L'ère nucléaire: French Visions of Japan, from Hiroshima to Fukushima

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Abstract

France has a long-standing cultural fascination with Japan, from the nineteenth-century tradition in the visual arts of Japonisme through the influence of Japanese fashion, cuisine, and animation on French culture today. As I trace the historical arc of what is admittedly a mutual fascination between the two cultures, I am interested in what I see as particularly French ways of invoking Japan and in how these conceptions have changed over time, specifically in the nuclear era. The approach in this study shifts from discourses of Japonisme and Orientalism to formal and ecocritical analyses of French films and literature about Japan from the postwar era through today. I argue that the visions of Japan in several works made during this period move beyond the primarily aesthetic interests seen in earlier French art and literature about Japan to environmental concerns that center around the nuclear question.

This study focuses in particular on how the nuclear disasters at Hiroshima and Fukushima have affected French cultural productions and on the consequences these events have had for filmic and literary form in France. In this project, I propose and develop the concept of a "nuclear narrative" to reframe our understanding of films by Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, Keiko Courdy, and Philippe Rouy, and a novel by Michaël Ferrier. My analysis uses M.M. Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope and Timothy Morton's hyperobject to consider how the nuclear events at Hiroshima and Fukushima have influenced filmic and literary form and representations of spatiotemporality. I argue that these nuclear narratives present fragmented accounts of everyday life in the nuclear era and serve as instances of Franco-Japanese solidarity while also commenting on concerns regarding nuclear energy in France.

In the postwar era, nuclear development offered a means to rebuild the nation and sense of national identity in France and Japan. Before the 2011 meltdowns at Fukushima Daiichi,

France and Japan were the world's two most nuclearized countries in terms of energy. Today, nuclear policy is a particularly pressing concern in Japan as it continues to deal with fallout from the 2011 disaster, and in France as its aging nuclear reactors near retirement. Japan and France can also be seen as leaders in environmental policy, hosting the 1997 Conference of Parties meeting (COP3) that produced the Kyoto Protocol and the 2015 meeting (COP21) that resulted in the Paris Agreement. The United States, a problematic partner in these negotiations and a nation at the forefront of global nuclear power, serves as an important third point in this triangle. Nuclear materials and technologies have long linked France, Japan, and the United States in scientific, economic, political, and cultural endeavors. Notably, the 1984 colloquium that produced the short-lived field of Nuclear Criticism occurred in the United States featuring the French philosopher Jacques Derrida.

The recent disaster at Fukushima Daiichi calls for greater transnational reflection on nuclear power. By focusing on the cultural implications of the nuclear era as seen in French filmic and literary form, this study joins an emerging body of critical reflection on nuclear culture at a crucial moment in history as environmental imperatives lead to a turning point in energy policy and practice and as narratives offer ways to envision and respond to these pressing concerns.

Introduction

> La fission brisait l'atome: la rupture de l'espace-temps historique était inséparable de cette rupture des composants de la matière même.
>
> (Fission split the atom: the rupture of historical space-time was inseparable from the rupture of the components of matter itself.)
>
> —Gabrielle Hecht, "L'Empire nucléaire: les silences des 'Trente Glorieuses'"

> Fine art and popular media alike can, at their best, be far more than symptoms of their age. They can voice its contradictions in ways few more self-conscious activities do, because both want to appeal directly to the senses, the emotions and the tastes of the hour, because both will sacrifice linear reason for rhetoric or affect, and because both have the option of abandoning the given world in favor of the image of something other than what, otherwise, we might feel we had no choice but to inhabit.
>
> —Sean Cubitt, *Eco Media*

In *Tokyo fiancée*, the 2015 filmic adaptation of Amélié Nothomb's *Ni d'Ève ni d'Adam / Tokyo Fiancée* (English novel title) (2007),[1] the real events of the March 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear reactor explosions in Japan serve as a deus ex machina, bringing the narrative arc of the film to a swift if not entirely unexpected conclusion. Director Stefan Liberski had been shooting in Japan during the triple disaster, which delayed filming for two years. Affected by these events, Liberski asked Nothomb's permission to integrate them into his film.[2] *Tokyo fiancée* is thus a film interrupted by the real-life triple disaster in Japan, an interruption that significantly diverges from the narrative of Nothomb's novel; a woman who chose to leave Japan for personal reasons in the novel becomes in the film a woman compelled to leave because

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[1] Gabrielle Hecht, "L'Empire nucléaire: les silences des 'Trente Glorieuses,'" in *Une autre histoire des "Trente Glorieuses": modernisation, contestations et pollutions dans la France d'après-guerre* (La Découverte, 2013), 159–78.161. (My translation. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from French are my own.) Sean Cubitt, *Eco Media* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2005), 2. Amélie Nothomb, *Stupeur et Tremblements* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999); Amélie Nothomb, *Ni d'Eve ni d'Adam* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2007). Stefan Liberski, *Tokyo Fiancée* (Les Films du Worso, 2015). *Ni d'Ève ni d'Adam* is a prequel of sorts to Nothomb's well-known *Stupeur et tremblements / Fear and trembling*.

[2] Marie-Noëlle Tranchant, "Tokyo Fiancée: à la découverte du Japon," *Le Figaro*, March 3, 2015, sec. Cinéma, http://www.lefigaro.fr/cinema/2015/03/03/03002-20150303ARTFIG00298--tokyo-fiancee-pauline-a-la-page.php.

of an uncertain and ongoing nuclear disaster.[3] The real-life nuclear disaster finished the adaptation that Liberski had begun and crossed an already uncertain boundary between fiction and what Sean Cubitt calls the "given world" we inhabit, or between aesthetic and sociopolitical worlds.

Post-Fukushima filmic and literary representations of Japan seem to be no less able to ignore the events of 3.11 than post-9/11 representations of New York are able to ignore those of September 11th. As the cultural historian of energy Gabrielle Hecht argues, the splitting of the atom had consequences well beyond the realms of technoscientific development and national defense; nuclear fission changed not only the rules of war and the course of history but also the cultural climate and everyday life in it. And as the epigraph to this chapter from Cubitt suggests, cultural productions can serve as more than mere "symptoms of their age" as they also "voice its contradictions," "appeal directly to the senses, the emotions and the tastes of the hour," and imagine other possible worlds. This study will analyze several French cultural productions that are both symptomatic of the nuclear era and interested in the contradictions and intersections of the sublime nuclear spectacle and its uncanny quotidian effects.

[3] I use the term "disaster" throughout this study more or less synonymously with "catastrophe," as do many texts across academic fields, both in Francophone and Anglophone scholarship. Timothy Morton, "How to Make a Catastrophe out of a Disaster" (Co-workers: Beyond Disaster, Paris, 2015) argues for the use of "catastrophe" in relation to nuclear events, because a catastrophe is something we inhabit from the inside, whereas a disaster is something we watch from outside. Morton's argument rests on the etymology of "disaster," or "bad star" interpreted as a black hole, a void, an apocalyptic event with nothing beyond, or a fatalistic scenario that absolves humans of their implication or responsibility for the event. He also draws on Naomi Klein's use of the term "disaster capitalism," in which national crises and disasters are exploited to push through policy with little to no resistance from shocked and distracted citizens, as described in Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Toronto: Knopf, 2007). Kate Rigby, *Dancing with Disaster: Environmental Histories, Narratives, and Ethics for Perilous Times* (Charlottesville, London: University of Virginia Press, 2015) argues that the term "natural disaster" lets humans off the hook and proposes in its place "eco-catastrophe," not the end of *the* world but of *a* world. In analyzing what might be considered "disaster narratives," I will, as Rigby does, "dance with disaster" throughout this thesis, as "disaster" is perhaps the more common term (used for example in the title of Michaël Ferrier's *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*), while also attending to the particularity of nuclear disaster, which could just as well be referred to as "nuclear catastrophe."

THE NUCLEAR ERA

The common perception is that the nuclear era began with an explosion: the July 1945 Trinity nuclear test at the Alamogordo Bombing Range in New Mexico, or the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9. After the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in an act of political jujitsu, President Dwight D. Eisenhower moved to rebrand nuclear technologies by promoting nuclear fission as a force for good in his 1953 Atoms for Peace speech. In this speech, Eisenhower proposed a future in which "experts would be mobilized to apply atomic energy to the needs of agriculture, medicine, and other peaceful activities….to provide abundant electrical energy in the power-starved areas of the world. Thus the contributing powers would be dedicating some of their strength to serve the needs rather than the fears of mankind."[4]

And yet, if we trace the exact boundaries of the nuclear era, we must consider earlier developments in nuclear research, such as Wilhelm Röntgen's discovery of the X-ray in 1895 and Henri Becquerel's 1896 discovery of radioactivity, a finding contemporaneous with the invention of cinema.[5] Also in France at that time, Marie and Pierre Curie were conducting research on radiation, a vocation taken up by their daughter Irène and son-in-law Frédéric Joliot-Curie and carried out through the postwar period with the development of the French nuclear program. Worth underscoring here is that while many would have it that the nuclear era began

[4] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Address Before the General Assembly of the United Nations on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy" (470th Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, New York City, December 8, 1953), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9774.

[5] Becquerel's discovery was made using photo plates from the Lumière brothers, often credited with having invented cinema the year before in 1895, the same year that the X-ray, another form of radiation, was discovered. In Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 30, Lippit connects the visual forms of cinema and the X-ray (along with psychoanalysis) as "new technologies for visualizing the inside, for imagining interiority."

with a sublime spectacle in the United States or Japan, it can also be understood to have begun much earlier with arguably more mundane laboratory research in France.

Another important consideration is whether the nuclear era refers to the history of military or civil nuclear developments, or whether the two are inherently entwined as the Atoms for Peace program suggests. In this dissertation, I use the nominalization "the nuclear" as it is often used in French to refer to the system of technologies and industries related to nuclear energy, to both its military and civil applications as well as to its social and cultural consequences. In this usage, I follow Hecht's elucidation of the term: "'The nuclear' is not equivalent to the radioactive. The nuclear is an idea that encompasses both physical and technological properties, as well as political and cultural and social properties." Hecht includes nuclear raw materials in her ontology of the nuclear, arguing that "by excluding uranium mining as an activity and uranium ore from common understandings of what it means to call something 'nuclear,' you are also excluding those activities from regulatory oversight by nuclear experts."[6]

The nuclear era became the subject of critical cultural reflection in 1984 when philosophers and critics gathered at Cornell University to create a new field of study called Nuclear Criticism. Its chief aims were to read "critical and canonical texts for the purpose of uncovering the unknown shapes of our unconscious nuclear fears" and "to show how the terms of the current nuclear discussion are shaped by literary or critical assumptions whose implications are often, perhaps systematically ignored."[7] Nuclear Criticism was to be applied not only to apocalyptic writing but to all kinds of discourses across a variety of fields, from the

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[6] Interview with Gabrielle Hecht by Cymene Howe and Dominic Boyer, "Gabrielle Hecht," *Center for Energy and Environmental Research in the Human Sciences at Rice* (blog), February 2, 2017, http://culturesofenergy.com/ep-55-gabrielle-hecht/.

[7] "Proposal for a Diacritics Colloquium on Nuclear Criticism," *Diacritics* 14, no. 2, Nuclear Criticism (Summer 1984): 2–3.

psychology of the arms race to nuclear ideologies and interests promoted in journalistic and artistic media. Jacques Derrida's contribution to the colloquium is structured as "seven inoffensive missiles" or "missives," the first of which argues for the importance of Nuclear Criticism for the humanities, "given that the stakes of the nuclear question are those of humanity, of the humanities," and calls for a critical slowdown against the acceleration of the nuclear age.[8] Derrida contends that nuclear war is "a speculation, an invention in the sense of a fable or an invention to be invented in order to make place for it or to prevent it from taking place."[9] If, indeed, nuclear war is written about in order to prevent its realization, if nuclear apocalypse is only a textual event, then according to Derrida, the textual anticipation of imagined nuclear war triggers the "reality" of the nuclear era, or the stockpiling and capitalization of nuclear weapons.[10]

In place of "era," Derrida uses the term "epoch," drawing on its Greek etymology *épochè* (stoppage or fixed point of time) to underscore the sense of suspension before absolute knowledge or the end of history in the nuclear epoch, the sense of suspension in time.[11] I have chosen for the title of this dissertation the more commonly used "nuclear era," or rather the more resonant French "ère nucléaire." The temporal French *ère* calls to mind with its homonyms the spatial dimension (*aire*, area) and the natural realm (*air*, air), while also finding rhyme in the word "nucléaire" itself, a poetic effect that is lost in English.

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[8] Jacques Derrida, "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)," trans. Catherine Porter and Philip Lewis, *Diacritics* 14, no. 2, Nuclear Criticism (Summer 1984): 20-2.

[9] Derrida, 28.

[10] Derrida, 23.

[11] Derrida, 27. "The nuclear age is not an epoch, it is the absolute épochè; it is not absolute knowledge and the end of history; it is the épochè of absolute knowledge." I use this notion of suspension in time in my development of the "chronotope of the nuclear" in which the nuclearized present is apparently infinite and inescapable.

A decade after the launch of Nuclear Criticism, Ken Ruthven looks back on the Cornell colloquium and subsequent *Diacritics* publication with critical distance: "In the broader sense, then, nuclear criticism concerns itself with the invention, applications and reception of nuclear science as cultural events."[12] Ruthven's insistence that nuclear physics and technology exist within culture, not outside of it, grounds his approach in cultural studies in which the nuclear project must be understood holistically and representations of nuclear power are not secondary to the technology.[13]

While the nuclear era seems to have neared a conclusion in 1991 with the breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, hopes of a nuclear-free world have yet to be realized. In 2017, the threat of nuclear war again looms large. Most strikingly, inexperienced political leaders engage in ego wars, intent on proving individual power through military demonstrations and bombastic tweets. Less spectacularly, the global nuclear industry faces legitimate challenges from far cheaper and cleaner forms of renewable energy. Companies such as the France-based multinational Areva and the US-based Westinghouse Electric Company (owned by the Japanese Toshiba Corporation) are experiencing financial difficulties that "cast a shadow over the global nuclear industry" and in the latter case have led to bankruptcy.[14] And yet the continued possibilities of nuclear accidents, terrorism, and war, along with the asymptotic nature of radioactive decay, point to a nuclear era that will never truly end. Accordingly, the nuclear question weighs not only on the psyches of those in military laboratories and research and testing sites, but also on the minds of those who witnessed the blinding flashes and fallout from nuclear

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[12] Ken Ruthven, *Nuclear Criticism*, (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1993), 8.

[13] Ruthven, 20-1.

[14] Diane Cardwell and Jonathan Soble, "Westinghouse Files for Bankruptcy, in Blow to Nuclear Power," *The New York Times*, March 29, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/29/business/westinghouse-toshiba-nuclear-bankruptcy.html.

explosions, of those who remember the 1950s campaign to "duck and cover" in a nuclear attack, of those potentially most vulnerable to attack who are currently acquiring air purifiers and nuclear bomb shelters, and of cultural creators around the world who are responding to and reshaping a nuclear world order.[15]

The global dimensions of nuclear power can be seen in the 2011 disaster at Fukushima Daiichi. As many towns in the immediate areas of the Tohoku region were devastated, projections at the time also suggested that a change in the wind direction could have led to dangerous levels of contamination as far south as Tokyo, possibly affecting the prefecture's 13.2 million residents.[16] In the days following the accident, high doses of radiation were detected even farther south at the U.S. naval base at Yokosuka.[17] The destroyed reactors continue to leak radioactive contaminants into the Pacific Ocean. In 2015, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute reported the arrival of small levels of Fukushima-derived cesium on the North American west coast.[18] As radioactive contamination respects no boundaries, the 2011 nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi is not only Japan's concern but the world's problem.

Even after the 2011 disaster, after Japan's decision to halt its use of nuclear energy, and after Germany's resolution to completely phase-out nuclear energy, the global nuclear industry

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[15] Kiyoshi Takenaka, "Japanese Demand for Nuclear Shelters, Purifiers Surges as North Korea Tension Mounts," *Reuters*, April 24, 2017, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-japan-shelter-idUSKBN17Q0U6. Mycle Schneider, "Japan Times: Post-Fukushima Nuclear Allergy Spreads in France - World Nuclear Industry Status Report," April 19, 2012, http://www.worldnuclearreport.org/Japan-Times-Post-Fukushima-nuclear.html. In 2012, the *Japan Times* reported a post-Fukushima nuclear allergy spreading to France, with the Fukushima meltdown bringing to the fore the 600-800 "significant events" recorded at France's 58 nuclear reactors each year. "Significant events" include those assigned a rating of 0 (deviation) and 1 (anomaly) out of 7 (major accident) on the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES).

[16] "Current Population Estimates as of October 1, 2011," Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, accessed April 19, 2016, http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/jinsui/2011np/.

[17] David Lochbaum et al., *Fukushima: The Story of a Nuclear Disaster* (New York: New Press, 2015). 78.

[18] "Fukushima Site Still Leaking After Five Years, Research Shows," Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, March 7, 2016, http://www.whoi.edu/news-release/fukushima-site-still-leaking.

continues to grow. Data from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) shows an increase in worldwide nuclear electricity production in 2016 and proposals to double nuclear capacity by 2050.[19] France currently has fifty-eight active reactors, the second highest number in the world after the United States, and leads the world in deriving 72% of its electricity production from nuclear energy.[20] In November 2017, the French minister of ecology (*ministre de la Transition écologique et solidaire*) Nicolas Hulot announced that France would not be able to meet the goal set forth in the 2015 energy transition law to reduce its nuclear share to 50% by 2025.[21] But moving away from the use of nuclear energy is only part of the problem; the greater challenge—how to deal with nuclear waste—remains and continues to shape both policy and cultural productions.

In this dissertation, the nuclear era takes as its elastic temporal boundaries the nuclear disasters at Hiroshima (1945) and Fukushima (2011), including works that continue to be made in the aftermath of this recent nuclear event in Japan. In many ways, "Fukushima"—which has come to stand for the triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster that began in the Tohoku region of Japan on March 11, 2011—echoes the events of "Hiroshima," a metonym for the atomic bombings of Hiroshima (and often Nagasaki). For the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, the name Fukushima "est accompagné du privilège sinistre qui le fait rimer avec

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[19] International Atomic Energy Agency, "Energy, Electricity and Nuclear Power Estimates for the Period up to 2050" (Vienna: International Atomic Energy Agency, 2017). World Nuclear Association, "World Nuclear Performance Report 2016," June 2016. The World Nuclear Association argues that to meet targets for reducing global warming agreed upon at the COP21 in 2015, nuclear energy will need to be expanded from its current capacity supplying around 10% of global electricity to 25%.

[20] "France," *IAEA PRIS*, last modified December 2, 2017. https://www.iaea.org/PRIS/CountryStatistics/CountryDetails.aspx?current=FR.

[21] Coralie Schaub, "50% d'électricité nucléaire en 2025: Hulot annonce que l'objectif ne sera pas tenu," *Libération.Fr*, November 7, 2017, http://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/11/07/50-d-electricite-nucleaire-en-2025-hulot-annonce-que-l-objectif-ne-sera-pas-tenu_1608434.

Hiroshima" (is accompanied by the sinister privilege that makes it rhyme with Hiroshima). Nancy warns against conflating the two events, distinguishing the enemy bombing of Hiroshima from the techno-political and natural disasters behind the Fukushima meltdown, but argues "cette rime recueille…le ferment d'une proximité. Il s'agit, on ne cesse pas depuis le 11 mars 2011 de remâcher cette pilule amère, de l'énergie atomique"[22] (this rhyme registers…the ferment of a proximity. It is regarding—since March 11, 2011 one cannot stop chewing this bitter pill—atomic energy).

Reducing catastrophe to a proper name shrinks its geospatial reach and ignores the human agency that created it. I use the names "Hiroshima" and "Fukushima" in the title of this dissertation not in reference to the places themselves but rather to French visions of these places in literature and film. The French writer and scholar Michaël Ferrier, whose work is studied at greater length in the final chapter, acknowledges the imprecision and exoticism inherent in the use of the term "Fukushima" in reference to the 2011 triple disaster, while also admitting that in the West, the damage is to a certain extent already done. As such, he argues, the choice to use "Fukushima" should be an informed one that resists the inclination to allow the name's foreignness to hold the ongoing disaster at a distance.[23]

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[22] Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'Équivalence des catastrophes (Après Fukushima)* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2012)., 29-30.

[23] Christian Doumet and Michaël Ferrier, eds., *Penser* avec *Fukushima* (Lormont: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2016), 20; Barbara Geilhorn and Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, "Negotiating Nuclear Disaster: An Introduction," in *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, Routledge Contemporary Japan Series (London, New York: Routledge, 2017), 20, point out the problematic use of this term in Japan: "In order to differentiate between the geographical place and the event, the nuclear catastrophe soon became frequently referred to as 'Fukushima' written in *katakana* instead of *kanji* (similar differentiations are used for the atomic bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Minamata disease)." *Katakana* is a simplified syllabary used in Japanese for foreign borrowings, as opposed to *kanji*, derived from Chinese, used for Japanese words. Throughout this dissertation, I will address problems with employing the place name as a stand-in for the event more commonly referred to as "3.11" in Japan.

VISIONS AND NARRATIVES: CONCEPTUAL TOOLS

Post-2011 literature and art has seen a surge of works responding to the disaster with similarly fragmented and interrupted narratives as those seen in postwar responses to Hiroshima.[24] The crisis of representation and of coherent narrative seen after the Holocaust and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki reemerges after the disaster at Fukushima. After the spectacle of explosion, attention shifts to representation of that which is invisible, odorless, and silent, seemingly detectable only by a dosimeter whose readings change with every step. In the recent *Nuclear Culture Source Book*, Ele Carpenter writes, "In the early twenty-first century, nuclear aesthetics are shifting from the distant sublime atomic spectacle to a lived experience of the uncanny nature of radiation."[25] Carpenter's collection includes a 1958 letter to the International Conference for the Detection of Nuclear Explosions from Yves Klein, who satirically proposes to color future explosions his signature Klein Blue for easier detection by all. Carpenter sees Klein's letter as both a spectacular and pragmatic (if ironic) proposal, "with all the extraordinary vision of a blue explosion, and the everyday practicalities of employing the very real and intimate colouring, staining fingers blue to try and make atomic explosions visually traceable."[26] Perhaps interest in the "lived experience of the uncanny nature of radiation" is not only a twenty-first-century phenomenon but has been part of nuclear cultural productions from the start. This dissertation focuses on works in which the "sublime atomic spectacle" is eclipsed

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[24] The most notable of such works come from Japanese artists such as Hikaru Fujii, Takashi Arai, Nobuaki Takekawa, Takashi Murakami, the artist collective Chim↑Pom, and the Project Fukushima! group. Michaël Ferrier, "Visualiser l'impossible, l'art de Fukushima," *Artpress*, 2015, 62, reports that at least a third of the Japanese artists presenting at the 2013 Aichi triennial had made work about Fukushima. In Michaël Ferrier, "Fukushima ou la traversée du temps: une catastrophe sans fin," *Esprit*, June 2014, 33–43, "C'est plutôt l'absence d'une oeuvre consacrée à Fukushima qui ferait événement" (It is rather the absence of work dealing with Fukushima that would be noteworthy).

[25] Ele Carpenter, ed., *The Nuclear Culture Source Book* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2016), 9.

[26] Carpenter, 162, 176-8.

by "lived experience of the uncanny nature of radiation" and expressed as French visions of a nuclear Japan. These are not the apocalyptic visions found in so many nuclear movies, a genre dominated by Hollywood but also seen in many British, French, and Japanese productions.[27] Rather, the French visions of a nuclear Japan under study here are formally unstable and spatiotemporally uncertain "nuclear narratives," a concept I will develop throughout this thesis.

Nothomb's and Liberski's visions of Japan serve as a useful starting point for this study of the evolving French fascination with Japan and as an explicit illustration of the intersection of narrative and nuclear interruption.[28] And yet while Liberski's *Tokyo fiancée* may be a nuclear narrative in a thematic and even a structural sense as nuclear disaster interrupts and plays a decisive role in the story arc, it is not exactly a nuclear narrative according to my reframing of the term. I do not use "nuclear narrative" as it has been used to describe a wide range of texts or discourses that even briefly refer to nuclear disaster.[29] Neither do I use the term in the sense proposed by the historian Jacob Darwin Hamblin, as a historical and political tool that can assign

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[27] Mick Broderick, *Nuclear Movies: A Critical Analysis and Filmography of International Feature Length Films Dealing with Experimentation, Aliens, Terrorism, Holocaust and Other Disaster Scenarios, 1914-1989.*, 2nd 1991 (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1988). Spencer R. Weart, *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 244, argues, "when the French thought of atoms they thought of Marie Curie, a national glory, and French filmmakers created no visions of radioactive monsters."

[28] Liberski and Nothomb are both Belgian, however their works can be considered French, as Liberski's film is a Franco-Belgian-Canadian coproduction, and Nothomb, a Parisian resident, publishes with the French company Albin Michel. Furthermore, this study upholds a more fluid notion of Francophone cultural boundaries and a transnational conception of France and French-language cultures.

[29] "Proposal for a Diacritics Colloquium on Nuclear Criticism," *Diacritics* 14, no. 2, Nuclear Criticism (Summer 1984): 2-3. The prefatory article to a special issue on Nuclear Criticism uses the term "nuclear narrative" broadly, referring to the many texts and discourses that fall under the domain of Nuclear Criticism, such as apocalyptic and eschatological writing, arms race discourses and psychologies, "nuke-speak," (atomic) origin stories, representations of nuclear war in media and literature, and conspiracy theory discourses. In cinema, thematic catalogues of nuclear films exist in studies such as Hélène Puiseux, *L'apocalypse nucléaire et son cinéma* (Paris: Les Éditions du cerf, 1987); Broderick, *Nuclear Movies*; and Jerome F. Shapiro, *Atomic Bomb Cinema: The Apocalyptic Imagination on Film* (New York, London: Routledge, 2002). Daniel Cordle, *States of Suspense: The Nuclear Age, Postmodernism and United States Fiction and Prose* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008) writes of "nuclear anxiety narratives" in fiction and prose, which emphasize suspension in time and thus perhaps come closest to my concept of the nuclear narrative.

responsibility for a nuclear disaster.[30] The addition I make to the concept of the "nuclear narrative" is the vision or representation of nuclearized spatiotemporality it provides. This is not something that every nuclear-themed text or discourse necessarily demonstrates.[31] The nuclear narrative as an aesthetic form also shows formal fragmentation and mutation as well as a pervasive sense of instability. And like radioactive contamination, the nuclear narrative is something that spreads, transforms, and ultimately endures, whether because of noteworthy formal or stylistic qualities, or as borne out by its strong critical reception and legacy. The nuclear narratives analyzed in this study—a non-exhaustive corpus to be sure—all address the theme of nuclear disaster while exhibiting qualities related to or evoked by the nuclear, such as formal instability, notions of plurality and mutation, and nuclearized spatiotemporality.

I analyze nuclear form and spatiotemporality in these works through the lens of what I call the "chronotope of the nuclear," after M.M. Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope as a tool for conceptualizing narrative types or genres according to the specific spatiotemporalities represented in the text.[32] In Bakhtin's formulation of the chronotope, time and space are considered as interdependent categories for analysis in a text, and the chronotope is "an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring."[33] Mary Louise Pratt, who coins the Anthropocenic chronotope, alludes to the emergence of the

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[30] Jacob Darwin Hamblin, "Fukushima and the Motifs of Nuclear History," *Environmental History* 17, no. 2 (April 2012): 285–99.

[31] For example, classic science-fiction and horror films such as *Godzilla* (Ishirô Honda, 1954) and *Them!* (Gordon Douglas, 1954) distance the effects of the nuclear through the creation of alternative, horrifying realities, while nuclear dramas such as *The China Syndrome* (James Bridges, 1979) and *Silkwood* (Mike Nichols, 1983) use the nuclear as a suspenseful plot device that does not significantly alter notions of space and time.

[32] M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.

[33] Bakhtin, 425-6.

chronotope of the nuclear in 1945 with "the human mastery of nuclear fission in the 1940s mark[ing] one new time-space configuration."[34] In my conception of the chronotope of the nuclear, nuclearized spaces are vast, dynamic, and unbounded, but often falsely delimited by spatial markers such as place names (e.g. "Fukushima"), graphic representations (e.g. concentric circles intended to approximate contamination levels), and national borders, all of which may be uncritically accepted as capable of containing radioactivity. Nuclearized time in the chronotope of the nuclear can be understood as an ongoing disaster in an inescapable present.[35] Nuclearized time challenges temporal boundaries such as that suggested in the designation "3.11" that would limit the disaster to a date in history. As in Bakhtin's conception of the chronotope in which specific spatiotemporalities are linked to genres, nuclear spatiotemporality is the sine qua non of the works in this study that I bring together under the category of nuclear narrative.[36] In this study, the chronotope of the nuclear is used to identify the spatiotemporalities characteristic of nuclear narratives.

By recognizing the works in the following chapters as nuclear narratives, we can understand them as more than mere updated representations of Japan or as apocalyptic nuclear movies that foreground the nuclear spectacle. Instead, the visions of Japan presented in these French cultural productions show anxiety, concern, and solidarity around nuclear concerns in everyday life and across vast expanses of space and time.[37] As such, they force us to rethink the

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[34] Mary Louise Pratt, "Coda: Concept and Chronotope," in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, ed. Anna Tsing et al. (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 171.

[35] This notion is developed further in Michaël Ferrier, *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*, 2nd, 1st 2012 ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 2013) and Anne Allison, *Precarious Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

[36] Bakhtin, 84-5.

[37] Doumet and Ferrier, *Penser* avec *Fukushima*. The forward to this collection of texts presented at a colloquium in Paris insists on the Franco-Japanese solidarity with the word "avec" in place of the expected "après," as there is no post- to an ongoing catastrophe.

nuclear as an actuality rather than a fantastic possibility. The particular nuclear narratives under study here can thus be seen as movements toward a more balanced, cooperative, and politically engaged Franco-Japanese cross-cultural encounter that might serve as a model for other transnational relations.

In this study, I follow Hecht's contention that nuclear technology is part of culture, both shaped by it and responsible for shaping it.[38] The approach here is necessarily interdisciplinary with an insistence on the many interruptions, intersections, collisions, and collaborations between aesthetics and politics and between the human and natural sciences. Hecht is not the only Anglophone scholar interested in cultural and political consequences of nuclear technology. In visual studies, Rey Chow and Akira Mizuta Lippit study key historical nuclear events, such as the atomic bombings in Japan, and the ensuing destruction of the visual order.[39] David Novak, an ethnomusicologist, studies the affective politics of the Festival Fukushima in Fukushima City, which is now a traveling festival initiated by Project Fukushima![40] The political scientist Richard J. Samuels and anthropologists Kath Weston and Anne Allison consider other various social aspects of the disaster.[41] In *Precarious Japan*, for example, Allison observes protest culture in

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[38] Gabrielle Hecht, "Technology, Politics, and National Identity in France," in *Technologies of Power: Essays in Honor of Thomas Parke Hughes and Agatha Chipley Hughes*, ed. Michael Thad Allen and Gabrielle Hecht (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 2001), 253–93. Hecht points out the tendency for a "material/cultural divide," in which "cultural historians have been guilty of ignoring technology" and "historians of technology have been guilty of putting culture in a black box."

[39] Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). Lippit, *Atomic Light*.

[40] David Novak, "Project Fukushima! Performativity and the Politics of Festival in Post-3/11 Japan," *Anthropological Quarterly* 90, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 225–53.

[41] For an analysis of citizen scientists in Japan after the triple disaster, see Kath Weston, "The Unwanted Intimacy of Radiation Exposure in Japan," in *Animate Planet: Making Visceral Sense of Living in a High-Tech Ecologically Damaged World* (Durham, NC, London: Duke University Press, 2017), 71–101; for a look at change and inertia in Japanese national security, energy policy, and local governance, see Richard J. Samuels, *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); for a look at social insecurity in Japan since the collapse of the economic bubble in 1991, see Anne Allison, *Precarious Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

Japan where many mothers and first-time protestors insisted they were not there for politics but for "life," "as if being an activist for life isn't political."[42] Allison is interested in the types of narratives she hears: "These stories—circulating everywhere—have an aesthetic, a rhythm all their own. On television, I listen to countless tales, told episodically with temporality uprooted and edges left raw; of lives suspended, families and familiarities torn asunder."[43] These stories with raw edges and "a rhythm all their own" might be a kind of ethnographic nuclear narrative as they show similar qualities of formal instability and temporal uncertainty.

In this dissertation, I also respond to the ever-resonant concerns of Nuclear Criticism and second-wave ecocriticism, which moves beyond nature texts and notions such as deep ecology and idealized wilderness at the center of first-wave ecocriticism. Second-wave ecocriticism removes nature from its pedestal and asks us to engage with it as it is, not only in the pristine corners of the Earth, but also in the places we have exploited, polluted, and destroyed. It asks us to take responsibility for what we have done and what we are doing to nature, and to understand nature as something we shape and influence, as part of culture and not as its opposite.[44] The very recent method of Risk Criticism considers all mega-risks without fetishizing the nuclear. Risk Criticism came out of Nuclear Criticism and ecocriticism and follows Ulrich Beck's contention that risk is virtual and imperceptible until it is represented.[45] Molly Wallace argues for this

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[42] Allison, 186.

[43] Allison, 188.

[44] A seminal text in early ecocriticism is Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995); See also Ursula K. Heise, "The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism," *PMLA* 121, no. 2 (March 2006): 503–16; and Loretta Johnson, "Greening the Library: The Fundamentals and Future of Ecocriticism," *Choice*, December 2009, 7–13.

[45] Molly Wallace, *Risk Criticism: Precautionary Reading in an Age of Environmental Uncertainty* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

approach because it is also critical of science and scientists, who have created problems that they cannot undo and whose consequences they cannot predict, nuclear technologies being one such example.

Timothy Morton, whose critical work also moves beyond nature and environmentalism, proposes new concepts for those working in the broad environmental humanities, from the idea of "doing ecology without nature," as nature has been aestheticized and contaminated by our fantasies about it, to "dark ecology" in which we must deal with the abject. An example of dealing with the abject is storing nuclear waste aboveground so that we can continue to monitor it and to feel responsible for it.[46] In Morton's ecological framework, humans are part of the environment rather than its distant admirers and destroyers, and it is from this intertwined position that the practice of dark ecology emerges. Morton's widely used notion of the "hyperobject" is paired with the chronotope of the nuclear in this thesis and is particularly useful for any study concerned with the consequences of climate change, environmental pollution, or nuclear materials more generally. Hyperobjects are "things massively distributed in time and space relative to humans." They are viscous in the sense that we are trapped in them. They are also nonlocal but capable of influencing things at great distances, and they exist on unthinkably long timescales.[47]

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[46] Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007). Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016). See also eco-philosopher Joanna Macy's notion of "Nuclear Guardianship" at Joanna Macy, "Transgenerational Nuclear Guardianship," Work That Reconnects Network, December 1, 2015, https://workthatreconnects.org/transgenerational-nuclear-guardianship-joanna-macy/.

[47] Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, Posthumanities (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013). For Morton, the unthinkably long timescale is also necessarily finite, as he argues "Infinity is far easier to cope with…I can think infinity. But I can't count up to one hundred thousand…Forever makes you feel important. One hundred thousand years makes you wonder whether you can imagine one hundred thousand anything" (60).

Also in the broad field of environmental humanities, Rob Nixon's notion of unimagined or forgotten communities looks at the particular consequences of pollution on marginal places like the Tohoku region in Japan, and the "slow violence" committed against these areas and the people in them by a gradual destruction dispersed across time and space. Nixon looks at the structural forms behind this violence and asks how we might convert these slow-moving disasters into image and narrative.[48] The nuclear narratives analyzed in this thesis and the French visions of a nuclear Japan they offer show an interest in the slow physical and cultural violence of the nuclear and the everyday disaster that is often overshadowed by the spectacular nuclear sublime.

Chapter Summaries

In the following chapters, I consider how the nuclear has shaped French visions of Japan by analyzing several specific instances in cultural productions that I call nuclear narratives. The corpus under study is thematically and formally diverse and stretches across a span of over fifty years, from Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) to Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), *Sans soleil* (1982), and *Level Five* (1996), Philippe Rouy's *4 bâtiments, face à la mer* (2012), Michael Ferrier's *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* (2012), and Keiko Courdy's *Au-delà du nuage: Yonaoshi 3.11* (2013). While these works were created both in France and in Japan (some in both places and some as coproductions), they share a common French identity in the sense that they were made by French filmmakers and writers and have been supported by French institutions. The creators of these works are all experimental and interstitial thinkers who demonstrate greater interest in margins, peripheries, and environments than in dominant subjects

[48] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2013).

or centers. These works also serve as gestures of solidarity with victims of nuclear disaster in Japan; as such, these creators might be seen as writer- and filmmaker-activists in Nixon's sense of the term.[49]

I have chosen to focus primarily on works of cinema, as cinema has been little studied in the context of Japonisme studies, and as France and Japan (along with the United States) have been leaders in developing the seventh art. As an art form of the continual present, or at least the illusion of such with the steady progression of twenty-four frames per second, cinema provides particularly fertile ground for the elaboration of the chronotope of the nuclear and its apparently eternal present as a conceptual tool. By envisioning forms for the abstract notions of nuclearized space and time, the chronotope of the nuclear also allows us to see how cinema as a visual art can make the invisible visible. The literary text studied in the final chapter allows for a comparative analysis of the chronotope of the nuclear in text and moving images and an exploration of the formal limits and possibilities of the written word.

The first chapter, "France and Japan: A History of Cross-Cultural Encounters," provides a brief historical overview of Franco-Japanese cultural exchanges. In this chapter, I review relevant scholarship and developments in the field of Japonisme studies. I argue that understanding the aesthetic orientation of France's historical fascination with Japan is necessary in order to fully appreciate the interruption of that tradition by the Second World War, and specifically by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagsaki. These events are commonly

[49] Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 23-4. Different types of writer-activists include: those who serve as spokespeople for their own environmental movements, "iconic figureheads and…autobiographers of collective movements," those affiliated with well-established struggles to "amplify causes marginalized by the corporate media," transnational go-betweens, those who act as "lightning rods for controversy" in their home countries, and those who document "socioenvironmental memory."

understood as having inaugurated the nuclear era, and I argue that they reframed the terms of the mutual cultural fascination between France and Japan.

Chapter two, "'Qu'est-ce que c'était pour toi, Hiroshima en France?': Nuclear Time and the Missing Mushroom Cloud in *Hiroshima mon amour*," returns to one of cinema's most well-known films to focus on its nuclear subject matter, which has been previously deemed merely the backdrop for the narrative. This chapter considers the impact of Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais's film *Hiroshima mon amour,* which complicates the previously aesthetically-oriented French fascination with Japan by at once insisting on the political (Hiroshima) and relegating it to the background in favor of the personal (mon amour). As the first successful Franco-Japanese feature-length cinematic coproduction, this film also marked the introduction of a new form of cultural exchange and a means of expressing solidarity in the postwar period. In this chapter, I analyze aspects of formal instability, linguistic uncertainty, and spatiotemporal disorientation in the film, and I use the notion of the chronotope to foreground the film's nuclear spatiotemporality. I argue that the French vision of a nuclear Japan presented in this postwar Franco-Japanese coproduction contributed significantly to changing the course of the tradition of Japonisme.

While *Hiroshima mon amour* can be seen as a transformative but isolated moment for Resnais as a director in the history of Franco-Japanese exchange, Chris Marker's fascination with Japan developed over time across several works focused on the country. The third chapter, "Things that Quicken the Heart: Sensing the Nuclear in Chris Marker's Japan," highlights a nuclear undercurrent in three of Marker's films which focus less on the nuclear than on what is overshadowed by it. Marker's short film *La Jetée* (1962) deals with time travel after a nuclear apocalypse and takes place in a subterranean refuge in Paris, a nuclearized space that recalls the

ruins of Hiroshima. Yet when Marker turns to Japan in the feature-length films *Sans soleil* (1982) and *Level Five* (1996), the focus shifts to the culture that exists around nuclear power as well as to the Battle of Okinawa, a major historical event that was overshadowed by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Marker's films are formally experimental and ontologically uncertain with montage that flows from reverie to virtual reality and through the historical archive. I argue that these films cannot simply be viewed but demand to be read and sensed. Understanding these films as nuclear narratives reveals a new approach to representing the nuclear, which also needs to be sensed as it cannot always be seen. In this dissertation, Marker's films serve to connect military and civil uses of the nuclear and to fill the temporal gap between the disasters at Hiroshima and Fukushima.

Chapter four, "Filming Fukushima: Franco-Japanese Webdocs and Coproductions," focuses on recent works about the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi. Keiko Courdy's participatory web-documentary *Au-delà du nuage: Yonaoshi 3.11* (2013) is unstable in its nonlinear form and mutable in the participatory mode of reception allowed for by the Internet. Philippe Rouy's *4 bâtiments, face à la mer* (2012) is part of a trilogy made in France using found footage from the Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO) live-stream webcams at the Fukushima Daiichi reactors. The webcam that never stops becomes in Rouy's film a fitting representation of eternal nuclear time. These filmmakers' works maintain the formal and spatiotemporal instability seen in nuclear narratives made before the disaster at Fukushima Daiichi while also challenging our understanding of national boundaries and revealing them as incapable of containing contamination. In terms of production, these digital films rely on somewhat different modes of construction than their analog counterparts. These are also smaller productions and it is still too soon to say whether they will last. They are included in this study

alongside more well-known works by Resnais and Marker as their creators show a similar spirit of formal innovation and directorial independence.

The fifth chapter, "There is no post-Fukushima: Portraits of Half-life in Michaël Ferrier's Japan," explores Ferrier's book *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* (2012) and its elaboration of the eternal present nuclear temporality and of the uncertain "half-lives" lived by those in nuclearized spaces. Ferrier, living in Japan and fluent in Japanese, transcends much of the linguistic uncertainty seen in earlier works from France and demonstrates a profound engagement with Japanese culture and artistic forms, as seen in the development of the *petit portrait* form throughout his oeuvre. In this book about the 2011 triple disaster, the petit portrait can be seen as a fragmented nuclear form, another kind of nuclear narrative. I also consider how Ferrier's understanding of nuclear time as an inescapable eternal present may be at odds with the written medium, which is continuously consigned to the past.

Given the sustained level of French investment in nuclear energy, it is perhaps unsurprising that French writers, artists, and filmmakers today have taken up the nuclear question in their work. Considering Japan's history with nuclear disaster, it is perhaps just as unsurprising that Japan would serve as a subject of so many of these French nuclear visions, fantasies, and fears. These visions depart from earlier primarily aesthetic visions of Japan, but as the French literary scholar Fabien Arribert-Narce argues, the French interest in the 2011 disaster in Japan is still rooted in Japonisme:

> La triple catastrophe…[a] suscité de très nombreuses publications dans l'Archipel et dans le reste du monde…Dans cet ensemble de textes divers se distinguent en particulier les écrits de langue française, dont le nombre est sans commune mesure avec ce que l'on peut observer dans d'autres langues européennes comme l'espagnol, l'allemand et même l'anglais. Ce phénomène s'explique sans doute en partie par le lien privilégié unissant la

> France et le Japon depuis la fin du XIXe siècle, dans la lignée du premier "Japonisme" esthétique… mais aussi par la place prépondérante du nucléaire dans l'Hexagone.[50]
>
> (The triple catastrophe…gave rise to many publications in the [Japanese] Archipelago and in the rest of the world. Amongst this diverse ensemble of texts, writings in French stand out in particular as they far outnumber those found in other European languages such as Spanish, German, and even English. This phenomenon can undoubtedly be explained by the privileged link uniting France and Japan since the end of the nineteenth century in the tradition of the first aesthetic "Japonisme"…but also by the predominant role of the nuclear in the [French] Hexagon.)

Understanding the works in this thesis as nuclear narratives allows for a reframing of the tradition of Japonisme in a more contemporary context after the distinct political turn in its trajectory during the postwar period. And the long-standing relationship between France and Japan bolsters the argument that contemporary French nuclear narratives serve as meaningful instances of transnational solidarity with Japan.

[50] Fabien Arribert-Narce, "Écrits du 11 mars en France et au Japon: écrire la catastrophe, entre fiction et témoignage," in *Penser* avec *Fukushima*, ed. Christian Doumet and Michaël Ferrier (Lormont: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2016), 57.

Chapter One

France and Japan: A History of Cross-Cultural Encounters

The end of the Second World War signaled a turning point in the tradition of mutual cultural fascination between France and Japan. In order to better highlight the force and significance of the postwar nuclear era as both a turning point in history and a significant cultural interruption, this chapter will sketch out a brief historical overview of Franco-Japanese relations with particular attention to instances of cultural exchange and to cinema. Throughout this chronology, I will outline developments in Japonisme studies, provide a brief summary of political and cultural history pertaining to the nuclear question in France and Japan, and consider Edward Said's theory of Orientalism and its legacy in the context of Franco-Japanese relations. I aim to show how the tradition of Franco-Japanese cross-cultural exchange reached a turning point in the postwar nuclear era and how subsequent nuclear developments played an important role in the transformation of this transnational relationship.

CROSS-CULTURAL EXCHANGE THROUGH THE 19TH CENTURY

One of the earliest written accounts of European travel through East Asia that mentions Japan can be found in Marco Polo's thirteenth-century Old French travelogue *Le Livre des merveilles du monde / The Travels of Marco Polo*. Marco Polo's understanding of Japan (or "Chipangu") as a civilized, isolated island of great wealth came to him as hearsay from China. It was not until 1542 that the first Portuguese sailors are said to have entered Japan for trade, adventure, and Jesuit missionary work. However, in Tokugawa Japan, Jesuit missionaries quickly came to be seen as agents of European expansionism, and by 1635 the borders of Japan

were closed to foreigners. Following the 1637-1638 Shimabara Rebellion of Catholics in Nagasaki, the shogun expelled remaining Westerners from the country, and trade was restricted to a single port in Nagasaki that was only accessible to the Dutch.[1]

During the Tokugawa period starting in 1600 and extending for over two and a half centuries, a time during which Japan was mostly isolated from the West, accounts of Japan still reached France. Enlightenment writers Montesquieu and Voltaire derived their conceptions of Japanese laws and customs in part from Englebert Kaempfer's *History of Japan*, which was translated from German to French in 1729. Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois / The Spirit of Laws* (1749) includes a chapter on the "Impuissance des loix Japonoises" (Impotency of the Laws in Japan) which critiques the use of the death penalty as a punishment to avenge wrongdoing to the Emperor rather than to correct offenders' behavior. In 1749, the third volume of Buffon's *Histoire naturelle / Natural History* on "Variétés dans l'espèce humaine" (Varieties in the Human Race) was also published, a volume in which the Japanese people are described as having essentially the same physical attributes and customs as the Chinese.[2] During the same period, and likely drawing on many of the same sources as his contemporaries, the Chevalier de Jaucourt wrote a series of entries on Japanese geography, arts, religion, and government for the *Encyclopédie*, first published in 1751. Voltaire devotes a chapter to Japan in *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations / An Essay on Universal History, the Manners, and Spirit of Nations*

[1] For this chronology of Franco-Japanese exchanges, I draw on those presented in Jan Hokenson, *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004); Akane Kawakami, *Travellers' Visions: French Literary Encounters with Japan 1881-2004* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005); and Pamela A. Genova*, Writing Japonisme: Aesthetic Translation in Nineteenth-Century French Prose* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2016). The Shimbara Rebellion was recently dramatized in Martin Scorsese's 2016 film *Silence.*

[2] Georges Louis Leclerc Buffon comte de, *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, Tome troisième, "Variétés dans l'espèce humaine"* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1749), buffon.cnrs.fr.

(1756), noting similarities between French and Japanese civilizations in terms of shared morals and similar customs.[3]

In the mid-nineteenth century, the opening of Japan to the West allowed for more extensive Franco-Japanese cultural exchange. In 1853-1854, American Commodore Matthew C. Perry forced the opening of Tokugawa Japan. Four years later, the 1858 *Traité d'amitié et de commerce entre la France et le Japon* (Treaty of Amity and Commerce between France and Japan) was signed, an agreement that allowed for diplomatic exchange between France and Japan and for the opening of several Japanese ports for travel and trade. The overthrow of the shogun in 1867 marked the end of the Tokugawa period and the start of the Meiji Era in 1868, which led to the modernization and Westernization of Japan and a general spirit of internationalization.

In terms of cultural exchange, the first Franco-Japanese school in Japan was established in 1865, although the Dutch presence in Japan allowed for French language instruction there as early as 1808, and the first substantial French-Japanese dictionary appeared in Japan in 1854.[4] Japanese woodcut prints arrived in France in 1812 with the sale of a Dutchman's collection in Paris, but their "discovery" in 1856 provides the better story, as Félix Braquemond reportedly came across Japanese prints used as wrapping for ceramics at Auguste Delâtre's shop in Paris.[5] While artists, writers, and collectors—most notably Edmond and Jules de Goncourt—

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[3] Voltaire's writing on Japan also resembles portions of Jaucourt's entry on "Le Japon" in the *Encyclopédie*, although it is unclear which text borrowed from which, or whether a third source was involved. In any event, what is now call plagiarism was not illegal at the time as copyrights did not exist. For more on citation or lack thereof in the *Encyclopédie*, see Dan Edelstein, Robert Morrissey, and Glenn Roe, "To Quote or Not to Quote: Citation Strategies in the *Encyclopédie*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74, no. 2 (April 2013): 213–36.

[4] Genova, *Writing Japonisme*, 15-6.

[5] Klaus Berger, *Japonisme in Western Painting From Whistler to Matisse*, trans. David Britt (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 17. Colta Feller Ives, *The Great Wave: The Influence of Japanese Woodcuts on French Prints* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974), 7.

made known their aesthetic appreciation of the prints, Japanese decorative objects were also commercialized for a wider public who valued the *japonaiseries* as accessories and status symbols.[6] In the early 1860s, Japanese prints were studied and purchased at La Jonque Chinoise at 220 rue de Rivoli and La porte chinoise on Rue Vivienne in Paris.[7] Key to the introduction and dissemination of Japanese arts in France were the World Expositions that took place in Paris in 1867, 1878, 1889, and 1900. The 1867 *Exposition universelle* in Paris, which coincided with the end of the Tokugawa period, featured Japanese decorative objects such as bronzes, porcelains, and lacquered goods, and more *ukiyo-e* "floating world" woodcut prints, which were by then a bit out of fashion in Japan but were in France a "revelation."[8]

JAPONAISERIES TO JAPONISME

In 1872, the French mania for Japanese arts and objects was given a name. In a series of articles for *La Renaissance littéraire et artistique* (The Literary and Artistic Renaissance) entitled "Japonisme," the collector and critic Philippe Burty details his encounters with Japanese arts, beginning with a description of death and cremation in Japan and of an album of Japanese

[6] A number of French painters are associated with the Japonisme tradition, as is the French Impressionism movement as a whole. Early on, Braquemond showed the prints to his painter friends Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, James Whistler, and Camille Pissarro. The influence of these prints has also been studied in the works of painters such as Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gaugin, Claude Monet, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard, Paul Cézanne, Georges Seurat, Mary Cassatt, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. For more on these artists' works, see Berger, *Japonisme*; Gabriel P. Weisberg, "Rethinking Japonisme: The Popularization of a Taste," in *The Orient Expressed: Japan's Influence on Western Art 1854-1918* (Jackson, MS: Mississippi Museum of Art, 2011), 17–73; Siegfried Wichmann, *Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art since 1858* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981). Notable nineteenth-century French writers who took an interest in Japanese arts or whose works reflect a Japanese influence include Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Emile Zola, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Joris-Karl Huysmans. For more on French writers associated with Japonisme, see the comprehensive study by Hokenson, *Japan, France,* as well as Genova's *Writing Japonisme*, focused on nineteenth-century French literature.

[7] Berger, *Japonisme*, 10. Hokenson, *Japan, France*, 48.

[8] René Sieffert, ed., *Le Japon et La France: Images d'une découverte* (Paris: Publications orientalistes de France, 1974), 115.

paintings "d'une sensibilité, d'une noblesse d'allure et d'une poésie que n'ont jamais atteintes nos danses macabres européennes, impies et prétentieuses"[9] (of a sensibility, of a noble appearance and poetry that our impious and pretentious European danses macabres never reach). Burty's "Japonisme" articles remark on poetry, drawing, religion, and language, among other subjects, and came to be understood as having "designate[d] a new field of study in Japanese arts and aesthetics" and identified "a full-fledged movement that helped western artists in all media achieve new heights of creative liberation."[10]

In 1876, Émile Guimet, the industrialist and art collector from Lyon, travelled with the artist Félix Régamey to Japan and returned the next year with relatively nuanced accounts in contrast to those of many of their Western predecessors.[11] Upon return to Lyon, Guimet opened a natural history museum where he displayed his Asian art collection until 1889, when it was moved to the Musée Guimet in Paris. During the 1880s, Japanese art was also exhibited in smaller venues around Paris, such as the Galerie Petit and the Galerie Bing, as well as the Café Tambourin in a show organized by Vincent van Gogh. *Japonaiseries*, or Japanese objects amassed by artists and collectors, could be purchased at department stores in Paris.[12] 1883 also

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[9] Philippe Burty, "Japonisme I," in *La Renaissance littéraire et artistique* (May 18, 1872) 25-6; "Japonisme II" (June 15, 1872) 59-60; "Japonisme III" (July 6, 1872) 83-4; "Japonisme IV" (July 27, 1872) 106-7; "Japonisme V" (August 10, 1872) 122-3; "Japonisme VI" (February 8, 1873) 3-5.

[10] Hokenson, *Japan, France,* 29. Gabriel P. Weisberg, "Reflecting on Japonisme: The State of the Discipline in the Visual Arts," *Journal of Japonisme* 1, no. 1 (2016): 3.

[11] Félix Régamey, *Le Japon Pratique* (Paris: J. Hetzel et Cie, 1891), http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb31187143k. The first section, "Le Japon vu par un artiste" (Japan seen by an artist), opens with an admonition to those would see the Japanese and the Chinese as the same. "Il y a là une confusion regrettable qu'il importe de détruire. Car s'il est vrai que l'une des deux civilisations ait été le berceau de l'autre, elles ont entre elles beaucoup moins de rapports que cette filiation ne le laisse supposer" (1). (There is in this a regrettable confusion that is important to destroy. Because if it is true that one of the two civilizations were the cradle of the other, they have between them many fewer connections than this filiation would lead to believe.)

[12] As described, for example, in Emile Zola's *Au Bonheur des dames* (1883). Here, I follow Kawakami's usage of the term *japonaiserie* in Kawakami, *Travellers' Visions,* 16-21.

saw the publication of Louis Gonse's *L'Art japonais /* Japanese Art, the first comprehensive history of Japanese aesthetics in the West, as well as Claude Monet's move to Giverny, where he installed a Japanese garden and hung on his walls Japanese prints from his extensive *ukiyo-e* collection. As the Claude Monet Foundation now describes the site, "Passant du jardin à son intérieur, Monet 'vivait au Japon' en Normandie!"[13] ("Whether in his garden or inside his home, Monet was 'living in Japan' in Normandy!")

In the literary realm, Louis Marie Julien Viaud (who wrote under the penname Pierre Loti) became one of the first notable French writers to visit Japan. In 1888, Loti published the widely influential *Madame Chrysanthème,* a novel based on his time as a naval officer in Nagasaki and life with a paid Japanese concubine. Loti's novel inspired works from Giacomo Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly* (premiering in 1904) to paintings by van Gogh and writing by Paul Claudel and Marguerite Duras, whose parents were reportedly seduced by Loti's vision of Japan and decided to move to Asia.[14] In the opening essay of *L'Empire des signes / Empire of Signs* (1970), Roland Barthes cites Loti's Orient as a model for his vision of the system of signs that he calls Japan.[15] Literary scholar and critic Koji Kawamoto reports on the influence of Loti in Japan seen for example in the Loti bust erected in Nagasaki in 1980, a monument that is "one

[13] "Les estampes japonaises," *Fondation Claude Monet*, accessed May 3, 2017, http://fondation-monet.com/giverny/les-estampes-japonaises/.

[14] Hokenson, *Japan, France,* 98. Marguerite Duras, *Un barrage contre le pacifique*, Folio (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), 23.

[15] Roland Barthes, *L'Empire des signes*, 1st ed. 1970, Éditions d'art Albert Skira (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 11-12. Marie-Paule Ha, *Figuring the East: Segalen, Malraux, Duras, and Barthes* (Albany: State Univeristy of New York Press, 1999), 97. Ha writes that the earlier French visions of Japan in writing by Voltaire, Loti, and an Air France tourist guide mentioned in this first essay of Barthes's book are both criticized and held up as models. For Ha, the title of the essay itself, "Là-bas" (Faraway), is a form of coded exoticism, and as the opening essay it seems to be intended to preempt charges of exoticism.

of the most popular sightseeing spots in today's Nagasaki."[16] Since 2007, the Prix Pierre Loti is awarded each year to a French work of travel literature.

On the other side of the exchange at this time and less studied in Francophone and Anglophone scholarship was a small movement referred to as "The Impressionist School in Japan." This group of Western-style Japanese painters followed Seiki Kuroda, who had traveled in 1884 to France, where he studied under Raphael Collin and adopted a "gentle, graceful naturalistic style."[17] The impressionist movement Kuoda inspired in Japan followed the aesthetics of the French Impressionist movement while mostly ignoring its politics, echoing the spirit of Japonisme in France. As the Japanese art historian Michiaki Kawakita writes, "the Japanese 'impressionist' school was not a revolt against academism. Instead, it became a type of academism in its own right. And before it had developed a really strong backbone, it gave way to the next wave of fashion."[18]

In a recent edited volume on postwar Franco-Japanese cultural exchanges, Doug Slaymaker seeks to remedy the imbalance of work focused on French receptions of Japanese culture, proposing that "the influence of French painting, literature, and thought on Japan, from even before the Meiji Revolution, is hard to overstate…Practically all artistic movements in Japan have drawn in significant amounts from the French fountain."[19] For Slaymaker, cross-cultural exchanges between France and Japan stem from similar impulses:

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[16] Koji Kawamoto, "French Views of the Japanese: Loti vs. Farrère," in *Selected Proceedings* (The Walls Within: Images of Westerners in Japan and Images of the Japanese Abroad, Vancouver: The Institute of Asian Research, University of British Columbia, 1988), 259.

[17] Michiaki Kawakita, *Modern Currents in Japanese Art*, trans. Charles S. Terry, First English Edition, vol. 24, The Heibonsha Survey of Japanese Art (New York, Tokyo: Weatherhill/Heibonsha, 1974), 39.

[18] Kawakita, 59.

[19] Doug Slaymaker, "Confluences: An Introduction," in *Confluences: Postwar Japan and France*, ed. Doug Slaymaker (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), 1.

> Each country holds a particular image of the other, congealing around a particular need and following a traceable history. In both France and Japan the image of the other is predicated on the particular image each holds of itself, of its own country and culture. Both France and Japan take a justifiable pride in a long cultural heritage…A further overlap is provided by the degree to which the meaning of being "French" or "Japanese" proceeds from self-identification with that heritage. More precisely, both "Japanese" and "French" share a pride as members of a unique culture only understandable via a linguistic and literary heritage, and to be a participant in that culture is often tacitly predicated on literacy in its written representations.[20]

Slaymaker's introduction addresses such questions of national identity and culture in necessarily broad strokes before illustrating and complicating general assertions with specific examples from chapters in the edited volume. Slaymaker also identifies important parallels between French and Japanese cultures, namely pride in cultural heritage, or a sort of mutual respect for the perceived historical density of the other, and a deep reverence for language.

While the French and Japanese languages have vastly different histories, and while attitudes around who should speak these languages and how they should be spoken vary considerably, there is significant overlap in both cultures' institutional promotion of an ideal of linguistic purity. Since 1635, the *Académie française* (French Academy) has sought to protect the French language from inelegant foreign intrusions, including a 1996 decree "relatif à l'enrichissement de la langue française" (relative to the enrichment of the French language) that encourages the creation of French neologisms "afin d'éviter l'emploi en trop grand nombre de termes étrangers, notamment anglo-saxons, dans les domaines scientifiques et techniques" (in order to avoid the use of too many foreign terms, especially Anglo-Saxon ones, in the scientific and technical domains).[21] In Japanese, foreign words are relegated to a different syllabary, katakana, the simplified forms of which often come from fragments of kanji, which themselves

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[20] Slaymaker, 3.

[21] "Terminologie et néologie | Académie française," *Académie française*, http://www.academie-francaise.fr/la-langue-francaise/terminologie-et-neologie.

come from Chinese and are used for words of Japanese origin.[22] Indiscriminate appreciation of notions such as "cultural heritage," "historical density," and "linguistic purity" can quickly turn to fetishism of another culture. Indeed, both sides in the Franco-Japanese exchange have held distorted visions of the other, visions that both stem from their own particular needs and self-images and also serve as screens on which to project their own desires.

A few recent studies provide more thorough analyses of Japonisme in French literature, a medium in which questions of language are unavoidable. Jan Hokenson's comprehensive study *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* addresses the lack of scholarly attention to Japonisme in French literature by providing an analysis of its historical arc. Hokenson, who deems literary Japonisme a minor but continuing tradition, notes that the actual study of Japanese aesthetics and of the Japanese language were until rather recently unusual for French writers.[23] Building on Hokenson's work, Pamela Genova's *Writing Japonisme: Aesthetic Translation in Nineteenth-Century French Prose* provides a close study of four nineteenth-century writers associated with the tradition: Edmond de Goncourt, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Émile Zola, and Stéphane Mallarmé. Genova develops a theory of "aesthetic translation" to be applied to written works that "address, often in subtle and indirect ways, the dynamics of another aesthetic realm."[24] For Genova, studying Japonisme both as an artistic style and as a mode of critical inquiry allows us to see how French culture and history might be reflected in their images of Japan. Akane Kawakami's study *Travellers' Visions: French Literary Encounters with Japan, 1881-2004* evokes different French ways of seeing and representing Japan by looking at themes

[22] Kanji are Chinese characters that are sometimes slightly modified in Japanese and often share the meaning of the Chinese character but not the pronunciation.

[23] Hokenson, *Japan, France,* 229.

[24] Genova, *Writing Japonisme*, 49.

such as japoniste encounters through objects, modernist "journalists and barbarians," and postwar travelers and photographers. Kawakami underscores the importance of language for these writers, showing "how both Loti and [Paul] Claudel, for instance, encounter the irreducibility of the other when they enter the Japanese linguistic system."[25] Michaël Ferrier's collection of critical work, *Japon: la barrière des rencontres /* Japan: The Barrier of Encounters*,* draws attention to what he calls literary "*passeurs*" (smugglers)—such as Paul Claudel, Maurice Pinguet, and Philippe Forest—whose plural visions of Japan are informed by their deeper engagement with the language.[26] The recent emergence of the international and multi-disciplinary *Journal of Japonisme* (2016) attests to a resurgence of scholarly interest in the influence of Japanese culture on the West and an aesthetic style often considered to have ended in the early twentieth century.

Early Exchanges and Parallels in Cinema

This dissertation will mostly depart from literature to consider the legacies of Japonisme in French cinema, an art form notably less discussed in recent scholarship on cultural exchange between France and Japan. It is perhaps helpful to recall that the height of Japonisme in the nineteenth century coincides with the birth of cinema. The early years of cinema saw an important instance of Franco-Japanese exchange. After the first films using Auguste and Louis Lumière's *cinématographe* were made in 1895, the Lumière brothers sent cameras and camera operators around the world to introduce the technology and to make films in over thirty countries. In 1897-1898, Lumière Company camera operators Constant Girel and Gabriel Veyre

[25] Kawakami, *Travellers' Visions*, 4.

[26] Michaël Ferrier, *Japon: la barrière des rencontres* (Nantes: Éditions Cécile Défaut, 2009).

traveled to Japan and added to the Lumière catalogue thirty-three films of Japanese actors, dancers, singers, fencers, and diners, among other subjects.

In a recent article in the *Journal of Japonisme*, Daiksuke Miyao attributes the Lumière brothers' particular interest in Japan both to Japonisme as a cultural fashion of the time and to their personal connection with Katsutarô Inabata, a former Japanese classmate at La Martinière Institute in Lyon who was there to study the silk industry. Miyao notes that many of the Lumière Company films shot abroad documented "official" events, such as coronations and official ceremonies. "But curiously, in Japan neither Girel nor Veyre photographed political events, governmental officials, modernized urban areas, or anything similar…. The focus appeared to be on the everyday life of ordinary Japanese people and daily scenes in Japan," including a film of the Lumière brothers' former classmate Inabata and his family entitled *Repas en famille* (1897).[27] This early vision of Japan reveals its French orientation and expectations, as Miyao remarks, "nobody in this film eats anything at all," "two infants are forced to drink some tea," "the dish placed in front of Inabata is not a food dish but a brazier," and "no Japanese filmmaker would title this film 'A family meal.'"[28]

The cinema scholar Noël Burch suggests that while Thomas Edison with his Vitascope in the United States sought the "total reproduction of life," the Lumière brothers were more interested in the technical challenge of capturing movement and approached their competing technology, the *cinématographe*, "as if it were a scientific toy."[29] Donald Richie, a leading scholar of Japanese cinema, writes that early Japanese cinemagoers were also more interested in

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[27] Daisuke Miyao, "Japonisme and the Birth of Cinema," *Journal of Japonisme* 1, no. 1 (January 4, 2016): 79.

[28] Miyao., 79.

[29] Noël Burch, *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 61.

the cinematic technology than in the filmed narrative. Projectors in Japanese cinemas were placed inside the screening room for audiences to view as part of the projection spectacle. From its beginnings until the early 1920s, Japanese cinema was more akin to theater than to photography. There was little expectation of narrative realism but instead of the theatrical staple of the *benshi*, an authoritative narrator who brings unity to an otherwise fragmented spectacle including an introduction, a film, advertisements, and music.[30]

During this period in Japanese cinema, editing was more often associative than linear, with an emphasis on composition over plot.[31] Richie observes an interesting parallel between Japanese cinematic aesthetics and the essay form: "Though Japanese films remain text-bound, narrative logic is not always deemed structurally necessary. In Japanese writing, for example, particularly in essay writing, it is not only acceptable but even elegant to jump about from one subject to another. Likewise, in films, variety is often preferred to logic."[32] The Japanese writing style Richie describes recalls the French *essai* form, as most notably developed by Michel de Montaigne in the sixteenth century. In the French *essai*, writing that "jumps about from one subject to another" is also appreciated for its elegance.

The 1930s, a time of rising nationalism in Europe and in Japan, is also considered the golden age of French cinema, with the arrival of sound in 1929 and the emergence of poetic realism, an artistic current that showed popular culture and everyday life in France using lyric and expressionistic styles.[33] Although the "golden age" of Japanese cinema is generally situated

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[30] Donald Richie, *Japanese Cinema: An Introduction* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 2.

[31] Richie, 8.

[32] Richie, 9.

in the immediate postwar period, Burch argues that the 1930s and early 1940s is the actual golden age as the Japanese political climate at that time fostered the development of a truly national cinema.[34] This period saw the emergence of realism and the influence of Expressionism on directors such as Akira Kurosawa, as well as of new film genres that focused on the lives of ordinary people (*gendaigeki*) and of the lower middle class (*shomingeki*). Film became a medium for social criticism of an increasingly oppressive Japanese government until 1937, when the militarist totalitarian government prohibited films that questioned loyalty to Japan.[35]

In 1940, at the outset of the Second World War, the Tripartite Pact initiated the alliance between Japan and Nazi Germany. The same year, Adolph Hitler toured an occupied Paris and secured the support of Philippe Pétain, allowing for the occupation of France under the Vichy government, with whom Japan quickly negotiated in order to occupy parts of French Indochina. Wartime cultural policies in Japan banned American and British films (along with jazz and baseball), while French films were allowed "but to preserve the martial atmosphere, the love scenes were cut."[36] There was a return to the "national" style, which "was by now so completely an amalgam of international influences that any attempt to regain a purely 'Japanese' vision or to proscribe stylistic imports could not be successful."[37] In France, the German invasion suspended much of the film industry's activity, but a ban on Anglo-American films there may have actually

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[33] *The Jazz Singer*, officially considered the first talking motion picture, was first projected in 1927 in the United States. It was projected in France in January 1929, followed several months later by the first French talking motion picture, *Le collier de la reine* (*The Queen's Necklace*).

[34] Burch, *Distant Observer,* 16, 143.

[35] Richie, *Japanese Cinema,* 32.

[36] Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 217.

[37] Richie, *Japanese Cinema*, 39.

encouraged French filmmaking in a context free from foreign competition.[38] Film was also a medium for propaganda, and anti-Semitic policies were put in place along with the prohibition and destruction of films seen to threaten the new social order. The end of the war, however, brought new prosperity to the French film industry, which succeeded in its return to the *tradition de qualité* filmmaking of the 1930s and the development of film noir.

POSTWAR FRANCE AND JAPAN

The end of the Second World War also marked the beginning of the nuclear era. The United States dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, and the nuclear explosions initiated a new way of seeing and understanding the world. In *The Age of the World Target*, Rey Chow understands the dropping of the bomb as a moment that "marked the pivot of the progress of science,"[39] and "an epistemic event in a global culture in which everything has become (or is mediated by) visual representation and virtual reality."[40] Common knowledge of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki came from the iconic image of the mushroom cloud, a picture that became a sign of terror. For Chow, one of the consequences of this event for knowledge production has been the creation of area studies programs in which the Other is studied as someone to be feared and controlled.[41] Reframing Martin Heidegger's contention that the world becomes a picture in the modern age, Chow argues that in the age of

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[38] Rémi Fournier Lanzoni, *French Cinema: From its Beginnings to the Present*, 2nd (1st 2002) (New York, London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 95.

[39] Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 29.

[40] Chow, 26-7.

[41] Chow, 15.

the bombing, the world as picture becomes a target for destruction.[42] This vision of the world as a picture that becomes a target perhaps best exemplifies the entwinement of aesthetics and (geo)politics in the nuclear era.

Ruth Benedict's wartime American vision of Japan in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) also points to a certain intersection of aesthetics and politics, or what Benedict calls fundamental contradictions in Japanese culture as expressed in the title of her book. The United States Office of War Information requested Benedict's anthropological study, which had to be conducted from afar as it was not possible to do field work in Japan during the war. Benedict's work was influential in shaping American ideas about Japanese culture during the occupation of Japan until 1952 and in cementing these stereotypes for years to follow. From its very title, this now rather dated study presents art and politics as historically entwined contradictions, which was important for the United States Office of War Information to understand in order to predict Japanese behavior.[43]

Postwar French visions of Japan drew on the shared traumas of war, but as the historian Matt Matsuda argues, they were also "framed by a particular imagery, one largely drawn from contacts since the nineteenth century" in the artistic tradition of Japonisme.[44] Matsuda argues that these visions were also shaped by the postwar geopolitics of the United States-France-Japan triad to the extent that "French readings of Japan are also readings of the United States and also

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[42] Chow, 31.

[43] The French translation *Le Chrysanthème et le sabre* was published forty years later, in 1995, a point at which Benedict's text would have been more interesting for what it said about how Americans viewed Japan than as an informative report itself.

[44] Matt Matsuda, "East of No West: The Posthistoire of Postwar France and Japan," in *Confluences: Postwar Japan and France*, ed. Doug Slaymaker (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), 16.

of France's ambivalent relationship to postwar America."[45] France sought in Japan a partner against the threat of American hegemony and cultural imperialism. France would align with Japan around shared notions of cultural heritage and "use the idea of *différence* to uphold Japan as an alternate modernity" to both Marxism and "Anglo-American market individualism" but still "*within* an accepted context of democracy and high capitalism."[46]

The end of the Second World War left France and Japan to confront the traumas and devastations of war. Both faced the rebuilding of the physical state and of the abstract sense of nation. These shared experiences of wartime trauma and postwar rebuilding are brought together in Alain Resnais's and Marguerite Duras's *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959). In the written text and in the film, suffering and destruction live on in Hiroshima in institutions such as the hospital and the museum, and traumatic memories of wartime France haunt the French protagonist. These memories contend with imperatives to forget, notably concretized by the New Hiroshima hotel in which the film begins and ends. The narrative of the film revolves around its absent center, the atomic bomb and the beginning of the nuclear era. And as the nuclear came to connote not only power and force but also scientific modernity and technological prowess, it would offer a way forward in rebuilding French and Japanese notions of national identity and pride.

Returning to a national tradition of research in radioactivity, postwar France quickly moved to develop its nuclear industry. In 1945, Charles de Gaulle created the Commissariat à l'énergie atomique (CEA) (Atomic Energy Commission), and in 1948 the first reactor Zoé was activated. However, as with the uncertain temporal boundaries of the nuclear era, the historian Michael Bess argues, "perhaps the most striking fact about France's emergence as a nuclear

[45] Matsuda, 17.

[46] Matsuda, 22.

power is that no single meeting of series of meetings, no single group of individuals working together, no single confluence of events can be identified as *the* point at which the nation's leadership decided to endow France with nuclear weapons."[47] Instead, a series of mini-decisions and advances led to de Gaulle's announcement at the start of the Fifth Republic in 1958 (as Marguerite Duras wrote and Alain Resnais filmed *Hiroshima mon amour*) that France would become a nuclear power.[48] Hecht contends that the development of nuclear technology in France came from the desire to "define Frenchness in the postwar world," starting with a unique French reactor design and extending to a distinctively French workplace culture and French communities built around nuclear plants.[49] From the start, the French nuclear program had military intentions; by the early 1950s, planning began for high-powered reactors capable of producing weapons-grade plutonium.[50] The nuclear project was a key component of the *Trente Glorieuses* (The Glorious Thirty), a period of economic expansion in postwar France and a term coined in 1979 by the economist Jean Fourastié in *Les trente glorieuses: ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* / The Glorious Thirty, or the Invisible Revolution from 1946 to 1975.[51]

Japan was more restrained in its embrace of nuclear power. The emperor Hirohito's speech on August 15, 1945 framed Japan as the victim of the atomic bombs, and a speech the

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[47] Michael Bess, *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 29.

[48] Bess, 30.

[49] Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II*, 2nd, 1st 1998 ed., Inside Technology (Cambridge, US: MIT Press, 2009), 3-4.

[50] Bess, 29.

[51] Jean Fourastié, *Les trente glorieuses: ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* (Paris: Fayard, 1979). For another perspective on the dark side of the French nuclear industry during this period, see Sezin Topçu, "Atome, gloire et désenchantement: Résister à la France atomique avant 1968," in *Une autre histoire des "Trente Glorieuses": modernisation, contestations et pollutions dans la France d'après-guerre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), 189–209.

next day by the prime minister Higashikuni Naruhiko blamed Japan's war loss on shortcomings in science in technology.[52] Yet article IX of the 1947 Japanese constitution, put into effect during the American occupation, forever prohibited war and the development of nuclear weapons. During the occupation, a strict censorship code was also implemented in which "no visual or verbal description of the devastation resulting from the Allied attacks during the Pacific War was allowed," including no mention of crimes committed by American soldiers nor of the Battle of Okinawa,[53] an event referenced in Chris Marker's *Sans soleil* (1982) and further explored in *Level Five* (1996). Film censorship in postwar Japan was a lengthy process involving checks by both civilian and military censors for violations of the pictorial code. Censorship also extended to critical, theoretical, and publicity writing about films.[54] American censors, afraid of moral questions around the bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, sought with this code to restrict and manage information around it and to minimize its visual impact.[55]

The American occupation ended in 1952, and Japan entered its own period of economic expansion. The state-guided Economic Miracle from 1950-1973 was a period of record high growth accompanied by environmental damage and political struggle.[56] The 1964 Tokyo Olympics provided an opportunity to showcase Japan's recovery and pride in domestic achievements, such as the new high-speed train system. Chris Marker came from France to

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[52] Philippe Pelletier, "De la guerre totale (1941) à la guerre de Fukushima (2011)," *Outre-Terre, Revue européenne de géopolitique* 35–36 (2013), section 8.

[53] Kyoko Hirano, "Depiction of the Atomic Bombings in Japanese Cinema during the U.S. Occupation Period," in *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film*, ed. Mick Broderick (London, New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 106.

[54] Hirano, 104-5.

[55] Hirano, 115.

[56] Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan,* 243.

document the Olympic Games but instead made the short film *Le Mystère Koumiko* (1965), a portrait of the young Japanese woman assigned to show Marker around Tokyo and a film that highlights new social patterns in Japan such as urbanism and women in the workplace. The film critic Chris Darke considers *Le Mystère Koumiko* as a sort of sketch for Marker's more fully realized portrait of Japan in *Sans soleil*.[57]

If nuclear power allowed France to display national technological prowess, in Japan the turn to nuclear energy also offered a chance to invert the horrific use of nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thereby transforming an evil into good. The impetus for the civil development of nuclear energy in Japan was paradoxically strengthened by the 1954 Lucky Dragon Number Five incident in which Japanese workers on a fishing boat were contaminated by fallout from an American nuclear test at the Bikini Atoll. After limited protest from the nascent antinuclear movement in Japan, the 1956 American Atoms for Peace exhibition (following Eisenhower's 1953 Atoms for Peace speech) opened at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, a museum perhaps better known for its exhibits on the horrors of the atomic bombs.[58] The historian Ran Zwigenberg writes, "the exhibit was instrumental in solidifying the dominant Japanese view that atomic energy was a legitimate, indeed essential, source of energy in a Japan that relied heavily on imported oil and natural gas."[59] Hiroshima was, of course, a highly significant location for the exhibit, which showcased the rebuilt city as modern and capable of embracing peaceful applications of nuclear technologies. The successful rebranding of

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[57] Chris Darke, *La Jetée*, BFI Film Classics (London: Palgrave, 2016), 18.

[58] Mathieu Gaulène, *Le nucléaire en Asie: Fukushima, et après?* (Arles: Éditions Philippe Picquier, 2016), 143.

[59] Ran Zwigenberg, "'The Coming of a Second Sun': The 1956 Atoms for Peace Exhibit in Hiroshima and Japan's Embrace of Nuclear Power," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 10, no. 6 (February 2, 2012). The exhibit remained as a part of the museum's permanent collection until 1967, when it was mysteriously removed from the building and the official historical records of the museum.

nuclear energy through this shift of attention from its military to civil applications serves as a reminder that military and civil nuclear power are two sides of the same coin and underscores the connection between the nuclear disasters at Hiroshima and Fukushima as more than just a sinister rhyme of names but as events unfolding within an integrated nuclear superstructure.[60]

Shortly after the Lucky Dragon affair, Japan began its own civil nuclear program in cooperation with the United States and the Atoms for Peace ideology. Broad consensus formed around the new program with help from popular culture that promoted the cause with the diffusion of films such as Disney's 1958 *Our Friend the Atom*, nuclear-friendly manga characters such as *Tetsuwan Atomu* (Astro Boy) and Doraemon, and an increasingly benign Godzilla.[61] The first Japanese commercial nuclear reactor went online in 1966, and by 2011 there were 54 reactors across Japan, making it the second most nuclearized land after France.[62]

Nuclear industries in the global late capitalist system engender an environment hostile to critical reflection on nuclear culture. For both France and Japan, the embrace of the nuclear was a chance to redefine and reaffirm national identity in the postwar world. While Japan also had intimate knowledge of the potential horrors caused by nuclear technology, "when the French thought of atoms they thought of Marie Curie, a national glory," the physicist and nuclear historian Spencer Weart argues, adding, "French filmmakers created no visions of radioactive monsters."[63]

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[60] Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'équivalence des catastrophes (après Fukushima)* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2012), 29.

[61] Pelletier, "De la guerre totale," section 11.

[62] Philippe Pelletier, *Atlas du Japon: Après Fukushima, une société fragilisée* (Paris: Autrement, 2012), 36.

[63] Spencer R. Weart, *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 244.

POSTWAR AND NEW WAVE CINEMA

In 1958, the political transition to the French Fifth Republic under de Gaulle coincided with the emergence of the New Wave in French cinema, a movement of inexperienced young directors who sought to overturn traditional methods and modes of filmmaking in France. While Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, and François Truffaut were making films in the streets of Paris and critiquing them in the *Cahiers du cinéma*, the Left Bank group—including Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, and Agnès Varda—made films that often took place outside of Paris and were more explicitly concerned with social and political problems.[64] Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour*, one of the films often credited as having launched the New Wave,[65] was the first successful coproduction between France and Japan, after Yves Ciampi's *Typhon sur Nagasaki / Typhoon over Nagasaki* (1957), which had been considered a risky venture for Japan.[66] *Hiroshima mon amour* was seen by critics as a film about memory and trauma, although the producers at Argos Films had envisioned a film about the atomic bomb. A letter in the Argos Films archives mentions a film initially entitled "Pikadon" (the onomatopoeic Japanese term for "atomic bomb," literally "flash-boom") that would be "sur le sujet de la Bombe Atomique et les dangers croissants des explosions thermonucléaires" (about the atomic bomb and the growing dangers of thermonuclear explosions). Other Argos correspondence refers to Resnais's project in

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[64] Richard Roud, "The Left Bank," *Monthly Film Bulletin* 32, no. 1 (Winter 1963): 24–27.

[65] Richard Neupert, *A History of the French New Wave Cinema*, 2nd ed. Wisconsin Studies in Film (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 143.

[66] A letter addressed to the president of Daiei Motion Pictures Masaichi Nagata, now in the Argos Films archives (ARG/DI78) at the Bibliothèque Raymond Chirat at the Institut Lumière in Lyon states, "I would never dare to embark you in a venture where you would have to risk 150 millions (like in the case of 'Typhoon over Nagazaki [sic]') in co-producing a 'foreign film' very risky for Japan." Donald Richie writes in, "'Mono No Aware': Hiroshima in Film," in *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film* (London, New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 30, "given the opportunity to say something meaningful about East-West love affairs, [Ciampi] chose instead to have his heroine perish in a gale, thus allowing the French lovers to be reunited." At the Nagasaki Atom Memorial Museum, "most of the footage is spent on Danielle flinching and Jean being strong…a conventional story-line was allowed to triumph over all else."

development simply as "film bombe atomique"[67] (atomic bomb film). For the cinema historian Scott Nygren, international antinuclear protest as depicted in *Hiroshima mon amour* with a multilingual parade of protestors through Hiroshima "marks the point of departure for Resnais's film, an international coalition of antinuclear activists that brings together a film crew from France and the context of Japan."[68] The Franco-Japanese connection runs deeper than sociopolitical solidarity in antinuclear protest, though; as Nygren argues, "*Hiroshima mon amour* acts as a hinge between 'New Waves' in France and Japan, and…can in one sense be said to mark an homage to Japan as one source of a new generation of filmmaking in France."[69]

Influential to French New Wave filmmakers were three Japanese directors in particular: Kenji Mizoguchi, Yasujirô Ozu, and Akira Kurosawa. These directors began work in cinema in the 1920s-1930s, well before the "Age of New Waves,"[70] although their films were not shown in France until the 1950s and gained attention with the "surprise victory of Akira Kurosawa's *Rashômon* at the Venice Film Festival."[71] In a study of the French reception of Japanese cinema in the 1950s, Isadora Kriegel-Nicholas focuses on the *Cahiers du cinéma* critics' idolatry of Japanese directors, and of Mizoguchi and Kurosawa in particular. Kriegel-Nicholas argues that Japanese cinema shaped much of postwar French film criticism and cinematic theory and that "in

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[67] Daiei Motion Picture Co. Ltd, "Daiei to Jacques Andrefouet," correspondence, December 18, 1957, ARG/D178, Argos Films; Pathé Overseas, "Pathé Overseas to Nagata Masaichi, President of Daiei Motion Picture Co. about 'Film on the Atom Bomb,'" April 26, 1957, ARG/D178, Argos Films.

[68] Scott Nygren, *Time Frames: Japanese Cinema and the Unfolding of History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 190.

[69] Nygren, 187.

[70] James Tweedie, *The Age of New Waves: Art Cinema and the Staging of Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[71] Isadora Kriegel-Nicholas, "The Historical Reception of Japanese Cinema at *Cahiers du cinéma*: 1951-1961" (Dissertation, Boston University, 2016), viii.

the hands of the *Cahiers* critics, Japanese cinema proved to be as malleable a canvas as any for limning the polemics of their *politique des auteurs* and their paeans to *mise en scène* and transcendent individual filmic genius."[72] In the critical discourse of the *Cahiers*, Kriegel-Nicholas finds echoes of nineteenth-century Japonisme and the same "abiding imprint of both desire and anxiety at the heart of the twentieth-century French filmgoer's gaze."[73] Kriegel-Nicholas's study underscores the claim that French visions of Japan (and in this case, of Japanese cinema and its auteurs) are more about France than about Japan, and that the enthusiasm for Japanese culture is also tempered by a certain anxiety around it.

By the end of the 1950s, Japan had launched its own cinematic New Wave (*nubero bagu* in the Japanese pronunciation), a term Richie describes as "coined in imitation of the French Nouvelle vague, itself another commercial invention."[74] The Japanese cinema historian David Desser includes in this movement "films produced and/or released in the wake of [Nagisa] Oshima's *A Town of Love and Hope* [(1959)], films which take an overtly political stance in a general way or toward a specific issue, utilizing a deliberately disjunctive form compared to previous filmic norms in Japan."[75] Desser points out that comparisons between the Japanese and French New Waves, "typically to imply greater integrity to the latter," are also problematic in that they "have served the cultural cliché that the Japanese are merely great imitators." Desser contends that "to see the Japanese New Wave as an imitation of the French New Wave (an impossibility since they arose simultaneously) fails to see the Japanese context out of which the

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[72] Kriegel-Nicholas, 1-3.

[73] Kriegel-Nicholas, 6-7.

[74] Richie, *Japanese Cinema,* 66.

[75] David Desser, *Eros plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 4.

movement arose."[76] In Japanese cinema scholarship, for example, directors such as Nagisa Oshima, Masahiro Shinoda, and Shohei Imamura are more often understood as having rebelled against French favorites Ozu, Mizoguchi, and Kurosawa. As Nygren argues, the French New Wave "could be said to have begun in Japan," citing as evidence French borrowings from Japanese cinema such as Godard's "trademark" use of directorial voice-over, the switching on of traffic sounds mid-scene as a character crosses the street, and the layering of flashback used after a character's death in the middle of a film, all strategies used in Kurosawa's *Ikiru* (1952).[77]

Here, we might recall the origins of cinema and the parallel French and Japanese interests in cinematic technology often at the expense of the narrative. As the cinema scholar T. Jefferson Kline argues, French cinema has always been more interested in the question "What is cinema?" than in the ideal of narrative continuity that has so preoccupied Hollywood. Kline offers a few linguistic examples to illustrate this thesis: the Lumière brothers invented "the *Cinématographe* (writing in movement), while Edison, across the Atlantic, decided to baptize his machine the *Vitascope* (a vision of *life*)"; and "when the Hollywood directors plan a film they do so on a 'storyboard' which enables them to establish a fluid sense of the continuity…When French directors begin their work, they make a 'découpage'—a cutting board."[78] Richie writes of a similar tendency in the Japanese cinematic tradition for looser narratives in which "various scenes suggest not so much a story as a relationship, of one character to another, or of a character to his or her environment."[79] With this tendency to focus on composition over plot, French and

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[76] Desser, 4.

[77] Nygren, 186.

[78] T. Jefferson Kline, *Unraveling French Cinema: From* L'Atalante *to* Caché (John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 4, 9.

[79] Richie, *Japanese Cinema*, 8.

Japanese cinemas might be seen to align in their modernist formal responses to the hegemonic "Hollywood pleasure palace."[80]

THE RADIANCE OF FRANCE

As the force of the international New Waves in cinema receded in the late 1960s, the Japanese Economic Miracle and the French *Trente Glorieuses* continued to strengthen. Rebuilding efforts in both France and Japan were largely successful due to developments in science and technology and in particular to the growing nuclear industry and its promise of energy independence. Hecht argues that the French nuclear program and its promise to restore French radiance, or "rayonnement," in the world appealed to a French sense of national identity.[81] The nuclear program, promised in 1948 by then-President Vincent Auriol to "add to the radiance of France," echoed the former glory of the Sun King Louis XIV as well as the colonial empire's *mission civilisatrice* emanating from the French Hexagon. Hecht understands nuclear power in postwar France and Britain as a substitute for colonialism and "a means of preventing their own colonization by the superpowers."[82] In 1960, France began testing nuclear weapons in the Algerian Desert. These tests have been the subject of a few very recent French documentaries such as Djamel Ouahab's *Gerboise Bleue: L'éclair de la honte /* Gerboise Bleue: The Flash of Shame (2011), which shows interviews with survivors of the tests south of Reggane, and Elisabeth Leuvrey's *At(h)ome* (2013), which follows an Algerian photographer to

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[80] Kline, *Unraveling French Cinema,* 6.

[81] Hecht, *Radiance of France,* 12. Hecht writes "In postwar France, the notion of radiance is precisely such a bridge [between past and future]: radiant through its empire before the war, France must maintain its radiance to maintain its Frenchness." Significantly, in French, "rayonnement" means both radiation and radiance.

[82] Gabrielle Hecht, "Nuclear Ontologies," *Constellations* 13, no. 3 (2006): 322.

the irradiated desert zone outside of Algiers. As a condition of the Évian Accords, the Algerian independence treaty signed by de Gaulle in 1962, nuclear testing continued in Algeria until 1966, when it was moved to French Polynesia.

The 1973 OPEC embargo and oil shock marked the end of the *Trente Glorieuses* and the Economic Miracle. Acutely aware of the vulnerability of depending on foreign oil, France and Japan both injected resources into the development of their nuclear industries. The 1974 Messmer Plan, named after the French Prime Minister Pierre Messmer, called for the acceleration of nuclear energy production in France, envisioning as many as 170 reactors by the year 2000 and a total move to nuclear energy.[83] "The most striking aspect of Messmer's energy plan," Bess notes, "was that it did not come up for formal discussion by the Assemblée Nationale until May 1975, more than a year after it was launched" and reactor building was already well under way. The implementation of the Messmer Plan serves as an example of the social violence committed by a cadre of politicians and technocrats whose undemocratic decision-making entailed consequences that would play out for generations.[84]

Antinuclear sentiment in France had started long before the Messmer Plan with general opposition to the atomic bomb on the left. However, it was not until the 1970s that *soixante-huitards* and local communities mobilized against nuclear energy and the construction of plants in their regions. In 1981, François Mitterrand rose to power on the left and deceived supporters who opposed nuclear energy by violating antinuclear promises.[85] In 1985, French government operatives bombed the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior while it was moored in New Zealand

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[83] Sezin Topçu, "Les physiciens dans le mouvement antinucléaire : entre science, expertise et politique," *Cahiers d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique*, no. 102 (October 1, 2007): 89–108.

[84] Bess, *Light-Green Society*, 95.

[85] Henry Chevallier, *Histoire des luttes antinucléaires en France 1958-2008* (Fustérouau: La Bertrande, 2009).

in protest of ongoing nuclear tests in French Polynesia. Nuclear protest is ongoing in France by organizations such as the political party *Les Verts* (the Green Party) and the independent association *Réseau Sortir du nucléaire* (Nuclear Phase-out Network), which comprises 120 local and regional antinuclear groups. Challenges by activists and nuclear counter-expertise organizations such as the *Groupement des scientifiques pour l'information sur l'énergie nucléaire* (GSIEN) (Association of Scientists for Information on Nuclear Energy) and the *Commission de recherche d'information indépendante sur la radioactivité* (CRIIRAD) (Commission for Independent Research and Information on Radioactivity) alert the public to occasional causes for concern, such as leaks and contamination, however "[b]eyond the moment of 'alert,'…[they] have had trouble getting traction."[86] The nuclear industry for its part has continued to maintain its strength and promote its own growth under the guise of combatting global climate change.

In 1970, the international Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to prevent the spread of weapons and weapon technology and to protect peaceful uses of nuclear power was entered into force, although France did not accede to it until 1992. While nuclear energy has always been considered a "peaceful use" of the atom, it has inflicted significant social and environmental violence. Accidents such as the little publicized 1957 Kyshtym nuclear disaster at Mayak, Russia, the 1979 disaster at Three Mile Island, the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, and the most recent series of meltdowns at Fukushima Daiichi in 2011 have contaminated large and ill-defined areas of land and resulted in major social, economic, health and environmental consequences, while institutions remain reluctant to take responsibility.

[86] Hecht, *Radiance,* 345.

In 1986, the worst nuclear disaster to date occurred at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant near Pripyat in the USSR. Months after the Chernobyl disaster, CRIIRAD was formed to seek the truth about nuclear contamination in France, which had been covered up by government officials. However, as Felix Kolb notes in a study of protest movements, after Chernobyl, France and Japan in particular could be characterized as showing a "pro-nuclear consensus," or an "absence of substantial governmental concessions towards the anti-nuclear energy movement, very weak anti-nuclear activities, relatively unified pro-nuclear elites, and rather pro-nuclear public opinion."[87] While Austria and Italy abandoned their nuclear programs in response to the Chernobyl disaster, France and Japan blamed the meltdown on human error and continued to expand their respective nuclear programs.

Recent Franco-Japanese Encounters

Some of the most notable French visions of Japan in literature from the 1970s and 1980s have come from ethnographic and anthropological perspectives. The essays on different aspects of Japanese culture that compose Barthes's *L'Empire des signes* (1970) have been called his "happy mythologies" in that they continue, albeit with a different critical perspective, the demystifying project begun in his analyses of French culture in *Mythologies* (1957).[88] Key to Barthes's experience and vision of Japan was Maurice Pinguet, to whom *L'Empire des signes* is dedicated. Pinguet, a cultural anthropologist who directed the Institut franco-japonais de Tokyo from 1963-1968, had invited Barthes to visit Japan in 1966. Pinguet published just one book during his lifetime, *La mort volontaire au Japon* / Willful Death in Japan (1984), an

[87] Felix Kolb, *Protest and Opportunities: The Political Outcomes of Social Movements* (Campus Verlag, 2007), 200.

[88] Ha, *Figuring the East,* 102.

anthropological study of suicide in Japan, although other work of his has been collected in the recent volume *Le Texte Japon: Introuvables et inédits, réunis et présentés par Michaël Ferrier* / The Japan Text: Rare and Unpublished Work, collected and presented by Michaël Ferrier (2009). Claude Lévi-Strauss, sometimes referred to as the "father of modern anthropology," credits his own father's interest in Japanese prints for the strong influence Japanese culture had on him as a child. His interest in Japan was renewed after the war, and he visited the country five times between 1977 and 1988. Lévi-Strauss's writings about Japan are collected in *L'autre face de la lune: écrits sur le Japon* / The Other Side of the Moon: Writings about Japan (2011) and in *L'Anthropologie face aux problèmes du monde moderne* / Anthropology Faces Problems of the Modern World (2011), a collection of lectures delivered in 1986 at the Ishizaka Foundation in Tokyo.

Former French president Jacques Chirac, another known French Japanophile, decided in 1995 to restart nuclear testing in the Pacific, a decision that strained the Franco-Japanese relationship. René Vautier, a French filmmaker and contemporary of Marker and Resnais, documented in the film *Hirochirac 1995* (1995) the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and the impact of Chirac's decision to resume testing in the Pacific. Aesthetic and political worlds collided again when the Japanese writer and Francophile Kenzaburo Oê denounced Chirac's decision and refused to attend the Festival of Japanese Literature in Aix-en-Provence where he was to be the guest of honor. In what became a highly-publicized literary feud, the French novelist Claude Simon condemned Oê's refusal in a letter to him published in *Le Monde*. In his letter, Simon defended Chirac and admonished Oê, his fellow Nobel laureate, for hostility toward France, reminding him that Japan had also committed wartime crimes. In response, Oê published his own letter in *Le Monde* acknowledging Simon's criticism of the

hypocrisy of the Japanese government and pointing out that Simon's patriotism blinded him to the great French tradition of humanism and more generally to concern for planet. "Au lieu d'interpréter [cette] action comme anti-française," Oê concludes, "je souhaite que la majorité des Français la ressentent comme l'expression d'un espoir en l'avenir"[89] (Rather than interpret [this] action as anti-French, I hope that the majority of the French feel it as the expression of a hope in the future).

By the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the French fascination with Japan has expanded to many cultural theaters, but it continues significantly in literature. In *Le Japon depuis la France: un rêve à l'encre* / Japan from France: A Dream in Ink (1995), Michel Butor responds to French figures such as Loti, Claudel, and Barthes and their images of Japan. In *Tokyo infra-ordinaire* (2005) (as in his earlier *Mono no aware (le sentiment des choses) /* Mono no aware (the feeling of things) (1970)), Jacques Roubaud draws on high and popular Japanese culture as a point of departure for his own poetry. In the twenty-first century, French writers engage both profoundly and fleetingly with Japan in works such as Stéphane Audeguy's *La théorie des nuages /* The Theory of Clouds (2005); Éric Faye's *Nagasaki* (2010), *Malgré Fukushima: Journal japonais /* Despite Fukushima: Japanese Journal (2014), and *Éclipses japonaises* / Japanese Eclipses, (2016); Maxence Fermine's *Neige* / Snow (1999) and *Zen* (2015), and Laurent Mauvignier's *Autour du monde* / Around the World (2014). Muriel Barbery's *L'Élégance du hérisson* / *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* (2006) is a notable example from a female writer who spent a year in Japan and whose work features the fictional Japanese character Kakuro Ozu, a distant relative of filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu.

[89] Claude Simon, "Cher Kenzaburo Ôe," *Le Monde*, September 21, 1995; Kenzaburo Ôe, "Cher Claude Simon," *Le Monde*, September 28, 1995.

The Franco-Japanese connection extends beyond the borders of the Hexagon to Francophone Belgian writers such as Jean-Philippe Toussaint and his Marie novel cycle, Amélie Nothomb, who has written several novellas on Japan, and François Weyergans's *Je suis écrivain* / I Am a Writer (1989). Montreal-based Haitian writer and member of the Académie française Dany Laferrière wrote *Je suis un écrivain japonais : roman / I Am a Japanese Writer: Novel* (2008) showing "un usage ludique et stratégique du Japon" (a playful and strategic use of Japan), according to a review by Ferrier.[90] On the Japanese side of the exchange, Akira Mizubayashi writes of his relationship to the French language as his "langue paternelle" in *Une langue venue d'ailleurs* / A Language from Another Place (2011). Ryoko Sekiguchi, who writes in both French and Japanese and was living in Paris in 2011, explored her response to the triple disaster in Japan both from France and from Japan in the novel *Ce n'est pas un hasard: Chronique japonaise* / This Is No Accident: Japanese Chronicle (2011).

Recent scholarly circles have arisen around Franco-Japanese exchanges in literature, and critical work has been collected in several editions published by Éditions Cécile Defaut and Éditions Philippe Picquier.[91] The 2013 conference "Paris-Tokyo-Paris: La réception de la culture japonaise en France depuis 1945" brought together several of these scholars as well as a few of

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[90] Michaël Ferrier, "L'art du repiquage: présences du Japon de Léon Rosny à Dany Laferrière," in *D'après le Japon*, ed. Laurent Zimmermann (Nantes: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2012), 75. The clear reference here is to Dany Laferrière, *Je suis un écrivain japonais: roman* (Montréal: Boréal, 2008). Ferrier, however, sees references to Japan in several of Laferrière's books, and describes Japan as more than just an object of study or admiration for him but as a way of thinking and knowing.

[91] Éditions Cécile Defaut has published Ferrier, *Japon : la barrière des rencontres* (2009) and Philippe Forest, *Retour À Tokyo* (Nantes: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2014), as well as three collected editions, Laurent Zimmermann, ed., *D'après le Japon* (Nantes: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2012); Philippe Forest and Cécile Sakai, eds., *Pour un autre roman japonais* (Paris: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2005); and Christian Doumet and Michaël Ferrier, eds., *Penser* avec *Fukushima* (Lormont: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2016). Éditions Philippe Piquier exclusively publishes books with a connection to East Asia, including translations of Japanese works. Of their hundreds of books on Japan, three that have been particularly useful for this study are Michael Ferrier and Nobutaka Miura, eds., *La Tentation de la France, la tentation du Japon: regards croisés* (Paris: Éditions Philippe Picquier, 2003); Gaulène, *Le nucléaire en Asie: Fukushima, et après?*; Corinne Quentin and Cécile Sakai, eds., *L'archipel des séismes: écrits du Japon après le 11 mars 2011* (Arles: Éditions Philippe Picquier, 2012).

the contemporary writers whose work they study such as Michaël Ferrier, Philippe Forest, and Gérard Macé. In 2015, the "Re-Orienting Cultural Flows: Engagements between France and East-Southeast Asia" colloquium at the Winthrop King Institute at Florida State University brought together a group of scholars studying these cross-cultural exchanges between France and Asia more broadly and featured keynote addresses on Franco-Japanese exchange by Michaël Ferrier and Kôichi Iwabuchi. In 2017 a two-day colloquium took place at the University of Edinburgh on "Michaël Ferrier: un écrivain du corail" (Michaël Ferrier: A Coral Writer) and "Post-Fukushima Art and Literature in Japan and the West."

Contemporary French cinema, too, has continued the tradition of fascination with Japanese culture. Many films focus on Tokyo, such as Olivier Assayas's films *Laissé inachevé à Tokyo* (1982) and *Demonlover* (2002). In an interview conducted in Tokyo during the shooting of *Demonlover*, Assayas admits that because of his lack of deep connections in Japan, he sticks to the surface, to his interests in graphic and visual arts.[92] This statement is perhaps surprising coming from a director who has other connections in East Asia and suggests a willful distancing from a more profound engagement with Japan, a desire to see a place that conforms to the familiar tradition of French visions of Japan.[93] Other Tokyo-centric films include Gérard Krawczyk and Luc Besson's *Wasabi* (2001), an action-comedy set between France and Japan, Gaspar Noé's *Enter the Void* (2010), and Michel Gondry's and Léos Carax's contributions to the triptych *Tokyo!* (2008). All three of the short films in *Tokyo!*, a production of the Paris-based

[92] Olivier Assayas, Demonlover en un mot, interview by Stephen Sarrazin, Objectif cinéma, 2001, http://www.objectif-cinema.com/interviews/093.php.

[93] As a writer for *Cahiers du cinéma,* Assayas published a special issue on Hong Kong cinema in 1985. In 1996, he made the feature film *Irma Vep* with Maggie Cheung, an actress from Hong Kong whom he later married. In 1997, he made *HHH,* a documentary on the Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-Hsien.

Franco-Japanese company Comme des cinémas, depart from the known world and clichés of the city into visions of a Tokyo tinged by science fiction.

A few recent Japanese filmmakers show a reciprocal interest in France and French culture. Nagisa Oshima's *L'Empire des sens / In the Realm of the Senses* (1976) and *Max mon amour* (1986) allude in their titles to French works about Japan by Barthes, Duras, and Resnais. In the "Crows" segment of Akira Kurosawa's *Dreams* (1990), a Japanese art student who speaks French meets Vincent van Gogh (played by Martin Scorsese) in an impressionist landscape painting. "The Peach Orchard," another segment in *Dreams*, offers a subtler reference to the French cinematic tradition as it ends with a freeze-frame on a young boy's face, an allusion to the freeze-frame ending of François Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups* / *The 400 Blows* (1959). Nobuhiro Suwa directed the "Place des Victoires" short featuring Juliette Binoche in the collective film *Paris, je t'aime* (2006), as well as *H Story* (2001), a feature-length remake of *Hiroshima mon amour*, and *Yuki et Nina* (2009), a co-production with French filmmaker Hippolyte Girardot about a young Japanese girl and her French friend. Kôji Fukada, a Japanese director born in 1980, has engaged with French culture in his animated short film "La Grenadière" (2006), an adaptation of a short story of the same name by Honoré de Balzac, and in *Au revoir l'été* (2013), in which characters travel to France and talk about seeing the *Mona Lisa* at the Louvre. Fukada's film *Sayonara*, about an evacuation after nuclear disaster (2015) features the Franco-Japanese actress Noémie Nakai, the French actor Jérôme Kircher and the Franco-Swiss actress Irène Jacob, and his film *Harmonium* (2016) is another Comme des cinémas Franco-Japanese coproduction.

Many French filmmakers in Japan, including Resnais and Marker, do not seem to know Japanese, a seemingly necessary element for more profound cross-cultural engagement.

However, a couple of very recent French works, Jill Coulon's documentary coproduction *Tu seras sumo* (2013) and Idrissa Guiro and Mélanie Pavy's *Cendres* (2015), were made by filmmakers whose lack of knowledge of Japanese might have actually allowed them greater access to their Japanese subjects. Coulon was able to film in the intimate quarters of a Japanese sumo stable where an outsider who could understand what was said might not have been allowed. Indeed, when Coulon's translator was not by her side, Coulon could not follow the conversations she was filming and reports having turned the camera off during interesting conversations and continuing to film when nothing much was being said.[94] Guiro and Pavy, who met the family of the deceased actress Kyoko Kosaka Gaisseau and were invited to participate in her funeral, only used a translator after they filmed and relied on non-verbal communication during their interviews in Japan.[95]

Several very recent French films about Japan focus on the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, a clear turn from earlier aesthetically oriented French visions of Japan. Documentaries, such as Alain de Halleux's *Welcome to Fukushima* (2012), Claude-Julie Parisot and Gil Rabier's *Fukushima, des particules et des hommes* (2014), Marc Petitjean's *De Hiroshima à Fukushima* (2015), and Jean-Paul Jaud's *Tous cobayes?* (2012) and *Libres!* (2015), as well as formally and conceptually experimental works, such as Keiko Courdy's *Au-delà du nuage: Yonaoshi 3.11* (2013) and Philippe Rouy's trilogy of films about Fukushima, *4 bâtiments face à la mer* (2012),

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[94] Yohann, "Interview de Jill Coulon pour son film 'Tu seras sumô,'" Dosukoi, le site français du sumo, http://www.dosukoi.fr/interview-de-jill-coulon-pour-son-film-tu-seras-sumo/. Coulon's documentary was also shown on Japanese television with a different ending. The French version ends with Takuya Ogushi, the young man training to become a sumo wrestler, dropping out of the training and a dramatic 4 a.m. departure from the stable, while the Japanese ending continues to follow Takuya, who returns to the stable several weeks later to persevere with his sumo training.

[95] Kosaka Gaisseau acted in Jean-Luc Godard's *Made in U.S.A.* (1966) and shared her apartment in Paris at the time with Koumiko Muraoka, the subject of Chris Marker's *Le Mystère Koumiko.* Stéphane du Mesnildot, "Un été avec Koumiko," *Cahiers du cinéma* 681 (September 2012): 85.

Machine to Machine (2013) and *Fovea centralis* (2014), show concern for and solidarity with victims of the 2011 triple disaster. Implicitly and explicitly, these films turn the nuclear question back on France and its own nuclear commitments. As French and Japanese national identities have been renewed through notions of scientific development and technological prowess, the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi would seem to undermine much of the foundation of postwar French and Japanese national identities and to create another opportunity for a shared experience of crisis.

JAPONISME AND ORIENTALISM

In guise of a conclusion, I will address a couple of terminological concerns. The first has been raised throughout this chapter with the implicit question as to whether a study of French visions of Japan actually fits under the umbrella of Japonisme studies. Since Philippe Burty's introduction of the term in 1872, "Japonisme" has found its most obvious homes in the disciplines of art history and literary studies. A resurgence of interest in Japonisme began in the 1970s and continues today with books, exhibitions, and symposia dedicated to the tradition. Art historical scholarship, such as Klaus Berger's *Japonisme in Western Painting from Whistler to Matisse* and the edition directed by Gabriel Weisberg *Japonisme: Japanese Influence on French Art 1854-1910,* suggest that Japonisme came to an end around the start of the twentieth century. However, in his introduction to the 2016 inaugural issue of *Journal of Japonisme*, Weisberg calls for an expansion of the parameters of Japonisme studies to consider new countries and media influenced by Japanese art and pop culture and to employ new methodologies, such as historical examination of Western travelers to Japan through the objects they brought back with them. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the influence in the West is not only of

Japanese aesthetics, but of the tradition of Japonisme itself. As Weisberg contends, "Soon there will be no corner of the world that has not been touched by Japonisme as this phenomenon also influenced the arts of literature, music, photography, and film. It continues to influence these areas well into our own era."[96] The 2014 collection *Japonismes*, edited by Olivier Gabet, acknowledges the vast and eclectic phenomenon of Japonisme and "postjaponismes," beginning in the 1960s, while focusing specifically on such works that can be found in three museums in Paris: Musée d'Orsay, Musée national des arts asiatiques – Guimet, and Musée des arts décoratifs.[97]

In his 2015 keynote speech at the "Re-Orienting Cultural Flows" colloquium, Michaël Ferrier moved away from the term "Japonisme," offering in its place three possible methodologies for the field going forward: 1. *Regards croisés*, or critical discourse between cultures rather than at or of each other; 2. Tripartite comparison and triangulation of cultures, or moving from dialogue to "multilogue"; and 3. Poetics of relation focusing on contact zones and collective identities.[98] Ferrier finds the proliferation of "Japonisme" terms to be misguided: "Le japonisme, ça existe. C'est un courant artistique qui existait, qui est historiquement fixé,

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[96] Berger, *Japonisme*; Gabriel P. Weisberg et al., *Japonisme: Japanese Influence on French Art, 1854-1910* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975); Gabriel P. Weisberg, "Reflecting on Japonisme: The State of the Discipline in the Visual Arts," *Journal of Japonisme* 1, no. 1 (2016): 13-15. A study of objects brought back from Japan can be found in Christine M. E. Guth, *Longfellow's Tattoos: Tourism, Collecting and Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

[97] Olivier Gabet, ed., *Japonismes* (Paris: Flammarion, 2014).

[98] Michaël Ferrier, "France-Asie: du stéréotype au prototype, pour un déplacement du regard critique" (Reorienting Cultural Flows: Engagements Between France and East/Southeast Asia, Winthrop-King Institute, Florida State University, Tallahassee, 2015). Also in Michaël Ferrier, "Introduction: Les écrivains du corail ou d'une nouvelle arborescence--possible et souhaitable--dans la réception de la culture japonaise," in *Réceptions de la culture japonaise en France depuis 1945: Paris-Tokyo-Paris: détours par le Japon*, ed. Fabien Arribert-Narce, Kohei Kuwada, and Lucy O'Meara (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2016), 37–9.

déterminable."[99] (Japonisme exists. It's an artistic movement that is historically fixed, determinable.) For fellow French writer-scholar Philippe Forest, the notion of a sort of "second Japonisme" focused on Japan's extreme modernity and intended to invert the first Japonisme focused on immemorial tradition only reinforces its stereotypes, "car retourner une image fausse ne suffit pas à en produire une qui soit vraie!"[100] (because turning a false image around does not suffice to produce a true one!)

Other scholars find that the term Japonisme does continue to be useful. Beatrice Rafoni, thinking to the future of the field, considers what certain critics call néo-japonisme, which she defines as the general enthusiasm for traditional Japanese arts in France today and the influence in France of Japanese media arts such as manga, anime, and cinema.[101] Rafoni points out that France is the second world market for Japanese manga, and notes examples of exchange in this medium, such as Frédéric Boilet's collaborative Franco-Japanese graphic novels.[102] Another collection of manga, *Japon: Le Japon vu par 17 auteurs* (2005) features work by French, Francophone, and Japanese graphic novelists and illustrators, including the filmmaker Joann Sfar, who has also published a solo graphic novel entitled *Tokyo* (2012). Florent Chavouet is a French graphic novelist living and working between France and Japan and recording his visions of Japan in volumes such as *Tokyo Sanpo* (2009) and *Manabé Shima* (2010) and in *Kokekokko*

[99] Michaël Ferrier, Un entretien avec Michaël Ferrier, interview by Hannah Holtzman, June 7, 2016. See Appendix.

[100] Forest, *Retour à Tokyo*, 14.

[101] Béatrice Rafoni, "Le néo-japonisme en France: de l'influence de la culture médiatique japonaise," *Compar(a)ison* 2 (2002): 116-20.

[102] Rafoni, 119. The first of such collaborations was Frédéric Boilet and Jirô Taniguchi, *Tôkyô est mon jardin* (Paris: Éditions Casterman, 1997).

(2014), a collection of work by sixteen French illustrators who are either expatriates or travelers in Japan.

Another collected edition that particularly resonates with this thesis, Géraud Bournet's *FRANCKUSHIMA: Essai graphique sur la catastrophe de Fukushima et le risque nucléaire en France* (2016), combines journalism and graphic arts to tell the story of the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi and of nuclear power in France. Using a form he calls the "graphic essay," Bournet, a self-taught illustrator with a background in environmental engineering, offers a comprehensive yet accessible approach to the Fukushima disaster and the nuclear industry in France through collaborations with French and Japanese filmmakers, photographers, researchers, scholars, expatriates, activists, and Fukushima residents.[103] In a study connecting nineteenth-century Japonisme with more recent manifestations of Japan's soft power influence in the West, Susan Napier, a scholar in Japanese literature and popular culture, studies different fantasies of Japan that have arisen from Western visions since the 1850s and considers how economics, politics, ideology, class, and gender have shaped these visions.[104] Going forward, visual arts such as manga, graphic novels, and animation would seem to be particularly fruitful avenues for Japonisme studies as these media bring together the visual and literary arts that have always been a part of the Japonisme tradition. The popular appeal of these media also echoes that of Japanese art and objects in the second half of the nineteenth century in France.

Contemporary cultural flows extend most notably to the commercial and aesthetic domain of fashion. Louis Vuitton's collaborations with Japanese artists Takeshi Murakami and

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[103] Géraud Bournet, *FRANCKUSHIMA: Essai graphique sur la catastrophe de Fukushima et le risque nucléaire en France* (Grenoble: Lutopiquant éditions, 2016). Collaborators include the French filmmakers Keiko Courdy and Alain de Halleux, amongst others.

[104] Susan J. Napier, *From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Yayoi Kusama, and notable Japanese fashion designers who have worked in Paris such as Kenzo Takada, Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, and Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons are a few examples from France. In the 1990s and early 2000s, French brands such as Chanel, Hermès, and Louis Vuitton, already popular in Japan, began to open shops there, and the Japanese language has integrated French terms such as "mannequin," "haute couture," and "prêt-à-porter."

Gastronomy has been another important theater of Franco-Japanese cultural exchange. Japanese visitors to France in the 1860s reported discontent with French cuisine, which was too fried and contained too much butter and meat for their tastes. Roldolphe Lindan, a French tourist in Japan at the same time, praised the variety in and refinement of Japanese cuisine as well as the central role of rice and tea.[105] Over a century later in 1972, Paul Bocuse traveled to Japan to give cooking courses, and Taïra Kurihara went to Paris to work in the Michelin-starred Tour d'Argent in the Eiffel Tower before opening his own Franco-Japanese restaurant in the seventeenth arrondissement.[106] Today, Sadaharu Aoki's upscale Franco-Japanese patisserie has four Parisian locations, and the French Mariage Frères tea boutique has eighteen locations across Japan. In popular food culture, sushi has become the new fast food in France, and the rue Sainte-Anne in the heart of Paris is a Little Tokyo where diners wait in line for hours for a bowl of the best *udon*.[107] Meanwhile, in Japan crepes have become a specialty of the Harajuku teen mecca district in Tokyo.[108]

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[105] Sieffert, *Le Japon et la France: images d'une découverte*, 52-58.

[106] Michelle Bloom, *Contemporary Sino-French Cinemas: Absent Fathers, Banned Books, and Red Balloons* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 199.

[107] "Restaurant Japonais - KUNITORAYA - Paris," *petit futé*, accessed May 9, 2017, https://www.petitfute.com/v17231-17295-paris-75001/c1165-restaurants/c1031-cuisines-du-monde/c1035-cuisine-d-asie/c56-restaurant-japonais/264742-kunitoraya.html.

[108] Selena Hoy, "Harajuku Crepes Guide," Tokyo Cheapo, accessed May 8, 2017, https://tokyocheapo.com/food-and-drink/harajuku-crepes/.

In a spatial rapprochement of high culture and national icons, we might also recall that the Maison de la Culture du Japon in Paris sits next to the Eiffel Tower, a model for the Tokyo Tower which was constructed in 1958 as a symbol of postwar Japanese revitalization.

Cultural works "made in France" and "made in Japan" still serve as status symbols around the world, as do quotidian borrowings like sushi and crepes, which inevitably undergo transformation for reception in markets abroad. In both France and Japan, haute cuisine is not only an art but also an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, as identified by UNESCO.[109] And yet the vast majority of exports between France and Japan are of the mundane variety: computer equipment, medicaments, vehicles, and nuclear machinery.[110] Data suggest that the exchange of culture may in fact be much more pervasive than that of Culture and that shared technologies can create and enrich the contexts of Culture's reception.

Discussion of Japonisme since 1978 must also contend with the term in a post-Said context. Edward Said's *Orientalism* launched postcolonial studies with its contention that the "Orient" is a Western invention and as such an object of domination in an implied East-West hierarchy.[111] Of the many critiques Said's work has received for its oversimplification of notions

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[109] In 2010, UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage division acknowledged the "Gastronomic Meal of the French - Intangible Heritage - Culture Sector - UNESCO," http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/gastronomic-meal-of-the-french-00437. In 2013, it acknowledged "Washoku, Traditional Dietary Cultures of the Japanese, Notably for the Celebration of New Year - Intangible Heritage - Culture Sector - UNESCO," http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/washoku-traditional-dietary-cultures-of-the-japanese-notably-for-the-celebration-of-new-year-00869.

[110] As seen in a comparison of data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity at the MIT Media Lab regarding exports between France and Japan in 2010, the year before the nuclear disaster and the halt of the Japanese nuclear industry. "Products That Japan Exports to France (2010)," The Observatory of Economic Complexity, http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/jpn/fra/show/2010/; "Products That France Exports to Japan (2010)," The Observatory of Economic Complexity, http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/fra/jpn/show/2010/.

[111] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 3rd edition (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

of East and West, the one most pertinent to Japonisme studies is the absence of the Far East. Marie-Paule Ha calls the oversimplification a facile East-West binarism and problematizes *Orientalism* from the perspective of a non-European postcolonial (and female) scholar in the West.[112] In the context of France and Japan, Ha argues that French writers assimilate orientalist ideas and references but also supplement, reaccentuate, and fill them in with other thoughts and discourses.[113] Hokenson's main objection to *Orientalism* as it relates to Japonisme comes from its monologic view of the West, a perspective notably ignorant of women's travel writing that subverts paternalist colonial discourse. Hokenson questions Said's hierarchy of an inferior Orient when Japanese aesthetics were often seen in the tradition of Japonisme as superior to those of the West. For Hokenson, Japonisme is incompatible with postcolonial notions of cultural hegemony stemming from France's *mission civilisatrice*; on the contrary, throughout the tradition of Franco-Japanese cultural exchange, France has looked to Japan as much in fascination as in admiration of its civilization.[114] Napier's study of Franco-Japanese cross-cultural exchange takes into account critiques of essentialism, misrepresentation, and lack of concern for gender and class in *Orientalism*. Rather than refuting Said's theory though, Napier argues that Japan's interactions with the West "add some fascinating complexities to the theory of Orientalism."[115]

Critical response from Kôichi Iwabuchi is more pointed. In *Recentering Globalization* (2002), Iwabuchi details the rise of Japan as a cultural power in Asia and critiques Said's orientalization of Japan in his later work *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), which ignores Japan's own imperialist history. In Said's formulation, Iwabuchi writes, "Japan is treated predominantly

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[112] Ha, *Figuring the East*, 3, 11.

[113] Ha, xiii.

[114] Hokenson, *Japan, France*, 24-5.

[115] Napier, *Impressionism to Anime*, 6-7.

as a non-Western, quasi-Third world nation which has been a victim of Western (American) cultural domination," when, in his own view, Japan plays a mediating role between East and West.[116]

Said responds to general criticism of his work in the 2003 preface to a new edition of *Orientalism*, arguing, "I emphasize in [*Orientalism*] that neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability."[117] Said even seems to implicitly support the argument that a more horizontal exchange, such as that between France and Japan, might emerge as a model for East-West studies, writing, "Rather than the manufactured clash of civilizations, we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow."[118]

For the literary scholar Joshua Paul Dale, this kind of configuration is a "lateral" exchange. Dale uses the term to describe the gaze in Barthes's *L'Empire des signs*, a gesture in which difference is neither neutralized nor parallel but coming from the side: "two gazes that pass each other by unseeing…two subjects orbiting the lateral gaze of the Other."[119] However, for the Japanese scholars Kojin Karatani and Sabu Kohso, the gaze of Japonisme remains one of aestheticentrism, a form of orientalism in which the Japanophiliac Frenchman who "loves the aesthetic Japan and the Japan that is represented in the French mind," turns away from Japan as

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[116] Kôichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 3, 13.

[117] Said, *Orientalism*, xvii.

[118] Ibid, xxix.

[119] Joshua Paul Dale, "Cross-Cultural Encounters through a Lateral Gaze," in *After Orientalism: Critical Engagements, Productive Looks*, ed. Inge E. Boer, Thamyris: Intersecting: Place, Sex and Race 10 (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2003), 73-75.

an economic power that threatens France. “In this passion and respect [for Japanese culture] there is a certain bracketing of the concerns of pedestrian Japanese, who live real lives and struggle with intellectual and ethical problems inherent in modernity. Inasmuch as these Japanese lives and concerns do not stimulate his sense of wonder, he would rather ignore them.”[120] For Karatani and Kohso, the counterbalance of looking up at and looking down on do not a lateral gaze make. Instead, these gazes come together in a problematic way: “looking down on the other as an object of scientific analysis and looking up to the other as an aesthetic idol are less contradictory than complicit” in objectifying the Other.[121]

While Said’s *Orientalism* largely overlooks the Far East, it provides a useful framework for Japonisme studies and for a contention at the heart of this thesis: orientalism as a Western creation tells us more about the West (or France) than it does about the Orient (or Japan). While Japonisme studies offer compelling conceptual frameworks oriented around aesthetics and form, I join many scholars in questioning whether “Japonisme” is still a useful term to describe cultural exchanges between Japan and the West today. The term remains particularly problematic in its lack of implied reciprocity. For this study, Japonisme provides a historical frame and context for the French side of the exchange, as well as a scholarly conversation in which to intervene, but I am at best ambivalent about employing the term or any of its recent iterations: néo-japonisme, postjaponisme, second Japonisme, new waves of Japonisme, and the never-ending story of Japonisme.[122] Such terms would seem to serve as shorthand for a complicated and ongoing

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[120] Kojin Karatani and Sabu Kohso, “Uses of Aesthetics: After Orientalism,” *Boundary 2* 25, no. 2 Edward W. Said (Summer 1998): 146.

[121] Karatani and Kohso, 147.

[122] Rafoni, “Le néo-japonisme en France: de l’influence de la culture médiatique japonaise”; "postjaponismes" in Olivier Gabet, ed., *Japonismes* (Paris: Flammarion, 2014), 299; "Japonisme: 'A Never-Ending-Story'" in Genova, *Writing Japonisme*; second Japonisme from Forest; and in Napier, *Impressionism to Anime*, 19, a “new wave” or “other waves” of Japonisme are implied in the following: “While I do not see anime and manga

relationship in an increasingly interconnected world in which binary spatial divisions such as East and West are losing purchase. Especially given its history and rooting in the visual arts, the term "Japonisme" still conveys a certain aestheticentrism without leaving much room for geopolitics.

And, of course, it would be injudicious to argue for both a never-ending Japonisme and a never-ending nuclear era, when one is a thought-provoking debate and the other a regrettable certainty. In the chapters that follow, I shift analysis away from discourses of Japonisme and East-West binaries and focus on the intersections of and disintegrating borders between aesthetics and politics, between Culture and cultures. In doing so, I seek to show how the global questions and intercultural responses posed in the works under study in this dissertation serve as instances of transnational Franco-Japanese solidarity in the nuclear era.

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fandom as emanating directly from the earlier waves of Japonisme that swept the West, I do see it as having fascinating similarities to these earlier booms."

Chapter Two

"Qu'est-ce que c'était pour toi, Hiroshima en France?": Nuclear Time and the Missing Mushroom Cloud in *Hiroshima mon amour*

> *Hiroshima* suggests that the habits of geography are the actual illusion and that modernity entails a fundamental reconception of the relationship between discrete times and places.
>
> —James Tweedie, *The Age of New Waves*

> ELLE: La nuit, ça ne s'arrête jamais, à Hiroshima?
> LUI: Jamais ça ne s'arrête, à Hiroshima.
>
> (ELLE: The night, it never ends in Hiroshima?
> LUI: It never ends in Hiroshima.)
>
> —Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*

INTRODUCTION: A TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR LOVE AFFAIR

The film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) was released in Japan under the title *Nijûyo jikan no jyôji*, or "A Twenty-Four-Hour Love Affair." While film titles often differ significantly in translation, this case merits particular attention for a couple of reasons. First, as many Japanese documentaries had already been made about the bombing of Hiroshima, Japanese spectators might not have been particularly shocked by the subject matter evoked by a more literal translation. With the new title and a promotional poster featuring the passionate couple and the Eiffel Tower, the film's distributor in Japan highlighted the relationship between a French woman and Japanese man, a topic that would have been surprising, rather than the theme of suffering humanity.[1] The Japanese title's emphasis on the brief love affair is also a move away

[1] Tweedie, *The Age of New Waves*, 120; Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour: scénario et dialogues* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 105–6. Translation in epigraph is my own. Except where noted, all other translations of dialogue from the film come from the English subtitles in Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour* (Argos Films, 1959). Mirei Seki, "La Réception de *Hiroshima mon amour* au Japon," in *Orient(s) de Marguerite Duras*, ed. Florence de Chalonge, Akiko Ueda, and Yann Mével (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2014), 223. What was surprising about this relationship was less its brevity or extramarital nature, but rather that it was between a Western woman and a Japanese man, inverting contemporary social expectations for intercultural relationships between Westerners and Japanese.

from the film's historical and political particularity. Its attention to time—twenty-four hours to be precise—can be seen as a shift from the original title's interest in space, as evoked by the place name "Hiroshima," which would resonate quite differently with a Japanese audience than it would with a French one. Nevertheless, the Japanese title's focus on time does remain faithful to Alain Resnais's own obsession with temporality and his working and reworking of it in *Hiroshima mon amour*.

The twenty-four-hour period in particular evokes the diurnal cycle and the film's compression of temporalities, the eternal present in which past and future briefly resurface. This is the "perpetual present tense" of cinema,[2] and Marguerite Duras's *nuit qui ne s'arrête jamais à Hiroshima*. In the famous *Cahiers du cinéma* critics roundtable discussion, Jacques Rivette calls *Hiroshima mon amour* "un film en boucle…une parenthèse dans le temps…C'est une idée de l'infini, mais à l'intérieur d'un intervalle très bref, puisque finalement le 'temps' d'*Hiroshima* peut tout aussi bien durer vingt-quatre heures qu'une seconde"[3] (a film in a loop…a parenthesis in time…It is an idea of the infinite, but inside a very brief interval, because finally the "time" of *Hiroshima* can just as well be twenty-four hours as one second). Rivette's notion of the infinite contained in a brief period of time might also be applied more broadly in thinking through nuclear temporality in literature and film and its paradoxical notions of instant annihilation and infinite contamination. The bombing of Hiroshima ushered in the global nuclear era during which the nuclear has become so entrenched in daily life as to seem banal, even if its consequences are disconcertingly infinite.

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[2] Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 12.

[3] Jean Domarchi et al., "Hiroshima, notre amour," *Cahiers du cinéma* 97 (July 1959): 16.

The question of whether *Hiroshima mon amour* is more focused on time or space leads to a more general inquiry about the concepts and labels used to understand and to attempt to categorize a film. We might consider, for example, whether a very specific category, such as Daniel Cordle's "nuclear anxiety narratives," helps us think through what kind of film *Hiroshima mon amour* is, or what kind of film we recognize it to be today. Nuclear anxiety narratives, which Cordle differentiates from nuclear disaster narratives, come from what he terms "states of suspense" in the postwar era that are more about the anticipation of disaster than about disaster itself.[4] On the surface then, *Hiroshima mon amour*, which is more concerned with the aftermath of a disaster than its anticipation, is neither a nuclear anxiety narrative nor a suspense film; it is, however, a film suspended in the present, perhaps as much in anticipation of the love affair's conclusion as of another war. After agreeing that the night never ends in Hiroshima, the film's protagonists discuss the possible future of their affair:

ELLE: Il est probable que nous mourrons sans nous être jamais revus?

LUI: Il est probable, oui. (*Un temps.*) Sauf, peut-être, un jour, la guerre…

ELLE: Oui, la guerre…

(ELLE: We'll probably die without ever seeing each other again.

LUI: Yes, probably. [*Pause.*] Unless, perhaps, one day, a war…

ELLE: Yes. A war…)

[4] Daniel Cordle, *States of Suspense: The Nuclear Age, Postmodernism and United States Fiction and Prose* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 2-3. Cordle's study focuses primarily on the effect of the Cold War on postmodern literature in the United States. Of the many motifs found in his "nuclear anxiety narratives," only the notion of "lives lived in suspension" seems to apply to *Hiroshima mon amour* (29-35).For Kate Rigby in *Dancing with Disaster: Environmental Histories, Narratives, and Ethics for Perilous Times* (Charlottesville, London: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 16, *Hiroshima mon amour* is not a traditional disaster narrative either, for as Rigby points out, the etymology of "disaster," from the Italian *disastro*, or ill-starred event, suggests that the misfortune is astrologically determined, letting humans off the hook.

The affair, it would seem, has no future, but in the moment together they can briefly imagine a future war in the nuclear era in which they find themselves.

While nearly every study of *Hiroshima mon amour* addresses temporality, time in the film has yet to be considered at length as it relates to the atomic bomb, the film's central albeit (mostly) invisible subject, or the nucleus around which love affairs and personal history orbit.[5] This chapter—and this dissertation as a whole—focuses on the relationship between time and the nuclear, and how this relationship as represented in the film intervenes in the tradition of French visions of Japan.

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[5] Bernard Pingaud, "À Propos d'*Hiroshima mon amour*," *Positif*, no. 35 (juillet-août 1960): 66–86. Pingaud conceives of time in the film as triangular and nonlinear, with the two pasts in a present that determines their evocation. René Prédal, *Alain Resnais* (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1968); René Prédal, *L'Itinéraire d'Alain Resnais* (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1996). Prédal's early study is inversely interested in the ways the past invade and condition the present, while his later work focuses on the flashback as he charts its sequences chronologically in the film. Roy Armes, *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, International Film Guide Series (London: Zwemmer; New York: Barnes, 1968). Armes is interested in how time structures the film, arguing that Resnais "builds a film out of an interplay of past and present" (68). Armes identifies three of the film's five acts by the time of day during which they occur: act two is "Night and Morning," act three is "Day," and act four is "Night Shots." Act one, "Prologue," and act five, "Decrescendo," might thus be considered as outside of time. James Monaco, *Alain Resnais* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). Monaco's study of the film focuses on the ethical implications of juxtaposing documentary with fiction and the audience's reaction to it. Robert Benayoun, *Alain Resnais: Arpenteur de l'imaginaire* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 1980). Benayoun considers the annihilation of time by space in the film, arguing, "le seul temps est celui du film" (the only time is that of the film) (69). Freddy Sweet, *The Film Narratives of Alain Resnais* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981). Sweet discusses time and psychological changes in character, and he argues, "memory and time integrate the diverse matter of the film" (27). Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 2. L'image-temps*, (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1985). Deleuze writes of the "nappes de passé" or "layers of the past" that structure Resnais's films and that solicit mental processes such as memory, forgetting, false memory, imagination, plans, and judgment. 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. For Ropars-Wuilleumier, the multiple temporalities offer a logical continuity to the narrative and historicize Hiroshima by giving it a proper time and space. Luc Lagier, *Hiroshima mon amour*, Les Petits Cahiers (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma; Scérén-CNDP, 2007). Lagier proposes the river as a metaphor for time, and building on Rivette's notion of the film as "une parenthèse dans le temps" suggests that the parenthesis, or the film's diegesis, occurs on the riverbanks of the Ota in Hiroshima and the Loire in Nevers. Sarah French, "From History to Memory: Alain Resnais' and Marguerite Duras' Hiroshima Mon Amour," *EMAJ*, no. 3 (2008). French's more recent study sees the temporalities of memory and history as counter-discourses. Carol Mavor, *Black and Blue: The Bruising Passion of* Camera Lucida*,* La Jetée*,* Sans Soleil*, and* Hiroshima mon amour (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012). Mavor explores the temporalities through the lens of involuntary memory, and she participates in this process as she recalls her own memories of viewing the film as well as those evoked for her by the film.

To appreciate the centrality of the nuclear despite its muted presence in the film, we might also consider the value of negative space or the aesthetic of subtraction, known in Japanese as *ma*, "the setting between object and object, person and person, or person and object…an atmosphere or situation…the space between or even the emptiness between things."[6] This empty space between things can be seen in arts such as ikebana, scroll paintings, and Japanese gardens, and seems to have affected Resnais's vision of Japan in *Hiroshima mon amour* just as space, line, and perspective in the ukiyo-e prints influenced French Impressionist painters. In a 1960 interview, Resnais acknowledges the conscious influence of Japanese aesthetics on the film, which was partly shot in Japan with a Japanese crew: "Il m'a paru intéressant de jouer le jeu avec les Japonais, en profitant des éclairages japonais, des équipes japonaises, de manière à remplacer un pittoresque dans les objets, dans les décors, par le leur."[7] (It seemed interesting to me to go along with the Japanese, taking advantage of the Japanese lighting, the Japanese crew, so as to substitute a [French] picturesque quality in the objects and sets with a Japanese one.)

This chapter will also address the film's nuclear subject matter in terms of its influence on formal aspects of the film. *Hiroshima mon amour* is one of world cinema's most studied films, and yet its nuclear subject matter has been mostly neglected in existing scholarship.[8]

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[6] Ivan Vartanian and Kyoko Wada, *See Saw: Connections between Japanese Art Then and Now* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2011), 53.

[7] Alain Resnais, "Entretien avec Alain Resnais," Séminaire du Film et Cinéma, Université Libre de Bruxelles, January 7, 1960, in dir. Raymond Ravar, *Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima!* (Bruxelles: Institut de Sociologie, 1962), 210.

[8] In the past few decades, scholars have begun to consider Hiroshima as more than just "the setting for a personal crisis," as Lynn A. Higgins identifies the majority of studies prior to her own doing. *New Novel, New Wave, New Politics: Fiction and the Representation of History in Postwar France* (Lincoln, NE; London; University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 32. Lagier, *Hiroshima mon amour*, 28, 35. Lagier accounts for the nuclear in the film's opening sequence, during which a chain reaction of images fade into one another, as "un équivalent cinématographique de cette fission nucléaire" (a cinematic equivalent of nuclear fission), and in the film's "temporalité aussi éclatée, comme si elle avait, elle aussi, été touchée par la catastrophe nucléaire" (temporality so shattered, as if it, too, had been affected by the nuclear catastrophe).

Hiroshima mon amour has been credited for having exploded narrative and formal conventions of film. In her seminal work on the film, Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier, for instance, uses the bomb as a metaphor for the explosion of form, suggesting that "the impotence of sight and knowledge to organize the readability of the event…can only be acknowledged through the mimicry of a fragmented editing style constructed on the model of the atomic explosion."[9] I propose looking beyond the well-explored notion of the fragment to suggest a more insidious and invisible kind of narrative volatility, because finally *Hiroshima mon amour* is not simply a film of fragments but one of a mutated, hybrid, and unstable narrative and spatiotemporality, created in an environment of linguistic uncertainty. *Hiroshima mon amour* is not a nuclear anxiety narrative, but a nuclear narrative tout court, and I argue that in its treatment of the nuclear subject matter this film laid the foundation for a new French way of seeing Japan.

From the film's inception through scholarship today, opinions have diverged as to what the film is, what it does, and what it means for French cinema.[10] Less attention has been paid to the particular vision of Japan (or at least of Hiroshima) that the film presents, and what that vision might mean in the context of the historical mutual cultural fascination between France and Japan.[11] The question that Lui poses to Elle the morning after they meet, "Qu'est-ce que c'était

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[9] Ropars-Wuilleumier, "How History Begets Meaning," 179.

[10] In Domarchi et al., "Hiroshima, notre amour." The *Cahiers du cinéma* roundtable discussion provides many such examples of critical disagreement as it introduces many of the film's themes, such as the cohabitation of historical tragedy and personal trauma, temporality, the film's relation to other arts, as well as formal concerns such as fragmentation and montage, and tracking shots and close-ups, concerns that would be expounded on by future scholars and critics.

[11] See Florence de Chalonge, Yann Mével, and Akiko Ueda, eds., *Orient(s) de Marguerite Duras* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2014) for Japanese perspectives on the film, viz. Seki's article on its reception in Japan and Iwasaki's account of post-production in France. See Jan Hokenson, *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004) for a japoniste reading of Duras's text that considers the influence of Asian theatrical styles with the interplay of shadow and image, flat characters, and mimed actions. Hokenson argues that Duras's Hiroshima is a monument to the *vide* and the world of illusions and echoes "Noh's terror of the ancient ghosts who cannot die" (380).

pour toi, Hiroshima en France?" (What was it for you, Hiroshima in France?) [*lit.* for emphasis], inspires the analysis for this chapter and motivates the general inquiry of this thesis.[12] In an interview, Resnais describes his walks around Hiroshima before shooting the film: "Il ne s'agissait pas tellement de voir comment était Hiroshima, mais de savoir si Hiroshima correspondait à ce qu'on en avait écrit."[13] (It wasn't so much about seeing Hiroshima, but knowing if Hiroshima corresponded to what had been written about it.) What, then, was Hiroshima for Resnais and Duras in France? And what does their vision of the place look like on the screen? But also, what might this tell us about France and its postwar fascination with Japan?

Hiroshima mon amour, released in 1959, signals a key moment in French-Japanese cultural relations as it serves as a transition from the predominantly aesthetic preoccupations of Japonisme to cultural productions concerned with the political implications of nuclear power. Hunter Vaughan situates *Hiroshima mon amour* as the inaugural feature-length film for a period of Resnais's productions that were "uniquely engaged with history as a process of representation" including "vigilant consideration of contemporary historical events," and "after which his cinema becomes more theatrical, less topical."[14] In terms of Franco-Japanese relations, *Hiroshima mon amour* was the first major, feature-length French film to present a more

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[12] In Grace An's analysis of *Hiroshima mon amour* using a transnational framework she calls "*par-asian,"* this "deceptively simple" question serves as an opportunity for An to summarize the film. While my thesis is specifically focused on Japan and the nuclear question, its conception owes much to An's notion of the "par-asian": "the different relationships that artists have explored between France and Asia, as well as moments of French self-critique that have been undertaken *par l'Asie*" with which artists "not only try to change the way East Asia is understood in France, but to transform the very artistic media they employ." Grace An, "A Par-Asian Cinematic Imaginary," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 10, no. 1 (2006): 16.

[13] Alain Resnais, "Entretien avec Alain Resnais," Séminaire du Film et Cinéma, Université Libre de Bruxelles, January 7, 1960, in dir. Raymond Ravar, *Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima!* (Bruxelles: Institut de Sociologie, 1962), 207.

[14] Hunter Vaughan, *Where Film Meets Philosophy: Godard, Resnais, and Experiments in Cinematic Thinking*, Film and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 149.

politicized vision of Japan. As such, the film might be seen to invite French reflection on its own nuclear culture via Japan and its nuclear history.

Hiroshima mon amour was also one of the first Franco-Japanese feature film coproductions.[15] The film commissioned by Argos Films was envisioned as a short documentary about the atomic bomb. Argos presented the idea to Resnais, who had already made *Nuit et brouillard* (1955), a short documentary about deportation and life in the Nazi concentration camps which producer Anatole Dauman deemed "a major aesthetic achievement, and not a straightforward documentary history."[16] *Nuit et brouillard* is said to have shaped "the cultural imaginary of generations" by establishing "iconic imagery of what we now understand as the 'the Holocaust.'"[17] It also brought attention to Alain Resnais as a filmmaker whose progressive documentaries were also works of art.[18] For the Hiroshima documentary, however, Resnais could not make the film Argos had asked for because he did not believe he could add anything new to the many Japanese documentaries about the atomic bomb that had already been made. Resnais wanted to make a film "pour stimuler l'imagination des gens sur la bombe atomique" (to stimulate people's imaginations about the atomic bomb), for which "un documentaire avec des

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[15] Kent Jones, "Hiroshima Mon Amour: Time Indefinite," *The Criterion Collection*, July 13, 2015, http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/291-hiroshima-mon-amour-time-indefinite. It was preceded by Yves Ciampi's *Typhon sur Nagasaki* (1957).

[16] Griselda Pollock and Maxim Silverman, "Introduction: Concentrationary Cinema," in eds. Pollock and Silverman, *Concentrationary Cinema: Aesthetics as Political Resistance in Alain Resnais's Night and Fog (1955)* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 2.

[17] Pollock and Silverman, "Introduction," 3. Resnais had also recently collaborated with Raymond Queneau on a commercial documentary commission, "Le Chant du Styrène" (1958). Using Queneau's alexandrines over images showing a pure interest in light and color, processes and movement, Resnais managed to make even plastic seem poetic.

[18] Raymond Ravar, *Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima!* (Bruxelles: Institut de Sociologie, 1962), 26-7.

chiffres n'aurait pas suffi"[19] (a documentary with statistics would not have sufficed). He talked about the documentary that he could not make with Duras, who agreed to write a script for a very different kind of film, the film that finally became *Hiroshima mon amour*.

While Resnais insisted that the atomic bomb was only ever a backdrop for the film, the film's vision of Hiroshima reveals a sustained and profound attention to the nuclear concern.[20] Representing the nuclear, however, was not without its problems. For Resnais as a filmmaker, one of the principal challenges was the visual representation of a nuclear Hiroshima. The image of the iconic mushroom cloud, he decided, would have been too demonstrative.[21] Hiroshima, rebuilt since its bombing in 1945 and starting to offer "Atomic Tours," as seen in the film, looked like a modern Japanese city. To represent a nuclear Hiroshima then, Resnais turned to reconstructions, "faute d'autre chose" (for lack of anything else), as Duras wrote in the film's script. These reconstructions include excerpts from Japanese films about the bombing, images at the Peace Memorial Museum, shots of a peace parade, and a peace film being made in *Hiroshima mon amour*. After the film's opening act, the narrative turns attention away from Hiroshima as Elle recounts her personal trauma in Nevers. Resnais's nuclear vision of Japan might thus be understood as a cautious yet suggestive one, a nuclear vision of Japan without the nuclear, an acknowledged incompleteness.

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[19] Alain Resnais, "Interview," interview by François Chalais, Alain Resnais, dir. *Hiroshima mon amour*. (United States: Criterion Collection, 2003), DVD, 1961.

[20] This is not to diminish the vision of occupied France represented in the flashback scenes of Nevers. However, this chapter aims to highlight the film's nuclear subject matter by moving beyond the comparison or parallel of historical traumas for a close reading of the film as a nuclear narrative.

[21] Alain Resnais, Histoire sans images: Hiroshima mon amour, interview by Michel Polac, INA, Argos Films, Arte Video, 2004, DVD, 1966.

Atomic Tour bus in Hiroshima

Perhaps the most overlooked influence of the nuclear is in the film's presentation of time. The "twenty-four-hour love affair" is contaminated by haunting pasts and an inescapable present, Rivette's "idée de l'infini, mais à l'intérieur d'un intervalle très bref." We might thus understand nuclear time as the banality of the everyday and the sublimity of the infinite, the interminable present captured on film, the medium of the eternal present. Nuclear time is inextricable from nuclearized space, which can be imprecisely delimited by a place name such as "Hiroshima," or by maps with concentric circles estimating contamination zones. However, while nuclearized space like nuclear time cannot be precisely demarcated, it can be experienced. Exterior spaces with uncertain and ever-changing levels of contamination become suffocating and panic-

inducing, and interior spaces cease to be refuges. Yet while nuclearized space is less certain than its official borders suggest, it is not ubiquitous. We cannot say, for example, that "Tokyo" or "Paris" is a nuclearized space in the way that "Hiroshima" is, both in terms of physical properties and of history and the psychic weight it imposes.

In *Hiroshima mon amour*, Resnais's presentation of a nuclear spatiotemporality along with the shattered conventions of fiction and documentary film create a very different kind of "document" on the bomb: neither a recognizable documentary nor a traditional fiction but rather a "nuclear narrative." I borrow and update this term from the short-lived field of Nuclear Criticism, in which it referred more generally to representations of nuclear war.[22] I use nuclear narrative to refer to aesthetic representations of the nuclear in both the first and second nuclear age.[23] Nuclear narratives are defined both by content and form. They show formal fragmentation, themes of uncertainty and instability, and conceptions of spatiotemporality that are often stuck in the present. Language may become incomprehensible, either because it is foreign, technical, missing, or overwhelming. Thematically, they may be narratives of destruction, while formally they demonstrate the destruction of narrative. In the Franco-Japanese context, the nuclear narrative is not only a formal or thematic pattern but also a cultural actor that intervenes in a tradition of French visions of Japan and invites French (and international) reflection on nuclear culture via two of the world's most nuclearized countries.

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[22] "Proposal for a Diacritics Colloquium on Nuclear Criticism," *Diacritics* 14.2, Nuclear Criticism (Summer 1984): 3.

[23] Molly Wallace takes these terms from the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, which used "second nuclear age" in 2007 to signal an epochal shift in recognizing other risks that had risen to the level of nuclear threats such as climate change, biotechnology and nanotechnology. Molly Wallace, *Risk Criticism: Precautionary Reading in an Age of Environmental Uncertainty* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 2.

This chapter in particular will examine formal instability, linguistic uncertainty, and temporal disorientation in the film *Hiroshima mon amour*.[24] To return to the question "Qu'est-ce que c'était pour toi, Hiroshima en France?", I propose that Resnais's vision of Hiroshima is a nuclear one expressed in a nuclear narrative. This nuclear vision of Hiroshima suggests a turn in the terms of the historical French fascination with Japan and an interruption of the predominantly aesthetic interest as seen in the tradition of Japonisme. *Hiroshima mon amour* not only invites reflection on the nuclear question, particularly in France, but also it influences the way future French writers and filmmakers envision Japan in their own works, as can be seen in the film's legacy, which will be explored in more detail at the end of this chapter.

As one of world cinema's most well-known and extensively studied films, *Hiroshima mon amour* has been subject to everything from philosophical, psychoanalytic, poststructuralist, historiographical, comparative, postcolonial, and poetic readings.[25] Each new turn in critical theory, film studies, and philosophy presents an opportunity to revisit the film. To address specific questions about nuclear form, language, and time, I draw from many of the valuable insights offered by these previous studies, taking an interdisciplinary approach in my analysis. The recent field of Risk Criticism serves this analysis in providing a way to think through the

[24] This analysis directs its focus to the contributions of the filmmaker because only Resnais was in Japan and thus able to both experience firsthand and film his vision of the place.

[25] Joshua Francis Hirsch, *Afterimage: Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004). Hirsch provides a recent psychoanalytical study looking at "posttraumatic cinema," which "not only represents traumatic historical events but also attempts to embody and reproduce the trauma for the spectator through its form of narration. For a historiographical study, see Higgins, *New Novel*. Recent comparative studies that look at contemporary films by revisiting *Hiroshima mon amour* include Catherine Lupton, "Terminal Replay: Resnais Revisited in Chris Marker's *Level Five*," *Screen* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 58–70, and Olivier Ammour-Mayeur, "*H Story* ou l'esthétique du 'remake *relevant*,'" in *Orient(s) de Marguerite Duras*, ed. Florence de Chalonge, Akiko Ueda, and Yann Mével (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2014), 237–50.

implications of representing the nuclear and how cultural productions that do so also shape cultural and political reflection on the nuclear issue.[26]

For thinking about nuclear time in the film, Deleuze is a key reference. Deleuze understands Resnais as an architect of time, constructing his films from layers of past (*nappes de passé*), while Alain Robbe-Grillet, who wrote the script for *L'année dernière à Marienbad,* is said to conceive of time in the form of points of present (*pointes de présent*).[27] *Hiroshima mon amour* might be seen to have a similar division in which writer Duras constructs a narrative from points of present, while Resnais conceives of the film as layers of past. This temporal tension between text and film could also help explain the ambiguous ending of *Hiroshima mon amour* and Resnais's and Duras's different interpretations of the future of the affair. Resnais sees the relationship ending with the film and becoming past, whereas Duras is open to the possibility of the relationship continuing into future, allowing for the present to endure.[28] Resnais's fidelity to Duras's script, as documented in their correspondence between Japan and France in which Resnais requested permission for even minor changes, may also have undermined what Deleuze views as the primacy of the past for Resnais.[29] Tweedie sees this kind of literary influence as common across Resnais's oeuvre: "Given the significant contribution of these *nouveau romanciers*, many of the films of Resnais are better characterized as products not of the Left

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[26] Wallace, *Risk Criticism*. For Wallace, Risk Criticism, which seeks to avoid fetishizing the nuclear over other mega-risks, is an outgrowth of the short-lived Nuclear Criticism in the 1980s, initiated in part by a special issue of *Diacritics* in 1984 and an article therein by Jacques Derrida, "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)," trans. Catherine Porter and Philip Lewis, *Diacritics* 14, no. 2, Nuclear Criticism (Summer 1984): 20–31.

[27] Deleuze, *Cinéma. 2. L'image-temps*, 137.

[28] Alain Resnais, "Conversation avec Alain Resnais," interview by Pierre Wildenstein, *Téléciné* (March-April 1960): 3; Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, 16.

[29] Dominique Noguez, Marie-Christine de Navacelle, and Chihiro Minato, *Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), 62-9.

Bank group but of the literary new wave, and his films oscillate between these various influences."[30] Resnais's layers of past might also be seen to contaminate the present, transforming points of present into infinite layers and rendering the present at once impossible and eternal.

The temporal analysis in this chapter, however, paired with a consideration of space, owes most to M.M. Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, with the chronotope of the nuclear serving as a way to conceptualize one part of the nuclear narrative. In the Bakhtinian chronotope, "[t]ime, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible" and "space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history." For Bakhtin, chronotopes "are the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events… It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative."[31] Robert Stam argues that the Bakhtinian chronotope, traditionally used in literary analyses, "seems in some ways even more appropriate to film than to literature," and suggests that "more important than searching for cinematic equivalents to Bakhtin's literary chronotopes, perhaps is the construction of specifically filmic chronotopes."[32] Michael V. Montgomery uses the chronotope as a way to "reinvigorate older studies of film based on genre."[33] Vivian Sobchack, who coins the

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[30] Tweedie, *The Age of New Waves*, 113.

[31] M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84, 250.

[32] Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction*. This has been taken up by film scholars such as Michael Montgomery with the chronotope of the shopping mall, Vivian Sobchack with the chronotope of film noir, and Lily Alexander with the chronotope of rise and fall. Lily Alexander, "Storytelling in Time and Space: Studies in the Chronotope and Narrative Logic on Screen," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 27–64.

[33] Michael V. Montgomery, *Carnivals and Commonplaces: Bakhtin's Chronotope, Cultural Studies, and Film*, (New York, Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994), 2. Montgomery's study looks at Hollywood cinema and focuses particularly on the spatial dimension of the Bakhtinian chronotope, exploring the setting of the road, the castle, and the shopping mall, and relating these places to the cultural ethos of certain decades in the United States. His study is less interested in how space and time work together within the films themselves.

chronotope of film noir, sees the chronotope as a more specific classification tool than genre,[34] such as the western, the noir, or, I would add, the nuclear narrative. The chronotope of the nuclear is thus useful in this sense to draw out the specifically nuclear spatiotemporal aspects of the nuclear narrative. For Sobchack, the choronotope is also used to understand the phenomenological relationship between text and context, the boundary between which is not absolute.[35] The chronotope of the nuclear thus allows us to understand the nuclear narrative in the context of the nuclear era, and how in this age the aesthetic of subtraction or of negative space might offer a way to envision catastrophe.

In summary, by exploring *Hiroshima mon amour*'s interest in the nuclear question through a deconstruction of filmic form and spatiotemporal elements as well as a consideration of linguistic factors, I seek to decenter the plot of the twenty-four-hour love affair and the themes that have been read as central to the film in favor of attending to the nuclear subject matter, the film's arguable dominant, although perhaps a latent one, as Resnais insisted the bomb was only the film's backdrop. It is my hope that understanding *Hiroshima mon amour* as a nuclear narrative might elucidate the film's place in the history of Franco-Japanese cultural exchanges, its legacy for future cultural productions, and the kinds of reflection it might inspire.

Formal Instability

To understand *Hiroshima mon amour* as a nuclear narrative requires both a consideration of what Resnais calls the film's nuclear backdrop as well as an analysis of its unstable, hybrid

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[34] Vivian Sobchack, "Lounge Time: Postwar Crisis and the Chronotope of Film Noir," in *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 151.

[35] Sobchack., 150.

form. I use the word "form" in this case synonymously with "mode," as in the documentary mode or the fictional mode. The vision of Hiroshima presented in *Hiroshima mon amour*, that of a city imagined on the page and reconciled with lived experience as it was filmed for the screen, is at times a poetically documentary one. And yet, the Resnais-Duras collaboration often calls into question the authority of what might be called its documentary elements. With *Hiroshima mon amour*, Resnais explodes the conventions of both documentary and fictional modes in cinema. His film is thus at once a narrative of destruction and an illustration of the destruction of narrative, a formulation that broadly summarizes the nuclear narrative.

Fiction was Resnais's plan for stimulating the spectator's imagination about the bombing of Hiroshima; however, from the start documentary elements encroached on the film. The opening act is often considered the most documentary in style as it incorporates images from other documentaries about Hiroshima as well as newsreels from after the bombing, archival images from the museum, and images of the evidence of destruction remaining in Hiroshima at the time of filming.[36] In his monograph on Resnais, James Monaco titles the chapter on *Hiroshima mon amour* "False Documentary," a term he borrows from Duras.[37] In a more recent study of Resnais's oeuvre, Emma Wilson writes, "Resnais appears to commemorate the documentary he might have made about Hiroshima in the first fifteen minutes of *Hiroshima mon amour.* The film even sounds in places like his earlier film *Nuit et brouillard.*"[38] Indeed, echoes

[36] Abé Mark Nornes's *Japanese Documentary Film: The Meiji Era through Hiroshima*, Visible Evidence (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 216, catalogues a few of the many films, including *Hiroshima mon amour*, that borrowed footage from the first documentary film of the bombings, *Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (1946). Mirei Seki in "Réception," 227, lists some of the other origins of Resnais's documentary images of Hiroshima: televised newsreels, Hideo Sekikawa's *Hiroshima* (1953), and Fumio Kamei's *Heureux d'avoir survécu* (*Ikite ite yokatta*, 1956) and *Le monde est terrifié* (*Sekai wa kyofu suru*, 1957).

[37] Monaco, *Alain Resnais,* 35.

[38] Emma Wilson, *Alain Resnais* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 50.

of Resnais's previous documentaries—*Nuit et brouillard,* in particular—resound throughout *Hiroshima mon amour*.[39] The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, like the Musée de l'homme in Paris explored in *Les statues meurent aussi*, is another public institution charged with creating and keeping national memory, and the institution of the museum is shown to be problematic as it leaves visitors with the impression that in seeing artifacts they have more authentic knowledge or a greater understanding of the history.

The *Cahiers* critics call these documentary echoes the "motif central dans la tapisserie" (the central pattern in the tapestry). For Pierre Kast, Resnais's documentary echoes bring together the apparently contradictory elements of intellectual passion and emotion. Jean-Luc Godard sees the documentary resemblance most obviously in the subject of memory and forgetting in Resnais's documentary about the Bibliothèque nationale de France *Toute la mémoire du monde*, while Rivette argues that *Hiroshima mon amour* explains Resnais's short films and their forms more than they might be used to explain it.[40] Roy Armes, for whom the documentary aspects are "clearly used to counterpoint the personal story," echoes the *Cahiers* discussion in his assertion that *Hiroshima mon amour* "follows naturally on the documentaries in the structural patterns it adopts, for Resnais's great achievement is to maintain in a feature the short filmmaker's freedom to build a film out of an interplay of past and present (as in *Nuit et brouillard*) or by the systematic use of successive tracking shots (as in *Toute la mémoire du monde*)."[41] Aesthetically and generically, *Hiroshima mon amour* marks a transition for Resnais

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[39] Wilson refers to a familiar musical motif in *Hiroshima mon amour* that was written by Giovanni Fusco, who claimed not to have seen *Nuit et brouillard*, from which the motif seems to have come.

[40] Domarchi et. al., "Hiroshima notre amour," 2. I would add the documentary parallel with "Le Chant du Styrène," Resnais's twelve-minute 1958 documentary about plastic, which is similarly concerned with its subject matter's past, the origins and materials that make it what it is.

[41] Armes, *Cinema of Alain Resnais*, 75.

from short-form documentarist to feature-length fictional filmmaker; thus, his experimentation with formal hybridity may not be particularly surprising. When asked about the difficulties of moving from short to long format, Alain Resnais himself remarked that *Hiroshima mon amour* is more of a "long court métrage" (long short film) than a true "long métrage"[42] (feature-length film). However, the place of the film in Resnais's filmography is of less interest in this chapter than its place in a tradition of French visions of Japan and the way in which its hybrid, unstable form evokes the nuclear subject matter.

The Japanese critic Hiroshi Minami argues that Resnais saw Hiroshima with a documentary, prosaic gaze, while the stream of consciousness filmed in Nevers lent the French town a poetic character. Mirei Seki's analysis of the film's Japanese reception suggests that "l'ensemble des critiques négatives proviennent du mécontentement suscité par le fait que les scènes de Nevers sont revêtues d'un caractère poétique, tandis que, pour les Japonais, Hiroshima apparaît comme une ville prosaïque, privée de tout charme pittoresque ou exotique." (The negative critiques arise from dissatisfaction provoked by the fact that the scenes in Nevers assume a poetic character, while, for the Japanese, Hiroshima appears as a prosaic city, deprived of any picturesque or exotic charm.) Still, as Seki points out, Resnais's images of wartime Hiroshima come from Japanese documentaries and fiction films, and many of the scenes of contemporary Hiroshima were filmed in a Daiei studio in Tokyo. Seki argues that for Resnais and Duras, "il ne s'agissait pas de montrer Hiroshima en pleine actualité ou à travers son passé historique: l'enjeu se trouvait ailleurs…. Cependant, les monuments historiques offrent aux spectateurs japonais une vue de l'authenticité de la ville d'Hiroshima."[43] (It was not about

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[42] Alain Resnais, *Le Monde*, May 9, 1959 in *Hiroshima mon amour*, DVD booklet, Argos, 2004.

[43] Seki, "Réception," 227-8.

showing Hiroshima as it is or through its historical past: the concern was elsewhere…. Nevertheless, the historical monuments offer Japanese spectators a picture of an authentic Hiroshima.)

The prosaic charge also ignores the possibility of different documentary modes, such as Michael Renov's "expressive tendency" or Bill Nichols's articulation of the poetic mode, which "stress[es] the visual and acoustic rhythms, patterns, and the overall form of the film."[44] Resnais's interest in visual and acoustic rhythms is evident in the opening dissolve shots of the actors' body parts, in parallel tracking shots in Nevers and Hiroshima, and in the musical themes associated with each place. For Resnais, acoustics were intimately related to form: "Par la musique, j'ai voulu retrouver le côté opéra de manière à créer une espèce de continuité par rapport aux dialogues de Marguerite Duras."[45] (Through the music, I wanted to rediscover the operatic side in order to create a sort of continuity in relation to Marguerite Duras's dialogues.)

Resnais's attention to acoustic rhythms extends to the level of the word and the proper name. Tsutomu Iwasaki, the interpreter in Paris for the actor Eiji Okada (Lui) and the man who provided the cough in the film that Elle hears every day at four o'clock, recalls Resnais asking about the name of the river in Hiroshima: "Ne pourrait-on pas prononcer Ora (Aura?), au lieu de Ota?"[46] (Couldn't we pronounce it Ora (Aura?), instead of Ota?) In an interview soon after the film's release, Resnais explained, "Nous avons choisi Nevers comme lieu de l'action passée

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[44] Michael Renov, "Toward a Poetics of Documentary," in *Theorizing Documentary*, ed. Michael Renov (London: Routledge, 1993), 32-3. Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 150.

[45] Alain Resnais, "Conversation avec Alain Resnais," interview by Pierre Wildenstein, *Téléciné* (March-April 1960): 6.

[46] Tsutomu Iwasaki, "La post-synchronisation de *Hiroshima mon amour*," in *Orient(s) de Marguerite Duras*, ed. Florence de Chalonge, Yann Mével, and Akiko Ueda (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2014), 372. Iwasaki said no.

parce que c'était un beau nom"[47] (we chose Nevers as the place for the past action because it had a nice name).

This is not to say that *Hiroshima mon amour* is a documentary film, or even a poetic documentary. However, the documentary elements that encroach on the film are at times those of the poetic mode, and they affirm Resnais's background as a documentarist while exploding the conventions of traditional fiction film and creating formal instability. We might even say that the documentary fragments that persist in *Hiroshima mon amour* lend the film a sort of documentary half-life. Thus, the further in time we find ourselves from the film's creation and the more the formal, theoretical, and historical analyses of the film accumulate, the better equipped we may be to see the film's documentary elements from a critical historical distance, to unpack their apparent archival authority, and to understand how these elements destabilize the film and subvert its formal or generic categorization.

The term "documentary" itself is problematic in that it can suggest a shortcut to truth, even if access to truth finally comes via representations and recreations. In an early critique of the film, Bernard Pingaud writes: "Entre ces deux événements, ces deux situations, existe une différence capitale: ni l'héroïne, ni son amant japonais n'ont vécu le bombardement. Ils ne peuvent en avoir qu'une connaissance dérivée, par les traces qu'il a laissées dans la mémoire des autres."[48] (Between these two events, these two situations, exists a crucial difference: neither the heroine nor her Japanese lover experienced the bombing. They can only have an understanding of it derived from the marks it left in others' memories.) In the film, Hiroshima's past is shown

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[47] Alain Resnais, "Un Entretien avec Alain Resnais," interview by Michel Delahaye, *Cinéma* n.38 (July 1959): 9.

[48] Bernard Pingaud, "À propos d'*Hiroshima mon amour,*" *Positif* n. 35 juillet-août 1960, 66-86, in ed. Stéphane Goudet, *Positif, revue de cinéma*: *Alain Resnais*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 70.

in the form of a documentary of its present, necessarily derived from archival material and recreations, and inevitably incomplete. Pingaud remarks on the subjectivity and fragility of the documentary mode:

> Qu'est-ce qu'un documentaire ? Précisément, la forme la plus fragile de la mémoire. Fragile parce que le documentaire nous présente les lieux tels que nous pourrions les voir, mais tels que nous ne les avons pas vus. C'est en quelque sorte une vision dérivée, un substitut. Si, par surcroît, le documentaire—comme c'est le cas ici et comme dans *Nuit et brouillard*—veut évoquer un événement ancien par les traces matérielles qu'il a laissées dans la mémoire publique que constituent les monuments, les musées, les documents officiels, il ne fait que plus tragiquement ressortir l'insuffisance de cette mémoire dérivée, de cette mémoire apprise.[49]
>
> (What is a documentary? Precisely, the most fragile form of memory. Fragile because the documentary shows us places as we could see them but as we did not see them. In a way, it's a derived vision, a substitute. If, moreover, the documentary—as in the case here and as in *Nuit et brouillard*—seeks to evoke a past event by the material traces that it left in the public memory formed by monuments, museums, official documents, it only more tragically emphasizes the inadequacy of this derived memory, of this learned memory.)

The historical documentary in particular must acknowledge its lack of complete authority, its "mémoire dérivée" or "mémoire apprise," and its dependence on incomplete "traces… laissées dans la mémoire publique." How then do we interpret the film or the text that explicitly acknowledges its "mémoire dérivée," as happens when Elle recognizes that the traces she has seen at the museum are "reconstitutions, faute d'autre chose"? Are these "traces" primarily used to call attention to the insufficiency of the documentary mode and the need for a more hybrid way of telling?

Hiroshima mon amour offers its hybrid form as a sort of humanistic alternative to the fragments of documentary films it contains. The film's opening images are dissolves of interlaced body parts covered alternately with ashes and sweat, introducing the film's poetic intention and its interest in the human being and metonymically in humanity. *Effects of the*

[49] Pingaud, "À propos d'*Hiroshima mon amour*," 71.

Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the 1946 Japanese documentary about the aftermath of the atomic bombings that Resnais visually cites in his film, was criticized for its cold, scientific presentation of Hiroshima that seemed to eliminate altogether the human factor.[50] So many images from *Effects* have been appropriated by other books and films that it is seen as having produced the iconic images of Hiroshima that live on in the public memory, just as Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* did for the concentration camps. Having already produced iconic images for the public memory in his previous short film, Resnais wanted the images in *Hiroshima mon amour*, documentary or not, to do something else.

The most iconic documentary image of Hiroshima was established early on: the mushroom cloud. Nearly half a century after the release of *Hiroshima mon amour*, Rey Chow confirms what Resnais seems to have anticipated about this image: "Our knowledge about what happened to Hiroshima and Nagasaki is inseparable from the image of the mushroom cloud. As knowledge, 'Hiroshima' and 'Nagasaki' come to us inevitably as representation and, specifically, as a picture. Moreover, it is not a picture in the older sense of a mimetic replication of reality; rather it has become in itself a sign of terror."[51] Resnais chose not to use this image or one of its variants, such as the mushroom cloud over the Bikini Islands—the image that Duras had initially called for in the script—and in doing so made clear his preference for the suggestive over the demonstrative: "L'événement lui-même d'Hiroshima nous ne le voyons d'ailleurs pas. Il est évoqué par quelques détails comme on fait parfois pour une description romanesque où il n'est pas besoin d'énumérer toutes les caractéristiques d'un paysage ou d'un événement pour faire

[50] Nornes, *Japanese Documentary Film*, 193.

[51] Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 25.

prendre conscience de sa totalité."[52] (We do not see the event of Hiroshima itself. It is evoked by a few details, as one sometimes does in a novelistic description where it is not necessary to enumerate all of the features of a landscape or of an event to create awareness of the whole.) Resnais's suggestive presentation of the bomb is also a literary one, as he compares the selection of detail for the screen with that of a novelistic description. Indeed, the literary collaboration altered the film from the outset. Duras's screenplay, the first text she wrote for the screen, is neither a traditional novelistic adaptation nor a film script per se, but a sort of hybrid form that led to an original process of collaboration that played out from remote positions across the globe.

As much of the film was shot in Japan, certain formal decisions were made for practical and financial reasons. For instance, it would have cost more to shoot Elle in the hospital and at the museum, so the scenes in those locations were shot without the actress, and her voiceover narration was added during postproduction. In the film, this results in the sense of an uncertain narrative consciousness leading the camera through these institutions. The camera's low height and smooth, often brisk tracking do not directly correspond to adult human movement. In the film, Elle repeats that she visited the museum four times, which might lead the viewer to question whether the images come from one such visit, from a composite memory of the visits, from an abstract and universal consciousness, or from a camera with chiefly aesthetic intentions.

We might also consider the uncertain status of the image with regard to the mushroom cloud. At the end of the film, at dawn after the never-ending night, another type of cloud hangs over a street in Hiroshima. This cloud, perhaps of dust, may also be seen as a nod to the spectacular and overly demonstrative image of the mushroom cloud that Resnais would not show in the film's opening shots. Yet this cloud of dust subtly evokes the lingering effects of the

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[52] Alain Resnais, "Un entretien avec Alain Resnais," interview by Michel Delahaye, *Cinéma* 38 (July 1959): 5.

bomb, the invisible threat of radioactivity in the atmosphere that is carried by wind, less apparently lethal than black rain but pernicious in ways that we may not yet fully know and are only able to imagine.

While Guy Debord's notion of the spectacle is more interested in late capitalism and postwar consumerism, it might also be used to think through conceptions of nuclear culture and to the atomic bomb in particular. For Debord, "Le spectacle n'est pas un ensemble d'images, mais un rapport social entre des personnes, médiatisé par des images." (The spectacle is not a set of images but a social relationship between people that is mediatized by images.) The spectacle comes from a loss of unity in the world. It is represented by the superior class and seeks to unify those separated by it, but to unify them as separate and isolated individuals.[53] The bomb as an American demonstration of superiority is such a spectacle in that it sought to weaken Japan by separating the Japanese people politically from the Axis as well as individually in their distinct personal traumas, while unifying them as victims and spectators of unprecedented destruction. In subverting the spectacular image of the bomb through the use of multiple kinds of images of Hiroshima, Resnais works against the notion of the society of the spectacle that Debord would articulate nearly a decade after the release of the film. Resnais's use of suggestive rather than iconic images and his destabilizing fusion of forms seem to work toward Bruno Latour's stated goal of questioning the icon and its claim to truth in order to emancipate the spectator and as an invitation to reflect more deeply on how the images we see construct our knowledge of a place and its history.[54]

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[53] Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle,* 2nd ed. (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1967; Paris: Éditions Champ Libre, 1971), 10-9.

[54] Latour quoted in Wallace, *Risk Criticism*, 19-21.

Cloud at dawn in Hiroshima

Ulrich Beck suggests that risk is not perceptible until it is represented,[55] which gets at the heart of the problem for *Hiroshima mon amour* and its representation of the bomb. In his nuclear vision of Hiroshima, Resnais finally does represent risk, or rather the risk of not being able to represent risk, the risk of representing risk as spectacular, or of creating iconic, archival images that come to stand for risk but that finally separate and isolate the spectators. Formal instability in *Hiroshima mon amour* allows for a representation of risk as uncertainty and the unease that accompanies it, an unease that may finally unify spectators more than an iconic image would.

[55] Beck quoted in Wallace, *Risk Criticism*, 12.

LINGUISTIC UNCERTAINTY

If *Hiroshima mon amour* can be said to explicitly document anything, it might be the scriptwriter's and filmmaker's acknowledgement of the obstacles a non-Japanese person faces in going to Japan to try to understand and represent the bombing of Hiroshima. These obstacles, many of which Resnais and Duras faced themselves in creating the film, are evident in the script as well as in images in the film. The French cinema scholar Robert Benayoun writes, "*Hiroshima* illustre cette démarche désormais rituelle chez Resnais qui consiste à créer par accumulation d'obstacles, à œuvrer contre son propre film."[56] (*Hiroshima* illustrates Resnais's now ritual approach that entails creating by accumulation of obstacles, by working against his own film.) Resnais, who did not speak Japanese, exchanged ideas by mail with collaborator Duras, who was halfway around the world. In Japan, Resnais used filmic allusions, in particular to Cocteau's *Orphée*, to direct a Japanese technical crew.[57] As for the subject matter, Duras summarizes their approach to it in the introduction to the script: "Impossible de parler de HIROSHIMA. Tout ce qu'on peut faire c'est de parler de l'impossibilité de parler de HIROSHIMA."[58] (Impossible to talk about HIROSHIMA. All one can do is talk about the impossibility of talking about HIROSHIMA.) With regard to these challenges, Wilson suggests that *Hiroshima mon amour* shows a negotiated acceptance of what might be termed a "new ignorance," or "a refusal of resolution or meaning."[59] This section will explore how ignorance and refusal of meaning, or "tu

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[56] Robert Benayoun, *Alain Resnais: Arpenteur de L'imaginaire* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 1980), 71.

[57] "Orpheus, the New Historian - Cahiers du cinéma," http://www.cahiersducinema.com/Orpheus-the-New-Historian.html, from Cyril Neyrat, "Orphée, le nouvel historien: 'Hiroshima mon amour' au programme du bac 2008," *Cahiers du cinema* 627 (2007): 75-76.

[58] Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, 10.

[59] Wilson, *Alain Resnais*, 6.

n'as rien vu" (you saw nothing), are communicated in the film and how the language barrier can be seen as an important component of the nuclear narrative.

Hiroshima mon amour demonstrates a suspicion of French attempts to understand and represent Japan. The international peace movie that is being made in the film serves as a critique of its own naïve approach and objectives. When talking about the peace film with Lui, Elle says, "Il y a bien des films publicitaires sur le savon. Alors, à force, peut-être." (There are lots of commercials for soap. Maybe by pressing the point.) He responds, "Oui, à force. Ici, à Hiroshima, on ne se moque pas des films sur la paix." (Yes, maybe. Here, in Hiroshima, we don't make fun of films about peace.) Elle is also certain that she has seen and understood everything about the bombing of Hiroshima after her four visits to the museum. The directorially acknowledged "new ignorance" contrasts with Elle's form of ignorance, as seen in her somewhat irreverent attempts to understand Hiroshima, which for her represents first and foremost "la fin de la guerre" (the end of the war). The film's creators, on the other hand, acknowledge the limitations of archival recreations, of documentary, and of the language barrier, and they express these limits and their own "new ignorance" in the film.

Hiroshima mon amour conveys the impenetrability of Japanese culture and language for a Western visitor most explicitly during the film's opening act, which in 1959 introduced the film as a new kind of cinema and offered a rather different vision of Japan than had been shown before by French artists. The hospital scene opens with a low-angle shot of the building's angular exterior, a door-less, imposing structure that suggests the architectural impenetrability of the institution. Once inside, a slow tracking shot of the hallway expresses cautious hesitation. The Japanese women standing at the doors in the hallway gaze slightly down at the camera, which pauses as if to request permission to enter the room. Inside one of the rooms, the camera halts at

medium close-ups of the patients and finally cuts away in acquiescence to the intimacy it has been denied after three patients turn from its curious gaze. The Japanese patients who turn their backs to the camera confirm the impenetrability of the institution of the hospital as well as of its patients, who refuse the parts offered them of documentary subjects, medical curiosities, or objects of pity. The visual tone at the hospital may be one of curiosity but it is also one of respectful restraint, of a directorial prudence in contrast to Elle's verbal insistence that "J'ai tout vu" (I saw everything) and "Comment aurais-je pu éviter de le voir?" (How could I not have seen it?)

This disjunction between visual and verbal language suggests the limitations of both. The patients' silences are a few of the many silences Elle and Resnais face in response to their efforts to understand and represent the nuclear history of Hiroshima. Their silence is emblematic of that which surrounds nuclear culture in general, particularly when disaster, or the threat of disaster, is so close to home. This silence might also be considered in terms of the Japanese notion of *mu*, or emptiness, in which the "seeming void is given greater value over material output."[60] Ignorance of the Japanese language is not only about the inability to comprehend words but also about the encounter with a different linguistic structure. Japanese discourse can function without an explicit subject, and interlocutors are sensitive to this silence or absence as "an anonymity that transcends selfhood," which is also part of the idea of *mu.*[61] The Japanese aesthetic and philosophical principles of *ma,* or negative space and subtraction, and *mu* offer ways to think about the experience of significant emptiness and silence in *Hiroshima mon amour*.

[60] Vartanian and Wada, *See Saw*, 145.

[61] Vartanian and Wada., 145.

Hiroshima hospital exterior

The scene at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum evokes the impenetrability of another culture's historical memory, especially in the face of a language barrier. Elle's insistence intensifies as she repeats that she visited the museum four times and that she saw everything: people, scorched and contorted metal, preserved human flesh, broken and charred stone, women's hair. The camera shows a different perspective: the empty museum entrance with its wide staircase and hard architectural angles; the glimmering disco ball as representation of the bomb; diagrams, charts, explanations—some only in Japanese and thus inaccessible to most non-Japanese visitors—and a mushroom cloud painted on the wall.

Reconstructions, photographs, and explanatory information about the bomb

Perhaps this is the film's missing mushroom cloud: photographed, explained, and represented on the wall. Four times at the museum in Hiroshima.[62] The camera, still resisting demonstration, passes through this corner of representations. It moves at a low height through the displays, showing the museumgoers' legs and their children's faces, a visual reminder of a different kind of ignorance of history. Clumps of hair on display at the museum are reminiscent of the piles of hair at Auschwitz seen in *Nuit et brouillard*. Resnais's self-reflexive allusion at this point provides an opening for a viewer already familiar with images of the atrocities at the

[62] Incidentally, the Japanese word for "four" (*shi*) also means "death," and four is considered an unlucky number in Japanese culture.

concentration camps, a suggestive evocation that allows the viewer to translate the experience at Hiroshima to that of a perhaps more familiar horror.

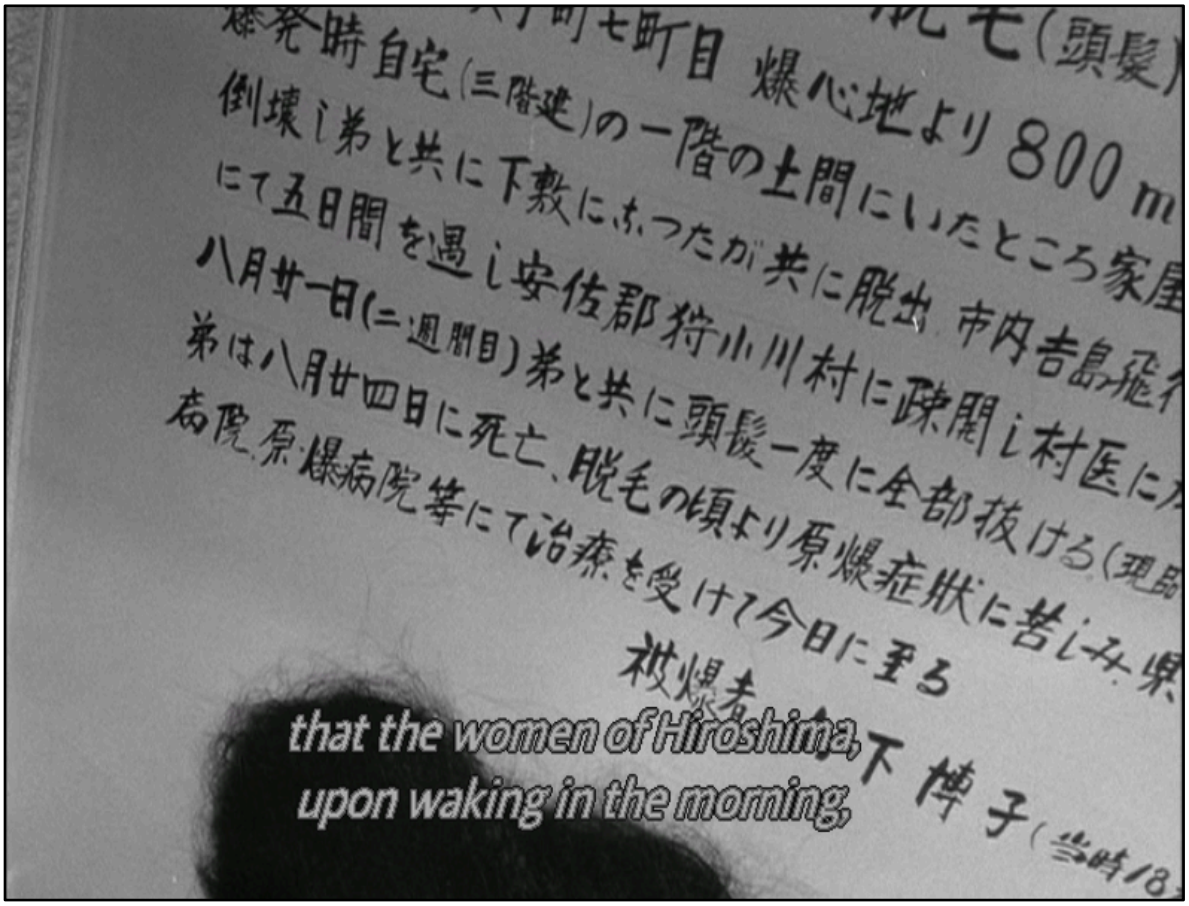

Exhibit of women's hair at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum

As Elle understands them though, they are the "chevelures anonymes que les femmes de Hiroshima retrouvaient toutes entières tombées le matin, au réveil" (anonymous masses of hair that women in Hiroshima, upon waking in the morning, would find had fallen out). In the frame, we see only a panel of writing in Japanese, which the viewer must read or accept its impenetrability. During the subsequent images of burn victims on display at the museum, the voiceover narration is silent, providing a momentary concession to an ultimately unknowable experience.

Toward the end of the film, the scene at the train station offers an example of the impenetrability of Japanese culture and language for the outsider and the instability it provokes. Elle walks into the station where announcements are made in Japanese, announcements that she cannot understand and seems to not even hear. Memories of Nevers return and dominate the screen accompanied by the extradiegetic Nevers theme. Elle vows to forget her German lover, and the camera slowly pans from a close-up of her to a two shot of Lui and the Japanese woman sitting between them. Elle disappears from the frame, and Lui and the Japanese woman converse in Japanese.

Lui as translator in the train station

In this moment, Lui becomes a translator between two women, two generations, and two cultures incapable of direct verbal communication. This is the first significant Japanese dialogue

in the film and the first instance during which Elle truly becomes the Other. Incidentally, the Japanese conversation was not initially translated in subtitles, "as though to emphasize the impenetrable nature of the Japanese culture," as Peter Cowie suggests.[63] The translation is thus incomplete, unresolved, and discontinuous.

Each of the nuclear narratives in this dissertation in some way calls attention to the opacity of foreign language and the relative risk that accompanies linguistic ignorance. In the context of Franco-Japanese cultural exchanges, *Hiroshima mon amour* directly addresses the problem of language and linguistic incomprehension that seems to have gone unnoticed, or at least unanalyzed, over the course of the preceding century of French encounters with Japan. For both Resnais and Elle confronting the nuclear issue in Japan, the language barrier is at times problematic to the point of being destabilizing. And while Resnais avoids explicit political engagement with this film, the linguistic uncertainty evident in it draws attention to the language barrier, to the idea of *mu*, the significant void or silence, and in the face of a silence that may not translate the same way across cultures, to the elusiveness of understanding.

Temporal Disorientation

Silence returns us to the question of representing that which is imperceptible. Molly Wallace's *Risk Criticism* opens with a discussion of the "Doomsday Clock" used as the cover image on the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* publications since 1947. The clock provides an image that allows us to perceive risk. It also alerts us to the possibility of uncertain time as its temporality is nonlinear: two minutes to midnight in 1953, seventeen minutes to midnight in 1991, and at the time of this writing, in 2017, two and a half minutes to midnight. For Wallace,

[63] Peter Cowie, "Commentary," on dir. Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour*.

the Doomsday Clock "provides a useful corrective to any narrative of progress that might mislead us into complacency regarding the nuclear."[64] As Wallace's analysis suggests, nuclear time is not progressive; it is stuck in the twenty-fourth hour at the precipice of apocalypse. This is also what we might understand as a sort of eternal nuclear present: existence, perhaps blindly, at the precipice of apocalypse. For the past seventy years, life under the Doomsday Clock has been stuck in the pre-apocalyptic present, fluctuating between a few minutes before midnight. A similar sense of temporal disorientation is evident in *Hiroshima mon amour,* which Rivette calls "une parenthèse dans le temps." It is the night that never ends, the perpetual twenty-fourth hour.

Discussions of time in relation to nuclear power often coalesce around understandings of nuclear temporality as alternately nonlinear, infinite, cyclical, and static. In this section, I use Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope to explore the particular nuclear spatiotemporality presented in *Hiroshima mon amour*. Specifically, I look at temporal disorientation in what can be acknowledged as the film's nuclear space, as in the chronotope, notions of space and time are interdependent, and space is responsive to time. Perhaps nuclear spatiotemporality can be best defined negatively by its imprecision. I use the chronotope of the nuclear in an attempt to envision the indefinite borders of nuclear space and time, which is a somewhat different use than Sobchack, for example, makes of the chronotope in her rather precise delineation of the chronotope of 1940s lounge time. Bakhtin's use of the chronotope, however, is not always so clearly delimited. For example, the chronotope of the adventure found in Greek romance is situated in "adventure-time," which lacks everyday cyclicity and indications of historical time, and occurs in "an *abstract* expanse of space."[65] Spatiotemporal abstraction and flexibility is thus

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[64] Wallace, *Risk Criticism*, 16.

[65] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 99.

essential to the chronotope of the adventure, as Bakhtin explains, "for any concretization—geographic, economic, sociopolitical, quotidian—would fetter the freedom and flexibility of the adventures and limit the absolute power of chance."[66] Following Bakhtin's looser conception of spatiotemporality in the chronotope, I argue for the fluidity and flexibility of the chronotope of the nuclear. Nuclear spatial borders shift and are uncertain. Nuclear temporality exists on an unthinkably long scale. The chronotope of the nuclear thus offers a form for literary and filmic representations of Timothy Morton's notion of the nuclear hyperobject.

In *Hiroshima mon amour*, the nuclear space is that which Resnais calls the film's "nuclear backdrop," or what I prefer to call its nuclear *background*. A "backdrop" can be a setting while also evoking the theater and décor, whereas "background" evokes a framework or foundation. In the physical sciences, "background" refers to "low-intensity radiation from radioisotopes present in the natural environment."[67] Nuclear time can be seen as at once static and cyclical, seemingly infinite in duration yet contaminated or imprinted on by the instant, and above all nonlinear and unstable. The chronotope of the nuclear is an outgrowth of Bakhtin's chronotope of crisis or threshold, which represents a breaking point or life-changing decision or moment of indecision, and in which "time is essentially instantaneous; it is as if it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of biographical time."

A frequent companion to Bakhtin's chronotope of crisis is the ancillary time of the provincial town, "the locus for cyclical everyday time" in which "there are no events, only 'doings' that constantly repeat themselves." The ancillary time of the provincial town cannot be the primary time of the narrative because nothing happens; instead, "it often serves as a

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[66] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 100.

[67] *New Oxford American Dictionary,* "background."

contrasting background for temporal sequences that are more charged with energy and event."[68] The chronotope of the nuclear thus merges the chronotope of crisis and its ancillary time of the provincial town (which need not be restricted to the nonmetropolitan place), fuses them, and reverses their roles. In the chronotope of the nuclear, the crisis, or the instantaneous time of the event, becomes "the locus for cyclical everyday time." The crisis is not necessarily directly presented as event or threshold but rather may serve as a supporting *background* rather than as a mere historical *backdrop*. In the chronotope of the nuclear, sequences "charged with energy and event" are at once subsumed by cyclical, infinite duration at the same time that they contaminate or imprint it with crisis.

The chronotope of the nuclear is evident in visual, verbal, and aural components of *Hiroshima mon amour* as well as in the film's treatment of duration, which remains resolutely in the present. Not only is the present punctuated by past memories (which may also be subsumed by the present), but also the diegetic sense of eternal present, or infinite duration, is punctuated by moments of static time, that which we might expect to appear in the ancillary time of the provincial town. A couple of examples of broken time occur in the second act of the film. In one such instance, Lui and Elle are in the hotel room looking at each other in a mirror, and he asks if it had been a nice day in Paris when she found out about the bombing of Hiroshima.

ELLE: Il faisait beau, oui.

LUI: Quel âge avais-tu?

ELLE: Vingt ans. Et toi?

LUI: Vingt-deux ans.

ELLE: Le même âge, quoi?

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[68] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 248.

LUI: En somme, oui.

(ELLE: Yes, it was a nice day.

LUI: How old were you?

ELLE: Twenty. You?

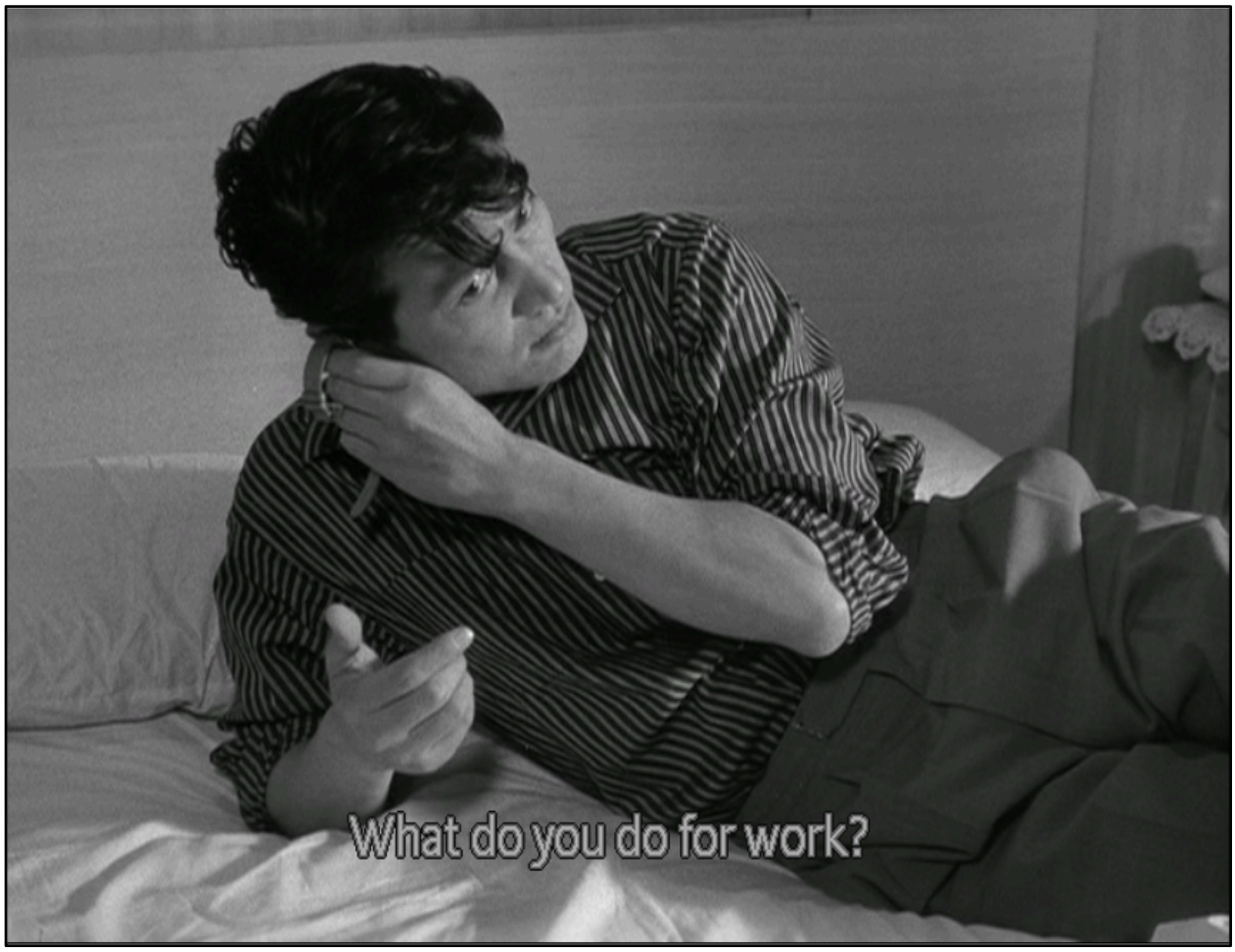
LUI: Twenty-two.

ELLE: The same age, really.

LUI: Just about.)

The discussion of the past ends with a cut to another conversation in the same room. Now, Lui is on the bed. He picks up his watch and appears to notice that it has stopped. He holds it to his ear as if to confirm that the registration of time passing has stopped, as if he and Elle are now stuck in an eternal present.[69] Here, the duration of the present is punctuated by the suggestion of static time. The conversation returns to the present as Elle asks, "Qu'est-ce que tu fais, toi, dans la vie?" (What do you do for work?) As the French present tense packs into it a few different meanings, "qu'est-ce que tu fais" might be understood in a few different ways: what do you do (habitually), what do you do (as a general truth), and what are you doing (in this instant, or in a very near future). Of course, "dans la vie" (here, for work, or for a living) demands the habitual sense of the term; however, it would seem that the other meanings, which situate the action in either the exact instant or in the absolute realm of the general, haunt Elle's question and also evoke the eternal present: the present instant that is also the everyday present and the absolute present as general truth.

[69] The film's script notes only that Lui picks up his watch "qu'il remonte avant de la fixer au poignet," in Alain Resnais, "Hiroshima mon amour: découpage intégral," *L'Avant-scène*, no. 61–62 (1966): 20.



Lui with stopped watch

Lui is not in this instant doing what he does in the habitual present, or working as an architect, because his cyclical everyday time has been punctuated by their affair. Time as registered by his watch has come to a standstill. As a manifestation of the chronotope of the nuclear, we might note that the affair, "charged with energy and event," is subsumed by the cyclical, infinite duration of daily life and also infuses that duration with event, imprints it with the instantaneousness of crisis. While the primary crisis in this case, the affair, is not nuclear, the experience of time, or the inescapable present, can be seen as influenced by the nuclear subject matter because the nuclear spatiotemporality of Hiroshima has facilitated the encounter. The

nuclear space of Hiroshima, too, is evoked by Lui's response: he is an architect in a city that has been completely rebuilt after the atomic bomb destroyed it.

This sequence provides another illustrative example of the chronotope of the nuclear. As Elle and Lui converse in the hotel room, church bells can be heard ringing in the background. They ring for nearly five minutes of film time: during Elle and Lui's conversation, as they leave the room and descend the stairs, and as they continue their conversation outside in front of the hotel, where the sound of the bells is finally drowned out by the sounds of automobiles in the street.[70] The interminable ringing bells anticipate the church bells that Elle recalls to Lui later in the film at the café as she remembers Nevers and the death of the German soldier: "Je suis restée près de son corps toute la journée et puis toute la nuit suivante. Le lendemain matin, on est venu le ramasser et on l'a mis dans un camion. C'est dans cette nuit-là que Nevers a été libérée. Les cloches de l'église Saint-Etienne sonnaient…sonnaient…" (I stayed by his body all that day and all the following night. The next morning, they came to get him and put him in a truck. Nevers was liberated that night. The Saint-Etienne cathedral bells rang and rang.) The sustained ringing bells in Hiroshima, as well as those in Nevers, signal thresholds: the end of an occupation, the beginning of a new day, and presumably the end of an affair as Elle refuses to see Lui again. Bakhtin's chronotope of threshold "can be combined with the motif of encounter, but its most fundamental instance is as the chronotope of *crisis* and *break* in a life."[71] The church bells both underscore the crisis or break in life and reinforce the notion of the cyclical ancillary time of the provincial town. The nuclear is again the supporting background for both of these breaks or crises, as the atomic bomb across the globe from Nevers marked the end of war at the same time

[70] The script never indicates that the bell ringing stops, only that "le tintement des cloches se mêle aux bruits des moteurs" (the ringing of the bells merges with the noise of engines).

[71] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* 248.

that it destroyed the city of Hiroshima, which serves as the supporting background for the present-day affair in the film.

Perhaps the most salient illustration of the chronotope of the nuclear in *Hiroshima mon amour* as a whole comes from an observation that has been made about the film many times: there is no diegetic sound in the narrated past.[72] The lack of diegetic sound is often interpreted as evidence of the past's embeddedness in the present, leading to analyses of memory and trauma in the film. I would like to propose a reading that considers the silent past in *Hiroshima mon amour* in the context of the larger nuclear spatiotemporality of the film. As previously discussed, the chronotope of the nuclear can also be understood as that of the eternal present in nuclearized space. For Elle, it would seem that there is effectively no true past, just continuous present becoming present. Memories of her past become mute visions in the present. And in the course of a single enunciation, Elle goes from remembering less well to forgetting to having forgotten: "Ah!... c'est horrible!... Je commence à moins bien me souvenir de toi… Je commence à t'oublier. Je tremble d'avoir oublié tant d'amour." (Oh! ... It's horrible! I remember you less and less clearly… I begin to forget you. I tremble at forgetting such love.) In the chronotope of the nuclear, there is no real separation between event and static everyday time. The instant is imprinted on duration, which spans an eternal present in the nuclear space of Hiroshima.

In fleshing out the notion of the eternal present, we might also consider the role of daily life in the chronotope of the nuclear, as the nuclear is embedded in everyday existence in Hiroshima. Resnais recalls the genesis of Duras's scenario for *Hiroshima mon amour* when she mentioned a conversation she had overheard in a café about irradiated fish after the bombing of

[72] The one exception to the lack of diegetic sound in the past is an ambiguous cry that is heard but not seen onscreen during a scene in Nevers.

Hiroshima. For Resnais, the overheard conversation about irradiated fish was an example of how "la bombe rentre dans le banal"[73] (the bomb becomes banal). Nuclear radiation is not only the problem of those exposed to it firsthand or those working in the nuclear industry; it has become everyone's problem every day. For example, while France has never dealt with an acute nuclear disaster within its own borders, the nuclear pervades everyday French life and culture. Gabrielle Hecht's historical study demonstrates how the French nuclear program was founded on the demonstration of national radiance and technical prowess, which she sees as central to a postwar redefinition of French identity.[74] After the 2011 nuclear disaster at Fukushima, Michaël Ferrier theorizes a way of life after nuclear contamination that he terms "*la demi-vie*" (half-life) or compromised existence in a state of emergency that has no end, or "*la catastrophe continuée*"[75] (the ongoing catastrophe). Indeed, the catastrophe has been continuing for decades. Even in 1960, Hiroshima's nuclear temporality was understood not as an isolated phenomenon but as a reflection of a more general anxiety about the nuclear question. Pingaud writes, "En effet, la conception du temps qui se dévoile dans *Hiroshima* reflète assez bien la crise de l'idée d'histoire dans un monde qui a connu le cataclysme."[76] (In fact, the conception of time that is revealed in *Hiroshima* reflects rather well the idea of history in a world that has experienced cataclysm.) What better medium to express the chronotope of the nuclear than cinema, whose invention

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[73] Resnais, *Histoire sans images:* Hiroshima mon amour.

[74] Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II*, rev. ed. (1998; repr., Cambridge, US: MIT Press, 2009).

[75] Michaël Ferrier, *Fukushima: Récit d'un désastre*, 2nd ed. (2012; repr., Paris: Gallimard, 2013), 290-1.

[76] Pingaud, "À Propos d'*Hiroshima mon amour*," 85.

Roger Munier compared to the discovery of atomic energy, both of "which ha[ve] released a power in nature capable of destroying man."[77]

In Resnais's vision of Hiroshima, time is nuclearized and narrative becomes suspended in an apparently eternal present: the night that never ends is also the morning after and the quickly approaching time of Elle's departure. Resnais's nuclear temporality is not, like Wallace's, that of instantaneous annihilation, but rather one of static risk in an eternal present. Still, Wallace accounts for uncertainty and nonlinearity in her nuclear temporality as well, writing, "turning back the Doomsday Clock has always entailed turning it forward, imagining the future so as to avert catastrophe."[78] The chronotope of the nuclear encourages imagination not of potential future catastrophe but of actual present disaster, not of the *fear of* but of the *living with*. The Doomsday Clock is a useful metaphor for risk and its uncertain temporality, and the Clock's twenty-four hours echo nicely the twenty-four frames per second speed of cinema. Like the Clock stopped at three minutes to midnight, cinematic duration can also become static, as with the film still or photograph. Laura Mulvey argues, "The photograph's suspension of time, its conflation of life and death, the animate and the inanimate, raises not superstition so much as a sense of disquiet that is aggravated rather than calmed by the photograph's mechanical, chemical and indifferent nature."[79] The photograph "allows for the presence of time to emerge within the image."[80] At twenty-four frames per second, though, the photograph is elusive in cinema, and the

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[77] Cited in Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories: An Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 248.

[78] Wallace, *Risk Criticism,* 18.

[79] Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 60-1.

[80] Mulvey, 66.

passing of time, experienced as the eternal present in the chronotope of the nuclear, remains in the background of the nuclear narrative as a disorienting force.

CONCLUSION

The atomic bomb provides the nuclear background of *Hiroshima mon amour* and has a destabilizing effect on the narrative. It is the film's centerpiece as absence. Ropars-Wuilleumier writes of the "subterranean continuity" of Duras's script, which is used "to establish the characters" but "obliterated by the actual film…free[ing] the filmic continuity from any explanatory impediment, and thus mak[ing] possible the functioning of an internal discontinuity." In this chapter, I have argued that the nuclear subject matter serves as another sort of "subterranean continuity" for the film. For Ropars-Wuilleumer, the text behind the film "lays the film open to the invasion of an off-screen space, by definition hidden."[81] The nuclear element that Resnais considers as the film's backdrop, an invisible threat that lingers in off-screen space, finally intrudes on the film, serving as an active background that destabilizes form, language, and time, and that also incites reflection on the nuclear question.

The nuclear industry in France that contributed to the rapid reconstruction and growth during the *Trente Glorieuses* continues to produce over 70% of France's electricity and has been touted as clean and green for decades. Historically, as Sezin Topçu argues in the edited volume *Une autre histoire des "Trente Glorieuses,"* opposition to the nuclear industry has been marginalized and pathologized by the French government.[82] While marches and signatures serve

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[81] Ropars-Wuilleumier, "How History Begets Meaning," 175-6.

[82] Sezin Topçu, "Atome, gloire et désenchantement: Résister à la France atomique avant 1968," in *Une autre histoire des "Trente Glorieuses": modernisation, contestations et pollutions dans la France d'après-guerre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), 189–209. Topçu chronicles resistance movements at different moments in history: 1. 1945-48: the formation of marginal groups of "responsible scientists," such as the group who publish the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, and prominent figures such as Einstein, Bohr, and Oppenheimer spoke out against the bomb. In

as important political work, art can conduct the background work of disruption and destabilization, of inciting reflection, and of creating and subverting dominant narratives. *Hiroshima mon amour* may or may not have mobilized French critical action or reflection on the nuclear question, but the film clearly offers a new way of seeing Japan, a nuclear vision that would set new terms for French visions of Japan in the following decades and jolt with a political charge the complacent visions of Japan seen in the tradition of Japonisme. Thus, the film also provides us with a new way of seeing France, both in terms of Japan and in terms of nuclear concerns. Japan would seem to serve in this film as a place for French reflection from afar on a critical concern at home.

As for the Japanese title, *A Twenty-Four-Hour Love Affair,* it is generally considered to have kept the film from greater critical acclaim and commercial success in Japan, at least initially. However, the shift in focus in this title from place (Hiroshima) to time (twenty-four hours) suggests a new way of thinking about the film, one that I have attempted to present in this chapter with the concept of the chronotope of the nuclear. While France and Japan remain spatially distant, the chronotope of the nuclear brings them together in a shared spatiotemporality rooted in social and historical context. It introduces not just a new French vision of Japan but proposes a different kind of cross-cultural encounter.

Since its initial release in 1959, *Hiroshima mon amour* has inspired countless cultural productions paying homage in some way to the original. These works might be considered the film's own half-life. A couple of recent examples from Japan include Nobuhiro Suwa's *H Story*

France, 85% were okay with the use of the new bomb in Japan. (Sondages, IFOP, "La bombe atomique et la capituation du Japon," octobre 1945.) 2. The Communist critique from 1949: marginalized as Communists were charged as the menace replacing the Nazis. 3. Protests against the H bomb from 1954: health and environmental effects of nuclear testing began to emerge in the media. 4. The environmental critique from 1958 (the year of production of *Hiroshima mon amour*): the construction of the French atomic bomb was announced and followed by moral, political, economic, and environmental criticism. Criticism of the civil nuclear industry began in this period as well.

(2001), a Japanese remake about the impossibility of remaking the film, and Yoshishige Yoshida's *Women in the Mirror* (2002), a Franco-Japanese coproduction, both of which were screened at Cannes. Daniel de Roulet follows in a long tradition of creators who borrow Lui's phrase, which de Roulet does for the epistolary essay *Tu n'as rien vu à Fukushima*.[83] The title *Hiroshima mon amour* has also been co-opted for various purposes, from Nagisa Oshima's 1986 film *Max mon amour* about a married French woman who takes a chimpanzee named Max as her lover, to Chantal Montellier's 2006 graphic novel *Tchernobyl mon amour,* to Doris Dörrie's 2016 film *Fukushima mon amour* (*Grüße aus Fukushima*) about a German woman taking a "radiation vacation" in the Fukushima region after the 2011 triple disaster.[84] In *Level Five* (1996), Chris Marker pays explicit tribute to Resnais, Marker's friend and occasional collaborator, when the protagonist Laura suggests titling the work "Okinawa mon amour." The recycling of this title and the relative failure of the original Japanese translation of it might suggest that the concreteness of place is what sticks in our minds rather than the abstractness of time. But perhaps the spatial image may not be enough on its own as images risk becoming easily digested and forgotten icons. The chronotope allows us to see time in space, to see how time shapes space, and to envision a particular kind of spatiotemporality, such as the nuclear.

In the context of the French fascination with Japan, the nuclear spatiotemporality presented in *Hiroshima mon amour* undermines clichés of the ephemeral/historical density binary so often used to talk about Japan and Japanese culture even today. *Hiroshima mon amour* as a "parenthèse dans le temps" stages the eternal present by moving the nuclear to the

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[83] Daniel de Roulet, *Tu n'as rien vu à Fukushima* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 2012). De Roulet's letter, written to a Japanese woman a week after the triple disaster on March 11, 2011, recounts his work at a nuclear plant in Switzerland in the 1970's before he joined anti-nuclear protests, during which he was a target of political pushback and state-sanctioned violence.

[84] Maggie Lee, "Berlin Film Review: Fukushima mon amour," *Variety,* February 14, 2016, http://variety.com/2016/film/asia/fukushima-mon-amour-review-berlin-1201706209/.

background where it can destabilize time, language, and narrative, and where it contaminates the aestheticentric visions of Japan as seen in the tradition of Japonisme.

Chapter Three

Things that Quicken the Heart: Sensing the Nuclear in Chris Marker's Japan

> Je reviens d'Hokkaido, l'île du nord. Les Japonais riches et pressés prennent l'avion, les autres prennent le ferry. L'attente, l'immobilité, le sommeil morcelé, tout ça curieusement me renvoie à une guerre passée ou future: trains de nuit, fins d'alerte, abris atomiques, de petits fragments de guerre enchâssés dans la vie courante.
>
> (I'm just back from Hokkaido, the Northern Island. Rich and hurried Japanese take the plane, others take the ferry: waiting, immobility, snatches of sleep. Curiously all of that makes me think of a past or future war: night trains, air raids, fallout shelters, small fragments of war enshrined in everyday life.)
>
> —Sandor Krasna, *Sans soleil*
>
> Il faut prévenir le spectateur contre l'obsession de "comprendre" à tout prix, comme s'il n'y avait à chaque film qu'une seule réponse.
>
> (The viewer must be warned against the obsession of "understanding" at any cost, as if there were only one response to every film.)
>
> —Chris Marker

INTRODUCTION: TRAVELS IN TIME AND SPACE

Chris Marker travels light. This might be hard to believe after a glance at his studio packed with the things that quicken his heart: books, magazines, VHS tapes and DVDs, monitors, clocks, control boards, lighting equipment, stereos, cords, shopping carts, souvenirs, foreign currency, posters, knick-knacks, stuffed animals, and *manekineko*, the famous Japanese beckoning cats.[1] But Marker, like his beloved cats, is a shape-shifter both in name and in practice. He is a collagist filmmaker of multiple identities, pseudonyms, and avatars. He was born Christian Bouche-Villeneuve and chose the name Chris Marker (or for a time, Chris. Marker) because it is easy enough to pronounce in many languages.[2] His official biography

[1] Epigraphs from *Sans soleil,* directed by Chris Marker (Paris: Argos Films, 1982) (translation from English audio version of film) and Chris Marker, "L'avant-garde française," in *Regards neufs sur le cinéma*, Collection peuple et culture (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1953), 251. *Agnès de ci de là Varda*, directed by Agnès Varda (Paris: Arte éditions, 2011), DVD. Varda's film, released a year before Marker's death on July 29, 2012 (his birthday), offers one such a glimpse. For a deeper look at the studio at 3 rue Courat in Paris, see Colin MacCabe and Adam Bartos, *Studio: Remembering Chris Marker* (New York, London: OR Books, 2017).

remains uncertain. Guillaume-en-Égypte, Marker's cat avatar in the virtual world Second Life, acts as his spokesperson and allows Marker to live on into eternity. He calls himself the "best known author of unknown works,"[3] but prefers the spotlight on the films rather than the filmmaker. His films show flexibility, mobility, instability, and a penchant for the ludic.

Guillaume-en-Égypte in Chris Marker's studio in *Agnès de ci de là Varda*

Marker's films are often of nonstandard lengths, either very short (under thirty minutes) or very long (over two hours). Much of his work consists of assemblages of others' images and surprising combinations of media. He is considered a pioneer of the film-essay form.[4] Until

[2] "To Chris Marker, An Unsent Letter by Emiko Omori," Chris Marker, http://chrismarker.org/chris-marker-2/to-chris-marker-an-unsent-letter-by-emiko-omori/. "I chose a pseudonym, Chris Marker, pronounceable in most languages, because I was very intent on traveling. No need to delve further."

[3] "To Chris Marker, An Unsent Letter by Emiko Omori."

[4] Nora M. Alter, *Chris Marker* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 17-9. Alter credits André Bazin with using "film-essay" to describe Marker's *Letter from Siberia* (1958), while acknowledging that the German avant-garde director Hans Richter used the term as early as 1940, and that the French filmmaker and theorist Alexandre Astruc developed the film-essay subgenre for films that fall somewhere in between the categories of "documentary" and "experimental," using his term *caméra-stylo* (camera-pen), a sort of filmed philosophy, or cinema as a means of writing.

recently, much of Marker's oeuvre has been difficult to access.[5] He has made films on five continents and several islands, shooting in Japan, China, North Korea, Vietnam, the Soviet Union, Israel, Chile, Cuba, Finland, Iceland, Cape Verde, and Guinea Bissau, to name a few. In the photo-film *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* (1966), still images are apparently shown from twenty-six countries.[6] In a rare interview with Marker, Colin MacCabe reports, "Marker told me that he became a filmmaker in order to travel. Travel was his passion, filmmaking simply the profession that seemed the most easy to combine with trips around the world."[7] Over the course of his creative career, Marker returned to some places more than others, most notably to the Soviet Union and to Japan.

Many Marker scholars have commented on the recurrence of Japan in his work, though few extended studies have been devoted to the subject.[8] French literature scholar Fumio Chiba writes that Marker "a noué des liaisons particulières avec le Japon"[9] (established special

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[5] The Cinémathèque française in Paris intends to make public its Chris Marker archive in 2018, which will likely introduce new works into Marker's filmography. A short and incomplete list of blogs and online communities dedicated to Marker's work includes: http://chrismarker.ch, Christophe Chalazon's site "Plongée en mémoire"; http://chrismarker.org "Chris Marker, Notes from the Era of Imperfect Memory," described as "a randomly-compiled, taxonomically naïve and hopefully useful archive"; www.poptronics.fr, an electronic culture site to which Marker contributed; http://chrismarker.tumblr.com, "Chris Marker, en mémoire" hosted by the Cinémathèque française; and http://www.gorgomancy.net/index.html, "Gorgomancy," where a selection of Marker's works, including *Immemory*, can be accessed. Several works have been shown in museums such as the Centre Pompidou and the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Many of Marker's films are now available to the public at institutions such as the Bibliothèque nationale de France or the Cinémathèque française. The blogs and online communities that have formed around Marker and his work link to rare and more difficult to access films. In 2013, ARTE released a ten DVD box set of fourteen Marker films, six of which were restored that year, and 2017 saw the re-release of Marker's documentary *Description d'un combat* (1961), looking at Israel twelve years after its independence. Marker removed this film from distribution after the Six Day War in 1967.

[6] Alter, *Chris Marker*, 154.

[7] MacCabe and Bartos, *Studio: Remembering Chris Marker,* 30-1.

[8] Articles that focus on Marker's Japan include: Grace An, "A Par-Asian Cinematic Imaginary," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 10, no. 1 (2006): 15–23; Fumio Chiba, "Le Japon de Chris Marker," in *Réceptions de la culture japonaise en France depuis 1945: Paris-Tokyo-Paris: détours par le Japon*, by Fabien Arribert-Narce, Kohei Kuwada, and Lucy O'Meara (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2016), 249–61; Stéphane du Mesnildot, "Notes de chevet sur le Japon de Chris Marker," *Vertigo*, no. 46 (Autumn 2013): 50–56; and Emi Koide, "Le Japon selon Chris Marker," *Appareil* 6, no. Philosophie et cinéma (2010).

connections with Japan), which features significantly in several of his works. *Le Mystère Koumiko* (1965) follows a young woman who was Marker's guide in Tokyo during his first trip there in 1964. *Sans soleil* (1982) is an epistolary travelogue shot primarily in Japan and Guinea-Bissau. *Le Dépays* (1982) is a book of photos with stills from *Sans soleil*. *A.K.* (1985) is a film portrait of the Japanese director Akira Kurosawa on the set of *Ran* (1985). *Tokyo Days* (1991) and *Bullfight/Okinawa* (1994) are short films in the multimedia installation *Zapping Zone* (1991). The film *Level Five* (1996) focuses on the Battle of Okinawa. And *Immemory* (1997), an encyclopedic multimedia work made for CD-ROM and now available online, features images of Japan from Marker's previous work. Marker also directed *Vive la baleine* (1972), a short documentary about whaling in Japan and the Soviet Union, and he wrote the screenplay for *Kashima Paradise* (1974), a documentary about protests against the construction of Narita Airport. Japan is referenced in passing in *Le Fond de l'air est rouge* (1977), in episodes of the thirteen-part television series *L'Héritage de la chouette* (1989), and in the very short *3 Video Haikus* (1994).[10]

We get a glimpse of Marker's temporal acrobatics in *Sans soleil* when, as the first epigraph to this chapter announces, Marker's fictitious cameraman Sandor Krasna (also one of

[9] Chiba, "Le Japon de Chris Marker," 249. "Son Japon, en apparence si simple, gratuit, parfois anodin, est au fond assez complexe, voire labyrinthique—il y a tant de détails pittoresques, de sujets divers qui vont des problèmes socio-historique aux sentiments personnels, constituant ainsi une suite interminable de digressions et une façon particulière de rendre complexe la trame des récits." (His Japan, so simple, gratuitous, sometimes trivial in appearance, is fundamentally quite complex, even labyrinthine—there are so many charming details, such varied subject matter, from socio-historic issues to personal impressions, that constitute an unending succession of digressions and a distinctive way of complicating the framework of the stories.)

[10] Chris Marker, "80:81 Chris Marker Speaks with Colin MacCabe," interview by Colin MacCabe, accessed December 15, 2016, http://chrismarker.org/chris-marker/interview-fragment/. The dates in Marker's filmography are also uncertain, with some citing the year of production and others that of distribution. Marker draws attention to this uncertainty in an interview during which Marker asked interviewer MacCabe the release date of *Sans soleil*. MacCabe responded, "In the filmographies, 1982." In instances of inconsistency, the dates for Marker's films mentioned here come from Nora Alter's rather comprehensive filmography.

Marker's pseudonyms) awaits the ferry from Hokkaido to Honshu and is reminded of "une guerre passée ou future" (a past or future war), revealing from the start of the film an unmooring in time. This past or future war and the landscape of atomic shelters it evokes for Krasna also recalls *La Jetée* (1962), the black-and-white post-apocalyptic *photo-roman* for which Marker is perhaps best known. And the "petits fragments de guerre enchâssées dans la vie courante" (small fragments of war enshrined in everyday life) that Krasna mentions in *Sans soleil* anticipate the more careful consideration Marker gives to war with his focus on the Battle of Okinawa in *Level Five*.

This chapter will analyze films by Chris Marker that explicitly and implicitly address nuclear concerns and will reflect on how the nuclear shapes his vision of Japan. I continue to use the substantive "the nuclear" as it exists in French to designate not only a nuclear explosion or an instance of radioactive contamination, but any nuclear materials and all of their physical, technological, political, cultural, and social properties. The short photo-film *La Jetée*, the most explicitly nuclear and the least Japanese film of the three, deals with time travel after a nuclear apocalypse and takes place in a subterranean refuge in Paris.[11] In his monograph on the film, Chris Darke compares the treatment of Paris in the contemporaneous *Le Joli mai* (1963):

> In *Le Joli mai* Marker probes and praises Paris. In *La Jetée* he blows it up. Why? The obvious answer is out of fidelity to the times, to push the anxieties of the historical moment to their all too conceivable conclusion. Anxiety abounded as the dark backing to the period's increasing economic prosperity…. Fears of nuclear catastrophe were heightened by the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. And the memory of World War II lingered.[12]

[11] *La Jetée* does have a very concrete connection to Japan as a bar in Tokyo named after the film was opened in 1974 by Tomoyo Kawai.

[12] Chris Darke, *La Jetée*, BFI Film Classics (London: Palgrave, 2016), 45-6.

Nuclear anxieties lingered well beyond the 1960s, and they surface at several points in the 1982 travelogue *Sans soleil*. As I will develop below, *Sans soleil* shows a formal and temporal instability similar to those seen in other nuclear films, and the nuclear resonates implicitly at points throughout the film. In *Sans soleil* and *Level Five*, feature-length films more or less focused on Japan, Marker explores the culture that exists around and as a result of global demands for energy. In France and Japan, these demands are chiefly met by nuclear power, which has created dependencies in both places that are difficult to overcome. These films also both address the Battle of Okinawa, a major event overshadowed in the historical archive by the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Battle of Okinawa is the main subject of *Level Five*, making this an obliquely nuclear-themed film. A proposed title for *Level Five* was "Okinawa, mon amour," a line that finally did make its way into the film along with an echo of the sorrowful melody from *Hiroshima mon amour*.[13]

We might also think about time travel through memory, a common theme in both Resnais's and Marker's works. Memory is threatened by amnesia, which itself signifies immobility in the present without recourse to the time travel offered by imagination. Elle's personal battle with amnesia is dramatized in *Hiroshima mon amour*, while *Level Five* focuses on the collective historical amnesia of a battle that the film's narrator tells us killed 150,000 Okinawan civilians, a third of the island's population. The principal media used in *Level Five,* film and the computer, are both theoretically capable of eternal memory, such as that possessed

[13] The film's protagonist Laura says, "Je peux me reconnaitre dans cette petite île parce que ma souffrance la plus unique, la plus intime est aussi la plus banale, la plus facile à baptiser. Alors, autant lui donne un nom qui sonne comme une chanson, comme un film. Okinawa mon amour." (I recognize myself in that little island because my most unique and intimate suffering is also the most banal, the easiest to name. So, let's give it a name that sounds like a song, like a film, Okinawa mon amour.)

by Krasna writing from the year 4001 in *Sans soleil*. And yet, even filmic and digital memory can be destabilized if they are corrupted, erased, rewritten, or otherwise altered.

Corruptibility and alterability are key components of instability, another important concept for both memory and for the nuclear. While instability of memory is often considered a weakness, with the nuclear, instability is a source of strength. Marker's films explore many kinds of instability: that of memory, history, space, and time; that of identity; and more implicitly that of the nuclear. As Krasna observes in his letter in *Sans soleil*, fragments of the past and of war resurface and lodge themselves in the flow of everyday life. This process is not unlike atoms that split, knock into one another, and cause disruptions, or like radioactive particles that become lodged in tissue and initiate mutation. Fragments of the past and of war resurface as well in the underground laboratory of *La Jetée* and in the cramped studio of *Level Five*. These fragments are archival images of bombed out cities, and digitized images from the Battle of Okinawa. Such fragments not only lodge in the flow of everyday life but also play a significant role in shaping narrative.

Chiba calls attention to a line from Krasna's letter in *Sans soleil* that is read over images of the Sahel: "C'est l'état de survie que les pays riches ont oublié, à une seule exception—vous aviez deviné, le Japon. Mon perpétuel va-et-vient n'est pas une recherche des contrastes, c'est un voyage aux deux pôles extrêmes de la survie." (This is a state of survival that the rich countries have forgotten, with one exception—you guessed it—Japan. My constant comings and goings are not a search for contrasts; they are a journey to the two extreme poles of survival.) For Chiba, Krasna's comment suggests that the notion of survival is what bridges time, space, and the nuclear: "Ce dernier mot qu'emploie ici Chris Marker nous amène à réfléchir pour finir sur la

situation actuelle du Japon après les événements du 11 mars 2011."[14] (The last word Chris Marker uses here leads us finally to reflect on Japan's current situation after the events of March 11, 2011.) Marker's films thus reach beyond the immediate contexts they address and provoke reflection on larger concepts such as survival and the nuclear. To take Chiba's line of thinking a step further, I argue that *La Jetée* and *Level Five* also bridge space, time, and the nuclear by representing mutation and movement as at once unstable and powerful.

The analysis in this chapter will focus on elements in *La Jetée, Sans soleil,* and *Level Five* that help us to understand these films as nuclear narratives. Specifically, it will examine instances of instability, multiplicity, and uncertainty, which can be seen in agility in space and time and flexibility of identity and form. Marker's films are often difficult to recall, at least in a linear fashion, and yet they are not made to be forgotten but rather revisited, reread, and approached as hybrid forms. These films do not allow us to simply view them but demand to be read or sensed. Understanding them as nuclear narratives reveals a useful approach to representing and perceiving the nuclear, which also needs to be sensed and not just seen. The perception of the nuclear in these films requires an approach that goes beyond the predominantly visual to the sensory. To "sense" here means to know with the senses, to be aware of, to detect.

In this approach, I join ecocritics such as Scott MacDonald and Adrian Ivakhiv who call for the expansion and retraining of cinematic perception, particularly with respect to avant-garde and experimental cinema that challenges viewers in different ways than more straightforward, didactic ecocinema does.[15] Simon Estok argues that viewers need to adjust their attention spans

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[14] Chiba, "Le Japon de Chris Marker," 261.

[15] Scott MacDonald, "Toward an Eco-Cinema," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 11. 2 (Summer 2004): 109; Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature*, Environmental Humanities (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2013), 12.

and should be able to participate rather than passively spectate.[16] Sensing the nuclear in Marker's works allows for an appreciation beyond the spectacle of nuclear disaster by directing attention to the lives and histories overshadowed, deformed, or erased by it.

Many studies of Marker's works address identity, form, space, and time.[17] The nuclear question as it relates to his films, however, has yet to be considered at length. Marker's cinematic style—evocative, pensive, unstable—is particularly well suited to address the nuclear concern, which for decades has remained taboo in French culture and thought. Taking a sensory approach to perceiving these films as nuclear narratives both highlights an overlooked theme in Marker's work and opens the door to new ways of perceiving the nuclear in a broader range of French cultural productions.

There are many explicitly nuclear French films, especially films that deal with nuclear war or apocalypse, that would fall in the category of nuclear movies.[18] However, after *Hiroshima*

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[16] Simon C. Estok, "Virtually There: 'Aesthetic Pleasure of the First Order,' Ecomedia, Activist Engagement," *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 24. 1 (June 1, 2017): 7.

[17] Much of the academic scholarship on Marker focuses primarily on these elements in his work. See for example major studies done by Nora Alter, *Chris Marker*, with its attention to Marker's innovative formal work; Guy Gauthier, *Chris Marker, Écrivain multimédia ou voyage à travers les médias* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), which focuses on Marker's experimentations with different media; Catherine Lupton, *Chris Marker: Memories of the Future* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), a study that announces its temporal orientation in the title and understands Marker's montage as mirroring the structure of consciousness and cultural memory; and Sarah Cooper, *Chris Marker* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2008), which devotes particular attention to immobility, static images, and their relationship to Marker's different conceptions of time.

[18] Hélène Puiseux, *L'apocalypse nucléaire et son cinéma* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1987). Hélène Puiseux, "Mythologie filmique du nucléaire," in *Mythes, rites, symboles dans la société contemporaine* (Paris: Laboratoire de recherche et d'études en sciences sociales, C.N.R.S.-E.N.S. Cachan, 1996), 31–52. Puiseux reports a tendency of science fiction and monster films mostly coming from the United States and Japan. A French exception is Christian de Chalonge's *Malevil* (1981). Puiseux's catalog of 212 nuclear films in *L'apocalypse nucléaire* spans from 1935-1985 and includes 32 French films and coproductions: the Franco-Norwegian *La Bataille de l'eau lourde* (1947); René Clair's *La Beauté du diable* (1950); the short documentary *La Bombe atomique en action* (1950); Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Les Espions* (1957); Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959); Henri Decoin's *Nathalie agent secret* (1959); two short documentaries about the French atomic tests at Reggane: *De Valmy à Reggane* (1960) and *Reggane à l'heure* (1960); the Franco-Italian *L'Atlantide* (1961), Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), Jean-Luc Godard's contribution "Le Nouveau Monde" to the Franco-Italian anthology film *Rogopag* (1962); the short documentaries *Atolls à l'heure nucléaire* (1966) and *Marine, atome, Tahiti* (1967); the archival documentary *La Bataille du Pacifique* (1971) and the documentary television film *La Bombe de A à H* (1971); the short documentaries *L'Explosion nucléaire* (1973), *La Défense contre les armes nucléaires* (1975), and *Les Engins*

mon amour (1959) and until the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, there is a gap in the filmography of French nuclear movies that also deal with Japan. Several French documentaries and telefilms about the nuclear question were made during the period between Hiroshima and Fukushima. A few films even focus on the Pacific region, such as René Vautier's *Mission pacifique* (1989) on the effects of atomic explosions on the Pacific islands, and *Hirochirac 1995* (1995), filmed during the fiftieth anniversary of Hiroshima and documenting the announcement made by then-president Jacques Chirac that France would re-engage in nuclear testing in the Pacific.[19] This chapter aims to bridge the gap in scholarship around French nuclear films about Japan made between the nuclear disasters at Hiroshima and Fukushima through an analysis of films made by Marker from the 1960s to the 1990s that deal with the nuclear and have connections to Japan. The visions these films present of a nuclear Japan also point to concerns around a nuclear France, if not destroyed by nuclear apocalypse as in *La Jetée* then shaped by its dependence on nuclear energy.

The tradition of Japonisme in the visual arts has been criticized for excessive aestheticism, or predominant attention to surfaces. Perhaps a more productive way of looking at French visions of Japan then is to consider how they engage the senses beyond the visual in

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balistiques (1975); the feature film *Demain les mômes* (1975); the documentaries *Les Abris antisouffle improvisés* (1977), *Ce monde est dangereux* (1977), and *Les Engins à charge nucléaire* (1979); the comedy *Cherchez l'erreur* (1980); the above-mentioned science fiction film *Malevil* (1980); the documentaries *Dossier Plogoff* (1980) *Plogoff, des pierres contre des fusils* (1980), *Les Forces nucléaires françaises* (1981), *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville: les armées françaises en Polynésie* (1981); Luc Besson's *Le Dernier Combat* (1982); the Franco-Italian *2019 après la chute de New York* (1983); and the documentaries *La Défense de la France* (1984), *Edition spéciale: comment vivre avec la menace de la guerre nucléaire* (1984), and *La Guerre en face* (1985). Puiseux's list of primarily American and Japanese films is of course incomplete; with digitized catalogues searchable by keyword today, the number of films would be much higher, especially if every ten-minute documentary broadcast on television were included. Puiseux's list also includes questionably nuclear films such as René Clair's *La Beauté du diable* (1950), a retelling of the Faust story that does not directly deal with the nuclear.

[19] Chirac's decision was criticized by Kenzaburo Ôe, which set off a Franco-Japanese literary feud as fellow Nobel laureate Claude Simon chastised Ôe in a letter published in *Le Monde*, and Ôe responded in kind. Simon, "Cher Kenzaburo Ôe"; Ôe, "Cher Claude Simon."

order to gain access to the invisible. Marker's visions, or rather his evocations of Japan, are also, as scholars have pointed out, quite French as they have been informed by French cultural traditions. Chiba notes the influence of Barthes in the textual companion to Marker's *Sans soleil, Le Dépays*. In *Le Dépays*, Marker writes, "le texte ne commente pas plus les images que les images n'illustrent le texte," (the text is no more a commentary on the images than the images serve to illustrate the text) echoing the first page of *L'Empire des signes*: "Le texte ne 'commente' pas les images. Les images n''illustrent' pas le texte: chacun a été seulement pour moi le départ d'une sorte de vacillement visuel."[20] (The text is not a 'commentary' on the images. The images do not 'illustrate' the text: for me, each was only a starting point for a sort of visual vacillation.)

Catherine Russell, a visual anthropologist, points out a tendency toward cultural essentialism in some of Marker's works, as they "remain implicated in the paradigms of modernism and colonialism, even as they seek ways of revising the production of otherness in representation."[21] Yet, Russell concedes, "he also maps out the scale of the task of inverting the salvage paradigm and representing the coevalness of disparate cultures in cinema."[22] *Sans soleil* in particular addresses the "problem of looking at others: how to travel, to collect the images that might document one's experience of cultural diversity, without commodifying or objectifying, without assigning the Other a place that exists only in memory, with 'othering.'"[23] Sei Shonagon and her "list of things that quicken the heart" cited in *Sans soleil* are, in Russell's reading of the

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[20] Chiba, "Le Japon de Chris Marker," 252-3. Roland Barthes, *L'Empire des signes* (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 133.

[21] Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Duke University Press, 1999), 19.

[22] Russell, 301-2.

[23] Russell, 309.

film, also a rather French take on Japanese culture as Shonagon is taken out of historical context. Her "list of things that quicken the heart" might be seen as the organizing principle behind the images in *Sans soleil* and the briefings from its world traveler Sandor Krasna; and yet, as Russell reminds us, Shonagon was part of the aristocracy and as a woman was not a mobile world traveler like Krasna or Marker.[24]

Exoticism and cultural essentialism are nothing new in the history of French visions of Japan: Claude Monet's *La Japonaise* (1876) is dressed up in a kimono (however ironically) in what might today be called cultural appropriation; Western men gaze at dancing geisha in a teahouse in James Tissot's *L'Enfant prodigue: en pays étranger* (1880); and the minor vein of Japonisme in Proust culminates in what Jan Hokenson calls Marcel's artistic apprenticeship in a Japanese "way of seeing."[25] What is newer in Marker's visions of Japan is an explicit awareness of this exoticizing tendency in French visions of Japan and an approach that treats seeing others as a visual problem. In her monograph on Marker's oeuvre, Catherine Lupton sees this approach as Marker's way of "perceiving strangeness as familiarity and defamiliarizing his own culture."[26]

Emi Koide sees other remnants of the French tradition in Marker's works. She draws parallels between the modernization of Tokyo for the 1964 Olympics and Walter Benjamin's description of the modernization of Paris, the Parisian *passages* serving as a nineteenth-century precursor to Tokyo's twentieth-century galleries. Koide also recalls Guy Debord and the society of the spectacle evoked by the stacks of TVs in the Tokyo department store in *Sans soleil*. She

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[24] Russell, 304.

[25] Jan Hokenson, *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), 212.

[26] Lupton, *Chris Marker*, 44.

sees Marker's way of traveling as a sort of *flânerie*.[27] Stéphane du Mesnildot describes the "géographie onirique de Marker" (Marker's oneiric geography) in which Japan becomes plural: a Japan of cats, ghosts, young women, manga, and electronics. Japan is also "marked" by Marker with the bar in Tokyo named after his film *La Jetée* and the image of Guillaume-en-Égypte painted on its door.[28]

This chapter aims at a new approach to Marker's work, an approach that foregrounds Japan and the nuclear. While previous studies have touched on these issues, they have yet to draw out the connection between Japan and the nuclear in Marker's films, and more specifically in *La Jetée*, *Sans soleil,* and *Level Five*. When we understand these three films as nuclear narratives, we also see emerge a politicized French vision of Japan that nevertheless remains rooted in the Japonisme tradition of aesthetic fascination. These films provide new windows on the nuclear problem and alternative ways of detecting concern for the nuclear in cultural productions. For Marker, Japan is not only a fascinating dream space of visual escape and wonder—an empire of signs—but also a concrete place with real concerns, such as those around nuclear energy. France is particularly implicated in these concerns given its own investment in nuclear power. But these concerns radiate well beyond national borders, presenting major global problems that must be met by transnational coalitions and that call for global solidarity.

The analysis in this chapter begins with a return to the chronotope of the nuclear, from Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope as a tool for conceptualizing narrative types or genres by their specific spatiotemporalities.[29] Timothy Morton understands the nuclear as a type of

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[27] Koide, "Le Japon selon Chris Marker."

[28] du Mesnildot, "Notes de chevet": 52-6.

[29] M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.

hyperobject, something "massively distributed in time and space relative to humans."[30] In this dissertation, the chronotope of the nuclear refers to the spatiotemporalities characteristic of nuclear narratives. In Marker's works, the chronotope of the nuclear manifests as an impossible present in an invisible nuclear space. Next, this chapter considers the plural identities in Marker's life and work as gleaned from interviews and Raymond Bellour's analysis of *Sans soleil* entitled "La double hélice" (The double helix). Bellour's title evokes DNA, which is located in the nucleus of a cell and capable of replicating itself; it is also a site of significance for its potential to be damaged or altered by radiation. In his work and in his life, Marker explodes the notion of the self and embraces the mutability of identity, which offers another way of thinking about nuclear destabilization. Finally, this chapter looks closely at unstable form through montage in Marker's films. Marker's use of montage creates ontological uncertainty and calls for a different way of experiencing his works, for a "sensing" of films that are not made to simply be viewed. This sensory approach follows those called for by André Bazin, who argues that intelligence is the primary material of Marker's films and that the image only intervenes later "in reference to this verbal intelligence," and by Laurent Roth, who writes of the "saut de l'oreille à l'œil" (leap from the ear to the eye) for the viewer of Marker's work.[31]

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[30] Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, Posthumanities (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 1.

[31] André Bazin, "André Bazin on Chris Marker (1958)," trans. Dave Kehr, *Film Comment*, 2003, http://chrismarker.org/andre-bazin-on-chris-marker-1958/. Laurent Roth and Raymond Bellour, *Qu'est-ce qu'une madeleine? À propos du CD-ROM* Immemory *de Chris Marker* (Paris: Yves Gevaert Editeur, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1997), 24.

La Jetée bar in Tokyo, my image

UNSTABLE TIME

While the chronotope of the nuclear in *Hiroshima mon amour* can be seen in the sense of eternal present, in Marker's oeuvre the eternal nuclear present becomes an impossible one. Ontological uncertainty in Marker's work extends to time as well. In *La Jetée, Sans soleil,* and *Level Five*, the present is undermined by other elements in the film such that the viewer is left to wonder whether or not it exists. The chronotope of the nuclear in Marker's films (as in *Hiroshima mon amour*) can be seen in the films' nuclearized spaces and temporal disorientations. The chronotope of the nuclear is still understood as an outgrowth of the chronotope of crisis and the cyclical ancillary time, which Bakhtin argues cannot be the primary

time of the narrative and instead "often serves as a contrasting background for temporal sequences that are more charged with energy and event."[32] In Marker's works, the nuclear content is to an even greater extent in the background than it is in *Hiroshima mon amour*. The nuclear elements in Marker's films are often subsumed by cyclical time and then forgotten. As in *Hiroshima mon amour,* the nuclear in Marker's films is not shown as spectacle but rather embedded in the everyday, insidious and easy to miss.

The impossible present is evident across the three works considered in this chapter. In *La Jetée*, the present is a void in which the time-traveling protagonist exists as the subject of the scientist's experiments with no agency of his own. The period we recognize as his true life plays out in the past. During this past, we see the one moment of filmed motion among the otherwise still images of *La Jetée*. In this moment, a woman awakens, suggesting that life was there in the past but is not here in the post-apocalyptic present. As such, the photographic form of *La Jetée* evokes an impossible present made up of isolated moments, of photographs shown for irregular and unpredictable durations as opposed to cinema's traditional steady march of twenty-four images per second. For Janet Harbord, the impossible present can also be seen in the film's situation in the future:

> Marker places the fulcrum of the present in the future, a future-present from which the present as it was (1962) appears as the past…The film is a view of what the present will look like from there, the future. It is, in a sense, an othering of the present, a making strange of its objects, people, thoughts and landscapes in order to bring them into view, to provide a frame through which the ineffable present may be described.[33]

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[32] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 248.

[33] Janet Harbord, *Chris Marker, La Jetée*, One Work (London: Cambridge, Mass.: Afterall Books; Distribution, MIT Press, 2009), 11.

Harbord's "othering of the present" makes it at once impossible and strange as well as definable and knowable as a sort of "other" time, a past from the perspective of the future, or a present always slipping away from us.

Morton's notion of the hyperobject challenges our understanding of the present in a similar way. For hyperobjects such as the biosphere, the Solar System, or nuclear materials in general, "spacetime isn't an empty box but rather an undulating force field that emanates from objects,"[34] and "the present does not truly exist…Time is not a series of now-points…but rather a sickening surge, like crosstown traffic or an ocean with many currents."[35] Morton argues, "the large finitude of hyperobjects forces humans to coexist with a strange future, a future 'without us.'"[36] We see this future in *La Jetée,* with the nuclear rippling through space and time, forcing the time traveler to coexist with a strange future, a future that is also "without him." Neither can a present be said to truly exist in the photo-film itself. The still images used in *La Jetée* insist on the artificial construction of the present, or a series of fixed now-points, among which the moment of animation becomes an unsettling surge of time.

In *Sans soleil*, the present is grammatically impossible. The narration in the film is in the past tense, a deliberate choice by Marker, who explains that the narration "is always a nightmare but with *Sans soleil* it was particularly difficult. For more than a month I did not know what to do and I was working in the present tense, and then I tried the past tense and it worked."[37] The impossible present can also be seen in Hayao Yamaneko's Zone, a place where images are synthesized and manipulated, as well as an explicit reference to the mysterious and dangerous

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[34] Morton, *Hyperobjects*, 65.

[35] Morton, 93.

[36] Morton, 94.

[37] MacCabe, "Interview with Marker," 87.

Zone in Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979) (*зона*, the Russian title, is pronounced "zona").[38] Not only does the Zone alter images, it also creates temporal transformations. As Rick Warner argues, "the images reworked by Yamaneko with his digital synthesizer are stripped of their temporal specificities and transformed into 'electronic graffiti."[39] For David Montero writing on the inability of images to recreate past events in *Sans soleil,* the Zone is "the place where *Sans soleil* manages to revert this 'aging' process…a cinematic space in which images are divested of their iconic quality in an attempt to turn them into the direct representation of human memories, that is, images that are temporally marked. These images are external to time; they have escaped the flow and remain frozen, ready to be rewritten and manipulated."[40] As a space that "strip[s] images of their temporal specificities" and creates new images that are "external to time," Yamaneko's Zone seems to function as a different kind of time machine than the time-travel apparatus seen in *La Jetée*, but one that also resides outside of time and external to the present.

From this point external to the present, history can be seen from a new perspective and becomes malleable. In his monograph on *Sans soleil,* Jon Kear writes, "[f]aced by the exasperating endurance of forms of political oppression and the disparity between the appearance of change and the persistence of the same old struggles recurring time and again throughout history, Yamaneko's machine is presented as providing a certain 'solution': 'If the images of the present don't change, then change the images of the past'."[41] At one point in *Sans soleil,* we see

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[38] *Sans soleil* explicitly references Tarkovsky's Zone, and I would argue that *Level Five* returns to the concept with the enclosed space in which Laura works as a sort of Tarkovskian Room, the place inside the Zone that is supposed to inspire creative production. Homage to Tarkovsky can also be seen in in the title of Marker's multimedia installation *Zapping Zone* (1991), as well as an in an email address he used: stalker@vnumail.com.

[39] Rick Warner, "Go-for-Broke Games of History: Chris Marker between 'Old' and 'New' Media," *Post Script* 29, no. 1 (2009): 14–26.

[40] David Montero, "Film Also Ages: Time and Images in Chris Marker's *Sans soleil*," *Studies in French Cinema* 6, no. 2 (January 1, 2006): 109.

images of Yamaneko's control boards as the narrator reads Krasna's letters. Krasna writes, "J'envie Hayao et sa Zone. Il joue avec les signes de sa mémoire, il les épingle et les décore comme des insectes qui se seraient envolé du temps et qu'il pourrait contempler d'un point situé à l'extérieur du temps—la seule éternité qui nous reste." (I envy Hayao and his Zone. He plays with the signs of his memory. He pins them down and decorates them like insects that would have flown beyond time, and which he could contemplate from a point outside of time—the only eternity we have left.) In both *Sans soleil* and *La Jetée*, where time travel (beyond that offered by memory) seems possible, the complementary idea of a place outside of time also emerges. This place outside of time is a space for reflection and creation, as in Yamaneko's Zone, but also one for possible existence, and thus an alternative to existence in the present.

This notion of existence outside of time is also seen in *Sans soleil* in a citation from Hitchcock's *Vertigo* of an image of a sequoia cross-section. Hitchcock's Madeleine indicates a space between two concentric tree rings and says that her life fits in that space. Krasna, recalling this image, "se souvenait d'un autre film où ce passage était cité: le séquoia était celui du Jardin des plantes, à Paris, et la main désignait un point hors de l'arbre—à l'extérieur du temps" (remembered another film in which this passage was quoted: the sequoia was the one in the Jardin des plantes, in Paris, and the hand pointed to a place outside the tree—outside of time). The film that Krasna recalls here is, of course, Marker's *La Jetée*. In *La Jetée*, the sequoia cross-section is not only a reference to *Vertigo* but also a way of visualizing the abstract notion of existence outside of time, beyond the tree's concentric rings. This position outside of time may be the strange future of Morton's hyperobject, a nuclear future with which we must coexist but that is also without us.

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[41] Jon Kear, *Sunless/Sans Soleil*, Cinetek (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1999), 40.

Muir Woods sequoia cross-section visited in *Vertigo*, shown here in *Sans soleil*

Sequoia cross-section in the Jardin des Plantes, Paris, *La Jetée*

The notion of existence outside of time is further developed in *Level Five,* which Raymond Bellour calls a "un film moins harmonieux que *Sans soleil* dont il est une continuation"[42] (a film less harmonious than *Sans Soleil*, of which it is a continuation) as it resumes the history of the Battle of Okinawa briefly mentioned in *Sans soleil*. The computer game developed by the protagonist of the film, Laura, has no apparent temporal component, no timer or stopwatch. Despite the evocation of progression in the title *Level Five*, the game is rhizomatic rather than linear. It is a network, a virtual world that more closely resembles the online virtual world Second Life or Marker's CD-ROM *Immemory* (1998) than a traditional sequential computer game. Instead, the game in *Level Five* allows for a non-hierarchical exploration of history. In the cramped space in which Laura works—her Tarkovskian Room—she, too, seems to exist outside of time. Her final speech explores temporal alternatives to the present, which has been drowned out by them: "J'aurais pensé il y a eu un temps où. Mais depuis, il y avait eu un autre temps, celui de la liste, celui des mensonges et de la jalousie, et ce temps-là aurait assourdi notre temps. Il aurait assourdi l'écho de notre propre vie. Et tout se serait passé comme à travers un mur. Ça aurait été à peine audible." (I would have thought: 'There was a time when…' But then there was another time, the time of the list, of jealousy and deceptions, and that time would mute our time. It would mute the echo of our life. Everything would have been as though through a wall, barely audible.) As Laura continues this monologue comparing death to a dream from which one does not awaken, the camera closes in on her face, then on her mouth and a remote control, which become fixed in the present as the image blurs before finally cutting to black. In a coda narrated by Marker himself, we see the empty studio and hear that

[42] Bellour, *L'entre-images 2: mots, images*, 227.

Laura was never seen again, as though she entered an alternative time outside of time, "un temps où," both outside of the present and outside of the time that muted the present.

If the chronotope of the nuclear in Marker's films shows an impossible present by offering alternative spatiotemporalities that exist outside of recognizable space and time, it also evokes the eternal present at times though the use of close-ups and repetition, as seen in *Hiroshima mon amour*. Lupton notes that in Marker's own early critical writings on cinema, he develops a temporal grammar of film shots "where long shots correspond to the past and close-ups to the present. [Marker's] analysis of Dreyer's film [*La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*], renowned for its use of extreme close-ups of the human face to carry the drama, goes beyond conventional psychological readings to correlate the close-ups…to a tangible experience of historical events made to seem eternally present."[43] In the full analysis from which Lupton cites, Marker is seen to understand Dreyer's stylistic choices not only as a need to make historical events seem eternally present but also as a commitment to jolting the viewer from the comfortable distance of the past. He writes, "La manière dont Dreyer fouille les visages, l'absence de maquillage, sont des conséquences de cette nécessité de mettre l'histoire de Jeanne au présent*, c'est-à-dire dans l'éternité*, afin de la rendre sensible au spectateur en le détournant du cadre rassurant du passé."[44] (The manner by which Dreyer reveals faces, the absence of makeup, are the consequences of the need to put Jeanne's history in the present, *which is to say in eternity*, in order to make the viewer sensitive to it by turning away from the reassuring frame of the past.) Close-ups in Marker's films, more often of figures on the margins of history than of those in the annals, function in this way as they bring attention to a subject and use duration to insist on the viewer's

[43] Lupton, *Chris Marker*, 22-3.

[44] Chris Marker, "Le film d'un auteur," in *Regards neufs sur le cinéma*, Collection peuple et culture (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1953), 259.

perception of that subject in the close present rather than at a comfortable distance. The woman in *La Jetée* is thus immortalized in an eternal present, as are women at the Guinea Bissau market and people sleeping on a train in Tokyo in *Sans soleil*, and Laura during her final monologue in *Level Five.* The immortalizing close-up expresses a certain solidarity with the subjects, giving the same weight to lesser known figures and events that reside in the margins and interstices of the annals of history.

Harbord's focus on repetition in *La Jetée* provides another way of thinking about the eternal present. "*La Jetée* is a story about going back. It tells of a man whose desire is to return to the past...The man wishes to return to a former moment, a 'twice-lived' moment of time. His fate is sealed by a desire for repetition, for an identical match, to experience the moment as it was then."[45] The desire for return and repetition becomes, in a sense, a desire for past to become present, to subsume it rather than to be subsumed by it, as Elle's past is subsumed by the present in *Hiroshima mon amour*.

We might see Marker's appropriations from other filmmakers as another kind of repetition and in certain instances as expressions of nuclear anxiety. One example of this is the musical fragment from *Hiroshima mon amour* echoed in *Level Five* at the moment when Laura gives her own suffering a name, "Okinawa mon amour." This melodic repetition brings the past of cinema into the present and underscores an eternal present of cinema in which a work like *Hiroshima mon amour* continues to resonate across time. In her analysis of the relationship between still and moving images across Marker's oeuvre, Sarah Cooper suggests that Marker's films conceive of a different kind of afterlife, not a religious one but an afterlife that "refers to the life of others who will live on after the death of the imaged subject(s)" and "one that

[45] Harbord, *La Jetée*, 5.

challenges fixity at every turn."[46] Thus, the eternal present need not be static, like the photograph, which for Barthes is the "future perfect of death," or what will have been, but becomes a fluid temporality that subsumes past, future, and afterlife precisely because it eludes fixity.[47]

While Barthes sees the photograph as the future perfect of death, for André Habib, the future perfect is the time of the archive, of the essay, and of Marker's entire oeuvre.[48] The future perfect is also the temporal modality of Molly Wallace's Doomsday Clock, in which the future is imagined in order to avert catastrophe, what will have been. The visions of a nuclear Japan in Marker's films can be seen to parallel Resnais's vision in *Hiroshima mon amour* in that they imagine an eternal present in which we learn to live with the nuclear. But Marker's visions also differ from Resnais's in that Marker's eternal present is also an impossible present. For Marker, if we can get outside of the present, we will be better positioned to perceive it and to imagine other pasts, presents, and futures.

In Marker's visions of Japan, the chronotope of the nuclear shows a present that is at turns impossible and eternal, two positions as ontologically uncertain as they are flexible. Marker's films do not subscribe to the optimistic platitude that by simply learning history we can avoid repeating it. *Level Five* concludes: "Laura avait compris que le jeu ne servirait jamais à refaire l'Histoire. Il se contenterait de la répéter en boucle, avec une obstination méritoire et probablement inutile. Mémoriser le passé pour ne pas le revivre était une illusion du XX^{e} siècle." (Laura had understood that the game would never be used to remake History. It would settle for

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[46] Cooper, *Chris Marker*, 8.

[47] Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire: Note sur la photographie* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), 150.

[48] André Habib, "Images du futur antérieur," *Vertigo* 46, "Chris Marker" (Autumn 2013): 37.

repeating it over and over, with a commendable and probably futile persistence. Learning the past in order to not relive it was an illusion of the twentieth century.) Still, the films insist that we learn history, that we understand its repetitions, transformations, and mutations, and that we guard against ontological certainty, particularly against the conviction that learning the past is enough to transcend it. Thus, the films also call for historiographical work, for a reevaluation of the past and of our understanding of history in order to better understand present and future mutations.

When we only understand the chronotope of the nuclear as the eternal present, it, too, risks seeming an overly optimistic notion. The eternal nuclear present ignores some of the greatest problems nuclear power presents: how to pass along responsibility for it and its ravages and how to communicate its dangers in a language that a future world will understand. And also, how to remember. The eternal present could mean a constant awareness of danger, or total recall with the inability to forget, which amounts to "mémoire anesthésiée" (anesthetized memory). A position outside of time, however, allows for a broader perspective on the present. Such a perspective might come from the post-apocalyptic time traveler in *La Jetée*, the letter-writing traveler from 4001 in *Sans soleil*, or the virtual time traveler in *Level Five*. These perspectives offer a broader understanding of the chronotope of the nuclear, a formal type based on its specific spatiotemporal arrangements and one that may be unique amongst chronotopes in its mutability.

Plural Identities

If getting outside of time allows for a broader perspective on it, so might getting outside of the self allow for a better understanding of identity and how it is reshaped and reconceived in

the nuclear era. Adaptability of identity, like that seen in nuclear mutation, can become a source of power. In both Marker's life and work, the notion of the self in the nuclear era is exploded. As identity mutates and becomes plural so do the explanations for plural identities. In Marker's case, as previously mentioned, he chose the pseudonym Chris Marker because it offered him ease of travel. But he used other pseudonyms as well, explaining that he disliked seeing the same name more than once in film credits.[49] Sandor Krasna is a frequent nom de plume, as is his brother, musician Michel Krasna. Hayao Yamaneko is credited for editing images in *Sans soleil*, and Sergei Murasaki is the name of Marker's human avatar in Second Life. Maroussia Vossen, a longtime friend of Marker, writes in a book not about the filmmaker Chris Marker but about the person Christian Bouche-Villeneuve, "ses multiples noms d'emprunt sont autant de preuves de son exceptionnelle capacité d'adaptation...il échappait à quiconque voulait l'enfermer dans une définition"[50] (his multiple pseudonyms are evidence of his exceptional adaptability…he eluded anyone who wanted to trap him in a definition). Even Vossen's explanations for Marker's many names are plural. Her mother had told her that Marker was secretive about his personal information for political reasons related to the war.[51] Whether out of boredom, playfulness, secrecy, or an independent streak, Marker's flexibility with identity, as Vossen suggests, is evidence of his adaptability. This adaptability is evident in the variety of media with which Marker worked and in the hybrid and innovative forms his works have taken. And hybrid form, of course, a kind of generic mutation, is also characteristic of the nuclear narrative.

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[49] Chris Marker, "Letter to Theresa by Chris Marker – Behind the Veils of Sans Soleil," Chris Marker, accessed December 17, 2016, http://chrismarker.org/chris-marker/notes-to-theresa-on-sans-soleil-by-chris-marker/.

[50] Maroussia Vossen, *Chris Marker (Le livre impossible)* (Paris: Le tripode, 2016), 10.

[51] Vossen, 21.

As amalgams of audiovisual forms, Marker's works themselves have plural identities and evade even the most general genre labels of documentary and fiction. His works are plural in their heterogeneous origins and in the various contributors who might claim ownership of the images, which are borrowed from archives, magazines, animations, and other films. A significant portion of Marker's oeuvre also involves collaboration with other filmmakers, such as work with Alain Resnais on documentaries including *Nuit et brouillard* (1956) and *Les statues meurent aussi* (1953). In the late 1960s and 1970s, Marker was involved with the *cinéma ouvrier* (workers' cinema) *Groupes Medvedkines* (Medvedkin Groups) and created the filmmaking collective SLON (Service de Lancement des Œuvres Nouvelles / Society for Launching New Works), which in 1974 became ISKRA (Image, Son, Kinescope et Réalisations Audiovisuelles / Image, Sound, Kinescope, and Audiovisual Productions).[52] These collectives sought to make filmmaking available to everyone and to encourage industrial workers to form film collectives of their own. Collective action, which offers another way of thinking about plurality, is for Marker an explicitly egalitarian pursuit. In an interview about the collective film *Loin du Vietnam* (1967), Marker explains, "One must not believe that the very well-known members of the collective had a proportionally larger input…There was no hierarchy within the team."[53] While these collectives did away with the model of individual authorship, and while many of the films Marker had a hand in directing during this period were unsigned, Marker does not appear to have been involved with ISKRA documentaries from France that directly addressed the nuclear question, such as *Mets pas tes doigts dans ton nez, ils sont radioactifs* / Don't Put Your Fingers

[52] In Russian, "Slon" means elephant; "Iskra" was the name of a revolutionary Marxist journal in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century and is also Russian for "spark."

[53] Interview by R. Ritterbursch, "Entretien avec Chris Marker," *Image et Son* 213 (February 1968). (Translated from the French.) Cited in Alter, *Chris Marker*, 137.

in Your Nose, They Are Radioactive (Comité contre le nucléaire de Montélimar, 1975) and *Condamnés à réussir* / Condemned to Succeed (François Jacquemain, 1976), nor with the transnational ISKRA productions *Voyage dans les centrales de la terre* / Trip to the Power Plants of the World (Per Mannstaedt, 1975), *Energies danoises* / Danish Energies (Per Mannstaedt, 1979), and *Paul Jacobs and the Nuclear Gang* (Jack Willis, 1979).[54] However, the filmmaking groups he helped to create sought to empower collectives of industrial workers to make films about their own conditions and concerns. As Marker did not work in the nuclear industry, his experience of the nuclear would have been in its quotidian civil manifestations, in the common anxieties of the era, that is less in the direct nuclear spectacle than in its everyday social implications. Accordingly, Marker's own films show an interest in the ways the nuclear reshapes everyday society.

Like most of Marker's films, the three studied in this chapter show identity plurality in a few different ways. *La Jetée* is a film made somewhat unintentionally on Marker's days off during the shooting of *Le Joli mai*.[55] Lupton calls *La Jetée* a "film that announced further radical departures in his work by turning the documentary adventure of *Le Joli mai* inside out."[56] Marker himself considers *La Jetée* a remake of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*.[57] *La Jetée,* arguably the film for which Marker is most well known, is distinctive in his oeuvre as a short science-fiction photo-film shot in black and white. It also resides in a network of past and future films, with

[54] The nuclear was also the subject of later films by Medvedkin Group participant René Vautier in his documentaries *Mission Pacifique* (1989) and *Hirochirac* (1995).

[55] Harbord, *La Jetée*, 7. Harbord writes, "Marker has remarked that he began to shoot images for a story he 'didn't completely understand', as though *La Jetée* were almost an unconscious rendition of contemporary anxieties."

[56] Lupton, *Chris Marker*, 78.

[57] Harbord, *La Jetée*, 103.

origins in *Le Joli mai* and *Vertigo*, and heirs in Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkeys* (1995), David Bowie's video for "Jump They Say," and the La Jetée bar in Tokyo that appears in Wim Wenders's *Tokyo-Ga* (1985).

Plurality in *Sans soleil* is geographic and cultural, with images shot in Japan, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Iceland, San Francisco, and Paris. It is also a linguistically plural film. It begins with the title flashing across the screen three times: Без Солнца in red, SUNLESS in pink, and SANS SOLEIL in orange. The English and French versions of the film open with different quotations. In French, Marker cites Racine's "Seconde préface à Bajazet": "L'éloignement des pays répare en quelque sorte la trop grande proximité des temps." (The distance between countries in some ways compensates for the excessive proximity of times.) In English, the citation comes from T.S. Eliot's "Ash-Wednesday": "Because I know that time is always time / And place is always and only place…" In an interview with film scholar Colin MacCabe, Marker explains, "One of the remarkable things about *Sans soleil* is that we did it with four different voice-overs, in French, German, English, and Japanese, and we found almost the same voice in each language."[58] Such examples show a quest among the plural for similarity rather than difference. While the languages and even the citations are different, the near match of pitch of the voices suggests a search for a certain harmony, an occasion for plural voices to work on a common project.

In *Level Five*, plurality can be seen in the film's series of doubles: the protagonist Laura is a sort of double of the viewer; the relationship between her and her lost lover, a double of Elle and her lost lover in *Hiroshima mon amour*; the computer game, a double of the forgotten historical archive; and iconic images, such as the "four images of doubt and fame" that Maureen

[58] Colin MacCabe, "An Interview with Chris Marker – October 2010," *Critical Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (October 1, 2013): 84.

Turim identifies in the film, are shown to be superficial doubles—but not exact duplicates—of reality.[59]

The plurality of identities in these films connects to a more comprehensive heterogeneity seen across Marker's oeuvre, a heterogeneity that is at once powerful—as with the collective of filmmakers working on *Loin du Vietnam* who were able to address the subject matter without "the isolated work of a single person distort[ing] that problem"[60]—and a source of instability. If the film's identity is uncertain, who has authority over it? Can images from various filmmakers come together as a cohesive whole?

In "La double hélice" (The double helix), Bellour considers the instability between images in *Sans soleil*: "C'est entre les images que s'effectuent, de plus en plus, des passages, des contaminations, d'êtres et de régimes."[61] (It is between the images that the passages and contaminations of beings and regimes occur.) Bellour identifies in *Sans soleil* three main figures (*personnages*)—Sandor Krasna, Hayao Yamaneko, and the "cinéaste"—and three image modes—raw images, images capturing different forms of movement, and altered images. The three image makers and the alternation of different image modes, or the contaminations that occur between them, both drive the film and destabilize it. The images in *La Jetée* are often linked by dissolves, suggesting an even more direct contamination of one image to the next. But at one point, the dissolves speed up and we perceive a moment of filmed motion as the woman

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[59] Maureen Turim, "Virtual Discourses of History: Collage, Narrative or Documents in Chris Marker's Level 5," *Sites: The Journal of Twentieth-Century/Contemporary French Studies Revue d'études français* 4, no. 2 (September 1, 2000): 369-71. Turim's four images are: 1. The White Flag Surrender of the Okinawan Girl (an image taken by the US Army), 2. The Flag Raising at Iwo Jima (which the film presents as staged and therefore not a document), 3. A Woman Throwing Herself off a Cliff in Saipan (who becomes aware of the camera and is thus perhaps coerced into completing the act), and 4. Gustave Burning (in which a bombing victim is on fire and appears to die if the footage is cut at a certain point, but the full sequence shows his survival).

[60] Alter, *Chris Marker*, 137.

[61] Raymond Bellour, *L'entre-images 2: mots, images* (Paris: P.O.L., 1999), 10.

flutters her eyelids and awakens. In *La Chambre claire,* Barthes compares cinema and its off-screen space in which life continues with the space of photography, in which everything in the frame dies. And yet the photograph's punctum—a detail with an expansive, often metonymic creative force—can open up space beyond the frame that evokes life outside of the photo.[62] The moment in *La Jetée* when the still photograph slips into a moving image reveals the expansive, animating force of the punctum. The film finds in this moment of movement its nucleus, its most powerful point. As Darke notes, "It lasts all of six seconds, this moment. Nineteen minutes (and forty-five seconds, precisely) into the film, we watch Chatelain walking…. The impact of this moment is out of all proportion to its screen time because it manages to impress us with something of the wonder that the first audiences must have experienced at the birth of cinema."[63]

UNCERTAIN FORMS

Marker's formal innovation with the photo-film *La Jetée* is perhaps unsurprising considering his background as a writer, editor, and animator. Experience with layout and different forms of media might account for the intricate cinematic collage style for which Marker is so well known. Even more so than his friend and collaborator Resnais, Marker made films that defy traditional cinematic forms and genres.[64] Drawn to margins and interstices, Marker developed a unique way of putting films together that included borrowings from a variety of media and genres, frequent discord between dialogue and image, and a reliable element of surprise, often in the form of inserts, unexpected close-ups, animations, and distorted images.

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[62] Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, 90.

[63] Darke, *La Jetée*, 80.

[64] Resnais's films, while often quite experimental in their own right, can be categorized more or less as fiction or documentary, with the exception of *Hiroshima mon amour,* as I argue in the previous chapter.

Marker's experimental cinematic style and the ontological uncertainty in his films allow for compelling representation of the nuclear. Montage flows from reverie to virtual reality and through the historical archive while remaining tethered to moments in contemporary reality. Marker or one of his narrators often tell us that the images have been manipulated, such as those that undergo processing by Hayao Yamaneko in the Zone. Sometimes visual association is enough to transport the viewer into a sort of oneiric viewing experience similar to the one Marker shows in *Sans soleil* when juxtaposing images of people sleeping on the train with their imagined dreams.[65] And sometimes the viewer is left to question the ontological status of the image in Marker's films. What is the image? Where does it exist? How did it come to be? Jacques Rancière situates Marker in "the generation of artists and intellectuals concerned with teaching people how to see instead of stupidly looking," with the commentary and voiceover narration in his films "saying look at the image, don't trust the image, look behind, look for deception in the image."[66] André Bazin, too, questioned the status of the image in Marker's works, describing the montage style in his early films as "horizontal," where the ear leads the eye and movement is "from the audio element to the visual."[67]

Scholars have proposed several ways of grouping images in Marker's works. In her analysis of *Sans soleil*, Alter identifies five "Zones of images": documentary footage of past events (sometimes distorted), video games, signs that function in memory, kamikaze pilots from the Second World War, and self-reflexive key images from the film itself that undergo

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[65] Marker, "L'avant-garde française," 251. Marker writes, "le caractère onirique de l'image cinématographique semblera en faire le moyen de représentation idéal du rêve." (the oneiric quality of the cinematographic image seem to make it the ideal medium for representing dream.)

[66] Jacques Rancière, "Re-Visions: Remarks on the Love of Cinema: An Interview by Oliver Davis," *Journal of Visual Culture* 10, no. 3 (December 1, 2011): 303.

[67] Bazin, "André Bazin on Chris Marker (1958)."

distortion.[68] For Lupton, Marker's montage style is a "structure of reflective consciousness," and his filmmaking tools, used to distort images and integrate different media, are "not cutting-edge technology but rudimentary" and evidence of a sort of "naïve informatics."[69] Hamid Naficy considers Marker's images through the prism of accented cinema. In a close study of the epistolary films *Lettre de Sibérie* (1958) and *Sans soleil,* Naficy relates the uncertainty and instability of the image in *Sans soleil* to the experience of exile. For Naficy, *Sans soleil* is less about Japan or Guinea Bissau than about itself as a film and its filmmaker, which "renders the film hermetically self-referential and intersubjectively claustrophobic—yet another feature of the accented style."[70] As Naficy defines them, epistolary exilic films challenge conventional styles and employ defamiliarization through fragmentation, non-linearity, juxtaposition, repetition, multivocality, and self-reflexivity—all qualities seen in *Sans soleil.* Epistolary exilic films also "problematize the dominant ideologies of authority (patriarchy), authenticity (mimesis), and authorship (auteurist parenting)."[71] Warner, whose study looks at the transition from cinema to post-cinema, thinks that Marker is too multifarious an artist to even be labeled a filmmaker. Warner does identify continuity across Marker's oeuvre in his use of found images, where montage provides "a way of dealing with a chaotic situation" and can be "a tool of historical inspection." Warner proposes that the computer message in *Level Five,* "I don't know how to Laura," is in fact referring to montage, wherein knowing "how to Laura" means knowing how to create using montage.[72] Marker's kind of montage, which creates defamiliarization through

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[68] Alter, *Chris Marker*, 106.

[69] Lupton, *Chris Marker*, 154, 179.

[70] Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 150.

[71] Naficy, 151.

fragmentation and juxtaposition, while also being used as a tool to "deal with a chaotic situation," is consistent with the formally volatile and unstable nuclear narrative. The ontological uncertainty of the image and the subordination of the visual to the aural suggest that sensing is as important as seeing in Marker's films. The viewer is asked to go beyond the spectacular and to find ways to otherwise perceive that which is invisible.

Formal uncertainty in Marker's films provokes a sense of instability for the viewer, who does not know what to expect. It is also a source of strength, both for the film, which compels the viewer to continue watching, and for the filmmaker, who is known and appreciated for his work as a formal innovator. Marker's unexpected filmic forms are accompanied by an ontological uncertainty of images. Thus, we might ask not only what kind of film it is, but also what kind of world is represented in its images. In *Sans soleil* and *Level Five*, we might also ask what kind of Japan is represented.

In *Sans soleil*, Japan is juxtaposed with Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde as an "extreme pole of survival." For Lupton, Marker's Japan is a "world of appearances." The viewer is asked both to trust it and to recognize it as deceptive and requiring time to be understood.[73] Hayao Yamaneko's Zone modifies images and asks the viewer to reconsider them in their "pure" image form. Krasna writes, "Il m'a montré les bagarres des Sixties traitées par son synthétiseur. Des images moins menteuses, dit-il avec la conviction des fanatiques, que celles que tu vois à la télévision. Au moins elle se donnent pour ce qu'elles sont, des images, pas la forme transportable et compacte d'une réalité déjà inaccessible." (He showed me the clashes of the Sixties treated by his synthesizer: pictures that are less deceptive he says—with the conviction of a fanatic—than

[72] Warner, "Go-for-Broke Games."

[73] Lupton, *Chris Marker*, 153, 157.

those you see on television. At least they proclaim themselves to be what they are: images, not the portable and compact form of an already inaccessible reality.) In *Level Five*, Japan is mediated through a computer game; significantly, this film focuses on Okinawa, a distant part of Japan that only officially became Japanese after annexation in 1879. *Level Five* thus presents a vision of the margins of Japan and of the historical archive. In *La Jetée*, Japan is not shown at all, but it is evoked in the images of an imagined post-apocalyptic world whose real-world analogs would be the European and Japanese cities destroyed by the atomic bomb.[74] There is also the ontologically uncertain world of time travel: the spatiotemporalities that exist between the past at Orly airport, the present in the underground laboratory, and the future he travels to, and the return to the moment when the time-traveling protagonist witnesses his own death.

The ontological uncertainty of images in Marker's films is accentuated by the subordination of the visual to the aural. Bazin noted the movement in Marker's early works from audio to visual, and Laurent Roth confirms this tendency in later works, such as *Sans soleil* and *Level Five*, which "saut[ent] de l'oreille à l'œil."[75] (leap from the ear to the eye.) Roth writes, "Des films de Chris Marker, j'éprouve de la difficulté à me souvenir: il m'en reste le ravissement, mais pas d'image…Y aurait-il, chez tout spectateur de ses films, une secrète conspiration de l'oubli?"[76] (I have a difficult time remembering Chris Marker's films: I am left with enchantment but no image… Could there be, for every viewer of his films, a secret conspiracy of forgetting?) Roth's response to Marker's films supports the claim of ontological

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[74] Harbord, *La Jetée*, 7. Harbord takes an expansive view here as well, arguing, "the images of life in the underground camp echo the conditions of the Holocaust, and those of the post-apocalyptic ruins evoke bombed-out European cities. The devastated landscape described by the narrator also recalls the poisoned remains of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Added to the weight of the past, the global political anxiety of the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962 brought the possibility of future wars into focus."

[75] Roth and Bellour, *Qu'est-ce qu'une madeleine?*, 24.

[76] Roth and Bellour., 9-10.

uncertainty both of the images and of their existence in the viewer's memory. In a way, Marker's films seem to be made to be forgotten. Or as Paul Sandro writes of *Sans soleil*, "What we remember most is the film's restlessness, its relentless searching and yearning. The turbulence and delirium provoked by Marker's mad tourism of the mind is an effect of the film that signifies by pointing toward an experience it cannot represent, but can only signify tangentially or asymptotically." For Sandro, the viewer's memories of restlessness are related to different kinds of memory explored in the film: Sandor Krasna's aesthetic memory tied to a concrete (if off-screen) notion of a being, and the imagined world traveler with the power of total recall and the inability to forget, which amounts to "la mémoire anesthésiée"[77] (anesthetized memory).

Nuclear films can be seen as a fight against anesthetized memory, but as Michaël Ferrier points out in his written account *Fukushima: récit d'un désastre,* the flood of images and statistics made available by various media also becomes a sort of public anesthetic to the suffering of individuals directly impacted by the triple disaster.[78] Marker's own cinematic style often approaches that of a writer, for whom images are born from words, either on the page or narrated, and it is the verbal, and perhaps the entire audio track in film, that finally takes precedence over the visual. Thus, perhaps Marker's works are not made to be forgotten but to be revisited, reread, and approached as hybrid image-texts rather than as linear films.

The relationship between the ontological uncertainty of images and the ways Marker's films challenge memory calls to mind Rancière's thoughts on the status of cinema: "Cinema is not only an art; cinema is a specific sensorium, cinema is a way of living in the shadows. I think it is very important that a film is never given as a whole. So the film is a sensation, the sensation

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[77] Paul Sandro, "Singled out by History: *La Jetée* and the Aesthetics of Memory," *French Cultural Studies* 10, no. 28 (February 1, 1999): 127.

[78] Michaël Ferrier, *Fukushima: Récit d'un désastre*, 2nd ed., 1st 2012 ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 2013), 188.

of an apparition, of shadows, and it lives in our memories."[79] This notion of the film—or the viewer's aesthetic experience of it—as a sensation that lives on in our memories calls for a different approach to perceiving audiovisual media: not simply viewing it but sensing it. In *La Jetée,* for example, the rhythm and the durations of the still images are important to the meaning of the film. Harbord, who understands the film not as a collection of stills but as "a project that draws attention to the relation between images," highlights three editing practices used in *La Jetée*: dissolves and cross-fades that produce lyricism and layering; hard cuts that allow images to gather force; and black leader between images that allows us to "fix our memory of a film."[80] While we take in the images of a film visually, there is another sensory process at work in our perception of rhythm and how it makes meaning in the film, how the non-images or the black leader contribute meaning to the audiovisual experience in the same way that the blank space on a page can convey meaning to a reader.

A broader definition of sensing becomes particularly important when considering how we perceive something that is invisible. How does Tarkovsky convey the invisible dangers of the Zone in *Stalker* if not through other sensory cues, such as painstakingly slow camera movement, and natural sounds of water and wind that distance the Zone from the urban area. In *Sans soleil*, for example, we might consider how we sense the "things that quicken the heart." Krasna writes, "[Sei] Shônagon avait la manie des listes: liste des 'choses élégantes,' des 'choses désolantes' ou encore des 'choses qu'il ne vaut pas la peine de faire.' Elle eut un jour l'idée d'écrire la liste des 'choses qui font battre le cœur.' Ce n'est pas un mauvais critère, je m'en aperçois quand je filme." ([Sei] Shonagon had a passion for lists: the list of 'elegant things,' 'distressing things,' or

[79] Rancière, "Re-Visions," 295.

[80] Harbord, *La Jetée*, 35-41.

even of ‘things not worth doing.’ One day she got the idea of drawing up a list of ‘things that quicken the heart.’ Not a bad criterion I realize when I'm filming.) During this voiceover narration, a small warplane is shown flying over a larger one, perhaps as part of a military exercise. This is not a neutral or calming image but one that evokes agitation, aggression, or wonder. The things that quicken the filmmaker’s heart are never named but suggested in the images of the film. The aesthetic experience of the film as a whole seems to be oriented toward a quickening of the heart, particularly in the flashes of surprising images, such as a boat at sea and the head of an emu that appear for a second each during a parade sequence in Japan, the imagined dreams of passengers on a train juxtaposed with their sleeping faces, and a split second of the elusive filmmaker himself inserted between frames of a shot showing televisions and camera operators on a street in Tokyo.

Chris Marker in *Sans soleil*

Sensing beyond the visible is particularly important for an appreciation of the invisible nuclear presence that haunts Marker's films. Akira Kurosawa, a filmmaker Marker greatly admired and about whose filmmaking he made the documentary *A.K.*, took a different approach to representing invisible radiation in the short film "Mount Fuji in Red," part of the longer work *Dreams* (1990). Like Marker, Kurosawa takes advantage of the ontological uncertainty of dreams to address real-life problems, such as the invisibility of radioactive contamination. In "Mount Fuji in Red," six nuclear reactors explode around Mount Fuji and cause the volcano to erupt. Across the landscape, radioactive contamination is rendered visible in Technicolor clouds: red for plutonium, yellow for strontium, and violet for cesium. The contamination made visible makes it even more terrifying for those who see it and have confirmation of the dangers surrounding them. In this case, the ontological uncertainty of Kurosawa's "dream" world makes for a more flexible reality that allows us to better perceive the nuclear.

In Marker's films, the instability of the nuclear is perceptible in the surprising rhythms and flashes of images and in their distortions and alterations. In *Le Mystère Koumiko,* a film Darke sees as a precursor to *Sans soleil*, a scarcely audible announcement plays over an image of Koumiko's face: "Tokyo, dix-sept octobre. Neuf étudiants ont été arrêtés au cœur de l'administration pour protester contre la visite au Japon des sous-marins américains porteurs de bombes atomiques"[81] (Tokyo, October 17th. Nine students were arrested inside the administration for protesting the visit to Japan by American submarines carrying atomic bombs).

The nuclear is most evidently perceptible in Yamaneko's Zone, but also in *Level Five* as Laura questions iconic images of war, and in *La Jetée* as the time traveler revises his understanding of an important image from his childhood. Other small nuclear references in

[81] Darke, *La Jetée*, 18.

Marker's films demand a similarly careful reading or sensing, as some are so apparently insignificant that they may go unseen. For example, we see a Doraemon balloon in the Tokyo parade in *Sans soleil*. Doraemon is a time-traveling, nuclear-powered, animated robotic cat that first appeared in a manga series in Japan in the 1970s to stress the peaceful use of nuclear power. It has been one of Japan's most popular cultural exports.[82] The Doraemon balloon appears onscreen for four seconds between shots of a girl dancing and a woman playing shamisen. When the balloon passes the camera, we see a glimpse of the man in traditional festival attire to whom the balloon is attached before the camera cuts to the woman with the shamisen. The camera lingers on the Doraemon balloon, if only for four seconds. Still, this image lasts longer than those of the one-second inserted shots, such as the above-mentioned boat and emu that punctuate the same parade sequence.

Unlike the inserted shots, the Doraemon balloon is part of the parade, part of the ongoing spectacle Marker is filming. Its inclusion could be interpreted as an example of Marker's affinity for the ludic, for cats, or for animation, which he himself practiced and included in many of his films. Or perhaps it was a chance appearance. As Marker the narrator says in *Le Fond de l'air est rouge* (1977), "On ne sait jamais ce qu'on filme." I argue that this fragment is quite significant and should be understood differently than shots that linger on cats in the street, or the one-second inserts in the parade. In this instance, sound can be our guide to the image. As the camera lingers on the balloon, the Doraemon jingle merges with the sounds of the street festival and serves as a sonic transition from the parade to Marker's (or Michel Krasna's) synthesized sounds. This juxtaposition goes beyond that of modern and traditional culture in Japan, which has been remarked upon often enough to become a hollow cliché, to show the ubiquity and banality of

[82] Timothy J. Craig, *Japan Pop! Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture* (M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 295.

nuclear culture, which becomes fixed in memory with its jingles and *kawaii* promotional characters. The one-second shot of the man behind the balloon draws attention to the language of publicity and to the shadowy human presence behind it. The language of publicity is visual and verbal, and the choice to include the Doraemon jingle seems intentional as it is not part of the diegetic sound from the parade. If the blending of sounds is subtle enough that the jingle could easily go unnoticed, this only echoes and exposes the use of understated messages in advertising and the need for discernment, for careful sensing. Kear suggests that themes emerge cyclically in *Sans soleil* and that the film is structured by a series of "'shifting dominants,' in which each moment of the film acquires a relative equality."[83] A structure of shifting dominants grants the same status to the Doraemon image buried in the parade sequence as to an image in a more prominent place in the film or one accentuated by complementary narration.

Doraemon balloon tied to someone's back in *Sans soleil*

[83] Kear, *Sunless/Sans Soleil*, 7-8.

The nuclear also appears quite explicitly at moments in these films as an interest in energy traces across them. When the time traveler in *La Jetée* nears the end of his mission, the voice-over says, “On lui donnait une centrale d’énergie suffisante pour remettre en marche toute l’industrie humaine, et les portes de l’avenir furent refermées.” (He was given a power supply strong enough to restart the world's industry, then again the doors to the future closed.) In *Sans soleil*, in addition to the example of the Doraemon balloon, the electrified city of Tokyo—with its trains, televisions, neon lights, arcade games, electronically synthesized images, electronics shops, and even a musical staircase—is shown as an extreme pole of survival dependent on energy, a large portion of which comes from nuclear power.

In *Level Five,* the nuclear interest comes at a surprising moment when Laura asks, “Pourquoi y a-t-il chez les objets une volonté de moquerie permanente, obstinée? Si on pouvait la transformer en énergie, le monde n’aurait plus besoin de pétrole.” (Why do material objects display such endless, willful mockery? If it could be turned to energy, the world could do without oil.) Later in the film, we see an image of Laura in what appears to be a gas mask. This image is superimposed over others of the faces of young Okinawans, and a synthesized voice from the computer game speaks:

> En d’autres temps, pour lester la puissance de l’abonné, on avait cherché une matière dense, lourde et rare qui pourrait en être un gage au fond des coffres, et on avait trouvé l’or. Maintenant, l’argent était devenu invisible et volatile et pour gager la nouvelle puissance, on avait cherché une matière invisible et volatile, et on avait trouvé le savoir. C’étaient les atomes de savoir qui traversaient nos écrans. C’était des trous noirs de savoir où s’engouffraient les rêves de puissance de ce siècle qui n’en finissait pas.
>
> (In past times, to lend weight to money, they sought a dense, rare material to act as a guarantee inside coffers. They chose gold. Now money has become invisible and volatile, so the new power needed a pledge that was invisible and volatile too. They found knowledge. Atoms of knowledge crossed our screens. It was into knowledge’s black holes that this unending century’s dreams of power fell.)

While the "atoms of knowledge" are perhaps the most explicit nuclear allusion in this excerpt, the passage as a whole merits consideration for its analysis of the system of capital that is both dependent upon and at odds with knowledge. Like the gold standard, nuclear energy is also invisible and volatile, dependent on both capital and knowledge, and often at odds with them, such as when nuclear construction goes over budget and when serious problems are hidden from public knowledge. Both of the examples from *Level Five* question the stability of concrete materials—of things, of gold, of nuclear materials—and explore possibilities for transformation. The interest in energy across these films exposes a blind faith in problematic energy sources and the volatility and precariousness of dependence on them; the films imagine alternatives.

The uncertain forms of Marker's films encourage a multisensory perception of their nuclear elements. On a first viewing (or even after several viewings), the viewer does not know what to expect from these films, which do not follow generic or common formal conventions. As active spectators, we are on high alert: we engage the senses beyond the visual; we listen, we feel, we sense our hearts quicken. In this heightened state of awareness, we experience a sort of absolute presence. Even the black leader intended to "fix our memory of the film" might not be enough to keep it from slipping into an anesthetized—or perhaps aestheticized—memory. It is not possible to remember everything in Marker's films because they are not constructed to be remembered in this way. This level of uncertainty—of form, of being, of memory—echoes the notion in Tarkovsky's *Stalker* by which the weak and flexible are seen as more alive and capable of growth than the strong and hard. In Bellour's formulation, Tarkovsky's Zone, as a place for such weakness and flexibility, is "par excellence l'univers des hantises, des nouvelles hantises nées avec 'la question de la technique,' contre lesquelles on serait sans recours si on n'avait la force de s'emparer des techniques pour produire—c'est une des façons de résister—toujours plus

de métamorphoses"[84] (the realm of obsession par excellence, the realm of new obsessions that emerge with 'the question of technology' and against which we would be without recourse if we could not take over the technology to produce—it's one way to resist—always more metamorphoses). Bellour's description of the Zone resonates with the definition, as it has been developed thus far in this thesis, of the nuclear narrative, a form that also develops from obsessions with the question of technology and produces transformations that resist strong and established narrative forms.

Unstable space and time, explosion and multiplication of identities, and uncertain forms all become sources of strength in Marker's work. For Marker, heterogeneity and uncertainty are stronger than homogeneity, certitude, and the individual. In our heterogeneous, uncertain, and interconnected ecosystem, our environment is damaged in visible and invisible ways that we must be able to sense in order to fully acknowledge and act. *La Jetée, Sans soleil*, and *Level Five* offer opportunities to perceive the nuclear in unexpected ways: as a hyperobject massively distributed in space and time; through the explosion of the self and the filmmaker and a multiplication of identities; and in unstable filmic forms.

CONCLUSION

In a rare interview, Marker was asked if his many travels taught him to be suspicious of dogmatism, to which he responded, "Je crois que j'étais prévenu à ma naissance. J'avais dû beaucoup voyager avant"[85] (I think I was suspicious from birth. I must have traveled a lot before then). Travel has allowed Marker the filmmaker to elude dogmatism and explore history from

[84] Bellour, *L'entre-images 2*, 44.

[85] Chris Marker, Rare Marker, interview by Samuel Duhaire and Annick Rivoire, *Libération*, March 5, 2003, http://next.liberation.fr/cinema/2003/03/05/rare-marker_457649.

beyond its assumed limits. Watching films that come from this sort of "beyond" requires a different approach than traditional viewing. Often implied in the statement "just let the film wash over you" is the assumption that the best the film might have to offer is a poetic style, a pleasant audiovisual experience. Marker's films ask a bit more than that of viewers. As hybrid forms from a filmmaker with a writerly sensibility and a penchant for ludic and meticulous montage in which the ear often leads the eye, these films demand a more sensory viewing style. As we have seen with the films analyzed in this chapter, we have to watch, listen, and perceive, pay attention to absences, rhythms, and combination. And we have to think.

Marker's films are also privileged spaces for the evocation rather than the direct presentation of the nuclear. "On ne sait jamais ce qu'on filme." A film's twenty-four images per second pass too quickly for the viewer to take in each still. These films, particularly *Sans soleil* with its discordant images and sound, exploit the sensorial overload that cinema has to offer and leave the viewer on ontologically uncertain ground, not unlike that of memory or dream. And yet specific elements—fragments, flashes, whispers, echoes—can lodge in the subconscious, provoking instability and mutation in the spectator's mind. After a first viewing, one might be hard pressed to say anything definitive about a Marker film. Even after multiple viewings, new questions and doubts begin to surface. But it is precisely this uncertainty and instability that allows for mobility of the mind.

As for the French visions of Japan they present, Marker's films are arguably more engaged with the tradition of Japonisme than was Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour*. While Resnais was asked to make a film in Japan and did not choose the location, Marker made the choice himself, and he did so several times. Marker's connection to Japan, a relationship established with the 1965 film *Le Mystère Koumiko* and one that continued over the course of his

career, shows a profound affinity for the country and its cultures. In an interview in the documentary *Chris Marker: Never explain, never complain* (2015), Wim Wenders compares his own experience as a visitor in Japan to Marker's relationship with the country and his deeper physical, mental, and spiritual connections to the place. Marker's connections to Japan are also cinematic. To cite just a couple of examples, he observes the Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa during the production of *Ran* for the documentary *A.K.*.,[86] and in *Level Five,* Marker includes an interview with Nagisa Oshima and clips from his documentaries about Okinawa. Marker's conviction that industrial workers in the Medvedkin Groups could best document their conditions on the ground extends to his cross-cultural practice in these later films, a practice that appreciates Japanese perspectives. He also kept returning to Japan, and in filming a visit to "le petit bar de Shinjuku" (La Jetée) in *Sans soleil*, Marker allusively cites himself as part of the tradition of Franco-Japanese cultural exchange. There has also been significant interest in Marker's work in Japan. After his death in 2012, the 2013 Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival organized a retrospective featuring forty-five of his films accompanied by the catalogue *Memories of the Future. Chris Marker's Travels and Trials*. In 2014, several articles were published by Japanese scholars in a collection entitled *Chris Marker: Nomadic and Engagé Filmmaker,* a publication followed the next year by a Japanese colloquium on Marker's work.[87]

Over the course of his filmmaking career, Marker developed the idea of time travel and the privileged perspective that spatiotemporal uncertainty can offer. But the time traveler writing from the future in *Sans soleil* and the time traveler chasing his past in *La Jetée* are not the end of

[86] Incidentally, *Ran* and *AK* were both produced by Serge Silberman of Greenwich Film Productions, who also produced Nagisa Oshima's *Max mon amour* (1986).

[87] Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, *Memories of the Future. Chris Marker's Travels and Trials* (Yamagata, 2013); Yu Kaneko and Chiho Higashi, *Chris Marker: Cinéaste nomade et engagé* (Tokyo: Mori Shosha, 2014).

this story. They can be seen to reappear as a single specter in Philippe Rouy's *4 batîments, face à la mer* (2012). This figure—captured on the TEPCO live-stream camera at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactors, identity concealed by the white protective suit and helmet resembling that of a space traveler—stands in front of the live-stream camera for twenty-five minutes and points at it, a gesture recalling the final question of Resnais's and Marker's *Nuit et brouillard*: "Alors qui est responsable?"

Chapter Four

Filming Fukushima: Nuclear Narratives in the Digital Age

> Ce qui m'a fasciné dans les images de cette webcam de TEPCO, c'est qu'elles ne s'arrêtaient jamais. Ce dispositif de filmage continu et infini me semblait adéquat au temps nucléaire dans lequel on ne peut pas se projeter.
>
> (What fascinated me about the TEPCO webcam images is that they never stop. It seemed fitting to use continuous and endless filming for a nuclear time in which we cannot project ourselves.)
>
> —Philippe Rouy, on *4 bâtiments, face à la mer*

> There is a real sense in which it is far easier to conceive of "forever" than very large finitude. Forever makes you feel important. One hundred thousand years makes you wonder whether you can imagine one hundred thousand anything.
>
> —Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects*

Introduction: Documenting Disaster in the Digital Age

Keiko Courdy's webdoc and film *Au-delà du nuage. Yonaoshi 3.11* (2013) (*Beyond the cloud. Yonaoshi 3.11*) begin with footage of the 2011 tsunami that swept much of Japan's northeastern coast. A man with a mobile phone on a balcony at Miyako City Hall records the tsunami as it crests and overflows the floodwall, while the people standing next to him narrate the destruction and yell out in disbelief.[1] In the long edit version of this footage, the camera pans left to show the water overtaking the city and a half dozen other people on the balcony, at least one of whom is also recording the disaster on a mobile phone.[2]

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[1] Philippe Rouy, Interview with Philippe Rouy: Blindness in images, blindness of society off-camera, interview by Elise Domenach, Print: *Fukushima en cinéma. Voix du cinéma japonais*. (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy, 2015), 124, 142. Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, Posthumanities (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 60. Miyako, a coastal city devastated by the tsunami, is in Iwate prefecture, a few hundred miles north of the Fukushima Daiichi power plant.

[2] The long edit version is not shown in full in the webdoc or film but can be accessed in the JAPAN WEBDOC PROJECT collection on Youtube: Keita Okamoto, *Tsunami Miyako* (Miyako City Hall, Iwate prefecture, 2011), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLeSbbgnXmE.

The smartphone has given rise to the amateur photographer and citizen filmmaker, often inspired to document situations of crisis or disaster to add to an increasingly uncertain notion of a permanent record. This recent phenomenon in contemporary visual culture changes the way we think about documenting history in the digital age and raises new questions about how we see, make sense of, and share visions of the world through the use of digital technologies. The question is no longer "Did it happen if no one caught it on camera?" but "Who writes history?" "How do we make sense of a profusion of images?" and "What meanings emerge from a multitude of perspectives?" In the digital age, new technologies and platforms facilitate the recording and sharing of images. With these digital tools, history can be crowd-sourced, and myriad narrative fragments coexist in the nonhierarchical space of the Internet. Today, the filmmaker's challenge is less about access and resources than about selection and organization.

Digital narrative fragments in the form of amateur recordings and surveillance and webcam footage, often collected in online databases, raise new questions about the nuclear narrative and its formal instability and spatiotemporal uncertainty. An underlying question of this chapter is whether these digital media are fundamentally different from their analog counterparts. One of the most salient differences between the two is the increased instability of digital media. As the media scholar Jon Dovey writes of the digital age, "we are always in a transitional phase. Our media landscape is a function of permanent upgrade culture where there is no 'other side' where it all stops changing."[3] What happens to the nuclear narrative when unstable digital media forms exist in a state of continual transformation? In such a transitional space, narrative itself becomes ever more unstable.

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[3] Jon Dovey, "Documentary Ecosystems: Collaboration and Exploitation," in *New Documentary Ecologies: Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, ed. Nash et al. (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 28.

More centrally, this chapter asks what new possibilities digital media might provide for the nuclear narrative and for the articulation of nuclearized spatiotemporality. How do nonlinear structure and database work change the forms of audiovisual nuclear narratives? How is the chronotope of the nuclear affected by an uncertain media landscape in which spatial and temporal distances continue to collapse? And what possibilities do collective and interactive work in the digital age provide for envisioning nuclear disaster and responding to it? This chapter reflects on these questions through an analysis of formal instability, spatiotemporal uncertainty, and collectivity in nuclear narratives about the 2011 triple disaster in Japan by two French filmmakers, Keiko Courdy and Philippe Rouy. I argue that in the digital age, the media forms of nuclear narratives are increasingly fragmented and destabilized, spatiotemporal boundaries are ever more uncertain, and new opportunities for collaboration and solidarity emerge. The digital productions by Courdy and Rouy in particular offer increasingly transforming and transnational French visions of a nuclear Japan. With the "trans-" visions they present, these digital productions both confirm and challenge generalizations that might be made about digital media and its nonlinear and non-hierarchical forms that stretch across vast expanses of space and time.

Keiko Courdy's webdoc and film *Au-delà du nuage. Yonaoshi 3.11* include interviews with people in Japan who have been affected by the disaster: nuclear refugees and others who chose to remain in highly radioactive areas; journalists, artists, and filmmakers; medical professionals and political actors such as Naoto Kan, prime minister at the time of the disaster who has since come out strongly against nuclear power. All of the interviews in Courdy's film are also in the webdoc, which includes an additional interview with Gérard Aleton, a retired French nuclear engineer. The webdoc also includes contextual information about the disaster and

Courdy's project, a collection of still images, a map of Japan, a calendar of screenings and events, links to social media, and an interactive space where viewers can post messages in the form of wishes. In the film, Courdy's voiceover narration provides contextual information about the filmmaker and the areas filmed, and there is no space for direct viewer interaction.[4]

Philippe Rouy's trilogy of films about the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi, *4 bâtiments, face à la mer* (2012) (*Four buildings, facing the sea*), *Machine to Machine* (2013), and *Fovea centralis* (2014), were made using found footage from the Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO) live-stream webcams and surveillance cameras as well as from YouTube. Interests in technology, visibility, space, and time serve as thematic ties across the films. The first in the trilogy, *4 bâtiments, face à la mer,* announces its three parts in a subtitle "*(trois vues)*" (three views). The first part, "l'invisible et le caché" (the invisible and the hidden), shows a montage of views of a damaged Fukushima Daiichi reactor from June 2011 through January 2012. In the second part, "squelettes enveloppés de soie" (skeletons wrapped in silk), a worker stands in front of the live-stream camera and points at it for twenty-five minutes. Rouy calls this gesture the spark for the entire trilogy of films. He had seen thirty seconds of the footage on Stéphane du Mesnildot's blog in September 2011 and was able to find the entire sequence on the YouTube channel Fuku1live.[5] On YouTube, Rouy also found live-stream TEPCO webcam footage dating back to June 2011, which he combined with his own recordings from the ongoing live-stream camera shown on the TEPCO website. In the third part of the film, "j'écouterai le reste du chant au pays des morts" (I will listen to the rest of the song in the land of the dead),

[4] The film was made available on YouTube in June 2017, and viewers are now able to respond to it in the comments section (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6t9KE2BZ4A&t=9s).

[5] Rouy, Interview with Philippe Rouy, 139.

narration from a 1985 promotional film by TEPCO (subtitled in French) plays over a cycle of footage of the destroyed reactor similar to what was shown in parts one and two.

Rouy's second film, *Machine to Machine,* is the shortest in the trilogy and arguably demands the most of the viewer. *Machine to Machine* uses images from drones, cranes, robots, and probes that have been sent into the highly radioactive reactors to document the damage. Ghostly, abstract images of ruins haunt what Rouy calls an "environnement minéral dont toute humanité est absente et dans lequel il est difficile de se réparer spatialement" (mineral environment devoid of all humanity and in which it is difficult to obtain spatial reference points).[6] The only intermittent sounds are those of machines. *Machine to Machine* offers a nonhuman vision of the disaster and shows human non-mastery of tools and machines used in an attempt to manage the situation.

The third film in Rouy's trilogy, *Fovea centralis*, takes its title from the anatomical term for the center of the field of vision in the eye where visual acuity is highest. *Fovea centralis* presents a multi-image mosaic of videoconference footage from eight TEPCO boardrooms in Tokyo and the Fukushima Daiichi region during the days and weeks following the nuclear disaster. In the spirit of transparency, TEPCO made this footage available to the public while also extensively censoring it by blurring faces and bleeping or entirely removing the sound. Rouy's film acknowledges and reframes these "blind spots," juxtaposing blurred boardroom footage with his own selection of texts and sound. At times, all eight boardrooms share the screen, providing a sense of visual and informational overload; other times, one or two frames fill the screen and yield no greater clarity on the situation.

[6] Rouy, Interview with Philippe Rouy, 129, 146-7.

Multi-image mosaic in *Fovea centralis*

Courdy's *Au-delà du nuage. Yonaoshi 3.11* and Rouy's trilogy of films show rather different French visions of Japan. While both filmmakers take as their primary subject matter the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi, their responses are shaped not only by their individual stylistic approaches but also by their different levels of access to Japanese culture. Courdy's vision of a post-Fukushima Japan expresses an ambivalent optimism. The title *Au-delà du nuage. Yonaoshi 3.11* (*Beyond the cloud. Yonaoshi 3.11*) recalls the iconic mushroom cloud of the 1945 atomic bombings and suggests the possibility of moving "beyond" disaster. *Yonaoshi*, Japanese for "renewal of the world," offers a hopeful frame for nuclear disaster and a gesture of solidarity with victims in Japan, a gesture reinforced by the bilingual title.[7] Courdy, who was born in Japan

[7] This definition comes from the "Yonaoshi" page in Courdy's webdoc.

and has a doctorate from the University of Tokyo, speaks Japanese, which allows her greater cultural and linguistic access for the interview-based work.[8] Rouy does not speak Japanese and did not go to Japan to make his films. In his work, language is de-emphasized as the human element is either abstracted or completely absent. Instead, a machine-operated world shows the fractures and fragments of societies that have put technological progress ahead of human well-being. These films offer no vision of renewal or of moving beyond disaster. While Rouy's mostly nonverbal films are in some ways more accessible to an international viewership, they do not seem to be aimed at a wide audience, having been shown mostly at festivals, museums, and colloquiums.[9] Courdy, on the other hand, promotes her work on social media and crowd-funding sites, encouraging viewers to "partager sans modération" (share widely).[10]

These contemporary French visions of a Japan struck again by nuclear disaster echo certain aspects of the earlier French visions analyzed in this thesis with one particularly notable difference: in the Fukushima films, the nuclear moves to the foreground to become the central subject matter. Courdy was not in Japan on March 11, 2011 to witness the triple disaster. Yet, as she explains in an early scene in the film, she felt she had to go there "to take part, help, do something." On May 1, she took a nearly empty flight to Tokyo armed with a dust mask, gloves, and her camera. Because she did not witness the disaster firsthand, Courdy relies on others' audiovisual accounts of the disasters, much as Resnais borrowed footage from Japanese films

[8] Courdy, a French artist and filmmaker, was born in Japan where she lived until she was twelve. She returned at twenty-one to earn a doctoral degree at University of Tokyo and to work for a while as an artist and professor at Kyoto University of Art and Design. She later returned to her hometown Biot, a village in southeast France, to work on media installations. Biographical information from https://www.kisskissbankbank.com/japan-webdoc-project_yonaoshi-3-11.

[9] The films are also available on Vimeo but are password protected and as of December 2017 have been viewed fewer than 100 times.

[10] A June 12, 2017 post on the "Japan Webdoc project" Facebook page invites visitors to access the film online for free and encourages them to "partager sans modération."

about Hiroshima. For Courdy as for Resnais, secondhand images are repurposed and become part of a transnational cinematic ecology. Shots are chosen for what they might contribute to a larger story told by someone who was not there, someone piecing together fragments of a story from a significant spatial or temporal distance. In Courdy's film, spatial and temporal distance from the triple disaster allows for greater reflection on it and for global perspectives on its implications. By beginning her work with borrowed footage of the tsunami, Courdy expresses the impossibility of knowing what it was like to have been there. The affective dimension is not absent from Courdy's work, but her distance is acknowledged. *Tu n'as rien vu*, the opening scene seems to say.

Working at a much greater spatial distance in France, Rouy made his trilogy of films from found footage in order to bring attention to the enormous amount of publicly available footage of the triple disaster and to question the apparent transparency of mass dissemination of images and information. Rouy's films focus on the institutions, technologies, and equipment involved in the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi and its aftermath with particular attention to questions of visibility and invisibility. Rouy's physical distance from the disaster allows him to reflect on it in different ways: "exprimer l'inquiétude d'une catastrophe nucléaire; à distance, en observant—ce qui correspondait à ma manière de faire. Il n'était pas question pour moi d'aller au Japon" (expressing the anxiety of a nuclear disaster, at a distance, through observation, which corresponds to my way of doing things. There was no question of my going to Japan).[11] Rouy suggests that if he went to Japan to make a film, it would not be about the nuclear disaster: "J'y verrais une forme d'obscénité à laquelle le travail à distance sur ces images m'a permis, j'espère

[11] Rouy, Interview with Philippe Rouy, 121, 139.

en tout cas, d'échapper" (I would see in that a kind of obscenity that working on these images from afar allowed me to escape, at least I hope).[12]

Courdy and Rouy are two of several French filmmakers who responded to the 2011 triple disaster by making films about it. Their formally and conceptually experimental works are joined by more traditional film documentaries, such as Alain de Halleux's *Welcome to Fukushima* (2012), Jean-Paul Jaud's *Tous cobayes?* (2012) and *Libres!* (2015), Claude-Julie Parisot and Gil Rabier's *Fukushima, des particules et des hommes* (2014), and Marc Petitjean's *De Hiroshima à Fukushima* (2015). These films all express a common concern for and solidarity with victims of the disaster. Many of the filmmakers also turn a critical eye toward France and its decision to continue using and developing nuclear energy.[13] These films about Fukushima share several common themes, images, and sounds: uncertainty, invisibility, road blocks, empty streets, stray animals, nuclear refugees, hazmat suits, face masks, Geiger counters, maps, TEPCO workers, the former prime minister Naoto Kan, citizen organizations, protests, the drone of machines, and silence. The nuclear concern in these works is explicit, and in addition to their foregrounding of the nuclear, Fukushima films can be distinguished from earlier nuclear narratives with regard to their speed of response to the nuclear disaster. The above-mentioned films were released

[12] Philippe Rouy, email exchange, July 3, 2017.

[13] Many of these documentaries about the Fukushima disaster, along with several others, are coproductions that are only partly French: Toshi Fujiwara, *No Man's Zone* (2012); Alain de Halleux, *Welcome to Fukushima* (Crescendo Films, 2013); Jean-Paul Jaud, *Libres!* (J+B Séquences, 2015); Jean-Paul Jaud, *Tous cobayes?* (J+B Séquences, 2012); Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato, *L'incommensurable: une recherche audio-visuelle après Fukushima* (Label Video, 2012); Mark Olexa and Francesca Scalisi, *Half-Life in Fukushima* (Dokmobile, Syndicado INC, 2016); Marc Petitjean, *De Hiroshima à Fukushima* (Mirage Illimité, 2015); Alain Saulière, *Courage!* (Les Ateliers du passeur, CNRS Images, 2014); Kenichi Watanabe, *Le monde après Fukushima* (Kami Productions, 2012); and Kenichi Watanabe, *Terres nucléaires: une histoire du plutonium* (Kami Productions, ARTE France, 2015). Also of note are the well-established nuclear concerns of filmmakers who made documentaries before Fukushima as well such as Alain de Halleux, *R.A.S Nucléaire, rien à signaler* (RTBF, ARTE, 2009) and Marc Petitjean, *Blessures atomiques* (On Line Productions, 2006).

relatively quickly after the disaster, and others continue to be made.[14] Filmmakers documenting the 2011 nuclear disaster do not have the option of the long view. They lack the temporal distance Resnais had from the bombing of Hiroshima. Filmmakers today are inundated with images, and they have tools and platforms to create and distribute ever more images. Live-stream cameras, smartphone videos, and social media platforms facilitate their accelerated responses to the disaster. In the digital age, information moves quickly and art with it.[15]

Given the accelerated production and distribution of images and information, it is difficult to say how long these works will last or whether they will be lost in a sea of data and other disaster narratives. Will these films matter in the long run? What cultural reach will they have? While these questions cannot yet be answered, Courdy's and Rouy's works can be analyzed in the context of this study as digital nuclear narratives with increasingly unstable forms and nuclearized spatiotemporalities. A key tension today arises between digital media that have the potential to allow for more democratic participation and increased transparency and the profusion of digital fragments that, because of their quantity, may paradoxically obscure that which they are intended to reveal. This chapter implicitly addresses this transparency paradox as I consider the narrative forms these digital media foster, the spatiotemporal uncertainties they introduce, and the possibilities for collectivity that they offer.

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[14] See for example recent work by Jérémie Souteyrat and Alissa Descotes-Toyosaki, *Road Fukushima*, web-doc (Kami Productions, 2016), https://r88be27665.racontr.com/; Judith Cahen and Masayusu Eguchi, *Le Coeur du conflit* (Inter Bay Films, 2017); and Keiko Courdy's forthcoming film *Fukushima l'île invisible* (Pika Pika Films).

[15] Abé Mark Nornes, *Japanese Documentary Film: The Meiji Era through Hiroshima*, Visible Evidence (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 216. Fournier Lanzoni, *French Cinema*, 224. Compare filmmaking in the digital age with the postwar situation during which the documentary *Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (1946) was censored by the American military until 1967, well after the end of the American occupation of Japan in 1952. *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), released fourteen years after the war, was kept out of competition at the Cannes Film Festival out of concern for offending Americans.

DIGITAL NUCLEAR FORMS

Chris Marker's multimedia computer work may have seemed cutting-edge in the 1990s, however today most audiovisual work is influenced in some way by digital media.[16] *Au-delà du nuage. Yonaoshi 3.11* and Rouy's trilogy of films rely on digital tools and technologies, which maintain many of the practices of analog filmmaking while also offering new opportunities for departure. Digital media practices such as nonlinear narrative structure, collage and mosaic, and database work allow for increasingly fragmented works in which the fragments themselves are often self-contained narratives. The nuclear narrative in the digital age may be more powerful in its structure composed of multiple independent fragments, but it can also be seen as more unstable as independent fragments may depend less on one another for meaning.

In order to appreciate the particularity of fragmented digital forms and to situate Courdy and Rouy in the context of the wider new media landscape, I offer a brief discussion of digital media terminology. To start, we might consider challenges to the term "medium" itself. Sean Cubitt writes, "Mostly when we say *medium* we mean something of a pretty high order of complexity such as television," which is also an industry, a culture, an assemblage of technologies, and a mix of programs.[17] The films analyzed in this chapter involve more than just the medium of film. They can be considered "multimedia" works as they are constructed using assemblages of technologies, such as digital cameras, live-stream webcams, and video databases on YouTube. The films also exist in the broader realm of digital media. For Cubitt, the term "digital media" points to a wide sphere that resists reduction as it "is far too vast to be

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[16] Colin MacCabe and Adam Bartos, *Studio: Remembering Chris Marker* (New York, London: OR Books, 2017), 15-16. Regarding Marker's work on the CD-ROM *Immemory* (1998), MacCabe writes, "For Chris, the computer freed him of the linearity of film that he had always felt as a constraint."

[17] Sean Cubitt and Paul Thomas, "Introduction: The New Materialism in Media Art History," in *Relive: Media Art Histories*, ed. Sean Cubitt and Paul Thomas (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2013), 7.

assimilable to a single aesthetic: the aesthetic of a dot-matrix printer has little to do with *Avatar*; Excel has little in common with Blender."[18] The works analyzed in this chapter show such heterogeneous digital aesthetic strategies. For instance, the aesthetic of the live-stream surveillance webcam in Rouy's work has little to do with that of Courdy's interactive website.

The term "digital media" and its synonym "new media" suggest a break with the past, with analog or "old media." Yet in *The Language of New Media,* which provides the first comprehensive theory of the term, Lev Manovich highlights the dependence of new media on certain conventions of old media. New media could include anything produced using a computer that conforms to some or all of Manovich's general principles of new media.[19] Manovich argues that avant-garde filmmakers since the 1920s have explored many of the same possibilities that new media offer in the digital age, from nonlinear narrative structure to the graphic collage aesthetic "with its characteristic heterogeneity and discontinuity."[20]

While new and old media artists have always borrowed from other works, with new media the possibilities for borrowing become much greater. As Manovich notes, "Any unique image that you desire probably already exists on the Internet or in some database….the problem today is no longer how to create the right image, but how to find an already existing one."[21] The found webcam footage in Rouy's film and the tsunami footage from a smartphone in Courdy's work—as well as footage from the documentary *Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and*

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[18] Cubitt, 9.

[19] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 2002), 27-45. The five principles of new media are: numerical representation; modularity, or fractal structure; automation in the creation, manipulation, and access of media; variability, or the ability to exist in different structures; and transcoding, or being translatable into computer data.

[20] Manovich, 311.

[21] Manovich, 291.

Nagasaki (1946) used in *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959)—all come from collections of existing images. Yet the analog images Resnais would have consulted for *Hiroshima mon amour* were relatively limited compared with the online databases of countless images available to filmmakers today. The ever-expanding database adds a new layer of uncertainty to a film: Where do its images come from? Who created them? Why were certain images chosen instead of others? While such questions have always been a part of filmmaking, in the digital age, they are amplified by tools and technologies that ease the process of image creation and expand access to images.

Databases of images provide such ease of access and expansion of choice. The database, which according to Manovich is the cultural form of new media, also challenges the notion of narrative. As Manovich explains, the database represents the world as a list rather than as a cause-and-effect narrative series of events, and it can replace, support, or destabilize narrative. In his view of the new media landscape, narrative itself is increasingly contingent, marginalized, and fragile. While acknowledging the possible coexistence of database and narrative, Manovich finds it surprising that narrative continues to exist at all in new media.[22] Rouy's trilogy of films exhibits this kind of narrative uncertainty. Images are taken from online databases such as YouTube and the live-stream camera on the TEPCO website. The clips in *4 bâtiments, face à la mer* are, indeed, organized as more of a list of dates than a cause-and-effect series of events. Narrative is destabilized in Courdy's work as well. The webdoc is a database of video interviews and still images that can be viewed in any order, as there is no explicit cause-and-effect structure between them. The webdoc presents the world of the film as a list or as thematically grouped categories, with each image and interview offering its own micro-narrative. The film provides a

[22] Manovich, 228.

more structured narrative of Courdy's trip to Japan and the people she met and interviewed while there. As a film, it is materially more linear than the webdoc, but Courdy's montage does not make explicit a certain chronology, nor does it suggest a cause-and-effect organizing strategy. Because of their digital structures, these nuclear narratives in the digital age indeed destabilize linear cause-and-effect narrative and in doing so suggest a more dynamic relationship between parts, perhaps best illustrated by the webdoc in which the viewer physically participates in the ordering of fragments.

The fragment as a formal characteristic of the nuclear narrative has thus far been discussed in terms of its destabilizing effect on narrative, such as the flashback in *Hiroshima mon amour* and the inserts in *Sans soleil*, but in the digital age the fragment emerges as a potentially independent narrative itself. It maintains its relationship to the whole, but the meaning of the whole may no longer be greater than the sum of its parts, as it often is in a linear cause-and-effect narrative structure or in an analog film. Is there a minimum size or duration the digital fragment must have in order to be considered a narrative? Can a single shot of a fixed subject be a narrative?

Dovey argues that in the digital age new media "fragments of actuality…are everywhere, but they don't make much sense in a happenstance browser flow determined by invisible search logics…[F]ew of the posts we encounter on a daily basis add up to much of a narrative, much less an argument, position or analysis."[23] In Dovey's line of thought, the video clip on a blog post showing the worker pointing at the TEPCO camera for thirty seconds would likely be a "fragment of actuality," while the full twenty-five-minute duration of the clip in *4 bâtiments, face à la mer* might be an independent narrative. Kota Takeuchi, the man pointing at the camera,

[23] Dovey, "Documentary Ecosystems," 11.

later explained in a blog post that he was a contract worker for TEPCO and came to Fukushima Daiichi on his day off to carry out the action. In pointing at the camera, he was symbolically pointing at TEPCO in order to draw attention to unsafe labor conditions; at the Japanese government, which was keeping information from Japanese citizens; at viewers of the live-stream or recorded video so that they might share a sense of responsibility rather than simply participate as voyeurs, and so that they might begin to understand the workers as heroes rather than lowly laborers; and at himself in an act of what Takeuchi calls "self-sacrifice by narcissism."[24] Takeuchi himself imparts narrative meaning to the gesture, and the meaning of his gesture evolves over the duration of the act, suggesting that a twenty-five-minute "fragment" is indeed an independent narrative.

The nonlinear structures of Courdy's and Rouy's films challenge the utility of the term "narrative" itself. Regarding the nonlinear organization of his films, Rouy explains, "un film chronologique va quelque part; il est en quête d'une résolution. Or, la temporalité de la catastrophe nous est inaccessible" (a chronological film is headed somewhere; it is searching for a resolution. But the temporality of the disaster is inaccessible to us).[25] Why use "narrative," implying a series of connected events, and not "portrait," "vision," or "view," as Rouy does to name the three parts of *4 bâtiments, face à la mer*?

Here, we might consider the three views in Rouy's film more closely to see how they exist as self-contained units and together constitute a nuclear narrative. The first view, "l'invisible et le caché," opens on what appears to be a still image of the damaged reactor with a date and time code at the top (2011-06-08 15:14:38) along with a "Tokyo Electric Power

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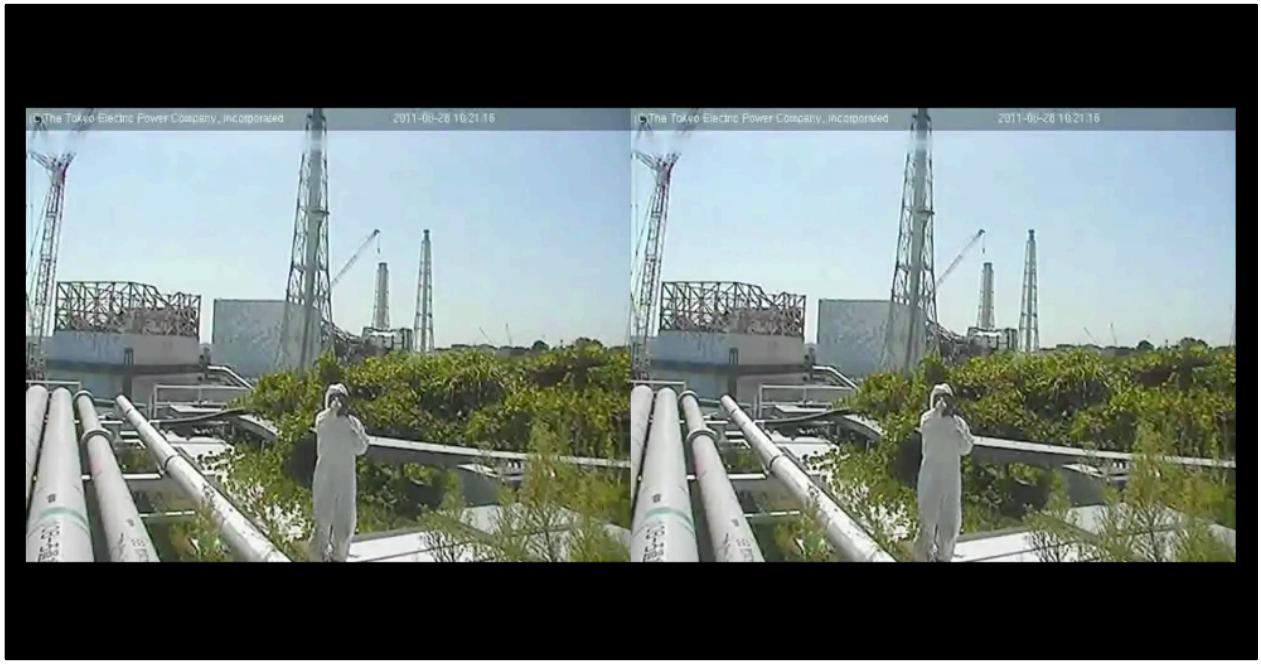
[24] Kota Takeuchi, "About the Pointing a Finger toward Fukuichi Live Cam," http://pointatfuku1cam.nobody.jp/e.html.

[25] Rouy, Interview with Philippe Rouy, 124, 142.

Company, Incorporated" copyright. The apparently still image is revealed to be a moving one as the time code advances. After several seconds, slight movement can be seen in the distance as a hose sprays over exposed scaffolding of a destroyed building. The webcam image changes every minute or so to show new views of the same reactor at different times of day and in various atmospheric conditions from June 2011 through January 2012. In June, the camera shakes from continued aftershocks. Footage from November shows withered orange and brown foliage. In January, the site is covered in a light dusting of snow. In early morning shots, fog obscures the buildings, while at night they are illuminated by an off-screen source of light. In place of a cause-and-effect linear narrative, several independent micro-events are shown: crows fly across the screen and land on part of the reactor; the camera zooms in on a tower and zooms back out; footage is sped up, showing hyperreal atmospheric movement against a night sky; construction cranes add and remove parts of the structure, which dangle uncertainly before the camera; the sun rises and sets. Four and a half minutes into the film, sound finally kicks in with bell tones and eerie instrumentals. Sonic transitions provide an unsettling sense of progression: synthesized instrumentals fade to silence or are overtaken by crackling feedback or deep rumbling, which are in turn interrupted by a buzzing drone, sounds that evoke the imperceptible radioactivity.

The second view, "squelettes enveloppés de soie," contains the footage of the worker pointing at the live-stream camera for twenty-five minutes on August 28, 2011. This section begins with a "squelette enveloppé de soie": Takeuchi, a worker (or a "skeleton," evoking his mortality) covered by a white suit and mask. Takeuchi enters the frame and walks toward the camera. He steps on a platform and positions himself in front of the camera using his phone screen, which he will also use to watch the live-stream of his act. With his other hand, he points first to the reactor and then at the camera, a gesture he holds for twenty-five minutes. A few

minutes into the film's second view, the screen splits into two frames, literally providing two views. Micro-events of other workers at the site appear on the left, while on the right, Takeuchi remains fixed in position, so immobile that the viewer might check the time code to be sure that it continues to progress. On the left, workers move quickly through the highly radioactive area, underscoring the duration of Takeuchi's gesture. At one point, the same footage of Takeuchi plays in both frames, and a beating sound intensifies, creating a sense of urgency and a climactic moment of sorts. Later in this section, a different worker who can be distinguished by a yellow helmet, appears in the left frame. This worker also stands in front of the camera but points at something off-screen, gesturing urgently. His gesture also calls attention to labor conditions and underscores the intentionality of Takeuchi's gesture.



Split screen with same image of Takeuchi pointing at the camera in both frames

Split screen of another worker (left) and Takeuchi (right) pointing at different objects

Near the end of this section, the left frame disappears and the right moves forward into its place. After pointing at the camera for twenty-five minutes, Takeuchi walks out of the frame and returns seconds later directly in front of the camera to point at it again. His face, partially obscured by his pointing hand, is almost visible through the mask. After several seconds, he drops his hand and again walks out of the frame.

The third view, "j'écouterai le reste du chant au pays des morts," returns to a single frame of footage from the same reactor. In this section, voiceover narration from a 1985 TEPCO promotional film describes the genesis and construction of the Fukushima Daiichi power plant and celebrates the economic benefits it brings to the region, adding a historical lens through which to view the footage.[26] The narration lasts ten minutes, during which several micro-events occur: a raccoon wanders across the frame, a cat walks alongside the damaged reactor, a fly

[26] The title of this section points to an ominous future in which we may have more clarity about the situation at Fukushima Daiichi, just as the filmmaker in 2011 more clearly perceives the arrogance and irony of TEPCO's 1985 promotional film.

crawls around on the camera lens, a crow lands on a long pipe. The voiceover narration concludes, “La nouvelle énergie qui est née ici sera une grande énergie. Elle améliorera toutes nos vies” (The new energy that has come into existence here will be a great energy. It will improve all of our lives). The narration stops, and in the film’s final ninety-second micro-event a breeze ripples through the vegetation and an inchworm moves across the lens in silence.

The three views of Rouy’s *4 bâtiments, face à la mer* suggest a new structural possibility for the digital nuclear narrative. In this new structure, independent digital fragments such as micro-events make up larger self-contained views that together form the nuclear narrative. As I define it, the nuclear narrative is formally unstable and spatiotemporally uncertain. A narrative superstructure offers spatiotemporal context to the fragment and the view that contains it. In *4 bâtiments, face à la mer*, fragments of footage have their own temporal limits, made explicit for the viewer by the time code at the top of the image. The fragments of footage are for the most part chronologically organized within the three views, and all three views cycle through the same eight months of footage. The superstructure of this nuclear narrative thus creates a temporal loop, an inescapable eight months. The narrative superstructure of the film also allows for fragments one might watch individually on YouTube to be seen in relation to one another in a film where they take on new significance. Together, the fragments gain some of the staying power of the nuclear narrative. Composed as it is of fragments, or smaller independent narratives, the digital nuclear narrative can be more powerful and perhaps richer than its analog precursor. For this same reason, however, the digital nuclear narrative is also more unstable, as independent fragments do not depend on one another for meaning and can easily come apart, leading to a breakdown of the nuclear narrative.

Courdy's webdoc serves as a prime example of the digital nuclear narrative's unstable form. During the writing of this chapter, the webdoc itself has changed form. In June 2017, the structure of the webdoc began to break down. First, the website no longer supported video, but non-video elements of the webdoc such as photos, wishes, and credits were still accessible on the website. Shortly after the videos disappeared from the website, the entire website became inaccessible. The individual videos can now be viewed on Youtube, where the feature-length documentary has also been made available. In its shift across the Internet, from the webdoc's host site to YouTube, the webdoc has in a way started to decay: viewers can no longer participate by leaving wishes; contextual information about the film's title and production are no longer available; and photographs taken during the filming process have disappeared. Yet, while YouTube takes viewers away from the relatively curated experience of the webdoc, it also offers new possibilities for interaction. Links to thematically related content on the side of the screen offer different perspectives on the triple disaster, from eyewitness footage to news broadcasts and an even an interview with Courdy. Courdy's nuclear narrative thus has its own metanarrative of decay, migration, and reconfiguration. This metanarrative offers a new way of thinking about the instability of digital media works that exist on the Internet and of the nuclear narrative in the digital age.

If terms like "digital media" and "new media" are less useful in signaling the forms of these digital nuclear narratives, these terms offer important context for the contrast of the films in this chapter with those of Marker and Resnais. Because of developments in new media and the omnipresence of digital tools and technologies, the digital age influences the form of the nuclear narrative in significant ways. Digital culture (including spectators' expectations and interactive viewing practices) supports spaces in which online databases exist, grow, and become enmeshed

in new networks. Independent narratives exist as digital fragments that can be combined in a nuclear narrative. A fragment of live-stream footage seen on a blog post sent Rouy to YouTube, where he borrowed footage for his film, which is now distributed on an online streaming platform. The database allows for such narrative fragmentation as it provides opportunities for filmmakers to combine, juxtapose, and recycle fragments. The database facilitates movement away from linearity, making for a powerful if more unstable nuclear narrative composed of self-contained units such as fragments and views.

FUKUSHIMA SPACETIME

While a narrative superstructure can provide self-contained digital fragments with a larger spatiotemporal context, filmmakers in the digital age continue to draw on familiar representations of nuclear space and time, such as those of the chronotope of the nuclear. In the now familiar chronotope of the nuclear, nuclearized space is dynamic and unbounded and time is at once static and cyclical. This section will analyze how representations of nuclear space and time are reshaped by digital tools and technologies and reflect on the utility of the concept of the chronotope of the nuclear in the digital age. Is the chronotope of the nuclear still the best term to describe the spatiotemporality of the digital nuclear narrative? Should digital nuclear narratives be categorized generically with analog nuclear narratives?

In many ways, representations of nuclear space and time in the digital age continue those of analog nuclear narratives as nuclear subject matter lends itself well to spatiotemporal analysis.[27] From the start, Courdy's film and webdoc and Rouy's films express interest in space

[27] Several recent works about Fukushima take as their central focus spatial and temporal concerns, such as Karen Barad, "No Small Matter: Mushroom Clouds, Ecologies of Nothingness, and Strange Topologies of Spacetimemattering," in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, ed. Anna Tsing et al. (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 103–20; Christian Doumet and Michaël Ferrier, eds., *Penser* avec *Fukushima*

and time in their titles. *Au-delà du nuage. Yonaoshi 3.11* expresses the key spatial and temporal subjects of Courdy's work. "*Au-delà du nuage*" (beyond the cloud) refers to both the abstract spatial and temporal concept of "beyond" as well as the more concrete space of the Tohoku region in Japan that is below (and in a sense beyond) the "cloud" of nuclear contamination. The date in the title establishes the 3.11 triple disaster as a fixed present that will shape any possible future renewal. *4 bâtiments, face à la mer* is more explicit in its focus on space with the "four buildings" in a position "facing the ocean." The open sea in front of the buildings also evokes future radioactive pollution from the damaged plants that continue to leak indefinitely. The sea suggests both a spatial and temporal "beyond": unbounded, uncontained, seemingly infinite, and continuously contaminated. The film's tripartite structure and its subtitle "trois vues" also evoke a temporal dimension as they recall the temporal sequence of the triple disaster: earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear explosions. Space is also central in the titles of Rouy's other two films: *Machine to Machine*, evoking a space between two objects, and *Fovea centralis*, focusing on the narrowing and obstruction of space in the center of the field of vision.

These films express their spatial and temporal interests in a few other ways as well. In Courdy's work, the locations of the interviews are identified by their distance in kilometers from Fukushima Daiichi: a ghost town forty kilometers away where a retired farmer drinks purifying herbs and continues to farm; a city twenty kilometers away where two women return with their children to visit their abandoned home for a few hours; a family inside the twenty-kilometer exclusion zone that was moved to a gymnasium four kilometers away. The spatially demarcated

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(Lormont: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2016); Philippe Pelletier, *Atlas du Japon: àprès Fukushima, une société fragilisée* (Paris: Autrement, 2012); Philippe Pelletier, "De la guerre totale (1941) à la guerre de Fukushima (2011)," *Outre-terre, revue européenne de géopolitique* 35–36 (2013): 399–437; and Matthew Penney, "Nuclear Nationalism and Fukushima," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 10, no. 11.2 (2012), http://apjjf.org/2012/10/11/Matthew-Penney/3712/article.html.

tour through the region does not serve to spatially orient the viewer but rather to show the uncertain and unreliable safety determinations based on the fixed figures of official guidelines. A woman forced to leave her home inside the twenty-kilometer exclusion zone goes well outside of it to Fukushima City, where radiation levels are higher than in her house, in an attempt to get better information about contamination levels. This uncertainty also extends to time: an interviewee explains how she lives in the present, and continues to live as she did before but with more daily stress and fear. Age calculations are considered in relocation decisions, and the uncertain stress of moving is balanced with what Molly Wallace calls "the highly ambivalent concept of 'resilience,'" which could appeal "to ecologists and activists who might wish to envision a world of salutary adaptations."[28]

The digital possibilities for representations of nuclearized space and time are perhaps best illustrated by the viewer's differing experience of time in Courdy's webdoc versus in the film. In the webdoc, the duration of each interview video is visible in the progress bar and time code at the bottom of the image, but there are no temporal boundaries for the experience of the webdoc as a whole. One viewer might watch a few interviews, while another might spend hours interacting with several parts of the webdoc and following the links beyond to social media platforms and related news and events. The screenings announced on the webdoc are for the feature-length film, linking the two works as what Patricia Aufderhide calls "transmedia projects" that are construed across various platforms.[29] The viewer of the film may re-watch parts of it and leave a message about it on the webdoc. The film, on the other hand, has a definite

[28] Molly Wallace, *Risk Criticism: Precautionary Reading in an Age of Environmental Uncertainty* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 20.

[29] Patricia Aufderheide, "Ethical Challenges for Documentarians in a User-Centric Environment," in *New Documentary Ecologies: Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 237.

duration of ninety-five minutes. The viewer does not see the lengths of the individual interviews, which vary between three and eight and a half minutes.

4 bâtiments, face à la mer, with a time code always visible at the top of the frame, has an explicit temporal framework that also announces its digital identity. The three parts of the film cycle through the same eight months of footage, from June 2011 through January 2012, and in doing so evoke different temporal strata. Rouy explains, "cette structure en modules autonomes permet de faire advenir ces strates temporelles dont je parlais. Un temps plutôt terrestre, géologique, est évoqué dans la première, un autre plus historico-politique dans la dernière. Et puis le temps du présent, de l'immédiateté, du direct—qui est aussi le temps de l'exposition du corps humain aux radiations—dans la partie centrale" (this structure of autonomous modules allows these temporal strata I'm talking about to emerge. A more terrestrial, geological time is evoked in the first part, another more historico-political time in the last. And then the time of the present, of immediacy, of the direct—which is also the time of exposure of the human body to radiation—in the middle part).[30] Placed between the geological, terrestrial time evoking the past and the historico-political time projecting an unpromising forecast for the future, the present is thus at the heart of *4 bâtiments, face à la mer*.

The duration of the present is underscored by the single shot from the footage of the worker pointing at the camera for twenty-five minutes. While the shot of the worker takes up the right frame during this time, the image on the left changes every few minutes. The juxtaposition of footage draws attention to the unchanging shot and fixes the moment in the present. Twenty-five minutes in a highly radioactive zone begins to feel like an eternity. The shot also holds attention on a subject long enough for it to become interesting. The worker standing in front of

[30] Philippe Rouy, ed., "Fukushima (3 Films) Textes et Entretiens," n.d.

the camera for ten seconds or one minute may be unremarkable; at five minutes, the gesture is notable; at twenty-five minutes in a highly radioactive zone, it is striking.

The long durations of seemingly static shots in Rouy's work offer opportunities to reflect on the passage of time, on the slow work of repair, and on the dispersal of radiation as wind blows through overgrown vegetation and unsuspecting wildlife move at their own paces through the zone. Wildlife and natural forces such as wind bridge what we think of as "contaminated" and "safe" spaces, carrying radioactivity between them. They also operate according to different timescales. Wind speed is independent of time, and nonhuman animals may experience the passage of time in very different ways than humans do.[31]

The long durations in *4 bâtiments, face à la mer* also encourage viewers to reflect on the imperceptible danger of radiation. In *Machine to Machine* and *Fovea centralis,* Rouy challenges the notion that radiation in invisible by showing radioactive dots and filaments that twinkle against a dark, grainy background. These images recall the common origins and contemporaneous discovery of radioactivity and cinema, and they show that digital cameras are not immune to the radioactivity that Henri Becquerel observed in 1896 on photo plates from the Lumière factory. Cinema in the digital age remains what Akira Lippit calls a "technolog[y] for visualizing the inside, for imagining interiority."[32] *Machine to Machine* takes the viewer inside reactor ruins, often to enclosed spaces alive with radioactivity. *Fovea centralis* includes in its

[31] A common motif in many Fukushima narratives is that of domestic and farm animals left behind in the exclusion zone and mourned by their human companions. Horses, in particular, have served as the subject of major works, such as the documentary film by Yoju Matsubayashi, *Matsuri No Uma (The Horses of Fukushima)* (Ronin Films, 2013); and the novel by Hideo Furukawa, *Umatachi Yo, Sore Demo Hikari Wa Muku De* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 2011), translated by Doug Slaymaker and Akiko Takenaka as *Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure: A Tale That Begins with Fukushima* (Columbia University Press, 2016).

[32] Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 30.

mosaic of videoconferences a black frame that sparkles with radioactivity. Adrian Ivakhiv contends that visualization in cinema "provides us with a way of knowing the world and with a form of power over it."[33] The visualization of radioactivity in Rouy's films may offer a suggestion of power over it, but seeing radioactivity also renders more uncertain the filmic spaces in which radioactivity is not visible.

Filmmakers in the digital age articulate nuclear space and time in ways that often draw on analog practices, such as using the medium of film to visualize radioactivity; however, the digital tools and technologies used to shape these films also offer new possibilities for the articulation of nuclear spacetime. They challenge the chronotope of the nuclear in new ways. In *Hiroshima mon amour*, the chronotope of the nuclear is understood as the sense of an eternal present in a nuclear space or against a nuclear background. In Marker's films, the chronotope of the nuclear becomes an impossible present in an invisible nuclear space. In these contemporary French digital visions of a nuclear Japan, concepts such as the inescapable nuclear present and unbounded nuclear space stretch into a new form: the loop.

The loop is not a new form in cinema, but in the digital age it reemerges as a "new temporality," as Manovich argues.[34] The loop form is intimately related to proto-cinematic devices as well as to Edison's Kinetoscope, while the narrative cinema that developed from them "puts forward a notion of human existence as a linear progression through numerous unique events."[35] For Manovich, uses of the loop are quite concrete: a looped moving image, loops in animation and video games, and loops as computer programming structures. The loop and

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[33] Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature*, Environmental Humanities (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2013), 79.

[34] Manovich, *Language of New Media,* 314.

[35] Manovich, 316.

sequential progression also need not be mutually exclusive.[36] In Courdy's and Rouy's works, the loop becomes an abstract form that contains spatial and temporal potential. For example, the homepage of Courdy's webdoc has looped sound and animation that become part of the narrative once the viewer begins to interact with the site. The videos in the webdoc exist independently of one another and can be watched in repetition, in a loop, in contrast to their linear placement in the film which forces to viewer to progress toward a conclusion. In Rouy's films, the act of cycling through live-stream footage is a loop that recalls the inescapable, eternal nuclear present seen in *Hiroshima mon amour*.

Temporally, the loop can be said to continue the sense of both eternal and impossible present. In the digital age, however, the eternal and impossible present may no longer be characteristic of the chronotope of the nuclear. As in the electron's nuclear orbit, the loop indicates nuclear potential. To break the temporal loop, then, is to release time from infinity and allow it to unfold as a very long stretch of time. As Morton writes of the hyperobject, "gigantic timescales are truly humiliating in the sense that they force us to realize how close to Earth we are. Infinity is far easier to cope with...I can think infinity. But I can't count up to one hundred thousand."[37] We can imagine a worker at a destroyed nuclear reactor pointing at a camera for an abstractly infinite stretch of time. But imagining infinity allows us to look away. Infinity lets us off the hook. We know we cannot watch anything for an infinite stretch of time. However, we can watch the entire twenty-five minutes during which a worker points at a camera. Twenty-five minutes begins to feel extremely long as workers on the other side of the screen move quickly in and out of the site; twenty-five minutes is a very long duration for any single shot in cinema;

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[36] Manovich, 317.

[37] Morton, *Hyperobjects*, 60.

twenty-five minutes in a highly radioactive place comes to feel that much longer, especially without the relief offered by the abstraction of infinity.

We can also think of the loop in spatial terms as a perimeter or zone. The spatial loop of containment challenges the notion of the free-flowing, borderless space of radioactive contamination. The loop as a spatial form marks the official exclusion zones of nuclear disasters. It indicates nuclear potential and in doing so allows energy to build. These abstract spatial loops are challenged by reports showing the uneven and unpredictable spread of radioactive contamination. Areas beyond the loop may be more nuclearized than areas inside of it. When the illusory spatial loop is broken, new narratives emerge to challenge political accounts of containment and security and to undermine the reassurances of certainty and infinity.

In both Courdy's and Rouy's work, narrative power comes from beyond the illusion of the contained spatial loop. In Courdy's webdoc, the wish tree reaches beyond the loop of radioactive containment as viewers from dozens of countries around the world leave messages of solidarity with the victims of the disaster. In the film, Courdy's travels from France to Japan and between Tokyo and the Tohoku region—in and out of the loop—launch the film's narrative. In Rouy's work, live-stream cameras break the loop of containment around the Fukushima Daiichi reactors and mediatize the situation for the world to see. In Rouy's films, narrative comes from broken spatial and temporal loops. The porous spatial boundaries of the exclusion zone are revealed in shots of the unrestricted movement of weather and wildlife, and through nonlinear temporal montage, Rouy breaks the chronological loop. As these official narratives of spatial containment and temporal abstraction break apart, nuclear narratives emerge in the interstices.

In the digital age, the loop may reemerge as a new temporality, but spatial and temporal loops are shown to be illusory and are broken in representations of nuclear disaster. Digital

technologies and platforms allow nuclear disaster to be virtually seen and felt around the world at the same time that it is experienced by those in proximity to it. As a hyperobject, nuclear materials cannot be contained by borders, continents, or seas. They extend beyond the nuclearized site, beyond the spatial container suggested by the place name "Fukushima" and the temporal container suggested by the date "3.11." As Timothy Morton writes, "hyperobjects end the idea that time and space are empty containers that entities sit in."[38] With hyperobjects such as nuclear materials, space and time move to the foreground and give form to the nuclear narrative. The nuclear hyperobject also connects problems across official borders and imagined boundaries and points to common concerns and the need for shared responses.

Solidarity in Collective Work

While filmmaking has always been a collective endeavor, the tools and technologies of the digital age facilitate increasingly independent production and distribution. And yet the same digital tools and technologies that offer independence in filmmaking also provide new opportunities for collectivity and transnational collaboration. While all of the works in this study have significant transnational components, those by Courdy and Rouy are deeply transnational and exploit collective strategies in different ways than films by Resnais and Marker did. In the digital age, crowd-funding websites and crowd-sourced footage allow for collaboration in production, online distribution platforms that can reach global audiences allow for greater visibility and potential expressions of solidarity, and cyber ecosystems allow for viewer interactivity with the works themselves.

[38] Morton, 66.

Digital tools and online platforms facilitate transnational collaboration as well. Mette Hjort, who contends that the term "transnational" has come to "mean anything and everything,"[39] calls for a distinction between different forms of transnationalism, deeming them strong or weak based on the number of transnational elements they include, from production, distribution, and reception, to the actual work itself. Such distinctions allow us to recognize forms of transnationalism that are more valuable, according to Hjort, because they resist cultural homogenization and remain committed to aesthetic and political values over economic concerns.[40] Hjort's typology includes nine cinematic transnationalisms: ephiphanic, affinitive, milieu-building, opportunistic, cosmopolitan, globalizing, auteurist, modernizing, and experimental. Globalizing and opportunistic transnationalisms are strategies she signals as motivated by financial imperatives, while epiphanic and affinitive transnationalisms are based on aesthetic and political values such as parallels between national cultures and shared problems and concerns.[41]

Courdy's transnational engagements are evident in her work. The credits list support from French, Japanese, and Franco-Japanese individuals and institutions, as well as from forty-six crowd-funding contributors. Courdy's Franco-Japanese identity and multilingualism provide her with cultural and linguistic access that also facilitates transnational work. She interviews Japanese subjects in her film and webdoc and uses footage of the tsunami borrowed from a Japanese eyewitness. In terms of distribution, Courdy anticipates transnational audiences and offers French, English, and Japanese versions of the webdoc.

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[39] Mette Hjort, "On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism," in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Natasa Durovicová and Kathleen E. Newman (New York, London: Routledge, 2010), 12.

[40] Hjort, 15.

[41] Hjort, 17-26.

Courdy's engagement with viewers and solidarity with victims of the triple disaster is also evident in the work itself. In the "about" section on the webdoc, Courdy invites viewers to join in solidarity: "Si vous explorez ce Webdoc, peut-être êtes-vous prêts à vous laisser inspirer, et à participer au changement" (In exploring this Webdoc, perhaps you too will be inspired to take part in this change).[42] Becoming involved gives the viewer a greater stake in the work. A viewer who contributes funding or footage may be credited as a contributor or participant. Viewers of the webdoc are also able to leave a virtual footprint and offer a gesture of solidarity by leaving a wish on the wish tree, thus responding to and becoming part of the online work. The wishes appear on images of *ema*, the small wooden plaques used for wishes or prayers at Shinto shrines. In graphically representing this aspect of Japanese culture in a webdoc that expresses concern about nuclear energy, Courdy's work shows what Hjort terms "affinitive transnationalism," a form of transnationalism that expresses cultural affinity and "arise[s] in connection to shared problems and commitments…or with the discovery of features of other national contexts that are deemed to be potentially relevant to key problems experienced within a home context."[43] For Hjort, this is a valuable form of transnationalism in its commitment to political values over financial ones.

Rouy's films rely on a different kind of transnational collaboration. The footage in the trilogy comes from the Japanese company TEPCO and the Fuku1live Youtube channel. Rouy intentionally keeps his distance from the disaster. He began a career as a journalist but is shy and does not want to intrude on people, so he moved to filmmaking.[44] In his trilogy of films, Rouy

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[42] Translations are from the English version of the webdoc.

[43] Hjort, "Cinematic Transnationalism," 17.

[44] Rouy, Interview with Philippe Rouy, 137.

does not tell others' stories but observes and responds to them. Solidarity for Rouy is as much in listening, watching, and reflecting as it is in telling. Solidarity is in the act of plodding through thousands of hours of live-stream footage to find interesting moments and then highlighting them, for example by juxtaposing the image of a raccoon and a cat walking alongside the damaged reactor while an audio recording extols the virtues of nuclear energy, or that of a worker in a white suit standing in front of the camera for twenty-five minutes against the sound of a dull pounding like a heartbeat.

Rouy's films are visual essays in the tradition of Marker's film-essay, where meaning is created through montage, and sound is as important as image. In Rouy's work, though, language is almost completely removed, and Rouy himself does not provide voiceover narration. His films are essays on visibility and invisibility and on anonymity in the secretive nuclear industry.[45] As such, these films are explicit in their criticism of the nuclear industry and the institutions that support it. In these filmic critiques, Rouy implicitly expresses solidarity with all people subject to the imperatives of capitalism and technological progress. Having grown up in France through threats of nuclear apocalypse and the Chernobyl disaster, Rouy is familiar with nuclear anxiety. He explains how "grâce à cette caméra [de TEPCO] j'avais la possibilité d'exprimer l'inquiétude d'une catastrophe nucléaire; à distance, en observant—ce qui correspondait à ma manière de faire" (this camera gave me the possibility of expressing the anxiety of a nuclear disaster. At a distance, through observation. This corresponded to my way of doing things).[46] Rouy did not contact the internet user whose footage he borrowed from the Fuku1live YouTube channel, but he credits the channel in the film, explaining, "Être isolé, à distance, me convient. J'aime

[45] Rouy, 140.

[46] Rouy, 120, 138-9.

conserver mon statut de regardeur non informé. Me dire que ces images sont lancées par un émetteur, et que j'y réponds à ma manière; que je relaie le signal sous une autre forme."[47] (I like the idea of being isolated, at a distance. I like preserving my status as uninformed viewer. Telling myself that these images were made available by someone and I respond to them in my way; that I broadcast the signal in another form.)

Rouy's trilogy of films about the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi arises neither from financial imperatives nor from a desire to create a lasting network but as an "artistically cogent and necessary thing to do at a given moment in time."[48] According to Hjort's typology of transnationalisms, his work might thus be considered "experimental transnationalism," as social and political values are secondary to aesthetic commitments. Rouy says as much himself: "Les gens qui viennent les voir ont déjà une conscience politique affirmée. Mes films relèvent d'abord d'un geste politique que je me dois de faire pour moi…. Je n'ai pas fait ces films pour dénoncer quoi que ce soit" (People who come to watch these movies already have a strong political conscience. My films are first and foremost a political act that I owe myself to make…. I did not make these films to denounce anything at all).[49]

Collectivity and transnationalism bring nuclear narratives across national borders to reach wider global audiences. Hjort multiplies the possibilities for cinematic transnationalism in the tradition of John Hess and Patricia Zimmermann, who "want to reclaim the term transnational in order to radicalize it" and to show how digital, online media "refigure the relationship between the local, regional, national and global as one of endless mediation, integration and negotiation

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[47] Rouy, 122, 140.

[48] Hjort, "Cinematic Transnationalism," 28.

[49] Rouy, Interview with Philippe Rouy, 125-6.

rather than separation."[50] The transnational breakdown of borders allows for the emergence of rhizomatic structures and ecological consciousness. In the digital age, cinematic transnationalisms are facilitated by such networked structures within which collaborative, interactive work can develop.

Conclusion

Through digital media, it is easier than ever to become aware of global concerns and to interact with one another. But does awareness and connectedness lead to action? It may be easier than ever to interact, but does that mean that we are more likely to act? Or, as the editors of *Transnational Ecocinema* ask, can cinema "do something beyond raise awareness"?[51] The films and filmmakers studied in this chapter offer two different visions of potential action their works might inspire. In her webdoc, Courdy explicitly encourages viewers to join in the action:

> Ne serait-ce pas l'occasion de repartir sur des bases plus saines dans notre rapport au monde, à l'environnement, à l'énergie? Beaucoup en rêvent. Mais est-ce possible? Peut-on changer nos comportements? Les Japonais pourront-ils le faire, ou nous inciter à le faire? Comment? En dépit des apparences et de l'impuissance que beaucoup ressentent, le changement est profond. Partout des individus s'activent pour lutter contre l'inertie. Si vous explorez ce Webdoc, peut-être êtes-vous prêts à vous laisser inspirer, et à participer au changement.
>
> (Might not this be the opportunity to start anew, with a healthier approach in our relationship to the world, the environment and energy production? Many dream of this. But is it possible? Can we change our behaviour? Will the Japanese be able to change, or persuade us to change? And if so, how? Contrary to appearances and the impotence felt by many, the change is profound. Throughout Japan, individual people are standing up and fighting against this inertia. In exploring this Webdoc, perhaps you too will be inspired to take part in this change.)

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[50] John Hess and Patricia Zimmerman, "Transnational Documentaries: A Manifesto," in *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (London: Routledge, 2006), 98, 100.

[51] Pietari Kääpä and Tommy Gustafsson, eds., *Transnational Ecocinema: Film Culture in an Era of Ecological Transformation* (Bristol, UK; Chicago: Intellect, 2013), 4.

Rouy, on the other hand, does not expect that his work will directly inspire political action. He assumes that viewers of his films already have a developed political consciousness. However, in the making and sharing of his films, Rouy models important acts of environmentalism. He does not travel to make the films. He uses relatively little material in the production and distribution of his work. His films have small carbon footprints. If Rouy does not directly ask viewers to act, he offers his work and his methods as possibilities for action.

To conclude, we might reflect upon how the digital media employed in these films destabilize the ontological status of digital works themselves. Will a website survive the next Flash update? Will a host platform survive? Will someone continue to pay to host content? Just three years after its online release, Courdy's webdoc platform is no longer active. Another French film about Fukushima, Jean-Luc Vilmouth's *Lunch Time* (2014), is also accessible online with a password that used to be able to be obtained by emailing the director. Vilmouth has since passed away, and the email address provided on his website leads to a full inbox. What does it mean for a film to last now? Can it still be a nuclear narrative if its material traces break down, disappear, or are rendered functionally invisible? Or is its breakdown, not unlike that of radioactive decay, yet further evidence of its nuclear form?

The digital age has also introduced new public anxieties over concerns such as surveillance, hacking, and cyber-terrorism. Such anxieties do not replace existing nuclear anxieties but rather augment them. The hacking of nuclear networks, power stations, and storage facilities are acts of cyber-terrorism that present new risks we may not yet be prepared to address. Rouy's films in particular gesture toward these new anxieties, showing the mandatory surveillance of nuclear reactors, as well as the ways such surveillance can be manipulated and corrupted, and how often it is inadequate to its stated aim of public safety.

Chapter Five

There Is No Post-Fukushima: Portraits of Half-life in Michaël Ferrier's Japan

> Pendant qu'on écrit un caractère chinois, il ne faut pas respirer. Le pinceau court sur le papier, la main pense toute seule, le fait même d'écrire donne naissance à son espace propre. La vie se trace dans un souffle, il n'y a rien d'autre à raconter. Les idéogrammes, bien sûr, c'est très joli, mais ce n'est pas là où je veux en venir. Il y a autre chose qui me retient, une condensation superbe de l'encre sur la page, un envol, une effraction, comme si la vie elle-même allait tout dévorer.
>
> (While writing a Chinese character, one must not breathe. The brush runs across the paper, the hand thinks for itself, the act of writing gives birth to its own space. Life is drawn in a breath, there is nothing else to say. The ideogram, of course, is lovely, but that is not the point. Something else catches me, a superb condensation of ink on the page, a taking of flight, a breaking in, as if life itself would devour everything.)
>
> —Michaël Ferrier, *Tokyo, petits portraits de l'aube*
>
> Certains "après" ont plutôt la valeur de "ce qui succède," ce qui vient postérieurement: c'est la valeur que nous avons donné au préfixe "post"... Mais l'"après" dont nous parlons relève au contraire moins de la succession que de la rupture et moins de l'anticipation que du suspens, voire de la stupeur. C'est un "après" qui veut dire: y a-t-il un après ? y a-t-il une succession ? allons-nous encore quelque part ?
>
> (Sometimes "after" means "that which succeeds," that which comes subsequently: that is the meaning we give to the prefix "post"… But the "after" we are talking about is less about succession than rupture, less about anticipation than suspense, even stupor. This is an "after" that means: Is there an after? Is there a succession? Are we still going somewhere?)
>
> —Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'Équivalence des catastrophes (Après Fukushima)*

INTRODUCTION

Michaël Ferrier's Japan is decidedly not post-Fukushima. In the collection of essays, *Penser* avec *Fukushima* (Thinking *with* Fukushima), Ferrier points out that Japan will never be post-Fukushima, at least not during his lifetime or any of ours, because of the unknown and enduring effects of radioactivity.[1] Fukushima, both a Japanese prefecture and a city relatively unknown until 2011, has come to stand for the triple catastrophe of earthquake, tsunami, and

[1] Michaël Ferrier, *Tokyo, petits portraits de l'aube* (Paris, France: Gallimard, 2004), 57. Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'Équivalence des catastrophes (Après Fukushima)* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2012), 31. (My translations.) Christian Doumet and Michaël Ferrier, eds., *Penser* avec *Fukushima* (Lormont: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2016).

nuclear disaster that began on March 11, 2011 in northeast Japan.[2] In the days following these events, Ferrier writes of the metonymic process that occurred in Japan:

> Un nom revient, qui sonne de manière étrangement pimpante et funèbre à la fois: Fukushima. Fukushima—étymologiquement "l'ile de la Fortune"—n'est plus que le synonyme confus d'une catastrophe sans véritable nom, dont on perçoit mal les causes, dont on ne distingue pas les contours et dont on n'imagine pas encore toutes les conséquences.[3]
>
> (One name returns with an oddly elegant and funereal ring: Fukushima. Fukushima—etymologically "the isle of Fortune"—is now nothing more than the indistinct synonym of a catastrophe without an actual name, the causes of which we poorly understand, the contours of which we do not perceive, and the many consequences of which we do not yet imagine.)

Reducing the triple catastrophe to the place name "Fukushima" both exoticizes it and anchors it in time and space, an effort to contain its spatiotemporality. It also harms Fukushima the place, a city and a prefecture that remain largely habitable today. "Fukushima," on the other hand, is an imagined nuclearized, isolated, and abstract space.

In *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* (Fukushima, Story of a Disaster), Ferrier challenges this kind of spatial abstraction by actually going to the places in the Tohoku region that the term "Fukushima" might encompass and writing about what he sees. Ferrier wanted to see for himself what was happening and to document it, adding a different perspective to the deluge of mediated images of the disaster in Japan.[4] In this work, Ferrier draws on the theme of rift, fissure, and gap present in much of his previous writing about Japan.[5] He writes of his experience of the triple disaster, presenting not so much a vision of Japan or of Fukushima but several small portraits of

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[2] In Japan, it is generally referred to as the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

[3] Michaël Ferrier, *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*, 2nd ed., (2012; repr., Paris: Gallimard, 2013), 45. Citations refer to the 2013 edition.

[4] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 118.

[5] Aurélie Julia, "L'écrivain sismographe," *Revue des deux mondes*, no. France-Japon: Une nouvelle histoire (April 2013), 93.

places he has been both as resident and as visitor. These portraits serve as documents of the less visible aspects and victims of the disaster, and the act of writing them, like that of writing kanji, creates new spaces for a global imaginary.

"Vision" is a rather elastic term used in this dissertation to refer to an abstract yet vivid mental concept. "Vision" is also a particularly apt term to use when discussing a visual medium such as film, and as such it can be illusory and problematic. Akane Kawakami argues that for many writers Tokyo is like "certain cities [that] have been so incessantly photographed and filmed that it is almost impossible to obtain a clear vision of the city uncluttered by the iconic images they have already seen."[6] Such composite visions from photographs and films can be fanciful, based more on what the viewer expects to see than on what is really there. The *Oxford English Dictionary* includes in its definitions of "vision" descriptions such as "prophetic or mystical" and "highly imaginative." Visions exist in the realms of insight, foresight, and possibility, as well as in reality as in the actual instance of seeing.[7] A portrait, by contrast, is a representation or description. It is static, modest in size and scope. A portrait in the visual arts is "a drawing or painting of a person…especially one of the face or head and shoulders."[8] The literary portrait then is a description of a subject that remains fixed in two dimensions on the page.

Visions and portraits are not exclusive to certain media though; there are literary visions, such as Pierre Loti's vision of Japan at the turn of the twentieth-century or Amélie Nothomb's at the turn of the twenty-first, and there are cinematic portraits, such as the individual interviews

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[6] Akane Kawakami, "Walking Underground: Two Francophone Flâneurs in Twenty-First-Century Tokyo," *L'Esprit Créateur* 56, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 12.

[7] "vision, n.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press.

[8] "portrait, n., adv., and adj.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press.

that make up Keiko Courdy's webdoc and film *Au-delà du nuage. Yonaoshi 3.11* (*Beyond the cloud. Yonaoshi 3.11*).[9] The works studied in this dissertation also challenge the illusory boundary that would separate literary from visual and audiovisual media as each work is in some way a hybrid multimedia production: Alain Resnais's film is an adaptation of Marguerite Duras's literary text; Chris Marker's *Sans soleil*, like many of his films, has a textual companion piece; and Philippe Rouy and Keiko Courdy both mix digital video with other archival and found content. Although Ferrier's work appears to be more firmly textual, he includes images of kanji in the novel *Tokyo, petits portraits de l'aube* (Tokyo, Small Portraits from Dawn), and his collaborations with Kenichi Watanabe on the documentary films *Le monde après Fukushima* (*The World After Fukushima*) (2012) and *Terres nucléaires, une histoire du plutonium* (*Nuclear Lands, a History of Plutonium*) (2015), might be seen as audiovisual companion pieces to the nuclear narrative *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*.[10]

Born in Strasbourg in 1967, Ferrier had an international upbringing that took him from Chad to Madagascar, Reunion, and French Guyana before he returned to France for his studies. Ferrier moved to Japan in 1994 and has lived and worked there for over two decades. He moved to Japan not by choice or because of any particular fascination with the country, but because he was assigned there for military service. He has since established himself as a professor of French literature at Chuo University in Tokyo; a cultural consultant for radio and television programs

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[9] Pierre Loti, *Madame Chrysanthème* (Calmann-Lévy, 1888); Amélie Nothomb, *Stupeur et tremblements* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999); Keiko Courdy, *Au-delà du nuage: Yonaoshi 3.11* (KI, 2013).

[10] Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour: scénario et dialogues* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960); Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour* (Argos Films, 1959); Chris Marker, *Sans soleil*, Documentary, Drama (Argos Films, 1982); Chris Marker, *Le dépays* (Paris: Éditions Herscher, 1982); Philippe Rouy, *4 bâtiments, face à la mer*, 2012; Philippe Rouy, *Machine to Machine*, 2013; Philippe Rouy, *Fovea Centralis*, 2014; Courdy, *Au-delà du nuage*; Ferrier, *Tokyo*; Kenichi Watanabe, *Le monde après Fukushima* (Kami Productions, 2012); Kenichi Watanabe, *Terres nucléaires, une histoire du plutonium*, (Kami Productions, ARTE France, 2015).

with NHK, Japan's largest broadcasting organization; and a novelist and essayist whose work primarily focuses on Japan. As a writer, Ferrier joins the century-and-a-half-long tradition of French travelers to Japan who have written about their experiences for a Francophone readership: from Pierre Loti and Paul Claudel to more contemporary essayists and novelists such as Roland Barthes, Philippe Forest, and Éric Faye.[11] Ferrier, however, has stayed in Japan longer than these other writers, and unlike many French artists and writers who have traveled to Japan during the past century and a half, Ferrier learned Japanese and has even embarked on a writing project in the language.[12]

While Ferrier's nationality is French, his conception of national identity is a bit more complicated. In his 2015 book *Mémoires d'outre-mer* (Memoirs from Overseas), for instance, he writes of his origins: "Les Français ne savent pas où me mettre. On n'a pas idée d'être français comme ça, me disent-ils. Trop compliqué, tes mélanges."[13] (The French don't know where to put me. We do not think of being French like that, they say. Too complicated, your mix.) And yet, Ferrier's work can be said to provide a French perspective insofar as he writes in the French language and his works have yet to be translated into any language other than Japanese.[14] He also writes within the French literary tradition and directly addresses a French readership in his works with references to classic texts in French literature and cultural history such as the allusion

[11] Pierre Loti, *Madame Chrysanthème* (Calmann-Lévy, 1888); Paul Claudel, *Cent phrases pour éventails* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942); Roland Barthes, *L'Empire des signes*, 1st 1970, Éditions d'Art Albert Skira (Paris: Seuil, 2007); Philippe Forest, *Retour à Tokyo* (Nantes: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2014); Éric Faye, *Nagasaki*, 2010; Éric Faye, *Malgré Fukushima: journal japonais* (Paris: José Corti éditions, 2014).

[12] Ferrier, Un entretien avec Michaël Ferrier. See Appendix.

[13] Michaël Ferrier, *Mémoires d'outre-mer* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015), 61.

[14] While an English translation of *Mémoires d'outre-mer* is in progress to be published by University of Nebraska Press, at the time of writing in late 2017 there is no firm publication date.

in the title *Mémoires d'outre-mer* to the French Romantic writer François-René de Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* (Memoirs from Beyond the Grave), and a passing reference to G. Bruno's *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants* (The Tour of France by Two Children), "manuel-phare de la III^{e} République" (key text of the French Third Republic): "Vous êtes français," Ferrier writes, "vous connaissez l'histoire."[15] (You're French, you know the story.) Ferrier's perspective on France also looks beyond its hexagonal borders to include the extremities and blind spots: the departments, of course, but also territories, protectorates past and present, and former colonies. "Alors, le pluriel reviendrait, dans les noms, les lieux et les mémoires. La France redeviendrait ce qu'elle n'a jamais cessé d'être, un terrain hétérogène et pourtant cohérent."[16] (Thus the plural would return, in names, places, and memories. France would become again that which it never stopped being, a heterogeneous yet coherent land.) Given the attention he brings to oft-forgotten corners of the Francophone world as well as his location in and writing about Japan, Ferrier and his work offer a new way of thinking about the term "French Global."[17]

Ferrier's knowledge of Japanese and his participation in Japanese society have allowed him access to a different Japan than that seen by the writers and filmmakers analyzed thus far in this study. Before 2011, Ferrier's writings about Japan echo the fascinations of earlier French writers and do not seem to be overly concerned with the nuclear question; his previous works,

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[15] Ferrier, *Mémoires*, 63.

[16] Ferrier, *Mémoires,* 70.

[17] Ferrier's aims thus coincide with those of Christie McDonald and Susan Rubin Suleiman, eds. in *French Global: A New Approach to Literary History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), which "espouses the kind of productive perplexity that results from seeing things from more than one perspective. Our aim is to see (French) language and nation in their multiplicity, their multiple possibilities. While we challenge the notion of a seamless unity between French as a language, French as literature, and French as nation (let alone French as 'universal spirit'), we do maintain the idea of literatures in French" (xix).

however, also show a reconfiguration of literary forms to communicate a series of portraits of Japan to a French readership. Ferrier's perspective on Japan looks beyond the woodblock prints and lacquer boxes that so fascinated nineteenth-century practitioners of Japonisme to contemporary everyday objects and cultural phenomena that become the subjects of his *petits portraits* of Japan. In *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*, the lives he documents are referred to as "half-lives" lived by the uncertain victims of nuclear disaster. In Ferrier's portraits of these half-lives, there is a particular attention to the ordinary, to daily life in Japan during the decades after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to daily life in the Tohoku region after the triple disaster, and to daily life at the damaged Fukushima Daiichi reactors where rounds of contract workers are brought in to accomplish what they can before attaining the maximum allowed dosage of radioactivity.

Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre is neither a work of journalism nor a strictly personal account, but a narrative or even a "novel," according Bakhtin's conception of the term, which emphasizes a work's zone of contact with the present, or contemporary reality, and not its claims to truth or fiction.[18] Understanding *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* as another kind of "nuclear narrative," illustrative of the chronotope of the nuclear, suggests a bit more about its form. *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* as a literary nuclear narrative continues fundamental aspects of its cinematic counterpart, such as formal instability and spatiotemporal uncertainty, and reconfigures others, such as the possibility for engagement and solidarity through multilingualism. In the analysis in this chapter, I will consider the *petit portrait* form that Ferrier mobilizes throughout his oeuvre as a kind of nuclear narrative that encourages global humanistic reflection about Japan and the nuclear industry. I will also look at Ferrier's conception of post-

[18] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 11.

3/11 Japanese spatiotemporality, which he terms *la demi-vie au temps nucléaire* (half-life in nuclear time), and show how nuclear spatiotemporality manifests in a literary work. I will then reflect on the intercultural influences and multilingual contents of Ferrier's works. Multilingualism and linguistic invention make it possible for Ferrier to express a different conception of Japan to a global French readership using the *petit portrait* form developed across his oeuvre. In *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*, multilingualism also suggests that "Fukushima" is a global problem, and one that is particularly concerning for France.

While this chapter will continue to develop the concepts of the nuclear narrative and the chronotope of the nuclear with respect to a literary text, it will also address the implicit question of how the literary nuclear narrative might differ from its cinematic counterpart. This difference can be addressed first in my distinction between the comprehensive, often fantastic, and primarily visual concept of a "vision" and the relatively limited "portrait," a visual and/or linguistic form. I argue that a vision itself may encompass several portraits, although multiple portraits do not necessarily create a vision. The fragment, a common formal characteristic of the nuclear narrative, can be a significant component of both portraits and visions. A portrait may be a single fragment, or it may be made up of several fragments, but the portrait form suggests a certain wholeness that the fragment lacks. The portrait, like the vision, allows its audience to see; but unlike the vision, the portrait form also requires its audience to recognize its limits.

After considering the new formal possibilities that the portrait offers to our understanding of the nuclear narrative, this chapter will focus on Ferrier's representations of nuclear spatiotemporality and ask how the chronotope of the nuclear in literature aligns with and diverges from the cinematic chronotope, which itself has been seen to manifest in different ways. While Robert Stam and Vivian Sobchack, among others, make the case for the development of

cinematic chronotopes, this chapter returns to Bakhtin's original use of the chronotope as a tool for conceptualizing literary novel types by their specific spatiotemporalities.[19] Compared with cinematic spatiotemporality, representations of space and time in literature are more abstract as they must be translated into words on a page. A reader also experiences a textual work at his or her own pace.

Finally, this chapter will consider the role of language in the literary nuclear narrative. Verbal language keeps literature from crossing borders with the same ease of cinema. Literature must be translated to reach different linguistic audiences, while films communicate in an arguably more universal visual language. Literary translations are seen as entirely new works with translators who are credited, whereas films are dubbed or subtitled, with the translation added on as an additional track to the work and often credited in a less prominent way, if at all. In the digital age, artificial intelligence provides useful opportunities for film subtitling that do not work in quite the same way for literature. Machine-produced film subtitles such as automatic captioning are at worst a partial hindrance to the meaning and to the overall audiovisual aesthetic experience. Few readers at this point in time, however, would rely on artificial intelligence to translate an entire literary work into another language for the purpose of aesthetic appreciation of the text. The final section of this chapter focuses on instances of multilingualism in *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* and thus implicitly asks how cinema and literature communicate differently across spatial, temporal, and cultural divides.

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[19] Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction*; Sobchack, "Lounge Time"; Montgomery, *Carnivals and Commonplaces: Bakhtin's Chronotope, Cultural Studies, and Film*. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*. Montgomery argues that Bakhtin's chronotope lacks specificity, and Sobchack proposed that the chronotope can define a film genre but can also be smaller than it. Bakhtin uses the chronotope specifically to conceptualize different types of novels, the novel being a "genre-in-the-making" without a fixed definition but with three basic distinguishing characteristics: stylistic three-dimensionality, ability to effect "radical change…in the temporal coordinates of a literary image," and structuring of literary images in a "zone of maximal contact with the present" (11).

One other important observation about many French cultural productions about Japan made toward the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first is a notable interest in the quotidian or the "infra-ordinary."[20] Roland Barthes's *L'Empire des signes* offers portraits of chopsticks, the pachinko parlor, and the stationery shop. Amélie Nothomb's *Stupeur et tremblements* proposes a vision of Tokyo corporate culture. Jacques Roubaud's *Tokyo Infra-ordinaire*, a title in homage to his OuLiPo collaborator, conducts a polychromatic Perecian inventory of different locations in Tokyo. Ferrier's *Tokyo, petits portraits de l'aube* provides glimpses of the autofictional narrator's sake-fueled wanderings through the city at night, with a final stop at Tomoyo Kawai's La Jetée bar in the Shinjuku quarter of Tokyo. While the infra-ordinary turn in French writing about Japan suggests a return to aesthetics, or to a sort of néo-japoniste fetishization of the ordinary, the move is also an unavoidably political one, even before 2011. It echoes the evocation of the ordinary in postwar Japanese literature by writers such as Kenzaburo Ôe, Fumiko Hayashi, and Nobuo Kojima, whose writings focus on the effects of the war on Japanese bodies, minds, and society.[21]

The triple disaster that began in Japan on March 11th, 2011 appeared to culminate in the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi, during which over the course of three days "three reactors experienced fuel core meltdowns, and hydrogen explosions blew off three of the reactor buildings' roofs and walls," releasing at least 168 times the amount of radioactive cesium 137 as

[20] Fabien Arribert-Narce, "Images du Japon dans la littérature française (1970-2015): Un goût pour le quotidien," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 109–17.

[21] See in particular Kenzaburo Ôe, *Hiroshima Notes*, trans. David L. Swain and Toshi Yonezawa, 1st Japanese edition 1965 (New York: Emeryville, CA: Grove Press, 1996); Fumiko Hayashi, *Floating Clouds*, trans. Lane Dunlop, 1st Japanese edition 1951 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); and Nobuo Kojima and Johnny Wales, *Long Belts and Thin Men: The Postwar Stories of Kojima Nobuo*, trans. Lawrence Rogers (Fukuoka: Kurodahan Press, 2016).

was released by the Hiroshima atomic bomb.[22] For Ferrier, this was not a culmination but rather the beginning of *le temps nucléaire*, "un temps friable, poudreux, désœuvré, une sorte de nappe de temps étale et infiniment déperditive"[23] (a crumbly, powdery, idle time, a spread out and infinitely decaying layer of time), a new conception of time unfolding in a newly perceived Japanese space. For Francophone Japanese writer Akira Mizubayashi, the accident at Fukushima represents "un état d'urgence dont on ne voit pas la fin" (a state of emergency with no end in sight), "une catastrophe continuée"[24] (a continuous catastrophe). Jean-Luc Nancy argues, "Il ne faut pas penser que la conjonction qui s'est produite à Fukushima est exceptionnelle."[25] (We must not think that the conjunction of events that occurred at Fukushima is exceptional.) Nuclear, in a sense, has become the norm. Despite the disaster at Fukushima Daiichi (recalling for many the nuclear accidents at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island), global nuclear culture has become so commonplace that as memories of nuclear devastations fade, so too does critical reflection about it.

The title of Ferrier's 2012 book, *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre,* and the image chosen for its Folio paperback edition provide material for analysis of another mundane matter, that of marketing. The title was chosen by Philippe Sollers, Ferrier's editor at Gallimard, instead of Ferrier's proposed title "Notes de Fukushima."[26] The reasoning was that the reference to Ôe

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[22] Kenji E. Kushida, "Japan's Fukushima Nuclear Disaster: Narrative, Analysis, Recommendations," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, December 15, 2012), 1.

[23] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 297.

[24] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 291. Akira Mizubayashi, Ferrier's colleague, is a Japanese writer who writes in French, which he refers to as his "langue paternelle." See Akira Mizubayashi, *Une langue venue d'ailleurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011).

[25] Nancy, *L'Équivalence des catastrophes*, 50.

[26] For a collection of essays from Japan translated into French that would more likely fit the title *Notes de Fukushima*, see Corinne Quentin and Cécile Sakai, eds., *L'archipel des séismes: écrits du Japon après le 11 mars 2011* (Arles: Éditions Philippe Picquier, 2012).

might be lost on a French readership, and, more importantly, the Japanese literary tradition of "notes" does not exist in France, where the word connotes a more journalistic treatment. Ferrier's work was deemed too literary to be classified as journalism. Ferrier accepted the title proposed by Gallimard, even if it was rather flat compared to his previous titles, acknowledging its relative sobriety as appropriate for the subject matter. Ferrier's response to the cover image for the Folio edition is more lukewarm. While granting that the cover image demonstrates the extent to which radioactivity has become part of our daily lives, Ferrier sees the light-heartedness of the image, a parody of the Beatles album cover, as inappropriate given the gravity of the book's content.[27]

Source: Folio Edition *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* (2013)

[27] Michaël Ferrier, email correspondence, March 22, 2016.

Source: AP, Kim Kyung-Hoon. Image that Ferrier would have preferred for the cover.

PETIT PORTRAITS

In *Tokyo, petits portraits de l'aube,* Ferrier introduces the term "petit portrait" without ever defining it. This one-hundred-page *roman* (novel), or *essai stylisé* (stylized essay), as it is called on the back cover, comprises a variety of forms, each of which can be seen as a type of *petit portrait*: short essay, journal entry, guidebook, instruction manual. Drawing on French and Japanese literary and visual traditions, the *petit portrait* might be understood as a hybrid post-japoniste form with roots in Kenzaburo Ôe's notes as well as in Sei Shonogan's vignettes, Basho's haiku, Michel de Montaigne's *Essais*, and Georges Perec's textual puzzle pieces.[28] Form can thus be seen as a transnational meeting ground and a vehicle for planetary thinking.

[28] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 305. Ferrier describes the note form in Ôe's *Hiroshima Notes* as a structure created for the occasion, an "[é]criture vive, précise, documentée, pour répondre au mensonge et à l'omission…pour révéler

The *petit portrait* also draws inspiration from Japanese kanji, the ideogram serving as the quintessential small word picture. The kanji writing system allows for a merging of word and image in a way that is not possible in Latin-alphabet languages such as French. In the section of *Tokyo, petits portraits de l'aube* entitled "La Chambre du fond: 4 essais de kanjis malgré la nuit" (The Backroom: 4 attempts at kanji despite the darkness), Ferrier provides four short calligraphy "lessons." Each contains a definition and ekphrasis of an ideogram followed by instructions for its drawing and an alternative way of viewing the image. Accordingly, each of the four lessons provides a *petit portrait* of a kanji character that has independent meaning and is also part of a larger language system. These lessons alternate with short scenes in which the protagonist Michaël, who is studying calligraphy, meets a professional Japanese calligrapher who is considered a national human treasure in Japan. The "Chambre du fond" section as a whole can be read as a larger *petit portrait* about learning Japanese calligraphy, one of several arts in the wider sphere of Japanese culture, and as the portrait of a memorable, brief encounter in the larger span of Michaël's life.

In the "Syntaxe de Tokyo" (Tokyo Syntax) section, Ferrier follows the Japanese tradition of breaking the night into distinct "soirées" (evenings/parties) to present a kind of temporal *petit portrait*: "ils font de la nuit une sort de bande mince et flexible, où l'on peut s'engager pour une, deux ou trois soirées, voire plus si affinités. La vie devient extensible jusqu'à ce que l'aube pointe, c'est-à-dire quasiment à l'infini. Souplesse exquise du temps."[29] (They turn night into a

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la réalité des radiations et de leurs effets, loin des versions de l'histoire officielle. Petits portraits rapides et transversaux, anecdotes suggestives, extraits d'interviews et de lettres…pour redonner la parole aux victimes ordinaires" (alive, precise, documented writing to respond to lies and omissions…to reveal the reality of radiation and its effects, far from the official versions of history. Quick and cross-sectional small portraits, evocative anecdotes, excerpts from interviews and letters…to give voice to ordinary victims).

[29] Michaël Ferrier, *Tokyo, petits portraits de l'aube*, 1st edition Gallimard, 2004 (Paris: Arléa, 2010), 36-7.

sort of thin and flexible strip where one can commit for one, two, or three evenings, or even more if desired. Life becomes extensible until dawn arrives, which is to say almost to infinity. Exquisite suppleness of time.) Here, each soirée is inscribed as a discrete *petit portrait* with elastic boundaries but its own purpose and conventions, while also serving as a part of the larger temporality of the night. In "Syntaxe de Tokyo," the *petits portraits* show four different visions of Tokyo in various spaces in the city and during different expanses of time. The syntax ordering them points to a kind of exalted illumination at dawn. As seen here and in the "Chambre du fond" section, the *petit portrait* is more than just a hybrid form; it is a modest and flexible structure that describes an element of a larger system, expanding our view and understanding of the space within that system.

The *petit portrait*'s power comes from its small size, its ability to reside in the interstices of space and of dominant discourse. In *Sympathie pour le fantôme* (Sympathy for the Phantom), Ferrier uses the *petit portrait* form to tell the "[h]istoire des invisibles, quelque chose qui n'est pas retrouvable dans les archives officielles"[30] (history of the invisible, something that cannot be found in the official archives). This arguably more traditional *roman*, or novel, features first-person narration by another Michaël, a French professor in Japan who also works for a television program on the all-stars of French cultural history. Alternating chapters in *Sympathie pour le fantôme* take the form of third-person *petit portraits* of French history's lesser-known figures: Ambroise Vollard, an art merchant from Réunion who was the first to show Van Gogh and Cézanne in France; Jeanne Duval, Baudelaire's historically maligned mistress and muse; and Edmond Albius, the enslaved twelve-year-old from Réunion who figured out how to cultivate vanilla. While Ferrier does not explicitly refer to the chapters of *Sympathie pour le fantôme* as

[30] Michaël Ferrier, *Sympathie pour le fantôme* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), 45.

petits portraits, the form as I have defined it is particularly applicable to these short narrations of a few of French history's *fantômes*. As such, the *petit portrait* is part of a rich, spatiotemporal system, expanding a dominant yet limited conception of French history to include lesser known actors and events beyond the borders of the Hexagon.

Of his own writing style and choice of forms, Ferrier says that he is inspired by what might be called the Japanese aesthetic of *peu* (little). Moving to Japan liberated him as a writer from the model of the great French novel—that of Proust, Zola, or Balzac—as he came to see the *roman-fleuve* (novel sequence) as a demonstration of European power and dominance.[31] Ferrier writes of the influence of the Japanese medieval literary form *zuihitsu*, a word composed of the Japanese characters for "follow" and "brush," or following the brushstroke. *Zuihitsu*, a prose form practiced by Japanese writers such as Sei Shonagon, Kamo no Chômei, and Yoshida Kenkô, refers to loosely connected personal essays, where "loose" might imply weakness but also freedom. "Ce qui m'intéresse," Ferrier writes, "c'est le mélange des genres qu'elles permettent, et même qu'elles appellent irrésistiblement, comme si l'on pouvait discerner là, par éclats, le mouvement même de la vie."[32] (What interests me is the mix of genres this allows for, and even irresistibly calls for, as if one could perceive in it, in flashes, the movement of life.) Ferrier is as interested in the aesthetic elements of *zuihitsu* as he is in its political implications:

> Ce principe de composition fragmentaire et musical, qui laisse la parole à des voix multiples (mélange, mixage, métissage), n'est pas uniquement ou pas strictement stylistique. Ou plutôt, il porte, si c'est un style digne de ce nom, une véritable politique du monde dans ses tracés déployés. Ce refus du recours à la transcendance ou au grand récit implique aussi de "se coltiner" avec le monde tel qu'il est.[33]

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[31] Michael Ferrier, "Je suis un écrivain japonais: de l'importance du *zuihitsu* chez un romancier contemporain," in *Japon: la barrière des rencontres* (Nantes: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2009), 235.

[32] Ferrier, "Je suis un écrivain japonais," 242.

[33] Ferrier, "Je suis un écrivain japonais," 245.

> (This musical and fragmentary composition principle that allows multiple voices to speak (blending, sound mixing, ethnic mixing) is not only or strictly stylistic. Or rather, it carries, if it is a style worthy of its name, a truly global politics in its lines. This refusal of recourse to transcendence or to metanarrative also implies "putting up" with the world as it is.)

Likewise, Ferrier sees the fragment itself not as a national form or style but as a potential literary weapon: "L'écriture fragmentaire, ça existe un peu partout…Je n'ai pas l'habitude de caractériser les écritures par nationalité" (Fragmentary writing exists everywhere…I do not tend to characterize writing by nationality). In Ferrier's own work, the fragment is "une façon d'introduire des failles dans un système constitué pour le faire vibrer, pour le faire bouger et puis pour réintroduire de la respiration, du rythme et du jeu…. Ça peut être une arme ou un outil"[34] (a way to introduce cracks in an established system to make it vibrate, to make it move, and to reintroduce breath, rhythm, and play…. It can be a weapon or a tool). The fragment as a weapon or tool destabilizes narrative form, as seen in the nuclear narrative. The interstitial and fragmentary *petit portrait* form is particularly well suited for telling the stories in *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*. This work is divided into three sections—"Le manche de l'éventail" (The handle of the fan), "Récits sauvés des eaux" (Stories saved from the waters), and "La demi-vie, mode d'emploi" (Half-life: operating instructions)—each of which focuses on one of the disasters, preceded by an untitled prologue and concluding with an epilogue that both focus on the story of Zhang Heng, the inventor of the first seismograph in 132 A.D. China.

Visually and structurally, *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* is more fragmented than Ferrier's previous works. Almost all of the paragraphs in this work are separated by blank lines and can stand alone in meaning. Many are lists or short descriptions. Some paragraphs are made

[34] Ferrier, "Un entretien avec Michaël Ferrier." See Appendix.

up of a single sentence or fragment of a sentence, such as: "Et tout d'abord, le son."[35] (And first and foremost, the sound.); "Ou encore ce détail, qui me rapporte un géographe rencontré dans un restaurant de Fukushima: les cartes de la région sont toutes à revoir, car de nombreux éléments du relief (côtes, criques, collines…) se sont déplacés."[36] (Or even this detail, told to me by a geographer in a restaurant in Fukushima: all maps of the region must be revised because many relief elements (coasts, creeks, hills…) shifted.); and "Écrire dans le désastre. Le séisme et le tsunami ont mis hors service les principales sources d'alimentation électrique. Les imprimeries aussi ont été touchées."[37] (Writing during the disaster. The earthquake and tsunami took out the main supply of electricity. Printers were also affected.) Nearly every paragraph in the book might serve as another *petit portrait*, or at minimum a brushstroke, one of several slivers that makes up a portrait. While the portrait may be more polished than the fragments or slivers of which it is composed, it remains internally unstable; its fragments and slivers are its hidden weapons.

Ferrier also uses fragments to break up the established narrative of disaster that exists in the global imaginary around the place name "Fukushima" and to tell the stories of its interstices. In the account of his time in the exclusion zone, Ferrier names several other towns and villages he visits. In many instances, these places have much higher levels of radioactivity than those found in the city of Fukushima, which, it bears repeating, is well outside of the mandatory and even the recommended evacuation zone: "Futaba, Tomioka, Namie, Okuma, Minami-Sôma, Iitate-mura… retenez ces noms, avant de les oublier définitivement, des villes au nom vide où ne résonne plus que le souvenir de l'absence: ce sont les nouvelles villes fantômes du Japon"[38]

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[35] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 128.

[36] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 127.

[37] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 168.

[38] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 204.

(Futaba, Tomioka, Namie, Okuma, Minami-Sôma, Iitate-mura… hold on to these names, before forgetting them forever, towns with empty names where only the memory of absence resounds: these are the new ghost towns of Japan). Breaking the Tohoku region into slivers and describing it in *petits portraits* provides a more locally accurate account of the area; it also destabilizes the simplified understanding of the region as an abstract homogenous and irradiated whole.

The *petit portrait* in *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* continues the fundamental formal instability of the nuclear narrative with a slight reconfiguration. The visual aspect is important in the *petit portrait*, but it plays a smaller role in the textual medium than it does in film. A film can present a relatively more totalizing vision of life as it unfolds, while a written work documents moments or fragments, a necessarily partial vision of life. Still, the partial view portraits provide can be as meaningful as a more totalizing vision. As Michaël in *Tokyo, petits portraits de l'aube* shows in his study of kanji, "le fait même d'écrire donne naissance à son espace propre" (the mere fact of writing creates its own space). With his *petits portraits* of the disaster, Ferrier draws on transnational formal influences and uses the fragment as a weapon to destabilize metanarratives of Fukushima, creating new fragmented and interstitial spaces for readers.

Half-Life in Nuclear Time

In his pre-2011 description of nights spent wandering the city in *Tokyo, petits portraits de l'aube*, Ferrier presents an exuberant, expansive view of time. In *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*, a comparatively sober post-2011 spatiotemporality emerges. The allusion to Georges Perec in "La demi-vie, mode d'emploi," the third and final section of the book, suggests an interest in the quotidian as well as a formal parallel with Perec's *petits portraits* of the inhabitants of 11, rue

Simon-Crubellier.[39] Ferrier's *demi-vie* refers, of course, to nuclear half-life, which Ferrier reminds us "n'est pas une moitié de vie. Techniquement c'est un cycle de désintégration"[40] (is not half of a life. Technically it is a cycle of disintegration). *La demi-vie* also serves as an illustrative metaphor for post-2011 daily existence in regions affected by the nuclear disaster:

> [S]'habituer à avoir une existence amputée (amputée de ses plaisirs le plus simples: savourer une salade sans crainte, rester en souriant sous la pluie), à vivre dans un temps friable, émietté, confiné, pour que la machinerie nucléaire puisse continuer comme si rien n'était…et que la situation a toutes les apparences du "normal." Insaisissable, impalpable, nébuleuse et irréfutable à la fois, subreptice et pourtant éclatante dans la limaille des jours, la demi-vie s'impose comme le seul modèle de nos économies et de nos modes d'existence.[41]
>
> (Getting used to a reduced existence (deprived of the simplest pleasures: appreciating a salad without worry, smiling in the rain), to living in a crumbly, restricted time so that the nuclear machinery can continue as if nothing happened…and the situation appears completely "normal." At once imperceptible, intangible, nebulous, and irrefutable, surreptitious and yet glinting in the cracks of the days, half-life imposes itself as the only model for our economies and our modes of existence.)

This "existence amputée" describes not only the compromised ways of life in nuclear-contaminated places but also the anxiety of what has become a new conception of time. This is Akira Mizubayashi's "catastrophe continuée" or Ferrier's "temps nucléaire," in which inhabitants, "[c]onfrontés à une reconstruction nécessaire mais impossible, à une décontamination à la lettre interminable…se trouvent pris dans les rets d'un temps qui ne passe

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[39] Georges Perec, *La Vie mode d'emploi* (Paris: Éditions Hachette, 1978); Philippe Didion, "Bulletin n. 64" (Assocation Georges Perec, June 2014). The Association Georges Perec bulletin reports, "Michaël Ferrier s'est expliqué sur le titre de la 3e partie, « La demi-vie, mode d'emploi » : la référence à Perec n'est pas ici un simple clin d'œil révérencieux, elle indique que Perec avait été l'un des tout premiers à sentir que l'infra-ordinaire ou la vie quotidienne étaient voués à devenir les cibles de prédilection des stratégies de contrôle politique dans les sociétés contemporaines mais aussi ses premiers espaces de résistance et de révolte." (Michaël Ferrier explained the title of the third part, "Half-life, operating instructions": the reference to Perec here is not a simple reverential wink, it shows that Perec was one of the very first to feel that the infra-ordinary or quotidian life were worthy of becoming the preferred targets of the political strategies of control in contemporary societies but also the first spaces of resistance and revolt.)

[40] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 290.

[41] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 293.

plus, dans une vacance monumentale où l'idée même de temps semble discréditée"[42] (confronted by a necessary but impossible reconstruction, by a literally interminable decontamination…find themselves trapped in a time that no longer advances, in a monumental vacuum where even the idea of time seems to be discredited). *La demi-vie* thus demands the assertion of one's existence in any way possible: with words, bodies, sounds, music, dreams, notes, photographs, or literature. This assertion itself is a political act, a declaration of one's right to exist. *La demi-vie* as a mode of human existence is no more "une moitié de vie" (half of a life) than its nuclear counterpart, but rather a way of life in a new spatiotemporal reality: *la demi-vie au temps nucléaire* (half-life in nuclear time).

The space of Ferrier's *demi-vie* both continues and irreversibly alters the arguably less nuclearized Perecian infra-ordinary. Ferrier describes how "[s]ous une normalité de surface, beaucoup de repères de la vie quotidienne ont déjà changé et continuent de se modifier au fur et à mesure" (under a surface of normality, many day-to-day points of reference have already changed and gradually continue to be modified). He details the distribution of iodine tablets, new hygiene recommendations, and the profound anxiety around natural elements such as wind and rain, which could change radiation levels at any time.[43] Still, the "normalité de surface" can be maintained because these modifications are restricted to a relatively small and aging region in Japan. As the geographer Philippe Pelletier explains, "[l]a localisation des centrales nucléaires dans des régions rurales périphériques, mais pas trop éloignées des mégalopoles, écarte *de facto* les craintes des métropolitains qui ne voient pas les centrales dont ils consomment l'électricité"[44]

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[42] Michaël Ferrier, "Fukushima ou la traversée du temps: une catastrophe sans fin," *Esprit* (June 2014): 41.

[43] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 275-6.

[44] Philippe Pelletier, *Atlas du Japon: après Fukushima, une société fragilisée* (Paris: Autrement, 2012), 93.

(the location of nuclear power plants in peripheral rural regions, but not too far from the megalopolises, in effect diverts the worries of metropolitans who do not see the power plants from which they consume energy). Out of site, out of mind. And because radiation is invisible, it remains out of sight as well, even for those who continue to conduct their daily lives in the peripheral rural regions controlled by "métropolitains."

This investigation under the surface and on the periphery, Ferrier's quasi-ethnographic approach in *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*, echoes observations of space and time in the region made by social scientists. For example, while participating in cleanup work in the Tohoku region in July 2011, American anthropologist Anne Allison writes of the Genda group that visited the Tohoku region and brought calendars: "Because thinking about the future—thinking oneself into the future (tomorrow, then the next week, on a calendar)—becomes 'the energy for action' (*Asahi Shimbun* July 23, 2012, 13). Genda distributed calendars among victims as both a symbol and method of hope."[45] While Allison welcomes this future-oriented outlook, she also understands the future as inextricable from the present, as in Mizubayashi's *catastrophe continuée* or Ferrier's *temps nucléaire*. Allison remains ambivalent about a rootedness in the day-to-day, asking, "Is a temporality of the forever-present precarious?":

> With people still living in temporary housing, decisions to be made about reconstruction, a nuclear industry to dismantle or figure out how to live with, and security and precarity of all the old(er) types still at bay, the present is soon not the present anymore. If not the future (or no future), what is it? Who can live (securely) in it? And with what kinds of 'economies of people' (a 'we' that includes and excludes whom)?
>
> I leave these questions dangling over a post-3/11 Japan that still, for the time being, is precarious, just like everywhere today.[46]

[45] Allison, *Precarious Japan*, 199.

[46] Allison, *Precarious Japan,* 206.

Allison, too, insists that Japan is not only country affected by the nuclear disaster. Her study *Precarious Japan*, most of which was written before March 2011, looks at several other social problems afflicting contemporary Japanese society, such as economic insecurity, population decline, and social isolation. These problems may be unique to Japan in their details, such as the *hikikomori*, a Japanese term for people who rarely if ever leave home, but in broader terms they are problems faced by many societies today. Thus, contemporary visions of spaces designated by place names such as "Fukushima" and "Japan" might be seen to crack open, split apart, and extend their boundaries to a more planetary reach.

For Ferrier, an interest in the margins of society and of national memory can be seen as another variation on the theme of fissure and breach. In *Mémoires d'outre-mer*, Ferrier articulates the relationship between the explosion of History, or the official record, and post-nuclear temporality:

> Explorer les marges, les silences, tel a toujours été l'un des secrets de l'acte d'écrire. Dans l'Histoire de France, les Mémoires sont des bombes. Des dispositifs parfaitement ingénieux, à fragmentation et à retardement. Eux seuls révèlent la complexité des temps, leur tourmente animée, leur turbulences secrètes. Clandestins. Ils ne monumentalisent pas, ils sont, littéralement, à côté de la plaque, mais à l'envers de la généalogie accréditée ils détectent les parentés originales, les affiliations imprévues, le foisonnement des moments contre le cours officiel du calendrier.[47]
>
> (Exploring the margins, the silences, that has always been one of the secrets of the act of writing. In the History of France, Memories are bombs. Absolutely ingenious devices to fragment and delay. They alone reveal the complexity of time, its lively turmoil, its secret turbulences. Stowaways. They do not monumentalize, they are not on the plaques, but on the other side of the authorized genealogy they detect the original relations, the unexpected affiliations, the expansion of moments against the official course of the calendar.)

Ferrier's *temps nucléaire*, as applicable to the evocation of postcolonial French spaces as it is to those of a nuclear Japan, is at once expansive and slow-moving, "contre le cours officiel du

[47] Ferrier, *Mémoires d'outre-mer,* 241.

calendrier." *Le temps nucléaire* provides portraits of time against visions and memory against History.

Slow-moving time is a weapon that can also be used against us. Rob Nixon offers another way of thinking about nuclear time in terms of the slow violence of nuclear contamination. Slow violence occurs most often in what Nixon calls an "unimagined community," or a space "whose vigorously unimagined condition becomes indispensable to maintaining a highly selective discourse of national development,"[48] such as in the less populated, rural Tohoku region of Japan. While "Fukushima" is no longer entirely "unimagined" in national and global discourse, it is certainly shaped by a "highly selective discourse" that creates more ambivalence, confusion, and distrust than it does understanding. Ferrier's reflection on the contaminated region of Japan as documented in the *petits portraits* that make up *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* addresses the dearth of French philosophical meditation on the nuclear problem and brings these "unimagined communities" into the French, if not the global, imaginary. Ferrier's *petit portraits*, like Ôe's notes, challenge dominant discourse by showing and contemplating what official information might prefer to hide. While Ferrier would likely reject the term "writer-activist," which Nixon uses for environmentally engaged writers, his work serves as a kind of literary activism that seeks a wider and deeper understanding of Japanese spaces—of the small, in-between, and frequently overlooked places—and the assertion of their existence to a wider audience.[49]

To situate these peripheral places, people, and histories, Ferrier opposes them to powerful centers, such as Tokyo, and well-known historical and literary figures. In *Fukushima, Récit d'un*

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[48] Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 150.

[49] Michaël Ferrier, Cercle littéraire de la BnF, interview by Laure Adler and Bruno Racine, March 23, 2012. Ferrier defends his work as first and foremost literary. His goal is not to denounce, but to show what he has seen and heard because "savoir, voir ce qui s'est passé est la meilleure façon de lutter" (knowing, seeing what happened is the best way to fight).

désastre, afflicted inhabitants are contrasted with Homer's Achilles: "Nous avons fait le choix inverse d'Achille, tel que nous le décrit merveilleusement l'*Iliade.* Homère nous le dit: Achille ne veut pas d'une demi-vie. Il veut une belle mort, c'est-à-dire une belle vie (comme le dit si bien l'expression 'une vie accomplie'). C'est tout ou rien: Achille ne transige pas."[50] (We made the opposite choice of Achilles, as it is marvelously described in the *Illiad*. Homer tells us: Achilles does not want a half-life. He wants a beautiful death, which is to say a beautiful life (summed up so well in the expression 'an accomplished life'). It's all or nothing: Achilles does not compromise.) Ferrier focuses on the larger-than-life hero whose choice is one of diametric opposition: life or death, all or nothing. Moreover, the epic antithesis is not simply that of life or death; it is the exalted, beautiful life, or the honorable death. The reference to Achilles underscores not only the inverse situation of those without choice forced to accept the half-life existence, but also the lack of Achilles-like hero to emerge and bring some sort of definitive change or conclusion to the triple disaster in Japan and the ensuing *demi-vie au temps nucléaire.*

This move to the epic register also invites a comparison of epic temporality with *le temps nucléaire*. The epic, which projects a past into the future and in so doing "claims for itself a certain 'durability,'"[51] memorializes the ephemeral life of its hero with the durability of tradition. For Bakhtin, the epic is a fixed genre that has completed its form, as opposed to the flexible skeleton of the novel or a work like *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*. Bakhtin describes how the novel contaminates other genres and in so doing destabilizes them: "The novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with

[50] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 299.

[51] Lorenzo F. Garcia (Jr.), *Homeric Durability: Telling Time in the Iliad*, Hellenic Studies Series 58 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2013).

unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the openended present)."[52] The novel for Bakhtin is the dominant contemporary genre that "sparks the renovation of all other genres, it infects them with its spirit of process and inclusiveness. It draws them ineluctably into its orbit."[53] The novel is also an ideal form for engaging with the present as it opens a new zone for "structuring literary images, namely the zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openendedness."[54] The epic, on the other hand, is past, closed off, and complete: "an absolute epic distance separates the epic world from contemporary reality."[55] The epic tells a national story and is part of a national tradition. It withstands decay and the destructive influence of time. *Le temps nucléaire*, however, provides a record of decay and of existence despite the destructive influence of time; in so doing, it remains firmly in the present. And while epic durability is finally bounded by the conventions of literature and the imagination, *le temps nucléaire* is an enduring real-life existence in a limitless expanse of space.

Cinematic visions use images to show the indeterminacy of spatial and temporal borders, with the frame imposing artificial spatial limits, and the steady movement of twenty-four images per second imposing the illusion of a fixed temporal progression and creating for the viewer an experience of the eternal present. The written portrait is comparatively atemporal and creates its own space. This atemporality, which becomes *le temps nucléaire* in *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*, is akin to a faraway epic time but also adjacent to the notion of the eternal present in the cinematic chronotope of the nuclear. The literary nuclear present can be described and theorized for the reader, but the reader does not experience it as eternal in the same way that the

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[52] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 7.

[53] Bakhtin, 7.

[54] Bakhtin, 11.

[55] Bakhtin, 13.

viewer experiences the cinematic eternal present. While cinematic visions may offer more vivid sensory experiences, literary representations give the reader a chance to reflect, to empathize, and to act in a different way: to become aware of gaps, fissures, and rifts between *petits portraits* and to seek out other stories.

MULTILINGUALISM

Language provides the tools not only to articulate spatiotemporalities but also to create, address, and mobilize specific audiences. Monolingualism, for example, may be used to create a kind of national unity after domestic upheaval or disaster,[56] while multilingualism grants writers such as Michaël Ferrier flexibility and encourages invention with literary form. The Japanese language is an important influence for the *petit portrait,* which takes inspiration from Japanese literary forms as well as from the Japanese writing system itself. If *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* is primarily addressed to a Francophone audience, instances of multilingualism throughout the text gesture toward the wider ramifications of the nuclear disaster and the need for transnational solidarity in response. Knowledge of Japanese in particular creates opportunities to access parts of Japanese culture that might be incomprehensible to a foreigner and allows Ferrier to translate a polyphonic experience of Japan to the page. This section looks at such instances of multilingualism that serve Ferrier's project to create polyphonic portraits of half-life in Japan after the March 2011 triple disaster. By multilingualism, I refer to multiple national languages but also to linguistic heterogeneity in French. Multilingualism allows Ferrier

[56] Pierre Encrevé and Michel Braudeau, *Conversations sur la langue française* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 30. "Mais le français, chargé de symboliser l'unité nationale après la suppression du trône et la fin du monopole catholique de l'autel, a pris assez vite la figure d'une sorte de religion d'État en France." (But French, charged with symbolizing national unity after the elimination of the throne and the end of the Catholic monopoly of the alter, rather quickly took the figure of a sort of state religion in France.)

expanded access to his writing subjects, for which and whom he serves as a kind of cultural translator. Multilingualism also expands the potential reach of his work to reach beyond the local or the national toward a more transnational audience.

The first and most evident multilingual context in Ferrier's work is that of national language. As someone who has lived in Japan for over twenty years, speaks the language, and takes inspiration from it in his own writing, Ferrier also uses Japanese to mobilize the *petit portrait* form in a way that Barthes, who aestheticized the language with lines such as "cette écriture idéographique qui semble à nos yeux dériver de la peinture, alors que tout simplement elle la fonde"[57] (that ideographic writing which to our eyes seems to derive from painting, whereas quite simply it is painting's inspiration), did not quite manage to do in *L'Empire des signes.* For Barthes, "La masse bruissante d'une langue inconnue constitue une protection délicieuse"[58] (The murmuring mass of an unknown language constitutes a delicious protection). Marie-Paule Ha calls these essays his "happy mythologies,"[59] or they might be called Barthes's own *petits portraits* of an imaginary Japan. Speaking Japanese allows Ferrier access to a Japan beyond that of tourists and dreamers to individuals and communities who directly experienced the tsunami and lived in or near the radioactive exclusion zone. Ferrier explains how it was not difficult to find people who worked at the Fukushima power plant for interviews, as some live in Tokyo (where Ferrier lives) or travel there for medical tests. He writes:

> Ce qui est plus malaisé, c'est de les faire parler. Il y a un principe bien établi dans certains milieux professionnels japonais: '*Shuhi gimu*', l'obligation de garder le secret. Dans le nucléaire, il est très fort. Ne rien voir, ne rien entendre, ne rien dire: les principes

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[57] Barthes, *L'Empire des signes*, 120. Translations from Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs* (Macmillan, 1983), 86.

[58] Barthes, *L'Empire des signes,* 21.

[59] Marie-Paule Ha, *Figuring the East: Segalen, Malraux, Duras, and Barthes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 102.

> des trois petits singes bouddhistes—Mizaru l'aveugle, Kikazaru le sourd et Iwazaru le muet—sont aussi ceux du nucléaire. 'Ne vois pas', 'N'entends pas', 'Ne parle pas'.
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> Certains parlent cependant, quelquefois pour de l'argent, d'autres fois pour se libérer du fardeau d'une connaissance terrible et presque intransmissible. Une seule condition revient comme un leitmotiv: ne jamais citer leur nom, ne jamais donner un détail quelconque—physiologique, vestimentaire, géographique ou familial—qui pourrait les faire repérer.[60]
>
> (What is more difficult is getting them to talk. There is a well-established principle in certain Japanese professional fields: '*Shuhi gimu*,' the obligation to keep secret. In the nuclear industry, it is very strong. See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil: the principles of the three Buddhist monkeys—Mizaru the blind, Kikazaru the deaf, and Iwazaru the mute—are also those of the nuclear industry.
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> Some speak anyway, sometimes for money, other times for freedom from the burden of a terrible and almost inexpressible knowledge. One condition returns like a leitmotif: never use their name, never mention any identifying detail—physiological, vestiary, geographical, or familial—that would mark them.)

Because he lives in Japan and speaks Japanese, Ferrier finds the equivalent of the ethnographer's local informants, while his ineffaceable French identity distances him to a certain extent from Japanese society and, in this example, might invite a certain candor from his Japanese informants.

One of these local informants, a former student of Ferrier's, works for the Japanese Meteorological Agency in the earthquake observation center. With him, Ferrier is able to tour the center, gaining access to a space that is another sort of "zone of exclusion" for ordinary citizens. During the tour, Ferrier observes:

> Des cartes et des calculs oscillent sur les écrans, constamment mis à jour par les ordinateurs. Peu d'écrans de télévision ici. Il ne s'agit pas à proprement parler de voir, mais de *lire*, de déchiffrer les mesures relevées par cent quatre-vingts sismographes et six cents appareils de mesure, placés stratégiquement dans tout l'archipel, à l'affût de la moindre accélération du sol.[61]
>
> (Maps and calculations alternate on the screens, constantly updated by computers. Very few television screens here. This is not, strictly speaking, so much about seeing as about *reading*, decoding the measurements from one hundred eighty seismographs and six

[60] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 243-4.

[61] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 48.

> hundred measuring devices, strategically placed all around the archipelago, waiting for the slightest acceleration of the ground.)

This is one example of many in which Ferrier privileges the kind of understanding that comes from active engagement with information: "lire" (reading) and "déchiffrer" (deciphering), as opposed to passive reception of the surge of televised images surrounding the events of the triple disaster. This is also an example of a multilingual context in which Ferrier's fluency in Japanese allows him to communicate with his former student and other employees at the agency, while remaining illiterate in the technical language of the seismographs and measuring devices, which must be read and decoded by specialists before being translated into recommendations for the general public. In this context, Ferrier acts as a sort of literary journalist-ethnographer, trying to make sense of one small piece of the problem he is investigating.

Ferrier also acts as a cultural translator, drawing from his knowledge of Japanese and French cultures to make sense of the information he learns at the earthquake observation center for a Francophone readership. When his former student mentions the small island of Oshika, which is believed to be the earthquake's epicenter, Ferrier, who has visited the island before, explains that it is known for its Shinto temple honoring the gods of fortune. "On dit que si on se rend à ce temple trois années de suite, on sera à l'abri de tout besoin financier pour le restant de sa vie. C'est donc ici que le séisme s'est produit, non loin du sanctuaire de la richesse, du commerce et des échanges… Étrange symbole."[62] (They say that if you visit this island three years in a row, you will be sheltered from any financial need for the rest of your life. It is thus here that the earthquake happened, not far from the sanctuary of wealth, of commerce, and of trade…A strange symbol.) This explanation provides what is likely necessary cultural and linguistic context for a French reader to understand the irony of Oshika's position as the

[62] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 51.

epicenter of the largest earthquake in Japan's history and the ensuing devastation of the tsunami and nuclear disaster.

Ferrier even translates French for his French readership. The word "réplique" (aftershock), a common experience in Japan and much less so in France, takes on new meaning when it is experienced. Ferrier demonstrates the gap between the written definition and the lived experience of the aftershock: "Réplique. J'ouvre mon dictionnaire. 'Le relâchement de l'énergie accumulée ne se fait généralement pas en une seule secousse…Ces secousses secondaires sont parfois plus dévastatrices que la secousse principale'"[63] (Aftershock. I open my dictionary. 'The release of accumulated energy does not generally happen in a single tremor…. These secondary jolts are sometimes more devastating than the principal). For Ferrier, the experience of an earthquake and its aftershocks echo that of war:

> Traduction: un séisme est une bombe à fragmentation, qui libère des milliers de répliques comme autant d'éclats se propagent à pleine vitesse sous la croûte terrestre dans des directions aléatoires—brisures, fracas—et peuvent remonter à la surface n'importe où et n'importe quand, comme des roquettes surgies de la roche. La première fois qu'il frappe, le séisme surprend, mais à la première réplique vous comprenez que c'est une véritable guerre qui vient de commencer. Lente et sournoise, explosive et implacable, avec ses moments de répit, ses accalmies, et ses accélérations subites, dévastatrices.[64]
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> (Translation: an earthquake is a fragmentation bomb that sets off thousands of aftershocks like so many flashes spreading quickly under the Earth's crust in unpredictable directions—cracks, crashes—and can return to the surface anywhere and at any time, like rockets emerging from the rocks. The first time it hits, the earthquake surprises, but with the first aftershock you understand that it is truly a war that has just begun. Slow and insidious, explosive and persistent, with its moments of respite, its lulls, and its sudden, devastating accelerations.)

The earthquake and its aftershocks are shown to have their own rhythm, at times slow, accelerating, and explosive ("—brisures, fracas—"). They have their own temporality, and even

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[63] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 60.

[64] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 61.

their own agency: the earthquake sets off the aftershocks that can reach the surface at any place and any time, can surprise and devastate anyone who happens to be within its reach. In this way, Ferrier not only decodes the word "réplique" to echo the experience of war, but he transforms the abstract space of the earthquake's reach into distinct places and people touched by it and by its aftershocks. "Place entails a spatial location, entails a spatial container of some sort," Lawrence Buell argues. Place is associatively thick and full of the "quotidian idiosyncratic intimacies" that space, associatively thin, might be seen to lack.[65] Place is thus something to be envisioned on its own terms rather than through the lens of imagination or fantasy.

Ferrier's *petits portraits*—of words, of places, and of phenomena—provide an insider's view of Japan translated for a French readership. These are portraits of half-life in the sense that Ferrier gives—of the compromised existence of the Japanese living near Fukushima—and they are also portraits of half-life in the sense that they aim only to describe glimpses, fragments, or fractions of lives. The portraits themselves are polyphonic and depend on Ferrier's multilingualism to come together in this work, signaling that Fukushima is a transnational problem. In one instance, Ferrier transcribes the English-language tsunami warning he hears on the bilingual television channel, a warning that ends with the order, "'*Everyone on the coast must evacuate to higher ground*…' Au même moment, sur toute la surface du globe, dans toutes les langues du monde, la catastrophe arrive."[66] (At the same time, all across the globe, in every language of the world, the catastrophe arrives.)

In addition to multilingualism in French, Japanese, and English, Ferrier also demonstrates a facility with a variety of literary registers as well as disciplinary languages, thus adding to the

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[65] Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 63.

[66] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 40.

polyphony of his portraits. His writing draws from such varied disciplines as philosophy, anthropology, meteorology, chemistry, and literature, as well as from literary registers ranging from epic, satiric, historical, poetic, journalistic, and autobiographical. As seen in the above-mentioned translation at the meteorological center, Ferrier is particularly interested in the ways that scientific language can cause more confusion than it clarifies for the general public. He enumerates deadly molecules, radiotoxic isotopes, and units of measure. "[O]n jongle avec les unités de mesure et on n'y comprend plus rien. Un jour le taux d'iode radioactive dans la mer est 3355 fois la limite légale. Le lendemain, 4835 fois. Mais qu'est-ce que cela veut dire?" (We juggle with the measurement units and no longer understand them. One day the rate of radioactive iodine in the ocean is 3355 times the legal limit. The next, 4835 times. But what does that mean?) Ferrier offers, with irony, "un titre délicieux du *Nouvel Observateur*: 'La situation est préoccupante pour les poissons.'"[67] (A delightful headline in the *Nouvel Observateur*: 'The situation is concerning for the fish.') In his deconstruction of supposedly authoritative yet mind-boggling facts and figures, Ferrier demonstrates how scientific language alone is not enough for a full understanding of the situation. Ferrier shows the need for irony, music, history, and literature, as well as for order and careful reflection. He writes, "le plus sûr moyen d'escamoter l'information n'est pas de la taire: c'est de la rendre publique en même temps qu'un millier d'autres. Dans la pluie désordonnée des bulletins et des communiqués, au milieu d'un jargon technique jamais explicité, les plus savants se perdent et les plus patients renoncent"[68] (the surest way to hide information is not to silence it: it is to make it all public at the same time. In the disordered outpouring of bulletins and reports, in the middle of technical jargon that is never

[67] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 232.

[68] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 237.

clarified, the most knowledgeable get lost and the most patient give up). In short, perhaps the best we can hope for are flashes of understanding and glimpses of truth to which we can attempt to give form. For Ferrier, these are *petits portraits* of half-lives, his own co-opted scientific term given a humanist meaning.

This facility and flexibility with disciplinary languages and registers allows for the creation of a heterogeneous language for reflecting on the nuclear problem, a humanistic discourse that, as Ferrier notes in *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre,* is curiously absent from twentieth-century French critical reflection.[69] Such discourse seems to have an equally troubled history in Japan. In his *Hiroshima Notes* from 1965*,* Ôe Kenzaburo writes, "For ten years after the atomic bomb was dropped there was so little public discussion of the bomb or of radioactivity that even the *Chugoku Shimbun*, the major newspaper of the city where the atomic bomb was dropped, did not have the movable type for 'atomic bomb' or 'radioactivity.'"[70] Ôe's response, his *Hiroshima Notes,* a collections of articles, observations, and thoughts about the atomic bomb and its aftermath, serve as a model for Ferrier's *petit portraits* of Fukushima, inflecting his work with a comparably humanist tone.

The facility with which Ferrier moves in his work between linguistic and literary traditions—from one part of the world to another, from Antiquity to the present day, Homeric epic to humanist notes—signals an embrace of a certain kind of global culture. This is not universalizing, difference-effacing globalization but more akin to an international library to which subscription requires neither proof of residence nor access code other than that of linguistic competence. This global library allows Ferrier to bring new light to what the world

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[69] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 33.

[70] Ôe, *Hiroshima Notes*, 66-7.

may have written off as Japan's problem. With this plural, planetary perspective comes a global humanist sense of responsibility.

Ferrier's "encounter" with Japan can be seen to differ significantly from those of most other French artists, writers, and filmmakers. Multilingualism allows Ferrier to engage with Japanese culture in ways that few French writers have done before. Particularly illustrative is the final portrait in *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre*, which comes full circle to the book's opening: the story of Zhang Heng, who in 132 A.D. China invented the world's first seismograph, and whose memory was later minimized in the official record for political reasons. Ferrier learned of Zhang's story from a Japanese translation of his biography and thus laments, "[e]n français, comme c'est dommage, il n'y a pratiquement rien sur le personnage"[71] (it is truly unfortunate that in French there is practically nothing written about this person). And of the first seismograph, Ferrier writes, "la plupart des plans et des croquis qui auraient pu nous aider à en comprendre les rouages sont également perdus. Certains vont jusqu'à prétendre qu'il n'a jamais existé"[72] (the majority of plans and sketches that could have helped us understand its inner workings were lost. Some go so far as to pretend he never existed). Multilingual forms such as Ferrier's polyphonic *petit portraits* seek to fill such gaps in the official archives, to build roads over the superficial traces of an earlier, primarily aesthetic French fascination with Japan. Ultimately, just as important as the existence and availability of forms that create new discursive spaces is the ability to access those spaces through language and to document them for a global public memory.

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[71] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 308.

[72] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 309.

CONCLUSION

For those most seriously affected by the triple disaster, it may be hard to imagine ever getting past the precarious temporality of the forever-present, moving beyond *la demi-vie au temps nucléaire*. Michael Wieviorka suggests that Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the Shoah show the limits of language with regards to representation, but he sees hope in the possibility of confronting disaster with art and literature, suggesting that literature after the disaster "repose sur la description du réel…au plus loin de toute rhétorique, de toute éloquence—montre la possibilité d'affronter le pire"[73] (rest on description of the real…as far as possible from all rhetoric, all eloquence—show the possibility of facing the worst).

Ferrier's *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* is a document of his experiences and those of the Japanese people he encountered in the days, weeks, and months following March 11, 2011. Ferrier's portraits of half-life are by turns transcriptions of the "real" and of the deconstructed, philosophized, or imagined. But his portraits are always rooted in the concrete, in fixed places at specific moments in time surrounded by everyday objects. The first chapter begins: "Vendredi, 11 mars 2011, en début d'après-midi, la vibration des fenêtres."[74] For Ferrier, as for Wieviorka, literature is one way to confront the worst, although there is no promise that literature alone can endure it. Literature, too, is precarious, Ferrier demonstrates with a description of books falling from his bookshelf during the earthquake:

> Saint-John Perse tombe le premier. 'S'en aller! S'en aller! Paroles de vivant!'… Le grand Hugo hésite, tergiverse, il grogne de toute la puissance de ses œuvres complètes et puis il s'écrase au sol dans un fracas énorme. Aimé Césaire, lui, tombe avec élégance et majesté. Nerval chevauche René Char, Claudel monte sur Villon, Villon sur Apollinaire…Un à un, ou par groupes, par paquets, les livres sont précipités vers la terre, et les phrases à

[73] Michael Wieviorka, "Michaël Ferrier à la barrière du Japon," *Critique* 762, no. Sous l'empire du Japon (2010): 923.

[74] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 21.

> l'intérieur des livres, et les lettres dans le mots, phonèmes, syllabes, syntagmes, segments de sons par saccades.[75]
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> (Saint-John Perse falls first. 'Let us be gone! Let us be gone! Cry of the living!' … The great Hugo hesitates, equivocates, he groans under the weight of his complete works and then he crashes to the floor in a tremendous clatter. Aimé Césaire, for his part, falls with elegance and majesty. Nerval sits astride René Char, Claudel climbs on Villon, Villon on Apollinaire…One by one, or by groups, by packs, the books dashed to the floor, and the sentences inside the books, and the letters in the words, phonemes, syllables, syntagms, segments of sounds in sudden thumps.)

As the books fall, Ferrier signals not only the fragility of literature but of chronology and perhaps of literary history as well. Césaire falls too soon. Villon is mixed up with Claudel and Apollinaire. There is no logic to which personified book falls when or where, or the fact that "seul Baudelaire résiste là-haut, tout là-haut, pour je ne sais quelle raison, éternel récalcitrant"[76] (only Baudelaire remains up there, all the way up there, for no apparent reason, eternally recalcitrant). No reason except those that Ferrier might imagine: Baudelaire's defiance, Césaire's majesty. It is as if temporality were suspended in a forever-archived past becoming a forever-present heap on the floor. And with the fall of Ferrier's library comes the breakdown of his own language as well: sentences whose verbs and articles drop out leaving fragments of language in a paragraph on the page.

At a few points in *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre,* Ferrier compares the earthquake to a bomb, or to *the* bomb, that unfortunate echo in "Fukushima" of Hiroshima. In *Mémoires d'outre-mer*, Ferrier writes of the bomb of Memory and its subsequent fragmentation, which allows for a recognition of incompleteness, a reconfiguration of pieces, a slowing down, and a more careful approach to space and time. A space and time against mandates of power and expediency. A

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[75] Ferrier, *Fukushima,* 30-1.

[76] Ferrier, *Fukushima*, 31.

language of fragments patiently reassembled from the periphery. A form against, between, and beyond dominant discourse. A literature revitalized and reaching out to a global readership.

Conclusion

The nuclear question raises important scientific, political, and historical concerns. As I have attempted to show in this study, it also influences aesthetics by shaping narratives and visions as well as ways of perceiving our planet. "Aesthetic" from ancient Greek means "sense perception," and its opposite, "anaesthetic," means "without feeling, insensible."[1] The flood of scientific data and images around a disaster might have such an anaesthetic effect, as do empty reassurances in abstract and technical terms devised to subdue victims—that is, all of us—of an undemocratic form of power and weapon of mass destruction that is seen as too big to fail.

The nuclear narratives analyzed in this dissertation use a more humanist language to do the aesthetic work of triggering senses and activating perception around the nuclear question. These nuclear narratives are formally unstable, fragmented, and nonlinear. Frankly, they are often difficult works to encounter. They tend not to be popcorn movies, page-turners, or apocalyptic thrillers. Nuclear narratives are more interested in the uncertainty of nuclear spaces and the tedium of nuclear time and its seemingly inescapable present. The chronotope of the nuclear as I have developed it throughout this study is itself a profoundly unstable concept. Nuclear space and time do not unfold in the same way in every nuclear narrative. The eternal present in *Hiroshima mon amour* is an impossible present in the films of Chris Marker and a temporal loop in the digital age. For Kota Takeuchi pointing at the camera at Fukushima Daiichi Reactor 1, the nuclear present is simply a very long time. And yet the uncertainty of the nuclear

[1] "aesthetic, n. and adj." OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. "anaesthetic, adj. and n." OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. Not until the 18th century was "aesthetic" used to refer to the "philosophy of the beautiful or of art."

present does not so much undermine the chronotope of the nuclear as it signals a crisis of the present in the nuclear age.

What do we make of such uncertainty surrounding the nuclear? As the historian Jill Lepore suggests in an article explaining how nuclear weapons have shaped the debate over global warming, "The public may not naturally have much tolerance for uncertainty, but uncertainty is the best that many scientific arguments can produce." Deterrence, for example, is an uncertain strategy, but it is one we rely on as a "fearful act of faith." Lepore argues, "Bipartisan agreement about the future of the planet falls apart not over the bomb but over the climate. Historically, though, they're inseparable: the weapons and the weather are twisted together, a wire across time, the long fuse to an ongoing debate about the credibility of science, the fate of the Earth, and the nature of uncertainty."[2] To take Lepore's line of thinking a step further, we might ask if intolerance for uncertainty in everyday life and politics extends to intolerance for unstable narratives and the uncertain worlds they envision. Isn't it easier to distance nuclear fears through science fiction and fantasy than to confront them head-on in the uncanny reality of the nuclear narrative?

This study is as much about the nuclear question as it is about the history of French writers, artists, and filmmakers who have looked to Japan in their work and, since the postwar period, have seen a nuclear Japan. In the tradition of Japonisme, French Impressionist painters sought aesthetic solutions to problems of realism. In the nuclear era, French writers and filmmakers seem to look to Japan for answers to larger interdisciplinary and transnational questions. The title of this dissertation foregrounds the focus on visions of Japan, but I have argued that these self-reflexive visions are just as much about France. *Hiroshima mon amour*

[2] Jill Lepore, "The Atomic Origins of Climate Science," *The New Yorker*, January 30, 2017, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/30/the-atomic-origins-of-climate-science.

opens in the western-style New Hiroshima hotel, and features a Japanese lead who needed to have "un visage assez 'occidentalisé'"[3] (a rather westernized face). Lui and Elle go to Casablanca café, a name evoking the Moroccan city once under French rule and the classic 1942 American film. In *Sans soleil*, the restless travelogue that touches down in Guinea Bissau, Iceland, Cape Verde, and Japan, the thought of home keeps resurfacing: "By the way, did you know that there are emus in the Ile de France?" Keiko Courdy begins her film in France, and Rouy was driven to make his nuclear trilogy by the anxiety of someone quite aware that he is living in the most nuclearized country in the world in terms of energy. Ferrier looks back to France in *Fukushima, Récit d'un désastre* to ask why French philosophers have thought so little about the nuclear question.

I acknowledge that this study likely betrays at many turns my own limited American perspective, and I have asked myself many times what an Anglophone American study of French visions of Japan might possibly add to a field already rich in contributions from France and Japan. Describing and analyzing different cultures from a distance necessarily entails imbalance, imprecision, and error. However, as Claude Lévi-Strauss suggests, distance also allows for a wider view, a *vue d'ensemble* that may be able to take in that which an indigenous population could be too close to see.[4] In an attempt to inhabit this distant perspective as respectfully and productively as possible, I refer again to the words of Michaël Ferrier, who distinguishes between different methods of writing about Japan by their prepositions:

> Il y a des gens qui écrivent *sur* le Japon. *Sur*, dans une espèce de position surplombante, alors ça peut être très bien. Il y a des scientifiques qui font une certaine forme de japonologie. Puis il y a les gens qui font *sur* le Japon avec l'espèce de captation comme ça : Je vais vous parler du Japon. Je vais vous apprendre ce que c'est que le Japon….

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[3] Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour: scénario et dialogues* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 151.

[4] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Other Face of the Moon*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2013) 6-7.

> Donc écrire *sur* le Japon, non. Écrire *du* Japon, *à partir du* Japon, ça, oui, d'une certaine manière…. Après, il y a écrire *avec* le Japon. C'est autre chose, écrire en utilisant le Japon. Mais encore une fois on choisit. Parce que dans la littérature japonaise il y a tellement de choses. Ça ne se réduit ni à l'affaire du fragment, ni même à la langue, même si je pense qu'il vaut mieux quand même savoir la langue pour entrer dans ce pays, mais ce n'est pas le seul moyen.[5]
>
> (There are people who write *on* Japan. *On,* a sort of overhanging position, and that can be very good. There are scientists who do a certain form of Japanology. Then there are people who write *on* Japan as a sort of appropriation: I am going to tell you about Japan. I am going to teach you what Japan is…. So writing *on* Japan, no. Writing *of* or *from* Japan, yes, sort of… And then there is writing *with* Japan. That is something else, writing while using Japan. But again, one must still choose. Because there is so much in Japanese literature. It cannot be reduced to the question of the fragment, or even that of language, even if I think it is better to know the language to enter into this country, but it is not the only way.)

The "avec" approach is common to all of the works studied in this dissertation. These French writers and filmmakers are not Japanologists; they do not seek to write or film *on* or *about* Japan, but *with* and alongside it, the lateral approach. They create portraits and visions of Japan, perhaps no less impressionistic than past French visions of Japan, but in the spirit of *with.* I, myself, am no Japanologist, and while I may have straddled these various prepositions at times during the course of this study, I hope to have steered in most instances toward writing *with*, writing as an implicated outsider observing and reflecting on a long-established and evolving cross-cultural relationship with the liberties and blind spots that such a position entails. In many ways, the Japan-France relationship serves as an alternative to the France-United States model, particularly in the cultural sphere. French artists, writers, and filmmakers often look to Japan self-reflexively hoping to find something of themselves there, whereas the relationship to the United States and Hollywood is more often oppositional in the face of American cultural imperialism.

In cinema, the Franco-Japanese relationship can also be seen as one of affinitive transnationalism, as Mette Hjort conceives of the term, centering on a "tendency to communicate

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[5] Ferrier, "Un entretien avec Michaël Ferrier." See Appendix.

with those similar to us," and an "ethnic, linguistic, and cultural affinity," but that "need not…be based uniquely on cultural similarities that have long been recognized as such and are viewed as quite substantial, but can also arise in connection with shared problems or commitments in a punctual now."[6] The significant if limited history of Franco-Japanese cinematic encounters suggests the depth of this affinity, encounters starting at the end of the nineteenth century with the arrival of the Lumière cameras in Japan, and later taken up by the production company Argos Films, which commissioned and produced *Hiroshima mon amour* and many of Chris Marker's films, including *Sans soleil* and *Level Five*. The Franco-Japanese companies in Paris today Comme des cinemas, which produced *Tokyo!* and *Yuki et Nina,* and KAMI Productions, which produced documentaries for television such as *Le monde après Fukushima* and *Fukushima, des particules et des hommes* continue this transnational affinity in cinema around shared nuclear problems and environmental commitments.

I end this study with open questions about the uncertain present, possible hope for the future, and life in a nuclear world, as well as a zoom out to another film addressing similar transnational and transdisciplinary concerns. In *Arrival* (2016) by the French Canadian director Denis Villeneuve, the competition of academic disciplines is dramatized as a linguist and a physicist are hired to figure out why twelve extraterrestrial spacecraft have come to different locations on Earth. The linguist and scientist quickly realize that they need to work together and less quickly recognize that they must collaborate with teams around the world to share what they know in order to decode the language of the extraterrestrials. This slow and collaborative process of learning to communicate and to better understand others is not an obvious one; it goes against the easier inclination to take from the surface the parts we like and disregard the rest. Yet sharing

[6] Mette Hjort, "On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism," in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Natasa Durovicová and Kathleen E. Newman (New York, London: Routledge, 2010), 17.

languages, visions, and stories and collaborating to confront problems creates an opening that allows us to see beyond fantasy or desire to what is actually there. Such work allows us to become aware of the slow violence committed in unimagined communities and helps us imagine new possibilities for life together in the never-ending nuclear era. Nixon asks, "How can we turn the long emergencies of slow violence into stories dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment and warrant political intervention?"[7] The nuclear narratives in this study as well as the ambivalence and adaptability they model point to several possible responses.

[7] Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 3.

Appendix

Un entretien avec Michaël Ferrier

Chuo University, Tokyo
7 juin 2016

Hannah Holtzman : Dans ton essai « Je suis un écrivain japonais : de l'importance du *zuihitsu* chez un écrivain contemporain », tu as écrit sur le tournant que fournissait le Japon pour toi en tant qu'écrivain, l'influence de l'esthétique de « peu ». Cela semble évident en lisant *Tokyo petits portraits de l'aube* et *Kizu, la lézarde.* Quelle est la particularité pour toi de ce « peu » japonais, ou du fragment qu'on trouve dans la littérature japonaise ? Comment diffère-t-il, par exemple, de la fragmentation du Nouveau roman, de la déconstruction ou même du post-modernisme ?

Michaël Ferrier : Je n'ai pas grande chose à rajouter là-dessous parce que c'est vraiment la découverte du Japon et la vie au Japon m'a appris une certaine forme de brièveté, voilà. C'est ce qu'on peut appeler « le peu » ou « la réduction », une certaine forme de minimalisme parfois.

J'ai dit que je n'ai rien à rajouter mais il y a quand même deux choses que je voudrais dire parce que le texte *Japon : la barrière des rencontres* est un peu ancien maintenant, ça fait sept ans, même un peu plus parce que je l'avais écrit avant.

La première chose c'est que dans la culture japonaise, il n'y a pas que du fragment, il n'y a pas que du peu, il n'y a pas que des formes courtes, évidemment. Donc, je pense qu'on sélectionne, on choisit—c'est ce que j'ai fait en tout cas—quelque chose qui nous intéresse à un moment donné précis dans une culture. Il se trouve que dans la culture japonaise il y a aussi des sortes d'épopées. Il y a aussi des très grands romans, à commencer par le *Genji monogatari*. Donc je ne suis pas allé de ce côté-là. Je suis allé de l'autre côté, vers les formes courtes, mais ça ne veut pas dire que toute la culture japonaise se réduit aux formes courtes, simplement. A ce moment précis de ma vie—de ma vie personnelle et de ma vie d'écrivain—j'ai senti que c'était le moment d'aller dans cette direction-là. Pourquoi ? Parce que j'ai eu une formation en France très classique, et j'avais tendance un peu d'aller dans les grands livres, les grandes phrases, l'accumulation d'adjectifs, un peu à la Chateaubriand, par exemple, qui est un écrivain qui m'a beaucoup marqué. J'ai passé une partie de mon adolescence à Saint Malo, une ville de Chateaubriand, et je me souviens très bien d'avoir lu et relu Chateaubriand très souvent. Donc j'avais cette espèce d'appétence, d'appétit, de goût pour la longue période, la grande cadence, la grande phrase classique, même un peu romantique. Et donc au moment où j'arrive au Japon, c'est le moment où je me sens que c'est très intéressant aussi de travailler dans l'autre sens. Après, peut-être que si en France j'avais eu une écriture un peu minimaliste, j'aurais pris autre chose dans la culture japonaise. C'était plus une façon de faire contraste, et c'est par rapport à une situation donnée à un moment donné de ma vie où j'avais besoin de faire ça. Je le vois très bien parce que maintenant, avec par exemple *Mémoires d'outre-mer*, je suis revenu un peu quelques fois à des phrases beaucoup plus longues, mais j'ai gardé quand même cette espèce de goût aussi pour la phrase courte. Est-ce qu'on peut la dire japonaise ? Je ne sais pas, parce que ce n'est ni la propriété de la culture japonaise ni sa seule caractéristique—loin de là.

Après, la question du fragment : est-ce que le fragment du Nouveau roman est différent du fragment à la japonaise ? Je pense déjà au fragment japonais, il faut définir plus ce que c'est, parce que l'écriture fragmentaire, ça existe un peu partout. Il est évident qu'il y a des différences, mais alors est-ce que ces différences-là sont liées à une culture, à une langue…je ne sais pas. Je n'ai pas l'habitude de caractériser les écritures par nationalité. Je ne trouve pas ça très pertinent de dire par exemple qu'il y a le fragment japonais, le fragment français. Je prends un exemple : Pascal Quignard, qui a travaillé beaucoup et qui travaille toujours avec les formes fragmentaires et qui aussi s'est inspiré beaucoup d'écriture un peu fragmentaire comme Sei Shonagon, des écritures de liste. Ce qui est intéressant dans le fragment c'est qu'à un moment donné il y a des blocs. Il y a des blocs de phrase, il y a des blocs d'idées, il y a des stéréotypes, des choses qui sont toutes faites, toutes constituées, et pour moi le travail d'un écrivain c'est de lézarder ces bloques. C'est pour ça que mon premier livre s'appelait *Kizu, la lézarde*. C'était une façon d'introduire des failles dans un système constitué pour le faire vibrer, pour le faire bouger, et puis pour réintroduire de la respiration, du rythme et du jeu. À ce moment-là, un fragment, c'est comme un coup d'archer, au début d'une partition, par exemple, ça ouvre quelque chose. Après quand quelque chose s'ouvre, on peut le refermer très vite, on peut le continuer sous une autre manière. C'est-à-dire que le fragment en tant que tel, pour moi en tout cas, ce n'est pas un but, c'est plutôt un outil qui peut servir de différente manière. Donc, avec du fragment, avec du discontinu, on peut reconstruire une forme de continuité.

Il y a ça assez souvent dans certaines formes de théâtre, au Japon par exemple. Dans ce qu'on appelle le « Ma » intervalle. Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un intervalle ? C'est-à-dire une pause, par exemple, entre deux moments, un souffle. Est-ce qu'on dit que ça sépare ? Est-ce que cet intervalle qui se situe entre deux éléments constitués, est-ce qu'il sépare, où bien est-ce qu'il relie, ou bien est-ce qu'il sépare à moitié, relie à moitié…c'est une bordure. Donc tout ce qui est du domaine de la bordure m'intéresse, beaucoup plus que *est-ce que c'est fragmentaire, est-ce que c'est long, est-ce que c'est court*. C'est plutôt le moment où ça vibre dans un entre-deux qui m'intéresse. Mais voilà, l'idée de fragment n'est pas pour moi en tout cas un idéal en soi. Ça peut être une arme ou un outil, pour ne pas être trop belliqueux, trop guerrier. Ça peut être un outil à utiliser à un moment donné, en fonction de ce que tu veux faire. Au moment où j'ai écrit *Kizu*, c'est évident que j'avais besoin de formes plus courtes.

HH : Et les termes tels que « japonisme », « post-japonisme » et « néojaponisme » sont-ils utiles aujourd'hui ?

MF : Alors, là, pour le coup, j'ai une réponse assez tranchée, assez nette. Je pense que c'est n'importe quoi. Moi, on m'a classé dans les « néojaponistes ». Pourquoi je dis que c'est n'importe quoi, parce que le japonisme, ça existe. C'est un courant artistique qui existait, qui est historiquement fixé, déterminable. On peut savoir à peu près quand ça commence. On a même l'année exacte. C'est Burty, le critique d'art qui l'a créé, donc on a l'exacte année où ça commence, et on peut déterminer une date où à partir de là c'est fini, ou ça se transforme. Mais ce qu'on appelle « le japonisme » en Europe, ça concerne d'abord les arts visuels, ensuite un petit peu les arts de la scène, le théâtre, mais assez peu la littérature, assez peu, en tout cas ce n'a pas été très étudié. Donc déjà dire « néojaponiste », ça veut dire quoi, ça veut dire que les écrivains qui parlent du Japon dans leurs vies sont tributaires ou héritiers d'une tradition qui, elle, était plus centrée sur les arts visuels, notamment la peinture. Dans ce cas-là, pourquoi les

appeler « néojaponistes », parce que les écrivains et les artistes, ils étaient plutôt peintres, tu vois. Ça, c'est la première chose.

Deuxième chose, ce qu'on ne dit pas assez, sur ce qu'on appelait « le japonisme », sur ce qu'on appelle toujours « le japonisme » aujourd'hui—on le présente toujours comme un courant esthétique. Et c'est vrai. C'est un courant esthétique très fort et européen en plus, pas seulement français. Mais ce qu'on dit rarement c'est que c'était (soutenu) aussi par des échanges économiques très forts. La découverte des estampes, c'est une technique très particulière, très spécifique, qui fait que tu peux reproduire une image des dizaines et des centaines de fois. Et évidemment, pour les marchands de l'époque, c'était génial parce que tu te procurais des estampes à un prix relativement modique—ce n'était pas très cher au Japon—et ça se revendait dans tout l'Europe à des prix beaucoup plus hauts. Donc il y avait aussi un aspect économique qu'on oublie, ou qu'on méconnait un petit peu aujourd'hui dans ce qu'on appelle « le japonisme ». Mais pour moi, aujourd'hui, appeler les gens qui écrivent à partir du Japon, sur le Japon, avec le Japon, des « néojaponistes » ou des « post-japonistes », ça n'a pour moi pas grand sens, surtout que souvent c'est-à-dire pas expliciter pourquoi est-ce qu'on les appelle comme ça, pourquoi ? Parce qu'ils s'intéressent au Japon ? Ce n'est pas la même ampleur. Et puis surtout les gens qui écrivent sur le Japon aujourd'hui sont complètement différents. Complètement. Ah non ! On ne peut pas comparer, on ne peut pas les regrouper dans une catégorie, et surtout pas celle du « japonisme ». À mon avis, c'est vraiment la paresse de la pensée, d'appeler les gens qui travaillent avec le Japon aujourd'hui le japonisme. Néo-, poste- ou japonisme qui n'en finit pas, japonisme qui s'ignore, ou japonisme sans le savoir. Ça, non, vraiment, il y a quelque chose qui est un peu paresseux là que je trouve que ça n'éclaire pas, ça n'apporte rien de dire « néojaponisant » ou « néojaponisme ». Rien que pour les auteurs de la langue française—mais on ne fait pas du tout la même chose.

Et d'ailleurs, on n'a pas du tout les mêmes parcours. Tu prends quelqu'un comme Philippe Forest—j'aime beaucoup ce qu'il fait—mais on ne fait pas du tout la même chose, ça c'est évident. Et ça serait pareil avec Gérard Macé. On va prendre quelqu'un d'autre : Amélie Nothomb. Est-ce qu'Amélie Nothomb est d'un japonisme ? Et quel est le point commun dans ce que fait Amélie Nothomb et moi ? Ou ce que fait Nothomb et ce que fait Gérard Macé ? À mon avis, ce n'est pas parce qu'il y a des écrivains qui écrivent en se servant ou en s'inspirant du Japon, qu'il faut tous les mettre dans le même sac. Soit on le laisse tomber, soit on le redéfinit complètement, parce qu'on le cadre un petit peu, dans une analyse critique il faut quand même savoir comment utiliser les mots.

Moi, je proposerais plutôt de jouer sur les prépositions. Il y a des gens qui écrivent *sur* le Japon. *Sur*, dans une espèce de position surplombante, alors ça peut être très bien. Il y a des scientifiques qui font une certaine forme de japonologie. Puis il y a les gens qui font *sur* le Japon avec l'espèce de captation comme ça : Je vais vous parler du Japon. Je vais vous apprendre ce que c'est que le Japon. Il y en a qui pensent avoir saisi l'essence du Japon, tu vois. Ça me fait rigoler. Dans *Tokyo : Petits portraits de l'aube*, je commence avec une citation de (Osamu) Dazaï. Alors là, je n'ai pas changé d'avis du tout : Dazaï qui dit « Je ne suis spécialiste de rien. Ma spécialité c'est la rencontre, le cœur à cœur. » Voilà. Et je suis tout à fait d'accord avec ça. Moi, c'est ça qui m'intéresse, pas de prodiguer un savoir de spécialiste que je ne suis pas d'ailleurs sur le Japon. Donc écrire *sur* le Japon, non. Écrire *du* Japon, *à partir du* Japon, ça, oui,

d'une certaine manière. Si j'ai une spécificité dans cet ensemble de gens qui écrivent et qui ont le Japon en partage, si j'ai une spécificité, c'est que j'y vis depuis très longtemps, évidemment, donc il y a une imprégnation.

Après, il y a écrire *avec* le Japon, c'est autre chose, écrire en utilisant le Japon. Mais encore une fois on choisit. Parce que dans la littérature japonaise il y a tellement de choses. Ça ne se réduit ni à l'affaire du fragment, ni même à la langue, même si je pense qu'il vaut mieux quand même savoir la langue pour entrer dans ce pays, mais c'est pas le seul moyen. Donc, voilà, il y a tout un tas de gens que le Japon attire, mais qui finalement ne l'utilise pas du tout de la même manière.

HH : Revenons à Sei Shonagon, cette écrivaine japonaise de l'époque de Heian qui inspire beaucoup d'écrivains français. Peux-tu parler de son statut en France et au Japon ?

MF : Sei Shonagon au Japon, ça fait partie des fondamentaux. Après, c'est vrai que la France l'a beaucoup utilisée. Sei Shonagon, si mes souvenirs sont exacts, les premières traductions partielles, c'est dans 1928. Claudel parle déjà de Sei Shonagon, alors que ce n'est pas encore traduit complètement. Il l'a lu en traduction déjà de cette époque. Quand les premières traductions paraissent en France, ça a tout de suite eu du succès. Très tôt, finalement. Pas par rapport à elle. Elle, ça fait longtemps qu'elle avait écrit *Les Notes de l'oreiller* (*Notes de chevet*). Mais une fois que c'est traduit en français, c'est présenté en tout cas en publiques lettrées, en publiques cultivées. Ça a tout de suite eu un impact. Et donc, à ce moment-là, je crois que c'est en 1928, dans un numéro de la *Nouvelle revue française*, il y a dans le compte-rendu de livres un compte-rendu sur Sei Shonagon, et Claudel en parle. Et ensuite, assez après la guerre, je vois deux grands écrivains qui l'utilisent très fort, c'est Pascal Quignard et Georges Perec. Bien sur, ça a eu une importance, et aujourd'hui je pense qu'il a quand même beaucoup d'importance pour certains dans la littérature française. Est-ce que c'est plus qu'au Japon ? Alors ça, je ne sais pas sur quels critères on pouvait décider ça. Le nombre de lecteurs, mais alors comment calculer le nombre de lecteurs sur quelque terre.

HH : Mais elle est bien connue au Japon ?

MF : Oui, tout le monde la connaît et très peu la lisent. C'est quasiment la définition d'un classique.

HH : Y a-t-il une tradition littéraire japonaise du récit de voyage, des écrivains japonais qui écrivent sur les pays où ils ne parlent pas la langue ?

MF : Il y a une tradition de récit de voyage *au Japon*. Des Japonais dans le Japon. Et alors à l'étranger, oui, il y en a. Qui est-ce qu'on peut citer ? Alors la chose qui est intéressante est qu'il y a quand même et depuis assez longtemps, les Japonais qui voyagent en France, qui écrivent sur la France, en français. Ça c'est extraordinaire. Akira Mizubayashi, c'est assez récent. Avant lui, il y a eu des choses qui ne sont pas traduites. Il y en a qui ont écrit en français, il y en a qui ont écrit en japonais mais qui ne sont pas traduits en français. Mais la spécificité je trouve, c'est que ces auteurs, il leur est arrivé d'écrire en français. Ça c'est étonnant. C'est extraordinaire. Parce que l'inverse n'est pas vrai. C'est-à-dire il y a très peu, voire pas d'écrivains français qui écrivent en japonais. Il y a un qui est devant toi mais qui a peur. Moi j'écris un peu en japonais mais…

J'essayerai de publier un jour, mais pour l'instant, non. Alors que, là il y a une dissymétrie. Moi, je crois beaucoup au fait que les relations culturelles sont dissymétriques. C'est pas du tout une belle symétrie. Au contraire, tout ça est un peu désordonné, il n'y a pas de balance, un peu chaotique, et c'est très bien comme ça.

HH : Quels écrivains japonais lisais-tu avant de venir au Japon ?

MF : Avant de venir au Japon ? Alors avant de venir au Japon c'est très clair et très simple : rien. Ah non, vraiment. Moi, le Japon ne m'intéressait pas, pas plus que ça en tout cas. Je raconte souvent qu'en fait mon compacte avec le Japon avant de venir au Japon c'est que le Japon était au programme du baccalauréat en géographie quand je passais le bac. Tu vois, ça peut suffire à dégouter d'un pays pour la vie. Pourquoi, parce que tu apprends un pays avec les fiches, pour réviser le bac en plus. C'est économie, c'est géographie, pas la géographie que j'aime en plus. C'est ennuyeux. Et donc je crois que je n'avais jamais lu d'auteurs japonais. Si, j'avais dû lire, mais comme ça, en passant deux ou trois textes. Mais je n'avais pas accroché du tout. C'est en arrivant au Japon que j'avais affaire. Mais avant ça, non. Je ne croyais jamais que le Japon aurait une telle importance dans ma vie.

HH : Et maintenant, quels écrivains japonais est-ce que tu lis ? Et est-ce que tu lis plutôt en japonais ?

MF : Ça dépend. Je lis quand même beaucoup plus vite en français, évidemment. Et puis, il faut dire aussi qu'il y a une partie de la langue japonaise que je ne maîtrise pas. Il y a une partie de la langue japonaise qui est très difficile à apprendre, même quand tu connais le japonais modern. Il y a le japonais ancien, de Sei Shonagon. J'ai même retraduit la première phrase. Je me suis amusé à la retraduire. Mais c'est vraiment à la fois un exercice linguistique et un jeu. Mais s'il fallait le dire, tout le *Genji no monogatari*, tout le Sei Shonagon, dans la langue d'origine, non. Ça prend trop de temps. Et même des auteurs après. Le tournant c'est un peu Soseki, qui est un auteur difficile aussi. Même Mishima est très difficile. L'utilisation des kanji—Mishima, c'est presque du chinois parfois.

Mais pour répondre à ta question, il y a beaucoup d'écrivains japonais que je lis. J'essaie de me protéger un peu parce qu'ils peuvent te parasiter assez rapidement, comme tous les grands écrivains. Mais pour te donner des exemples : Soseki, mais alors plutôt le Soseki de la fin, celui de *Le mineur*. Il y a un aspect presque de Kafka chez lui à la fin de ce livre. Mishima, beaucoup. Mishima, pas pour les mêmes raisons que Soseki. Mishima, il y a un musée Mishima. Sa maison a été transformée en musée. Et à un moment donné je vois des manuscrits, et j'ai été sidéré vraiment par le manuscrit de Mishima. Il y a une espèce de précision, une espèce de minutie dans la façon qu'il prépare ses livres qui est incroyable. Pour décrire une pièce, il va te faire tout le plan de la maison sur le manuscrit, tout ça pour une pièce qui va apparaître peut-être dans une demi page, en passant, comme ça. Après, il y a des auteurs que j'aime beaucoup, comme Kaikô Takeshi, comme Nosaka, les auteurs un peu de la verve. Kaikô Takeshi, c'est un écrivain d'Osaka, de Kansai. Lui, il est très loin de l'image d'une certaine Japon, de la littérature japonaise qu'on a en France, qui est une image très élégante, très distillée—qui existe, mais qui n'est pas la seule. Moi, j'aime bien aller de temps en temps vers ces gens-là qui font un Japon beaucoup plus cru, beaucoup plus violent. Nosaka, c'est pareil, un Japon un peu plus pervers, un

peu plus ludique. Évidemment, c'est très impressionnant, le raffinement japonais est très impressionnant, mais il y a beaucoup d'autres choses qui peuvent former, forger un écrivain. Donc voilà, ça dépend des moments aussi, ça dépend de ce que je suis en train d'écrire.

HH : Peux-tu parler un peu de ton propre apprentissage de la langue japonaise ?

MF : Oui, alors, apprentissage tardif, d'abord. Puisqu'avant de venir au Japon, je ne parlais pas japonais, et même quand je suis arrivé au Japon, au début je m'y suis pas mis tout de suite, pour plusieurs raisons. D'abord, à un moment donné, j'étais en service militaire, donc je pensais que j'allais rester un an et demi, seize mois, et je me suis dit, bon, pour seize mois je peux parler un petit peu comme ça, mais si tu veux vraiment t'y mettre, si tu pars après, il y a un investissement en temps. Et puis, j'avais, il faut le dire, c'est ça la raison principale, j'avais une thèse à finir. Je n'avais pas fini ma thèse sur Céline, donc j'étais dans une espèce d'écartèlement entre d'un côté un écrivain qui s'appelle Louis-Ferdinand Céline, dont le moins qu'on puisse dire, c'est qu'il n'était pas très branché sur le Japon, sur un sujet en plus, la chanson, qui fait appel à des références culturelles très françaises. Et je me retrouvais à écrire ça au Japon. Du coup, l'écart était maximum, par l'écrivain et par le sujet. Céline et la chanson chez Céline. Il y a eu un an et demi comme ça, quand j'étais à Kyoto. Je baragouinais un petit peu, mais je n'ai pas fait beaucoup d'efforts. Et puis je ne voulais pas trop intellectualiser ce rapport au pays. Donc il y a plein de facteurs. Ça, de 1992 à 1994.

À partir de 1994, je bosse à Tokyo. Là, quand même, je suis très sérieux, linguistiquement. J'apprends, petit à petit, je commence à travailler à la télévision, à un certain moment à l'université. À l'université on travaillait en français, mais à la télévision, on travaillait aussi en japonais. Du coup je découvrais une autre partie du monde japonais et le monde du travail, de l'entreprise presque. Et après, une fois que je me suis débarrassé de ma thèse, 1998, dix ans après l'arrivée, ça s'est fait très progressivement. Mais je suis content que ça se soit fait comme ça. Je me suis imprégné progressivement. Et après, en 1998, c'est la grammaire, le kanji, c'était parti.

Mais je suis toujours en train de l'apprendre, cette langue. Je suis loin d'en avoir fini avec le japonais, très très loin. D'ailleurs, je ne suis pas sûr si on finit un jour avec le japonais en particulier ou avec une langue en générale. Et ce qui et certain, c'est qu'à l'avenir, si Dieu me prête vie, je vais nouer de plus en plus la pratique de l'écriture à la langue japonaise. J'ai depuis très longtemps un livre qui s'écrit lentement, mais qui s'écrit, en japonais. J'en ai un autre livre qui s'écrit aussi lentement, mais qui s'écrit, sur le kanji. J'ai plusieurs titres comme ça en tête, un qui s'imposerait un jour, mais qui sera sur le kanji. Mais je pense ça va porter ses fruits très tard. La langue japonaise, c'est un peu comme une bombe à retardement. Je sais qu'elle est là, et je sais aussi qu'elle va, comme un tsunami ou comme un tremblement de terre, elle va finir par remonter à la surface à un moment donné. Ça c'est certain. Mais je laisse les choses se faire progressivement.

HH : Est-ce que tu as toujours écrit les romans ? Qu'est-ce qui t'as poussé à écrire la fiction ?

MF : Parce que c'est beaucoup plus intéressant. Moi, j'écris des critiques, voilà, les livres critiques, les articles, les textes de critique littéraire ou de critique d'art. Ce sera arrogant de dire que je les écris facilement, mais il y a un peu de ça. J'écris assez facilement ce genre de texte.

J'espère que ce n'est pas trop mauvais pour autant. En revanche, dès que je me trouve sur un texte de fiction ou un récit, ou de la poésie, ou… Bref, là tu mets en jeu quelque chose qui est beaucoup plus profond, je trouve. Les textes de critique littéraire, c'est un peu de la manipulation. Tu peux aller très loin, et ça peut être très intéressant, ça peut être ludique et très intéressant intellectuellement, conceptuellement.

Mais la fiction, le roman, tu engages des choses de l'intérieur, du plus profond. Tu mets ta peau sur la table, comme disait Céline. Céline disait ça, il avait raison. Et c'est pour ça, d'ailleurs, que les écrivains détestent qu'on les critique. Évidemment, parce qu'ils ont mis quelque chose—et ça peut être ratée—mais ils ont pris un risque. Il y a une prise de risque dans l'écriture, dans ce que j'appelle l'écriture, qui n'est pas l'écriture universitaire académique. Je ne méprise pas l'écriture universitaire académique. D'ailleurs, j'en fais moi-même, tu vois. Je ne la méprise pas, mais il faut savoir la remettre à sa place. Ce n'est rien, quoi. Ce n'est pas grande chose. Un roman, c'est quelque chose. Ça tremble, ça vibre, ça touche à des choses terrifiantes, ou très drôles, ou très cocasses, grotesques, mais ça touche à quelque chose de l'ordre—oui de la peur, de la jouissance—ce qui ne fait pas, ou alors très rarement le texte critique.

HH : Donc tu ne mets pas ta peau sur la table pour écrire un article critique.

MF : Mais non, parce qu'il n'y a pas besoin. Au contraire, ça serait contreproductif d'une certaine manière. Un article critique, ça vise à comprendre comment le type il l'a fait et à l'expliquer et à l'éclairer de cette manière-là. Ça ne vise pas à reproduire le geste de l'artiste. Sinon, c'est une catastrophe. Les gens qui écrivent sur Céline de la critique littéraire et qui écrivent à la manière de Céline, souvent c'est très mauvais. Ce n'est pas ça qu'on demande à un critique. Un critique n'est pas fait pour refaire ou essayer de refaire péniblement ce que l'artiste, lui, a réussi magnifiquement.

HH : Il me semble que tu es un des meilleurs critiques de ton propre œuvre. Que peut-on ajouter ?

MF : Ah, mais je n'ai rien dit, moi. Je n'ai absolument rien dit sur mon œuvre. Si, j'ai dit deux ou trois trucs, mais ça peut être d'ailleurs des fausses pistes. « Je suis un écrivain japonais, *zuihitsu* », je pense que c'est profondément vrai. Ce n'est pas moi qui a trouvé ça, c'est une copine japonaise, c'est elle qui m'a dit ça : « C'est du *zuihitsu* que tu fais en fait. » Elle me dit : « Ce n'est pas du *zuihitsu* à la japonaise, mais en fait tout ça c'est une espèce hybride. » Elle a complètement raison, mais elle m'avait donné le truc. Il n'y a pas que ça. Il y a même une espèce de fausse piste là-dedans. Donc, non, j'ai dit des choses, mais d'abord on m'a forcé de les dire. On m'a demandé de les dire. Je l'ai fait, j'ai accepté. Mais, je pense qu'il y a une tache aveugle. Un écrivain n'est pas le mieux placé pour parler de ce qu'il fait. Heureusement, dieu merci.

C'est comme si tu demandes à un footballeur ou à un tennisman de commenter ce qu'il est en train de faire. Un tennisman, par exemple—on est juste après Roland Garros—tu vois, un grand tennisman, comme Djokovic ou McEnroe avant, ces grands champions-là, on ne leur demande pas de commenter quand ils montent au filet en même temps ce qu'ils sont en train de faire. Et on ne demande pas non plus après de l'expliquer. Non, il monte au filet parce que tout en lui est fait pour aller au filet. Voilà. Pour McEnroe en tout cas. Pour d'autres, ça serait le fond du court.

Et donc un écrivain, il n'est pas forcément le mieux placé pour commenter son œuvre. Il peut le faire. Il peut même apporter les éléments intéressants, mais méfiance. Il y a des tas d'écrivains comme ça. Quignard est très bien comme ça, il commente très bien son œuvre. Et ce qu'il en dit nous aide beaucoup à le lire. Est-ce que c'est l'essentiel, je ne sais pas. Antoine Volodine, il a construit quasiment toute sa théorie de sa propre œuvre. C'est très pratique. Les professeurs d'université sont très contents. Ils reprennent ça, ils ont un kit d'interprétation. C'est « ready-made », mais alors pour Volodine, je ne suis pas certain que ça explique—fin, je suis certain que ça n'explique pas tout—de ses qualités, de la valeur de ce qu'il écrit. Donc, tu vois, un écrivain, ça peut aussi donner des fausses pistes. Il faut faire gaffe, fait attention.

HH : Tu as tendance à chevaucher les genres littéraires et les disciplines dans tes œuvres. Par exemple, *Fukushima : récit d'un désastre* est à la fois un texte littéraire, critique, sociologique, anthropologique. Que peut faire la littérature qui est unique à elle ?

MF : Tu veux dire par rapport à des disciplines comme l'anthropologie, la sociologie ?

HH : Oui.

MF : Céline, il disait que l'écrivain, c'est le raté de tous les arts. C'est pas mal comme définition. « Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un écrivain ? » Ça descend un peu les écrivains de leur piédestal. Mais il avait raison, Céline. Moi, par exemple, je faisais beaucoup de musique quand j'étais enfant. J'adore la musique. Et vraiment j'aimerais être musicien professionnel. J'aime beaucoup l'architecture. J'aimerais être capable de penser un bâtiment, de tracer des plans sur un bâtiment. J'aime beaucoup le dessin—plus que la peinture encore. Donc, voilà, je suis un raté de tous les arts. Le papier, ce qu'on appelle la littérature, c'est facile. Matériellement, c'est simple : stylo, papier, un endroit pour écrire, une table, ou même un genou, ou même par terre. Et ça y est, c'est parti.

Mais j'aime bien cette idée qu'on récupère les restes. C'est les rebuts. La littérature, c'est une parole. C'est rien, et en même temps c'est essentiel. Parce que tu choppes dans ce rien-là, tu choppes des trucs qui sont complètement hors discours, justement, qui sont hors control. Alors que toutes les autres disciplines remettent du control, de la maitrise, pour produire un résultat. La littérature, non. Ce que j'appelle la littérature, ce n'est pas ça.

Par exemple, je n'ai pas écrit *Fukushima : récit d'un désastre* pour lutter contre le nucléaire. En revanche, et je crois que c'est parce que *Fukushima : récit d'un désastre* n'a pas été écrit pour lutter contre le nucléaire explicitement comme ça, lourdement, je pense que c'est exactement pour cette raison-là qu'on peut très bien se servir de ce livre comme une arme implacable contre le nucléaire. Alors que si j'avais essayé de faire une espèce de truc où, tiens, je vais te faire une leçon, ça ne marche pas. Parce que tu sens tout de suite quelqu'un qui fait la leçon, c'est quelqu'un qui a un intérêt à faire, et donc tu dis : « Mais pourquoi tu dis ça » ou « Ah oui, vous voulez reprendre le control des autres manières. » Alors qu'un vrai écrivain, ce n'est pas ça, c'est quelqu'un qui lâche les choses, et après chacun se débrouille avec ça, y compris lui-même.

HH : Quel est la réception de *Fukushima : récit d'un désastre* en France et au Japon ? Il a été traduit en japonais ?

MF : Oui, c'est traduit en japonais. Alors en France, je connais parce que j'ai pas mal voyagé grâce à ce livre. Après, au Japon, c'est un peu spécial parce que d'abord, il y a beaucoup de livres sur Fukushima au Japon et pas beaucoup de livres comme celui-là. Ce livre-là est même unique, je trouve. Mais, il y a une marée de livres sur Fukushima au Japon depuis 2011. Donc du coup, la réception, elle a été bonne. Mais le livre n'a pas eu cet écho, cette ampleur qu'il a eu en France notamment. Ça c'est certain. Les livres ça met du temps parfois à voyager, y compris quand c'est traduit. Donc, on verra. Rendez-vous dans dix ans. Et en plus, Fukushima, ça va durer très longtemps, donc il a tout à fait le temps, ce livre, de trouver sa place ou ses lecteurs.

HH : Qu'en penses-tu de la traduction japonaise ?

MF : J'ai bossé avec ma traductrice—je l'ai laissé de le faire, parce qu'il n'y a rien de pire, je trouve, pour un traducteur, de se faire emmerder par l'auteur sous le prétexte que lui, il connaît un peu de japonais donc il va, « Non, mais là c'est pas bien. » Mais, elle, elle est très compétente, et elle voulait avoir mon regard, mon retour, donc je l'ai fait avec plaisir. On a corrigé deux ou trois choses. Mais bon, j'ai quand même la laissé faire parce que traducteur, c'est un métier très ingrat, très difficile, donc il faut respecter le travail du traducteur. Soit je le traduis moi-même, ce qui m'aurait pris beaucoup plus de temps—et je l'aurais en plus fait beaucoup moins bien—soit je la laisse faire, et après si on demande, elle m'a posé des questions sur tel ou tel passage, et là, je pouvais l'aider un peu.

HH : Y a-t-il une traduction anglaise prévue ?

MF : Alors, il y a une traduction anglaise prévue, mais ça va se décider en septembre [2016]. Tu sais que dans ton beau pays les Etats-Unis d'Amérique, vous ne traduisez pas énormément, voilà. Mais là aussi, je te fais la même réponse que précédemment, c'est que : c'est important les traductions, c'est très important, mais on a le temps. Ça viendra quand ça viendra. Il y a une traduction en allemand qui est en discussion aussi. L'anglais, évidemment, c'est important, parce que du coup, là, tu touches énormément de gens. Mais bon, par exemple, tu vois il est en train d'être traduit en tamoul, donc ça touche aussi beaucoup de gens. L'Inde, il y a quand même du monde. Mais c'est vrai que l'anglais, stratégiquement, c'est important pour permettre un livre de circuler, de diffuser. Après, bon, on verra.

HH : Comment traduire ces passages qui sont—je pense à des passages dans *Mémoires d'outre-mer*, mais aussi dans *Fukushima*—plutôt visés à un public français, même des phrases comme : « Vous, les Français, vous connaissez la chanson. »

MF : Je ne vise pas un public français, mais il est clair que j'écris dans une langue qui est la langue française, et en plus dans un certain contexte. Donc je crois que je suis très difficile de traduire. Je suis sûr, parce que j'ai discuté avec des amis japonais ou américains, et je sais que c'est difficile à traduire. Il y a beaucoup de jeux de mots dans ma langue. Il y a des choses qu'on ne voit pas au premier abord. Une phrase qui est faite comme ça, et en fait elle a un deuxième sens ou un troisième sens. Il y a aussi des jeux oulipiens. Il y a des textes qui sont un peu

oulipiens, où il y a des contraints, il y a des secrets. C'est pour ça que je disais que le texte là « Je suis un écrivain japonais », ça ne dit pas tout, loin de là. Ça cache même certaines choses. Donc tout ça c'est très difficile à traduire. J'ai bien vu quand j'ai travaillé avec ma traductrice sur *Fukushima : récit d'un désastre.* Très difficile. Après, un traducteur, c'est un interprète. C'est comme dans le sens musical, c'est-à-dire il y a la partition, et il joue. Il peut jouer de manière très différente, selon sa sensibilité, selon ses connaissances. Et puis après ça peut être retraduit de manière très différente.

HH : Pourquoi penses-tu que les Français s'intéressent à la catastrophe nucléaire au Japon ?

MF : Mais je trouve surtout qu'ils ne s'y intéressent pas du tout !

HH : Par rapport aux Américains, par exemple. On voit, par exemple, plus de Français qui vont au Japon pour documenter la catastrophe.

MF : Ah oui, il y a une raison qui paraît évidente quand même, c'est que la France est le pays le plus nucléarisé du monde. Par rapport à la superficie de son territoire. Aux Etats-Unis, vous avez plus de centrales nucléaires que nous, mais sur un territoire qui est beaucoup beaucoup beaucoup plus grand. En France, on est quand même truffé. C'est un pays qui est truffé de centrales nucléaires, et qui non seulement est truffé de centrales nucléaires géographiquement, spatialement, c'est là. En plus, historiquement, c'est très important aussi, puisque ça fonde l'indépendance soi-disant française, militairement. Donc géographiquement, spatialement, c'est très important. Historiquement, c'est fondamental. Je me souviens, juste après Fukushima, j'avais vu l'ambassadeur de France qui me disait « Mais le nucléaire, ça fait quasiment partie de l'identité française. » Qu'est-ce qu'on a qui est connu universellement, la France ? Il y a la gastronomie, il y a la langue, la francophonie, et puis il y a le nucléaire. C'est un des piliers.

Et puis, économiquement, ça joue un grand rôle : l'électricité, l'énergie, le renouvèlement. On a fait cette erreur en France de mettre tous nos œufs dans le même panier. C'est pour ça qu'on est très embêté. On parle de transition énergétique, mais c'est très lent, la transition. Pour toutes ces raisons-là : historique, géographique, spatiale, culturelle, économique et financière. Et je trouve que c'est assez récent, et ce n'est pas assez développée, cette attention au nucléaire. Tu dis, « Pourquoi vous vous intéressez au nucléaire ? » Non, on n'est pas assez intéressés au nucléaire. On devrait y être beaucoup plus étant donné toutes ces raisons. Beaucoup plus. Moi, des fois je suis un peu désespéré. J'ai bien peur qu'il faille un accident majeur en France. Majeur ou mineur, d'ailleurs, un incident un peu grave pour resservir de déclic.

HH : Même Tchernobyl—la France était beaucoup plus touchée par cet accident que les Etats-Unis, par exemple, l'étaient par Three Mile Island, qui finalement n'était pas aussi grave.

MF : J'étais surpris la dernière fois quand j'étais dans ton cours, qu'en fait les étudiants ne connaissent pas Three Mile Island.

HH : C'est vrai, personne n'en parle.

Dans *Fukushima* tu évoques cette expression japonaise « shuhi gimu » quand tu parles à ton ancien étudiant et quand tu cherches des gens de la région pour parler de Fukushima. En tant qu'étranger, es-tu d'une certaine manière exclu, un peu comme un confiant à l'extérieur ?

MF : Alors, pas du tout. Non. J'entends très souvent ça. C'est une espèce de stéréotype sur le Japon que je trouve faux. Le fait de dire, « Ah, mais de toute façon, t'es étranger, tu seras toujours étranger ». Bon, oui, bien sûr, c'est un truisme, c'est une évidence. Mais que ça veuille dire que tu n'auras jamais accès à certaines choses de la culture japonaise, c'est archi-faux. Ça, je n'y crois pas un second. Et je dirais même des fois au contraire. Des fois, au contraire. Pas tout le temps. Des fois il y a des gens : « Bah, de toute façon, lui, il est étranger, donc ça ne le regarde pas. Ou deux, il ne peut pas comprendre. Trois, il ne parle pas la langue. Ou quatre, il parle mal. Ou cinq, même s'il parle bien, de toute façon il ne peut pas comprendre. » Bon, d'accord.

Mais, il y a aussi beaucoup de fois où c'est exactement l'envers. C'est-à-dire que, tout comme tu peux des fois parler à quelqu'un beaucoup plus librement que justement parce qu'il n'est pas de—c'est le principe de la psychanalyse. La psychanalyse, tu te livres à quelqu'un parce que justement il n'a rien à voir avec tout ça, ou tu crois qu'il n'a rien à voir. Et donc la distance permet aussi de… tu peux avoir un accès par la proximité, mais tu peux aussi avoir un accès par la distance, par l'indirect. Tu peux être très loin de quelque chose et au contraire le voir beaucoup mieux. Quand tu es très proche de quelque chose, tu as un effet de myopie : tu ne comprends plus ce que tu vois parce que tu es trop près. Donc être loin, ou être un étranger, ça peut être une condition d'accès, une manière d'entrer dans des informations, dans un pays. À moi, on pouvait dire des choses qu'on ne disait pas à un journaliste japonais, par exemple, ou qu'on ne disait pas à un Japonais qui travaillait pour telle ou telle société. Et moi, j'arrivais parce que j'étais l'étranger, pour les tas de raisons. Mais le fait d'être étranger n'était pas une barrière non plus. Ça peut l'être quelquefois, mais pas tout le temps.

HH : Donc d'une certaine manière, tu étais exclu de ce concept de « shuhi gimu »

MF : Oui, mais je ne suis pas le seul d'être exclu. J'étais exclu à ce moment-là, mais ça peut être des Japonais, ils peuvent en être indemnes.

Là, je viens de relire, dans le livre c'est « bien établi dans certains milieux professionnels ». Mais là quand je parle de « shuhi gimu », je parle de milieux professionnels japonais. Le nucléaire français, c'est pareil. Il y a une structure de secret, de l'opacité qui est tout à fait pareil. D'abord parce que c'est lié au militaire, premièrement. Deuxièmement, il y a des enjeux financiers colossaux. Donc ce n'est pas parce que tu es un étranger qu'ils vont pas t'en parler. C'est parce qu'ils n'en parlent à très peu de monde en fait.

HH : Étais-tu anti-nucléaire avant Fukushima, ou ton opinion du nucléaire a-t-elle évoluée au cours de tes recherches, même après le livre ?

MF : Alors, avant Fukushima, j'étais contre le nucléaire, mais disant modérément. Je faisais quand même déjà cours avant Fukushima sur *Hiroshima mon amour* de Duras, j'avais fait deux ans de cours à l'université ici, à Chuo, sur Hiroshima. Donc, ça m'a travaillé déjà, ça m'intéressait déjà, disant que je l'avais pas senti dans ma chair, dans mon corps, dans ma vie. Ça

restait quelque chose d'intellectuelle. C'était un vrai intérêt puisque je faisais cours dessus quand même, mais assez lointain. Et là, c'est toute la différence avec quelque chose qui tourne d'un coup, qui te transperce. Et donc oui, là quelque chose qui était très loin, très enfouie, tout d'un coup est venue au premier plan, y compris dans la lutte politique. Après, je continue. Il y a ce livre qui va sortir. Il y en a un qui sortira l'année prochaine, toujours sur Fukushima. Et j'ai dans mon ordinateur là un livre qui s'appelle pour l'instant *Essais sur Fukushima*, qui ne gardera pas ce titre. Mais j'ai l'idée de faire un véritable livre de réflexion sur le nucléaire, puisqu'il n'y a pas de réflexions dignes de ce nom en France sur le nucléaire.

La réflexion « philosophique » sur le nucléaire, c'est plutôt les penseurs de langue allemande : Günther Anders, par exemple. C'était très peu fait en France. La France a quand même eu au 20e siècle les penseurs d'une dimension incroyable : Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Bourdieu. On a du lourd, comme on dit. Ce sont des gens qui ont quand même pensé, qui ont changé l'histoire de la pensée. Et quand tu regardes sur l'histoire du nucléaire, il y a trois fois rien. Ça m'a marqué. Quand j'ai lu Bourdieu, par exemple, très peu de choses, une note en bas de page compare le nucléaire à l'industrie à la bulle immobilière. Bon, quand une bulle immobilière éclate, ça fait des dégâts, ça peut être très grave. Mais ce n'est pas la même chose que quand une centrale nucléaire explose, évidemment.

Donc ça, c'est quelque chose qui m'intéresse, qui me tourmente même. Pourquoi ? Pourquoi ce truc qui est quand même énorme n'a pas été pensé, ou très peu, et très mal, pendant quasiment un demi-siècle, plus d'un demi-siècle. Alors qu'on savait. On avait eu Hiroshima et Nagasaki. On le savait. Sartre écrit un texte fantastique juste après l'explosion de Hiroshima dans *Les lettres modernes*. Un texte très beau. Et après, plus rien ! *Réflexions sur la question juive*, tout ça, très grand texte, mais le nucléaire disparaît. Deleuze, pareil. Alors qu'il y avait Guattari, qui était là, qui était penseur de l'écologie. Très étrange, cette espèce d'éclipse du nucléaire, comme s'il y avait quelque chose-là qui était tellement énorme, quasi-impossible, mais qui va nous falloir penser maintenant de plus en plus.

HH : Tu ne penses pas que ce soit en fonction de la politique de la publication en France ?

MF : Je ne pense pas parce que, surtout dans les années 60 où on publiait beaucoup plus qu'aujourd'hui en sciences humaines, en philosophie, en sociologie, les essais, ça marchait bien, et puis c'était des gros chiffres de vente. Ça pouvait toucher un large public. Donc je ne pense pas qu'il y ait de censure sur ce type de publication. Je pense, eh ! Peut-être je me trompais, mais je crois que c'est ça. Il y a une censure, évidemment, mais qui est une espèce de censure tellement forte et tellement souterraine. Et bon, est-ce qu'un type comme Foucault était quand même assez peu sensible à la censure ? Au contraire. Donc, non, ce n'est pas ça qui explique ça. Je ne pense pas. C'est quoi ? Mais c'est ça que j'essaie de démêler, que je vais essayer de démêler dans les années à venir avec ce livre, si je le finis. Mais je vais essayer quand même de le finir.

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