

“Genba” in Medoruma Shun’s Fiction: On Resistance, Care, and the Nonhuman in Postwar Okinawa

KUROSAWA Masato

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Doctoral student, JSPS Research Fellowships for Young Scientists (DC1)

著者抄録

本稿は、目取真俊文学が、暴力及び非暴力による抵抗の枠組みによっては把捉できない戦後沖縄における抵抗実践を、人間及び人間以外の存在の複雑な絡み合いの〈現場〉として表現していることを明らかにした。

第1節では、抵抗を「ケア」と「場所」に依存する肉体の観点から議論する〈現場〉という視座が設定され、第2節では「水滴」を対象に、ケアする肉体の無能さを通じて形成される人間と人間以外の存在の絡み合いが、語れない記憶を生きる抵抗の実践を持続可能にしていることが、第3節では「群蝶の木」を対象に、認知能力を失った性暴力被害者が肉体的な記憶に触れることで境界を失いつつある自己感覚を賦活しており、それが別の肉体との内面の共有なき対位法的な協働によるものであることが示される。第4節では『眼の奥の森』を対象に、ケアの持続のためには声なき声の「理解」を要する局面があること、人間以外の存在が加害と被害のポジショナリティを迂回する新たな抵抗の回路を生み出す可能性が示唆され、第5節で議論全体が総括される。

Summary

This paper discusses how Medoruma Shun’s fiction narrates the practice of resistance in postwar Okinawa, avoiding the dichotomy of violence and nonviolence, as “genba” of complex entanglements of human and nonhuman. The first section points out to set up the mode of reading “genba” that a resisting body at sites of resistance depends on care and place. Section 2 reveals that in “Droplets,” the human-nonhuman entanglement, which forms through the incapability of caregivers’ bodies, sustains the practice of resistance with unnarratable war memories. Section 3 shows that in “Tree of Butterflies,” a victim of sexual violence who has lost her cognitive abilities revitalizes her body sensation through recalling her fragmented memories of being entangled with human and nonhuman, and that this practice of an entangled inner narrative is based on an asymptotic collaboration with another body without sharing interiority at “genba.” Section 4 discusses *In the Woods of Memory* to show how there is a significant phase of understanding voiceless voices in a long-term care of survivors of sexual violence, and how the nonhuman creates alternative circuits of resistance including both perpetrator and victim. The discussion is summarized in the final section.

キーワード

戦争記憶 身体 ポスト・ヒューマン 暴力 ポジショナリティ

Keywords

War Memory; Body; Posthuman; Violence; Positionality

原稿受理日：2021.12.24.

Quadrante, No.24 (2022), pp.277–294.

Contents

1. Introduction

1-1. Reading Violent and Nonviolent Resistance into Medoruma’s Postcolonial Fiction

1-2. Dependent Bodies at Sites of Resistance

1-3. How to Understand *Genba*

1-4. How to Proceed with This Argument

2. War Memory and Dependent Bodies in “Droplets”

2-1. Memory Resistance and Incapability in Postwar Okinawa

2-2. The Human Body Entangled with the Nonhuman

3. *Genba* Spreads Outside and Inside a Dependent Body in “Tree of Butterflies”

3-1. The Entangled Inner Narrative and Empowerment Under Violent Conditions of Life

3-2. Asymptotic Collaboration and Memory Trans-formation



4. Taking a Detour to the Incident in *In the Woods of Memory*

4-1. Taking Care of the Dependent Body being Impossible to Narrative

4-2. The “Nonhuman Circuit” Entangling Perpetrators and Victims

5. Conclusion

1. Introduction

1-1. Reading Violent and Nonviolent Resistance into Medoruma’s Postcolonial Fiction

Medoruma Shun is a contemporary Okinawan writer whose works mainly focus on the transmission of the memory of the Battle of Okinawa. He is also a key writer in Japan on the issues of postcoloniality because of his literary imagination and perspective on the psychological and social effects on Okinawan people of the oppression and discrimination through the rule of modern Japan and the United States¹. One of his controversial literary pieces “Kibō” (希望 Hope, 1999) condenses postcolonial problems into a short story. In this story about the rape of an Okinawan girl by American soldiers in 1995, a citizen of Okinawa feels disgusted with his fellow Okinawan people who seem only able to protest the crime through peaceful demonstration. He kills the child of a U.S. soldier to show the U.S. military and Japanese government the depth of Okinawan anger². Medoruma’s fiction often uses this motif of the desire to resist the oppression of structural domination suddenly turning into a violent act.

What is the meaning of depicting such violence in postwar Okinawa? Ikuo Shinjo, a leading scholar of Okinawan literature, points out that it is literary practice to “expose the persistence of violence and domination in everyday life through one’s own violence.”³ This is especially true in *Niji no tori* (虹の鳥 Rainbow Bird, 2006), a story of young Okinawans caught up in a vortex of violence between the oppressed, revealing the invisible impact of structural violence on their lives⁴. And as previous studies on Medoruma’s novels such as “Hope” and *Rainbow Bird* often refer to Frantz Fanon’s discussion of “counter-violence,” highlighting the role of violence is common in his fiction not only to visualize structural violence in Okinawa but also to envision social change through breaking the oppressive structures of colonialism which have constructed the psyche of the colonized⁵.

¹ Although beyond the extent of this paper, what is particularly characteristic of his works is that they grasp the layers of racism and sexism against Taiwanese and Koreans within Okinawa, while avoiding victimization of Okinawa. See for example the following study that analyzes the complex position of Okinawa with a postcolonial perspective in East Asia: Toshio Nakano/Tsuneo Namihira/Osamu Yakabi/Hyoduk Lee ed., *Okinawa no senryō to Nihon no hukkō: Syokuminchishugi wa ikani keizoku shitaka*, (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2006). For a discussion of Medoruma’s critical attitude toward postcoloniality including the Orientalist representation of Okinawa by mainland Japan and the closed nature of the Okinawan community, see Ikuo Shinjo and Michel Molasky’s explanations of his literary resistance against writing “Okinawan literature.” See Ikuo Shinjo, *Okinawa bungaku to iu kuwadate*, (Tokyo: Impact Shuppankai, 2003); Michel Molasky, “Medoruma Shun: The Writer as Public Intellectual in Okinawa Today,” *Island of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*, ed. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

² On October 21, 1995, the Okinawa Prefectural People’s Rally was held in Ginowan City to protest the sexual assault of a young woman by US soldiers. The venue was filled with about 85,000 participants.

³ Ikuo Shinjo, *Okinawa bungaku to iu kuwadate*, 150. Motoi Taniguchi also understands violence in *Rainbow Bird* as a way to make structural violence visible. See Motoi taniguchi “Fukashi no bōryoku o ute,” *Rikkyō daigaku Nihon bungaku*, no.97 (2006): 188–196.

⁴ For basic literature analyzing the relationship between structural violence and the violence that permeates everyday life, see Ariko Kurosawa, “Medoruma Shun *niji no tori* ron: nichijō no saibu o shinjun suru <bōryoku>,” *Okikokudai ga Amerika ni senryōsareta hi: 8.13 Beigun heri tsuiraku jiken kara miete kita Okinawa, Nihon no shukuzu*, ed. Ariko Kurosawa (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2005).

⁵ See Ichiro Tomiyama, “Teroru o shikō surukoto: Medoruma Shun kibō’ron,” *Inpakushon*, no.119 (Tokyo: Inpakuto Shuppankai, 2000); Kyōng-sik Sō, “Kibō ni tsuite,” *Yuriika=Eureka* (August 2001 issue), (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2001); Masaki Kinjo, “Bōryoku to kanki: Frantz Fanon no jojutsu to *niji no tori* kara,” *Gendai Okinawa no rekisi keiken: kibō aruiwa miketsusei ni tsuite*, (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2010); Ayata Ozaki, “Medoruma Shun *niji no tori*’kō: Frantz Fanon no bōryoku ron o koete,” *Gengo syakai*, no.5

On the other hand, there has been recent criticism of such studies for idealizing violence. A study of “Hope” points out that the murder of an American child as counter-violence foregrounds a political message to the dominant side but lacks imagination of the victim’s wounds⁶. From the same perspective, there is an argument that envisions an escape from the chains of violence among Okinawan people in *Rainbow Bird*, starting from “voice tremors” that cannot be verbalized or politicized⁷. Furthermore, recent studies on *Me no oku no mori* (眼の奥の森 Forest behind the Eyes, 2009), which focuses on a retributive violent act by an Okinawan boy during wartime, criticizes counter-violence by the oppressed as a desire to identify with “masculinity.”⁸

These studies try to find a nonviolence circuit by capturing the delicate tension between violence and nonviolence. However, there seems to remain a binary division between violent and nonviolent events and actions as they aim to read into Medoruma’s fiction “the ways in which nonviolence is counterposed to violence,”⁹ and understand his work as a narrative in which “the voices calling for violence for resistance or revenge and the voiceless voices of the victims exist in antagonism.”¹⁰

This paper calls this division into question for the simple reason that we cannot understand the human body only within the framework of violence and nonviolence, investigating the complex reality of resistance in Medoruma’s fiction through a more multifaceted approach. Although the previous studies put great emphasis on the corporeality of humans in such things as feelings, vulnerability, and wounds, their reading of the human body has blind spots as I will explain next.

1-2. Dependent Bodies at Sites of Resistance

I would like to read Medoruma’s fiction with a “detour” around the framework of violence and nonviolence. To explain why such a roundabout attempt is necessary, I will first review the following passage in which Medoruma refers to the ongoing resistance in front of the entrance gate to the U.S. military base construction site in Henoko, Okinawa. He says:

You must be prepared to sit down and grit your teeth even if the riot police beat you, kick you, or drag you around with bruises all over your bodies, keeping in mind that if you can stop the U.S. military vehicles, you can stop the functioning of the base. Nonviolence does not mean that you will not be hurt. It is very difficult to be nonviolent no matter how much pain you are in, physically and mentally. The riot police have a nasty way of doing things. When they grab you by the hand, they use cotton gloves covered with hard bumps, and you end up with bruises. Women and the elderly are

(2011): 220–234; Yoshikazu Urata, “‘Bōryoku’ no yukue: Medoruma Shun *niji no tori* o Kiriya Kasane *paruchizan densetsu* to hikaku shite,” *Syakai bungaku*, no.50 (2019): 57–68.

⁶ Yūsuke Kuriyama, “Medoruma Shun *kibō* ron: dōin sareru shōjo no higai ni tsuite,” *The ritsumeikan bungaku*, no.652 (2017): 163–173.

⁷ Yūsuke Kuriyama, “Taga tameni <ikari> o hyōmei surunoka: Medoruma Shun *niji no tori* ron,” *Shakai bungaku*, no. 50: 69–80.

⁸ See Katsunao Murakami, “Hakyū suru sensō: *me no oku no mori* o yomutameni,” *Ekkyō hiroba*, no.4: 28–36; Yoko Murakami, “Bōryoku ni yoranai kairo o hiraku: Medoruma Shun *me no oku no mori* o megutte,” *Fukuin to sekai* (September 2019 issue), no.74 (2019): 30–35; Yūsuke Kuriyama, “Bōryoku no kioku o <kataru> tameni,” *The ritsumeikan bungaku*, no.669 (2020): 26–36. As Katsunao Murakami mentions in the notes of his essay, this discussion on the circuit of nonviolence evolves from Shinjō’s argument. See Ikuo Shinjo, *Okinawa no kizu toiu kairo*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2014).

⁹ Kuriyama, “Bōryoku no kioku o <kataru> tameni,” 2020, 35.

¹⁰ Y. Murakami, “Bōryoku ni yoranai kairo o hiraku: Medoruma Shun *me no oku no mori* o megutte,” 2019, 32.

also attacked. They may think they are taking it easy, but their strength is not weak at all, and women and the elderly have weaker joints and muscles, so when they are lifted to be carried, their bodies get injured.¹¹

As Shinjō has already pointed out in his analysis on this “sit-in” resistance that the “life within the structure of violence is the condition for the possibility of nonviolence,” in the concrete places where resistance occurs, both the body performing violence and the body receiving violence are present in conflict. However, here I would like to emphasize the following point: being nonviolent requires physical strength and patience to withstand violence.

In order to discuss this issue of resistance through his fiction, I will set up and practice reading from the perspective of “*genba*.” This Japanese term refers to a place where an incident or accident has actually occurred, or where it is actually happening. The rich nuances implied by this word will provide us with a useful perspective for reading into Medoruma’s work the complex corporeality of resistance. In this paper, it implies two kinds of *dependency*: on “care” and “place.” Dependency may be viewed negatively by the individualistic values of modern society in general. However, Medoruma rather succeeds in portraying resistance as a complex process of life in Okinawa by incorporating the dependency of a concrete body into his work. This paper will investigate how Medoruma, in dealing with the dependence of a human body, depicts the elusive aspects of resistance more ably than the conventional framework of violence and nonviolence.

1-3. How to Understand *Genba*

Dependancy on Care

Born in 1960 in Nakijin Village in the northern part of Okinawa Prefecture, Medoruma Shun is an Okinawan of the postwar generation. As stated in his essay, he strives to reflect on and pass on the experience and memory of the Battle of Okinawa through writing novels¹². What makes this writer unique is that he seeks to understand the violence of war not as something in the past, but as an ongoing problem in the present as he says:

Even “after the war” there are many deaths that would not have happened without the war. When we look at the damage caused by the war, we should not overlook how much it has tormented and continues to torment people later on. There are even people who committed suicide decades after the war, suffering from the trauma of the war. Some, severely burned or disabled by the war, lost hope and committed suicide, and others, who became mentally ill due to the horrors of the war, remain in hospitals. For those people, the war is not over, is it? Even though a long time has passed, I think “death” and “illness” are still brought by the war.¹³

¹¹ Shun Medoruma and Yō Henmi, *Okinawa to kokka*, (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2017): 165–166. The translation and underline are mine.

¹² See Medoruma Shun, *Okinawa “sengo” zero nen*, (Tokyo: NHK Shuppan, 2005)

¹³ *Ibid.*, 61. The translation is mine.

He understands the issue of the Battle of Okinawa through the presentness of illness and wounds. As I will analyze in the second section, this in turn brings the subject of “care” into his work. This perspective enables him to create a narrative that does not idealize resistance in Okinawa but rather captures its complexity and layers of dependency on the site of resistance. And it is important to note here that dependency extends not only to care receivers, but also to caregivers because of the limited bodily and mental powers of a concrete body. His understanding that resistance is always a concrete physical activity cannot be overemphasized in reading Medoruma’s work as a literature of resistance¹⁴.

Dependency on Place

A resisting human body is always dependent on a concrete place. The problem of a resisting body has much to do with the place where resistance occurs in his fiction. As Medoruma once stated in a conversation with Kenzaburo Ōe, the driving force behind his literary creation is nothing but “imagination of place.¹⁵” More precisely, he often depicts human bodies in postwar Okinawa becoming entangled with the nonhuman, including animals, plants, and materials, all of which coexist in the same place. In this sense, it is difficult to understand such problematic violence in his fiction only through gender analysis frameworks which usually focus only on humans.

For example, the protagonist of “Hope” is often considered to be male, but this is arguably ambiguous given the apparent lack of any gender-identifying expressions in the text. With this in mind, how can we construe what the protagonist of “Hope” means by:

I felt no remorse now, or even any deep emotion. Just as fluids in the bodies of small organisms which are forced to live in constant fear suddenly turn into poison, I had done what was natural and necessary for this island.¹⁶

A violent impulse unrelated to human feelings of “remorse” and “emotion” is expressed in such nonhuman terms as “fluids in the bodies of small organisms” and it being “natural and necessary” not for Okinawan people, but for “this island.” And at the end of the story, it sets itself on fire and transforms itself into something nonhuman: a “walking, tumbling fire” and “smoking black lump.¹⁷” The act of violence in “Hope,” which has been understood as counter-violence, produces the “nonhuman,” apparently preventing the reader from understanding it merely as a political act of an individual “human” being. The entanglement of human and nonhuman or transformation into nonhuman, as we will see in this paper, appears frequently in Medoruma’s work.

¹⁴ In his interview with Henmi, Medoruma mentions the problem of physical and mental fatigue in resistance activities. See Medoruma & Henmi, *Okinawa to kokka*, 2017, 10–11.

¹⁵ Kenzaburo Ōe and Shun Medoruma, “Okinawa ga kenpō o tekishi surutoki: ‘Iyashi’ o motomeru hondo eno igi,” *Ronza* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Sya, 2000): 177.

¹⁶ Shun Medoruma, “Hope” (Machi monogatari: Kibō). Translated by Steve Rabson. In Davindar L. Bhowmik and Steve Rabson ed., *Islands of Protest: Japanese Literature from Okinawa* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016): 21–24.

¹⁷ Medoruma, “Hope,” 2016, 24.

1-4. How to Proceed with This Argument

How does Medoruma’s fiction problematize postcolonial dependency through imagining the entanglement of human and nonhuman, and how does it concretize the full complexity of resistance in Okinawa into a narrative?

In the second section, “War Memory and Dependent Bodies in “Droplets,”” I will analyze how war memory and dependent bodies become entangled, using “Suiteki” (水滴 Droplets, 1997) as an example. Although this story has been understood as an attempt to depict the resistance of individual memory to collective memory of the war, it is founded on the multilayered connections of care that arise through the “incapability” of a dependent body. And I will discuss the problem of resistance as *genba* where such connections of care among humans become entangled with the nonhuman.

Then in the third section, “*Genba* Spreads Outside and Inside a Dependent Body in “Tree of Butterflies,”” I will deal with “Gunchō no ki” (群蝶の木 Tree of Butterflies, 2000), in considering how people can empower themselves under escapable conditions of pain. For that purpose, I will examine the entangled inner narrative of war trauma that not only destroys but also constructs a body image by entangling body parts, plants, and animals. I will also focus on an “asymptotic collaboration” between a war survivor and a postwar-generation man, showing how the entanglement of *genba* spreads simultaneously in opposite directions: inside a dependent body and outside to the other.

The fourth and final section, “Taking a Detour to the Incident in *In the Woods of Memory*,” deals with Medoruma’s full-length novel *In the Woods of Memory*. In this section, I will examine how the voiceless victim of sexual violence continues to live on after the incident, from the perspective of a caregiver’s dependency, avoiding a conventional discussion of the unshareability of the victim’s experience. Then, I will describe how the nonhuman entangles perpetrator and victim such that violence and nonviolence cannot be distinguished.

2. War Memory and Dependent Bodies in “Droplets”

2-1. Memory Resistance and Incapability in Postwar Okinawa

“Droplets” explores an issue concerning the transmission of war memory in postwar Okinawa: that the individual memories of those who experienced the Battle of Okinawa, including their experiences as “perpetrators,” cannot be articulated through the collective narrative in the form of tragedy that only victimizes Okinawan people. In other words, “Droplets” focuses on the individual memory’s resistance to this oppressive characteristic of the collective memory shared within a community. The protagonist is the war survivor Tokushō, who lives as a storyteller of the war and talks about his “tragic” war experience, while repressing the painful memory of his real war experience with a sense of guilt. One day in June, fifty years after the war, his right leg suddenly swells up like a gourd melon and he becomes bedridden. Through fantastic scenes where Tokushō gives water dripping from his swollen right toe to the ghosts of his ex-comrades-in-arms who appear at his bedside night after night, he is forced to re-enact providing care on the battlefield. We know that this is a “do-over” because he gradually begins to recall the traumatic memory of his “failure” to care for his dying friend Ishimine on the battlefield: he drank all the water that

was meant for his friend. His attempt at care seems to fail again in the present, however, when he finally bursts into anger at the ghost of Ishimine, saying “Don’t you know how much I suffered these past fifty years?” Later, thanks to the care of those around him, Tokushō wakes up, but even to the end of the story remains unable to talk about his memory to other people.

Although this is clearly a story of care, prior studies have failed to evaluate care as the essence of this novel¹⁸. When the focus is only on individual resistance to collective memory, the carers that make this resistance possible seem to be invisible in the text. Tokushō is indeed isolated regarding sharing his own memory with others¹⁹. However, the story in which the bedridden protagonist confronts his traumatic memory is not possible without those who take care of his dependent body. The mode of reading “genba” makes it possible to problematize how individual resistance to collective memory in Okinawa consists of layers of care. In this story, Medoruma explores the possibility of resistance in Okinawa, through the fact that confronting one’s traumatic memory is itself a physically draining event.

In addition, the fact that the protagonist’s illness is “incurable,” cannot be overlooked in conceiving resistance as genba. The “incapability” to cure wounds is a condition of care in Medoruma’s fiction and it highlights the importance of “being with” a dependent body. In the following quotation, although Tokushō’s traumatic memory remains unshared with others, it suggests that his wife Ushi’s caring for him through “being with” him will continue after the end of the story:

Ten days had passed. Tokushō gazed out the window at the summer grass in the garden. The soldiers had ceased to appear since the dripping stopped, yet Tokushō was afraid to sleep alone, so for the first few days he had Ushi sleep beside his bed. And, though she protested, Ushi did not mind doing this one bit. Tokushō kept the light on at all times and listened as Ushi told him everything that had happened in the village while he was bedridden. Tokushō had trouble deciding whether to tell her about Ishimine and the other soldiers who came to drink each night, but ultimately he couldn’t bring himself to talk about them. In fact, he realized that he would probably never be able to tell her. Once his strength returned, however, he did want to visit the cave together with Ushi. He would merely explain that he had hidden there during the war. They would offer flowers and look for any human bones that still remained.²⁰

As is often mentioned, in parallel with the story of the reunion of Tokushō and his friend’s spirit, “Droplets” also tells of the protagonist’s cousin Seiyū, who finds that the water from Tokushō’s right foot has curative

¹⁸ I have discussed this issue in Masato Kurosawa, “The Water of Dependence and Care: Rethinking of The Actuality of War Memory in Medoruma Shun’s ‘Suiteki (Droplets)’.” *Gengotai*, no.18 (2019): 215–234. This section is a revised and restructured version of the paper.

¹⁹ For example, Yoko Murakami concludes that “Medoruma Shun is a writer who repeatedly depicts the “un-shareability and un-representability” that memory inevitably contains in the form of the “unspoken.” Depicting memories is an attempt to get closer to the people who existed within the events. The memories depicted in this way will require the reader to receive the pain of the events as well. [translation mine]” See Yoko Murakami, *Dekigoto no zankyō: genbaku-bungaku to Okinawa-bungaku*, (Tokyo: Inpakuto Shuppankai, 2015): 266. It is suggested that Murakami’s reading highlights “the pain of the events,” but the reading that encourages the reader to “care” for war survivors through Medoruma’s fiction on the one hand misses the practice of care by the characters in his fiction on the other.

²⁰ Medoruma Shun, “Droplets” (Suiteki). Translated by Michel Molasky. In Michel Molasky and Steve Rabson ed., *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000): 284.

“Genba” in Medoruma Shun’s Fiction

properties and tries to make money by selling it to villagers. This story of “Magical Water” concludes with Seiyū meeting the vengeance of the consumers as the efficacy of the drug water turns out to be an illusion. In contrast to immediate healing being unable to form human connections, Tokushō’s incurable illness will generate long-lasting care connections.

While at the same time, it is important to note here that Seiyū, who acts out of self-interest, is also included in the connections of care. Given that the capacity of every “body” is limited, Ushi’s body is no exception. The story also conveys chains of connections of care, in which the caregiver’s body also depends on the care of others²¹. Ushi finds it difficult to take care of Tokushō while working to maintain her daily life. If Seiyū didn’t offer to take care of Tokushō for Ushi, it would be difficult to sustain the care relationship between Ushi and Tokushō. In this way, the narrative of *genba* consists of multiple layers of care: between Tokushō and Ishimine, Ushi and Tokushō, and Seiyū and Ushi. “Droplets” reveals that the incapability of healing wounds and illness creates a diffusion of human connections without the transmission of memory. It is a story that makes us understand how resistance in Okinawa to the repressiveness of collective memory is based not on the individual act, but on the multi-layered care for dependent bodies.

2-2. The Human Body Entangled with the Nonhuman

Another point I would like to discuss is that the transformation of the human foot into a plant enables care for the ghost in this story. It is not enough for humans to care for each other in postwar Okinawa. This insight seems to be at the heart of Medoruma’s fiction. Considering this point, how should we account for this story ending in a poignant scene in which the protagonist has tears in his eyes when he sees an enormous gourd melon growing in the garden?

Sifting through the grass, beneath a hedge of Chinese hibiscus, lay an enormous gourd melon too big for even Tokushō to carry. Fine hairs glistened on the deep green skin. Tokushō gasped in surprise, then gave it a kick, but it wouldn’t budge. A long vine, thick as a thumb, grew from the gourd to the hibiscus. At the end of the vine, a yellow flower swayed against the blue sky. The flower was so bright it made Tokushō’s eyes brim with tears.²²

Is it possible to understand Tokushō’s tears as an expression of a change in his “interiority”? As mentioned earlier, he is traumatized by the failure of care for his dying friend during the war, and his care for his friend’s ghost in the present ends without knowing if it was successful, or resulted in failure; his memory remains unspoken, becoming a burden for the individual; his routine of drinking and gambling will resume. In other words, the story is narrated in such a way that the redemption for the friend fails, and his sense of guilt remains unresolved. Therefore, it may be difficult to read Tokushō’s tears in the scene described above as a sign of his inner change.

²¹ As for the issue of caring for caregivers, see Eva Feder Kittay, *The Subject of Care: Feminist Perspectives on Dependency* (Feminist Constructions), (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002)

²² Medoruma, “Droplets,” 2000, 285.

What the mode of reading *genba* problematizes is not the meaning of the tears themselves, but the question by what kind of entanglement these tears are produced: they are tears dependent on a gourd melon in the garden. What this story achieves is the creation of *genba* that produces tears on his face. In other words, although a change is depicted in this scene, it is not of the *individual*, but of *genba*. It is necessary to understand this scene not as the tears of Tokushō but as the tears of *genba*. This entanglement is not based on sympathy but is established through “emotional materiality.” The uninterpretable tears are uninterpretable both for Tokushō and Ushi. However, when the tears appear on his face, those who live around him, such as Ushi, may notice the pain that even Tokushō himself cannot understand. The final scene of “Droplets” shows such a “circuit of wounds without sharing interiority.”

Reading *genba* is an approach to problematizing the entanglement of human and nonhuman without a perspective of individualistic interiority. Human and nonhuman live in disconnected worlds but simultaneously congest the same site. *Genba* is a concurrent collaboration of gathering disconnected beings. What the novel “Droplets” tells us is not a story about humans, but a story about *genba*. In the next section, I will further discuss how this collaboration happens.

3. *Genba* Spreads Outside and Inside a Dependent Body in “Tree of Butterflies”

3-1. The Entangled Inner Narrative and Empowerment Under Violent Conditions of Life

Like the works analyzed so far, “Tree of Butterflies” is also a story of care, this time for a former Okinawan “comfort woman.” Conventional studies assign the woman Gozei, who has a “dependent body” suffering from dementia and who wanders around the postwar Okinawan village, with a negative value in that she is a voiceless “victim.”²³ Although her wartime and postwar memory is never mentioned to the characters around her, it should not be overlooked that the bulk of this novel consists of narratives of Gozei’s traumatic recollections²⁴. Indeed, most of her memories are painful: Some relate to Japanese soldiers’ sexual violence against her, and others are about wartime scenes in which she is unable to save her lover from being killed by Japanese soldiers. However, her intricate narrative of remembrance weaves together fragmented memories full of “joy” through bodily sensations of physical contact. The following scene seems to depict a conflict between dismantling and constructing the boundary of her body:

“Gozei, Gozei!” Shōsei was calling from far away. No, he was right here. The moonlight poured down, and the yūna’s flock of yellow butterflies looked as if it would take flight at any

²³ Most studies of this work consider Gozei to be a victim of former “comfort women,” whose memory is difficult to articulate. For example, Tsuyoshi Miyazawa understands this short novel as an ethical story in which people who have not experienced war confront their own traumatic memories through contact with victims of wartime sexual crimes, who live with “untold memories” of trauma. See Tsuyoshi Miyazawa, “‘Ianfu’ to shōsetsu: katarientu kioku no hyōgen o megutte,” *Shōwa bungaku kenkyū*, no.76 (2018): 171–185. I have discussed this issue in Masato Kurosawa, “The Metamorphosis of Gozei into/from Butterflies: A Clustering Body and its Transformation in Medoruma Shun’s ‘Gunchō no ki (Tree of Butterflies),’” *Shakai bungaku*, no.53 (2021): 160–173. This section is a revised and restructured version of the paper.

²⁴ Kyle Ikeda understands Gozei’s narrative to be “highly subjective,” contrary to objective historical narratives as he writes: “For Medoruma, one of narrative fiction’s most important functions in overcoming the limits of testimony lies in its capacity to engage with the intensely emotional. Far from requiring a more objective and distanced mode of narration, Medoruma’s war narratives, and by extension survivor narratives in general, need to be highly subjective and intensely moving in order to recover and explore that which is typically avoided. Kyle Ikeda, “Ch.4 Critical ‘Sentimentalism’ and conscious engagement in ‘Tree of Butterflies,’” *Okinawan War Memory: Transgenerational Trauma and the War Fiction of Medoruma Shun*. On the other hand, in this paper, we explore Medoruma’s war narratives from the perspective of *genba*, in which both subjectivity and objectivity are entangled.

moment. As soon as she came under the shadow of the tree, she was pulled by a strong force, as if to savor the little time that was left. His hot tongue dug at her throat, and his stiff left arm pressed into her back. Burying her head in his chest, she choked on the scent of the forest and tide. She’d never thought that a woman like her would be held by a man and feel this way. From the depth of the darkness, at the base of her ear, she could hear him whisper her name: “Gozei, Gozei.” As she responded, “you don’t need to rush,” gently, she held both his hands and stroked his hair. The steamy night air that clung to her skin soaked her in sweat to the innermost folds of her body. The sensation of clinging to Shōsei returned to her arms. “I’ve already sunk into the mud.” The Korean woman was saying something. Something was being pushed inside her mouth. It was a piece of brown sugar. Her mouth began to water, as if a thin white root of life were growing. “Don’t worry about me. Thank you.” A woman squeezed her hand and stroked her fingers. Every sensation in her body began to fade along with the dull pain in her groin.²⁵

Although she is dying with her own bodily sensations fading away due to the pain caused by her negative experience of sexual violence, Gozei’s half-passive practice of recollection seems to reconstruct an affirmation of her body. In other words, by recalling a swarm of memories of physical contact with those around her, Gozei marks the boundary of her body, to keep her self-image from dismantling. Therefore, in “Tree of Butterflies,” the recalling of war memory needs to be understood as not being for communicating and sharing experience, but for living in the present²⁶.

In her memory practice, the incapability to distinguish between self and others by sight gives Gozei temporality with which to repeat the practice of regaining the sensations of her own body. This practice of touch is quite different from the operating mechanism of the modern subject, which constructs the subject interiority through objectifying others²⁷. My intention in attempting to read his novels with a perspective of *genba* is to avoid this perspective of the interiority of the modern self, which has much to do with objectifying and externalizing surroundings as *landscape*²⁸. In addition, in terms of his style, Medoruma’s ambiguous use of personal expressions makes it difficult to understand who possesses the body parts and distinguishes agent from recipient as there are excessive omissions of the expressions related to personality in Gozei’s recollections.

These characteristics of the narrative mean that Gozei’s body is itself *genba*: it is not the “subjective

²⁵ Medoruma Shun, “Tree of Butterflies” (Gunchō no ki). Translated by Aimée Mizuno. In Bhowmik and Rabson ed., *Islands of Protest: Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, 75–76. I have made some changes to the translation because there seem to be some points where Gozei’s words are mistakenly translated as Shōsei’s words. Such misunderstandings may be the effect of Gozei’s narrative here, where personal expressions are used in an ambiguous manner. The original translation is as follows: “‘Gozei, Gozei. You don’t need to rush.’ Gently, he held both her hands and stroked her hair.”

²⁶ For example, Lee Chong-wha does not negatively understand the memory of Korean “comfort women” as the mere memory of victims but explores in a delicate and ingenious way the complexity of lives *conditioned* by the memory of sexual violence. See Lee Chong-wha, *Tsubuyaki no seijishisō*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, bunko bon ed., 2020).

²⁷ The stylistic emphasis on the sense of touch through the incapability of seeing can be seen, for example, in his first novel, “Taiwan Woman: Record of a Fish Shoal” (Gyogunki). Translated by Shi-Lin Loh. In Bhowmik and Rabson ed., *Islands of Protest: Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, 49–70.

²⁸ Kinjō points out that violence in Frantz Fanon’s works brings about the destruction of the landscape as viewed by colonizers (Kinjō, “Rampaging through the ‘Pacifist Island’: The Rainbow Bird by Medoruma Shun”). On the issue of landscape and colonialism in Okinawa, see Yasuhiro Tanaka, *Hūkei no sakeme: Okinawa, senryō no ima*, (Tokyo: Serika Shobō, 2010) and Hiroko Ōta, *Okinawa no kioku: <shihai> to <teikō> no rekishi*, (Tokyo: Keiōgijukudai gaku Shuppankai, 2012).

inner narrative” which expresses an individual’s stream of consciousness but an “entangled inner narrative” that does not presuppose a boundary between individuals, revealing the construction of an entangled bodily consciousness through remembrance.

3-2. Asymptotic Collaboration and Memory Trans-formation

“Tree of Butterflies” is also composed of the narrative of Yoshiaki, a postwar-generation Okinawan man, who is reunited with Gozei in his home village. As a child, Yoshiaki lived in the same village where Gozei lived; but he was not allowed to interact with her as she was discriminated against; he knows almost nothing about her being a former “comfort woman” or what kind of war experiences she had. Yoshiaki left the village to go to college and started to live in the city. One day he happens to return to the village after a long absence to participate in the village festival, *hōnensai*, and is reunited with Gozei, who has developed dementia and can no longer distinguish between war memory and reality. At this time, for some reason, Yoshiaki is called Shōsei by her; he is curious about that name and when he looks it up, he finds out that the name belonged to his relative who supposedly died in the war. In this relationship Gozei’s interiority is never open to Yoshiaki but her confusing speech inspires his actions. Furthermore, Yoshiaki’s voice and hand also trigger Gozei’s recurring memory of touching and being called as follows:

“Gozei, Gozei.” Someone was calling her name. “Gozei, wake up.” She was grabbed by the shoulders and shaken. “Ahhh, Shōsei, when did you get here?” she answered, trying to get up. But she couldn’t move or open her eyes. Only the faint smell of the river drifted towards her. The clouds broke, and when the moonlight shone through, a *yūna* tree rose before her eyes, blooming as if large yellow butterflies had flocked to its branches. Though it was night, the blossoms showed no signs of withering; rather, bathed in the moonlight, the flowers looked as if at any moment they would take flight. A hand reached out from the dark and grabbed her wrist. Rough fingers slowly caressed the top of her hand. Whose hand was it? The palm of the hand rested her brow. What time is it now?²⁹

At the very moment when this vision occurs to Gozei, Yoshiaki is rubbing her hands and calling her name at the site where she is strapped to a hospital bed. His care does not help to cure Gozei’s illness or to hear her war memory. But his touching and calling her name from her side form the foundation of her recollection. Although she seems to live on in her fantasy during her memory recall, Gozei, being admitted to hospital, had little time to interact with Yoshiaki. And the fact that Gozei dies right after Yoshiaki leaves allows us to understand that Medoruma’s fiction places “being with” as an especially important aspect of care in postwar Okinawa. In light of this, we need to understand the duplicity of Gozei’s repeated phrase, “Don’t leave me here all alone,” which indicates not only her fear of being left behind on the battlefield but also the importance of others “being with” her for her survival in the present.

Gozei’s self-practice and Yoshiaki’s actions do not arise on the mutually intelligible horizon. However, they are described as permeating each other’s lives. Each of the worlds in which they live is

²⁹ Medoruma, “Tree of Butterflies,” 75–76.

disconnected, yet interdependent. This is an asymptotic collaboration, in which their practices remain separate yet provide each other with the basis for their practices on the same site. It makes it difficult to understand the transmission of war memory as simply a question of whether the “content” of war experience can be passed on from generation to generation. Medoruma’s fiction depicts it as “*genba*” that occurs even after war survivors who cannot articulate their memories fail to share with others their “interiority.” In other words, this is the transmission of war memory without any common *mission*. The fact that “Tree of Butterflies” describes Gozei’s death through a scene of *trans-formation* into a butterfly is, in this sense, suggestive.

4. Taking a Detour to the Incident in *In the Woods of Memory*

4-1. Taking Care of the Dependent Body being Impossible to Narrative

Like “Hope” and *Rainbow Bird*, *In the Woods of Memory* is related to the 1995 rape of an Okinawan girl by four American soldiers. However, the position of the incident in each work is different. “Hope” depicts direct revenge for the incident, while *Rainbow Bird* deals indirectly with it, revealing how the presence of the US military base affects Okinawa today. In any case, these two works are about the present situation in Okinawa after the incident. In contrast, *In the Woods of Memory* gives temporal depth to the 1995 incident by situating it within a narrative that revolves around two incidents: the wartime gang rape of Sayoko, an Okinawan girl aged 17, by American soldiers, and the revenge of her friend Seiji.

This novel is a polyphonic narrative with multiple narrators including Okinawans, American soldiers, and an Okinawan American. But Sayoko does not have a narrative to speak for herself. In other words, this novel portrays Sayoko as a “voiceless” victim. Nevertheless, her corporeality leaves traces in the memories of those who witnessed it, making it difficult for the narrators to incorporate Sayoko into their respective war narratives, for example, Kayō, ex-chief of the ward where the incidents happened, and former US military interpreter Robert Higa, who is a *nisei* Okinawan-American man. In their later years, Sayoko appears as an unnarratable specter that constantly entangles and disrupts their attempts to narrate war memories that justify themselves, just as Ishimine appears to Tokushō in “Droplets.”

However, this novel does not only depict Sayoko as such a being beyond comprehension. In the narrative of Sayoko’s sister Tamiko, Sayoko is narratable. Some sixty years after the incident, Tamiko is a storyteller who shares her war stories with young people in Okinawa. In her talk, she mentions that her sister Sayoko was attacked by American soldiers. The argument that narration is impossible is insufficient to understand Sayoko’s significance to Tamiko. In order to think about the relationship between Tamiko and Sayoko, it is essential to problematize the burden of care with the perspective of *genba*.

Since Sayoko’s rape incident, Tamiko has come to hate her father because he does not understand her sister’s suffering and despises her. But later when she realizes that her father had been facing her sister while suffering from his “inability” to do anything about her; she begins to feel, “Even after my father and mother died, I kept running away from my sister, using the excuse that I was busy with my daily life.” For Tamiko, taking care of Sayoko is a heavy burden. In other word, the wartime rape incident continues to be a problem in the form of care for Sayoko in the present.

Living with Sayoko, whose body and mind cannot be cured, demands of Tamiko continuous neverending care³⁰. However, at one point she feels that she has come to “understand” Sayoko’s suffering as her own: the moment when she feeds her baby.

I remembered hearing that sixty years ago the ocean was black from all the US warships and that the area now covered with sugarcane and houses had been scattered with the dead. That meant that beneath these green leaves fluttering in the breeze were piles of bodies. I could sense the foul odors and groans oozing from the decaying corpses and leaking out between the stalks. The smells and sounds reminded me of my sister’s body odor and mutterings as she cowered in the back room.

I didn’t know it at that time, but Sayoko had been talking to her baby. I first realized that about a month after giving birth to my first child. One night, my baby wouldn’t stop crying, so I pressed my breast to her mouth to soothe her. What if she were taken away from me? I thought. For the first time in my life, I could imagine the extent of my sister’s pain. And then I suddenly knew what sort of things she’d been muttering.

Tears flowed down my eyes.³¹

This empathy differs from the interpretation of it being a means to justify ignoring uninterpretable others. On the contrary, this is the empathy necessary to care for a concrete other. If Tamiko cannot feel Sayoko’s suffering as her own, her care for Sayoko will not be sustainable, and she may as well have abandoned it midway. Along with this point, it is worth noting that the “foul odors and groans oozing from the decaying corpses” become connected to her “sister’s body odor and mutterings as she cowered in the back room,” through the nonhuman, sugarcane leaves and stalks. And in this connection, it is Tamiko’s physical sensation that recalls the moment when she realized that her sister was talking to the baby at that time. We can understand that her body is already equipped with a circuit in which memory and land, human and nonhuman, are intricately entangled. It is this corporeality that allows her to approach Sayoko and Seiji’s story of voice entangled with the wind:

—What’re you looking at, Sayoko?

Without responding, she left staring straight ahead. I stood next to her and leaned against the concrete handrail, which had been painted to look like a tree trunk. Then I looked in the direction she was staring. The sugarcane was gently undulating in the sunlight. The leaves and slender branches of the beefwood trees were swaying, too. White waves rippled along the coral reef, and I could hear the rhythmic rushing in the distance. We were the only ones in the yard, and the nursing home was as quiet as if everyone were fast asleep. My sister’s short, gray hair was disheveled from the wind, which had blown over the sugarcane and up the hill. There was a twinkle in her eye, and then she smiled. Staring at her face, I couldn’t remember the last time she looked so peaceful. Suddenly, her

³⁰ In one scene, she breaks down in tears, angry at her mother for only taking care of Sayoko and not worrying about her. Medoruma Shun, *In the Woods of Memory*, translated by Takuma Sminkey, (Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press, 2017): 182.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 183.

lips moved, and she seemed to say something.

—Huh? What?

Still staring at the ocean, she didn’t answer. But her words echoed in my ears, together with the faint sound of the breeze.

—I hear you, Seiji.³²

At this time, Tamiko is able to notice a “peaceful expression” on Sayoko’s face, which she rarely shows, and to sense her joy, too; she can also hear (or imagine) the words, “I hear you Seiji.” Like Gozei in “Tree of Butterflies,” Sayoko and Seiji not only suffer, but also feel joy in lives full of suffering. Tamiko’s long process of care seems to enable her to imagine both sides of the story. Narrating or understanding others is not always violent, for which it is often criticized. It empowers caregivers like Tamiko and maintains “genba” in postwar Okinawa. It is unclear whether Seiji can hear Sayoko’s response, but *In the Woods of Memory* reveals that Tamiko hears her words. From the perspective of *genba*, it is significant.

4-2. The “Nonhuman Circuit” Entangling Perpetrators and Victims

The gourd melon in “Droplets” and the butterfly in “Tree of Butterflies” all are entangled with burdens or failures of care and seem to enable humans to maintain resistance in postwar Okinawa. However, Medoruma also depicts in many of his stories the nonhuman orienting human bodies towards acts of violence. The same situation occurs in this novel. In particular, the narration of Smith, one of the four American soldiers who committed the rape, shows a red fruit present at the site of the incident inextricably entangled with him:

With my elbows planted in the sand, I kept moving until I figured I’d performed enough. When I started to get up, my eyes met the half-open eyes beneath me. Well, not exactly met. The girl was avoiding my gaze and staring at something behind me. I turned around, and there was that bright red fruit. Never in my life had I seen such a malicious-looking color. The finely divided chunks looked like clumps of blood. At that moment, something split open inside me. Once the thin membrane had ruptured, primal feelings erupted from deep inside and oozed through my body like a runny egg yolk. The girl’s lips, distorted and covered with half-dried blood, were mocking me. Impulsively, I punched the swollen face with my fist.

Fantasizing about shooting all three of them, I ejaculated.³³

Preceding studies interpret this scene of gang rape by American soldiers as a violent initiation into being a “strong man” through the peer pressure of homosociality in the U.S. military³⁴. Yoko Murakami points out that the U.S. soldier, at first just pretending to rape the girl Sayoko, is provoked by her seemingly mocking face; a fierce impulse makes him carry out sexual violence as a means of showing off his own

³² Ibid., 186–187.

³³ Ibid., 138–139. The underline is mine.

³⁴ See the studies cited in footnote 8.

strength³⁵. However, this scene is insufficiently understood in this way because the excessive impulse to shoot his three comrades would destroy the homosociality itself. Moreover, although Murakami interprets that Sayoko's mockery causes the "primal feelings," we should not overlook that it is the "red fruit" that drives him to act, as the underlined part indicates³⁶. This motif of physical violence entangled with the nonhuman, as in the case of the protagonist in "Hope," is a recurring theme in Medoruma's fiction.

However, what is important to note here is that it is not only the American soldiers who are in contact with the red fruit: the raped girl also sees it at the same site. The red fruit appears several times in the story, entangled with the bodily memory of the American soldier and Sayoko. In other words, it transforms the American soldier and Sayoko into a detached entanglement. For example, in Tamiko's narrative the red fruit appears as a "dark red circle" in a picture drawn by Sayoko:

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 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.³⁷

This passage seems to suggest that the red fruit growing in her memory of violence makes those who look at the picture feel something uninterpretable that transforms from time to time. As I have already mentioned, Sayoko's trauma seemed manifested in her body movements, "running while screaming." It is difficult for those who saw it to understand what it *means*. Moreover, what is important to note is that Sayoko herself is also unable to internalize her wounds. In this sense, her movement and voice, as well as her paintings, are not meant to convey her memories or her inner life itself. This is another example of the tears of *genba* in "Droplets:" the red fruit in this picture creates an emotional connection without sympathy, without forming and sharing interiority. And through this "encountering without encounter," people are sometimes spurred to action: An inner landscape Tamiko senses in Sayoko's painting causes her to run to her sister; she encounters the scene of Sayoko and Seiji's story as mentioned above. The red fruit gives a visible form to the incomprehensible memory of violence, making the complex implications of Sayoko's wounds contagious to the people living with or around her, and thus encouraging many people to speak and act.

In addition, we should not overlook the red fruit even lives in the wounds of the *perpetrator* of the rape, changing into various forms. For example, in the following passage, the red berries, which had aroused the man's anger and motivated his violent behavior, appear as an attack on himself:

³⁵ Murakami, "Bōryoku ni yoranai kairo o hiraku: Medoruma Shun *me no oku no mori* o megutte," 33.

³⁶ *Ibid.*.

³⁷ Medoruma, *In the Woods of Memory*, 185.

The girl’s face was battered and swollen; her lips, mangled and oozing blood. Her vacant eyes avoided mine and stared blankly at the red fruit dangling behind my head—as if I didn’t even exist. I grabbed her jaw, turned her face toward mine, and screamed:

—Look at me, goddamn it!

As I violently moved my hips, a chunk of the fruit separated along the grenade-like notches and came flying toward me. I felt a spear rip into my body, and then saw blood gushing from my side. As I frantically passed down to stop the bleeding, I woke up. The intense pain in my side, however, wasn’t a dream.³⁸

The wound on his side, from when he was harpooned by the Okinawan boy, Seiji, who tried to avenge Sayoko, is experienced through the fantasy related to the red fruit that “lodged in my abdomen and was scorching my insides like a hot iron.”³⁹ To be sure, the counter-violence by Seiji itself, while seriously injuring the American soldier, did not heal the wounds on Sayoko. However, the red fruit inseparably entangles the American soldier’s wounds, inflicted by the attack, with Sayoko’s. In other words, the circuit of wounds forms the complex entanglement of the wounds of both victim and perpetrator. The analysis that their wounds are entangled by the red fruit which coexists at the scene gently refutes the reading of the nonviolence circuit through the framework of violence and nonviolence.

Moreover, as shown in the next scene, the nonhuman creates a pathway for the American soldier to approach the girl:

Just then, I noticed the red fruit hanging from the beam over my bed. A cold sweat broke out over my whole body, and I tensed up even more. The fruit was quivering and squirming. Peering through the darkness, I noticed it was covered with large red hornets. (...) Suddenly, one dropped off and came flying straight toward me. A scream froze in my throat, followed by the sensation of a pebble striking me in the chest. Something slimy spread out over my skin. Then I realized that the hair on my chest was covered in gore. The fruit had transformed into a gooey clump of blood, and large drops were dripping down onto me. Following down my neck, along my sides, and over my belly, the blood slithered over me like a red snake pinning me to the bed.

At the foot of my bed, a girl with long hair was staring at me. I immediately knew it was her. Her eyes turned to the ceiling. The clump of blood glistened garishly in the darkness—and then fell. The blow to my chest knocked the breath out of me. As blood splattered across my face, I blinked and looked down. The clump was now twisting and turning. A newborn baby, covered in blood and still attached to an umbilical cord, moved its gaping mouth and tiny arms and legs. The heaviness and slime made me think I was going crazy. The girl reached out and pulled the baby to her chest. Then the baby shook its head and looked at me. At that moment, I knew everything that was going to happen. The tip of the harpoon in my hand cut deep into my flesh, and the blood dribbled down

³⁸ Ibid., 133–134.

³⁹ Ibid., 134.

my arm. The baby began crying feebly. The girl pressed her palm to the baby's wet forehead and whispered something. After a while, the girl and the baby disappeared, but the whispers and feeble cries never left me.⁴⁰

As the baby's feeble cries and Sayoko's whispers "never left" him, the American soldier's body gets entangled with voiceless voices. In other words, his body becomes entangled with the victim through a "nonhuman circuit." He is disconnected from the girl's interiority but at the same time his corporeality is dependent on the materiality of her whispers and the baby's cries. What generates this entanglement of disconnection and dependence is the red fruit. In other words, it serves as a "detour," not a straight passage, to the girl, which will persistently entangle the entire life of the American soldier with the emotional materiality of Sayoko, diffusing inside his body its altered forms such as grenades, wounds, bees, red snakes, and the crying baby covered with blood.

In this sense, the Japanese title *Me no oku no mori* (Forest behind the Eyes) becomes suggestive; it is necessary to read the story with the perspective of a forest, which entangles people in various positionalities inside their respective bodies. If the boundary of the individual is not self-evident, *In the Woods of Memory* does not become a collection of separate individuals' narratives: Seiji, who commits counter-violence, Sayoko, who is the victim of sexual violence, and the American soldier who is the perpetrator of wartime crime, all of them are entangled where the red fruit grows. Taking a detour to the incident, wandering in the forest behind their eyes, will be a process to find alternative circuits. Although we cannot understand their complex entanglement as connections of "care," it seems to have the potential to give rise over a long period of time to another asymptotic collaboration through being with and inside their bodies.

5. Conclusion

Aiming to impart the memory of the Battle of Okinawa, Medoruma Shun explores the complex resistance at the site through the writing of his novels, with his perspective on the postcolonial situation in Okinawa. This paper reveals that the writer, who recognizes the Battle of Okinawa not as a past event but as a present problem that continues here and now, depicts the reality of the resisting body as "genba" through imaginings of the sick and wounded body entangled with the nonhuman.

What I found in my reading of "Droplets" in Section 2 is the fact that a resisting body is a dependent body. This short story reveals that the "incapability" of a dependent body is a condition for resistance in Okinawa, where violence and the postcolonial structure continues. In this sense, the transmission of memory in postwar Okinawa cannot be achieved by simply passing on the content of memory, but by having multiple dependent bodies live in multilayered connections of care. And by the entanglement of the nonhuman, Medoruma imagines the spread of resistance as *genba*, gathering pluralistic lives that do not share inner worlds.

What we find in the reading of "Tree of Butterflies" in Section 3 is a narrative of a victim of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 147–148.

“Genba” in Medoruma Shun’s Fiction

violence revitalizing her dependent body while living in a postwar period conditioned by inescapable suffering. As the integrated body image is dismantled by traumatic memory, the body is constructed as a loose aggregate through the memory of contact with various body parts, plants and animals, and thus the body is generated as *genba*. In addition, as in the case of “Droplets,” the content of the memories of those who live in such bodies is not transmitted. But through their corporeality, those who do not share their inner worlds serendipitously penetrate each other’s lives through “asymptotic collaboration.”

Finally, I discover in my reading of *In the Woods of Memory* in Section 4 is that the understanding of voiceless victims, who has been negatively considered in previous research to be a denial of the “un-shareability” of war trauma, can be a condition for sustaining resistance from the perspective of resistance as performed by a dependent body. Victims who have been injured have caregivers being with them. Caring for the victims can be a burden upon caregivers. This novel reveals the potential for caregivers to make long-term care sustainable by understanding the voice of the victims with whom they live. Furthermore, I highlight Medoruma’s unique method of entangling the nonhuman as a way to depict the complex aspects of the entanglement between perpetrator and victim. The “red berry” that existed at the site of the incident connects the wounds of both rapist and raped. This is the “nonhuman circuit,” which bypasses the sharing of characters’ inner worlds, yet enables the caregiver to understand their dependant’s wounds while also making the perpetrator face their victim.

Violence and nonviolence are entangled in this complex way. Existing frameworks of hostility and ethics, such as exploring “counter-violence” or the “nonviolence circuit,” are insufficient for reading Medoruma’s fiction. In order to decipher this entanglement, a detour is necessary. Through this detour, we can approach “*genba*,” the complex reality of resistance in his fiction.

Acknowledgement: This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP 20J22107.