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Rampaging through the “Pacifist Island”: *The Rainbow Bird* by Medoruma Shun

Masaki Kinjo*

“I thought what I had done was natural and inevitable for this island” (Medoruma, 2001, p. 290).

The Natural and the Inevitable

First published in the *Asahi Shimbun* in 1999, Medoruma Shun’s “Hope” evoked a mixed response from its readers due to a series of violent scenes depicted in the story (Tomiyama; Sō). For example, the non-violent activist Mukai Kō points out that although “Hope” brings to light the irresponsibility of the Japanese people who have been nothing but mere “onlookers” to the issue of U.S. military bases in Okinawa, he nevertheless does not hesitate to voice his distaste for the story because “terrorism” is committed against a child. He remarks, “I don’t want to be forgiving of the author’s imagination that crosses such a line” (Mukai).

“Hope” is about an Okinawan who abducts and kills the child of a U.S. soldier. As such, many have interpreted this as an act of terrorism. The sense of urgency in the story is compounded by that fact that in its background is the well-known, real rape of a schoolgirl by three U.S. soldiers in 1995. Thereafter, all eyes became fixed on Okinawa, wherein normative representations of Okinawans and anti-war movements as nonviolent and pacifist circulated throughout the media both nationally and internationally. The cruel image of the Okinawan protagonist in the story, however, is incompatible with these established representations and instead subverts the norms attached to them. For example, Medoruma outright mocks the stereotype of the peace-loving Okinawan anti-military activist as he writes:

A meek ethnic group that at best ducks issues by holding rallies and polite demonstrations as they talk about anti-war or anti-base or anti-whatever . . . There are the leftists or extremists, but the best they can do is ineffectual guerrilla activities . . . Neither would they conduct an act of terror or kidnap someone important, nor would they ever take up arms . . . A comforting island that loves peace. (Medoruma, 2001, p. 288)

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Representations and their accompanying norms created under the colonial condition cannot be reduced to any facile discussion on images.¹⁾ Instead of ending with a mere description of images, Frantz Fanon locates rifts in the colonizer’s representations that challenge the colonial order. He asserts that representations created in the colony such as “(t)he Algerians, the veiled women, the palm trees and the camels,” “make up the landscape, the natural background to the human presence of the French” (Fanon, p. 250). In short, objectifying and representing the colony or the colonized as if they were part of the natural landscape is tantamount to facilitating the constitution of the French as colonizing subjects, who panoramically view the landscape. Through this process, the colonial world is constructed. But as Frantz Fanon clarified, representations of the colonial world are always fraught with a hostility that resists representation. Fanon does not attribute the “natural background” merely to nature, but also to a “(h)ostile nature” or an “obstinate and fundamentally rebellious [nature].”

Hostile nature, obstinate and fundamentally rebellious, is in fact represented in the colonies by the bush, mosquitoes, natives, and fever; colonization is a success when this wild nature has finally been tamed (Fanon, p. 250). The colonizer calls the force that rebels against him/her and that he/she regards as uncontrollable “hostile nature.” This is why the hostilities must be hidden, neutralized, and dissolved into a pacified and unresisting natural landscape such as “(t)he Algerians,” “the veiled women,” “the palm trees,” or “the camels.” Fanon detects a threatening force labeled as hostility in this objectified natural landscape that could potentially dismantle the colonial order.

It is precisely this kind of treatment of hostility as a force denied by the colonizer that emerges in the provocative speech of “Hope’s” protagonist, who resists stereotypes and the norms that go along with them. In this way, it is scandalous and outrageous that an Okinawan, who is supposed to only know how to “love peace” and participate in “polite demonstrations,” betrays the norms and rebels with the cruelty of killing a small child (Medoruma, 2001, p. 288). People are taken aback by the incident, thrown into a panic, and utterly bewildered. Here, they attempt to make some sense out of the incident: “Yeah, I can’t even turn a decent profit these days” “What will happen if we lose even more tourists?” “Hurry up and catch [the criminal] already. On with the death penalty” (Medoruma, 2001, p. 288).

These characters deal with the incident by attempting to contain its antagonism. However, the protagonist sneers at the people’s shock and declares: “What is necessary for Okinawa now is not a demonstration of a few thousands or a rally of a few tens of thousands, but the death of one American small child”; “[o]nly the worst means possible are effective” (Medoruma, 2001, p. 289). In the end, the terrorist commits self-immolation after murmuring the following: “Just like the fluids of small organisms caught in the grip of fear suddenly turn into poison, I thought what I had done was *natural and inevitable* [my emphasis] for this island” (Medoruma, 2001, p. 290).

The protagonist’s last statement has incited much discomfort among its readers because it seems to publicly justify terrorism as “natural and inevitable.” For example, the

activist Mukai Kō mentioned earlier simply concludes that “Hope” justifies “terrorism” in the name of resistance. Here, terrorism is defined as a suicidal act committed by “those under extreme conditions” who, “out of despair,” are incapable of “turning to any other measure” (Mukai). For Mukai, terrorism differs from a riot in that the former is carried out by the resolution of a single individual and aims to “provoke and reveal the violent nature of the state” (Mukai). With this understanding of “terrorism” within a communication model that aims to deliver a message to the state, he has precluded his interpretation of the words “natural and inevitable” with the assumption that the protagonist has already resigned him/herself to an antagonistic relationship between the ruler and ruled. That is to say, he regards the “natural and inevitable” as a cliché that glorifies the hostility of those die hard individuals who are ready to engage in a dialectic struggle with the ruler at the risk of their lives. In perpetuating such an antagonistic relationship, the teleological outcome of struggle is of utmost importance: will we celebrate victory or lament defeat?

However, Mukai’s rendering of the protagonist’s conduct, which he calls “terrorism,” in the passive sense of something turned out of “despair” in the absence of any other possible means, is highly problematic. As I argue later, “natural and inevitable” rather indicate a positive force that takes itself as an aim; it is not an act where one calculates an effect or reaction the act will have on the oppressor beforehand within a master/slave dialectic. Rather, what “Hope” makes clear is the denial of a life regulated by an economy of power between the oppressor and the oppressed and the denial of the dichotomy itself.

Furthermore, in his juxtaposition of nonviolent direct action among those engaged in “the ordinary way of life, or a way of living that already exists as our everyday lives,” with the activism or terrorism of organized experts, Mukai places more importance on the former. However, he completely fails to understand that this “ordinary way of life, or way of living,” is almost synonymous with Medoruma’s “natural and inevitable,” which he associates with “terrorism.” The protagonist’s violence is a sort of defensive gesture that occurs when such a “natural and inevitable” form of life is denied and destroyed and cannot be reduced to violent organizations such as the police or military.

This is why the protagonist’s act does not reverse the power relation between the master and slave, nor is it concerned about the outcome of the confrontation. In fact, the telos of struggle as victory or defeat bears no meaning on the suicidal death that ends the story. In sharp contrast to the desperation that Mukai describes, this story presents the “hope” for a different way of life in which one is not forcibly locked into a master/slave dialectic. This is none other than the hope for a life that cannot be regulated by the Other who is in a position of overwhelming superiority; this is a life that suffices itself without the Other. That is why it is “natural and inevitable” for the “small organisms,” or in other words, for the minority, to seek a hope that does not exist in the here and now.

And finally, the most important point of this story: the relationship between the protagonist’s sexuality and violence. Although the story unfolds through the protagonist’s actions and words in mostly first person narration, it does not reveal “its” gender. Nevertheless, since most readers regard the protagonist as male, nobody has paid enough atten-

tion to “its” sexuality. Regardless of whether readers are critical or not of the Oedipus complex, there is a tacit understanding that the subject who exerts violence is always a male. Since there is no pronoun or grammatical indication of the protagonist’s gender, it is impossible to simply assume “Hope” is a story that recovers the masculinity of the colonized male who negates castration. At the same time, it disrupts naturalizing norms associated with victimhood, which appears in categories such as the “innocent child” as seen in the real life incident of sexual violence in 1995. It is *The Rainbow Bird* that clearly problematizes these norms that are circulated and naturalized in society.

Violence, Recognition, and Love

The Rainbow Bird is a story that depicts the unpredictable violence caused by a seventeen-year-old girl, Mayu, through the eyes of a twenty-one-year-old male protagonist, Katsuya. After repeated beatings and bullying by a group of delinquent upperclassmen led by a youth named Higa, Katsuya comes to submit himself to Higa. By doing so, Katsuya reasons that he can avoid exposing his life to danger and even revels in the illusion that he is being protected by him. Higa is such that if anyone even showed a hint of insubordination in his presence, he would beat them with abandon to show off his brutality and plant the seeds of terror in their hearts. He seeks to make it perfectly clear that there is no other tyrant besides himself and that it is he who possesses a monopoly on violence.

This is why Katsuya was frightened of Higa as a monopolist of violence, “felt something different in him from other upperclassmen, and came to be drawn to him” (Medoruma, 2006, p. 62). Katsuya is drawn to his awesome power that keeps anything at a bay and rules anyone at will. “He even felt a surge of loneliness and anxiety when he was abandoned and left behind by Higa” (Medoruma, 2006, p. 60). In this way, Katsuya is mired in conflicting emotions: the utter fear and complete adoration of a tyrant who rules with an awesome power. The masochistic desire to entrust one’s fate to a tyrant and to be recognized and protected by him. The hasty attempt to suppress any harm that may come one’s way by seeking the recognition and love of the Other and by becoming at one with the Other instead of confronting it head on. Although these emotions seem discordant, they coexist as one in Katsuya. The total fear Higa ingrains in Katsuya controls his every move. Higa’s gaze would never fade from Katsuya’s mind. In other words, Katsuya actions are imbued with an acute consciousness of the dangerous Other called Higa at all times. The more Katsuya senses the dangerous Other, the more he compels himself to shed or conceal his internal hostility toward it, and the more he seeks to become a part of the Other. In this way, the story is centered on a structure of ambivalent desire toward violence, recognition from the Other, and the longing for love.

Mayu comes from a single-mother home. She is an active junior high school girl who becomes a member of the student governing body by her second year and is popular among the students due to her attractive looks and good grades. However, as soon as the upperclassmen who protected her graduate before she enters her third year, her situation

suddenly changes. She is summoned by a group of delinquent students who frequently squeeze her for money and force her to shoplift. Finally, they brutally gang rape her and stuff pebbles wrapped up in a handkerchief into her genitalia. Thereafter, Mayu locks herself up in her room and graduates from junior high without ever going back to school again. After some time elapses, she is gradually able to go out and starts working part-time near her home. Then, one of the female students who had once brutally abused her starts to frequent the store where she is working. “Although Mayu [is] on guard at first, she gradually [comes] to open her heart and talk with the female student as she kindly approached her as if nothing had happened before” (Medoruma, 2006, p. 76). For Mayu, this female student becomes “the only person Mayu [can] talk to” because at that time, she does not get along with her mother (Medoruma, 2006, p. 76). Katsuya is able to understand “Mayu’s behavior of dependency on the one who hurt her, which looks odd at first glance” (Medoruma, 2006, p. 76), because it is exactly the same type of relationship Katsuya has with Higa. Mayu tries to get back into the swing of things and return to the outside world that she had once rejected through the recognition and love of a female student who had once abused her.

However, her attempt to return to society is once again shattered. The female student approaches Mayu only to lure her back to the group of delinquent students. Mayu is blackmailed by the group with photos of her gang rape that are finally sold to Higa, who has been leading the lower branch of the gang ever since he graduated from junior high school. Then, Mayu is sent to Katsuya, who just as before is still paralyzed in Higa’s grip. Katsuya’s task given by Higa is to lure men through a two-shot dial service,²⁾ take photos of them prostituting women Higa sends Katsuya’s way, and then hand the photos over to Higa. Higa uses the incriminating photos to blackmail and extort large sums of cash from the men. The women who Higa sends to Katsuya never try to escape because they are enfeebled with an addiction to drugs. However, Mayu is already weaker than any of the other women when she is sent to Katsuya. No matter what he says to her, her expression never changes, and she appears as if she has lost any interest in the outside world.

Although both Katsuya and Mayu seek the recognition and love of the Other who overwhelms them with incredible violence in the beginning of the story, both of them stop seeking recognition as the story develops. Rather, they come to destroy the existing relation with the Other. As a result, the story also focuses on force, which harbors the possibility of changing the relationship with the Other.

The Politics of Norms

As a preliminary disclosure, I must emphasize that *The Rainbow Bird* is not a sentimental story that condemns military violence by showing the misery of its victims who become helplessly consumed by it. For instance, Ariko Kurosawa suggests such an interpretation as she poses the question, “What is the true face of the ‘enormous violence’ that closes in on Katsuya and Mayu, thereby transforming them into such brutal monsters?”

(Kurosawa, p. 257). She concludes: “This huge structural violence that is taken out on the ‘children,’ and consequently creates a ‘moral decay with no exit’ is precisely the ‘distorted mirror image’ of contemporary Okinawan society” (Kurosawa, p. 257). For Kurosawa, violence is understood as a forcibly imposed evil, negative power, or something that should be denied or removed from human existence. As a result, Katsuya and Mayu are simply described as victims who became tainted in a vicious economy of violence. Kurosawa fails to discuss what sort of sociality Medoruma attempts to open up in his writing through the expressive form of the novel. Her discussion on violence configured as a “distorted mirror image” of Okinawa that suffers from a “huge structural violence” grossly simplifies the complexity of Medoruma’s work.

Ironically, this attitude, which claims a sort of unsullied integrity above violence in the name of political correctness, actually deters the reader from critically re-thinking the violence that is inevitably inscribed in every human life. Furthermore, this position leads to the factional thought that divides the complexity of human life into categories of good or evil: those who are above violence are “good” and those who have submitted to its temptation are “evil.” What we must be aware of is that *The Rainbow Bird* paints a critical picture of political correctness and the established anti-war peace movements rather than supporting them, contrary to Kurosawa’s assumption. *The Rainbow Bird* focuses on the force or kind of being that the peace movement based on political correctness has chronically ignored.

In the story, violence emerges in stark contrast to various social norms. For instance, the man who prostitutes Mayu shockingly turns out to be a junior high school teacher as seen in the scene where Katsuya disdainfully spits out the question, “Are you a junior high school teacher?” (Medoruma, 2006, p. 18). In that scene Mayu, who ordinarily “looked so bleak as if she lost words themselves,” comes to suddenly beat the naked man brutally with a belt (Medoruma, 2006, p. 68). Furthermore, she takes the man to the shower room and, without hesitation, pours hot water over him as he cries and begs for mercy. Her violent torture does not end there as she cruelly inserts a matchstick up his urethra and lights it. Although Katsuya has seen this kind of torture being carried out and has done it himself as he was instructed by Higa, “he has never seen a woman doing it” (Medoruma, 2006, p. 27).

One is a teacher, who is socially expected to embody knowledge and virtue; it is undoubtedly socially unacceptable that he prostitutes a girl whose age is almost the same as his own students. The other is a junior high school girl whose grades were as good as her looks and was such a serious student that she even served as a member of the student governing body. However, in the scene where the male teacher prostitutes Mayu and Mayu cruelly brutalizes him, the norms of “teacher-like” and “girl-like” which they are expected to perform by society entirely collapse. On one hand, the male teacher’s scandalous acts eclipse the image of a teacher who is supposed to instruct his student as the embodiment of morality. On the other hand, Mayu’s brutal behavior clearly deviates from the integrity of her own image as an exemplary student. Both of them cause a blistering

backlash in society. In the story, force begins to raise its head and gushes out as a sort of pleasure and ecstasy. The only reason why this sort of force is called “violence” is that it clearly deviates from the norms expected of an established society and rebels against it. Norms, which embrace prescribed models at each level of the social stratum, require social recognition of “how one should act,” transform the appropriate structure of bodily acts into something predictable in advance, and collapse them into harmonized categories. Hence, norms constantly attempt to eliminate from society any unpredictable force, or in other words, violence as a disorderly power or desire that is antagonistic to society. Norms try to gain their absolute justification and protect themselves through the elimination of antagonistic violence.

Norms such as “teacher-like” and “girlish” have greatly supported the ground of anti-base movements in Okinawa. In “Hope,” Medoruma evokes social norms associated with an “innocent child” as the protagonist violently strangles him to death. This incites an “outrage and hatred toward the crime committed against an innocent child” (Medoruma, 2001, p. 288). Although this remark was made when characters in “Hope” denounced the criminal who killed the small child of a U.S. soldier, the adjective “innocent” was also repeatedly used to condemn the U.S. military during the demonstrations against the real-life 1995 rape incident when three U.S. soldiers raped a twelve-year-old girl. *The Rainbow Bird* reenacts the demonstration protesting the 1995 incident, suspends, and then subverts these stereotypical norms. For example, in the scene where Katsuya runs into a demonstration of schoolteachers protesting the rape incident, it suddenly occurs to him that the teacher who prostituted Mayu might be there.

As soon as he saw the participants holding placards and red flags bearing their group name, he noticed that it was a demonstration held by teachers from some elementary, junior, and high schools. As he watched demonstrators marching in a straight row under a pedestrian overpass, the face of the man whom Mayu had once brought into the room came to mind. He started to look closely at the faces of the demonstrators who were filing out of the school gate because he thought the man might be there. However, he began to feel the absurdity of it all and stopped looking.” (Medoruma, 2006, p. 101)

This scene, in which it suddenly comes to Katsuya’s mind that the teacher who prostituted Mayu might be there, cannot help but give readers a hypocritical impression of the teachers’ demonstration that is enabled only by eliminating any antagonistic violence implicit in the norms associated with “teacher.” At the same time, this scene also tries to show that norms are always accompanied by recognition from the state and law, which aim to eliminate antagonistic violence. For example, although demonstrators march forward under strict surveillance by plainclothes police officers and the riot police, “some demonstrators were chatting away playfully” as if in a nonchalant acceptance of their presence. Medoruma continues, “the line, which they never try to cross even when they express their anger, is stretched around their mind like the fence around a base” (Medoruma, 2006, pp. 103–04).

The norms associated with the image of the “pure and innocent girl” that are mobi-

lized by the anti-base movement also become more chaotic. In the scene where Katsuya’s eyes are glued to the live TV broadcast of the prefectural resident rally protesting the rape incident, a schoolgirl bravely makes a speech in public expressing the hope for peace in Okinawa:

A girl with long hair was blown up on the TV screen. Her white jacket and short reddish-purple necktie made for an impressionable uniform; the girl came off as upright and pure, as if she were a member of the student [governing] body or something. As he started to see Mayu’s face that he saw in the room that afternoon fold over onto the face of the girl speaking her cause to the tens of thousands of people in front of a microphone, he was dumbstruck.

If something, somewhere had been different by even a fraction of a moment, the positions of the girl on TV and Mayu lying face down on her stomach could have been switched. It wasn’t true for just Mayu, but for Katsuya, Higa, or Matsuda as well. If something had changed by even the narrowest margin, they might be in a completely different world than the one they were in now.

While living in this moment in the same Okinawa, the girl on TV and Mayu live in completely opposite worlds. I couldn’t bear this fact.” (Medoruma, 2006, p. 190)

The figure of the girl who “came off as upright and pure, as if she were a member of the student [governing] body or something,” is depicted exactly as Mayu used to be. The image of the girl as “upright” and “pure,” which exaggerates the political correctness of the movement, is described in a way that contradicts and contrasts Mayu’s life of moral decay, in which she is forced to prostitute herself and then inflicts a most brutal torture on her client. When the girl who was raped by U.S. soldiers is identified with the “pure” girl who makes the speech and is symbolized as a “victim,” the male-centered discourse in the movement reinforces the assertion that the powerless, innocent, and “pure” girl must be protected by a patriarchal society.

For example, Ōshiro Tatsuhiro’s Akutagawa prize-winning novella *Cocktail Party* depicts typical roles of a raped girl who is victimized and forced to keep silent and a colonized male who tries to save her from the colonizing male by displaying a towering rage toward the rapist (Ōshiro, 1989). In this case, it is impossible to narrate another possibility in which the raped girl kills the rapist because it goes against the normative grain of “upright” and “pure.” *The Rainbow Bird* depicts such violence that is forbidden by society. Mayu’s act of setting Higa, the man who forced her to prostitute herself, on fire and subsequently killing him in the end will execrably confuse any reader familiar with discourses on violence only from a patriarchal viewpoint. In other words, it reveals a power relation in which various possibilities have not been narrated in the discourse of rage expressed in the male-centered society and anti-military movement.

Mayu’s scene of cruel violence does not end there. At the end of the story, she abducts the young daughter of an American soldier and kills her with a knife. Although the scandalous development of a “pure girl” killing not only a “cruel adult” such as Higa but also an “innocent child” incites repugnance in the reader, it simultaneously undermines the norm associated with a “cruel adult.” This is because shock and rage tends to be more

easily elicited at the rape or murder of an “innocent small child” rather than of an adult. Even when an adult female is raped or murdered, the case is often attributed to the victim’s lack of self-responsibility. For example, some may question, “Why did she go to such a dangerous place?” or “Why did she hang round such a man?”³) These notions of a “cruel adult” or adults who must take responsibility for themselves function to conceal the fact that most victims of rape or murder related to U.S. military personnel in Okinawa are adult females who by far outnumber children. It is important to keep in mind that the signifiers “child” and “adult” do not exist in isolation but discharge a complementary function in everyday life. What Mayu’s brutal murder of a small child unintentionally reveals is the gesture of self protection among those in a so-called adult society who try to conceal one adult’s cruel violence inflicted against another. The story criticizes a lack of imagination toward the victims who suffer from the violence resulting from military bases on a daily basis.

The fragility of the politics of norms also appears in the scene in which Matsuda, Higa’s right-hand man, mocks the prefectural resident rally that protests the rape of an “innocent child” by U.S. military soldiers.

Even if many people come out, they can’t do anything. That’s why Okinawan people are pathetic. If so many people are able to come out, why don’t they break through the base fences and beat the American soldiers to death? All their bitching and complaining doesn’t bother the Americans in the slightest. (Medoruma, 2006, p. 190)

Katsuya has never heard Matsuda speaking in such a manner about U.S. military bases and is surprised that “even Matsuda was interested in the incident” (Medoruma, 2006, p. 190). Following Matsuda, Higa opens up his mouth to speak. “Hang ‘em. They should kidnap a GI kid, strip him naked, and hang him up with wire from a palm tree along Route 58 That’s if they seriously want to kick the U.S. military out” (Medoruma, 2006, pp. 190–91). Katsuya makes a mental note, “He’s right,” and agrees with him (Medoruma, 2006, p. 191).

On one hand, there are social movements that advocate justice and peace with the backing of various social norms. On the other hand, there is an evil world in which people who are cut off from society, like Mayu, Katsuya, and Higa, live. However, *the question here is not whether we agree or disagree with violence*. It is rather identifying the kind of force the established movement has excluded so that its participants can sanitize themselves in an effort to conform with the norms of “upright,” “pure,” “peace loving,” or “teacher-like.” The novel critically depicts the anti-base movement that is predominantly led by teachers, political leaders, and specialized activists. Simply put, the story attempts to find possibilities in the movement from a wider range of sociality, including those who are categorized as “evil,” such as Katsuya, Mayu, Higa, or Matsuda, and not limited to a certain group of specialists who are categorized as “good.” Hence, the story is also about the essence of rage that surges instantly through ordinary people against social injustice or discrimination arising from problems such as the military bases in Okinawa. Medo-

ruma attempts to locate hope in this rage belonging to ordinary Okinawans such as Katsuya, Mayu, or even Katsuya’s older brother, who has fallen into the decadent life of playing pachinko every day. Medoruma invests the hope for change in these individuals in Okinawan society. Hence, rage does not belong to only those who have mastered the art of being politically correct.

However, the established movement today names the inevitable and contradictory force against social norms “violence” and then alienates and sanitizes itself from that “violence.” Therefore, the violent world of Mayu, Katsuya, and Higa that society excludes is originally nothing but society itself. In the story, Katsuya longs for this society absent the norms that filter individuals such as himself out. When Katsuya mumbles to himself that if only things had been a just a hair different, not only Mayu, but even Katsuya, Higa or Matsuda might be in a completely different world. He does not wish to return to the established present society, nor does he wish to take flight towards a “pacifist island.” He sails against time and reaches the past before society had norms that excluded violence.

I recalled an old village story I heard from my grandparents when I was small. Cape lilac trees lined the village market and its shade bustled about with villagers who traded goods or idled away in chatter. It was also that market where my grandparents met. Near the market was an *uganju*⁴ where the villagers worshiped, and [a] huge banyan tree with its branches spread out wide. Stone walls made with coral taken from either springs welling up with sweet water or from the ocean. Fukugi trees surrounding the residences. The woods of the *utaki*⁵ where *kaminchu*⁶ sang *kamiuta*⁷ and prayed all through the night. These all dissolved into the military base and transmogrified into a space for runways, warehouses, residences, and lawns.

If only there had been no war, and no forced confiscation of the land for U.S. military bases, then the Katsuyas of the village would have been born and raised on the other side of those fences. If that were the case, they would have had completely different lives from the ones they live now Not only Katsuya’s life, but also that of his parents and grandparents, and the villagers who lived postwar Okinawa—all of their lives would have been different. (Medoruma, 2006, p. 184)

This village landscape that Katsuya recalls as a utopia is precisely “the ordinary way of life, or way of living that already exists as our everyday lives” that Mukai speaks of. When Katsuya recalls the past saying, “ If only there had been no war, and no forced confiscation of the land for U.S. military bases,” he finds a different present than the one in his here and now. In other words, he locates an indeterminate form of the future from the recalled past that has been negated by military violence and left unrealized. He discovers in this new future a moment that changes the relationship with others in the present, including “his parents and grandparents, and the villagers who lived postwar Okinawa,” and “not only Mayu, but even Katsuya, Higa or Matsuda.” At this moment, memory ceases to simply be a utopia remembered but rather produces the force to change society and the existing relationships with others. When Katsuya conjures up the memory of society in the present, the memory begins to wax over with a tinge of violence.

When thinking about the possibility of a political practice called “constituent power” from the scene of violence, Hardt and Negri refer to Walter Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence” (Hardt and Negri). When Benjamin critically investigates the relationship between the law and violence, he cites two forms of state violence: law-making and law-preserving violence (Benjamin and Demetz, pp. 280–86). Although the state attempts to preserve the established legal order through legalized violent means such as police violence, it exerts violence when the situation of the legal order becomes critical. The most important thing is that the state always attempts to restore the legal order through new enactments of the law after it suppresses the rioters. Hence, the origin of the law that establishes a pacified legal order is inevitably inscribed with traces of violence. Conversely, even the violence that attempts to counter state violence is law-making violence if it is reincorporated into a new order that is legally recognized. Benjamin uses “mythical violence” as a general name for both the law-making and law-preserving violence, and “divine violence” as violence, which that cannot return to any legal order. (Benjamin and Demetz, pp. 297–99). Hardt and Negri argue that the former form of violence “involves constructing an external relation between an action (violence) and its representation (the law),” but the latter form is “‘unalloyed’ or ‘immediate’ in the sense that it does not look to anything external to itself, to any representations, for its effect.” (Hardt and Negri, p. 294). In other words, the former attempts to establish an outside and explain the foundation of its existence through the outside while the latter does not seek an outside to support its foundation, but “expresses life in itself in a nonmediate way, outside of law, in the form of the living.” (Hardt and Negri, p. 294). This latter practice, divine violence, is precisely another name for the constituent power they mention.

For example, Katsuya’s memory of the village does not have any recognition of an external state or law. The memory emerges as if it is a self-sufficient, natural, and inevitable world for itself. Katsuya’s father, who collected military land rent, tells him “If the opposition movement doesn’t heat up, the military land rent won’t rise, and government subsidies won’t increase,” as he scorns the anti-base movement in Okinawa (Medoruma, 2006, p. 185). His cynical remark reveals that opposition movements simply seek no more than recognition from the state or the established Other. A form of life that does not have any corresponding relation with the present established Other emerges beside it when Katsuya remembers the village landscape and the lives of villagers that he heard of from his grandparents long ago. Since memory does not necessarily exist in a corresponding relationship with the present Other, it is an unrecognizable world.

The rainbow bird, which is also the title for this story, has been talked about as an illusory bird among American soldiers undergoing anti-guerilla combat training in the jungle of Yambaru. As the story goes, they believe in the miracle that if they see it in the jungle, they can survive the battlefield. However, if one tells others that he caught a glimpse of the bird, the effect of this miracle completely disappears. Even if he keeps it secret and survives, other soldiers of his unit will be annihilated. That is why it is “an unprovable bird in that double sense,” and a socially unrecognizable bird (Medoruma,

2006, p. 146). The story ends with a scene where Katsuya and Mayu are drawn into the darkness of Yambaru’s deep forest in order to seek the unrecognizable rainbow bird.

The Delighted Rioters

Katsuya’s father often tells this story of the Koza riot to Katsuya:

I’ve heard of the story before reversion to Japan in which demonstrators wrapped wire rope around the base fences, dragged them down, and threw in Molotov cocktails. At that time he apparently rampaged about without any principles. On one hand, while he ridiculed philosophy or ideology because it’s incapable of turning a profit, got the young guys from the A-sign⁸⁾ establishments together, and then attacked a group of Zengunrō⁹⁾ picketers, he also blended into the demonstrators and threw stones at the riot police. It was from such a father that I heard the story of the Koza riot many times.

As soon as my father, who was drinking at a bar in the town of Koza on that day, got word that U.S. military vehicles were being burned, he went out of the bar and participated in the riot. In his everyday life, he was on the benefitting end of the U.S. military bases, but yet he boasted of the fact that he blended into the mob, flipped over the GI’s cars, and set them on fire. The mob circled the yellow license plates¹⁰⁾ flaming with black smoke, applauded, and whistled with their fingers. Some of them even danced *kachāshi*¹¹⁾ as if they were incited by the heat of the flame. While he talked about how formidable the mob was that advanced toward the Kadena Air Base gate, he was intoxicated with his own story and always murmured at the end, “I wonder if it will happen again?” (Medoruma, 2006, pp. 102–03)

This is a fictional account of the real life Koza Riot that took place unplanned and unanticipated in the middle of the night on December 20, 1970. The enraged multitude whistled with their fingers and was overjoyed to see burning military vehicles. Children handed over glass bottles filled with gasoline to the mob. A-sign bar employees started hitting U.S. servicemen who were their customers. Old women started dancing *kachāshi* boisterously with joy. We have to acknowledge that the singing and angry voices of the rampaging rioters, which intensify the body’s power of activity, did not demand recognition from the state or law in the first place; the riot was not a function that sends a message to the state or law. It was a force that did not have any purpose vis-à-vis the outside and generated its power for itself.

In addition, since Katsuya’s father, who scornfully states that “philosophy or ideology . . . is incapable of turning a profit,” is not tagged as a member of the “anti-base faction,” the norms of justice versus evil do not carry any importance. At that time in Koza, bloody clashes between students who were on the picket line in front of the base gate and A-sign businessmen who collected income from the military routinely divided the people. Okinawans who were supposed to be positioned against each other politically suddenly began gathering in the main street of the city. All factions unintentionally collapsed. People sang songs, rampaged about, and occupied the main street as if they were engaging in a carnival. Here, the method of historical interpretation that establishes intention before human action as the cause of the act completely loses its validity.

The reason why the riot appeared as madness is that the mingled effect of joy and rage among the people did not have any corresponding relationship with norms of political correctness in real politics and movements. It existed as unrepresentable. This is why what we have to problematize is this rupture between the norm of political correctness and the rioters' joy. This is precisely what *The Rainbow Bird* accomplishes. What Medo-ruma attempts to do by describing violence is open up in the present the force that has the power to change the relationship with a pre-existing Other. We need to keep questioning what it is about language that holds the possibility of incorporating the affect of people into the movement, who ordinarily have no other way to express themselves other than "if the opposition movement doesn't heat up, the military land rent won't rise, and the government subsidies won't increase." What we need to do is constitute a broader communality that is no longer based on norms such as justice or evil. What is important is the need to intervene with the realm of affect, which exists one step before an unrecognizable and immanent force becomes power. It is a magnetic field where joy infects the air as people link together. Such an unpredictable and exciting communality rampages through the so-called "pacified island."

Notes

- 1) One such example can be found in (Tada, 2004), where he has written an entire book on the image of Okinawa.
- 2) A two-shot dial is a phone service in Japan that introduces men to women. Since a couple results from the call, it takes the name "two-shot."
- 3) For example, see (Ishii and Kuniyoshi). Ishii and Kuniyoshi problematize the Japanese Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka's remark on the sexual assault of an Okinawan adult female that took place in June 2001. It was reported that she insinuated that the victim was at fault because she was out drinking alcohol at two in the morning when she was assaulted.
- 4) Okinawan term for a place of prayer.
- 5) Okinawan term for a sacred natural spring.
- 6) Term for Okinawan female shaman.
- 7) Religious songs of the *kaminchu*.
- 8) The "A" in "A-sign" means "approved" for business by the U.S. military but came to represent businesses in the entertainment district that catered to U.S. military personnel. Since they were a phenomenon of the base economy, A-sign businesses often clashed with anti-military activists out of fear of losing business.
- 9) *Zengunrō* is short for "*Zen Okinawa Gunrōdōsha Kumiai*," or in English, the "All-Okinawa Military Workers Union," which was a U.S. military base workers union of Okinawans that fought for increased wages while simultaneously participated in the anti-base movement.
- 10) A metonym for U.S. military vehicles that were identified by their yellow colored license plates bearing the phrase "Keystone of the Pacific."
- 11) "*Kachāshi*" is a celebratory Okinawan dance that is performed with the dead.

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