

Masuji ibuse and "black rain"

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Japan has a very rich history as well as a very rich culture. It was home to famous artists and poets, which gets their inspiration from whatever is happening in the country. One of these writers is Ibuse Masuji, who was the writer of the 1965 masterpiece, *Kuroi Ame* or "Black Rain." The inspiration of this is the previous bombing of Hiroshima, where black rain refers to the radioactive "rain" that spread out to the people in the area.

Ibuse Masuji came from a family of independent farmers, born as the second of a landowner in Hiroshima, Japan. Ibuse spent his young years in the countryside, in a small village called Kamo in the east of Hiroshima Prefecture. When he became 19, started going to Waseda University in Tokyo, where he had his fill of the ideas from brilliant minds of history, most especially regarding surrealism and Marxism.

The specialty which he took in college was on French literature, but his interests were more on the works of Russians like Tolstoy and Chekov ("Masuji Ibuse," 2002). But because of an unwanted incident where Masuji Ibuse was sexually harassed by a gay professor, he was forced to quit school. His writings surfaced in the early 1920's, but his works were not recognized until the late 1920s with the positive feedback given by an influential modern critic named Kobayashi Hideo. Because of this, people noticed Masuji Ibuse's works, wherein he later gained a large following due to people's admirations.

Despite his emergence as one of the new modern writers, he chose to take the path of traditional techniques which is known to his place of origin. His techniques were more on the first person aspect where he used the

subjective "I-novel" mode of Japan. This technique is characterized by having a narrator and author in one. Southern Japan's countryside inspired him to come up with his short story, "Koi" which marked his traditional techniques. Ibuse's pre-war works showed his wry humor as an artist, as well as having characters which are psychologically sharp yet sympathetic villagers, peasants, doctors, farmers and other unchanging people. This is the distinguishing trait of Ibuse's style when he writes.

When the World War II broke out, Masuji Ibuse led a different life. He served in the propaganda units, which has also inspired him to write about Japanese propagandists. He was able to look at life differently because of all the wars. War's cruelty served as a new inspiration for his writings. One of his great creations which emerged from this aspect was "Black Rain," which shows his take on the fateful events caused by the Hiroshima bombings, making it as one of the best Japanese novels known to the world.

The novel Black Rain chronicled various stories of the hibakusha or the survivors of the Japanese atom bomb (The Hiroshima Project, 2007). It showed their struggles for acceptance, and their sufferings from discrimination and social isolation. This is all because of the radiation poisoning, when they were exposed to huge amounts of radiation during the bombings. These people may have survived the attacks, but the life they had afterwards showed how hard it is being in their place.

This novel became famous to western readers even though the author was Japanese. This was partly because of how the novel depicts its contents, which is more on the human perspective. It ignores the political factors that

existed around that time. It focused on the issue on the extent of devastation that these bombs can cause, and that the suffering that is connected with it is not only on those who were directly suffered from the bombings, but also with generations after generations from the victims.

References:

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