Towards Eden: Three post nuclear crisis reconstruction strategies

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1 In that modern desert, he experienced a kind of return to the Garden of Eden because he “was able to walk there with God.” Like his ancestors, who composed the Nenbutsu, he discovered that the only reality is “the now”, the here and now. He discovered that when one looks at and accepts that reality as the one thing “really real”, one can walk and converse with God in real prayer. This return to Eden is the beginning of paradise without end, the Beatific Vision.1

2 Post-crisis narratives are invested in narrative representation and symbolic reconstruction as a means of re-structuring meaning and re-establishing community. The themes in the following narratives are overwhelming: apocalypse and the fate of humanity.

3 The first atomic bomb detonated over the Hiroshima Prefecture Industrial Promotion Hall.2 The second bomb detonated over the Urakami Cathedral, the largest Catholic church in the East. At the time of the bombing, Nagasaki held the largest concentration of Catholic Japanese and was also one of the most Westernized of cities.3 Hiroshima’s building is included in the UNESCO World Heritage Site, whereas the Urakami Cathedral is not. Although neither building was of military interest, there is a significant difference in the testimonies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki4.

"呖広島、祈りの長崎"

4 Nagasaki no kane (The Bells of Nagasaki) (1949) is an epic journey that begins after the heroes have departed and works to reclaim paradise from inferno. It is a ground zero description of the nuclear event framed as a Catholic narrative of martyrdom. It is also a memorial for those who died in the blast. Maria no kubi (1959) is a hibakusha (atomic bomb victim) drama also set in Nagasaki, and it unveils the hidden Kurishitans (Christians) of Nagasaki, the martyrs forgotten by the both East and the West. Through the evocation of Mary’s apparition, it offers an intimate look at the task of translating a Westernized Catholic ideology into an original Japanese conception. Duras’ narrative Yes,
Peut-être (1968), abstracts the author’s personal interest in Hiroshima and her political anger about the Vietnam war. The unheeded spectre of the Hiroshima atomic tragedy haunts an unnamed post-apocalyptic desert.

Utilizing Whittier Treat’s genealogy of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd generation A-bomb writers, these three post-crisis narratives range in narrative proximity to the event. Tanaka’s 2nd generation play is based on the interpretation of 1st generation Nagai’s experience. A successive generation removed and in another country, Duras’ theater takes the position of the spectator, compressing the aporia of destruction with amnesia into a unique metaphor of her modern life. Each of these interrogations seeks catharsis with contrasting degrees of success and also negotiates its relationship into larger discourses. Takashi Nagai’s recovery of meaning relies upon an adopted spiritual framework. Chikao Tanaka excavates poetic re-appropriated meaning from reconstruction of the symbolic. Marguerite Duras’ impossibility of nothing is part of the language of depression. They also illustrate the range of strategies mediated in these post-crisis testimonies in the search for the glimmers of a new utopia.

Derrida’s injunction ‘No one bears witness to the witness,’ is linked to the themes of survival and witnessing. The challenge of testimony can be linked to what may be termed as ‘textimony.’ Bearing witness is not necessarily truth itself, but as a performative act, it is a speech given under oath, a promise invoking responsibility to a law and therefore reinforces the possibility of transgression. Although belief may be a belief in the act of thinking, the necessity for belief is not logic, it is not knowledge, it is an appeal by the witness to the other for recognition. This recognition entails re-membrance, a reflection of one’s self in the Other, not as mirrored re-creation, but as discovery. The phrase, ‘no one bears witness to the witness,’ involves the dissolution of semantics of present time, the effacement of pronouns and reflexivity of the preposition. The loss of the Other as continually present is the radical dispossession of self as icon; as the petrified discourse of ‘textimony.’

Like all good metaphors, liminal supernatural entities (what I term the fantastic spirit or FS), such as the ghost, apparition, spectre, and obake are often utilized as communicative strategies in trauma narratives to represent displaced objects/subjects. The porosity and permeability of such entities provides a useful trope to discuss places that are realized by chronos rather than topography. Engaging these spiritual variables clarifies and revises the conventional memory of personal narratives.

Conversion narrative: Victim to martyr in Nagasaki no Kane

Spiritual autobiographies and conversion narratives follow an arc from an individual’s crisis to participation in community. It also often ‘documents and affirms the providential design he believes gives order and meaning to his life.’ From Nagai’s original scientific intent to record events emerges a post-conversion and post-crisis narrative. As a Catholic Japanese narrative, Nagasaki no kane is in the unusual position of being a doubly marginal narrative that seeks closure and hope by elevating the victims into martyrs, and transforming senseless destruction into meaningful sacrifice. Interspersed with valuable scientific information about the after-effects of the atomic
bomb on the body and surrounding nature, Nagai primarily shapes Nagasaki no kane, as a
textimony to martyrdom and a plea for peace. His controversial stance frames the deaths
of the Nagasaki Christians by American Christians as a sacrifice, as martyrs for the
glimmer of utopic world peace.

Originally censored by the United States, then published only if it included a translation
of an American document outlining the atrocities of war committed by the Japanese in
Manila. Although the inclusion of the document was meant as a justification for the
atomic bomb, Nagai viewed it as possibly adding to his plea for world peace. However, the
document was seen by Japanese publishers as incongruent, and subsequent publications
did not include the Manila document. Critics cite Nagai’s acceptance of the document as
well as his framing the victims as sacrifice as the stance of a passive victim.

In his conversations with his former students, Nagai eschews the idea of revenge and
condemns the war aesthetic:

‘戦争の戦には絵があります。「。。。」あの日あの時、この地にひろげられた地獄の姿
というものを、君達が一目でもみなさったなら、きっと戦争をもう一度
やるなどという馬鹿馬鹿し気を尾起さめに違いない。これから戦争が起こる事がある
tと仮定すると、至る処に原爆爆弾が破却するでしょう。そうして無数の人
間がなんの変哲もなかったヒラドンと潰されてしまうのです。美談もなく、
詩歌もなく、絵にもならず、音楽にもならず、文学にもならず、研究にもなら
ず、ただローラーで蟻の行列を圧し潰すように、そこら一帯地均すしえるだ
けのことです。馬鹿馬鹿しくでやれるものじゃあれせん。

But when asked for answer for the future, if revenge is for God, Nagai has yet to find an
answer. He closes his eyes and sees the disappearance of the beautiful dream of the past,
and the stark wasteland of the present.

Nagai’s conclusion is gratitude, and he writes a 対原子爆弾合同 葬弔辞 (Funeral Address
for the Victims of the Atomic Bomb). For Nagai, the end of the war on the feast day of
Mary after the atomic bomb landed on a cathedral dedicated to Mary is a miraculous sign.

Or perhaps, as Mary reversed and transcended the original sin of Eve, the sin of bombing
the cathedral is reversed by the peace celebrated on her feast day. In any event, Nagasaki
becomes a holy place for Nagai, the only holy place as the victims of the bomb become
martyrs for the sins committed by all of humanity.

In Nagasaki no Kane, the geography is unrecognizable, all markers of place, societal
distinction, and direction are lost due to the blast. Nature, a significant part of Japanese
aesthetic, politics, and philosophy also suffers destruction.

[...] In the past, when the going was tough, Nagai had always found comfort an
encouragement in Mother Nature. Now he was horrified to discover that the bomb
deranged even her. Black rain began to fall, flat drops that left dark and evil
stains. The air too had become foul.

The doctors are patients, unrecognizable in the makeshift bandages without their
traditional uniforms they wear. Nagai creates a flag immediately to stop panic and shock.

‘During the war in China, Nagai had witnessed how the centrifugal forces of shock
and panic can sometimes be reversed by a bold action or a powerful symbol. For the
Japanese of 1945, the most powerful of symbols was the Hi no Maru, the national flag. For the past fifteen years, the militarists had made sure it flew prominently over all military headquarters and over every public building and important celebration. Nagai ordered Okura to tie the homemade flag to a thick bamboo pole lying nearby and drive it into a grassy spot a little distance above them. Matron Hisamastu recalls it very vividly, forty-two years later; “Suddenly we had a ‘headquarters’ to rally around, a center that put order back into the picture.” Dr. Okura, who has since become a priest and (significantly) an expert on Saint John of the Cross, agrees: “It was so simple an act, and yet the psychological effect was profound.”

In the same way, Nagai, famously ends his narrative with the ringing of the cathedral bells and a prayer for peace. The bells, which were given by the French, remained miraculously unharmed in the blast. He finds the retrieval of meaning in the signs of life that emerge despite the blast: shoots that spring up from the blackened soil and pregnant women. This discussion is interspersed with scientific hypothesis and observation. The nuclear blast was estimated to destroy the possibility of life for years; yet within the year, even in what seemed to be the ultimate wasteland, there is renewal. That life emerges before science’s expectation is another example of supernatural intervention, and testimony that despite the destruction of nature, supernatural providence triumphs. For Nagai, the shoots, the pregnant women, the flag, and the church bells are not incompatible symbols, they are united in a coherent narrative of peace and prayer. In a Song for Nagasaki, Glynn describes how Nagai suddenly passed away with the continuing plea to pray for peace. These symbols rally the war shattered discourse into a theme of courage, sacrifice, and ultimately the joy of meaning.

Re-appropriation strategy: Transgressions or Transcendence? Maria no kubi

In Maria no kubi, although there was no such recorded incidence of the statue being brought piecemeal from the Urakami cathedral to another location, there are several interesting events that offer a unique perspective in the reading of this narrative. At the time of Tanaka’s play, the cathedral was incinerated and nothing appeared to remain of the large statues that had graced the cathedral. In fact, not only did another artifact survive (the gate pillar of the Santo Shinto shrine), but the head of the statue of Mary in the Urakami cathedral had already been discovered and was being kept in the Trappist monastery of Hokkaido. The only recoverable remains of the statue was the head. That part of the statue had crystallized eyes and a burn mark on its cheek.

After relocation to the Junshins Women’s College in 1975, it was eventually restored at the Urakami cathedral in 1990. In 2001 a petition and foundation was set up to place the head of Mary named the Madonna of Nagasaki on the list of UNESCO Heritage artifacts. Since that time, on numerous occasions, with the petition and numerous visits to other sites, the Madonna of Nagasaki has become a symbol of peace and a voice for the victims, those who died immediately and many years later. As memory of these victims fade, the Madonna of Nagasaki remains a reminder of the destruction of war, the necessity for peace, the sacredness of life, and the miracle of faith.
As a self-proclaimed Catholic, but unbaptized, Tanaka might have been aware of the discovery of the statue’s head. If this is the case, there is profound significance to not only the title of the play, but it certainly colors the content, particularly the ending. At the end of the play, Shinobu is in the process of trying to lift the Head of Mary and place it on the rest of the statue. If Tanaka was aware of the monk finding and keeping the statue head, it could be a plea to restore the artifact to its original site, the place where it would heal the scars of the hibakusha, marginalized not only by their scars, but by their faith, and some by their position as burakamin (untouchables).

In any case, Tanaka’s narrative definitively explores another group not overtly discussed in Nagai’s narrative. The focus of Maria no kubi is a statue of Mary in the Urakami cathedral of Nagasaki. Tanaka utilizes the setting to create a fictionalized scenario in which the atomically scarred statue is taken apart by the hibakushas, to be reconstructed at a Japanese shrine. In this way, the hibakushas re-appropriate the statue. Although he considered himself a Christian, Tanaka was interested in how to translate and interpret Nagai’s Christian rhetoric into a Japanese idiom. The transition from Nagai’s narrative into Tanaka’s play is through language: it is self-conscious and carefully overt. The emphasis is on the poetics and constructed sound of language. Tanaka’s narrative focuses on the specific locale of the event. Whereas Nagai’s narrative enlarges the meaning of the event so that the victims become martyrs for the world, Tanaka encloses the circle, concentrating on a particular meaning for a designated group of people. Rather than the Nagasaki people dying for world peace, Mary is Nagasaki’s saint and protector, speaking their dialect and bearing similar wounds, thus giving meaning to the living hibakushas and their suffering.

As part of this transition, naming is significant in this narrative. Shinobu, whose name means endurance, is aware of her name and its meaning.

"しのぶ、しのぶ、しのぶとはあたしの名"

The statue is the carrier of meaning between the two women characters Shika and Shinobu, who do not know the language of the oppressors. The result of the collapse of memory, meaning, and loss is echoed in Shika’s discursive opening monologue originally written by her husband Momozono:

"道の上の小石のように、
あたしは偶然を圧し殺し、
無数、無限祖母の道を通じて、
あたしはふくれ、ひろがり、
あたしの実在のなかに霧のように散る"

In Maria no kubi, the sacrificial victim is Momozono (a male character), who is wasting away from an unknown disease that is not a result of the war, but intrinsically linked to the war. The women are burdened with definition, the responsibility of monologic discourse, and the interlocutor. Language leads away from meaning, so the women attempt to escape through action, figuration, and borrowed poetry. The need to escape is directly linked to identity. Their kinesthetic actions contribute to the heteroglossia of the text, and the statue as text reciprocates the act of writing the play itself. The originary, scarred, defective symbol is outside the spoken discourse. The language of words, the logic of grammar has imploded. The religious discourse of Christianity has emptied itself until only the scarred statue remains, yet the symbol is concretely remade through the physical efforts of Shika and Shinobu. Throughout the play, the body in the form of the
statue of Mary and the women’s occupations brings forth the metamorphosis of the visible.

Physical change is clarified by voices: the prayer after the snow has fallen, the hymns after the statue has been nearly reconstructed, and the song before the final act of placing the statue’s head on the body. In the typesetting scene, the prayers and pleas of the surviving mothers to create a Nagasaki International Culture Center, rise from the manuscript. The editor reads aloud as the cathedral bells begin to ring.

These physical transformations continue throughout the play. The ash and black rain of atomic blast has become a miraculous snow, a ‘baptismal pool whose water washes away sins.’ Water is what carries them to heaven and Shinobu is the new Moses who through the intercession of Mary, brings forth ‘new children by Baptism.’ The snow falls from heaven like manna, and as from the Holy Spirit. They have triumphed over death, and they are marked with scars from the atomic blast that resonate with the ‘blood of the lamb on the lintels of the doors, the sign which turns aside the Destroying Angel’. Mary also bears a mark that calls to mind the ‘sign of the Cross which turns away demons’. It is only after the snow that falls remains, and in essence transforms the ground through baptism, that the supernatural may be unveiled. The snow that lingers on the ground is also a physical sign to move the statue, signaled by Nagai’s cathedral bells.

The Sanctus bells create a joyful noise of praise indicating the changing of the elements, or the transformation of the natural into the supernatural. The statue speaks in a Nagasaki accent and becomes an altar; her breastmilk is her Eucharistic sacrifice. Tanaka translates Mary literally from an apparition of assumed body and soul to one that is corporeal. This is something that might be an obake (a changed thing), while including the idea of transubstantiation. As in the ending of the play, the translation is difficult and remains unfinished.

Strategy of incomprehension: Yes, Peut-être

In contrast to Tanaka’s play, the transfigurations in Duras’ play are attenuated by verbal gestures: the English yes is yoked with the French ambiguity of peut-être, the women are alphabetized, recreating their anonymity, the soldier does not even have a name; he is essentially declassified. Physical actions are useless. The post apocalyptic landscape remains unchanged, and the soldier’s actions are rendered meaningless by the incomprehension of A and B.

Yes, Peut-être occupies a peripheral yet crucial position in French atomic bomb literature and within the works of Marguerite Duras. Overshadowed by the play and subsequent film, Hiroshima mon amour, Yes, Peut-être’s absence of a topical place has been overlooked, despite its significant observations on the actuality of nuclear holocaust that is initiated by Hiroshima mon amour. Hiroshima is a subtext for Nagasaki; Hiroshima mon amour serves as the privileged subtext to the long range vision of Yes, Peut-être.
Duras’ play is minimal: desert scenery, three characters, few gestures, and brief dialogue. Set in a post-apocalyptic era, it is mystery revealed through the interaction of the three characters who are ‘innocent, insolent, tender, and gay, without bitterness, without malice, without amiability, without knowledge, without stupidity, without references, without memory.’ The scene is a desert and the three characters are simply A, B (two female characters), and a male soldier.

The entrance of the one woman (A), dragging the soldier while the other (B), is already on stage provides a sense of in medias res. The crime has been committed and the nature of the crime and its impact must be determined. To accomplish this, Duras utilizes the flashback technique, emphasizing incompleteness and discontinuity. The empty staging contributes to the feeling that the characters are on the cusp of the present, past, and future. Each character is a condensation and refined representation of humanity. The terror is amplified by the controlled dialogue of characters.

The female characters pursue parallel paths toward memory. In its fragmented state, where the only real remembered vocabulary is of numbers and arrows, there is the possibility of universal communication and direction. They search for meaning through their monologic dialogues; the soldier’s periodic outbursts force questions towards enlightenment of the situation. The soldier, who represents “Every soldier,” is emblazoned with symbolic phrases of Western ideals: God, Patriotism, Honor, and Nationalism. They are arranged on his uniform in incongruous locations. He is a scarecrow, a lifeless doll who occasionally comes to life, unconscious of the present and living in the past. The phrases become a signpost for the fall of meaning via war. The signs of words exist without their meaning, maligned by monster portmanteaus. Thus patriotism has been yoked to war, God to war, and truth to war. As war has destroyed and been destroyed, the figures try to excavate the original meanings which have become lost. The women cannot read the slogans on the soldier as they have lost literary ability, that symbol of civilization.

Reconstruction of the word in Duras’ play is attempted through gesture and symbolism. The soldier’s welfare and military ideology becomes the responsibility of A. The re-assimilation of the women’s memory is punctuated by the soldier’s fragmented discourse. The former political discourse that destroyed the women’s memories and ‘shattered’ the soldier’s speech is examined in recursive dialogue. The soldier’s gestures and outbursts and the women’s incantatory non-dialogue attempts to recapitulate untraceable memory. This re-visioning of the past allows the characters to shape their future.

In Yes, Peut-être, the apprehension of memory begins with contemplation. The symbolization of concepts in the form of words upon the soldiers’ uniform and the refinement of memory-laden signifier into a gesture convey a sense of timelessness and transcendence. The characters’ process of recovering memory is not a linear, structural process of logical abstract thought; nor is it a divine madness indicating patriarchal truth.

‘Les deux femmes, elles, ne sont enfants de rien, enfants de nulle part. Elles n’appartiennent pas au monde de la guerre qui sévit près d’elle et que ne les concerne pas (si ce n’est dans la mesure où elle affecte nécessairement leur vue par le désert et le vide dont elle les entoure). Idéologiquement, elles sont complètement libres et n’obéissent à aucun impératif extérieur, moral ou autre. Leur force de refus est absolument intacte et le verbe “refuser” est un verbe qu’elles conjuguent toutes les deux ensemble, un des rares verbes dont elles se souviennent.’
Papin notes that *Yes, Peut-être* is arguably Duras’ most bitter and violent work.\(^\text{32}\) She posits that after the horror of the atomic blasts in World War II, the Vietnam war revealed how history repeats itself. Despite the memory or the horrors of previous war, war continues. There is a need to remember and a need to forget. This oscillation between the need to remember the atrocity in order not to repeat it, yet be released from the horror is evoked by the characters. There is anger at this lack of respect for human life and the need to remember the consequence of this lack of respect.

‘L’homme n’a pas la parole un seul instant et les femmes ont tout oublié de l’enchainement “logique” des faits qui ont conduit à cette guerre particulière. Elles ne se souviennent que de l’épouvante qui est comme imprimée dans leur corps par delà la mémoire et qui est aussi la raison d’être de cette pièce. C’est un texte qui dit la terreur d’un siècle sur lequel plane, tenace, l’ombre d’une guerre nucléaire totale.’\(^\text{33}\)

In Hiroshima mon amour, the atomic blast was a metaphor for a singular instance in one life. *Yes, Peut-être*’s individual fury is abstracted into Hiroshima’s upraised fist; and finally diffused into the memories of every war.

‘La vie de Duras a commencé lorsque des soldats revenaient d’une guerre qu’ils appelaient la “der des der”. Il y en eut pourtant une autre, et Duras écrivit plus tard Hiroshima, mon amour. La guerre du Vietnam venait rappeler une nouvelle fois que tout pouvait recommencer, et qu’on pouvait encore envoyer des hommes se battre pour défendre une “mère patrie” dans des pays “où c’est qu’on les avait jamais vus” comme le dit crûment l’une des jeunes femmes. Tout se passe comme si régulièrement, l’humanité perdait la mémoire de son histoire et de l’horreur alors que c’est là au contraire le seul souvenir que gardent les deux femmes de *Yes, Peut-être*.\(^\text{34}\)

For Kristeva, the didactic fury of Duras’ novels is less than cathartic; it is troubling and even dangerous in the wrong readership.\(^\text{35}\) It’s lack of grace becomes a lack of moral integrity.\(^\text{36}\) In contrast, Duras’ plays as performative witness, as textimony, perhaps break through the typical Durassian langour through a hypnotic atonality. The crudeness of the speech and transgressive appearance of the characters’ gestures and symbols are merely appearance. At the heart of the play is endurance, a Bataillan immediacy of being that unfolds through A’s and B’s recreation. The characters merely uncover previous blasphemous yoking of the sacred creation with mindless destruction. Yet, as the characters have no understanding of blasphemy or the sacred, they are also ignorant that they are victims. As spectators, we witness the horror of their situation, the violence has already occurred, and what we are witnessing is the reconstruction.

Without sin, the act of recovering memory becomes transgressive, instead of a desert which empties the teleological, the self, and words of their sense, it opens a brilliant and constantly affirmed world, without shadow or twilight, without that serpentine “no” that bites into forbidden fruits and lodges their contradictions at their core. Instead, at the transgressed limit, the “yes” of contestation reverberates in the text, the “yes, peut-être” that is repeated in the dialogue by the women, the “yes” that is not generalized negation but the affirmation that affirms what is not remembered or known.
Conclusion

Conversion tactics in Nagai’s narrative, theophany as means for existence in Maria no kubi, and poetic language and memory in Yes, Peut-être are all strategies of resistance to obliteration and attempts to find glimmers of reconciliation and new hope. These testimonies witness the attempt to find possibilities for discourse beyond deconstruction or isolation. Within the flow of the narrative and through the multiplicity of marginalizations and negations that are portrayed, perhaps we will find as Kristeva hopes, that a ‘new amorous world is surfacing in the eternal return of historical and mental cycles.’

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NOTES

1. p. 259-260 A Song.
2. For more information about the building see the UNESCO World Heritage Site.
3. Yuki Miyamoto discusses the religious aspects of the atomic bombs, noting that while the Nagasaki held the highest concentration of Japanese Catholics, Hiroshima was largely Buddhist.
4. p. 257-258. A Song for Nagasaki. In his acclaimed biography of Takashi Nagai, Paul Glynn notes this difference and quotes unnamed participants who describe the differences. "Hiroshima is bitter, noisy, highly political, leftist and anti-American. Its symbol would be a fist clenched in anger. Nagasaki is sad, quiet, reflective, nonpolitical and prayerful. It does not blame the United States but rather laments the sinfulness of war, especially of nuclear war. Its symbol: hands joined in prayer."
5. Shouting Hiroshima, Praying Nagasaki trans. Shigeru Idei p. 258 A Song for Nagasaki
7. p.18 Nussbaum.
8. ‘A limit of Nagai’s understanding, for example, is that it unfortunately resulted in confining the experiences of Urakami Catholics to themselves for a long time.’ Miyamoto 141
9. For more on this, see, Yuki Miyamoto’s discussion of the critical reception to this literary move and spiritual interpretation.
10. Manira no higeki [translation of Japanese atrocities in Manila, by Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Military Intelligence Division] (p. [191]-319)The original also included a presentation by John Hersey.
11. The first work was originally published by Tokyo: Hibiya Shuppan sha, 1949. A 2nd publication was released by Ōhashi-shi: Mitsubishi Jūkōkō K.K. Nagasaki Seiki Seisakujo, 1949. It was not until the 3rd publication by Tokyo: Fujin Taimususha, 1949, that a new introduction replaced the document.
12. Real war is a cruel affair[...]. If you had been here on that day and at that time, if you had seen the hell opened up on earth before our eyes, if you had had even a glimpse of that, you would never, never entertain the crazy thought of another war. If there is another war, atomic bombs will explode everywhere and innumerable ordinary people will be annihilated in the flash of a split second. There will be no beautiful stories, no songs, no poems, no paintings, no music, no literature, no research. Only death. Just as an anthill is crushed by a steamroller, so the whole earth will be crushed by this war. Isn’t it too crazy for words? Johnston p. 103-104. original:p.166-167.
14. 170-175. Nagasaki no kane.
15. On August 15, the Imperial Rescript which put an end to the fighting was formally promulgated, and the whole world welcomed a day of peace. This day was also the great feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. It is significant to reflect that Urakami Cathedral was dedicated to her. And we must ask if this convergence of events—the ending of the war and the celebration of her feast—was merely coincidental or if there was here some mysterious providence of God. Johnston. translation. p. 107.
16. 170-175. Nagasaki no kane.
18. Glynn. p. 164-165
19. ‘His left arm, up to now barely able to hold Pius XII’s Rosary, suddenly soared upwards and seized the crucifix from his son’s hands. In a voice that was startling in its strength, he cried out: “Inotte kudasai. Pray, please pray.” Suddenly, it was all over. p. 147. Glynn. A Song for Nagasaki.
20. Hibaku Maria zo.
21. Unlike the existing discourse on the atomic bombings in the United States and Japan, religious interpretations are not necessarily grounded in national boundaries, but in theological understandings of history, anthropology, and soteriology. Through such differences, religious interpretations create different frameworks that can go beyond the nation-state framework, by which the victims of the atomic bombings, regard- less of their national identities, take part in discourse, as well as non-victims. I argue, therefore, that religious interpretations provide us with a more inclusive perspective on this historical event, and thereby they can contribute to creating a discourse in which the marginalized Hibakusha participate more fully, regardless of their connection, or lack thereof, to a particular nation-state. It is extremely important to stress my argument here that religious interpretations only supplement the existing atomic bomb discourse, but not replace it. They have their own frameworks and those who do not share the same faith will find themselves unheard when a particular religious interpretation becomes a dominant narrative. Miyamoto 133
22. Tanaka’s narrative may be seen as another example of describing the doubly marginalized world of the hibakushas, both as Christians and as victims. The Statue of Mary is renegotiated, neutralized, and thus considered reconciliatory. Maria no kubi is a Catholic drama set in Buddhist terms. Goodman, p. 111.

23. Coinciding with the death of the Shōwa Emperor in 1989, various hibakusha (atomic bomb victim) minorities emerged in public discourse. These included Korean, Okinawan, Japanese-American, American POW, and Dutch POW hibakusha, whose experiences had been expelled from the Japanese collective past. The testimonies of the hibakusha minorities thus contested the dominant atomic bomb discourse in Japan, in which the experience of the atomic bombing was constitutive of Japanese uniqueness. In other words, while the atomic bombings influenced and impacted Japanese identity-formation, a number of hibakusha minorities, who experienced the atomic bombings and aftermath outside the nation-state framework, had been left out. p. 133


As pebbles on the road,
I will crush fortune underfoot,
the myriad, the infinite road I will continue,
I will swell, spreading
My existence diffusing as mist
For another translation see Goodman’s translation, p. 110.

26. The Bible and The Liturgy, p. 95

27. The Bible and The Liturgy, p. 95


The cathedral bells ring.

Man II (rises and looks out the window): It’s piling up on the ground....snow...snow.
For another translation, see: Goodman, p. 176


30. 'How is the truth of pain to be spoken when the available rhetoric of literature and even that of everyday speech somehow always seem festive? It is only by subverting this festive rhetoric, distorting it, making it grate, rendering it awkward and clumsy. [...] In that sense, the stylistic awkwardness in Duras is the discourse of blunted pain.” p. 140 Kristeva

31. Papin. p. 71

32. Papin. p. 69

33. Papin. p. 69 My translation: At no time does the man speak and the women have forgotten all of the logic that leads to this particular war. They don’t recall the disgust that is imprinted on their body by memory and that is also the reason for this play. It is a text where the terror of an era perseveres under the shadow of nuclear war.

34. Papin. p. 69 Translation: Duras’ life began when soldiers were returning from a century of a war they called “all wars”. Later, Duras wrote of another war in Hiroshima, mon amour. The Vietnam War was a reminder once again that everything could start over, and you could still send men to fight to defend a “motherland they had never known” as bluntly said by one of the women in the play. It is as if on a regular basis, humanity lost the memory of its history and horror, and it is only this lost memory that humanity holds for the two women of Yes, Peut-être. It is as if on a regular basis, humanity lost the memory of its history and horror, and it is only this lost memory that humanity holds for the two women of Yes, Peut-être.

35. ‘Accordingly, Duras’s texts should not be given to fragile readers, male or female. Instead, such readers should see her films or plays, where the same malady of pain is subdued, enveloped in a dreamy charm that both softens it and makes it more artificial, invented, in short conventional. By contrast, her books bring us close to madness.’ Kristeva p. 140
36. ’Duras does not orchestrate this nothing as did Mallarmé; who looked for the music in words, or Beckett, who refined a syntax that stumbles or advances in fits and starts, diverting the forward motion of narrative. The reverberation of the characters, the inscription of silence, and the insistence on “nothing to say” as the ultimate manifestation of pain lead to a whiteness of meaning. Combined with rhetorical awkwardness, they constitute a universe of troubling and contagious malaise.’Kristeva, p. 151


ABSTRACTS

Post-crisis narratives are invested in narrative representation and symbolic reconstruction as a means of re-structuring meaning and re-establishing community. The themes in the following narratives are lofty: apocalypse and the fate of humanity. Nagasaki no kane (The Bells of Nagasaki) (1949) is an epic ground zero description of the nuclear event framed as a Catholic narrative of martyrdom. It is also a memorial for those who died in the blast. Maria no kubi (1959) is a hibakusha (atomic bomb victim) drama also set in Nagasaki, and it unveils the forgotten martyrs, the hidden Kurishitans (Christians) of Nagasaki. Through the evocation of Mary’s apparition, it offers an intimate look at the task of translating a Westernized Catholic ideology into an original Japanese conception. In Duras’ narrative Yes, Peut-être (1968), the unheeded spectre of the Hiroshima atomic tragedy haunts a nameless post-apocalyptic future. Each of these interrogations seeks catharsis with contrasting degrees of success and also negotiates its relationship into larger discourses. Takashi Nagai’s recovery of meaning relies on an adopted spiritual framework. Chikao Tanaka excavates poetic re-appropriated meaning from reconstruction of the symbolic. Marguerite Duras’ impossibility of nothing is part of the language of depression. They also illustrate the range of strategies mediated in these post-crisis testimonies in the search for the glimmer of a new utopia.

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