

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### *Contexts for a Half-Century of Remembering*

This book examines postwar German and Japanese narratives that serve as “counter-memories” to the officially sanctioned versions of World War II. In his *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Michel Foucault posits a so-called effective history, composed of counter-memories, as a necessary opposition to traditional history. Foucault claims that:

The traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and for retracing the past as a patient and continuous development must be systematically dismantled. . . . “Effective” history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature . . . [and instead] deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations. An event, consequently, is . . . the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked “other.” (153–54)

The Japanese and German works of fiction that I will discuss fulfill roughly equivalent roles as contributions to “counter-memory” or “effective history” for the two cultures. Postwar authors who have been repeatedly rewriting the recent past do not pretend to present an objective and unified vision of

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history, but rather, in seeking the “most acute manifestations” of experience, emphasize the subjectivity and the selective nature of any record of events. Ōe Kenzaburō, for example, in praising Günter Grass’s *The Tin Drum*, sees the need for literature “to express the period through individual voices” (Nemoto, *WLT*, 305). Such writing seeks a liberation of the reader from a dogmatic perspective on, or blindness toward, the legacies of World War II, aiming instead at provocation toward an active participation in history.

### Historical and Literary Contexts

In 1995, the end of the war a half-century earlier was commemorated in many ways—in public speeches and ceremonies, in written documents, in publications and media presentations about the war, and in countless private thoughts. Many participants and observers may have achieved a sense of closure for the postwar period. Yet, it might be argued that for Germany and Japan, in different ways, the postwar era ended in 1989, or at least passed a crucial threshold in that year. In Japan, Emperor Hirohito died on January 7, 1989, at the age of eighty-seven, without ever acknowledging responsibility for the war. In Germany, the Berlin Wall was dismantled on November 9, 1989, and the long dream of national reunification came true on October 3 of the following year. These historic moments in both 1989 and 1995 have given the Japanese and German people a chance to once more rethink their “uncompleted past,” in the fine phrase that forms the title of Judith Ryan’s book on the postwar German novel. However, each government also has tried to suppress a resurgence of disquieting wartime memories, urging instead a revised and more positive image of the past, or else asserting the notion that an entirely new era would begin. In Japan, at the emperor’s passing, then Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru expressed nothing but praise, saying that “the late monarch had always been devoted to ‘world peace and the happiness of the Japanese people’” (Awaya, 388), and declaring that “it was up to future historians to decide whether Japan was the aggressor in the war” (Weisman, 64); in Germany, the conservative newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* offered the optimistic assessment that “there has been a postwar era and literature . . . yet we are now standing at the starting point” of a new beginning (Grass and Ōe, “Doitsu,” 303).

During these assertions of renewal and commemorations of a (receding) past, uneasy writers and intellectuals were pointing out that the

disturbing events of the war years remained urgently present. On October 4, 1990 (one day after German reunification), for instance, the Japanese writer Ōe Kenzaburō, who later won the 1994 Nobel Prize for literature, and the German writer Günter Grass, both well-known political activists, held a public interview at the Frankfurt Book Fair to critique their governments' silencing of the overwhelming memories of the war and its aftermath.<sup>1</sup> According to Ōe, Japanese authorities saw the death of the emperor as an opportunity to put to rest the unpleasant reality of World War II<sup>2</sup>—an attitude that Ōe regarded as reflecting the idea of *misogi*, or the ritual cleansing that precedes a Shinto ceremony. As Ōe saw it, the government drew on the tradition of *misogi* when Akihito, the new emperor, “became a ‘god’ through the Shinto ritual of *ōnie no matsuri* or acquisition of divinity” (*Gunzō*, 1991, 314).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Grass commented that he refused to consider October 3, 1990, as another *Stunde Null* (zero point/hour) or new beginning. At the height of the German people's intoxication with reunification, he rejected the advent of a United Germany in which, he feared, the memory of the evils of the Nazi regime would be too easily erased. Blaming the West Germans for remaining indifferent to the economic problems faced by the East Germans and to the “eradication of their culture” (*Gunzō*, 1991, 307), Grass saw the shadow of the Third Reich in the new United Germany.

As the postwar half-century drew to a close, the concerns expressed by Ōe and Grass about cultural tendencies to gloss over past wrongdoing were paralleled by acts of hatred against minorities and foreigners, and by violence against critics who spoke out against the predominant policies or ideologies. In Japan, for example, a fanatical rightist attempted to assassinate Nagasaki's Catholic mayor, Motoshima Hitoshi, on January 18, 1990, about one year after the emperor's death. The motive for this attack was retaliation for the mayor's alleged criticism of the emperor. In the Nagasaki City Assembly, a Communist Party representative had asked the mayor his opinion on the question of the emperor's war guilt; Motoshima had responded, “I think that the emperor does bear responsibility for the war. However, by the will of the great majority of the Japanese people as well as of the Allied powers, he was released from having to take responsibility and became the symbol of the new Constitution” (Field, 178). This comment created a sensation throughout Japan, and Motoshima was threatened with death by several right-wing organizations. Though shot at in front of Nagasaki's City Hall, he escaped being killed.<sup>4</sup> On May 30, 1994, some four years after the Motoshima incident, another rightist

unsuccessfully attempted to kill Hosokawa Morihiro, who in 1993 became the first prime minister to officially admit that Japan had been the aggressor in the Pacific War. In the same month, reflecting the resurgence of Japanese antagonism toward foreigners, a former minister of justice, Nagano Shigeto, claimed that the "Rape of Nanking"—the mass murder in December 1937, in which at least 40,000 Chinese civilians were killed and many more Chinese women were raped or mutilated—had never occurred, but was a fabrication by Chinese opponents of Japan. Moreover, Japanese discrimination against other Asian peoples, especially Koreans, again rose to the surface, and the government continued to censor textbooks that acknowledged Japanese crimes in Asia.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, in the new Germany, neo-Nazi violence shocked the world. In 1992, there were "4,587 attacks on foreigners. Seventeen people were killed" (Buruma, *Wages*, 306). The worst violence of the year occurred in Mölln, a small town 30 miles east of Hamburg, where skinheads threw firebombs into houses in which Turkish families lived, killing three Turkish women and injuring nine others. Günter Grass, speaking to the huge crowd that attended their funerals, suggested "that the burnt-out shell of the old house should be left as a monument to remind, admonish and warn" (Becker, 33). There was more violence in 1993 and 1994, particularly against refugees and Turks.<sup>6</sup> In Rostock-Lichtenhage in the summer of 1993, for instance, over five hundred right-wing extremists repeatedly attacked a refugee hostel in Rostock-Lichtenhage. In Berlin in the autumn of 1994 a young man from Ghana was surrounded on a train by skinheads, stabbed, and shoved off the train (*Die Zeit*, 7 Oct.), and a man from Nigeria was thrown from his bicycle, robbed, and stabbed by skinheads. As Grass had predicted, the distortion of the past that accompanied reunification was encouraging the German people to again seek scapegoats for their problems. With the Rostock attacks: Grass angrily stated, the illusion that "a new chapter in our history" would begin in 1990 faded away, for instead "the past has tapped us on the shoulder" ("On Loss," 149). Even earlier, beginning in the mid-1980s, movements to recuperate the wartime era had arisen. The visit to the SS military cemetery in Bitburg that Chancellor Helmut Kohl and U.S. President Ronald Reagan made in May 1985, and the so-called *Historikerstreit* (historians' debate) of 1986, represented attempts to relativize the Nazi atrocities "by equating them with the sufferings of the Germans in the last phases of the war, or with the crimes of others (usually the U.S.S.R)" (Harms, 239).<sup>7</sup> The main tactic of the right-wing historian Ernst Nolte has been to promote a

revisionist historiography in which anti-Semitic genocide in the Third Reich is “regarded not primarily as an initiative taken for their own reasons by the Nazis, but as a partially understandable, although ultimately irrational, reaction to the Bolshevik threat” (Baldwin, 6–7).<sup>8</sup> The philosopher Jürgen Habermas challenged this view, insisting that the “right-wing historians were attempting to shrug off Germany’s burden of guilt for war crimes” (Riordan, 1–2). Former West German President Weizsäcker has also rejected the revisionists’ claim: “Auschwitz remains unique. It was perpetrated by Germans in the name of Germany. This truth is immutable and will not be forgotten” (43). Weizsäcker points to the memory of the Holocaust as an element of effective history, in Foucault’s sense, which in its acuteness will always defeat the efforts of Nolte and other revisionist historians to explain atrocity away.

In Japan, on August 15, 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the day of surrender, Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi offered “Japan’s first frank apology” for what the Japanese imperial army had done in Asia during the war (*New York Times*, 16 Aug. A3). Murayama read his statement, which had been approved at a Cabinet meeting on the morning of the fifteenth, to reporters at his official residence.<sup>9</sup>

Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war, only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and through its colonial rule and [invasion], caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of the Asian nations. I express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology (*owabi*). (*Yomiuri*, 16 Aug. 1995: 2)

In labeling the wartime national policy “mistaken,” Murayama’s statement acknowledged Japan’s responsibilities for the Pacific war and seemed to express an unambiguous official apology. Yet his position may not be fully unambiguous after all, for Murayama also stated that the Japanese government did not intend to offer compensation for individual victims, such as the Korean women who were compelled to provide sexual services to the Japanese army; he found it adequate that the government “had implemented state compensation through the San Francisco Peace Treaty, bilateral peace treaties, and other means.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, he strongly denied that the late emperor had any responsibility for the war, insisting that “even after the war was over, Hirohito was not questioned about any responsibility for it, neither here nor abroad. It is well known that he

prayed for world peace, made strong efforts to avoid the war, and then made the brave decision to end it" (*Yomiuri*, 16 Aug. 1995: 2). On the anniversary date of August 15, Emperor Akihito too made a speech at a ceremony for the war dead: "I renew my deep sorrow for the people who lost precious lives in the last great war and their survivors . . . I . . . express my deep mourning for those who died and suffered in the battlefield" (*NYT*, 16 Aug. 1995: A3). The emperor's focus was on regret, not responsibility, and the ambiguous (or *aimaina*, in Ōe's term) quality of his language allowed for the interpretation of the phrase "those who died and suffered" as referring only to the Japanese.

Five years after their Frankfurt interview, Ōe and Grass corresponded with each other, exchanging four letters in the summer of 1995. These letters again demonstrated their strong belief that the past must remain central to the present and the future, and that writers must continue to perform acts of remembrance—to provide what Foucault would call the necessary counter-memories of World War II. Grass recollects, for example, that approximately 20,000 deserters from Hitler's army were executed during the war: in various cities, wearing around their necks a board on which was written "I am a coward," they were hanged from the trees along streets that had been renamed for Adolf Hitler. Grass declares that those young soldiers, the soldiers of the so-called *Fahnenflucht* (the escape from the Nazi flag) who courageously said "No!" to the Nazis, were the true heroes of the nation and should have been remembered (*Gestern*, 46 and 61).

Those examples may suffice to represent the persistence—or the return—of earlier sociopolitical ideologies and to suggest that, throughout the postwar half-century, World War II constituted a heavy cultural burden for the Japanese and German people. This book is about the difficult task that many of the writers from these countries have faced since 1945, in defining their position toward their problematized and troubled national histories. Their works accept the need to recreate the suppressed memories of the past, and reject attempts to alter or erase the traces of painful events. The postwar dilemmas that both nations have faced in dealing with responsibility, guilt, and historical consciousness are expressed in many different forms. My interest lies in questions of narrative technique as they intersect with the overall development of narrative "after the war"—by which I mean, primarily, narrative in response to the war<sup>1</sup>—in these two countries that are linked by their shared experience of imperialism, defeat, and human-made catastrophe.



There are evident similarities in the situations of German and Japanese writers in the postwar period. Immediately after the war, writers in both defeated countries felt obligated to directly represent the horror just past. They became, as Ernestine Schlant puts it, a “public conscience” (21), believing that they spoke for the moral sense of society. Their experiences during the war led them to insist on the significance of a narrative record as a means of presenting the lessons to be learned from recent events. As the war itself receded, however, its literary traces tended to be expressed in a greater range of ways. This book concentrates on three overlapping stages of narrative perspective that are manifested in both Japanese and German postwar literature, though in some cases at slightly different times: the re-creation of immediacy, the achievement of a distanced but still national perspective, and the international expansion of range in time and place. No claim of a unitary or “patient and continuous development” of the type dismissed by Foucault (*Language*, 153) is being made here, for in neither country did these developments proceed easily, or in isolation from other trends, or on an uninterrupted timetable. As Günter Grass indicated, the ability to depict the wartime past from a detached point of view took him more than ten years to develop (Nemoto, *WLT*, 303). Many other Japanese and German writers also have been struggling to portray their history from multiple angles and in multiple voices.

The first developmental phase in both countries’ literary response after the war conveyed immediate anger, sorrow, and shock through autobiographical narratives written mostly from the victims’ perspective. In Japan, the so-called genre of *genbaku bungaku* (A-bomb literature) was born in the ruined cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where *hibakusha* (survivors of the A-bomb) recorded their ghastly experiences. This type of literature includes not only stories by *hibakusha* authors, whose mission as writers drove them to imaginatively recreate the hellish destruction that they themselves saw, but also preserves embedded excerpts of nonfictional documents, such as diaries or doctors’ records of the medical treatments they provided. The juxtaposition of fact and fiction is a special feature of this stage of A-bomb literature. Similarly, in Germany, the so-called coming home generation of writers vividly portrayed their miserable memories of the war and their harsh experiences on returning home. These German stories have been labeled *Trümmerliteratur* (literature of the rubble) due to their recurrent descriptions of cities in ruins. Because of censorship, Japan’s A-bomb literature was not published until the beginning of the 1950s, although some of it was written initially after the

bombing. It then further developed through the 1980s. Germany's literature of the rubble, however, appeared first around 1947 and was exhausted by the mid-1950s as Germany rebuilt itself and social problems emerged in other areas.

A second postwar phase among Japanese and German writers involved the search for a literature that could achieve a detached perspective, relying on techniques such as a multilayered narrative and a multiplot structure in order to create a response not of the visceral engagement encouraged by the earlier works, but of grotesque estrangement, incongruity, or ambiguity. Foucault's call for counter-memory or "effective history" to deal with "events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations" (*Language*, 154) seems especially apt here. As "makers of meaning through representation" (Hutcheon, *Politics*, 87), these authors employed Brechtian techniques of alienation or *Verfremdungseffekt* to distance the audience from the narration and thus make them regard it with critical eyes. The result was a more oblique and difficult literature requiring "two-track reading" (Ryan, *Legacies*, 193)—in other words, a literature that engaged its readers not as passive or empathetic consumers, but as active, yet questioning, participants. Beginning with publications in both countries in the mid-1950s, this type of narrative was at its peak in Germany by the end of the decade and reached its maturity in Japan later in the 1960s. These writings also show that the authors could distance themselves personally from the past. For example, Grass's masterpiece, *The Tin Drum*, written in Paris at the end of the 1950s, is complicated and indirect in its response to wartime issues. In Japan, Ibuse's *Black Rain*, though based on real diaries of Hiroshima survivors, appeared in 1966, more than twenty years after the bombing, and shows an awareness of the passage of time by intermingling the past of 1945 with a narrative present of 1950.

A third stage of Japanese and German postwar literature saw a further expansion of perspective in terms of both time and place. The literature of stylistic alienation or detachment, whose setting remained mostly within national boundaries, now became enlarged to incorporate new and broader dimensions as writers attempted to demonstrate that Hiroshima and Auschwitz were neither one-time events nor the problem of the participant nations alone, but instead belonged to all of humankind. In these more recent narratives, wartime history is no longer recreated from the relatively localized perspective of either victims or the guilty, but is interpreted from the perspective of the responsibility of each and every individual. The



recounting of events transcends the limitations of a Japanese or German context, as both past and present are seen through an increasingly international view. In Japanese literature, this expanded perspective began to appear in the late 1970s, as in Ōba's *Urashimasō* (1977); in German literature, this type was evident at the beginning of 1970s, as in Uwe Johnson's *Jahrestage: Aus dem Leben von Gesine Cresspahl* (1970–1983, *Anniversaries: From the Life of Gesine Cresspahl*). Readers of these narratives and of others like them, such as Oda Makoto's *HIROSHIMA* (1981) and Christa Wolf's *Kassandra: Erzählung* (1983, *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays*), are made to realize that history is a collection of subjective experiences that can be rewritten and reinterpreted from the perspective of a distant place, such as America or ancient Troy; or from the context of other kinds of narrative, such as folkloric archetypes; or from many different subjective sites. Readers are required to take part in historical events in relation to whatever their present situation may be. Their need to relate to the past, though reinterpreted, is not relinquished, because "not to feel responsible for the past is not to feel responsible for the present" (Gluck, 13)—and not for the future either.

Throughout this sequence of changing perspectives, several kinds of thematic continuity are evident. In particular, aside from the obvious themes of any war-related literature (death, destruction, terror, loss, etc.), the postwar literature of both countries manifests a skepticism and distrust of authority. In Japan, the defeat in the war—followed by the emperor's 1946 proclamation that he was only a human being, rather than a god, and by the American occupation of 1945–1952—led people to deny old values and traditions and to accept what Selden calls a new "imperial democracy" (xxiv). This transitional period strongly influenced and sometimes destabilized the writers who had grown up during the war. They observed that the authoritative figures they had known earlier, including the fanatical teachers who had taught them to worship the divine emperor, were suddenly transformed overnight into "democrats" on August 15, 1945. Ōba Minako, for example, who was fourteen years old at the end of the war, manifests her reaction to this reversal through an aversion to any "trendy" ideas at all, of whatever direction. Her works are permeated with a distrust of authorities and a contempt for social norms, which she sees as being repeatedly defined and redefined for the benefit of those who hold power (personal interview). Similarly, in Germany, the atrocities of the Third Reich and the postwar political division of Germany under the occupation caused people to deny the authority of their longstanding tradition and

culture. However, unlike the distrust that arose in Japan—which seems to have been concentrated in the younger generation—in Germany this skepticism seems stronger among the older writers, who experienced the epochs of World War I, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, and the defeat and partition at the end of World War II. Living through all these metamorphoses, Böll, for instance, confesses his difficulties in trusting any kind of authority. Yet the postwar literature of both countries paradoxically also displays a repeated optimism for the future. Despite the skepticism toward governments, institutions, and authority-figures, and also despite these writers' realization that their words will probably have little effect on public behavior, they persist in writing, and their fiction often reflects a strong commitment to the processes of change. In this spirit, Ōba's *Urashimasō* reveals a selective confidence in the younger generation, as does Christa Wolf's *Cassandra*, with its concept of a peaceful commune of women and men within the setting of the Trojan War.

In contrast to their passage through similar literary phases and their shared conjunction of skepticism and optimism, the development of postwar narrative in the two countries reveals significant differences, too. Examples to the contrary certainly exist, but Japanese postwar literature seems more frequently to protest against victimization than to acknowledge the atrocities committed by the Japanese army in Asia, whereas German postwar literature tends to emphasize responsibility for what the Germans did in Europe. This differential tendency to express victimization or guilt can be related to the aftereffect of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, two events that coalesced into an overwhelmingly powerful symbol of suffering that partially obliterated other Japanese responses to the war.<sup>12</sup> However, the tendency to emphasize victimization also reflects Japanese literary traditions ever since the classical period of the eighth century C.E., for, as Irmela Hijija-Kirschner points out, the posture of interiority can be seen as a continuation of the characteristic introversion and sentimentality of traditional forms, ranging from the autobiographical tale (*monogatari*) of the classical period to the *shishōsetsu* (I-novel) of the twentieth century. Moreover, a further factor in the overall guilt/victimization balance pertains to fundamental cultural differences between the divine emperor system in Japan and the secular position of the Nazi rulers in Germany. Maintaining silence about the emperor's responsibility for the war enabled the Japanese people to deny their own responsibility as well, for Japanese soldiers and citizens who were regarded as the children of the divine emperor believed (or pretended to

believe) that they had had no choice but to obey him.<sup>13</sup> During the occupation period, when their father-emperor lost his identity, this concept became transferred, and they were temporarily adopted by a “democratic” father and called “MacArthur’s children.” The adopted father’s assertion of their own father’s innocence, along with the Japanese government’s postwar propaganda—which now portrayed the emperor as a pacifist—easily convinced them that their father, like the populace at large, had been betrayed by the military leadership during the war.<sup>14</sup> This verdict of “not guilty” for their cultural father-figure strongly influenced their retrospective individual consciousness of the war; as Gluck states, the Japanese tend to view the wartime period “in the passive voice, or [as] ‘victims’ history” (12). There was widespread and willing public acceptance of the emperor’s new image as a peace-loving constitutional monarch<sup>15</sup> and a victim who had bravely ended the war for the sake of the people: Awaya Kentaro calls this reconstruction “the greatest political myth of postwar history” (396). The Japanese applied the same logic to themselves. In short, the emperor and the whole nation became accomplices in the denial of responsibility. No one was supposed to admit individual guilt, because to do so would be synonymous with manifesting the guilt of the emperor. Living under the chrysanthemum taboo (a reference to the design of the imperial seal), postwar Japanese culture preferred to regard itself as enacting primarily the role of victim.

In Germany, on the other hand, when Nazi atrocities became publicized, the German people found that they had to admit guilt and responsibility. Of course, many individuals tried to separate themselves from personal involvement with the Nazis (sometimes validly so), while others tried to deny the past in a mood of psychological numbness—or, as Ian Buruma puts it, citing the title of a book by Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, the German people became immersed in an “inability to mourn” (*Wages*, 21). Unlike the officially innocent Japanese Hirohito, who at the end of the war was transformed overnight from a sacred icon behind a screen into a popular father-figure, the German Führer had committed suicide, as if admitting his sin. Also in contrast to the emperor, who represented a cultural tradition that had lasted since time immemorial in Japan, Hitler had risen to power suddenly and individualistically, though “legally and within the system” (Spielvogel, 67). Thus the German people’s sense of war responsibility may have been increased by the fact that they had legally elected Hitler, whereas the Japanese people’s sense of reticence and nonresponsibility for wartime atrocities seems partly due to

their belief that they had had no option, except obedience to what seemed to be the will of the sacred father.

### Critical Contexts

In studying the changing perspectives in Japanese and German narrative after the war, this book builds on previous studies of postwar literature in each country alone. Aside from analyses of particular writers or works (which in some cases have been voluminous), critical overviews have tended to focus on establishing generational categories. Scholars of German literature have proposed several versions of a periodical taxonomy that sometimes proceeds by decades—the politicized 1960s, the subjective 1970s, the personified 1980s. Stuart Parkes's categorization of German postwar literature, for example, is based on the relations between writing and politics. He sees a period of "restoration tragedy" in the 1950s, marked by the renewal of capitalism and bourgeois power, which the majority of writers observed with distrust; and then a period of "Party Talk" in the 1960s, when there was a close relationship between influential writers such as Günter Grass and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Next in Parkes's series comes the "retrenchment warfare" of the 1970s, when the passion of the student movements had cooled and expectations for social change through parliamentary politics and writing had decreased. Instead of the social, political focus of 1960s fiction, in the 1970s Parkes observes a less activist literature, called the "New Subjectivism," which stresses a personal, introverted dimension; it includes feminist writings, love stories, and autobiographical works, and insofar as it is political, is closely connected with regional movements focusing on pacifist and ecological issues. In the 1980s, given the threats to peace and to the environment, writers who dealt with the recent past attempted, from a broader perspective, to show the changed values of the time. Ralf Schnell offers a similar categorization: literature versus politics in the 1950s (when there was a great gap between the writers and the politics of the time); the politicized period of 1960–1968 (a renewal of the writers' engagement); the so-called *Neue Subjektivität* (New Subjectivism) of 1969–1977; and the *Zwischen Post-Historie und Widerstands-Ästhetik* of 1978–1989 (history reinterpreted from new angles).

According to Judith Ryan, postwar German literature has had two major peaks of productivity, the first between 1959 and 1968, and another around 1985. The year 1959 was a monumental one in that three great

novels of the “resist in retrospect” type were produced to “attack the large questions about the Nazi past with greater energy and more analytic subtlety” (*Legacies*, 191) than previous works had shown. These three novels—Günter Grass’s *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*), Heinrich Böll’s *Billard um halbzehn* (*Billiards at Half Past Nine*), and Uwe Johnson’s *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* (*Speculations about Jakob*)—all shared a characteristic political and multilayered perspective that requires “two-track reading, looking simultaneously at the surface and the implied depths” (*Legacies*, 193). Nearly a decade later, influenced by the student revolutions of 1967–1968 and the escalation of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, the second peak of this literature of two-track reading was permeated with antiauthoritarianism, as Ryan points out. A typical example is *Deutschstunde* (1968, *The German Lesson*) by Siegfried Lenz (b. 1926), a work which insists that Germans have yet to learn the lessons of history. For Lenz and other writers of this time, to be antiauthoritarian meant to “question not only the superfluous forms of authority but also the authority of the specific generation that was responsible for Nazi fascism” (P. Schneider, 284). The direct political and social consciousness of German literature in the late 1960s was then, as other critics have suggested, replaced by the “new subjectivism” of the 1970s, which “gloried personal expression and anarchistic spontaneity” (McCormick, 8) and addressed new types of activism, such as women’s movements and ecological concerns.

In 1979, the American TV series “Holocaust” was broadcast in Germany. Ryan analyzes the reasons for the impact of this black-and-white, straightforward film on German audiences: “Tired of the highly cerebral, two-track modes of the 1959 and 1968 ‘resistance in retrospect’ fictions, the public turned with relief to a film that let them empathize with the victims of nazism and understand for the first time something of the suffering that Hitler’s ‘final solution’ had caused” (*Legacies*, 202). In response to this movie, other realistic and nostalgic films, such as Edgar Reitz’s TV series *Heimat* (1984), were produced in Germany. Along with the nostalgic wave, the so-called generation literature or literature of the father (*Väterliteratur*) was created by younger writers born mostly in the late 1930s and 1940s. Their narratives focused on their relationship to their parents, especially their fathers, and on their fathers’ involvement with the Nazis. This type of fiction concentrates on “the personal side of the confrontation with the German past, with the parent in question personifying that past for the younger generation” (McCormick, 181). Most of these

stories are autobiographical, such as the unfinished narrative *Die Reise* (*The Journey*) by Bernward Vesper (1938–1971), published in 1977, six years after his suicide in a mental clinic. Son of the writer Will Vesper, who as a favorite of Hitler had produced numerous works for the Nazis, Bernward Vesper presents his conflict with an authoritarian father and describes his own psychological and physical journey in three movements: a journey from Dubrovnik to Tübingen; a drug-induced trip in München and Tübingen; and the *Rückerinnerung* (reminiscence) of his childhood. Another example is *Vati* (*Daddy*, 1986) by Peter Schneider (b. 1940). Based on real events, this fictional work describes a successful lawyer's painful experience of meeting with his father, who had fled to South America in 1949; the father's character is modeled on the notorious Nazi doctor of Auschwitz, Josef Mengele.

Scholars of Japanese literature, many of them writing in Japan, have proposed somewhat similar generational taxonomies of postwar literature. According to the survey in "Nihon kindai bungakushi" ("Modern Japanese Literary History," *Kokubungaku*: 21. 3, 1976), there are six such categories. One is represented by writers established before the war whose works (written during or after the war) reappeared immediately after 1945. Tanizaki Junichirō, Nagai Kafū, and Shiga Naoya belong to this group. A second group, called *daiichiji-sengoha* (the first set of postwar writers) includes writers who believed in Marxist ideology and served in the war; with the appearance of *kindai bungaku* in January 1946, they became the leading new figures of early postwar literature. Noma Hiroshi (1915–1991) and Shiina Rinzō (1911–1973) are representatives of this group. A third category, called *buraiha* (literally, the rascals), includes writers such as Dazai Osamu (1909–1948) and Sakaguchi Ango (1906–1955), whose "antiestablishment" works, often eased with light touches of humor, became best-sellers at the end of the 1940s. Fourth, the *dainiji-sengoha* group (the second set of postwar writers) includes Abe Kōbō (1924–1993), Ōoka Shōhei (1909–1988), Hotta Yoshie (b. 1918), and Mishima Yukio (1925–1970); their works appeared a little later than those of "the first postwar writers" of the late 1940s. Fifth, writers who were children or adolescents during the fifteen-year war, such as Endō Shūsaku (1923–1996), Yasuoka Shōtarō (b. 1920), and Yoshiyuki Junnosuke (b. 1924), belong to the *dai san no shinjin* (the third generation of new writers) who started publishing around 1953, at the end of the Korean War and the beginning of Japan's economic miracle. Unlike the political and social works of "the first and second sets of postwar writers," the stories by these younger



writers tend to be apolitical and to return to the mode of the *shishōsetsu* (the I-novel). Finally, a sixth group of writers who were young children at the end of the war are sometimes called “the pure postwar writers.” Ōe Kenzaburō (b. 1935) and Kaikō Ken (b. 1930) are representatives of this group.

Emphasizing continuity with earlier twentieth-century works rather than postulating new beginnings in Japanese postwar literature, Hijiya-Kirschner categorizes writers and texts even more elaborately, using a threefold matrix of generation, topic, and genre. Her generational taxonomy consists of five groups. First comes the older generation of established writers who either refused to cooperate with the war, such as Nagai Kafū and Tanizaki Junichirō, or engaged in cooperation to some degree, such as Kawabata Yasunari; their works after the war tend to show an escape into aestheticism. Second, she sees a generation of activists, an age-cohort old enough to have been recruited for military service, who started their literary careers after the war; this group includes Noma Hiroshi, Takeda Taijun, and Ōoka Shōhei. Their war experiences are the central concern of their works. The third group includes writers of the generation that grew up during the war—those who were indoctrinated by the imperialistic value system but were too young to play an active, adult role in the war. The fourth is a generation of writers who were still children at the end of the war; the fifth group of writers was born after the war. Unlike recent German writers who have tried to discover the roles their parents may have played in the Third Reich, Kirschner points out that these younger Japanese writers find the war of no immediate concern or interest.

As for topics, Hijiya-Kirschner defines four categories: the war itself, with its battlefield experiences overseas and in Japan; civilian life during the war; the A-bomb; and the aftermath of war in everyday postwar life.<sup>16</sup> She sees four genres: *Jun bungaku* (pure literature); *Taishū bungaku* (mass literature), such as Gomikawa Junpei's four-volume bestseller *Ningen no jyōken* (1956–1958, *The Human Condition*); personal records (diaries and letters), such as a collection of letters by student-soldiers who were killed in the war, entitled *Kike wadatsumi no koe* (1949, *Listen, Voices of the Sea*); and documentary accounts. Overall, Hijiya-Kirschner states that Japanese literature since the classical period has always tended to depend on sentimentalization, fatalism, and aestheticizing strategies, and to transform history into nature—characteristics that she sees dominating postwar literature as well. For instance, she argues that, following the

sentimental mode of the traditional autobiographical I-novel, Japanese writers still tend to recount their recent past on a personal level and with an apolitical stance: "The prevailing personal approach to war being emotive and sentimental, the reaction to disaster is one of accepting it as fate" (113). Hijiya-Kirschner regards Kawabata's *Yama no oto* (1949–1954, *Sound of the Mountain*) and Mishima's *Kinkakuji* (1956, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*) as typical examples of aestheticizing, and suggests that Ibuse Masuji's *Kuroi ame* (1966, *Black Rain*) is representative of the type of postwar literature that transforms history into nature. (Disagreeing with this view, I will discuss *Black Rain* in Chapter 3.)

Similarly, Van C. Gessel views postwar Japanese literature as an extension of prewar literature, with a continuation of the same two opposing types of writing: the literature of committed social activism and the writings of a sincere artistic purism. Authors of these two major types of narrative are designated as the *sengoha* writers (postwar writers) and the *daisan no shinjin* (the third generation of new writers). According to Gessel, works of the "private" trend of the *daisan no shinjin* add a new feature, irony, to the traditional *shishōsetsu*, "and their depiction of the war is far more cynical and personalized" (214). This sort of private fiction was revived in the 1970s in the movement of the "new subjectivism" or *naikō no sedai* (the generation of introverts), which appeared a little earlier in Japan than its Western counterpart. Just as German audiences, tired of two-track reading, welcomed the straightforward "un-Brechtian" version of the made-in-America "Holocaust" series, so in Japan, in reaction to the challenge of social and political consciousness in literature, Japanese readers turned to works by Furui Yoshikichi (b. 1937), Sakagami Hiroshi (b. 1936), and Murakami Haruki (b. 1949). These are writers who "strip politics and ideology from literature and restore focus to the home, the workplace, and the individual leading a life of 'quiet desperation' in various complex social institutions" (*Legacies*, 221). As for the question of war guilt, Gessel carefully states that the public's longstanding literary tradition of the *shishōsetsu*, with its narrow perspective and focus on individual confession, leads the majority of examples of Japanese war literature to present internal conflicts and individual responsibility, rather than addressing larger questions of guilt and national culpability.

John Whittier Treat's 1995 book, *Writing Ground Zero*, is the first work in English to critically, systematically, and thoroughly analyze the entire range of Japanese A-bomb literature. In this very important study, Treat argues for three "postnuclear" generations. Writers such as Hara

Tamiki, Ōta Yōko, and Kurihara Sadako, who were in Hiroshima at the moment of the blast, belong to the first generation. Their focus is on “the problems of mimesis and imagination” (21), as, facing the limits of language in relation to the overwhelming event, they struggled over ways to convey atrocity through words. A second generation of writers includes Ōe Kenzaburō, Ibuse Masuji, and Hotta Yoshie, who “treat the bombings as a social or individual inner problem often touching on broader political or social issues” (21). In *Hiroshima Note*, for example, the process of discovering human dignity among Hiroshima survivors enabled Ōe to recover from a personal crisis of his own, and in Ibuse’s *Black Rain*, “the domestic is so believably and convincingly combined with the historical” (263) that the text quietly creates an ordinary world despite the extraordinary situation. Third-generation writers “take the meaning of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to be our future as well as our past, a permanent imaginative state of threatened being” (21). For instance, Oda Makoto’s 1981 novel *HIROSHIMA* demonstrates the qualities of the so-called total literature, depicting his characters’ paradoxical experiences—as victim and victimizer—in a global perspective in order to convey “a *totality* that comprehends the diverse political conditions of modern life under the nation-state” (384). My book will repeatedly draw on Treat’s work, but will differ in scope by analyzing both Japanese and German postwar fiction and by presenting not only A-bomb literature per se, but also literature dealing with other experiences of soldiers and civilians in wartime and in the aftermath of the war.

### Lines of Convergence—and Difference

It is time to lay the Japanese and German paradigms next to each other, in recognition both of the commonalities of the two countries’ postwar experience, and of the longstanding development of cultural interchanges between them since the late nineteenth century. A brief review of the earlier historical context may be appropriate. Japan and Germany both became modern states in the second half of the nineteenth century—in other words, at almost the same time.<sup>17</sup> After more than two hundred years of isolation during the Edo era (1604–1868), Japan finally opened her doors to the West during the Meiji Restoration of 1868, embarking on, as Oda Makoto puts it, “the path leading to the status of a modern nation, under the strong and autocratic rule of the *tennō* (emperor) system, a path that led to World War II, and Japan’s total defeat” (*Legacies*, 264). As

described in *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*), the first compilation of myth and history, which was prepared under imperial direction in the eighth century C.E., the modern emperor system is rooted in Shinto mythology in which the emperor (*tennō*, literally the heavenly sovereign)<sup>18</sup> is understood to be a descendant of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, and the first emperor, Jimmu, is said to have established his court, *Yamato*, in 660 B.C.E. The Japanese people have thus regarded themselves as the *Yamato minzoku* (the Yamato race), the people of divine origin, though descended from lesser gods. However, before the reign of Empress Suiko (592–628 C.E.), actual historical events are unauthenticated, and the consecutive dating of the imperial line that has reigned through either symbolic or real power begins only in 645 C.E. By listing 36 legendary emperors since Jimmu, the effect of *Kojiki* was to reinforce the political myth of “an imperial line running from the Sun Goddess through the Yamato kings to the emperors and empress reigning in the seventh century” (Brown, 2). In classical times (until the eleventh century C.E.), the emperor was the actual head of the nation, with absolute power to rule. In the medieval period, however (ca. 1200–1868, i.e., from the late Heian through the Edo eras), he became merely symbolic under the Shogunate regime. From the restoration of 1868 until the end of World War II, the emperor again became a divine figure through the Meiji leaders’ attempts to unite the Japanese under Shinto myth and to rule with absolute authority in the name of the emperor god. Nevertheless, in the Taishō years (1912–1926), coincided with Emperor Yoshihito’s physical and mental illness, the system of party government established in 1918. This movement called the Taishō democracy, however, was quickly destroyed through violence, the assassinations of its leaders, Hara Kei in 1921 and Inukai Tsuyoshi, 1932. When the twenty-five-year-old Hirohito ascended the throne on December 25, 1926, his divine image as emperor became a central part of the *kokutai*, a term that can be translated as “the sacred nature of the Japanese nation” (Tasker, 138) or “sacred national policy” (Bix, 305)—a concept that accelerated the development of both nationalism and militarism. The mytho-history of the *kokutai* emphasized “the divine origins of the Japanese imperial line and the exceptional racial and cultural homogeneity of the Japanese people” (Dower, *War*, 205). In 1931, the so-called Fifteen-Year War began with the Manchurian Incident; in 1932, the puppet state of Manchuria (Manchukuo) was established under Japanese control. Four years later, the February 26 Incident of 1936—an attempted *coup d’état* by right-wing young officers—triggered the imperial army’s invasion of

China. Japanese military forces continued to kill thousands of innocent people in incidents such as the Nanking Massacre, until Japan's unconditional surrender in 1945.

In the Germany of 1871, three years after the Meiji Restoration in Japan, unification of the numerous small states was achieved by means of "a revolution from above," when the Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck established the Second Reich under Kaiser Wilhelm I, the head of an "authoritarian, conservative, 'military-bureaucratic power state'" (Spielvogel, 5). Its policies would eventually lead Germany into World War I during the reign of Wilhelm II. Like the stress on the nobility of the *Yamato* race in Japanese *kokutai* ideology, the German focus on the Kaiser reinforced the ideology of the *Volk* (nation, people, or race) of Aryan blood, asserting the superiority of German culture and German people. *Völkisch* cultural politics consequently emphasized "the idea of a *Volksgemeinschaft*, a national community that could not assimilate alien peoples such as Jews" (Spielvogel, 6). Rapid industrialization and urbanization brought serious economic and social problems at the end of the nineteenth century. Just as Japan's Taishō democracy briefly thrived right after World War I, the imperial Germany of Wilhelm II, which ended with defeat in the war, was followed by the founding of the Weimar Republic in 1919. The humiliation of the Versailles treaty, along with economic and political crises, soon triggered the rise of Hitler, who became Chancellor in 1933. As is generally recognized, the initial popularity of the Nazis was fed by various factors: economic crisis, German nationalism, the absence of strong leaders since the Kaiser's abdication, and the perceived threat of communism. By calling their state the Third Reich (Third Empire), the Nazis claimed that it was the legitimate successor of the two earlier German empires, the Holy Roman Empire (962–1806) and Bismarck's German Empire (1871–1918). In the years after 1933, lithographs of three profiles were shown on the walls of local bars: Frederick the Great, Bismarck, and Hitler. This and many other types of visual propaganda appealed to German nostalgia for the golden era of the earlier empires. Hitler's concept of a superior German race fell easily on people's ears, and his ideal of *Volksgemeinschaft*, expressing a "new consciousness of national community" (Spielvogel, 303), fulfilled many of the German people's wishes at the time.

Through almost all of the historical period just reviewed, from the late 1860s or 1870s to the war years, there was considerable cultural and literary exchange between Japan and Germany. Starting with the Meiji era,

in rejecting its previous isolationist policies, Japan tried rapidly to absorb European art, science, industrial technology, and economic and political systems. Germany, in turn, participated in a simultaneous outburst of European interest in Japan.<sup>19</sup> The Meiji government sent many intellectuals and officials into European countries, choosing Germany as a particular model; the Meiji constitution, promulgated in 1899, drew on Prussian authoritarianism. The study of Western philosophy—predominantly German—was also passionately welcomed and Japanese translations of texts by Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche had appeared by 1915.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the *Nihon rōmanha* (Japanese Romanticism) movement, which reached its height during World War II, was explicitly rooted in nineteenth-century German Romanticism. The *Nihon rōmanha* writers, such as Kamei Katsuichirō (1907–1966) and Yasuda Yōjūrō (1919–1981), considered Japan to be the nation of a master culture in which the emperor was a unifying force, and the *Nihon rōmanha* ideology, like German Romanticism, stressed not only the concept of a superior race, but also radical sentiments that led to the admiration of chaos as something beautiful, and to the acceptance or even exaltation of death and destruction as ultimate values (Scott-Stokes, 95).

The career of Mori Ōgai (1867–1922) may serve to suggest the cultural complexities and personal ambivalences involved in the experience of Japanese officials sent abroad to Germany. In 1884, Ōgai, who would become one of the most distinguished authors of the Meiji era, was a second lieutenant in the Japanese army medical corps; he was assigned to Germany to study European methods of military hygiene. Freed from Japan's rigid feudal society, he responded strongly to what he felt to be the liberated air of the Western world. His passion for literature was aroused—as was his passion for a German woman who, after his return home, followed him to Japan. However, his family persuaded her to return to Germany and the relationship was broken off. This experience led Ōgai to write autobiographical short stories, including “Maihime” (“Dancing Girl,” 1890), in which the protagonist, an elite Japanese officer like Ōgai himself, reflects on his past, especially on his days in Germany, where he had met a dancer named Elise. Pregnant by him, she went mad on discovering that he intended to abandon her to return home. The narrator retrospectively tries to comprehend his own behavior and to answer his inner questions about his actions. According to J. Thomas Rimer, in writing this story as a personal experiment Ōgai was trying to “encompass what he found in Germany that had touched him and so stimulated his own creativity” (Mori