

Crisis, Exposure, Imagination

Crisis, Exposure, Imagination:

Lifting Veils

Edited by

Jordan E. Miller, Craig Condella
and Fred Abong

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INTRODUCTION

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Unprecedented changes appear to be happening more often and more rapidly than ever before. We notice these changes and events more readily due to the advent of the information age and the continual technological innovation that has accompanied it. New methods of the manufacture and the dissemination of information expose us to crises in ways never before possible. These crises often lead to the exposure of new ways of understanding. The lifting of veils allows us to see these crises more clearly. In turn, these epiphanies invite imaginative and creative responses.

There are two sides of the veil, with crisis on one side and imagination on the other. The issue of lifting veils—of revelatory change—expresses the authors' interests in the intersection of and collaboration between different disciplines. Lifting the veil radically undoes the past, opens us up to the future through change, and provides the possibility for vision and hope. In spite of technological and scientific innovation, crises often happen unexpectedly. Environmental and climatic crises, economic volatility, scientific and technological breakthroughs, political revolution, religious extremism and terrorism, and nuclear destruction are a few of the events that seem to be exposing us to new ways of understanding. These crises traverse a multitude of boundaries including social, institutional, disciplinary and international ones. In part, crises make our world smaller, bring people closer together, and expose our differences. This affects our perception of the world and how we make sense of and interpret it.

In October 2011, scholars convened in the Pell Center for International Relations at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island, for a conference devoted to discussing these and related issues. The essays in this collection began as presentations at that conference. They include perspectives from the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Broadly, they are concerned with the ways in which journalism, politics, literature,

philosophy, theology, and the natural sciences grapple with the world as it rapidly changes – changes that call for imaginative responses. This collection is a worthy contribution to the ongoing dialogue between the humanities and the natural sciences. The essays in it are concerned with three broad areas of veil lifting: the world of natural and technological objects in which we live; the literature, philosophy, and theology we use to find meaning in that world; and the brain science, psychiatry, rehabilitation, and justice that are utilized to organize and stabilize our communities.

The editors would like to thank Dr. Michael A. Budd, the director of the graduate program in the humanities at Salve Regina University, for all his guidance and encouragement. Additionally, this project would not have been possible without the support of Salve Regina University's Provost and Assistant Provost, Dr. Dean de la Motte and Dr. Donna M. Cook, respectively; the director of the Pell Center for International Relations, Dr. Jim Ludes; and the "Lifting Veils" conference organization committee, comprising Tara Brennan, Stephen Jackson, Todd Mele, John J. Litherland, and Ryan Marnane. Finally, thanks to Dan Titus for his help in putting the final version of this volume together.

*Craig Condella, Fred Abong, and Jordan E. Miller
Newport, RI.*

PART I:

CRISIS

LIVING FIRE: THE ATOMIC BOMBS, JAPANESE NIHILISM AND CREATIVE RESPONSE

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Introduction

*“When the atomic bomb drops
Day turns into night
People turn into ghosts”¹*

This paper discusses how the dropping of two atomic bombs in August 1945 unexpectedly changed not only the lives of the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also their worldview, philosophy and creativity. In order to elaborate on how the dropping of the atomic bombs caused unprecedented changes in the lives of the A-Bomb survivors, this study focuses on three main developments:

1. The emergence of a shared nihilistic worldview
2. The birth of Japanese existentialism as a new way of understanding
3. Iri and Toshi Maruki’s creation of *The Hiroshima Panels*, in particular *Ghosts*, as a response to the atomic bombings.

The Birth of Nihilism

The atomic explosions left scars on the survivors’ souls as much as their bodies. The psychological devastation of the *hibakusha*—the Japanese term for those who survived the bombings—was so profound that they

¹ Sakamoto Hatsumi, “The Atomic Bomb,” in *Poems by Atomic Bomb Survivors: Selections from Nihon genbaku shishu (Anthology of Japanese atomic bomb poems)*, (Tokyo: Taihei Shuppansha, 1970), 336, as quoted in Kyoko Selden and Mark Selden, ed., *The Atomic Bomb: Voices from Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. 1989), 127.

forgot what it meant to be human.² Indeed, in 1977, at an international symposium about the *hibakusha* and the psychological impacts of the atomic bombings, scientists jointly declared, “To the *hibakusha*, life is walking on an endless march. They are always subject to nihilism and despair, standing always on the border between life and death.”³

As a result of witnessing death, destruction and the abrupt breakdown of “imperial icons and national myths,” the *hibakusha* felt nothing but emptiness.⁴ “Passive and withdrawn,” the *hibakusha* became ultimately pessimistic about their future.⁵ They lost their faith and trust in the meaning of human existence, and death became more attractive than life itself.⁶ Feeling emptiness, doubting and not knowing what the future would hold for them, and finding human existence meaningless, the *hibakusha*’s nihilistic worldview deepened as time passed.

The Emergence of Japanese Existentialism

Japanese existentialism is rooted in both Eastern and Western thought. After Nishida Kitaro (1870–1945) founded the Kyoto school in the 20th century, Japanese philosophers started to synthesize Eastern philosophy, especially Mahayana Buddhism, with Western thought.⁷ Philosophies of religion were prominent focuses of the Kyoto School of thought. Even though religion was a significant subject for the philosophers of the Kyoto School, those thinkers were “non-dogmatic and non-sectarian,” as they

² Iwanami Shoten, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings, Study of Human Behavior—The Committee for The Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, trans. Eisei Ishikawa and David L. Swain (New York: Basic Books, INC., Publishers, 1981), 485, 491.

³ Joanne Silberner, “Psychological A-Bomb Wounds,” *Science News* 120, no. 19 (1981): 298.

⁴ Kyo Maclear, *Beclouded Visions: Hiroshima-Nagasaki And The Art Of Witness* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 168.

⁵ Takeshi Ito, “The A-Bomb Victims’ Situation and Their ‘Negation’ Mentality,” *Shiso [Thought]*, 430:422–31 (April, 1960), quoted in Shoten, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 491.

⁶ Robert Jay Lifton, “Psychological Effects of the Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima: The Theme of Death,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 92, No. 3, Themes in Transition (Summer 1963): 487.

⁷ Bret W. Davis, “The Kyoto School,” 27 February 2006, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=kyoto-school> > (7 June 2011).

focused on Christian and Buddhist sources.⁸ Thus, as Bret W. Davis points out:

[The Kyoto School of philosophy is] best understood as a set of unique contributions from the perspective of modern Japan—that is, from a Japan that remains fundamentally determined by its historical layers of traditional culture at the same time as being essentially conditioned by its most recent layer of contact with the West—to a nascent worldwide dialogue of cross-cultural philosophy.⁹

As one of the renowned philosophers of the Kyoto School, Keiji Nishitani integrated Eastern Philosophy with Western thought. By adopting and combining the Buddhist concept of “Great Doubt” with Nietzsche’s radical nihilism, Nishitani created his unique existential philosophy to understand why nihilism emerged as the worldview for the *hibakusha*. In Zen Buddhism, a person’s doubt regarding existence is called “the self-presence of the Great Doubt [*daigi genzen*].”¹⁰ According to Nishitani, when a person starts doubting her or his existence, that person raises questions such as “Why did this happen to me? What can I do about it?”¹¹ Furthermore, if that person lets doubt dominate her or his life, those questions change to “Who am I? Why do I exist?”¹² Nishitani called this transformation “the realization of nihility.”¹³

Besides Zen Buddhism’s notion of the Great Doubt, Nietzsche’s radical nihilism helped Nishitani understand the survivors’ psychological state. According to Nietzsche, “radical nihilism is the conviction of an absolute untenability of existence when it comes to the highest values one recognizes; plus the realization that we lack the least right to posit a beyond or an in-itself to things that might be divine.”¹⁴ Influenced by Nietzsche, Nishitani pointed out that nihilism emerges when the ground or the foundation of human values is conceived as untrustworthy.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Hans Waldenfels, *Absolute Nothingness*, trans. J.W. Heisig (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 66.

¹¹ James W. Heisig, “Philosophers of Nothingness: An Essay on the Kyoto School,” (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), <<http://0site.ebrary.com.helin.uri.edu/lib/salve/docDetail.action?docID=10019105>> (11 June. 2011), 220.

¹² Ibid. 220.

¹³ Ibid. 220.

¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), 9.

Nishitani explained the foundational decay of human values taking place by identifying nihilism as a “historical and social phenomenon.”¹⁵ For Nishitani, nihilism excels and exceeds time and space; while it is a symbol of the dissolution of the stability of society externally, it is also a symptom of the breakdown of the ground of human values internally during the progression of history.¹⁶ For instance, Nishitani pointed out that the devastation of both social order and personal unity right after the atomic bombings was an example of how nihilism, as a “historical and social phenomenon,” prevails when a person stops acknowledging the ground of human values.¹⁷ Thus, according to Nishitani, “The phenomenon of nihilism shows that our historical life has lost its ground as an objective spirit, that the value system which supports this life has broken down, and that the entirety of social and historical life has loosened itself from its foundations.”¹⁸ The ultimate human values were shaken as the conventional values’ ground lost their credibility and meaning. The ground came to be “perceived as something unreliable, [as] an immense void begins to open up within history.”¹⁹ Consequently, if the ground of values is considered as the exact or ultimate ground of human meaning and existence, then the void that occurs in such a situation is not just a void, but also a permanent “abyssal nihilism.”²⁰

Nishitani suggested that when a person loses loved ones and experiences death, things previously important now become meaningless. Being surrounded by the pain of the death of loved ones, a person acknowledges the fact that she or he will never see these lost loved ones again.²¹ This infinite period of not being together with loved ones causes a profound doubt about the self-existence of the person and the existence of other people.²² According to Nishitani, “when we become a question to ourselves and when the problem of why we exist arises, this means that nihility has emerged from the ground of our existence and that our very existence has turned into a question mark. This appearance of nihility signals nothing less than that one’s awareness of self-existence has penetrated to an

¹⁵ Keiji Nishitani, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, trans. Graham Parkes and Setsuko Aihara (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 3–4.

¹⁶ Ibid. 3.

¹⁷ Ibid. 3.

¹⁸ Ibid. 3.

¹⁹ Ibid. 4.

²⁰ Ibid. 4.

²¹ Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, trans. Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 16.

²² Ibid. 16.

extraordinary depth.”²³ If a person does not realize or become aware of her or his existence, that person will not question her or his existence and not find oneself in the abyss of nihility. As Nishitani wrote, “To that extent the realization of nihility is nothing other than the realization of the self itself.”²⁴

Nihilism became pervasive in Japan after the economic and social disintegration of the postwar period.²⁵ The devastation of the war restructured people’s consciousness and souls. *Hibakusha*, faced with death, realized their own existence as well as the absence of dear ones.²⁶ As a result, life and values became meaningless for the *hibakusha*. In “Japanese Existentialism-Postwar Phase,” Tsurumi Shunsuke observes the psychological breakdown of survivors and considers how people’s values and perspectives and the meaning of human existence changed after the war:

The postwar generation received the impact of defeat most directly. It was they who witnessed the values they had believed in fade to the point of transparency. Now, at the bottom of their hearts, they were convinced of the meaninglessness of all values: parents, brothers, and sisters, and the emperor, the state, love, nurture, money, god...²⁷

The *hibakusha* searched for the meaning or reason for their existence; they, however, ended up finding neither. Rather, the *hibakusha* embraced the cold face of nihilism.

The Creative Response: *Ghosts* by Iri and Toshi Maruki

After the dropping of the atomic bombs, the Japanese government provided information only about how many buildings and bridges were damaged. Authorities failed to give adequate information about how many

²³ Ibid. 4.

²⁴ Ibid. 16

²⁵ J. Victor Koschmann, “The Debate on Subjectivity in Postwar Japan: Foundations of Modernism as a Political Critique,” *Pacific Affairs*, 54. No. 4 (Winter 1981-1982): 612.

²⁶ Ibid. 612.

²⁷ Kuno Osamu and Tsurumi Shunsuke, *Gendai Nihon No Shiso (Contemporary Japanese Thought)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 1956), 198, quoted in J. Victor Koschmann, “The Debate on Subjectivity in Postwar Japan: Foundations of Modernism as a Political Critique,” *Pacific Affairs* 54 (1981-1982): 613.

people died or were burned for several years after the bombings.²⁸ That is why Iri Maruki (1901–1995) and Toshi Maruki (1912–2000) chose to paint people over rubble and debris in their fifteen life-size panels known as *The Hiroshima Panels* (*Gen Baku No Zu*). The Marukis also decided to paint *The Hiroshima Panels* because they believed that their paintings would be a record of the destructive effects of the atomic bombs on the *hibakusha*'s physical and psychological health.²⁹ The Marukis felt compelled to create a visceral and artistic record of the suffering and death of the victims of the bombings in the absence of any official record.

The Marukis' personal experiences of death and chaos caused by the bombings were another reason why they painted *The Hiroshima Panels*. When they learned that the A-bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima, Iri and Toshi Maruki were living in Tokyo. In order to see how his family was doing, Iri Maruki went to Hiroshima. In the following days, Toshi joined her husband. Unfortunately, they discovered that most of Iri's relatives and friends had died because of the atomic bomb. While Iri's father suffered for six months before he passed away, his mother survived. Later, the couple described their experiences during their stay with Iri's family in Hiroshima: "We carried the injured, ... cremated the dead, searched for food, made roofs of scorched tin sheets, wandered about just like those who had experienced the bomb, in the midst of flies and maggots and the stench of death."³⁰

As artist-activists, the Marukis aimed to express political and social upheaval in their murals. The mayhem and disorder caused by the bombings were highly influential in their paintings. Furthermore, the couple expressed in *The Hiroshima Panels* the *hibakusha*'s psychological trauma after witnessing their loved ones' deaths, the overall devastation, and the dissolution of their national myths.³¹ The Marukis transferred the repercussions of the atomic bombs in real life to the canvas through their unrehearsed and authentic painting styles, their inspirations of both Western and Oriental painting techniques, and their different approaches to art. As a result of their choice of painting techniques, the Marukis' *Hiroshima Panels* represent concerns about "human nature, the modern state, and, quite literally, the very meaning of hell in the modern age."³²

²⁸ John W Dower and John Junkerman, ed., *The Hiroshima Murals: The Art of Iri Maruki and Toshi Maruki* (New York: Harper and Row Inc., 1985), 124.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 124.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 11.

³¹ Kyo Maclear, *Beclouded Visions: Hiroshima-Nagasaki And The Art Of Witness* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 168.

³² Dower and Junkerman, 10.

The Marukis never prepared outlines or detailed sketches before they started painting together.³³ They both had a spontaneous painting style and an authentic way of applying the *suiboku* inks and colors. John Dower and John Junkerman explain the spontaneous styles of the Marukis: “Eventually, it will be recognized as one of the most important, disturbing, and moving artistic expressions of the twentieth century, and it is best approached in the simplest way possible: by following the unplanned, chronological manner in which murals were conceived and painted.”³⁴

Using *suiboku* ink and great washes of color, the Marukis showed that they could reflect the dark, ugly face of the modern world.³⁵ Their dedication to the washes and the lines of dark colors of the *suiboku* ink, which overpower the space in the panels, reflects the Marukis’ emotional and political stances toward the war.³⁶ Those inks or colors and the Oriental techniques gave a great wisdom to their murals “that Western styles alone cannot convey: as blacks and greys, naturally, but also washes of red, sepia, somber browns and greens.”³⁷ The couple’s devotion to red, gray, and blue colors, therefore, expressed “the darkness of the modern age.”³⁸

Western avant-garde artistic styles associated with the political left, such as Futurism, Constructivism, Dada, and Surrealism, inspired Japanese artists during the post-war period.³⁹ Post-war avant-garde in Japan was perceived as arising from “‘a purge of history, a beginning from absolute nothingness;’ a ‘nothingness-centered position’ permeates ‘postwar art’s search for identity’; and art becomes a product of ‘the gestalt of the postwar Japanese psyche absolute loss and absolute freedom.’”⁴⁰ Doubt and meaninglessness were important parts of the Western avant-garde style. Inspired by Western avant-garde artistic styles, Japanese avant-garde artists adopted doubt and meaninglessness in their arts as well. The avant-garde Japanese artist Kudo Tetsumi (1935–1990) stated that doubting the

³³ Ibid. 26.

³⁴ Ibid. 11.

³⁵ Ibid. 26.

³⁶ Laura Hein and Rebecca Jennison, ed., *Imagination Without Borders: Feminist Artist Tomiyama Taeko and Social Responsibility* (Michigan: The Regents of the university of Michigan, 2010), 38.

³⁷ Dower and Junkerman, 26.

³⁸ Hein and Jennison, 38.

³⁹ Alexandra Munroe, *Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 1994), 24

⁴⁰ Munroe, 22, 27, 159, quoted in Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, “Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky by Alexandra Munroe Review”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (November, 1996): 1011.

meaning of the existence of everything produced his art: “To doubt God, to doubt myself, to doubt the world. The accumulation of these doubts became my art. To doubt the extreme . . . that is my starting point.”⁴¹

Japanese avant-garde artists’ doubtful perspectives of life in their art became a dominant feature as a result of their disappointment in Japan’s acceptance of surrender and its overnight defeat; the artists lost their trust in the sacred power of the Empire, old traditions, and values.⁴² Without any confidence and belief in the Emperor and national myths, as well as any solid authority to control their art, the Japanese artists gained a chance to create their own styles.⁴³ Most of the artists abandoned traditional Japanese art techniques and began developing interests in Western avant-garde style.⁴⁴

Although the Marukis were influenced by the avant-garde just as their colleagues were, the Marukis continued to follow the techniques of traditional Japanese art. Different from the other avant-garde techniques that inspired other Japanese artists, the Marukis tried to apply the styles of Western painting without being Western.⁴⁵ Both Western leftists’ painting style and traditional techniques of Oriental paintings provided inspiration for the couple’s style.⁴⁶ In their collaborative work of *The Hiroshima Panels*, the influences of Communist artists like Kathe Kollwitz and Western leftists’ styles were essential.⁴⁷ Western European leftist policies and surrealists’ antimilitarist ideologies also had an impact upon the Marukis’ avant-garde style. Toshi Maruki, especially, was profoundly influenced by the Western leftists’ styles and surrealists’ humane ideologies. Toshi was trained in Western painting and was inspired by surrealist painting techniques. Toshi’s pre-war and wartime artistic styles for painting nudes proved influential as well in providing a precedent for the nude figures in the panels.⁴⁸

Iri Maruki, like his wife Toshi, was also inspired by the Surrealist artists because of their anti-militarist, anti-fascist ideology. Iri, however, was mostly affiliated with the artists who used “water-and-ink” as a technique and was interested in the traditional Japanese painting style,

⁴¹ Munroe, 22.

⁴² Kyo Maclear, *Beclouded Visions: Hiroshima-Nagasaki And The Art Of Witness* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 168.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 168.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 167.

⁴⁵ Hein and Jennison, 32.

⁴⁶ Dower and Junkerman, 26.

⁴⁷ Hein and Jennison, 32.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 33–34.

Nihonga.⁴⁹ In the 1930s, Nihonga circles influenced Iri's unique style of life-size landscape paintings.⁵⁰ Rather than painting nude figures, Iri dedicated himself to painting "landscapes, flora, and fauna."⁵¹ Following the 1930s, Iri still followed traditional-style painting and painted traditional subjects in the India-ink medium.⁵²

Besides differences in their painting techniques, dissimilarities in their personalities enhanced the provocation of *The Hiroshima Panels*.⁵³ Because of his impatient personality, Iri Maruki painted spontaneously and intuitively with strong, quick, and effortless brushstrokes.⁵⁴ As a realist, Toshi Maruki nonetheless improvised as well. Yet she meticulously focused on detail and form. Since she had painted details in human figures for years, she developed a highly observant painting technique. Thus, Toshi's style was compatible with her quiet, attentive approach.⁵⁵

Witnessing the *hibakusha's* psychological breakdown and the lethal effects of the bombings in Hiroshima did not allow the Marukis to paint any cheerful, peaceful or vibrant portrayals. The couple, therefore, let themselves experience and absorb the dark, pessimistic and negative feelings that continuously intruded upon their work.⁵⁶ Toshi Maruki stated, "After the war, many of our artist friends in Tokyo decided that we should try to paint healthy, cheerful portraits of Japan at peace. We tried to do this. We began to do studies of young men and women. Even Iri, who had painted only animals and flowers and landscapes, began to paint portraits. But somehow, inexplicably, we ended up painting grief-stricken faces. No shining light came from within."⁵⁷

The *hibakusha* believed that they had overcome the mayhem and misery after the bombings and had begun living their lives again since the war was over. The *hibakusha*, however, did not realize that the vivid sceneries of the suffering people and the death of their loved ones already constituted unforgettable, upsetting memories in their minds.⁵⁸ Every time the Marukis listened to the *hibakusha's* horrifying stories, the couple noticed that those victims of the bombings were still experiencing pain.⁵⁹

⁴⁹ Dower and Junkerman, 11.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 12.

⁵¹ Ibid. 11.

⁵² Ibid. 12.

⁵³ Ibid. 11.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 124.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 124.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 123.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 123.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 123.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 123.

Inspired by the profoundly saddening memories and horrible experiences of the *hibakusha*, the Marukis authentically reflected the physical and psychological suffering of the A-bomb victims in their paintings.

The Message of *Ghosts* and the Reactions of the *Hibakusha*

After the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, the *hibakusha* described the scene of debris, burning flesh and bleeding people as hell: “It was like hell or hell could not be more horrible than this.”⁶⁰ Many people who lost their families, values and beliefs in the meaning of life tended to express the horror of the bombing in these and similar terms. Before the annihilation of the atomic bombings, the typical hell scenes of the medieval Buddhist scroll paintings were “Birds without wings. Ghosts suffering forward, hands stretched weakly before them. Monsters. Naked figures wreathed in flames.”⁶¹ After the explosion of the atomic bombs, however, the medieval Buddhist style was transformed into a modern, twentieth century style of expressing the hellish landscapes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: “In the old scrolls, monsters were the keepers and tormentors of hell; in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the victims themselves were disfigured and turned into monsters.”⁶²

With their joint collaboration to express the *hibakusha*’s feelings about the devastation of the Hiroshima bombing, the Marukis painted *The Procession of Ghosts*.⁶³ In that mural, as with other murals that they painted later, they aimed to focus on perishing and disfigured people whose skin flaked off, “like cloth or like a glove,” when the atomic bomb fell.⁶⁴ These wounded people inspired the Marukis to paint the witnesses of the atomic bomb as ghost-like figures—victims of unbearable burns with their arms stretched before them, hands hanging at the wrists almost precisely as “ghosts and ghouls.”⁶⁵ The Marukis’ first mural, *The Procession of Ghosts*, was an attempt to represent the atomic bomb as the experience of “the mushroom cloud and the black rain” that covered the whole city after the atomic bombing.⁶⁶

Ghosts was painted in *sumi* on paper and was framed on eight panel screens. The deformed phantom figures the Marukis depicted expressed

⁶⁰ Ibid. 9.

⁶¹ Ibid. 9.

⁶² Ibid. 9.

⁶³ Ibid. 14.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 14.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 14.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 14.

the sentiment that tradition can no longer keep people living together communally or arouse spiritual feeling. Just as ghosts are entities of another world, the values, beliefs and traditions people once believed in before perished after the atomic bombings. As Kyo Maclear states: “The phantom limb appears only to deny tradition’s mending promise.”⁶⁷

Ghosts expresses the horrible consequences of the atomic bombings. As with all their panels, the Marukis explained what they tried to express in *Ghosts*. Just as other modern artists had done, the Marukis decided to write stories for each mural in order to show the *hibakusha*’s psychological state of nihilism and their physical pain more explicitly as well as effectively. Toshi Maruki was especially determined to write explanations for each mural because she believed that, “words can reach places paintings alone cannot reach.”⁶⁸ Therefore, to tell their intentions for painting these murals or give the exact explanation about them and describe how their political beliefs and philosophical dislocation gave the meaning to each piece of art, the Marukis used texts for every mural. Here is the text for *The Procession of Ghosts*:

It was a procession of ghosts.

Clothes burned in an instant. Hands, faces, breasts swelled in purple welts that burst and left skin hanging like rags.

A procession of ghosts, with their hands held before them. They pushed on, dragging their burned bodies, falling and piling onto one another, groaning, and dying.

The temperature reached six thousand degrees at the center of the blast. A human shadow was etched on stone steps. Did that body vaporize? Was it blown away? There is no one to tell us what it was like near the hypocenter.

There was no way to distinguish one charred, blistered face from another. Voices became parched and hoarse. Friends would introduce themselves, but still not recognize each other.

One lone child slept innocently, with unburned skin. Perhaps it survived, sheltered by its mother’s breast. We hope that this is one child who rose and lived on.⁶⁹

Thus, as a result of their strong visualization of the physical and psychological destruction of the *hibakusha*, the Marukis engraved the consequences of the bombings on people’s mind.

⁶⁷ Maclear, 168.

⁶⁸ Hein and Jennison, 45.

⁶⁹ Dower and Junkerman, 29.

The Hiroshima Panels received international recognition because of their stimulating and stunning scenes: “These large murals show large, nearly life-size nude figures with their scorched flesh, peeling skin, and frazzled hair, and a pile of burned corpses.”⁷⁰ According to some, the provocative scenes of the panels definitely express such reality. The *hibakusha* stated that the panels reflected exactly the horrifying scenes of Hiroshima after the bombing and that they saw the figures of their victimized and dead loved ones in the panels. For instance, an elderly man told Toshi that “These are our paintings.”⁷¹ Thus, the *hibakusha* of the Hiroshima bombing demanded and encouraged both Toshi and Iri to continue painting the deadly consequences of the atomic bombings. On the other hand, some people harshly criticized the panels because of “the nakedness of the figure as unrealistic,” or for the political content of the paintings “as excessively propagandistic...”⁷² Even though some of the *hibakusha* did not welcome the Marukis’ panels, the couple did not stop painting after their first three murals. Their provocative panels encouraged other painters as well as filmmakers and writers to show the human cost of the atomic bombings.

Conclusion

As a result of their destructive effects, the atomic bombings caused unexpected changes in the lives of the people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. One unprecedented change was that Hiroshima and Nagasaki residents’ perception of the world altered and nihilism became a pervasive worldview. Another unexpected change was that a new way of understanding, Japanese existentialism, was born. Finally, as one creative development, the Marukis painted *The Hiroshima Panels* as an imaginative response to the atomic bombings’ destructive effects.

⁷⁰ Ann Sherif, *Japan’s Cold War: Media, Literature, and the Law* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 46.

⁷¹ Ibid. 15.

⁷² Ibid. 15.

TRACKING A MONSTER: THE WEATHER BUREAU, NEW ENGLAND AND THE HURRICANE OF 1938

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Introduction

In the preface to *Hurricane Watch: Forecasting the Deadliest Storms on Earth*, Dr. Bob Sheets and Jack Williams write,

Great tropical cyclones are the largest and most destructive storms on the face of this planet; collective memory never forgets the passage of a powerful, deadly storm. In the past, these typhoons and hurricanes struck without warning. Today, this never happens. We can forecast the great storms with increasing, often remarkable, accuracy. We can save lives and property—some lives, some property. However, we will never be able to stop these storms.¹

Unfortunately, in the 1930s, accurate forecasts were not yet a guarantee in meteorology. As a result, a devastating hurricane took Long Island and New England completely by surprise on September 21, 1938, despite the fact that the United States Weather Bureau started tracking the storm at its birth on September 4th.

Many people in the 1930s, especially meteorologists, did not believe that a hurricane could make landfall as far north as New England. Hurricanes need humidity to increase their speed and size. This need for humidity is why hurricanes will weaken over cooler water and also why meteorologists did not believe a hurricane was capable of striking the northeast at full strength, given the cold ocean waters.² In addition, the last hurricane to strike the region occurred in 1815. With so much time having

¹ Dr. Bob Sheets and Jack Williams. *Hurricane Watch: Forecasting the Deadliest Storms on Earth* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), xiv.

² Sheets, *Hurricane Watch*, 32–33.

passed since the last major hurricane, New Englanders did not know the warning signs for a hurricane and relied on the US Weather Bureau to provide all severe weather warnings. On September 21, 1938, the Weather Bureau purposely removed the word *hurricane* from their weather report for the region, only forecasting “rain, heavy at times.”³ With no warnings for severe weather, people assumed the storm was simply a nor’easter, a typical fall storm in New England.

Given the intensity of the hurricane of 1938, one cannot argue that a warning could have prevented the physical destruction. Moreover, had residents of Long Island and New England been given any forewarning of the severity of the approaching storm, as well as some knowledge of hurricanes in general, lives and property could have been saved. The US Weather Bureau failed the people of Long Island and New England by following its presumptions about the weather rather than looking at this particular storm. Had the meteorologists studied the storm itself, they would have realized that a deadly hurricane was heading straight for this highly populated and vulnerable region and immediately issued hurricane warnings for the Northeast, as they had done for Florida days earlier.

Florida Prepares for a Hurricane

On September 4th, the Great Hurricane of 1938 developed off the Cape Verde Islands in an area known as hurricane alley. On September 16th, the US Weather Bureau in Jacksonville, Florida, received notice from weather stations in the Caribbean that the storm was on a collision course with Florida.⁴ Immediately, on September 17th, the first storm warning was issued for Florida: “A tropical disturbance of dangerous proportions is gathering in the Caribbean. Traveling at twenty miles per hour in a westerly direction, it should reach the Miami-Dade area sometime Tuesday morning. Every precaution should be taken in the face of this dangerous storm.”⁵ The residents of Florida reacted immediately because they had been educated by the US Weather Bureau on what to do when a hurricane approached.

³ Cherie Burns, *The Great Hurricane: 1938* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005), 48.

⁴ R.A. Scotti, *The Sudden Sea: The Great Hurricane of 1938* (Boston, MA: Back Bay Books, 2003), 35-36.

⁵ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 40-41; The Associated Press, “Hurricane Veering From Florida; May Keep on Its Course Out to Sea,” *The New York Times*, September 20, 1938: 1, 6.

Given the advanced warning provided by the Bureau, many people in Florida had time to prepare for the storm, including government organizations and the Red Cross. In fact, the Red Cross brought in additional relief workers, “pulling them from New York and New England and dispatching them to Florida.”⁶ So while Florida was well prepared for the approaching storm, New England and New York were left vulnerable with no hurricane education and no relief workers. According to Mrs. Nancy Allen Holst, who was part of the Department of Forestry in Rhode Island in 1938, “The Red Cross disaster team...had gone down to Florida because the hurricane was supposed to come ashore down there. The Weather Bureau lost track of [the hurricane] and it landed up here instead. So they were delayed in getting here for about 24 hours and Providence wanted to know what was going on.”⁷ The Weather Bureau released updates about the hurricane and its track regularly for Florida residents. However, when its path changed, areas further north did not receive similar updates.

Late on September 19th, the storm began to veer away from Florida and to head on a northern path. Instead of turning its attention to the northern United States, the Bureau continued to issue warnings for Florida. One such warning stated: “Danger from a tropical hurricane would seem to be past, but caution is advised for the next twelve hours.”⁸ However, Grady Norton, the meteorologist in charge of following this storm out of Jacksonville, did say on September 19th that, “it was impossible to say whether the whole Atlantic Coast would escape the hurricane.”⁹ Despite this, the Weather Bureau did not issue warnings or watches for any other states. Meteorologists believed “the storm [would] lose steam in the colder northern waters and flatten out in the busy shipping routes of the North Atlantic. At worst, it might cause a few cases of seasickness.”¹⁰ What the Bureau did not realize was that the typical cold waters of New England were absent on September 21, 1938.

⁶ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 41.

⁷ Mrs. Nancy Allen Holst, Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities and South Kingston High School, *In the Wake of '38: Oral History Interviews with Rhode Island Survivors and Witnesses of the Devastating Hurricane of September 21, 1938* (Wakefield, Rhode Island, 1977), 88.

⁸ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 48.

⁹ “Hurricane Veering From Florida,” *The New York Times*, 1,6.

¹⁰ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 77.

The Hurricane Moves Up the Coast

The Northeast had been turned into “a steam bath. After four days of unrelenting rain and oppressive humidity, New England was as close to the tropics as it had ever been. This meteorological setup was an open invitation to a tropical cyclone.”¹¹ Instead of looking at the storm itself, the meteorologists used past hurricanes as data, believing this hurricane was no different from ones in the past. Despite a report from the *Carinthia*, a transatlantic steam liner, of a barometric reading of 27.85 during the hurricane, the “lowest reading ever recorded in the North Atlantic,” the Weather Bureau did not reconstruct their weather forecasts for the storm.¹² It maintained that an intense hurricane would never strike New England because none had in recent memory. If the meteorologists looked closely enough, they would have realized that hurricanes had reached the New England coast at full intensity and it was not as unusual as they believed. The first was in 1635. William Bradford’s description of the 1635 hurricane could very easily have described the 1938 hurricane as well:

Such a mighty storm of wind and rain as none living in these parts, either English or Indian, ever saw. Being like, for the time it continued, to those hurricanes and typhoons that writers make mention of in the Indies. It began in the morning a little before day, and grew not by degrees but came with violence in the beginning, to the great amazement of many.¹³

The last hurricane to strike the area before 1938, the Great September Gale of 1815, affected the same areas as the 1938 storm, “flattening New York and New England.”¹⁴ The Great September Gale of 1815 and the Great Hurricane of 1938 were mirror storms, striking the same region of the United States and developing in very similar ways. The Bureau, however, claimed that it was impossible to predict the hurricane of 1938 because it was a situation they had never faced before, making it difficult to forecast the track of the storm.¹⁵

Once the hurricane reached far enough North, the Washington, D.C. office took over from Jacksonville. When D.C. received the assignment to track the storm, they were faced with a daunting task as most ships heeded the Jacksonville warning to stay in shore. Minimal observations sent to the

¹¹ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 76.

¹² Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 57.

¹³ William Elliot Minsinger, M.D., ed. *The 1938 Hurricane: An Historical and Pictorial Summary* (Randolph Center, VT: Green Hill Books, 1988), 17.

¹⁴ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 78.

¹⁵ Burns, *The Great Hurricane*, 54.

Bureau from ships made it almost impossible to track the hurricane. There was, however, one meteorologist in the Washington Weather Bureau Office named Charles Pierce, who realized the hurricane of 1938 was not going to be a typical storm. On the morning of September 21st, Pierce deduced from the data and charts available to him that if the storm stayed on the same track with the same intensity, “the first landfall would be Long Island.”¹⁶ Despite his strong evidence, which Pierce felt “pointed to a disaster in the making,” the senior meteorologists could not believe it and maintained that “experience trumped facts.”¹⁷ The meteorologists at the Weather Bureau were not the only people ignoring the meteorological data. Dr. Leray Davis lived on Long Island and had recently purchased a barometer for his home. At 2:40 p.m., on September 21st, Dr. Davis was cursing the instrument as it was “frozen at the bottom of the scale in the area marked HURRICANE.”¹⁸ It never crossed his mind that a hurricane was heading his way.

The Hurricane Arrives in the Northeast

On September 21st, people in the region observed unusual things about the weather but paid no attention to them. Actress Katherine Hepburn was at her family’s summer home in Connecticut and noticed the water when she went for her daily swim. She thought, “the tide shouldn’t peak for hours, yet it seemed to be coming in rapidly. Highly peculiar, but then it had been a peculiar season.”¹⁹ George Bond, a Rhode Island resident, noticed “an ominously gray sky—a gray that I had never seen before and didn’t know what it all meant.”²⁰ Most people in New England had never been told the signs of an approaching hurricane. They did not realize that what they were observing and feeling meant danger. Morgan Garrett knew “the wind was blowing very hard but we just thought it was, as I say, just a storm, that’s all. I don’t think any of us had ever heard of a hurricane...nobody knew of a hurricane. No warnings or anything.”²¹ It was fall in New England and residents expected the storm to simply be a nor’easter, a regular enough occurrence that did not require any major

¹⁶ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 73–74.

¹⁷ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 77.

¹⁸ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 112.

¹⁹ Katherine Hepburn quoted in: Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 64.

²⁰ George Bond, Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, *In the Wake of '38*, 12–13.

²¹ Morgan Garrett, Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, *In the Wake of '38*, 71, 74.

concern. As Everett Allen described it, “There was no reason to assume that this Wednesday would be appreciably different from any other September 21, the people who had watched the weather in this place all their lives knew what they knew about it.”²² New Englanders prepared for the approaching storm as they would for any fall nor’easter. They rolled up the rugs, got mops ready, shut windows and doors, and placed things in front of them to ensure that wind and rain did not get through any cracks.²³ The residents of New England knew how to protect themselves and their homes from a nor’easter, but they did not know how to protect themselves from a hurricane. Of course, on September 21st, 1938, they did not realize that what they were facing was a hurricane.

In the town of Falmouth, Massachusetts, located on the coast of Cape Cod, one resident provided a warning for the town, but not because of the Weather Bureau. Falmouth Fire Chief Ray D. Wells, despite being “accustomed to storms and dirty weather, sensed the approach of the biggest one any of them had seen” and notified the State Police in West Bridgewater.²⁴ The State Police notified all Cape Cod stations, but it is unknown whether the officials passed the warning on to the residents. Chief Wells’ warning, however, did allow for the evacuation of the coasts of Falmouth and Bourne prior to the storm’s arrival, and emergency equipment arrived from the State Police just as the storm passed.²⁵ Chief Wells’ knowledge of the region’s weather helped him prepare his residents for the worst. Unfortunately, most people in the Northeast did not have that same knowledge.

Many people would look back and remember signs that should have indicated something unusual was happening with the weather. Some would say that “the morning [seemed] too perfect.”²⁶ On that day, however, most people would not recognize the signs. Mrs. Helen Joy Lee, a resident of Watch Hill, Rhode Island, was at her coastal home when the storm struck and, despite her experience with hurricanes in Florida, she was still unaware that the storm approaching the coastline was, in fact, a hurricane. She even mentioned seeing a flag flying at the Coast Guard station that she thought was the hurricane warning flag, but she was not sure as she did not “know what the hurricane warning flag [looked

²² Everett S. Allen, *A Wind to Shake the World: The Story of the 1938 Hurricane* (Beverly, MA: Commonwealth Editions, 1976), 27.

²³ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 88.

²⁴ “Martha’s Vineyard Damage Slight; Nantucket Untouched by Storm,” *The New York Times*, September 24, 1938: 10.

²⁵ “Martha’s Vineyard Damage Slight.” *The New York Times*, 10.

²⁶ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 85.

like].”²⁷ So even if the Coast Guard stations throughout New England and Long Island had posted the hurricane warning flag (which they did not because the Weather Bureau had not issued a hurricane warning of any kind), residents in the area would not have known what the flag looked like and they would not have known what to do if they saw one. By the time the weather turned severe enough that people knew something was wrong, the change was so “swift and dramatic” that there was simply no time to prepare.²⁸ It was not until the storm had already made landfall and was wreaking havoc throughout the region that the radio stations began to report of the storm. Mr. Santo Amato remembered receiving “notification that the water was rising in the downtown area [of Providence] as a result of the tidal wave during the storm” only after the storm had passed through the area.²⁹

When the hurricane made landfall, “it struck without warning, and it showed no mercy. Entire beach communities that seemed secure at lunchtime were wiped off the map by supper.”³⁰ The storm struck with such strength that seismographs in Alaska registered its landfall.³¹ As the storm moved through Long Island and New England, “those in its path continued to be generally unaware of what was coming, because it imposed upon areas already devastated a tragically effective pattern of isolation. Communications, by land, sea, phone, telegraph, or teletype, were mostly wiped out in those areas which had most to communicate...”³² With no warning of a hurricane, many people went to the shore to watch the unusually high tide arriving almost simultaneously with the storm. According to Ferris Dove, the storm surge was a “big 30-foot wall wave that came up in the tide—the sea seemed to lift right up.”³³ The storm surge, described by survivors as a tidal wave, left the most lasting impressions on people.

²⁷ Minsinger, *The 1938 Hurricane*, 54.

²⁸ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 85.

²⁹ Santo Amato, Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, *In the Wake of '38*, 2.

³⁰ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 94

³¹ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 94, 98.

³² Allen, *A Wind to Shake the World*, 81.

³³ Ferris Dove, Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, *In the Wake of '38*, 53.

What the Storm Left Behind

Even as the storm hit and people were trapped in debris-filled water, “many never realized what was happening to them—and those who did could not believe it.”³⁴ No one in the Northeast had ever experienced the horror of a hurricane and, even after living through one, it was still unimaginable for many. Everett Allen recalled, “It is appalling in retrospect, to reflect upon how little we expected what happened, to discover how little we knew about what was going on elsewhere on the day of the storm and to realize how long it was before we did know.”³⁵ Many people did not realize the scope of the storm and the resulting damage until after the storm had completely passed. Many, including A.W. Forbes, “thought we saw some local trouble, that we had seen a piece of faulty construction, or after a few trees weakened without our knowledge. It was not till after the storm, when I walked through a mile of continuous destruction...that I began to realize the extent of the damage.”³⁶ Warnings issued by the Weather Bureau would in no way have prevented the physical destruction caused by the Great Hurricane of 1938, but they could have saved many lives, especially if those storm warnings included the necessary education regarding the signs of a hurricane and the actions to take when one was approaching. Property damage caused financial problems, but the loss of loved ones ruined lives forever.

In addition to personal loss, the 1938 hurricane destroyed New England’s pride, spirit, and tradition. The historical images of New England were lost forever as “the ancient elms that canopied Main Streets, the white church steeples that had defined the landscape of New England since colonial days, all fell. Memories, landmarks, family treasures, washed away.”³⁷ Joseph Gordon described the New England way of life, destroyed by the hurricane, best when he wrote,

New England’s a proud country—proud of its ancestry, its rugged hills and valleys, its fertile fields, its crystal beaches, its rocky shores, the summers are not too hot; the winters not too cold; ... There are no severe earthquakes. Floods and violent storms are the exception not the rule. New England’s climate is the best!³⁸

³⁴ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 96.

³⁵ Allen, *A Wind to Shake the World*, 27.

³⁶ A.W. Forbes, “Some Notes on the New England Hurricane of 1938, Made at Worcester, Mass.,” *Science* 88, no 2296 (1938): 616.

³⁷ Scotti, *The Sudden Sea*, 96.

³⁸ Bernard L. Gordon and Joseph Gordon, *Hurricane in Southern New England: An Analysis of the Great Storm of 1938* (Book and Tackle Shop: 1976), 4.