

TRANSNATIONAL IMAGES OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI: KNOWLEDGE  
PRODUCTION AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

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Yuko Shibata

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Yuko Shibata, Ph. D.

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This dissertation explores how knowledge on the atomic bombings has been produced in relation to postwar reconstruction, the formation of national discourses, and memories of war and colonialism. By examining cinematic representations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japanese, European, and American films, such as the canonical *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and the Japanese documentaries used within it, the dissertation argues that while engaging in an open dialogue with each other in the form of refutation, divergence, and affirmation, these films respond to historical changes in the idea of a human being and the postwar world order resulting from the collapse of Japanese and European colonialisms and the emergence of the US as an atomic superpower in the Cold War. It also contends that the ostensible disjunction between Japanese and Euroamerican discursive spheres precisely constitutes a structure of interdependence substantiated by the complicity of nationalisms. This is a process of an active creation rather than a direct suppression and preclusion of knowledge.

Chapter One examines the discrepancies in knowledge about films on the atomic bombing by tracing a variety of ways in which they are consumed, questioned, neglected and censored, while participating in the on-going debates about the disciplinary limitations of Japanese film studies. Chapter Two discusses how the creation of the epic world and the narrative of martyrdom that appear in Japanese films on Hiroshima and Nagasaki have contributed to the isolation of atomic victimization as a “Japanese” tragedy by locating them within a genealogy of these

films made in the 1950's and the prewar and postwar histories of these cities. Chapter Three analyzes cinematic strategies to approach the atomic bomb victims, especially the performative aspect of victimization, the automaton-like human beings found in the ruins, and post-bombing victimization, in conjunction with a discussion of the plausibility of film narratives. Chapter Four reconsiders *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* by redefining the signification of Hiroshima in this film. It posits that what this film has portrayed is not a Hiroshima haunted by the memory of the bombing, but rather a Hiroshima obsessed with the memory of occupation, the on-going reconstruction, and prewar colonial legacies.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Yuko Shibata was born in Yamaguchi, Japan during a summer typhoon. After receiving a B. A. in International and Cultural Studies at Tsuda College, Tokyo, she worked as a journalist for the Asahi Shimbun until 1994, principally covering the issues of minorities, media, and wartime histories. She moved to Hong Kong in 1995 and taught Japanese while studying at the University of Hong Kong, where she earned an M. A. in Literary and Cultural Studies in 2000. In 2002, she learned Mandarin at the National Taiwan University in Taipei, and between 2005 and 2008, was a visiting researcher at the Gender Studies Institute at Waseda University. She will join the faculty at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in Minnesota this fall.

For Atsushi

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Sketch	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Introduction	1
1. Knowledge Production of <i>Hiroshima, Mon Amour</i> : Discrepancies, Complicity, and Beyond	18
2. An Act in Contradiction: Fumio Kamei's <i>Still It's Good to Live</i>	58
3. Silent Mannequins and the Politics of Representation: Resnais and the Atomic Bomb Victims	99
4. Postcolonial <i>Hiroshima, Mon Amour</i> : Franco-Japanese Collaboration in the American Shadow	142
Epilogue	196
Bibliography	200

## INTRODUCTION

### **Why *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*?**

This dissertation explores the French cinema, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (director: Alain Resnais, Screenplay: Marguerite Duras, 1959)<sup>1</sup> and the Japanese films that appear within it. It also critically engages in the analyses of both of these. To thematize a French movie as the object of study is not a common practice in the field of Japanese literature. However, this very fact encourages me to intervene in the previous critiques of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* which have lacked a Japanese studies perspective for decades, in spite of the multi-layered discussions of this movie in many other fields. In a way, this fact reveals how disparately disciplinary fields have been organized between European and Asian studies in North American academia. In other words, the research on *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* from the perspectives of various humanities fields is not really shared with the study of films on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the fields of Japanese cinema and literature, while the studies of the event of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which have accumulated considerably in these Japanese fields are not incorporated into the critique of this movie. Here we can observe a mirroring effect. On the one hand, most scholars who comment on *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* are from the fields of Euro-American literature, cinema or history, and are not necessarily knowledgeable of the Japanese fields. On the other, scholars in Japanese studies do not study *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* in detail, because it is beyond required disciplinary boundaries, insofar as it is not a film made by Japanese, even though it may be viewed as being about Japan.

The result is that in spite of the film's overt reference to Hiroshima, the issue

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<sup>1</sup> The title of the film is *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, while that of the script is *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. Since this dissertation mainly focuses on its cinematic representations, it uses *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*.

of Hiroshima itself has often escaped close attention in the critiques of this film. Therefore, a purpose of this dissertation is to intercede in this anomalous situation and provide arguments that contest the critiques thus far available. I read this film in conjunction with the contexts of 1950's Japan—the state of atomic bomb victims, the reconstruction movement after the war, and the state of cinematic production in Japan at the time.<sup>2</sup> This dissertation, thus, does not try to offer “true” interpretations of this film, but rather to bridge the existing gap in knowledge production about *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, as well as about Japanese cinema on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in order to establish intellectual passages for interdisciplinary studies. In this sense, to discuss *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* from the perspective of Japanese cinema, literature, and history is a strategic effort to create a meeting point where the arguments previously made about this film and Hiroshima and Nagasaki in different fields can encounter each other more often and more easily.

This strategic choice also concerns a problematic in the broader intellectual environment. Since Edward Said launched his criticism, the institutionalized form of Orientalist practices in academia has been continuously criticized by many postcolonial critics. The discussions of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* are not necessarily categorized as Orientalist, yet they can also be considered as being closely connected to this way of thinking to some extent, when a non-Western object is defined as an indecipherable other without any investigation. As we will see in many critiques, to universalize the event of Hiroshima by regarding it as unrepresentable—without exploring Hiroshima's political and historical contexts before and after its

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<sup>2</sup> The atomic bomb victims are called *hibakusha* in Japanese, which describes the ones exposed to the atomic blast as well as residual radioactivity. The different characters are employed for each; the former 被爆者, and the latter 被曝者. This dissertation uses “the atomic bomb victims” rather than “*hibakusha*” so that the term becomes more accessible to the reader unfamiliar with the Japanese language.

destruction—can be a way to make the event of Hiroshima monolithic and homogeneous, applying the Orientalist idea of a homogeneous and impersonal non-West.

In arguing Duras' synopsis of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, Rey Chow criticizes Duras' representational politics as cultural imperialism in the way Duras creates a dichotomy between the main protagonists of the film, the French woman and the Japanese man, and between her own French avant-garde film and Japanese documentaries and a realist reproduction done before their work. Chow maintains:

[M]y point is that Duras's avant-garde film text introduces a new kind of moralist opposition—this time, in a progressivist manner—between the mimetic realism of “made-to-order” documentaries and the avant-gardism of her own aesthetics, into which she respectively inserts nonwhite people (as a mass) and her white heroine (as an individual).<sup>3</sup>

This dissertation in a way follows Chow's criticism, and extends it further through the historical contextualization of the making of this film. The expansion of her argument is necessary, since although Chow is right on target in terms of highlighting the problematic relationships between the West and non-West and between avant-garde films and the “mimetic realism” that Duras has established, she does not go on to elaborate on, in fact, how differently we can interpret the Japanese man from Duras' stereotyping. To provide contextualization of these problematically dichotomized relationships may also prevent criticism of the West-Rest dichotomy from falling into the restabilization of these schematized categories.

This is not, of course, to distract from Chow's accomplishment in taking the risk of engaging in an issue that is still controversial due to the wartime history between China and Japan. In light of this historical context, it is a challenge to claim that Duras' way of representing the Japanese man with a link to the atomic bombing

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<sup>3</sup> Rey Chow, “When Whiteness Feminizes . . .” in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 178.

in Hiroshima does not do him justice. At any rate, what this dissertation demonstrates is how the themes of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* can be contoured when the Japanese contexts are involved in its critique. This intervention into existing criticism is indispensable for an understanding of the representational potential of the film whose subject traverses not only Europe but Asia, and, as a matter of fact, America as well.

### ***H story and the Blurring of Distinctions***

Let us discuss this dichotomy between avant-garde films and mimetic realism with regard to *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. Actually, there is a movie that sharply questions these binaries by situating its setting exactly in that of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. This film is entitled *H story*, directed in 2001 by Nobuhiro Suwa who is from Hiroshima City. The title seems to be made intentionally ambiguous, open to a number of interpretations of H as His, Her, Historical, Hiroshima, or *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. In the very beginning, *H story* makes its identity clear—a documentary reproducing *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* precisely as it was made four decades before. With the French actress Beatrice Dalle and Hiroaki Umano, a Japanese actor fluent in French, the first scene is staged in the hotel room in Hiroshima just like the opening of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*; it starts by capturing the figure of Suwa directing Beatrice on her performance.

But it soon becomes clear that *H story* has actually reversed the basic premise of the original. In *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, the French woman is configured as an actress who participates in a Japanese film being produced in Hiroshima. While the shooting for this film takes place on screen, her personal story stays strictly outside this event. However, in *H story*, how to mimic the acting of the French woman in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* becomes the biggest concern of Dalle, and her struggle dominates the whole diegesis. In other words, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* slips inside the

box-in-box or film-in-film structure of *H story*, and exerts a decisive influence from within. This exhibits a striking contrast to *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, in which the Japanese film being made inside it is basically separated from the main story, in the way it simply constitutes a backdrop to the film narrative. In a sense, *H story* challenges the rigid way *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* demarcates its relationship with the Japanese film within itself.

What *H story* demonstrates as a result is, however, an unequivocal failure to reproduce the same film in a different context, or to put it another way, the impossibility of precise mimicry. In the process of the remaking, Dalle gradually develops discontent and distress, and finally refuses to act in the middle of the shooting; the consequence is a cancellation of the whole film-making project. This cancellation exemplifies the impossibility of mechanical repetition of or genuine mimesis of past events as well as the inevitability of the involvement of the present situation at the time of the performance.<sup>4</sup> Yet interestingly here, it is unclear whether this abandonment of the original shooting plan is accidental or a part of the acting predetermined in the scenario, and whether this development should be considered as genuinely documentary or as a fictional part in the movie. *H story* can be viewed as intentionally suspending these questions, and as producing the effect of blurring the distinction between a natural occurrence and acting, or between a documentary and fiction.

*H story* makes another point with regard to the relationship between memory and forgetting. It describes the reason for the discontinuation of shooting as Dalle's inability to understand the fear that the French woman in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* feels about her forgetting of past memory. Four decades later, Dalle has even become

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<sup>4</sup> If the copy becomes identical to the original, it can be far more creative and challenging than the original, as, for instance, Jorge Luis Borges' *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote* demonstrates.

unable to comprehend the feelings of the French woman; this seems to represent an unbridgeable gap between the past and the present, and denies the possibility of inheritance of past memory in every way. Yet, while affirming that it is impossible to retrieve the past as it was, *H story* simultaneously shows that an abrupt return of the past can take place in an unexpected way. Immediately after the remaking of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is abandoned, slightly faded color footage portraying destroyed city of Hiroshima fills the screen. This comes from the footage produced by the United States Strategic Bombing Survey in 1946, to record the degree of destruction by the US bombing of Japan so as to evaluate its effects. Along with passersby and traffic in the ruined city, the picture boards recording the dates and the locations of shooting as well as the names of the director and the cameramen are also shown here.<sup>5</sup> This abrupt appearance of the shots from past Hiroshima gives an impression that as if another shooting has been going on underneath the narrative of *H story*, and has suddenly emerged on the surface of the screen out of the rupture created by the collapse of the shooting plan of *H story*. The appearance of the old footage here seems to suggest that after all, we can neither remember past events well nor forget about them totally.

But the film's noncommittal attitude about memory and forgetting also makes reference to the context of the making of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. When *H story* remakes *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, it purposely omits its first part, the opening sequence comprised of a montage of the footage of bomb victims from a few movies such as *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (Hiroshima, nagasaki ni okeru genshi bakudan no koka) produced by The Japan Film Company (Nippon Eiga sha) in 1946 which vividly depicts these cities destroyed by the atomic

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<sup>5</sup> The name of Harry Mimura, a well-known cameraman who was actively involved in both Hollywood and Japanese film making in the prewar time, appears here.

bombings. One of the reasons that the remaking does not make sense to Dalle derives from this erasure of the opening sequence. She complains to Suwa that she does not know what to do unless *H story* uses this footage in the beginning. It is as if through this elimination, Suwa tries to prove that *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* does not make sense without this documentary part which illustrates the degree of the destruction and victimization of Hiroshima.

More importantly, this erasure of the footage in *H story* insinuates a historical context concerning the cinematic representation of Hiroshima: the long-term practice of the censorship of visual representations of Hiroshima's victims. As we will discuss in the coming chapters, *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* was called a phantom film for a while, due to its confiscation by the US Occupation Forces right after its completion and subsequent disappearance. Although this historical context has been neglected in arguing about *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, if we are to consider the issues of memory and forgetting in this movie, the censorship issue is also something that we cannot simply sidestep. In short, we may say that *H story* has performed the very mimicry of the censorship done to *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* by way of the deletion of the documentary footage from *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, and thereby the important historical context of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. Now, let us briefly outline how to locate the censorship of the representation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the US Occupation, in conjunction with wartime American and Japanese censorship practices, since this is a significant historical point in this dissertation.

### **American and Japanese Censorship Practices**

According to Teruo Ariyama's *Senryoki mediashi kenkyu: jiyu to tosei, 1945 nen* (A Study of Media History during the Occupation: Freedom and Control, Year

1945)<sup>6</sup>, the US government began framing its postwar policy toward the rule of Japan as early as August 1942, just a few months after the victory of the Battle of Midway. Yet it was June 1944 when it finally created the documents that specifically focus on media control in Japan.<sup>7</sup> In *Tozasareta gengo kukan: senryogun no kenetsu to sengo nihon* (The Closed Discursive Space: The Occupation Army Censorship and Postwar Japan),<sup>8</sup> Jun Eto points out that the same individual who had directed censorship practices in wartime America also took the lead in formulating plans for censorship in occupied Japan. He is Byron Price, the Director of Censorship in the US government, who established the whole censorship system of a wide range of media and private correspondence such as newspapers, radio, journals, mail, phone calls and telegrams.

In the US, military and civil censorship was conducted by two organizations, the Office of Censorship and the Office of War Information; while the former administered censorship, the latter created propaganda. As an illustration, Ruth Benedict's best-selling book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (1946) was published as an assignment of the Office of War Information. Eto considers that American censorship in occupied Japan followed the double organization system on the mainland, and established two separate censorship institutions in Japan as well: The Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) and the Civil Intelligence and Education (CI&E), one for censorship, the other for propaganda or education.

There is a controversy over how to view the relationship between prewar Japanese censorship and US Occupation censorship. The US Occupation censorship

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<sup>6</sup> Teruo Ariyama, *Senryoki mediashi kenkyu: jiyu to tosei, 1945nen* (A Study of Media History during the Occupation: Freedom and Control, 1945) (Tokyo: Kashiwa shobo, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-40.

<sup>8</sup> Jun Eto, *Tozasareta gengo kukan: senryogun no kenetsu to sengo nihon* (The Closed Discursive Space: Occupation Army Censorship and Postwar Japan) (Tokyo: Bungei shunju, 1989). Its short English version is Jun Eto, "The Censorship Operation in Occupied Japan," in *Press Control around the World*, ed. Jane Leftwich Curry and Joan N. Dassin (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), 235-53.

was, as John Dower calls it “the phantom bureaucracy,”<sup>9</sup> since not only the existence of the censorship organizations, but also the institution of censorship itself was kept secret. Therefore, Eto claims that it is almost the opposite of the wartime Japanese censorship which elucidated what organizations and laws prohibited the exhibition of specific behaviors and statements. For Eto, in Japanese wartime censorship, what was at stake was not to contravene certain taboos, whereas the protocol of the US Occupation censorship was not to reveal what the taboos were; therefore it required the creation and maintenance of complicit relationships between censorship organizations and the censored.<sup>10</sup> However, Takumi Sato argues that these two censorships, in fact, have a lot in common. Sato finds in the Occupation censorship “an extremely ‘modern’ character in the sense that it mobilized subjectivity and autonomy as system of resources,”<sup>11</sup> using the same technique as in wartime Japanese censorship. Sato claims:

If the distinguishing characteristic of modern power is to be found in the transition from violence and public discipline to regulation and concealment, then modernization in “propaganda” is not openness but the formation of a “closed discursive space” along with surveillance (invisible censorship). But does this kind of modern discursive space actually have its origin in the postwar/Occupation period? Eto states that “the visible war ended, but an invisible war, a war of annihilation against thought and culture had begun.” But in fact, “thought war” was the slogan loudly proclaimed throughout the period of total war in Japan. If one calls censorship under the Occupation “hidden” in contrast to the “blatant” censorship before the war—or else calls it an “offensive” policy on speech as opposed to a “defensive” speech policy—then one supposes that this supervisory power was clearly conceived under the system of wartime mobilization. Further, the key fact that the various media—

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<sup>9</sup> John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 406.

<sup>10</sup> Jun Eto, *Tozasareta gengo kukan: senryogun no kenetsu to sengo nihon* (The Closed Discursive Space: Occupation Army Censorship and Postwar Japan) (Tokyo: Bungei shunju, 1989), 189-91.

<sup>11</sup> Takumi Sato, “The System of Total War and the Discursive Space of the War on Thought,” in *Total War and ‘Modernization,’* ed. Yasushi Yamanouchi, J. Victor Koschmann, and Ryuichi Narita (Ithaca: East Asia Program; Cornell University, 1998), 290. Its Japanese version is Takumi Sato, “Soryokusen taisei to shisosen no gensetsu kukan,” in *Soryokusen to gendaika* (The Total War and Modernization), ed. Yasushi Yamanouchi et al. (Tokyo: Kashiwa shobo, 1995).

the wire services, newspapers, broadcasters, publishers and so on—organized under the wartime mobilization system continued in the postwar with hardly any changes has been ignored by historical narratives which attempt to locate an actual termination or a point of departure at the end of the war [emphasis in the original].<sup>12</sup>

This way of mobilizing subjectivity and autonomy was also utilized in wartime censorship in the mainland US. In *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II*, Michael S. Sweeney maintains that the American media voluntarily participated in self-censorship during the war, as a support stemming from their sense of mission and loyalty. It was also a rational choice, since, “to do otherwise could damage the nation’s security, lead to compulsory censorship, or both. Even more compelling, being identified as a code violator could hurt a newspaper’s circulation or the size of a radio audience, posing a threat to profits and perhaps the paper’s or station’s survival.”<sup>13</sup> Still, it even surprised a presidential press secretary at that time: “It is an amazing fact to me to see the press and radio asking for rather than standing solidly against such a thing as censorship.”<sup>14</sup> According to Sweeney, except for one radio journalist who deliberately disobeyed the code, all the journalists, especially those from print media, abided by the voluntary rules. While a number of violations took place, these stemmed from either ignorance or misunderstanding among the journalists who did not receive a copy of the code or failed to recognize it. This surprising outcome was realized by Price, who fully knew the mentality of journalists though his own career as a reporter and administrator with a wire service. “One key to his [Price’s] wartime success was his belief that journalists were as supportive of the war as other Americans, and that his role would be to help

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<sup>12</sup> Takumi Sato, “The System of Total War and the Discursive Space of the War on Thought,” in *Total War and Modernization*, ed. Yasushi Yamanouchi, J. Victor Koschmann, and Ryuichi Narita (Ithaca: East Asia Program; Cornell University, 1998), 290.

<sup>13</sup> Michael S. Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

them censor themselves,”<sup>15</sup> says Sweeney.

In occupied Japan, a huge bureaucracy established under CCD and CI&E exercised censorship on an extensive scale from September 1945. Dower gives the overview of their sweeping activities:

A sprawling bureaucracy was created under the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) within the Civil Intelligence Section, and CCD’s censors were closely abetted by the “positive” propagandists for democracy within the Civil Intelligence and Education (CI&E) Section. Censorship was extended to every form of media and theatrical expression—newspapers, magazines, trade books as well as textbooks, radio, film, and plays, including the classical repertoire. At its peak, CCD employed over six thousand individuals nationwide, the great majority of whom were English-speaking Japanese nationals who identified and then translated or summarized questionable material before passing it on to their superiors. Until late 1947, many publications, including close to seventy major daily newspapers and all books and magazines, were subject to *prepublication* censorship. At one point, the monthly volume of material flooding into CCD’s central “PPB” (Press, Pictorial and Broadcast) section alone was estimated to average “26,000 issues of newspapers, 3,800 news-agency publications, 23,000 radio scripts, 5,700 printed bulletins, 4,000 magazine issues, and 1,800 books and pamphlets.” Over the course of their four-year regime, CCD’s examiners also spot-checked an astonishing 330 million pieces of mail and monitored some 800,000 private phone conversations. Censored materials included foreign as well as Japanese writings, meaning that the vanquished were not allowed to read everything the victors read. Both Associated Press and United Press wire-service dispatches were sometimes vetted before being deemed safe for consumption in translation.”<sup>16</sup>

Then, exactly what kinds of contents were the objects of censorship? In *The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in Occupied Japan*, Monica Braw describes them this way:

The prohibited subjects could be enumerated in much greater detail for practical purposes. A Monthly Operation Report from the PPB in November 1946 includes a guide to deletions and suppressions made during the time covered by the report. It has a whole list of key words with explanations.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 407.

Besides criticism of SCAP [Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers] (“any general criticism of SCAP and criticism of any SCAP agency not specifically listed below”), the United States, and the Allies, it also included “Criticism of Japanese Treatment in Manchuria,” “Criticism of Allies Prewar Politics,” “Third World War Comments,” “Militaristic Propaganda,” and “Justification or Defense of War Criminals.” “Other Propaganda” was a heading that could be used for any propaganda not specifically listed. Not only was “Criticism of the Occupation Forces” not allowed, neither were stories on “Fraternization.” “Black Market Activities” could not be mentioned, and “Overplaying Starvation” was prohibited. There was also a heading called “Premature Disclosure” and, of course, “Reference to Censorship.”<sup>17</sup>

As for the representation of atomic bombings, the reaction of the US Forces was more immediate and forceful than expected. In the beginning of the Occupation in September 1945, it suspended two media companies that criticized the American use of the atomic bombs: the news agency Domei and the newspaper the Asahi Shimbun.<sup>18</sup> The publications that depicted the calamities in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were often either suspended or partly deleted. As an illustration, while the writer Tamiki Hara, who experienced the atomic explosion, completed his piece *Summer Flowers* by the end of 1945, not only could he not publish it until 1947, but also he was ordered to change the medium of publication from a major to a minor journal. In the meantime, John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* was published in the US in August 1946, as the first report on human victimization by the atomic bombing. Yet in Japan, Hersey’s translation was allowed to be published only in 1949.

Compared to literary illustrations which were more often partially permitted under certain conditions, the visual representations of the atomic catastrophe were thoroughly suppressed until the end of the Occupation in 1952. Even the publications of scientific and medical studies on the effects of radioactivity from the atomic explosion were suspended during the Occupation, in spite of the fact that, if publicly

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<sup>17</sup> Monica Braw, *The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in Occupied Japan* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), 63-64.

<sup>18</sup> This incident ended up in the dissolution of Domei into two different news agencies: Kyodo and Jiji. As a result, Domei lost the dominant power that it had had until the end of the war.

shared, these studies could help many bomb victims suffering from various diseases stemming from the aftereffects of radioactivity. Although CCD was active only between 1945 and 1949, Kiyoko Horiba maintains that the press code remained valid even after the dissolution of CCD; the publications that portrayed the atomic victimization were still confiscated, and the individuals were arrested when their writings were judged to be against the US Occupation Army.<sup>19</sup>

### **Chapter Summaries**

This dissertation examines the ways in which knowledge on Hiroshima and Nagasaki has been created, through the analyses of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and the Japanese films cited within it, as mentioned earlier. It also discusses issues of colonialism, nationalism, and the dichotomy between the West and non-West. Here are the highlights of the four chapters. The first thesis chapter, “Knowledge Production of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*”: Discrepancies, Complicity, and Beyond,” starts by looking at perplexing situations in the reception of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*: the continuous neglect of this canonical film by Japanese academia, and the separation of critiques of this film from those of Japanese films on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in North American academia. I argue that this preclusion of knowledge on both sides is a process of production rather than suppression. It is an active creation of another value that overshadows others, operating through a mechanism similar to the institution of confessions.

Although most critics have not paid much attention to a newsworthy aspect of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, at the time of release, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* introduced to

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<sup>19</sup> Kiyoko Horiba, *Genbaku: hyogen to kenetsu—nihonjin wa do taio shitaka* (The Atomic Bombing, Representation and Censorship: How Did the Japanese React?) (Tokyo: Asahi shimbun sha, 1995), 123-27.

the wider world almost for the first time the footage from *The Effects on the Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki*. This footage is a testimony to US censorship during the Occupation, but nonexistent until the Japanese crew disclosed part of it that they had secretly kept during the Occupation. However, in previous studies of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, this footage has received blanket treatment merely as a Japanese newsreel along with other cited Japanese films, as an example of factography with no more depth to investigate. Critics' attention has centered, instead, on expanding the textual analysis of the fiction part of this film, the heterosexual relationship between the French woman and the Japanese man, or the French woman's past traumatic experience in Nevers, as if this is the only area where critics can explore the "unrepresentable" event of the atomic catastrophe. The hierarchical relationship between documentaries and avant-garde films, and between the non-West and the West, has actually been presented in the realm of knowledge production in this way.

However, I claim that the documentary and fiction parts of this film cannot be separated so neatly into a clear dichotomy, since their implosion into each other takes place inside and outside this film text. The scene of truth claims by the French woman demonstrates the superimposition of facts and fiction, of existence and non-existence. The French woman contends that she has seen movie-images taken on the day of the explosion as well as on the second and third days. What complicates this testimony is that these movie-images actually existed: they were taken the second day.<sup>20</sup> Two camerapeople had, in fact, taken two different movie-pictures in Hiroshima, but both

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<sup>20</sup> See Akira Iwasaki, *Senryo sareta sukurin: waga sengo shi* (The Occupied Screen: My Postwar History) (Tokyo: Shinnihon shuppansha, 1975), 113-17. Also "Kaku jidai no senso hodo shashin: genbaku kiroku eiga kara uketsugubeki-mono" (War News Photographs in the Nuclear Era: What We Should Inherit from Documentaries of the Atomic Bomb), "Mada attsuta genbaku eiga: moeteiru Hiroshima" (Another Film of the Atomic Bombing That Had Existed: Burning Hiroshima), *Masukomi shimin* (Mass Media Citizen), vol.16 (June 1968): 26-28, 50, and Ryuichi Kano and Hajime Mizuno, *Hiroshima nijyu-nen* (Hiroshima Twenty Years) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1965), 30-31.

of them were confiscated without trace by the Japanese and American militaries twice before and after the Occupation. This “truth” (or “false”) claim of bearing witness to these permanently disappeared images is further superimposed on the footage on the screen, the one taken from *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, confiscated by the US forces and officially unavailable at that time. The testimony of seeing and the referent mentioned inside the film have an anomalous link to the incidents that took place outside it.

But the point here is neither the slippery nature of the referent in the French woman’s address, nor the equivocal nature of testimonial accounts in general, but rather the radical implosion of facts into ghostly existences and vice versa. The French woman’s voiceover also suggests three-layered enunciating positions. Her words can be interpreted, first, as her conversation with the Japanese man, and second, as her internal dialogue, and third, as her commentary about the images on the screen. Accordingly, her addressees are threefold: the Japanese man in the diegesis, herself as the one whose imagination has constructed the whole diegesis, and the film audience. Yet these three enunciating positions of the French woman are not independent of each other, but overlap, even though her utterance constitutes one speech. This state of implosion fundamentally questions the idea of the voiceover commentary as univocal, authoritative, and absolute—one basis for the definitions of the avant-garde as totally different from the objective and monolithic construction of the documentary.

In Chapter Two, “An Act in Contradiction: Fumio Kamei’s *Still It’s Good to Live*,” I examine one of the Japanese documentaries that *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has cited: *Still It’s Good to Live* (Ikite ite yokkata) directed by Fumio Kamei in 1956. I contend that *Still It’s Good to Live* is a syncretism of contradictory film techniques: an Eisensteinian dialectic and an Ozu montage of purely optical and sound images, which exceed the range of a so-called realist representation. As early as the 1930’s, Kamei

made the surrealist documentary, *Shanghai*, which demonstrates that there have hardly been any distinctions between the world and images in our cognition in the Heideggerian sense. Yet *Still It's Good to Live* keeps an absolute power over the object of the gaze, the atomic bomb victims, both as a realist and a “postmodernist” film, while showing a momentary rupture away from the absolute relationship. It establishes the epic world that celebrates these bomb victims as martyrs, by setting out an exclusively national space. I discuss how this epic world presented by Kamei’s documentary has contributed to the isolation of the atomic victimization as a “Japanese” tragedy by locating it within the history of other Japanese films on Hiroshima and Nagasaki made in the 1950’s.

In Chapter Three, “Silent Mannequins and the Politics of Representation: Resnais and the Atomic Bomb Victims,” I turn to the documentary part of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, the famous opening sequence, which often escapes as a solid focus of critiques. This opening sequence makes extensive use of the shots originally taken for Kamei’s *Still It's Good to Live*, but eliminates all the historical contexts of the bomb victims embedded in Kamei’s documentary when citing them. I maintain that this omission is Resnais’ challenge to Kamei’s depiction, especially to the plausibility of film narrative as Christian Metz highlights it. Resnais’ portrayal of the victims is also an association with the mannequin-like bodies found in the ruins of the atomic explosion; this portrayal can be considered as both a realist and modernist representation. Yet, Resnais’ strategy has double-edged results; on the one hand, by silencing the victims as mannequins, Resnais fails to illustrate the performative aspect of victimization that some survivors effectuated in reconstructed Hiroshima. On the other, to petrify the victims as mannequins may be a form of resistance to the powerful cleansing force that the atomic bomb symbolizes, to the extent that to bear witness to the experiences of the disaster structurally entails the reestablishment of the

power of the atomic bomb and the reenactment of post-bombing victimization.

Chapter Four, “Postcolonial *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*: Franco-Japanese Collaboration in the American Shadow,” explores the latter part of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, the main story in which the heterosexual and interracial relationship between a French female visitor and a local Japanese resident takes place. I redefine the whole signification of Hiroshima in this film by illuminating the complicated realities of occupation and colonialism in present-day Hiroshima which is superimposed onto past incidents in Nevers. I argue that what the film illustrates is not a Hiroshima haunted by the memory of the bombing, but a Hiroshima obsessed with the memory of occupation and on-going reconstruction. The relationship of this couple, which structures the film narrative, allegorizes the complicity between the colonizer and the colonized by taking the form of a homosocial exchange of a woman between two men.

These men could be the German soldier and the Japanese man, but are more likely the French husband and the Japanese lover. They exchange (and return) the French woman both in the past and present over different temporalities. Whereas the first exchange which signifies the legacy of war and colonialism is made between ex/soldiers and ex-occupiers, the second exchange (although it does not overtly surface) is operated between ex/colonizers who have lost or are losing their colonies and, as a result, are becoming the colonized under a newly-formed international order shaped by American hegemony. The exchange of the woman is a negotiating process for both the nations of France and Japan, the collapsing or collapsed colonial powers, which these figures allegorize. They do so in order to cope with the postwar world order and to form a mutually beneficial relationship between them, as an oath to belong to the Western camp under the implicit direction of the new colonizer, namely the US.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION OF *HIROSHIMA, MON AMOUR*:**  
**DISCREPANCIES, COMPLICITY, AND BEYOND**

**The Troubled Reception of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* in Japan**

Since its release in 1959, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has attracted considerable attention from North American academia as an object of study in fields such as literary criticism, film studies, psychoanalysis and history. This is partly because the film is regarded as an avant-garde masterpiece of the French New Wave heralded by Resnais, and partly because it incorporates works by Duras, not only an icon of French literature and women's writings, but also a significant point of reference for Lacanian psychoanalysis. Debates on trauma, memory, and forgetting since the 1990's have also shed new light on this seemingly ever-fascinating film in humanities fields; this is evidenced in analyses conducted by critics such as Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier, Cathy Caruth, and Nancy Wood.<sup>1</sup> However, despite such an abundance of attempts to

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<sup>1</sup> Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier, "How History Begets Meaning: Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959)," in *French Film: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau (London: Routledge, 1990), 173-85. Cathy Caruth, "Literature and the Enactment of Memory: Duras, Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour*," in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 25-56. Nancy Wood, "Memory by Analogy: *Hiroshima, mon amour*," in *Vector's Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 185-96. The film *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, along with Duras' scenario, has been an object of inexhaustible interpretations and inquiries in academia for decades. For example, earlier critiques approach issues such as memory, time, space and analogy through Proust; Wolfgang A. Luchting, "'Hiroshima, Mon Amour,' Time, and Proust," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Spring, 1963), 299-313; Bergson; John Ward, "Hiroshima Mon Amour," in *Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), 17-38. A variety of projects have continuously been done by others. For instance, John Francis Kreidl discusses the surreal in this film in comparison with Hitchcock's *Vertigo* in *Alain Resnais* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), 53-64. Bert Cardullo provides a political-conscious reading in "The Symbolism of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*," *Film Criticism*, vol. viii, no. 2 (Winter 1984): 39-44. (1984). Sharon Willis problematizes deferral, displacement, and repetition of a traumatic subject in "*Hiroshima mon amour*: Screen Memories," in *Marguerite Duras: Writing on the Body* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 33-62. Lynn A. Higgins finds echoing effects of Duras' other works such as *Moderate Cantabile* and *The War* within it, in "Durasian (Pre)Occupation," *L'Esprit Créateur*, vol. xxx, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 47-57. Earl Jackson Jr. analyses how the politics of race and gender has played out in this film in "Desire of Cross(-Cultural) Purposes: *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence*," *positions* 2:1 (1994): 133-74. Caroline Mohsen considers this film in

decipher this film, their criticisms have upheld a virtually autonomous space constructed within Eurocentric contexts, in almost total isolation from those in Japan.

Although *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* was ostensibly a Franco-Japanese production, no critics in the disciplines of European literatures and languages have taken much account of its Japanese reception in their writings. Instead, an automatic endorsement of the acknowledgement of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* around the world has uniformly been taken for granted among them. Yet, there have been underlying realities in Japan since the movie's release which are hardly congruent with the universal acclaim of this film. First, this movie was a box-office failure, resulting in its cancellation in Tokyo after less than a week. It was shown in mid-June of 1959 at the theaters belonging to Daiei, one of the major Japanese movie companies internationally known for its production such as Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* and Kenji Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu monogatari* in the 1950's.

In the postwar reconstruction period, movie-going was the top affordable recreation, drawing one billion viewers annually and forty billion Japanese yen in annual profits for movie distributions (the sum after the subtraction of the entrance fees from box-office profits).<sup>2</sup> Yet, according to the statistics in *Shukan Eiga Puresu* (Weekly Movie Press) of June 20, 1959, the showing of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* at the Daiei's main theater in Tokyo attracted audiences that amounted to only 6% to 34% of its seating capacity, even on the first day of release.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding that it was

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conjunction with the idea of man/time and woman/space in "Place, Memory, and Subjectivity, in Marguerite Duras' *Hiroshima Mon Amour*," *Romantic Review*, vol. 89, no. 4 (November 1998): 567-82.

<sup>2</sup> Jiji tsushinsha, *Eiga nenkan* (Film Yearbook) (1 January 1961): 43, 47. According to *Kinema junpo*, no. 270 (November 1960): 44, reflecting this broad scale, the number of Japanese movies scheduled for production in 1961 was 624, which exceeded the total number made in Europe such as in France, England, Italy and West Germany in the previous year, even the number made in the US. After adding 210 foreign films, it tallied 834 movies that were to appear in the Japanese domestic market in 1961.

<sup>3</sup> According to *Shukan eiga puresu* (Weekly Movie Press) no. 598, 20 June 1959, p. 3, the number of the viewers of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* at this Daiei theater with a seating capacity of 1450 on the first day of release, June 17, in 1959 was 87 at 11a.m., 133 at 12a.m., 195 at 1p.m., 301 at 2p.m., 402 at 3p.m., and 496 at 4p.m. This theater tended to attract audiences who liked Japanese popular movies. *Shukan eiga puresu* commented that perhaps it would not have resulted in such a failure, if this film had been released at the theaters specializing in foreign films with different audiences.

customary to screen a movie for a week, the show was cancelled in the middle. As Resnais himself conceded in an interview, indeed, “the film was a success everywhere but Japan,”<sup>4</sup> where the popularity of movies was at its height.

As often noted, the 1950’s was one of the golden ages of Japanese cinema in terms of not only its breadth and international reputation, but also its power to mobilize viewers, as top entertainment and an affordable recreation for people experiencing the miseries of early postwar life. The competition was running high in the film world, until the dominance of film was eaten away at by the increase in other recreations such as going on excursions—symbolic of the postwar rehabilitation of the transportation system—and early 1960’s rapid spread of television, accelerated by the broadcasting of the marriage of Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko, and the Tokyo Olympic Games.

Second, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* was unfavorably received by critics as well, largely because of what they say as the “imbalance” between the ways in which the film depicts Hiroshima and the ways in which it thematizes Nevers in France. One of the harshest reviews was written from a humanist perspective by the playwright Yoshio Shirasaka right after release. He states that Resnais and Duras, two poets from overseas, have created a work of masturbation not only by misunderstanding the event of Hiroshima as being of the same degree of reality as that of Nevers, but also by unwittingly gazing at Hiroshima just as they do at other Japanese “specialties” such as geisha and Fujiyama. Then he declares, “we can gain nothing from this movie other than an hour-and a half of boredom—no anger at wars, no sentiment about the suppression of freedom of human beings, no poetry, no love, not even any of the most primitive kinds of eroticism in it.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “‘Hiroshima Mon Amour’: A Composite Interview with Alain Resnais,” in Robert Hughes, ed., *Film: Book 2: Films of Peace and War* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 60. In this interview, Resnais mentioned that the film was appreciated especially in Italy, South America, Belgium, and England.

<sup>5</sup> *Kinema junpo*, no. 236 (July 1959): 104-06. Shirasaka also states, “The impressive part of this movie is not Resnais’ shots, but the stock shots from Sekikawa’s *Hiroshima* and Kamei’s *Still It is Good to Live*” (106).

Others also question the structure of the film narrative as being heavily weighted towards the episode in Nevers. A film critic, Susumu Okada argues that Resnais approaches broken-up spaces in the past and present through the mediation of present time carried out by the character of the French woman. However, this approach makes the observation of reality only a means for her to experience the past, dissolving that reality into her unconscious; thus Hiroshima, past and present, the German soldier, and the Japanese man become tools only to assure her existence.<sup>6</sup> Even a general contributor to a movie magazine, Sumiko Kawaguchi, complains: “I cannot tolerate the gradual change of the male protagonist into a comical character. For the female protagonist, the sublation of terror and love constitutes drama, yet for the man, the banal course of the development of their love only covers a dispersed twenty-four hours.”<sup>7</sup> The novelist Shusaku Endo, who is relatively sympathetic to *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, also points out that lengthy scenes and banal images in the second half demonstrate that Resnais has run out of materials to describe Hiroshima.<sup>8</sup> (Chapter Four in this dissertation, however, presents a counter-argument to these views on the representation of Hiroshima by rethinking the signification of this void in the second half. It explores how the film illuminates complicated realities of occupation and colonialism in present Hiroshima which is superimposed onto the Nevers of the past).

These negative views on *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* decreased at the end of the year to some extent after its international reputation was better known. When *Kinema junpo* (Motion Picture Times), an influential magazine in the film industry, announced

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<sup>6</sup> *Eiga hyoron* (Film Criticism), vol. 17, no. 1 (January 1960): 68-69. According to Okada, too much devotion to Nevers makes it impossible to present the encounter between Nevers and Hiroshima as the synthesis of time and space. Unless the Japanese man experiences the history of Hiroshima from her Nevers, the synthesized unity in the last scene does not take place.

<sup>7</sup> *Eiga hyoron*, vol. 17, no. 6 (June 1960): 56-57. Kawaguchi maintains, “Love cannot be a mediation to signify ‘Hiroshima’ to the audiences, who are foreign to the scene of ‘Hiroshima.’ My impression is that the film ends with a one-sided recording of Nevers, in spite of the fact that it suggests ‘Hiroshima’ that strongly” (57).

<sup>8</sup> *Kinema junpo*, no. 236 (July 1959): 103.

the ten best foreign movies of the year at its annual event, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* ranked seventh. Obviously this was not a dismal failure—as Resnais also asserted in the interview, “I believe it was well-received, at least in intellectual circles”<sup>9</sup>—as long as we ignore the feverish reception of other French films, Claude Chabrol’s *Les Cousins* and Louis Malle’s *The Lovers*. Not only in this ranking, but also in other rankings announced by movie magazines, press clubs, and a broadcasting company, *Les Cousins* and *The Lovers* were always ranked closer to the top, while *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* was either among the lowest three or even left out of the rankings.<sup>10</sup>

The year 1959 marked the emergence of the French New Wave, and Japanese film critics also passionately discussed its impact. Yet, their attention was mostly focused on Charbol and other film makers such as François Truffaut, who made *The 400 Blows*, and Jean-Luc Godard, whose *Breathless* caused a sensation, but not on Resnais. As time went by, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* started to receive more appropriate appraisals;<sup>11</sup> yet, its low profile notably continues even today, not only in Japanese society at large but also in Japanese scholarship.

### **The Victim-Victimizer Relationships in Kurosawa’s *Rhapsody in August* and Imamura’s *Black Rain***

In a word, a perplexing phenomenon manifests itself in the sense that *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, the canonical film on Hiroshima in North America, has never become part and parcel of the knowledge on the visual representation of Hiroshima in Japan. This situation is, however, the reverse image of another situation; the outstanding status that

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<sup>9</sup> “‘Hiroshima Mon Amour’: A Composite Interview with Alain Resnais,” in Robert Hughes, ed., *Film: Book 2: Films of Peace and War* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 60.

<sup>10</sup> In 1959 rankings by *Kinema junpo*, Claude Chabrol’s *Les Cousins* was the fourth, Louis Malle’s *The Lovers*, the fifth, while the first three places went to Sidney Lumet’s *Twelve Angry Men*, Andrzej Wajda’s *Ashes and Diamonds*, and Michelangelo Antonioni’s *The Outcry*.

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Toru Ogawa ed., *Gendai nihon eigaron taikai* (A Survey of Modern Japanese Cinema), vol. 6 (Tokyo: Tojyusha, 1972), 295, and *Kinema junpo*, *Sekai no eiga sattsuka* vol. 5 (Film Directors of the World) (Tokyo: Kinema junpo, 1970), 154, 225.

*Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has sustained in North America corresponds to a particular treatment of the postwar Japanese movies on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well, knowledge of which is seldom shared outside the Japanese domestic sphere. Shohei Imamura's *Black Rain* (Kuroi ame, 1989), produced after anti-nuclear movements spread in a concerted way throughout Western countries, may be a relative exception.

But the two movies on the atomic bombing made even by Akira Kurosawa, *Record of A Living Being* (Ikimono no kiroku, 1955) and *Rhapsody in August* (Hachigatsu no rapusodi/kyoshiyoku, 1991) could not generate worldwide interest, except for the scene of an apology in *Rhapsody in August*. In this scene, the American protagonist, Clark, played by Richard Gere, apologizes to his Japanese grandmother; this brought infuriated responses from inside and outside the film industry. Vincent Canby, a reviewer of *The New York Times*, for instance, rebuked Kurosawa by commenting that "a lot of people at Cannes were outraged that the film makes no mention of Pearl Harbor and Japan's atrocities in China,"; "If Clark can apologize for bombing Nagasaki, why can't Granny apologize for the raid on Pearl Harbor? . . . I suspect that he would admit that he doesn't know how Americans feel about the war."<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, in regard to how to historically locate the event of the American atomic bombings, there is a set of related questions both unavoidable but still unresolved. These may also partly explain the treatment of films on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in North American discursive spheres, and the sensitive reaction to *Rhapsody in August*. On the one hand, the American use of the atomic bomb undoubtedly reflects a massive and murderous series of military actions which have accelerated in the world since the 1930's. Not only the Nanjing Massacre and the killing of civilians in the battle in

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<sup>12</sup> Vincent Canby, "Kurosawa, Small in Scale and Blunt," *New York Times*, December 20 1991, 22. See also, Tadao Sato, "The Spirit of Compassion," trans. Linda Ehrlich, *Cineaste*, vol. 19, issue 1 (1992): 48-49, and Linda Ehrlich, "The Extremes of Innocence: Kurosawa's Dreams and Rhapsodies," in *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film*, ed. Mick Broderick (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 160, 171.

Manila, but also the indiscriminate air raids on big cities such as Chongquin, Dresden, London and Tokyo, constitute a chain of atrocities, many of which were also perpetrated by the Japanese Imperial Army.

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are inseparable from Japan's invasion in the Asian and Pacific regions and the mobilization and sacrifices of its people dragged to rock-bottom in order to wage wars. In this sense, Japan's imperial past prevents us from seeing Hiroshima and Nagasaki simply as victims, and this history will perpetually haunt our judgment of their victimization. On the other hand, an ethical question is at stake, (including one that has also been raised about indiscriminate air raids on the cities mentioned above), in the bombing of the densely-populated city areas, which indisputably resulted in the massacre of civilians. In particular, the atomic bombings of these two cities caused many people to die in ways that stole their recognizable human form, and survivors to suffer from the lingering aftereffects of radiation for decades. For the US, its use of atomic bombs that brought a cruel end to the Second World War may mar its heroic postwar self-image as the rescuer of the Jews from the European Holocaust as well as the banner-bearer of freedom and democracy.

In the flux of these controversies, *Black Rain* and *Rhapsody in August* were by and large criticized as promoting the sense of victimization among the Japanese without mentioning Japan's wartime aggressions. Jeffery Ruoff and Kenneth Ruoff claim that these two films made by Kurosawa and Imamura "condemn the horrific atomic bombings but provide no context."<sup>13</sup> They argue that the Japanese documentary, *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On* directed by Kazuo Hara (Yukiyukite shingun, 1987), is more self-referential in the way it portrays the postwar activities of an

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<sup>13</sup> Jeffrey Ruoff and Kenneth Ruoff, *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On: Yukiyukite shingun* (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1998), 43. For similar criticism, Winston Davis, review of *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor: A Portrait of Japan at Century's End*, by Norma Field, *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 147-51.

ex-sergeant of the Japanese imperial army, who uncovers the practice of cannibalism among starving soldiers, and prosecutes the Emperor Hirohito and the postwar politicians along with his senior officers for war responsibilities. But, as Akira Lippit detects, there is a recycling of “the rhetoric of apologists for the atomic bombings OF Hiroshima and Nagasaki”<sup>14</sup> in this tendency to contrast the three movies.

To locate Kurosawa’s and Imamura’s films within the fabric of a simple dichotomy may be missing the complexities embedded in these narratives: the entangled relationships between the victim and the victimizer. In *Rhapsody in August*, Clark is presented as a resident of Hawaii from a Japanese American family, which suggests his complicated positionality in relation to the long-standing conflicts since the nineteenth century between the US and Japan. At the end of the nineteenth century Hawaii was colonized by the US, and decades later was attacked by the Japanese army as the first target in the Pacific War fought between the two countries, albeit that the Japanese attack was against US military facilities, not the Hawaiian population. While Japanese Americans already comprised a big immigrant population in Hawaii, and therefore escaped from incarceration in the internment camps in contrast to Japanese Americans on the mainland, many local Japanese Americans, as well as those on the mainland, found themselves to be battered figures in between, who had no choice but to volunteer on the European Front, literally “going for broke,” in order to attest their loyalty to the US nation.

When Canby, without showing any hesitation, includes Clark in the American collective under the rubric of “we Americans” by saying that “he [Kurosawa] doesn’t know how Americans feel about the war,”<sup>15</sup> he seals off this historical dissonance between the mainland and Hawaii, between mainstream white Americans and the

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<sup>14</sup> Akira Lippit, review of *The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On: Yuki Yukite shingun*, by Jeffrey Ruoff and Kenneth Ruoff, *Film Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 3 (Spring 2000), 58.

<sup>15</sup> Vincent Canby, “Kurosawa, Small in Scale and Blunt,” *New York Times*, December 20 1991, 22.

non-white immigrant population that does not neatly fit into a seamless national narrative. Moreover, this means that Canby has positioned Clark on the side of the victimizer regarding the atomic bombing, without considering how different kinds of interpellations, based on their social positionalities, can be at work in subjugating these individuals to the American nation-state.<sup>16</sup>

In Canby's rhetoric, the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki rather prompt a call for the formation of the monolithic American subject to conveniently disregard the fissures and ruptures not easily bridgeable among the people, by quickly associating the events with the memory of Pearl Harbor and drawing on national pride and patriotism within the narrative of American victory and commitment. In this regard, the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki play an important role in establishing an American national identity in American discourses in a particular way. The defensive mechanism of this type of rhetoric can be observed in many areas of the world. In a recent economically-stagnant Japan, for example, the repudiation of the blame for the Nanjing Massacre and the issue of the Comfort Women, who were sexually enslaved by the Japanese military during WWII, readily functions to organize a reactionary, nationalistic subject in order to affirm the self-righteousness of their own logic.

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<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Takashi Fujitani, "Go for Broke, the Movie: Japanese American Soldiers in U.S. National, Military, and Racial Discourses," in *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)*, ed. Takashi Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White and Lisa Yoneyama (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 239-66, "Senka no jinshushugi: daijiji taisenki no 'chosen shusshin nihon kokumin' to 'nikkei amerikajin'" (Racism under Fire: 'Korean Japanese' and 'Japanese Americans' in WWII), in *Kanjo, kioku, senso: iwanami koza—kindai nihon no bunkashi* vol. 8 (Sentiment, Memory, War: Iwanami Lectures—The Cultural History of Modern Japan), ed. Yoichi Komori et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002), 235-80, and "The Reischauer Memo: Mr. Moto, Hirohito, and Japanese American Soldiers," *Critical Asian Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3 (September 2001): 379-402. Also, Naoki Sakai, "Two Negations: Fear of Being Excluded and the Logic of Self-Esteem," *Novel*, vol. 37, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 229-57, and "Henzai suru kokka: futatsu no hitei—*No-No Boy* o yomu," (The Ubiquity of the Nation State: Two Negativities—A Reading of *No-No Boy*), in *Shizan sareru nihongo, nihonjin: "nihon" no rekishi—chiseiteki haichi* (The Stillborn of the Japanese as Language and as Ethnos: "Japanese" History—Geopolitical Configuration) (Tokyo: Shinyosha, 1996), 99-126.

But, should Clark be considered a representation of the Americans apologizing for the atomic bombings as Canby claims? As a number of scholars point out,<sup>17</sup> Canby misreads Clark's apology as such, and this misreading/misleading initiates the mobilization of nationalistic sentiment in his rhetoric. For the accuracy of the plot, what Clark apologizes for to his grandmother is his lack of knowledge about the cause of his Japanese grandfather's death (the atomic bombing of Nagasaki), not for the bombing itself. This may suggest another form of knowledge that opens up Clark and his grandmother—the people who have already, wittingly or unwittingly, formed a trans-Pacific and transnational family—to a relationship that needs not always to be mediated by national narratives.

In other words, their relationship that connects the history of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and the history of Japanese Americans paves the way for another relationship between those people for whom the participation in wars, either as civilians or soldiers, has engendered an intolerable degree of trauma. Still, it should be added that there are some limitations in the plot; their encounter becomes possible only with Clark's initiative, not the grandmother's. Also, not the grandmother, who had witnessed the atomic explosion, but Clark is expected to acquire the new knowledge; he belongs to the generation with no direct experience of traumatic events. While presenting Clark as active and future-oriented, the film portrays the regression of the grandmother to a state of insanity as well as her captivity to a memory of the bombing, yet in its climax, it depicts her frenzied behavior as funny and comic rather than serious and grievous. This portrait of the grandmother also bears witness to the working of gender politics that results in the fixity of the feminine as illogical and disordered.

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<sup>17</sup> See Matthew Bernstein and Mark Ravina, "Rhapsody in August by Hisao Kurosawa: Akira Kurosawa," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 98, no. 4 (October 1993): 1161. For a detailed explanation of criticisms, Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 364-71.

Instead of to the grandmother, the film assigns an important position to the grandmother's house as a site of travel for all the protagonists. For Clark, her house represents one origin of his immigrant family; for her grandchildren, a theme-park like the countryside filled with fearful folklore tales overshadowed by the atomic victimization; and for their parents, an indispensable link to financial benefits from successful relatives overseas. A local village in Nagasaki can be directly connected across the Pacific to the profitable farm that the Clarks have in Hawaii, as if their relationship suggests that the local is always already an effect of the global, but not vice versa. Whatever its function, her house intersects all these regional/transnational movements from one place to another, including her own temporal travel or possibly her "migration" to past memories. In other words, everyone has to travel far to her house in order to share a coeval relationship with each other, although she leaves soon after their arrival for a different temporality within her memory, a place unreachable to family members.

In this way, the spatial arrangement in this film is confused and disrupted, and this confusion of spatiality radically asks what the local can mean; as James Clifford puts it, " 'local' in whose terms? How is significant difference politically articulated, and challenged? Who determines where (and when) a community draws its lines, names its insiders and outsiders?"<sup>18</sup> In opposition to a conventional idea of the East-West binaries, this film does not depict Clark's visit as something like an ethnographic field trip. Rather, it highlights a sense of foreignness shared among the grandchildren through their experience of living with the grandmother in the summer.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 19.

<sup>19</sup> An English version of this film with subtitles, however, omits many episodes included in the Japanese original, such as the ones depicting perplexed feelings generated in the grandchildren's minds through their experiences of living in the grandmother's house. As a result, the English version becomes accentuated by the episodes directly related to the atomic bombing only. It loses the touch in the original work of this film, *Nabe no naka* (Inside a Pot), an Akutagawa Prize-won novel written by Kikyoko Murata, that Kurosawa has tried to incorporate into the story of this film.

While underscoring a generation gap or temporal difference more than national, regional, racial, or cultural differences, it situates the memory of the atomic bombing in the midst of these complicated relationships, like an absence which cannot be retrieved simply as an experience in the past.

*Black Rain* also thematizes the complexities of the victim/victimizer relationship in more controversial ways. This film foregrounds the union between a female atomic bomb victim, Yasuko, and a shell-shocked male returnee of the Japanese Imperial Army, Yuichi. This coupling, along with the film's lack of reference to Japan's wartime atrocities, has been criticized as the reinforcement of Japanese victimization in war. For instance, Carol Cavanaugh problematizes the scene which highlights the faces of Jizo (Buddhist saviors of the helpless) that Yuichi carved in stone, as the moment when not only the sufferings of Yasuko and Yuichi become indistinguishable, but also when the differences in suffering from war experiences among all the Japanese become intelligible. Cavanaugh maintains:

When Yuichi restages the horror of combat for Yasuko, his memories illuminate and emphasize the distortions of the stone faces of the Jizo he has carved. Are these the anguished expressions of Yuichi's comrades? Or the disfigured victims of the atomic bomb? Is this Hiroshima? Or a battlefield in the Philippines? The film persuades us that there really is no difference between battle and bomb. In the iconographic use of Jizo, *Black Rain* successfully reconstructs innocent suffering as equally shared in Japan by men and women, soldiers and civilians, children and adults, and so fulfils the national desire to visualize the war in terms of Hiroshima and Nagasaki alone.<sup>20</sup>

As Cavanaugh points out, it is undeniable that the film sympathetically depicts Yasuko and Yuichi alike as tragic figures that can be appropriated into the establishment of a romantic tale of national martyrdom by using the rhetoric of the victimization of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But the use of Jizo statues in this scene

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<sup>20</sup> Carole Cavanaugh, "A Working Ideology for Hiroshima: Imamura Shohei's *Black Rain*," in *Word and Image in Japanese Cinema*, ed. Dennis Washburn and Carole Cavanaugh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 266.

simultaneously makes it difficult to confine the excesses of the statues' symbolization only to the national framework. As Cavanaugh herself refers to the battle in the Philippines as an example of what the scene of the highlighted Jizo faces may suggest, it is possible to consider even Filipino civilians and American soldiers in battlefields in the Philippines as objects of Jizo's redemptive power which is supposed to transcend national boundaries and even the distinctions between the victim and the victimizer. The question is: if anybody suffering from traumatic experiences can be viewed as indistinguishable, how can we pursue political responsibilities for the perpetration of atrocities? As Dominick LaCapra maintains, the categorization of the victim is, first and foremost, social, political, and ethical rather than psychological.<sup>21</sup> Yet, this conflation of the victim and the victimizer, of civilians and soldiers, becomes further complicated when we consider the degree of trauma in veterans that Donald E. Pease discusses.

According to Pease:

In his groundbreaking work with Vietnam veterans, Robert Jay Lifton discovered profound similarities between the combat veterans' collective experiences of social abjection—ontological insecurity, desymbolization, general distrust of the counterfeit nurturance of the environment, psychic numbing, flashbacks to the experience of death immersion, psychic disconnections between affect and experience, shock syndrome—and those of *hibakusha*, the survivors of Hiroshima, who were the subject of *Death in Life*. Neither the experiences of *hibakusha* nor the veterans Lifton examined could be represented in the image repertoires of their respective national narratives. As psychic materials in excess of any narrative's power to derive significance, these profoundly disturbing experiences remained unforgettable and unrepresentable somatic symptoms and returned *hibakusha* and Lifton's Vietnam veterans alike to the respective scenes of their traumas.<sup>22</sup>

For Pease (and Lifton), the atomic bomb victims, like Vietnam veterans—who actually can easily be equated to Japanese veterans represented by Yuichi—embody the

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<sup>21</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2001), 79.

<sup>22</sup> Donald E. Pease, "Hiroshima, the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial, and the Gulf War: Post-National Spectacles," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 572.

object of the postwar social ostracization, far from being the medium for creating the unified sense of the Japanese as the victim, in contrast to Cavanaugh's claim. Therefore, Pease argues:

Unable to surrender their past experiences to a narrative enchainment able to redescribe terror as valor, pain as courage, mutilation as integrity, and thereby transmute physical distress into the abstractions cultures reward, the survivors of Hiroshima as well as the Vietnam War, Lifton explained, instead felt absolutely dissociated from their culture's social symbolic orders.<sup>23</sup>

Here a totally opposite view is possible of the relationship of the atomic bomb victims with the society. This view is premised upon the equation of the veterans and the bomb victims, regardless of their national, historical, and positional differences, by categorizing both as the "survivor," neither as the perpetrator nor as the victim.

According to Lifton, "[a] survivor is one who has encountered, been exposed to, or witnessed death, and has himself or herself remained alive."<sup>24</sup> Based on this definition, Lifton even discusses the victims of Hiroshima, the European Holocaust, and the Buffalo Creek flood disaster together with Vietnam veterans.<sup>25</sup> He finds similar psychological symptoms among these "survivors" such as death imprint, death anxiety, death guilt and psychic numbing, which are generated by the experience of bearing witness to others' deaths. In the case of incidents such as the massacre in My Lai in Vietnam, he maintains that the phenomenon of "false witness" takes place among soldiers; this "false witness" creates the sense of their mission as survivors that not only

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, "Witnessing Survival," *Society*, vol. 15, no. 3 (March/April 1978), 42. The subtitle of his first edition of the study of Vietnam veterans, *Home from the War*, published in 1973 was *Neither Victims Nor Executioners*. In later editions, it changed to *Learning from Vietnam Veterans*. However, contrary to Lifton's position, this dissertation basically uses the term the atomic bomb "victim," not the atomic bomb "survivor," because, although it is true that they "have survived," the threat of the aftereffects of radioactivity is not a past event, but a continuing reality with which these people have to live for their entire lives.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, "Witnessing Survival," *Society*, vol. 15, no. 3 (March/April, 1978), 40-44.

demands the avoidance of the death encounter, but also prompts the killing of others in order to displace their own death anxiety.<sup>26</sup>

Although this psychological process effectively explains what Lifton calls the “atrocities-producing situation,” it does not necessarily encompass all the psychic reactions of soldiers in the scenes of atrocities. Also, it does not mean that every soldier who committed cruelties shows the traumatic symptoms that Lifton describes. In *Senso to zaiseki* (War and Responsibility for Crimes) that analyzes the testimonies of Japanese veterans who participated in atrocities in China, Masaaki Noda observes that these combatants are not always bitterly afflicted before and after the incidents. It is true that according to these testimonies, in being commanded to perform atrocities no matter how physically and mentally stressed they were, some soldiers exceeded their mental limits, attempted to escape from battle fields, and became executed later. Some were hospitalized when diagnosed as suffering from mental disorders, but committed suicide even after their apparent recovery from their neurosis, out of fear of returning to battlefields.

However, one of the surprising accounts in Noda’s study is that many of the veterans he interviewed were not mentally damaged by their atrocities. This was true of some exceptional individuals who not only confessed but also volunteered to publicly testify to their own past cruel conduct by writing memoirs and participating in anti-war meetings held in Japan as well as in China. Noda considers that this amazing lack of trauma among them was symptomatic of an emotional paralysis that has endured in the postwar Japanese society at large.<sup>27</sup> In light of Hiroshima, Lifton and Greg Mitchell also mention psychic numbing in the US:

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<sup>26</sup> Cathy Caruth, “An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 138-39.

<sup>27</sup> Masaaki Noda, *Senso to zaiseki* (War and Responsibility for Crimes) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1998), 351-55.

It became politically correct (before the expression existed) in the deepest sense to remain numbed toward Hiroshima—politically suspect if one was troubled or inclined to make a fuss about it. In that way, as a people, we developed a *habit* of numbing towards Hiroshima, a sustained tendency toward, one way or another, avoiding feeling in connection with what happened there.<sup>28</sup>

The numbing toward the nuclear proliferation (as well as Japanese atrocities in Asia) actually prevailed in 1950's Japanese society as well. Kurosawa's *Record of A Living Being* may suggest this state of numbing by portraying the inability of family members to understand their panicked father's fear of the existence of an increasing number of nuclear weapons in the world.

*On the Beach*, directed by Stanley Kramer in 1959, the same year as *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* was produced, may also epitomize the blurring in differentiating the victimizer from the victim. While thematizing the desperate situation in which the Northern Hemisphere has almost been annihilated by recent nuclear wars, this film does not allude to who initiated the attacks—in other words, who is responsible for using nuclear weapons first—but only vaguely suggests that nuclear wars started somewhere afar. The stage is set in Australia, where people have luckily escaped from instant annihilation, yet it is a matter of time before waves of radioactivity hit here. But protagonists display no resentment against the perpetrators and nuclear armament, and accept their destiny without complaining about the cause of death in the foreseeable future. The question of responsibility for human eradication is not of great concern here.

This lack of interest in the cause of annihilation is, indeed, closely connected to the rhetoric of nuclear wars. Once nuclear wars break out, it is useless to single out the first perpetrator, because sooner or later everyone will die; there is no difference between the victor and the vanquished, and thus ultimately, no difference between the victimizer and the victim. In this situation, Gregory Peck, who appears in the crew of

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell, *Hiroshima in America: Fifty Years of Denial* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1995), 338.

the American nuclear submarine, is presented as a heroic victim or even a martyr without any contradictions. This lack of reflection on the differentiation between victim and victimizer among “survivors” shapes a bizarrely harmonized ending of the world. The last members of humanity are all white and enjoying upper-middle class life until their final days, in spite of the basic premise that all people on earth are equally and indiscriminately deemed as sacrifices in nuclear wars.

### **The Problem of the Abstraction of Hiroshima**

As mentioned earlier, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has hardly been discussed along with these Japanese films such as *Rhapsody in August* and *Black Rain*. But the entangled relationship between the victim and the victimizer that these films deal with is also at the heart of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, not only because historical judgment of the victimization of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is intricately intertwined with the conflated relationship between the victim and the victimizer, but also because the film momentarily discloses the past of the Japanese man who has a brief affair with the French woman visiting Hiroshima. He is a veteran, as he “seriously and hesitantly” reveals by answering the French woman’s question about whether or not he was at Hiroshima at the time of the atomic explosion: “No . . . Of course I wasn’t.” “But my family was at Hiroshima. I was off fighting the war.”<sup>29</sup> His military career does not come to the fore, when considering what the French woman’s encounter with this Japanese man may signify.

In her influential paper on *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier argues that the Japanese man plays a therapeutic role for the French woman so that she can articulate her traumatic experience in a logical and comprehensible sequence as if they are the analyst and the analyzed. Furthermore, for

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<sup>29</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 28.

Ropars-Wuilleumier, the French woman's story of Nevers enunciated through this act of transference can conversely speak of the presence, not the content, of the "unrepresentable" story of bombed Hiroshima, in its very process of telling.<sup>30</sup> If so, what is evoked in the French woman by this encounter with the Japanese man, once a soldier of the occupation force in Asia and the Pacific just like her German lover in Vichy France, should also have involved the experiences and memories of war and occupation that his figure suggests, experiences and memories other than the atomic bombing.

The problem I am calling attention to is the all-inclusive, highly abstracted idea of Hiroshima that is apparent in the critiques by Ropars-Wuilleumier and other critics. As a result, Ropars-Wuilleumier and others disregard complex, contradictory, and divergent situations of pre- and postwar Hiroshima, and ironically, end up conflating the victim and the victimizer in a way they did not expect. In Ropars-Wuilleumier reading, the Japanese man who can possibly be regarded as the victimizer of aggressions during the war is now transformed into a pertinent mediator to gain an insight into the atomic bomb victimization in postwar Hiroshima. The fact that the Japanese man is a citizen of Hiroshima and a family member of bomb victims does not allow us to automatically regard the psyche of this man as similar to that of the victim.

There is a glaring gap that can hardly be filled between the bomb victims and the citizens of Hiroshima who did not experience the atomic calamity. In Hiroshima, whose city center was destroyed, a change in its societal structure took place more drastically than in more than a hundred other Japanese cities and towns also destroyed by American bombings. Whereas the city's reconstruction projects were launched soon after the end of the war under the US Occupation, and attracted many new-comers, not

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<sup>30</sup> Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier, "How History Begets Meaning: Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959)," in *French Film: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau (London: Routledge, 1990), 179-81.

only from the local areas but also from all over the country—people who wanted to escape from starvation or to seek new business opportunities—the surviving bomb victims who used to have thriving businesses or live relatively affluent lives in the epicenter suffered destitution with no medical or livelihood assistance until the end of the US Occupation. Although colonized Koreans, most of whom had a hard life, constituted more than ten percent of all the victims, and this fact repudiates the idea of the victimization of Hiroshima as a Japanese event, the annihilation of the population in the city center caused a drastic inversion of social strata in Hiroshima City.

Also, the psychological effects the atomic bombing exerted on victims' minds were profound. Yoko Ota, a writer who came across the atomic disaster in Hiroshima, wrote about what she felt during her visit to Hiroshima several years after the bombing. When she met a variety of people, she realized that most of them were not in Hiroshima on that day, but were either military returnees, repatriates from colonies or postwar new-comers from Kansai, Kyushu and Hokkaido. She shuddered at the thought of what a massive number of Hiroshima citizens were dead, and felt as if duplicates of her bloody body were strewn around just as she had witnessed real corpses on that day.<sup>31</sup> Ota's words demonstrate how difficult it was for the victims to expel the traumatic scene from their minds as well as illustrate the victims' tendency to unite psychologically with the dead as Lifton observes.<sup>32</sup> A tremendous sense of loss accompanied by a sense of guilt often pushed them from the side of the living to the side of the dead, and forced them to ask themselves—why am I not dead yet, although every other one around me is? Trauma residing in their psyche can neither be easily resolved nor understood by those who did not experience the events, even family members.

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<sup>31</sup> Yoko Ota, *Ikinokori no shinri* (The Psychology of the Survivor) in *Ota Yoko shu Volume Two* (The Collected Writings of Yoko Ota) (Tokyo: Nihon tosho senta, 1952; 2001), 320.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968; 1991), 495-99.

As another instance, an NHK TV producer Hitoshi Sakurai wrote about a bomb victim that he interviewed decades ago; the victim, who encountered the explosion at the age of fifteen, had two children when Sakurai met him. Both the children were born with congenital illnesses, and one of them died at the age of two. Probably because of this, he kept visiting institutions of handicapped children to photograph them. But right after his third child was born with no disabilities, he suddenly asked for a divorce from his wife, who was not a bomb victim, by telling her he could not part from the side of the dead.<sup>33</sup> Whether his photographing was the act of recording, questioning or connecting himself to the dead, the bombing had penetrated his life to such an extent that he could never recall it without feeling a sense of guilt.

The valorization of Hiroshima simply as the unrepresentable without considering these basic differences between residents, victims and their families is not just the issue of mystifying and obscuring Hiroshima. No matter how Ropars-Wuilleumier and others emphasize the reciprocal relationship between the Japanese man and the French woman or between Hiroshima and Nevers, these accounts sound like an excuse or even an alibi for not pursuing what Hiroshima may represent in the film. However, this may not be an issue of false consciousness that individuals can transform through ideological struggles, but an institutional problem about how academic disciplines have been organized in North American academia as well. Not to investigate the meaning of Hiroshima in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* as well as not discuss this film along with Japanese cinema on the atomic bombings are partly because of the regulation and normalization of disciplinary boundaries in regard to objects of study in which these critics are contained.

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<sup>33</sup> Hitoshi Sakurai, "Eizo wa hibakusha o do egaitekita," (What Images of the the Atomic Bomb Victims Have Appeared on the Screen?) *Sekai*, vol. 692 (September, 2001): 124-25.

Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto discusses the position of Japanese cinema vis-à-vis that of mainstream American, French, German cinemas and hierarchical relationships between them. According to him, when film studies institutionally established itself as a new, emerging field that transgressed national and disciplinary boundaries, it used Japanese films as an indispensable supplement, because Japanese cinema could substantiate two important claims of film studies: a universal appeal of cinema and a particular practice of culture. However, when applying theory to cinematic texts for interpretative purposes, the model texts were always chosen from specific national cinemas such as the American, French and German ones, in spite of the theory's claim of its universality. He thus maintains:

Japanese cinema has never been included in the canon of film theory except when . . . theory is used to assert Japanese cinema's essential differences from Western cinema. There is a privileged connection between Western cinema and theory, which is supposed to present a totalized, general view, capable of explaining different aspects of the cinema irrespective of national and cultural differences.<sup>34</sup>

Yoshimoto's analysis indicates that the positions of the cinematic texts in the overall interpretative practices are already designated depending on where to locate the texts according to the specific ways of their categorization—simply put, whether they are produced in the West or the non-West, or in the “model” Western countries or not. Then, it is understandable why critics in European literatures and languages need not pay attention to Japanese cinema and the contexts in Hiroshima in their critical activities. For these critics, both Japanese cinema and the contexts in Hiroshima are not only outside their areas of study, but also possibly essentially different; to study these non-Western texts together with Euroamerican texts and contexts may be even

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<sup>34</sup> Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 36. For critiques of the current disciplinary practices in the humanities, see, for instance, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian, eds., *Learning Places: the Afterlives of Area Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), and Vicente L. Rafael, “The Cultures of Area Studies in the United States,” *Social Text*, no. 41 (Winter 1994): 91-111.

employing intellectual violence against these foreign texts, as Yoshimoto suggests.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, becoming the site that exemplifies Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's discussion of "sanctioned ignorance,"<sup>36</sup> *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is a dead end text where scholars in different disciplines miss encountering each other: North American scholars of European films and literatures, North American scholars of Japanese films and literature, and Japanese scholars of Japanese films and literature. My own project, however, intends to reread/rewrite this provocative film to transform it from a dead end alley to a threshold where we scholars from these three fields can possibly meet. It also challenges the legitimate and authentic use of theory so far limited basically to the Euroamerican context by transcending boundaries; by so doing, we can expand theory's potential beyond the prefigured regional boundaries.

### **The International System of Knowledge and Beyond**

The methods of knowledge production regarding *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* also reveal a broader schema in the configuration of the relationship between the West and non-West. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said comments on the novel, *Nostramo*, written by the Polish-English writer Joseph Conrad; "All Conrad can see is a world totally dominated by Atlantic West, in which every opposition to the West only confirms the West's wicked power. What Conrad cannot see is an alternative to this cruel tautology."<sup>37</sup> If we follow Said's perspective on the representational relationship between the West and non-West, and schematize the discrepancies in the production of knowledge on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we can say that these discrepancies indicate an eternally tautologically constructed system of knowledge as well as the potential for

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<sup>35</sup> Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 37.

<sup>36</sup> See Gayatri S Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>37</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xviii.

going beyond this formation of knowledge. To paraphrase, first and foremost, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has been a marker of the internationally-organized system of knowledge characterized by the privileged position of North American academia. The normalization of the frequent neglect of and indifference to the knowledge produced by the non-Western world takes place. This system of knowledge also enters an alliance with the willful neglect of Western knowledge by non-Western counterparts, although to a lesser degree. Both seemingly formulate a binary relation, yet their relationship takes neither an equal nor symmetrical shape, contrary to what those who locate themselves on the side of the non-West may want to imagine; simply put, their binaries are configured hegemonically.

For instance, whereas the cultural commodities produced in the American market are by and large export-oriented, those in Japan are distributed and consumed mainly within its national spheres, even though its domestic market is of an atypically large scale as a non-Western state, and its burgeoning cultural influence crosses its national borders and extends across Asia and other regions. In principle, the American point of view more or less has automatically spread to many areas around the world, and even framed local knowledge about events that take place outside them. The discrepancies regarding the knowledge on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in other words, provide a glimpse of how the international epistemological structure has been maintained through an intellectual division of labor, in which specific knowledge and discourses on Hiroshima and Nagasaki produced in Japan are only allowed to thrive inside the Japanese linguistic domain predominantly.

This structure supports the production of an abundance of nationalistically acceptable narratives within the Japanese nation—the martyrdom of the atomic bomb victims in the case of those of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—while omitting the connection of the atomic victimhood to the nation’s imperial past. (Chapter Two will recount this

aspect by exploring the subject of the atomic bomb in Japanese cinema). The whole situation which may be called complicity between nationalisms encapsulates the political divisions in Asia which have been exacerbated in the Cold War through the containment policy and the bilateral relationships between the US and each of its Asian allies. In the broader picture, while centering the US, these countries have occupied the position of American satellites, so to speak, and have relied on the supply of key information on the outer world often via the US-centered network. In this regard, this relationship fostered by American supremacy may not only be symbolic in the US-Japan or the US-Asian relationship, but applicable to other areas of the world historically penetrated by US hegemony.

However, what needs to be kept in mind here is that the bilateral relationship between the US and Japan operates neither in the wake of a confrontational policy, as was the case with the former communist bloc, nor under coercion employed by the US. Rather, their relationship takes the form of a mutual agreement or complicity. This is encouraged by Japanese opportunism as a nation-state, with the intention of not only surviving under the American hegemony, but also pursuing its interest in tandem with the American benefit. To maintain this relationship with the US as smoothly as possible, Japanese politicians, business circles, and media even pretend not to notice Japan's de facto submission to the system of knowledge based on US hegemony and its "colonial" position in terms of the worldwide flow of knowledge, while voluntarily precluding the knowledge that may upset this indispensable relationship.

The knowledge that *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has thus far produced regarding Hiroshima is a symptomatic instance of this preclusion. Let us consider the specific context when this film was introduced to Japan. At the time of its release, the proper name of Hiroshima was completely erased from the title. The substitute title indicated "Nijyu-yojikan no jyouji"—an affair that took place for twenty-four hours—with no

mention of Hiroshima.<sup>38</sup> In the preview advertisements in one newspaper and one magazine on movies, the picture of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, which never appeared in the movie, was drawn as a backdrop to the embracing couple, suggesting that the whole diegesis would take place in France. Furthermore, the accompanying caption gave a totally different kind of sensation—“Blonde hair disarrayed, rosy skin burns! A French girl collapsed in the arms of a Japanese young man in agony!”<sup>39</sup> While clearly evading the use of the politically charged name Hiroshima, a highly sexualized implication surfaces in these advertisements. As a publicity policy of this film, Masaichi Nagata, the president of Daiei and the producer of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, advocated not for referring to Hiroshima or the atomic bombing, but for solely focusing on a sexual relationship between them in the diegesis.

Nagata considered the depiction of this affair as provocative because it takes the form of the “conquest” of a foreign woman by a Japanese man, not of a Japanese woman by a foreign man as normally happened in past collaborations between Japanese and foreign movie companies.<sup>40</sup> But, the caption of these advertisements rather demonstrated the conventional psyche of the colonial/non-white male who desires the woman of the colonizer’s/white race. This sexualization of the colonized man displays a meek assimilation of the colonizer’s culture rather than a challenge to it, since the colonized man’s desire for the colonizer’s woman belongs basically to the realm of the desire of the colonizer, not that of the colonized. In this way, new knowledge was created by borrowing specific vocabularies from the thinking of the colonizer to develop the colonial interior. The replacement of the title through this metaphoric

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<sup>38</sup> There were a number of criticisms of the change of the title of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* in the Japanese translation. For instance, see Shusaku Endo’s review in *Kinema junpo*, no. 236 (July 1959): 103-04, and Kiiichi Sasaki’s review in *Eiga hyoron*, vol. 16, no. 8 (August 1959): 20.

<sup>39</sup> *Shukan Eiga Puresu*, no. 595, 30 May 1959, 8. In Japanese, “Kinpatsu ga midare, bara-iro no hada ga moeru! Nihon no seinen no ude ni modaete, kuzureru furansu musume!” A similar advertisement also appeared in *Kinema junpo*, no. 235 (June 1959). However, as recounted earlier on page 2, these sensational advertisements did not achieve a noticeable effect in terms of a high turnout in audiences.

<sup>40</sup> See Yoshio Shirasaka, in *Kinema junpo*, no. 236 (July 1959): 106.

translation is actually a creative process, not simply the result of oppression, insofar as the preclusion of certain knowledge is simultaneously the production of another knowledge.

Interestingly, the cancellation of the release of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* in 1959 due to its poor viewership was called to mind in 1960, when the release of *Night and Fog in Japan* (Nihon no yoru to kiri), directed by Nagisa Oshima, was terminated. Since Oshima's film portrayed student movements (in a rather sarcastic way), and was shown immediately after the domestic turmoil and the social unrest caused by the intensive campaign against the Japan-US Security Treaty, some suspected that there was political pressure applied on the film companies. For instance, Kiichi Sasaki connected the two cancellations—*Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and *Night and Fog in Japan*—and questioned why the two film companies, Daiei, and Shochiku that distributed *Night and Fog in Japan*, did not strongly advocate for them, as if they implicitly wished that not many viewers would see these films.<sup>41</sup>

In other words, the memory of the cancellation of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* was enacted as the present event here, and not the past incident required to rescue from forgetting, nor the belated emergence that has kept its genuine form since the time it happened. Rather, memory is an effect of knowledge production not totally divorced from the specific temporality and spatiality at the time of remembering, i.e. the present contexts and power relations. Remembering is a construction in this sense, but a construction derived from the very situations of remembering, and not from nothing. As Walter Benjamin puts it: “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’ (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at

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<sup>41</sup> *Eiga hyoron*, vol. 17, no.12 (December 1960): 16-17. See also “‘Nihon no yoru to kiri’ no jyoei chushi” (The Cancellation of the Release of *Night and Fog in Japan*), *Kinema junpo*, no. 271 (November 1960): 44.

a moment of danger.”<sup>42</sup> Memory is not just something which returns, but which is already floating around as a constituent of the present, and which suddenly flashes up on some occasions.

Similar operations of knowledge “production” took place when *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* was presented to North American audiences so as not to disturb them and the contemporary world order, or rather, so as to “positively” seek internal cooperation and concurrence under the Cold War regime in the Western camp. Although this film actually quotes a Japanese documentary whose very existence is a rebuke to the US censorship of visual records of the disastrous aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this aspect in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has never become a vital part of the knowledge about this film nor an object of close scrutiny. The making of this documentary, *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, was undertaken by the Japan Film Company approximately fifty days after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 to illustrate the consequences of the bombing.<sup>43</sup> But in mid-production, the US Forces caught a member of the camera crew, who was at work in the ruined fields of Hiroshima. While allowing the crew members to continue shooting, they confiscated all

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<sup>42</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 255.

<sup>43</sup> For detailed accounts of a historical overview of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, see Kyoko Hirano, “Depictions of the Atomic Bombings in Japanese Cinema during the U.S. Occupation Period,” Abé Mark Nornes, “The Body at the Center—The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki,” in *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film*, ed. Mick Broderick (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), and Kyoko Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: the Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation, 1945-1952* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992). The making of this documentary is vividly recounted in Ryuichi Kano and Hajime Mizuno, *Hiroshima nijyu-nen* (Hiroshima Twenty Years) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1965), Akira Iwasaki, *Senryo sareta sukuriin: waga sengoshi* (The Occupied Screen: My Postwar History) (Tokyo: Shinnihon shuppansha, 1975), and *Masukomi shimin* (Mass Media Citizen), vol.16 (June 1968). Even after the US government returned the copy of the documentary to the Japanese government (altered to a 16-mm movie from the original 35-mm one) in 1967, the Japanese government did not allow it to be lent out except for strictly academic purposes despite sharp protest and criticism from the public as well as from the camera crew and the production members of the documentary. Although for the Japanese government, the reason for the refusal of public use of the documentary was the protection of the privacy of the bomb victims in the footage, this incident epitomizes how the Japanese government has actually prevented the public from seeing this documentary. For accounts of the criticism of the policy of the Japanese government regarding the treatment of this documentary, see also the three resources above (Kano and Mizuno’s and Iwasaki’s pieces as well as the journal *Masukomi shimin*).

the materials as soon as the document was complete in the spring of 1946. For the next six years until the end of the US Occupation, the documentary remained unknown and officially nonexistent. After the Japanese government recovered sovereignty in 1952, the existence of this documentary became known for the first time when the senior members of the film company released part of the footage in a few theaters in Japan. These people had secretly copied it before giving the entire footage to the US Forces. Albeit that the use of the footage was limited, it was used again in the Japanese documentary, *Still It's Good to Live* directed by Fumio Kamei in 1956, followed by *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* in 1959.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, historically speaking, at the time of its release in 1959, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* introduced these vivid pictures of the victims of the atomic bomb almost for the first time to wide audiences outside Japan. Nevertheless, this newsworthy feature of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has never gained much attention in North American academia. Often *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* has simply been noted as a source from Japanese “newsreels” by replicating the comments made by Resnais and Duras in interviews and the scenario.<sup>45</sup> The provocative use of this documentary in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has been obfuscated, while being treated on a par with other Japanese films quoted in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. In this sense, the ways in which Hiroshima in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has been deciphered by most of the North American critics that we discussed earlier may also explain the confinement of this noteworthy documentary within the film text. The historical contexts already embedded in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* through its inclusion of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* have had almost no

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<sup>44</sup> The footage of this documentary was also used in the Swedish documentary, *Krigets Vanvett* (The Face of War), directed by Tore Sjöberg in 1963.

<sup>45</sup> For Resnais, see “‘Hiroshima Mon Amour’: A Composite Interview with Alain Resnais” in *Film: Book 2: Films of Peace and War*, ed. Robert Hughes (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 35. For Duras, Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 18-22.

opportunities to create further contexts beyond the highly abstracted idea of Hiroshima that these critics have embraced. This blanket treatment of the Japanese movies may unwittingly reflect an Orientalist idea of a lack of history in the non-Western world among these critics who have no problem with indiscriminately treating these cited movies. If this is the case, it suggests what kind of political role the Orientalist idea of timelessness in the non-West can play beyond the aestheticization of non-Western cultures.

What is remarkable about *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is, however, the way in which it quotes the footage from *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*. Resnais superimposes the images of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* onto the voiceover of the woman in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. She claims that she saw the newsreels of Hiroshima being captured not only on the day of the explosion, but also those taken the next day and two days later. In fact, the precise images alluded to in the woman's words never existed, or, to put it another way, were never allowed to exist publicly. What is known right now is that on the second day of the bombing of Hiroshima, two camerapeople took the movie images of the disaster there, yet both of these images have disappeared permanently. The images taken by one cameraperson were confiscated twice; first, the Japanese Army seized the footage in the initial several days between the bombing and Japan's acceptance of defeat, and second, the American Forces took the negatives immediately, once the Occupation started. The images taken by the other cameraperson were lost without trace when they were sent from Hiroshima to Tokyo.<sup>46</sup> Although in light of the still images—photographs—taken

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<sup>46</sup> See Akira Iwasaki, *Senryo sareta sukuriin: waga sengoshi* (The Occupied Screen: My Postwar History) (Tokyo: Shinnihon shuppansha, 1975), 113-17. Also "Kaku jidai no senso hodo shashin: genbaku kiroku eiga kara uketsugubeki-mono" (War News Photographs in the Nuclear Era: What We Should Inherit from Documentaries of the Atomic Bomb) and "Mada attsuta genbaku eiga: moeteiru Hiroshima" (Another Film of the Atomic Bombing That Had Existed: Burning Hiroshima), *Masukomi shimin* (Mass Media Citizen), vol.16 (June 1968): 26-28, 50, and Ryuichi Kano and Hajime Mizuno, *Hiroshima nijyu-nen* (Hiroshima Twenty Years) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1965), 30-31. An account of one of the camerapeople who took the earliest images in Kano and Mizuno's book differs considerably from the

within the few days immediately after the explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, various visuals do exist in a collection by professional photographers and ordinary people. However, as for these lost movie images, it can be said that they have been morphed into a ghost-like existence or even into fables in the past.

Then, how should we interpret Resnais' superimposition of the phantasmatic images of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*—which had been officially nonexistent for a long time—onto the words that suggest other “phantasmatic” images—which will probably never be recovered? Do the woman's remarks in the voiceover suggest these ghost-like images that vanished from the regular world? Do they intimate the presence of the political power that had made the otherwise precious testimonies dissolve into a sphere unreachable by the public? Do they rather attempt to camouflage the inclusion of the problematic footage from *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* into the film, since it would possibly provoke the American authorities if this inclusion becomes widely known at that time? Or, should her remarks be genuinely deciphered in relation to the question of representation? Namely, do they imply a sarcasm about a realist representation of documentaries often considered to fixate the referent? Do they intend to problematize the gap between seeing and knowing, witnessing and truth claims, or the unresolved relationship between them? Do they address the impossibility of representing overwhelming events such as the atomic catastrophe—the unrepresentable—as is often

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accounts of Iwasaki and of the two articles in *Masukomi shimin* mentioned above. In addition to these movie images captured at the earliest stage, there existed another newsreel composed of the images pictured two weeks after the atomic explosion of Hiroshima. For an account of this newsreel, see Ryuichi Kano and Hajime Mizuno, *Hiroshima nijyu-nen* (Hiroshima Twenty Years) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1965), 30-32, along with Iwasaki's book. Kyoko Hirano introduces an account of the fact that there was another set of movie images on Hiroshima, taken by a local amateur cameraperson and donated to the Hiroshima Memorial, but probably confiscated by the Americans. She offers this information in her *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: the Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation, 1945-1952* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 59.

discussed regarding *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*? The undecidability of these questions creates a vertiginous sense in which everything can be partly/totally true and/or false.

Here the issues embedded in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* would enter the spheres beyond the system of knowledge pivoting around American hegemony, beyond the West's tautological structure of knowledge indicated by Said. What is suggested here is the potential for another type of knowledge that does not necessarily correspond to the existing frame of reference. In this regard, this film should not be reduced to a mere reification of the system of knowledge, albeit constantly at war with its dominating power. We should also rethink the effects of the voiceover of the woman in this scene as the layering of at least three different situations: her conversation with the man or possibly her interior monologue, plus her voiceover commentary about the movie-images on the screen. The addressees are therefore threefold: the man in the diegesis, herself in which the whole diegesis equals her imaginary construction, and the audience for the film. When one voice that would stem from an invisible body can be situated in three such different scenarios, the speaking subject of this voice is cracked and split from within. But the point is that this subject is split not only because of the co-existence of three different situations, but also because of the implosion of these three situations into each other. In other words, this reveals that the documentary commentary is not always a voice of authority and mastery, but one of vulnerability and susceptibility to exterior power, far from establishing the idea of oneness inside the speaking subject as normally assumed.

### **Rethinking Genre Transition**

The questions of representation in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, then, pave the way for another question rooted in this movie—the genre changes from a documentary, which was initially commissioned for Resnais to depict Hiroshima fourteen years after

the bombing, to a feature-length fiction film on an interracial and heterosexual affair accidentally generated in contemporary Hiroshima. *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* repeats this transition in overtly self-referential, yet multi-layered manners. This genre change from a documentary to a feature-length movie appears first in its diegesis, when the film's opening sequence, composed of the fragmentary footage from *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* and others, switches to the fiction part of a love-making scene between the French woman and the Japanese man.<sup>47</sup> This transition in the diegesis manifests itself again in the switch in Resnais' own career from master of short documentaries to director of avant-garde films. *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* documents these transitions that took place inside and outside the cinematic text, both in fiction and real life.

This genre transition, however, has been interpreted in relatively simple terms, as epitomized in the famous synopsis in which Duras claims how qualitatively different the avant-garde *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is from the Japanese referential documentaries made prior to it.<sup>48</sup> As Rey Chow points out, in this synopsis, Duras introduces a hierarchy between fiction film and documentary, between Western and non-Western cinemas, between “a sort of false documentary that will probe the lesson of Hiroshima more deeply than any made-to-order documentary”<sup>49</sup> and the documentary limited only to the superficial factuality for her. This contrast between a high modernist narrative and the mechanical, realist factographicity delineated by Duras intentionally creates the geographical, racial and cultural differences between them as a *fait accompli*, which neatly blends in the epistemological structure—the system of knowledge configured on the basis of American hegemony and the tautological structure of Western knowledge.

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<sup>47</sup> Joshua Hirsch also mentions the repetition of the transitions that take place both in the genre and the structure of the film in his *After Image: Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 87-88.

<sup>48</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 9-10.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

Chow explains the contradictory mechanism in this hierarchical system: “Duras’ avant-garde text fully depends on mass culture—the “made-to-order” documentary that it consciously disdains—in order to be what it is. Only thus does her avant-garde text achieve its puritanist revolutionariness.”<sup>50</sup> If so, what Duras defines as avant-garde is rather an empty signifier, which only retroactively filled its content by demarcating its identity as what is different from the realist films and documentaries made in Japan.<sup>51</sup> But as argued earlier, this dichotomy between avant-garde films and documentaries is hardly sustainable. In Chapter Two, we will explore the documentaries produced by Kamei, which incorporate surrealistic expressions as well as techniques used in the feature-length film narrative.

But the genre change in this film accompanies a further switch in the focal theme, from the vivid depiction of the bomb victims to the psyche of the French woman traumatized in wartime France. When the troubled psyche of the woman is foregrounded, the psyche of the Japanese man, of her counterpart, is reduced to an extension of the collective psyche shaped through the victimization from the atomic bomb, even though he was a veteran and far away from Hiroshima when the war ended, as we discussed earlier. The most drastic change that arises in accordance with this theme shift is that the psyche of the Japanese man as well as that of the bomb victims become an instance that represents “a sign of the so-called limit of Western knowledge,”<sup>52</sup> as Chow observes. This “ ‘impasse’ of Western thought”<sup>53</sup> is posited exactly the same way as Said inferred—the non-West as the opposition to the West,

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<sup>50</sup> Rey Chow, “When Whiteness Feminizes . . . : Some Consequences of a Supplement Logic,” in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 177.

<sup>51</sup> Matt Matsuda discusses perspectives of French intellectuals who see Japan as an alternative modernity, reflecting their complicated views of *Japonisme* and their relationships with the US in “East of No West: The *Posthistoire* of Postwar France and Japan,” in *Confluences: Postwar Japan and France*, ed. Douglas Slaymaker (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002), 15-33.

<sup>52</sup> Rey Chow, “When Whiteness Feminizes . . . : Some Consequences of a Supplement Logic,” in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 175.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

which functions merely to confirm the contour of the identity of the West. In addition, Duras' logic presumes that the Western subject can approach the non-Western Other only through realism and referentialism, as if otherwise this tautological discourse cannot securely contain the Other within it.

As suggested earlier, Chapter Four will exhibit a reading completely different from Duras' definition of the psyche of the Japanese man, and initiate a discussion about what has been avoided in the critique of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. Here suffice it to say that Duras' hierarchal formation of the binaries between the psyche of the French woman and that of the Japanese man, or the binaries between the avant-garde and documentaries, might have been the precise cause of the overall popularity of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* in the Western world. Through its geographically laid-out, evolutionalist idea, the Western audience members can imagine themselves as advanced and sophisticated, and the non-Western others as backward and primitive. Also, Duras' elaboration on the psyche of the French woman may have served to shift the interest of the Western viewers away from the disastrous aftermath of the nuclear attack and the suffering of the bomb victims toward something else.

There would be a number of reasons for this theme shift, such as political intentions, as considered earlier. Yet, in relation to a modernist sensitivity which *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* demonstrates, a desire for "ascetic cleansing" may partly be at work here as well. In her *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, Christine Ross views Roland Barthes' embrace of the New Novel as the result of his hygienically-driven urge and the purificatory zeal for "a retreat from the pleasures of greasy french fries as much as from the messiness of the real."<sup>54</sup> Such evasiveness of the randomness, messiness and uncontrollability of reality gives a sense of newness and freshness, and equips people

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<sup>54</sup> Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 183.

with a convenient shield that protects them from the “outer” reality so that they can move ahead together with societal development, without worrying much about the past.

The question is that, if Duras’ avant-garde narrative—in its complexity and subversiveness—is, after all, contingent on the documentary’s hardcore referentiality, to what extent is it justifiable to totalize a documentary as being simple, placid, and conventional, merely the opposite to avant-garde texts? If, as Chow states, in this movie, “the ‘primitive’ modes of representation have not exactly disappeared; they are simply displayed,”<sup>55</sup> should not our starting point for the discussion of representation be the exploration of the simultaneous co-existence of these two modes? Why did Resnais, in the first place, not relinquish his “failed” documentary part, but instead include it in the opening sequence as a crucial part of the movie? If he deliberately places the fragments of his documentary within the film narrative, does it mean that the multilayered transitions inside and outside of the film designate not a linear development of the realist/referentialist modes of representation to the modernist/avant-garde ones, but rather a circulative movement constantly oscillating between the two modes? This is another set of questions that we should wrestle with in re-thinking the ways in which the knowledge on *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has been produced.

Let us return to the issue of the genre change of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. James Monaco’s interview with Resnais has frequently been quoted by the critics since its publication in 1979, because it reveals the reason Resnais gave up making a short documentary on Hiroshima. According to this interview, Resnais explained that there seemed to be no way to undertake the film other than by remaking *Night and Fog*, a documentary about the Nazi concentration camps that he directed in 1955, because of the commonality of their perceptual effects such as memories, knowledge of

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<sup>55</sup> Rey Chow, “When Whiteness Feminizes . . . : Some Consequences of a Supplement Logic,” in *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 175.

incomprehensive suffering, pain, and death.<sup>56</sup> These remarks of Resnais have long been used not only as a preliminary episode that introduces the genesis of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*—how the collaboration between Resnais and Duras was generated—but also as a spring board to a close examination of the fiction part.

What is dubious about this explanation is that, first, it is as if the documentary genre can provide only one style of representation, just like that of *Night and Fog*, and implicitly negates other possibilities for documentaries. Second, it precludes questions such as why it has to be regarded as meaningless to make another *Night and Fog* out of the experience of the atomic explosion of Hiroshima. This question inevitably invites further questions; is the nuclear massacre absorbable and containable within the range of mass murders in the concentration camps? How should we consider the singularity of the enormous impact of these events and many other atrocities as well as their relationships with modernities?

### **The Palimpsest Relationship between Resnais' and Kamei's Films**

Laura Adler's interview with Resnais conducted in the late 1990's may offer a more constructive explanation for Resnais' abandonment of his short documentary on Hiroshima. In the interview Resnais said, "if you want to make a film on Hiroshima, buy the rights from the Japanese; neither Marker nor I could do better."<sup>57</sup> According to Adler, Resnais spent six months surveying dozens of films on the related theme in collaboration with another documentary filmmaker Chris Marker. In this remark, Resnais did not address Kamei's name, but considering the fact that Kamei's *Still It's Good to Live* was the only documentary on Hiroshima made in Japan by then, (other

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<sup>56</sup> James Monaco, *Alain Resnais* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 34.

<sup>57</sup> Laure Adler, *Marguerite Duras: A Life*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 218.

than American censored *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*,) it would be natural to assume that Resnais had referred to Kamei's film.

Furthermore, in a talk with Kamei that was given in Tokyo in 1958 before the release of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, Resnais also made similar remarks to Kamei in person. Resnais explained to Kamei that he originally had three plans for making a documentary on Hiroshima. One was to make a film just like *Night and Fog*, the second was to make it like an encyclopedic display of knowledge on the atomic and hydrogen bombs, and the third was exactly what Kamei's *Still It's Good to Live* achieved. Resnais said that he abandoned the first plan due to a possible lack of sincerity, and the second one owing to a scarcity of budget. Therefore, he said that he was enormously disappointed to find Kamei's movie, in which everything in his mind had already been used.<sup>58</sup> If this is more than lip-service by Resnais to Kamei, how should we interpret the relationship between *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and *Still It's Good to Live*, especially *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*'s extensive use of the footage from *Still It's Good to Live* in its own opening sequence?

We discussed earlier that Resnais complicated the denotation and connotation of the images excerpted from *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* by superimposing the enigmatic voiceover of the woman's testimonial accounts on them. These images that captured the situation seven weeks after the explosion, and were reused in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, appear almost identically in *Still It's Good to Live*. Moreover, in the opening of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, all the images of the victims still dying or suffering from lingering radioactive effects ten years after the bombing also come from images originally taken for *Still It's Good to Live*. These images from two different documentary sources constitute the biggest part of the

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<sup>58</sup> Alain Resnais and Fumio Kamei, "Watashi wa naze kiroku eiga o tsukuruka: yoru to kiri kara pikadon e" (Why Do I Make Documentaries?: From *Night and Fog* to *Pikadon*), *Geijyutsu shincho* (Art Shincho) (December 1958): 258.

opening sequence of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, while their random and fragmented montage cuts chronology into pieces, and ignores the temporal distances between each shot.

Not only the use of the same images but also the ways in which the film narrative proceeds in the opening sequences are alike in both *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and *Still It's Good to Live*. Both of them start with ominous music, followed by showing the images of a human shadow instantly burnt onto the stone steps at the moment of explosion, but already faded at that time. They also include similar images of the smartly dressed young girls in the latest fashions walking on the completely restored streets of Hiroshima, along with narrations that state that memories of catastrophic experiences are now sinking into oblivion. In this way, the two films open by signaling temporal distance and fading memory. What separates *Still It's Good to Live* from *Hiroshima Mon Amour* is, however, the former's expressive gesture of uncovering the hidden truths: deep inside of the superficial surface of forgetfulness, many victims are still living, removed from the rest of society, un-rescued from approaching death, incurable diseases, destitution and depression.

Although neither Resnais nor Duras fully acknowledged *Hiroshima, Mon Amour's* appreciable indebtedness to Kamei's documentary other than referring to it as one of the "newsreels," Resnais seems to respond critically to Kamei's way of representing the bomb victims. This dissertation also considers that Kamei is not simply a realist filmmaker, but rather a pioneering figure, one of those who made "modernist documentaries" already in the 1930's through the production of the records of wars and occupation. It explores, nevertheless, why Kamei's approach to the documentary changed when representing atomic bomb victims in the postwar 1950's, and how Resnais fundamentally transfigured Kamei's approach. The question of the distance between the filmmaker and the atomic bomb victim, or the gaze of the camera and the

objectification by the gaze, are involved in Resnais' "remaking" of Kamei's film. In this sense, it is feasible to suggest that their relationship precisely constitutes the palimpsest textuality that Gérard Genette discusses. Genette states:

Hypertextuality, in its own way, pertains to *tinkering*. This term {in French, *bricolage*} generally carries derogatory connotations but has been given some credentials by Claude Lévi-Strauss's analyses. I shall not dwell on the matter. Let me simply say that the art of "making new things out of old" has the merit, at least, of generating more complex and more savory objects than those that are "made on purpose"; a new function is superimposed upon and interwoven with an older structure, and the dissonance between these two concurrent elements imparts its flavor to the resulting whole . . . . That duplicity of the object, in the sphere of textual relations, can be represented by the old analogy of the *palimpsest*: on the same parchment, one text can become superimposed upon another, which it does not quite conceal but allows to show through. It has been aptly said that pastiche and parody "designate literature as a palimpsest." This must be understood to apply more generally to every hypertext, as Borges made clear concerning the relation between the text and its foretexts. The hypertext invites us to engage in a relational reading, the flavor of which, however perverse, may well be condensed in an adjective recently coined by Philippe Lejeune: a *palimpsestuous* reading. To put it differently, just for the fun of switching perversities, one who really loves texts must wish from time to time to love (at least) two together. That relational reading (reading two or more texts *in relation* to each other) may be an opportunity to engage in what I shall term, with an outmoded phrase, an *open structuralism*. Indeed, two kinds of structuralism coexist, one of which is concerned with the closure of the text and with deciphering its inner structures: such is, for example, the structuralism of Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss's famous analysis of Baudelaire's "Les Chats." The other kind may be exemplified by Barthes's *Mythologiques*, which demonstrates how a text (a myth) can, with a little help, "read another."<sup>59</sup>

But humankind, which is ever discovering new meaning, cannot always invent new forms; it must at times be content to invest old forms with new meanings. "The quality of fables and metaphors of which the human imagination is capable is limited, but that small number of inventions can be all things to all people, like the Apostle." But those must be *attended to*, and the specific merit of hypertextuality is that it constantly launches ancient works into new circuits of meaning. Memory, they say, is "revolutionary"—provided, no doubt, that it is impregnated, made fruitful, and not reduced to *commemorating*. "Literature is not exhaustible for the sufficient and simple reason that no single book is." That single book must not only be reread; it must be rewritten, even if à la Pierre

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<sup>59</sup> Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 398-99.

Menard: literally. Thus does Borges's utopia come to be accomplished, the utopia of a Literature in a perpetual state of transfusion, a transtextual perfusion, constantly present to itself in its totality and as a Totality all of whose authors are but one and all its books one vast, one infinite Book.<sup>60</sup>

This is to say that in order to comprehend the task of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and its multilayered significance underneath the text, we need to undertake a different way of reading that traverses the clear-cut distinction between realism and modernism, and that goes back and forth within the simultaneous co-existence of these two approaches, since modernist representation cannot transpire without leaving in place the excesses and residues of realism. This is also a question of how Resnais and Kamei, two outstanding documentary directors, struggled with the re/presentation of the unprecedented experiences of atomic bomb victimization. For this purpose, Chapter Two explores Kamei's representational strategies in his documentaries, from his prewar films to *Still It's Good to Live*, and Chapter Three examines how Resnais' documentary segment in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* responds and recreates *Still It's Good to Live* as its palimpsest. In other words, the critical endeavor of this project is to create another hypertext of *Still It's Good to Live* and *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 400.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**AN ACT IN CONTRADICTION:**  
**FUMIO KAMEI'S *STILL IT'S GOOD TO LIVE***

**World as Image, Documentary as Fiction**

Fumio Kamei,<sup>1</sup> the director of *Still It's Good to Live*<sup>2</sup> (which can be interpreted as the palimpsest of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* as suggested in Chapter One) produced a ground-breaking documentary of war and occupation in 1938. This film is entitled *Shanghai: A Logistic Record of Sino-Japanese War* (Shianhai: shina-jihen koho kiroku). The film captures the deployment of the Japanese force that occupied the entire city of Shanghai after the fierce fighting during its war of invasion.<sup>3</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> For Kamei's works and life history, see Fumio Kamei, *Tatakau eiga: dokyumentarisuto no showashi* (Fighting Cinema: A History of Showa for a Documentarian) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989); Masaaki Tsuzuki, *Tori ni nattsuta ningen: hankotsu no eiga kantoku Kamei Fumio no shogai* (A Human Being Who Has Become a Bird: The Lifetime of Fumio Kamei, An Uncompromising Film Director) (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1992); Tadao Sato, *Nihon eiga no kyosho tachi II* (Masters of Japanese Cinema II) (Tokyo: Gakuyo shobo, 1996), 167-84; Eric Cazdyn, *The Flash of Capital: Film and Geopolitics in Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); and Ann Sherif, *Japan's Cold War: Media, Literature, and Law* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> For *Still It's Good to Live*, see Fumio Kamei et al., "Kiroku eiga 'Ikiteite yokatta' no itoshita mono" (What the Documentary *Still It's Good to Live* Intended), *Bijyutsu Hihyo* (Art Criticism) (August 1956): 76-78; Shinbi Ogura, "Ikiteite yokatta" (*Still It's Good to Live*), *Eiga geijyutsu* (Cinema Art), (September 1956): 52-53; Shohei Tokizane, "Kamei Fumio," *Eiga hyoron*, vol. 13, no. 10 (October 1956): 71; Tadashi Iijima, "Ikiteite yokatta" (*Still It's Good to Live*), *Ibid.*, 104-05; and Fumio Kamei et al., "Dokumento eiga no sekai" (The World of Documentary Films) *Geijyutsu shincho*, vol. 8, no. 2, (February 1957): 219-28. For *The World Is Terrified: The Reality of the "Ash of Death"* (Sekai wa kyofu suru: shi no hai no shotai), a documentary on the effects of radioactivity on biological changes in creatures and environments that Kamei made next in 1957, see Fumio Kamei and Takeo Takagi, "Eiga de egaku shi no hai" (Deadly Fallout Portrayed by a Film), *Shukan yomiuri* (Weekly Yomiuri) (August 1957): 52-56; Fumio Kamei, "Aete 'hiroshima nagasaki no himitsu' o hagu: 'Sekai wa kyofu suru' satsuei urabanashi," (I Dare to Disclose the Secrets of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: An Unknown Story of Shooting *The World Is Terrified: The Reality of the "Ash of Death"*) *Chuo koron* (December 1957): 77-85; and Mitsuo Takeya, "'Sekai wa kyofu suru' o mite" (Watching *The World Is Terrified: The Reality of the "Ash of Death"*), *Eiga hyoron* (December 1957): 73-75.

<sup>3</sup> The success of *Shanghai: A Logistic Record of Sino-Japanese War* made Kamei an outstanding figure in the movie world. He then made another documentary, *Peking*, in 1938 in which he focused on everyday life of the city dwellers in Beijing rather than the Japanese military campaign. For Kamei's films during this period such as *Shanghai* and *Soldiers at the Front* (Tatakau heitai), see Tsuneo Hazumi, "Nihon no senso eiga," (Japanese War Cinema), *Kinema junpo*, no. 637 (February 1938): 12; Tatsuhiko Shigeno, "'Shanghai' hihyo" (A Review of *Shanghai*), *Kinema junpo*, no. 637 (February 1938): 62-63; Akira Iwasaki, Shinkichi Noda, and Shigeomi Sato, "Tokushu: Kamei Fumio no

documentary was created by Toho to commemorate victory over a fierce battle fought with the Chinese just three months before, and to give more detailed accounts of the fight that attracted much attention in Japan. But it betrayed its own agenda by conjuring up confusing images of ambivalence and obscurity.

In this documentary, pictures of Japanese soldiers in a relaxed mood—talking cheerfully with each other, playing sports, taking care of weapons, or playing with local children—are juxtaposed with the other images of trees, creeks and tombs in the countryside as well as ruins in the empty city center. The narration informs the viewer that these creeks and roadside trees and even tombs were effectively put to use as devices for the Chinese attacks: the creeks as obstacles, the tombs as trenches, and the

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saihyoka” (A Special Edition: the Reevaluation of Fumio Kamei), *Eiga hyoron*, vol. 28, no. 12 (December 1971): 84-95; Tetsuo Kitagawa, “Tsuito: Kamei Fumio no shiso to sakuhin” (Mourning: Thought and Works of Fumio Kamei), *Buraku (Area)* (April 1987): 64-67; Noriaki Tsuchimoto, “Kamei Fumio: ‘Shanghai’ kara ‘Tatakau heitai’ made,” in *Koza nihon eiga 5: Sengo eiga no tenkai*, (Lecture Series Japanese Cinema 5: The Development of Postwar Cinema), ed. Tadao Sato et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1987), 322-41; Masaaki Tsuzuki, “Ga o shite shinjitsu o kataraseru: Kamei Fumio no dokyumentariron o megutte,” (Let Pictures Tell the Truth: On Fumio Kamei’s Theory of Documentaries), *Eizogaku (Image Studies)*, vol. 51 (November 1993): 52-61; Wahiko Yoshida, “Media, aruiwa fashizumu: 3 dokyumentarisuto Kamie Fumio to seni koyo eiga,” (Media or Fascism: The Documentalist Fumio Kamei and the Films to Raise Fighting Spirit), *Hosei riron (Theory of Laws and Politics)*, vol. 33. No. 1 (2000): 118-50; Jinshi Fujii, “Torarenakattsuta shotto to sono unmei: ‘Jihen’ to eiga, 1937-1941,” (Untaken Shots and Their Destiny: “Sino-Japanese War” and Cinema, 1937-1941), *Eizogaku (Image Studies)*, vol. 67 (November 2001): 23-40; Jinshi Fujii, “Shanghai, nankin, pekin: toho bunkaeiga-bu tairiku toshi sanbusaku no chiseigaku” (Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing: Geopolitics of a Trilogy of Continental Chinese Cities by Cultural Films Branch of Toho), in *Eiga to “daitoa kyoei-ken,”* ed. Kenji Iwamoto (Cinema and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere) (Tokyo: Shinwa sha, 2004), 101-27; and Tadao Sato, *Kinema to hosei: nichu eiga zenshi* (Cinema and the Roar of Cannons: A Pre-history of Sino-Japanese Movies) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2004), 225-59. For the Comments made by Kamei himself on these films, see Fumio Kamei et al., “Jyugun kantoku kyameraman no zadankai” (Round Table by the Directors and Cameramen Following the Army), *Eiga hyoron*, vol. 21 (March 1939): 50-63; Fumio Kamei, “‘Tatakau heitai’ kara no keiken” (My Experiences in *Soldiers at the Front*), *Kinema junpo*, no. 676 (April 1939): 105; Fumio Kamei et al., “Nihon bunka eiga no shoki kara konnichi o kataru zadankai” (Round Table on Japanese Cultural Movies from the Initial Period up to Today), *Bunka eiga kenkyu (Cultural Film Studies)*, vol. 3, no. 2 (February 1940): 16-27; Fumio Kamei, “‘Tatakau heitai’: sono junan to enshutsu hoho o kataru” (*Soldiers at the Front: Ordeals and Production*), *Shine Furonto (Cine Front)* no. 12 (July 1977): 4-5; Fumio Kamei et al., “Kamei Fumio no kataru hiroku: senchu sengo eigashi” (A Secret Memoir Told by Fumio Kamei: A History of Wartime and Postwar Cinema), *Eiga geijyutsu* (July-August 1976): 78-89; and Fumio Kamei and Noriaki Tsuchimoto, “Dokyumentari no seishin” (A Spirit of Documentaries), in *Koza nihon eiga 5: Sengo eiga no tenkai* (Lecture Series Japanese Cinema 5: The Development of Postwar Cinema), ed. Tadao Sato et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1987), 342-61.

roadside trees as convenient places for hiding machine guns in a row by hollowing out the bottoms of the trunks. While emphasizing how formidable and scrupulous the enemy's entrenchment and fortressing were, and what gruesome experiences fellow soldiers had to endure to overcome difficulties, the camera persistently follows the meandering creeks and tangled streets, structured like a maze that enfolds the space. This camerawork gives the impression that the seemingly unceasing flow of creeks that spread in innumerable directions also encircle other scenes, dividing them into fragmented pieces.

Kamei was trained in Eisensteinian montage in Leningrad where he studied film-making in his early twenties. He believes that the audience's perceptions formed through montage techniques are brought to completion not by the synthesis of the images on the screen but by the synthesis that takes place inside the audience's mind after recognizing these images. In this sense, the film's images of the flow of the creeks can also be said to constitute the audience's psyche, insofar as this eternal flow continues uninterrupted within it. The images of this flow give rise, not only to a slight sense of uncanniness stemming from a foreignness or otherness, but also the sense of a sight akin to that experienced in a dream, the unconscious, or possibly a nightmare.

Although the images of the flow of the creeks are a naturalistic representation and thereby seem to make a realist representation in this sense, they also indicate the possibility that nature, the city landscape, or things familiar in everyday life can be transformed into a weapon of the enemy who suddenly attacks. The flow would symbolize the psychic world of the paranoid, who shudders in fear of being avenged by the defeated, and who is constantly threatened by the return of the repressed. The world had already become a picture in Kamei's documentary in the Heideggerian sense. The estranging montage generates an uneasy atmosphere throughout the movie,

and gives the feeling that the smiling faces of the soldiers and the innocence of children playing together on screen may just be a lull before a turbulent storm and a prophecy of a forthcoming incursion. Moreover, the viewer might easily suspect that the scenes of these amicable interactions were merely a performance with a script and a stage manager, far from what was going on in real life. Kamei's documentary can also be seen as a fiction in this sense. The point is that he seems conscious of the self-referential and performative aspect of the film's narrative.

Also in this documentary, it is not the Japanese military operations, but the Chinese defense strategies, that comes to the fore when the film extensively covers the damage done during a battle in the downtown Shanghai district. Even though filmmakers are not free to depict details of the Japanese military action, the considerable emphasis on the Chinese military actions creates a bewildering effect on the minds of the audience, provoking doubt about which perspective the film represents, that of the Japanese or of the Chinese. The last scene of the movie privileges such a sense of doubt, since it vividly portrays the hostile expressions on the faces of the Chinese who are watching a victory parade of the Japanese soldiers on the main street. An unusually prolonged tracking shot foregrounds the gaze of these people directed at the camera. Although they avoid physical confrontation and any display of overt hostility, they are fully aware of returning the enemy's gaze. The official narrative of the celebration and the justification of the Japanese military campaign are furtively reversed in this documentary, and limited to a minimal elevation of the pro-war sentiment.

### **Emptiness and Aloofness in Kamei's Surrealism**

Let us further consider the specific style of the camerawork in this documentary that starts by depicting the flow of the winding creeks. The scene

reminds us of what Walter Benjamin values in a number of photographs taken by Eugène Atget. According to Benjamin:

Atget almost always passed by the “great sights and so-called landmarks.” What he did not pass by was a long row of boot lasts; or the Paris courtyards, where from night to morning handcarts stand in serried ranks; or the tables after people have finished eating and left, the dishes not yet cleared away—as they exist by the hundreds of thousands at the same hour; or the brothel at No. 5, Rue—, whose street number appears, gigantic, at four different places on the building’s façade. Remarkably, however, almost all these pictures are empty. Empty is the Porte d’Arceuil by the fortifications, empty are the triumphal steps, empty are the courtyards, empty, as it should be, is the Place du Tertre. They are not lonely, merely without mood; the city in these pictures looks cleared out, like a lodging that has not yet found a new tenant. It is in these achievements that Surrealist photography sets the scene for a salutary estrangement between man and his surroundings. It gives free play to the politically educated eyes, under whose gaze all intimacies are sacrificed to the illumination of detail.<sup>4</sup>

The creeks and the row of trees persistently captured in Kamei’s documentary can be reckoned, just like Atget’s objects in city life are, as a typical surrealist expression that describes the particulars in fine detail, and that witnesses a bizarre sense of emptiness within the picture frame. Yet for the viewers of this movie, who are predominantly Japanese, these images may also reflect something beyond Benjamin’s consideration, beyond the consequences of mechanization, urbanization and modernization, which are limited to social changes that have taken place inside metropolitan life. In the eyes of the audience of *Shanghai*, that which fills the empty space, which had just been the site of bloody battle, may rather be heavily charged with subjective feelings which are nothing salutary nor even dry and neutral. We could say that this cinematic space is filled with something like an affect propelled by the force of colonialism and imperialism. The image conjured up in the mind of the

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Little History of Photography” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 2 1927-1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings et al., trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 519.

paranoid, who can be the Japanese audience as well as the Japanese colonizer, has taken the form of a Surrealistic expression, like that noted by Benjamin.

The subjective feelings of the Japanese audience may have to do with the suppression of freedom of speech as well, which signals that military censorship is in force. Although Kamei was critical of the Japanese invasion of China, what he could do at the time of making *Shanghai* was strictly limited. After *Shanghai* earned a good reputation, he produced another documentary entitled *Soldiers at the Front* (Tatakau heitai) in 1939. It illustrates the Japanese soldiers marching across the unendingly vast Chinese soil. Kamei became a bit bolder and his criticism slightly exceeded the range of surrealistic euphemism. That the documentary depicted the exhausted soldiers provoked the Japanese authorities immensely. Not only did they ban the movie, but they also deprived Kamei of a film director's license, which became required from 1940, after a law policing film-making was issued under the militarist regime. In wartime Japan, Kamei was the only director persecuted for the infringement of this law. As a consequence, he was imprisoned for a year.

In considering the surrealist expression in *Shanghai*, it should be noted that the images of this "documentary" are often highly imaginative. Without visiting Shanghai City, Kamei created a montage by using the rushes sent to Tokyo by the camera crew. Although he gave the crew brief ideas about the shots beforehand, these were somewhat as banal and stereotypical as shots of the sunset in Manchuria. In the making of *Shanghai*, Kamei was the editor rather than the director. Interestingly, this episode bears a resemblance to the making of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, in which Duras, without visiting Hiroshima, imagined its landscape with the aid of Resnais' letters sent from Japan, and formulated her screenplay according to his description. At any rate, the way Kamei created his cinematic images encapsulates his aloofness from the context, and possibly his lack of affect towards the object.

In *Shanghai*, one of the scenes of the most ferocious battlefields, where the annihilation of the whole Japanese unit took place, best exemplifies how this kind of aloofness from the object is established. Kamei created a montage that links the shots that demonstrate the impregnability of the enemy's position to those of the wreckage of the dead Japanese soldier's battle helmet and many Japanese grave-posts. To sublimate these two shots in a dialectic development, he then places a shot of the butterfly hovering over the Japanese soldier's helmet. This last serene shot of the butterfly reorganizes the death of the Japanese soldiers as part of the immensity of the natural landscape. It creates the effect of radically cancelling out the specificity of the battle and its temporal and spatial context, and absorbs its historicity into eternal and unchanging nature.

Why did Kamei discard the ironical gaze and bystander's indifferent attitude, when he later documented the atomic bomb victims in *Still It's Good to Live?* In *Shanghai*, the unyielding distance from the object, the dead Japanese soldiers, is established in a way different from a traditional realist depiction. Kamei's montage creates the sense that the whole incident is an example of the countless battles that have arisen from time immemorial, and allows the film narrative to isolate itself from the given context. The surrealism employed in this documentary thus supplies a representational method for one who assumes that his or her position can stay outside the context of the incident being witnessed, and can maintain a steadfast detachment from the messiness of that reality.

Kamei's use of montage, however, can be further understood as a demonstration of techniques widely shared in 1930's Japanese fiction films, especially those of Yasujiro Ozu. As the film critic Tadao Sato points out, Kamei incorporated such techniques when he inserted a shot of the flitting butterfly into the Eisensteinian

montage.<sup>5</sup> Although there are many analyses of Ozu's film techniques, here we would refer to Gilles Deleuze's.<sup>6</sup> According to Deleuze, Ozu's montage is innovation in the purely optical and aural situation that suddenly emerged in modernity as a visual representation. Deleuze considers:

[T]he montage-cut, which will dominate modern cinema, is a purely optical passage or punctuation between images, working directly, sacrificing all synthetic effects. The sound is also affected, since the montage-cut may culminate in the 'one shot, one line,' procedure borrowed from American cinema. But there, for instance, in Lubitsch, it was a matter of an action-image functioning as an index, whereas Ozu modifies the meaning of the procedure, which now shows the absence of the plot: the action-image disappears in favour of the purely visual image of what a character *is*, and the sound image of what he *says*, completely banal nature and conversation constituting the essentials of the script . . . . It is clear that this method immediately presents idle periods, and leads to their increase in the course of the film. Of course, as the film proceeds, it might be thought that the idle periods are no longer important simply for themselves but recoup the effect of something important: the shot or the line would, on this view, be extended by a quite long silence or emptiness. But it is definitely not the case, with Ozu, that we get the remarkable *and* the ordinary, limit-situations *and* banal ones, the former having an effect on, or purposely insinuating themselves into, the latter.<sup>7</sup>

If we accept Deleuze's ideas, the shot of the flitting butterfly above the dead Japanese soldier's helmet in the battlefield can be said to be the amplification of the situation in which "everything is ordinary or banal, even death and the dead who are

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<sup>5</sup> Tadao Sato, *Nihon eiga riron-shi* (History of Japanese Film Theory) (Tokyo: Hyoron-sha, 1977), 215-16.

<sup>6</sup> For analysis of Yasujiro Ozu's cinema, see Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), Donald Richie, *Ozu* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), Tadao Sato, *Ozu Yasujiro no geijyutsu* (Art of Yasujiro Ozu) (Tokyo: Asahi shimbun sha, 1978), Noel Burch, *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), Tadao Sato, "Ozu," in *Currents in Japanese Cinema*, trans. Gregory Barrett (New York: Kodansha International, 1982), 185-96, and Shigehiko Hasumi, *Kantoku Ozu Yasujiro* (Director Yasujiro Ozu) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 1983), David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), Hideki Maeda, *Ozu Yasujiro no ie: jizoku to shinto* (Home of Yasujiro Ozu: Continuance and Permeation) (Tokyo: Shoshi Yamada, 1993), Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film: A Concise History* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2001), 119-29, and Kuniichi Uno, *Eizoshintai ron* (A Discussion of Image and Body) (Tokyo: Misuzu shobo, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugu Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 13-14.

the object of a natural forgetting.”<sup>8</sup> Also, the sense of order tentatively broken by human beings through the battle is “reinstated by an unchanging, regular nature, as in an equation that provides us with the reason for apparent breaks, ‘for the turns and returns, the highs and the lows’, as Leibniz puts it.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, the turbulences incurred by the human deed are absorbed into the power of nature that readjusts itself like the automatism of the preprogrammed system, while erasing the specificities of the Sino-Japanese War. This function, characteristic of the purely optic and sound situation according to Deleuze, is congruent with the aloofness from the context that surrealist expressions may achieve. The aloofness that accompanies the erasure of historicity, however, can be questioned as to whether it is in principle radical or reactive, anti-war or acquiescent to wars, in terms of the positionality of the camera’s gaze that displays indifference to the object and even a sense of transcendence.

### **The Dialectical Montage and Ozu’s Purely Optical and Sound Images**

Now let us closely examine the subject-object relationship presented in *Still It’s Good to Live*. This documentary made by Kamei in 1956, about twenty years after *Shanghai*, depicts the atomic bomb victims in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who are still passing away and suffering from the lingering radioactive aftereffects ten years after the bombings. The difference between these two documentaries is that the latter disposes the shield of surrealism that the former held, while continuing to create Ozu’s purely optical and sound situations. If this is the case, we must ask how the film narrative of Kamei’s much more engaged film, *Still It’s Good to Live*, can encompass Ozu’s purely optical and sound montage without causing a bankruptcy within it. Our answer to this question is actually no, and the reason for its failure can be found in the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 15.

way *Still It's Good to Live* performs towards its own narrative and objective, the representation of the atomic bomb victimhood and the solicitation of the global preemptive actions against nuclear weapons. Even though adopting Ozu's techniques, Kamei at all times pursues a fundamentally different theme from Ozu's in his film-making. For Kamei, montage stands not merely for film technique but also for an approach to assert his ideas and philosophy, and a documentary is his letter of protest or suggestions to a wider range of society. In his mind, film-making is equal to writing a personal essay in which he can subjectively charge himself with a social and political agenda.<sup>10</sup>

Just as reifying this idea of documentary as a vehicle of his political message and his Eisensteinian montage as a base, *Still It's Good to Live* is structured distinctively by a developmental process of the three parts. The first part, "it is painful to die," can be interpreted as a thesis so to speak, and then "it is distressing to live, too" as an anti-thesis, and lastly "but, still it is good to live" as the sublation of both. The first part, "it is painful to die," consists of a number of episodes about the bomb victims who die of leukemia and various diseases. The second part, "it is distressing to live, too," comprises the stories of the victims who continue to suffer from a state of destituteness that derives from poverty and the lack of health caused by the lingering side effects of radioactivity. Finally, the last part and the climax of the film, "but still it is good to live," shows the victims attending the first World Rally Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, appealing to the audience to abandon nuclear weapons so that no one will ever again experience the hardship that they have gone through.

The appearance of victims who stand up and take action for political change at an international conference represents a celebration of democracy and freedom of

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<sup>10</sup> Fumio Kamei, *Tatakau eiga: dokyumentarisuto no showashi* (Fighting Cinema: A History of Showa for a Documentarian) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989), 18.

speech, as well as the sublimation of their victimhood through the articulation of their experiences. However, even though the victims' call for participation in the anti-nuclear movement is primarily directed towards the international community, this call also plays the role of mobilizing people within the national sphere, exhorting the domestic population to rescue those who have been neglected. The images of the bomb victims are used not only for the mobilization of political movements, but also for compensation from the welfare system on their behalf. These political agendas consequently integrate them into the national community. In this sense, the film subscribes to a kind of utilitarianism that advocates "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." Whereas the message of *Shanghai* could be interpreted as criticism of a war of invasion conducted by a nation state, the ultimate message of *Still It's Good to Live* rather demands the intervention of the nation state into everyday life of its people, and obliquely requests covering the bomb victims under the umbrella of the national welfare system by promoting the bio-political policy of the nation state.

In the film narrative, however, contradictory moments also surface, especially when shots of nature are inserted in the detailed portrayal of the victims' lives. The stories of the children in the orphanage, who had lost their parents in the atomic bombing and become disabled due to radioactivity, end with a scene in which they sit together in the field and have a picnic lunch on a clear spring day. The close-up shot of the plum blossoms about to open is introduced just before the whole sequence of this scene starts. This Ozu-type insertion of the shot of the landscape situates the victims ultimately in harmony with the tranquility of nature, enhanced by the self-content atmosphere of *mise-en-scène*, and gives the impression that the anguish and suffering of the bomb victims will be gradually dissolved into the natural environment, which remains invariable over the long term despite its display of seasonal changes. The consequence is that the physical and psychological damage of the victims will

eventually be healed, as if it were a disruption inside the pattern of nature. The trivial depictions of the victims' daily lives lose the momentum to develop into a dialectical narrative, while creating a monotonous tenor throughout the film. The sublation of death and struggles among the victims fails before it reaches the apex of the triangular movement of the Eisensteinian montage that is supposed to take place in the dialectical development of narrative.

Yet, can the bodily damage inflicted by radioactivity ever be healed naturally, in spite of the fact that it may continue to influence subsequent generations? Likewise, can the victims ever work through the psychological trauma resulting from their painful experiences so easily by forging a harmonious relationship with the natural environment? The question lies in who exactly this Ozu-type montage in *Still It's Good to Live* attempts to heal. We will return to this point later in this chapter. For the moment, let us recapitulate the point here—this unchanging tone found in this use of the Ozu-type montage and the immersion of individual stories into the background landscape sharply conflicts with the developmental framework of the film narrative. *Still It's Good to Live* is thus a work of incomplete syncretism, trying to combine these two distinct strategies—the use of the protagonists for the sublimation purpose versus the diminution of these protagonists through the naturalization of their specific histories; or, to put it in another way, the idea of a historical development and the political activism that this documentary purchases versus the implosion of the temporal and spatial differences enacted by the co-relation between human beings and nature. Still, these two co-existing approaches have in common the transcendental position of the camera's gaze at the object, the bomb victims in this case. The camera's distance from the victims is strictly maintained as a relationship between seer and seen.

### **Kamei's Transformation from the Camera's Gaze to the Object of the Camera**

But, what is striking about *Still It's Good to Live* is a further twist—for there is a momentary rupture that emerges within this regulated distance from the object. Such a rupture occurs when the young female victim who lost both her legs in the atomic bombing on Nagasaki comes to the fore. In this scene, Ozu's purely optical and sound montage is foregrounded again in a radical fashion, creating a climax of the film in which the readjustment of the human's state by eternal nature takes place. This part starts with explaining her present life—her confinement in her house for the last ten years, and making a living by doing piecework in bed every day. Then the narration introduces her saying, “although I was born and grew up in Nagasaki, I do not know Nagasaki.” The voiceover goes on telling that the camera crew was emotionally moved by these remarks and decided to take her out into the streets and show her the places that she had wanted to visit for a long time, such as the place where she became injured and her brother was instantly killed by the atomic explosion.

After the tour within Nagasaki City, the girl and camera crew go up to the hill where she can enjoy a panoramic view of the whole city, a view that she has never got in the last ten years. Here director Kamei literally steps into the screen and constitutes part of her world of joy. On screen, Kamei helps the girl out of the car, and holds her in his arms. They look at the same direction together, the grand sight of the restored city of Nagasaki. But compared to the girl, who is talking to him in an unpretentious manner with beaming smiles on her face, it is rather Kamei who seems to be deeply struck by this grand sight, with his eyes riveted on the city which partially glistens in the sunlight. The shots of them on the hill are superimposed on those of the city. This scene can be interpreted as the representation of “the very special extension of the

opsign: to make time and thought perceptible, to make them visible and of sound,” as Deleuze puts it.<sup>11</sup>

Deleuze considers that cinema embodies the aberration of movement that cannot be normalized by or reduced to regulating laws, inasmuch as the motions in films do not reproduce the reality, but create a kind of cinematic reality. For instance, the screen shows an escapee running away at full speed, yet never moving away from the front of the screen or away from the audience. The continuity of time is disrupted by a disproportion between movements of objects on the screen that cannot be measured by standardized denominators of speed. However, when this aberration of movement becomes commonplace, the dependency of time on movement is reversed. The result is the construction of a new mode based on perception and action: “perception is organized in obstacles and distances to be crossed, while action invents the means to cross and surmount them, in a space which sometimes constitutes an “encompasser”, sometimes a “line of the universe.”<sup>12</sup> This leads the movement-image to approach its absolute quality or the sublime, in which every image correlates to every other image in every aspect. Yet Deleuze contends that something other than this transformational mechanism takes place in the field of modern cinema. Deleuze maintains:

Now, from its first appearances, something different happens in what is called modern cinema: not something more beautiful, more profound, or more true, but something different. What has happened is that the sensory-motor scheme is no longer in operation, but at the same time it is not overtaken or overcome. It is shattered from the inside. That is, perceptions and actions ceased to be linked together, and spaces are now neither co-ordinated nor filled. Some characters, caught in certain pure optical and sound situations, find themselves condemned to wander about or go off on a trip. These are pure seers, who no longer exist except in the interval of movement, and do not even

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<sup>11</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugu Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 18.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

have the consolation of the sublime, which would connect them to matter or would gain control of the spirit for them. They are rather given over to something intolerable which is simply their everydayness itself. It is here that the reversal is produced: movement is no longer simply aberrant, aberration is now valid in itself and designates time as its direct cause. ‘Time is out of joint’: it is off the hinges assigned to it by behaviour in the world, but also by movements of world. It is no longer time that depends on movement; it is aberrant movement that depends on time. The relation, *sensory-motor situation*→*indirect image of time* is replaced by a non-localizable relation, *pure optical and sound situation*→*direct time-image*.<sup>13</sup>

Is it possible to consider that as the one that pushes the purely optical and sound situations to the extreme, this scene, where Kamei and the girl gaze at the panorama of Nagasaki together, represents something unendurable and insufferable in the everyday life of the surviving victims after the catastrophe? By employing the Ozu-type montage, Kamei may approach the “unrepresentable,” what the experiences of the atomic bomb victims signify, and what cannot be easily accessible. It is an attempt to capture not the overwhelming and overpowering experience of the atomic explosion, which may be defined as the sublime, but the unbearableness of the everyday life of the victims who have to continuously live with physical and psychological pain until death.

Kamei’s incorporation of the methodology of the Ozu-type montage into the making of the documentary on Hiroshima and Nagasaki is remarkable, since this montage would be more easily assimilated into the genre of feature movies, not documentaries. But the point is what makes it feasible to let such purely optical and sound images emerge in the scene of the panoramic view of Nagasaki. After all, for whom are these purely optical and sound images made, and for what purpose do these images work? Deleuze’s account of the reversed relationship between time and movement—the subordination of movement to time, and not vice versa—in the sphere

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 40-41.

of cinema explains how the purely optical and sound images are engendered in modern cinema, but not why they do (or do not) do so in a specific moment in cinema.

Here we should consider that what Kamei tries to do on screen by approaching the unbearableness of the everyday life of the bomb victims. This does not simply derive from a practical or political purpose such as the improvement of the bomb victims' welfare and the expansion of the anti-nuclear movements. Rather, his aim has to do with a certain form of wish-fulfillment that the film narrative can effectuate, while being driven by sympathetic feelings towards the bomb victims. This also means that as Kuniichi Uno points out, if the film inevitably constitutes an intersection between what transcends human perception and individual intention and what is generated by the producer's subjective choices such as the selection of themes and objects, we may also say that the purely optical and sound image is not only purely that image, stemming from the mechanism of film, but also is reflective of the signifying practices, another dimension of cinema.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, Kamei seems to have experienced a kind of transference vis-à-vis this girl in the process of his film-making, as revealed in the film narration prior to introducing this scene: her words greatly touch the minds of the crew. It can be said that by merging himself into the picture of the purely optical and sound situation with this girl on screen, he may want to compensate for the loss of immediacy with the object so that he can create a specific space shared with the object behind the camera, since the camera always divides them into binary positions—the side of the gaze of the camera and that of its object. This may be a way to stay together with the object inside the same spatiality frozen on the surface of the footage, in order to eternally preserve this artificially created oneness.

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<sup>14</sup> See Kuniichi Uno, *Eizoshintai-ron* (A Discussion of Image and Body) (Tokyo: Misuzu shobo, 2008), 33-44.

Lisa Yoneyama discusses the ways that some people identify themselves with the bomb victims when they learn the severe lives that the victims have endured:

The survivor's testimonial practices indeed foster the communal sense that narrators and narratees, the narrators and the narrated dead, and presumably the remembered victims and those who listen to their voices share sentiments and experiences. Nevertheless, the critical nature of the testimonial practices simultaneously generates a sobering warning that this sensation of identification, fullness, and unity can only take place in fleeting and fragmentary instances, in what we might call moments of sympathy.<sup>15</sup>

Although it is questionable that if one can ever formulate a real unity with the dead even momentarily, not only because this sense of unity is always a creation susceptible to changes conditioned by present situations, but also because one can never "experience" one's own death in reality. But as Yoneyama points out, the force (and attraction) of imagining such an association between the death or the harsh experiences of others and one's own is often at work in a problematic identificatory process with the other.

That Kamei himself becomes unreachable on the screen provokes a couple of consequences. Not only does Kamei as an individual split into the two positionalities of director and objectified being, but he also performs an inability to control his own creation as an author-director. Once he becomes an image, the Kamei captured in the shot would belong to a completely different realm, where neither the audience nor Kamei as the director can come into immediate contact with that image. Incarcerating himself inside the screen, Kamei floats within the space, permanently holding the girl in his arms. To create such a state may be a way to eternalize a moment of sympathy that Yoneyama discusses, and to invite identification with them by the viewer who is

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<sup>15</sup> Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 146. For discussion of the community of sympathy, see Naoki Sakai, *Nihon, eizo, beikoku: kyokan no kyodotai to teikokuteki kokuminshugi* (Japan, Image, America: Community of Sympathy and Imperial Nationalism) (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2007).

favorable to forming the communal space with them. Yet, their isolated unity on screen can also alienate the viewer who is excluded from or disinterested in the forming of this space. At any rate, *Still It's Good to Live* also exhibit the making of the documentary about Kamei himself—the process of recording his transformation from the holder of the camera to the object of the camera.

### **The Epic World and Bleak Hiroshima**

As the director, however, Kamei never relinquishes his privileged position, nor abandons a realist hold on the bomb victims who are the object of the camera. The relationship between this female victim and Kamei bears a monological tone, as both of them do not exceed their fixed roles as good-natured victim and understanding helper. The female victim held in Kamei's arms on the hill of Nagasaki has been described as the representation of a typical victimhood that the audience cannot help but find admirable. As a matter of fact, not only this female victim, but also every one of the victims depicted in this documentary can be classified into the pattern of victimhood that the audience should readily comprehend and sympathize with.

Victims are ones such as a teenage girl with a beautiful voice and a smart look but a disfigured hand and blind eyes, still training hard in music and speech; an orphaned little boy with blind eyes, never leaving near his music box that he likes and repeatedly listening to its melody all day long; and a hospitalized father worrying about his children living like beggars due to his illness and unemployment and thinking about full family suicide. Yet, the critic Sato cynically remarks that without the slightest fear of being threatened, audiences of this kind of movie can feel sympathetic with the victims, in the sense that these people are so unfortunate that it

seems obvious that the audience should be thoughtful and sensitive about them.<sup>16</sup> In a way, *Still It's Good to Live* assumes the victims to be humanistic, the audience to be compassionate, and both of them to be men and the women of goodwill.

The figure of the bomb victims established in this manner to some extent echoes what Mikhail Bakhtin calls the epic character. According to Bakhtin, the epic character is individualized by his/her circumstances or fate, not by his/her existence which is more than his/her destiny or less than his/her humanness. Compared to the character in a novel, who can never become the complete incarnation of the preexisting social categories, the epic character is regulated by a sole, prescribed, and incontestable world view. In the epic world, the subject represents “the exclusive beauty, wholeness, crystal clarity and artistic completedness of this image of man”<sup>17</sup> and “his limitations and his obvious woodenness under conditions obtaining in a latter period of human existence.”<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the epic world not only demonstrates marked piety towards the subject, but also enforces a deep reverence for the subject upon the reader. Most significantly, the epic character resides in a specifically configured temporality, which is equated with the absolute past, totally isolated from subsequent times as well as the contemporaneity. Bakhtin observes:

It is possible, of course, to conceive even “my time” as heroic, epic time, when it is seen as historically significant; one can distance it, look at it as if from afar (not from one’s own vantage point but from some point in the future), one can relate to the past in a familiar way (as if relating to “my” present). But in so doing we ignore the presentness of the present and the pastness of the past; we are removing ourselves from the zone of “my time,” from the zone of familiar contact with me.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Tadao Sato, “Gensuibaku to eiga” (The Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs and Cinema), *Bungaku* (Literature), vol. 28 (August 1960): 835.

<sup>17</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 35.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

In other words, the isolation of the temporality of the epic world from our familiar space accompanies the valorization of that temporality, which signifies the category of value itself, more specifically, of the highest value. Therefore, Bakhtin celebrates the allegorical roles of the villain, the clown, and the fool developed in folklores that expose hypocrisy, falsehood, and conventionalism lurking in the ideologies of the epic narrative, for these characters would parody and destroy the authority that sustains the epic distance in which hierarchized values are self-righteously valorized.<sup>20</sup> *Still It's Good to Live* apparently does not contain these fools and clowns in its film narrative. It neither incorporates the twist between narration and images observable in *Shanghai*, nor produces the effect of confusing the audience in judging what is true or false among the described images.

After the release of *Still It's Good to Live*, however, in a Japanese art journal, Kamei and his staff jointly wrote an article about what realities they bore witness to in Hiroshima during the making of the film. Interestingly enough, the essay presents a world that is completely opposite to “the epic world” established in the documentary.<sup>21</sup> They state that close to ground zero, where the Atomic Bomb Dome is located, they found a few small souvenir shops. A big signboard built by the owner of the adjoining shop that bitterly criticized an owner of a souvenir shop in both English and Japanese stood out strikingly at this site. The signboard maligned his business rival as an outrageous rogue who called himself Hiroshima number one. This exposure of unhesitating hostility expressed in the signboard came as an unpleasant surprise to Kamei and his team.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 158-67.

<sup>21</sup> Fumio Kamei et al., “Kiroku eiga ‘Ikiteite yokatta’ no itoshita mono” (What the Documentary *Still It's Good to Live* Intended), *Bijyutsu Hiho* (August 1956): 76-78.

They also heard of a robbery that occurred on the peace memorial bridge immediately after its completion. The bridge was designed by Isamu Noguchi, an internationally acclaimed artist and landscape architect, and proclaimed to be the symbol of the rehabilitation project of Hiroshima. However, a senior janitor who had diligently worked at a local bank for forty years ambushed a transport car from his bank on the bridge, and attempted a robbery for cash. The article introduces a view of a local writer that the abrupt change in this senior citizen may have had to do with the deep physiological and psychological influence of the atomic bomb. It also notes that the bridge, whose color was as white as bleached bones, reminded Kamei and his staff of masses of human bones still being easily found everywhere under the ground in Hiroshima. They felt as if there was something in the beauty of the bridge to tempt one to commit a crime.

Furthermore, they came across a teenage boy with a big keloid scar on the back of his head shooting down doves for fun with an air gun at the Atomic Bomb Dome. This sight astonished them, since the doves were released into the sky at the Dome on the anniversary of the bombing every year as the symbol of peace. Their overall impressions of Hiroshima were dry, cynical, and bleak, and the atmosphere of the streets was rough. They considered that this atmosphere may partly stem from Hiroshima's prewar history as a local center for the Western units of the Japanese military—the leftover ambiance of a city once filled with hordes of soldiers. But they also thought that probably this was mostly the result of the influx of postwar “mammonists” from other areas into Hiroshima City.

After the acceptance of defeat in the Asia-Pacific War, the first project that the Japanese and local governments in Hiroshima embarked on during the US Occupation was the reconstruction of the destroyed city. But their concern was not the relief of the bomb victims, nor their medical care and livelihood assistance, which the local

government started to address more seriously after the end of the occupation. Instead, a number of big civil engineering projects were launched in Hiroshima, where the epicenter of the city had been utterly demolished, within a few years after the war. Concurrently the new-comers, who amounted to two thirds of the whole population of Hiroshima at that time, occupied these renewed spheres in place of those killed and severely injured by the bomb. The people who used to reside in or have business in the center of the city, and had therefore once formed the substratum of the relatively affluent, were either killed or too sick to recover and, as a result, fell in poverty. The displacement of the former residents with the new-comers and the reversal of their social status happened in Hiroshima more sharply than in any other Japanese cities destroyed by the US Forces.

Therefore, Kamei's initial plan for *Still It's Good to Live* was drastically different from the way the film was finally realized. The documentary was supposed to open with the scene of the boy shooting down the doves at the Atomic Bomb Dome. The crew actually filmed this scene, as well as ones such as the striking signboard set up in front of the souvenir shops at the Dome. Yet Kamei professes in that article, as well as in his book, that after a discussion with the Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs which commissioned him to make the documentary primarily to commemorate their first international assembly held in 1955, he decided to entirely remove these scenes from the film.

Later he explained the reason for the exclusion of these scenes—which caused him to lose an opportunity to encompass the polyphonic voices of the victims—as the limitation of the times.<sup>22</sup> At that time, ten years after the atomic bombings, the

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<sup>22</sup> Fumio Kamei et al., “Kiroku eiga ‘Ikiteite yokatta’ no itoshita mono” (What the Documentary *Still It's Good to Live* Intended), *Bijyutsu Hiho* (August 1956): 76-78. Also, Fumio Kamei, *Tatakau eiga: dokyumentarisuto no showashi* (Fighting Cinema: A History of Showa for a Documentarian) (Tokyo: Iwanami-shoten, 1989), 152-53.

Council, the first organized anti-nuclear movement in Japan, was about to initiate its activities. Kamei remembered their small, unclean office at the nascent stage of their inauguration. Even the citizens of Hiroshima were not interested in the signature-collecting campaigns organized at the time of the first international convention, nor in seeing that the bomb victims receive compensation from the government for medical treatment. Most people knew nothing about what kind of terror the atomic bombs could possibly bring. These different circumstances led Kamei to opt for the style of an “orthodox humanism,” he stated in retrospect. Yet, the preclusion of the heterogeneity of the victims’ psychological states results in description of their experiences that is limited primarily to the physical, and that makes representation of their mental injury a lower priority in *Still It’s Good to Live*. This empiricism also results in an elision of the intense degree of trauma rooted deep in their psyches.

### **1950’s Japan and the Films on Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

As mentioned in Chapter One, the visual representation of the disastrous conditions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in both photographs and movie images was strictly prohibited until the US Occupation of Japan drew to a close at the end of April, 1952. As for cinema, during the initial seven years, no documentaries or realist reconstructions were allowed to be released, and only a few fiction movies were available to the public in the early 1950’s. But they referred to the atomic bombing of Nagasaki as the background of the melodramatic scenes, without any depiction of the actual events.

One of these films is *The Bells of Nagasaki* (Nagasaki-no kane), directed by Hideo Oba and released in 1950, a movie version of the bestselling real-life story written by the radiologist, Takashi Nagai. In this somehow fictionalized film, Nagai, a pious Catholic, who is already informed that he is dying from radiation damage

incurred by overwork in his profession before the US bombing, accepts his approaching death like a hero, while regarding the atomic massacre as a test given by God. In the film, the atomic explosion is suggested only through the mushroom clouds viewed far away over the mountains. Another fiction film, *I'll Not Forget the Song of Nagasaki* (Nagasaki-no uta wa wasureji), was made by the director Tomotaka Tasaka in March, 1952, just before the end of the Occupation. It portrays a friendly interaction between an American male visitor and a Japanese woman who becomes blind owing to the atomic explosion of Nagasaki. The warm-hearted American man goes to Nagasaki in order to complete the unfinished song that the husband of this blind woman sang for him before his death at an American prisoner-of-war camp. His act touches her heart, and makes her appreciate his kindness and makes her forgive the Americans.

The critic Sato points out that although most Japanese critics are dismissive of *I'll Not Forget the Song of Nagasaki*, it most accurately reflects the unchanging attitude of the postwar Japanese government towards the issues of the atomic and hydrogen bombs, insomuch as the relationship between the two protagonists in the movie allegorizes a Japan asking the US to love her more, and she will relinquish her grudge caused by the damage from the atomic bombings.<sup>23</sup> For Sato, the lack of Japanese criticism of the US atomic bombings in movies made during the occupation period derives not only from the US censorship of representations of the atomic disaster during that period, but also from a “penitential” tendency among some Japanese, who felt that Japan also committed war atrocities and had war responsibility, or from those who reckoned that wars as such are intrinsically cruel.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Tadao Sato, *Nihon eiga shiso-shi* (History of Japanese Film Thought) (Tokyo: Sanichi-shobo, 1970), 340.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 328-29.

Criticism of the atomic bomb attacks became much more apparent after the end of the occupation when Japanese directors were able to posit the atomic calamity as the central theme. The first film produced after the establishment of Japan's sovereignty was a fiction movie titled *Children of the Atomic Bombing* (Genbaku-no ko). Raised in the nearby town of Hiroshima, the director Kaneto Shindo aimed to make a film on Hiroshima as soon as the US Occupation ended. The movie is based on the well-known book published with the same title in 1951, a collection of testimonies of the children who experienced the atomic catastrophe in Hiroshima. However, it turned into an effusive portrayal of the surviving children, which represents the victims' suffering immediately after the explosion only briefly through a montage of symbolic images such as a crying baby and a burned bird. Although Shindo's movie was released in time for the seventh anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, another movie based on the same original was soon made by the Japan Teachers Union. The union members criticized the sentimental depiction of victimhood in Shindo's movie as not being able to sufficiently convey the cruelty of the atomic bomb. Nor did they assess it as an adequate response to the urgent situation of the early 1950's, when the use of nuclear bombs by the US Army in the throes of the Korean War was a possibility.

This second movie, *Hiroshima*, a realist reconstruction directed by Hideo Sekikawa in 1953, was therefore made to provoke a painful reaction in the audience as a preventative measure. As a result, a graphic description of the victims suddenly thrown into horrific suffering and dying one after another dominates most of the movie. Since opening sequence of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* includes some of the footage of this film, it is probably Sekikawa's film that Marguerite Duras refers to in

her synopsis as “the description of horror by horror.”<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the way in which this movie constructs its own spectacle may be characterized as violent, sensational, and even scandalous for both the audience and the victims. But, it may also be ethically questionable, if the suffering of the victims is so numbing in its portrayal that the viewers can rather enjoy watching it without perceiving any pain themselves.

The production of these movies, however, did not promote an immediate rise in public awareness of the effects of the atomic bomb. Rather it was the Lucky Dragon Incident taken place in March of 1954 that captured national attention. In this incident, the crew of a Japanese tuna fishing boat, the Lucky Dragon Five (Dai go fukuryu-maru) was accidentally exposed to nuclear fallout from the US testing of a hydrogen bomb carried out on the Bikini atoll. Since the boat belonged to the Yaizu fishing port, one of the providers of seafood to the population of Metropolitan Tokyo, the media undertook an extensive coverage of the incident, which invited an upsurge of anti-nuclear movements led by Tokyo residents, especially homemakers, who were concerned about their food security *vis-à-vis* the nuclear contamination. After this incident, the atomic victimhood of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, both of which are actually located in the periphery of the Japanese archipelago and the Western edge of the country, started to attract more national concern.

### **American Violence, Japanese Imperial Past**

Kamei's *Still It's Good to Live* was produced in these circumstances, two years after the Lucky Dragon Incident. Since *Still It's Good to Live* did not bear a hopeful prospect as a box-office success, at first it could not gain a contract for wider distribution with any movie companies. Only after its release at a small movie theater

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<sup>25</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 9.

in Tokyo, which elicited a fervent public response when audiences learned closely of the ten-year-old realities of bomb victims almost for the first time, did the documentary achieve nationwide distribution. Taking account of this situation, in which the issues of Hiroshima and Nagasaki apparently had not yet acquired national prominence by the mid-1950's in Japan, it might be understandable that Kamei may have felt an obligation to create a discourse sympathetic to the bomb victims, so as to affect a wider viewership. In retrospect, however, *Still It's Good to Live* may be positioned in the larger profile of the genealogical development of discourses on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

One of the characteristics of *Still It's Good to Live* (as well as many other movies released in Japan and elsewhere) is that it does not explain the cause of the bombings—first and foremost, why the US Forces dropped the atomic bombs on these two Japanese cities. Although it is beyond the range of our discussion to deliberate on this American decision, it should be noted that *Still It's Good to Live* wittingly or unwittingly fails to articulate the US as the victimizer of these calamities in its film narrative. The lack of this address in *Still It's Good to Live* exhibits a striking contrast to *Hiroshima* made three years before by Sekikawa, who was also a member of the Japanese Communist party. Among the Japanese movies on the atomic bombing, *Hiroshima* probably most distinctively denounces the act of the US by quoting the famous line from the final speech in Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux*—one murder makes a villain, millions a hero. It is worth mentioning that Sekikawa's *Hiroshima* rendered homage to Chaplin in 1953, probably to support Chaplin's position, right after he was exiled to Europe in 1952, under a fierce attack from the Cold War McCarthyism.

Here again we need to consider the circumstances at that time. To some degree, in Japan, an anti-communist movement that soon developed into the Red Purge also forced Kamei to leave the movie company Toho, where Kamei had made *Shanghai*

and other movies during the prewar era. He had joined Toho again when he recovered his profession as a film maker after the war. Prior to this leaving, he participated in a major labor dispute at the Kinuta Toho studio in 1948. The dispute developed into a forceful confrontation between the union members and the company over the barricades. The US Occupation Army sent a military force including tanks, armored vehicles, and air planes to the scene, and surrounded the union demonstrators. The mobilization of the army was totally suppressed in the news under the Occupation. But the comment made by Kamei on the way to settle this labor dispute was circulated broadly; he said “the only ones that did not come to the scene were battleships.” Considered as one of the communists who incited the company union members, he had to leave afterwards.

Prior to this event, Kamei’s postwar films had already been censored by the US Occupation Forces. One was *A Tragedy of Japan* (Nihon-no higeki), which was made with the encouragement of David Conde, the chief officer at the Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E) of the Occupation government. After this incident, Conde resigned CI&E. It is still unclear if Conde was a communist or not, although there is much speculation both in the US and Japan.<sup>26</sup> Kamei produced *A Tragedy of Japan* in 1946 by using the prewar war propaganda footage precisely for the opposite objective—to pursue the war responsibilities of politicians, the Zaibatsu companies, the intellectuals, and the head of the Japanese empire, Hirohito. It is said that Kamei’s montage scene in which Hirohito changes his clothing from a military uniform to a businessman-like frock coat especially infuriated Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida at that time.<sup>27</sup> Despite the fact that this documentary

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<sup>26</sup> See Kyoko Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: the Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation, 1945-1952*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 8.

<sup>27</sup> Akira Iwasaki, *Senryo sareta sukuriin: waga sengoshi* (The Occupied Screen: My Postwar History) (Tokyo: Shinnihon shuppansha, 1975), 79.

initially passed censorship and was already available to the public, the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD), another censorship organization that formed the double censorship system along with CI&E, re-censored the film and decided to ban the movie and confiscated all the footage, both negatives and positives. After this incident, which in retrospect marked a starting point of the “reverse course” in the film policy of the US Occupation, Kamei moved from the Japan Film Company (the Nippon Eiga-sha), where he had made *A Tragedy of Japan*, to Toho, and produced *Senso to heiwa* (War and Peace), a fiction movie, as a joint project with another director, Satsuo Yamamoto. But they were again ordered to eliminate many parts from the completed film by US censorship.<sup>28</sup> These actions presaged the labor dispute that took place at the Kinuta Toho studio.

*Still It's Good to Live* was made after Kamei left Toho and founded an independent production company to make feature films with other directors. The company ultimately failed, due to the difficulty of distributing their works while competing with other major film companies. Kamei returned to the field of documentaries in 1953 so that he could make movies on his own even on a lean budget. Before creating *Still It's Good to Live*, he had made a few documentaries on the movements among local farmers and their supporters from the labor union, who were opposed to the extension of the US military bases. The presence of the US bases was unremittingly conspicuous in the suburbs of Tokyo, just as it had been during the Occupation. This background history invites us to further question why, in *Still It's Good to Live*, Kamei separated his representation of the existence of the bomb victims

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<sup>28</sup> The movie is entitled *Senso to heiwa* (War and Peace), co-directed by Satsuo Yamamoto and Fumio Kamei in 1947. The US Occupation government ordered, for instance, the deletion of the scene in which the yakuza members forcibly intervene in a strike at the factory. Kamei said that Yakuza's intervention into strikes, in fact, became normalized soon after this event, in his *Tatakau eiga: dokyumentarisuto no showashi* (Fighting Cinema: A History of Showa for a Documentarian) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989), 123.

from a representation of the origin of violence caused by the US. Is his restraint in referring to the US due to the legacy of American censorship that he had experienced a couple of times? Or does this reflect the practicality of both Kamei and the anti-nuclear organization that consider it better to avoid causing friction with many Americans if they want to globally expand anti-nuclear movements?

No matter what his reasons for compromise were, to privilege the theme of rescuing neglected bomb victims over delving into the cause of the catastrophe (as well as Kamei's depiction of the bomb victims as epic characters) bears certain consequences. Not to touch on the cause of the violence inflicted on the victims while drawing the viewer into their everyday life makes the bomb victims undistinguishable from those victimized by natural disasters or other unfortunate accidents. Moreover, this lack of reference to American atomic bombings also covers up the earlier Japanese violence resorted to in Asian and Pacific countries and regions, including the attacks on Pearl Harbor, as part of its imperial expansionist project.<sup>29</sup> These phenomena suggest a complicity between the US and Japanese nationalisms and imperialisms. In spite of the fact that Kamei was well aware of the prewar nature of Hiroshima—as an important military center in Western Japan, the documentary does not reflect this view, rendering it as a supposed land of martyrdom.

It is undeniable that the prewar development and prosperity of both Cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki went in tandem with the increase in accumulation of wealth and the military success of the Japanese empire. From this specific history, both cities—especially Hiroshima—absorbed many colonial subjects in the downtown areas as either laborers or residents. As a matter of course, a great number of those

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<sup>29</sup> For a debate over American and Japanese military violence and nationalisms, see Laura Hein and Mark Selden, ed., *Living with the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), and Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996).

colonized people were also victimized by the US atomic bombing. In Hiroshima, it is said that Koreans occupy at least ten percent of the surviving victims if not more. This means that if we include the number of those killed, tens of thousands of Koreans were involved in the disaster that took place only in Hiroshima.<sup>30</sup> Regardless of this fact, Kamei makes no reference to Korean victims not only in this documentary but also in his retrospection in which he said that he interviewed three hundred victims in both cities in the process of the film making.<sup>31</sup>

In this sense, to ignore both American and Japanese violence simultaneously creates the closed space of martyrdom exclusively among the Japanese people, regarding atomic victimhood. This space may suggest an introverted interior of the postwar Japanese psyche at large, which wishes to forget an imperial past, and desires a posited homogeneity among the people. If Kamei considers that the political situations in those days led him to exclude heterogeneous figures among the bomb victims from the description in the documentary, the times he mentions would embrace the desires and wishes described above as well. *Still It's Good to Live* was released the same year as when the Japanese government declared in its annual economic white paper that it was no longer "postwar." By the time the film was made, the Japanese economy had recovered to its pre-war level, leaving behind the chaotic and devastated state that characterized Japan immediately after the defeat. The

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<sup>30</sup> For Korean bomb victims in Hiroshima, see Park Shufu et al. eds., *Hibaku kankokujin* (Koreans Victimized by the Atomic Bombing) (Tokyo: Asahi shimbun sha, 1975), Hiroshima, Nagasaki shogen no kai, *Hiroshima, Nagasaki, sanjyunen no shogen* (Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Thirty-years Testimonies) (Tokyo: Mirai sha, 1976), 251-94, *Mohitotsu no Hiroshima* (Another Hiroshima), dir. Park Su-nam, 58 min., 1987, Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 151-86, and Yasuo Ota, *Umino muko no hiroshima, nagasaki: kankoku hibakusha tachino saigetsu* (Hiroshima, Nagasaki across the Sea: Years of Korean Bomb Victims) (Tokyo: Bakushu sha, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Alain Resnais and Fumio Kamei, "Watashi wa naze kiroku eiga o tsukuruka: yoru to kiri kara pikadon e" (Why Do I Make Documentaries?: From *Night and Fog* to *Pikadon*), *Geijyutsu shincho* (December 1958): 259.

recovery was facilitated by US aid as well as an economic boom triggered by the Korean War that took place from 1950 to 1953.

1955, one year before the release of *Still It's Good to Live*, marked the beginning of the nation's rapid economic growth period; this was augmented by the development of industries and international trade, and lasted until the oil crisis changed the whole situation in 1973. But the mid-1950's was also the politically turbulent time when both the conservative and leftist camps formed internal coalitions, and initiated the so-called 1955 system.<sup>32</sup> In retrospect, the 1955 system can be said to be a political device established in the midst of the Cold War not only to tie Japan firmly to the Western camp, but also to promote Japanese economic development in this international environment. Japan was accepted as a member of the IMF in 1952 and the GATT in 1955; this prepared for Japan to promote its export-oriented economy. The San Francisco Peace Treaty was also enacted in 1952, and the Japanese nation-state recovered its sovereignty.

However, since this "independence" was allowed on the condition of keeping the US bases within Japanese territories as space of de facto extraterritoriality, the Japanese government met strong opposition from people who organized nationwide protest movements when the Japan-US Security Treaty was made in 1960 and renewed in 1970. Yet to some degree, we may say that the balance of power preserved

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<sup>32</sup> For the 1955 system, see Junnosuke Masumi, *Gendai seiji: 1955 nen igo* (Modern Politics: In and After 1955) (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1985). An English version, Junnosuke Masumi, *Contemporary Politics in Japan*, trans. Lonny E. Carlile (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). For a change in Japanese society propelled by the economic development and political turbulence in the 1950's and 1960's, see Yoshikuni Igarashi, "From the Anti-Security Treaty Movement to the Tokyo Olympics: Transforming the Body, the Metropolis, and Memory," in *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 131-63. For the development of Japanese nationalism either as an anti-American or pro-American movement, see Michitoshi Takabatake, "'Rokuju-nen anpo' no seishinshi (An Ideological History of the 1960 Anti-Security Treaty Movement), and Mitsunobu Sugiyama, "Sengo nashonarizumu no ichisokumen" (An Aspect of a Discussion of Postwar Nationalism), in *Sengo nihon no seishinshi*, ed. Tetsuo Najita et al. (A History of the Postwar Japanese Mentality: Its Re-examination) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988).

in the 1955 system had ingeniously absorbed such political conflicts; although this 1955 system was characterized by a confrontation between the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Socialist Party, reflecting the Cold War structure, the proportion between them was basically maintained in that the number of the Socialist Party in the House of Representatives remained half of the LDP. It is the system allowed criticism, dissent or protest concerning the LDP's policies, but after all, subdued and settled these objections within its frame. In this way, the LDP held onto power as a long noncoalition administration until 1993, even after the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

As mentioned earlier, the anti-atomic and hydrogen bomb movement started as a reaction to the Lucky Dragon Incident of 1954, and not as a reaction to the victimization of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. As Chikanobu Michiba points out, the initial concern of the people engaged in the movement was not about the bomb victims who were still suffering from the outcome of the first nuclear attacks in the world, but rather about the prevention of their own victimization in the future.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, how to appeal to these people who were not originally interested in the existing victims became a political agenda for activists in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In other words, after all the years of suffering from the deserted state during the Occupation, due to the prohibition against widely sharing information on the atomic bombings and the lack of official support for their lives, and thereby experiencing prejudice and discrimination due to the ignorance about the atomic victimization produced by this lack of knowledge, what the bomb victims had to face was a harsh reality in a newly independent Japan: an amazing degree of difference in

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<sup>33</sup> See Chikanobu Michiba, “‘Kaku jidai’ no hansen heiwa: taiwa to koryu no tameno noto 2” (Antiwar and Peace in the “Nuclear Era”: Notes 2 for Dialogue Exchanges), *Gendai shiso* (Modern Thought), vol. 31-10 (August 2003): 158-65.

psychological and economic conditions from the other people who were feeling that it was no longer even postwar.

Considering these circumstances, to mobilize their sympathy with the bomb victims and to create the exclusive space of martyrdom are not only effective, but also match the political demands of that time, to the extent that their involvement with anti-nuclear movement neither destroys the nation's path to economic prosperity, nor ultimately disturbs the alliance with the US. In this way, the film made victimization by the atomic bombs narratable without any reference to American violent acts or the Japanese Imperial past. This way of accounting for the victimhood of Hiroshima and Nagasaki prevailed and dominated the Japanese discourse for a long time. In this sense, the space of martyrdom and the homogeneity of victimhood constructed exclusively within Japanese national borders in *Still It's Good to Live* may have anticipated the prevalence of this model discourse, in as much as the closed space of martyrdom constitutes the epic world, which represents the heroic past of the nation, and serves for posterity as such, as Bakhtin observes:

The world of the epic is the national and heroic past: it is a world of "beginnings" and "peak times" in the national history, a world of fathers and founders of families, a world of "firsts" and "bests." The important point here is not that the past constitutes the content of the epic. The formally constitutive feature of the epic as a genre is rather the transferral of a represented world into the past, and the degree to which this world participates in the past. The epic was never a poem about the present, about its own time (one that becomes a poem about the past only for those who came later).<sup>34</sup>

### **The Plausibility of Martyrdom**

To designate the bomb victims as martyrs is not only unique to *Still It's Good to Live*, but was a tendency shared by many other films including ones made even

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<sup>34</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 13.

now. Thus, it would be unfair and inaccurate to attribute this trait only to *Still It's Good to Live*. Yet this documentary holds an important position insofar as it established a narrative about the martyrdom of the bomb victims, which has been continuously reproduced into the present. Or, put it in another way, the film established a sense of the plausibility of atomic bomb victimhood. Let us discuss the issue of plausibility *vis-à-vis* film-making. Christian Metz contends that the establishment of plausibility constitutes a problematic mode of ideological censorship. According to Metz, there are two types of censorship based on political or commercial incentives such as political presuppositions and regulations, moral standards, and commercial requirements, all of which he recapitulates as institutional censorship.

For instance, Kamei's *Soldiers at the Front* was banned precisely due to the political censorship institutionally conducted by the prewar Japanese imperial government, and *A Tragedy of Japan* was banned by the postwar American Occupation government. If we widen our definition of institutional censorship, *Still It's Good to Live* may also be seen as a result of censorship of this kind, although it was not as forceful as the military censorship mentioned above. Still, the change in the content of this film took place because Kamei accepted the objections about the inclusion of the heterogeneous figures among the bomb victims, which came from the anti-nuclear movement organization that held substantial sway over Kamei as the producer of the film. Without such definitions, it is highly probable that Kamei would have made this documentary as he originally intended.

But Metz claims that in addition to institutional censorship, there is another type of censorship, the censorship of the plausible, which forms a likely model and thereby shapes and regulates a genre. According to him:

We know that Aristotle defined the Plausible . . . as the unity of that which is possible in the eyes of common opinion; and thus it is distinguished from the unity of that which is possible in the eyes of knowledgeable people (this

second “possible” being presumably identical to the true possible, the *real possible*). The *arts of representation*—and the cinema is one of them, which, whether “realistic” or “fantastic,” is always figurative and almost always fictional—do not represent all that is possible—all the possibles—but only the plausible possibles. The post-Aristotelian tradition—consider for example the concepts of credibility, seemliness, and propriety in the classical French writers of the seventeenth century—has extended this idea by adding to it a second variety of Plausibility, which is not entirely different from the first and not entirely absent from the thought of the Greek philosopher: Everything that conforms to the laws of an established genre is plausible. In the one case as in the other (i.e., common opinion, rules of the genre), it is in relation to *discourses*, discourses that have already been pronounced, that the Plausible is defined, and thus it appears as the effect of a *corpus*: The laws of a genre are derived from earlier examples of that genre—that is to say, from a series of discourses (unless they have been explicitly set forth in a special discourse, poetic art or other); and common opinion is simply an innumerable and scattered discourse since, in final analysis, it is composed of what people say. Thus, from its inception, the Plausible is a reduction of the possible; it is an *arbitrary* and *cultural* restriction of real possible; it is, in fact, censorship: Among all the possibilities of figurative fiction, only those authorized by previous discourse will be “chosen.”<sup>35</sup>

In other words, the plausible is created in the process by which the originally dispersed discourses become clustered together, organize a sequence, and comprise a corpus of common opinions that repeats itself over and over again. Let us consider the two preceding films on the atomic bombing which were released after the end of US institutional censorship before *Still It's Good to Live*. It is noteworthy that those two movies, Shindo's *Children of Atomic Bombing* and Sekikawa's *Hiroshima*, display a considerable difference in the representation of the victims. Whereas the ideology of martyrdom penetrates the narrative of the first movie, Shindo's *Children of Atomic Bombing*, Sekikawa's *Hiroshima*, primarily produced as a critique of Shindo's, demonstrates a more open view on the bomb victims, insomuch as it encompasses the diverse figure of the victims far away from martyrs, such as a group of orphaned boys, who deface a burial site of numerous people killed by the bomb, and sell their skull

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<sup>35</sup> Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 238-39.

bones to white tourists for a living in a reconstructed Hiroshima. *Still It's Good to Live*, which appeared as the third after these two contrasting films, “chose” to follow the manner in which Shindo described the bomb victims in the first movie, not the way in which Sekikawa did in the second. This third movie thus “authorized” the pattern of martyrdom, and contributed to the formation of a specific genre of films on the atomic bombing. Accordingly, the films like Sekikawa’s which depict the heterogeneous aspects of the bomb victims have become less plausible.

Metz considers that another characteristic of censorship lies in the ways in which norms and regulations are established and functioned. In contrast to institutional censorship, which is concerned with the choice of the subjects, the censorship of plausibility aims at controlling “the *form of the content*” [Emphasis in the original],<sup>36</sup> or “the manner in which the film speaks about whatever it is telling.”<sup>37</sup> Yet this clear-cut difference between institutional censorship and the censorship of plausibility needs re-examination because, for instance, the exclusion of heterogeneity among the bomb victims can be deciphered either as censorship of subject choice (which victims the film depicts) or censorship of the way the subjects are described (whether or not their diversity is illustrated).

Moreover, in *A Tragedy of Japan*, which apparently was subjected to institutional censorship, what provoked the Prime Minister Yoshida most when he saw the movie was presumably the way the film portrayed the role change of Emperor Hirohito in the postwar period through montage shots of his appearances before and after, not the direct criticism of Hirohito and the prosecution of his war responsibility, even though this was clearly articulated in the film in the subsequent shots of the newspaper headlines both in Japanese and English; “Judge the Imperial Family Too,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Capitalist War Criminals Indicate, Moscow Broadcasting”; “Try Hirohito, Philippines Lawyers Urge.”

Although in his discussion, Metz does not explain what this genre-making fostered by the censorship of plausibility can effectuate, it is significant to conceive in these specific contexts what kind of affect the discourse of martyrdom of the bomb victims may have engendered, while reflecting a growing sentiment of the age surfacing in the society. The narrative of martyrdom allows the audience to see that the atomic bombs brutally changed the fate of individuals, but damage human nature no more than a scratch, as Sato perceives.<sup>38</sup> Then audiences may think of the way to work things out on behalf of these victims in rather a mechanical and convenient manner—the institutionalized support accompanied by public sympathy with them. The implementation of this kind of official support makes the situation of the victims solvable and ushers in the bright side of the society to audiences. This prompts them to neglect another aspect in which the sense of guilt and threatened feelings may emerge. This may be one of the reasons why the martyrdom of the victims became plausible and evolved into a series of discourses by the reinforcement and duplication of the narrative in various segments of society. This narrative of martyrdom may also be claimed by the victims themselves; at times they voluntarily comply with the dominant discourse in order to become accepted by the majority and to cope with the harsh circumstances that they have to endure.

### **Resnais’ Transgression of Christian Framework**

In *Still It’s Good to Live*, however, Kamei has also projected an appeal not just to national audiences but to the international viewership. The pictures of *Still It’s*

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<sup>38</sup> Tadao Sato, “Gensuibaku to eiga” (The Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs and Film), *Bungaku* (Literature), vol. 28 (August 1960): 837.

*Good to Live* combine a number of Christian images, as in the opening sequence. In it, the camera focuses on the collapsed Urakami Cathedral near ground zero of the Nagasaki explosion, and especially on the statue of the Virgin Mary at the gates of the cathedral. Her face is burned by intense heat rays at the time of the cataclysmic explosion, and looks as if it is shedding tears. This shot of Mary is inserted in the middle of the documentary, together with the shots such as that of a sick child wearing a cross or praying to the picture of Mary. Most tangibly, the last victim who appears in *Still It's Good to Live*, the widowed mother, is also a devout Christian whose face was burned in the bombing, just like the statue of Mary at the cathedral.

The movie explains that although in the midst of the catastrophe, the widow doubted if God ever existed, her faith was gradually restored, and to support her daughter and herself, she became a day laborer at a reconstruction site, while suffering from the aftereffects of radioactivity. In spite of the objections of relatives, she is also tenacious enough to willingly provide the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum with a wax-molded sample of her daughter's deformed hand, wishing people in the world to know what cruelty was perpetrated on her daughter. This episode is accompanied by the scene in which a white female visitor to the museum became deeply affected by the model of the daughter's hand, and sympathized with her. *Still It's Good to Live*, in this way, addresses the imperative to love one's neighbor, directed at those who were not loved by their neighbors. Being a Catholic himself, Kamei reminisced in his book that the more he met the bomb victims, the more he wished not only to complete this movie but also to solve their destitution even a little bit, and absurdly began dreaming that if he were Christ, he could grant every wish of the victims. He said that in the end,

his way of thinking became like that of a peace movement activist, not a film maker.<sup>39</sup> This may reflect an all-encompassing tendency within Marxist and Christian thinking.

It is Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* that has responded to such appeals issued by Kamei with a firm no. When quoting a good many shots from *Still It's Good to Live*, Resnais erased all the fringe contexts of the bomb victims in order to prevent any specific affect from being generated. Needless to say, among those eliminated shots were the Christian images, whose presence will indubitably impart symbolic meanings as well as possibly inciting a strong affect such as the sense of guilt towards "neighbors." As for the episode of the mother whose face got burned in the same way as the statue of Mary's, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* uses the close-up shot of the daughter's deformed hand only, without furnishing any background information on the source for the sample.

This reaction by Resnais suggests that no visitors of the museum (as well as viewers of the movie) will apprehend the atomic bomb victimhood as Kamei expected, and that they will just pass by the exhibit at a brisk pace. The French woman in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, who tells the Japanese man during their love making that she has made a number of visits to the peace museum, may be an avatar, in Resnais' version, of the white female visitor in Kamei's documentary. This transformation candidly tells us that audiences neither love their neighbors nor care that they may conceivably lack the love of their neighbors, which may end up in a lack of love of themselves as well as of humanity. Resnais' interest is rather attached to how audiences will neglect the tragedy of their neighbors as mere passers-by.

Also, Resnais intervenes in the epic world of *Still It's Good to Live* by transgressing on the plausibility of the narrative of martyrdom. The French woman in

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<sup>39</sup> Fumio Kamei, *Tatakau eiga: dokyumentarisuto no showashi* (Fighting Cinema: A History of Showa for a Documentarian) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989), 152.

*Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has an affair with a man that she has just met in Hiroshima, rather than contemplating Hiroshima's tragedy after her visit to the peace museum. The well-known montage, the superimposition of the love-making bodies onto what seems to be a heap of corpses covered by nuclear fallout, signifies a mode of blasphemy against the land of martyrdom, which instead is shown as engenders sexual desire and pleasure, although this idea may be seen too banal.<sup>40</sup> In so doing, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* precisely constitutes the palimpsest of *Still It's Good to Live*, as I argued in Chapter One. It plays the necessary role of the "clown" or the "fool" that subverts the hermeneutics of the epic narrative in Kamei's documentary, by presenting a refusal of Christian philanthropy. Chapter Three will explore, then, the opening sequence of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, Resnais' "failed" documentary part, which has been neglected by critics, by examining the distance between the camera/audience and the object/bomb victims within it.

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<sup>40</sup> Jean-Luc Godard was critical of this scene of entanglement between death and desire. See "Hiroshima, Notre Amour," *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 97 (July 1959): 11.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**SILENT MANNEQUINS AND THE POLITICS OF**  
**REPRESENTATION: RESNAIS AND THE ATOMIC BOMB VICTIMS**

**Three Japanese Films in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour***

While constituting a palimpsest relationship with *Still It's Good to Live*, as discussed in Chapter Two, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* emphatically repudiates its humanist and Christian framework. Even though the opening sequence of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* mostly consists of images borrowed from *Still It's Good to Live*, it also presents a striking difference to it in the way it stipulates the distance between the gaze of the camera and the object of the gaze—the atomic bomb victims. Indeed, it is unthinkable for Resnais to enter the screen and become a part of the image together with the bomb victim, as Kamei does, since Resnais dissolves any emotional connection with the victims, as we will see. This chapter explores how *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* visually approaches the atomic bomb victims. For this purpose, it discusses the opening sequence of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, Resnais' "failed" documentary part, which has often escaped conscientious attention by most critics, compared to the following part which foregrounds the heterosexual relationship between the French woman and the Japanese man.

The fifteen-minute opening sequence of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* borrows, just like a bricolage, footage from at least three Japanese documentary and fiction movies. Before exploring Resnais' approach to the bomb victims, let us go through what these films are like. The first is *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, "the film of *maboroshi*, or a phantom,"<sup>1</sup> because of its disappearance from the public

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<sup>1</sup> Ryuichi Kano and Hajime Mizuno, the crew of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, used these words, *Maboroshi no fūrumu* (The Film of a Phantom) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1967) for the title of the second version of their book that illustrates the making of this documentary. The title

sphere due to confiscation by the US Occupation Forces immediately after the film's completion in April 1946. This documentary, which was produced by the Japanese Film Company, as a more than two-hundred-minute film, records the degree of physical destruction and the human damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in detail; most of it was shot from late September to late October in 1945, a few months after the atomic bombings. However, in August 1952, the first summer after the end of the US Occupation in April, a short documentary and a newsreel were released by utilizing the part of the footage in *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* that the movie staff and crew had secretly copied before transferring it to the American authorities, and had hidden during the Occupation for seven years.<sup>2</sup> Also, the pictorial magazine, *Asahi Graph*, issued on August 6, 1952, on the seventh anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, used the same footage to highlight the atomic victimization.

Actually, this was the first time that visual representation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was shared nationwide after the lifting of the US censorship.<sup>3</sup> Thus, there was a huge audience reaction to these unprecedented events. However, this short documentary and newsreel encompass only one fiftieth to one seventieth of the footage originally contained in *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and*

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of the first version was *Hiroshima nijyu-nen* (Hiroshima Twenty Years) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1965). For calling this documentary *maboroshi*, see also Abé Mark Nornes, "The Body at the Center: *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*," in *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film*, ed. Mick Broderick (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 120-21.

<sup>2</sup> See Ryuichi Kano and Hajime Mizuno, *Hiroshima nijyu-nen* (Hiroshima Twenty Years) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1965), Akira Iwasaki, *Senryo sareta sukuriin: waga sengoshi* (The Occupied Screen: My Postwar History) (Tokyo: Shinnihon shuppansha, 1975), 118-44, and *Masukomi shimin* (Mass Media Citizen), vol.16 (June 1968).

<sup>3</sup> Prior to them, regional exhibitions of the photos of the atomic bomb victims started to be held at some twenty places around 1950 while under the Occupation. The biggest exhibit was organized by college students in Kyoto in the summer of 1951 and it attracted approximately thirty thousand audience members. But the victimization from the bomb was not well-known in most areas, and the victims who fled Hiroshima and Nagasaki and moved to other areas far away often suffered from the lack of understanding of what extraordinary damage the atomic bombs caused.

*Nagasaki*. Akira Iwasaki, the producer of the film (although he had already left the Japanese Film Company during the Occupation) and other members urged the Japanese Film Company to create a more complete version, yet their request was never realized. Iwasaki speculates that the Japanese Film Company hesitated because Toho, one of the biggest film companies in Japan, became its parent company in the process of the reconfiguration of the film industry after Japan's defeat. He considers that Toho feared possible obstruction of its business in the US market, if it were to make a film on the atomic bombing.<sup>4</sup> In any case, soon in 1954, Toho produced *Godzilla*, a film about monster transformed by radioactivity, and with this blockbuster found its grandiose way into the American filmdom.

Compared to *Godzilla*, the images in *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* did not so easily become available to the international audience. At the time of the release of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* in 1959, *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* remained “*maboroshi* or a phantom” in the possession of the US Forces as classified material. Therefore, as mentioned earlier in this dissertation, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* was in a way the first movie beyond Japan to convey this precious record of the visual representations of human damage inflicted by the atomic bombings. However, this newsworthy aspect of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has never received much attention from most critics. Judging from the ways to account for the making of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, many critics seem to know nothing about the censorship of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* included in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, and regard the shots from this hardly-attainable picture as something readily available anywhere. This causes them to end up disregarding the power relationships working intensely in the disclosure of *The Effects*

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<sup>4</sup> Akira Iwasaki, *Senryo sareta sukuriin: waga sengoshi* (The Occupied Screen: My Postwar History) (Tokyo: Shinnihon shuppansha, 1975), 142-46.

of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as the making of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*.<sup>5</sup>

As for *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, the American government returned its copy to the Japanese government in 1967, calling it a favor to Japan, while declaring the original American property.<sup>6</sup> Iwasaki adduces two reasons for this sudden change in the US attitude. First, by then, the types of bombs used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki had already become so familiar as a military secret that the release of their records could no longer endanger the American military.<sup>7</sup> Second, politically speaking, it was more advantageous to make a democratic gesture by allowing persistent requests from the Japanese for its return.<sup>8</sup> But, even after the return of the copy (which had been altered from the original 35-mm to a 16-mm, the smaller and less clear version, at the request of the Japanese government), the Japanese government did not allow it to be lent out except for strictly academic purposes, despite sharp protest and criticism from the public. Its reason for the rejection of public use was the protection of privacy for the bomb

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<sup>5</sup> Their reception may also be influenced by the way in which Duras so casually defines these Japanese materials used in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* as something close to a “made-to-order movie” in the synopsis. See Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 10.

<sup>6</sup> According to Iwasaki, in May 1967, AP first reported that the American authorities admitted they held *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* that they had confiscated during the Occupation. But in September 1967, AP’s tone had changed. It says that this film is a US national property, and its return to Japan is a favor. See Akira Iwasaki, *Senryo sareta sukuriin: waga sengoshi* (The Occupied Screen: My Postwar History) (Tokyo: Shinnihon shuppansha, 1975), 154-58.

<sup>7</sup> Kano and Mizuno’s book recollects the episodes when they were editing the footage for the production of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* from October to December 1945. For instance, they were frequently contacted by British and Russian agents who tried to gain information on the bombs. Their workplace was always vigilantly watched by the American Forces. See Ryuichi Kano and Hajime Mizuno, *Hiroshima nijyu-nen* (Hiroshima Twenty Years) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1965), 133-36. To complete the film, the footage was analyzed by Japanese scholars to measure the biological, medical, architectural, physical, and engineering effects of the bombs. The calculation of the quantity of radioactivity, heat and blasts as well as the exact place and the altitude where the bombs exploded were also important factors to determine the destructive power of the bombs.

<sup>8</sup> Akira Iwasaki, *Senryo sareta sukuriin: waga sengoshi* (The Occupied Screen: My Postwar History) (Tokyo: Shinnihon-shuppansha, 1975), 154-55.

victims in the footage, yet this incident epitomizes how the Japanese government prevented its people from seeing the reality of human damage caused by the atomic explosion through this documentary.<sup>9</sup> People had to wait to see different versions of this document until 1980 when anti-nuclear citizen groups in Japan organized a nationwide fund-raising campaign, the so-called 10 Feet Movement, for the purchase of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, along with the other footage recorded by the US Forces in 1946. With contributions of one hundred and eighty million Japanese yen gathered by hundreds of thousands of people, they made three documentaries with the purchased footage, *Ningen o kaese* (Lost Generation, director: Yuten Tachibana, 1982), *Yogen* (Prophecy, director: Susumu Hani, 1982), and *Rekishi: kaku kyoran no jidai* (History: the Nuclear Frenzy Era, director: Susumu Hani, 1983).<sup>10</sup>

The second Japanese documentary that *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* contains is *Still It's Good to Live* of course, which was made three years before *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. Almost all the footage of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* that appears in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is also found in *Still It's Good to Live*. Since there were no movies that could use the footage from *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* before *Still It's Good to Live*, except for the short documentary and newsreel mentioned earlier, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* can be said to succeed *Still It's Good to Live* in this regard, too. Also, in addition to the use of this memorable footage, Resnais borrows many shots from *Still It's Good to Live*, which portrays the bomb victims suffering not only from the destruction of their

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<sup>9</sup> For the criticism of the policy of the Japanese government regarding the treatment of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, see Ryuichi Kano and Hajime Mizuno, *Hiroshima nijyu-nen* (Hiroshima Twenty Years) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1965), Akira Iwasaki, *Senryo sareta sukuriin: waga sengoshi* (The Occupied Screen: My Postwar History) (Tokyo: Shinnihon shuppansha, 1975), 118-44, and *Masukomi shimin* (Mass Media Citizen), vol.16 (June 1968).

<sup>10</sup> For this campaign, see Hideaki Nagai, *Ten fiito eiga sekai o mawaru* (The 10 Feet Movie Goes around the World) (Tokyo: Asahi shimbun sha, 1983).

health but also from their lives after ten years, although Resnais removed all these stories and contexts embedded in Kamei's, when using them. The third film cited in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is *Hiroshima* made by Hideo Sekikawa in 1953, three years before Kamei's film. It is the fiction film that reenacts the state of calamity after the atomic explosion and how the lives of the residents completely changed after this incident. In *Hiroshima*, Resnais finds not only the shots that he can make use of in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, but also the main actor for his film, Eiji Okada. Okada plays the role of a schoolteacher in *Hiroshima*, whereas he acts as the Japanese man in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. But Resnais adds a further twist to his film by utterly transforming Okada's character into almost a double-faced figure: from the teacher who earnestly advocates the significance of peace to his students in Sekikawa's film, to the wife-cheater who does not hesitate to have an affair during her absence.

### **“Hiroshima Number One”**

By and large, Resnais seems to concern himself with how to effectively use the shots that he borrowed from these three Japanese films in the opening sequence as a form of a bricolage. Then, what kind of representational strategy does he develop to depict the bomb victims? Among many shots, we focus on the hospital scene in the first part of the opening sequence. The reason is threefold: first, the hospital scene that portrays the bomb victims consist exclusively of Resnais' own pictures. Second, this scene includes the bomb victim that Resnais had direct contact with—possibly the only one whom he interacted with in person. Third, most importantly, the way Resnais approaches this victim in the hospital scene, Kiyoshi Kikkawa, one of the most familiar faces among the victims of Hiroshima, may epitomize his modus operandi in attending to the voice of victims and representing the event and experience of the atomic bombing in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. Kikkawa is an exceptional figure who

willingly revealed to anyone requesting to look at his injuries, the keloid scars—a synonym for the atomic victimization—the skin that becomes thickened, swollen, and discolored by the intense heat and radioactivity through the atomic explosion. In a way he is a self-conscious and self-referential performer knowing well what it means to be “seen” as the object of the gaze, and what meanings are being created in the signifying process to expose his body to the gaze of others through this performative act.

Kikkawa’s frequent media appearances also attest to the reluctance of most victims to show their bodies in public. At any rate, he did not hesitate to come in contact with the media including films, and sometimes even made use of such occasions. His first appearance on film is in *Children of the Atomic Bombing* (director: Kaneto Shindo, 1952), the first movie to directly tackle the atomic victimization after the end of the Occupation. At that time, Kikkawa was running a souvenir shop beside the Atomic Bomb Dome, the symbol of Hiroshima near ground zero, a place too conspicuous to miss. Shindo became acquainted with Kikkawa when shooting in this area, and asked him if he could film for the movie the keloid scars that completely covered his back. Kikkawa accommodated Shindo’s request, because he believed that the inclusion of his scars on the screen could make this testimony to the bombing stay alive as part of the story of the movie. In those days, Kikkawa was trying to establish a new association of bomb victims, together with Sankichi Toge, a poet and the bomb victim in Hiroshima.<sup>11</sup> Kikkawa was also one of the first activists

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<sup>11</sup> Kiyoshi Kikkawa, “*Genbaku ichi-go*” *to iwarete* (Called “Atomic Bomb Victim No.1”) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 1981), 164-65. For an English translation of the poems written by Sankichi Toge, see ed. Richard Minear, *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, trans. Richard Minear (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). Toge published his *Genbaku shishu* (Poetry of the Atomic Bomb) at his own expense in 1951 while still under the Occupation; he feared of the possibility of the American reuse of the atomic bomb in The Korean War, after he heard the news of President Truman’s intention to use an atomic bomb in 1950. He died of diseases in 1953. *Prelude*, one of his most famous poems that appears in the opening of *Genbaku shishu*, goes as follows:

Bring back the fathers! Bring back the mothers!  
Bring back the old people!

to struggle to organize the victims since the Occupation period. He immediately involved Shindo, who is originally from the vicinity of Hiroshima, as well as Nobuko Otowa, who starred in *Children of the Atomic Bombing*, in their grassroots movement, by asking them to attend their gathering and become their supporters. To strengthen their association, Kikkawa successively solicited other people such as the painters Iri and Toshi Maruki, known for their murals of Hiroshima which illustrates the catastrophe they bore witness to just a few days after the explosion, and also the writer Yoko Ota, who likewise experienced the bombing of Hiroshima.

In Sekikawa's *Hiroshima* produced one year after Shindo's, Kikkawa again exposed his keloid scars by yielding to the crew's insistent requests. A few years later when Kamei made *Still It's Good to Live*, Kikkawa had already become well-known in Hiroshima. Kamei also filmed Kikkawa's souvenir shop, but did not use these shots because of objections probably from the producer. Kikkawa was not only ostentatious but also controversial. Since 1952, Kikkawa linked up with a local bus company to include in the tour itinerary of Hiroshima his shop where he not only sold passengers materials deformed by the atomic explosion as souvenirs, but also talked about his bomb experience and even showed them his scars. Four decades later, the poet and local activist, Toshikazu Masuoka, reminisced about Kikkawa probably as the first "*kataribe* of Hiroshima," the citizen volunteers who talk about their bomb experiences

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Bring back the children!

Bring me back!  
Bring back the human beings I had contact with!

For as long as there are human beings, a world of human beings,  
bring back peace,  
unbroken peace (Ibid., 305).

This poem is criticized especially in the 1980's and 1990's as not only neglecting the history of Japanese invasion but also universalizing the victimhood of Hiroshima. But it should also be noted that Toge committed himself to a specific political and military situation in those days: the American involvement with the Korean War and its threat to use the atomic bomb again.

to visitors to Hiroshima.<sup>12</sup> But according to Kamei, what he saw and captured on camera at that time was abusive language against Kikkawa inscribed on a large signboard built right next to his shop by a right-winger who was also a souvenir shop owner. This sight reminds Kamei of a kind of wrestling, “the spectacle of excess,”<sup>13</sup> in the way it surprises visitors with the exhibition of such open hostility in the place where such an unprecedented human tragedy took place.<sup>14</sup> In many ways, Kikkawa was a seducer, agitator, and provoker of the emotions and feelings of the people who got in touch with him.<sup>15</sup>

After that, Kikkawa involved himself further with film-making, not only by exposing his scars but also raising funds for the production and promotion of the films on the bomb victims such as *Hiroshima 1966*, directed by Kosei Shirai, who was assistant director for *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, and a few others made in the 1960's and 1970's. He also appears, in the name of Kiyoshi Ishikawa as well as Kiyoshi Yoshii, in Ota's story, *Yunagi no machi to hito to: 1953nen no jitsutai* (City of the Evening Lull and People There: Actual Conditions in 1953), which depicts slum streets where various kinds of people reside in 1953 Hiroshima. Considering Kikkawa's high prominence, it is no wonder that Resnais also approached him through his research in order to make his film. Kikkawa says that he was also coaxed by Resnais and Shirai to make an appearance in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*.

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<sup>12</sup> Rikito Watanabe, Tokihiko Tagawa and Toshikazu Masuoka, eds., *Senryoka no hiroshima: hankau-hibakusha undo sosoki monogatari* (Hiroshima under the Occupation: A Story of the Pioneer Days of the Anti-nuclear and Bomb Victim Movement) (Tokorozawa: Nichiyō sha, 1995), 224-25.

<sup>13</sup> This expression is borrowed from Roland Barthes's "Wrestling," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Noonday Press, 1972), 15.

<sup>14</sup> Fumio Kamei et al., "Kiroku eiga 'Ikiteite yokatta' no itoshita mono" (What the Documentary *Still It's Good to Live* Intended), *Bijyutsu Hiho* (August 1956): 76.

<sup>15</sup> Throughout his life, Kikkawa received much criticism. The writer Toshiyuki Kajiwara, who spent his childhood in colonial Seoul and postwar Hiroshima, is one of those who attacked Kikkawa's activities. The weekly journal *Shukan Bunshun* (24 August 1959) also comments harshly on Kikkawa as using his bomb experience for his "peace business" (22-23).

It was accidental and shocking, however, when Kikkawa first exposed his body to the camera. For the initial few years after the bombing, due to his extreme debilitation that derived from the aftereffects of radioactivity, he stayed in the Hiroshima Red Cross Hospital, a center for the research and treatment of the various diseases that the atomic bomb victims contracted. Kikkawa was lucky to be admitted to the hospital, since basically the bomb victims were forced to be self-reliant after initial treatment, in spite of the fact that they needed continuous medical help. The severe degree of his keloid scars may have been a reason for his acceptance by the hospital.

In April, 1947, probably because of its concentration on medical examination of the diseases caused by the atomic explosion, the hospital became one of the visiting places for high-ranking officials of the American military forces making a tour through Hiroshima. The vice-director of the hospital singled out Kikkawa among the patients and asked him to give interviews to the American media such as *United Press*, *Associated Press*, *Life*, *Time* and the newspaper staff that accompanied these military officials. First, Kikkawa bluntly refused the hospital's request because he could not tolerate presenting a spectacle to the victimizer's side. Yet, he reconsidered after realizing that this was rather a good opportunity to demonstrate the cruelty of the atomic bomb directly to the Americans. He described his complex feelings when he actually exposed his body stripped to the waist to the surrounding gaze as a mixture of mounting rage and sheer delight—imagining that he was yelling loudly: Look at my body! How can I endure my life, if I do not vindicate myself as a testament to survival of the atomic catastrophe?<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lisa Yoneyama also points out the resentment and anger of the bomb victims that sometimes surface at the time of their storytelling. See Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 130-33.

Although he wished to present the inhumanity and brutality of atomic bombing to the audience, his words published in *Life* in September, 1947 were much more docile and benign: “something good must come of this. I now want to be sent to the U.S. so doctors can experiment with my body. It does not matter if I die as long as I can be of some use to a world at peace.”<sup>17</sup> When the camera portrayed him, the *mise-en-scène* was set outdoors on the top of the hospital building in order to clearly photograph his keloids with an abundance of sunlight. Yet probably due to a hesitation to show his entire wounds to readers, his naked upper body was framed from the front at a slightly oblique angle, which allowed readers to see only the partial spots of the keloid scars on his arms and shoulders. From this shot, readers would barely sense Kikkawa’s bursting emotions inside his mind and his provocative gestures in making the scene. *Life* and other American press featured him as the “first” victim of Hiroshima covered photographically by the media, while naming him “Hiroshima Number One.” This experience led Kikkawa to introduce himself in this way afterwards, to draw people’s attention, precisely because of this label given by the Americans.

After the initial exposure to American media, Kikkawa kept showing his keloid wounds for years to more than one thousand visitors to the hospital. Considering this guinea-pig treatment, it is really apt to call him “Hiroshima Number One.” His showing of the keloid scars to visitors continued until the hospital pressured him to leave in April, 1951, by cutting off his social welfare assistance without his consent. This incident took place after he started to organize a group of patients, and demanded improvement in the hygiene level of the meals provided by the hospital.

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<sup>17</sup> *Life*, 1 September 1947, 42. Contrary to this friendly portrayal of Kikkawa published in *Life*, the picture contained in his book, “*Genbaku ichi-go*” to *warete*, which was taken on the same occasion by *Life*, shows a drastically different approach to subjugating Kikkawa as the object of the gaze. By clasping both hands behind his bending head, Kikkawa was portrayed from behind at a high angle along with a black signboard, “Kikkawa K Hiroshima April 20 1947.” The setting and his posture together frame him as almost analogous to a criminal or a prisoner in a police identification photo.

Unable to support himself and his wife, also hospitalized with him, after being expelled, he opened a small souvenir shop beside the Atomic Bomb Dome, with the help of other victims. Kikkawa also began visiting bomb victims one by one to change their isolated state, share their health, job, and housing problems, and discuss how to organize themselves to take action. While parks, big roads, new buildings were constructed in the name of rehabilitation under the Occupation, the bomb victims had been relegated to the bottom of society. Kikkawa even met the mayor of Hiroshima City, Shinzo Hamai, to explain their destitute situations and ask about any rescue plans by the city. Hamai only answered that it was financially difficult since the city was still in the middle of rehabilitation.

While many victims gave up expecting any remedy for their situations, Kikkawa successfully organized the first association of the bomb victims in August 1951. Yet they lost the meeting place immediately, when the landlord asked them to leave after receiving a visit about their meeting from the police. This episode reminded Kikkawa of prewar Japan, inasmuch as the meeting of the bomb victims looked similar to illegal activities to the police and the US Occupation Forces.<sup>18</sup> In spite of these hardships, both his political activism and his lifelong performance as a spectacle on display characterize Kikkawa's atomic bomb victimhood. For him, these two deeds sprang from his sense of "mission."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "*Genbaku ichi-go*" to *iwarete* (Called Atomic Bomb Victim No.1) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 1981), 70-81. After being evicted, Kikkawa asked for help from the pastor of the Methodist Church, Kiyoshi Tanimoto, who became well-known for his appearance in John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, to let them use his church as a meeting place. But this turned into Kikkawa's having a conflictual relationship with Tanimoto. Tanimoto took *Genbaku otome* (the Hiroshima maidens), a group of the young women whose faces were disfigured by the atomic bombing, to Tokyo in 1952 while accompanying Kikkawa. According to Kikkawa, Tanimoto not only used these women for a publicity campaign, but also lied to the press in saying that the organization that Kikkawa had started was all done by him. Tanimoto also arranged a visit of these women to the prison in Sugamo to express sympathy to war criminals who were on trial. These incidents made Kikkawa decide to split from Tanimoto and organize a new association with Toge (Ibid., 81-90). Tanimoto took these women further to the US in 1953, and gathered a lot of media attention there once again.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 100-03.

## **Performing Atomic Victimhood**

Let us examine what Kikkawa might provoke by posing before audiences' gaze numerous times, especially the theatrical aspect of his performance that inevitably brings about a certain form of subversion between the viewer and the viewed. Compared to the first time he was pictured by the media, over the years Kikkawa should have become aware of what exactly his performance involved, just like a veteran actor who has played the same role over and over again. His "stage" enmeshes spectators through his face-to-face encounters with them. In other words, it carries the premise that spectators are always already a constituent of his "show" in such a way that the display of his disfigured body cannot help but exhibit the obscenity and hypocrisy of the spectators as well. Whether the motivations of spectators stem from curiosity, sympathy, or serious concerns, their watching Kikkawa's demonstration concurrently caricatures their presence at the scene. The structure of Kikkawa's performance thus implicates the transformation of spectators into the "seen"—in the eyes of not only people located outside this *mise-en-scène*, but also of Kikkawa, a performer, originally supposed to be the seen. In this highly theatrical relationship between Kikkawa and his spectators, their positions can be exchanged and subverted, in contrast to the relationship between actors and spectators in the cinema, where audiences would enjoy their omnipresence without ever being seen by the actors in the film.

This subversion of positionalities between the seer and the seen comes into effect precisely because both sides cannot refuse their coevalness in this theatrical space. The point is that Kikkawa's body and his being do not serve as a universal point of reference to spectators. Rather, a basic premise for the organization of this theatrical space is that every time he displays his body towards them, he is

“becoming” an atomic bomb victim, the figure who fulfills the victim’s identity in concert with the damage inflicted on the body. What enacts his victimhood through his performance, therefore, is the gaze of the spectators at his body or, to put it in another way, his being-seenness. Likewise, by seeing his body, spectators first demarcate their identities as the ones who are not like him—not having deformed skin, or not having experienced the aftereffects of radioactivity. Yet their positionalities cannot be totally secure, as seen earlier in terms of the possibility of a subversion in the relationship between the viewer and the viewed. At this point, another anxiety may enter their minds, when it occurs to them whether the skin, this extremely thin fabric, can be entirely trustworthy as the border separating the self and the other. This question may lead them to question whether they can really neatly sustain a clear-cut difference from Kikkawa. They may sense how fragile it is to contour difference in identities, especially if they realize that one is most likely tempted to posit the difference with the other who can otherwise be similar.

Let us suppose that somebody feigns being a bomb victim, and stages Kikkawa’s highly dramatic performance. The effect that this performance would generate would be different from the effect manifested in Kikkawa’s performance, because the former embodies more of an imitation or a reproduction, whereas the latter comprises something close to a production supplemented by complex interactions with the spectator. The gap between Kikkawa and the imitator indicates the singularity of the theatrical space that Kikkawa’s performance inaugurates. The singularity of this dramatic space is not only generated from the coevalness and the contemporaneity that Kikkawa and the spectator share, but also from the specific temporality in which he has had to and will have had to live as a bomb victim, insofar as his keloid scars and the unceasing radioactive aftereffects—both visible and invisible damage—will persistently reside within him for the rest of his life. This

particular lived/living temporality forms his history or experience, and signifies the basal change in everyday life after the atomic explosion. Beyond question, the temporality that Kikkawa is living through is at odds with the temporalities that most spectators have and will have gone through. In this sense, Kikkawa's display of his deformed body also reflects a partial discharge of his resentment onto the spectators—about their curiosity, indifference, and malice—as well as his intention to forcibly offer a glimpse of his experience to those who have not known the atomic explosion and its aftermath.

Regarding his performance, there is an impressive scene in Ota's *Yunagi no machi to hito to* in which Kikkawa appears. In the name of Yoshii, he shows his keloid scars to international scholars of theoretical physics who are visiting Hiroshima from the US, Germany, France and Denmark. His display of these scars is an angry reaction to an American scholar who tells him that he is not sure of where to draw the line on cruelty, since there are American soldiers who were injured in the Pearl Harbor and are still hospitalized, and people who lost arms and legs by in the air raids on Tokyo and Osaka. For him, therefore, the victimization of Hiroshima may not be especially cruel. In this scene of Kikkawa's exposure of his body, Ota restricts the illustration of his scars to a minimum, and instead, details the ways these scholars look at Kikkawa's scars; a female American scholar promptly averts her eyes. The scholar who said that the effects of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima are not specifically cruel opens his mouth a bit, bends over, and studies Kikkawa's back thoroughly with curiosity. Another American scholar gazes at his back, while hardening his rosy cheeks and blinking his eyes like a child. Obviously here, the spectacle is shifted to the seer, rather than the seen. In this sense, Ota represents Kikkawa's aims exactly: to almost violently transform these viewers into ones who have no choice but to look at

him, and to expose their vulnerability in the way they themselves get to witness this process of mutation.

### **The Bomb Victims as Non-Meaning Mannequins**

Thus far we have explored the theatrical space created by Kikkawa's personal performance, and the conjunction of this space with a particular temporality—his lived/living history. In the hospital scene in the opening sequence of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, however, Resnais drastically transforms Kikkawa from this eloquent, exhibitionist activist into an agentless, impassive victim by creating a specific setting and milieu for the bomb victims. Although it is already seven years since Kikkawa left the hospital, the *mise-en-scène* of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* returns him there as a hospitalized patient. Lying in bed half-naked and showing his injured back, he is momentarily captured in this shot, as he turns his head away from the camera. The natural arrangement of his posture and the soft focus of the camera make his keloid scars less conspicuous; this resembles the way in which Kamei documented the bomb victims in their daily lives in *Still It's Good to Live*.

Yet, the transfer of Kikkawa, from the site of obscenity and scandalousness that he has daily enacted in his performance, to the hospital bed—a clean, transparent, and insulated environment of the *mise-en-scène*—establishes a fundamentally different positionality for him. Kikkawa's identity becomes whitewashed by his detachment from his souvenir shop, which serves as both his workplace and residence, and from the conspicuous signboard next to his shop that blatantly reviles him for his act of showing his keloid scars to tourists. This everyday-life-ness is the space that candidly exposes various kinds of emotions such as the bitter hostility expressed in the signboard as well as the harsh realities of the lives of the bomb victims. The neighborhood located in the actual city center, which Ota's *Yunagi no machi to hito to*

also vividly portrays, has been a slum for a long time for those victimized people with no place to go, after losing everything in the atomic attack—their family, property, and health. Kikkawa's movement opposes the clearance of this slum proposed by Hiroshima City. His criticism is that the local government is attempting to make invisible the traces of the destruction and to hide the impoverishment of the victims in order to fashion Hiroshima as already successfully reconstructed and rehabilitated.

What is at stake in this hospital scene is that this benign yet definite form of the objectification of Kikkawa deprives him of a way to express himself as the subject who can affect public memories through his performance and who can make political demands such as for the preservation of the slum. In correspondence with this emasculated position, neither Kikkawa's expressions nor facial features are intelligible to audiences in this scene, since the shot only provides a brief display of his profile. Together with the proceeding shots of other female patients in the hospital, whose facial expressions also offer no meaning in spite of the fact that they gaze at the camera,<sup>20</sup> the complete passivity apparently outlines the bomb victims. In this sense, these patients are virtually indistinguishable from the faceless mannequins exhibited in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum which appear immediately in the following scene. As a result, Kikkawa's personal circumstances, his complicated feelings about the exposure of his body, and the strong affect that his performance may invoke in audiences are not just bracketed, but suppressed and invalidated.

What is more, throughout the opening sequence, Resnais consistently dictates the figure of the bomb victims in the same manner. When using shots of the bomb

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<sup>20</sup> Nancy Lane also describes in "The Subject in/of History: *Hiroshima Mon Amour* in Literature and Film in the Historical Dimension: Selected Papers From the Fifteenth Annual Florida State University Conference on Literature and Film, ed. John D. Simons (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994):

As the camera moves into the wards probing the faces and bodies of the patients there, their faces are serene and expressionless. The camera's gaze slides off without being able to penetrate and find any kind of meaning. Their suffering is indecipherable; it offers no opening or foothold for the camera (97).

victims in Kamei's *Still It's Good to Live*, he eliminates all of their episodes and personal contexts. Then, Resnais confuses the whole chronology by combining in random order the shots from the hospital scene created by him in 1958 with the shots from Kamei's documentary produced in 1956, the shots from a realist reconstruction of *Hiroshima* released in 1953, and the shots from *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* pictured between 1945 and 1946. By so doing, this diachronical disorder designed by Resnais not only equates the victims filmed a few months after the bombings with those who had survived for about ten years, but also presents both of them as a uniform signifier of the atomic bomb victims. They become visual samples displayed on the screen more or less equivalent to the faceless, non-human mannequins on exhibit in the museum.

### **The New Type of Human Being**

The disruption of time and the emergence of non-human figures conjured up in the opening sequence in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, however, have something in common with the lifeless world observed immediately after the atomic explosion. Tamiki Hara, the writer who also experienced the atomic bombing in Hiroshima, in his *Summer Flowers* (*Natsu no hana*), portrays the catastrophic scene at the site of destruction as something akin to a world in which everything is momentarily stripped away without trace of anything human—anything personal, anything individual or anything particular. Then he associates it with a surrealistic representation:

The wagon then went toward Kokutaiji and, crossing Sumiyoshi Bridge, toward Koi, so I was able to get a look at virtually all the ruins. In the expanse of silvery emptiness stretching out under the glaring hot sun, there were roads, there were rivers, there were bridges. And corpses, flesh swollen and raw, lay here and there. This was without doubt a new hell, brought to pass by precision craftsmanship. Here everything human had been obliterated—for example, the expressions on the faces of the corpses had been replaced by something model-like, automaton-like. The limbs had a sort of bewitching

rhythm, as if rigor mortis had frozen them even as they thrashed about in agony. With the electric wires, jumbled and fallen, and the countless splinters and fragments, one sensed a spastic design amid the nothingness. But seeing the streetcars, overturned and burned apparently in an instant, and the horses with enormous swollen bellies lying on their sides, one might have thought one was in the world of surrealistic paintings. Even the tall camphor trees of Kokutaiji had been torn up, roots and all; the gravestones too had been scattered. The Asano Library, of which only the outer shell remained, had become a morgue. The road still gave off smoke here and there and was filled with the stench of death. Each time we crossed a river, we marveled that the bridge hadn't fallen. Somehow I can capture my impressions of this area better in capital letters. So here I set down the following stanza:

BROKEN PIECES, GLITTERING  
AND GRAY-WHITE CINDERS,  
A VAST PANORAMA—  
THE STRANGE RHYTHM OF HUMAN CORPSES BURNED RED.  
WAS ALL THIS REAL? COULD IT BE REAL?  
THE UNIVERSE HENCEFORTH, STRIPPED IN A FLASH OF  
EVERYTHING.  
THE WHEELS OF OVERTURNED STREETCARS,  
THE BELLIES OF HORSES, DISTENDED,  
THE SMELL OF ELECTRIC WIRES, SMOLDERING AND SIZZLING<sup>21</sup>

For Hara, this new hell that had abruptly emerged on earth transfigures human beings into “something model-like, automaton-like,”<sup>22</sup> and paralyzes them in accordance with “a sort of bewitching rhythm, as if rigor mortis had frozen them even as they thrashed about in agony.”<sup>23</sup> The scene of the museum that follows that of the hospital in the opening sequence may have reintroduced this new perception of a human being found in the ruins after the atomic attack. The faceless mannequins on exhibit that take on a skewed posture with their limbs oddly twisted, as if they are doing a strange dance, overlaps considerably with the bodies that Hara saw in the destroyed city. It seems that these automation-like human beings in the museum, along with the bodies deformed by the bombing at the site of the catastrophe, possess

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<sup>21</sup> Tamiki Hara, *Summer Flowers* (Natsu no hana) in *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, ed. and trans. Richard H. Minear (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 57-58.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

no history, no temporality, and therefore no identity. All the contexts are stripped away from them, and only the surface without contents remains. They are converted into a muted sign too puzzling for a living being to properly decipher.

A blank meaning or automatism with no secrets inside it—what kind of representational strategy can best explain this new type of human being that has emerged in both the opening sequence of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and Hara's description of the atomic catastrophe? The idea of *écriture blanche* that Roland Barthes advocated may be the key to exploring this question. Chronologically speaking, it was in 1953 that Barthes published *Writing Degree Zero* which contains his account of *écriture blanche*. Then the emergence of the New Novel followed just a few years after. Barthes promptly embraced the New Novel and championed writers such as Alain Robbe-Grillet, Resnais' next partner in the making of *Last Year at Marienbad*, the work Resnais directed in 1961, immediately after *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. These circumstances may partly explain why Resnais, when producing *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* in 1959, shapes the figure of the bomb victims as a non-meaning signifier. Barthes describes the idea of *écriture blanche* as follows:

In this same attempt towards disengaging literary language, here is another solution: to create a colourless writing, freed from all bondage to a pre-ordained state of language. . . . The new neutral writing takes its place in the midst of all those ejaculations and judgments, without becoming involved in any of them; it consists precisely in their absence. But this absence is complete, it implies no refuge, no secret; one cannot therefore say that it is an impassive mode of writing; rather, that it is innocent. The aim here is to go beyond Literature by entrusting one's fate to a sort of basic speech, equally far from living languages and from literary language proper. . . . [I]t is the mode of a new situation of the writer, the way a certain silence has of existing; it deliberately forgoes any elegance or ornament, for these two dimensions would reintroduce Time into writing, and this is a derivative power which sustains History. If the writing is really neutral, and if language, instead of being a cumbersome and recalcitrant act, reaches the state of a pure equation, which is no more tangible than an algebra when it confronts the innermost part of man, then Literature is vanquished, the problematic of mankind is

uncovered and presented without elaboration, the writer becomes irretrievably honest.<sup>24</sup>

In other words, to represent the bomb victims as non-meaning or a mere signifier as Resnais did in the opening sequence may be conceived of as the result of this estrangement from both living languages and literary language proper, and their translation into honest, innocent, and pure terms as in Barthes' vocabulary. If we consider that Resnais' representation of the bomb victims encapsulates the idea of blanking off meaning, it is understandable that he has abstracted the victims in "the state of a pure equation, which is no more tangible than an algebra when it confronts the innermost part of man."<sup>25</sup> And this radical modification has sacrificed the articulation of the personal, individual, and particular histories of the victims as well as invalidated the contexts of their victimization and survivorship.

Jonathan Culler's discussion of Barthes' commitment to avant-garde works helps us further delineate the points that Barthes is making in regard to living languages and literary language proper.<sup>26</sup> According to Culler, Barthes considers that Brecht and Robbe-Grillet exemplify his position in representational and signifiatory practices. For Barthes, Brecht achieves three important aims in the genre of theater (and that of literature implicitly). First, Brecht rejects representing reality through naturalized performance which attempts to demonstrate that what happens on the stage is the way that things really are. Second, he foregrounds the fundamentally artificial nature of theater rather than obscure it as conventional theaters try to do, by incorporating the concept of *Verfremdung* or alienation/distancing that is operated by making use of an arbitrary nature of signs. As an illustration, "[a]ctors and actresses performing Racine should speak their lines as verse instead of attempting to make this

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<sup>24</sup> Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), 76-78.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>26</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Barthes* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1983), 50-58.

formal and highly ordered language seem the natural expression of psychological states.”<sup>27</sup> Third, although Brecht does not refuse the production of meaning itself, he repudiates the plenitude of meaning. Also for Barthes, Robbe-Grillet challenges the conventionality of literature through two distinctive characteristics of his works: the removal of depth from narrative, and the creation of disordered and confusing narrative. Robbe-Grillet denies traditional narrative techniques that engage in pursuing depth, interiority and details, and by contrast, makes narrative only the surface, as a result of this elimination. Furthermore, he resists establishing the continuity of narrative, yet champions fragmentality by prioritizing specific scenes over the development of narrative.

In this sense, Resnais’ representation of the bomb victims as a mere signifier also seems to successfully not naturalize but alienate the existence of the bomb victims, as Brecht does, not fill but void their meaning, and not develop but fragment their story as Robbe-Grillet does. Also, as discussed in Chapter Two, Resnais’ depiction of the bomb victims can avoid being trapped by the creation of the plausibility of the atomic martyrdom in Metz’ sense, contrary to Kamei’s approach that ends up promoting the atomic victimhood in *Still It’s Good to Live*. All these methods—alienation, distantiation, fragmentation, and making the object the surface only—can prevent representation from establishing the plausibility of history and identity. But at the same time, is it possible to circumvent making any performative meaning in the signifying practice, in the sense that nothing can avoid mediation and inscription by language? Culler also questions this point, regarding the interpretation of Robbe-Grillet’s works:

But as Robbe-Grillet’s novels grew more familiar, it became evident that readers could recuperate them as literature and make sense of them, particularly by imagining a narrator. The most mechanical descriptions, the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 53.

most confusing repetitions or lacunae, make sense if they are taken as the thoughts of a disturbed narrator. *La Jalousie*, with its repeated geometrical descriptions, can be read as the perceptions of a paranoid and obsessed narrator. *Dans le labyrinthe* can be read as the discourse of a narrator suffering from amnesia. Instead of 'objective literature' we have then a literature of subjectivity, taking place entirely within the mind of a deranged narrator.<sup>28</sup>

In Resnais' case, what concerns us is the question of engagement in and responsibility for the bomb victims, when he chooses them to be the object of the camera. If it is difficult for Kamei to stay aloof from the state of the bomb victims after closely associating with them, and if this is a reason for him not to be able to treat them as he does in his prewar documentary, *Shanghai*, where he objectifies the trace of Japanese soldiers who die in battles in a distinguishably detached manner, what about Resnais? When the creator distantiates his or her work from the object of representation, and separates him/herself from transference affects from the object, is there any possibility that this distantiation also results from a certain degree of indifference in the contexts and circumstances where this object is embedded? Resnais clearly shows a different attitude toward the contexts of the Holocaust, in his short documentary, *Night and Fog* (Nuit et Brouillard, 1955), which documents the traces of Nazi death camps. Although the way this film alienates us to the depiction of the Holocaust victims on the screen is to some degree similar to that of the opening sequence of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, his engagement with the survivors of the concentration camps remarkably contrasts with those of the atomic bombing.

In *Night and Fog*, Jean Cayrol, who is also an inmate of the camp, is in charge of both the script and narration, because, as James Monaco maintains, "Resnais was adamant about Cayrol's participation since he felt no one who had not experienced the camps had the moral authority to speak about them."<sup>29</sup> Cayrol's narration, which

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>29</sup> James Monaco, *Alain Resnais* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 21-22. In his "Desire at Cross(-Cultural) Purposes: *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence*, *positions* 2:1 (1994), Earl Jackson Jr. refers to Monaco's account, and makes a point on this matter by comparing *Night and Fog* with *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* as follows:

severely accuses the Nazi officials of responsibility for the mass-killing in a restrictive but powerful tone, is juxtaposed with the shots of the officials on trial, all of whom deny their responsibilities. In this sense, Resnais does not hesitate to infuse a moralistic tone as well as transference affects in the film narrative. Also, the incorporation of Cayrol's voice brings to the fore the presentness of the film's temporality and creates a coeval space between the audience and the survivor, saving the victimized from being confined only in the past. However, the opening sequence in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* gives no authority to the bomb victims to talk about their experiences; no victims speak either in voice-over or on screen. Written by Marguerite Duras, who never visited Hiroshima, the script does not attend their voices, either. Even though Resnais meets Kikkawa in person, he does not use Kikkawa to present any coeval space to be shared with the audience. Why does Resnais not feel about the bomb victims the same way as about the survivors of the Holocaust? These differences may partly derive from a degree of historical commitment of France to the Holocaust, its involvement in the operation of the camps. According to Monaco, *Night and Fog* was actually censored by the French authorities because it mentions the French involvement:

'Nuit et Brouillard' was withdrawn from the Cannes Festival of 1956. The ostensible reason was that the French government did not want to offend another participating government. Yet what really disturbed the censors was the challenge the film presented to the French to recognize their own complicity in the extraordinary crimes of the death camps. They glossed over, for the most part, the inferences of the narrative to seize on one particular image, a shot of about five seconds which showed the Pithiviers assembly camp. In the control tower a French gendarme was clearly visible. This visual evidence of collaboration was intolerable to the authorities. After two months

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It seems incongruous with the ethical standards of the director of *Nuit et brouillard* that a European meeting a native of Hiroshima would proceed to monologue about his or her own experiences, almost unconscious of the setting and the meanings of the addressee's survival, and, beyond this, to claim to have seen "everything" and to know the meaning of it all (Ibid., 169-70).

of negotiations, the producers of the film agreed to alter the image (and the evidence of history) by covering the gendarme's uniform.<sup>30</sup>

This French collaboration with the Nazis may explain why Resnais has taken a different approach in *Night and Fog*. But conversely, this reasoning naturalizes the fact that a lack of close connections and geographical distance can vindicate the detachment from the contexts and circumstances. Can we even say that since Hiroshima is not located in the middle of Europe, but in the distant Far East, Resnais can push his avant-garde challenges to the limits? Are the bomb victims used for an artistic experiment in a similar way as they were used for a military experiment to measure the effects of the atomic bomb, as many victims believe?

### **“Authenticity” of Event and Experience**

But, how can we define the experience of the bomb victims and the event of the atomic bombing itself, and how can we demarcate their relationship with each other, the experience with the event? One assumption is that the effect of the bomb is so overpowering that it obliterates all the individual experiences of the victims. Yet, this idea reduces the various experiences of the victims to the phenomenon of the atomic explosion only, and defines atomic power as the almighty that can encompass any particularities and individualities. Also, it is logically contradictory as to why it is possible for an individual like Hara to provide a testimonial account. This assumption not only intentionally ignores the existence of a perceptive witness in the scene of devastation, but also silences the voices of the victims who try to articulate their experiences.

Let us formulate the question that corresponds to a specific situation. Does Hara's description of the bodies left in the devastated field represent the “event” of atomic bombing or Hara's “experience” of it? As a matter of fact, Hara's testimonial

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<sup>30</sup> James Monaco, *Alain Resnais* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 22.

narrative of *Summer Flowers* illustrates how an individual's experience overrides the event of Hiroshima, and engenders something excessive and heterogeneous which is irreducible only to the event. It shows that no matter how shocking the sight that he encounters is, the description of automation-like bodies and the ruined city constitutes just part of his whole experience of the atomic catastrophe he faced. Escaping from Hiroshima City, taking refuge in a nearby village, and returning to the ravaged site—the flux of his actions being continuous with everyday life before and after the atomic explosion rejects the privilege of one specific moment only. Furthermore, the behaviors of the fatally injured victims that he witnessed are often far from being monotonous and identical. Readers of *Summer Flowers* learn that a man damaged on not only his face but also on both his arms and legs can still be as assertive and aggressive as expelling another fellow trying to sit next to him in an aid station, and that a little girl demands to be given *yokan*, azuki-bean paste sweets, while receiving medical treatment and crying with pain. Even though the destructive power of the atomic bomb overpowers these targeted people, the reactions of survivors are not uniform, suggesting that something particular, something individual, and something excessive reside within them.

It is also questionable if we limit the idea of the “real” or the “ultimate” or the “exemplary” victim only to the one killed almost instantaneously or soon after by the explosion. How can we define the “authentic” experience of atomic bombing? Is it to disappear immediately and leave only the shadow burned into the stairs where they are sitting? Is it to die after wandering about on the verge of death with extreme burns and swelling that have removed a human form? Is it to die after a while by having one's whole body covered with black spots and vomiting up blood as well as part of the viscera? Is it to die in a few months, a few years, after ten or twenty years or later, due to various kinds of diseases stemming from the aftereffects of radioactivity? Is it

to survive while constantly fearing signs of death appearing in the body or find the influence of radioactivity in the next generation? Or is it to be alive while being mentally tormented with a sense of guilt toward the dead and traumatized by the whole experience? Regarding the atomic bombing, we are unable to define the standards to classify the types of victimization, and assign each to a relevant place according to the degree of seriousness or immensity. If we enact such regulative measures, what do these almost bureaucratic processes and procedures eventually invite?<sup>31</sup> The elusive and compound nature of victimization by radioactivity and its horror cannot be neatly determined by means of taxonomy.

Giorgio Agamben, in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, presents his idea on how to consider victimhood—although his concerns are exclusively with the Holocaust—by establishing a new category of the specific group of people called the *Muselmann* among the camp prisoners. Agamben claims:

The witness usually testifies in the name of justice and truth and as such his or her speech draws consistency and fullness. Yet here the value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks; at its center it contains something that cannot be borne witness to and that discharges the survivors of authority. The “true” witnesses, the “complete witnesses,” are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness. They are those who “touched bottom”: the Muslims, the drowned. The survivors speak in their stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witnesses; they bear witness to a missing testimony. And yet to speak here of a proxy makes no sense; the drowned have nothing to say, nor do they have instructions or memories to be transmitted. They have no “story” (Levi 1986: 90), no “face,” and even less do they have thought” (*ibid.*). Whoever assumes the charge of bearing witness in their name knows that he or she must bear witness in the name of the impossibility of bearing witness. But this alters

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<sup>31</sup> Actually, the relief system for the atomic bomb victims in Japan adopts meticulously-established medical and physical standards such as the types of diseases, the existence of shield, and the amount of radioactivity calculated from the locations in order to acknowledge them as the “official” victims who qualify to receive medical and livelihood allowances. As a result, many victims who did not exactly match these criteria (ex. their geographical locations and time to enter the areas of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Cities) have been excluded, even though their medical conditions demonstrate the aftereffects of radioactivity. Still today in August 2009, a group of victims are contesting these standards by filing law suits against the Japanese government.

the value of testimony in a definitive way; it makes it necessary to look for its meaning in an unexpected area.<sup>32</sup>

Agamben's argument is based on the precedent statement of Primo Levi, a writer and survivor of the Holocaust, that true witnesses are not survivors, but those who "have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute."<sup>33</sup> To contemplate the experience of the dead which we can never know is significant in the discussion of the possibility of a testimony. But, Agamben's differentiation between true and pseudo-witnesses may not be applicable to the atomic bomb victims, to say the least, not only because the atomic victimization is hardly definable, as argued, but also because the logical structure of his discussion seems to have questionable traits. His basic assumption is that surviving witnesses would testify "in the name of justice and truth," and try to draw "consistency and fullness." But is it really so? Rather, when trying to bear witness, they often cannot help but face a gap occupying the heart of their testimonies, a gap between what they can talk about and what they cannot. Levi's words should be deciphered to attest to this unbridgeable lacuna, an agonizing state inside the survivor's mind, rather than to his un-authenticity as a witness.

The problem is that Agamben's argument judges the truthfulness of testimonies by the person, not by the account. The ones who cannot bear "true" witness are automatically labeled as less true, while being ignored for the efforts they may be making to approach what they saw and experienced as closely as possible. In fact, who can ever totally testify to their experiences, especially when they are extremely traumatic? If no one can afford this consummate subject position, again the

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<sup>32</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 34. It is also disturbing that when modifying the *Muselmann*, the diction of Agamben often evokes that of Orientalist discourse. For an elaborate criticism of Agamben, see Dominick LaCapra, "Approaching Limit Events: Sitting Agamben," in *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 144-94.

<sup>33</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 33.

question should be to what extent a person can bear witness to his or her traumatic experience. Nevertheless, Agamben assumes the impossible subject who can, as it were, obtain consistency and fullness, in contrast with an extreme figure like the *Muselmann*, “the non-human who obstinately appears as human”<sup>34</sup> or “the human that cannot be told apart from the inhuman.”<sup>35</sup> His schematization of victimhood establishes the binaries between the proxy/pseudo-witness (the one who usually testifies in the name of justice and truth) and the true/complete witness (the *Muselmann* who embodies the impossibility of bearing witness), and promotes a monolithic understanding of victimhood, limited only to the two kinds: the *Muselmann* and others. This dichotomy may, wittingly or unwittingly, not only essentialize but also hierarchize the camp prisoners.

This classification and hierarchization may possibly be meaningful for those who are outside the traumatic event, by-standers by definition, but how is it useful for those who are traumatized? According to Dominick LaCapra, “one crucial—perhaps *the* crucial—historical issue is whether (and how) the Holocaust is attended to or whether attention is diverted from it in a manner that decreases chances that it will be worked through to any conceivable extent.”<sup>36</sup> To bear witness should basically be a way for victims to work-through their traumatic memories, not a way for us to judge and categorize the types of testimonies.<sup>37</sup> In the case of Hiroshima, in response to a call from the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) Hiroshima Branch to keep a visual record, seven hundred and fifty witnesses contributed total of two thousand and

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 81-82.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>36</sup> Dominick LaCapra, “Representing the Holocaust: Reflections on the Historians’ Debate,” in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution,”* ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 109.

<sup>37</sup> However, as in the case of Benjamin Wilkomirski’s *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood* (1995), which fabricates his past as a witness of the Holocaust, there is a dubious testimony to be a bomb victim of Nagasaki. Akihiko Ito, a journalist working for the Nagasaki Broadcasting Company, gives an account of a story of this man, Keiji Yoshino, in *Mirai karano yuigon: aru hibakusha taiken no denki* (Last Wish from the Future: The Life Story of A Bomb Victim) (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1980).

two hundred pictures that portray sights after the bombing. However, some victims intentionally drew the pictures different from what they really saw.

Akiko Naono, who visited these witnesses thirty years after the pictures were made (at that time only two hundred of them were alive), reveals that one witness who tended injured victims at school added blankets, which did not exist, to her picture in order to cover all the victims lying on the floor. In reality, their naked bodies were infested with maggots. But she drew in this way, since she thought that it was the best she could do for them by drawing that picture. Another witness told Naono that despite his initial intention, he quit painting the picture that illustrates a victim whose left hand and a military sword that he is holding are completely melded together, making it impossible to tell where the hand starts and where the sword ends. He could not paint the picture, since he thought that he should not further demean this tragically transformed man.<sup>38</sup> These episodes suggest that for them to bear witness is not to pursue truth, but to come to terms with the traumatic sight that they had to endure for thirty years as well as to recover the dignity of the people who died dehumanized death.<sup>39</sup> It is an opportunity for them to reconcile with past memories.

### **The Atomic Cleansing and the Rhetoric of Reconstruction**

Resnais' approach to the bomb victims should also be examined in the broader scope of politics. Actually, the bleak and colorless sight of Hiroshima after

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<sup>38</sup> See Akiko Naono, *Genbaku no "e" to deau: komerareta omoi ni mimi o sumasete* (An Encounter with Atomic Bomb Pictures: Attending to Innermost Thoughts) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2004), 33-37.

<sup>39</sup> See Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 95. He states:

A goal of historical understanding is, as I have intimated, to develop not only a professionally validated public record of past events but also a critically tested, empirically accurate, accessible memory of significant events which becomes part of the public sphere. A related, problematic, even impossible goal is to assist in the effort to restore to victims (at least symbolically or even posthumously) the dignity perpetrators took from them—a restorative effort in which historical discourse is itself engaged to some extent in processes of mourning and attempts at proper burial (important forms of working through the past).

the bombing that Hara witnessed can be interpreted as the consequence of a cleansing act: the scene of the massacre by the “atomic cleansing” of almost all that was animate from the space. In a review of John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* in 1947, Georges Bataille provides a problematic, yet suggestive perspective on characterizing the atomic calamity. By evoking the metaphor of pest control, he associates the atomic catastrophe of Hiroshima with a collapsing nest of termites: “[t]hose who were its witnesses, enduring the effect without dying, no longer had the strength necessary to form an intelligible representation of their misfortune: they submitted to it as the termite submits to the unintelligible destruction of its nest.”<sup>40</sup> As for Bataille’s troublesome use of the metaphor of termites, specific historical circumstances in those days should also be considered, since he wrote this essay not long after the end of the wars between the Allies and the Axis, which were accentuated by rampant racism and hostility.

Instead, what is significant here is that in Bataille’s comparison between the use of the atomic bomb and the metaphor of pest control lurks an idea of modernity as a garden culture that promotes the accomplishment of a perfect world designed by a rational and scientific mind. In analyzing the Holocaust, Zygmunt Bauman links instrumental rationality to the mass-killing, and argues how this killing is programmed in the design of a better society.<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that one of the differences between the Holocaust and the atomic bombings is, while the former is more geared towards the extermination of the Jewish race, the latter ends up producing a scapegoat effect for the rest of the society. But after the bombing, Hiroshima is often described as if it were a model garden whose reconstruction is part of the advent of a better world. In this sense, the destruction of Hiroshima is rather a creation, made possible

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<sup>40</sup> Georges Bataille, “Concerning the Accounts Given by the Residents of Hiroshima,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 227.

<sup>41</sup> See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

by a rational choice and reform plan after an act of clearing and cleansing the space. Such a discourse appears in the American media, when reporting the reconstruction movement of Hiroshima after the war. *Time* on August 18 in 1947, for instance, depicts Hiroshima on the second anniversary of the bombing, as follows:

Hiroshima, however, was stressing construction and optimism. Just a year ago the city began a boomtown effort of clearing and building. New and restored structures are everywhere; a Hiroshiman guide apologizes with old U.S. booster hyperbole: “Sorry, but these buildings were not here yesterday.”<sup>42</sup>

*Life*, published on September 1 in 1947, in the same timeframe as *Time*, describes the situation similarly: “Hiroshima seemed to have risen from the dead. The people were putting their city back on the map. The spirit was that of a US boom town in the late 1800s. Their motto was: look at us and forego war.”<sup>43</sup> The former enemy once delineated in the most racially discriminatory kinds of expressions during wartime<sup>44</sup> was drastically changed—after the atomic bombing—into the hopeful and energetic people that the Americans could even identify with in their own past selves. In other words, the use of the atomic bomb propelled the emergence of the new world and the regeneration of new people that the Americans could welcomingly co-live and coexist with. In this narrative of reconstruction, the atomic cleansing paves the way for the advent of a new society and history, as if the atomic apocalypse has set the stage for such a “fresh” start in the land of genocide.

What is more, the *Life* article not only embraces the story of how Hiroshima after the attack celebrates a new start, but also highlights how the people of Hiroshima have already forgotten the war with America (“Their motto was: look at us and forego war”<sup>45</sup>). The cynical view of *Time* about the lack of war guilt among the people of

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<sup>42</sup> *Time*, 18 August 1947, 23. The article also touches upon the prosperity of the local black-market.

<sup>43</sup> *Life*, 1 September 1947, 39.

<sup>44</sup> See John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

<sup>45</sup> *Life*, 1 September 1947, 39.

Hiroshima who are engaging in a rebuilding movement may also attest to another sign of forgetfulness in Hiroshima:

American visitors are bombarded with questions as to how Hiroshima can be made a Mecca for peace-loving pilgrims. Hiroshimans feel that The Bomb purged them of all war guilt; perhaps that is why Hiroshima is free of the paralysis that palsies most of the rest of the world.”<sup>46</sup>

Significantly, these narratives assume that the forgetting of war prevailed among the people in Hiroshima long before the remembrance of war struck them. In a word, this rhetoric precludes their memory of war in order to foreground their forgetting of it.

Such a twisted relationship between memory and forgetting is reminiscent of Benedict Anderson’s familiar discernment in the paradox of Ernest Renan’s words. Renan states that his readers should “have already forgotten” the massacres such as the Saint-Barthélemy that he assumed they clearly remembered. Anderson points out that while articulating specific warfare, Renan not only obscures the linguistic and ethnic differences between victimizers and victims that extended over many places in Western Europe, but also switches the nature of wars from massive religious conflicts to a “reassuring” fratricide among fellow Frenchmen. Then, Anderson continues:

Needless to say, in all this there was, and is, nothing especially French. A vast pedagogical industry works ceaselessly to oblige young Americans to remember/forget the hostilities of 1861-65 as a great ‘civil’ war between ‘brothers’ rather than between—as they briefly were—two sovereign nation-states. (We can be sure, however, that if the Confederacy had succeeded in maintaining its independence, this ‘civil’ war would have been replaced in memory by something quite unbrotherly).<sup>47</sup>

We would notice that the narratives of *Time* and *Life* have also made metaphorical use of this American historical past. To describe the rush of construction in postwar Hiroshima, both of them overtly refer to the Reconstruction after a serious “divide” in

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<sup>46</sup> *Time*, 18 August 1947, 23.

<sup>47</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 201.

the American nation by the Civil War. These articles also strongly emphasize how a mutual friendship has emerged between the Americans and the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: “The booster spirit of resurgent Hiroshima would warm the heart of any U. S. Rotarian”<sup>48</sup>; “Hiroshima and its fellow bomb victim, Nagasaki, are the most pro-U.S. cities in Japan.”<sup>49</sup>

Here Hiroshima and Nagasaki play the role of brotherly sites that foster the Japanese nation to become integrated into the postwar US nation-state or the US empire, if we choose to call that, by serving as a metaphorical colony, just as the defeated South became integrated into the American nation as a natural consequence. The idea of reconciliation after fratricide that prompts the forgetting of conflicts prior to the remembrance of them may work not just to unify the nation-state, but to consolidate the hegemony of one nation/empire over other nation-states. As for the American national psychology, to figuratively make Hiroshima a US boomtown also mitigates the sharp antagonism and hostility shared among the American people toward the Japanese, their ex-enemy that fought to the death, along with the sense of guilt that derives from causing unprecedented disaster to this enemy by dropping the atomic bombs. In addition to producing these effects, the narrative of reconstruction in *Time* and *Life* also aims to give their readers an impression about the successful occupation of a defeated Japan. The idea of a recovering fellow Hiroshima (and Nagasaki) accommodates itself to this need as a good exemplar. Finally, all of these narrative effects function to strengthen the formation of the Western bloc based on American military supremacy so as to confront the USSR during the Cold War in the Asian region. In this way, the unparalleled event of the atomic catastrophe becomes an episode to advance the consolidation of national and international ties.

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<sup>48</sup> *Life*, 1 September 1947, 39.

<sup>49</sup> *Time*, 18 August 1947, 23.

Yet, we should also recognize the degree of control employed in those narratives of *Time* and *Life*. The metaphor of Hiroshima as a boom town, the mention of a friendly relationship between the US and the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the use of data regarding the number of old and new in the population, the destroyed and replaced buildings in Hiroshima that they quote—so many points are unnaturally identical between the two articles. It is understandable when we learn that the correspondents of these articles attended the tour of high-ranking officials of the US military, as mentioned earlier, including the visit to the hospital that Kikkawa was admitted to (they were also the ones that photographed his keloid scars). Not only the way they visually report on Hiroshima, but also the way they frame their narratives might have been based on a decision made somewhere else. However, control of the media and censorship, especially in light of the victimization of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, pervaded Japan far more widely. To maintain public order under the Occupation Army and to prevent hostile feelings against the US, the Occupation Forces issued a press code in September 1945, soon after its arrival in Japan, and regulated various topics including the disasters of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Hara's *Summer Flowers* marked the first publication of a detailed testimonial in occupied Japan distributed beyond the local literary community.<sup>50</sup> Yet, because of strict censorship, its publication was not allowed until June in 1947, in spite of the fact that Hara completed it by the end of 1945 (for fear of his dying soon as many victims

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<sup>50</sup> Before Hara's *Summer Flowers*, a local literary journal, *Chugoku Culture* (Chugoku Bunka), vol. 1 (March 1946) published three works that describe the experiences of the atomic bombing under the US Occupation. Prior to them, the writer, Yoko Ota, who was also from Hiroshima like Hara, contributed her essay, "Kaitei no yona hikari: genshi bakudan no kushu ni atte" (The Light As If It Were in the Bottom of the Sea: Experiencing the Atomic Attack) which describes her encounter with the atomic explosion in Hiroshima in the *Asahi Shimbun* in the Osaka area on 30 August 1945, the same day as General Douglas MacArthur first arrived at Atsugi airport in Japan. Ota's essay was the very first testimony of atomic bombing published in the media. Its publication became possible because it was a transition time between the acceptance of the defeat by Emperor Hirohito of Japan on August 15 in 1945 and the beginning of censorship by the US Occupation Forces that was announced on September 19 in 1945.

did at that time), nor was it permitted in a major literary journal even when it was finally allowed. It could only appear in a minor journal, far different from the original publication plan. In the meantime, in *The New Yorker* of August 31 1946, the war correspondent, John Hersey, published *Hiroshima*, a journalistic report based on the experiences of the bomb victims that he interviewed in Hiroshima in the spring of 1946. As the “first” description of the human experience of the atomic catastrophe, Hersey’s *Hiroshima* caught not only national but also the international attention, even of critics such as Bataille. But the whole process of Hersey’s publication may demonstrate a way to control the representation of the atomic victimhood. In a sense, Hersey’s *Hiroshima* is silencing the voices of the victims by acting as their substitute. It not only shuts the opportunity for a head-on interaction with and exposure to the voices of the victims, but also supplies a convenient alibi that enables American readers to justify the mediation of the American author to learn about the disaster of Hiroshima.

These instances illustrate that the literal prohibiting of the articulation of remembering war proceeded to the preclusion of the memory of war, as well as the foregrounding of the forgetting of war in Japan. Until the US Occupation ended in 1952, the Japanese media could not visually represent the victimhood of Hiroshima as vividly as American counterparts such as *Time* and *Life* were already allowed to in 1947. Monica Braw, in her research on the American censorship of Japan, maintains that not only information from the outside world was censored in Japan, but also the outside world had limited access to information on Japan under the Occupation. She observes:

Here the aim was to draw a ring around Japan through which no unauthorized information slipped, either to or from Japan. Seen from this angle, Japan was a territory separated both from most of the world, including to a large extent the allies of the United States. It was to be remade in the image of the Americans.

It was also to be separated from its own past, and from developments of the world, until the transformation was accomplished.<sup>51</sup>

As for *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, how should Resnais' representation of the bomb victims as non-meaning mannequins be positioned in relation to the issue of the preclusion of memory? Indeed, it may foster the foreclosure of memory and the foregrounding of forgetting by changing the victims into figures who lack the ability not only to bear witness but also even to remember their experience of the atomic disaster. The transformation of Kikkawa into a muted signifier in the hospital scene indicates his transformation into a sign of "blank memory" as well. In reality, as seen earlier, Kikkawa resisted the very rhetoric of reconstruction by insisting on the preservation of the slum where the wretched bomb victims resided. This slum graphically revealed the sordid aftermath of the bombing, since it was entirely different from the image of a resurgent and booming Hiroshima. Kikkawa's performance of displaying his keloid scars to tourists also parodies his treatment at the hospital almost as a guinea pig<sup>52</sup> as well as mocks the notion of the martyrdom of victimhood through the commercialization of his injured body, by making it a must-see on the tourist circuit in Hiroshima. Although it is unclear to what extent Kikkawa is aware of these effects, by so doing, he acts as an allegorical clown or fool

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<sup>51</sup> Monica Braw, *The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in Occupied Japan* (Armonk: Sharpe, 1991), 145.

<sup>52</sup> Following the order of President Truman, The Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC), a medical research institute, opened in Hiroshima in 1947. ABCC was notorious among the bomb victims, since it did not treat them, but only researched their bodies, conditions, and symptoms in order to study the long-term effects of atomic bombing on human bodies. Many victims testified that their examinations not only caused pain and side effects, but also inflicted on them humiliation and even trauma by having to be stripped naked in front of the surrounding gaze. It is said that a teenage girl went out of her mind after going through this experience. After the victims died, ABCC promptly fetched the bodies before funerals to have them dissected. They also forced the victims to take examinations by driving to schools in jeeps to take students directly to ABCC or threatening the ones who rejected requests with trial by court-martial. After a while, quite a few victims began refusing to go to ABCC even when they received requests for a visit, and instead relied on local doctors. In ABCC, the Americans sent from the homeland held the central position in ABCC, and Japanese staff worked under them. This can be said as another instance of Japanese collaboration with the US Occupation. But a discriminatory policy such as the segregation of cafeterias according to race penetrated the organization, which also demonstrates the colonized position of the Japanese.

in the Bakhtin sense, and introduced heterogeneity and excesses into the discursive sphere that produces the signification of atomic victimhood. It can be said that he resists the establishment of civil religion that elevated the victimization of Hiroshima into a transcendental event. Resnais' blanking off of meaning may extinguish such ambivalent implications that Kikkawa's performance and resistance contain.

However, there is another way to interpret Resnais' representation, a way to consider that the figures of the blanked victims act out the silenced subject in a totally controlled speech environment. Here we need to grapple with a complex situation of occupation and colonization between the conqueror and the conquered. It would be inaccurate to regard the US Occupation regime as unilaterally forcing the people of Hiroshima to accept the preclusion of memory and the foregrounding of forgetting. Instead, local politicians and city planners held the desire to reconstruct the destroyed city themselves, not just because they were told to do so.

The point here is where does the idea of making Hiroshima a Mecca for prayers for world peace come from? Although the *Time* article reports it as if it were an original idea of the citizens in Hiroshima, a record left in Hiroshima shows that an American lieutenant who became a city advisor for the reconstruction of Hiroshima in the spring of 1946 made the request that it was desirable to construct a memorial column for perpetual world peace, not for the repose of the victims' souls as the mayor of Hiroshima had initially planned.<sup>53</sup> We do not know to what extent this "request" carried weight in deciding the basic design for the reconstruction of postwar Hiroshima. But the Japanese under the Occupation often could not ignore the intention

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<sup>53</sup> Chugoku Shimbun sha, ed., *Hiroshima no kiroku: nenpyo/shiryō hen* (the Record of Hiroshima: Chronology and Data) (Tokyo: Mirai-sha, 1966), 20. The Japanese literary critic, Minato Kawamura, claims that there are no records to prove America's active involvement with the plans of "peace" and reconstruction in Hiroshima, in his "Tokatonton to pikadon: "futsuko" no seishin to "senryo" no kioku" (Tokatonton and Pikadon: A Spirit of "Reconstruction" and the Memory of "Occupation") in Yoichi Komori et al., eds., *Kanjo, kioku, senso: iwanami koza—kindai nihon no bunkashi* vol. 8 (Sentiment, Memory, War: Iwanami Lectures—The Cultural History of Modern Japan) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002), 341.

of the proxy of the US Army in those days, or they felt this was so. Judging from postwar history, it is clear that the local government (as well as the Japanese government) was not only good at understanding demands of the conqueror, but also able to carry out plans and projects as competently as they wished.

This conformity observable in the direction of the reconstruction of Hiroshima (and Japan at large) is not unrelated to Japan's past as a colonizer as well. Just as they employed various technologies and techniques to rule the colonized inside the Japanese empire, this time they may have made use of these exclusively for the Japanese inside the shrunken ex-empire. A peace song of Hiroshima, introduced at the second anniversary commemoration and reported in *Life*, specifically promotes the idea of the atomic cleansing and the rhetoric of reconstruction as if it were a sort of joint US-Japanese song, and were a good example of postwar Japanese collaboration:

Shining gloriously, the cleansing wind,  
Unto the ends of the land,  
And to our friends of the world,  
Will warmly blow to and fro.  
Ring the bell, the bell of peace;  
Now shall we, our hands raised high,  
Sing here of the dawn to come.<sup>54</sup>

### **“You Saw Nothing in Hiroshima”**

The discourse on Hiroshima was initiated by the announcement issued by President Truman right after the US Forces dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. In other words, it started as part of the discourse on the American victory in the Asian-Pacific War and World War II. As such, there has been no risk in being denied this occurrence, compared to the events such as the Holocaust or the Nanjing Massacre which sometimes encounter problematic denials. What is characteristic

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<sup>54</sup> *Life*, 1 September 1947, 40.

about the discourse on Hiroshima is that victims' testimonies are often mediated by American voices. For instance, as we have seen earlier, the first narrative about human damage from the atomic bomb was written by Hersey, when censorship was still in place in Japan. Hersey did not experience the atomic catastrophe, but interviewed those who had seen it. Since then, his piece has become canonized. Even after the narratives written by the actual victims such as Tamiki Hara and Yoko Ota became available in English, the status of Hersey's work as testimony to the atomic bombing is totally incomparable in the US.<sup>55</sup>

Also, the mindset of victims is framed in a specific way in Japan. The relief system finally established in 1957 requires them to certify not only the date of their victimization, their name and age, but also distance from ground zero when they were in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As Lisa Yoneyama points out,<sup>56</sup> this way to identify their locations precisely situates them as the target positions of the bombs again, since it is also a process of visualizing not just the degree of victimization but the results of the bombings. Yoneyama states: "the image of concentric circles radiating outward over a map of the city replicates the vision of the pilots who dropped the bomb and inspected its aftermath."<sup>57</sup> Their authenticity as victims is ensured by their repositioning under the gaze of the perpetrator.

When certified, they receive atomic bomb books, victim certificates so to speak, so that they can get medical allowances and claim related expenses such as for funerals. The victim and journalist in Nagasaki, Akihiko Ito, says that to receive this book becomes the decisive moment when one becomes deeply conscious of being the

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<sup>55</sup> It may be possible to find the same phenomenon in the popularity of Katsuichi Honda's *Chugoku no tabi* (Travel in China) (Tokyo: Asahi shimbun sha, 1981). Honda's piece, which became a best-seller in the 1970's and 1980's, collects testimonies of the Chinese people about the atrocities performed by the Japanese Army during the war, and describes their experiences in a sympathetic tone. However, it is framed and mediated from his perspective, as Hersey's is.

<sup>56</sup> See Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 113.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

victim.<sup>58</sup> But, systematically speaking, the records of their medical treatment also instantly provide the data that prove the effects of the bombs. The whole procedure unwittingly plants in them a perspective of seeing themselves from the angle of those who attacked them. When victims talk about their experiences, it often becomes customary to start with how far they were from the hypocenter at the time of victimization as their personal introduction. The process of identification as a bomb victim is structured in a way that his or her position is not only recognized but also reconfirmed over and over again in the spatial arrangement grounded by either the gaze of the perpetrator or that of the bomb itself.

Considering this structure of post-bombing victimization, it may be possible to interpret that by erasing all the contexts regarding the victims, Resnais resists the force to keep victimizing them even after the events, the force that not only places them within a military operation strategically designed in advance, but also integrates their indescribable experiences into mechanical and rational intelligibility. In other words, Resnais has decided to leave them rather in fragmented states at the time of victimization, when the space became destroyed and flattened as if it were in the middle of nowhere, even though to represent the victims in this way simultaneously gives an overwhelming power to the bomb and valorizes the event. But to erase the contexts and depict the victims as silent mannequins may have another implication. The act of erasure itself may intimate fundamental issues inherent in the discourse on the atomic bombing. How to depict the suffering of the bomb victims, or whether or not it is pertinent to do so has been a sensitive and touchy issue especially in the US. Commenting on *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, Bert Cardullo states:

A Resnais film documenting the devastation and suffering caused by the bomb would have been incomplete and unacceptable to a Western audience. Even a

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<sup>58</sup> Akihiko Ito, *Mirai karano yuigon: aru hibakusha taiken no denki* (Last Wish from the Future: The Life Story of A Bomb Victim) (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1980), 183.

film fictionalizing both the devastation and suffering caused by the bomb and the pressing reasons for its dropping would seem inevitably to be creating more sympathy for the victims than for the victors. A film that created the two sides to the dropping of the bomb—the tragedy of its dropping, that is—through metaphor would reach, and affect, its audience. Camus was right to say that ‘it is better to suffer certain injustices than to commit than even to win wars.’ The Americans were equally right to inflict great suffering on the Japanese rather than continue to suffer themselves.<sup>59</sup>

In a way, Hersey’s work and its canonization in the American discursive sphere may indicate the mixture of a desire to control the discourse on the atomic victimization, the anxiety underlying this desire, and a sense of compensation for causing suffering to the victims. The durability of Hersey’s work as testimony to the bombing may reflect the still unsettled state of mind as to how to come to terms with the atomic victimization. In this sense, Hersey’s book is basically for Americans to grapple with the past, rather than to know about the bomb victims. In other words, what is at stake is how to consider not only victimhood but also the side of the victimizer. Resnais seems to make reference to this fractious issue precisely by erasing the figure of the Americans on the screen. The opening sequence contains the shots of souvenir shops along with those of a tour bus and graffiti on the Atomic Dome. These shots concurrently demonstrate the words and phrases written in English on the posters in the shops, the body of the bus (atomic tour), and the wall, suggesting that visitors are not only Japanese, but also Westerners, many of whom are probably Americans. But there is no one in these places as if they were marked crime scenes needing to be separated from other places.

Actually, Sekikawa’s *Hiroshima* that Resnais has cited includes a shocking scene in front of souvenir shops; a group of street children importunately follow white tourists to sell the skeletons of dead victims. In those days, there were many orphaned children in Hiroshima who had to struggle to survive after losing their parents in the

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<sup>59</sup> Bert Cardullo, “The Symbolism of Hiroshima, Mon Amour,” *Film Criticism*, vol. viii, no. 2 (Winter 1984): 39-40.

bombing. Sekikawa depicts this reality in his film released after the lifting of censorship, the reality prohibited from expression during the Occupation, namely the aftermath of the atomic bombing and the visual representation of the Americans, by combining these two. Resnais should have seen this scene, since he has used a number of shots from *Hiroshima* in his opening sequence. But he purposely eliminates hosts and guests who should appear in the scenes (except for a smiling tour guide on the bus) in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* so that Western spectators, including the Americans, do not have to see themselves on screen.<sup>60</sup> But he also creates another meaning by precisely erasing people on the screen—by mimicking censorship practices that the US Forces enforced in cooperation with the Japanese. This may be considered as a resistance that Resnais has undertaken in a subtle but bold way, as well as a trick that he has played on the spectator, while superimposing the shots in the opening sequence with the voiceover that repeats the famous line again and again, as if assuring the spectator of no worries: “you saw nothing in Hiroshima.”

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<sup>60</sup> According to Laura Adler, when Resnais came to Hiroshima to make his movie, he participated in a bus tour. While on the bus, he accidentally listened to the sentence combined in the words of a bus guide and a love song from a speaker, “you saw nothing in Hiroshima.” See her *Marguerite Duras: A Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 226. One of the souvenir shops that appear in Resnais’ shots shows a Japanese sign saying that it is owned by a blind victim. In this shot, a female clerk stands across the counter with her eyes shut. The gaze at tourists/spectators is carefully avoided.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**POSTCOLONIAL *HIROSHIMA, MON AMOUR*: FRANCO-JAPANESE**  
**COLLABORATION IN THE AMERICAN SHADOW**

**The Nexus between Hiroshima and Nevers**

One of the most enigmatic questions in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is the close connection between Hiroshima and Nevers drawn in the diegesis: why does everyday life in Hiroshima thirteen years after the bombing in Japan need to be linked to rural Nevers in wartime France? Why should a seemingly commonplace, middle-aged Japanese architect be superimposed on a young soldier who is a member of the occupation force of Nazi Germany? These opaque links between Hiroshima and Nevers as well as between the Japanese and German men are established through the gradual revelation of the past of the French woman, who is attached to both places: in a tragic relationship with the German man in Nevers and an ongoing affair with the Japanese man in Hiroshima where she is visiting. Hinging the film's narrative structure on this obscure linkage and the process of its disclosure, her character becomes a focal point, since only her memory can mediate between the scenes in Hiroshima and the existence of the Japanese man, and those in Nevers and the German man. Naturally, critics have placed singular importance on her words and psyche, and give her trauma, which ostensibly has nothing to do with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, a status that they have to explore above all else.

This juxtaposition between Hiroshima and Nevers and the prioritization of the French woman's trauma over the bombing in Hiroshima initiated criticism from Japanese film reviewers right after the release, as explained in Chapter One. Their accusation mostly lies in the disproportional depictions between Hiroshima and Nevers, and the film's consequent neglect of Hiroshima's tragedy. The film narrative

is denounced by them in one of three ways: as misconstruing and deflating the magnitude of the atomic catastrophe by linking Hiroshima to Nevers (by the playwright, Yoshio Shirasaka); making Hiroshima a tool to assure the existence of the French woman (by the film critic, Susumu Okada); or running out of what to describe in contemporary Hiroshima and thus ending up in the second half with banal scenes of it (by the novelist, Shusaku Endo).<sup>1</sup>

An American scholar of Japanese cinema reacted in a similar fashion. Donald Richie also questions the treatment of Hiroshima and Nevers; “why Hiroshima? Why not *Yokohama Mon Amour*?”<sup>2</sup> He dismisses the parallel between them, because they have nothing in common except that the woman endures suffering in both places, and also because they cannot signify more than what they are. Yet, interestingly, he also defines the characteristics of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* as a “sentimental” acceptance of the inevitable forgetting of past events, and on this basis, groups this film with many other Japanese movies on the atomic bombing. Richie’s claim of a resignation to forgetfulness in these films, which can be translated as subscribing to the acceptance and remission of the US bombing, actually supplements what this chapter will discuss.

But, in spite of all these criticisms, if Hiroshima and Nevers still have connections between each other, as this film has demonstrated, what does each of them stand for? In her psychoanalytic reading, Sharon Wills maintains that like the Lacanian real, Nevers and Hiroshima are sites impossible to reach, due to their constant displacement and the text’s overdetermined relationship with the concealed.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Richie, “‘Mono No Aware’/Hiroshima in Film” in *Film: Book 2: Films of Peace and War*, ed. Robert Hughes (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 84. Richie states, “the main parallel and comparison imbedded in the picture is an invidious one. Nevers and Hiroshima . . . have in common only that the girl has suffered in both places. In juxtaposition they cannot mean anything larger than what they are, two extremely dissimilar cities” (84). In this essay, Richie mentions that no Japanese critics objected to the use of Hiroshima in this paralleled relationship with Nevers. However, Richie disregarded reactions of Japanese critics featured in *Kinema Junpo* (July 1959) and *Eiga Hyoron* (January 1960) in the prominent journals of cinema, ones such as Shirasaka’s, Okada’s, and Endo’s.

She considers that, since Duras' synopsis of the scenario informs the non-eventfulness in the displacement of Hiroshima, what we see in the last scene in which the Japanese man calls himself Hiroshima and the French woman Nevers, is, after all, nothing more than "the constitution of a scene."<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Nevers suggests a preemptive foreclosure of narrative and subject. By referring to Marcelle Marini's argument, Willis states: "Nevers: that toward which one tends. But which one never reaches [ne: negation, not; vers: toward]."<sup>4</sup> For Willis, the negation of both Hiroshima and Nevers structurally constitutes a fantasmatic relationship in which fantasy is not the object of desire but the mere setting, where the whole film-text functions as a screen memory consisting of analogy and proximity, and frustrating any signification and symbolization. This nexus between Hiroshima and Nevers can be expounded insomuch as both are susceptible to perpetual repetition, circulation, and displacement. Consequently, Willis's interpretation neither differentiates Hiroshima from Nevers or potentially anywhere at all, nor accounts why the scenes of this film need to be set in both places first and foremost, although she is keenly aware that there is a danger in dismantling the historical referent and in fetishizing this very disassembly.<sup>5</sup>

In short, neither Richie nor Willis considers it meaningful to illuminate the signification of Hiroshima and Nevers. For Richie, Hiroshima and Nevers would represent the literal only, or precisely "what they are," as the audience finds on the screen, although it is questionable whether this position is sustainable when considering the film's signifying process in which what the audience sees is by no means the literal, but intrinsically the projected. For Willis, Hiroshima and Nevers are

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<sup>3</sup> Sharon Willis, *Marguerite Duras: Writing on the Body* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 36. According to her, Nevers "signifies a-topia, a null space, as the original matrix which generates the negation of both narrative and subject" (51); "This perpetual and failed tending toward, the noncoincidence of name and place, indicates the impossible localization of the subjects as they are 'named' in this scene" (51).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

the names of the unnameable as well as non-referential, and as such, to some extent, they transcend the conflicts between the literal and the figurative. However, this chapter discusses Hiroshima and Nevers in an opposite way to Willis, interpreting them as overnamed in Benjamin's sense. Walter Benjamin states that "[t]here is, in the relation of human languages to that of things, something that can be approximately described as 'over naming'—the deepest linguistic reason for all melancholy and (from the point of view of the thing) for all deliberate muteness."<sup>6</sup> This view of Benjamin's seems to derive from his perceiving an infinitely unbridgeable gap between the signifier and the signified. This chapter considers this uneradicable gap inseparable from the function of language and the making of identity as the very source of dynamism which emerges from within in the signifying process.

Let us return to exploring how critics have grappled with the linkage between Hiroshima and Nevers which has profoundly affected the frame of this movie. Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier is one of those who have presented a lucid explanatory framework for this parallelism. She considers that an act of telling renders a traumatic past and a fragmented memory intelligible and decipherable. Therefore, what this movie performs is a process of reaching out to the unrepresentable and unnarratable event of Hiroshima by making a temporal and spatial detour through the more comprehensible story of Nevers. The point is that this process is both transferential and psychotherapeutic for the French woman who plays the role of storyteller and analyzed vis-à-vis the Japanese man, her listener and analyst. In other words, the disclosure of her past achieves both a working-through of her memory in Nevers and an approach to the indescribable scale of the atomic catastrophe. Yet,

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume. 1. 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 73.

when she finishes telling her story of Nevers, oblivion starts to descend upon not only the past Nevers but also the present Hiroshima. According to Ropars-Wuilleumier:

Once the story has been told, all there remains for Nevers is the cantata of oblivion, where the subject . . . expels the Nevers memory and exchanges it for views of modern Hiroshima. That is the ultimate goal of the transference. Such as it is generated by the prologue, the explosion at Hiroshima eludes both the subject and the object, both the word and direct figuration, only a trace remains. Projected on to the streets of Nevers, and linked to a narration which takes its place, the scar of Hiroshima enters in turn into the domain of oblivion whose exclusive memorableness the film guarantees. The process of obliteration is double-edged, and the itinerary which inscribes Hiroshima into a story remains reversible.<sup>7</sup>

In her interpretation, the relationship between Hiroshima and Nevers is still unilateral inasmuch as the therapeutic operation is simply undertaken on the side of the French woman, and only the Nevers story is told. But, at the time of the film's closure, both Nevers and Hiroshima find themselves equivalently at a similar place, a place of forgetfulness. Interestingly here, Hiroshima is forgotten even before being remembered. What is at stake is the ambiguity about what kind of Hiroshima is passing into oblivion. For instance, Ropars-Wuilleumier addresses Hiroshima three times in this short excerpt: modern Hiroshima, the explosion at Hiroshima, and the scar of Hiroshima. Can these Hiroshimas possibly be deemed more or less as one and the same, regardless of their historical contingency and temporal differences in terms of what can be represented in the name of Hiroshima? Can modern Hiroshima and Hiroshima at the time of the bombing be regarded as principally undifferentiated or intermittently continuous, and if so, on what basis? When she indicates the scar of Hiroshima, does this scar derive from contemporary Hiroshima, bombed Hiroshima, or a mixture of both? The ostensibly impeccable explication by Ropars-Wuilleumier demonstrates its slippage by equating what is articulated as Hiroshima always alike.

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<sup>7</sup> Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier, "How History Begets Meaning: Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959)" in *French Film: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Sudan Heyward and Ginette Vincendeau (London; Routledge, 1990), 181.

The historicities of Hiroshima are not being worked-through here, but fall into oblivion, no matter what Hiroshima, either past or present, or possibly both concern.

As discussed in Chapter One, the Japanese man who is a local resident of Hiroshima cannot simply be a contemporary mediator of the atomic calamity for the French woman. As many testimonies of bomb victims suggest, their traumatic experiences are not easily represented by people who did not experience the tragedy even though they are from Hiroshima or have relatives who are the bomb victims. Rather, it is feasible to consider that the Japanese man's identity is marked more by his wartime engagement in territorial invasions in the Asia-Pacific region as a soldier of the Japanese Imperial Army, and by his postwar profession as an architect as well as a politician<sup>8</sup> in a marvelously rehabilitated Hiroshima.

Actually, his past as a soldier on the side of the occupier and perpetrator can be translated into the uncannily overlapping figure of the dead soldier of Nazi Germany whom the French woman has primarily found in him in her flashback. In this sense, the Japanese man who plays a therapeutic role in the working-through of the French woman, according to Ropars-Wuilleumier, carries her back to the initial time of her being together with the German man under the Occupation. This interconnection between them can be deciphered as an allegorical coalition of aggressor and collaborator, and again ostensibly seems to have nothing to do with a Hiroshima victimized by the atomic attack. If we are to construe the intimate involvement of contemporary Hiroshima with the past Nevers under the German Occupation, we need to consider another phase of Hiroshima, which may expose this movie to a whole new interpretation.

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<sup>8</sup> See Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 34. When the French woman asks the Japanese man's vocation, he answers, "Architecture. And politics too" (34).

## **Prewar Hiroshima as a Military City**

One may ask, then, what kind of Hiroshima should we take into consideration? Needless to say, the key to this question is how to interpret the Japanese man—his past and present, history, memory, and trauma. Although thus far critics' focus has been primarily on the figure of the French woman—her psyche and behavior, this dissertation considers that the issues of memory and forgetting, and of representing trauma and representing history, may not fully be examined without reflecting on the part of the Japanese man to a degree similar to that of the French woman. Another suggestion that this dissertation advances is to approach this whole issue from a postcolonial perspective. Here let us examine the analysis of the Japanese man's trauma given by the literary critic Nancy Wood. Wood argues that the French woman has also mediated the Japanese man's traumatic memories through his "bitterly ironic recollection of world reaction to his city's mass destruction."<sup>9</sup> Wood's idea derives from her observation of the conversations between them in the beginning of the film. When he asks her about what Hiroshima means for her in France, her answer is that Hiroshima principally signifies the end of the war for her. Then he replies in an ironic tone; "The whole world was happy. You were happy with the whole world. I heard it was a beautiful summer day in Paris that day, is that right?"<sup>10</sup>

For us what is interesting in these conversations is twofold: the displacement of the event of Hiroshima with World War II takes place, and this shift engenders historical excesses. A question arises: apart from the side of the vanquished, can we say that everyone in the world has appreciated the end of this "World" War in a similar manner? The point here is that when the event of Hiroshima is superseded by

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<sup>9</sup> Nancy Wood, "Memory in Analogy" in *Vectors of Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 192.

<sup>10</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 34.

the end of the war, an unwitting Eurocentrism has also slipped into this discourse. Although the end of war for France would mean the final victory of the Allies over the Axis as well as the endorsement of the recovery of its sovereignty from the Occupation, an automatic association of such signification with the happiness of the “whole” world seems to indicate a conceptual failure about how this “whole” war may have been perceived in the eyes of the nations colonized by European powers. The postcolonial intellectual, Aime Césaire, in his *Discourse on Colonization*, for instance, points out how a Eurocentric viewpoint has prevented the colonial massacres perpetrated by these very Europeans from being connected to the Holocaust during World War II:

People are surprised. They become indignant. They say: “How strange! But never mind—it’s Nazism, it will pass!” And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, the supreme barbarism, the crowing barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism, yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack. Yes, it would be worthwhile to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler *inhabits* him, that Hitler is his *demon*, that if he rails against him, he is being inconsistent and that, at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not *the crime* in itself, *the crime against man*, it is not *the humiliation of man as such*, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to European colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the “coolies” of India, and the “niggers” of Africa [emphasis in the original].<sup>11</sup>

Césaire illuminates how a mass-killing is racialized depending on whether victims belong to the white or black race, to the colonizer or the colonized. His critical

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<sup>11</sup> Aime Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 36.

attitude towards the Holocaust to some degree also underlies Asian reactions to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; beyond feeling revengeful about the Japanese invasion and Occupation, many Asians often show indifference or disinterest in the victimization of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In other words, even though the Japanese are a non-European race, the Asian-Pacific Wars fought between Japan and the Allies are considered more as conflicts between imperial powers, especially in Southeast Asia, part of which was the domain of the French empire. Contrary to France, where Japan's defeat should have amplified a sense of liberation for the French after the German Occupation, in French Indochina, the colonized peoples would have instead been weary in anticipation of the return of the old French colonial power in no time after the Japanese departure. The Vietnamese obviously did not wholeheartedly welcome this French return, and therefore we witnessed their battles for independence against the French from the mid-1940's to the mid-1950's, followed by another long defense war against the US from the 1960's to the 1970's. In brief, for them, Japan's defeat would have only designated the departure of one colonial power and nothing more than that, even though this imperial power was incidentally non-white and non-Western.

When considering this perception gap between the French colonizer and the colonized, the shift from Hiroshima to the end of the war that appears in the Japanese man's words is indicative of the characterization of his identity. In short, he is also verbalizing a colonial unconscious as the colonizer or the occupier, judging from his inability to imagine how the side of the colonized might have viewed World War II. He is not behaving as a mediator of the victimization of Hiroshima, although the attack on Hiroshima can also be viewed as intersecting with the colonial violence exercised on the colonized by imperial powers, and also as what these escalated violent acts brought back to their own. In this sense, his trauma concerns not the

destruction of Hiroshima, but rather the defeat of Japan and the loss of its colonies to another power.

Yet it is also problematic to separate the war of aggression that Imperial Japan undertook from the destruction of Hiroshima. This separation will create a crystallized idea of Hiroshima only rooted in the atomic calamity and its postwar reconstruction as a peace city,<sup>12</sup> while obscuring its prewar history as an important part of the development of modern Imperial Japan. Historically speaking, after the Meiji Restoration at the end of the nineteenth century, Hiroshima City developed as a regional center of the military, the economy, and education in the Western part of Japan called the Chugoku area that covers several prefectures. The Hiroshima Peace Cultural Foundation, which runs the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum now, notes in its *Hiroshima Peace Reader* how the imperial endeavors of the whole Japanese nation became part and parcel of the prosperity of Hiroshima before the atomic attack. Although it is lengthy, it is worth citing:

The Meiji Restoration provided the opportunity for the castle town of Hiroshima to be reborn as an economic and cultural city. However, as the Meiji government pursued its policy of strengthening the military, it soon became apparent that Hiroshima, at the center of the Chugoku district with a good harbor, was ideally situated for military purposes. After the abolition of clans and the establishment of prefectures, the First Detached Garrison of Western Japan was set up in Hiroshima Castle. In 1873, the Hiroshima Garrison of the Fifth Military District, one of six garrisons in the entire nation, was established with Hiroshima and nine other prefectures under its administration. Thus Hiroshima became a military city. When the 11th Infantry Regiment was organized, its units were stationed in Hiroshima. In 1886, the Hiroshima Garrison was renamed the Fifth Division. New military installations were built one after another not only in the castle but also outside

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<sup>12</sup> Many citizen groups in Hiroshima especially in the 1980's and the 1990's engaged in excavating the past history of Hiroshima. The Hiroshima Interpreters for Peace, *Hiroshima Handbook* (Hiroshima: The Hiroshima Interpreters for Peace, 1995), a Japanese-English guidebook for Hiroshima, for instance, contains two chronologies of Hiroshima; one as a military city in the prewar period and the other as a peace city in the postwar period, in order not to emphasize the aspect of the victimization of Hiroshima only. It also introduces the information and locations of atomic bomb ruins as well as former Japanese military sites in Hiroshima.

the castle, steadily strengthening Hiroshima as an army base. When the Sino-Japanese War broke out in August 1894, the Fifth Division was the first to be sent to the front. They were followed by soldiers from all over Japan, leaving Ujima Harbor daily for active service overseas. Ujima Harbor was a very active port with many military transports coming and going. On September 15, Emperor Meiji moved the Imperial Headquarters to the Hiroshima Castle where he planned strategy. An extraordinary session of the Imperial Diet was held in the provisional Diet building built in a corner of the west drill ground (around the site of the Hiroshima Castle) with civil and military officials accompanying the emperor. Hiroshima looked as if it were the national capital. Until the emperor left Hiroshima on April 27, 1895, the city was unprecedentedly prosperous and busy, with high government officials coming and going, soldiers leaving for the front, wounded soldiers returning, and tradespeople and workers coming from all over Japan. The war brought more people to Hiroshima and resulted in the expansion of military installations. Thus Hiroshima made rapid progress as one of the important military cities of Japan. In 1904, as the Russo-Japanese War broke out, Hiroshima was again brought to the fore as a large-scale army base of operations. Through these wars, the industrial economy of Hiroshima grew rapidly and the establishment of stock exchanges, banks, and industries was promoted. Hiroshima became an economic city as well as a military city. It also had the appearance of an educational city equipped with a number of educational facilities. Hiroshima, secure in its position as a military city, grew and prospered as wars and incidents occurred throughout the Meiji and Taisho periods. Therefore, Hiroshima was little influenced by the cutback in armaments during the 1920s. Along with its expansion of its role as a military city, Hiroshima became a modern city. After the “Manchurian Incident”, the “Shanghai Incident”, and the outbreak of the full-scale war between Japan and China, the Japanese army and navy launched an attack on the northern Malay Peninsula and a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 8, 1941 (Japan time). Japan rushed into the Pacific War. In Hiroshima, a center of military affairs since the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese Wars, military installations were expanded and various heavy industries developed rapidly. In 1942, a Marine headquarters (under the command of Lieutenant General Fumio Saeki) was set up in Ujima, and related units were placed on the coast around Hiroshima City. Later, when the atomic bomb was dropped, these units, located about 4 kilometers away from the city, escaped destruction. They sent out relief squads and took a very active part in aiding the wounded, clearing the dead bodies and cleaning the streets. After the outbreak of the war, the air defense setup of the city was rapidly strengthened and was much stronger than in other cities. However, after Japan, which had been victorious in the early stages of the war, lost the battle of Guadalcanal in 1943, the military situation grew steadily worse, and it appeared that the mainland of Japan would be turned into a battlefield. The army hurriedly prepared for a decisive battle on the mainland. With these preparations Hiroshima was to take

on a new role. Japan was divided into two parts; the First General Headquarters was placed in Tokyo, and the Second General Headquarters (under the command of Marshal Shunroku Hara) in Hiroshima, where the headquarters of the Chugoku District Governor-General (led by Isei Otsuka), the highest administrative body commissioned by the central government, was also established.<sup>13</sup>

This past in Hiroshima precisely as an instrument of the state military policy has created introspective reactions in the minds of the bomb victims as well.

Recognizing a gap between prewar and postwar images of Hiroshima, the poet Sadako Kurihara, who bore witness to the Hiroshima's catastrophe in the vicinity, wrote the poem entitled "When We Say Hiroshima" in the midst of the Vietnam War, decades after the victimization of Hiroshima. Her poem contends that without thinking of the massacres in Nanjing and Manila, or Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, it is unthinkable to talk about Hiroshima, too:

When we say "Hiroshima,"  
do people answer, gently,  
"Ah, Hiroshima"?"  
Say "Hiroshima," and hear "Pearl Harbor."  
Say "Hiroshima," and hear "Rape of Nanjing."  
Say "Hiroshima," and hear of women and children in Manila  
thrown into trenches, doused with gasoline,  
and burned alive.  
Say "Hiroshima,"  
and hear echoes of blood and fire.

Say "Hiroshima,"  
and we don't hear, gently,  
"Ah, Hiroshima."

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<sup>13</sup> Yoshiteru Kosakai, *Hiroshima Peace Reader*, trans. Akira and Michiko Tashiro, and Robert and Alice Ruth Ramseyer (Hiroshima: Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, 1980), 12-14. However, Lisa Yoneyama also points out the danger that such statements of the bomb victims that accuse Hiroshima of participation in the Japanese military are readily appropriated by the media and progressive educators to substitute "the desire to demonstrate the Japanese conscience" (121). See Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1999), 121. When the author of this dissertation visited Hiroshima in the summer of 2004 for research, as one of the featured articles on the 60th anniversary of the bombing on Hiroshima, the media covered a story on the Hiroshima victims who visited Nanjing to talk to the victims of the Nanjing massacre, but who failed to reconcile with them. Among the journalists whom the author interviewed, only one writer who is from Okinawa voiced his objection to the use of the bomb victims in the media in this way.

In chorus, Asia's dead and her voiceless masses  
spit out the anger  
of all those we made victims.  
That we may say "Hiroshima,"  
and hear in reply, gently,  
"Ah, Hiroshima,"  
we must in fact lay down  
the arms we were supposed to lay down  
We must get rid of all foreign bases.  
Until that day Hiroshima  
will be a city of cruelty and bitter bad faith.  
And we will be pariahs  
burning with remnant radioactivity.

That we may say "Hiroshima"  
and hear in reply, gently,  
"Ah, Hiroshima,"  
we first must  
wash the blood  
off our own hands.<sup>14</sup>

Kurihara also states that there still exist in contemporary Hiroshima a number of well-preserved moments and places that commemorate imperial campaigns and the participation in "sacred" wars. She points out that these monuments demonstrate not only the past memory of Hiroshima as a military city, but also a lack of a sense among the citizens of presentday Hiroshima City that prewar Hiroshima was undoubtedly on the side of the perpetrator.<sup>15</sup> As a local resident of Hiroshima, both an architect and politician, who engages in presenting a vision of and carrying out the design of the city, the Japanese man would exemplify the way the contemporary Hiroshima is. He is also a product of the prewar history of Hiroshima, which developed and prospered as a military city. His identity cannot be gauged as thoroughly impervious to the identities of the past and present Hiroshima.

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<sup>14</sup> Sadako Kurihara, "When We Say 'Hiroshima' " in *When We Say "Hiroshima": Selected Poems*, trans. Richard H. Minear (Ann Arbor: The Center of Japanese Studies/The University of Michigan, 1999), 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> Sadako Kurihara, *Towareru hirosima* (Questioned Hiroshima) (Tokyo: Sanichi shobo, 1992), 273.

## **The Collaboration between France and Japan in French Indochina**

But there are more layers that we should investigate when discussing the link between Hiroshima and Nevers. As for the occupation of the French territories, there existed a parallel between the French metropolis and its colonies, between Europe and Asia. As the northern zone of France including Paris was occupied by Nazi Germany between 1940 and 1944, French Indochina was also subordinated to the Japanese empire, a German ally, between 1940 and 1945. While the study of Vichy France has exclusively been centered on the relationship between the Vichy regime and Germany, that of the French territories in Asia in this period tends to be out of sight.<sup>16</sup> But in fact, imperial Japan and imperial France were in active cooperation in ruling French Indochina almost until the end of the war. The Japanese army was stationed in the northern part of French Indochina in September 1940, after the French government concluded an armistice with Germany in June 1940, and the pro-German Petain regime was established. Kyoichi Tachikawa argues that France did not pursue the possibility of continuing to fight against Germany by immediately moving its headquarters to a colony in North Africa, because of its strategic choice and ambition; France desired not only to continue the French nation, but also to occupy the second strongest position after Germany in the new European order established by Hitler. To achieve these goals, France wanted to preserve undamaged its naval power, the

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<sup>16</sup> Robert O. Paxton's *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), an epoch-making work that challenges the myth of the French Resistance, touches upon the connections between the Collaboration and colonial policies, but has no further investigations into this issue, not to mention the situations of French Indochina. Henry Rousso's *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) also explores how postwar collective memory in France comes to terms with the Vichy period, yet pursues this issue basically within the national framework, not taking into consideration the French colonial realm. For the discussion on Japanese policies on French Indochina, see Ralph B. Smith, "The Japanese Period in Indochina and the Coup of 9 March 1945," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (September 1978): 268-301, John E. Dreifort, "Japan's Advance into Indochina, 1940: The French Response," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2 (September 1982): 279-95, and Kyoko Kurusu Nitz, "Japanese Military Policy towards French Indochina during the Second World War: The Road to the *Meigo Sakusen* (9 March 1945)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2 (September 1983): 328-53.

second strongest in Europe, as well as to secure its colonies, dispersed around the world, as a symbol of its imperial power.<sup>17</sup> Robert O. Paxton also considers that one of the initial intents of Petain was to enter into a partnership with Hitler in the new world order; the French authorities hoped that the collaboration with Germany would work favorably for them to compete with Britain and possibly expand their imperial powers.<sup>18</sup>

Although the French colonial government could not resist the military power of the Japanese army in reality, it could keep its sovereignty in French Indochina during the better part of the period. According to Tachikawa, the Japanese accepted the French intention to maintain its colonial territories, since the main purpose for them derived in the strategic need to interrupt a supply route to China via French Indochina, in order to gain an advantage in the Sino-Japanese War, which had already sparked in 1937. For the sake of laborsaving, it was more convenient for the Japanese to let the French keep running the colony than to undertake a military conquest.<sup>19</sup> The circumstances also resembled the time when Hitler was initially considering his policy on the treatment of France. For him, to let the French govern its own soil could release the Germans from the responsibility of the administration there, as Paxton maintains.<sup>20</sup>

However, for Japan to station military in French Indochina invited a significant outcome. When Japan advanced further into the rest of Indochina, into its southern part, in July 1941, this invasion prompted a harsh reaction from the US, and

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<sup>17</sup> Kyoichi Tachikawa, *Dainiji sekai taisen to furansu-ryo indoshina: nichifutsu kyoryoku no kenkyu* (World War II and French Indochina: A Study on Franco-Japanese Collaboration) (Tokyo: Keiryu sha: 2000), 48.

<sup>18</sup> See Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 51-135.

<sup>19</sup> Kyoichi Tachikawa, *Dainiji sekai taisen to furansu-ryo indoshina: nichifutsu kyoryoku no kenkyu* (World War II and French Indochina: A Study on Franco-Japanese Collaboration) (Tokyo: Keiryu sha: 2000), 239-40.

<sup>20</sup> Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Knopf: 2001), xii.

resulted in the freezing of all Japanese assets in US territories as well as an American embargo on the export of oil to Japan. These US measures were often regarded as the trigger for the Japan-US War in December 1941. Yet, even after the start of the Japan-US War, the collaboration between the French and the Japanese continued in French Indochina, until the Japanese finally decided to subvert the French colonial order and made the puppet regimes there declare independence in March 1945. The Japanese feared that the French colonial government would desert to the Americans after Japan's successive defeats in battles with the US in the Southeastern Asia and Pacific area from 1942.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, before this overthrow of the French, the Japanese adhered strictly to preserving a cooperative relationship with the French colonial government. Therefore, as Tachikawa states, compared to the other occupied areas such as Burma, the Philippines and Indonesia, the Japanese neither trained the local people, nor propagandized independence as a public policy in French Indochina, reflecting the intention of the military authorities. But, this policy in French Indochina was in sharp contradiction to Japan's ostensible slogan and vindication of the invasion and occupation of the Asian and Pacific region as the liberation and independence of Asian peoples and Pacific islanders from Western colonial powers. This policy not only disappointed local independent activists, but also rendered the organization of anti-Japanese along with anti-French movements by communist activists in French Indochina.<sup>22</sup> In short, the cooperation and collaboration between Japan and French Indochina can be seen as a complicity between imperial powers in order to maintain the rule of the colonized at will.

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<sup>21</sup> See Kyoichi Tachikawa, *Dainiji sekai taisen to furansu-ryo indoshina: nichifutsu kyoryoku no kenkyu* (World War II and French Indochina: A Study on Franco-Japanese Collaboration) (Tokyo: Keiryu sha: 2000), 159-60.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 248-50.

When considering this historical reference, is it not possible to speculate that the French woman and the Japanese man might have already met in French Indochina in an allegorical sense, just as she and the German man encountered each other in the occupied Nevers? This scenario actually makes sense in deciphering their enigmatic exchanges close to the end of the film. When the French woman says, “Probably we’ll die without ever seeing each other again,” the Japanese man responds, “Yes, probably. (*Pause.*) Unless, perhaps, someday, a war. . . . (*Pause.*)” Then, the French woman reiterates, “(*ironically*): Yes, a war. . . .”<sup>23</sup> In this elliptic, yet repetitious conversation, is it not feasible that the linearity of time is rather confused, the past and future can be overturned, and “someday” is simultaneously someday before? Is it not probable that when they say, “someday, a war. . . .” and “yes, a war. . . .,” they may be talking about not only a future possibility, but also their past memory, which has already been conjured up in a subverted temporality? In a word, their memory is not necessarily anchored only in their meeting in Hiroshima nor the clearly articulated past event in Nevers, the doomed relationship between the French woman and the German soldier, but also in another hidden relationship possibly between the French woman and the Japanese soldier that might have taken place in French Indochina.

As speculation, if the Japanese man, who is exceptionally fluent in French, had been dispatched to a Japanese military base overseas as a member of the imperial army, it is most likely that he would have been sent off to French Indochina, the place where the servicemen whose proficiency in French had a strategic importance: they could not only communicate with, but also perhaps spy on the French colonial government in the joint project of governing the colonized. Interestingly, in this movie, although the Japanese man confirms that he is the first Japanese for the French woman,

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<sup>23</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 70.

he never reveals whether she is the first French woman for him (“I’m the first Japanese man in your life?” “Yes”).<sup>24</sup> Also, in contrast to the French woman, who expresses her surprise in knowing the body of an Asian man for the first time (she tells him, “it’s extraordinary how beautiful your skin is”),<sup>25</sup> rather what he is interested in is her possibility, the possibility to know more, through her, about something that is not necessarily limited to her (he comments, “You are like a thousand women in one”).<sup>26</sup> It is possible to presume that he has had or even got accustomed to relationships with French women, and if so, his experienced manner insinuates his past activities to probe into the internal affairs of the French, possibly in French Indochina; if so, here the female body is projected not only onto the national entity, but also as the object of the desire for knowledge and conquest.

Yet, this memory of colonial collaboration is not welcome on either the French or Japanese sides (therefore, it has been obstructed). On the one hand, the French desire to neglect their ill-fated imperial trajectory (at the time of the making of this film, they had already lost Indochina and were just losing Algeria). Also, they want to turn away from the fact that the territories of the “white man” were forcibly taken by the military power of the “non-white” man, since this incident impairs their white pride and prestige. On the other hand, Japan, now as a “pacifist” state in the postwar era, also wishes to pretend nothing like their invasion and atrocities in the prewar time happened after the occurrence of the victimization of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

As thus far discussed, the victory in the war for France means not only a victory in the European political circumstances, but also in its colonial realm. To neglect this fact leads to three consequences: a cover-up of the imperial histories of

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 27.

both France and Japan, a separation of Europe from Asia, or the imperial metropolis from the colony, and finally an upholding of the dichotomy between the West and the non-West in the knowledge production regarding *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. Wood's indication of the Japanese man's trauma as the discrepancy between him and the whole world in the perception of the destruction of Hiroshima should be deciphered in these contexts. And if we do this, Wood is correct, insofar as the signification of Hiroshima's destruction for him concerns not the victimization and the suffering of the bomb victims, but rather the military defeat of Japan that the American atomic attack symbolizes. By replying to her understanding of Hiroshima ("The whole world was happy. You were happy with the whole world"),<sup>27</sup> he may have attempted to work-through an inability to articulate this traumatic event of the collapse of the Japanese empire, and of the loss of its colonies which had supported an imperial ambition.

In this sense, is there any better partner of transference for him than the figure of the French woman, or what this figure may suggest?: the ex-empire that had once worked together to maintain the colonial order in French Indochina, yet has been destined to lose its colonies as well as the international status constructed in the prewar time; the ex-empire that has ended up with a subordinated position in the new world order led by the US in the Cold War. But then, the point is that the Japanese man's trauma involves not only past memory in the prewar era, but also the present situation in the postwar time. What if his trauma is also composed of an ineluctability to transform Hiroshima as a military city, which used to be an important part of the imperial army, into something else that is not simply a newly reconstructed peace city? What if the whole film of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* also concerns the re-living

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 34.

and re-experiencing of this newly-allocated role that Hiroshima represents for the Japanese man to allow him to act out rather than work-through his trauma?

### **Duras' Commitment to the French Empire**

Before further discussion, let us take account of one more factor in the making of this film-text, regarding this historical reference of the collaboration between the French colonial government and Japan in Indochina. Laura Adler, who writes Duras' biography through her exhaustive research, reveals that between 1938 and 1940 in Paris, Duras was working for the Colonial Office, a division of the French government whose rationale was to advocate the greatness and superiority of the French empire and the white race; this is a noteworthy fact that Duras never was happy to disclose during her life. Throughout her life, her personal history had rather recorded her as a member of the Resistance and the communist party even in Vichy France.<sup>28</sup> At any rate, Adler states that Duras easily got this job with the objective of promoting an imperial ideal, right after her graduation from college in June 1938, with a major in political sciences. According to her college mate, Duras found her job fascinating, even when she was writing technical reports on various goods produced in colonial plantations. Yet, it did not take long for her to get appointed to a more special assignment. Adler outlines the circumstances:

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<sup>28</sup> In her bestselling autobiographical novel, *The Lover*, trans. Barbara Bary (New York: Pantheon Book, 1985, c1984), Duras makes an interesting correlation between the Resistance, the Collaboration, and communist activities. In it, she touches upon the fact that she closely associated herself with the Collaborators, Ramon and Betty Fernandez and Marie-Claude Carpenter:

And while he [Ramon Fernandez] laughed, his jest became the war itself, together with all the unavoidable suffering it caused, both resistance and collaboration, hunger and cold, martyrdom and infamy . . . Collaborators, the Fernandezes were. And I, two years after the war, I was a member of the French Communist party. The parallel is complete and absolute. The two things are the same, the same pity, the same call for help, the same lack of judgment, the same superstition if you like, that consists in believing in a political solution to the personal problem (68).

But these people are all clearly marked as non-French and foreigners.

On 16 September 1938 came Marguerite's first promotion: assistant to the committee responsible for publicizing French bananas, formed in June 1938. She left bananas to work with tea before returning to the intercolonial department of information on 1 March 1939. Her task was clearly defined. In collaboration with her superior Philippe Roques and helped by a close aide of the minister, Pierre Lafue, a historian and writer (who the following year published a novel entitled *La Plongée* with Gallimard), she had to produce a book outlining the virtues and greatness of the colonial empire. It was a commission. The minister explained there was no time to lose, the book had to appear as soon as possible. Marguerite—as we have seen—had already been noticed for her ability to synthesize, her capacity for work, her aptitude for writing and her knowledge of the history of Indo-China. She got on with the job and scribbled away night and day, producing pages and pages of writing that Roques revised and corrected.<sup>29</sup>

What is the content of this propaganda book: *L'Empire français* that Duras worked zealously to have appear in public? Adler explains as follows:

*L'Empire français* came out on 25 April 1940, with an initial print run of 6300 copies. The 240-page book, written in an academic and technical style, had but one aim, which was quite clearly set out in the first few lines: to inform the French that they had extensive territories overseas, an empire that every Frenchman and every Frenchwoman should know about. The book did not attempt to hide the fact that its aim was militant. France had to know about its 'colonizing abilities' so that it could be proud of them. 'And that is the task of this book. The understanding the reader will gain from this book is: the Empire is made. The war helped complete it.' . . . The book's vocabulary reveals the authors' mindset: people born in the colonies are 'natives' who love their homeland, who have 'a child-like faith' in 'sweet France.' To the two authors the white race was by nature the conquering race, and although the book pays homage to the courage and pride of the 'native', it is teeming with clichés that point to a human hierarchy. At the top of the ladder of the inhabitants of the colonies we find the Annamese—was this Marguerite favouring her native land?—and at the bottom the black African: 'The Negro is the victim of the forces of nature. Undeveloped, sickly and suspicious, he hides in the shadows of the forest and is incapable of dispelling the mysteries that surround him. The Negro penetrates deeper into the forest as the European moves in and makes way for more robust indigenous races.' But as the forest thins out and the white occupation advances, it is the view of Marguerite Donnadiou [Duras] and Philippe Roques that 'the type of native changes'. Indeed, 'the Negro from the steppe is braver and bolder.' Natives are not altogether the same as other people. In other words, they are different from us

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<sup>29</sup> Laura Adler, *Marguerite Duras: A Life*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 85.

Westerners. And that is why, the authors explain with many arguments to support their view, we must continue to fashion them in our image by passing on to them the benefits of Western civilization—education and medicine having been found to be the most effective weapons. But how can the point of view of indigenous elites who want to be acknowledged rather than dominated be taken account of? Marguerite Donnadiou and Philippe Roques envisaged the gradual evolution of a policy: in exchange for what some ‘natives’ gave France, certain local councils, especially in Indo-China, would be granted additional powers. Particularly brilliant subjects would be allowed to study in some of France’s great institutions of learning, such as Saint-Cyr and the Polytechnique, or to become high-ranking army officers. But a distinction would have to be made between those races that were not equal: ‘It would be insane to impose on a young Annamese, whose country had achieved historical and intellectual greatness, the same working conditions as a young black child, whose evolution has been held in check for thousands of years.’ *L’Empire francais* upheld the status quo and hoped colonialism would survive the upheavals of the forthcoming war. While it was possible for some colonies to envisage the gradual implementation of a policy diplomatically described as ‘of association, indeed of collaboration’, it was considered essential to remain circumspect. The extending of citizenship was not an option. Although there were reformers suggesting that the empire should have its own parliament made up of representatives from the colonies, in the eyes of Marguerite Donnadiou and Philippe Roques that idea was too innovative and too dangerous because ‘the black race was still in its infancy’. ‘It is through a process of trial and error that the black native will gain an understanding of the administrative, political and commercial structure of the area to which his village belongs. Were he given the vote, he would be confused, unable to use it or swayed by witchdoctors or marabouts’. So the betterment of ‘our natives’ would be a gradual affair. The important thing was to have them ready to provide cannon fodder against Germany in the forthcoming conflict.<sup>30</sup>

As indubitably observed, the narrative of this propaganda book that intends to promote the excellence and primacy of the French empire clearly reflects the idea of a racial hierarchy; it draws a close linkage between physical appearance and the evolutionary process of civilization, and exactly follows the notorious view of Gobineau which Hitler also embraced.<sup>31</sup> This too is a significant point that we should contemplate as to how Nazism and colonialism could have been connected to each

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 88-90.

<sup>31</sup> See Arthur Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (New York: Howard Fertig, 1967). For a discussion on sexuality, culture, and race in Gobineau, see Robert C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 99-117.

other, as we have seen earlier in Césaire's claims. In its scheme, Duras' co-authored book obviously locates the French at the top of the racial hierarchy as the race of the colonizer, while it creates multilayered racial and ethnic scales among the races of the colonized, such as the Annamese and the African black, and allocates different developmental stages to each of them. It is understandable why after the war, Duras had to exclude this publication from her bibliographies, in spite of the fact that it was her first, even though co-authored.<sup>32</sup> Adler, who recurrently interviewed Duras, divulges Duras' response to her participation in this book project in this way: "since she couldn't disown it, she spoke of it as an oversight, a youthful error of judgment."<sup>33</sup> But, is this something that we should regard as Duras' youthful mistake?

Uncannily, this idea of a youthful mistake also appears in Wood's interpretation of the act of the French woman who indulges herself in a sexual relationship with the German soldier, a member of the occupying force, the "enemy" of the French nation. She describes her "crime" to be "that of youthful love alone, of an *amour fou* that ignored the strictures that 'History' had imposed on intimate life,"<sup>34</sup> when discussing Alain Brossat's analysis of this film in her critique. Wood actually criticizes Brossat's account of the French woman who represents these women who "slept with the enemy," and therefore who were later sexually punished by "patriots" in liberated France. She also points out that what caused the French woman to act in this way is not her innocence as Brossat asserts, but her desire for transgression. Yet, for Wood, this desire for transgression stems only from "the force it needed to act out the rebellion of her youth, to express her emergent sexuality, and her sense of social

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<sup>32</sup> Laura Adler, *Marguerite Duras: A Life*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 91.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Nancy Wood, "Memory in Analogy" in *Vectors of Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 191.

confinement,”<sup>35</sup> not from a broader historical, political, and ideological framework that the French collaboration with Germany may encompass.

In other words, Wood’s argument encloses the act of the French woman within more or less generalized issues of gender and youth, and suppresses its possible links to complicated relationships between the colonizer and the colonized expressed in gender and sexual terms that the pair, the Japanese man and the French woman, mimics. This theorization of Wood derives partly from the way she strictly individualizes the psyche of the French woman, and neglects a specific social context articulated through her figure, while not hesitating to collectivize the psyche of the Japanese man. On the one hand, she repeatedly defines the French woman’s trauma as “the individual drama”<sup>36</sup> and “the personal tragedy,”<sup>37</sup> and resists connecting her trauma to “the enormous tragedy of Hiroshima,”<sup>38</sup> since the former cannot simply be encompassed by the latter.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, without explanation she equalizes the Japanese man’s trauma to the destruction of Hiroshima. She takes it for granted probably just because he is from Hiroshima and Japanese, and in a way, this follows the classical Orientalist dichotomy between individualism-oriented Westerners and group-oriented non-Westerners.

However, what further complicates Duras’ purchase of a racial hierarchy in her first book is that she herself had an affair with a Gestapo agent, a relationship that is to some degree analogous to what the French woman does in the film. This Gestapo agent, Charles Delval, was the very person who arrested Duras’ husband, Robert Antelme,<sup>40</sup> and sent him to a Nazi concentration camp. As a result, Delval was

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>40</sup> After being rescued from the camp, Robert Antelme writes about the idea of the absolute Other/alterity in 1947. See Daniel Dobbels, ed, *On Robert Antelme’s The Human Race: Essays and Commentary*, trans. Jeffrey Haight (Evanston: Marlboro Press, 2003). Four decades later in 1985,

sentenced to death and executed at the beginning of 1945 after German rule was subverted. Duras' friends testify that while being a member of the Resistance, and ostensibly approaching Delval to get the information on Anteleme and gain a special favor from him, Duras seemed to have had a personal relationship with Delval.<sup>41</sup> Duras was also closely acquainted with her neighbor and Nazi collaborator, Betty Fernandez, who was also arrested in the summer of 1945, had her head shaved, and was forced to parade through the streets to be ridiculed by the crowd.<sup>42</sup> Adler depicts Duras' responses to this experience at the time of the making of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, as follows:

Bernard Fresson played the German soldier. Just before he dies, she [the French woman] smiles and says, 'You see, my love, even that was possible.' When he's been killed, she lies on his body for a day and a night. And when he's loaded into a lorry and taken away, she still desires him, crazily, obscenely desires the dead man. And then they shave her head. We retain the image of Emmanuelle Riva's<sup>43</sup> gentle gesture as she offers her head to the scissors. After she'd been shorn, she waits, she doesn't stir. Is she afraid they're going to cut off her head? Marguerite Duras, who watched as they filmed in Nevers, found this scene unbearable. She screamed and fainted. It's difficult, on seeing these images once again and on rereading the pages describing the events in Nevers, not to think of her wartime experiences with Delval. Until the end of her life Marguerite was convinced, though she had no proof, that Delval was a German passing himself off as a Frenchman so that he could work as a spy. Was she referring to herself when she put these words into the heroine's mouth: 'I'm morally suspect, you know' and 'I lie and I tell the truth'? Was she referring to her own badness when she made Emmanuelle Riva say, 'I went mad about being bad. I felt I could make a veritable career of being bad'? And the head-shaving episode, wasn't it very reminiscent of what happened to her friend and neighbour Betty Fernandez after the Liberation? In *Hiroshima*, Nevers has to be seen in the light of Marguerite's need to clarify

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Duras published the book entitled *The War: A Memoir*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: The New Press, 1986). This piece depicts her suffering in waiting for Antlelme's return from deportation, and in observing his treatment after his release, but excludes Charles Delval from the account.

<sup>41</sup> See Laura Adler, *Marguerite Duras: A Life*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 120-38.

<sup>42</sup> See *Ibid.*, 94-95, 106, 110 and 347.

<sup>43</sup> Emmanuelle Riva played the role of the French woman in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*.

certain episodes in her own past, and Resnais was able to turn into her imagination and to integrate it brilliantly into the story.<sup>44</sup>

If we follow Adler's interpretation, through this episode of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, Duras has made an appeal for her innocence in terms of both her youthful naivety and lack of guilt in the collaboration with the Nazis in a figurative sense, and that may have been her way to reconcile with her past experience. But what kind of relationship does this have with her complicity in French imperialism? What is striking here is her eagerness to pursue the idea of pureness, whether it concerns the untainted mind of youth or a lack of sinfulness regarding the collaboration. The fact that Duras believed Delval was not French but German also connects with this tendency of hers. To consider him German allows Duras to avoid complicating the idea of Frenchness; it saves this Frenchness from possible contamination, while exempting the French woman in the movie from any responsibilities, by deeming her act to be undertaken simply out of pure passion in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, too. In this sense, it can be considered that by thematizing this episode, Duras seemingly denounces the abusive treatment of these female "collaborators" and the idea of the purity of the nation that were superimposed on these women's bodies and so propelled a gendered violence against them. But in contradiction, she in fact reestablishes the intactness of the French national identity by creating the "foreignness" of the German in the figure of Delval, and by "cleansing" the motive and drive of these women including herself.

If this is so, why is it so important to Duras to state the innocence of the French race? In *The Sea Wall*, *The Lover*, and *The North China Lover*, the three stories that describe her childhood in French Indochina, Duras depicts the lives of her poor white family as bordering on the lives of the local Vietnamese. Although these

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<sup>44</sup> Laura Adler, *Marguerite Duras: A Life*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 224.

three stories give different accounts of the power relationship among the protagonists depending on their racial, gender, and class positionalities, they all, in one way and another, expose contradictions in the logic of a racial hierarchy that is supposed to be institutionalized in colonial society.<sup>45</sup> As her own subject position demonstrates, Duras' racial identity cannot automatically ensure the status of the colonizer, due to her lower class position. Her identity as part of the supreme white race is consistently in grave jeopardy, about to fall apart. In other words, to stabilize a French identity in purified form, and fabricate a right and unfailing French race may compensate the very instability of her identity, because the idea of the nation can create a fantasy of equality and egalitarianism in which one can to some extent transcend racial, class, and ethnic differences.<sup>46</sup> This mindset driven by racial anxiety in Duras may also explain her affinity to the theory of racial hierarchy that is evidently inscribed in *L'Empire français*.

In light of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, however, there is a significant difference in the way Duras has articulated between the issue of collaboration with Nazism and collaboration with French colonialism.<sup>47</sup> While she comments extensively on the issue of collaboration with the Germans in the French metropolis through this episode in Nevers, she is almost mute with regard to another collaboration that took place in

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<sup>45</sup> See *The Sea Wall* (1952), *The Lover* (1985), and *The North China Lover* (1992). When Duras first wrote *The Sea Wall*, she did not even reveal that the lover of the French girl in the story is Chinese, from a non-white race. Written decades later, *The Lover* illustrates the lover as a son of a wealthy Chinese family, but also depicts him as a timid, emasculated man. The last piece that Duras wrote, *The North China Lover*, however, portrays this lover as a more masculine, confident figure, by using a similar setting.

<sup>46</sup> The position of this dissertation is that gender difference cannot be transcended in the national framework, but rather is firmly implemented in it, as an indispensable constituent. In other words, gender difference is utilized in the very forming of the nation-state system.

<sup>47</sup> This chapter does not aim to account for Duras' involvement in the issue of the victimization of the Jews. It should be noted that Duras wrote *Abahn Sabana David* in 1970, which thematizes the history of the persecution of the Jews and their suffering. Her engagement with the whole issue is far too complex and beyond the scope of this dissertation.

colonial Indochina with the Japanese, as well as her own engagement with French colonial policies.

It is worthwhile to consider how it sounded to Duras when she heard the news that the Japanese troops had advanced and stationed themselves in the northern part of French Indochina in September 1940, the start of the complicity between the French colonial government and the Japanese empire. As a member of the Colonial Office, she would have been in a position to observe such happenings, even after the French subjection to German rule. According to Adler, she quit the Colonial Office in November 1940, two months after the stationing of the Japanese occurred, as her new husband, Antelme, got a job in Paris. Yet she had been able to keep her position, even when she moved away from Paris with her superior Lafue after the armistice between France and Germany.<sup>48</sup> Is part of the reason for her resignation from the Colonial Office that she could not tolerate the confusion and disturbance of the colonial racial hierarchy between whites and non-whites that this Japanese stationing caused?

Whatever her reasons for finally leaving the Colonial Office were, as far as *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is concerned, it seems that Duras tried to alienate the idea of Japan from that of France as much as possible. In 1960, one year after the release of the film, Duras published *Hiroshima mon amour*, which contains not only the scenario of the movie but also a synopsis and lengthy appendices. In this publication, Duras emphasizes the big difference between the French woman and the Japanese man: they are “two people as dissimilar geographically, philosophically, historically, economically, racially, etc. as it is possible to be.” (Synopsis)<sup>49</sup> Yet, the questions about how their encounter became possible and why this alliance was formed between the French and the Japanese are decisively precluded: “How they met will not be

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<sup>48</sup> Laura Adler, *Marguerite Duras: A Life*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 91-93.

<sup>49</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 9.

revealed in the picture. For that is not what really matters. Chance meetings occur everywhere in the world” (Synopsis)<sup>50</sup>; “If the audience never forgets that this is the story of a Japanese man and a French woman, the profound implications of the film are lost” (Appendices: Portrait of the Japanese).<sup>51</sup> Then she remarks: “This Franco-Japanese film should *never* seem *Franco-Japanese*, but *anti-Franco-Japanese*. That would be a victory” [emphasis in the original] (Appendices: Portrait of the Japanese).<sup>52</sup> This slightly belligerent comment can be construed as if Duras has belatedly articulated her repulsion toward the previous collaborative relationship between France and Japan in French Indochina.

As these remarks are extricated here from different sections in her narrative, it should be noted that they have been made in the process of formulating different arguments that are basically disconnected from each other. Still, they can make a profound impression on the reader’s mind as well as influence reaction oftentimes, precisely because they are dispersed in the text in the whole narrative. What is peculiar here is Duras’ strong desire to control the film’s contexts. Since *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is a film, encompassing visual images, sound effects, and impromptu acting, it can neither be the exact reification nor a loyal translation of the written scenario. However, Duras intervenes in the film’s signifying process not only through the scenario, but also through its substantial translations, the synopsis and even the appendices. This intervention can both preempt the exploration of possible commonalities or specific connections between the French woman and the Japanese man, and discredit historical reference, while foregrounding the accidentalness and conventionality of their encounter.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

As a matter of fact, Duras' interpretation and translation of the film has exerted a great influence on the ways this film has been perceived by critics. In the synopsis, she also writes well-known phrases: "All one can do is talk about the impossibility of talking about Hiroshima. The knowledge of Hiroshima being stated à priori by an exemplary delusion of the mind."<sup>53</sup> These words by Duras have provided a great source for critics to explore the significations of the film. But first and foremost, they are an interpretation of the film by the scenario writer herself, not an intrinsic part of the film. Our intent here is neither to claim that we should adhere only to the original film text by prioritizing it, nor to regard an interpretation/translation as fundamentally subservient and inaccurate.<sup>54</sup> Instead, we question the degree to which the author dominates the ways the text is interpreted by the reader/audience, or the contexts that the text incessantly creates in the domain of knowledge production.<sup>55</sup> At any rate, it seems that the way Duras outlines the film has produced the effect of (or an excuse for) critics not examining the identity formation of the Japanese man as well as the implications of Hiroshima (why should we consider them, when the author herself is asserting it to be impossible to talk about Hiroshima?).

### **The Othering of the Japanese Man**

But this dissertation considers that *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is not a work of Duras only, rather of the amalgamation of Duras and Resnais; or more precisely, a Durasian work transforming itself into a considerably different product through

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>54</sup> For the relationship between the original and the translation, see Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 165-207, Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 69-82, and Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

<sup>55</sup> For the discussion on the author and the reader, see Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-48, and Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Book, 1984), 101-20.

Resnais' intervention.<sup>56</sup> To discuss this issue, let us explore how the figure of the Japanese man has been deciphered by critics, which is another way to consider how the knowledge production of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* has been built. One remarkable characteristic is that the critiques in the 1960's, not long after the film's release, are more geared to viewing this film as Resnais' work, rather than Duras,' and to account more equivalently for both figures of the French woman and the Japanese man by juxtaposing them. For instance, Wolfgang A. Luchting argues on these two protagonists as follows:

For him the memories are, primarily, *concentric*, that is to say: revolve around the complex of what Hiroshima as a historical fact means today, what the city's moment of destruction was like. Secondly, his memories are *excentric*, in so far as they participate in her memories. For her, the memories of *le temps psychologique* are, primarily, *concentric* around her experience in Nevers. Secondly, they are *excentric* in so far as they participate in his memories of Hiroshima [emphasis in the original].<sup>57</sup>

Luchting considers that these protagonists function as effects in the narrative for Resnais to pursue his theme. In particular, the Japanese man plays an important role in articulating Resnais' position regarding time in conjunction with Proustian time:

The difference between him [Resnais] and Proust is that the latter accentuates in his novel the ephemerality. . . , whereas the former, Resnais, puts rather more emphasis on the very *necessity* of this ephemerality in order that there *be* a continuity [emphasis in the original].<sup>58</sup>

Therefore, in the scene where he slaps her, the most crucial juncture of the film for Luchting, "the Japanese lover becomes the executor of Resnais' ultimate statement about time and man. The empirical order of things—i.e., past belongs to the past and present to the present—is reestablished, must be reestablished, else we become unfit

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<sup>56</sup> According to Adler, Resnais asked Duras a few times to rethink the image of the Japanese man and modify his lines. See Laura Adler, *Marguerite Duras: A Life*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 222-23.

<sup>57</sup> Wolfgang A. Luchting, "'Hiroshima, Mon Amour,' Time and Proust," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 21, No. 3 (Spring 1963): 301.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

for life—mad.”<sup>59</sup> In this vein, the Japanese man is in a position of pivotal importance in the whole movie rather than the French woman.

John Ward also considers that the Japanese man represents a standard, example, or normativity in the way in which one should react to the past event in a generalized context. Ward maintains: “what would a ‘normal’ response to the kind of experience she has suffered be like? Presumably it would be something like the adjustment made by the Japanese to Hiroshima.”<sup>60</sup> Compared to Luchting, Ward is basically dissatisfied with the way the structure of the film narrative is organized, since the character setting is quintessentially ill-formed according to him; “She [the French woman] would be a person who could not participate in any very interesting way in a deep human relationship. She would not be an appropriate partner for the Japanese, psychologically or aesthetically,”<sup>61</sup> and as a result, “*Hiroshima* would be reduced to a rather trivial story whose theme was that a normal man and a psychotic woman are unlikely to develop a lasting love relationship.”<sup>62</sup> Ward considers that it is because the story does not develop conflict between the Japanese man and the French woman, and rather heavily relies on her inner conflict alone. Therefore, he even contends that:

Resnais’ difficulty springs from the fact that Marguerite Duras made the mistake of choosing to examine the wrong experience for his case. If she had concentrated on the more normal (i. e, in the sense of being non-traumatic) though by no means typical experience of the Japanese, the film would have gained a greater breadth of reference.<sup>63</sup>

For Ward, who explores Resnais’ works with reference to Bergson as well as Proust, this film does not properly respond to Bergson’s question: “might not the impregnation of our present by our past make us aware of the *discontinuity* of the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>60</sup> John Ward, *Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time* (London: Secker & Warburg: 1968), 35.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 34.

process of our becoming,” [emphasis in the original] <sup>64</sup> insofar as the French woman, the key person of this film, keeps fragmenting her past experience and making it traumatic of her own volition.

Although both Luchting and Ward seem to attach too much importance to a normalizing and regulating power (while this can also be seen as a criticism of letting trauma act-out rampantly), overall their reading implicitly contours the Japanese man and the French woman according to their gender difference: the rational and the hysterical, the normal and the deviant. Yet it should be noted that they pay scarce attention to their racial features or the “geographical, philosophical, historical, or economic” differences that Duras has highlighted. However, later critics especially since the 1990’s, start to expose a great difference from the earlier ones such as Luchting and Ward.<sup>65</sup> These critics often read *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* through Duras’ other works in lieu of Resnais, and locate the themes that recurrently manifest themselves in Duras’ texts to be at the core of their readings.

Lynn A. Higgins, for instance, situates this film in correlation with *Moderate Cantabile*, another Duras’ piece published just one year before the release of this film.<sup>66</sup> Higgins’ presumption is that “the film [*Hiroshima, Mon Amour*] ‘remembers’

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>65</sup> There are also other types of critiques. As an illustration, Bert Cardullo’s “The Symbolism of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*,” *Film Criticism*, vol. viii, no. 2, (Winter 1984): 39-44, demonstrates a unique interpretation of the Japanese man and the French woman. For Cardullo, they are both stand-ins of those actually victimized by the bomb and the ones who dropped the bomb in sufficiently distanced form so that the audience can more freely “contemplate and lament the tragedy of the atomic bomb’s creation and use” (42). What is more, the Japanese man is “a symbol for his defeated people who, in rebuilding their country, were at the same time externalizing their wartime experience, working off their suffering” (42), whereas the French woman is “a symbol for the victorious Americans, who, overjoyed at saving their own country and the countries of the Allies, were at the same time internalizing their guilt for destroying Hiroshima with the atomic bomb” (42-43). As a result, “the relationship between the Frenchwoman and the Japanese is symbolic of the difficult rapprochement between a repressed America and a reconstructed Japan” (43). Although this dissertation approaches both figures in a different light, mainly from a postcolonial perspective, Cardullo’s reading is intriguing, especially his idea of how distantiation fosters different kinds of engagement for the audience.

<sup>66</sup> Lynn A. Higgins, “Durasian (Pre)Occupations,” *L’Esprit Créature*, vol. xxx, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 47-57.

and repeats the novel [*Moderate Cantabile*].”<sup>67</sup> For her, the plots of these two are equivalent; “Each has a framing story in which a man helps a woman in her quest to understand and assimilate a violent death she has witnessed.”<sup>68</sup>; “Each death is perceived as an ordinary and mysterious trauma: time began at that moment”<sup>69</sup>; “in both stories, the erotic relationship in the framing story reenacts or represents the one from the past, much in the manner of the psychoanalytic transference.”<sup>70</sup>; and “both stories avoid closure; we cannot know whether the telling has been a ‘cure’ or simply one instance in a series of neurotic repetitions.”<sup>71</sup> Accordingly, she considers the Japanese man in a way analogous to the man who appears in *Moderate Cantabile*. She contends, just as “the man’s motives are never explored”<sup>72</sup> in *Moderate Cantabile*, “the Japanese man’s memories are not the subject of the film.”<sup>73</sup>

Instead of the male figures in these two pieces, what concerns Higgins is the considerable presence of the maternal figure, one of Duras’ familiar subjects. She points out that the shot of the appearance of the French woman’s mother after her ostracization precedes a scene in which she is held in the arms of the Japanese man. For Higgins, this montage means that while *Moderate Cantabile* displays the mother’s obsession with her child, here in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, the French woman becomes a child herself. Therefore, what she has lost is not only her German lover, but also the maternal embrace. Consequently, this idea leads to the Japanese man substituting not only for his German counterpart, but also for the French woman’s mother. From this Higgins concludes that what is impossible to talk about in this movie is that, after all, “[t]he traumatic losses of wartime and the preverbal loss of the mother come to

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

represent each other, through the typically Durasian emphasis on silence and madness.”<sup>74</sup> In Higgins’ reading, it is taken for granted that the leading figure of the film is the French woman, and the losses significant in this film are those related only to her, while naturalizing the relegation of the Japanese man as a foil just to support her through a psychological struggle.

Nancy Lane furthers this tendency of foregrounding the French woman and subordinating the Japanese man.<sup>75</sup> She argues the way in which the subjectivity of the French woman comes into effect through the presence of the Japanese man as follows:

Her self-understanding must come via triangulation, refraction through the otherness of the Japanese lover, whose skin color is both like and unlike hers, whose language is at once like and unlike hers (grammatically impeccable, it is quite heavily accented). It is his desire—his gaze and his listening ear—that have elicited her story and constituted her as an object and a subject in the field of the Other. By placing herself there, she comes to understand and thus reintegrate herself as seen and as seer.<sup>76</sup>

Lane’s interpretation implements the rhetoric of the colonial Other and what Homi Bhabha calls colonial mimicry, the colonized looking “almost the same but not quite” as the colonizer.<sup>77</sup> To initiate this argument, first, the racial feature of the Japanese man is mobilized, and his linguistic ability is superimposed on his dubious racial profile. Here, not only linguistic competency is racialized, but also authenticity and authority, by which one’s (racial) properness is measured, convicted and affirmed, are established in the realm of language. In other words, language becomes a marker of a racial hierarchy. In this way, the Japanese man is positioned as a source of anxiety, uneasiness, and fascination as well as an “impossibility to know,” as a racial and linguistic other to the French woman. To posit that his desire constitutes her,

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>75</sup> Nancy Lane, “The subject in/of History: *Hiroshima Mon Amour*,” in *Literature and Film in the Historical Dimension*, ed. John D. Simons (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 89-100.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>77</sup> See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Lane's discourse also shows the ways in which the sexuality of the white woman is formulated by the very imagining desire of a colonial male for her, as Frantz Fanon points out.<sup>78</sup> By so doing, this destabilizing identity of the Japanese man precisely stabilizes the identity of the French woman as a white, western colonizer in spite of her gender, whereas this othering of the Japanese man simultaneously feminizes him through this function of objectification. Lane further points out the scopic desire of the French woman:

As the actress makes clear at the end of the opening sequence, her desire to know, to encompass Hiroshima is a scopic drive: "Why did you want to see everything in Hiroshima?" "Because, you see, I think you can learn how to really look at things." . . . Seeing the place that carries the trace or mark of the past thus becomes equated with recovering the past.<sup>79</sup>

Assuming that recovering the past is also establishing her position as the colonizer, and authenticating her masculine standpoint, she holds the power as well as the desire to look around and find/define the meaning of what she sees (then, the Japanese man's reply in the film, "you saw nothing," may signify a colonial denial). Yet, this scopic power does not stop with the French woman. As a matter of course, it is bestowed upon the audience so that it also shares this position of the scopic colonizer with her, as Lane states:

All of the images on the screen are visual correlatives of the scopic drive—not just the actress's, but that of the audience as well (the audience is *mise en abyme* in the shot of the tourist busses). The camera unveils to us our own morbid desire to see a horror that resists figuration.<sup>80</sup>

In this sense, Hiroshima's calamity is also regarded in the same light as the objectified Japanese man, and is exposed to a scopic gaze, possibly being imagined as the aftermath of "colonial" violence.

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<sup>78</sup> See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), especially Chapter Six, "Negro and Psychopathology."

<sup>79</sup> Nancy Lane, "The subject in/of History: *Hiroshima Mon Amour*," in *Literature and Film in the Historical Dimension*, ed. John D. Simons (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 95.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

Earl Jackson Jr.'s argument can be said to invert Lane's discourse and problematize the function of the French woman as standing proxy for the male colonizer.<sup>81</sup> According to him:

The woman in the film is caught within a system that militates against autonomous female sexuality as it preserves the exclusion of racial/national Other from subjecthood. The woman, therefore, can fulfill the role of the masculine subject for the male viewer without assuming an autonomous or otherwise threatening role as a female subject.<sup>82</sup>

He doubts seeing the French woman as a "free woman," as well as equating her simply with the symbol of Western imperialism. Indeed, from the perspective of the spectator whom Jackson Jr. assumes to be a hegemonic, white and Western male, he views that "[i]dentification with the white French woman maintains the racial "generality" of the subject, and her perspective maintains Europe as the center of (intellectual, linguistic) intelligibility."<sup>83</sup> However, he considers that even though she occupies "a pseudo-'masculine' role,"<sup>84</sup> she is deliberately used as a surrogate for this hegemonic male spectator for two reasons. First, it is to neutralize a greater threat than white females in the eyes of the white male spectator. This threat comes from the non-Western masculine subject, embodied by the Japanese man who challenges Western authority (he denies the Western vision by reiterating "you saw nothing"). To make him an object of erotic desire is a way to mitigate his menacing presence. Second, this maneuver of the eroticization of the Japanese man should yet be avoided from being conceived as deriving from a homo-erotic desire on the part of the white male spectator. Thus, it is necessary to present this deformation of the existence of the Japanese man through his engagement in a heterosexual relationship. In other words:

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<sup>81</sup> Earl Jackson Jr., "Desire at Cross(-Cultural) Purposes: *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and *Marry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence*, *positions* 2:1 (1994): 133-74.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

Although the hegemonic spectator will generally identify with Riva's figure in her "masculine" function as surrogate voyeur, her *female* body deflects the homosexual undercurrent of the desire for the woman's penis structuring the fetish internal to the film, since the biological sexes of the two figures maintain the heterosexuality of the images and narrative, as well as the homosexual inflections of the spectator's conjoined gaze at Okada [who plays the role of the Japanese man], since the woman's body (the "masculine" surrogate desiring gaze) is also potentially the fetish object for the spectator, when necessary. In these interlocking contradictory positions, the doubled fetish not only serves to quell the castration threat of the sexual and the racial/cultural Other but even "saves the fetishist from being a homosexual."<sup>85</sup>

Jackson Jr.'s analysis supplements Lane's interpretation by its gendering of the colonizer's anatomy. But it also assumes that the subversiveness of femininity is containable within the hegemonic epistemological system, and more importantly that the Japanese is simply in the position of the racial and cultural other. But considering Japan's imperial past, the Japanese nation cannot be the historical other to Western imperialism. This contradiction also stems from the limit in the binary logic that Jackson Jr. entirely relies on. The idea of the binary opposites is only explicable in the relationships between the Western subject and the non-Western other and nothing further; it is unable to encompass ambiguous cases like the Japanese nation which was once a non-Western imperial power.

The othering of the Japanese man in the film in a way culminates in Cathy Caruth's critique.<sup>86</sup> Caruth achieves this through her specific view of history and language. For her, the French woman's escape from madness during her confinement in the cellar and her return to everyday life or reason signifies an entry to a specific type of history that is the French official one:

Freedom from madness is thus equated with the forgetting that began her sane seeing and knowing, a freedom that is fundamentally a betrayal of the past. The movement of this freedom is also characterized as an arrival, a symbolic

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>86</sup> Cathy Caruth, "Literature and the Enactment of Memory (Duras, Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour*)" in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 25-56.

arrival of the woman at a common site and a common moment of French history; she is let out “on a holiday,” a day that commemorates, presumably, an event such as liberation. And notably, it is her insertion into a national time that also marks, for her, a relation to the history of others, and specifically, to the events at Hiroshima:<sup>87</sup>

What underscores this statement is that history is something that is fundamentally demarcated and divided on a national basis, and that one is almost destined to be part of one’s national history at the expense of sharing others. In this logic, Hiroshima’s calamity may belong to the Japanese nation only, and therefore no French can share it. But, the foreignness of the disastrous experience in Hiroshima is resisting being shared easily by other Japanese, or even by the citizens of Hiroshima and the family members of the bomb victims, as mentioned earlier. More generally speaking, Caruth’s view of national history and national memberships does not take into consideration the existence of ambiguous figures such as ethnic and sexual minorities who are often forcibly integrated into the national community, as the marginalized, ostracized, or foreign within its entity.

Furthermore, to interpret the scene in which another Japanese man flirts with the French woman in a bar at the end of the movie, Caruth emulates the very idea of inventing fictive ethnicity<sup>88</sup> in the process of building the nation-state, by paying special attention to the man’s use of English:

If this scene, like the ones before it, opens up the possibility of the Japanese man’s history beyond the French woman’s departure, it does so only within an address to those who speak another language, and who view the story—and the film—from the perspective of another past.<sup>89</sup>

According to her, the Japanese man can gain his perspective of history (presumably Japanese history) by marking himself against the foreign language that he imitates,

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>88</sup> This is termed by Etienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 96.

<sup>89</sup> Cathy Caruth, “Literature and the Enactment of Memory (Duras, Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour*)” in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 46.

just as the creation of national identity is based on contouring the inner/outer borders of the nation against other ethnic groups who represent foreignness.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, in spite of the fact that Caruth is one of a few critics who point out the presence of the US in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*,<sup>91</sup> and seemingly gestures to open up this film to the broader trans-Pacific as well as trans-Atlantic contexts, the address to the other that she advocates to exercise results not really in a departure from the existing nationally-delineated community, but a foreclosure on or rather a containment within it.

This tendency is most apparent when Caruth mentions her “discovery” of the fact that the actor Okada, who plays the role of the Japanese man and therefore speaks in French in the movie, actually knows no French, but only produces the French sound for the sake of acting. Compared to the other Japanese man in the bar who speaks in fixed patterns of bookish English, and the role of the main Japanese man that Okada plays, Okada as an individual is the object of applause for Caruth: “For the voice of the Japanese actor bears witness to his resistant, irreducible singularity, and opens as a future possibility the telling of another history.”<sup>92</sup> This singularity derives from the idea that one can truly speak only in one’s national language, and that the history that

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<sup>90</sup> Caruth repeats this rhetoric when discussing the Japanese man’s use of English and address to American viewers later: “His story can be told, that is, only when the Americans can hear, through the speaking of their own language by the Japanese and through the translation of their own fiction into the fiction of others” (46-47).

<sup>91</sup> Cathy Caruth, “Literature and the Enactment of Memory (Duras, Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour*)” in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 46-49. For instance, she writes:

In a film appearing, as did *Hiroshima mon amour*, in 1959, the café Casablanca, in which this scene takes place, cannot but be understood as an allusion to the American classic of 1942, *Casablanca*, a World War II film that centers on a café in Casablanca, a café called Rick’s Café American. The Casablanca in *Hiroshima mon amour* can thus be considered through its allusion of the French name of the café in the American film, a version of the Café American. And the English spoken here is, likewise, an address to those –whose history, like that of the Japanese, is also tied to the catastrophic event at Hiroshima, an address to the Americans, who so far have been virtually absent from the film. The history of the Japanese man is not directly told, that is, but is elliptically suggested as an address to the listening and to the hearing of the Americans who watch the film” (46).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

one is expected to talk about is that of one's nation by its very nature. Therefore in this logic, to speak in a foreign language invites the loss of or the forgetting of the self.<sup>93</sup> Amy Hungerford also comments on this idea:

Here, cultural integrity appears to entail the decision only to speak—or more accurately, only to intend meaning—in one's own language, the language, to use Wilkomirski's terms, that is not the "imitation of other people's speech" but one's "own, at bottom." The language of the other is preserved as incomprehensible by the operation of memorization as opposed to learning. But in a sense, we can see that it has become not the language of the other, but the language in which one is most oneself. For on this model, language is not representation but ontology; not the vehicle for knowledge but the medium in which one "voices his difference quite literally," in which one simply is oneself.<sup>94</sup>

As Etienne Balibar states, any linguistic community cannot create its own specific ethnicity, since language possesses a kind of plasticity that naturalizes new acquisitions. One can learn plural languages, even though he or she cannot choose the first languages.<sup>95</sup> It should also be added that Caruth considers that the reason that both the main Japanese man and the other Japanese man in the bar follows the French woman stems from "their common desire for a woman from the West,"<sup>96</sup> repeating

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<sup>93</sup> See Ibid., 49. Caruth claims: "there is also, perhaps, a certain loss of self implicit in the speaking another's language. In this respect, in spite of the difference in their language skills, the Japanese lover can recognize in the stranger's use of English a symbol of his own speaking in French. English, in this scene, is the language of forgetting" (49).

<sup>94</sup> Amy Hungerford, "Memorizing Memory," *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2001): 85. In critiquing Caruth's discussion of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* in *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) Ruth Leys also points out Caruth's tendency to specify the enunciative positions of the narrator as well as the status of the addressee by way of what national language he or she speaks:

Deploying an 'us' and a 'we' that refer not to a universal subject but to English- or German-speaking readers exclusively—as if Freud meant to bestow the legacy of psychoanalysis only on an English-speaking or a German-speaking people—Caruth suggests that 'we' become the coowners of Freud's trauma because we cannot read his sentence divided between German and English without being split ourselves—without being traumatized or dissociated by the very trauma of 'departure' that he himself experienced (291).

<sup>95</sup> Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 96-99.

<sup>96</sup> Cathy Caruth, "Literature and the Enactment of Memory (Duras, Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour*)" in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 48.

what appears in Lane's critique: a desire of a colonial male for a woman of the colonizer.

But the fundamental characteristic in Caruth's argument is that she separates individual memory from the collective one by reasoning that they are basically different entities from each other. Therefore, at the moment that the French woman extricates herself from the state of madness, she immediately proceeds to a different phase dominated by national temporality and collective memory. There, the French woman almost automatically loses and forgets her individual memory. In this way, Caruth not only creates the distinction between individual and collective memory, but also defines the relationship between them as developmental. In other words, the transition from individualized trauma to collectivized memory is naturalized as a healing process. This view gives the impression that past memory is rather mechanically superseded by the present collective memory (that is also unquestionably national memory for her) within the psyche of the individual. This trajectory from the individual to the collective, and from the past to the present, is justified by comparing it with the bodily rehabilitation towards wholesomeness. For Caruth, the state of the French woman being captured by a past traumatic experience is conveyed by the sense of the fragmented body, in so much that her recovery from this situation manifests itself in the recuperation of an organic whole in the bodily sense:

Her refusal is thus carried out in the body's fragmentation, in the separation of her hands from the rest of her corporeal self and in the communion with her lover's death through the sucking of her own blood. It is thus utterly deprived of sight and understanding, and only as a fragment, that the body can become, for the woman, the faithful monument to a death. It is likewise the unavoidable reintegration of the body in the recovery of her hands that represents in this story a betrayal in the forgetting imposed by the sight and understanding of a larger history.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 31.

What is happening here is the crystallization of the past by isolating it from the possibly contaminating present, by making it something that has been eternally lost and therefore unreachable, and to some extent, purified. It is what Caruth's rhetoric wittingly or unwittingly establishes while representing one's relation to the past in dramatically ethical terms such as faith and betrayal. But this faith in the past may not be fair to the present, since the forgetting of the past also designates a creation, fabrication or invention by the present, not a palpable occurrence like a natural phenomenon. As Freud makes clear in the analysis of the Wolfman, the present situation is part and parcel of creating past trauma.<sup>98</sup> In other words, this does not mean that past trauma belatedly returns without any correlations to the present situation. The remembering of the past as well as the forgetting of the past should be explored in conjunction with the contexts at the time of the occurrence of the past event, as well as at the time of remembering or forgetting. It is also logically contradictory unless Caruth takes account of the contexts of the French woman remembering her German lover at the sight of the hand of the Japanese man lying on the bed, since it is the Japanese man's hand that triggers her remembrance of the German lover. Yet, she claims:

In the juxtaposition of hands—a series of images that is presumably seen by the woman, and that the spectator sees without quite grasping them and without understanding—we are first introduced, in sight, to the event that forms her story, to the death of her German lover (whom the woman

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<sup>98</sup> I owe this point to Jeremy Tambling, review of *Trauma: Exploration in Memory*, by ed. Cathy Caruth, *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 94, no. 1 (January 1999): 299. His critique of this piece seems applicable to her basic position in this essay, too, "Literature and the Enactment of Memory (Duras, Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour*)" in her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). Tambling maintains:

[t]here is little focus on the notion of delayed trauma (Nachtraglichkeit), which in Freud, as with the case of the Wolfman, involves suggesting that the present invents the past traumatic episode, that the present, in a Benjamin-like 'moment of danger' makes an investment in the past that gives it a traumatic experience. The sympathy that engages the writing of the texts in Caruth's collection suggests rather the importance of the individual subject (it seems sometimes a privileged American subject) overcoming the past, though 'The Intrusive Past' does suggest the therapeutic use of creatively 'playing with the value of the past' (Caruth, p. 179)" (299).

apparently sees while looking at the hand of the Japanese man). But *if the woman is opened to a past here through what she sees, it is not in how the living body at Hiroshima represents for her the knowledge of the dead—how the sight of the living body represents and replaces the body of the dead—but in the uncanny similarity that the seen body, the hand, reveals between the unconsciousness of sleeping and the unconsciousness of dying [emphasis mine].*<sup>99</sup>

Caruth may not be interested in seeing what his hand may imply to the French woman beyond her past memory of the German lover, but is more interested in seeing how the act of the French woman may affect or represent her psyche.

### **Postcolonial *Hiroshima, Mon Amour***

This chapter, however, investigates what is neglected in the previous critiques—what the figure of the Japanese man suggests in this film-text. It contends that his figure also exemplifies what Duras has tried to distantiate, yet what keeps coming back in the film. In a way, the narrative of this movie *per se* performs this process of the return of the repressed, and its aftermath. The film narrative starts with positing the French woman as the woman colonizer or the occidental tourist, who is visiting Hiroshima where local residents are supposed to be “dissimilar geographically, philosophically, historically, economically, racially, etc. as it is possible to be,”<sup>100</sup> like colonial natives, as Duras originally intended. Therefore, the French woman behaves in a way that projects the spectator’s desire to see the exotic lives of the colonial Other. She wears a *yukata* instead of a bath robe, and pours the coffee into a cup out of a Japanese teapot in a way never practiced in everyday life in Japan. Then, she goes out onto the balcony in the hotel room and looks down on the city in a happy mood, as if enjoying not the sight but rather her status of being in the commander’s position.

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<sup>99</sup> Cathy Caruth, “Literature and the Enactment of Memory (Duras, Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour*)” in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 36.

<sup>100</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 9.

As one of those colonial natives, the Japanese man has a heavy accent that emphasizes his impossibility to be in the position of the colonizer, no matter how hard he mimics speaking French, the language of the colonizer. The reason he speaks French also attests to his position as the colonized. He explains it as “[t]o read about the French Revolution.”<sup>101</sup> This line insinuates figures such as Ho Chi Minh and Jose Rizal, the leaders of independent movements and revolutionists in Southeast Asia, who are also known to have studied in prewar Paris. As Jackson Jr. points out, the Japanese man is also presented as a figure overlapping with the Chinese lover in *The Lover*, who has studied in Paris as someone from a wealthy colonial family in French Indochina. Jackson Jr. states:

The Chinese man in *The Lover* speaks French, which was not unusual at this time in French-colonized Indochina. The fact that the Japanese man in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* speaks French, however, is nearly as remarkable as the woman’s ability to take his fluency for granted; she does not even remark on his command of the language until he himself mentions it. The expectation of facility in French in the “native” is a superimposition of former colonial expectations onto an Asian nation that had never been a European colony.<sup>102</sup>

The comments of the French woman after intercourse in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (“It’s extraordinary how beautiful your skin is,”<sup>103</sup> as seen before) are also repeated in the French girl’s impression of the Chinese man’s body in the scene of their love-making in *The Lover* (“The skin is sumptuously soft”<sup>104</sup>). The racial feature of the Japanese man is made use of to abstract the historical reference, the shared past of the collaboration between the Japanese empire and the French colonial government, or to put it another way, the relationship that the French were rather forced to accept in the presence of the Japanese military power.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>102</sup> Earl Jackson Jr., “Desire at Cross(-Cultural) Purposes: *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence*, positions 2:1 (1994), 148.

<sup>103</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 25.

<sup>104</sup> Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*, trans. Barbara Bary (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 38.

Yet interestingly, the reference to the French Revolution may also connote another signification. As Frederic Jameson maintains, historically speaking, the French Revolution induced the secularization of society enforced by capitalist development and the expansion of the market system, resulting from the breaking-up of class structure, a heredity system and the traditional community.<sup>105</sup> Although this social reform had been on the agenda since the Meiji administration, this was also promoted in postwar Japan under the Occupation. The Japanese man's words, suggesting the need to learn about the French Revolution, may imply his active participation in this reform project of reconstructing Hiroshima as a local politician by closely following the American Occupation policy. As we will see, there is a shadow of the US in covert references made to it in this movie. In other words, the figure of the Japanese man is an amalgamation of the past and present situations; not a mere synthesis of these histories, but a product of the present state' recalling or inevitably mobilizing past memory. He is a double-faced figure who represents a Hiroshima that had prospered as a military city, as well as a Hiroshima that has accepted the defeat and worked for rehabilitation, more or less under the command of the Americans. Succinctly put, he is both the ex-colonizer and the colonized as of now.

The power relationship between the French woman and the Japanese man starts to undergo a change the moment she sees the hand of the Japanese man sleeping in the bed. She finds in him the figure of the German man or the ex-occupier of the French, as well as, through this German figure, the encrypted existence of the past Japanese partner of colonial collaboration in French Indochina. Although a visit to Hiroshima and the affair with him in the land of non-white people are initially meant to be a sort of excursion for her to stabilize her positionality as a part of white

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<sup>105</sup> Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 1989), 249.

Frenchness, this encounter with past memory makes her psyche plunge into an identity crisis, and causes the sense of uneasiness and humiliation to begin imploding within her psyche. After this incident, she gradually realizes that she can no longer dominate the Japanese man; rather she needs to face the fact that the longer she is with him, the more she has to become aware of this situation and possibly to accept it.

Her inability to stay safely within the self is represented by her constant movement—from the hotel room, the streets, his house, the café, the hotel room, the streets, the train station, the bar, and finally back to the hotel room. After the sight of his hand in the hotel room has awakened her traumatic memory, she makes love with him once more in his house, whose interior is filled with exotic Japanese tastes. This *mise-en-scene* demonstrates that her power as the colonizer is not yet completely abandoned. But after the intercourse, again he urges her to talk about her affair with the German lover. As well as the hotel room, now his house has also become a menacing place for her. She can no longer afford to share an intimate space with him alone, since this may force her to confront the traumatic memories that disquiet her identity. Therefore, until the end of the movie, she avoids returning to the hotel room, which is supposed to be her temporary private zone; after she momentarily visits there, she leaves immediately, since he, the source of her trauma, follows her there.

Instead, they keep wandering about the non-territorial place for both of them, open, public spaces such as the café, bar, and streets. Her loitering also indicates colonial fantasy resembles imaginary onanism: it elicits a pleasure from fantasizing about a sexual or sensual relationship with the colonial other, yet prolongs this daydreaming as long as possible, without reaching out to the climax or reality. The scene in which she imagines him approaching her, when they are walking on the streets substantiates this scheme. She imagines: “He’s going to come toward me, he’s going to take me by the shoulders, he’s-going-to-kiss-me. . . . He’ll kiss me . . . and

I'll be lost (*The word 'lost' is said almost ecstatically*).”<sup>106</sup> Although in actuality he is following her by carefully keeping a certain distance, she is possessed by the fantasy in which colonial males desire and woo her almost automatically, and is led to a state of exultant jouissance, which becomes possible paradoxically because it has been unreal.

Apart from her acting-out of fantasy, the Japanese man also pursues his own colonial fantasy, or put it in another way, he imitates it, while being stimulated by his past memory as the colonizer. His pursuit comes to a crescendo in the scene where he slaps her across the face in the café. The film depicts that this slapping has a placatory effect on her in a delirious state. After being beaten, she rather smiles at him and resumes talking in a steadier manner; this gives the impression that his action rather provides her with more sense as well as making their tie stronger. In other words, he plays the role of “reason and rationality” that is necessary to properly handle the distracted as Luchting and Ward argue, and to forge a desirable relationship with the confused. The point is that not only this normalizing power entails recourse to force, but also the use of this masculine violence is justified and even implicitly recommended. In this sense, this scene can be considered to have two implications with regard to the character of the Japanese man: the figure of both the ex-colonizer and the present colonized.

First, by slapping her face twice in quick succession, he covertly emulates the atomic violence that the US committed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This act leads to the rhetoric of rehabilitation in which the destruction of prewar Hiroshima paves the way for the rebirth of postwar Hiroshima as a peace city; and therefore the use of the bomb is implicitly endorsed. By mimicking the act of the Americans, the “current

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<sup>106</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 76.

colonizer,” he not only performs well as the colonized, but also strengthens the tie with his colonizer through this conduct. Second, his deed also acts out a prewar propaganda used in a blockbuster film in Japan. This film, entitled *Shina no yoru* (China Nights, director: Osamu Fushimi, 1940), is a romance between a Japanese man and a Chinese woman. They accidentally meet in Shanghai and fall in love after a number of episodes, one of which is his slapping of her on the face. Her rebelliousness is gradually tamed when she realizes his “seriousness and sincerity” through these events. This movie, produced in the midst of the Sino-Japanese War, carries a message of glamorizing the purpose for the Japanese invasion and coercing the Chinese into the obedient acceptance of it. Yoshiko Yamaguchi, who starred as the Chinese woman in this movie with the Chinese name of Ri Koran in Japanese pronunciation (Li Xianlan in Chinese pronunciation), asserts, however, that the movie caused a contrary effect by stirring anti-Japanese sentiment among the Chinese.<sup>107</sup> Ironically, the Japanese man’s reenactment of the past imperial ideology paradoxically verifies his current powerlessness here, too, and demonstrates that he can do nothing other than imitate his past self.

But this slapping brings about an unexpected outcome. As it is observable in the shots after he slaps her, almost everybody in the café, not only employees but also customers, turn around and stare at them reproachfully. In other words, the Japanese man and the French woman arouse the local community, and the community views

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<sup>107</sup> Yoshiko Yamaguchi and Sakuya Fujiwara, *Ri Koran watakushi no hansei* (Ri Koran, My Past Half Life) (Tokyo: Shincho sha, 1987), 138. After Japan’s defeat, Yamaguchi was arrested by the Chinese government that believed that she was a traitor to China, and was put on trial. Although she was released after she proved herself as Japanese, she wrote later that her participation in this slapping scene in *Shina no yoru* had become problematized in the trial (Ibid). See also Yoshiko Yamaguchi, *Senso to heiwa to uta: Ri Koran kokoro no michi* (War, Peace, and Song: Ri Koran, the Path to Heart) (Tokyo: Tokyo shimbun shuppankyoku, 1993), and Yoshiko Yamaguchi, *Jidai ni tsutaetai koto: rekishi no kataribe Ri Koran no hansei* (What I Want to Pass on to the Next Generation: An Account of the Past Half of Ri Koran, Witness to History) (Nara: Tenrikyo doyou sha, 1997). For *Shina no yoru* and Ri Koran, see Inuhiko Yomota, *Nihon no jyoyu* (Japanese Actresses) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2000) and Inuhiko Yomota, ed., *Ri Koran to higashi ajia* (Ri Koran and East Asia) (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 2001).

their behavior, especially his slapping of her, as a kind of challenge to itself. Although it is unclear whether he acts out Japanese imperialism in gendered form as the ex-colonizer, or imitates American violence as the colonized, what the community demands of the local residents is basically to keep a low profile and not provoke others; in this way the state of the current Hiroshima is not greatly distracted from its reconstruction project. As seen in Ward's comments earlier, to hold this kind of guiding principle is a "normal response" as well as a rational choice for the members of the community to adjust themselves to the political environment that has drastically changed since the defeat. This policy penetrated by the very masculine idea is, after all, unchanged from the prewar ideology inasmuch as the positive attitude toward working on reconstruction of the city can save the vigor and manliness of the society. In short, the reconstruction of the city also facilitates the rehabilitation of manliness, while to some extent affirming the use of violence in the name of reason.

In spite of his career as an architect as well as a local politician, the Japanese man obviously oversteps the boundary of the laws of nature by acting out his traumatic past and present too straightforwardly. After this slapping, the Japanese man and the French woman lose a place to go, and thus have no choice but to keep meandering on the streets, unless they decide to retreat to their private spaces such as the hotel room or his house. But, possessed by the anxiety that paradoxically fuels her fantasy, she does not notice that the circumstances have already irrevocably changed. Thus, after finishing her story in the café, she gladly says to him, "Doesn't anything ever stop at night, in Hiroshima?" Receiving an affirmative answer from him, she continues: "I love that . . . cities where there are always people awake, day or night. . . ." <sup>108</sup> Yet, the two of them are no longer welcomed in this closed community,

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<sup>108</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 70.

and Hiroshima is no longer a free, open space for them. Immediately after she expresses her joy, the waitress in the café approaches to them, cleans their table, and signals them to leave in an unvoiced way. After that, the community does not hesitate to intervene openly; even when they are sitting in the chairs in the waiting room in the train station, the place that should principally accept anybody from anywhere, either they are residents or visitors, the Japanese man and the French woman are susceptible to interrogation. A senior citizen intrudes between them, and she unilaterally questions the Japanese man about their relationship without hesitation. She ostensibly assumes the un-threatening form of being both a female and a senior citizen, but her behavior is not different from that of the police.

Finding themselves at a dead end, they come back to the bar named Casablanca, where they first met the day before, the point of origin as well as the point of return; this suggests that their affair is destined to go round in circles and that their encounter cannot be a departure from any communities. Casablanca insinuates the presence of the ultimate power that rules this dead-end world in this film-text: the American colonizing power. Referring to the famous American movie, *Casablanca* (director: Michael Curtiz, 1942), the idea of Casablanca in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, on the one hand, suggests the American dominance of Europe, when considering its historical context. Caruth depicts the way in which the movie *Casablanca* influenced the American wartime policy about Europe as follows:

[W]hen the film was made in 1942, Roosevelt, against Churchill's advice, was still reluctant to withdraw support from the Vichy government in France. It has been suggested that *Casablanca* was in fact used as propaganda aimed at enlisting his support for de Gaulle, in which task it was successful (the film was shown at the White House on New Year's Eve, 1942-1943).<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Cathy Caruth, "Literature and the Enactment of Memory (Duras, Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour*)" in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 47.

In other words, *Casablanca* marks the memorable conversion of the US diplomatic and military policies, which accompanied the victory of the Allies, as the American male Rick, a bar owner in Casablanca inside the movie, helps the members of the Resistance fight against the Nazis and the Vichy regime. This rescue also heralds the beginning of American hegemony in the new European order in the postwar era.

On the other hand, the scenes in the bar Casablanca in Hiroshima exemplify how considerably deep the influence is that the US exerts on postwar Hiroshima. When the French woman enters the bar, another Japanese man talks to her in English to pick her up, in spite of the fact that he, for some reason, knows she is from France, not from the US. In this scene, the English language not only subordinates Japanese but also French, and treats them both equally as the colonized. Probably because of this, even though she understands him, she never replies to him in English, but responds only by shaking her head. Her refusal to speak English partly suggests that she does not want to accept the relegation of her status as equal to the non-white Japanese.

But, the figure of this Japanese man who talks to her in English also substitutes for another figure that never appears in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, the figure prohibited from portrayal under the colonial rule: that of the Americans. One of the things that most critics have overlooked in the analysis of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is the extent to which this movie actually mimics what the Japanese movies produced during the American Occupation had gone through: censorship. Soon after its arrival in Japan in September 1945, the American Forces issued a press code to smoothly facilitate its occupation policies. Although the targets of censorship varied, and naturally included the visual and written representation of the victimization of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, one of the key targets of suppression was the portrayal of American soldiers, even if they were depicted in a favorable and friendly manner. In particular, any liaisons

between American men and Japanese women were strictly forbidden in order not to disparage the Americans.<sup>110</sup>

In other words, what we can assume in the Japanese man's flirtation with the French woman in the bar in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is a parody of American men picking up Japanese women in the occupied Hiroshima, or Japanese women flirting with American men there. Obviously, this relationship can be equated with those French women had with German occupiers. The textbook English that another Japanese man uses in this scene is also from the pastiche used between Americans and Japanese, between native and non-native speakers, in order to start up conversations anyway. The point here is that the language used in such circumstances is seldom the language of the colonized, but of the colonizer. Succinctly put, this whole bar episode represents the parody of *America, Mon Amour*.

In this scene, what would be in the mind of the Japanese man, while watching the other Japanese man flirting with the French woman? As discussed earlier, this chapter does not support the idea that he is in competition with the other man for her, whereas she would have expected it to happen, being enticed by her colonial fantasy. While rejected for being in the public space with her and then returning to the Casablanca finally where American colonial power may be most strongly felt, he now has to follow the protocol set up in the world of *Casablanca*; this is to say, as his American master has returned the French woman to her French husband in *Casablanca*, he should also send her back to her French husband in the world of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. This is the "normal response" that the community would also demand. Thus, his job is now to carefully watch her at a considerable distance, in

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<sup>110</sup> See Kiyoko Horiba, *Kinjirareta genbaku taiken* (The Suppressed Experiences of the Atomic Bombing Victimization) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995), 28-34, and Kyoko Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: the Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation, 1945-1952* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 54-59.

order to make sure that this arrangement will certainly be done, like a businessman as well as a guard. This is the impasse that has been reached in reference to the movie *Casablanca*, inasmuch as he acts out the past imperial desire or performs the mimicry of the colonizer.

But, this impasse also has a connection to the international business order controlled by American capitalist power. In this sense, the French woman is handed over as the national/male commodity, as part of the transaction of commerce, a vital part of capitalist development in the postwar world. This finale seems to replicate the establishment of the homosocial relationship between men through the exchange of a woman in Sedgwick's sense.<sup>111</sup> Yet here, the French woman is not really exchanged, but only temporally rented and presumably returned to the community. In this sense, it is rather pertinent to say that what happens in this movie is the inscription on or the naming of the body in the process of transaction rather than its exchange, as both the French woman and the Japanese man call themselves Nevers and Hiroshima in the final scene. As Deleuze and Guattari consider, the idea of exchange is premised upon the existence of closed entities, but in actuality such closedness is not sustainable under the market system.<sup>112</sup> In conclusion, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is both the parable and the parody of international commercial transactions significantly developed in the postwar Western world, as well as the switching of colonial power from one to the other.

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<sup>111</sup> See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

<sup>112</sup> See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 184-86.

## EPILOGUE

This dissertation has explored *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and Japanese films cited in it, such as the documentary, *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, and Kamei's *Still It's Good to Live*, and investigated the ways in which knowledge has been produced through the reading of these films. It has probed why these films, the French feature-length movie and the Japanese documentaries, have not been interpreted and discussed in reference to each other. This lack of cross-referencing prevents us from invoking questions such as why the censorship of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* by the American authorities has been ignored in the critiques of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. One of the points this study makes is that the issues of seeing and knowing should not be contained within the realm of textual analyses only, but should be considered in the broader framework of the politics of representation as well. This study casts doubt on the previous studies that examine *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (which highlights the uncertainty of seeing and knowing so provocatively) without considering not only this film's implicit reference to censorship, but also the director Resnais' background as a documentarian, who fought against the forces of censorship in his career.<sup>1</sup>

I have also challenged the rigidly and hierarchically established binaries between the West and non-West as well as between avant-garde films and documentaries that Duras demarcated in the synopsis of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. This dichotomy should be destabilized and reconsidered, since their relationships are too complex for such a clear-cut division. I contend that the difference between them, if

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<sup>1</sup> Among Resnais' works, *Les Statues meurent aussi* (1951), which criticizes French colonialism was banned by the French government for a long time. Furthermore, not only *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, but also other films such as *Night and Fog* (1955) and *La Guerre est Finie* (1966) encountered formidable difficulties to be shown at the Cannes Film Festival.

any, is not a presentation of the prescribed truth that we can take for granted, but the very display of a creation of differences, or the way an exclusion can take place through the production of the object of knowledge, rather than its lucid suppression. Obviously here, the production of knowledge is far from an autonomous and disinterested development, but is both a creating process and its outcome, structured within a large historical frame, and often culturalized, racialized, and nationalized through the location of objects in a geographical mapping.

The disconnection between *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and the Japanese documentaries may seem to represent the exclusiveness of discursive spaces in the international sphere. Yet in the bigger picture, this seemingly mutual exclusion actually substantiates a state of interdependence that made possible precisely by their lack of attention to each other. Some of the previous interpretations of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* became parts of this process of formulating disconnected knowledge in which negligence of and indifference to each other have mutually sustained the “status quo” of the French avant-garde film and the Japanese documentaries. This system of confinement to their “own” places may also wittingly or unwittingly reflect the Cold War containment policies of that time, whose ideological creed was the categorization of identities and the balance of power. This dissertation intends to capture a dimension of this interdependent structure of containment and exclusion through its reinterpretation of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*.

To expand this study of structural interdependence in the international system of knowledge production beyond the scope of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, the investigation of other genres may be pursued. Since this dissertation has focused on cinematic representations, to explore new topics in the fields of literature may be a next step. “The Reflection of the Views on the Atomic Bombing between John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* and Takashi Nagai’s *The Bells of Nagasaki*” is a literature-based

topic that could be included in a subsequent study. This topic analyzes Hersey's *Hiroshima* and Nagai's *The Bells of Nagasaki*, the two best-selling books on Hiroshima and Nagasaki written in the US and Japan respectively. They were published in the 1940's, the initial period when discourse on the atomic bombing started to be framed. Interestingly, notwithstanding the fact that US censorship was practiced in occupied Japan in those days, the views on the atomic bombings in these two texts demonstrate a striking resemblance, as if having a secret knowledge of each other. A comparison of these two texts has not been undertaken in spite of their wide readership in both countries, and each narrative has basically been consumed within its own national sphere, although Hersey's text gained international currency as the first report on the human damage from the atomic bombing. Yet the disconnection in the reading of these texts, again, represents the ways in which knowledge on Hiroshima and Nagasaki has been created across the Pacific.

To consider knowledge production on the atomic bombing in discursive spheres in Asia could also be examined. The issue of the US atomic bombing tends to be discussed primarily within the framework of the bilateral relationship of the US and Japan. But, to limit the range of discussion to this bilateral relationship may suggest another legacy of Cold War politics, in which the primary relationship for nation-states that belong to the Western camp is always with the US, and relationships with other countries are disregarded and overlooked. Therefore, to approach the issue of the atomic bombing through a reading of the French film, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, in conjunction with French and Japanese colonial histories in French Indochina, has also been an attempt to avoid rehashing discussions within the underlying structure and thus to contour a wider picture. Concurrently, what this dissertation has also revealed is that even to read this originally French film, we need to consider the US presence and clout insinuated into its film narrative.

As Kwon Heok-tae points out,<sup>2</sup> knowledge production in Korea regarding the US atomic bombing cannot be separated from Korean understanding and perceptions of the US presence and Japanese colonialism. As in the US and Japan, the knowledge production of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Korea and other Asian countries and areas would also be culturalized, racialized, and nationalized. When the Cold War situations are to some degree continuing in East Asia, and not really resolved as we can see in the situation of North Korea, to discuss knowledge production on the atomic bombing in Asia is a crucial issue to be grappled with in the near future.

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<sup>2</sup> Kwon Heok-tae, “Shudan no kioku, kojin no kioku: kankoku to hiroshima ga otagaini toikakerumono” (Collective Memory, Personal Memory: What Korea and Hiroshima Question about Each Other), *Gendai shiso*, vol. 31-10 (August 2003): 209-15.

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