ILLiad
Below is the detailed information about your outstanding request.

Edit Request | Cancel Request

Transaction Information

Journal Title	Writing ground zero : Japanese literature and the atomic bomb
Volume	
Issue	
Month	
Year	1995
Inclusive Pages	pp. 261-300
Article Author	
Article Title	Ibuse Masuji: Nature, Nostalgia, Memory
Item Author	Treat, John
Item Place	
Item Publisher	
Item Edition	
ISSN/ISBN	0226811786
Cited In	Prof. Course Reserves Request -Suzuki/JA
Cited Title	
Cited Date	
Cited Volume	
Cited Pages	
Not Wanted After	09/16/2009
Accept Non English	No
Accept Alternate Edition	
Due Date	
Renewals Allowed?	
Max Cost	

Suzuki
JAPAN 4620
Fall 09

Notes

Date/Time Added By Note

No Notes

Tracking

Date/Time	Status	Changed By
8/17/2009 3:34:04 PM	Submitted by Customer	[redacted]
8/17/2009 3:34:04 PM	Awaiting Copyright Clearance	[redacted]

Copyright © 1998-2009 Atlas Systems, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
Interlibrary Loans | 801.581.6010 | Contact Us
© THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH | J. Willard Marriott Library 295 S 1500 E SLC, UT 84112-0860 | 801.581.8558 • Fax 801.585.3464
THE University of Utah | Contact Us | Disclaimer | Privacy | Staff Intranet

In ideology men do indeed express, not the relation between them and their conditions of existence, but *the way* they live the relation between them and their conditions of existence: this presupposes both a real relation and an *"imaginary" "lived"* relation. Ideology, then, is the expression of the relation between men and their *"world,"* that is, the (overdetermined) unity of the real relation and the imaginary relation between them and their real conditions of existence. In ideology the real relation is inevitably invested in the imaginary relation, a relation that *expresses a will* (conservative, conformist, reformist, or revolutionary), a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality.

Louis Althusser, "Marxism and Humanism"

8

Ibuse Masuji: Nature, Nostalgia, Memory

I begin by juxtaposing this epigraph, Althusser's famous definition of ideology as the representation of our imaginary relationship to the real conditions of existence, with an example from where that definition has found its most fertile application: a novel. This is another oft-quoted excerpt—the first paragraph of Ibuse Masuji's *Black Rain*, Japan's best-known work of atomic-bomb literature:

> For several years past, Shigematsu Shizuma, of the village of Kobatake, had been aware of his niece Yasuko as a weight on his mind. What was worse, he had a presentiment that the weight was going to remain with him, unspeakably oppressive, for still more years to come. In Yasuko, he seemed to have taken on a double, or even a triple, liability. That no suitable marriage was in sight for her was a circumstance simple enough in itself. The real trouble was the rumor. Towards the end of the war, it

> ran, Yasuko had been working in the kitchens of the Second Middle School Service Corps in Hiroshima City. Because of that rumor, the villagers of Kobatake, over one hundred miles to the east of Hiroshima, were saying that she was a victim of radiation sickness. Shigematsu and his wife, they claimed, were deliberately covering up the fact. It was this that made her marriage seem so remote. People who came to make inquires of the neighbors with an eye to a possible match would hear the rumor, would promptly become evasive, and would end up by breaking off the talks altogether. (9–10)

The typical in medias res opening of a novelistic narrative; its *Pride and Prejudice* bourgeois concern with the marital disposition of a young woman dependent upon the family patriarch; and a succinct statement of the "problem" which the remainder of the novel must endeavor to resolve—all mark *Black Rain* as precisely the kind of work for which Althusser's formulation of ideology as sets of variously "real" and "imaginary" representations has proved so analytically useful. The European novel of manners, attractive to Marxist critics since Marx himself for the sake of its rich display of implicit ideological constructions of an "everyday life" afforded by the fruits of capital, seemingly finds a ready parallel in the first lines of this Japanese novel from the mid-1960s. If the classic realist narrative "turns on the creation of an enigma through the precipitation of disorder which throws into disarray the conventional cultural and signifying systems,"[1] then *Black Rain*'s basic problem of how to marry off Yasuko—how to "exchange" her, were we to think of matrimony as implicated in our "cultural and signifying systems"—would seem to qualify the novel as precisely the kind of literature that a Marxist critic could claim reproduces, as an "Ideological State Apparatus," the relations of production.[2]

But at the same time, something very un-European and un-nineteenth-century intrudes before the paragraph can conclude: the reference to "radiation sickness" and its fatal social as well as physical repercussions suddenly thrusts the novel into a specific and ghastly history that makes it a novel about a very new theme, certainly for Western readers, as well as one at least as old and familiar as Jane Austen. This conjuncture, as we have seen in other works purporting to be "literature" about the "atomic-bomb," is always an unstable one: but nowhere more, perhaps, than here. "A genre committed to life or even to death in the bosom of the nineteenth-century middle class," writes Berel Lang, "would simply fail as the vehicle for a subject that challenged the very possibility of social existence."[3]

From another perspective *Black Rain* is again a striking anomaly. For a reader accustomed to the documentary approach of a Hara Tamiki, or the direct and angry address of atomic-bomb literature by such authors as Ōta Yōko, Ibuse's work seems so much more an ordinary "novel." This impression, even

while it charges the novel with its own particular energy, namely that between the telling of a story many families might find cognizant and the telling of one nearly all would find extraordinary, is responsible for *Black Rain*'s unprecedented degree of success. Until now this genre has been described in this study as marginalized and even suppressed: but now, as we encounter atomic-bomb literature two decades after its inception, there is this one notable exception. There is no doubt that Ibuse Masuji's 1966 novel is far more widely read, translated, and taught than any other single example of Japanese atomic-bomb literature: its status as a "curriculum" for the lessons of Hiroshima makes an analysis of precisely what it teaches, and with what implications, especially significant. Like all good novels, the story that seizes our attention is in part congruent with our own lives and experiences, which is precisely why *Black Rain* proposes itself as a proof-text for how, as Althusser and others suggest, our "lives" and "experiences" may seem intuitively known to us but are in fact social representations with their own histories, uses, effects, and consequences.

It is *Black Rain*'s power as a work of literature that the domestic is so believably and convincingly combined with the historical. When Yasuko is finally approached by a suitor who almost seems "too good for her," Shigematsu thinks the best way to ward off the usual round of destructive rumors is to send the go-between Yasuko's certificate of good health. But that unfortunately only raises suspicions, and the go-between comes back to Shigematsu wanting to know what Yasuko did, and where, from the day of the bombing to her return to Kobatake.

It is this situation which inspires Shigematsu to copy out the relevant entries from his niece's 1945 diary. Shigematsu, himself diagnosed with mild radiation disease, has heretofore spent his time fishing, and most recently started a small carp nursery with two other hibakusha in the village. It comes as a shock to Shigematsu as he recopies Yasuko's diary that she, too, was pelted by the radioactive "black rain" which fell across the city a few hours after it was bombed:

> And yet, he told himself, at something past eight on August 6, when the bomb fell, Yasuko must have been more than ten kilometers from the center of the blast. He himself had been at Yokogawa, only two kilometers from the center, and his cheek had been burned, but even so he was alive, wasn't he? He had heard that some people who had been in the same area but had escaped without burns were now leading perfectly normal married lives. (35)

So Shigematsu decides additionally to copy out his own diary, entitled simply "The Journal of the Bombing" (Hibaku nikki), to send along to the go-between for purposes of comparison. Indeed, the whole family collaborates. Shigeko, Yasuko's aunt and Shigematsu's wife, appends her own document, "Diet in War-

time Hiroshima." Perhaps predictably, however, before he is finished with his labors the rumors about Yasuko become prophetic, and with the onset of her symptoms the marriage talks break off. Powerless to help his niece in any other way, Shigematsu continues to assemble and recopy for the benefit not only of her doctors but himself such additional documents as Shigeko's "Diary of the Illness of Yasuko Takamaru"; the story of one hibakusha's miraculous recovery entitled "Notes on the Bombing of Hiroshima, by Hiroshi Iwatake, Medical Reserve"; and "A Record of Mrs. Iwatake's Recollections of Events at That Time." It is, however, Shigematsu's own "Journal of the Bombing" that itself takes up over half the length of *Black Rain*, and it is as Yasuko's illness terminally worsens that both Shigematsu's recopying of his diary and the novel itself rather abruptly conclude.

This brief outline of *Black Rain* identifies the two characteristics that best qualify it: its documentary, historical detail and its seductive, almost melodramatic fictional narrative. The combination has proved a successful one for both the novel and Ibuse personally. In addition to the aforementioned international popularity of the work, it has been used for psychoanalytical purposes in Robert Jay Lifton's study of hibakusha psychology, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima*;[4] its prose appears as verse in poet Marc Kaminsky's *The Road From Hiroshima*, and it is the only work of atomic-bomb literature that has been adapted for both television and film, the latter—a 1989 production directed by Imamura Shōhei—indeed winning five Japanese Academy Awards. If John Hersey's documentary account *Hiroshima* stands as the dominant American reading of the first atomic bombing, then Ibuse's novel *Black Rain* is the Japanese: a source of anecdote, myth, history, reference, and, most importantly, a source for the intimation of the human scale of the atrocity. The importance of this work, which is to say its emblematic representation of "what happened," means that in some real sense the perceived importance of Hiroshima itself now hinges upon what it says, and does not say.

This is most true in Japan itself, where the novel has no commercial equal among other works of atomic-bomb literature. According to 1981 figures, the Japanese edition had sold 263,000 hardback copies and 1,160,000 paperback ones.[5] Perhaps more significantly, a survey of leading Japanese intellectuals published in 1987 declared *Black Rain* the most important Japanese book written on *any* topic since 1945. The critical and popular contrast with other works of atomic-bomb literature—works resisted by publishers, dismissed by critics, suppressed by censors—is both striking and grounds for the first point of departure for any reading of *Black Rain*. Even before the work had appeared in its entirety during its 1965–66 serialization in the literary journal *Shinchō* (New Tide), it was enthusiastically hailed by some of Japan's most respected critics as a masterpiece. Saeki Shōichi, for instance, wrote in the *Asahi shimbun*:

> Ibuse has placed himself amid overwhelming and extraordinary events as a very reserved, ordinary *[nichijōteki]* spectator. He is a unperturbed observer who records the smallest details of what was eaten at meals; of how fish are raised; of the seasonal ceremonies and festivals of farming families. And into the framework of a Jane Austen-like domestic novel, he embeds what was "Hiroshima." This is a nearly unbelievable triumph. . . . Perhaps it is nothing other than the very essence of Japan *[Nihonteki na gokui]*.[6]

This review iterates two of the most common critical observations made of *Black Rain* at the time of its publication. First, there is the "reserved, ordinary" discourse of Shizuma Shigematsu's description of the bombing and life afterwards. This is a discourse which is implicitly in contrast to those of other, presumably less reserved and less ordinary atomic-bomb writers. In fact, Saeki and others have attributed one part of *Black Rain*'s power to the universal identification with the character of Shigematsu that his very "ordinariness" allows—an identification that earlier writers such as Hara Tamiki and Ōta Yōko, by virtue of their irrepressible sense of themselves as "different," resist.[7] Second, there is the suggestion, indeed the outright assertion, that there is something ineffably "Japanese" and thus authentic about Ibuse's use of rural and familial detail which makes this work a "triumph" where others are not.

Such views advertise a kind of cultural, national, or racial collectivity allegedly expressed in Ibuse's novel, an expression that wins it not only the appellation of "literature," but that of "Japanese literature." Yamamoto Kenkichi, an important conservative critic somewhat older than Saeki's generation, frankly explained why this work of atomic-bomb literature found favor with him and why those by Hara and Ōta did not:

> [Other works of atomic-bomb literature] are too strenuously serious. They are too sullied by politics. Or too full of simplistic catch-phrases. Had Ibuse not written this novel, I would never have been able to feel better about myself as a Japanese.
>
> That such a novel as *Black Rain* was written is a triumph for Ibuse and his approach to literature. Sartre came to Japan and stirred up our intellectuals; but it was Ibuse who, with the calm and unperturbable attitude of a common, ordinary Japanese *[Nihon no heijōshin]*, wrote this book. We might think about whose attitude—Sartre's or Ibuse's—is the stronger, the more authentic.[8]

Yamamoto's term for "authentic" is *chi ni tsuita*, literally to have one's feet on the ground. (In fact, the title of the essay from which the above is quoted is "Chi ni tsuita heijōjin," or "An Ordinary Person with his Feet on the Ground.") The metaphor suggests some nostalgic reference to the peasant, the simple back-

bone of the nation—precisely the opposite of the critical, politicized urban intellectual who, in the person of Ōe Kenzaburō (surely implicated as one whom Sartre "stirred up"), had recently monopolized public discourse on Hiroshima. *Black Rain* becomes a "triumph"—here the same language as Saeki's—which is at once a nationalistic emblem and a reactionary attack on liberal or left critiques. In fact, most of the praise for *Black Rain* from major literary critics shared an admiration for the novel's lack of political content; its choice of a rural landowner and former white-collar worker such as Shigematsu for a hero rather than an urban intellectual; and most importantly its supposed endorsement of traditional Japanese culture and values.

Uniting conservative critical commentary on *Black Rain* is its approbation of what is held to be the "common man" and "non-intellectual" nature of its story and its complementary rejection of "ideology" as a consideration in the narration of the Hiroshima bombing. As one observer has noted in recent years, "The critical reception of *Black Rain* made exceedingly clear the Japanese literary establishment's definitive emphasis on political transparency and its insistence on de-ideologization."[9] Such a reception takes place, in Japan of the 1960s, amid a great deal of literature—by no means not only that of the atomic bomb—charged with highly explicit political intentions and even consequences. Ōe's *Hiroshima Notes* had been a prime example of precisely what some senior critics meant to rail against: literature that was held to exploit the moral indignation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to score anti-Western, pro-communist points. In this atmosphere of larger geopolitical controversies, little note was taken of Ibuse's own modest stated intentions in writing *Black Rain*—simply to tell the story of a friend, named Shigematsu Shizuma in real life, who was "exposed to the Hiroshima atomic bomb."[10] Instead, grand and boldly provocative claims were made on behalf of *Black Rain* by critics who, according to the most cynical interpretation, sought more to attack other writers and other works more than they meant to praise Ibuse.

No such claims were finally more controversial than those made by Japan's most prominent conservative literary critic today, Etō Jun. As a young man whose precocious work in the 1950s on Natsume Sōseki still stands in many ways unsurpassed more than thirty years later, Etō was originally sympathetic to the progressive approaches and critiques of Japanese literature and culture made by his peers such as Ōe Kenzaburō. But by the time of *Black Rain* Etō had begun to argue against rather than for the left, a shift which his review of *Black Rain*—the most famous of all of its reviews—made quite clear.

Etō's essay, entitled "Extraordinary Events Told Ordinarily: Atomic-bomb Fiction Without Rancor" (Heijōshin de kataru ijōji: kioi no nai gembaku shōsetsu), begins as did Yamamoto's with a general and blanket statement dismissing all atomic-bomb literature written heretofore:

> I have never liked what is called "atomic-bomb literature." In fact, I have myself refrained from writing or speaking of the bombings. I felt that I wished that others had done likewise when I read Hara Tamiki's "Summer Flowers" and Ōta Yōko's series of novels. I also felt that Ōe Kenzaburō's *Hiroshima Notes* was fundamentally in error somewhere. John Hersey's *Hiroshima* is the product of a good conscience, but finally I've never rid myself of the impression that it is sensationalist.

Etō pinpoints more precisely what it is that dissatisfies him about these examples of atomic-bomb literature when he points to their irreconcilability of "experience" (*taiken*) and "expression" (*hyōgen*). Etō is not the first, of course, to identify this as an issue in atomic-bomb literature, and quite likely he is influenced by some of the theoretical contradictions identified by the same atomic-bomb writers—Hara, Ōta, and Ōe—whom he here dismisses as failures. But Etō's statement of irreconcilability is not, as it is for others, the incommensurability of atrocious violence with cultural meaning. Rather, for Etō "expression" refers to intellectual, and specifically oppositional intellectual, discourses. It is *their* expression that fails to convey experience, not expression itself as language. This is why Etō was subsequently able to represent Ibuse and his novel as a counter-example, a successful work of atomic-bomb literature where expression and experience fortuitously intersect. Ibuse's achievement lies precisely in the fact that he is not an intellectual, or that at least in *Black Rain* none of his characters adopt the practiced critical stance of one. Shigematsu, Etō declares with approval, is *not* an intellectual; he is a small landowner (*shōjinushi*) who is deeply involved in all the family and village life such a figure typically is. There is a web of what Etō refers to as *ningen kankei*, or "human relations," which constitutes the local society and culture upon which the impact of the atomic bombing of nearby Hiroshima is measured.

In Etō's estimation and that of his like-minded colleagues, such an environment represents the "real Japan," the everyday reality of life that exists in contrast to the Westernized, politicized, urbanized life of the intelligentsia—ironically the life presumably led by Etō Jun himself. It is just this unfashionable rejection of the metropolis and its literary-left milieu that thus enables *Black Rain* to be an honest and reliable work where others are not: a work without, Etō claims, ideology: "No other work of fiction has so looked at the atomic bombing with an eye so unclouded with any ideology." By "ideology" Etō would mean, first of all, the various expressions of anti-Americanism linked in postwar Japan with left-wing politics. In fact *Black Rain* does seems a novel with little to say on America at all, either one way or another. It is a novel expressly novelistic in its focus: the tragic story of a family whose lives are affected and potentially destroyed by the bombing, a story that unfolds against a back-

ground nonetheless recognizably familiar, at least to readers we
other families of modern literature if not actual life. In *Black Rain*
seems dominated with such matters as marrying off one's dau
with one's wife, or gossiping with the neighbors. *Black Rain*, unli
atomic-bomb literature, is never didactic, polemical, or argum
work that, in some respects not unlike *The Diary of Anne Frank*, r
mental (in fact, quite sparingly so) but nonetheless always digr
of individual lives subjected to collective violence in order to re
ity of "Hiroshima" within its carefully circumscribed descriptic
of one small "typical" family. It is, as a result, a very moving wo

But what precisely within us is "moved" must be examined
claims made for the novel by its conservative champions. When
to associate the term *heijōshin* (a word coined by a novelist in the l
century and explained as "a unexceptionable and typical calm st
unperturbedness, in a word) with Ibuse's method in *Black Rain*
verting the atomic bombing into an event that *was* "ordinary,"
least capable of an ordinary retelling. The first effect, not neces
tional, is to remove the bombing from the political history in w
cally inserted. The second effect is to separate the left intelligen
perceived monopoly of the atomic bomb and its discourse in
Japanese culture. Etō's "heijōshin"—literally "normal heart"—w
found widespread favor, perhaps due to its appeal as metaphor
conservative and reactionary critics in writing of *Black Rain*. Fo
mamoto Kenkichi, writing in the Hiroshima newspaper *C*
claimed that Hiroshima natives Hara Tamiki and Ōta Yōko no
no writer before Ibuse Masuji had produced a work of atomic-b
with a style "so everyday [*nichijōteki*], so unsacrificing in its or
jōshin]."[11]

Such comments as these conflate the presence of an ordin
ordinary, i.e., apolitical, views of world events. Indeed, it is pre
that in *Black Rain* an atomic bombing is no longer a "world eve
tirely local, even familial one, that seems to produce the aestheti
work for so many critics. There is a clear connection between t
this withdrawal from political history and the subsequent cele
novel's status as the representative account of Hiroshima. The gr
the novel, both politically and artistically, is interpreted as proof
literary merit, a merit not earned by the works of atomic-bomb
preceded it. Its minute scale—even while it intimates somethir
together with its comfortable domesticity, resonates with the im
tion of introspective writing, the writing of manners, which c
dominant and critically sanctioned mainstream of modern Japan

This became the view of the novel everywhere. C. P. Snow

quoted review of the work, referred explicitly to the welcome "aestheticization" of the atomic bombing in *Black Rain*:

> Some subjects are too big for art . . . too far removed from the human scale. Most writers have the self-protective cunning to keep off them, or to touch on them only glancingly. . . . Yet here is a novel by an elderly Japanese writer which turns Hiroshima into a major work of art, utterly unsentimental, unsparing but not at all sensational, telling us what we are like as human beings and what horrors we assist at, and perhaps leaving us with a vestige of stoical hope.[12]

To maintain that *Black Rain* "turns Hiroshima into a work of art" is to say a great deal not only about "Hiroshima" and "art"—Snow implies that here, at least, the two can be coterminous—but about the power of a writer to effect such a conversion. If *Black Rain* tells "us" (non-victims) what "we" are like as human beings, then it is because here is a novel that tells of the similarities between ourselves and the victims rather than the differences. This is the crucial point, and this is perhaps why the book has been received so enthusiastically. It proposes, in place of the historical fissure argued by a Hara Tamiki or Ōta Yōko, a common nature: something essentially "human" and thereby linked to what is most properly the subject of "art."

It is also an appeal to something essentially "Japanese," which is to say something that is "cultural" as opposed to historical or political. Thomas Rimer, an American scholar of Japanese literature, states:

> Ibuse . . . might be said to be representative of those authors who maintain an older, humanistic view of human character in general and of the Japanese situation in particular. Untouched by any of the fashionable postwar literary movements imported from Europe and the United States, Ibuse was long considered an exemplar of a gentler and perhaps more circumscribed tradition in Japanese literature. . . . Ibuse's novel, which has already gained the status of a classic in Japan, looks at the horrors of war without political bias and seemingly without lasting bitterness, no small achievement in itself.[13]

This evaluation derives from, and contributes to, the critical consensus that Ibuse and his novel are more purely Japanese, more authentic and "real" than those writers and their works who might be "touched" by non-Japanese literary influences, "political bias," or "bitterness." When this is acclaimed as "no small achievement," the implication is that atomic-bomb literature is usually, *Black Rain* aside, some or all of these things. Rimer, in synchrony with the Japanese critics cited earlier, goes to the heart of what makes *Black Rain* so attractive to readers seeking the kind of catharsis that allowed Yamamoto to "feel better about [him]self as a Japanese," namely its nature as a work that has "changed,"

"transformed," or "reworked" Hiroshima as a real event in human history. *Black Rain* does something to the popular representation of Hiroshima not achieved earlier: it is a near-organismic cultural operation (hence such terms as "older" and "circumscribed") performed *on* Hiroshima, an operation that recasts the place and occurrence marked as "Hiroshima" as a literary "classic" fully part of the organism. It is more than coincidence that the aesthetic satisfaction that *Black Rain* provides as a "true work of literature" derives from a novel whose principal theme is the neat congruency of human and natural life, despite the vagaries of history. Such "organicism," defined by Terry Eagleton as the signification of "social and aesthetic formations with the supposedly spontaneous unity of natural life-forms" in his examination of English literature from Arnold to Joyce,[14] is precisely what is celebrated by Ibuse's conservative admirers when they boast of his Japanese authenticity, sensitivity, and stoicism.

Ibuse himself did not encourage critics in their exuberant claims for his novel. In fact, he was somewhat embarrassed by all the attention it initially caused, and even expressed some measure of regret over ever having written it, disowning it as a "failure" because it did not communicate just how horrible hibakusha told him Hiroshima really was.[15] When asked in later years to speak about *Black Rain*, Ibuse abruptly responded that he had nothing to say on the subject.[16] He did not, in other words, take deliberate professional advantage of the critical view of him as, in place of Hara, Tōge, Ōta, or Ōe, the representative writer of Hiroshima.

This is quite in keeping with his modest character. Born in 1898 in a village in eastern Hiroshima Prefecture, and dead only recently at the age of 95, Ibuse has been not only one of twentieth-century Japan's most long-lived writers but one of its most approved.[17] His reputation was secure long before *Black Rain*, and is built upon works more often noted for their sympathetic, but never sentimental, descriptions of ordinary people than for their intellectual insight. It is true generally of Ibuse what Rimer says specifically of him in the postwar period. While never entirely free of fashion, Ibuse was in comparison to his peers relatively free of the political and artistic trends that swept through Tokyo literary circles, especially between the two world wars. Ibuse did not subscribe to any noteworthy commitment to either the left-wing enthusiasms of the 1920s or the reactions to them in following decades. Neither was he in the postwar period much given to the imposed ideologies of American-style democracy or the post-Occupation retreats from that democracy. Indeed, the most common critical impression of Ibuse, a writer who began his career in 1923 with the simple story of a salamander who makes friends with a seahorse, and who devoted himself in his last years to personal memoirs, is the epitome

of the politically indifferent, perhaps even naive, author. Sequestered in his study, immersed in his world of the picturesque (and often picaresque) village "folk" and city "eccentrics," Ibuse Masuji was indeed one of those Japanese writers from whom one would least expect a polemical novel. Critics looking for an author who could write of Hiroshima without reference to postwar history—either that of the nation, or of the literary establishment—found in Ibuse their perfect champion.[18]

Naturally, it is difficult to imagine that a writer whose career bridges such a turbulent century would create a body of work wholly free of references to history and politics. Where such references do exist in Ibuse's work, they have been ignored or repressed by most critics: but they are there. Early on, under the influence of the proletarian literature movement that held sway in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Ibuse wrote a short story ("Tankōjitai byōin," or "The Mining Town Clinic," 1929) which, in its depiction of the lives of coal miners, was certainly influenced by its concerns. In the 1930s Ibuse's historical fiction, and its frequent theme of past civil conflicts and uprisings, clearly had implications for Ibuse's views on the war in which his country was then currently entangled. And of course after 1945, with the dramatic changes wrought by the Allied Occupation, Ibuse's stories were not immune to such changed contexts. If one were to characterize the net effect of such tumultuous national history on Ibuse, it would be as a conceit: he is famous for his wryly affectionate depictions of a rather commonsensical "folk wisdom" that suffices among the everyday, often rural, Japanese people in lieu of an overtly ideological extremism of any ilk.

This conceit, too, can easily and properly be critiqued as political. It is the construct of some ahistorical, inoffensive national "character" that perseveres to survive intact the ravages of cruel history, whether man-made or natural. It is a representation of Japanese national character that is attractive—American culture has its own versions of it—even as it is resistant to change. It is precisely this disposition towards change, its impossibility just as much as its possibility, that makes Ibuse's work amply capable of sustaining a political reading, even if it itself is not political in the plainest sense.

Such readings do exist. The early, enthusiastic endorsement of *Black Rain* by mainstream conservative intellectuals inspired a few rejoinders from critics and readers who, while just as impressed with the literary talent of Ibuse's work, were nonetheless disturbed and even made suspicious by its rapid elevation to the ranks of the "modern classics" of Japanese prose literature. Many of these doubts came from hibakusha themselves, who perhaps understandably resented the fact that such success was to be earned not by one of their own, such as Hara or Ōta, but by a non-hibakusha such as Ibuse. In fact, though *Black Rain*, like Ōe's earlier *Hiroshima Notes*, was and is highly regarded outside of Hiroshima, within the city itself voices in some quarters felt the need to

qualify it as a good work by a "non-victim." Moreover, by novelizing the event of the bombing, Ibuse made the experience comparable to other novelistic situations. Such comparisons may inevitably render Hiroshima a less epochal, even less real event: and that demotion is contested by hibakusha who insist that their experience cannot be freely borrowed, interpreted, or domesticated.[19] Toyoda Seishi wrote five years after *Black Rain* was published that it "most certainly does not enjoy a high reputation among Hiroshima writers. 'It's written just too cleverly.' 'It's nothing more that a skillful adaptation of actual diaries.' 'Ibuse has always turned his back on literature with political themes in favor of his little vignettes. He is incapable of grappling with this kind of story.' These were the sorts of critical reviews *[Black Rain]* received."[20]

As noted earlier, Ibuse himself termed his work a failure and reportedly vowed never to write about Hiroshima again—a promise he kept—on account of the criticism his novel generated in the city he sought to memorialize. One might try to discount such negative reactions among Hiroshima readers as the predictable, if sincere complaint of victims who fear their lives compromised even further through their objectification by outsiders. But in fact the criticism leveled against *Black Rain* was more than that, and not completely restricted to Hiroshima and its understandably sensitive hibakusha.

Rather, this broader criticism was not so much an attack on Ibuse or his novel as it was a criticism of the eagerness of the literary establishment to embrace it, to declare it a triumph in language that denigrated earlier atomic-bomb literature (as "political" and thus "artless") even as it promoted *Black Rain* (as "artistic" and thus "apolitical"). Kaneko Hiroshi, for instance, has noted that it was this loose establishment, and not Ibuse himself, that endeavored to cast *Black Rain* as an example of such apolitical subgenres as "domestic" or "personal" fiction.[21] Similarly, Sakurai Mikiyoshi, while acknowledging *Black Rain*'s critical status as "a work representative of the 1960s," suggests there is nonetheless something amiss about its reputation among mainstream critics.[22] From the point of view of a critic sympathetic to the two decades of atomic-bomb writing that preceded Ibuse's novel, such belated praise raises more suspicions than perhaps it does appreciation.

The most astute questioning of the motives of the literary establishment in welcoming *Black Rain* into the ranks of genuine literature at the expense of all previous atomic-bomb writing was conducted by Ōe Kenzaburō. Responding specifically to Etō Jun's essay that proclaimed *Black Rain* to be the first worthwhile atomic-bomb literature by virtue of Ibuse's application of heijōshin—his "everyday tack of mind"—to the famous events told in the novel, Ōe argues that this notion of heijōshin is simply another way of identifying the narrator of the text as an outside observer, unperturbed by history in the manner of classic realist writing. Shigematsu's journals thus serve as a means for relativiz-

ing the events of the bombing in a way that appealed to the aesthetic and political conservatism of the literary establishment. Ōe's point is persuasive. Ibuse's serene language is no less a rhetorical mode of oratory than would be strident polemic, and by placing the historical event of August 6th in the frame that such a mode provides, the potential of that event to disrupt the form of the narrative—and perhaps more—is literally contained.

Ōe suggests this conflation of Ibuse's dispassionate authorial stance with the "proper" attitude towards Hiroshima is a misleading interpretation of a novel by which Ōe is himself impressed. There is, according to Ōe, no actual heijōshin in *Black Rain*. Rather, the calmness, the ordinariness for which it is mistaken is in fact the surface effect of the submerged *shock* than runs through the novel.[23] Etō's reading remains no better than cursory, according to Ōe. In fact, *Black Rain* intimates in its very quietude a deep, albeit numbed, response to the violence; the novel invites us to read it as ironically as we would the outwardly placid account of any victim of trauma.

Ōe's reading is encouraged by his conviction that any act of writing about Hiroshima naturally and indeed even necessarily entails political issues. In his nonfictional writings over the past thirty years, Ōe has insisted, perhaps jingo-istsically, that the use of two nuclear weapons was perhaps the single one most important advance for twentieth-century American power, and it allowed in large measure the unequal relations the United States has imposed upon non-nuclear nations, including Japan. Consequently, "Hiroshima" and "Nagasaki" are terms which have taken on, in addition to their literal references, the nature of metaphors that indicate Japan's humiliating submission to the superior military prowess of a superpower. In other words, any discussion of nuclear war must involve the fact of a massive exercise of power, literally and in the extended sense of the organizations of human societies in ways that enabled and authorized the production and execution of that power. Moreover, and more apropos the themes of atomic-bomb literature, responses among the Japanese to that use of power mirror similar power relations within the configuration of Japanese society itself. The marginalization, for instance, of the hibakusha community (a marginalization insured in government legislation as well as in cultural life) is itself an exercise of power, one that identifies the aftermath of the Second World War—an aftermath which is always potentially a reminder of Japan's expansionist ambitions—as something best repressed. Atomic-bomb literature for Ōe can never meander far from history, and from a particularly brutal history which records the clash of modern states intent in establishing their own international and national hegemonies.

But it is precisely the exploration and narration of this kind of broadly geopolitical history which has been so difficult for Japanese atomic-bomb writers, indeed for Japanese writers of all sorts. The relative paucity of modern

Japanese literary works that take up political themes is well noted and is even held up for admiration on occasion by native and foreign critics alike. The critically received modern canon is marked by its resistance to certain explicitly political or social discourses. Since the late nineteenth century, when the intellectual writer of fiction found himself no longer licensed to write about issues of power, and when simultaneously an aesthetics denuded of social critique was made a criterion of evaluation, the great narratives of history have been eliminated as proper themes for art. Thomas Rimer, in the same essay quoted earlier, states that "traditionally, Japanese literature has not lent itself to political debate in any particularly direct form."[24] Konishi Jin'ichi, dean of Japanese literary historians, has gone even further to state categorically that "the scarcity of political topics is, in fact, a characteristic of Japanese literature."[25] This may or may not be true, of course, depending on how broadly or subtly one wishes to define "particularly political" and how one interprets "tradition," but it seems valid to claim that, for the twentieth century at least, "pure literature" (jun-bungaku) is a critical appellation thoroughly invested with the sanctioning value granted works eschewing political debate in favor of the subtlety and intricacies of individualized, psychological identity.

It is important to add, however, that even these works of "pure literature," despite their alleged apolitical character, are sometimes conceded to be embedded within broad historical contexts which include the "influence" of politics. This is true of *Black Rain*. Ibuse himself has declared that his novel was written in a political context, and what is more, out of a political intent. The context and intent were not those of the Second World War but instead of a war more immediate to the years in which Ibuse was writing. "I wrote *Black Rain* just as the Vietnam War was raging," Ibuse explained. "I tried to make it reportage that, while faithful to the facts, also included an antiwar sentiment. Unfortunately it was wholly ineffective against the proponents of war."[26]

This "antiwar sentiment" is expressed in the work via its occasional references to the failure of politics in Japan at the end of its own war. To some extent the documentary ambitions of the work for historical veracity necessitated the insertion of references to militarist sloganeering and paraphernalia, particularly at its beginning. Yasuko's diary, for instance, is described as having the icon of a Rising Sun printed on its cover. Other emblems of empire, some as pathetic as the crude bamboo spears that young draftees took with them from their villages, abound in *Black Rain* and always appear against the irony of the ignominious defeat that had long been certain by the summer of 1945. But Ibuse's position is not easily identified with that of any rote left-wing orthodoxy. In fact, it is crucial to the novel's effect that any "position" taken vis-à-vis "politics" be ridiculed—and that, in fact, is what comprises the subtlety of the politics in and of *Black Rain*.

This is an excerpt from Yasuko's diary:

> Both Mr. and Mrs. Nojima are always doing things for the other people who live in the same district. People say that Mr. Nojima has been friendly for years with a left-wing scholar called Mr. Matsumoto, and that since the war got more serious he's been making himself especially nice to everybody in the district so that the authorities won't get suspicious. Mr. Matsumoto, who went to an American university and used to correspond with Americans before the war, has been called before the military police any number of times. So he, too, is always on his best behavior with the people at the city hall, the officials of the prefectural office, and the members of the civilian guard, and whenever there's an air raid warning he's always the first to dash outside and rush around calling out "air raid! air raid!" He's never been known to take off his puttees, even at home. They say he even offered to take part in bamboo spear practice with the women. It's really pathetic to see a reputable scholar like him trying so hard to please. (20)

Such cynicism is used to dismiss political activity after the war as well, when it takes place on the left rather than the right. One of Shigematsu's friends and fellow hibakusha declaims, for example, that "everyone's forgotten. Forgotten the hellfires we went through that day—forgotten them and everything else, with their damned anti-bomb rallies. It makes me sick, all the prancing and shouting they do about it" (30). In effect any political action, in support of the war or against it, for the bomb or against it, is indicated in *Black Rain* to be spurious, inconsequential, vain, and even silly. What looms as real are only the lived experiences of those who suffered during a war without meaningful categories of "good" and "bad." What seeks to convert such experience into a program for action is human organization, which is represented on a small scale by, for instance, the aforementioned "anti-bomb rallies" but on a larger scale by the larger unit of this organization, namely the apparatuses of national government.

In the eleventh of *Black Rain*'s twenty chapters Shigematsu describes two soldiers who were engaged in cremating corpses shortly after the bombing. Exhausted, one of the soldiers remarks to the other, "If only we'd been born in a *country*, not a damn-fool *state*" (162). Country *(kuni)* is preferred over state *(kokka)* because it connotes an idyllic place rather than a coercive organization; a people peaceably inhabiting it rather than a powerful government imposing its regimen upon that people. Such nostalgia for "country" dismisses one kind of politics; it dispenses with the decisions to be made between "left" and "right" even while it seems earnestly "antiwar," for without the authority of a state there is no center of power, and even no voice with which to declare one. When Shigematsu goes into the ruins of Hiroshima and notes that city hall has been destroyed (a "desolate sight"), what has been symbolically destroyed

along with it is the apparatus of power that turned the Japanese islands into a Japanese state and led to the destruction Shigematsu now surveys.

This is not an endorsement of anarchism. That, too, is another of the political idealisms which *Black Rain* repudiates as useless and, more to the point, a distortion of the "natural" state of human life. Perhaps this makes *Black Rain* an apolitical or even antipolitical novel; then again, maybe it makes it merely a discouraged political novel. The late Irving Howe once proposed a careful, highly circumscribed working definition of "political novel" that might initially help in understanding the critical controversy that attends *Black Rain*. Howe wrote:

> By a political novel I mean a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role or in which the political milieu is the dominant setting—though again a qualification is necessary, since the word "dominant" is more than a little questionable. Perhaps it would be better to say: a novel in which *we take to be dominant* political ideas or the political milieu, a novel which permits this assumption without thereby suffering any radical distortion and, it follows, with the possibility of some analytical profit.[27]

For Howe only some novels are strictly, meaningfully, political. For political ideas to be "dominant" in mimetic fiction would seem to limit the political novel to instances in which the setting and characters are recognizably part of a society's formal institutions for the exercise of its power. Howe's examples of the political novel include Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*, Orwell's *1984*; Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima* is cited only as a book that fails to explore politics as the "collective mode of action" Howe wishes to make a minimal requirement.[28] As a critic he is at pains to avoid any "radical distortion" of a political criticism that seeks to extend the definition of "political ideas" beyond such formal boundaries and so risks diluting the efficacy of such ideas where they might really exist.

It seems advisable to allow Howe his careful definition, and to calculate rather that a much larger range of—indeed, perhaps all—novels which may be thought as *ideological* if not political. That is the concept with which critics after Howe have often permitted themselves to look at literature as implicated in the way social organization is imposed even if the "politics" of that imposition are not thematically present. An ideological novel, whether radical or conservative, will treat the issue of existence, of *being*, as problematic: as a construction of property, people, and institutions that has undergone change and will undergo it again. It is the provisional character of those arrangements, the necessity of an attitude within the novel towards change and therefore toward "time" or "history," that makes what is ideological in literature also the potentially political. Fredric Jameson, writing in the late 1960s, defined "political ideology" as "first of all a certain attitude towards Being itself . . . towards the

Being of objects and the world, of social institutions, of people and of their positions in the world."[29] For Marxist critics such as Jameson, the Hegelian vocabulary of "Being" would soon be replaced with Lacanian and Althusserian language of "representation," which holds that ideology is no longer a set of illusions but a system of signification: not just the *real* relations of how people live, but the *imaginary* ones. Ideology is a concept—a process—that thus partakes of both the real and the fictive.[30] As such, it is abundantly present in those literary representations defined as simultaneously real and fictive, i.e., the mimetic or historical novel. Whereas for Howe "political novels" are ones which thematically take up "politics" and thus are limited in number, presumably for Jameson the "ideological novel" is a tautology, and exists everywhere. Terry Eagleton has put this point more literarily himself: "Ideological language, then, is the language of wishing, cursing, fearing, denigrating, celebrating, and so on. And if this is so, then perhaps the closest analogue we have to ideology is nothing less than literary fiction."[31]

■

To look at how the range of social, political, and economic relations are organized, maintained, and altered within culture in terms akin to how a given situation in fiction appears "real" to us is to look at the brief exchange between Etō Jun and Ōe Kenzaburō as one which elides a crucial point. If we agree that *Black Rain*, as a representation of Hiroshima, must make of Hiroshima not only an "event" in history but a statement, a position, on "Being"—on what can and can *not* be—then Etō's and Ōe's common premise that *Black Rain* is not a political novel has aided the circumvention of critical readings of its ideological character. Moreover, this premise has served to make the debate over the work one which has displaced the real issue today, namely how this novel has come to be accepted so readily and so widely as an ideal example of the Japanese cultural response to Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and as an internationally available primer in one of the lessons of twentieth-century mass violence everywhere.

The ideological work of *Black Rain* is displayed in ways familiar to us from other works of modern mimetic fiction. Whether we are talking about Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* or Erich Segal's *A Love Story*, novels both high and low construe as "real" those practices and structures that reiterate the conditions of socialized (including the "individual") life in modern societies. But those encoded practices and structures nonetheless yield a discernible ideology insofar as they reproduce the "deformed representation" which any literary realism has to be, since the very concept is at root oxymoronic. There, in the inevitable lapses and gaps, looms the possibility of critical reading. The deformed representation is not stable: it is the product of internal tensions between ideology

and representation in a process that makes spurious noises which, when we labor to make sense of them, account for the fact that some novels seem explicitly to undermine dominant ideologies while others reinforce them. Jameson writes: "Ideology is not some thing which informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions."[32] As a process of symbolic systems both verbal and otherwise that determines specific representations of events, and as the process by which particular versions of reality are represented as naturally true and unconstructed, ideology in fiction tends to act in conformity with a perceived "status quo," which is to say some hegemonic formulation of historical, economic, and social relations. The radical—whether from the left or the right—wishes, again according to the early Jameson, "to alter Being; the conservative wishes to associate himself with the permanence of Being, its massive quality. The conservative always has the advantage in literature: his attitude is *already* an esthetic one. The conservative has no need to single out political activity from the rest of Being. . . . His program is already achieved when he has interested you in Being itself."[33]

The built-in advantage that the novelist has in choosing to reproduce the existing social and ideological relations that obtain in his society is maximized, in fact, whenever critics such as Etō and Ōe cite works like *Black Rain* as "apolitical" or "non-political." When they, like Howe, mark some texts as "political" and others not, they are labeling those that are "not" *as* ideological by repressing the structures of power which the novelist, if he is to be taken as "realist," must mimic within his writings.

A major project of literary critics in Japan, not all of them Marxist, has been to identify precisely what ideological work conducted in novels has been masked as "aesthetic." *Black Rain* has been subjected to this critique. In Japan, apart from the Etō-Ōe controversy, the most vociferous criticism of the novel came from hibakusha who felt that a non-victim writer such as Ibuse had exceeded the boundary of ethical privilege in writing about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. But this a criticism that is made of many works, and is in a sense unfair. The sort of literature written by a non-victim should not be required to "compete" with one written by a hibakusha, if for no other reason than because the premises of how knowledge of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is to be grasped is so utterly contrary between any two such works.

It is unfortunate that Etō and other critics have not distinguished between different orders of atomic-bomb literature predicated upon the different backgrounds and ambitions of their authors. Hiroshima is not a theme that Ibuse, painfully aware of the chasm that looms between his own life and those of the hibakusha, approached cavalierly. Raised not far from the city, he had wanted

to write for a long time about what happened on August 6th. But by the 1960s Ibuse, who first published in 1923, was already a senior writer already thought to be in semi-retirement. Ibuse did not need to write *Black Rain*—though it would become his most overwhelmingly popular work—in order to enjoy a reputation as one of Japan's most important twentieth-century writers. A few years before he began work on *Black Rain*, it seemed likely that Ibuse would soon cease writing altogether. In a 1959 essay he complained that the years now race by, that he wished he could "apply the brakes . . . or put up a stop-light" to halt what he feared was the decline of his talents.[34] Moreover, he complained elsewhere of a writer's block; unable to write, "no matter what the theme," he resolved to dedicate his remaining energies to projects already begun but not yet finished. These projects are three, he writes, the last of them being the story of a hibakusha friend named Shigematsu.

The difficulty of finishing such a story, of course, was how to do it responsibly and within the bounds of historical authenticity. Ibuse was familiar with the atomic-bomb literature both of hibakusha novelist Ōta Yōko (from whom, after the success of *Black Rain*, he would inherit the mantle of "Japan's A-bomb writer") and of the non-hibakusha Ōe Kenzaburō;[35] and he had already written in the early 1950s a short story that dealt obliquely with the destruction of Hiroshima. Ibuse had, in other words, already given what must have been considerable thought to the problems of representing, accurately and ethically, an atrocity which one is guiltily spared. In that early short story, "The Iris" (Kakitsubata, 1951), the elected method was to locate the scene of the narrative not in Hiroshima proper but in the nearly town of Fukuyama and then to note the repercussions of the bombing on those citizens rather than on the Hiroshima population itself.[36] In *Black Rain*, the displacement would be of another sort, one with a long and useful lineage in Ibuse's work.

From the late 1920s to the present day, Ibuse's longer works of prose literature have often assumed the form of the diary—more precisely, the journal—kept by invented characters. Such novels and stories as the 1938 *Waves* (Sazanami gunki), the 1943 "A Young Girl's Wartime Diary" (Aru shōjo no senji nikki), and the much later *A Record of Tea Parties at Tomonotsu* (Tomonotsu chakaiki, 1983), have used the conceit of a personal archival record to organize individual experience in the midst of important events in history: respectively the twelfth-century Gempei wars, the Battle of Singapore, and the late sixteenth century. Ibuse narrates the public history of these events through the mechanism of private memory; through the detailed recollections of the direct participants in, or close observers of, those events. He once characterized journals (*nikki*) as a particularly "powerful" (*tsuyoi*) genre of literature:[37] this is a choice of words that suggests diaries (and to some extent all the extratextual materials comprising, or quoted in, his works) confer upon his narratives and their themes an authenticity, a specific and personal historicity. This grounding

of the text in an anterior, external chain of denoted events results in a calculated effect crucial to *Black Rain*'s success as a novel of violence. Its use of diaries allows the everyday trivia of conventional life to overlap and thus contrast with the trauma of a nuclear explosion. It also acts to constrain the typical centrifugal tendency of the novel to move away from strict historical representation and towards the imaginative exploration of private psychologies. Much as Shigematsu attempts to arrange a match between his niece and a suitor, so do the diaries mediate the pre-bomb and post-bomb realities of their authors. In this regard Yasuko, the first of *Black Rain*'s diarists, is akin to earlier Ibuse heroes—and to Ibuse himself when, as a diarist stationed in Southeast Asia during the Second World War, he retreated from his "public" role as an occupying soldier into a writer's privacy.[38] All share a common purpose: the subjectivization and consequent appropriation of experience through making it a story. The manipulation of testimony—and what masquerades as testimony—is both the literary charm and ideological feat of *Black Rain*. Like any documentary narrative, it is a work assembled from historical accounts, real or invented, that seeks to authenticate and thereby naturalize a particular interpretation of that history.

Black Rain is Ibuse's most extended and complex use of journals to create a work of fiction. Its many journals—some inserted intact, others more or less imagined—were acquired from or through Ibuse's real-life hibakusha acquaintances. Shigematsu Shizuma (whose family and given names were reversed when Ibuse made him a novelistic character) first made Ibuse's acquaintance just after the war. Shigematsu, a farmer in the actual village of Kobatake in Hiroshima Prefecture, told Ibuse the story of his hibakusha niece Yasuko who, after marrying and bearing two children, came down with symptoms of radiation disease and soon died. Shigematsu offered to send Ibuse her diaries, but when Ibuse did ask for them later, it was discovered that other relatives had destroyed them.

Ibuse broadened his search for documentary sources. In the days immediately following August 6th, villages throughout the prefecture dispatched relief teams into Hiroshima to assist the authorities. Ibuse notes, however, that of each village's team "only one survived."[39] Ibuse assembled five or six of these informants, intending to transcribe their accounts for use in his novel, but he had trouble with his tape recorder and abandoned the idea.

At this point Shigematsu again came to Ibuse's aid. Shigematsu himself had gathered much material on Hiroshima, a collection of records that he, like his counterpart in *Black Rain*, planned to bequeath as archives to future generations. His accumulated documents amounted to over three hundred pages. Once lent to Ibuse, these personal accounts of the bombing and its aftermath constituted the single greatest source of testimonial data for use in *Black Rain*. As Ibuse stated, the novel "could not have been written from simple speculation."[40] Additionally, Ibuse personally conducted a detailed investiga-

tion of the events of August 1945. He said in an interview with the *Asahi shimbun*:

> Since I had no first-hand knowledge of what happened, I was left with no choice but to gather as much material as I could. I collected all there was to be collected, as if I were raking it in. Both before and after I began to write, I went to Hiroshima to hear the stories of more than fifty survivors. I listened to people who, as members of the fire brigades, had gone into the hills. When the talk turned to those who had searched through the "ashes of death," everyone turned silent. The ashes were a forbidden subject. I was told that everyone who passed through them had died.[41]

Ibuse thus commenced his work on *Black Rain* as he would with historical fiction, by researching facts before imaginatively manipulating them. Ibuse has repeatedly stressed the documentary character of his novel, noting how he has embedded within it the stories of many hibakusha. But of course the work is hardly an interpretation-less and value-free assemblage of survivors' accounts—author Ibuse intervenes everywhere to make their stories his own. "The writer, as the producer of a text, does not manufacture the materials with which he works," writes Pierre Macherey, in a reference to Marx's own comment on the material conditions in which men make their own history. "Neither does he stumble across them as spontaneously available wandering fragments."[42] Ibuse would find that the diaries he acquired, as well as those he invented, proposed their own ethical and ultimately ideological response. He stated in the same interview with the press:

> Once the writing was under way, I grew quite serious. It was a seriousness that came not from the act of writing, but from the transient world itself. I asked myself: Why did this happen? Everything seemed senseless. I kept thinking to myself that I must continue writing. There was no justice, no humanity, no anything in what happened. Everyone died. The more research I did, the more terrible it became. It was too terrible.[43]

By relying upon the diaries Ibuse was perhaps able to maintain a kind of epistemic distance from the material which was also experiential: it always remained *their* story and never became empathetically *his*. There are many diaries in *Black Rain* besides that of Shigematsu, but it is through his that Ibuse actually describes how one comes to write about—and *not* write about—Hiroshima as an event in history. The use of diaries means that Ibuse creates for his reader a textual hall of mirrors in which "Hiroshima" is made textual in ways that make its relationship to history a mediated one. Traditionally, diaries often seem to occupy a unique position exactly where the lines of historical and literary representation cross. But diaries within a novel, deployed as a rhetori-

cal trope of the eyewitness, seem fully "novelistic" because they are there in lieu of an author's right to imagine others', here atrocious, experience. Ibuse demurs to represent "Hiroshima" himself: he writes instead about people who represent it. He avoids direct description of the bombing itself and leaves that to the writers he has invented, or whose words he has borrowed, to characters or sources who possess that "first-hand knowledge" of which he pointedly admits a lack. The function of the town of Fukuyama in the earlier story "The Iris" as an extended figure for the impact of the war on people and their ability to make sense of it becomes the function of the Shizuma household in *Black Rain*. Through this family, the novel works dialectically as life inspires writing and then writing inspires life. The reader is led from diary to diary, each corroborating the others and demonstrating the central work of the novel, namely, the articulation of a new vocabulary of violence through the creative project of writing. Against the destructive power of the bomb stands the constructive power of words, language, writing. The reader notes, for instance, how, on the one hand, some hibakusha struggle to identify and name the bomb, while, on the other hand, other characters easily compare names for fish in their various native dialects. The diaries of *Black Rain* cease to be vehicles for stories and become the story itself.

Ibuse makes this the most evident when he works with Shigematsu's diary. Unlike Yasuko's diary, which was merely recopied, Shigematsu's "Journal of the Bombing" is, by virtue of the work of memory, essentially rewritten. Shigematsu adds new interpolations and explanations as he seems to relive the experience of the bombing even while safe in his study. Yet far from recoiling, he now rejoices. The diary becomes a project of which Shigematsu is genuinely proud:

> "I should have had to copy it out decently soon at any rate, if I'm going to present it to the Primary School Library for its reference room. I'll show it to the go-between before I give it to them."
>
> "Surely Yasuko's diary will be enough for the go-between, won't it?"
>
> "Yes, but this will be a kind of appendix to it. Either way, if it's going to go in the school reference room, it'll have to be written out properly sometime."
>
> "Won't you just be making yourself more work?"
>
> "I don't care. It's my nature to keep myself occupied. The diary is my piece of history, to be preserved in the school library."
>
> Shigeko said no more, so with a smug air he went and got out a fresh notebook, then set about rewriting his own account of the bombing. (36)

At this early stage in the novel we can already see how on the one hand "fact" is made into "fiction," and on the other "fiction" into "fact." Ibuse relies upon eyewitness testimony, he has told us, because he himself was not present in Hiroshima. The surrender of his own subjectivity in exchange for that of

the victim is an expression of his humility: it is his politically and ethically sensitive act of contrition. But at the same time he makes that testimony, as he renders it his own by reproducing it, a kind of novelistic fiction—a particular type of narration embedded within a general narration identified less with the historical or documentary record than with the discourse of the novel. The original testifying voice of Shizuma Shigematsu is detached from its historical position and inserted into a literary one, a movement that must then effectively "fictionalize" it. One Hiroshima critic, perhaps embittered by Ibuse's popular success, has complained that Ibuse relied so much on Shigematsu's diary that Shigematsu himself should have been cited as the *Black Rain*'s co-author. Hospitalized at the time the novel appeared, Shigematsu, it is hinted, was victimized in new ways that are partially Ibuse's own responsibility, too. "Ibuse was very lucky to have had the Shigematsu diary," is the derisive way this critic characterizes the allegedly disingenuous relationship between the two works.[44] But in an important sense *Black Rain* is absolutely no part of Shigematsu's memoir. Ibuse fundamentally alters its status as testimony once he introduces it into an aesthetic practice, namely, that of the literary work, in ways not just epistemological (for example, the way we readers comprehend that testimony via its function as a device advancing plot) but including the ideological. With the introduction of the authorial narrator and the dismissal of the hibakusha narrator from the narrative center, the hibakusha becomes *represented*, part of a broader interpretation of the novel's events as something suddenly less individual and now more generally "Hiroshima."

This new implicit narrator, an "implied author" with whom the reader may more readily identify than he would with Shigematsu, represents an exteriorized cognitive register (whether we call it "Ibuse Masuji" or "ourselves") within which we—and certainly critics—are at considerably greater ease. The "position," if you will, is an ideologically comfortable one. The "timeless," "traditional," and "authentic" virtues associated with Ibuse Masuji's storytelling skills are manipulative as well as artful. The conditioning of bourgeois humanism encourages us to imagine that we are suprahistorical readers rather than the products of particular social and cultural conjunctures: the proof of the presence of such humanism in *Black Rain* may be the fact that, unlike any of Ōta Yōko's novels, the reader emerges from it intact. While Shigematsu is clearly central as a character in *Black Rain*, the multiplicity of explicit narrative viewpoints in the novel produces both an "Ibuse" who assembled those viewpoints and similarly communicates the impression that the author does not identify uniquely with any own of his characters. The result is that no one character, and especially not the doomed Yasuko, is singled out for any special fate or fortune; and the corollary is that the reader does not feel uniquely bound to that fate or fortune either. Instead, where one is bound is precisely that place the author, a person much like ourselves, speaks to us. In one sense

Ibuse is thus able to avoid turning *Black Rain* into a melodrama, the shortcoming of many critically less "successful" atomic-bomb novels.

But, as was seen in the earlier discussion of Ōta's novel *Human Rags*, there are potentially less welcome consequences as well. In her case, fracturing unified narration and point of view imbued *Human Rags* with a kind of pluralizing structure which the more circumscribed genre of personal testimony cannot. But at the same time, it opens up the work to the reader as well, and in ways that give the reader a figural space within which to interpret and even judge. For Ōta this was a problem, since such autonomy for the reader means a proportional reduction in her own propriety as a hibakusha. Ibuse's problem in *Black Rain* is different, of course. He is not a victim, and has no "truth" of his own to protect in its dissemination. Rather, his use of a number of viewpoints is in the service of representing Hiroshima as a historical event to which he can lay no privileged claim. This, I would argue, places Ibuse inevitably if inadvertently in the position of having to endorse an ideological structure rather than, as in Ōta's instance, a moral one. What is at stake in Ibuse's novel is not the *right* of a hibakusha to any particular knowledge not shared generally in society, but instead how society will make "knowledge" out of that hibakusha.

In other words, the organization of *Black Rain*, lacking a single hibakusha narrator whose story dominates the novel as in much atomic-bomb literature, aims for a general *cultural* representation of Hiroshima where those other works were concerned first and foremost with a survivor's personal, even private, representation. It is the public duty served by such a social representation—a duty noted when, for example, Saeki Shōichi calls *Black Rain* "the very essence of Japan"—that can so easily and even necessarily lead to ideological effects and then political implications.

Every representation of the past has ideological implications insofar as that representation is a choice among modes of representation. In the case of modern literature in general and atomic-bomb literature in particular, each of those choices strives to naturalize itself as "realistic," "authentic," or "true-to-life." But if that is the similarity between these choices, the differences lie in the rhetorical contingencies that initiate models of *relationships* within plot, characterization, and interpretation beginning, however, in language. Hayden White has argued that "the crucial consideration for him who would represent [past facts] faithfully are the notions he brings to his representation of the ways parts relate to the whole which they comprise."[45] Among the atomic-bomb writers already discussed we have noted a variety of ways in which "parts" of Hiroshima are related to its "whole," but perhaps the most commonly utilized is the metonymical strategy nearly always embedded within the testimonial mode.

One example of this is Hara Tamiki's "Summer Flowers." As an actual survivor, Hara's account of August 6th and its aftermath is highly personal and sub-

jective, governed by a first-person narrator whose epistemic limits are fixed by the particular and individual encounters this single "I" has. "I felt as if I were standing stage center in a tragic play," Hara writes, suggesting that initially his experience was one radically singular, isolated, alone. The part of Hiroshima his narrator surveys as he makes his way from one refuge to another effectively reduces all of "Hiroshima" to that path—what else can the highly circumscribed field of vision of the testimonial survivor do? Yet at the same time, in reducing the whole of the bombing's impact to that on the single individual, there is presupposed a *difference* between that part and the whole. Hara writes in "Summer Flowers" that he "scarcely knew the truth about the air raid then" (54–55), just as fellow hibakusha Oda Katsuzō writes in his memoir "Human Ashes" (Ningen no hai, 1966) that neither he "nor anyone else had the slightest idea what had brought about this sudden freakish event" (70).

What is important here, and what leads to an awareness of the ideological structure of how Hara represents the Hiroshima experience and thus its historical significance, is that the part is more "real" than the whole, if only because the whole is so epistemically remote as to be unknowable and thus only conjectural. Hara's insistence on the radicalness of his experience ("Oh, the world stripped of all in an instant," as Hara wrote in the poem he embeds in "Summer Flowers") is related to the radicalness of this metonymical mode of narration, in which unity is undone by this dissolution into parts. Hara begins many of his sentences with a first-person pronoun, despite the Japanese language's reluctance to do so, and so he forces on to us the militancy of his testimonial mode. Concomitant is his rejection of a totalizing, metaphorical mode, to argue instead the ideological implication that the phenomenal field defined in "Summer Flowers" is one that does not readily submit to tropic organization resulting in a synthesis of individual experience into a communal, social economy.

There is in *Black Rain* a similar move that might be associated with the testimonial. Shigematsu's diary, while far less immediate in its witness than Hara's memoir, is much like "Summer Flowers" in that it is a first-person narrative that operates metonymically to reduce the whole of the bombing to the part of an average white-collar worker within an "Everyman" whose records are meant to intimate the expanse of history.

Indeed the whole project of testifying is explicitly narrated and contextualized as a theme in the novel. Worried that the description in Yasuko's diary of the literal black rain that fell shortly after the blast may compromise her chances for marriage, Shigematsu resolves to append his own diary to hers. If he, only two kilometers from ground zero, has survived, then surely Yasuko, many times that distance away, has been spared any ill effects. But unlike Yasuko's diary, which was merely recopied, Shigematsu adds new interpolations and explanations—it becomes a project more ambitious than originally in-

tered parts of what once was a whole but is now ironic, Ibuse has written in *Black Rain* a novel where the traditional unities of form and the social organism seem to supersede—"heal" in more anthropological terms—the damage so powerfully described in the journal. *Black Rain* can consequently be read simultaneously in varying, even contradictory ways—as Etō's *and* Ōe's comments make plain—that yield either stabilizing or destabilizing histories of Hiroshima; either politically conservative or revolutionary imports. But the fact that, Ōe notwithstanding, most commentators have seen in the book the work of a tranquil but totalizing "heijōshin" is proof of the potency and appeal of synecdoche over metonymy, of our predisposition to value wholes over parts—that itself a demonstration of our modern tendency to prefer the genre of the novel over other literary forms. *Black Rain* continually lobbies for such privileging, not only through the utter volume of detail dedicated to the description of the Shizuma family, but through its particular rhetorical strategy of replicating on several levels, thematic as well as formal, the integration of parts into a whole.

■

The device for this movement towards the production of unity and closure most methodically deployed throughout *Black Rain* is that of the ceremony or ritual. "Device" implies that something is imposed by the literary text upon raw experience, but in fact the novelistic Shigematsu's interest, for example, in reciting the Buddhist funeral liturgy has its analogues in testimonial accounts. Robert Jay Lifton, for example, quotes one of his hibakusha informants:

> In the midst of the disaster I tried to read Buddhist scriptures continuously for about one week, hoping that my effort could contribute something to the happiness of the dead. . . . It was not exactly a sense of responsibility or anything as clear as that. It was a vague feeling—I felt sorry for the dead because they died and I survived. I wanted to pacify the spirits of the dead. . . . In Buddhism we say that the souls wander about in anxiety, and if we read the scriptures to them, they lose their anxiety and start to become easy and settle down. So I felt that if I read the scriptures, I could give some comfort to the souls of those who had departed.[51]

Ceremony, or more precisely its irretrievable loss, is a frequent topic in atomic-bomb literature. "Those killed without ceremony," writes Sasaki Yutaka in a waka, "we gather and place in the bonfire without ceremony."[52] The nature of mass death means the suspension of many civilities, including those of burial: in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the exigencies of a death toll in the tens of thousands meant that bodies had to be disposed of quickly and easily, without the

luxury of religious or civil ritual. Early in Agawa Hiroyuki's novel *The Devil's Heritage* (Ma no isan, 1954), a character explains to a visitor to Hiroshima that the stench outside his home is due to the dead horses and human beings indiscriminately buried together on his neighbor's property (105). The loss of a proper grave represents much more than that, in fact an entire assumption one may have once held apropos the value of life itself as well as of death. In Takenishi Hiroko's aptly titled short story "The Rite," protagonist Aki sees a portrait of an ancient Egyptian nobleman and imagines his death with a nostalgia made meaningful only by its contrast with the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

> There without a doubt was a fitting way to start out on death's journey, with the dead well tended and watched over by the living. Thinking of that man who had left behind a part of his own flesh, and his people who had taken it into their keeping, in what was surely a most dignified and solemn ceremony, it seemed to Aki that there was a secure and reassuring way to die. (173)

With Ibuse's *Black Rain*, however, the theme of ceremony's loss meets with that of its recovery. Every chapter is enriched by Ibuse's emphasis on ritual, custom, and tradition. This broad motif permeates the lives of his characters at each stage of the novel. Even as Shigematsu and his family were fleeing the burning city on August 6th, he paused long enough to reflect that the parched rice they were eating was a foodstuff travelers in older times were certainly wise to carry. Returning to events earlier that same day, Shigematsu notes in his diary that when he had stumbled out of Yokogawa Station he had found himself in front of a shrine, or rather what remained of it. Within the shrine grounds lay bleeding, disfigured victims of the explosion. The scene suggests the disintegration of religious structures (in both the literal and abstract senses) under the force of the bomb and their subsequent replacement by images of violence that potentially refuse the succor of faith.

Shigematsu's fear and confusion have the effect of driving him back into the reassuring rites of his pre-bomb existence. For instance, he is suddenly inspired to do his usual morning calisthenics as if they were a "Shinto purification ceremony." Even—especially—when the narrative moment of the novel returns to the present, Shigematsu remains dedicated to regulating his life through ritualized activities. At the end of the third chapter Shigematsu, done with his copying for the day, is having dinner with Shigeko when he recalls how poorly they ate during the war. Perhaps, he suggests, she could write her own account of their deprivations as an appendix to his "Journal of the Bombing." Shigeko has her own idea: why not commemorate Hiroshima by having, each August 6th, the same breakfast they had on that day in 1945? This would preserve, in effect ritualize, their suffering in a kind of reverse feast of thanks-

giving. Shigeko remembers exactly what she prepared that day, and indeed, she remembers much else.

Soon the entire Shizuma household is busy writing. Shigeko's contribution to the family project, though brief, is entitled "Dietary Life in Wartime Hiroshima." It is a fascinating summary of the largely nutritional hardships endured by the civilian population in the last years of the war. This journal, like others in *Black Rain*, supplies interesting details on how ingeniously people respond when faced with serious shortages. By obtaining foodstuffs in the country or on the black market, or by substituting homemade concoctions for hard-to-get necessities, the women of Shigeko's neighborhood exhibit the resourcefulness which figures as the principal talent of *Black Rain*'s characters.

Shigematsu approves of his wife's literary labors. After reading her account, which notes how hungry children were given insects to eat, it is with no little irony that he leaves to attend a ritual dedicated to the souls of vermin:

> The Mass for Dead Insects was a rite performed on the day after the [harvest] festival, when farmers would make rice dumplings as an offering to the souls of the deceased insects they had inadvertently trodden on as they worked in the fields. (71)

Such historically agrarian customs are some of the traditions of the pre-bomb world that Shigematsu brings with him into the post-bomb world. They are modes of symbolic behavior, validated by centuries of common observances intimately connected with a social sense of full integration. They ensure, to whatever extent, the continuity of key cultural structures. Shigematsu, stripped of those structures by the Hiroshima bomb, now realizes what subtle purposes such old folklore can serve. The belief is one in the sanctity of life, the most important of all faiths for Ibuse's hibakusha characters. Throughout *Black Rain* the hero will find himself recalling a host of obscure rites from the past, all of which serve as powerful talismans against further attacks on a social matrix already weakened by atrocity. Ibuse writes at the beginning of chapter seven:

> Still Shigematsu continued the transcription of his "Journal of the Bombing." This month, he reflected, was a succession of festivals. The Mass for Dead Insects had gone by already; the Rice-Planting Festival came on the eleventh, and the Iris Festival, by the old lunar calendar, on the fourteenth. On the fifteenth there was the River Imp Festival, and on the twentieth the Bamboo-Cutting Festival. In all these countless little festivals he seemed to sense the affection that the peasants of the past, poor though they were, had lavished on each detail of their daily lives. And as he wrote on, and the horrors of that day came back to him ever more vividly, it seemed to him that in their very insignificance these farmers' festivals were something to be loved and cherished. (101)

Shigematsu treasures the "simple ceremonies" of modern life as well—Shigeko's celebration of her August 6th breakfast, and his own attention to the raising of carp. One of the festivals observed in Kobatake, however, can predict the future, with consequences not necessarily favorable for either the village or Yasuko. Just before her prospective fiance breaks off negotiations because of disturbing talk that will not subside, Ibuse writes:

> June 30th was the day of the Sumiyoshi Festival in Onomichi harbor. In Kobatake village, the occasion was marked by a festival at which lanterns were set afloat on the river to call the attention of the god of Sumiyoshi and invoke his protection against flood. Four small floats, named after the four seasons, were made of plain, unvarnished wood, lighted candles were placed inside them, and they were set afloat on one of the pools of calm water that occurred along the mountain stream. The longer they drifted about the dark surface of the water, the more favorable the omens were said to be. If the autumn float, for example, was promptly carried away out of the pool, it was believed that there would be a danger of floods in the autumn. (126)

Ritual in *Black Rain* is tied not only to the private regeneration of one hibakusha family but to the general movement of the human and natural world. "Ideology," observed Althusser, "has no history," and in fact nature comes close to replacing history entirely by the conclusion of Ibuse's famous novel.[53] Indeed, Shigematsu's recopying of the diary is itself an activity that, conspicuously marked with words found like those on the Sumiyoshi Festival floats, functions much as a modern, literary amulet: a demonstration of how one of ideology's functions is to circulate "culture" and "nature" and render both synonymous.

The various sorts of ceremonies and rituals alluded to in *Black Rain* include the religious, the doctrinal, the aesthetic, the literary, and even the personal. They often function together, however, as elaborate patterns of mitigation, which is to say as ideological mediation, assimilation, and naturalization. What is negotiated and converted into a set of political relations is the gap suddenly presented by the atomic bomb between the individual subjectivity of the hibakusha and his place in the objective environment—"reality." To gargle water, recite a sutra, float a lantern, or write a journal are conceivably diverse attempts to effect a similar reconciliation: that of Shizuma Shigematsu with his world by providing him with a role empowered to induce, ritualistically, the "natural" course of that world. In the end all these rituals collectively imply that their enactment comes to signify more than any given fact—however intensely a part of his experience that fact may be. The project of this revival and the institutionalization of such ceremonies is to identify and define a transient hu-

man life as part of a greater cycle of living and death which provides a kind of consolation or even compensation for the victim.

It is important to note that the role performed by ritual and ceremony as a pattern of mediation is akin to the role of ideology. As Althusser has defined it in the epigraph that stands at the head of this chapter, ideology "is the expression of the relation between men and their 'world' . . . a relation that expresses a will (conservative, conformist, reformist or revolutionary), a hope or a nostalgia."[54] Applied to the rituals described in *Black Rain*, it is through the empathetic magic exercised by Shigematsu the Priest, the Farmer, the Guardian that he hopes his will, his hopes, and his nostalgia might bring about a normal, "natural" world in which he and his family will survive. Ideology here as elsewhere is a *process*, a way of life that naturalizes itself, subsuming the subject's real relations within his imaginary relations. In *Black Rain* we typically welcome these processes as powerful antidotes to the destruction continuously distorting the lives of its characters. But just because we are grateful for a representation of Hiroshima that redeems something whole out of what has disintegrated, we should not pretend that just because such constructs are necessary they are not "imaginary," and thus part of an ideological apparatus. Fredric Jameson states "the ideological representation must . . . be seen as that indispensable mapping fantasy or narrative by which the individual subject invents a 'lived' relationship with collective systems which otherwise by definition exclude him."[55] *Black Rain*'s principal "individual subject"—Shigematsu—dramatically, as in the role he serves as priest, "invents" repeatedly such a "lived" relationship with a "collective system." It is just this repetition that makes Shigematsu the major architect of the ideological ground of the novel—that of a "natural" world coterminous with a folk tradition that simultaneously accommodates and repairs the inordinate violence represented by the atomic bomb.

"Nature," as a continuum of order that suffices in lieu of those offered by civilization, permeates every chapter of *Black Rain*. There are all kinds of "nature": the nature of animal life, plant life, the skies, the rivers; and of course "human nature." The first chapter, which introduces the problem of Yasuko's inability to find a husband, inaugurates what is essentially a problem of "nature"— of sexual maturity threatened by the great thwarting of nature in the novel, the atomic-bomb and its lingering contamination both physical and social. The second chapter reiterates this initial theme with the story of Shigematsu's raising of baby carp, a parallel to the relationship he has with his niece. Additionally, as we learn in chapter four, Shigematsu is "the head of a farming household," i.e., the patriarch of another unit linked to cyclical, generative, and natural activity.

In fact it is crucial to *Black Rain*'s message that after the war Shigematsu, who had previously been a white-collar worker in a light industry, leaves the

city and returns to the country, which is to say "nature": a place before industry, before modernity, where urban rules are suspended and folk practices and beliefs come to the fore to govern life in its rhythms. The disorder of the world in which the bombing of Hiroshima took place is contrasted within the *order* of a world where human society follows a course determined by its fauna, flora, and human myths. It is an order to be "loved and cherished." Culture is naturalized; nature is cultivated. At the same time Shigematsu begins his duties as a substitute priest. His is a *cultural* response to an atrocity interpreted in one sense as something *natural*. As political authority in Hiroshima breaks down all around him—leaderless soldiers loot, for example—the work that Shigematsu performs once again as the mediator of a natural cycle seeks to restore moral authority. "In olden times, people used to say that in an area badly ravaged by war it took a century to repair the moral damage done to the inhabitants; and it began to seem as though they might have been right," Ibuse writes in the conclusion to the tenth chapter (149).

This restoration of moral authority in the person of Shigematsu anticipates the rejuvenation of nature soon after the bombing, again a substitute for political authority. A week after the bombing, Shigematsu, ostensibly on a mission for his company, travels back into a still-smoldering Hiroshima only to be surprised at what he finds in addition to the ruins:

> Insects and plants, indeed, were thriving as never before. Yesterday, I had seen a new shoot a foot and a half long on a plantain tree in what had been the back garden of a noodle shop. The original stem had been snapped off by the blast and had disappeared without a trace, but a new shoot, encased in a sheath like bamboo, was already growing in its place. Today, the shoot was a good two feet long. Familiar with trees as I was, after a childhood spent on a farm, I was astonished. (191)

The power of the natural world rushes in to fill the void vacated by the collapse of political power. "Abstract phrases" mouthed by the remaining civil and military officials in chapter fourteen "were of no comfort at all" to Shigematsu; such authority is now counterfeit and ersatz. But the survivors of Hiroshima are not left in anarchy as a result. Rather, the "natural" world of the flora, fauna, and, most importantly, the village, takes over. In a sense the city *becomes* a village: Shigematsu is constantly running into acquaintances from Kobatake in Hiroshima. In chapter fifteen, Shigematsu notes how it is only a relief squad made up entirely of Kobatake volunteers that does any effective good in Hiroshima.

There is a direct line connecting this "natural" resurgence in Hiroshima with the "natural" life Shigematsu and his family lead in Kobatake five years later. At the beginning of the sixteenth chapter Shigematsu thinks he would like to finish recopying his diary entry for August 15th, but Yasuko, who now

evidences sure and undeniable signs of atomic-bomb disease, suddenly preoccupies his thoughts instead. To distract himself Shigematsu heads off for his fish pond, where the carp are about to spawn. Later, a long description of this spawning follows immediately upon news of Yasuko's deteriorating condition:

> Approximately eighty percent of the fry hatched from the two lots of spawn they had gathered had perished. That left—assuming that one spawning produced about twenty-five thousand fry—some ten thousand in the hatching pond. They were about the same size as killifish. At this stage, they were called *kego*. About two months after hatching, their backs would begin to turn bluish and they would reach a length of from one to two-and-a-half inches. At this stage they were called *aoko*, and were released into the main pond. Those that were a year or more old were called *shinko*, and those that were big enough to eat were called *kirigoi*. . . .
>
> When he arrived home, Shigematsu got out an almanac—Daigaku Katō's "Treasure Almanac," it called itself—and studied it carefully. It was the seventeenth of the sixth month by the old lunar calendar—the "seventeen-day old moon," when it was appropriate, according to the almanac, to sow certain varieties of giant radish, kidney beans, and a particular kind of Chinese cabbage on the soil where one's carrots, marrows, and the like had been. A good piece of advice that, thought Shigematsu—it was obviously based on the farmers' experience in taking advantage of the Indian summer that regularly occurred in September. On the same principle, carp fry should do nicely, too. It also occurred to him that there were only three days to go to the anniversary of the Hiroshima bomb, which occurred on the sixth and was followed on the ninth by the anniversary of the Nagasaki bomb. (271–72)

The synchronization of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (including Yasuko's delayed illness) with the life cycle of fish—and the human ritualization of that cycle—acts to subordinate that destruction under and within a general concept of the "routine natural," a belief in an essential organismic character of human, botanical, and zoological culture. This same strategy of de-historicizing "bad" events by rationalizing them within a "good" natural world is perhaps most powerfully demonstrated in *Black Rain*'s final chapter, when Shigematsu recopies his journal entry for August 15th, the day of the Shōwa Emperor's radio broadcast announcing the national surrender. Five minutes before the broadcast Shigematsu, on an impulse, left the building where all his fellow workers were assembled before the radio. What he saw was as "exterior" as what he flees was "interior":

> The courtyard was silent and deserted. Three sides were enclosed by company buildings, while the other faced the slope of a hill where oak

> trees grew. An irrigation canal some six feet wide flowed from among the oaks into the courtyard and out again via the gap between the office building and the building housing the engineering section, bringing a cool breeze with it. The damp soil on this side of the canal had thick-growing clumps of tall plants with small, pink flowers. Here and there, there were tall white flowers with large yellow pistils. (296)

Once the imperial broadcast began, Shigematsu remained outside in his verdant, virtually human-less landscape. His attention was focused not on the collapse of the state but on the almost magical resurgence of the natural world:

> How had I never realized there was such an attractive stream so near at hand? In the water, I could see a procession of baby eels swimming blithely upstream against the current. It was remarkable to watch them: a myriad of tiny eels, still at the larval stage, none of them more than three or four inches in length.
>
> "On you go, on up the stream!" I said to them encouragingly. "You can smell fresh water, I'll be bound!" Still they came on unendingly, battling their way upstream in countless numbers. They must have swum all the way up from the lower reaches of the river at Hiroshima. Newborn eels usually swim into the rivers from the sea in mid-May. Within the first mile from the estuary they are still flat and transparent, like willow leaves, and the fishermen of the bays around Hiroshima call them "sardine eels," because of their likeness to sardine fry. By the time they reached here, though, they looked like real eels, about as big as a large loach but far slenderer and more graceful in their movements. I wondered where they had been swimming on August 6, when Hiroshima had been bombed. I squatted down by the edge of the canal and compared their backs, but all I saw was different shades of gray. None of them showed any signs of harm. (296–97)

When Shigematsu finally, and reluctantly, returned inside the building to learn that, in fact, Japan had surrendered, his tears at the news reminded him of another natural scene:

> My own tears had dried up. . . . If the truth be told, I suspect they had not been tears genuinely shed for that moment—that moment, shortly after noon, on a particular day of a particular month—but for something quite different. They reminded me of the time when I was very small, and used to go out to play around our house. At those times I was often tormented by a village lout, almost a half-wit, called Yōichi, but I would never let myself weep in front of him. No—I would run home instead, and badger my mother into baring her breast for me; and it was only then, at the sight of that familiar haven, that I burst into tears at last.

> Even now, I can still remember the salty taste of her milk. The tears I shed were tears of relief, and I believe that my tears this day were of the same kind. (298)

Two pages later the novel is over. Shigematsu hopes for a natural sign—a "familiar haven"—in the form of a multicolored rainbow that might portend Yasuko's recovery. The correspondences between the ambiguously construed human world and the very unambiguous world of carp, plantain trees, and even atmospheric phenomena are articulated in ways not so much Romantic—where such natural images would be recognized *as* images—but literal. The symbolic order of nature is proposed, in fact, as its actual order; otherwise, the damage done by the atomic bomb could not both be expressed by its distortion of the natural world and repudiated by its occasional repair of that distortion. Here is why, perhaps, John Bester could reasonably and sincerely claim that "*Black Rain* is not a 'book about the bomb' at all."[56] So successful is the dissolution of one of the greatest atrocities of the century into stories of baby carp and other nostalgic signs of a long-gone pastoral, that the novel's translator can say that its theme is precisely opposite what the public assumes. "A hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality," wrote Althusser of the "imaginary relation" defining ideology: and, one might add, both the appeal and terror of *Black Rain*.

■

The function of these themes in *Black Rain* is to create a context that explains, orders, and governs the lives, the deaths, of the Shizuma family: a family who stands as the first synecdoche of all hibakusha and, indeed, conceivably all Japanese. This is the primary charge of this novel's particular ideology, but it is well in the way of things ideological anyway that in *Black Rain* "nature" is fused and conflated with "history." If "false consciousness" is where we would look for the product of ideological reasoning, then Shigematsu Shizuma's imaginary relationship with the social world around him lies in his conviction that it is not social at all, but natural. Hiroshima as a event in *time* is repressed in favor of Hiroshima that is a *place* where the forces of violence demonstrate anew their power. Hiroshima of course remains a horrible tragedy, but it is one that, equipped with the collected tranquility ("heijōshin") of a propertied family patriarch, is reconciled within the sanctions of the traditional understanding of how, perhaps after all, things are meant to work. Ideology, conceived here as the sum of the ways in which people both live and represent to themselves their relationship to the conditions of their existence, operates in *Black Rain* through the hegemony of its well-considered picture of nature. In Raymond Williams's formulation, Ibuse's natural world, as well as ideology itself, is "the

central, effective dominant system of meanings and values, which are not merely abstract but are organized and lived."[57]

Such definitions allow us to see in *Black Rain,* and in particular in Shigematsu's view of the world around him, how meanings and values are "naturally" implied. "As he wrote on, and the horrors of that day came back to him ever more vividly, it seemed to him that in their very insignificance these farmers' festivals were something to be lived and cherished." The "insignificance" of these ritual reenactments of man's place in the world could not be otherwise, if they are to be ideological. To the extent that ideology equals the commonsensical, it obscures the real conditions of life by prescribing partial truths. Shigematsu "sees" in nature a model that offers some hope of regeneration, of redemption, but such sight requires an equal degree of blindness, in this instance to the very contingent circumstances, not "natural" at all, that allowed nuclear war. When Shigematsu intuits a correspondence between the events of August 6th and the way an earlier peasant society is organized about commemorative observances in order to guarantee the reproduction of the relations of agrarian production—the reproduction entrusted to ideology—he rationalizes *those* events as well as *that* society. The effect is to extend the ethos and practice of those observances forward, into the aftermath of the Second World War, and rewrite that aftermath as another marker in the periodically catastrophic lives of ordinary people. There is a kind of universalization of Hiroshima at work here that, insofar as that is also its moment of naturalization, is ideological.

But "universalization" is also doubtlessly what has made the novel so popular, because finally it seems so "real," so close to "experience," and thus surely congruent with dominant forms of ideology. By universalizing this particular brand of nostalgic rural life, *Black Rain* concurrently represses other post-Hiroshima cultures, and indeed propagates the illusion that there is only one genuine culture, post-Hiroshima or otherwise, and moreover a culture that reiterates features—perhaps most importantly that of the patriarchal family—that may hold a special appeal for conservative critics. This legitimization of a particular familial organization akin to a *natural* organization in *Black Rain* is coterminous with its ideological work. This work emplots human history along a "continuum" that in turn reconstitutes both pre- and post-Hiroshima life as a seamless unity, a unity no less monolithic for being comforting to readers eager for such reassurance.

Ideological naturalization, this accommodation of a forced unity of history with nature, is replicated in the unity of *Black Rain* as a literary work. By combining the testimonial, discursive content of the diaries with its narrative argument as a "novel," *Black Rain*—even beyond its explicitly ideological functions—imposes a reiterative and reproductive form. Critics such as Etō Jun and Yamamoto Kenkichi find the design of *Black Rain* as a "true literary work of art"

so admirable because it, like all such successful forms, satisfies just those desires and expectations that it arouses. *Black Rain*'s hybrid status as a novel with testimonial passages finds establishment approval because it meets the criterion that an "objective" world would be re-presented, aesthetically, as a subjective experience, and moreover as a subjective experience linked to "our" own subjectivity. The effect, politically, is one of domination rather than of resistance. This is where *Black Rain* is at its most conservative, though this is not by any means necessarily a bad thing. It continually restores "forms"—the vital conjunction—among past, present, and future endangered in modern culture by mass death. Shigematsu never knows when, or if, he will succumb to a worse case of life-threatening atomic-bomb disease, but he does know that his little carp, as the hardiest of them grow from *kego* to *kirigoi*, will continue to affirm that precious continuity of life so much at stake in this novel.

The powerful processes at work in *Black Rain*, and afterwards in the works of its impressed critics who have aimed to make the novel so singly representative of Japan's nuclear destruction, are processes we should identify not with the individual struggle of, say, a Hara Tamiki or Ōta Yōko to create an atomic-bomb literature, but rather with a general reaction on the part of established and powerful cultural circles to do so. In an obituary that appeared in the *Asahi shimbun* the day after his death in 1993—an obituary far more extensive than that usually accorded writers, but one in keeping with Ibuse's immense reputation—it was said he "wrote of the important contemporary theme of the atomic bombing by looking at it in the context of everyday life, and it was characteristic of him to do so with a calm and unperturbed state of mind."[58] The author of the obituary expressed "calm and unperturbed state of mind" in Japanese with the single word "heijōshin"—the word first used to describe Ibuse and *Black Rain* by his more conservative reviewers, but which now inevitably appears whenever his most read and critically praised novel is cited. There is in *Black Rain* and its critical reception traces of the forging of a Hiroshima equivalent of a nostalgic, and politically expedient, medieval "Matter of Britain" or "Matter of France." As troubadours once wove together myths with history to create a field upon which the collective imagination might draw in being "British" or "French," so now does *Black Rain* serve as a similarly romantic expression of how "the Japanese" experienced and answered their history.[59] Such expression, or at least its uses, may be criticized; but in its being if not particulars, it is probably inevitable. "Only a horizon ringed about with myths," says Nietzsche, "can unify a culture," and it attests to the success of Ibuse's benevolent myth-making that another of his eulogizers declared him "the epitome of a Japanese."[60]

It is a powerful imagination that Ibuse leaves us, one with ethical and pragmatic dimensions we might well recognize as salutary. But we realize, along with Irving Howe, that it is in the nature of the political novelist that he "urges

his claim for a moral order beyond ideology," and that "the receptive reader, even as he perseveres in his own commitment, assents to the novelist's ultimate order."[61] But this ease of assent testifies to the ideological promise of *Black Rain*—that we, while (or perhaps because we are) horrified by the terrors told in Ibuse's novel, are nonetheless strangely reassured by the strengths its victims summon even in the face of the atomic bomb's inexorable toll. I say "promise" because the ideological work performed by *Black Rain* is only provisional, full of countervailing doubt and its own undoing—and that, too, is part of the book's power. If it is true, as has been argued, that "the effectively ideological is also at the same time necessarily utopian,"[62] then *Black Rain*'s ideological content can hardly be said to be wholly effective—the world of Kobatake, while one that we may indeed inhabit, is not the one we would unambiguously wish for ourselves. Around its edges *Black Rain* lets us know that perhaps the hopes and certainties upon which Shigematsu relies to get through his and his family's troubles are private ones born of a particular desperateness: an inference that has a great deal more in common with the messages of Hara and Ōta than Etō and Yamamoto might care to acknowledge. Like the lives of the victims it portrays, *Black Rain* too is a struggle, albeit one between not life and death but rather between the wholeness of life and our recent, irrefutable evidence to the contrary.