

Atomic Evangelists: An Investigation of the American Atomic Narrative Through News and Magazine Articles, Official Government Statements, Critiques, Essays and Works of Non/Fiction

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Doctoral Dissertation

**Atomic Evangelists:
An Investigation of the American Atomic Narrative Through
News and Magazine Articles, Official Government Statements,
Critiques, Essays and Works of Non-Fiction**

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Introduction

Since the two atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the word “nuclear” has been closely intertwined with the image of “fear” in the Western literary context. As Robert A. Jacobs, an American historian, noted *The Dragon’s Tail: Americans Face the Atomic Age*, the word “nuclear fear” had become a serious issue as it spread through popular culture. In this Western context, as John W. Treat observes in *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb* (1995), apocalyptic fear toward nuclear power is emphasized without focusing on the *hibakusha*, the atomic bomb victims, as though they never existed.

In the United States, it seems that it all started on August 7, 1945, when a sensational article appeared on the front page of *The New York Times* (see figure 1). The title of the article is “First Atomic Bomb Dropped on Japan.” On this day, not only the front page, but nearly the entire paper was devoted to articles relating to the first atomic bomb. The readers were able to learn about the details of the atomic bomb and see the previously the veiled faces of those involved the production of this enigmatic power. Scientists such as Robert J. Oppenheimer, Enriko Fermi, Neils Bohr and James B. Conant are lauded as the leading members of the Manhattan Project, with the paper showing large photographs of each of their faces.

The most outstanding article of the day was the statement signed by Harry S. Truman, the 33rd President of the United States. This statement not only suggested that the power of the atomic bomb should be “praised” as God’s power, but also emphasized the U.S. acquirement of this power ahead of Germany is nothing if not “Providence.” This first atomic statement both shocked and pleased



Figure 1: The top page of the New York Times on August 7, 1945.

the American public by its clever use of images and metaphors derived from the Old Testament. It was as if the dystopian fictional world of H.G Wells' *The World Set Free* (1914) had become a reality.

Yet, as far as one can see in the letter-to-the-editor columns in the newspapers of that era, the people of the U.S. seemed to have embraced this statement enthusiastically, not without a sense of smugness over Truman's declaration that the Americans are

“the chosen”:

Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, an important Japanese Army base. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of TNT. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British “Gland Slam” which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.

[. . .] It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its powers has been loosened against those who brought war to the Far East.

[. . .] We may be grateful to Providence that the V-2's late and in limited quantities and even more grateful that they did not get the atomic

bomb at all.

However, long before the atomic bomb was dropped on the two cities, stories of atomic energy had been told by the mass media and scientists, often with use of biblical images. Spencer R. Weart, the author of *Nuclear fear: A History of Images* (1988) observes:

[t]he most curious and unsettling thing is that every theme in such tales was already at hand early in the twentieth century, decades before the discovery of nuclear fission showed how to actually release the energy within atoms. The imagery, then, did not come from experience with real bombs and power plants. It came from somewhere else (*Nuclear Fear* 4).

This story linking atomic energy with the power of God became more popular in the era of the Cold War. During this time when the nuclear arms race was a grave matter, nuclear iconography became widespread through popular culture in the form of novels, movies, TV programs, commercials, graphic novels, and even games. It can be said, as Mike Gorman states, within this cultural context, nuclear technology came to be perceived as a “motif,” rather than an actual “threat” (Gorman, 124).

Over the years, a lot has been written about the relationship between nuclear images and fear. Among them, American historian Robert Jacobs’s *The Dragon’s Tail: American Face the Atomic Age* (2010) is particularly notable. According to Jacobs, the nuclear image as an icon set off a chain reaction of “fear” and became the basis of an apocalyptic discourse in the American post-atomic culture. As Jacobs points out, when stories of the two atomic bombs are told and described within this cultural context, the “apocalyptic image” dominates most of the narrative. What is more striking is that in this kind of narrative, the *hibakusha*,

namely the atomic bomb victims, are ignored and treated as though do not exist. Critics such as John W. Treat have observed that this type of apocalyptic narrative is the most remarkable characteristic of American atomic texts.

This raises the following questions: why did such an apocalyptic atomic narrative emerge in the first place? Are there any foundational texts that helped promote such perspectives? What was happening just after Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the context of the American atomic discourse? The objective of this thesis is to show that the American texts on Hiroshima and Nagasaki have never been analyzed from a literary perspective, and that it is necessary to study such texts from this angle. Of course, some of the works are indeed remarkable and even considered historical, exerting influence on atomic discussions even to this day, as seen in Spencer R. Weart's *Nuclear Fear* (1988), or Paul Boyer's *By the Bomb's Early Light* (1995). However, from the post-atomic era to the present day, atomic texts including newspaper and magazine articles, reportages, documentaries, and official government statements have mainly been used as "tools" by historians for the purpose of discussing particular historical events, such as the censorship imposed by the American government, nuclear disarmament, or the nuclear arms race. As a result, the worth and meaning of American atomic texts have become undermined.

Considering the point above, this thesis will cast light on the overshadowed stories and discourses by mainly focusing on newspaper and magazine articles, official government statements, critiques, and works of nonfiction written by American writers, all of which are known to have spread widely among the American public in the atomic age. While referring to the preceding studies conducted by historians, this thesis seeks to illuminate the obscured details of

Hiroshima and Nagasaki by investigating relevant texts from a literary perspective. There are five chapters in all.

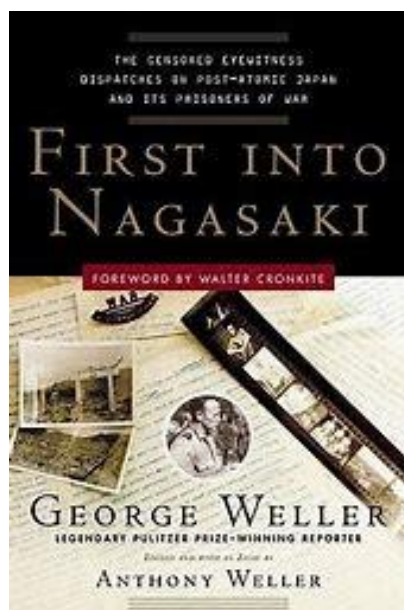


Figure 2: The Cover photo of George Weller's *First Into Nagasaki*, published in 2015.

The first chapter, “First Correspondents’ Atomic Reportage,” aspires to reveal the hidden stories that exist behind the early journalistic texts on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is estimated that more than ten American war correspondents entered the devastated cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki between the time the first atomic bomb was dropped on Japan and early September 1945. Because these first dispatches were famously written under strict censorship implemented by the General Head Quarters (GHQ), many historically significant works of nonfiction have sought to explain why the

journalists did not have the freedom to write their articles as they wished. This in turn meant not enough attention was given to the hibakushas, downplaying the hardships endured by the bomb victims as a result.

Monica Braw’s *The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in Japan 1945-1949* (1986) is perhaps the most prominent example. While examining this historical background, this chapter will focus on other aspects of these reportages by examining them as the first publicly released atomic narratives. Two important articles written by the war correspondents Homer Bigart and George Weller will be investigated in detail. Like the other atomic articles written by American journalists, the reports of Bigart and Weller went under strict censorship. However, they were unlike the others in that Bigart’s Hiroshima reports and

Weller's Nagasaki coverages attempted to highlight the unknown aspects of the two cities.

Homer Bigart, who entered Hiroshima as one of the government's press members, released his first Hiroshima report on September 5, 1945, just a month after the first bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. What should be noted here is that this firsthand Hiroshima report was not just an ordinary on-the-spot news coverage. On the surface, Bigart's report seemed like a run-of-the-mill news article illustrating the aftermath of the bomb, with considerable appeal to the American public with its sensational descriptions of the ruined city of Hiroshima.

However, because of its populist nature, his report was thought to have little literary value: it has been historically bracketed with the other wartime press reports and has never been analyzed in a literary context. Still, taking a closer look at Bigart's report today, there seems to be an element that distinguishes it from the others, rising above the framework of conventional news coverage. Despite the strict censorship, he managed to give details on not only the ruined city, but also the conditions of the victims. Whatever his intent was, he had captured the essence of the lives of hibakushas. This raises the next question: how can a horrifying event, namely, the atomic holocaust, be described through the eye of a writer who has not experienced it?

It was just after the two cities were destroyed that many news articles about the atomic bomb were published in the United States. Most of these articles focused on nuclear energy, which later became the focal point of the apocalyptic atomic narrative. Of course, there were some exceptions, and some articles focused on the damage done to human bodies, such as injuries sustained by the bomb victims. A recent study conducted by The Foreign Correspondents' Club revealed

that the first on-the-spot dispatch had been written by the Japanese American Leslie Nakashima, who entered Hiroshima on August 27, 1945. His report, entitled “Hiroshima Gone, Newsman finds” appeared in the *New York Times* on August 31, 1945. In this article, Nakashima, who entered Hiroshima in search of his mother, focuses on the devastating panorama of Hiroshima and suffering victims as well. Another exception was Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett, who was able to successfully send his whole Hiroshima report to the *Daily Express* in London on September 5, 1945. The report was titled “The Atomic Plague,” explaining radiation sickness and nuclear fallout. Subsequently, the GHQ ordered a strict censorship and banned the coverage of the atomic wastelands of Hiroshima and Nagasaki without their permission. Because Nakashima and Burchett were free from censorship, they were able to perceive the two bombed cities without being biased.

According to Braw, under the censorship, describing the victims’ sufferings or referring to radiation sickness were strictly forbidden. In this situation where the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are not visualized, Bigart’s atomic report attempts to discover the hibakusha, making the readers feel that Hiroshima is closer to their everyday lives than they had ever imagined. Considering these points, this first section will investigate how this writer covertly tried to depict the pain of the hibakushas, who were regarded as a complicated existence among the American people.

The second section will focus on another important Nagasaki writer, George Weller. His coverage of Nagasaki is said to be one of the first atomic texts and is a compilation of several dispatches. Unlike Bigart and William L. Laurence, who conducted atomic research with other correspondents, Weller wrote on his own

during August and September of 1945. However, this series of dispatches were secretly censored, then banished just before Weller sent them to the *Chicago Daily News*. It was 60 years later that they were discovered and published as *First into Nagasaki* (2005) by his family members.

One of the most unique elements of this “discovered” text is that the writer focuses not only on the bombing of Nagasaki itself, but also on the various brutal acts committed by the Imperial Japanese Army to the prisoners of war (POW). By depicting not only the devastating panorama of the hypocenter but introducing the accounts given by the prisoners of war, Weller tried to “decentralize” the memory of the Second World War. Decentralizing, in this case, is reminding the readers that Nagasaki is not the only place that was affected of this war, and that there are numerous victims other than the hibakushas of Nagasaki. This kind of Nagasaki narrative can be considered one of the first typical atomic discourses in the U.S. Considering this point, the second section of this chapter seeks to analyze Weller’s Nagasaki narrative as a story that reflects the American national memory during the Second World War, meanwhile making reference to memory studies.

The second chapter, “Genesis in 1945: William L. Laurence and Judeo-Christian Atomic Propaganda” is a rhetorical investigation of the master-narrative on the nuclear issue, which became widespread throughout the American society in the post Hiroshima and Nagasaki era. As mentioned above, more than ten American war correspondents entered the devastated cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki between August 6 and early September 1945. Most of them were acclaimed journalists, such as Homer Bigart, whose series of articles about the Pacific and Korean wars earned him the Pulitzer Prize. Other early correspondents include the previously mentioned Leslie Nakashima, who is said to be the first

foreign reporter to write about Hiroshima, and George Weller, whose Nagasaki reports were allegedly banned by the U.S. Office of Censorship.

Among them was one journalist in particular who differentiated himself from other war correspondents. His name was William Leonard Laurence (1888-1977), a *New York Times* science writer who would eventually wield enormous influence on the way American citizens regarded nuclear weapons. When compared to the other journalists who had entered the ruined cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there are two elements that separate this writer from the others.

First, the U.S. government granted him a “privilege” for his great knowledge of nuclear power, which he had been accumulating since the early 1940s. Because of this “privilege,” he was the only journalist allowed to witness the first nuclear test held in New Mexico on July 16, 1945.

Second, in contrast to the other reporters who wrote on-the-spot reports about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Laurence openly showed support for the decision to drop the bombs on Japan and denied the existence of “radiation sickness.” Some scholars, such as Amy and David Goodman, have castigated Laurence for his insincere attitude toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and are currently lobbying for the withdrawal of his Pulitzer Prize. However, considering that his reports on nuclear weapons circulated throughout the entire nation via newspapers, the following point must be acknowledged: William L. Laurence was one of the most influential figures in forming the American citizens’ perspective and attitude toward nuclear weapons.

One remarkable feature of Laurence's articles on the atomic bomb is the writer's cold indifference toward the hibakushas, namely the victims of the two cities. That is to say, one does not find the “voices” of hibakushas in his reports as

in the writings of other journalists such as John Hersey and other press members. Therefore, the meaning of “Hiroshima and Nagasaki” described by Laurence is completely different from that of the hibakushas people. For Laurence, atomic power and the nuclear weapon itself were synonymous with “God's power”: he was, as Stephen Walker emphasized in his book *Shockwave Countdown to Hiroshima*, a staunch devotee of that omnipotent power. This leads to the following question: how was Laurence’s perspective toward nuclear energy formed in the first place? As mentioned, recent studies have criticized Laurence for not only justifying but also endorsing the use of nuclear weapons. However, few studies have discussed the reason why Laurence became a worshiper of atomic power as a force akin to “God.” The second chapter will focus mainly on Laurence’s attitude toward the atomic bomb, as well as on the difference between his perspective and that of the Japanese hibakushas.

Chapter 3, entitled “John Hersey's Sensational Text and the Context of American Society in the Early Atomic Age,” will focus on John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, which was published in August 1946 and has long been considered one of the most influential and sensational texts in the post atomic age. In 1999, the New York University Journalism faculty selected “The Top 100 Works of Journalism in the United States in the 20th Century,” and Hersey's *Hiroshima* took first prize, prevailing over other great texts such as Rachel Carson's “Silent Spring.” Hersey’s *Hiroshima* created a great sensation soon after its publication and became a best-seller, and much has been said about the response it triggered. The following is an excerpt from Robert J. Lifton and Greg Mitchell’s *Hiroshima in America*.

When a new issue of the *New Yorker* arrived at the very end of August it seemed no different from any other. The cover featured a generic picnic

scene. But quickly subscribers must have recognized that something was odd about this issue: there was no “Talk of the Town”; there were no cartoons. The entire issue was devoted to a “Reporter at Large” feature, sixty-eight pages long, titled simply “Hiroshima.” [...] The article caused an immediate sensation. All copies sold out on newsstands. The mayor of Princeton, New Jersey, asked every citizen to read it. The entire thirty-thousand-word story was read over the ABC radio network on four consecutive evenings, and many stations repeated the programs due to popular demand....Columnists and editors, most of whom had expressed strong support for the use of the bomb, nevertheless praised the article, many calling it the best reporting job of its time.(87-8)

As Lifton and Mitchell observe, *Hiroshima* enlightened even the people who supported the U.S. decision to drop the two atomic bombs. Until now, many critics have discussed how *Hiroshima* attained the readers’ sympathy and has completely changed the perspectives of the American citizens. Most of these critics maintain that *Hiroshima* impressed the American readers with its humanistic element, unlike the former atomic narratives that failed to vividly portray the bombed cities and citizens. Moreover, critics have argued that *Hiroshima* should be praised for portraying the Japanese people as human beings, not as a faceless Yellow Peril. To the average American, *Hiroshima* seemed to have unexpectedly burst into prominence as the first written account displaying a sympathetic attitude toward the hibakushas.

However, one important question must be raised. Why did *Hiroshima* garner so much attention in the fall of 1946, when the public’s interest on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was starting to fade? More importantly, was *Hiroshima*

the first text that depicted the hibakushas in such a way that allowed the Americans to clearly visualize the two bombed cities? These are the questions that must be answered in this paper.

Hiroshima has been called the text of morality, but in fact, it contains many realistic and grotesque descriptions of human beings. For example:

Mr. Tanimoto's way around the fire took him across the East Parade Ground, which, being an evacuation area, was now the scene of a gruesome review: rank on rank of the burned and bleeding. Those who were burned moaned, "Mizu, mizu! Water, water!" Mr. Tanimoto found a basin in a nearby street and located a water tap that still worked in the crushed shell of a house, and he began carrying water to the suffering strangers. When he had given drink to about thirty of them, he realized he was taking too much time. "Excuse me," he said loudly to those nearby who were reaching out their hands to him and crying their thirst. "I have many people to take care of." Then he ran away.

In this scene, Reverend Tanimoto Kiyoshi, who is one of the most important characters of *Hiroshima*, wanders around confused in the evacuation area, and is unable to do anything for the dying people. Here, the readers are shocked to see the reality of the atomic wasteland and are dismayed that Reverend Tanimoto's humanitarian efforts mean nothing in the midst of such havoc.

The same can be said about the scene where Father Kleinsorge, another vital character, sees the faces of twenty men wholly burned, their eye sockets hollow, the fluid from their melted eyes running down their cheeks (68). These realistic descriptions may isolate the readers from the hibakushas rather than stirring up feelings of compassion.

In spite of these matter-of-fact depictions of devastation and human nature, *Hiroshima* has been considered a humanistic text that makes the readers feel empathy toward the hibakushas. What element of *Hiroshima* elicited such response? The most important point to be made is that *Hiroshima* should not be seen as an individual text but must be regarded in relation to the texts that preceded its publication. In other words, even before *Hiroshima* made its debut, the American public was already pre-conditioned to embrace it with fervency. Under this premise, the third chapter will focus on the two types of pretexts on the nuclear issues stemming from differing disciplines: religion and science.

In fact, religious discourse and scientific frame of knowledge have always shared an analogical relationship in the Western world. As Spencer Weart notes, the word “science” had been linked with the image of the apocalypse since the early 19th century, “when a fantastic novel, *The Last Man*, was published in France” in 1805 (*Nuclear Fear* 19). In the late 19th century, when the newly discovered scientific energy was made public, the word “atom” emerged within the apocalyptic discourse. According to Weart, the “atomic apocalyptic narrative” was already a familiar concept among the American citizens in the 1930s. During this period, many Christian sermons preached that the atomic power is an untouchable and omnipotent force. Just after the two bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, American Christian churches reinforced this stance and began to speak out against the use of the all-consuming bomb based on moralistic grounds.

It was early 1946, six months after the two bombs were dropped, that the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America published a report called “Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith,” which castigated the use of the two bombs. Around the same time, Phillip Morrison, an acclaimed scientist who was involved

in the Manhattan Project, released a firsthand essay on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By analyzing the rhetoric of these two texts, this chapter aims to examine a certain perspective that elicited enthusiastic response from the readers and made *Hiroshima's* sensation inevitable. How these two narratives shaped the American attitude toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki must be reconsidered in this day and age.

Chapter 4, “Lewis Mumford and the Possibility of Nuclear Criticism” will focus on the anti-nuclear critique written by Lewis Mumford. Mumford is well known for his various works dealing with human civilization, such as *The Story of Utopias* (1922) and *The Condition of Man* (1944), which have been mainly discussed in historical and sociological circles. Based on these previous writings, Mumford started to publish nuclear critiques from 1945. Unlike most news coverages or media narratives on atomic bombs in the post Hiroshima and Nagasaki era, Mumford emphasizes humanity and insists that the use of atomic bomb should be recognized as a sin. Mumford’s nuclear critique can be seen as a counter-narrative toward the dominant atomic discourse that was spread predominantly through the media and official statements. To the present day, some historians such as Robert J. Lifton, Greg Mitches and Paul Boyer have already discussed Mumford’s atomic critique, but they have not focused on how these ideas originated. Considering this point, while mainly focusing on Mumford’s 1946 nuclear critique, this chapter will attempt to answer the following questions: in what aspect does Mumford’s nuclear critique differ from the dominant atomic narrative in the U.S.? When the two atomic bombs are discussed from a humanistic perspective, would it be possible to reevaluate Hiroshima and Nagasaki in American literary circles?

Based on the discussions from the previous four chapters, the fifth chapter, called “Retelling Nagasaki: Susan Southard, *Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War*” will consider the current situation surrounding Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s narrative sphere, focusing on the remarkable work of non-fiction published by the

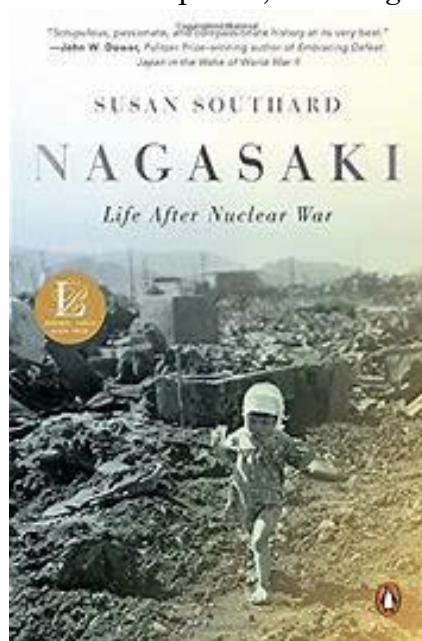


Figure 3: The cover photo of *Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War* (2015)

American writer Susan Southard in 2015.

This award-winning reportage is markedly dissimilar from the American official atomic narrative. In her book, Southard sheds light on the lives of the Nagasaki hibakushas by mainly focusing on five survivors, all teenagers at the time of the bombing. It should be noted that by highlighting the historically overshadowed victims, Southard endeavors to create a new framework for understanding the Nagasaki bombing. When we consider that for decades, as John W. Treat notes, the

pain of atomic bomb survivors have been overlooked in the American literary context, Southard’s *Nagasaki* may hold the key to retelling the story of the 1945 atomic warfare in an entirely new light. When *Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War* won the Dayton Literary Peace Prize in 2016, Southard emphasized in her speech that the “witnesses” of the victims have been largely ignored in the American atomic narrative sphere, and that this is one of the main reasons why she was compelled to write this hibakusha story.

This raises the question of why, after a long period of silence, the hibakushas’ life stories appeared in 2015. What do we need to understand about this ambitious counter-narrative to the conventional atomic discourse? Could this

text be read as something that can both overcome and update the dominant American atomic narrative? The purpose of the last chapter is to answer these questions while reconsidering the meaning of Southard's Nagasaki narrative. Additionally, how Southard's Nagasaki story fits in the American atomic narrative history will be investigated.

Finally, the meaning of this thesis will be explained through the history of former studies. For over 70 years, much has been discussed and investigated from various academic angles on the issue of the two atomic bombs being dropped over the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Most studies focus on the background of the historical, sociological, and political aspects of the bombings.

There is, however, a "unique" academic approach that came into fashion in the 1960s, mainly among Japanese scholars, with the purpose of reconsidering the Hiroshima and Nagasaki issue from a broader perspective encompassing various academic disciplines such as literature, history, sociology, and art. The collective term for these studies is "A-bomb literature research." From its inception, a series of critical reviews on acclaimed novelists such as Toge Sankichi, Hara Tamiki, Kurihara Sadako, Hayashi Kyoko, and Ibuse Masuji have been written. The academic movement in regard to atomic literature accelerated in the 1980s, when Nagaoka Hiroyoshi, a Japanese scholar, compiled *Nihon-no-Genbaku-Bungaku*, which consisted of fifteen volumes of Japanese atomic bomb literature. Following this, another celebrated Japanese scholar Kuroko Kazuo's *Genbaku-bungaku-ron* (Critical Response to Atomic Bomb Literature) was published in 1993. Two years later, an American scholar, John W. Treat, published *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and Atomic Bomb* (1995). Treat's book is an example of how Japanese literature on the a-bomb and its devastating consequences impacted

American scholars.

It is undeniable that we Japanese have a duty to focus not only on Japanese “A-bomb literature,” but also to study American literary works for a better understanding of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By examining such works of literature, it will be possible for the Japanese to gain knowledge of the distinctly American perspective of this calamitous event, one that is no doubt quite different from that of the Japanese “A-bomb literature.” As stated above, Japanese “A-bomb literature research” has a relatively long history, but there seems to be only a few studies on how American writers describe Hiroshima and Nagasaki through literary works. While some academics such as Martha A. Bartter and Gene Ray have examined how “nuclear issues” and “America’s paranoia of the unknown” are actualized in works of science fiction, such critiques have the tendency to focus not on the text itself but on the turbulent sociological situation of the Cold War era. Essentially, not enough research has been done on the early years when the notion of a nuclear holocaust first entered the American psyche or lexicon; furthermore, they scarcely investigate what such texts truly mean.

Therefore, this paper will focus on Hiroshima and Nagasaki narratives, written and told by American war journalists, Christian ministers, non-fiction writers, and critics, all of whom felt compelled to speak out about the two bombed cities. One important purpose of this study is to uncover their innermost thoughts on the bombings and unintentional inherent stories behind such discourses. More precisely, the questions that must be asked are: 1) What aspects of the reportages do the authors focus on? 2) Are there any differences between their discourses, and if there are, what are those differences? These are the questions at the core of this study.

The American stance toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki was quite sensational for me, who, as an average Japanese student, had been taught by teachers, parents, and relatives that Japan was the victim when it comes to the dreadful events of August 1945. I still remember how shocked I was when, upon starting my research, I read the novel *Empire of the Sun* (1984), written by J. G. Ballard. The main character of this story, Jim, is a young British man captured by the Imperial Japanese Army and is imprisoned in a concentration camp in China. On August 9, 1945, he witnesses a large, bright light shining over the far east. It was the atomic explosion of Nagasaki.

But a flash of light filled the stadium, flaring over the stands in the south-west corner of the football field, as if an immense American bomb had exploded somewhere to the north-east of Shanghai....Jim smiled at the Japanese, wishing that he could tell him that the light was a premonition of his death, the sight of his small soul joining the larger soul of the dying world.

However, even after this incident, the story continues as if nothing significant had taken place and the novel finishes with a happy ending. In contrast to the hibakushas' stories, no one dies or is injured because of the bomb. The bombing of Nagasaki is merely mentioned in passing, with no influence on the storyline. This was the first time I realized that the story of the atomic bomb could be told with a different perspective than that of the hibakushas.

The standpoint of *Empire of the Sun*, which is markedly different from that of the Japanese, raised an awareness within myself of how crucial it is to regard a particular issue from various angles. Thanks to this realization, I have come to see Hiroshima and Nagasaki in a broader sense. The ultimate objective of this thesis

is to help resolve the discrepancy among the people discussing the memory of the two events and shed new light on the atomic narrative sphere by introducing a transpacific perspective.

The title of this thesis, *Atomic Evangelists*, has nothing to do with American evangelical churches or any organization in particular: there is no intention of making any political implications with the use of the word “evangelists”. However, considering that words like nuclear energy, atomic bomb, or simply “atom” have long been used alongside Judeo-Christian imagery in the United States, the works of writers such as the war correspondents, non-fiction writers, and journalists mentioned in this thesis share some common ground with Christian pastors. These writers have explained the atomic bomb using simple words so that the U.S. readers can comprehend it easily. The point I find most fascinating is that these writers, since the inception of the atomic weapons, have strived to express their views on nuclear energy in a country where religion, science, and mass media are inextricably associated. Some have openly “praised” atomic power in the name of God: in this narrative sphere, victims under the mushroom cloud are disregarded. When an event is told and committed to memory within a certain context, one should reconsider its implications: there may be a vast universe of parallel stories that are excluded from that discourse.

William Downey, who was a military chaplain assigned to the 509th Composite Group in charge of delivering the atomic bombs to their Japanese targets, celebrated the successful creation of the deadly weapons in his sermon. He spoke the following words during Mass shortly before the box car flew over Japan on August 8, 1945.

Almighty Father, who wilt hear the prayer of those that love thee, we pray

thee to be with those who brave heights of thy heaven and who carry the battle to our enemies. Guard and protect them, we pray thee, as they fly the appointed rounds. May they, as well as we, know thy strength and power, and armed with thy might may they bring this war to a rapid end. We pray thee that the end of the war may come soon and once more we may know peace on earth. May the men who fly this night be kept safe in thy care, and may they be returned safely to us. We shall go forward trusting in thee knowing that we are in thy care now and forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.¹

As George Zabelka, another chaplain in this mission later recalled, Downey subsequently came to strongly regret blessing the atomic bomb. The primary mission of these chaplains was to pray for the safe return of the bombardiers and to wish success in dropping the bombs on the Japanese cities. There seemed to be nothing wrong with this mentality in the context of August 1945. However, after the actual casualties and damages were made known, these chaplains' holy discourses can be read in an entirely new light. Thus, the act of "telling a story" sometimes reaches far beyond its original intent, in some cases leading people to unexpected destinations.

¹ This sermon is quoted from <https://www.lewrockwell.com/2007/10/laurence-m-vance/should-christians-be-military-chaplains/>

Chapter 1: First Correspondents' Atomic Reportage

I. Dispatch on the Pain of Others: Homer Bigart's Hiroshima Coverage

Both mentally and physically, it is impossible for humans to completely understand a certain incident unless they experience it for themselves. For many years, various Japanese atomic-bomb literature writers have written about their experience based on their own stories and most of them are survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It must be noted that when discussing Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the manner in which the writer is connected to the bomb experience is crucial. Once that is established, we must examine how these writers describe Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

For example, Hara Tamiki, one of the most well-known writers of a-bomb literature, described the horrible reality of Hiroshima just after the bomb detonated. In *Summer Flower* (1947), he writes as follows.

Someone called me in a sharp, pitiful voice. Below I saw a naked young boy whose lifeless body was completely sunk in the water, and two women squatting on the stone steps less than four feet from the corpse. Their faces were swollen twice their natural size, distorted in an ugly way, and only their scorched rumpled hair showed that they were women. Looking at them, I shuddered rather than felt pity. (*The Crazy Iris*, 44-5)

The narrator "I" is not just a bystander, but one of the citizens who witnessed and experienced the white light on August 6, 1945. The narrator's reaction to the suffering victims may seem rather cruel, but this "cruelty" also shows that the writer identifies himself with the bomb victims. The victims could have been the writer himself because they shared the same horrible experience on the same day

and place. The narrator's eye is directed not only to the pain of the bomb victims, but also to the narrator himself. Throughout its history, Japanese atomic bomb literature has represented the pain of bomb victims and most of them have been written by the bomb survivors.

This raises two questions: how was the pain of bomb victims seen through the eyes of "others," who had not experienced Hiroshima/Nagasaki? Moreover, how could they describe the unimaginable pain of the bomb victims?

When we focus on U.S. newspaper coverage soon after the bombings, we can see a remarkable tendency. That is to say, as soon as the first atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima, "nuclear-control" became one of the biggest issues that the people were urged to consider. For example, on August 7, 1945, an editor of the *New York Herald Tribune* had already written an editor's note titled "The Atomic Bomb," and in this postscript, the editor connotes that this new weapon could bring about the destruction of the human race. He says:

It is as if the gruesome fantasies of the "comic" strips were actually coming true. It is as if we had put our hands upon the levers of a power too strong, too terrible, too unpredictable in all its possible consequences for any rejoicing over the immediate consequences of its employment. (*New York Herald Tribune*, August 7, 1945)

This note shows that from an early stage following the bombing of Hiroshima, the Americans had become obsessed with the idea that someday, perhaps in the near future, another atomic bomb created by another country could very well be dropped on any U.S. city. However, the "we" in the editorial note signifies only the U.S. citizens, who had not experienced the atomic holocaust. The dead citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are not included. On this point, one may say that the U.S.

response to Hiroshima and Nagasaki clashed with that of Japan's from the outset. On one hand, Japanese people considered Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a starting point of world peace, but on the other, the Americans recognized the events as the dawn of a horrible atomic holocaust. This is one reason behind the discrepancy between the American and Japanese attitudes regarding the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, this sort of disagreement may be resolved if the two nations make attempts to understand the historical and social background of the other. It is vital that the Japanese try to see things from the American perspective.

In the 1960s, some American writers successfully described the U.S. citizens' inner distress toward atomic warfare by writing fictional stories. However, there are some questions regarding these fictional movements. What was the main source of the American peoples' terror? Why did unease spread among U.S. citizens after the Second World War? In other words, what impact did Hiroshima and Nagasaki have to the American people? In regard to these questions, the newspaper coverages of Hiroshima and Nagasaki just after the Second World War may play a significant role in providing some answers.

In this section, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki coverage led by the *New York Herald Tribune*, one of the major newspapers in the U.S., will be examined closely, focusing especially on the Hiroshima reports written by Homer Bigart (1907-91). Bigart was a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and is to this day regarded as one of the most acclaimed journalists of the 20th century. He was chosen as one of the press tour members by the U.S. government, which meant he directly witnessed the aftermath of Hiroshima in early September 1945.

There is one thing that should be kept in mind. Homer Bigart's report on

Hiroshima is not an example of ordinary journalism. Rather, it is laden with literary techniques that allows it to be read as "literature." This is one of the important reasons why this paper focuses on his "Hiroshima report." Of course, a "reportage" can be analyzed from various academic approaches, and each approach can have different results, since their perspectives differ from one other. In this paper, this report will be interpreted from a literary point of view, while focusing on the text itself, and attempt to reveal the author's idea and attitude toward Hiroshima. By doing so, some new aspects of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki reports may be discovered as a result of a completely new and different approach.

The main objective of this section is to analyze the "narrative technique" of Homer Bigart's Hiroshima report, and to investigate what we can learn from the effects of this technique. To demonstrate these points, it will be useful to first have an understanding of the tendency of the *New York Herald Tribune's* coverage of the atomic bomb during August 1945. Next, Bigart's Hiroshima report will be analyzed in detail, focusing on three significant points.

II. How the *New York Herald Tribune* Covered Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August and September 1945

First, it must be examined how Hiroshima and Nagasaki was reported by the *New York Herald Tribune* from August 7 to the end of September in 1945.

The articles that emphasize the atomic bomb's destructive power most frequently appear from August 7 to 15. These articles not only stress the bomb's devastating power, but simultaneously give biased information about the atomic bomb to the readers: they explain how the confidential "Manhattan Project" was launched and emphasizes the wondrous possibilities of nuclear energy for future

generations. Sometimes, these articles applaud the success of the two atomic bombs with photographs of the scientists who created them. It seems that in those days, these scientists were considered “heroes,” although they would later suffer from the tremendous guilt of having created such monstrous weapons.

It was just after the end of the Second World War that another, more apocalyptic kind of article started to appear frequently. These articles expressed more concern toward "nuclear control," and warned the public that the future use of atomic bombs can bring devastating consequences to humankind. The previously mentioned editor's note, “The Atomic Bomb,” is a typical example. What is most interesting about such articles is that they have two different agendas. Though both types of articles discuss "nuclear control," their tones are very different.

The first kind leans heavily toward Christianity. As several pastors commented on August 13th, atomic power is seen as a force equaling God's power, and therefore humans must not abuse it. Based on this line of thinking, they released multiple statements promoting nuclear control. One of the pastors stresses that “the thing we have to remember is that the power in the atom lay inert for centuries. Science did not create that power. It is God's power. We must pray for its constructive use in the words of the Lord's prayer, for Thine is the Power.” It is apparent that this logic defining atomic energy as God's power is one feature of the American mindset, and is rarely seen in Japan, where Christian faith has not taken root in society.

The second type of article is more political. They demand stricter nuclear control because if every nation has atomic bombs, the destruction of the human race will surely become inevitable. It is obvious that behind this logic, there is a fear of being attacked by a foreign country. Such articles continue to appear until

Homer Bigart's Hiroshima reportage comes out on September 5, 1945, but after that, "Hiroshima and Nagasaki issues" gradually fade out.

III. Homer Bigart's Perspective Toward Hiroshima

Homer Bigart's "Hiroshima Reportage" appeared as the top issue on September 5, 1945. It is titled "A Month After the Atom Bomb: Hiroshima Still Can't Believe It," and consists of six chapters. As the title shows, this is one of the first on-the-spot reportages written just after the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Before this report, he had written several articles for the *Herald Tribune*. For example, one was entitled "Air View of What Was Nagasaki: People Plod Across a Vast Ruin" appeared on August 28, 1945, but this Nagasaki report focuses primarily on the damages of infrastructure and buildings, so its readers could not be informed on what happened to the people in Nagasaki after the bomb.

The same can be said about the first paragraph of this Hiroshima report. When taking a look at the first few sentences, it seems that there are no notable differences compared to the former atomic bomb coverages. It begins with the detailed description of the damages suffered by the city and the number of the people who died. The writer describes these things objectively, not subjectively.

However, when the text is carefully examined, it becomes apparent how the readers will likely be drawn in by the writer's ingenious narrative technique. Because of the skillfully executed writing, the readers effectively relive the fatal day of the Hiroshima bombing. Let us explore these "narrative techniques" in detail.

IV. The Eyes of the Japanese

Bigart's Hiroshima report starts as follows.

On the morning of Aug. 6, the 340,000 inhabitants of Hiroshima were awakened by the familiar howl of air-raid sirens. The city had never been bombed—it had little industrial importance....At 8 a.m. the "all clear" sounded. Crowds emerged from the shallow raid shelters in Military Park and hurried to their jobs in the score of tall, modern, earthquake-proof buildings along Hattchobori, the main business street of the city. Breakfast fires still smoldered, in thousands of ovens—presently they were to help to kindle a conflagration.

Upon reading this report, the readers can see what the people of Hiroshima experienced on the morning of August 6, 1945, because the story is based on the eyewitness accounts of the Hiroshima citizens. Therefore, the readers can have a clear and vivid image of what it must have been like to be in Hiroshima on Aug.6. As far as one can ascertain, this type of narrative first appears after the *Herald Tribune* started to cover the atomic bomb issue. What is more, we must focus on the fact that the writer uses the Japanese witnesses as "storytellers." These storytellers play a significant role within the text, because they possess the power to tell the reader what truly happened to the Hiroshima citizens on that day. Another storyteller shares his experience:

When Lieut. Taira Ake, a naval surgeon, reached the city at 2:30 P.M., he found hundreds of wounded still dying unattended in the wrecks and fields on the northern edge of the city. "They didn't look like human beings," he said. "The flesh was burned from their faces and hands, and many were blinded and deaf..."

"The first thing I [Hirokuni Dadai] saw was brilliant flash," he said.

"Then after a second or two came a shock like an earthquake. I knew immediately it was a new type of bomb. The house capsized on top of us and I was hit with falling timbers."

This narrative technique using the Japanese people as "storytellers" allows the U.S. readers to see the destruction of Hiroshima not as a fantasy or an incident dissociated from their daily lives, but as something very real and close. The readers are integrated with the protagonists in the story of Hiroshima.

V. The Old Man and the Writer

In the middle of this text, the readers meet a strange "old man." At first glance, this "old man" does not seem to be a significant figure, but it must be emphasized that he is actually one of the important characters in this text. The following excerpt appears just after the press tour members asked the naval lieutenant to halt some pedestrians and gather eyewitness accounts of the blast.

"They may not want to talk to you," he [the naval Lieutenant] said. But finally he stopped an old man, who bared his gold teeth in an apparent gesture of friendship.

"I am a Christian," said the old man, making the sign of the cross. He pointed to his ears, indicating deafness, and the lieutenant, after futile attempts to make him hear, told us that the old man, like many others, apparently had suffered permanent loss of his hearing when the crashing blast of the atomic bomb shattered his eardrums....Down one street was the ruined wall of a Christian church, and near it the site of the Japanese Second Army headquarters.

The first thing that must be noted is that there are "dialogues" in this scene. In

fact, this interaction between the "old man" and the writer may not seem like a traditional dialogue because only the "old man" speaks in the text. In this respect, some may argue that this is only a "one-way communication." Besides, it is "we" the readers who meet "the old man," not just the writer. However, the significance lies in the fact that the writer dares to focus on the actions of the old man, who reveals his Christian faith while showing his cross. Furthermore, when the writer reports on how much damage Hiroshima suffered, he does not forget to describe "the ruined wall of a Christian church". This mention of "the ruined Christian church" corresponds with the communication with the old man. In other words, "Christianity" functions as a common concept or sign shared between "the old man" and the writer. For this reason, the excerpt can be seen as a "dialogue" between this old man and the writer. Thus, we can witness the "dialogue" between the old man and the writer in this scene, but the writer attempts to hide himself from the text: though the writer surely exists there, he seems to be missing from the text, since he does not include anything he might have said to the old man. For this reason, the reader may have the impression that only the old man talks in the text. This makes the readers feel as if they entered the world of the story and had a conversation with the old man. However, they may later find that this is only an illusion.

Who is this "old man" and why does his name remain unmentioned in the text? In other words, why did the writer not give him a name? The most straightforward answer is that the writer could not ask the old man his name because of his deafness. However, we should think of this question on a more profound level, because if this Christian old man is given a name like Dadaï Hirokuni or Kanazawa Masao, he suddenly becomes a fixed character and cannot

be perceived as just a fragile Christian man. This old man chooses to introduce himself not with his own name, but with his Christian faith, because by doing so, he thought he could bring himself closer to the Americans. In other words, "being a Christian" is his entire identity, and is more important than his real name. By introducing an old man who has nothing except his "faith," the readers are made aware of the fact that they are interchangeable with the characters in the text.

VI. Who are "We?"

Finally, let us focus on the use of "personal pronouns" in this text. A close examination reveals that the Hiroshima and Nagasaki reports have a certain tendency when it comes to the usage of personal pronouns. If the writer is equivalent to the narrator within the text, the writer tends to use "I" when referring to oneself. This type of narrator can be seen in George Weller's Nagasaki reports. If the writer describes the Hiroshima/Nagasaki story based on the eyewitness accounts of someone else, the writer is missing from the text and has the tendency to use the third person for the witness. This type of narrator can be seen in John Hersey's *Hiroshima*. However, Homer Bigart's Hiroshima reports do not fall into either of those categories. To be specific, instead of missing from the text, the writer comes into view by using the term "we." It is worth pointing out that both the first and last sentences of this Hiroshima report start with the word "we."

We walked today through Hiroshima, where survivors of the first atomic-bomb explosion four weeks ago still dying at the rate of about 100 daily from burns and infections which the Japanese doctors seem unable to cure.

...They also asked whether Hiroshima "would be dangerous for 70

years." We told them we didn't know.

This raises a question: who are "we"? One possible answer is that the word "we" signifies the writer and other press tour members. Or we could consider things from another angle: what if "we" includes the person outside the text, namely, the readers? When read this way, the entire report could be interpreted in a completely different manner, because if "we" includes the person outside the text, that person suddenly becomes one of the characters. The result is that they are confined to the text and unable to escape it. In this sense, the use of "we" can be understood as a literary technique to force the readers out of their tranquil daily lives into coming face-to-face with the dreadful reality of Hiroshima.

VII. What We Can Learn from Bigart's Hiroshima Coverage

As examined earlier, the initial Hiroshima and Nagasaki coverages might have failed to convey in a real sense the magnitude of destruction regarding the atomic wastelands, since they mainly focus on the post atomic age situation. Because of this, the readers most likely feel apprehensive about a future in which they must cohabitate with atomic bombs. On the other hand, such reportages do not help the readers imagine what truly happened in the two cities in August of 1945. When all these elements are taken into consideration, it is obvious that Homer Bigart's Hiroshima report contains some literary devices that differentiates itself from previous atomic bomb-related coverages.

As mentioned in the previous section, his narrative technique lures the readers into feeling that Hiroshima is something that is closely related to their daily lives, not some irrelevant incident that took place in a remote location. The first reason is that the readers go through a "simulated experience" when the

writer introduces the Japanese atomic bomb survivors as "storytellers." Secondly, the writer purposely inserts "the old man" whom he met by chance in Hiroshima as one who is only allowed to be defined by his Christian faith. As a result, the old man becomes interchangeable with the American readers, who are predominantly Christian. Finally, instead of using the third person or "I," the writer uses "we." Because of this, the readers are integrated into the text, and they see the city of Hiroshima through the writer's eyes. In other words, contrary to the former coverages, this Hiroshima report allows the reader to see the atomic warfare from the Japanese hibakusha's perspective, and the readers feel more involved in the atomic field.

All of these literary techniques show the writer's attitude toward Hiroshima. It is widely known that during the Korean War, a series of articles Bigart had written earned him a Pulitzer Prize, but at the same time, he was accused of undermining General of the Army Douglas MacArthur. As we can see from this episode, one may argue that this writer was not so obedient, though he was chosen as one of the press tour members by GHQ. Although there is no way to know his true character, one thing is for sure: he made a tremendous effort to write exactly what he saw and felt, taking pains to paint an honest picture without any dramatization.

Some critics say that before John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, which appeared as a top issue of the *New Yorker* in August 31, 1946, few reports covered the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with focus on moral problems. As a result, the American people did not have access to specific information on what happened to those who had been in the two cities in August of 1945. This might be one of the reasons why *Hiroshima* was a best seller, and subsequently became one of the most

important works of literature in the 20th century. However, this fact does not in any way mean that Homer Bigart's Hiroshima report failed to cover the damages suffered by the citizens. Indeed, the uneasy situation just after the Second World War forced the American people to read this type of early atomic report in a certain way. That is why people had no awareness of the dreadful reality the people of Hiroshima were forced to contend with even after reading Homer Bigart's report. The American were already obsessed with an atomic future from an early stage.

VIII. George Weller's Banished Reports and Fluctuating Nagasaki Narrative

In contrast to Bigart, whose Hiroshima report permeated the U.S. media immediately, another American war journalist, George Weller, was unable to have the American public read his Nagasaki reports until several decades later.

As a war correspondent of *Chicago Daily Express*, Weller sneaked into Nagasaki on his own just after the censorship began. Through September 6 to 9, 1945, he wrote several on-the-spot Nagasaki reports, then moved to Omuta City in Fukuoka Prefecture, where the internment camp was located. After interviewing several prisoners there, he once more entered Nagasaki and continued to write about the bombing of Nagasaki until September 25, 1945. The total of 32 reports he had written were censored, and then subsequently banned from being published. It was about 60 years later that these texts were found by his family member, then published as *First into Nagasaki* in 2005.

As Robert J. Lifton, an American psychologist, states in *Hiroshima in America* (1995), Weller's Nagasaki reports "would never appear in print in any form, *despite the fact that Weller felt rather dispassionate about (and indeed, endorsed) the atomic bombings*. Weller had bluntly described the physical and

medical effects of the Nagasaki bomb but ‘eschewed all horror angles,’ he later recalled” (50, emphasis added). For example, in the Nagasaki report written on September 8, 1945, Weller notes:

The atomic bomb may be classified as a weapon capable of being used indiscriminately, *but its use in Nagasaki was selective and proper and as merciful as such a gigantic force could be expected to be...* As one whittles away at embroidery and checks the stories, *the impression grows that the atomic bomb is a tremendous but not a peculiar weapon.* The Japanese have heard the legend from American radio that the ground preserves deadly irradiation. *But hours of walking amid ruins where the odor of decaying flesh is still strong produces in this writer nausea, but no sign of burns or debilitation.* Nobody here in Nagasaki has yet been able to show that the bomb is different than any other, except in the broader extent of its flash and a more powerful knockout (*First into Nagasaki*, 29-30, emphasis added).

According to this early dispatch, the atomic bomb is no different from any other weapon, and the use of the second atomic bomb is justified. However, Weller’s Nagasaki reports cannot be characterized as a mere endorsement of the atomic bomb. When these reports are examined more closely, we may discover that they have double meanings. It is true that Weller’s reports satisfy the desires of both the citizens and the U.S. government, which is the need to believe that the Japanese are savage. Inserting the POW’s accounts regarding the brutality of the Imperial Japanese Army works well in this light: while revealing the fact that Japan was not only the victim but also the perpetrator of brutal acts, the reports successfully help to decentralize Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

On the other hand, however, they discreetly raise a question on mass destruction. This double structure of Weller's reports has a strong correlation with the author's complicated point of view regarding the atomic holocaust and the American memory of the Second World War. In the next section, Weller's fluctuating Nagasaki narrative will be closely examined by shedding light on the difference between "what the author actually witnessed," and "what he believed" in the American literary context during the Second World War.

IX. Changing Attitude: "Early Dispatches"

Weller's Nagasaki report starts with the description of the damage done to buildings. Hibakushas do not appear at all in the early texts. In addition, as stated above, the narrator displays a positive attitude toward the use of the atomic bomb. There is no mention of any "victims." It is as if no one in Nagasaki got hurt. However, this tendency changes in a short period of time. First, one must focus on the narrator's perspective and ask this question: how does his viewpoint transition from focusing predominantly on the destructed buildings to devastated human bodies?

Weller's twelve Nagasaki reports can be categorized into four types. In the first type, which we will call Group A, the atomic bomb is not significantly different from any other weapon of mass destruction, and its power is underestimated. The Group B texts are derived from the accounts given by POWs: they mostly condemn the myriad of brutal acts led by the Imperial Japanese Army. The Group C texts, on the other hand, refer to "disease X," which is now known as radiation sickness and its harmful effect on the human body. Finally, the Group D texts mostly focus

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Figure 4: The POW camp in Koyagi, a small village near Nagasaki City, where Weller gathered the accounts of prisoners. (Courtesy of Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum)

on the damage to buildings but not on humans and depict the geographic panorama after the destruction. With these four categories in mind, the twelve Nagasaki reports will be investigated in respective order.

The earliest report, written on September 6, is turbulent. In fact, it is rather difficult to grasp the narrator's attitude toward the bombing of Nagasaki. On one hand, Nagasaki's gruesome condition is described in a calm tone, as follows:

The mystery of the atomic bomb is still sealed. But the ruins are here in testimony that not only Nagasaki but the World was shaken....They [the atomic bomb] are burning the last human bodies on improvised ghats of rubbish...What looked like disinterest amid Nagasaki's peace-imploring debris was the suppression of personal feeling in obedience to the emperor's order. (25-6)

The narrator casts sympathetic eyes toward the people of Nagasaki, who were forced to live in devastating conditions during and after the Second World War. Yet, this compassion is seen only in the beginning. In the following scene, the narrator's lack of information about the atomic wasteland is revealed. This is because Weller depended on the account of one surviving hibakusha instead of seeing for himself the damage done to the human bodies. In this first story, Nagasaki is universalized: it is not very different from any other bombed city.

The following four consecutive reports, which were written from September 7th to 8th, were a compilation of accounts and dialogue gathered from POWs in Nagasaki (see figure). They can be categorized as Group B on the basis that these accounts condemn the various brutal acts led by the Imperial Japanese Army. While calling attention to the appalling acts of savagery such as the Bataan Death March, these reports also reinforce the national memory within the reader, which can be traced back to the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Here, Nagasaki becomes decentralized as the crimes committed by the Japanese are examined under a harsh light. Furthermore, as Emily S. Rosenberg states in her book *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (2003), the American Memory, which can be traced back to the day when the Imperial Japanese Army invaded Pearl Harbor, makes an appearance. On one hand, Nagasaki and its citizens are the second bombarded victim, but on the other, they are accomplices to Japan's brutality. In the social climate of the U.S. in 1945, as John Dower states, Japan was considered a "Yellow Peril". This sentiment against the Japanese permeated the official narratives and mass-media, forming a stereotypical American wartime frame of reference. Dower also states that contrary to Germany, where only the Nazis were considered to be the root of all

evil, in Japan, everyone including non-combatant civilians were seen as villains. This social background enables us to conclude that the previous four Nagasaki reports reflect the national attitude dominant through the social, political, ideological context of the 1940s.

However, this ideological attitude gradually starts to change in the sixth report, which was written on midnight on September 8, just after Weller visited the prefectural hospital in Nagasaki. There are five things that should be noted about this change. First, nouns referring to a particular person or people, such as “several children,” “one woman,” or “fifteen-year old fattish girl,” start to appear. Before the sixth report, the bomb victims were just called “Nagasakians.” Second, the number of victims is gradually revealed. Third, the suffering people are introduced: “One woman caring for her husband shows eyes dim with tears” (37), “Now she lies moaning, with a blackish mouth stiff as though with lockjaw, and utter clear words. Her exposed legs and arms are speckled with tiny red spots in patches” (38). The narrator’s eyes are directed toward the suffering of others. The fourth point is mention of the unknown illness called ‘disease X,’ which turns out to be radiation sickness. Along with this, the narrator starts to call the patients “victims.” The last point is unmistakably political, and the narrator’s doubt toward the U.S. government can be seen for the first time: “They [radio rumors from America] are licked for a cure and do not seem very worried about it [the disease X]” (39).

This gradually shifting viewpoint is obviously influenced by the narrator’s own experience. The narrator says that during the daytime on September 8th, he visited the hospital in Nagasaki, where he witnessed some seriously injured hibakushas for the first time. Just a day before entering Nagasaki, Weller

comments on his impression of Kanoya, Kagoshima, where the damage to the city was relatively small. At this stage, he states that the United States Army seems to have spared the lives of civilians. It is obvious that what he subsequently saw in the hospital in Nagasaki was powerful enough to overturn his previous impression toward the bombed Japanese cities. Children with no hair, a group of women wrapped in bloody bandages, a nameless woman shedding tears beside her dead husband: every one of these violent scenes serve to tear down the dominant story which maintained that not only was the atomic bomb not very different from any other weapon, but also that all Japanese were evil and brutal without exception, therefore deserving of the atomic bomb.

As Rosenberg states, the U.S. promoted this view on a nation-wide scale during the Second World War. These dominant stories had long existed at the core of the American wartime memory. They were shaped artificially, as John Dower explains in *War without Mercy* (1986), when shortly after the U.S. entered the Second World War, the U.S. government started to produce a series of propagandistic documentaries. One example of these films, called *Know Your Enemy—Japan* was released on August 9, 1945, the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. About this film, Dower states as follows:

Know Your Enemy—Japan was a potpourri of most of the English-speaking world's dominant clichés about the Japanese enemy, excluding the crudest, most vulgar, and most blatantly racist. The filmmakers adopted a strongly historical approach, offering a lengthy survey of those aspects of Japan's past which Westerners believed had made the Japanese a modern menace. They began as almost everyone began in those days, and many still do, with scenes of samurai, echoes of a disciplined killer past. The film then cut to

a commentary on the Japanese mind, which was portrayed as being imprisoned in an ideological cage built of two unique elements: the Shinto religion (as perverted by the modern state) and belief in a divine emperor whose role was both sacred and secular. Out of this Shinto-emperor amalgam came Japan's cult of racial superiority, its sense of holy mission, and its goal of placing the "eight corners of the world" under a Japanese roof (encapsuled in the slogan *hakko ichiu*). (Dower 20)

The media had cemented these stereotypical images of the Japanese in the minds of the American people, and Weller was understandably affected by such preconceived notions prior to his visit to Nagasaki.

Weller's Nagasaki narratives start to waver after his visit to Urakami hospital. The narrator who originally endorsed the use of the atomic bomb gradually starts to show sympathy toward the hibakushas. For example, the seventh Nagasaki reportage, written twenty-one hours after Weller witnessed the events at the hospital, unmistakably belongs in Group B. It is all about the Bataan Death March, as well as a compilation of eyewitness accounts about the multitude of notorieties conducted by the Imperial Japanese Army.

However, the very next report, written only five hours later, reveals the details of radiation sickness, which was then called "disease X." The eighth report starts as follows:

The atomic bomb's peculiar "disease," uncured because it is untreated and untreated because it is undiagnosed, is still snatching away lives here. Men, women and children with no outward marks of injury are dying daily in hospitals, some after having walked around for three or four weeks thinking they have escaped. (43)

Although these two reports are written on the same day, the narrator's viewpoint suddenly shifts from the brutality of the Japanese to the pain felt by the hibakushas. This implies that the visit to the hospital and what he witnessed there had a tremendous impact on the narrator's mind regarding the atomic bomb. Here, the national memory, which can be traced back to the early 1940s, is in direct contradiction with what the narrator witnesses.

X. "Return to Nagasaki" and the Collapse of the Dominant Story

On September 9, 1945, the U.S. official team of investigation first entered Nagasaki for the purpose of conducting research at the atomic hypocenter. During this time, Weller fled to the neighboring prefecture of Fukuoka for ten days because his stay in Nagasaki was in fact unauthorized. The destination for his escape was Omuta City because it housed another notorious camp for prisoners of war. While staying at the POW camp, Weller wrote nineteen reports based on the eyewitness accounts collected from the prisoners. By enumerating these witness reports in large quantities, all about the brutal acts committed the Imperial Japanese Army, one aspect of the atomic bombs is brought to attention: the two bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki are the symbol of "liberty," as the prisoners were set free by the use of the bombs. In this line of thinking, the "Yellow Peril" Japanese civilians are entirely deserving of this nuclear weapon of mass destruction. This doctrine is repeatedly emphasized throughout these nineteen reportages, and closely linked with the dominant narrative in the U.S. The narrator's attitude regarding these nineteen reportages is clear. There is no sign of remorse or any sense of humanity toward the Japanese civilians.

However, the narrator's viewpoint starts to sway again in the following

reports, which are all written in Nagasaki from September 20th to 25th. These reports are called “Return to Nagasaki.” By focusing on these five reports in chronological order, we can see how the victims in Nagasaki were described.

The first text, written on September 20th, starts with the introduction of a Japanese doctor:

The gulf separating American and Japanese ideas of humanity is both deep and wide, according to Navy Chief Quartermaster Clarence Sosviale of Auburn, Massachusetts.... “Finally the [Japanese] physician operated but without anesthesia although he possessed plenty, and put the man’s mangled hand back together amateurishly, with little regard to the bones or tendons.” (131)

Like most “brutal” Japanese soldiers who committed heinous acts against the POWs, this Japanese doctor is described as inhuman and cruel. This report may be regarded as a sequel to the previous accounts gathered from the prisoners. To counterpoint this “cruel” Japanese physician, the narrator introduces an American doctor called Major Thomas Hewlett, “who was confronted with the problem of saving a man with a ruptured appendix on a prison ship where the Japanese refused all aid” (131). Here again, the narrator displays feelings of mistrust toward the Japanese. Although this report is written in Nagasaki, hibakushas do not make an appearance; they are treated as if they do not exist.

However, in the second report, written two days later on September 22th, the narrator’s attitude toward the Japanese once again becomes ambivalent. In this report, “what the narrator really sees” in the hypocenter contradicts “what he believes,” namely, the dominant story in the American psyche. As a result, the horrific scenes of the bomb’s aftermath and the suffering victims of Nagasaki are

overshadowed by an unreliable medical report submitted by the American doctors.

New cases of atomic bomb poisoning with an approximate fifty percent death rate are still appearing at Nagasaki's hospital six weeks after the blow fell, *but United States Navy physicians who have examined them report that the death rate is falling off. . .*

Whereas formerly twenty patients a day dwindling hair and their bone marrow affected were coming to Japanese hospitals, the rate is now fallen to about ten. Death, which at the time of the writer's first series of dispatches were eight daily, are now about five or less. (133, emphasis added)

The significance of this excerpt lies in the use of specific language. What the narrator sees with his own eyes are negated by using denial conjunctions, such as “but” or “whereas.” While these primary sources are denied, the statements given by the U.S. medical staff hold tremendous sway. Under this textual structure, the use of technical jargon lends credibility to the experts' statements while trivializing the suffering of the hibakushas. The same thing can be said about the conclusion of this text:

Loosely summarized, it may be said that Nagasakians suffer from what used to be known as “X-ray poisoning.” 21,000 died, *however, not because the atomic bomb's ray is deadly, but because with American planes in full view overhead, the population failed go in to air raid shelters and ignored earlier warnings.* Mitsubishi plant workers — including Allied prisoners whose camp was in the plant's heart — were killed when their empty shelters would have saved them, simply because the Mitsubishis chose to keep the war work going with enemy planes overhead. And Japanese

doctors are in agreement that losses from an atomic bomb can be more sharply cut by concrete shelters than by any drug. (135, emphasis added)

In hindsight, the assertion that “losses from an atomic bomb can be more sharply cut by concrete shelters” is misguided, since more recent scientific studies have concluded that no one can survive the atomic wasteland. The notable aspect of this scene is that the narrator denies what he had “witnessed” in the hospital and continues to insist that the true cause of atomic damage was not radiation, but the fact that the Japanese did not protect themselves properly. The narrator’s conflicting attitude is once more made apparent in this scene.

As a correspondent, Weller makes attempts to give accurate on-the-spot reports, but on the other hand, the American national memory does not allow him to recount the lives of the individual hibakusha people. Death is all around in the atomic wasteland. In this situation, each death has only statistical values for the U.S. investigative team. One factor that differentiates Weller’s narrative from these official records and stories is that the greater the atomic damage is, the more persuasive the American national memory becomes. Nagasaki is effectively decentralized from the historical narrative because of the accounts given by the POWs. However, this decentralization of Nagasaki also brings to light the narrator’s subconscious thoughts on the bombing. That is to say, Weller, who was swayed by witnessing in person the suffering victims in the atomic wasteland, unintentionally suppresses what he saw because it contradicted what the U.S. believed in during the Second World War.

XI. Nagasaki and the Engraved American Wartime Memory

Although Weller’s narratives are entitled *First into Nagasaki*, more than

two-thirds of his reports consist of the POWs' accounts. In fact, the length of the Nagasaki reports are relatively short, but as stated previously, it is the POWs' statements that play an important role. From Weller's Nagasaki narratives, it can be concluded that the American wartime memory of the Japanese is deeply rooted not only in the social context, but also in the American mindset. As earlier studies have verified repeatedly, it must be acknowledged that the Imperial Japanese Army committed all manner of inhumane acts during the Second World War. However, this raises the following question: is it possible to say that this historical background can justify the use of the two atomic bombs? It has been almost 75 years since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and even today, this is a delicate, controversial, and political problem.

The American national memory was later reinforced by the eminent official narrative titled "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," which was written by Henry Stimson in 1947. Since its release, this official statement has had an enormous impact on the U.S. society. According to this statement, the primary objective of the U.S. during wartime was "to end the war in victory with the least possible cost in the lives of the men in the armies," which in effect justified the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in that it successfully ended the Japanese war (210). This can be seen as a variation of what the prisoners repeatedly testified in Weller's reports. Under such historical and political context that has little room for humanity, Weller was unquestionably torn between the two stories. On one hand, as the dominant American discourse has it, all Japanese are brutal and barbaric without exception, but on the other, they too are suffering human beings.

Like many other correspondents who entered Hiroshima and Nagasaki at an early stage, Weller made attempts to cover the controversial stories, but at the

same time, he also tried to report on the actual conditions of war violence. Along with the Nagasaki coverage, he also wrote about nameless civilians who became the victims of wartime atrocities. However, what we can learn from Weller's Nagasaki reports is that this historical genocide that took place on August 9, 1945 has an entirely different meaning for this writer. Although it was one of the largest mass holocausts, his narrative does not allow hibakushas to be innocent war victims; August 9th and the series of atrocities committed by the Japanese army were in one continuous string of events in the American consciousness. By covering the aftermath of Nagasaki and the POWs' accounts simultaneously, Weller's banished reports can be re-read not only as one of the first on-the-spot atomic articles, but also as the wartime national story that was deeply engraved within the American memory.

Chapter 2: Genesis in 1945: The Rhetoric of William L. Laurence's Nuclear Articles and Judeo-Christian Atomic Propaganda

I. Introduction

On August 7, 1945, *The New York Times* ran a sensational article about something that no one had ever heard of before. The title of the front page was “First Atomic Bomb Dropped on Japan: Missile Is Equaled to 20,000 Tons of TNT; Truman Warns Foe of ‘Rain of Ruin’.” Nearly all the pages were devoted to articles relating to the first atomic bomb, such as hitherto unknown details of the Manhattan Project, testimonies of eminent scientists, and the huge panorama of the atomic wasteland. Obviously, the most outstanding among them was the statement signed by Harry S. Truman, 33rd President of the United States. This statement not only suggested that the power of the atomic bomb should be “praised” as God’s power, but also emphasized that the U.S. acquirement of this power in advance of Germany is “Providence.” Furthermore, atomic energy is described as an overwhelming, celestial power far beyond any human capacity. It may be said that this rhetoric effectively promoted the brilliance and necessity of nuclear energy to the American public.

However, the rhetoric of Truman’s statement was not a new one. Recent historical works suggest that long before Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear energy had been described within a familiar frame of reference. According to Spencer Weart, science was already associated with the image of “fear” in the early 19th century, when the French writer Cousin de Grainville published *The Last Man* in 1805. Since then, the “apocalyptic image” gradually emerged not only in the Judeo-Christian context, but also in the narrative of science (Weart, 29). In such

discourses, scientists are often likened to alchemists in the Middle Ages, who were allegedly involved in mysterious magic. Besides that, science was also depicted as a force that could bring an end to human society. These stereotypical images can be seen in classic literary works such as H.G. Wells' apocalyptic novel, *The World Set Free* (1914), or Jules Verne's science fiction novel, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea: A Tour of the Underwater world* (1870).

It is notable that Weart tells a story of the atomic bomb in his 1988 book, *Nuclear Fear*. In it, he acknowledges that this story is based on the numerous other stories written about the atomic bomb, which had already gained popularity and taken root in the American mindset. In this fictional story of the atomic bomb, the most remarkable character is a man who is fanatically obsessed with scientific research. This man secretly conducts experiments using atomic energy in "a laboratory hidden down a shaft deep in the earth," and there he attempts to "construct a weird creature, a sort of living robot armed with irresistible energies" (3-4). In the story, there is "a woman who might have been the scientist's lover" (4). While fearing the scientist's frenzied experiments, she devotes herself to supporting his endeavors. Toward the end of the story, "enormous clouds mushroomed into the sky, radioactive poisons swept the planet," and the scientist's fatal weapon destroys the entire planet. The scientist and his lover are the only people who survive, and in the end of the story, they "joined hands" (4). Weart comments on this self-created story as below:

There are some curious things about this legendary tale, which I have constructed as a composite of numberless stories familiar to every citizen of the twentieth century. A close look will show that such tales included divergent and even contradictory ideas. Yet in some odd fashion the ideas

fitted neatly together. Still more remarkable, the images were plausible. Atom-powered city, potent ray, strange creature, blasted plain—each could happen. Images so plausible, and also so impressive, might have been expected to exert some kind of influence on the people who made the political, economic, and military decisions that determined the history of nuclear energy. . . . *The most curious and unsettling thing is that every theme in such tales was already at hand early in the twentieth century, decades before the discovery of nuclear fission showed how to actually release the energy within atoms. The imagery, then, did not come from experience with real bombs and power plants. It came from somewhere else.*

(4 emphasis added)

Weart emphasizes that the images of the atomic bomb had already existed in American minds long before the actual bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This insight also reveals that those nuclear images, which date back to the early 20th century and have since become a frame of reference, formed the basis of the dominant atomic narrative in the United States.

Based on these preceding studies on the public image of atomic energy, the widely read newspaper articles written by William L. Laurence must be inspected. A former *New York Times* science writer in the post-Hiroshima/Nagasaki era, Laurence wrote a series of ten articles and a work of non-fiction called *Dawn Over Zero* (1946). It is crucial to examine the two closely in order to gain deeper understanding of the dominant atomic narrative of those times. *Dawn Over Zero* is a revised compilation of the previously written articles, published a year after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These texts were not only scientific articles that described nuclear energy in simple words, but also presented the

familiar story of the atomic bomb, which subsequently spread all over the U.S. society in the post-Hiroshima/Nagasaki era. According to Beverly Ann Deepe Keever, these series of reports, “which [were] written for the government, would instead be distributed on behalf of the government by *The Times*, free of charge, to newspapers throughout the country”. Furthermore, “[t]he *Times* reproduced the series as a pamphlet for use in schools and for the public” (73). For those who did not have a clear knowledge on the atomic bomb, Laurence’s reports served as a comprehensible introductory handbook.

Furthermore, these atomic reportages were based on previous texts, and familiar images of nuclear energy can

be observed throughout the entire text. Atomic power is synonymous with the Biblical image of God, and the post-

Hiroshima/Nagasaki era is expected to transform into a new world; without doubt, the Judeo-Christian ethos permeates the entire text. As Keever observes, Laurence’s atomic narrative is an amalgam of various texts derived from the dominant discourses of nuclear power within the U.S.

Besides minimizing the existence, persistence and hazards of radiation, Laurence used another device that helped shape readers’ perceptions and outlook for the world’s new atomic order—and to shape them in a way



figure 5: William L. Laurence, from the third page from *The New York Times*, August 7th, 1945 issue.

beneficial to the U.S. government. That device was the use of the writing devices of metaphors and imagery that pulled at some of his readers' cultural-religious biases: biases against non-white races, against oral cultures and against worshippers outside the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. He also added language and images from science fiction, ancient mythology, Euro-American exploration and the U.S. frontier. (74)

Regarding this point, Laurence's atomic reportages do not seem to be particularly different or innovative compared to other nuclear narratives that appeared during and just after the Second World War.

However, here it would be worth noting that on one hand, Laurence's atomic reportages functioned as a sort of "evangelism," which spread knowledge on the power of the atomic energy with a simple, biblical narrative via the media, but on the other, they might be considered a propagandic narrative, which triggered fear of nuclear power within the American society. Considering these points, Laurence's series of atomic reportages can be analyzed as an evangelical narrative aiming to have the public embrace atomic energy as an omnipotent power. Based on this interpretation, the texts will be investigated as political propaganda in the next section. Such propagandistic material suited the turbulent circumstance of the U.S. during the 1940s.

II. Memory of the Jewish Intellectual Community and the American Ideological Atomic Story

One can say that Laurence's series of atomic narratives have significant correlation with his hidden background. In this chapter, before discussing his atomic reportages in detail, first it would be useful to shed light on his personal

history and his “Jewish memory,” which coincided with the tumultuous social background of the early twentieth century shared by both Europe and the U.S.

William L. Laurence, or “Atomic Bill,”² was the only journalist who was allowed by the U.S. government to be involved in the top-secret Manhattan Project. In the issue of *The New York Times* on August 7, 1945, when Laurence was formally introduced to the public, he was described as the one who “obtained leave from this newspaper at the War Department’s request to explain the intricacies of the atomic bomb’s operating principals in laymen’s language.” In simple words, Laurence wrote a series of atomic reportages covering the Trinity test, which was the first detonation of a nuclear device in history, as well as the first formal dispatches on the Nagasaki bomb. For his eyewitness accounts of the bombing of Nagasaki and the ten subsequent articles on the development, production, and significance of the atomic bomb, he was awarded the 1946 Pulitzer Prize. He was without doubt one of the most acclaimed journalists who reported on the atomic bomb, but his private life was highly affected by the dark history of the late 19th century Europe.

William L. Laurence, born Lieb Wolf Siew, was a Lithuanian Jewish who fled to the U.S. in early 20th century from a small village belonging to the former Soviet Union. According to Laurence’s interview conducted by Louis M. Starr in 1956, this small village called Salantai was an Orthodox Jewish community from the time it originated in the Middle Ages. Laurence came from a pious Jewish family, and his peers in the village also shared a deep faith in Judaism. He later recalls that by the time he was eight years old, he could practically cite most of the

² This nickname was given not only because Laurence was well known as an expert in atomic bomb-related issues, but also because there was another *New York Times* journalist named “William H. Lawrence,” who had also written some articles on the Nagasaki bombing.

original Bible in Hebrew (3). Because of his religious upbringing, he studied Judaism from an early age to become a religious leader of this small community. However, he later chose a completely different path. It was just after he participated in the Russian Revolution that he fled to the United States alone.

When compared with other correspondents who had entered the devastated cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there are two distinctive elements that separate this writer from the rest. First, the U.S. government granted him a special privilege based on his vast knowledge on nuclear power, which he had been expanding from the early 1940s. Because of this “privilege,” he was the only journalist who was allowed to witness the first nuclear test held at New Mexico on July 16, 1945. According to Kever, “shortly before the surrender of Germany” in May, 1945, Leslie Groves, a former United States Army Corps of Engineers officer, “secretly approached *The Times* to ask it to release Laurence to the Army to officially chronicle the making of the A-bomb” (40). Groves later recalls the background of this recruit as follows:

To help prepare this press release and the many others that would be necessary, back in the spring we had secured the service of William L. Laurence, a science reporter for the *New York Times*....Laurence had an excellent reputation as a scientific writer, and after careful consideration and learning all we could of his background, I made an appointment to see Edwin L. James, the managing editor of the *New York Times*. I asked him to have Laurence available in case our conversation necessitated his presence. (325)

Second, in contrast to other correspondents, who wrote neutral on-the-spot reports about Hiroshima/Nagasaki, Laurence openly supported the U.S. decision

to drop the bombs on Japan and denied the existence of “radiation sickness.” Some scholars, such as Amy and David Goodman, recently denounced Laurence for his insincere attitude toward Hiroshima/Nagasaki, and they are calling for the withdrawal of his Pulitzer Prize. Considering the fact that his reports on the atomic bombings appeared all over U.S. newspapers, one point must be acknowledged: William L. Laurence was one of the most important persons involved in shaping the U.S. citizens' perspective and attitude toward nuclear weapons.

One of the most significant characteristics of Laurence's atomic texts is that they consistently deny radiation sickness, which means they ignore the actual bomb victims in the atomic wasteland. In fact, his atomic texts are far removed from hibakusha narratives that mainly focus on the suffering voice of the bomb victims. Even after the Nagasaki bombing, when Laurence witnessed the explosion from the sky, his narrative completely ignores the bombed civilians. Instead, the U.S. scientific achievement is featured in a positive light. The other feature is that his reports tell the story of the atomic bomb alongside biblical images. These two qualities can be seen in the article below, which was written following the Nagasaki bombing.

After five hundred thousand to a million years of his existence on this earth, during which his quest had appeared under many metamorphoses, man at last is within striking distance of his goal. For atomic energy brings within sight the realization of the dream of the ages. He now has within his grasp a philosophers' stone that not only will transmute the elements and create wealth far greater in value than gold, but will also provide him with the means for gaining a far deeper insight into the mysteries of living processes,

leading to the postponement of old age and the prolongation of life...He stands on Pisgah in the desert, gazing at a land of promise. (254)

“Pisgah” refers to Mount Pisgah in Deuteronomy 34:1-4, in which Moses’ death is depicted. Moses was blessed by God, and just before his death at the age of 120, he was given a large piece of land by his Lord.

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the Valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. And the LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, ‘I will give it to your offspring.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.”

Laurence typologically weaves biblical imagery into his atomic narrative, even though they are from a different context and era. These biblical references can be seen everywhere in Laurence’s narrative, which will be investigated in the next section. What should be noted here is that this rhetoric is inextricably linked to not only the U.S. political and religious background, but also to Laurence’s personal history.

In a 1956 interview, Laurence states his belief that science can be equated to religion, which in turn elicits the view that journalists are comparable to religious missionaries: journalists inform the public on current events and missionaries spread the word of God. Laurence’s view of associating atomic energy with God is evidently related to his Jewish upbringing and its intellectual, religious implications which can be traced back to the late 1800s.

As stated above, Laurence's personal history had a significant impact on his later texts on nuclear energy. In particular, the small village in Lithuania where he spent his early years until his departure in 1905 shaped his identity and beliefs. The village was called Salantai, or Salant in some texts. In a 1956 interview mentioned above, Laurence unveils his Jewish background. According to Laurence, Salantai was one of the Lithuanian villages that "became the great centers of Hebraic learning" starting in the 14th century. He also refers to the "exclusiveness" of this Jewish community as follows.

Because it was a forgotten part of the earth, a hinterland that was practically separated from the rest of the European culture, people never did bother them, so they could continue that tradition. . . . they [the Jewish in Salantai] lived there in the 19th century in a way that might have been the 15th century, the 16th century. It made no difference. They wore the same type of clothing. They lived the same kind of a life, because it was the same culture, you know. . . .

I think a 15th century rabbi could have come there and he wouldn't have found any difference. As far as living accommodations were concerned, it was the same primitive small little wooden houses, and no comforts, and only lamps and candles for lighting. For water, you had to go fetch it from a well. So conditions there were practically out of space and time. (1-2)

In this exclusive, conservative village where the center of Jewish academia was located, Laurence also recollects that reading any scholarly works such as Goethe, Schiller, Tolstoi were considered "secular learning". His father "was very strict" and wouldn't permit his young son to "to read these secular books" (6). Furthermore, he also recalls that there was no library in this village nor were there

any “secular” schools (4).

One may argue that in this medieval-like Jewish community, knowledge could be gained only through the teachings of Judaism. Along with this, it can be inferred from Laurence’s account that accessing the outside world was essentially forbidden. This repressed circumstance cannot be ignored when considering that Laurence successfully created the secret story of the atomic energy, which meant he revealed and exposed God in a way that was never done before. Unveiling the secret of the atomic energy, which he regarded as an omnipotent power, can be seen as a taboo, as can the act of exposing God’s power. It meant he gained “secular knowledge” that was expressly forbidden in the Judaic intellectual community. However restrictive this community might be, it is obvious that Laurence had been regarded and trained as one of the most promising Jewish intellectuals. In addition, as Beverly Ann Deepe Kever observes, “these multilingual talents later enabled Laurence to converse in their native languages with émigré scientists who had fled Nazi Germany’s anti-Semitic persecutions and helped to spark the development of a made-in-the U.S.A. A-bomb” (45).

There is another side to the story of Salantai: the incursion of Nazi-Germany. According to a record of JewishGen, an organization that investigates Jewish genealogy, there had been a massive persecution of Jewish citizens in this small village from the end of the 19th century. Consequently, Zionism emerged as it did in other eastern European communities. Between the late 1880s and early 1920s, more than three hundred Jewish people fled to the United States, Israel, and South Africa. According to the immigrants’ list which was compiled by Elaine Cohen, the number of Jewish “families” were around three hundred. This means

Volpert	Yehuda	Wolpert	Udel	Avraham	Anna Gerb		1890 &?		USA	Returned to Salant, than back to US
Zagenkahn	Benyamin	Sagenkahn	Benjamin R.	Shmuel	Hesa Tsvik		ca 1905	16	S.A./USA	1907, age 18, to US from Durban, S.A.
Zagenkahn	Hirsh	Sagenkahn	Henry	Shmuel	Hesa Tsvik		1911	18	USA	
Zagenkahn	Shmerel	Sagenkahn	Samuel	Shmuel	Hesa Tsvik		1904	19	USA	
Zalmanzon	Abram						1906	50	USA	
Zalmanzon	Chana						1906	40	USA	
Zalmanzon	Chaika						1906	6	USA	
Zalmanzon	Eclje						1906	9	USA	
Zalmanzon	Leyb						1906	15	USA	
Zaltsman	Aron						1904	28	USA	
Zaltsman	Hinde			Shmerel			1913	19	USA	
Zegerman	Abel						1904	16	USA	
Zegerman	Lazer						1905	17	USA	
Ziv	Leyb						1905	16	USA	

Figure 6: Part of the immigrant list of Salant, compiled by Elaine Cohen in 2005. We can find the name “Leyb Ziv” in the last line.

that a large percentage of people had left this village during this turbulent era. Laurence was one of those who fled to the U.S.

The most devastating incident in the history of Salantai took place in 1941, just after the incursion of Nazi-Germany. In a massive holocaust, more than 90% of the Jewish population, including Laurence’s own family, were executed. This tragedy could have happened to any Lithuanian Jewish.

According to Don Levin, a historian of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, “Lithuanian Jewry seems to have been the first Jewish community where the ‘final solution’ was actually implemented from the very beginning of German rule” (217). As for the fate of Salantai, we can make inferences from Levin’s following statement.

German attacks and physical brutality against Jews started almost from the very first day of their invasion of Lithuania, which formed part of “Operation Barbarossa”—Nazi Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union. Thus, in the days following June 22, 1941, in a number of towns near the German border in western Lithuania, the Jewish male population was dragged from their homes and beaten by SS men and local thugs before

being sent to labor camps set up in and around the Heidekrug forest near Klaipeda. . . .

Thousands of Jewish men and women in the cities were forcibly taken and dragged to places in the surrounding countryside where they were tortured and killed. Acts of murder, rape, and robbery took place every night. Victims were sometimes even forced to dig their own grave before they were murdered (217-19).

In fact, Laurence hardly ever mentions this massacre of Lithuania in detail, both during and after the Second World War. The exception is the interview which was tape-recorded in 1956. In this interview, when asked by Louis M. Starr about the Nazi-Soviet pact signed in June 1939, he reveals the following:

As you know, Hitler to me was a double enemy. My emotional reaction to Hitler obviously would be not only that I were Jewish. That would have made no difference. It would have been the same way as a believer in freedom and democracy. Hitler was a throw-back, Hitler was representing the darkest, the most evil, the most horrible, the most loathsome forces that had ever really manifested themselves in the entire history of man. . . .
(144)

As a *New York Times* journalist, Laurence rarely shows glimpses of his private political stance in his articles, as he is disinclined to abandon his position as a journalist. However, it is curious that from the early 1940s, he expresses trepidation toward Nazi-Germany through several news articles on nuclear energy. According to Keever, Laurence was playing an important role in spreading the notion that “the atomic bomb can be a countervailing power toward Nazism.” For example, in May 5, 1940, he wrote an article titled “Vast Power Source in Atomic

Energy Opened by Science,” which was published on the front page. In the subtitle, Laurence not only emphasizes that “Germany is seeking” atomic energy, but also expresses his own apprehension toward Nazi-Germany:

The news has leaked out, through highly reliable channels, that the Nazi government had heard of the research in American laboratories and had ordered its greatest scientists to concentrate their energies on the solution of this problem...All these research workers it was learned are carrying on their tasks feverishly at the laboratories of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute at Berlin.

Among the eminent scientists who were exiled from Europe and later involved in the Manhattan Project, the sense of unease toward Nazi-Germany already existed starting in the late 1930s and the early 1940s. Laurence, who had known of this concern among those American intellectuals, not only spread their fear through news sources to ordinary citizens, but also promoted the idea that nuclear energy can be a countervailing force against fascism, which was regarded as being evil. Therefore, Laurence’s atomic articles display a positive attitude toward nuclear energy from the outset. Nuclear energy “would provide the most powerful source of neutron rays that might possibly be used in the treatment of cancer.”

Furthermore, “they [nuclear energy] could even be used for making gold out of mercury.” It is also possible to infer how concerned Laurence was about Nazi-Germany from the fact that he was the first news person to write about nuclear power, which was confidential among both the American government and the émigré scientists from Europe. As the momentum of Nazism became more irrepressible and threatening, atomic power was described as an omnipotent force with the ability to eradicate “evil.”

On one hand, Laurence's atomic articles express alarm toward fascism, while they positively and metaphorically describe atomic energy as an omnipotent power that can overcome any hardship in this secular world. One may say that this characteristic of Laurence's atomic articles gives us a single "story." In this story, where atomic power is repeatedly emphasized as God's power, it is regarded as a force that can destroy "evil" or emasculate the power of fascism.

In a later atomic text published in 1946, which will be investigated in detail in a later chapter, Laurence emphasizes that the U.S. is the chosen country, using a familiar American frame of reference. He says, "It is the American people who have opened up this great new continent of atomic power. Destiny has placed its trust in our people by providing us with the key to this hitherto tightly locked 'cosmic cupboard,' and the American people must [...] keep faith with trust. We must develop and cultivate this continent into a new promised land" (273). Here, we can affirm that the Americans tended to regard good and evil as a binary concept, and Laurence's atomic narrative encouraged this way of thinking.

For the United States, the Second World War signified "the war against totalitarianism", and no other country should be given "providence" by God. Here, one atomic story created by a Lithuanian-Jewish journalist mostly known by his nickname coincided with the ideological story the entire nation embraced.

III. Laurence's Description of Atomic Power and the "Chosen" Country, America

By the early 1940s, the term "atomic power" was already associated with the image of the "almighty God" within the American society. Laurence's unprecedented atomic narrative was able to become the sole ideological nuclear story thanks to this frame of reference. For example, on September 9, 1921, nine

years before Laurence joined the *New York Times* as a science writer, a mysterious energy akin to the light of firefly had already been introduced, with the title “Chemists Predict Startling New Era”. According to this article, even the Bible “should be revised” to be consistent with the great scientific discoveries made by mankind. Here, the numerous triumphs of “science” are repeatedly celebrated within the Judeo-Christian frame of reference:

The Bible must be revised to meet the undreamed of accomplishments of science, Dr. Charles Baskerville, Laboratory Director of the College of the City of New York, told the chemists during the meeting [of the American Chemical Society]. . . . “Many of the miracles of the New Testament are everyday acts of master surgeons today,” Dr. Baskerville said. . . . “Thus science has made history at an overwhelming speed. In it all man acquired quite naturally a growing smugness of material omniscience. The pulpit has sought to harmonize what it did not understand with phraseology fifteen or more centuries old.”

Eight years later, on May 28, 1929, which is a year before Laurence started to write a series of articles regarding the atomic power, a tiny but prophetic article entitled “New Light on Atomic Energy” appeared in the *New York Times*. “Prof. Millikan,” a scientist who repeatedly appears in this article, displays a rather negative attitude toward the use of atomic energy. To Millikan, atomic energy is tantamount to the biblical image of creation, as stated below.

If man wishes to drive his subways and his steamships with atomic energy, he must learn how to build up atoms. This is not disintegration but creation—a process which Millikan believes cannot occur on the earth. So he bids us content ourselves with the old-fashioned sun as the only primal source

of energy that we shall ever have, and derive what comfort we can from the wisdom displayed by the Creator “in introducing some fool-proof features into His machine.”

What should be derived from these two articles on the discovery of nuclear energy is that from the early 1920s, nuclear energy was considered a celestial power that shall not be easily obtained by mankind. This rhetoric linking nuclear energy to biblical images would serve as a foundation of Laurence’s later atomic narrative. By using this frame of reference, his narrative morphed into a familiar story which was easily understood by its readers, thus becoming widespread among the American public.

However, it also should be pointed out that Laurence’s rhetoric of Judeo-Christianity and nuclear power has one unique element that cannot be recognized in other atomic narratives.

First, as we can see in the previous *NYT* articles or numerous narratives on atomic power that later appeared in the 1940s, nuclear power is frequently referred to as an omnipotent force: something that humans cannot easily access or learn about. These narratives often emphasize that nuclear power is a holy territory from which mankind should keep a safe distance from. As many Christian churches dictated in their sermons from the 1930s to the 1940s, there is a solid border dividing the realm of humans and God. For example, Donald Harrington, a Unitarian pastor of The Peoples Liberal Church, delivered a spectacular sermon “The Atomic Age: Doom or Dawn?” on October 7, 1945. Although Harrington’s narrative seems to have an inter-textual relationship with Laurence’s atomic narrative in some regards, one notable point is that Harrington recognizes nuclear power as a formidable and inaccessible existence.

Furthermore, while most news articles that appeared from the 1930s to the pre-Hiroshima and Nagasaki era optimistically regard nuclear energy as a form of “alchemy” having the potential to change human lives, they fail to explain its mechanism in detail. At the foundation of such narrative, there lies this widely shared belief based on the Judeo-Christian way of thinking: Man must obey the law of God and must not be allowed to either understand or violate God.

One could argue that Laurence’s atomic narrative breaks this taboo. While nuclear energy is described as omnipotent, the key aspect is that Laurence’s narrative does not express alarm or any negative feelings toward nuclear energy. Instead, by making use of a familiar framework and allegories, it retells the story of the atomic energy in novel fashion.

The optimism toward the power of the atom does not mean Laurence himself is irreverent of the Judeo-Christian God. Laurence recalls in a 1956 interview that he became an atheist during the time he was living in the Orthodox Jewish village, but also adds that this was because he was discontented with the insular world where the rabbis governed every aspect of life. While it may be true that Laurence considered himself an atheist, he is often found singing praises for atomic energy when his narrative and rhetoric are examined closely; nuclear energy had effectively replaced his religion, whether he is aware of it or not.

The following is an excerpt from a series of ten articles, when Laurence witnessed the first atomic explosion in the Trinity Test on July 16, 1945. The explosion is dramatized with use of both popular and secular imagery such as “symphony” and “grand finale.”

With the flash came a delayed roll of mighty thunder, heard, just as the flash was seen, for hundreds of miles. The roar echoed and reverberated

from the distant hills and the Sierra Oscuro range near by, sounding as though it came from some supramundane source as well as from the bowels of the earth. The hills said yes and the mountains chimed in yes. It was as if the earth had spoken and the suddenly iridescent clouds and sky had joined in one affirmative answer. Atomic energy—yes. It was like the grand finale of a mighty symphony of the elements, fascinating and terrifying, uplifting and crushing, ominous, devastating, full of great promise and great forebodings.

I watched the birth of the era of atomic power from the slope of a hill in the desert land of New Mexico, on the north western corner of the Alamogordo Air Base, about 125 miles southeast of Albuquerque. The hill, named Compania Hill for the occasion, was twenty miles to the northwest of Zero, the code name given to the spot chosen for the atomic bomb test. The area embracing Zero and Compania Hill, twenty-four miles long and eighteen miles wide, had the code name Trinity (Dawn over Zero, 4 emphasis added).

This meticulously crafted atomic drama can be interpreted as having strong correlations with Laurence's Jewish background. In this scene, the atomic bomb signifies two different elements. On one hand, it implies the end of the world, but on the other hand, it also announces the beginning of a new era. As stated previously, Laurence was brought up in a restrictive Jewish village where any "secular" knowledge was prohibited. Clearly, atomic power was for Laurence the bridge to uncharted territory. Contrary to the Lithuanian Jewish community, where Laurence was unable to gain much knowledge of the outside world, this new world created by the atomic energy is "full of great promise and forebodings."

For decades, the story of the Trinity Test has been told by various narrators. This historical incident, along with the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, has continued to be one of the most sensational literary themes of all time. One of the most frequently quoted words are by J. R. Oppenheimer, the director of the Los Alamos Laboratory:

We waited until the blast had passed, walked out of the shelter and then it was entirely solemn. We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried. Most people were silent. *I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita: Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and to impress him he takes on his multi-armed form and says, "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds."* I suppose we all thought that, one way or another. (Canady, 184 emphasis added)

Here, Vishnu, one of the principal deities of Hinduism, is quoted although there is no physical relation between this motif and nuclear energy. According to John Canady, the author of *The Nuclear Muse*, literary rhetoric and allusions are often employed by the Los Alamos scientists (184). Canady is openly critical of the scientists' use of such literary devices:

Clearly, Oppenheimer entangles his audience in a peculiarly literary conception of nuclear weapons—a conception which, through its historical air and religions provenance, contextualizes our understanding of the bomb within the tradition of human encounters with the divine and thereby leads us inescapably to questions of morality. Ultimately, Oppenheimer's invocation of this literary model simultaneously sharpens our awareness of the remarkable power and responsibility of the individual scientists in

the creation of nuclear weapons and induces us to accept the inevitability of these bombs as yet another manifestation of an inhuman and inscrutable divinity (185).

Canady concludes that Oppenheimer's, or the other scientists' reference to literary themes "provide them with the narrative materials to represent forcefully crucial elements of the scientists' experience: the feeling of being in control of unlimited power; an awareness that the exercise of this power will result in death and destruction on a vast scale; a sense of personal submission to these forces" (188). In addition, he analyzes that the embodiment of nuclear energy in the literary motifs "has the potent effects of mitigating the scientists' responsibility for the bomb by reassigning that responsibility to the bomb itself" (188).

Canady's position on the Los Alamos scientists' narrative is insightful. When recounting an event that no human has ever experienced, literary rhetoric is undoubtedly an effective tool not only in describing the event itself, but also in minimizing the accountability of the people involved in the creation of a monstrous force, which in this case was nuclear energy. Although Laurence's atomic narrative shares some characteristics with the strategy Canady notes, it is more sinister when we look closer at its biblical rhetoric. The image of the nuclear explosion, which is described as "the grand finale of a mighty symphony of the elements, fascinating and terrifying, uplifting and crushing, ominous, devastating, full of great promise and great forebodings" may serve to remind the readers of millenarianism, which seems to be derived from the Revelation to John, *The Seven Trumpets* (8:1-13). Laurence has never explicitly stated that the "grand finale" scene was inspired by the Revelation, but these two texts have unmistakable similarities, which are emphasized by the images of musical instruments and

nature. Below is an excerpt from the Revelation 8:1-5.

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

Following this chapter, four angels enter the picture and blow their trumpets. Then the first person “I” appears:

Then *I looked*, and *I heard* an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!”
(emphasis added)

It is worth noting that the first person “I” suddenly appears in Laurence’s narrative. This first person “I” in Laurence’s Trinity narrative presents first and foremost the narrator as a journalist and storyteller who tells the untold story of the Manhattan Project. On the other hand, it also represents “the witness” who saw the unspeakable event that mankind had never before witnessed. The sudden appearance of “I” and the changing viewpoint implies that Laurence’s Trinity narrative is written under the influence of the Revelation. This intertextual relationship between the Revelation and Laurence’s narrative may have enabled the readers to grasp the image of nuclear energy as a familiar concept.

Not only the Revelation, but also other uses of the biblical rhetoric portray nuclear energy in a positive light, allowing the reader to experience Laurence's texts as if they are well-known "fables." For example, the Trinity explosion is depicted using the words of God in the Genesis.

Up it went, a great ball of fire shooting upward, from deep purple to orange, expanding, growing bigger, rising as it expanded an elemental force freed from its bonds after being chained for billions of years. For a fleeting instant the color was unearthly green, such as one sees only in the corona of the sun during a total eclipse. *It was as though the earth had opened and the skies had split. One felt as though one were present at the moment of creation when God said: "Let there be light."* (10-11 emphasis added)

The narrator goes on to say that from the explosion, an image of the Statue of Liberty seems to emerge, celebrating the start of a new world.

In the first the mountain that rose above the clouds took the form for a fleeting instant of a gigantic Statue of Liberty, its arm raised to the sky, symbolizing the birth of a new freedom for man. (271)

Furthermore, the Trinity explosion is presented as the birth of the new world and a fresh start for human beings, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

On that historic morning in the desert of New Mexico when the first atomic bomb sent up a mountain of cosmic fire 41,000 feet into the stratosphere and suffused the earth with a light never before seen under the sun, your world and mine, the world we knew, came to an end. A new world was born in that mountain of fire. *What kind of world this new world is going to be no one yet knows. But we do know that it could be a vastly better world than the one that has just come to an end.* (270 emphasis added)

As a matter of course, this rhetoric harmonized beautifully with the U.S. political strategy during and after the Second World War, which aimed to inspire the citizens to both praise and support the atomic energy. It must be noted that the rhetoric and structure of Laurence's storytelling is based on the national, conventional discourse that had been widely shared among the American people from the 17th century.

Sacvan Bercovitch explains in *The American Jeremiad* that the Puritan clergy gave masterful sermons, using familiar rhetoric such as “sin and salvage,” “the chosen,” and “millennialism” to enhance the national identity. The purpose of these sermons was to guide the citizens to forming an ideal community, one with very different principles from those of England. Bercovitch calls this Protestant movement “the Puritan jeremiad.” He also states that “[d]uring the eighteenth century, the meaning of Protestant identity became increasingly vague... ‘providence’ itself was shaken loose from its religious framework to become part of the belief in human progress” (93). In the natural course of events, religious rhetoric developed strong connections with secular matters surrounding in the U.S. The Puritans in the eighteenth century “incorporated Bible history into the America experience—they substituted a regional for a biblical past, consecrated the American present as a movement from promise to fulfillment, and translated fulfillment from its meaning within the closed system of sacred history into a metaphor for limitless secular improvement” (94). Bercovitch calls this rhetoric “typology” and gives a further explanation:

“Canaan” was a spiritual state for them [the Puritan clergy], as it was for other Christians; but it was also their country. . . . By “church-state” they meant a separation of powers in the belief that in the American Canaan,

and there only, the ecclesiastical and the civic order were not really distinct.

(94)

Its foundation dates back to the 18th century, when the Puritans set out to create a New World. To establish a new country, 17th century America had to integrate their citizens into one single community. To this end, political and religious leaders needed to employ a special “language” that united the people and instructed them to act according to the “divine mission” and solve various problems within society such as “doctrinal controversy, the Indian wars, the witchcraft trials, the charter negotiations” (62). The contents of the messages vary from era to era, but the frame of storytelling has hardly changed even to this day.

During the Second World War, when the U.S. was fighting against fascism, Nazi-Germany and Japan, it was essential to enforce their own national identity. Within this turbulent social context, Laurence’s atomic narrative worked as a form of evangelism. Without using technical jargon or complicated terms, Laurence’s atomic narrative implied that America, the “chosen” nation, could not only eradicate fascism, but also fill the entire world with justice and hope.

As Japanese critic Onishi Naoki describes in his book, *Myth Named Pilgrim Fathers*, sermons were one of the most important media because they were widely pervasive as well as easily accessible by Puritans in the 17th century. Things changed when in the late 19th century, the newspaper appeared as a new media device and was immediately embraced by the public. The reason for this popularity can be explained by many social factors, but two things particularly stand out.

First, because newspapers quickly became readily available throughout the nation, they enabled people to obtain daily information easily. Second, it not only reflected but reinforced the national ideology. Because of these features, the

newspaper became the ideal tool for propaganda in the same way sermons were. As is well known, the word “herald” is frequently used in the American media and is sometimes even used as the name of newspaper companies. In the Cambridge Dictionary, the word “herald” means “to be a sign that something important and often good, is starting to happen or to make something publicly known, especially by celebrating or praising it.” On the other hand, according to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE), this word is also used in the biblical context. When the Bible was translated from Aramic to English, the term “herald” was used as the translation for the Aramic word *karo*, meaning “preacher” or “evangelist”: “And the herald proclaimed aloud, ‘You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages’” (Daniel 3:4). There are also instances in which the term “preacher” is used as an English translation of *karo*. For example, 1 Timothy (2:7) states “For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.” 2 Peter (2:5) states “if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.” Thus, the words “herald” and “preacher” were used interchangeably, which makes it apparent that “preaching” and “news media” have always had much in common throughout American history. Considering how media and sermons are interconnected, it could be said that Laurence’s atomic narrative, which repeatedly explains the divinity of nuclear energy, follows the tradition of Puritans in the 17th and 18th century. By “preaching,” both the missionaries and Laurence played a large role in maneuvering the American public into uniting under a single nation.

IV. The Ominous Rhetoric of “Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy”

As shown in the previous section, Laurence's atomic narrative endorses nuclear power by using explicit and simple rhetoric as well as images. However, one must take note that this explicit and simple rhetoric divides the world into the moral dichotomy of good and evil. Below is an excerpt from Laurence's series of ten articles that were published starting from September 9, 1945. In this article, "atomic fire," which emerged from the Trinity explosion, is described alongside the biblical story of *The Handwriting on the Wall* (Daniel 5:1-12). This story is also well known as *Belshazzar's Feast* (see figure on the next page).

The great cloud of fire and smoke that rose more than eight miles to the stratosphere over the New Mexico desert on the morning of July 16, when the first atomic bomb poured out its energy in an explosive burst greater than any ever produced on earth, symbolized a funeral pyre for the Japanese Empire.

The select few who witnessed the spectacle knew for certain at the instant of the explosion that the new weapon would prove decisive in a relatively short time. No power on earth, everyone realized, could stand up against the elemental force liberated in these bombs.

That cosmic fire that lighted earth and sky for hundreds of miles was a modern version of the Biblical handwriting on the wall to the Japanese and all would-be future aggressors. *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. He has counted, counted weighted and they divide. You have been weighted an found wanting.* (NYT, September 27, 1945, emphasis added)



Figure 7: Rembrandt, *Belshazzar's Feast*, 1635 (National Gallery, London). Photograph was taken by Nanae Hama, 2019.

The Handwriting on the Wall is a prophetic story featuring Belshazzar, the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar's late father, was reverential to God, while Belshazzar was blasphemous. One day, when Belshazzar was making "a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand," he ordered that "the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought." Consequently, "they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone." Immediately after this incident, a mysterious human hand suddenly appeared and wrote on the wall of the king's palace. Because nobody at the feast could read the handwriting, Daniel, who was thought to carry "the spirit of God"

in him, was brought to interpret the text. According to Daniel, the handwriting was to be read as follows:

“Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” (Daniel 5:24-28)

In compliance with Daniel’s interpretation, Belshazzar was killed that night and his kingdom was divided in two upon his death.

Laurence’s article on September 27, 1945, uses a typological rhetoric. Not only is nuclear energy is described as a divine power, but also the “ominous prophecy to the irreverent Belshazzar” is analogized with “the atomic bomb dropped on the evil Empire of Japan.” However, it should be noted that the word “divine” has a profound meaning here. The central theme of *The Handwriting on the Wall* is not only the punishment for sacrilege, but also the collapse of an Empire. Considering that this theme of the Bible is tactically used in Laurence’s article, there seems to be a dichotomy of “good and evil” behind this atomic narrative. Using the story of *The Handwriting on the Wall*, this atomic article can be read not only as a mere journalistic report, but also a political text.

Meanwhile, behind this rhetoric dividing the world into two contrary factions, there is this disturbing logic: America, on one hand, is allowed to acquire and make use of the atomic bomb, because they are “the chosen.” On the other, Japan deserves to have it dropped on them. Considering that the U.S. had to both enforce the national identity and fight against fascism during the Second World

War, Laurence's atomic narrative went hand in hand with the U.S. goals. While emphasizing the "divinity" of nuclear energy, it supports and fortifies the notion that the U.S. was chosen by God for the purpose of obliterating evil using "divine power."

This American notion of being "the chosen" is particularly stressed in the last chapter of *Dawn over Zero*, which "instructs" the peaceful use of nuclear energy. This last chapter seems to be revised in 1946 to add this section advocating the non-violent use of nuclear power; there is no mention of it in the original articles.

In the final analysis *it is the American people who have opened up this great new continent of atomic power*. Destiny has placed its trust in our people by providing us with the key to this hitherto tightly locked "cosmic cupboard," and the American people must, and will, keep faith with this trust. *We must develop and cultivate this continent into a new promised land of plenty, for ourselves and for all mankind, bringing in a new era of wealth, health, and happiness such as the world has never seen.* (273-74 emphasis added)

On the surface, this scene promotes the ethical use of nuclear energy. However, it also can be read as the familiar American story that "only" the Americans can create a wealthy, hopeful new world by using the "divine power."

V. The Meaning of Unveiling "God"

As stated in the former section, Laurence's atomic narrative is based on the American traditional story which can be traced back to the 17th century. It celebrates atomic energy through the use of a biblical rhetoric, which was in line with the story that the Americans wanted to believe. In Laurence's mind, writing

reports on the nuclear issue was akin to being on a religious mission, as Spencer Weart notes in *Nuclear Fear*.

Laurence believed that science was the religion of the future. Like any religion, it needed missionaries, and that was what a journalist like himself should be. . . . Laurence warned his editor that he was onto a story bigger than anyone could have imagined, “a sort of second Coming of Christ yarn.” (99-100)

However, it also should be noted that there is an alarming quality that the readers of the articles in the 1940s failed to notice: unlike the other atomic narratives, Laurence’s texts described atomic power as something that can be accessed easily. The series of ten articles which were awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1946 mainly focus on the mysterious structure of nuclear energy. Additionally, more than half of *Dawn over Zero* is devoted to describing the details behind the birth of nuclear energy, while illustrating its physical and scientific structure. Without using any kind of technical jargon, Laurence’s atomic reports expound on the structure of the nuclear power in great detail, making it easy for the general public to comprehend. According to the *New York Times* special issue on March 19, 1977, the day Laurence passed away, his biggest achievement is explained as follows:

With a style that often relied on vivid, but simple, imagery, he put technical subjects into terms that a lay man could understand.

This “plainness” is one of the defining characteristics of Laurence’s narrative. In fact, because of this feature, his atomic articles were reproduced “as a pamphlet for use” even “in schools and for the public.”

Considering that Laurence evidently identifies nuclear energy with God,

his atomic narrative was clearly a form of propaganda which aimed to spread the faith of the atomic power throughout society. As the Christian pastors preached in their sermons to the American public before the Second World War or in the times before nuclear energy was discovered, there was an inviolate border that separated secular lives and a celestial existence. In this sense, science was akin to alchemy: humans were forbidden from approaching its sanctity. However, Laurence's atomic propaganda utilizing "vivid, but simple, imagery" exposed this unnerving fact: the knowledge of atomic power, i.e. the divinity of God, is in truth accessible to anyone. Because of this, his atomic narrative gave a sense of threat to the American public during the Cold War era.

Spencer Weart states in *The Rise of Nuclear Fear* that "during the first few years, people did not fear anything specific or immediate. The public simply felt that the ground had fallen away from under them" (57). However, this response gradually changed in accordance with the shifting political and social climate in the U.S. Nuclear fear, which was shared only among a few intellectuals such as scientists and fundamentalist Christians, gradually became pervasive throughout the entire nation via mass media and popular culture.

After the shocking news that the Soviet Union had tested an atomic bomb in 1949, it was obvious that the United States could easily be attacked, as an official statement warned, by "valise bombs." The government paid serious attention to the threat of Communist agents wielding infernal devices. Magazine and newspaper articles and a few Hollywood melodramas brought the concern before the public. (65)

Here, in the early Cold War era, Laurence's atomic narrative, characterized by its clear and simple explanation, turned from divine propaganda to ominous

apocalypse. Perhaps not many people noticed this portentous nature of Laurence's narrative when it publicly appeared immediately after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, since it repeatedly enforced the national identity of the U.S. as "the chosen." Even so, this inauspicious element should not be ignored, for on one hand, Laurence's narrative was congruous with the U.S. political orientation, but on the other hand, it propagated nuclear fear in the era of the Cold War. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that Laurence's hidden fear of atomic power is closely related to the American public's apprehensiveness toward nuclear weapons, which started to become apparent in the late 1940s. To the present day, various genres including science fiction, advertisements, the media, sermons, and popular culture have been telling the same story: nuclear weapons can and will violate the daily lives of "ordinary" people. One may say that this is one of the most dominant and familiar nuclear discourses in the U.S. and it is undeniable that Laurence's atomic narrative served as the cornerstone. It is true that his widely spread atomic narrative successfully unveiled the structure of nuclear energy: it made it possible for the American people to understand one of the most remarkable scientific achievements in the history of mankind. However, it also exposes a forbidden territory that must not be easily violated. It demonstrates the fact that nuclear energy is accessible to "every" nation, and the U.S. is no exception.

Although the initial purpose of Laurence's atomic articles was to function as a counternarrative to fascism, it consequently demolished the seemingly solid border between daily life and the atomic wasteland. As stated in Laurence's reports, atomic weapons did indeed open up "a new world," considering how they destructed traditional values. However, in this "new world," where God is accessible to any human being, nuclear weapons can exert their power even to the American people.

This becomes proof that the national story, in which the U.S. was chosen as God's providence, no longer exists. In other words, although the U.S. was allowed to acquire and make use of nuclear power, it is no longer "the chosen."

VI. Conclusion

No one can deny that Laurence's atomic narrative is a grand story, one that pursues the whole process of the atomic bomb from its birth, enlightening the public on the structure of this power while using traditional American metaphors and the Judeo-Christian frame of reference. As introduced in the previous section, Laurence viewed science and religions as one and the same, and science "needed missionaries, and that was what a journalist like himself should be" (99). Just as he had hoped, atomic energy was "evangelized," and "propagandized" throughout the U.S. society. This atomic narrative formed the American consciousness toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It also should be emphasized that in this narrative, the many victims of the two cities simply do not exist.

However, at the same time, Laurence's atomic articles are one of the paramount narratives exerting tremendous impact on the American mindset. In this regard, they should not be ignored or criticized for its propagandistic nature. Instead, they should be reconsidered alongside the American consciousness regarding nuclear energy in the 1940s.

As already mentioned, within the American sociopolitical climate during and just after the Second World War, Laurence's description of nuclear power corresponds impeccably with the American ideological story. On the other hand, his rhetoric also unveils that "God," i.e. nuclear power, is within the reach of humankind. In the mid-1940s after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this rhetoric was

well-suited for the U.S. campaign promoting the peaceful use of atomic energy. However, in the climate of the late 1940s, when the threat of the Soviet Union became very real and significant, Laurence's articles can be re-read as an apocalyptic story: the U.S., previously the only nation allowed to access God's power, was expelled from the state of "the chosen." In this regard, Laurence's narrative becomes more threatening than fascism, with which the U.S. was fighting.

No one knows whether Laurence, otherwise known as the Atomic Evangelist, had realized that his propaganda could be interpreted as a parallel to the third chapter of Genesis, which he repeatedly learned in his childhood. "The new world," which was created by the birth of the nuclear weapon, over time became a prophesy to the American society in the post Hiroshima and Nagasaki era.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Like Adam and Eve, who were induced by a snake and banished from the Garden of Eden by disobeying God's will, America was also displaced from the position of "the chosen" for breaking a taboo to obtain an omnipotent power. No one knew what "the snake" signified in the turbulent war-time America.

Chapter 3: John Hersey's Sensational Text and the Context of the American Society Between August 6, 1945 and August 31, 1946

I. Introduction

Ever since the two atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, numerous texts have been written on this dreadful event. They include not only news articles, which are mentioned in the previous two chapters, but works of other genres including novels, movies, and even comic books. Moreover, the nuclear narrative in the U.S. is covered by multiple disciplines, often explored from religious, political, and social perspectives. Among these texts, John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, which appeared in the *New Yorker* on August 1946, can be recognized as one of the most influential texts in the post atomic age. As legend has it, *Hiroshima* captured the nation's attention soon after its publication and became a best-seller. As Robert J. Lifton and Greg Mitchell note, "Columnists and editors, most of whom had expressed strong support for the use of the bomb, nevertheless praised the article, many calling it the best reporting job of its time" (87-8), *Hiroshima* served to "enlighten" even the people who supported the decision to drop the two atomic bombs. It is also known that the most distinguished members of society paid great attention to this sensational atomic account. Albert Einstein was reported to have ordered a thousand copies, and Bernard Baruch, an esteemed American financier, ordered five hundred. In those days, *The New Yorker* was publishing about three hundred thousand copies a month, but as soon as *Hiroshima* appeared, they flew off the newsstand shelves (Lifton 81). In a poignant book review published in *Critique* just a year after the publication of *Hiroshima*, French philosopher Georges Bataille focuses on the lives of six hibakusha people

and explores ways in which mass-execution could be avoided during wartime. Paul Boyer also mentions *Hiroshima's* enormous impact in *By the Bomb's Early Light* (1985).

Hiroshima became a runaway best-seller. The Book-of-the-Month Club distributed free copies to many of its 848,000 members. A reading of the entire work, in four half-hour segments, over the ABC radio network won the Peabody Award for the outstanding educational broadcast of 1946. (204)

Hiroshima's author John Hersey (1914-93) wrote this nonfiction novel at the young age of 31. He was born on June 17, 1914 in Tientsin, China. Both of his parents were involved in Christian activities: his father worked for the Young Men's Christian Association in Tientsin, and his mother was a missionary. This pious home environment explains *Hiroshima's* religious character. During the Second World War, he wrote to *The New York Times* and to *The New Yorker* from China and Italy as a correspondent. His works include *A Bell for Adano* (1944), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, and *The Wall* (1960), which tells of the events in the Warsaw ghetto from 1939 to 1943. Throughout his career as a journalist and novelist, he consistently questioned and pursued what the moral destination of the United States should be and was deeply invested in the issues of his day.

Over the years, many critics have discussed how *Hiroshima* attained the readers' sympathy and changed the perspective of the U.S. citizens. In the late 1940s, *Hiroshima* received a generally positive response from the American public. For example, in a review that appeared in *the New York Times* on November 10, 1946, Charles Poore observes:

“Hiroshima” penetrated the tissue of complacency we had built up. It penetrated it all the more inexorably because it told its story not in terms of graphs and charts but in terms of ordinary human beings, Miss Sasaki, Dr. Fujii, Mrs. Nakamura, Father Kleinsorge, Dr. Sasaki, the Reverend Tanimoto, aliens and enemies though they were...Among the stacks of letters that have been written to the New Yorker, perhaps one in ten objected to the magazine’s having printed “Hiroshima”....”

Most of these critics agree that *Hiroshima* impressed American readers with its humanistic elements unlike the former atomic narratives, such as the news coverage introduced in the previous chapter, or the official narratives released by the government. These texts are often criticized for not fairly portraying the bombed cities and citizens. Additionally, some critics have argued that *Hiroshima* deserves more credit for depicting the Japanese people as “human beings,” not as a faceless Yellow Peril. Thus, *Hiroshima* was largely embraced as a progressive attempt to represent the victims of the atomic bomb in a refreshingly unbiased manner. While it is true that some early critics such as Dwight Macdonald and Mary McCarthy criticized the “moral deficiency” of *Hiroshima*’s literary naturalism, stating that “Hersey’s non-polemical stance and his emphasis on the survivors’ recovery and the continuity of life rendered the bomb safe and familiar” (294), such negative responses have never given much weight in discussions of *Hiroshima*.

The reason why *Hiroshima* garnered so much attention in mid-1946, when narratives on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were gradually dying down, is still unknown even to this day. There is another mysterious factor: *Hiroshima* has been called the text of “morality,” despite containing multiple graphic and grotesque

portrayals of the victims. The main characters sometimes abandon the atomic wasteland, even though there are suffering people right in front of their eyes. Also, these main characters, who are the survivors, look back on the atomic wasteland from a “safe” position and are repulsed by the suffering and dying people. These descriptions are not the reason why readers feel sympathy for the bombed victims; on the contrary, they only widen the gulf that exists between the readers and hibakushas.

Despite these realistic and unsightly representations, *Hiroshima* has been considered a humanistic text that makes the readers feel sympathetic toward hibakushas. To understand why this is true, here is one important point that should be noted: *Hiroshima* should not be considered a stand-alone text, but rather a direct descendant of the pretexts that appeared before its publication. In other words, before its publication, there was already a solid foundation of nuclear awareness in the American public, and it was only natural that *Hiroshima* became a sensational best-seller. Boyer sets the scene as follows:

For a year, the obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been the subject of enormous public attention. What one might call the panoramic background of an atomic attack—the sheets of flame, the mushroom cloud, the mass destruction, the instantaneous death of thousands—was already vividly present in the consciousness of Hersey’s readers....On a canvas whose broadbrush background scenes were already familiar, Hersey etched several vividly realized foreground figures. In isolation, his account does seem limited and incomplete; in the context of his reader’s experience, its great impact becomes more understandable. (207)

In fact, John Hersey reportedly learned narrative techniques on how to engage the readers from former texts on atomic bombs. These texts include Thornton Wilder's *Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927), the diary of John A. Siemes, a German victim of Hiroshima, and official reports of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS).

On the other hand, few have yet discussed the matter of the readers' response toward *Hiroshima*, as well as the relationship between *Hiroshima* and the social climate of the U.S. during 1945 and 1946. The reason why *Hiroshima* gained so much attention as well as a generally affirmative response has not been discussed in detail.

Considering this point, it is crucial to focus on the atomic narrative led by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ (FCC), and the scientist's atomic narrative in the early 1946. As mentioned in the previous chapter, science and religion were traditionally intertwined in the American culture: both have substantial impact on the people's lives and are deeply rooted in the American mindset. By focusing on these pre-texts, let us shed light on how these early atomic narratives and Hersey's *Hiroshima* are interrelated.

Regarding the great sensation caused by *Hiroshima*, much has been discussed since it was first published. Among them, Shibata Yuko, who is a historian at the University of Hawaii, has shared a particularly important insight on this matter in recent years. According to *Producing Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (2015), Hersey's *Hiroshima* was not the first account that focused on hibakusha people: there are some narratives that did the same before and after *Hiroshima's* publication. Based on this background, Shibata makes the following point:

While there is a long list of examples that illustrate the phenomenal reaction to Hersey's *Hiroshima*, what is striking is that this initial

difference in the reception between Hersey's text and the Hiroshima writers' at the time of their public appearance has continued up to the present day...In the United States, Hersey's *Hiroshima* has long been used in high school and university English classes as a "remarkable nonfiction text" in the young adult literature genre. (84)

Though more than 70 years have passed since the atomic bombings, Hersey's *Hiroshima* is still regarded as the canon of Hiroshima and Nagasaki narratives. This point will be further investigated in the final chapter, but for now, it is essential to examine the social climate of the time of *Hiroshima*'s publication.

II. Ideological Viewpoint for Hibakushas Just After Hiroshima and Nagasaki

As mentioned in the first chapter, the first official on-the-spot Hiroshima and Nagasaki reports were written by war journalists who entered the hypocenter just after the end of Second World War. Most of these correspondents were chosen by GHQ: they had the privilege of being in the position to write about one of the most sensational events in world history. However, because they were under strict censorship, most of them mainly focused on the damage done to buildings and houses instead of human beings. Some had reported on how the people were affected, as Homer Bigart or George Weller did, as explained in Chapter 1. However, their descriptions of the hibakushas are purely objective: the narrator does not identify with the victims, retaining the position of a "spectator".

One reason why such narratives prevailed can be explained from an ideological perspective. It is well known that U.S. officials led anti-Japan campaigns during and even after the Second World War. In most cases, these campaigns manifested in forms of popular culture. For example, a propaganda film

called *Know Your Enemy—Japan* was released on August 9, on the exact day Nagasaki was atomic-bombed. According to the previously mentioned historian John Dower, this film was “a potpourri of most of the English-speaking world’s dominant clichés about the Japanese enemy...The filmmakers adopted a strongly historical approach, offering a lengthy survey of those aspects of Japan’s past which Westerners believed had made the Japanese a modern menace” (20). Dower also reveals that these anti-Japanese campaigns were conducted as part of a political tactic to counteract the worldwide condemnation for dropping the two atomic bombs. To this end, negative images of the Japanese were strategically propagated, as Robert J. Lifton observes:

On September 5, the same day that the first articles from Hiroshima appeared, Secretary of State James Byrnes released a report of more than two hundred atrocities committed by the Japanese during the war. Included were stories of American airmen and soldiers decapitated, buried alive, even eaten by the enemy. Intended or not, the connection to the horror stories coming out of Hiroshima was clear enough. . . . (Lifton 51, emphasis added)

This official campaign led by the U.S. government helped to form a stereotypical view of the Japanese among the American public. In other words, when stories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are told alongside the “atrocities committed by the Japanese during the war,” the Americans were naturally affected by this official campaign. As seen in Chapter 1, while George Weller, the first journalist who entered the bombed city of Nagasaki on his own, vividly describes the horrific landscape which he witnessed, he also inserts hundreds of POW’s accounts condemning the Japanese war crimes. Similarly, in William L. Laurence’s atomic

narrative, the Japanese are repeatedly referred to as “devils.” Such portrayals also served to remind the readers of Pearl Harbor and the Bataan Death March (Laurence 234).

Thus, the unfavorable image of the Japanese was fixed firmly within the minds of Americans just after the end of the Second World War, and this was the backdrop to which the early correspondents such as Bigart, Weller, and Laurence were dispatched to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These early atomic reports rarely depict the hibakushas without showing any preconceived notions toward them. Instead of representing the hibakusha people as human beings, the narrators of these early reports merely “observe” them from a distance. One could say that these early correspondents’ attitude toward hibakushas is stereotyped, and the American people of this era generally shared a similar sentiment.

However, a year after these early atomic reports appeared, Hersey’s *Hiroshima* showed the U.S. readers a completely different view of the hibakushas. One of the most remarkable characteristics of *Hiroshima* is its narrative footing. In Hersey’s text, the first person “I” does not appear, unlike the early correspondents’ texts. Instead, the story of Hiroshima is told through the eyes of the hibakushas. In addition, they are given names such as “Miss Sasaki,” “Father Kleinsorge,” or “Reverend Tanimoto.” That is to say, contrary to Bigart, Weller, or Laurence who tell the story from the outsider’s point of view, Hersey stands on the same side as the bombed civilians.

Another outstanding feature of *Hiroshima* is its proximity to the suffering hibakushas. As mentioned above, the early correspondents’ reports are distanced from the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Additionally, hibakushas are frequently compared to harmful insects, rats, and snakes, which serve to imply

Japan's savagery. One may say that the American national memory during the Second World War is directly affected by these early journalists' depictions of the hibakushas.

Hersey's *Hiroshima*, on the other hand, is free from such prejudice: it focuses on each hibakushas' thought process by describing their inner feelings. For example, Miss Sasaki, who later converts to Catholicism and becomes a nun, asks bluntly, "If your God is so good and kind, how can he let people suffer like this?" (749) The narrator even introduces the character's memories of the war time.

A surprising number of the people of Hiroshima remained more or less indifferent about the ethics of using the bomb. Possibly they were too terrified by it to want to think about it at all. Not many of them even bothered to find out much about what it was like. Mrs. Nakamura's conception of it—and awe of it—was typical. . . . As for the use of the bomb, she would say, "It was war and we had to expect it." And then she would add, "*Shikata ga nai*," a Japanese expression as common as, and corresponding to, the Russian word "nichevo": It can't be helped. Oh, well. Too bad. (749)

Looking back at these events from the present day, the problem of whether or not the United States' use of the atomic bombs could be explained in such a simple phrase like "it can't be helped" is a subject of controversy. As recent scholars have noted, it may be true that by introducing Mrs. Nakamura's comment, Hersey tactically distances himself from the American responsibility for using the atomic bomb. However, in the context of 1946, another point can be made about this scene: by showing the hibakushas' wartime memories and sentiments, it recognizes that the Japanese are also suffering human beings.

What should be considered here is that the publication and the subsequent popularity of Hersey's *Hiroshima* was only a year after the early atomic narratives appeared and became widespread among the U.S. citizens. Furthermore, it is more important to focus on the reason why the readers, who were accustomed to the "dominant" atomic narratives, accepted *Hiroshima* as the first humanistic account of the atomic wasteland. Regarding this point, it should be noted that from 1945 to 1946, the American attitude toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki (mainly Hiroshima) was gradually changing, and because of this paradigm shift, *Hiroshima* was able to claim the position of the newly dominant narrative within the U.S. American historian Patrick B. Sharp observes that *Hiroshima* effectively changed the stereotypical American view of the Japanese³:

Using the "wasteland" imagery of literary modernism, Hersey encapsulated for his American audience the horror of the atomic bomb *within a familiar framework*. At the same time, Hersey criticized the widely held view that the atomic bomb was a justified, science-fiction-style attack against an evil and militaristic Yellow Peril. (emphasis added)

In terms of "a familiar framework," before *Hiroshima*'s publication, there were pretexts that had significant influence on the American position regarding the atomic wasteland. From this background, *Hiroshima* created a sensation, was widely shared among the U.S. society, and since then has become the dominant Hiroshima discourse. In fact, many narratives on bombs and nuclear energy were made public from 1945 to 1946. It should be noted that some of them were not only influential, but also intertwined with one another. In the next two sections, two types of

³ "From Yellow Peril to Japanese Wasteland: John Hersey's 'Hiroshima'" (Twentieth Century Literature, Vol 46, No. 4, 2000)

preexisting narratives will be introduced and investigated, both of which were released in the era following the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

III. “A Good War” and the Death of the Non-Combatants: Atomic Narrative of Christian Churches

When examining the American position toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki between 1945 and 1946, one cannot ignore the proclamations of the Christian churches. Their denunciation of the decision to drop the bombs was announced loud and clear throughout the nation on August 7 when the first news coverages of Hiroshima made their appearance. Although this was not in consonance with the rest of the nation, the response from the churches “laid the groundwork for and added a sharp intensity to the debate over the general moral implications of nuclear weapons” (Boyer 200). One of the first statements came from the Federal Council of Churches, an association of liberal Protestant denominations. Their reaction to the use of atomic weapon was immediate, as Boyer states:

On August 9 (before news of the Nagasaki bombing was released), the president of the FCC, Methodist bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, and John Foster Dulles, chairman of its Commission on a Just and Durable Peace, issued a joint statement urging that no further bombs be dropped. “If we, a professedly Christian nation, feel morally free to use atomic energy in that way,” they said, “men elsewhere will accept that verdict. Atomic weapons will be looked upon as a normal part of the arsenal of war and the stage will be set for the sudden and final destruction of mankind.” (200)

Unlike William L. Laurence’s atomic narrative, which appeared at the same time, this statement openly expresses concern toward the casual use of nuclear weapons.

Another response from the churches came two weeks later: thirty-four prominent Protestant clergymen submitted a letter to President Truman condemning the United States' decision to use the atomic bomb. Boyer also observes that some of the statements were broadcast to the nation in spoken words. For example, in the early postwar period, Harry Emerson Fosdick of New York's Riverside Church said the following in his radio sermon:

“When our self-justifications are all in, every one of us is nonetheless horrified at the implications of what we did. Saying that Japan was guilty and deserved it, gets us nowhere. The mothers and babies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki did not deserve it.” (Boyer 200)

As stated above, these reactions from the churches did not have much impact on the public opinion. However, considering that such accusations were made by religious organizations with immense moral influence on society, it is safe to say that they played a significant role in shaping the American perspective toward the two atomic bombs. In particular, as Morimoto Anri states, “sermons” can be regarded as the most influential narrative device, considering that they were one of the most familiar and far-reaching “media” in the American society (55). Even today, religious discourses are deeply rooted in the daily lives of people in American society. Morimoto further observes that people watch sermons on TV almost daily: they have become part of the fabric of the people's lives since the 17th century.

The publication of *Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith* by the Federal Council of Churches on March 6, 1946 was the culmination of the protest movements against the atomic bomb. This statement, signed by twenty-two prominent Christian leaders, appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*.

(see figure 8) It was reprinted by other newspapers and became widespread among the American citizens shortly after its publication.

The FCC was a liberal organization established in 1908. They defined “guilt” as a human flaw and preached that it could be overcome by prayers, education, and benevolence. *Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith* is in line with this philosophy. Overall, it regards the two atomic bombs as the American guilt, and it encourages people to confess. Considering the social climate of early 1946, the publication of this statement was a great challenge, for in those days, more than 70% of the American people supported the use of the two bombs. What should be brought to attention here is that Judeo-Christian values were apparent in many

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 1946.

Report of Protestant Church Leaders on Atomic Warfare

AT CONFERENCE OF FEDERAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST



The Rt. Rev. Henry W. Hobson of Cincinnati, Protestant Episcopal bishop of southern Ohio, presiding at the opening service of a special three-day meeting in Columbus, Ohio.

Associated Press Wirephoto

By the Associated Press.
COLUMBUS, Ohio, March 3.—Following are excerpts from a report on atomic warfare prepared by a special committee of twenty church leaders for a special session of the Federal Council of Churches in America today.

The atomic bomb's great new and fearful meaning to the agonized plight of man. The profound power have always been his most dangerous enemy of evil. The new weapon has destroyed at one blow the familiar conception of national security, changed the scale of destruction, and set many people, and opened before us as the prospect of swift ruin for civilization and even the possibility of a speedy end to man's life on earth.

Whether universal fear, one of the most powerful of all human emotions, will help to save us or to push us to the brink of annihilation depends on how it is directed. The fear of God, and His laws, can indeed be a source of saving wisdom, but the fear of hellfire or the death of any man is a thing to be discarded.

In the face of atomic bombs and radioactive gases, no less truly than in the presence of smaller perils, the rule is: seek first the Kingdom of God, and the right answer, as the only sure ground of ultimate security.

A major task of the church in the atomic era must be to demonstrate a courageous fear of God and faith in His infinite goodness, in place of either demagoguery or panic. Leaders of the church must now exercise far more than the reality of God-ordered thought and action, which is the supreme task of the church in this era. In the hope of securing a world order in which every release of atomic energy would be employed for human welfare and not for world annihilation.

As far as our best minds can see, the very promising dangers against atomic warfare are moral and political, not physical. The idea of atomic weapons that can now be released would mean war not only more destructive and treacherous, but more irresponsible than ever. As American Christians, we are deeply grieved for the responsibility now already made of the atomic bomb. We are agreed that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are morally indefensible. They were indeed without specific warning, under conditions which utterly annulled the desire of 136,000 civilians. Both bombings, however, must be judged to have been necessary for winning the war. Even though one of the new

weapons last August may well have shortened the war, the moral cost was too high.

All things considered, it seems necessary to include in any consideration of international security measures not only the use of atomic bombs in August, 1945, but the policy of wholesale annihilation bombing as practiced at first by the Axis Powers, and then as a far greater scale by the Allies.

Policy affecting the present well-being of billions of men—economic health and the future satisfaction of whole peoples should be decided directly on military grounds.

We are agreed, further, as to our major theme regarding future peace and other new methods for effecting mass destruction.

First: These methods tend to spiritualize, individualize destruction. Hence, it is more than ever imperative upon Christians to resist the development of armaments in which these methods are likely to be employed.

Second: The only mode of control that holds much promise is control directed to the prevention of war. We recognize the great role of the development of armaments to outlaw atomic weapons while war itself continues.

Third: We believe the churches should urge the Government of the United States, at present holder of existing atomic bombs, to plan for producing them, to use more swiftly toward achieving disarmament respecting their possible use.

We, therefore, call upon the churches to urge, first, that all considerations of atomic bombs be viewed in the development of effective international controls. We urge, secondly, that the church call upon the Government of the United States to announce, that it will under no circumstances be the first to use atomic weapons in any possible future war, such measures as to be thought of not as adequate means of control but as a step toward the development of a better state of international relations, in which effective measures for the prevention of war may be more readily be worked out.

We believe that the only conceivable road toward effective control of atomic warfare and other forms of mass destruction is the road of international unity and joint effort. Endeavors that are a political maneuver of any kind to solve the problems posed by atomic warfare would be a dangerous illusion.

In particular, the hope for a world government, useful as a guiding principle, cannot be turned into a program for immediate action without first securing the cooperation of all. Although the Government of the United Nations

Organization is imperative, world government in any literal sense of the term is not yet attainable, and right insistence on full world government now is in effect a vote for continued international anarchy. It is better to deal with the important unworkable and problems at the provisional forms of cooperation that have actually begun to take shape, and earnestly to seek their improvement.

International programs, we are agreed, should be based on the control of atomic research and application in the problems of peace and war should fulfill certain elementary conditions. Such control should be designed, ultimately to control, not military agencies.

A major concern of the international agencies must be to secure a wide and equitable distribution of whatever economic benefits may result from the use of atomic energy, and to prevent monopolistic exploitation by nations or other minority groups. The public of supervision and control, therefore, should be calculated to safeguard humanitarian freedom.

Political and technical questions (and not be subjected to discussion, and inspired by the development of spiritual and moral unity. The more fully we recognize that other men have the same needs, the more from the same weaknesses as we, the more we shall understand our com-

mon failure and the more patiently we shall seek to help one another rise above them.

The moral and social role of the church in world affairs clearly is to be in this spirit. First in our present situation must be a call to active penitence, addressed to individuals and formal assemblies alike. The most appropriate and convincing expression of such repentance would be determined resistance to public policies of the future that seek to cripple human energy powers. Military disarmament, as complete as has been insisted, is not the same as economic disarmament. There is need also for determined urging of more active provision for relief and rebuilding of devastated lands.

We are well aware of the inadequacy and the danger of proposing specific acts of repentance. To rebuke Hiroshima and Nagasaki would be to restore only a small fraction of what our atomic bombings actually destroyed. To practice special aid for the survivors of those two murdered cities would be hardly more than a token of repentance.

Yet we believe either would have lasting value for future human relations. The former task would require public deeds of a large popular character. The latter could be undertaken by the churches of the United States, and we hope that, at last, we might say we done.

The report was signed by the following:

Robert L. Daboon, chairman, Yale, and John C. Bennett, secretary, Union Theological Seminary; Edwin E. Aubrey, Crozer Theological Seminary; Richard H. Bannister, Valley Forge; J. J. Bergquist, Augustana College; Eric Thengstad, Seminary; E. Marvie Rasmussen, Duke; Bishop Argus Dan of the Washington Diocese; Protestant Episcopal Church; New F. D. Perry, Antioch-Northwestern Theological Institute; and Theodore N. Green, Princeton.

George E. Hartmann, Garrett; Melvin Belline; Walter H. Horton, Oberlin Graduate School of Theology; John Knox, Union Theological Seminary; Kenneth E. Joyce, president, Morehouse College; John T. McNeill, Union Theological Seminary; Richard H. Bannister, Union Theological Seminary; Ernest Fremont Tittle, First Methodist Church, Evanston, Ill.; Henry P. van Dusen, president, Union Theological Seminary; and Theodore D. Wedel, Graduate College of Preachers, Washington Cathedral.

Figure 8: An excerpt of the FCC statement from the New York Times, March 6, 1946

of the statements made by the bomb-supporters. The excerpts below are some examples, introduced by Boyer in a critical tone:

“Thank God for the atomic bomb, which has proved so essential and valuable already.” (211)

“Divine providence has made the United States the custodian of the secret of atomic energy as a weapon of war.” (211)

“God, our Father, is still in His Heaven. And just as in ages past He made the sun to stand still, so also has He stayed the hand of the war devil. In the perfecting of the atomic bomb, I feel all is well with the world, just so long as it stays in the hands of the people who believe in and practice the principles of Christ.” (211)

This sort of reasoning was familiar to most of the American public in early 1946. It is remarkable that they can be found not only in the official atomic narratives, but also in many “letters” to newspapers and magazines, written by “ordinary” citizens.

Thus, one could argue that FCC’s statement was one of the most powerful counter-narratives against the widely shared sentiment supporting the use of the two atomic bombs in the name of Christ. The following is a quote from one of the most noteworthy statements made by the FCC⁴, where their attitude toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki is apparent.

We would begin with an act of contrition. As American Christians, we are deeply penitent for the irresponsible use already made of the atomic bomb.

We are agreed that, whatever be one’s judgement of the ethics of war in

⁴ The whole text is quoted from *Hiroshima’s Shadow*, which was published by Kai Bird and Lawrence Lifschultz in 1995.

principle, the surprise bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are morally indefensible. *They repeated in a ghastly form the indiscriminate slaughter of non-combatants that has become familiar during World War II.* (491 emphasis added)

As mentioned in the quote, it was the act of having bombed numerous non-combatants that the FCC strongly reproaches. This argument is frequently repeated in this statement. The question that must be raised here is why the FCC is so concerned about the death of non-combatants of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This mystery cannot be solved without examining the “Just War Theory,” which is often seen in the Judeo-Christian history. When we take this theory into account, FCC’s statement on Hiroshima and Nagasaki can be interpreted not as a mere “moral narrative,” but as a counter-narrative that resists the American ideology during and immediately after the Second World War. To emphasize this point, the excerpt below should be noted:

Even though use of the new weapon last August may well have shortened the war, the moral cost was too high. As the power that first used the atomic bomb under these circumstances, we have sinned grievously against the laws of God and against the people of Japan. Without seeking to apportion blame among individuals, we are compelled to judge our chosen course inexcusable. (491)

The notion that the “use of the nuclear weapon shortened the war” is based on the “Just War Theory.” According to this theory, which was well-known among the American public during the Second World War, the fight against Japan and the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are justified as being rational. The Japanese sociologist Fujiwara Kiichi observes the U.S. is distinct from other

countries, because unlike Europe, Japan, or other Asian countries, America has never been defeated or invaded by others. This is one of the most important factors that determines the U.S. perspective toward warfare. Because of this, during the Pacific War, the American people never once doubted that it was a “Good War.” The Second World War was particularly a “Good War” as Studs Terkel cynically puts it, and had special importance to most of the people in America. (Fujiwara 98) Moreover, as John Dower states in *War Without Mercy*, the Japanese were seen as the “Yellow Peril” during the Pacific War and were one of the most detested people in American history. Thus, the war against the Japanese held a particular significance as a “War of Justice,” or “Good War.” One may say that for the American public, it was perfectly reasonable to attack the “Yellow Peril,” even if they are non-combatants.

However, this idea promoted the view that even if non-combatants are attacked, they deserve it because they are the enemy. The hazard of this attitude was that it would inevitably cause many Americans to disregard the lives of innocent human beings. It was mainly of this situation that the FCC’s statement warned adamantly. Most of the people in the U.S. during the Second World War devoted themselves to the “Good War.” This nationalistic and ideological orientation, however, exacerbated the people’s indifference toward the stories of suffering fellow human beings. FCC’s statement not only resisted the U.S. dominant atomic discourse, which viewed the use of the two bombs as “God’s providence,” but also tried to reclaim the stories of those individuals who lost their lives in the name of the “Good War.”

IV. The Rhetoric of Scientists

In *The Nuclear Muse: Literature, Physics, and the First Atomic Bombs* (2000), John Canady observes that the scientists' atomic reports and statements had tremendous impact on the public because of their authority, warning people of the nuclear holocaust with a sense of urgency. Because of this, atomic narratives promoted by scientists "overlap" with literature in many respects in post-Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One good example is the publication of Einstein's open telegram, which appeared in the *New York Times* in May 1946. Canady states that in that telegram, Einstein adopts an "oracular tone":

Our world faces a crisis as yet unperceived by those possessing power to make great decisions for good or evil. The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe. We scientists who released this immense power have an overwhelming responsibility in this world life-and-death struggle to harness the atom for the benefit of mankind and not for humanity's destruction.⁵

Just after its publication, Einstein's telegram succeeded in capturing the public's imagination, "to the extent that his [Einstein's] words have become a kind of cultural emblem, quoted again and again in contexts ranging from scholarly works to comic books" (6). Canady further states that there are two factors behind this enthusiastic response:

This popular impact seems the result of two factors in particular: Einstein's authority as *the* representative figure of twentieth-century science—which had just produced a spectacular example of its command over the natural

⁵ Albert Einstein, *New York Times*, 25 May 1946, p.13

world in the form of nuclear weapons—and the dexterity of his rhetorical flourish itself, which constructs an apparently inevitable movement from “unleashed power” to “unparalleled catastrophe.” In this one line, Einstein crystallized a popular conception of science as a nearly omnipotent force in a world fraught with unprecedented dangers. (6)

It is undeniable that Einstein was one of the most notable scientists involved in the nuclear issue, but it should be noted that his writing on the atomic bomb was not the only influential text made public by scientists in the post-Hiroshima and Nagasaki era. To illustrate this point, the publication of *One World or None: A Report to the public on the Full Meaning of the Atomic Bomb* (1946) must be mentioned. This is a compilation of essays written by fifteen prominent scientists, most of which were involved in the Manhattan Project. As soon as it was published, it became an immediate bestseller and sold more than 100,000 copies.

Boyer observes that the most gripping chapter of *One World or None* was “If the Bomb Gets Out of Hand” by Philip Morrison, a Cornell physicist who had worked on the Manhattan Project at Chicago and Los Alamos, participated in the final bomb assembly on Tinian Island, and was among the first to inspect Hiroshima after the war (77-8). Although these credentials are reminiscent of William L. Laurence, who also deeply involved in the atomic bomb project, Morrison’s atomic narrative is distinctive from others in some regards. First, it was widely read by the American public, despite the fact that people’s interest toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki was dwindling: “At a moment when the initial shock of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was beginning to fade somewhat,” Morrison’s testimony “brought it rushing back” (78).

Another characteristic of Morrison's narrative is its prose style which Boyer praises as the most sophisticated among atomic scientists (78). In addition to this, Morrison's attitude toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki is another crucial factor. He had a strong conscience and a sense of guilt for what the scientists did during the Second World War. In several interviews that were conducted after the war, he frequently alludes to the guilt of the Trinity scientists. For example, in an interview with Studs Terkel, Morrison recounts his wartime memory. He was acutely aware of the fact that science, which is predominantly aimed to improve human society, can bring about dire consequences.

The folklore of the day is, the physicists were approached by the army. The army said, We will make you rich and famous. We'll give you the wonderful opportunity to make the world's greatest explosion and all you have to forget is, it's going to make a bomb to kill very many people. A Faustian bargain...At night, I sat and I thought. I woke up in the morning and I thought. All my friends did the same thing. What can we do about this war? Physicists invented the bomb. (Terkel 506)

In fact, before the publication of *One World or None*, *The New Republic* published Morrison's essay on the bombing of Hiroshima under the title of "Beyond Imagination." This essay on Hiroshima and nuclear energy is worth considering in relation to the sensation of Hersey's *Hiroshima*. The editor of the *New Republic* states that "Beyond Imagination" is the "first publication in any periodical of the entire text," with the subtitle "a statement of utmost importance."

It was February 11, 1946, when this essay was published as the top story of the *New Republic*. As well as Einstein and Leo Szilard, Morrison was one of the most important scientists of the Manhattan Project. However, after the Trinity Test,

he began to fear the nuclear weapon and its destructive power. In due course, he developed a negative attitude toward the use of the atomic bomb. This sentiment seems to be implied in “Beyond Imagination.” On the surface, this atomic essay is not very different from the reports and statements written by other scientists: the structure of atomic energy is illustrated in plain words so that anyone can easily understand. However, Morrison’s essay characterized atomic energy in a way that no other scientist did. It repeatedly warns of the dangers of atomic energy from a more philosophical and humanistic perspective. In his essay, Morrison repeatedly uses the same motifs while emphasizing the devastating power of the nuclear weapon and its damage to human beings. Furthermore, it requires the readers to use their “imagination,” so that they can see the atomic wasteland as if it were something that existed in their everyday lives. In the excerpt below, the narrator reminisces about the time when he saw a nameless victim in the atomic wasteland:

Even more striking than the damage to buildings is the great number of casualties. . . . *I remember seeing one man*, a patient, who had worn a railway-worker’s uniform. This uniform in Japan is a dark serge with an insigne to designate his grade. This man, wore, as insigne, a kind of a cross-shaped emblem over the left breast. His whole body was burned very badly and blackened, with the exception of the region under this cross. (The *New Republic*, February 11, 1946, 179 emphasis added)

The “man” is not given a name, or any other form of identification except his burnt and blackened uniform. However, what should be noted here is that more than eight months before Hersey’s *Hiroshima*, one nameless, single human being is “discovered” among the mountain of dead bodies. Contemporary critics tend to condemn the early atomic narratives for not depicting the hibakushas as

individual humans, but that is not always the case. Even in the early atomic writings, one can find examples of the hibakushas being presented as humans with their own histories and emotions. This assumption by contemporary critics is misleading and must be revised. Although Morrison was involved in the atomic bomb project, his narrator did not describe the atomic wasteland from the bombardier's perspective. Instead of seeing the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as just a number, the narrator tells the readers of a hidden story of one single human being and his banished identity.

Another point worthy of note is that the narrator of "Beyond Imagination" tells the story of Nagasaki in a way that parallels the atomic wasteland with the American society. That is to say, the aftermath of the bombings witnessed by the narrator is described within a familiar framework so that the people in American society can easily imagine it. In this respect, Morrison's atomic narrative may seem similar to Laurence's.

However, contrary to Laurence's Judeo-Christian atomic narrative, which is rich with metaphors and traditional tales, the narrator of "Beyond Imagination" uses explicit similes to give vivid descriptions of the two atomic wastelands so the readers can clearly picture them in their minds. For example, below is an excerpt of when the narrator explains that the "Roman Catholic church" was completely destroyed by the bomb.

At Nagasaki, the Roman Catholic church was an old and heavy brick-walled building nearly a mile and a half away, and it suffered total destruction. *It is likely that an American city would be as badly damaged as a Japanese city*, though it would look less wrecked from the air. In Japan the wreckage burned clean; in a Western city, the rubble would still stand

in piles in streets. But the city would be just as ruined, and the people of the city as dead. . . . The Action of the blast on steel-frame factory structures is known from the wreckage of the Mitsubishi Torpedo Works in Nagasaki. *Japanese homes are lightly built, but their factories are about like ours.* (emphasis added)

This scene, where the narrator gives detailed descriptions on the damages incurred by the city of Nagasaki, not only makes the reader feel a sense of familiarity toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also reminds the readers of this disquieting reality: any location in the world can be replaced with the two bombed cities, and the U.S. is no exception. Furthermore, the narrator is conscious of the imaginary reader in front of the text: just like the victims in the atomic wasteland, these readers are forced to picture him/herself suffering from a nuclear attack. The narrator raises the following issue to the readers:

The atomic bomb is a weapon of saturation. It destroys so quickly and so completely such a large area that defense is hopeless. Leadership and organization are gone. Key personnel are killed. *With the fire stations wrecked and firemen burned, how control a thousand fires? With the doctors dead and the hospitals smashed, how treat a quarter of a million injured?* . . . If the people in Kobe, went through a night of inferno, *you*, living in Nagoya, were going to be all right that night...But every hour of every day above any Japanese city there might be one American plane. And one bomber could now destroy a city. The alert would be sounded day and night. Even if the raiders were over Fukuoka, *you*, in Sendai, a thousand miles north, must still fear death from a single plane. This is unendurable. (emphasis added)

Here, the indiscriminate, chaotic, and random character of the atomic bomb is emphasized. The readers of the text must face the chilling realization that they also could be the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The panorama of the atomic wasteland, so skillfully illustrated by the narrator, shows the readers that the ordinary lives of ordinary people could be violated without warning by a single atomic weapon.

It can be said that these issues brought up in “Beyond Imagination” were closely related to the U.S. national experience and memory during the Second World War. In the introduction of the second edition of *War Without Mercy*, John Dower states that until September 11, 2001, America had never truly experienced “violence,” unlike the other countries of the world (13). In this case, “violence” is defined as a situation where non-combatants are attacked, killed or otherwise lose the ability to live normal, daily lives. Although it is



Figure 9: The mushroom cloud of Nagasaki, which was taken from the Bockscar (Courtesy of the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum)

said historically that the Pacific War broke out following the sudden attack by the Empire of Japan, the U.S. had scarcely experienced any kind of bombardment involving the death of non-combatants. One may argue that this historical background is interconnected with the America’s stance toward war, or mass-

execution in general. As mentioned in the previous two chapters, among the official reports and news coverages on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, only a few described the atomic wasteland through the eyes of victims. Instead, most of them viewed the panorama of the two bombed cities through eyes in the “sky,” namely, the bombardier’s point of view. As William L. Laurence reasons with use of the Judeo-Christian rhetoric, the American people were believed to be the “chosen,” thus allowed to acquire and utilize the atomic bomb.

This American attitude is captured effectively in the most famous photograph of the mushroom cloud, which was taken by Lieutenant Charles Levy (see figure), one of the bombardiers of the Bockscar. Levy recalls, “we saw this big plume climbing up, up into the sky. . . it was purple, red, white, all colors—something like boiling coffee. It looked alive.” According to *Time* Magazine:

Officials censored photos of the bomb’s devastation, but Levy’s image—the only one to show the full scale of the mushroom cloud from the air—was circulated widely. The effect shaped American opinion in favor of the nuclear bomb, leading the nation to celebrate the atomic age and proving. Under this widely spread image of the mushroom cloud, more than 80,000 people were killed, deprived of the opportunity to live normal lives, and lost their families. In spite of this, most people in the U.S. during that time never gave much thought to those people had everything taken away from them. In this regard, Morrison’s essay is remarkable in that narrator’s focal point is not the cloud, but the people underneath it. There, the bombed civilians take center stage and their hitherto unknown reality is unveiled.

Hersey's *Hiroshima* starts from the description of six bombed civilians. The narrator silently traces where they were, and what they were doing at the time of the bombing:

AT EXACTLY fifteen minutes past eight in the morning, on August 6, 1945, Japanese time, at the moment when the atomic bomb flashed above Hiroshima, Miss Toshiko Sasaki, a clerk in the personnel department of the East Asia Tin Works, had just sat down at her place in the plant office and was turning her head to speak to the girl at the next desk and the Reverend Mr. Kiyoshi Tanimoto, pastor of the Hiroshima Methodist Church, paused at the door of a rich man's house in Koi, the city's western suburb, and prepared to unload a handcart full of things he had evacuated from town in fear of the massive B-29 raid which everyone expected Hiroshima to suffer. (3-4)

This famous opening scene illustrates the daily lives of the civilians, though most American readers would have noticed that this so-called "daily" life was in truth not so much "daily" as it was "abnormal". It was wartime after all, and these were people who displayed fanatical adoration for the Emperor at every opportunity. However, the point here is that the narrator does not emphasize how "abnormal" the situation is but chooses instead to demonstrate how similar the "daily" lives of the Japanese are to those of the Americans. In other words, the narrator attempts to evoke the horrors caused by the bomb in the most direct manner possible, while putting both Americans and the hibakushas on the same level. Because this sympathetic attitude toward the hibakushas already existed within the American literary scene, Hersey's atomic narrative was accepted and easily understood by its readers. To reiterate, the reality of the atomic wasteland reported by one

scientist had laid the foundation for *Hiroshima* to become as widely celebrated as it was. “8.15” and “11.02,” which respectively signify Hiroshima and Nagasaki, can only gain meaning in the United States when its people finally face the two atomic wastelands from the ground level, not from the sky.

V. Conclusion

In terms of criticism toward the use of the atomic bombs, historian Gar Alperovitz states:

A small but steady stream of criticism began to achieve a modest momentum almost immediately after the bombings. Although the critics made little detectable impact on the general public, they were by no means restricted to the margins of American society. (437)

These criticisms served as a warning against the nature of humans and expressed strong concern toward the overly rapid development of civilization. However, one should admit that most of those criticisms lacked sympathy toward the bomb victims’ sufferings and their individual stories. In this regard, FCC’s statement and Morrison’s widespread atomic report had a unique perspective that complemented the former atomic narratives.

This chapter examined the background of how these two texts laid the groundwork for the success of Hersey’s *Hiroshima*. What must be emphasized here is that these pretexts not only had an influence on “how” the U.S. people saw Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also represented an attitude that had already existed in the period between 1945 and 1946. *Hiroshima* can be regarded as a culmination of several pretexts, which had exemplified the confused and complicated situations of the U.S. just after the Second World War. Although these

pretexts did not create as great of a stir as Hersey's text, it is true that they were instrumental in establishing a solid basis for the American public to see that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not imaginary, but something closely related to their everyday lives. As Emily S. Rosenberg, who investigated the relationship between Pearl Harbor and American memory, observes, people can embrace historical issues as personal matters when there is a "frame of reference": a familiar story that they have heard repeatedly.

As many researchers have noted, the impact of *Hiroshima* and its pretexts were remarkable in the context of the American society from 1945 to 1946. Not only did these narratives provide a fresh attitude toward the atomic wasteland, they also "discovered" the hibakushas under the mushroom cloud. For over 70 years, *Hiroshima* has been one of the most dominant texts of the Second World War. Even today, most news media frequently mention it when discussing atomic issues.

However, it should also be brought to attention that contrary to the early public response, some scholars in recent years are skeptical whether Hiroshima is truly worthy of such high praise. This point will be discussed in detail in the chapter 5, but it is important to emphasize here that despite its great sensation and favorable reception, it is also true that *Hiroshima* lacks some important factors that should be highlighted in the post Hiroshima and Nagasaki era. This shortfall is related to the fact that *Hiroshima* was ultimately unable to inspire the American public to take initiative and act against nuclear power, as Boyer rather cynically states in 1985:

In the intense but strictly circumscribed engagement with the Hiroshima reality offered by John Hersey, it was as though Americans were saying: "We have now faced what we did. We have been told. We have experienced

its full human horror. But we must get on with our lives. We can now put all that behind us.” (Boyer 210)

Because of its social implication, it seems that *Hiroshima* had put a temporary end to further discussion of the two cities. It is not clear whether Hersey had expected this consequence or not, but for over several decades, the hibakushas were again forced to be silent. Even though many literary works on the atomic bomb appeared during the Cold War era and beyond, hibakusha stories were never again put in the spotlight as part of the primary atomic narrative of the U.S.

Chapter 4: Lewis Mumford's Atomic Narrative and Possibility of Future Nuclear Criticism

I. Introduction

The 1984 journal article written by Jacques Derrida is an exceptional representation of the discrepancy between the Western world and Japan in terms of the rhetoric and attitude surrounding the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This article, entitled “NO APOCALYPSE, NOT NOW (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven missives)” was published in a special issue of the academic journal *Diacritics*. In this essay, Derrida argues that the term “nuclear age” is merely a type of “colloquialism,” created in response to preceding narratives and various information. He further states that even “nuclear war” is just a signifier that involves no actual event. To this day, this stance has sparked controversy, for Derrida concludes that the atomic holocaust never occurred. The most frequently quoted sentence of his essay is this:

Nuclear war has not taken place, it is a speculation, an invention in the sense of a fable or an invention to be invented in order to make a place for it or to prevent it from taking place (as much invention is needed for the one as the other), and for the moment this is only literature. Some might conclude that therefore it is not real, as it remains entirely suspended in its fabulous and literary epoche. (28)

In his attempts to decode the meaning of this essay, John Whittier Treat criticizes Derrida's statement in the most insightful manner. In his monumental work on Japanese atomic bomb literature *Writing Ground Zero* (1995), Treat says:

It is a fundamental corollary to Derrida's claim that what we now call "the nuclear age" has always been with us...that, though his own recourse to history, nuclear war has never taken place. The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—places Derrida never mentioned directly by name...is marked only by a telling circumlocution: he states "American bombs in 1945 ended a 'classical,' conventional war; it did not set off a nuclear war."

(Treat 354)

Following this, Treat observes that Derrida's argument is "characterized as something fully independent of the Manhattan Project and 1945" (354): the words "nuclear" and "atom" are confined within the text and have been separated from the actual event.

It is true that Treat admits Derrida's review is useful within the Cold War context: it recognizes the logic of the nuclear arms race, which regards the nuclear issue as a threat to the American society. However, he expresses concern that Derrida's rhetoric could potentially be hazardous because it neatly coincides with the American fantasy that the nuclear bombings did not actually take place. If the readers fully embrace Derrida's rationale, it would further oppress the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

What is worrisome is that whatever Derrida's intensions, it is entirely in keeping with the history of Western, specifically American, intellectuals since 1945 to repress the consequences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to speak of "nuclear war" only as something that has not happened. Most nuclear literature in the United States, for example, is science fiction, which is to say a perpetual deferment of an historical fact into an immaterial future. Indeed, the absence of a discussion of nuclear (i.e., post-

Hiroshima) culture in the works of American intellectuals is precisely the trace of its conspicuous presence—just the kind of rhetorical trope so often identified by contemporary theorists, and so characteristic, in fact, of the *Diacritics* special issue and its intentional or unintentional (it makes no difference) exclusion of any sign (pun intended) of Japanese nuclear criticism. (Treat 357)

In fact, the original purpose of Nuclear Criticism was to “construct a bridge between academia and the nuclear concerns of the populace” (Blouin, Shipley, Taylor 2), as it is stated in the presentation at the Cornell conference in the early 1980s:

[Nuclear Criticism] arises, on the one hand, out of reading a certain amount of recent criticism and critical theory and feeling that without exception it recounts an allegory of nuclear survival; *and, on the other, out of the sense that critical theory ought to be making a more important contribution to the public discussion of nuclear issues... the purpose of uncovering the unknown shapes of our conscious nuclear fears....* (emphasis added)

However, Derrida’s work resulted in fortifying and exposing the Western world’s understanding of the nuclear issue. The nuclear event is “fabulously textual... a nuclear war has not taken place: one can only talk and write about it... it is a non-event” (Derrida 23).

Countless literary works have dealt with the atomic issue in the post nuclear age. Indeed, nuclear fear manifested itself in every facet of the people’s lives, from educational brochures to science fiction novels, in such quantities that make it impossible to investigate them all in detail. As Treat observes, most of them mainly focus on “imaginary atomic wars,” as we can recognize in a numerous

science fiction novels and movies which began to appear in the late 1940s. In such narratives, victims of the real atomic warfare have been overshadowed: these stories provoke nuclear fear in imaginary scenarios without considering the actual events of the two destructed cities.

It has been widely accepted that ever since Derrida's review appeared, "Nuclear Criticism" spread over the Western world as a new trend in literary theory. However, it is notable that recent works point out that "there were a number of important texts that preceded" *Diacritic's* attempt (Blouin, Shipley, Taylor 2). Because of the dominant character of Derrida's review and because it reflected so well the American mindset regarding the nuclear issue, one could argue that these preceding early criticisms have not been discussed thoroughly enough. The problem lies within the politics of the U.S. atomic narrative that is structured to exclude certain narratives. This matter will further be discussed in the next chapter, but one thing must be noted here: although these non-categorized atomic narratives did not create a major stream of nuclear discourse in the Western world, some of them have paved the way to important discussions considering the rhetorical discrepancy between the Western world and Japan which seems to continue until today.

Among those "overshadowed" examples of early Nuclear Criticism, this chapter will particularly focus on Lewis Mumford's response on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which were mainly published at the dawn of the atomic age. Mumford is well known for his poignant criticisms on civilization, technology, literature and urban research. In his most remarkable works such as *The Story of Utopias* (1922) and *Condition of Man* (1944), Mumford not only warned that civilization is advancing at an overly rapid speed, but also foreshadowed the grim future of

humans. Based on these preceding works, he began to respond to the public on the atomic issue just after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Later he seeks to raise the question of whether humans are misusing technology, as Miller states that “Mumford had lived through what he considered the worst twenty years in mankind’s history, the age of Hitler and Hiroshima, and his work in the postwar years in an effort to discover and explain what had gone wrong (301)”.

In a time when the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were largely ignored by the U.S. media and official narratives, Mumford’s perspective toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki is markedly different from the mainstream. In addition, in direct contrast with Derrida’s *Diacritics* review, Mumford’s atomic narrative has a global point of view and recognizes Hiroshima and Nagasaki as actual events which may threaten not only the American society, but also human society as a whole. It should be considered one of the most monumental counter-texts against the American media and official statements like those released by President Harry Truman and Secretary of State Henry Stimson.

Mumford’s criticism toward the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has been regarded as the first “moral narrative”: he is frequently named as one of the outstanding moralists who “had lamented that humankind was not morally sound enough to handle the new weapon” (Lifton and Mitchell 77-8). Boyer also points out the ethical aspect of Mumford’s atomic narrative:

In a remarkable 1948 essay, Lewis Mumford lashed out at both the “genocide” that had now become accepted American practice and the hypocrisy of those who euphemistically termed it “total war.” The only novelty of the atomic bomb, he said, was that it “wrapped up this method of extermination in a neater, and possibly cheaper package.” Mumford was

appalled not only by the “moral nihilism” that had permitted the descent into mass extermination, but by the public’s apathetic response: “It is as if the Secretary of Agriculture had authorized the sale of human meat during the meat shortage, and everyone had accepted cannibalism in daily practice as a clever dodge for reducing the cost of living.” It was not the atomic bomb alone, he concluded, “but our willingness to use any instruments of genocide, that constitutes the all-enveloping danger.” (218-19 sic)

In fact, Mumford’s response to the nuclear issue has often been discussed in terms of its moralistic viewpoint, as Malcolm Cowley states that he was “the last of the great humanists” (Miller 5). Moreover, it is also known that Mumford was one of the first intellectuals who helped to organize the U.S.’s first nuclear disarmament movement immediately after Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Miller 7).

However, it is worth emphasizing that Mumford’s atomic narrative not only has a “moral” aspect, but also views Hiroshima and Nagasaki from a broader and global perspective which can serve to shed new light on even the current, 21st century nuclear criticism. This chapter will first consider Mumford’s works on civilization and technology, which set the stage for his response to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Then, the following section will investigate his atomic narrative in detail, by seeking answers to the question of whether or not this narrative could possibly bridge the gap between the Western and Japanese nuclear criticism.

II. Machine, Civilization, Technology and Human Beings

Mumford is known for his wide range of works on the relationship between civilization, technology and human history. For over decades, many critics have

discussed his multidisciplinary works. For example, Japanese critic Miura Masashi mentions Mumford's *The Myth of the Machine* (1967) in his book, which discusses the transformation of the human body within the context of modern society⁶. According to Miura, one of the most remarkable accomplishments of Mumford's works is that they consider the magnificent scale of civilization while referring to preceding studies and discoveries in the areas of anthropology, ethology, and psychoanalysis. Furthermore, what is more striking is that Mumford identifies "machines" with "human beings": the origin of machines, which are essential in modern society, can be traced back to the ancient people, who had built enormous architectures such as the Great Pyramids. In other words, contrary to the general understanding that we human beings created machines to improve our civilization, machines were as a matter of fact born organically out of daily human behavior. Miura insightfully summarizes this point: machines appeared after we humans lost out humanity and started to live against nature.

One may get a better understanding of Mumford's notion of the machines and its origin in "The Monastery and the Clock," one of the most notable articles in *Technics and Civilization* (1934), which "described not simply the work of inventors and scientists but also the cultural sources and moral consequences of the breakthroughs in technology and science" (Miller 299). It was four years before nuclear fission was discovered by German chemists Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassman in 1938 that this unconventional view on the relation between human and technology first appeared in public.

⁶ Shintai no Reido, published from Kodansha in 1994.

In “The Monastery and the Clock,” Mumford observes that “the clock. . . is the key machine of the modern industrial age. . . and at each period it has remained in the lead” (326). What is significant here is that the clock, which is one of the most ubiquitous machines of all time, originated from the monastery, specifically the Benedictines in the seventh century. Mumford’s observation about the relationship between the monastery and the origin of clock is significant:

[. . .] The application of quantitative methods of thought to the study of nature had its first manifestation in the regular measurement of time; and the new mechanical conception of time arose in part out of the routine of the monastery. Alfred [North] Whitehead has emphasized the importance of the scholastic belief in a universe ordered by God as one of the foundations of modern physics; but behind that belief was the presence of order in the institutions of the Church itself.

[. . .] Within the walls of the monastery was sanctuary: under the rule of the order surprise and doubt and caprice and irregularity were put at bay. . . . The monastery was the seat of a regular life, and an instrument for striking the hours at intervals or for reminding the bell-ringer that it was time to strike the bells was an almost inevitable product of this life. If the mechanical clock did not appear until the cities of the thirteenth century demanded an orderly routine, the habit of order itself and the earnest regulation of time sequences had become almost second nature in the monastery...*the clock is not merely a means of keeping track of the hours, but of synchronizing the actions of men.* (324-25 emphasis added)

The lives of those who lived in the monastery had been mechanized long before the actual clock was invented in the thirteenth century. It can be said that

“punctuality,” a concept initially born out of the Benedictine lifestyle, later percolated through the Western world and became broadly embraced as the standard way of life, consequently becoming the main factor that caused the rapid acceleration of civilization.

It seems that in “The Monastery and the Clock,” Mumford uses the word “civilization” without expressing any judgement. However, it should also be noted that his rather critical attitude toward the overly hasty evolution of civilization in the Western society is implied. First and foremost, he cites the “unnatural” habit of the monastery, which later gave birth to the clock.

Now, *the orderly punctual life that first took shape in the monasteries is not native to mankind*, although by now Western peoples are so thoroughly regimented by the clock that it is “second nature” and they look upon its observance as a fact of nature. Many Eastern civilizations have flourished on a loose basis in time: the Hindus have in fact been so indifferent to time that they lack even an authentic chronology of the years. Only yesterday, in the midst of the industrialization of Soviet Russia, did a society come into existence to further the carrying of watches there and to propagandize the benefits of punctuality. (327 sic)

He further discusses the consequence of the invention of the clock.

To keep time was once a peculiar attribute of music: it gave industrial value to the workshop song or the tattoo or the chantey of the sailors tugging at a rope. But the effect of the mechanical clock is more pervasive and strict: it presides over the day from the hour of rising to the hour of rest. (328)

Thus, Mumford observes that the origin of machines can be traced back to the Western customs, habits, and way of life. This observation is noteworthy in that it

foreshadows his later nuclear criticism, proclaiming that machine, civilization, and technology are cultivated and produced from human desires. In this respect, Mumford's argument takes a completely different stance from the dominant American narratives such as news articles or the official statements released by the government. In these dominant narratives, technology is discussed within the Judeo-Christian frame of reference: within this view, technology is often identified with alchemy, which is considered to be a celestial power far beyond the human imagination. Consequently, the human responsibility for the atomic holocaust is trivialized.

When considering Mumford's attitude toward technology and civilization, his idiosyncratic concept of what he refers to as the "megamachine" should also be noted. This idea on the relationship between authority and individuals first appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1970, but Mumford had already introduced a similar concept in *Technics and Civilization* in the 1930s. In his book *The Myth of the Machine*, published in 1966, Mumford observes that the machine era had started not in the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, but actually in ancient Egypt where people had constructed a large number of great pyramids. Just as he noted that the origin of "technology" can be seen in the invention of the clock as well as the human's notion of time and space, Mumford makes a similar observation about the origin of "machines." He argues that they originated from the human body, which had constructed enormous architectures:

In fact, it is the building of the pyramids that we find the first indubitable evidence of the machine's existence, and the first proof of its astonishing efficiency. . . .

Though the material equipment of dynastic Egypt was still crude, the patient workmanship and disciplined method made good these shortcomings. *The social organization had leaped ahead five thousand years to create the first large-scale power machine: a machine of a hundred thousand manpower*, that is, the equivalent, roughly, of ten thousand horsepower: a machine composed of a multitude of uniform, specialized, interchangeable, but functionally differentiated parts, rigorously marshaled together and coordinated in a process centrally organized and centrally directed: each part behaving as a mechanical component of the mechanized whole.... (316-18 emphasis added)

Mumford further remarks that the builders of pyramids behaved as mechanical components and “they collectively performed the equivalent of a whole corps of power shovels, bulldozers, tractors, mechanical saws, and pneumatic drills, with an exactitude of measurement, a refinement of skill. . .” (318).

However, Mumford also states that human machines can perform effectively under the surveillance of what he calls the “megamachine.” A megamachine is a large hierarchical and bureaucratic organization that oversees individuals: it issues instructions to every member of the unit, “so that the parts would interlock to form a single operating whole” (319). From ancient Egypt to modern society, the megamachine has repeatedly exercised its power, and in most cases brought about dire consequences (315). After the Second World War, Mumford introduces the negative and coercive aspects of the megamachine in *The Myth of the Machine* (1967):

In short, none of the destructive fantasies that have taken possession of leaders in our own age, from Hitler and Stalin, from the khans of the

Kremlin to the Khans of the Pentagon, were foreign to the souls of the divinely appointed founders of the first machine civilization. With every increase of effective power, extravagantly sadistic and murderous impulses emerged out of the unconscious: not radically different from those sanctioned, not only by Hitler's extermination of six million Jews and uncounted millions of other people, but by the extermination by the United State Air Force of [approximately] 180,000 civilians in Tokyo in a single night by roasting alive. *When a distinguished Mesopotamian scholar proclaimed that "civilization begins at Sumer" he innocently overlooked how much must be forgotten before this can be looked upon as a laudable achievement. Mass production and mass destruction are the positive and negative poles, historically, of the myth of the megamachine. . . .* (322-23 emphasis added)

There are three points in Mumford's peculiar and magnificent theory of the pertinence between machine and technology before the Second World War that should be emphasized because of their connection to his later narrative on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. First, he expresses a rather severe attitude toward civilization, which "flourished" in the Western society. Second, he observes that totalitarianism stems from bureaucracy, which forces each person to work as a component of a large organization. It is notable that Mumford was aware of this factor twenty years earlier than the publication of Hanna Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* in 1951. The third point is the most important: machine and technology are inseparable from the human body. They are both born out of "unnatural" human habits, as Mumford eloquently expressed in his observation of

the Benedictine monastery and the clock. Considering these three points, the next section will investigate his atomic narrative in detail.

III. American Madness

In *Culture of the Cities* (1938), which was published just before the outbreak of the Second World War, Mumford declared that no matter how advanced a civilization becomes, the lives of individuals should be the primary focus. This book was published in an unstable social climate where the fear of fascism gradually began to pervade the world. He expressed strong concerns that when a civilization becomes too advanced, it would give rise to barbarism. This idea implies a somewhat critical perspective toward the 19th century evolutionism that illustrates the Western culture as the complete form of civilization:

Today our world faces a crisis: a crisis which, if its consequences are as grave as now seems, may not fully be resolved for another century. If the destructive forces in civilization gain ascendancy, our new urban culture will be stricken in every part. Our cities, blasted and deserted, will be cemeteries for the dead: cold lairs given over to less destructive beasts than man. But we may avert that fate: perhaps only in facing such a desperate challenge can the necessary creative forces be effectually welded together. . . . As life becomes insurgent once more in our civilization, conquering the reckless thrusts of barbarism, the culture of cities will be both instrument and goal. (11-12)

Although Mumford cautions against the savage aspect of civilization, he still seems to hope that human beings can avoid dire consequences if only “we” could be

conscious of the binary characteristic of civilization. Mumford believed in the decency of human beings.

However, his fear of barbarism, which is essentially disregard for the life of others, became real when the two atomic bombs were dropped on the two Japanese cities. As a response to this situation, on March 2, 1946, seven months after the incidents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Mumford wrote an essay titled “Gentlemen, You Are Mad!” for the *Saturday Review of Literature*, which was an influential weekly magazine in the U.S.

The title word “gentlemen” refers not only to the American citizens, but also to each individual who was consciously or unconsciously involved in the mass-execution as a component of a large organization. In this essay, Mumford repeatedly argues that the U.S. after Hiroshima and Nagasaki is in a state of insanity. Furthermore, he warns that this madness is incited by scientists and politicians who consider themselves as sane and normal.

The word “madmen” in this essay represents the people’s aberration in the post Hiroshima and Nagasaki era. What is striking is that the word “madmen” does not directly refer to a particular person by name. Instead, it refers to the collective, aggregate, bureaucratic organization which consists of the military, government officials, scientists and mass media. The essay begins somewhat allegorically:

We in America are living among madmen. Madmen govern our affairs in the name of order and security. The chief madmen claim the titles of general, admiral, senator, scientist, administrator, Secretary of State, even President. And the fatal symptom of their madness is this: they have been carrying through a series of acts which will lead eventually to the

destruction of mankind, under the solemn conviction that they are normal responsible people, living sane lives, and working for reasonable ends.

According to Mumford, “madmen” created the “infernal machine,” i.e. atomic bombs, in the same way that the ancient Egyptian constructed large architectures. He also implicitly criticizes the nuclear arms race which had already become the primal political issue in 1946:

We know that the madmen are still making these machines, and we do not even ask them for what reason, still less do we bring their work to a halt. So we, too, are madmen: madmen living among madmen: unmoved by the horror that moves swiftly toward us. We are thinking only of the next hour, the next day, the next week, and that is further proof that we are mad, for if we go on in this fashion, tomorrow will be more heavy with death than a mortuary. (sic)

By emphasizing the responsibility of every individual, he reminds his readers that even they are the components of the “infernal machine.” He also remarks that although a devastating incident is taking place right in front of them, people are indifferent about it. This apathetic attitude and clock-like human nature is allegorically tied to the imagery of machine components.

One may have the first impression that this essay is a “fable,” a story that issues warnings against excessively advanced technology. Moreover, neither the term “atomic bomb” nor “mass-execution” appear in the first half of the text. Thus, on the surface, this text seems to be a general tale of “humanity.” However, it is unconventional when compared to other counter-narratives within the context of the mid-1940s.

First, it introduces a distinctive perspective on the “social violence” inflicted by the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki: it is the insanity of a “nation,” not the insanity of individual human beings, that lead people to destruction or mass-execution. As mentioned in his previous works, Mumford’s stance on “the social violence” differed significantly from that of ordinary social scientists in 1946. For example, Robert Jacobs observes that in those days, in the field of social science, nuclear problems were thought to have resulted from a penchant for violence. However, this argument gives the false impression that human folly is at the root of most if not all nuclear issues. In the excerpt above, although Mumford uses words such as “Secretary of State” or “President,” his condemnation is not directed personally to Henry Stimson or Harry Truman. Instead, he is denouncing the insanity of the “nation,” namely the bureaucratic structure, which shepherds the people to the realm of insanity while pretending to be sane.

Second, this text can be interpreted as an allegory which not only criticizes the use of the atomic bomb, but also aims to restore the sanity of the American public. Mumford express his view on “sanity” and “madness” in his essay as follows:

Why do we let the madmen go on with their game without raising our voices? Why do we keep our glassy calm in the face of this danger? There is a reason: we are madmen too. We view the madness of our leaders as if it expressed a traditional wisdom and a common sense: we view them placidly, as a doped policeman might view with a blank tolerant leer the robbery of a bank or the barehanded killing of a child or the setting of an infernal machine in a railroad station. Our failure to act is the measure of our madness. We look at the madmen and pass by. (284)

According to Mumford, “we” are behaving in the exact same way as the policeman, who fails to respond to the heinous crimes taking place right in front of him; “we” are not aware of how abnormal the situation is, seeing but not comprehending how appalling the leaders’ actions are. In this state, individuals are controlled by authority, and they never notice the “queerness” of the circumstance that surrounds them.

This allegory expresses Mumford’s view that the atomic bomb was created as a consequence of the division of labor in which each worker acts as a “component” of a machine. What is required for each “component” is to be indifferent to others: they need not think nor feel anything. Furthermore, because their bodies are “paralyzed” and their minds are “dead,” they are no longer able to speak in their own words, listen to other people’s stories, or communicate with one another, much like actual machines. One could say that this was the scenario of the U.S. society in the early nuclear age. In the excerpt above, Mumford raises the issue that under such bureaucratic structures, people are more susceptible to violence, though they are often not conscious of it. In addition to this point, a rather sobering idea is presented: this American social condition during and even after the Second World War is comparable to fascism and totalitarianism, where the most “morally sound” and “mentally stable” people can easily become advocates of mass-execution.

IV. Beyond the Judeo-Christian Rhetoric

As mentioned in the second chapter, one of the obvious characteristics of the American “dominant” atomic narratives in the post Hiroshima and Nagasaki era is that they regard science and Judeo-Christian views as interlinking disciplines. This rhetoric not only reinforces the notion that considers the atomic

weapon as a “divine” existence, but also succeeds in exonerating the U.S. responsibility for the use of the two bombs.

In terms of the relationship between metaphors, narratives and nuclear weapons, John Canady notes that metaphorical representations of nuclear weapons are ubiquitous in popular culture. Canady also makes the interesting observation that the most pervasive metaphor is one that equates the nuclear weapon with the omnipotent God:

Amidst these riches, there is one metaphor that occurs more frequently than any other, in various guises: the bomb is like god. It is an immediately compelling link, referencing the power of nuclear weapons, their apparent omnipresence, the actual omnipresence of the nuclear processes that engender them, the role of fusion in creating all of the heavier elements that make up the world, and the fact that fission and fusion reactions underlie the properties that lead us to call the sun “the giver of life.” (263)

What Canady states is congruent with William L. Laurence’s atomic narrative. The latter is not only compatible with the American ideological story that aims to eradicate fascism, but also employs a familiar framework that had been traditionally used from the time when the Founding Fathers established the nation in the 18th century. On one hand, it successfully explains the physical structure of the atomic energy through a religious rhetoric, so that the layman can easily understand. On the other hand, however, it makes no reference to the glaring reality that the bomb was in truth created by human beings. When the atomic weapon is described and discussed within the U.S. context in a cliched religious rhetoric, “Hiroshima and Nagasaki” lose their reality: the mass-execution, violence, and atrocities are obscured under this rhetorical maneuver. Consequently,

the two incidents become mere symbols, or hollow images which have no actual meanings.

Taking this into consideration, it makes sense that apocalyptic nuclear literature and culture flourished in the U.S. society within the context of the post Hiroshima and Nagasaki era. As Michael Gorman observes, the words “Hiroshima and Nagasaki” have been used as a mere “motif,” which has no relation to the actual event. Upon examining the post atomic age “nuclear literature” including novels, movies, song lyrics and advertisements, Gorman reprehends the use of such motifs in that they not only ignore the actual reality of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also exploit them for commercial purposes:

Television producers, film executives, and movie critics perceive nuclear technology as a "motif," rather than an actual threat. For them the nuclear motif seems outdated because it has been supplanted in the American imagination by other threats to the welfare of the planet and the human race. Global warming, genetic engineering, biological experiments, and toxic chemical spills seem more immediate dangers. The U.S. film industry has been busy responding to this change in the American psyche by updating icons of Cold War popular culture. It is rather amazing how simply stories are modernized. References to the nuclear aspects in the original storylines are deleted and replaced with an issue that seems more relevant to contemporary society.

Mumford's narrative on the atomic weapons differentiates itself from the apocalyptic, Judeo-Christian outlook. What is particularly notable is that the former ignores the “divine” nature of the atomic weapon. Instead, it repeatedly demands humans to reconsider their responsibility regarding the mass-execution.

In addition, in direct opposition to the dominant atomic narrative, which described the atomic weapon as “the Second Advent of Christ,” Mumford places the atomic weapon, what he calls the “infernal machine,” within the context of human history that has been shaped according to the human behavior: their ways of living as well as needs, wants, and desires. Fittingly, Mumford’s essay repeatedly uses the personal pronoun “we.” By doing so, the readers and the subject of the essay are brought closer together, thus closing the gap between the two.

Regarding the contrast between the dominant atomic narrative and Mumford’s response to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is also worth considering that in this essay, what is called “the awakened ones” appear as a countervailing existence against the “madmen.” The narrator of this essay states that the awakened ones “are the only people who show a normal awareness of danger, and the proof of this fact is that their frantic signals are dismissed as madness. *The louder they shout to us, the more inaudible their voices become*” (285 emphasis added).

“The awakened ones” can be explained in two very different ways. On one hand, they can simply be interpreted as those who advocate nuclear disarmament. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is true that these people, including scientists and religious leaders, already protested against nuclear weapons in the early atomic age. On the other hand, however, the “awakened ones” serve to unearth and shed light on the numerous “stories” of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which were excluded from the sphere of the U.S.’s atomic narrative. In other words, the message of the “awakened ones” overlaps with the narratives of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that started appearing immediately after the bombings but were not widely known within the U.S. society.

According to the narrator of this essay, he has received the message of “the awakened ones.” He shows the reader the whole text, which denounces the U.S. actions of producing and using the two bombs. The message also foretells the impending future:

“The madmen are planning the end of the world. What they call continued progress in atomic warfare means universal extermination, and what they call national security is organized suicide. There is one duty for the moment: every other task is a dream and a mockery. Stop the atomic bomb. Stop making the bomb. Abandon the bomb completely. Dismantle every existing bomb. Cancel every plan for the bomb’s use; for these clever plans are based on stark madness. . . Do not treat the atomic bomb as a weapon of offense; do not treat it as a weapon of retaliation; do not treat it as an instrument of the police. Treat the bomb for what is actually is: the visible insanity of a civilization that has ceased to worship life and obey the laws of life. . . .”

In fact, this message is directed to the “recipients”: the narrator works as a “messenger” who sends this cautionary warning to the people who are blissfully unaware of the nuclear danger. Upon receiving the warning message from “the awakened ones,” the narrator says “let us awaken the sleeping sanity of the peoples of the world by calling them together and showing them our guilty hands, our hands already stained with a madman’s blood, still clenched in a madman’s purpose. . .”.

What should be noted here is that in this triangular interaction of “the awakened ones,” the narrator and the recipients/readers are in a parallel structure with the Book of Jonah. Although Mumford does not use the direct image of the

Old Testament in this nuclear criticism, his later essay titled “Call me Jonah!” (1961) reveals that he had consciously been identifying himself with the Biblical character, Jonah, who was ordered by God to travel to the city of Nineveh and warn its residents of the divine retribution. It is well known in the Western world that Jonah is a symbol of sin, swallowed by a huge whale because of his disobedience to the God’s orders. Mumford explains that most people familiar with this story view Jonah as “a bringer of bad luck”:

If anything goes wrong, Jonah is to blame for it. Jonah is that terrible fellow who keeps on uttering the very words you don’t want to hear, reporting the bad news and warning you that it will get even worse unless you yourself change your mind and alter your behavior. (366)

What is striking here is Mumford’s explanation on why he identifies with this Biblical figure in “Call Me Jonah!”: although Mumford admits that Jonah has become one of his favorite books in the Bible, he further explains that this is not because Jonah is someone to look up to, but because he is an admonitory figure. Jonah serves to expose Mumford’s failures, taking him down whenever he is elated by some minor success, jeering at him when his most acute forecasts fail.

Mumford further states in “Call Me Jonah!” that Jonah was a man who was punished by God for not working as a messenger despite knowing what would happen if he did not alert the people:

And why to begin with did he want to escape from Nineveh? Because he was fleeing from the voice of the Lord. Jonah did not want to tell the people of Nineveh, that mighty metropolis, what the Lord commanded him to say. *“If you go on this way you will be destroyed.”* So Jonah abandoned his mission and fled as fast as he could for a distant port. . . .

Jonah comes off badly in comparison with the wise and wily old patriarch, who didn't set out to be a prophet. . . . Jonah's monstrous error was to imagine that he knew in advance how badly both the people of Nineveh and God would behave. (366-68 sic)

Mumford's interpretation of Jonah is somewhat idiosyncratic as he admits that "this private Jonah is of course quite different from the stock character still visible in folklore" (366). What must be understood here is that the "structure" of Mumford's atomic narrative overlaps with that of Jonah's story. Although it is unclear whether Mumford was aware of this point when he published this nuclear essay, these two texts seem to have an intertextual connection. When considering this relationship, one significant fact should not be forgotten: not only was Mumford a historian, sociologist, and philosopher of technology, he was also known as one of the most celebrated literary critics of Herman Melville. In 1928, just after the publication of his critical work "Herman Melville," he wrote an essay titled "The Significance of Herman Melville." Here, Mumford states that the American social situation in the 1920s has similarities with what Melville depicts in *Moby-Dick* (1851), and concludes that Mumford's contemporaries could and should learn from this epic saga:

Whatever Melville's life was, his art in *Moby-Dick* was that integration and synthesis which we seek. Through his art, he escaped the barren destiny of his living: he embraced Life; and we who follow where his lonely courage led him, embrace it too. That embrace was a fertile one, and in each generation it will bring forth its progeny. The day of Herman Melville's vision is now in the beginning. It hangs like a cloud over the horizon at

dawn; and as the sun rises, it will become more radiant, and more a part of the living day. (The *New Republic*, October 10, 1928)

In fact, as he later recalls in “Call Me Jonah!,” Mumford is struck by the fictional sermon of Father Mapple, one of the characters of *Moby-Dick*, who preaches in front of the crew of Pequod. On Jonah’s betrayal and Father Mapple’s response to it, Mumford states that:

The important fact is that Jonah, who was a dedicated prophet, had heard the voice of the Lord, and in a cowardly panic ran away from it. He didn’t dare to deliver the awful message he got directly from the Lord’s mouth. . . . This betrayal of his mission as a prophet is what Father Mapple properly denounces and castigates in that most magnificent passage. I have read his words aloud again and again, and each time the sermon gets better and better. It teaches something we must all learn if and when Truth calls us. For what is the lesson of science? What is the lesson of religion? Whenever Truth command us, we must obey it and utter it aloud whether our friends and neighbors and countrymen like it or not. (367)

One of the most significant similarities of the biblical Jonah and the narrator of Mumford’s nuclear essay is that the two have exclusive knowledge on vital information before anyone else: they are destined to become prophets, appointed by a higher power to tell others about forthcoming bleak events. Furthermore, like the Lord’s message that was delivered to Jonah, the message from “the awakened ones” can be regarded as something “you don’t want to hear”: they both foreshadow an unfavorable future that can destroy human civilization.

However, unlike the biblical Jonah, who had at first refused to deliver the divine message of God to the people of Nineveh before fleeing to a distant place

and consequently being punished for his actions, the narrator of Mumford's nuclear essay attempts to share the message of "the awakened ones" with the recipients, namely the readers of the essay. Upon receiving the message from "the awakened ones," the narrator sets out to inform the recipients/readers of the disastrous and urgent situation surrounding the U.S. society, by saying:

While the whole world writhes in a spasm of madness, let us in America be mad with a method, mad with a purpose. Let us say No to the atomic bomb rather than say No to life itself. Let us awaken the sleeping sanity of the peoples of the world by calling them together and showing them our guilty hands, our hands already stained with a madman's blood, still clenched in a madman's purpose. . . .

With its use of the biblical framework as well as the typological triangular relationship between "the awakened ones," the narrator, and the reader, Mumford's nuclear essay appears to resonate with the dominant U.S. atomic narrative. However, there is a significant difference between the two narratives. While the dominant American atomic narratives use the Judeo-Christian rhetoric to praise the nuclear energy as an omnipotent force, the biblical structure of Mumford's response on Hiroshima and Nagasaki holds the potential to overcome these dominant narratives. What is notable about this point is that the Jonah-like messenger, namely the narrator of this essay, turns out to be a mediator and not a betrayer who disobeys a higher power. In this respect, the structure of the *Book of Jonah* is dismantled. One may argue that this dismantling and overturning of Jonah's story rises above the American atomic narrative and Judeo-Christian ideology that had been ignoring a multitude of atomic stories. When "the messenger" of Mumford's essay on Hiroshima and Nagasaki goes far beyond the

Judeo-Christian atomic narrative and starts tearing down the biblical structure, all the obscured, untold and forgotten stories of the two cities can be retrieved. Mumford's Jonah-like messenger tells the readers of the post atomic age what they do not want to hear and what they had never heard before.

V. Conclusion

Among the intellectuals who responded to the situation involving Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Mumford's critical voice regarding the two events is outstanding in its breadth, covering various aspects regarding the history of civilization, technology and human behavior. It is worth noting that in despite his many insights and criticisms, Mumford stated the following in 1961:

“I would die happy if I knew that on my tombstone could be written these words, ‘This man was an absolute fool. None of the disastrous things that he reluctantly predicted ever came to pass. . . .’ then I could die happy.”

Even so, his nuclear narrative has the potential to enlighten even contemporary, 21st century nuclear criticism. For one thing, his narrative presents the inescapable fact that the birth of the nuclear weapon is of a parallel structure with that of fascism and totalitarianism: both, according to Mumford, are derived and created from “ordinary” human behavior. His language is calm/quiet, but his message is foreboding; the birth of the nuclear weapon transitions seamlessly into mass-execution when individuals work as a component of one large organization.

What is more chilling is Mumford's attestation that this mechanism can be seen anywhere in the human history. This is the same mechanism as the first machine being invented in the medieval monastery of Europe, the ancient Egyptians building enormous architectural structures, and the nuclear weapon

being created and used for a mass-execution. The biblical narrative framework which implies a triangular relationship between the narrator, the readers and the message by “the awakened ones” sheds light on the politics of narratives in the context of the atomic age. Deviating from the cliched rhetoric, Mumford’s response on Hiroshima and Nagasaki overcomes the limitation of the dominant narratives which appeared in the early years of America. In this respect, this 1946 essay, along with Mumford’s other works on civilization, technology, and history should be reconsidered in our contemporary era.

“Lessons from the past” may seem banal to those living in the post atomic age, 75 years after the first nuclear war took place. Whether this is true or not, modern people should admit one thing: the nuclear weapon or atomic war will once again slide into the territory of fiction unless people today become fully aware of what was behind the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It must be acknowledged that the mass-execution stemmed from our “ordinary” customs and behaviors.

Chapter 5: Retelling the Story of Nagasaki: Susan Southard's *Nagasaki: Life after Nuclear War* and the Western Atomic Narrative Sphere of Nagasaki

I. Introduction

The sixteen-year-old Taniguchi Sumiteru was working as a postman in Nagasaki. On that summer day, he and his colleagues heard the air-raid siren beginning to wail but paid no particular attention to it because they were used to hearing it daily. Shortly before eleven o'clock, the all-clear was sounded, so Taniguchi left the post office with a heavy bag full of mail to deliver. He called to his colleagues that he was going to be back shortly. On the street, he saw children in white shirts playing. They greeted the postman because they knew each other very well. Their interaction was casual since they all believed the same scene will play out again the following day. However, they were wrong:

At that instant, the children and everything else around him disappeared in a blinding flash, bluish-white, like a gigantic arc-lamp, and accompanied by deafening, unearthly thunder—survivors would remember it as *pika-don*, the flash-boom. Then all was dust and darkness as a wind more violent than any typhoon blasted Sumiteru off his bicycle and hurled him to the ground some metres away. . . .

Before he hit the ground, something like a cannon-ball struck Sumiteru in the back—it was one of the boulders from the heap around the pine tree on the corner. For some moments, he lay still, wondering whether he was alive or dead. . . . Immediately he was seized by the fear that he might after all die, there, in the road. He forced himself to think. 'No,' he murmured aloud, 'No, I'm not going to die, not here. I refuse.'

As he lay, trying to collect his thoughts, he dimly heard the sound of an aeroplane high overhead. It was Bock's Car, very low on fuel, on its way back to forced landing at Okinawa. The crew were congratulating each other on a job well done. Someone called the bombardier on the intercom. 'Hey, Bea, you just killed a hundred thousand Japs.' Among them were those white objects looking like leaves scattered before the wind. They were the children who had just waved to Sumiteru. (*The Postman of Nagasaki*, 62)

This is an excerpt from *The Postman in Nagasaki* written by the English writer Peter Townsend in 1984. Taniguchi Sumiteru, who later became widely known to the public due to the circulation of the shocking photograph of his heavily injured body, is one of the protagonists of this novel. The reader of the above excerpt may wonder what happened to Taniguchi after this scene. He survived the blast but was tormented by the everlasting agony of his injuries for the rest of his life. In *The Postman of Nagasaki*, Townsend describes Taniguchi's unspeakable sufferings both mentally and physically after the nuclear war. While focusing on one hibakusha who was an adolescent at the time of bombing, this story also shows the perspective of the bombardiers. This structure enables the narrator to tell the story of what happened both "under" and "above" the mushroom cloud.

It is worth considering that this novel was published in 1984, 39 years after the bomb exploded over Nagasaki, in an era when the eyewitness accounts of the hibakushas were gradually losing public attention both domestically and internationally. In spite of that, *The Postman in Nagasaki* became a great success. However, one fact about the public "response" of this novel should also be noted here. In Japan, this novel was favorably received by the general public and was

even adopted as one of the stories to be included in high school textbooks. In 2005, celebrating the novel's republication, *The Japan Times* published an article titled "Novel on hibakusha reprinted." In this article, a statement made by a Japanese journalist is introduced:

Many books have been published on the A-bomb, but the appeal of "The Postman of Nagasaki" lies in Townsend's style and the moving story of Taniguchi's struggle against discrimination as an A-bomb survivor and his fears for himself and his children over radiation sickness, according to Setsuko Yokokawa, a freelance journalist who initiated the project to revive the book. (*The Japan Times*, July 27, 2005)

However, on a global scale, there does not seem to be any public response toward this novel, even in England and France, the two countries where the book was first published. This disparity in enthusiasm must be examined in relation to the main theme of this chapter.

Peter Townsend was heavily involved in the Second World War as one of the most important personnel of the British Army. In addition, he had already established his status in the Western society at the time of the publication of this story not only as a writer, but as a Royal Air Force officer, a flying ace, courtier and even a lover of Princess Margret of England.

In 1974, a few years before this celebrated figure started preparing for his sixth novel which focused on the Nagasaki bombing, one nameless American high school student who was an exchange student in Yokohama, visited the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum for a school trip⁷. At the time, this 16-year-old American

⁷ In those days, the museum was officially known as "The Nagasaki International Culture Hall."

student knew nothing about the Pacific War and the American use of the two atomic bombs. Later she recalled:

Inside the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, I stood arm in arm with friends who had embraced me as their own, staring at photographs of burned adults and children and the crushed and melted household items on display. In one of the glass cases, a helmet still had the charred flesh of a person's scalp stuck inside. . . .

The memory of Nagasaki stayed with me into adulthood. (xi)

It was 40 years later that this former American high school student named Susan Southard recreates Taniguchi's story as her first publication, entitled *Nagasaki: Life after Nuclear War* (2015).

Southard's book mainly focuses on the five adolescents at the time of bombing: Do-oh Mineko, Nagano Etsuko, Taniguchi Sumiteru⁸, Wada Koichi and Yoshida Katsuji. While chronicling their lives in the post-atomic war era for over a span of 70 years, *Nagasaki* also refers to various discourses including official documents, statements, news articles, and diaries, from both the U.S. and Japan. With a transregional narrative, *Nagasaki* attempts to present the panorama of August 9, 1945. It won two notable literary awards in 2016, just a year after its publication. During her speech at the award ceremony of the Dayton Literary Prize,

⁸ As Southard states both in the preface of *Nagasaki* and the interview held at Nagasaki City in November 2019, her encounter with Taniguchi was the most significant event leading to the birth of *Nagasaki*. According to Southard, she would not have become a writer had it not been for the opportunity to be the interpreter of Taniguchi's lecture, which was held in Washington DC in 1986. She stated in 2019 in a talk session with Seirai Yuichi, an Akutagawa-prize winning Japanese novelist, and American poet Arthur Binard, that before *Nagasaki's* publication, she had never written any novels or works of nonfiction. Because she wanted to write a story of the hibakushas, she decided to become a writer (tape-recorded in November 10th 2019 at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum).

Southard makes mention of how Hiroshima and Nagasaki are being discussed in modern-day America:

I accept this beautiful award in memory of the hundreds of thousands who died 71 years ago and in the years that followed, and the countless more who faced the acute and long-term terrors of post-nuclear survival. *Their day-to-day suffering is still obscured by iconic images of atomic clouds rising over Nagasaki and Hiroshima, or diminished by passionate justifications for using the bombs.* Peace is an arduous endeavor and impossible to achieve without a commitment to understanding the grievous harm our actions inflict on others. (emphasis added)

In the preface of *Nagasaki*, there is a passage describing how the two cities have historically been treated within the U.S. atomic narrative, where this simple but meaningful observation is made:

Many critically acclaimed books have addressed the United States' decision to use the bomb, but few have featured the eyewitness accounts of atomic bomb survivors. Those that have, such as John Hersey's *Hiroshima* and several collections of *hibakusha* testimonies, focus almost exclusively on the immediate aftermath of the bombings; stories detailing the brutal long-term physical, emotional, and social manifestations of nuclear survival have rarely been told. (xiii)

There are at least two significant points in this passage on how the political, cultural, and social domains in the U.S. have historically represented Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For one thing, Southard notes that the actual damage incurred by the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is rarely, if ever, brought to the public's attention: they had been confined within symbolic images such as the "mushroom

cloud,” “apocalypse” or biblical motifs. For another, it is pointed out that Hiroshima and Nagasaki had always been treated as a political matter: rather than focusing on the victims’ voices, America was mostly busy justifying its use of the two nuclear weapons. Arguably, one of the most important missions of *Nagasaki* is to transcend these shortcomings.

However, in regard to Southard’s claims that the atomic bomb victims have been largely ignored, the following point must be made. Even before the publication of *Nagasaki* in 2015, various literary works have made attempts to tell the “story of Nagasaki” through the eyes of the hibakushas. Townsend’s *The Postman of Nagasaki* is a noteworthy example: Southard’s *Nagasaki* is by no means the first story that focuses on the inner sufferings of the people in Nagasaki. Southard’s argument that the events of August 9, 1945 have not been recounted enough in the American atomic discourse is misleading, and her words must be scrutinized more thoroughly. To see how critics responded to Southard’s views, it would be useful to study the book reviews of *Nagasaki*.

For example, Ian Buruma praises *Nagasaki*’s publication in *The New York Times* by saying:

The strength of Southard’s book is that her account is remarkably free of abstractions. She is a theater director, albeit one with an M.F.A. in creative writing, and her interest in the story began in 1986, when she was hired as a translator for one of her subjects who was on a speaking tour in the United States. Instead of statistics, she concentrates, like Hersey, on the fates of individuals. (New York Times, July 28, 2015)

Ruben Martinez, the finalist judge of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, explains why *Nagasaki* won the award:

Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War essentially begins where John Hersey's famous 1946 work *Hiroshima* ends. . . . Far beyond a reductionist argument about whether to use nuclear weapons, this is a profound inquiry into the extremes of human violence and what it does to both victim and victimizer. It is essential reading in our hyper-violent time.

John Dower, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (1999) also sings the praises of *Nagasaki*:

Susan Southard does for Nagasaki what John Hersey did for Hiroshima, and more. She takes us beneath the mushroom cloud with harrowing, damning, eloquent intimacy—and then through ensuing decades of individual and civic recovery right up to the present day.

In addition to these three reviews, *Publishers Weekly*, which is known as a long-established weekly news magazine, adds that “Southard offers valuable new information and context, and her work complements John Hersey’s 1946 classic, *Hiroshima*.”

What is striking here is that all these praises and reviews compare Southard’s *Nagasaki* with John Hersey’s *Hiroshima*. Moreover, the two literary works are regarded as sharing a common ground: they not only focus on the lives of people who experienced the atomic bombing, but also on the mental and physical sufferings of those people. In the mid-1940s, most of the public learned about Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and their aftermath through the news, which gave very little information about the actual situation of the atomic wasteland. Therefore, it could be said that Hersey’s *Hiroshima* was unlike these coverages to some extent. As mentioned in Chapter 3, no one can deny that the publication of Hersey’s *Hiroshima* was sensational in the American social situation of 1946. Even so, the

reason why Southard's *Nagasaki* is frequently compared with Hersey's *Hiroshima* is still a mystery. Moreover, one must consider the fact that *Hiroshima* and *Nagasaki* were published in different times: on one hand, *Hiroshima* is a "classical text" published in 1946, and on the other hand, *Nagasaki* was published 70 years later. One may get the impression from the accolades received by *Nagasaki* that the hibakushas had not been represented since the publication of Hersey's classic. One may also question whether or not *Nagasaki* can only be told and described within the framework of the *Hiroshima* narrative.

As Kyoko Matsunaga points out, a doomsday scenario threatening the destruction of the whole planet had spread throughout the U.S. society as the mainstream atomic narrative. This apocalyptic rhetoric is important in relation to the literary theory known as "ecocriticism": it urges people to reconsider the urgent nuclear agendas of today such as radioactive contamination. However, what is required of the people when considering modern problems including nuclear issues is to have a diverse perspective, unlike the Judeo-Christian, apocalyptic narratives (Matsunaga 361).

Regarding this matter, what Southard states about the author's "attitude" toward *Nagasaki* is worth considering. She is conscious of her identity as an "American," who was born and raised in a completely different time and circumstance from the hibakushas. That is why she strives to listen to the various stories told by the people of *Nagasaki*. In the preface, she writes:

. . . I am an American, of another culture and generation than the subjects of this book, and I wanted to prevent potential manipulation or appropriation of the survivors' stories, even more so because they were people who, no matter what the rationale, had already been violated by my

country. *My answer to this challenge was to use the survivors' own words and images to relay their experiences as accurately as possible*, and to draw on the clearest scientific, medical, political, military, and historical analyses I could find to place the survivors' experiences into the larger framework of the various histories in which they played a part. (xvi emphasis added)

The purpose of this chapter is chiefly to evaluate and expose the problem that has surrounded the American Nagasaki narrative and locate Southard's *Nagasaki* within that narrative sphere. The first section will seek to shed light on how the story of "August 9, 1945" has been told and described within the American society. Then the next section will investigate the meaning and possibility of "retelling" the story of Nagasaki in 2015.

II. The Place Where Nagasaki Has Been Told

In his essay "Triumphal and Tragic Narratives of the War in Asia," John Dower notes that Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been interpreted mainly in two typical ways within American society: the "heroic" or "triumphal" and the "tragic." According to Dower, the "heroic" or "triumphal" narrative justifies the American use of nuclear weapons during the Second World War based on the reasoning that the two bombs saved countless American lives. This interpretation has its roots in the official narratives such as Harry Truman's statement or Henry Stimson's controversial paper "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," officially published in 1947:

In recent months there has been much comment about the decision to use atomic bombs in attacks on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

This decision was one of the gravest made by our government in recent years, and it is entirely proper that it should be widely discussed. . . .

The decision to use the atomic bomb was a decision that brought death to over a hundred thousand Japanese. No explanation can change that fact and I do not wish to gloss it over. But this deliberate, premeditated destruction was our least abhorrent choice. The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki put an end to the Japanese war.

Although Stimson admits that the two bombs took many Japanese lives, he ultimately validates the mass-execution. The “tragic” narrative, on the other hand, sees Hiroshima and Nagasaki through the eyes of the people under the mushroom cloud: it not only denounces the U.S. decision to use the bombs, but also laments the dire consequences that followed. In addition to these two “typical” discourses, Peter Kuznick adds one more, which has existed in the American consciousness for decades: the “apocalyptic narrative” (Kuznick 5). This is somewhat similar to the “tragic” narrative in terms of its critical attitude toward the use of nuclear weapons, but Kuznick emphasizes that it is independent of the former two in that it anticipates an exponentially larger number of victims:

Missing from much of the debate has been consideration of what I call the apocalyptic narrative, a framework for understanding U.S. actions that has even greater relevance to today’s citizens who must continue to grapple with the long-term ramifications of nuclear war, particularly the threat of extinction of human life. . . . it does not see the Japanese as the only victims and holds Truman, Byrnes, and Groves, among others, to a much higher level of accountability for knowingly putting at risk all human and animal existence. (5)

As Spencer R. Weart and Robert A. Jacobs point out, the origin of such narrative can be traced back to the 19th century when science became a source of fear among the people. Because this fear toward science was ubiquitous among the American public, the nuclear weapon, upon its birth, was immediately incorporated into the apocalyptic rhetoric.

However, it must be emphasized that the problem lies in the “categorization” of these discourses. Although the story of the nuclear war is told in many different ways, some of which do not fit in either of the abovementioned categories, the act of “categorizing” fails to include anything that does not fit neatly within its boundaries. In other words, this “categorization” process invariably excludes certain types of stories and makes it seem like those that do not “fit” do not even exist. Admittedly, not many stories on Nagasaki have been written, and one could hardly say that the American readers have read enough of them. However, this does not mean that the narratives on Nagasaki do not exist at all in the Western society. As we can see in the example of Townsend’s *The Postman of Nagasaki*, introduced in the beginning of this chapter, some notable literary works on Nagasaki have been published.

For instance, there was the American journalist Frank W. Chinnock, who was known for his series of war coverage especially on the Vietnam War as well as the nonfictional work *Kim: A Gift from Vietnam* (1969). On the same year as the publication of *Kim*, he also published a non-fiction book called *Nagasaki: The Forgotten Bomb* (1969). It tells the story of the Nagasaki atomic bombing through two different angles, namely the bombardiers’ and the victims of Nagasaki. Having more than one voice allows this text to be polyphonic. What is most notable about this text is the “title”. The term “forgotten bomb” implies that the memory of

August 9, 1945 had already faded at the time the publication, 25 years after the incident. In this respect, it is worth noting that Chinnock's *Nagasaki* shares an important aspect with Southard's *Nagasaki*: both texts call attention to the diminishing memory of the second atomic wasteland.

Other examples can be seen mainly in the 1980s, when many writings on the nuclear issue emerged. Some of them are English interpretations of what is called "Japanese atomic bomb literature." *Fire from the Ashes*, for example, is one of the finest compilations of Japanese atomic literature, with stories such as Inoue Mitsuharu's *The House of Hands*, Hayashi Kyoko's *The Empty Can* and Sata Ineko's *The Colorless Paintings*. It also should be noted that Townsend's *The Postman of Nagasaki* was also published during this period. A decades later, Canadian-American author Eleanor Coerr, who is known for her children's historical novel *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* (1977), wrote a story about one girl in Nagasaki: *Mieko and the Fifth Treasure* (1993). Unlike Sadako, who was widely known because of her tragic death, the young protagonist of this story may not be as familiar. However, in this story of Nagasaki, Coerr again attempts to focus on the lives of the hibakushas after the bombing and their inner sufferings.

Discourses on Nagasaki proliferated in the early 2000s. For instance, as mentioned in the first chapter, the American war journalist George Weller's series of atomic articles were discovered in 2005 and were immediately published under the title *First into Nagasaki*. In 2006, Japanese-American filmmaker Steven Okazaki released a documentary film *White Light/Black Rain*, which adopts a polyphonic narrative style, featuring fourteen the hibakushas and four Americans involved the bombings. In 2009, Kamila Shamsie, a British-Pakistani novelist,

released a novel called *Burnt Shadows*. The story revolves around the events that took place in Nagasaki, in August 1945. Tanaka Hiroko, a young Japanese schoolteacher of Nagasaki, falls in love with a German named Konrad Weiss. Their romance is brought to an abrupt end by the blinding light that renders Konrad a shadow on a stone and burns the birds on Hiroko's kimono onto her back. Years later, she flees to India, and then to Pakistan.

The 2010 non-fiction work *Nagasaki: The Massacre of the Innocent and Unknowing*, written by the Australian TV producer Craig Collie, also introduces various voices within the story. Starting with the account of Yamaguchi Tsutomu, who was exposed to the bombs in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the story is expanded by introducing multiple statements: not only of the hibakushas, but also of U.S. and Soviet political leaders. However, it must be noted that this story of Nagasaki concludes in a somewhat happy ending, with the use of several biblical images:

Whether a coincidence or cause and effect, the day after the Nagasaki bombing saw the first steps towards the new Japan and, free from the grasp of militarism that had plagued it, the economic recovery that was the nation's post-war miracle. At the level of everyday life we try to fashion for ourselves, Yoshiro Fukuda was cured by the bomb of his stomach ulcer as if Jesus Christ had passed by, and Tatsuichiro and Sugako Akizuki found each other in the ashes and horror of Nagasaki, eventually forging a life together.

Fate, that drone in the sky, can unfold against us to horrifyingly, but it can also unfold *for* us. It's either in the lap of the gods or in the toss of the dice, depending on how you think the universe got here. (312 sic)

Although the ending obscures the suffering of the hibakusha people with the use of biblical imagery, this story of Nagasaki is still significant for its role in raising the issue that mass-execution is not someone else's problem.

Other stories about Nagasaki have emerged in recent years. In 2016, Caren Stelson, an American author and teacher, published a work of non-fiction entitled *Sachiko*. This book, which appears to be written mainly for children, is based on the account of one woman named Yasui Sachiko, a survivor of the Nagasaki atomic bombing. Joy Kogawa, the Canadian novelist best known for her novel *Obasan* (1981), wrote a personal story by the title *Gently to Nagasaki* (2016). In fact, in 2011, Kogawa had already written a story that became the basis of *Gently to Nagasaki* in *The Asian American Literary Review*. *Gently to Nagasaki* aims to highlight the many atrocities committed by humans throughout history. Paul Mori observes that in this memoir, the author “confronts the persistence of the tragedy of evil, both in the large events such as the bombing of Nagasaki and the Rape of Nanking, and in the personal ones she has suffered in her own life”, reflecting on her internment during the Second World War. The 2018 picture book *Weeds*, written by Polish-American chemist Roaldo Hoffman, known not only as a Nobel Prize laureate but also as a survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, attempts to shed light on the memory of the Second World War.

These stories are some of the examples⁹ and there are certainly other narratives on the Nagasaki bombing not mentioned here. Considering this

⁹ Of course, there are innumerable other texts that focus on the bombing of Nagasaki. Not only literary works, but other genre such as animation (manga) and cartoon focused on Nagasaki as their primary topic. Tessa Morris-Suzuki introduces Harvey Kurtzman's 1953 cartoon “Atom Bomb!” in her work analyzing the relationship between history and media. According to Morris-Suzuki, what makes “Atom Bomb!” unique is that it depicts the bombing of Nagasaki from a noncombatants' perspective. What is more interesting is that one of the main characters is an elderly Japanese woman of Nagasaki, who is waiting for her son's return

circumstance, one issue must be raised: despite the fact that a number of narratives on Nagasaki had been published, it is not known exactly why they have not been categorized as one of the major atomic narratives in the U.S. It must be emphasized that the problem lies within the exclusive character of the literary sphere where Nagasaki has been told. John W. Treat and Chad R. Diehl discuss this point relation to Japanese atomic bomb literature and the history of Nagasaki as a center of Christianity. Nagai Takashi, a devout Catholic physician as well as an author and survivor of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, emerges as a significant character, frequently called “the Saint of Urakami.”

In *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and Atomic Bomb* (1995), Treat argues that even in Japan, the atomic bombing of Nagasaki had not been discussed as much as Hiroshima in the late 1940s. In the ninth chapter, entitled “Nagasaki and the Human Future,” Treat states:

“Ikari no Hiroshima, inori no Nagasaki”: Hiroshima rages, Nagasaki prays. This common characterization of the marked difference between the social and cultural responses of the number one and two cities to be subjected to a nuclear attack speak a widespread prejudice: Nagasaki is the second city, the silent city, the city that, because of its early familiarity with the Western science that would one day facilitate its destruction, perhaps even invited that fate. The slogan frequently heard at protests throughout the world, “No more Hiroshimas!” makes no mention of Nagasaki. Whereas the place name “Hiroshima” is now the metonymy of all “Hiroshimas” past and future, Nagasaki remains just “Nagasaki,” conceivably better known

from Syberia. These two points cannot found in any other war-themed U.S. cartoon which treats war in general (223).

around the world because of an Italian opera than because of an American air raid. There exists in the historiography of the nuclear age a hierarchy —Hiroshima and then, only sometimes, Nagasaki. (301)

Despite this social and cultural discrimination that Nagasaki faces, Treat further notes that many literary works reconsidering the meaning of “survival” have been inspired by this “second” city. According to Treat, Nagasaki’s somewhat unique historical background is the reason behind this proliferation. For one thing, because of *sakoku*, the isolationist foreign policy during the Edo period limiting foreign nations from entering the country freely, Nagasaki’s atomic bomb literature is different from that of Hiroshima’s:

Indeed, Nagasaki atomic-bomb literature is guaranteed to proceed differently than that of Hiroshima precisely for this reason: Nagasaki itself occupies a unique position in Japan’s history and thus Japan’s modern imagination. A visitor to Nagasaki today, for instance, is shown a city that boasts of its uniqueness not as a target. . . but as an international entrepot during Japan’s centuries of national isolation, when contact with foreign nations was strictly forbidden outside of Nagasaki. Nagasaki city boosters still prefer to think of its local culture in terms of Dutch estates and Chinese temples, and decidedly not as the A-bomb city. . . . Reconciling the irony of being a city which, due to the early influence of European traders, introduced much of modern Western technology to the rest of Japan with the fact of its destruction by the twentieth-century results of that same technology is certainly not part of the city’s promotional rhetoric. But it is nonetheless an irony that an unnerve the unprepared visitor, and an irony

that can thus make a trip there more pathos-inspiring than any to Hiroshima. (303-4)

The second factor is even more significant: Nagasaki has been the center of Christianity since the Edo period, consequently becoming the center for mass persecution of the Christians. More importantly, the fact that the atomic bomb was dropped directly onto Urakami district, which had long been known as the Catholic “ghetto” for the past 300 years, should not be ignored. Treat explains the consequences of this tragic coincidence:

Other non-Christian Japanese, indulging prejudices long held, saw some sort of perversely just retribution in the fact that it was, after all, the foreign-tainted Japanese Christians who were bombed. “The bomb was not dropped on Nagasaki; it was dropped on Urakami,” older residents of the city once reportedly and ungenerously quipped in a reference to the particular neighborhood suffering the worse damage and, coincidentally (since the bomb was dropped off-target), housing the highest concentration of Christian populations. . . .the rage directed outwardly in so much Hiroshima atomic-bomb literature was conversely directed inwardly in Nagasaki, where the phenomenon of “blaming the victim” served to curb what impulses to record, document, and write might have otherwise flourished. (305-6)

Treat concludes this is the reason Nagasaki-centric atomic discourses tend to focus on the voices of the minorities and bring to light problems that should be more widely discussed in modern society. He observes that most of Nagasaki’s atomic narratives:

reflect with particular passion on the predicament of modern historical and imaginative writing concerned with atrocity, or more precisely the textual representation of moral violence perpetrated without restraint by one community against another. (307)

With this in mind, he examines four outstanding writers of Nagasaki in particular: Nagai Takashi, Hayashi Kyoko, Goto Minako and Sata Ineko. He reconsiders the possibility of their atomic narratives to provide answers for some of the problems faced by humans throughout history. They “have been commonly concerned in different ways and to varying degrees with the historical conditions—past and future—of victimization” (347).

However, it must be noted that among these four writers, Treat pays special attention to Nagai Takashi’s atomic narrative for its remarkably unique theory. Nagai’s idiosyncratic views can be seen in his best-selling book *The Bells of Nagasaki* (1949), in which he recounts his own experience as a survivor of August 9, 1945 and the days that followed. The most controversial point of this book is Nagai’s rationale of why the atomic bomb was dropped on the people of the Urakami district, who had endured so many hardships since the Edo period. According to Nagai’s interpretation, atomic bomb victims of Urakami are “the chosen,” and were offered to God in the manner of lambs. In Japan, this theory is known as *urakami hansai setsu*, referring to the biblical holocaust, and was first coined by Takahashi Shinji, a former professor of Nagasaki University.

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Figure 10: Urakami Catholic Church, located in the hypocenter. Just five months later, Nagai gave his condolence speech at this church. (Courtesy of Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum)

In fact, Nagai's theory regarding the bombing of Urakami was already established when he delivered his funeral address during the mass memorial at the destroyed Urakami Catholic Church. Nagai's entire eulogy appears in his biography *A Song for Nagasaki*, written by Paul Glynn¹⁰ and published in 1988:

“... It was not the American crew, I believe, who chose our suburb. God's Providence chose Urakami and carried the bomb right above our homes. Is there not a profound relationship between the annihilation of Nagasaki and the end of the war? Was not Nagasaki the chosen victim, the lamb without blemish, slain as a whole burnt offering on an altar of sacrifice, atoning for the sins of all the nations during World War II?”

¹⁰ A Marist priest who served as a missionary in Japan for 25 years.

“We are inheritors of Adam’s sin. . . of Cain’s sin. He killed his brother. Yes, we have forgotten we are God’s children. . . . At last the evil and horrific conflict came to an end, but mere repentance was not enough for peace. . . . We had to offer a stupendous sacrifice. . . . Only this hansai in Nagasaki sufficed, and at that moment God inspired the Emperor to issue the sacred proclamation that ended the war. . . . The Christian flock of Nagasaki was true to the Faith through three centuries of persecution[. . .]. Here was the one pure lamb that had to be sacrificed as hansai on His altar. . . so that many millions of lives might be saved.”

[. . .] Blessed be the name of the Lord. Let us be *thankful* that Nagasaki was chosen for the whole burnt sacrifice! Let us be thankful that through this sacrifice, peace was granted to the world and religious freedom to Japan. (188-90)

What is most notable about this condolence speech is that Nagai views the bombing of Nagasaki not as an independent incident, but as a corollary of Christian martyrdom dating back to the 17th century: for Nagai, August 9, 1945 is the culmination of all the sufferings of the people of Urakami.

Like Treat, the American historian Chad R. Diehl also notes that the story of Nagasaki has not been told sufficiently compared to Hiroshima. However, Diehl makes scathing criticism of Nagai’s narrative. In *Resurrecting Nagasaki* (2018), Diehl investigates the politics behind Nagai’s popularity: he raises the question of why Nagai’s theory gained so much attention in the late 1940s compared to other atomic narratives on Nagasaki. According to Diehl, Nagai’s epic story of sacrifice led to the birth of two conspicuous patterns in Nagasaki’s atomic discourse. The first is the failure to include “the other sixty-five thousand or more Nagasaki

residents who died in addition to” (75) the martyrs of Urakami district, who are the primary focus of Nagai’s narrative. By 1948, just three years after the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Nagai’s atomic narrative had gained nationwide and later worldwide attention, despite originating from a private conversation between Nagai and a parishioner in the Urakami district:

No longer was Nagai professing the idea of the providential tragedy as his own, but rather as “ours”; specifically, “Those of us left living,” *we*, consider the atomic bombing an “expression of Divine Providence.” As parishioner representative since 1945, Nagai spoke for the entire Urakami community, but after the publication of *Kono ko o nokoshite* in 1948, he began to represent the “we” of Nagasaki to the people all over Japan and the world. (Diehl 79)

Based on this background, Diehl concludes that the Nagasaki victims excluded from Nagai’s narrative have been deprived of their voices, which is one of the most significant differences from the Hiroshima narrative sphere. In a somewhat critical tone, Diehl observes that:

[. . .] the dissemination and promotion of Nagai’s interpretation of the bombing in the immediate postwar era prevented other narratives of personal trauma and suffering from emerging, including among the Catholics, some of whom did not agree with him. One book, *Masako taorezu* (Masako shall not perish), written by a Nagasaki survivor and published in 1949, was no less heartbreaking in conveying the tragedy of the bombing than *Nagasaki no kane* published the same year, but it failed to compete with any of Nagai’s books. In other words, the hype surrounding Nagai blinded Japanese readers and politicians, not to mention international

audiences, to the other narratives and voices emerging from the atomic experience of Nagasaki. *A self-proclaimed martyr replaced the individual experiences of tens of thousands of survivors.* (93 emphasis added)

As for the second point, Diehl is in unison with other Japanese critics such as Yamada Kan¹¹ and Takahashi Shinji¹²: because Nagai's atomic narrative regards the bombing of Nagasaki as God's will, the American responsibility of using the bombs has consequently been nullified. Nagai's theological interpretation was thus welcomed and officially accepted by the U.S. government:

[. . .] in Nagai's formula, the United States did not factor into the bombing—it was all due to the work of God—which impeded discussion of the events surrounding the decision to drop the atomic bombs. Occupation-period censorship also contributed to the lack of discussion, of course, but Nagai's writings supported a view of history in which American responsibility was a nonissue. *American censors realized the value of Nagai's writings and sought to use them to promote their own atomic narrative.* (93 emphasis added)

One could argue that Nagai's narrative conveniently coincided with the story the U.S. wanted to advocate in the nuclear age. As Diehl observes, one must face the daunting reality that Nagai's theory was the only dominant atomic narrative for many years, possibly causing the other narratives of Nagasaki to fade to the background.

¹¹ A Japanese poet originally from Nagasaki. According to Kawaguchi Takayuki, Yamada had been reproaching Nagai's narrative as "Catholic egoism" or "mere propaganda full of sentimentalism" since the mid-1950s.

¹² A Japanese philosopher who first called Nagai's atomic narrative "Urakami hansai setsu." In his 1994's book, Takahashi denounced Nagai's theological response toward the bombing of Nagasaki by saying that it overshadowed numerous stories of the supposed hibakusha people.

At the same time, however, this match made in heaven has likely gone far beyond Nagai's original intent. Originally, his theological and idiosyncratic view of the Nagasaki bombing was intended to be a source of consolation for the survivors of the Urakami district. It must be understood that Nagai's speech at the mass memorial was dedicated to the survivors, not the deceased. To keep their lives going under such dreadful circumstances, they had no choice but to find meaning in their great loss. For, as Glynn explains, the people of Urakami were accused by those from other districts of deserving the bomb:

[. . .] Some people were muttering that the A-bomb was obviously *tenbatsu*, heaven's punishment. At this juncture the bishop announced plans for an open-air Mass for the dead and asked Nagai to speak on behalf of the laity. Nagai intensified his efforts to find meaning in the A-bomb. (186)



Figure 11: Nagai Takashi, mourning the death of his wife (photo taken in 1946: courtesy of Nagai Takashi Memorial Museum Nagasaki).

The following scene from *The Bells of Nagasaki* is an example of what the survivors of Urakami had to face on a day-to-day basis. The narrator meets a parishioner in Urakami who had been fighting for the Japanese Imperial Army during the wartime but upon returning to Nagasaki, discovered that he had lost his entire family. The man, introduced as "Ichitaro-san," says he cannot find any meaning to life. He is full of despair after hearing people whisper that the atomic bomb was a punishment for the people of Urakami and that those who were killed were villains.

The survivors, on the other hand, were blessed by God. Then, he asks Nagai if his dead wife and children were also villains (142-43). In the next scene, Nagai consoles Ichitaro-san by saying that the dead were offered as a sacrifice to God, because they were the chosen. When considering Nagai's controversial theory, it is crucial to take its origin into account: one must not fail to see what Nagai's theory meant for the people of Nagasaki. Nagai's philosophy may not make much sense when taken out of context, but it is understandable that many people embraced it as a survival mechanism. In this respect, Nagai's theory must be understood for what it is: a contradictory, double-sided theory that served to protect and console the survivors of Nagasaki by reframing the victims' deaths as something to be celebrated. Regardless of what Nagai's intent was, his theory was fantastically convenient for the American atomic narrative.

One must note that in recent years, some critics have argued that Nagai's canonization both in Japan and the world has caused his story to be discussed in a similar vein as Hersey's *Hiroshima* in the Western (mainly the American) society. For example, in *Producing Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Literature, Film, and Transnational Politics* (2018), Shibata Yuko¹³ observes that Nagai's atomic narrative and Hersey's *Hiroshima* are in an analogical relationship. While Shibata expresses concern toward the canonization of Nagai's works both domestically and internationally, her attitude is circumspect and judicious. Taking the background of Nagai's theory into account, she raises the question of why Hersey's *Hiroshima* is still the most popular and quoted narrative out of everything that has been

¹³ Research fellow at the International Peace Research Institute at Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo and author of the Japanese book *Hiroshima/Nagasaki: Debunking a Myth of the Hibakusha Narrative* (2015).

written on the two atomic bombed cities in North America (84), and states as follows.

While there is a long list of examples that illustrate the phenomenal reaction to Hersey's *Hiroshima*, what is striking is that this initial difference in the reception between Hersey's text and the Hiroshima writers' at the time of their public appearance has continued up to the present day. This does not mean that no Japanese texts on the atomic bombing have ever been introduced into the English-speaking world. From the early 1950s onward, after the end of censorship during the American occupation era, various types of narratives have been translated into English, following their initial inception and acclaim in Japan. Nevertheless, these Japanese works have hardly enjoyed the same kind of wide popularity as Hersey's. In the United States, Hersey's *Hiroshima* has long been used in high school and university English classes as a "remarkable nonfiction text" in the young adult literature genre. (Shibata, 84)

Regarding this canonization of Hersey's *Hiroshima*, Shibata analyzes the perspective of *Hiroshima*'s narrator and the structure of the narrative in detail. In *Hiroshima*, the narrator, who is omnipotent and knows everything that has happened and will happen to the six characters, tells the story of the atomic aftermath. This position of the narrator enables the readers to just "observe" the events under the mushroom cloud from a safe distance. According to Shibata, the narrator's viewpoint in *Hiroshima* is akin to a "bird's eye," namely a transcendental view that complies with the readers' eagerness to behold the disastrous events from a safe place:

From the beginning, the omnipotent voice of the narrator in *Hiroshima* already knows what will happen to these six protagonists, who, ironically enough, know nothing about their destiny. The only role of the narrative, then, is to fill the gap between the cause (the bombing) and the effect (its aftermath) by gradually revealing the details. The narrative also gives the reader a bird's eye view to accommodate their desire to see from a safe position what actually happened inside the mushroom clouds. (87)

Because of this narrative structure, the observers (the narrator and the readers) and the observed (the six characters and hibakusha people in general) are distanced from one another and exist on parallel axes that never converge.

Another significant point is that Shibata compares *Hiroshima* with Ota Yoko's *City of Corpses* (1945) regarding the use of "tenses" describing the event. She states that "there are three registers of 'the present' overlaying one another in the narrative at large" (87), namely "the present of the diegesis, the present of narrating, and the present of reading" (87). Because the present of diegesis is subsumed by the latter two in *Hiroshima*, it:

provides the reader with an intelligible form of the experience of the atomic bombing that can be grasped from an advantageous position. This narrative device leads to the rejection of the coevalness between the gaze (the narrator/reader) and the object of the gaze (the protagonists/*hibakusha*). (sic 87)

Contrary to *Hiroshima*, which "compartmentalizes the readers' present by confining the reader to where he or she is" (87), Ota's text on the bombing of Hiroshima "adapts a different strategy to reduce the distance between the present of diegesis and the present of narrating" (87). That is to say, "[r]ather than

dramatizing the moment of the explosion as in *Hiroshima*, the book begins by depicting the author's state of mind at the time of writing in September 1945, already a few weeks after the bombing" (87). For Ota, the experience of Hiroshima "is narratable not only in the present tense but also in the future tense" (88). The reason is that:

what the *hibakusha* suffer from is also an anticipation of their traumatic experience in the future in the wake of radiation illness; these aftereffects are latent at this moment but can possibly manifest themselves in the foreseeable future. (88)

Shibata further observes that "Hersey's narrative position is clearly different from Ota's. The omnipotent narrator tells the story of the six *hibakusha* from above, with no interest in retrieving their voices" (88): in Hiroshima's narrative, the story of "August 6, 1945" is a bygone incident. This observation is compelling when one considers the lives of the six *Hiroshima* protagonists after the bombing. Although they are physically ill from being exposed to radiation, they go back to their ordinary lives as if nothing had happened. The radiation sickness is treated as a temporary problem of no serious consequence, allowing the readers to feel unaccountable and detached from the actual events. In other words, their sense of security is guaranteed because of the narrator's position.

Nagai's atomic narrative (especially in *The Bells of Nagasaki*) shares the same traits as *Hiroshima*, as can be seen in the following passage:

The same characteristics found in the narrative strategy of Hersey's *Hiroshima*—the transcendental position of a narrative voice, historical emplotment, closure of perspectives, the valorization of the power of the atomic bomb, compassionate identification, the personalization of

Hiroshima, and the transformation of protagonists into archetypes—are also found in the best-selling book on the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, *The Bells of Nagasaki*. . . . (91)

Yet, the most outstanding similarity between these two texts is that both declare “that the Nagasaki bombing is not ‘an Accident,’ but ‘an Intention’” of God (93). Regarding this point, Shibata concludes that:

[. . .] Hersey’s *Hiroshima* and Nagai’s *The Bells of Nagasaki* parallel each other across the Pacific, while promoting a standardization of the narrative on the atomic bomb victimization. Despite the unprecedentedness of events, both books rather arbitrarily followed a path to reducing possibilities without challenging the limits of representation. This outcome has also led to the compartmentalization of the ways of representing the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki within the discursive spheres of the United States and Japan. (98)

Although these two narratives “exist separately and function in their own discursive spheres” (98), one must recognize that they could gain dominancy both in Japanese and American narrative spheres where other atomic narratives have never held center stage as “the primary” discourse.

III. The Possibility of Retelling the Story of Nagasaki

When summarizing the points discussed in the previous section, the apparent issue is that stories on the bombing of Nagasaki have never been told enough, or have been told as a stereotypical and dominant archetype within the U.S. narrative sphere: Nagasaki has been grossly underrepresented for more than 70 years. Considering this point, one question arises: how did Southard’s *Nagasaki*

transcend the limitation of the traditional U.S. atomic discourse and retell the story of Nagasaki? To answer this question, this section will analyze the two points of *Nagasaki*. For one thing, unlike Nagai Takashi, who declares from a theological stance that the bombing of Nagasaki (or Urakami) is the culmination of the agelong suffering of the Christian people, *Nagasaki's* narrator recognizes “August 9, 1945” as the starting point: the day symbolizes “the beginning” of long-term agonies of the hibakushas. Second, the narrator expresses a rather negative attitude toward the way in which the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are intertwined with the Judeo-Christian rhetoric.

As already stated, *Nagasaki* received an overall favorable response from critics when it first appeared in 2015: many praised *Nagasaki* for depicting the bombing of Nagasaki just like John Hersey did for Hiroshima. It could be said that the general response to *Nagasaki* is characterized by the impression that it is similar to *Hiroshima*: depicting “each individuals’ lives” under the mushroom cloud, for instance. However, what should be emphasized here is that *Nagasaki* differentiates itself from Hersey’s dominant and widespread discourse by implying the existence of untold stories which tend to be overshadowed by the “humanistic view toward the victims”. In most cases, the narrator of *Nagasaki* silently tells the stories of each hibakusha, but sometimes the narrator’s presence can be sensed through their accounts and memories.

One example is when the narrator introduces the untold story of the American official censorship after the Second World War. The narrator not only explains that the hibakushas’ accounts failed to see the light of day because of this,

but also gives details on how the ABCC¹⁴ investigated hibakushas and left them traumatized, as well as how the American government tactically denied the existence of radiation sickness. The text is full of accusations made by the narrator. However, in most cases, the narrator's voice overlaps with those of the characters. For instance, the excerpt below is a recollection by the Japanese psychologist Shiotsuki Masao of the time he read an American magazine article. In Shiotsuki's account, the narrator's skepticism toward the American mass media and its ignorant readers can be seen:

[I]n Tokyo, Dr. Shiotsuki Masao was outraged at the ignorance and utter foolishness of the U.S. media and the obliviousness of the American people regarding both their safety in the event of a nuclear attack and the medical support they would receive in its aftermath. "The other day while leafing through a popular U.S. magazine," Shiotsuki wrote in 1952, "I came across a picture of a patient lying on a bed under clean white sheets being injected with some sort of fluid while a doctor and nurse in spotless uniforms stood by." Under the headline, "Medical Attention Given to Victims of the Atom Bomb," Shiotsuki remembered, the article described how "the finest medical facilities" were well prepared to provide care for bomb victims. "What kind of impractical, theoretical nonsense is this?" he railed. "Where in such a devastated city could one find a bed with such a soft downy mattress, such a healthy doctor ready and able to work, such a kindhearted and beautiful nurse? Where would medicine, bandages, or even a single sterilized needle be left preserved in good condition?" (197)

¹⁴ The Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission was established by the American government in 1946. Because its primary purpose was to conduct a purely scientific research, no medical treatment was provided to the hibakushas.

Immediately after this scene, the narrator explains that Shiotsuki's response is a testament to the fact that even after the publication of Hersey's *Hiroshima* and *Life* magazine ran photos of the devastation that had befallen the two cities¹⁵, "U.S. policies of censorship and denial had succeeded in keeping Americans uninformed of the unimaginable power of atomic bombs and the ghastly consequences of whole-body exposure to high levels of radiation" (197). It must be noted that Shiotsuki's anger toward the fabrication of an outrageous and unrealistic story of medical care for the hibakushas overlaps with the narrator's cynicism toward the American public's obliviousness to the reality of the bombing: by introducing Shiotsuki's account, the narrator exposes the deception of the American officials and media. Additionally, the voice of the narrator also serves to remind the readers that the protagonists such as Taniguchi Sumiteru and Yoshida Katsuji are actual hibakushas who suffered terribly in the atomic wasteland. Shiotsuki's account is implicitly contrasted with the hibakushas' severely injured bodies, traumatic memories, and inner sufferings.

In fact, the narrator's critical attitude is apparent even before Shiotsuki is introduced: in the second chapter called "Flashpoint," the narrator denounces the Hersey-like omnipotent stance through the description of the hibakushas' burnt bodies. The significance of this is that it shows the outstanding gap between the characters of Hersey's *Hiroshima* and Southard's *Nagasaki* regarding the perspectives of the characters. Unlike the six characters of *Hiroshima*, the

¹⁵ It refers to the issue of September 1952, which featured the bomb's impact with ten photographs taken by Yamahata Yosuke, a Japanese military photographer, who first entered the bombed city of Nagasaki. In fact, Yamahata's photographs of Nagasaki have been earning critical acclaim even to this day. For example, English historian Tessa Morris-Suzuki observes that Yamahata's subjects are often mothers and babies, who were severely injured. She further argues that these photographs remind the observers of traditional family portraits (115).

protagonists of *Nagasaki* are not only the subject of observation, but also the object of it: they do not see, and are not allowed to see, the atomic wasteland as mere bystanders.

For example, Yoshida Katsuji is aghast at the sight of countless severely injured victims laying on the ground “with severed limbs and heads split open, their brains oozing out” (49). However, he shortly discovers that his own face is also burned so badly that he cannot recognize his own face in the mirror. Although he survived, he does not have the “privilege” to observe the bomb victims from a safe position, unlike Hersey’s six survivors:

The blast had thrown Yoshida and his friends in different directions, but all six survived, albeit with serious burns and wounds. After some time, they found one another and slowly made their way to a small tributary of the Urakami River, where they rinsed the mud off their bodies and lay down together in the grass, hoping that someone would find them. One of Yoshida’s friends handed him a broken piece of mirror, and when Yoshida looked at his reflection, he could not comprehend what he saw. (49)

The same thing could be said about Do-oh Mineko, who is exposed to the bomb while working near the hypocenter. Although she survives the explosion, the physical damage she suffers is so severe that the readers are left unsettled:

Do-oh stumbled toward the main road, where she met two of her classmates emerging from nearby factory buildings. The girls were startled when they saw Do-oh’s injuries, but Do-oh was in such shock that she didn’t register the meaning of their expressions. (51)

The other example can be seen in the description of Taniguchi’s condition just after the explosion. From the first few sentences, the readers get an impression that

Taniguchi seems to be unhurt, because he calmly observes the scenery of the atomic wasteland and collects the scattered mail that was blasted out of his postal bag: it is as if he is spared and is in a position to regard the victims as a bystander. However, when the readers read the following scene, they will be shocked to learn that Taniguchi is in fact one of the most severely injured victims:

He heaved himself up. All the houses around him were destroyed. Flames spurted from the ruins. Near him, a woman lay in agony, her hair burned off and her face terribly swollen. Taniguchi glanced over at his crushed bicycle. His postal bag was open and mail had scattered all around. Bewildered, he wandered along the road, collecting the letters and stuffing them into his pockets—and for the first time he noticed his injuries. His right hand was seared black. From his fingertips to his shoulder, the skin on his left arm had melted and was hanging in shreds. His left leg, too, was badly burned. Taniguchi felt something strange and slippery on his back, so he reached around to find that his shirt was gone—and when he pulled his hand back, his fingers were covered with charred, melted skin, black and slimy, like grease.

[. . .] A woman offered him a bit of water, apologizing that there wasn't more because the city's waterlines had been destroyed. She cut off the skin dangling from Taniguchi's arm [. . .]. (53)

Immediately after this scene, Taniguchi drags himself to a tunnel full of other victims suffering in agony. Here, he becomes one of the anonymous victims just like the other nameless hibakushas. His individuality is lost and his agony is amalgamated with those of the others:

Fear of a second attack spread through the tunnel. As everyone clambered to escape to the hills, Taniguchi tried to hoist himself off the table, but his legs couldn't support him. Several men carried him outside to the top of a hill where they laid him down on his stomach surrounded by injured people begging for water, crying out for help, and muttering their names and addresses in the hope that someone would tell their families where and how they had died. (53)

It must be stressed that the spectacle seen through the eyes of the characters of *Nagasaki* serves a mirror in which the characters can see their own reflections: what they "observe" as bystanders also represents what they are supposed to "experience". This raises a significant question regarding the readers' attitude toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As Southard mentions in the preface of this text, *Nagasaki's* readers are mostly thought to be the American people, who had long accepted Hersey's *Hiroshima* and official government statements as the primary and authoritative atomic narratives. Southard asks: "[w]hy do most Americans know little or nothing about the victims' experience beneath the atomic clouds or in the years since 1945?" (xiii) By describing the characters not only as the observers, but also as the object of observation, *Nagasaki* castigates the omnipotent and safe point of view, which can be seen repeatedly in the dominant American atomic narratives. In other words, the characters' terribly wounded bodies in *Nagasaki* reflect the narrator's critical view toward the secure position that allows one to observe the victims from high above the mushroom cloud. Furthermore, the characters' physical and mental sufferings make the modern-day American reader realize that August 9, 1945 is a universal tragedy with long-term effects that may never be resolved.

Regarding the second point mentioned earlier in this section, the close relationship between the hibakushas' accounts and the Christian rhetoric should also be discussed. The previous section explained that Nagai Takashi's atomic narrative from 1945 to 1949 became widespread both in Japan and the Western society as the dominant atomic discourse of Nagasaki, consequently overshadowing all the other narratives. Nagai's influence is so tremendous that he makes an appearance in *Nagasaki* as well. His philosophy has been widely circulated among the people of Nagasaki through their accounts, diaries and memories. However, the narrator of *Nagasaki* regards Nagai's Judeo-Christian atomic narrative in a critical manner: in the protagonists' accounts, there is an undercurrent of skepticism toward God's providence, which was something the Christians of Nagasaki traditionally held deep faith in.

For example, the excerpt below includes a diary of Tsujimoto Fujio, who was a student of Yamazato elementary school, located close to the hypocenter. According to the narrator, Tsujimoto's diary is quoted from *Living Beneath the Atomic Cloud: The Testimony of the Children of Nagasaki*, which was edited by Nagai in 1949. What is most remarkable is that the narrator presents Tsujimoto's frustration and confusion toward the idea that his family was offered to God as a "sacrifice":

In the privacy of their classrooms, Nagasaki teachers guided their students in writing about their postbomb lives, and under the direction of Dr. Nagai, their essays were later published in a collection called *Living Beneath the Atomic Cloud*. Tsujimoto Fujio, a fourth grader at Yamazato Elementary School who lost his parents and siblings in the attack, wrote about living with his sixty-year-old grandmother in a shanty constructed where his

house used to be. Every morning, his grandmother attended Mass, then went to the banks of the Urakami River to search for shells, which she sold to help pay for their food. She was always holding her rosary, he wrote, always praying. She would tell him that all was fine, that everything was the will of God.

But Tsujimoto did not feel as hopeful as his grandmother. He longed for his former life, when his grandmother ran a food shop, his father was a well digger, and the family had plenty of money. "Please give me that life back. . . please," he begged in his essay. "I want my mother. I want my father.

I want my brother. I want my sisters. . . ." (162 sic)

As can be seen in the excerpt, Tsujimoto's grandmother, who is apparently a Christian of the Urakami district, is a believer of Nagai's theory: to her, all hardships are the will of God and no matter what the situation may be, she and her orphaned grandson must withstand it. On the other hand, young Tsujimoto cannot accept his grandmother's belief that his miserable circumstance is the direct result of God's will. Tsujimoto's plea for salvation indicates both his and the narrator's disapproval of Nagai's philosophy, namely the rhetoric that links atomic weapons with the omnipotent, Judeo-Christian God.

The excerpt of Tsujimoto's diary appears in the fifth chapter entitled "Time Suspended," which depicts the turbulent post-war period from 1946 to 1949 when the U.S. official investigation team entered Nagasaki for the first time after the Second World War. This chapter mainly focuses on the accounts of people who were forced to live in poverty and solitude after the bombing, such as orphans, women, and elderly citizens. It is safe to say that Tsujimoto, who lost his beloved family members and spent his post-war life in despair, was one of those people. The

meaning of Tsujimoto's diary in *Nagasaki* can be interpreted in two ways. For one thing, it is one of the most invaluable "records" of the lives after the nuclear war, with proof that Nagai's atomic narrative had indeed permeated throughout the ordinary citizens of Nagasaki. For another, despite the fact that *Living Beneath the Atomic Cloud* included many essays, Tsujimoto's diary is the only text, which is explained and used as the ending scene of chapter 5. The young boy whose voice had gone unheard represents all the other obscured hibakushas of Nagasaki. By putting him in the spotlight, the reader is given glimpses of the narrator's position regarding the marginalization of Nagasaki: the traditional American narrative sphere has not done it justice, and it is wrong and unfair that the aftermath of the bombing had never been satisfactorily told, memorialized, or discussed.

In relation to the narrator's implicit discontent toward Nagai's interpretation, Dr. Akizuki Tatsuichiro¹⁶, who is one of the most important characters in *Nagasaki*, should also be taken into account. Although Akizuki was born and raised in a Buddhist family, he studied Christian theology on his own and had a wide range of knowledge about religion in general. However, he developed a skeptical attitude toward Christianity after experiencing the bombing of Nagasaki: he firmly believed that God's providence or divine plan cannot be reconciled with the hideous reality that he witnessed after August 9, 1945. In *Nagasaki*, he is described as a defiant figure who maintains that Nagai's philosophy "minimized and silenced the survivors' suffering, provided a rationalization for the United

¹⁶ Born in 1916 in Nagasaki, he was a medical practitioner for more than 50 years until he was hospitalized in 1992. Other than being a prominent physician, he is well known for his books on the bombing of Nagasaki. Although Akizuki's life overlaps with that of Nagai in some regards (in fact, Akizuki was a student of Nagai), his stance and interpretation of the bombing of Nagasaki differs significantly from Nagai's. The dissonance between Akizuki and Nagai's attitude regarding the bombing and Christianity is further discussed in Akizuki's Japanese account "Nagasaki Genbakuki" (A Record of the Nagasaki Atomic Bombing).

States' use of the bombs, and gave credence to the existence of nuclear weapons" (172). In his life after the bombing, his impiety solidifies as he is faced with the reality that God will not step in to make things better but will simply continue watching the suffering people in Nagasaki. According to the narrator, Akizuki "often challenged hibakusha nuns at his hospital about their beliefs" (173), but like the other Christians in the Urakami district, those nuns seem to be under the spell of Nagai's logic of sacrifice:

"Why is it that you have to suffer like this?" he demanded. "Why people like you, who've done nothing but good? It isn't right!" Unshaken, the Catholic sisters replied that they believed in providence, in the will of God. But Akizuki could not agree. He blamed the Americans for dropping the bomb and hated the Japanese government "who had willfully perpetuated this senseless war." (173)

Despite his misgivings toward the Christian belief, Akizuki ultimately converted to Catholicism in 1953, eight years after the bombing. According to his 1972 memoir, his baptism was not a result of his mental transformation. In his years-long battle with depression after the bombing, he found solace in the act of praying. Though he did not necessarily believe in a merciful God, he felt he was slowly healing through his daily prayers. Additionally, his Christian colleagues inspired his conversion: God had seemingly abandoned them, but they continued to have faith and were eternally humble. Akizuki yearned to belong to that group of the good, faithful people. He admits that depression and sense of loss urged him to "surrender" to Christianity. He later recalls this complicated inner suffering at the time of conversion:

I was baptized. Even though I was given a Christian name after Saint Francis of Assisi, I felt empty inside because I was completely defeated by the atomic bomb. Without any earthly possessions, I was exhausted. After no longer being able to have faith in Buddhism and abandoning my medical research, my mental hardships were too much to bear. In this respect, conversion for me was not a glory, but a defeat. (Akizuki 251)

Although the background of Akizuki's conversion is not fully explained in *Nagasaki*, he is shown as an advocative figure who continues to search for the meaning of religion.

For instance, even after his conversion to Christianity subsequent to the bombing, he continues to ask insightful questions on the matter of God's silence: "If this hell day came to me again, and the atomic bomb burned us up again. . . would Jesus Christ save us?" (176) Immediately after this scene, the narrator chronicles Akizuki's life as a leading advocate for hibakushas in Nagasaki and portrays him as a figure who relentlessly challenges the typical and dominant image of Nagasaki, which subsequently had a far-reaching impact on the entire nation.

This typical image of Nagasaki has often been contrasted with the assertive character of Hiroshima: as the saying goes, "Hiroshima rages, Nagasaki prays" (Ikari no Hiroshima, inori no Nagasaki). As mentioned earlier, Treat attributes this to the fact that Nagasaki is "the second city" to be bombed, historically known for having strong connections to the Western world.

Akizuki's rebellion against Nagai's "logic of sacrifice" becomes the antithesis to the long-standing marginalization of Nagasaki, while tacitly reflecting the narrator's disapproval of the rhetoric presenting the bombing of

Nagasaki as the divine will. In other words, Southard's attempt to give voice to the underrepresented hibakushas such as young Tsujimoto or Akizuki, whose sufferings have been all but obliterated in the face of the widely accepted atomic discourse of Nagasaki, has the potential to rise above the confines of the conventional American narrative on the issue surrounding the nuclear war.

On the surface, Southard's *Nagasaki* seems like it merely introduces stories told by the Nagasakians about their lives after the bombing. However, this attempt has a significant meaning in the American and Western context, in which countless stories have gone ignored, forgotten, or suppressed over the years. By putting the hibakushas' voice of dissent out into the world, the hitherto eliminated stories of Nagasaki are finally brought to light.

IV. Conclusion

By examining the exclusive nature of the American atomic narrative sphere, this chapter considered the role of *Nagasaki* as a text that can both transcend the limitations of the American atomic narrative and modify the history of the nuclear discourse that had prevailed for the past 70 years. Admittedly, the hibakushas' accounts and stories have crossed borders immediately after the bombings and have been told in Western nations for years. As mentioned previously, many English texts have focused on the bombing of Nagasaki: some have even described it from the hibakushas' perspective. In this respect, it must be acknowledged that the publication of Southard's *Nagasaki* was in no way a singular event.

However, the most significant attribute of *Nagasaki* is that it challenges the long history of the American narrative sphere. While employing a simple

format that presents unfiltered accounts of the hibakushas, *Nagasaki* exposes the structure of the conventional discussion regarding the atomic bombings and attempts to rectify the perennial omission of certain narratives. It is an ambitious attempt to retell the hibakushas' accounts within the context of the American nuclear discourse and bridge the gap between the Japanese and American perceptions regarding the bombing of Nagasaki¹⁷.

On August 7, 2015, just after the publication of *Nagasaki*, Southard's essay titled "Nagasaki, the Forgotten City" appeared in *The New York Times*. In the conclusion of this essay, she emphasizes the issues surrounding the American and Western atomic narrative sphere, making a compelling argument on why the hibakushas' accounts must no longer be ignored. However, the most significant point is Southard's and *Nagasaki's* efforts to go beyond the confines of the traditional American atomic narrative with a transnational perspective:

They [hibakusha people] do not tell their stories to promote Japan's victimization, or to minimize the attack on Pearl Harbor, or the suffering and deaths of Asian civilians and Allied military personnel at the hands of brutal Japanese soldiers. Rather, they speak to eliminate ignorance about the realities of nuclear war and to eradicate nuclear stockpiles across the globe.

The official narrative remains the dominant opinion of most Americans. In that story, Nagasaki fades in memory; we should not let it.

Our time to understand the survivors' experience of nuclear war is running

¹⁷ As for the dominant Japanese narrative, Japanese literature scholar Yamamoto Akihiro argues that the hibakushas' accounts have been shared excessively for the past 70 years, and that it is time to seriously reconsider the ways these stories are told. As Southard observes, certain types of texts have dominated the American narrative sphere, and the same can be said about Japan.

out. Only they can tell us what it was like, and their lives are coming to an end.

If *Nagasaki's* first aim is to be the antithesis to the dominant American narrative, its second mission would be to highlight those who have been marginalized. In these times of increasing intolerance and apathy toward those who do not conform to social norms or fit into a certain category, *Nagasaki* seeks to retell the stories of the disregarded people so that their voices will finally be heard, loud and clear.

Ending Chapter: Reconsidering the “American” Atomic Narrative

I. Discussions Derived from the Atomic Narratives

By examining the American atomic narrative through literary material such as reportages, newspaper and magazine articles, official government statements, essays and works of non-fiction, this thesis investigated the American perspective and narrative sphere in which the stories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been discussed for the past 70 years. The objective of this research is to reveal the hidden dimensions of such stories and the politics surrounding American society. The common denominator of these texts is that their central theme is Hiroshima and/or Nagasaki, with a sense of mission to enlighten the Western world on nuclear issues as well as the unknown aspects of the two cities. With this in mind, this thesis attempts to shed light on the obscured facets of these atomic narratives that have remained unnoticed and undebated to this day, and to consider the discussions that may arise from these discoveries.

Homer Bigart’s Hiroshima report, which was mentioned in Chapter 1, raises the crucial yet fundamental question of how to describe an event that has not been experienced by most of the world as well as how to write about the pain suffered by others. Regarding these discussions, one old and nameless Christian man may hold the key. What is most remarkable is that this old man, who is apparently a devout Catholic, is introduced to the readers as a universal being: although he has lost everything, he still has his faith and that is what matters most to him. One may argue that in a country with a large Christian population, the readers tend to develop a sense of affinity to this character and could no longer disregard the nuclear atrocity as somebody else’s problem. Though Bigart was one

of the official press members who were allowed to enter the bombsite and cover its aftermath, his report on Hiroshima deviates from Truman and Stimson's statements: by presenting straightforward accounts of the hibakushas whenever possible, even under the U.S. government's severe censorship, it attempts to chronicle the atomic wasteland without the use of hyperbolic rhetoric or theatrics.

Although George Weller's Nagasaki reports were confiscated by the U.S. Office of Censorship during the post war period and never appeared in public until 2003, it is crucial to focus on their association with the American national memory of the Pearl Harbor attack. Since the day the Imperial Japanese Army launched the infamous preemptive strike, as Dower and Rosenberg put it, abhorrence toward the Japanese had become pervasive within the American society. Because of this, most Americans had no remorse for the bombings of Japan, regardless of whether the victims were combatants.

This notion led to the dominant recognition that, although a vast number of civilians were exterminated under the mushroom cloud, the use of the two bombs could be rationalized with the reasoning that it was the only way to bring justice back to the world. Against this backdrop, the outstanding feature of Weller's reports is that they heavily lean on the accounts given by the POWs captured by the Imperial Japanese Army rather than actual reports on Nagasaki. What can be observed from this faltering narrative is that the American dominant memory during the Second World War is deeply engraved in these reports. Because Weller's series of reports were published with the title *First into Nagasaki*, the readers may be given the impression that these reports provide invaluable insight into the actuality of Nagasaki immediately after the bombing. However, when taking the distinctively American historical background into account, this narrative can be

reread as a familiar national story that prevailed among the American citizens during wartime. In this sense, Weller's reports could offer a starting point for discussions regarding the political problem between victims and perpetrators.

The second chapter was an examination of the narrative sphere in the early atomic age through the rhetorical investigation of William L. Laurence's atomic narrative. His reports not only attracted considerable attention, but also had tremendous impact on the American society in the early atomic age: they were written in a familiar Judeo-Christian rhetoric so that every reader could understand the complex structure and other mysterious aspects of nuclear energy.

However, one should not ignore other facets of these atomic texts. Firstly, Laurence's reports supported and fortified what the U.S. government wanted the public to believe, ultimately becoming the dominant American atomic narrative in the post Hiroshima and Nagasaki era. To some extent, his atomic texts took on the role of nuclear propaganda, spreading the notion that the Americans are "the chosen" and have been expressly permitted by God to use the monstrous weapon. Based on this conviction, the use of the two atomic bombs against Japan were justified in the name of Providence. In this sense, one could argue that Laurence's Judeo-Christian atomic rhetoric could give rise to dangerous ideas akin to totalitarianism, which would essentially divide the world into two. It must be acknowledged that in this scenario, the dichotomy of good and evil would be inevitable.

Regarding the points above, the "explicitness" and "simplicity" that make Laurence's atomic texts distinctive and unique must be carefully examined, for they offer tremendous insight, even in the present day, into how a manipulative rhetoric could impact the public mind. On the surface, "explaining in simple and

familiar words” seems benevolent enough, because its aim is to make everyone understand the object of discussion. However, underneath this façade, telling stories about an event from a single fixed angle could potentially disguise the truth and ignore the voices of those deemed irrelevant; in the worst-case scenario, doing so could obscure all the other conflicting perspectives. This element must be given special consideration in this type of narrative, because when the nuclear issue is explained with a typological rhetoric, the voices of the people under the mushroom cloud are made silent.

The third chapter observed John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* and its nationwide sensation by investigating the underlying literary premise of the mid-1940s when it was published. *Hiroshima* chronicled the lives of the six hibakushas just after the bombing and gained both commercial and critical success. It is generally regarded as the first atomic text that shed light on the individuals under the mushroom cloud. However, this chapter reconsidered this common understanding by focusing on the relationship between the two pretexts, which were already in wide circulation prior to Hiroshima’s publication, and the American readers’ perspective toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The first pretext was the statement released by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America (FCC), characterized by its denunciation of the attack on non-combatants. In a sociopolitical climate where the entire nation was in a state of unbridled rage against the Japanese, FCC’s theological response on the bombing may have served as a counterview against the mass opinion.

The second pre-text, which was Philip Morrison’s scientific explanation of nuclear energy entitled “Beyond Imagination,” may give the impression that it is an average handbook on atomic power. However, it in fact raises a significant

question on the way the observers see disastrous events. To a remarkable extent, Morrison's text avoids telling the story from the bombardier's stance and instead has the narrator stand alongside the people of Nagasaki.

These foundations laid by the two pretexts is a crucial element that paved the way to the critical and popular acclaim of Hersey's *Hiroshima*. Hersey's text did not appear out of nowhere; there was already a cornerstone and frame of reference that allowed the American readers to regard the bombings in a certain way. This leads to the discussion on the origin of the dominant narrative: the matter of how it came to be and the reason it became the primary reference point for the Hiroshima bombing must be considered.

The fourth chapter, which analyzed the 1946 atomic essay written by Lewis Mumford, attempted to highlight his idiosyncratic yet momentous approach toward Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To this day, Mumford's nuclear essay has been defined predominantly by its moral aspect condemning the use of the atomic bomb as "inhuman," but it must be reconsidered and critiqued within the modern nuclear sphere. This conventional categorization renders Mumford's atomic essay banal, along with the other "moral texts" that endeavored to retrieve some of the humanity that was lost during the atomic age.

Mumford's atomic essay is worth reexamining for at least two reasons. First, it sought to expose how uncannily analogous the origin of the atomic bomb is to the emergence of totalitarianism. By using a familiar allegory, the narrator of this essay uncovers the disquieting truth that the two are products of a bureaucratic and machine-like social structure: when an individual becomes a component of a powerful organization and begins to function as part of a larger machine, totalitarianism arises and monstrous atomic weapons are created.

Secondly, Mumford's essay can be read as a counter-text that could potentially deconstruct the Judeo-Christian atomic propaganda such as the reports written by the Atomic Evangelist. In this regard, the narrator, who corresponds to the biblical character Jonah, plays a significant role, though their actions and choices are very different, perhaps even contradictory. Unlike the biblical Jonah, who refused to inform the citizens of Ninevah of God's omen, the narrator of Mumford's essay is introduced as a vigorous messenger who tries to warn the American people of the forthcoming apocalyptic future. One could say that this inverted biblical story urges the Western society to reconsider its outlook on the nuclear issue. If, as Treat observes, there is truly a discrepancy between the Western narrative sphere and that of Japan, Mumford's response toward the nuclear issue may provide us with clues on how to close the gap that exists between them.

The main purpose of the fifth chapter, "Retelling the Story of Nagasaki: Susan Southard's *Nagasaki: Life after Nuclear War* and the Western Atomic Narrative Sphere of Nagasaki," was to investigate the exclusive atomic discourse of the United States and the Western world. The goal was to understand the reason why the hibakushas' accounts were never included in the primary atomic narrative of the U.S. and the Western world, though the bombing of Nagasaki has been told outside of Japan through platforms such as novels, works of nonfiction, documentaries, and cartoons. Regarding this question, one must focus on what is considered "the dominant atomic narrative," which exclude and overshadow accounts that do not "fit in" and prioritizes only the texts that are deemed worthy.

In case of the U.S. and the Western world, John Hersey's *Hiroshima* has been long regarded as the most authoritative atomic narrative. As Shibata states, even today, 70 years after its publication, *Hiroshima* is being read in American

classrooms and has firmly established its status as the canonical text of the nuclear issue. An identical phenomenon can be seen in the Japanese narrative sphere. In this respect, Nagai Takashi, who over the years has been considered the symbol of Nagasaki, must be examined. According to Treat's observation, Nagai's atomic narrative is characterized by its unique philosophy interpreting the bombing of Nagasaki from a theological view: he sees the victims of Nagasaki as an offering made to God and that divine providence specifically selected the people of Urakami, therefore they ought to be grateful the bomb was dropped on them. Because of this theological perception, Treat suggests that Nagai's narrative has been embraced by the American public unlike the other accounts on Nagasaki.

Based on Treat's research, Diel unveils the politics hidden behind Nagai's canonization. While placing Nagai's narrative at the center of the American atomic discourse, Diehl expresses disapproval for its role in mitigating the American guilt of killing and maiming thousands of civilians as well as preventing other latent stories of the hibakushas from surfacing.

Based on previous studies on the narrative sphere of the U.S., Shibata focuses on the production process of the authoritative texts on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. She notes that both Hersey's *Hiroshima* and Nagai's atomic narrative contain hidden, unintentional stories, and are in accordance with the ideas the American government wished to promote.

Against this backdrop, Southard's *Nagasaki* aimed to overcome these limitations that have been posed on American literary circles. By retelling the stories of the hibakushas in the U.S., *Nagasaki* ventures to rectify and re-record the memory of the Second World War by giving attention to the previously unheard voices of the forgotten people. *Nagasaki* urges its modern-day readers to reconsider

the underlying politics of the atomic narrative sphere in which inconvenient and incongruous voices are ignored or forced to be silent.

II. To the Transnational Perspective: For 21st Century Nuclear Criticism

Through the investigation of various atomic narratives in the U.S., this thesis aspired to pinpoint the issues that should be discussed in more depth. In this regard, one must understand that the contrasting viewpoints of the storytellers inevitably render American atomic narratives and Japanese atomic bomb literature mutually exclusive.

For example, Treat observes that for decades, the narrator's "distance" from the atomic hypocenter has been the determining factor of the story's standpoint: it is one of the most crucial factors causing the gap between the Japanese atomic narrative and those of other countries:

Japanese present at the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima or Nagasaki and who subsequently wrote of their experience commonly preface their accounts with a historical qualification. Each tells us, as if that place both permits and curbs the words to follow, where he was on the morning of August 6 or 9, 1945. This "where" is expressed in a measure of how far from, or close to, ground zero the writer stood or sat or slept. "Two kilometers" for one survivor, "two and a quarter" for another, and as one atomic-bomb writer recalls of his middle school class, "the difference of one's place in line was also a difference in the effects of the radiation."

[. . .] The geographical difference that determined living from dying is also a difference that determines meaning. First, *there is meaning in language, as greater distance from the silent epicenter parallels the greater*

ease with which the victim of nuclear war can speak of the fact of that day, and second, there is meaning in the multitude of other ways the survivor of atrocity may seek to reconcile experience, memory, guilt, and rage with—and against—those inherited cultural systems of mediation incongruent with such lived reality. As an American army general who observed the Alamogordo test of the first atomic bomb from the safety of a bunker noted, “Words are inadequate tools[. . .] . It had to be witnessed to be realized” (ix-x emphasis added)

In a subsequent passage, Treat acknowledges that his own position is decidedly a “safe” one: he is neither a bomb victim of Hiroshima or Nagasaki, nor was he alive at the time of the Second World War. Despite this, he also observes that although he has no direct relation to Hiroshima or Nagasaki, it is impossible for him “to approach the topic of the atomic bombing entirely innocent of a cultural and historical, if not literally personal, involvement” (x). With this awareness, he emphasizes that every living person is involved with Hiroshima and Nagasaki in one way or another. In his argument, he uses the term “potential hibakusha,” meaning that every person, no matter what nationality or background, is living alongside nuclear issues:

Although it may be suspect for an American to do so, I propose that this concept of the potential hibakusha now has to extend to everyone alive today in any region of the planet targeted by warhead-carrying missiles, or in our newly fragmented post-Cold War world, any region contested by any of the rapidly expanding “nuclear club” of nations. This is in effect to say all of us, although unlike the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who had no credible warning, we have been “prepared” for what lies ahead. (xi)

Treat's transnational bearing urges the readers to reconsider the way Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be discussed, described, and remembered hereafter in the literary world.

Each of the texts investigated in this thesis tell the two events from their own unique perspective. The atomic stories told most often in the U.S. share nothing in common with the hibakushas' accounts of Japan, which have been recounted and remembered an infinite amount of times, especially around the war-end anniversary every August. Indeed, as mentioned in this thesis several times, there is a non-negligible discrepancy between the two narratives: each sphere has its own dominant atomic texts, resulting in the exclusion of certain narratives from their categorizations. In other words, while Japan has designated the hibakushas' accounts as the primary atomic narrative for the past 70 years, America and the Western world have done the same with their own atomic narratives, telling stories vastly different from what the Japanese people have long considered ordinary and ideologically "accurate".

It may be easy to accuse the atomic narrative sphere of the Western world of being "morally deficient" and for neglecting to describe Hiroshima and Nagasaki through the eyes of the victims. However, what is most important for the people of the modern era is to gain a perspective that is accepting of any and all narrative styles telling stories of the nuclear issue. As Kawaguchi notes in the preface of a collaborative anthology published in 2017, a multicultural point of view will shed new light on future atomic bomb literature and create the potential to introspectively reconsider the post-war history.

Considering the origin of the "atomic bomb literature" in relation to critical responses that arose from society is equivalent to discussing the memories

of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that have been told in Japan for the last 70 years as the “national story”. Those who live in this modern age must acknowledge that every nation has created their own stories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in their own ways: if there is an American atomic story, there is also a Chinese original atomic story. One may find stories that do not speak of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at all. In any case, we must examine the genre of “atomic bomb literature,” which had tremendous impact on the Japanese consciousness after the Second World War, with a broader perspective. To this end, it is necessary for the Japanese people to pay attention not only to texts written in Japanese, but also to other atomic discourses created in various languages and regions. (15)

This “transpacific and multicultural perspective” is the focal point of the fifth chapter of this thesis, not only questioning the narrative sphere of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also asking to reexamine what it means to describe a certain event from one fixed angle. Critical analysis on the narrative sphere of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must employ an all-encompassing perspective that may possibly remove the de facto boundary that has existed between the accounts of hibakushas and other narratives.

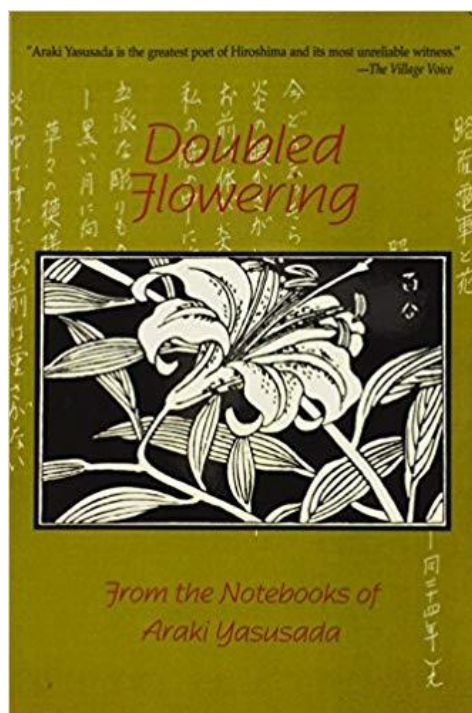


Figure 12: Yasusada's controversial texts were later compiled into a single book and published from Roof Books in 1997.

Regarding the discussion above, one significant incident known as the “Araki Yasusada Affair,” which caused a scandalous sensation in American literary circles in the 1990s, must be examined as the final argument of this thesis.

Araki Yasusada was a “hibakusha poet,” whose works were published in major American journals such as *Grand Street*, *Conjunctions*, and *Stand*. In 1996, *American Poetry Review*, one of

the most prominent poetry magazines in the U.S., published a special issue entitled “Doubled Flowering: From the Notebook of Araki Yasusada”.

Along with several poems, it introduced Yasusada's personal writings such as letters and English assignments, with an introduction written by three English translators. It was explained that Yasusada, who lost a wife named “Nomura” and two daughters in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, died from cancer in 1972. It also mentions that eight years later, Yasusada's son found his late father's works.

However, just after *American Poetry Review* published Yasusada's works, a rumor began to circulate alleging that Araki Yasusada might not actually exist and the poems were a “hoax,” written by Tosa Motokiyu, one of the translators of Yasusada's poems, or Kent Johnson, a teacher and poet of Illinois who sent Yasusada's poems to *American Poetry Review*. Although Johnson later admitted that Yasusada's works were indeed a “hoax,” and many people have been rumored to be the real author of the poems, the mystery of who wrote the poems is still

unsolved to this day. This incident caused an immediate sensation in the literary sphere of the United States and other countries:

In major publications in the U.S., England, Australia, Mexico, Russia, Spain, Israel, and Italy, poets and critics have expressed excitement, hostility, and bewilderment toward Yasusada's idiosyncratic work. They have judged it as everything from a "racist inspired hoax" to an "imaginative gesture of profound beauty and empathy."¹⁸

The debates over this incident draw us into deeper discussions. One of the most significant points is the problem of "who" tells certain stories and events. Eliot Weinberger, for example, explains that Yasusada's alleged hoax was exposed when "the Eng. Dep. had split into two contradictory 'post-modernisms'". Under these chaotic circumstances:

One side wanted to hear the stories that hadn't been told, and the other doubted that stories could be told; one side promoted authenticity, and the other inauthenticity. The former embraced Yasusada and then violently rejected him when his identity became questionable — the precise moment when the latter embraced him.¹⁹

Weinberger further argues that one should not place too much value on the author's identity. Whether the author truly witnessed Hiroshima and Nagasaki is irrelevant: one must recognize that a firsthand account or experience does not necessarily tell the truth of a certain event.

"[It is] a mistake, I think, in having 'Kent Johnson' stand for the author.

He/She/They should be known as the Yasusada Author, much as we refer

¹⁸ quoted from: <http://jacketmagazine.com/02/yasu.html>

¹⁹ quoted from: <http://jacketmagazine.com/05/yasu-wein.html>

to a Renaissance painter as the Master of the X Altar.... [Yasusada] is both the greatest poet of Hiroshima and its most unreliable witness.”²⁰

Like Weinberger, Mikhail Epstein views Yasusada’s anonymity as a positive quality: because Yasusada’s identity is unknown even to this day although his works are internationally acclaimed, this enigmatic and transcendental figure could step over any boundary that may exist among nations and ethnicities²¹.

Based on these discussions on the author’s identity, Hosea Hirata²² raises a crucial issue that affects the atomic narrative sphere of both Japan and the U.S. He states that the Yasusada affair manifests the politics surrounding the “testimonial narrative,” “hibakushas’ accounts” and “atomic bomb literature”. When hibakushas’ accounts, or any type of firsthand narrative for that matter, are given more weight due to their perceived authenticity, other discourses telling about certain events are consequently undermined. Because of this structure, it is generally agreed that violent incidents such as the holocaust or atomic bombing cannot be described adequately without the storyteller going through the actual experience. Hirata sees Yasusada’s hoax as a catalyst for changing, or at least questioning, this literary framework.

Discussions on the Yasusada affair should be studied in Japan as well, where, in the name of the “only atomic bombed nation,” people have been relying too heavily on the hibakushas’ accounts for decades. When the accounts of the

²⁰ quoted from: <http://jacketmagazine.com/02/yasu.html>

²¹ see also: “Commentary and Hypotheses,” in Tosa Motokiyu, Ojiu Norinaga and Okura Kyojin eds., *Doubled Flowering: From the Notebooks of Araki Yasusada*, Roof Books, 1997.

²² An author of *Discourses of Seduction: History, Evil, Desire, and Modern Japanese Literature*. See also: “Created *hibakusha* poet Araki Yasusada: Does poetry require truth?” in *Plagiarism, Imitation, Originality: Questioning the Imagination of Japanese Literature. Proceedings of the 27th International Conference on Japanese Literature, Nov. 2003* (Tokyo: National Institute of Japanese Literature, 2004), 155-168.

hibakushas are canonized as the singularly true atomic discourse, other types of narratives are swept away: they are labeled as fictitious and unworthy. This literary ideology leads us to the crucial question of who would continue telling the stories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in this era, when the survivors of the two events are dwindling. As Nagahata Akitoshi, one of the most prominent scholars exploring the Yasusada affair, points out, one should reexamine the relation between “hibakushas accounts” and other discourses on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. What is required of the atomic narrative sphere in the 21st century is a transpacific perspective that takes alternative discourses into consideration.

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