has especially fond memories of bringing them to Sayoko (English translation 17). Working as a fisherman is a solitary occupation that can be associated with antisocial values. The ocean is also representative of purity and the salt is believed to keep away bad spirits (117). In the novel, it is described as being “pure” and “defiled” once the American’s blood pours into it after his attack (13). Okinawan religion speaks of a mythical place called *Nirai Kanai*, the place from which all life is said to originate, and where all souls return after death and once they cross over from the living world. According to the *Kōjien* 5<sup>th</sup> edition, an authoritative dictionary of Japanese, *Nirai Kanai* is a paradise believed to exist far beyond the ocean. According to the *Irōsetsuden*, a collection of 142 ancient legends of Okinawa compiled around 1713, it is an underwater realm. One can only wonder whether Medoruma might be deliberately using the important cultural symbol of the ocean, with its various references to danger, solitary lifestyles, purity, vitality, and holiness as a backdrop to Sayoko’s transformation to reaching a point of mental stabilization. The reader might consider whether Sayoko might be, by staring out at the ocean, simultaneously imagining Seiji off in the distance and looking out towards *Nirai Kanai*, a spiritual place considered to be the home base of the gods. Medoruma has created this graceful scene in sharp contrast to the scenes of Sayoko’s flight into the woods towards the places where spirits retreat to in death.

#### **4.2: Environments and Mediums**

As the reader witnesses Sayoko’s ultimate expression of her voice through her artwork as it appears in Chapter 10, it is important that we keep in mind the qualities of the environment by which such narration is made possible. How is it that survivors of atrocities are restricted from making their experiences known? Medoruma suggests, through his depiction of the desire of

---

<sup>59</sup> Susan Sered, *Women of the Sacred Groves: Divine Priestesses of Okinawa*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 122.

both perpetrators and survivors to keep their memories shrouded from the public eye, that if they were to make their experiences known, they would require environments that are conducive to their ability to speak about their experience. Ikeda explains how environments influence narration by pointing out that Tamiko regrets giving her speech at the Junior High School mainly because she speaks to people with whom she lacks a personal connection. He describes the students' reaction to Tamiko's talk as an action of what Eva Hoffman dubs "formulaic piety." It is, he clarifies, "less an act of rejection and defiance" than the passive acceptance of something as "important" without "real understanding, engagement or thought."<sup>60</sup> In the unsettling classroom environment of listeners who display formulaic piety, Tamiko cannot bring herself to tell the students that the girl she is speaking about is actually her own sister. "Suppressing my feelings," she reflects, "I pushed through to the end, but I told myself that I'd never give a speech again." Clearly, the classroom environment, of listeners who extract just superficial meaning from Tamiko's speech, does not allow her to communicate her true story, with its implications of deep meanings.

Another example of a character who struggles with the inability to share traumatic memories is the ward chief, Kayō. Though he speaks to the young woman who is interviewing him about his war experiences, he is not able to narrate the truth of them to her, a stranger to the community. Kayō asks her if she is planning on going to the island to check on everything he has said. "Because if you are, you should forget it," he tells her. "Some people don't want to remember the past," he warns, almost as if talking about himself. During the interview, it seems that Kayō is caught under the weight of the same sense of guilt that he felt at the time of the attack brought about by his having cooperated with the American soldiers to inform them of Seiji's whereabouts. After the woman leaves he realizes that he "couldn't communicate anything" to her. Having lost all close family members with whom he might have had a chance to speak the truth, he comes to the conclusion, "my memories will die with me." Although Kayō makes a first effort, in the end he fails to take on the role of being a witness to the truth of his own story and passing it on to others.

Takuma Sminkey interprets the novel's use of multiple character perspectives as Medoruma's attempt at exploring the various ways the war memories of characters are passed

---

<sup>60</sup> Kyle Ikeda, *Okinawan War Memory*, 131.

down, and in turn, the ways that the methods used to attempt to share experiences seem “doomed to failure.” In contrast, a successful method of transmitting traumatic memories may be through Fumi and Hisako meeting up again 70 years after the war. Ikeda explains that the exchange between Fumi and Hisako, two childhood friends who share the disturbing experience of having witnessed Sayoko’s rape as impressionable fourth graders, allows them to communicate the deep emotions associated with the tragedy, and its narration occurring in front of Fumi’s son, Yōchi, is one of the few instances presented in the novel in which memories are successfully passed on to a person who didn’t experience the war.<sup>61</sup>

In the case of Sayoko, she is unable to narrate her experiences while living in the environment of the village due to the shame she faces from the entire community as well as her family members, who all treat her sexual assaults, and the child born from them, as taboo subjects that they cannot talk about. She is unable to speak her feelings and thus turns to coping with them through the self-blame associated with depression, self-harm, and shutting herself off from others. However, later in life, the safe environment of a hospital institution allows her to narrate her traumatic experience through the production of her artwork. She is finally able to do so because the expression of her emotions in a creative way occurs as a semi-private, relatively intimate exchange: she knows that only her sister Tamiko, her caretaker, and the other women in the dormitory will see the art that she creates. Additionally, because it is her caretaker who suggests that she take up drawing, the environment of the institution is one where she is encouraged to embrace her creativity. According to Herman, recovery for severely traumatized individuals is “only possible within the context of relationships.”<sup>62</sup> Vickroy further explains, that a “sense of ego integration, developed through relationships... is needed to overcome the devastating fragmentation often occurring in trauma.”<sup>63</sup> Fortunately, Sayoko’s caretaker is able to provide an atmosphere of acceptance and empathy, in which Sayoko feels comfortable expressing her emotions, allowing her to begin to regain her self-identity as a person who opens up to others in the knowledge that they care about her.

It is not only environment and relationships that dictates whether traumatic memory can be articulated. The medium through which a survivor does so is perhaps equally as important. In

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>62</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence, from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, (Basic Books, 1997), 133.

<sup>63</sup> Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, 27.

Sayoko's case, it seems to be that her severe traumatic memory cannot be linguistically coded. Herman explains traumatic memory as often being "wordless and static" (175). "To really reach and touch one's emotional world," explains Wertheim-Cahen, "words are seldom sufficient." The medium of visual arts may be easier for Sayoko to utilize to begin to tap into her subconscious, as her images precede language and may serve as an eventual bridge for finding words.

The private nature of Sayoko's drawing and art work also offers her a shielded environment that, in contrast to the form of an interview or speech given to a group of people, allows her to engage and express the traumatic past without the pressure of the expectations of an interviewer of oral history or the audience of a speech as part of a program for peace. Since the artwork is created for a very limited private and personal audience with the purpose of allowing for the expression of anything without backlash, its meanings do not have to be concrete in the same way that written and oral testimonies are expected to be. This freedom of expression can allow victims to widen the horizons of exploration of their inner chaos in order to enable them to begin to re-construct their identity. Moreover, personal artistic expression created within such safe, private environments allows survivors to drop their defenses and avoid the pressure to perform. The personal therapeutic purpose of Sayoko's drawings, along with the visual, image based element of their form may thus allow her to simultaneously engage her memories without the use of words as well as free her from the expectations of an external potentially judgmental consumer or audience of her art.

#### **4.3: Articulation versus Transmission**

It must be said that despite the powerful and restorative qualities that art-making holds for the individual, it is still somewhat limited in its ability to communicate memories to the viewer. Sminkey may be right when he notices that Medoruma indicates that first-generation survivors repeatedly "fail" to transmit their memories. While Sayoko is able to find a new coping mechanism through creative self-expression, she is not necessarily able to clearly and completely communicate her actual experiences to her caretaker, to Tamiko, or to others. In order for transmission to be successful, explains Felman and Laub, the listener (or in this case, the viewer) must connect with the victim's inner experience (memories, fears), become aware of their own defenses, and at the same

time retain a separate perspective so that one might be at the same time a witness to the trauma witness and a witness to oneself.<sup>64</sup> Clearly, Tamiko seems to be able to do this – she evidently sees her own experience in the first drawing just as much as she notices her sister’s.

But while we might say that Tamiko is unable to truly come to understand what happened to her sister through her drawings, she at the very least becomes cognizant of the ways that artwork has helped Sayoko over the years – how the highly creative and tactile job she did working at the sewing shop was good for her mental and emotional health, and how making the drawings now help her. Bissonett explains that Winnicott’s usage of the word “creativity” as describing “the core of the person that remains whole in spite of life events.”<sup>65</sup> She explains that creativity allows for the ability to “awaken the potential of self-healing when the creativity is contacted and nurtured through a reframing of past experiences in visual terms.” Hence Sayoko’s story and the inclusion of her drawings serves as a testament to the potential for the arts, whether it be through visual, verbal, or musical means, to find new ways to heal emotional ills through the expression of one’s authentic inner stories.

---

<sup>64</sup> Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. (New York: Routledge, 1991), 58.

<sup>65</sup> Jo Bissonett, “Tell me your story so far: A developmental approach to art therapy” in *Art Therapy with Young Survivors of Sexual Abuse*. Edited by: Jenny Murphy. (Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2001): 128.

## CHAPTER FIVE: A Multiplicity of Memories as Kaleidoscopic Images

*Me no Oku no Mori* is narrated through various points of view, from the perspective of the victim, to the perspective of the perpetrator, those in 1945 near the end of the Battle of Okinawa and those 60 years after the war. Characters in each chapter of the novel recollect and recall two key violent events that are presented in the first chapter of the Japanese version of the novel and the first two chapters of the English translation.

The first of the two events focuses on a seventeen-year-old girl named Sayoko, who is brutally raped by four American soldiers. Her rape is followed by the rapes of other women in the village just a few days later by the same group of American men in front of the male villagers, who do nothing but watch helplessly. Sayoko is caught up in the shame of what has happened to her. Her trauma is compounded by the fact that she is raped again by other young men in the village, that her father is physically and mentally abusive, and that her child born out of the sexual violence is taken from her and put up for adoption.

The second story is of Seiji, the shy son of a fisherman, who is the only person in the village to retaliate against the Americans. In the aftermath of the rapes, Seiji attacks the soldiers as they are swimming across the two-hundred-meter strait that separates their temporary military port from the island. Seiji prevents more rapes from occurring, but only manages to injure one of the soldiers. He ends up blind after he is tear-gassed by the Americans who seek to force him out of the cave that he hides in. Both Sayoko and Seiji end up living solitary lives in the post-war years. Cast out to the periphery of their community, they struggle with deteriorating mental conditions, both ending up dependent on family members for survival.

The subsequent chapters present the reader with the perspectives of various individuals who were involved in, witness, or hear about the attacks from others. Sayoko's friend, Fumi, witnesses both the rape and Seiji's attack. Kayo, the ward chief, is forced to confront his memories when a young woman interviews him about his war experiences, and finds himself caught under the weight of the same guilt that he faced at the time of the attacks: for having informed the Americans of Seiji's whereabouts and for cooperating with the Americans, despite their violent acts against the village women. Hisako is compelled to return to the island 60 years later to piece together her fractured memories that appear only in the form of heart-wrenching nightmares following her husband's death. Tamiko, Sayoko's younger sister, is asked to give a speech about her war experiences for a Junior High School 60 years after the war but ends up

regretting agreeing to do so. A student at the school listens closely to Tamiko's speech and feels a strong connection to the story of Sayoko, but lives in fear every day as she is bullied in school. One of the American men who raped Sayoko ends up surviving the war, but is haunted by his memories of her. It is suggested that his ultimate death is by suicide. An unnamed novelist living in Okinawa, who writes a story that is very similar to Medoruma's *Me no Oku no Mori*, is contacted by an old friend about the events that occurred in 1945. The Japanese-American interpreter who aids in Seiji's capture and interrogation is wrought with remorse 60 years later. Thus, the 10 chapters show multiple perspectives that all revolve around the two original events of 1945.

The novel was originally published in the quarterly *Zenya*. It is important to note that each new chapter was released quarterly, so readers of the novel would have to wait for a period of time after reading a chapter until the next installment, when they would be able to continue reading the next chapter of the story. Thus, in its original form, readers had sufficient time in between installments to contemplate and synthesize the meanings of the distinct perspectives related to the memories of each main character, almost all of whom had his or her own dedicated chapter. In other words, after reading a chapter, readers were able to achieve a certain perception of the overall meaning of the story before being presented with a new chapter, offering the new perspective of its main character. Over the time of reading the chapters, readers continued to modify their understandings of the essential meaning of the story, based on their critical interpretation of the viewpoints they were able to formulate.

While Suzuki Tomoyuki has described the presentation of multiple perspectives in *Me no oku no mori* as being a mosaic-like construction (*mosaiku-jou*)<sup>66</sup> in his criticism of the novel, Koshikawa Yoshiaki's analogy of the novel's construction is as a "prism" (*jū-ko no katari no purizumu*).<sup>67</sup> Taking into account Suzuki and Koshikawa's analogies, I would like to present the construction of the novel as a kaleidoscope of memories.

Though the analogy of the mosaic represents each character's memory as fragments that are connected to form an overall picture, the kaleidoscope analogy might offer a different way of thinking about the complexity of Medoruma's work. In a mosaic, all of its pieces do not revolve

---

<sup>66</sup> Tomoyuki Suzuki, *Me no oku ni tsukitate rareta kotoba no mori*. 148

<sup>67</sup> Yoshiaki Koshikawa, "Mori no gama ni hibike, uchinaa no koe: Medoruma Shun no 'Me no oku no mori.'" *Shosetsu Torippa (The Asahi Shimbun)*, 2009.



around a core point. The pieces in a mosaic might be random, jumbled, and incongruous. The kaleidoscope, on the other hand, reveals an image of elements that are interconnected, all revolving around one central point – even those at the most far periphery are connected to the image’s center. The kaleidoscope analogy accounts both for the multiplicity of perspectives that is integral to the novel as well as the construction of the memories of the characters’ in *Me no oku no mori* as all revolving around the main incidents of Sayoko’s rape and Seiji’s retaliation which occur in the first chapter of the novel.<sup>68</sup>

The mosaic is forever static, as each piece of ceramic or stone is set in place as the artist creates it, while the kaleidoscope’s images are not static but change as the viewer turns the kaleidoscope. The mosaic can be seen by multiple people at once. It is in open view, often worked into the road surface or displayed on the wall. In contrast, the kaleidoscope must be picked up and peered into, so its rotating images are only revealed when the individual viewer makes the conscious decision to gaze into it. We turn the kaleidoscope, over and over again, curious about the magical geometric forms it reveals. Viewing these analogies from this angle, the kaleidoscope may be seen to illustrate the act of reading the text, as the reader goes through the process of looking *into* the characters stories from the “other side.” As readers “turn the kaleidoscope” in the intimate act of reading the text — that is, as their thinking and perspectives are challenged by the text — the multicolored patterns of light and images continually shift and alter the meaning of the story. By the end of the novel, not only do we arrive at a different overall image of the story, but our understanding of the implications of the text has been altered.

The word “kaleidoscope” has roots in the Greek words *kalos*, *eidos*, and *skopios*, respectively meaning *beautiful*, *form*, and *view*. The turning of the kaleidoscope allows the mind to explore and the eye to marvel. It also requires the skill of the artist’s hands in its creation. Medoruma’s text is at times terrifying, but it is also often beautiful, which seems to reflect the landscape of Okinawa – a tropical island filled with verdant flora and saturated with sparkling sunlight but that is also covered with the stultifying grayness of military bases and deep onerous caves that are filled with memories of a dark past.

While the geometric forms on the outer periphery of the kaleidoscopic image come clearly into view, the center seems to be a distant, barely visible point. Yet, everything is

---

<sup>68</sup> The first chapter of the original was split into two chapters in the English translation.

connected to this one seemingly miniscule central point. In this way, the image of the kaleidoscopic is representative of how distant we remain from Sayoko's actual voice and inner experiences until quite late in the text. Though the event of her rape is central to the story, the reader is not finally presented with her voice until the tenth chapter of the novel, and it is only through her artwork that we learn about the inner workings of her soul.

## CONCLUSION

Central to Medoruma Shun's *Me no oku no mori* is the story of Sayoko, a survivor of wartime sexual violence who is able to progress from life-threatening depression to mental re-stabilization by means of artistic expression. As the tenth chapter of the novel ends with Sayoko's one and only vocalization in the entire text – her words of understanding that she sends over the waves of the ocean to the far-off Seiji – we might interpret her artwork as the bridge by which her silence is able to be finally broken. It is in this way that Medoruma both acknowledges traumatic memory as being painfully inexpressible in linguistic terms for survivors as well as the potential that art has for giving marginalized subjects such as victims of violence the voice to express themselves and begin the reparation of their psyche and soul.

Very importantly, Sayoko is able to come to a point of restoration of stasis; however, the question remains whether she will ever be able to transmit her memory to future generations. As is evidenced by the failure of characters in the novel to transmit their memories, Medoruma is mindful of the fact that all mediums of transmission of emotions stemming from past experiences can be faulty in one way or another. He concedes the failure of modes of visual communication, be it something as simple as the emotion that is expressed in one's eyes, or something more complex, as the emotion that is expressed in visual artwork. He also admits the failure of communication that is linguistically expressed to support the ability to speak about the past. In short, he acknowledges the limitations of the quite complex transmission of memory through both art and the written word.

In truth, Sayoko's artworks, though powerful tools for the restoration of her identity, are not likely to ever be displayed publicly to transmit her memories such as in the environment of a museum. Nor will her child, taken from her only a month after his birth, be able to inherit her memories as Medoruma has been able to do from his parents and grandparents. Here the author reminds us of the tragic fate of Sayoko's memory, and in turn that of the vast majority of a wider community of survivors of atrocities, to never appear as part of public history. The ever-present uneasy realization we are left with is that what ends up being recorded and remembered is rarely congruent with what actually happened during traumatic events.

Nonetheless, we are given hope that it may be possible to come ever closer to the truth of what occurs as a result of experiencing deep psychological trauma. By creating literature devoted to the topics of violence and trauma as a second-generation survivor, Medoruma is able to act as

conduit for the memories of his parents and grandparents to reach the world. As the creator of a literary work of art, he presents us with an array of memories seen through the kaleidoscope of the various perspectives of his fictional characters, allowing him to delve into taboo topics such as sexual violence by predators and mental abuse by family members, difficult topics which have generally been avoided by society. However, it may be assumed that Medoruma is well-aware that the expression of memory that is passed on to others is simply not enough to alter the course of history or to stop violence from recurring.

Similar to Medoruma himself, the unnamed author in *Me no oku no mori* writes about a young island girl raped by American soldiers after the war, based on a story he hears from his grandmother. Unfortunately, the unnamed author's work is met in his circle of university peers with confusion and the lack of willingness to try to understand. Similarly, the students at the junior high school do not strive to understand Tamiko's speech on a deeper level and the relevance of meaning it has for their own harmful actions as bullies, instigators of violence within the school.

Medoruma incorporates into his text these types of scenes, which represent the many conflicting perspectives that may arise in the face of trauma; therefore, it seems quite clear that he is aware that making the overlooked and inaccessible memories of characters such as the rape survivor Sayoko visible to us in his work of fiction represents just a beginning. Literature and art by itself is not enough. It is most crucial that readers of literature and viewers of artwork, people across the globe, now make a conscious decision to gaze deeply into the kaleidoscope of both the memories presented by artists as well as their own troubling memories, each of which may represent one of many diverse perspectives. What they encounter should inspire them to engage in the process of finding meaningful solutions for the contemporary problems of violence and the deep trauma. It is only then that making a piece of artwork may have the power to act as not only a restorative force but a preventative one that can truly aid in the creation of a better world with less lives ruined by the devastation of war and far fewer victims of violence.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Matthew. *Identity and Resistance in Okinawa*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.
- Bhowmik, Davinder L. *Writing Okinawa: Narrative Acts of Identity and Resistance*. London: Routledge, 2008.
- . "Fractious Memories In Medoruma Shun's Tales Of War." *Imag(in)ing the War in Japan*, Brill, 2010, 203-28.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- Cheek, J.M., and R. Hogan. "Self-concepts, Self-presentations, and Moral Judgments." *Psychological Perspectives on the Self 2* (1983): 249-73.
- Cook, Haruko Taya., and Theodore Failer. Cook. *Japan at War: An Oral History*. New York: New, 1992.
- Downs, Wilbur G. "Malaria on Okinawa." *Bulletin of the U.S. Army Medical Department 9.8*. US Army Academy of Health Sciences, Stimson Library, 1949, 652-655.
- Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Freud, Sigmund. *XVIII Fixation to Traumas: The Unconscious in Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. Edited by James Strachey. W. W. Norton & Company, 1977 (Orig. 1917).
- Finkelhor, David, Richard K. Ormrod, Heather A. Turner, and Sherry L. Hamby. "Measuring Poly-victimization Using the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire." *Child Abuse & Neglect 29.11*, 2005, 1297-312.
- Finkelhor, David, Gerald Hotaling, I.a Lewis, and Christine Smith. "Sexual Abuse in a National Survey of Adult Men and Women: Prevalence, Characteristics, and Risk Factors." *Child Abuse & Neglect 14*, no. 1 (1990): 19-28.
- Hartman, Geoffrey H. "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies." *New Literary History 26*, no. 3 (1995): 537-63.
- Hill, Clara E. *Working with Dreams in Psychotherapy*. New York: Guilford Press, 1996.
- Hein, Laura Elizabeth. *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.
- Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence, from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books, 1997.
- Horwood, Christopher. "Perpetrators and Motivation: Behind Rape and Sexual Violence in War." *The Shame of War: Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Conflict*, 2007, 38.

- Ikeda, Kyle. "Geographically-Proximate Postmemory: Sites of War and the Enabling of Vicarious Narration in Medoruma Shun's Fiction." *International Journal of Okinawan Studies* 3, no. 2 (2012): 37-60.
- . "Unarticulated Memories of the Battle of Okinawa: The Early Fiction of Second-Generation War Survivor Medoruma Shun." *Positions: Asia Critique*, 2014, 301-28.
- . *Okinawan War Memory: Transgenerational Trauma and the War Fiction of Medoruma Shun*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2013.
- Incayawar, Mario. *Psychiatrist and Traditional Healers Unwitting Partners in Global Mental Health*. Chichester, UK: J. Wiley & Sons, 2009.
- Oe, Kenzaburo. "70th Anniversary of US Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Interview with Oe Kenzaburo" By Amy Goodman. *Democracy Now! Independent Global News*, August, 6, 2015, [http://www.democracynow.org/2015/8/6/japanese\\_nobel\\_laureate\\_kenzaburo\\_oe\\_on](http://www.democracynow.org/2015/8/6/japanese_nobel_laureate_kenzaburo_oe_on).
- Johnson, David Read. "The Role of the Creative Arts Therapies in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Psychological Trauma." *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 14, no. 1 (1987): 7-13.
- Jung, Carl. "Civilization in Transition." in *The Collected Words of C.G. Jung*. Translated by R. Hull. Vol. 10. New York: Pantheon Books, 1964. 149.
- Kammerer, Nina, and Ruta Mazelis. "Trauma and Retraumatization." 2006.
- Koshikawa, Yoshiaki. "Mori no gama ni hibike, uchinaa no koe: Medoruma Shun no 'Me no oku no mori'" *Shosetsu Torippa (The Asahi Shimbun)*, Winter (2009): 434-46. Accessed December 18, 2015. <http://www.kageshobo.co.jp/main/books/menookunomori.html>.
- LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. 1st ed. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000.
- Kawato, Yuko. *Protests against U.S. Military Base Policy in Asia: Persuasion and Its Limits*. Stanford University Press, 2015.
- López-Calvo, Ignacio. *Critical Insights: Magical Realism*. Salem Press, 2014.
- Markus, Hazel R., and Shinobu Kitayama. "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation." *Psychological Review* 98, no. 2 (1991): 224-53.
- Mccarthy, A., K. Lee, S. Itakura, and D. W. Muir. "Gaze Display When Thinking Depends on Culture and Context." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 2008, 716-29.
- Medoruma, Shun. *Me no oku no mori*. Tokyo: Kage Shobo, 2009.
- . *In the Woods of Memory*. Translated by Takuma Sminkey (unpublished manuscript, December 3, 2015)
- . "Eiga: 'Fuuon' wo megutte: Interview with Medoruma Shun." *Wander*,

- no. 36 (2004): 46-59.
- . *Okinawa sengo zero-nen*. Tokyo: Nihon Hosho Shuppan Kyokai, 2005.
- . "Uchinaguchi no jisei to tokimasa. Kotoba o "ibutsu" no youni: Interview with Medoruma Shun." *Edge*, no. 7 (1998): 32-41.
- Molasky, Michael. "Medoruma Shun: The Writer as Public Intellectual in Okinawa Today." In *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*, 161-91. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.
- Murphy, Jenny. *Art Therapy with Young Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Lost for Words*. Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2001.
- Nelson, C. T. "Occupation without End: Opposition to the US Military in Okinawa." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 4 (2012): 827-38.
- Ota, Masahide. "War Memories Die Hard in Okinawa." *Japan Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1988): 9-16.
- . *The Battle of Okinawa: The Typhoon of Steel and Bombs*. Kume Publishing, 1984.
- Rabson, Steve. *The Okinawan Diaspora in Japan Crossing the Borders within*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012.
- Roberson, J. E. "Memory and Music in Okinawa: The Cultural Politics of War and Peace." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 2009, 683-711.
- Sartre, Jean. "A Propos De Le Bruit Et La Fureur," *La Nouvelle Revue Francaise*, 52 (1939); Eng. Trans." In *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*, edited by Fredrick Hoffman and Olga Vickery. Michigan State University Press, 1960.
- . *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1956.
- Saylor, Conway F. *Issues in Clinical Child Psychology: Children and Disasters*. New York: Plenum Press, 1993.
- Sered, Susan. *Women of the Sacred Groves: Divine Priestesses of Okinawa*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Sminkey, Takuma. "Me no oku no mori." Reading Okinawa. Accessed December 11, 2015. <http://takumasminkey.com/readingokinawa/styled/styled-10/>.
- . "Translating Medoruma Shun's *Me no oku no mori*: Rewards and Challenges." Presentation at the University of Vermont, Burlington, VT, November 16, 2015.
- Stroinska, Magda, Vikki Cecchetto, and Kate Szymanski. *The Unspeakable: Narratives of Trauma*. Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag Der Wissenschaften, 2014.
- Suzuki, Tomoyuki. "Convergence of Memories : Acquisition of "Vision" and Return of "Voice"" In *Me no oku ni tsukitaterareta kotoba no mori: Medoruma Shun no "bungaku" to*

- Okinawasen no kioku*, 146-203. Tokyo: Shobunsha, 2013.
- Takenaka, Akiko. *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar*. University of Hawaii, 2015.
- Talwar, Savneet. "Accessing Traumatic Memory through Art Making: An Art Therapy Trauma Protocol (ATTP)." *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 34, no. 1 (2007): 22-35.
- Turner, R. Jay, and Donald A. Lloyd. "Lifetime Traumas and Mental Health: The Significance of Cumulative Adversity." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 36, no. 4 (1995): 360-76.
- Van Der Kolk, B. A., and Onno Van Der Hart. "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma." In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 158-82. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- Van Der Kolk, B. A. "The Compulsion to Repeat the Trauma: Re-enactment, Revictimization, and Masochism." *Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 12, no. 2 (1989): 389-411.
- . "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and the Nature of Trauma." *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*. Accessed December 18, 2015. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3181584/>.
- Vickroy, Laurie. *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002.
- "We Won't Forget the "Typhoon of Steel"" Okinawa Times, June 22, 2015.
- Wilson, John P., and Boris Drozdek. *Broken Spirits: The Treatment of Traumatized Asylum Seekers, Refugees, War, and Torture Victims*. New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004.
- Young, Leslie. "Sexual Abuse and the Problem of Embodiment." *Child Abuse & Neglect* 16, no. 1 (1992): 89-100.