

Drew University
College of Liberal Arts

Atomic Legacies:
The Historical Significance
of the Atomic Bomb
In American and Japanese Cultures

A Thesis in History

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Bachelor in Arts
With Specialized Honors in History

May 2017

Abstract

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and August 9, 1945, respectively, redefined the nature of humanity's existence. Yet while various events of World War II are commemorated each year in the United States with memorials and events, the memories of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings are notably absent.

A Gallop poll conducted soon after the bombings revealed that an unprecedented eighty-five percent of Americans supported the United States' decision to utilize the atomic bombs against Japan. Despite vast public approval, a calculated campaign led by government officials was employed to spread a narrative of the bombings that ignored the facts in favor of portraying the bombings in a positive light. This coupled with decades of ignorance of the facts of the bombings has accounted for the striking disparity between the public's endorsement of the use of the atomic bombs against Japan and the reluctance to commemorate the bombings as part of World War II.

In this U.S. view, the atomic bombs were dropped to bring an end to a brutal war started by Japan and to prevent countless American and enemy casualties that could occur in a full American invasion of the Japanese islands. In the consciousness of the American public, the atomic bomb created peace, it did not threaten it. Popular culture in the U.S. reflected this politicized view and allowed for the disconnect in the American opinion of the bombings from that of the Japanese.

In May of 2016, President Obama visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in Hiroshima Japan, nearly seventy-one years after the first atomic bomb was detonated over the city. His visit was historic in that it marked the first time a U.S. President had visited the city. With the ruins of a building torn apart by the bomb behind him, President Obama called on the world to remember the events of that fateful day, cautioning, “the memory of the morning of August 6, 1945, must never fade. That memory allows us to fight complacency. It fuels our moral imagination. It allows us to change.”¹

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th and August 9, 1945, respectively, redefined the nature of humanity’s existence. The successful separation of uranium isotopes was met by a world unprepared to grapple with the development’s destructive capabilities. There have been events all throughout history that have separated the time before they took place from the time after. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked one such juncture.

World War II is commemorated every year in countries across the world. In the United States, memorials and events are dedicated to the remembrance of numerous acts of the war. The public remembers dates deemed significant. June 6th is remembered as the anniversary of the D-Day invasion of Normandy, and December 7th is formally recognized as Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. In the late 1970s, Congress officially designated the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust, which later became an eight-day period of remembrance. The anniversaries of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, however, have not traditionally been acknowledged by the United States. In fact, the United States’ first true involvement in the commemoration of the

¹ “Text of President Obama’s Speech in Hiroshima, Japan.” *The New York Times* 27 May 2016.

bombings came in 2010, when then U.S. Ambassador to Japan, John V. Roos attended the official ceremony in Hiroshima.²

The question that arises in regards to the minimal commemoration of Hiroshima and in some instances, the complete lack thereof, is why the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are remembered differently from the other events of World War II. In Hiroshima, President Obama said,

“In the span of a few years, some 60 million people would die. Men, women, children, no different than us. Shot, beaten, marched, bombed, jailed, starved, gassed to death. There are many sites around the world that chronicle this war, memorials that tell stories of courage and heroism, graves and empty camps that echo of unspeakable depravity. Yet in the image of a mushroom cloud that rose into these skies, we are most starkly reminded of humanity’s core contradiction. How the very spark that marks us as a species, our thoughts, our imagination, our language, our toolmaking, our ability to set ourselves apart from nature and bend it to our will – those very things also give us the capacity for unmatched destruction.”³

Some have argued the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki differed from every act of war ever committed in that the use of the atomic bombs marked the moment humanity developed the means to destroy itself.⁴

Hiroshima and Nagasaki represent a critical moment in human history. Historian Paul Boyer argued that Hiroshima specifically, joined an exclusive list of places and cities that have come to embody specific historical identities. As he wrote,

“At least since the Romans leveled Carthage in 146 B.C., thereby imposing the first ‘Carthaginian Peace,’ the names of certain sites have taken on a powerful symbolic meaning. ‘Waterloo’ evokes irrevocable defeat; ‘Gettysburg,’ the Civil War’s turning point. ‘Verdun’ has become shorthand for the futility of trench

² Sheila Smith. “Why We Should Remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki.” *Forbes* 6 Aug. 2015.

³ “Text of President Obama’s Speech in Hiroshima, Japan.” *The New York Times* 27 May 2016.

⁴ Henry L. Stimson. “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb.” *Harper’s Magazine* 194.1161 (1947): 107.; Richard Rhodes. “Richard Rhodes On: The Significance of Developing the Atomic Bomb.” Interview. *PBS*.

warfare, while ‘Guernica’ and ‘Dresden’ stir thoughts of the slaughter of innocent civilians from the air.”⁵

It was the significance of these places that made them legendary, to the point, Boyer suggested, that they could be evoked with little acknowledgement of the events that made them infamous in the first place. He claimed that when such a place is mentioned, “the name is drained of emotion and serves a purely rhetorical function,” arguing that when “we speak of a ‘Carthaginian peace’ or say that someone ‘met his Waterloo’ we do so ‘with little conscious awareness of the specific events or the specific towns in North Africa or Belgium that gave rise to these expressions.’”⁶

Hiroshima, however, Boyer explained, differs from other landmarks of history in this regard. He insisted that Hiroshima’s legacy is powerful in that “its symbolic meaning continues to evoke passionate emotional responses.”⁷ While the bombings were not initially seen as controversial they were viewed as increasingly so over time. The controversial nature of the atomic bombings created a gap in the historical narratives of the United States and Japan. In the decades since 1945, the U.S. rarely publicly examined the atomic bombings as they took place. Instead, the United States successfully separated the discussion of the bombs used to end the war from the discussion of the existence of nuclear weapons themselves.⁸ The U.S. accomplished this by portraying the bombings as acts of justice, for instance by evoking the memory of Japanese war crimes. The striking disparity between the public’s endorsement of the use of the atomic bombs against Japan and the reluctance to commemorate the bombings as

⁵ Paul Boyer. “Exotic Resonances: Hiroshima in American Memory.” *Diplomatic History* 19.2 (1995): 297.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 298.

⁷ *Ibid.*

part of World War II is the result of a widespread ignorance of the facts of the bombing and a calculated campaign by officials to propagate a narrative that disregarded those facts and portrayed the bomb in a favorable manner. This paper will argue that in the consciousness of the American public, the bomb created peace, it did not threaten it. Popular culture in the United States reflected this politicized view and allowed for the disconnect in the American opinion of the bombings from that of the Japanese.

Immediately following the bombing of Hiroshima, President Harry S. Truman announced the successful creation and use of the new weapon to the world. He famously declared, “The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold.”⁹ This statement laid the groundwork for what would become the American narrative of the bombings. It served as a reminder that Japan was the initial aggressor that started the war. This allowed for the bombings to be viewed as justifiable as it supported the idea that the U.S. utilized the bombs to save lives that would be lost if the war instigated by Japan was to continue. In the American perspective of the bombings, the act of using the bombs was not controversial.

Unlike their Japanese counterparts, U.S. produced portrayals of the atomic bomb placed no focus on the victims of the bombings. They instead emphasized the bombs’ ability to end the war. Many American portrayals of the atomic bombs ended with them being dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The bomb, in short, was the focus, and not the bombings. By doing this, the United States was able to uphold the image of the bombs defeating Japan, the ruthless enemy, as opposed to the image of the bombs targeting innocent civilians who had already suffered immensely from their own

⁹ Harry S. Truman. “Statement by the President Announcing the Use of the A-Bomb at Hiroshima.” 6 Aug. 1945. *Harry S. Truman Library & Museum*. Web.

country's war efforts. Sociologist Paul Joseph, has argued that "By attempting to keep the public insulated from horrific injury, Washington officials orchestrated one of the most important responses: they encourage Americans to forget."¹⁰ This was made evident by the fact that, while Americans were long deprived of information regarding the conditions of the victims as a result of the bombs, they did not demand it.

In Hiroshima, President Obama gave mention to the stories of the hibakusha, the survivors of the bombs. He acknowledged, "The woman who forgave a pilot who flew the plane that dropped the atomic bomb because she recognized that what she really hated was war itself" and "the man who sought out families of Americans killed [in Hiroshima] because he believed their loss was equal to his own."¹¹ These types of personalized stories were not the stories of the bomb visible to the American public.

The Bomb and the American Press

Following Japan's surrender to the Allied Powers on September 2, 1945, the United States assumed occupation of the war-torn nation. Immediately, the U.S. sought to control the outflow of information from Japan. Through censorship and a powerful national media campaign, the United States successfully controlled the narrative of what unfolded in the Japanese cities in the days and weeks after the bombings.

The United States sought to censor any and all information relevant to the consequences of the atomic bombs. This included, but was not limited to, medical records, written accounts, and pieces of physical evidence. By confiscating medical reports and materials, the United States prevented details of the effects of the new weapon on humans from becoming public. The seizure of medical materials by U.S.

¹⁰ Paul Joseph. "Forgetting and Remembering Hiroshima in the U.S." *Peace Review* 12.2 (2000): 291.

¹¹ "Text of President Obama's Speech in Hiroshima, Japan." *The New York Times* 27 May 2016.

occupation officials, made certain that the Japanese would be unable to perform tests in the future to draw conclusions about the effects of such weapons. Dr. Issei Nishimori, M.D., a specialized pathologist, was a medical student in Nagasaki when the bomb exploded over the city. He recalled the American effort to censor the medical community saying,

“they took all the autopsy material that we had collected and sent it to America. Had even half of it been left, we pathologists could have done research on the effects of the atomic bomb on human beings. As it was, there was no autopsy material about the important period of the bombing and its immediate aftermath. The material was not returned to us for thirty years, and then only after we repeatedly asked for it. At the time, of course, it was already history.”¹²

The U.S. seizures of autopsy material included autopsy reports, photographs, and four thousand pieces of human remains including hearts, lungs, livers, eyes, and brains.¹³ In 1973, the United States shipped the remains back to Japan in seven shipping crates. The remains had been stored at the American Federal Institution of Pathology in Washington D.C. since they were originally taken from Japan in 1945.¹⁴

Dr. Nishimori noted that while the United States did not force Japanese doctors to stop their research they “imposed so many restrictions, for example, that everything had to be translated into English, that in practice we were prohibited from publishing.”¹⁵ He explained that the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) did not share any outcomes of its research and insisted that if it had revealed the findings with its advanced medical knowledge, countless lives could have been saved.¹⁶ Because medical

¹² Monica Braw. *The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in Occupied Japan*. London: East Gate, 1991, 5.

¹³ M. Susan Lindee. “The Repatriation of Atomic Bomb Victim Body Parts to Japan: Natural Objects and Diplomacy.” *Osiris* 13 (1998): 376.

¹⁴ Issei Nishimori. Nagasaki University, Nagasaki. 29 June 1995. *Atomic Bomb Disease Institute, Nagasaki University Division of Scientific Data Registry*. Web.

¹⁵ Braw, 4.

¹⁶ Ibid.

findings were not circulated, physicians tending to the bomb victims were left in the dark when it came to knowing the correct courses of treatment.¹⁷ Victims of the bombs suffering from what is now recognized as radiation sickness, were seen as suffering from a mysterious and deadly disease, and as a result, were shunned by their communities.¹⁸

The Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission began in 1947 as a combined effort by the United States and Japan.¹⁹ The goal of the commission was to study the effects of the atomic bomb on human beings and to draw conclusions that could be used to establish basic guidelines for the treatment for radiation exposure.²⁰ While the commission claimed to be a joint mission by the U.S. and Japan, it was predominantly controlled by the United States who included Japan for diplomatic reasons more than anything else.²¹ A report by the National Research Council in 1947 even stated, “A long-term study of atomic bomb casualties in collaboration with the Japanese, affords a most remarkable opportunity for cultivating international relations of the highest type.”²² The ABCC conducted the majority of research on human exposure to nuclear weapons and the initiative grew significantly in the years after the bombings with over one thousand employees by 1950.²³

Censorship of medical materials and findings was only one form of censorship enforced by occupation authorities in post-war Japan. Monica Braw who interviewed Dr. Nishimori for her book, *The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in*

¹⁷ Robert Karl Manoff. “The Silencer.” *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 41.2 (1984): 156.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ John Beatty “Scientific Collaboration, Internalism, and Diplomacy: The Case of the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission.” *Journal of the History of Biology* 26.2 (1993): 205.

²⁰ Frank W. Putnam “The Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission in Retrospect.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 95.10 (1998): 5426.

²¹ Beatty, 205.

²² Ibid.

²³ Putnam, 5426.

Occupied Japan, also spoke to Sueo Inoue who worked as a cameraman for Nippon Eiga-sha. Inoue visited both Hiroshima and Nagasaki in September of 1945 as part of a group that aimed “to appeal against the inhumanity of the atomic bomb to the Red Cross in Geneva.”²⁴ They never succeeded in submitting the film to the Red Cross as they were placed under arrest by the American military police and their film was seized.²⁵

The Japanese were subject to strict censorship policies under the U.S. occupation. What became known as the “press code” was a series of ten regulations that were in effect by September 19, 1945.²⁶ The first two regulations, for example, stated, “News must adhere strictly to the truth” and “Nothing should be printed which might, directly or indirectly, disturb the public tranquility” respectively.²⁷ Anyone who wished to publish a piece of work had to present it to the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) to be reviewed.²⁸ Once it was reviewed, a copy of the work would be returned to its author with notes that stated for example, “ok,” “delete,” or “suppress.”²⁹ For instance, in September 1945, Dr. Massao Tsuzuki submitted a medical report of the atomic bomb to the CCD.³⁰ The CCD insisted that Tsuzuki remove a section of his article they claimed would “disturb public tranquility” as it stated,

“Considering from various points, generation of something like poisonous gas accompanying the explosion operation is conceivable, and it is not hard to conjecture that there were perhaps war victims who died of these poisons. At present we have no clue whether it was devised on purpose so as to radiate

²⁴ Braw, 5.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Robert H. Berker. “The Press in Postwar Japan.” *Far Eastern Survey* 16.15 (1947): 163.

²⁷ Sey Nishimura. “Censorship of Medical Journals in Occupied Japan.” *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 274.6 (1995): 454.

²⁸ Sey Nishimura. “Medical Censorship in Occupied Japan, 1945-1948.” *Pacific Historical Review* 58.1 (1989): 4.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Sey Nishimura. “Censorship of the Atomic Bomb Casualty Reports in Occupied Japan: A Complete Ban vs Temporary Delay.” *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 274.7 (1995): 520.

something like poisonous gas. If I have a chance, I'd like to put a question to America on this matter."³¹

The purpose of such strict forms of censorship in Occupied Japan, was to allow the United States to maintain a favorable view of the bombings, especially by the American public. A Gallop poll conducted in 1945 after the bombings revealed that eighty-five percent of Americans supported the United States' decision to utilize the weapons.³² This was the high rate of approval the United States hoped to uphold. To do so, the U.S. had to ensure that information reflecting the aftermath of the bombings and the bombs' effects on human beings were not visible to the American public.

Despite the strict censorship regulations, information regarding the bombings did reach U.S. media outlets. Generally, however, the media reported the information from Japan in a manner that would not cause anyone to call into question the bombings themselves. For example, the August 25, 1945 edition of *The New York Times* featured an article with the headline "Japanese Stress Hiroshima 'Horror,'" indicating that the alleged horror may not be all that it seemed.³³ The article stated, "American experts on Japanese propaganda suggested that the Japanese may be attempting to capitalize on the horror of atomic bombing in an effort to win sympathy from their conquerors and to play on possibly divided opinion among the Allies."³⁴ The article went on to argue that these "American experts on enemy propaganda" claimed that the intent of this Japanese propaganda was to reduce the cost of restitution and the extent of the American

³¹ Ibid.

³² Michael Pressler. "Atomic Warfare and the Nuclear Family: Domestic Resistance in Hollywood Films About the A-Bomb." *Film Criticism* 27.3 (2003): 40.

³³ "Japanese Stresses Hiroshima 'Horror.'" *The New York Times* 25 Aug. 1945: 3.

³⁴ Ibid.

occupation.³⁵ This article was not alone in labeling details from Japan of the bomb's aftereffects as Japanese propaganda.

On September 10, 1945, *The New York Times* announced the deaths of eight Allied prisoners of war that resulted from the Nagasaki bomb along with injuries sustained by thirty-eight other prisoners of war. The article was deliberate in explaining that the deaths of these men were not solely the fault of the bomb as the prisoners were housed in an area that was not to be used as a camp for war prisoners indicating they were held "in an unmarked prison camp squarely in the center of the great Mitsubishi arms works – a location selected by the Japanese for the prisoners of war in direct violation of international law."³⁶ The article specified, "It was a camp location that never had been certified to the neutral Swiss Government nor to the belligerent powers, and the aviator who flew the Superfortress from which the bomb was dropped could not have known that the Allies' prisoners were below him in the center of a great industrial area and an ideal and certain target for a bombing force."³⁷

The article called the report by Japanese officials of the Allied prisoners deaths, propaganda. Journalist, W.H. Lawrence further argued, "I am convinced that, horrible as the bomb undoubtedly is, the Japanese are exaggerating its effects in an effort to win sympathy for themselves in an attempt to forget the long record of cold-blooded Japanese bestiality."³⁸ The dismissing of information about the bomb from Japan as Japanese propaganda was not limited to the media. U.S. government officials employed the same tactic.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ W.H. Lawrence. "Atom Bomb Killed Nagasaki Captives: 8 Allied Prisoners Victims – Survivor Doubts After Effect – 2d Blow More Powerful." *The New York Times* 10 Sept. 1945: 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

One such official was General Leslie R. Groves, who had been the director of the Manhattan Project. Groves became greatly involved with the defense of the project and the bomb's use in the press following a provocative claim made by *The Associated Press*. In an August 23, 1945 article that broached the subject of radiation poisoning in Japan as a result of the bombs, Howard W. Blakeslee, the science editor for *The Associated Press*, boldly claimed that the United States was aware of such effects when the decisions regarding the bombs were made.³⁹ Sean L. Malloy, who wrote of Blakeslee's allegation in his article "'A Very Pleasant Way to Die': Radiation Effects and the Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb Against Japan," credited Blakeslee with both legitimizing reports of radiation sickness that were previously dismissed by the American media and "cit[ing] prewar studies conducted with the cyclotron at the Radiation Laboratory (or 'Rad Lab') at the University of California."⁴⁰

Disturbed by the recognition of radiation poisoning in the publication, Groves reached out to Lieutenant Colonel Charles E. Rea who was in charge of the hospital at the site in Oak Ridge, Tennessee responsible for the separation of uranium isotopes used in the atomic bomb.⁴¹ Notably, Lieutenant Colonel Rea was not knowledgeable in the field of radiation.⁴² Nonetheless, Rea was able to assure Groves that reports of radiation poisoning were simply propaganda.

A now declassified document revealed the details of the communication that took place between Groves and Rea. Groves's primary concern throughout the duration of

³⁹ Sean L. Malloy "'A Very Pleasant Way to Die': Radiation Effects and the Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb Against Japan." *Diplomatic History* 36.3 (2012): 516.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between General Groves and Lt. Col. Rea, Oak Ridge Hospital, 9:00 a.,, 25 August 1945." *National Security Archive*, 1.

⁴² Malloy, 516.

the telephone call was how reports of radiation sickness could effect the public's opinion of the bomb and the government's decision to use it. Groves did not appear to be disturbed by the details of radiation sickness, instead he was concerned by the harm that could be done by the details becoming known to the public. He told Rea, "We are not bothered a bit, excepting for – what they are trying to do is create sympathy."⁴³

The men were dismissive of reports of suffering and of the reported injuries. Rea advised Groves, "I would say this: I think it's good propaganda. The thing is these people got good and burned – good thermal burns."⁴⁴ The language used by the two men was very telling. For instance, Rea's use of the phrase "good and burned" revealed his true lack of concern for the victims of the bomb. Despite the seriousness of the topic being discussed, the men were fairly casual in their conversation with Rea on multiple occasions referring to the information he was going to get for Groves regarding the bomb as "straight dope."⁴⁵

Toward the end of the call, Groves reiterated to Rea his concern about the details of radiation becoming public. Reading from an article, Groves explained,

"This is the kind of thing that hurts us – 'The Japanese, who were reported by Tokyo radio, to have died mysteriously a few days after the atomic bomb blast, probably were the victims of a phenomenon which is well known in the great radiation laboratories of America.' That of course, is what does us the damage."⁴⁶

Rea advised Groves to "get some big-wig to put a counter-statement in the paper."⁴⁷

In an attempt to refute what he saw as false reports, Groves sent General Thomas Farrell to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to assess any effects of radiation.⁴⁸ In a memo to

⁴³ "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between General Groves and Lt. Col. Rea, Oak Ridge Hospital, 9:00 a.,, 25 August 1945," 3.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 1-3.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Groves, Farrell disclosed, “Summaries of Japanese reports previously sent are essentially correct, as to the clinical effects from single gamma radiation dose.”⁴⁹ By corroborating the earlier findings of Japanese officials, Farrell confirmed to Groves that people were becoming sick and dying from radiation exposure. From Nagasaki, Farrell sent Groves an additional memo that stated, “The Japanese report a considerable number have died up to September 1st who did not seem to be wounded initially.”⁵⁰ Experts from Farrell’s team including pathologist Shields Warren, had not yet arrived in Nagasaki when Farrell contacted Groves, because of weather delays.⁵¹ Without their findings to report Farrell sent Groves information from Japanese reports that supported conclusions about the existence of radiation poisoning.

With concrete evidence of radiation sickness reported by Farrell and his team, Groves could no longer deny its existence or dismiss it as Japanese propaganda. He therefore was forced to employ a new strategy to manipulate the narrative surrounding the aftereffects of the atomic bomb. Groves informed members of the Senate at the Special Committee on Atomic Energy Hearings that radiation poisoning was in fact, “a very pleasant way to die.”⁵² Groves’s purpose in saying this was to forestall Senate members from forming negative opinions in regards to the use of the bombs. In reality, however, victims of radiation poisoning displayed symptoms including nausea,

⁴⁸ “Cable CAX 51813 from USS Teton to Commander in Chief Army Forces Pacific Administration, From Farrell to Groves, September 10, 1945.” *National Security Archive*. and “Cable CAX 51948 from Commander in Chief Army Forces Pacific Advance Yokohoma Japan to Commander in Chief Army Forces Pacific Administration, September 14, 1945.” *National Security Archive*.

⁴⁹ “Cable CAX 51813, 3.

⁵⁰ “Cable CAX 51948, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

⁵² United States. Cong. Senate. Special Committee on Atomic Energy. 79 Cong. Washington, D.C., 1946.

headaches, fever, anemia, hemorrhaging, and hair loss.⁵³ In short, it was not at all a pleasant way to die.

In addition to twisting the facts of the suffering in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, American officials and the press alike often invoked the idea that Japan was ultimately at fault for the mass casualties in the two cities. They did this by focusing on the ill-equipped nature of Japan to handle such a tragedy. In late 1946, Shields Warren, a pathologist who served as the leader of the United States Naval Technical Unit insisted in the *Rhode Island Medical Journal*, that the elevated death tolls in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not the fault of the bombs themselves, but of Japan's response to the emergency.⁵⁴ Warren explained that the deaths occurred due to the fact that the "Japanese were too disorganized" to properly treat the sufferers.⁵⁵ Additionally he argued that the Japanese hospitals were ill equipped to accommodate and treat the blast victims, as they did not have access to antibiotics or blood that could be used in transfusions.⁵⁶ Lieutenant Richard Berlin of the Medical Corps of the United States Navy made similar observations when he spent sixteen weeks observing doctors in Japan between September 1945 and January 1946, six weeks of which he spent in Nagasaki.⁵⁷

For six weeks, Berlin was stationed at a major hospital in Nagasaki that also featured one of the best medical schools in the nation.⁵⁸ The hospital was severely understaffed, as approximately eighty percent of the people in the hospital and medical

⁵³ Michael J. Yavenditti. "John Hersey and the American Conscience: The Reception of 'Hiroshima.'" *Pacific Historical Review* 43.1 (1974): 38.

⁵⁴ Janet Farrell Brodie. "Radiation Secrecy and Censorship After Hiroshima and Nagasaki." *Journal of Social History* 48.4 (2015): 848.

⁵⁵ Shields Warren. "Medical Aspects of the Atomic Bombings." *Rhode Island Medical Journal* 29.12 (1946).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Richard B. Berlin "Impressions of Japanese Medicine at the End of World War II." *The Scientific Monthly* 64.1 (1947): 41.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

school died as a result of the bomb's blast.⁵⁹ The hospital was essentially in ruins. Berlin noted that prior to the bombing, the hospital had resembled those in the West and boasted modern equipment and technology.⁶⁰ Because the hospital was devastated, Japanese officials advised that approximately three-hundred patients could be transported to thirty area hospitals, however, Berlin recalled, "most of them were in small houses of mud and bamboo that were hardly worthy of the term 'hospital.'"⁶¹

Information Berlin reported elaborates on Warren's report that the Japanese did not have the medical equipment to treat bomb victims. Berlin explained the nature of the drugs available to Japanese physicians. For instance, he reported a scarcity of penicillin. What penicillin did exist was supposed to be reserved for the military, not that it was very effective, the Japanese did not have the refrigerating capabilities necessary to preserve the drug.⁶²

Another story that gained traction in the press reflecting the idea that it was Japan's lack of scientific advancements that caused the high number of casualties in the bombings, suggested that Japan's poor infrastructure was ultimately to blame for the severe devastation caused.⁶³ In reality, however, Japan had much stricter building codes than did America, as a result of an earlier earthquake.⁶⁴

In February 1947, an article entitled "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb" was published in *Harper's Magazine*. The article was written by Harvard Dean McGeorge Bundy who persuaded former U.S. Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson to put

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁶¹ Ibid., 42.

⁶² Ibid., 46.

⁶³ Yavenditii, 37.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

his name on the document.⁶⁵ Bundy believed that an article explaining the necessity of the bomb's use, endorsed by a government official involved in the decision making process, would help shape a positive narrative of the atomic bomb among the American public.⁶⁶ The article unofficially revealed the U.S. government's stance on the use of the atomic bombs against Japan. It emphasized that the question of whether or not to use the bomb and questions surrounding how it would be used were heavily debated by high ranking government officials and scientists alike. The article mentioned alternative methods for using the bombs that were suggested, such as dropping a bomb over an unpopulated area to show Japan the extent of the damage the U.S. could inflict or alerting Japan of the attack before it was to take place.⁶⁷ Both options it explained, were ultimately dismissed due to their perceived inability to cause Japan to surrender unconditionally.⁶⁸

The article provided an explanation for why the U.S. saw it as imperative that Japan surrender unconditionally stating that “only the complete destruction of her military power could open the way to lasting peace.”⁶⁹ The atomic bomb was essential in getting Japan to surrender sooner rather than later. If the atomic bombs were not used the U.S. had in the works a plan to fully invade Japan's main island in the spring of 1946, a plan that would involve upwards of five million American men.⁷⁰ The article explicitly stated,

“such operations might be expected to cost over a million casualties to American forces alone. Additional large loses might be expected among our allies and, of

⁶⁵ J. Samuel Walker. *Prompt & Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of the Atomic Bombs Against Japan*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 102.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Henry L. Stimson. “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb.” *Harper's Magazine* 194.1161 (1947): 100.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 101.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 102.

course, if our campaign were successful and if we could judge by previous experience, enemy casualties would be much larger than our own.”⁷¹

This statement provided justification for the use of the atomic bombs in that it suggested that the bombings prevented an invasion that would cost well over two million lives. The idea of “one million lives saved” defined how Americans came to understand the bombings. It is important to note that when Stimson endorsed this statistic, there was simply no way to know how many lives would have been lost if the U.S. launched a full invasion of Japan.⁷² The suggestion that one million Americans lives may have been saved was strictly speculation.

Both the government and press’ control over the narrative surrounding the atomic bomb continued through the late-1940s and continued well into the 1950s. In 1955, ten years after the atomic bombs were dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, twenty-five women from Hiroshima were brought to New York City for medical procedures to be performed by plastic surgeons at Mount Sinai Hospital. This program quickly became a fantastic public relations campaign in which America played healer to a war-torn and beaten down Japan. The women were dubbed the “Hiroshima Maidens” by the press. The women were all relatively young, having been students when the first atomic bomb exploded over their city on August 6, 1945.⁷³ Hiroshima Peace Institute researcher, Robert Jacobs, described the American press’ focus on the women writing,

“As soon as they arrived in the United States, the women ... fascinated the US mainstream press who ... turn[ed] the whole event into a triumphant narrative of

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Susan Neiman. “Forgetting Hiroshima, Remembering Auschwitz: Tales of Two Exhibits.” *Thesis Eleven* 129.1 (2015): 9.

⁷³ Robert Jacobs. “Reconstructing the Perpetrator’s Soul by Reconstructing the Victim’s Body: The Portrayal of the ‘Hiroshima Maidens’ by the Mainstream Media in the United States.” *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 24 (2010): 9.

science and compassion. In this narrative the Japanese are allowed to be present but only in a childlike, dependent and ultimately grateful position. The heroes are the US doctors and philanthropists, who make the decisions, bear the costs and perform the miraculous surgeries, thus restoring life, happiness, and beauty to the Japanese women.”⁷⁴

These themes defined the portrayal of the Hiroshima Maidens in the American press.

The program was arranged by Norman Cousins, editor of the *Saturday Review* in conjunction with Reverend Kyoshi Tanimoto and both the United States and Japan were hesitant to allow it to take place. The U.S. State Department unsuccessfully tried to halt the women’s voyage at the last minute, but General John E. Hull allowed the plane taking the women to the U.S. to take off claiming he did not receive the memo cancelling the trip in time.⁷⁵ He actually had received it in time. Japan on the other hand, had been concerned by the U.S.’s motive behind the program, thinking that they were trying to draw attention away from the fact they were testing the hydrogen bomb.⁷⁶ The women ultimately stayed in America for one year’s time during which they endured countless cosmetic procedures. They were treated with skin grafts, rhytidectomies (face lifts), and additional reconstructive procedures such as the detachment of fingers that had become joined as a result of the high temperature emanated from the explosion of the bomb.⁷⁷

The women became figures in the press during their stay. Cold War Era scholar, Christina Klein offered an explanation for the women’s popularity in her book *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961*. She argued that what drew the press and the public to the Hiroshima Maidens was how portrayals of the

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ James H. Foad. “Vehicles of Memory: The *Enola Gay* and the Streetcars of Hiroshima.” *Religion, Violence, Memory, and Place*. Ed. Oren Baruch Stier and J. Shawn Landres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 127.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Jacobs, 9.

women deviated from the portrayals of the Japanese Americans were used to seeing. She explained, “During World War II, U.S. propaganda had represented the Japanese in racialized and dehumanizing terms – as apes, vermin, supermen, inferior men, primitives, savages, madmen ...”⁷⁸ The Hiroshima Maidens on the other hand, she stated,

“marked the shift away from the terms of wartime propaganda and toward the new terms that fit with Japan’s postwar status as ally and subordinate partner. No longer vermin, these Japanese were innocent... Their wounds marked them as human beings with whom Americans could identify and feel sympathy, and their femininity distanced them from the masculinity of the Japanese military. These characteristics also clearly cast the Maidens as subordinate figures dependent on American generosity.”⁷⁹

The press published short accounts of the experiences of the women in America that portrayed them not only as young and un-knowing, but also as helpless. For instance, a story was printed about how one of the women attempted to mail letters during her stay at Mount Sinai, but unknowingly threw them in a garbage can because she had believed it to be a post box.⁸⁰

The idea of America as savior to these innocent victims permeated through all media coverage of their medical care. The press focused relentlessly on the appearances of the visiting women. One woman, Shigeko Niimoto, who had been only thirteen years old when the first atomic bomb exploded over her city, was described by *Time* magazine as being the “youngest and prettiest of-Fisherman Masayuki Niimoto’s three daughters.”⁸¹ In addition to physical appearance, the press also focused on the clothing worn by the women. The same *Time* article that commented on Shigeko Niimoto, also

⁷⁸ Christina Klein. *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2003), 149.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Jacobs, 9.

⁸¹ “Young Ladies of Japan.” *Time*, 24 October 1955.

reported on the women's embracement of western fashion. The article reported, "They have adopted sleek Italian hairdos, colored ballerina slippers and other US fashions," suggesting it had caused them to "no longer shrink from meeting people as they did at home."⁸²

Overall, the journey of the twenty-five women from Hiroshima to New York City served to show the United States playing the role of a hero. The U.S. was seen to have rescued helpless women from a country that could not provide them the help they so desperately needed to maintain any sense of normalcy in their lives. This image of America was created by the press and showed America's ability to serve as a healer. In 1956, for example, *Collier's* printed an article that explained why the women so desperately needed the medical care provided by the United States. The article reported that the women were so impoverished in Japan that they could not even afford to pay the equivalent of two U.S. dollars for a skin graft.⁸³

Portrayals of the atomic bomb in the American press often focused on America's superiority over other nations. Since President Harry Truman announced in August of 1945, that the United States had invented and successfully detonated a bomb possessing "more power than 20,000 tons of T.N.T." and "more than two thousand times the blast power of the British Grand Slam, which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare," the U.S. sought to associate the atomic bomb with its technological superiority.⁸⁴ This theme could be seen throughout the media coverage of the women's cosmetic surgical procedures. The idea that the women had to travel to America for

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Gloria Kalischer and Peter Kalischer. "Return of the Hiroshima Maidens: Love Helped to Heal 'The Devil's Claw Marks'." *Collier's* 26 Oct. 1956, 49.

⁸⁴ Harry S. Truman "Statement by the President Announcing the Use of the A-Bomb at Hiroshima." 6 Aug. 1945. *Harry S. Truman Library & Museum*. Web.

medical treatment that their own country could not provide for them is a prime display of America's scientific advancement beyond that of other nations.

The press continued to support the narrative that the U.S. was able to help the Japanese people in a way their own country could not. In 1977, a little more than twenty-years after the Hiroshima Maidens made their infamous trip to America, *The New York Times* interviewed Michiko Sako who had come and received life changing surgeries, at her home in Japan. The article focused predominantly on what America was able to give her. She praised her host family from Ridgewood, New Jersey and the people of the United States for welcoming her, noting that they had the greatest impact on her attitude following the bombing.⁸⁵ In the ten years after the bomb and before her surgeries at Mount Sinai, Michiko Sako spent almost all her time indoors and in solitude, angry at the world.⁸⁶ Her surgeries and her renewed confidence inspired by the people she encountered during her stay in the U.S. helped her overcome this. This was not the only way in which the United States changed Sako's life after the bombing. In 1977, she was nominated for the role of Vice President of the PTA at her children's school. She told the *New York Times* that "some parents said a vice president must sometimes appear in public and should be more beautiful" but she "told them off," and act which she referred to as "an American habit, not Japanese."⁸⁷ This supported the idea that the Hiroshima Maidens were helpless as it implied that Michiko Sako would have been unable to stand up for herself had she not gone to America.

⁸⁵ Henry Kamm. "A 'Hiroshima Maiden' Conquers Bitterness: A 'Hiroshima Maiden' Overcomes Scars, and the Bitterness." *New York Times* 22 May 1977, 51.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

The controversy surrounding the atomic bomb persisted in the press well beyond the fiftieth anniversaries of the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In 1994, the year before the fiftieth anniversary of the bombings, it was announced that the *Enola Gay*, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb over Hiroshima would be the subject of a display at the National Air and Space Museum, of the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C..⁸⁸ The plane was to be displayed along with other items recovered from Hiroshima.⁸⁹ Martin Harwit, the director of the museum, hoped to create a display that would “neither glorify nor apologize for the bombing, but explore it.”⁹⁰ The proposed exhibit, however, was ultimately met with great criticism from both sides of the historical debate over the decision to use the bomb.

The exhibit, titled, “The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II” was the culmination of a decade long restoration of the *Enola Gay*.⁹¹ Slated to open in the spring of 1995, the exhibit put the Smithsonian Institution at the center of the historical controversy over the bomb’s use. The exhibit was first criticized by veterans’ organizations, most significantly the American Legion, that felt that the exhibit downplayed the need for the atomic bomb. The debate again became over the number of lives saved by the use of the bomb as a result of preventing a full American invasion of the Japanese islands. The text originally scripted to accompany the exhibit suggested that had the bomb not been used, approximately thirty to fifty thousand American troops would have died within a month of launching the invasion.⁹² Veterans groups, including

⁸⁸ Sadao Asada. *Culture Shock and Japanese-American Relations: Historical Essays* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 207.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Neiman, 16.

⁹¹ “Enola Gay Moves as Debate Goes On.” *The New York Times* 28 Nov. 1994: A12.

⁹² *Ibid.*

the American Legion, preferred the statistic that the bomb prevented upwards of one million American deaths. Philosopher Susan Neiman noted, “Mostly, the critics complained that only Japanese not American victims were depicted, without suggesting how it could be otherwise in an exhibit meant to centre on the Enola Gay.”⁹³

After much scrutiny, the museum agreed to restructure the exhibit. The revised exhibit was to include an area dedicated to war crimes perpetrated by the Japanese. The Air Force at one point accused the museum of “still pushing the thesis that the atom bomb shouldn’t have been dropped.”⁹⁴ While the museum denied this accusation, it agreed to redraft the text included in the exhibit. The revised version of the text instead stated that one million Americans could have died in an invasion of Japan. This, however, did not bring an end to the controversy surrounding the exhibit, it instead generated more. Academic historians did not support the narrative of one million American lives saved and therefore took issue with the revised textual piece of the exhibit. The secretary of the Smithsonian, I. Michael Heyman received a letter signed by these scholars that referred to the altered text as “intellectual corruption” and as a “historical cleansing.”⁹⁵ Barton Bernstein, a history professor at Stanford argued, “In the present version [of the text], there is no clear statement that there is controversy surrounding the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and that leaves Americans impoverished intellectually.”⁹⁶

The debate surrounding the Enola Gay exhibit was not just between veterans’ organizations and historians. Instead, it very much became a national debate and one that

⁹³ Neiman, 16.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ “Enola Gay Moves as Debate Goes On.” *The New York Times* 28 Nov. 1994: A12.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

played out almost entirely in the press. World War II Historian Kai Bird publicly argued that by making alterations to the exhibit, the Smithsonian “caved into right-wing political pressure.”⁹⁷ *Washington Post* columnist, Jonathan Yardley directed his criticism at the men tasked with organizing the exhibit, Michael Neufeld and Tom Crouch arguing that they “wanted to use the Enola Gay to address the significance, necessity and morality of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, because the question of whether it was necessary and right to drop the bomb continues to perplex us.”⁹⁸ No matter which side of the debate one stood on, there was no denying that it was, as the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “emotion-soaked.”⁹⁹ As a result of the controversy, the exhibit went through a series of revisions, the last of which “eliminated all but one photo of a Japanese victim, and accepted the official estimate of American casualties expected in an invasion as 260,000 to one million. Psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton and journalist Greg Mitchell in their book *Hiroshima: Fifty Years of Denial*, criticized the final version of the exhibit arguing that the final script was ‘nothing more or less than the 1947 Stimson article with visual aids.’”¹⁰⁰ Harwit, however, supported the historians’ arguments against the inflated number of lives the exhibit claimed were saved by the use of the bomb and hoped to change the statistic presenting the hypothesized number of lives saved to reflect their beliefs.¹⁰¹ As a result, veterans groups campaigned to Congress and the exhibit was ultimately cancelled by Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich.

⁹⁷ James Risen. “For Two Smithsonian Curators, the Enola Gay’s Mission Launched the Nightmare of the Nuclear Age. To WWII Veterans, Dropping the Bomb Saved U.S. Lives. Their Conflict Over a Commemorative Exhibit Sparked the Museum’s Retreat and a Bitter ... WAR OF WORDS.” *Los Angeles Times* 19 Dec. 1994: 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Neiman, 17.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

The national controversy surrounding the Enola Gay exhibit was important in that it marked the first time the atomic bomb's use in Japan had entered the national consciousness in decades, and it did so on a very large scale. The director of the National Air and Space Museum resigned as a result of the controversy following a letter submitted in January 1995 to I. Michael Heyman, calling for the director's resignation, signed by eighty-one members of Congress.¹⁰² The exhibit was a subject of debate during the 1994 midterm election season with Gingrich asserting, "the Enola Gay fight was a fight in effect, over the reassertion by most Americans that they are sic and tired of being told by some cultural elite that they ought to be ashamed of their country."¹⁰³ Gingrich later appointed a bomber pilot from the Vietnam War to the board of the Smithsonian.¹⁰⁴ The debate grew so great that even the White House issued a statement reflecting President Clinton and Vice President Gore's opinions on the exhibit. It stated, "The president and the vice president are very sensitive to the concerns expressed by veterans' groups and others about the exhibit itself. While they believe firmly that academic freedom has its place they nonetheless felt that some of the concerns expressed by veterans' groups had merit."¹⁰⁵ Historian, Sadao Asada argued that the cancelled exhibit marked, "what could have been an excellent occasion for a dialogue on the historical and moral significance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki thus turned into the 'history war' that rocked the nation."¹⁰⁶ Following the exhibit's cancellation, the debate surrounding the atomic bomb slipped from the national consciousness once more. That is

¹⁰² "Official Resigns Over Exhibit of Enola Gay." *The New York Times* 3 May 1995: A19.

¹⁰³ Murray Sayle. "Tailspin: The Ex-Director of the Air and Space Museum Tells How the Enola Gay Exhibition Crashed." *The New York Times* 16 Nov. 1997.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Neiman, 18.

¹⁰⁶ Asada, 208.

not to say, however, that opinions on the issue were no longer divided. In 2003, when the restored Enola Gay was to be displayed at Dulles Airport, the director of policy and communications for the Air Force Association, Napoleon Byars, told the *Washington Post*, “unlike the first exhibit, this one is historically accurate,” a jab at the Smithsonian exhibit, of which he was a notable opponent.¹⁰⁷

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have spurred many debates. Yet, widespread public support of the bombings remains. Part of the controversy surrounding the discussion of the atomic bombs is the discussion itself. The atomic bombs are rarely remembered in the United States, as if the memory creates vast unease. This is the result of decades of ignorance of the facts of the bombings supported by a calculated campaign by officials to spread a narrative that ignored those facts and portrayed the bomb in a favorable light.

The Bomb and American Popular Culture

Following the controversy over the Enola Gay exhibit, President Clinton was asked at a press conference on April 18, 1995, if he believed that America saw discussing the atomic bombings as “taboo.”¹⁰⁸ He did not.¹⁰⁹ That would have provided an explanation for Americans’ hesitations to confront the atomic bombings decades after they took place. In his reply, President Clinton explicitly stated that he thought Truman was right to use the bombs against Japan.¹¹⁰ Despite the overwhelming support for the

¹⁰⁷ Jacqueline Trescott. “Enola Gay, Waiting in the Wings No More; Restored A-Bomb Plane Unveiled at Dulles.” *The Washington Post* 19 Aug. 2003: C01.

¹⁰⁸ William J. Clinton. “The President’s News Conference” 18 April 1995. *The American Presidency Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara*.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

bombings by government officials and the media a disconnect has continued to exist between the support and the hesitation to remember and study the bombings.

The portrayal of the atomic bomb in American popular culture undoubtedly reflected the opinions of the bomb shown in the American press. The early depictions of the atomic bomb in popular culture produced in the years immediately following the war, were very much a consequence of U.S. censorship in occupied Japan. Historian Paul Boyer credited “the lack of detailed visual evidence of the bomb’s effects,” for the widespread support of the bombings at their outset.¹¹¹ Boyer argued that because the occupying government “suppressed the more horrifying films and photographs of corpses and maimed survivors... Americans initially saw only images of the awesome mushroom cloud.”¹¹²

The image of the mushroom cloud over Hiroshima symbolized America’s triumph in the Second World War. While the image of the mushroom cloud was the first visual exposition of the atomic bomb available to the public, it was also one of the few details available at all. The only facts the public was given in addition to that image was the fact that the bomb had “more power than 20,000 tons of T.N.T.” and that it was responsible for ending World War II.¹¹³ While new information became available over time, the image of the mushroom cloud had a lasting place in the media.

The recurrent portrayal of the mushroom cloud was indicative of the attitudes toward the atomic bombings that were evident in pieces of American popular culture. The atomic bomb was viewed triumphantly as a symbol of victory and of scientific

¹¹¹ Christine Hong. “Flashforward Democracy: American Exceptionalism and the Atomic Bomb in *Barefoot Gen*.” *Comparative Literature Studies* 46.1 (2009): 125.

¹¹² *Ibid*.

¹¹³ Harry S. Truman. “Statement by the President Announcing the Use of the A-Bomb at Hiroshima.” 6 Aug. 1945. *Harry S. Truman Library & Museum*. Web.

advancement. Author Peter Schwenger labeled America's way of viewing the atomic bombing of Hiroshima as "Disneyfication" in that America "tende[d] to view Hiroshima as a dramatic spectacle, an exercise in special effects," a habit which persisted in the decades after the bombs use.¹¹⁴ Less than three months after the surrender of Japan brought an end to World War II, an event was hosted at the Los Angeles Coliseum which presented a reenactment of the events of the fight against Japan.¹¹⁵ The event was titled "Tribute to Victory" and concluded with a B-29 plane flying over the stadium to symbolize the dropping of the atomic bomb.¹¹⁶ The *Los Angeles Times* described the scene writing, "a terrific detonation shook the ground, a burst of flame flashed on the field and great billows of smoke mushroomed upward in an almost too-real depiction of devastation."¹¹⁷ Two decades later, in 1976, another B-29 was flown as part of a reenactment in Texas.¹¹⁸ This time however, the exhibit featured a mushroom cloud and the plane was flown by Paul Tibbets, the pilot who flew the *Enola Gay*.¹¹⁹ Although, due to criticism the United States issued an apology to Japan for the display, it highlighted the way in which Americans viewed the use of the atomic bomb.¹²⁰

While depictions of the atomic bomb in American popular culture portrayed the atomic bomb as a symbol of power and triumph, they also emphasized the fear that surrounded the weapon's destructive capabilities. This fear was captured in the image of the mushroom cloud. This was logical in regards to the processing function of the human mind. Philosopher, Jean Bethke Elshtain argued,

¹¹⁴ Peter Schwenger and John Whittier Treat. "America's Hiroshima, Hiroshima's America." *Boundary 2* 21.1 (1994): 235.

¹¹⁵ "A Tribute to Victory – And You." *Los Angeles Transit Lines Weekly Topics* 6.43. 22 Oct. 1945.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Schwenger and Treat, 236.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ "Hiroshima Bomb Pilot Dies Aged 92." *BBC News* 1 Nov. 2007.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

“Human beings think most often in images; a terrible or delightful picture comes into our minds and then we seek to find words to express it, to capture it, to make it somehow manageable. Thus it is with the possibility of nuclear war. Our images are fixed. The scenes of utter destruction at Hiroshima and Nagasaki; two cities laid waste; people disappeared, remaining as shadows on cement or persisting in a terrible and painful twilight zone of lingering death from radiation.”¹²¹

This accounts for the prevalence of American films, novels, and other works that portrayed the atomic bomb as a threat. As the narrative that saw the weapon as a threat spread, Hiroshima, Paul Boyer argued, became “a symbol of what must never happen again: the definitive object lesson of nuclear horror.”¹²²

This was evident in *We Can Do It!*, a ‘Kid’s Peace Book,’ published in 1985. The book contained the passage,

“H is for Hiroshima. *Hiroshima* is a city in Japan, where an atomic bomb was dropped many years ago in 1945. Thousands of people lost their lives and the city was destroyed. That’s why we say ‘NO MORE HIROSHIMAS!’ H is also for *hope, happiness, and harmony*. That’s what the world needs instead. Another H is for *hug*.”¹²³

This passage showed how the severity of Hiroshima and the atomic bomb were often dismissed in popular culture. In reference to this passage Boyer wrote,

“In this rhetorical usage ... ‘Hiroshima’ was removed from history and treated as a semimythic symbol of atomic menace. In the passive voice of the above passage for example, the bomb *was dropped*, a city *was destroyed*, with no hint of *who* dropped the bomb or destroyed the city, or *why*. Such dehistoricizing characterizes not just juvenile peace literature but much of the rhetorical invocations of ‘Hiroshima’ by antinuclear activists over the years.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ Boyer, 312.

¹²² Ibid., 301-2.

¹²³ Dorothy Morrison, Roma Dehr, and Ronald Bazar. *We Can Do It!: A Kid’s Peace Book*. AMC Media Corp, 1985.

¹²⁴ Boyer, 298.

The passage from *We Can Do It!* exemplified how in discussions of the bomb, America tended to focus on the facts of the bomb itself rather than the bombings and their effects. The lack of detail in the passage beyond the statement that “the bomb *was dropped*, a city *was destroyed*” conveyed the idea that the event may not have been that significant in history.

In order to understand the atomic bomb’s role in American culture and the narrative that surrounded it, it is important to recognize what the American public knew about the weapon and its effects. As explained earlier, the strict censorship in occupied Japan kept the public from learning directly of the horrors of radiation. The American public had very little knowledge of the bombings for approximately one year.

On August 31, 1946, American author John Hersey’s story *Hiroshima* was printed in *The New Yorker*. Hersey’s story followed the lives of six individuals who survived the atomic bomb in Hiroshima.¹²⁵ Hersey’s *Hiroshima* was significant in that it showed the effects of the atomic bomb on individual people and humanized the event for the American public. The use of the atomic bomb against Japan was a military act and therefore the casualties that stemmed from it had been viewed as the human expense of war. It was far easier for the American public to come to terms with the mass casualty when it was only considered in terms of a number and individual victims were ignored. Hersey’s account however, focused on these individual victims and humanized the pain and suffering caused by the atomic bomb and for the first time, exposed the public to the bomb’s effects on people and not just on Japan as an enemy state.

During the war, the only exposure the American people had to the people of Japan was through propaganda that painted the Japanese as being particularly barbaric.

¹²⁵ John Hersey. *Hiroshima*. New York: Vintage Books, 1946.

Hersey's book, like the press coverage of the Hiroshima Maidens showed Americans a different version of the Japanese people. Again, much like the stories of the Hiroshima Maidens, Hersey's book portrayed the Japanese as victims. This was emphasized by the fact that the six individuals whose stories Hersey told were particularly sympathetic. Hersey introduced readers to Miss Toshiko Sasaki, a twenty-two year old woman who suffered permanent leg damage in the explosion, Dr. Masakazu Fujii, a physician, Mrs. Hatsuyo Nakamura, a widowed mother of three, Father Wilhelm Kleinsorge, a German priest, Dr. Terufumi Sasaki, a twenty-five year old surgeon at a Red Cross Hospital where he was the only doctor unharmed by the bomb, and Reverend Mr. Kiyoshi Tanimoto, a Methodist pastor.¹²⁶ Readers were able to empathize with these individuals which allowed Americans to indirectly connect to people they previously saw as their enemy. Historian Michael J. Yavenditti explained, "For perhaps the first time since Pearl Harbor thousands of Americans confronted Japanese who were ordinary human beings and who manifested few of the stereotyped Japanese warrior traits of fanaticism and sadism."¹²⁷

In addition to showing everyday Americans a different side of the Japanese, Hersey's text also painted a detailed picture of the terrible effects the bomb had on humans, a picture that Americans were previously shielded from. Hersey described the effects the bomb had on people in explicit detail. For instance he described the sights of Reverend Tanimoto in the immediate aftermath of the bombing as he tried to make his way to his family and his church. Hersey wrote,

"He was the only person making his way into the city; he met hundreds and hundreds who were fleeing, and every one of them seemed to be hurt in some

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Yavenditti, 36.

way. The eyebrows of some were burned off and skin hung from their faces and hands. Others, because of pain, held their arms up as if carrying something in both hands. Some were vomiting as they walked. Many were naked or in shreds of clothing. On some undressed bodies, the burns had made patterns – of undershirt straps and suspenders and, on the skin of some women (since white repelled the heat from the bomb and dark clothes absorbed it and conducted it to the skin), the shapes of flowers they had had on their kimonos. Many, although injured themselves, supported relatives who were worse off. Almost all had their heads bowed, looked straight ahead, were silent, and showed no expression whatsoever.”¹²⁸

Through passages such as this, Hersey brought the unimaginable to life for readers of his story.

It has been argued that despite the vast popularity of Hersey’s text, it had little effect on the way the public viewed the atomic bomb or its use.¹²⁹ While Hersey’s text did not create overwhelming public upheaval, it was the first portrayal of the bomb that challenged the positive narrative surrounding the bombings.¹³⁰ Stimson’s *Harper’s* article was published approximately six months after the release of *Hiroshima* and served to suppress negative opinions about the bomb that had slowly begun to spread. The notion that the bomb was the only successful means to end the war continued to spread through the media.

The idea that the bomb was determined to be the best strategy to elicit a Japanese surrender was present in the 1946 film, *The Beginning or the End*. *The Beginning or the End* was one of the first films to depict the events surrounding the creation and subsequent use of the atomic bomb.¹³¹ The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production was produced in conjunction with the White House, the Federation of American Scientists

¹²⁸ Hersey, 29.

¹²⁹ Yavenditti, 42.

¹³⁰ Patrick B. Sharp. “From Yellow Peril to Japanese Wasteland: John Hersey’s ‘Hiroshima.’” *Twentieth Century Literature* 46.4 (2002): 442.

¹³¹ Pressler, 40.

and the War Department.¹³² As the government endorsed the film, the film was strategic in how it portrayed the new weapon. Both the War Department and the White House accepted the written screenplay to be used in the film.¹³³ Groves himself agreed to the script and received payment in the sum of ten-thousand dollars for the rights to his piece of the narrative.¹³⁴ The film branded itself as telling the truth, yet it strayed from presenting the complete history of events.

In his 2003 article, “Atomic Warfare and the Nuclear Family: Domestic Resistance in Hollywood Films About the A-Bomb,” university professor, Michael Pressler noted that the film did not show that scientists who worked on the Manhattan Project objected to the use of the bomb.¹³⁵ By doing so, the film allowed for the public to maintain its favorable view of the bombing for if no one directly involved in the making of the bomb objected to its use, why should an everyday citizen with even less knowledge of the war and the bomb. The only objection in the film came from Quaker scientists who quickly withdrew their disapproval when the mission was classified as a weapons program.¹³⁶ In actuality, a number of scientists signed a petition to Truman dated July 17, 1945, in which they openly opposed the proposed use of the atomic bombs against Japan.¹³⁷ The petition stated,

“The war has to be brought speedily to a successful conclusion and attacks by atomic bombs may very well be an effective method of warfare. We feel, however, that such attacks on Japan could not be justified, at least not unless the terms which will be imposed after the war on Japan were made public in detail and Japan were given an opportunity to surrender.”¹³⁸

¹³² Yavenditti 45.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Pressler, 42.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 40.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 42.

¹³⁷ “A Petition to the President of the United States.” 17 July 1945. *Harry S. Truman Library & Museum*. Web.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

The letter also warned that there should be “seriou[s] consider[ation] [of] the moral responsibilities which are involved.”¹³⁹

In addition to excluding the opposing views of scientists involved in the bomb’s creation, the film also showed President Truman struggling to decide whether or not to use the bomb.¹⁴⁰ Yavenditti noted that the film showed “the great care with which the President proceeded by showing the actor playing President Truman suffering from sleepless nights and holding numerous conferences on the subject with his advisors.”¹⁴¹ By doing this, the film upheld the perception that the act of dropping the bomb was the result of great consideration and was ultimately determined to be the best course of action. Psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton and journalist Greg Mitchell explained in their 1995 book, *Hiroshima: Fifty Years of Denial*, that “early outlines and scripts raised doubts about the Hiroshima decision,” but ultimately, “The decision to use the bomb, in revised scripts was viewed as not merely justifiable but admirable.”¹⁴² This was similar to Stimson’s emphasis on the extensive decision-making process that preceded the use of the bomb in his article in *Harper’s*.

While Stimson explained that the government concluded that the sudden use of the bomb would be more effective than the use of the bomb following a public warning, *The Beginning or the End* did not display the series of events in that way. In what Manhattan Project veteran, Harrison Brown called a “most horrible falsification of history,” the film contained a scene in which pamphlets were distributed over Hiroshima

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ *The Beginning or the End*. Dir. Norman Taurog. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1947.

¹⁴¹ Yavenditti, 45.

¹⁴² Pressler, 42

ten days prior to the detonation of the bomb.¹⁴³ In actuality, of course, there was no such warning. *The Beginning or the End* illustrated how the United States spun the narrative that surrounded the creation and use of the atomic bomb. Of how *The Beginning or the End* so closely reflected the view of the government, Pressler suggested that what "...had been intended as a cautionary tale became an ostensible endorsement of the official stance."¹⁴⁴ The portrayals of the bomb in popular culture were representative of the facts and opinions initially reported by the press.

Over time, the portrayal of nuclear weapons in American films shifted to reflect the fears of the time period, but the general theme of the fear that stemmed from the initial atomic bomb was always there. There were a few instances in which films about the bomb were not rooted in fear and instead the bomb provided the basis for comedy. Generally speaking, as time went on, the destructive capabilities of the bomb were downplayed in films along with the bomb's toxicity to humans.

One film that portrayed the bomb as slightly less threatening was *The Atomic Kid*, a film produced in 1954 that starred Mickey Rooney. The opening credits rolled over an image of a mushroom cloud and the film opened with Rooney's character, a prospector named Barnaby Waterberry wandering through a desert with fellow prospector Stan Cooper.¹⁴⁵ The two men were traveling in search of uranium due to their belief that finding it would allow them to become incredibly wealthy. Rooney's character was depicted as highly naïve. At the beginning of the film, the men were lost in the desert

¹⁴³ Ibid., 41.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁵ *The Atomic Kid*. Dir. Leslie H. Martinson. Prod. Maurice Duke and Mickey Rooney. Republic Pictures, 1954.

and when asked what he did with the compass, Rooney's character replied that he had gotten rid of it because it did not work and would only point North.¹⁴⁶

The two men unknowingly stumbled into a nuclear test site.¹⁴⁷ They broke into a house to find it occupied by mannequins. Thinking that they discovered uranium, Stan left in a car the men discovered, but ran into the military that informed him that an atomic bomb was to be detonated in approximately one minute. He was told by a soldier that if Barnaby, known as "Blix," was "within a mile of that house, there [would] be nothing left of him."¹⁴⁸

Meanwhile Blix had made himself a peanut butter sandwich when he realized an atomic bomb was about to be detonated. He ran to take cover in a closet, only to run back out again to get his sandwich to bring into the closet with him. After the bomb went off, scientists and reporters rushed to the house where Blix, who had emerged from the house with his sandwich in hand, greeted them. Besides being covered in dirt, Blix was seemingly fine except for the when he spoke he spoke at twice the speed and sounded as if he had inhaled helium.¹⁴⁹ On occasion a ticking noise could be heard coming from his body.¹⁵⁰

At the hospital where Blix was treated, Stan was told by a physicist, "We have called many doctors, leading physicians and surgeons. They can find nothing organically wrong with your friend. His problem is more in the field of nuclear physics. He radiated

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ "The Screen in Review; Rooney is 'Atomic Kid' in Film on Palace Bill." *The New York Times* 4 Dec. 1954.

¹⁴⁸ *The Atomic Kid*. Dir. Leslie H. Martinson. Prod. Maurice Duke and Mickey Rooney. Republic Pictures, 1954.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ "The Screen in Review; Rooney is 'Atomic Kid' in Film on Palace Bill." *The New York Times* 4 Dec. 1954.

like pure U-235.”¹⁵¹ Ultimately Blix achieved international fame for his miraculous survival, yet became dehumanized in the process. An official in Washington, D.C. called him “the nation’s top secret” and suggested that he “might turn out to be the country’s foremost weapon for peace.”¹⁵² One radio station reported, “At the United Nations General Assembly ... the Russian delegate announced to the world that his country had invented its own Blix Waterberry.”¹⁵³

The film made minor references to current events. For instance, two communist spies attempted to kidnap Blix for experimentation purposes. In the end, he was able to apprehend both individuals on behalf of the FBI.¹⁵⁴ Ultimately, the *Atomic Kid* did not possess the underlying fear of nuclear annihilation that drove so many atomic bomb films. What the film did represent, however, was that popular culture in America was willing to present the atomic bomb in a comedic setting, something that Japanese popular culture, has understandably, never done. Additionally, the film did present the classic atomic bomb related theme of American superiority. Blix became an asset to the United States government both in terms of research and apprehending wanted spies. Blix became something that the United States had and other countries wanted as made evident by the fact that the Russian delegate to the United Nations claimed that the Soviet Union had created its own version of Blix. This was representative of the four-year span during which the United States was the only nation to possess nuclear capabilities.

¹⁵¹ *The Atomic Kid*. Dir. Leslie H. Martinson. Prod. Maurice Duke and Mickey Rooney. Republic Pictures, 1954.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ “The Screen in Review; Rooney is ‘Atomic Kid’ in Film on Palace Bill.” *The New York Times* 4 Dec. 1954.

Most atomic bomb films, however, embodied the fear that surrounded the invention of nuclear weapons. In 1965, filmmaker and writer, Susan Sontag, published a paper entitled, “The Imagination of Disaster,” in which she argued that the onslaught of science fiction films produced during the 1950s showed signs of “a mass trauma ... over the use of nuclear weapons.”¹⁵⁵ She was not alone in suggesting a psychological component to films about the atomic bomb. Psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton, for decades wrote, of “psychic numbing,” a phrase used to define America’s ambivalence to address the fears of nuclear weapons. The fear surrounding nuclear weapons could be seen in the 1964 Cold-War film, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*.

Dr. Strangelove, satirical in nature, told the fictional story of a rogue U.S. Air Force General who ordered a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁶ The President learned of the imminent attack only to discover that there was no course of action in place to stop the plane that carried the weapons.¹⁵⁷ This was representative of fears surrounding nuclear weapons during the Cold War Era. Not only was the government somewhat ill prepared to deal with such a crisis, but there was also the threat of retaliation. If the United States attacked the Soviet Union without provocation, the Soviet Union would strike back causing even more mass destruction. It is at this point in the film that the Soviet ambassador to the United States revealed to the leaders in the Pentagon’s War Room that the Soviet Union had successfully invented a doomsday

¹⁵⁵ Pressler, 41.

¹⁵⁶ *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*: Dir. Stanley Kubrick. Columbia Pictures, 1964.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

device that would inflict mass destruction on the United States if the Soviet Union were attacked.¹⁵⁸

While this film took place in the context of the Cold War, the original fears stemming from the Hiroshima bomb were present. The idea that major cities in two countries could fall victim to nuclear attacks was representative of the fear that spread after Hiroshima, the fear that any city could meet the same fate.¹⁵⁹ Even more prominent in the film, was the echoing theme that humanity possessed the means to destroy itself. In the film, multiple cities were facing annihilation at the hands of one rogue agent.¹⁶⁰ There was no system in place to reverse the chain of events he put in motion.¹⁶¹ This highlighted the horrible threat to global security. Man may have created something so scientifically great over which it had no control.

As serious as the underlying fears in *Dr. Strangelove* were, the film was a comedy. Stanley Kubrick, the film's director, characterized it as a "nightmare comedy," explaining that in the film "the things you laugh at most are really at the heart of the paradoxical postures that make nuclear war possible."¹⁶² The film was so much of a comedy that *The Guardian* named it the sixth "best comedy film of all time."¹⁶³ This again, was a way in which popular culture portrayals in America of the atomic bomb differed from those in Japan. The film was also highly imaginative in nature, another

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Boyer, 302.

¹⁶⁰ *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*: Dir. Stanley Kubrick. Columbia Pictures, 1964.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Maland, Charles. "Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb." *Cineaste* 42.1 (2016): 57.

¹⁶³ John Patterson. "Dr. Strangelove: No 6 Best Comedy Film of All Time." *The Guardian*, 18 Oct. 2010. Web.

characteristic that set American portrayals of the bomb apart from those of the Japanese.¹⁶⁴

The best example to highlight the differences in American and Japanese portrayals of the atomic bomb in the film is *Godzilla*. The original *Godzilla* film, *Godzilla*, premiered in Japan on November 3, 1954. This film was not the story of *Godzilla* that is known in America. In fact, the Japanese produced film did not make its debut in American theaters until 2004.¹⁶⁵ The production of *Godzilla* in Japan in 1954 was not the result of random timing. Rather, the film was in a way a response to the American hydrogen bomb test on Bikini Atoll in the Pacific.¹⁶⁶ On March 1st of that year, the United States performed the first test of the hydrogen bomb, a bomb estimated to be one thousand times stronger than the bomb detonated over Hiroshima.¹⁶⁷ At the time of the explosion, a Japanese fishing boat known as *The Lucky Dragon* was approximately eighty-five miles away from the blast site.¹⁶⁸ The men aboard the boat witnessed the flash and later became sick with symptoms of radiation poisoning while a few later died.¹⁶⁹ In the aftermath of the *Lucky Dragon* tragedy, producer Tomoyuki Tanaka had the idea for *Godzilla*.¹⁷⁰

Godzilla evoked the memory of the doomed fishing boat. The film opened on a fishing trawler in the Pacific Ocean and without warning, the sky flashed, fire erupted, and a mutant creature that rose from the depths of the ocean destroyed the boat.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁴ Schwenger and Treat, 240.

¹⁶⁵ Steve Ryfle "Godzilla's Footprint." *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 81.1 (2005): 45.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Aya Homei. "The Contentious Death of Mr Kuboyama: Science as Politics in the 1954 Lucky Dragon Incident." *Japan Forum* 25.2 (2013): 212.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ryfle, 49.

¹⁷¹ *Godzilla*. Dir. Ishiro Honda. Prod. Tomoyuki Tanaka. Toho, 1954.

Tanaka, the film's producer and Ishiro Honda, the film's director, had specific aims in conveying a message about nuclear weapons. Godzilla was intended to represent power much greater than that of a typical cinematic monster. In fact, Godzilla was meant to represent power greater than that possessed by mankind. His role was to serve as retribution against humanity for the suffering it brought upon the world. Tanaka explained, "The theme of the film, from the beginning, was the terror of the bomb. Mankind had created the bomb, and now nature was going to take revenge on mankind."¹⁷² Godzilla was a force of nature destined to punish humanity for its actions.

Ryfle argued that "For Honda, Godzilla was not a metaphor for the bomb but a physical manifestation of it."¹⁷³ Honda possessed direct knowledge of the effects the atomic bomb had on Hiroshima. Honda had served in the Japanese army and was captured and held in China as a prisoner of war until the war's end.¹⁷⁴ On his journey home, he traveled through Hiroshima and saw the decimated city for himself.¹⁷⁵ Speaking of his intentions in making Godzilla, Honda recalled, "If Godzilla had been a dinosaur or some other animal, he would have been killed by just one cannonball. But if he were equal to an atomic bomb, we wouldn't know what to do. So, I took the characteristics of an atomic bomb and applied them to Godzilla."¹⁷⁶

Honda's mission to portray Godzilla as the "physical manifestation" of the atomic bomb was successful. Godzilla embodied the fears that came with living in a world with

¹⁷² William M. Tsutsui. *Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004).

¹⁷³ Ryfle., 52.

¹⁷⁴ Peter H. Brothers. "Japan's Nuclear Nightmare: How the Bomb Became a Beast Called Godzilla." *Cineaste* 36.3 (2011): 36.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Steve Ryfle. *Japan's Favorite Mon-Star: The Unauthorized Biography of "The Big G."* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1998), 43.

nuclear weapons, that being, the fear of the unknown. In an analysis in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, film curator Kerry Brougher explained that Godzilla served as

“... a physical manifestation of the fear of the dark (most of his attacks come at night in the original film, and he remains unseen in the first several acts of carnage). Or, more accurately, the fear of that which cannot be seen, the fear of radiation, of the possibility of sickness and death descending unseen.”¹⁷⁷

Godzilla’s popularity and lasting impact in Japan was the result of the film representing the real feelings associated with the atomic bomb.

Two years after the release of Godzilla in Japan, or *Gojira*, as it was called, a film entitled *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* premiered in the United States.¹⁷⁸ The film was America’s answer to *Godzilla*. The overall theme of the film however, differed drastically from that of its Japanese counterpart. The American version of the film did not convey the same message regarding nuclear weapons. The Japanese film poignantly captured the fear of nuclear annihilation felt by so many after the first bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Following the use of the atomic bomb, Ishiro Honda explained, “There was a feeling that the world was already coming to an end. Ever since I felt that this atomic fear would hang around our necks for ever.”¹⁷⁹ The Japanese film captured this fear.

The American variation did not depict such a sense of doom. The most discernable example of the difference between the films comes at the end of each film. *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*, ends with a voiceover conveying a message of hope. The closing lines of the film stated, “The menace was gone. So was a great man. But the

¹⁷⁷ Kerry Brougher. “Art and Nuclear Culture. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 69.6 (2013): 13.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁷⁹ Tim Martin. “Godzilla: Why the Japanese Original is No Joke.” *The Telegraph* 15 May 2014. Web.

whole world could wake up and live again.”¹⁸⁰ In this film, the defeat of Godzilla restored peace and seemingly restored the world to what it was before Godzilla. The Japanese film, however, recognized that the defeat of Godzilla still left the future unknown. Instead of a message of hope, the film ended with one of caution. The film ended with the lines, “If we keep conducting nuclear tests, another Godzilla may appear somewhere in the world.”¹⁸¹ The film accepted that the world as it was once understood was lost with the inception of nuclear weapons and thus it presented the idea that in order to prevent a future defined by the terror of nuclear weapons and the threat of annihilation, steps needed to be taken in order to ensure that these weapons were limited and controlled.

The Bomb and Japanese Popular Culture

The best way to understand the influence the atomic bomb has had on American culture is to compare it to the influence the bomb had on Japanese culture. Japan has a unique perspective in regards to nuclear weapons, as they remain the only country to ever experience a nuclear attack. The first study into Japanese civilian’s opinions regarding the bomb came shortly after the war’s end. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey surveyed five thousand Japanese citizens and reported that twelve percent of the Japanese population and nineteen percent of the population of Hiroshima and Nagasaki indicated negative feelings towards the United States because of the atomic bomb.¹⁸² The survey also inquired as to whom people felt were to blame and reported that thirty-five percent of those surveyed found Japan to be responsible, while almost thirty percent listed no

¹⁸⁰ *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* Dir. Terry Morse and Ishiro Honda. Prod. Tomoyuki Tanaka. Toho, 1956.

¹⁸¹ *Godzilla*

¹⁸² Asada, 209.

particular nation as being at fault and instead found that the bomb was just a result of the war.¹⁸³

Another study exploring opinions toward the atomic bomb was conducted in 1971. This study was administered by the Japanese newspaper, *Asahi Shimbun* and surveyed U.S. citizens. The paper reported that sixty-four percent of those surveyed found that America's use of the atomic bomb "could not have been helped" and that twenty-one percent called America's use of the weapon a "mistake."¹⁸⁴ While these results were not surprising given the results of previous polls conducted in the United States, the Japanese public who had not had access to these studies was stunned by the vast approval by those in the United States.¹⁸⁵ The report in *Asahi Shimbun* indicated the idea, "that the Japanese people had not fulfilled the great responsibility to themselves and to the world to tell the truth about atomic devastation."¹⁸⁶

Regardless of whether or not this was true at the time, this has been a responsibility that the Japanese people have taken strongly in the seventy-one years since the bombings. Japanese popular culture has been dedicated to preserving the memory of the victims of the bomb and telling their stories as a way to dissuade future uses of atomic weapons. The most popular medium through which the Japanese told the stories of the atomic bombs was comics.

Comics depicting atomic weapons became commonplace in both Japan and the United States in the decades after World War II. This said, comics contributed more to the collective Japanese narrative of the atomic bomb than that of America. Comics made

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

a great impact at the time due to their widespread nature. In their article, “Atomic Heroes and Atomic Monsters: American and Japanese Cartoonists Confront the Onset of the Nuclear Age, 1945-80,” historians Ferenc Szasz and Issei Takechi evaluated the portrayal of the atomic bomb in cartoons from both Japan and the United States during the postwar period. Explaining the nature of the cartoons popularity, they wrote,

“In the immediate years after the close of the Second World War, American and Japanese comic book/*manga* artists both reflected and helped shape their respective worlds of popular culture. Perhaps the picture-and-text combination of comic books/*manga* might be best understood as a medium of popular storytelling. Rivalled only by radio, film, and (eventually) television, for a quarter century after the war, the lowly comic book reached a vast, if ultimately uncharitable, audience. Read by millions, these easy-to-comprehend stories helped forge the atomic outlook for each generation.”¹⁸⁷

While cartoons contributed greatly to the atomic narrative of both nations, the themes of the comics differed significantly between the two countries.

The differences in the cartoons from both countries reflected those between the 1954 Japanese production of *Godzilla* and America’s 1956 film, *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*. Japanese comics placed a responsibility on their readers similar to that *Godzilla* placed on humanity. The responsibility to prevent future uses of nuclear weapons. The American comics presented no such idea.

The American atomic bomb comics were similar to *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* in that they did not address atomic power as a lasting threat. Instead of presenting specific themes indicative of the atomic bomb, American comics simply introduced atomic bombs into their typical storylines. For instance the atomic bomb

¹⁸⁷ Szasz, Ferenc M. and Issei Takechi. “Atomic Heroes and Atomic Monsters: American and Japanese Cartoonists Confront the Onset of the Nuclear Age, 1945-80. *The Historian* 69.4 (2007): 728.

found its way into the stories of both Superman and Batman.¹⁸⁸ In 1948, a sweepstakes for Cheerios, designed by Carl Barks, a cartoonist for Disney, called “Donald Duck’s Atom Bomb,” told the short story of Donald Duck building an atomic bomb.¹⁸⁹ In the cartoon, a thief took Donald’s plans for building the weapon, however, it turned out that the only negative effect of the bomb was that it caused hair loss.¹⁹⁰ Clearly this story downplayed the dangers of nuclear weapons.

Diminishing the threat of the atomic bomb was common in American cartoons. Szasz and Takechi explained that, “Unlike their Japanese counterparts, American Funny Animals expressed no concern over issues of radiation. In fact, radioactivity provided most of them with their superpowers.”¹⁹¹ An example of this, was Charlton Comics’ *Atomic Mouse*, a highly popular cartoon that boasted adaptations for both film and television. *Atomic Mouse* told the story of “Cimota Mouse” who was victimized and described as “insignificant,” until he was given pills containing U-235.¹⁹² Cimota Mouse, who became Atomic Mouse when he took the pills hoped that they would help him to “keep law and order” and he was officially tasked with “helping to keep peace and order throughout the universe.”¹⁹³ This was reflective of two much larger themes that defined the American perspective of the atomic bomb. The idea of justice and that the United States used the atomic bomb to end the brutal war that Japan started, an idea that was reminiscent of Truman’s initial statement that Japan was “repaid many fold” for the Pearl Harbor attack. Additionally, *Atomic Mouse* portrayed atomic power with the same

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ *Donald Duck’s Atom Bomb*. Cheerios Giveaway, Walt Disney Corporation, 1947.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Szasz and Ferenc, 742.

¹⁹² *Atomic Mouse*. 001st ed. Vol. 1. Charlton Comics, 1953.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

triumphalist attitude that the American public viewed the atomic bomb. Atomic Mouse had superpowers such as the ability to travel at super speed and the ability to fly.¹⁹⁴ This was representative of the idea that the atomic bomb exemplified America's technological prowess beyond that of other countries.

Japanese comics, or manga, focused on what the discovery of atomic power meant for the future of humanity and highlighted the fact that the future was no longer guaranteed. Humanity had after all, as many believed, developed the means to destroy itself. In 1949, for example, Tezuka Osamu, a former doctor, created the manga *Metropolis* that ended with a warning similar to that at the end of *Godzilla*, although *Godzilla* would not be created for another five years. It warned, "The creation of life made possible by the consumption of modern technology has only resulted in disturbing our society. Technology may get out of control and be used against mankind someday."¹⁹⁵ Japanese comics intentionally called attention to the harsh reality of the threat of nuclear weapons, warning of what could happen if future weapons were used.

Ultimately, comics played a much larger role in influencing the narrative surrounding the atomic bomb in Japan than in the United States. Part of the reason comics were so important in Japan was because they addressed the issues related to the atomic bomb long before other mediums of popular culture. While American censorship in occupied Japan ended when the U.S. military left Japan in 1951, the new Japanese government continued to halt the spread of information regarding the atomic bomb in some instances until the 1970s.¹⁹⁶ This form of censorship permitted cartoonists to address topics that could not be presented in other mediums. Additionally, comics

¹⁹⁴ *Atomic Mouse*. 004th ed. Vol. 1. Charlton Comics, 1953.

¹⁹⁵ Szasz and Takechi, 737

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 740

remained a popular form of entertainment in Japan for longer than they did in the United States as television began to replace comics in the U.S.. This is why manga addressing the atomic bomb remains popular in Japan today, while such comics in America are considered stories of the past.

The most famous atomic bomb manga in Japan to this day is *Hadashi no Gen*, known in the English-speaking world as *Barefoot Gen*. *Barefoot Gen* was created by Keiji Nakazawa in 1972.¹⁹⁷ Nakazawa had first-hand experience with the atomic bomb. He was six years old on August 6, 1945, when the first atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima where his family resided and he was only one mile away from the bomb's point of impact.¹⁹⁸ While many members of Nakazawa's family died in the attack, his mother survived, only to die from leukemia that resulted from the bomb's radiation in 1966.¹⁹⁹ *Barefoot Gen* partially told Nakazawa's story, but it also told the story of all victims of the atomic bomb.

Barefoot Gen spanned ten books, the first of which was translated into multiple languages. *Barefoot Gen* was also made into multiple movies and was performed as a musical in New York City.²⁰⁰ In 1976, Project Gen, a not for profit organization, was started in Tokyo as the result of a joint effort between Japanese and American citizens.²⁰¹ Project Gen was the force behind the translation of the *Barefoot Gen* books into English as it hoped to expose its "ban the bomb" theme to an American audience.²⁰² *Barefoot Gen* achieved widespread popularity in Japan as project Gen member, Alan Gleason

¹⁹⁷ Nakazawa, Keiji. "From 'Barefoot Gen.'" *Manoa* 13.1 (2001): 124.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Hong, 127.

explained, by serving “as a unique resource for educating young people about the horrors of nuclear war.”²⁰³ The story, however was also met with criticism from Japan’s conservative population as it was critical of the “militarist leadership that led Japan into war.”²⁰⁴

Barefoot Gen was received much differently in America. Notably, it did not have the widespread audience it had in Japan. It was initially available exclusively in liberal bookshops on the West Coast.²⁰⁵ *Barefoot Gen* was a large departure from the narrative of the atomic bomb to which Americans were typically exposed. It introduced American readers to the experiences of those who were on the other side of the atomic bomb story. In her analysis of the cartoon, literature professor, Christine Hong explained, “Reflecting an emergent no-nukes sensibility within the US comics market, the manga’s early US circulation signaled a shift away from heroic figurations of American superpower, not to mention Cold War zombies and atomic mutants, to a more sobering historical reflection on the human toll of US nuclear power.”²⁰⁶ Notoriously, the United States did not generally consider the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in terms of the people who were affected. The U.S. generally stuck to the triumphalist narrative and the one that hailed the bomb as a scientific achievement. *Barefoot Gen* was the first source to truly expose the United States’ public to the Japanese experience.

This was important to Nakazawa who longed to spread non-proliferation ideals. Nakazawa explained, “Today the nuclear arms race proceeds unabated, unquestioned and accepted as inevitable by far too many. Now, more than ever, people all over the world

²⁰³ Nakazawa, 124.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Hong, 127.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

must take a hard look at the facts about those first primitive weapons used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”²⁰⁷ This was a direct reference to the American belief that the bomb’s inception and use was inescapable. If the United States did not develop a method for separating uranium isotopes, another nation would have. The German discovery of nuclear fission in 1938 guaranteed the eventual development of the atomic bomb. In the words of a reporter for *Time* magazine, “The world had no choice, but to grope ahead into the Atomic Age.”²⁰⁸

Barefoot Gen told the story of a young boy named Gen in the lead up to and aftermath of the Hiroshima bomb. The first book in the series, *Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon History of Hiroshima*, focused predominantly on Gen’s life in wartime Japan prior to the atomic bomb. *Barefoot Gen* was interesting because it was not particularly anti-American in its presentation. Gen and his family members were depicted as victims, but more so as victims of the Japanese war effort and of the war itself, than anything else. Notably, Gen and his family were characterized as victims long before the atomic bomb was ever dropped over Hiroshima.

Anti-war messages were widely visible in *Barefoot Gen*. These messages were highlighted by the contrast between Gen’s war opposed family and their neighbors who adamantly supported the conflict. Gen’s father was particularly against the war. Hong described him as “an ardent pacifist and nationalistic critic of Japan’s pan-Asian imperial ambition.”²⁰⁹ He maintained that Japan had no reason to continue fighting the war as there was no way they could defeat the United States.²¹⁰ He made statements such as,

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Szasz and Takechi, 730.

²⁰⁹ Hong, 137.

²¹⁰ Nakazawa, Keiji. *Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon History of Hiroshima*. Trans. Project Gen (San Francisco:

“The Americans are attacking in broad daylight now. Japan will lose the war for sure.”²¹¹ Which he supported by saying, “Japan doesn’t even have enough warplanes to defend itself.”²¹² Adamant that Japan should withdraw from the conflict he stated, “America has more resources than Japan does. A small country like Japan can only survive by foreign trade. We should keep peace with the rest of the world.”²¹³

Gen’s father not only blamed Japan for staying in the war, but for starting it in the first place. He argued that the war was a result of the government’s greed and that the involvement in the war was not in the best interest of Japan’s everyday citizens. He complained, “The military was misled by the rich. They started the war to grab resources by force, and drew us all in ...”²¹⁴ Gen’s father said these things much to the dismay of Gen’s mother who knew her husband’s statements could get him and the family in trouble with the police. This is not to say Gen’s mother supported the war. She herself at one point stated about wartime Japan, “If this is what Japan is, it might as well be wiped out.”²¹⁵

Gen’s father was eventually arrested for his anti-war opinions, which led to a very revealing exchange of dialogue. He told the police,

“I-I’ve already cooperated enough with the war effort ... My eldest son, Koji, has given up his studies to work in a factory, making weapons ... There are no metal pots and pans left in our house ... they were all taken away to make warships, tanks and guns. My children go hungry every day ... They fight over one potato, one grain of rice ... why? Because the military takes all the food. Yet we put up with all of it. How can you say we’re not cooperating? How can you call us traitors?!”²¹⁶

Last Gap of San Francisco, 2005).

²¹¹ Ibid., 6.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid., 13.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Hong, 139.

²¹⁶ Nakazawa, Keiji. *Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon History of Hiroshima*. Trans. Project Gen (San Francisco: Last Gap of San Francisco, 2005), 33.

When a police officer replied by telling him, “Shut up! That’s a matter of course for a Japanese!” Gen’s father argued back asking, “How can poor people like us cooperate any more than this?!”²¹⁷

Barefoot Gen showed the sacrifices Japanese citizens were forced to make in the name of the war effort. When young children complained of hunger they were told, “[They] have to do without so the soldiers can eat rice and win the war...”²¹⁸ Children were also forced to leave school to instead be employed in factories.²¹⁹ The book also showed how children were taught in school to support the war effort and that they had to be loyal to the emperor before all else. Gen’s teacher told his class, “Japan is a sacred country. The wind of the gods will blow away any enemies that come near. Japan will win the war for sure. The Emperor is the God of Japan. You are all the Emperor’s children. You must all grow up to be strong Japanese, willing to go anywhere the Emperor commands and then give up your lives for him.”²²⁰

Barefoot Gen showed how the Japanese people were at the mercy of their government and how the government forced particular views on its people by teaching specific ideas in school. For instance, in the book, young children were writing letters in class that were to be sent to Japanese soldiers. One student wrote, “Dear Soldiers, I hope you are well. When I grow up, I will become a soldier too and kill lots of horrible American soldiers. Keep up the good work.”²²¹ One young girl opened her letter by

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 15.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 7.

²²⁰ Ibid., 51.

²²¹ Ibid., 52.

writing, “Dear soldiers: Thank you for fighting for our country against the American and British devils ...”²²² These were clearly not thoughts the children had on their own.

Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon History of Hiroshima heavily articulated the idea that the everyday people of Japan were victims of their government and the war effort. This was highlighted by the fact that unlike his classmates, Gen was exposed to ideas other than those propagated by the government. For instance, Gen befriended a local Korean man by the name of Mr. Pak. Mr. Pak was the only person who looked out for and helped Gen’s family. On one occasion, Mr. Pak told Gen, “After Japan colonized Korea, we were brought here by force – to work, or to serve as soldiers on the front lines ... we Koreans are suffering terribly from this war...”²²³ This scene presented a negative act committed by the Japanese government during the war, something that Japanese portrayals of the war and the atomic bomb rarely addressed. Most Japanese children had no idea at the time that their government was doing such things.

The book even elaborated on the Korean experience at the hands of the Japanese. It stated, “Korean and Chinese people are brought here and forced to help with Japan’s war effort. They’re treated like cattle... It’s all because of the war. In the coal mines they hardly get any food ... They’re thrown in the pits and worked to death ... Up north in Hokkaido, they work in the snow till they die from cold and hunger...”²²⁴ It was incredibly rare for a piece of work illustrating the impact the atomic bomb had on Japan to address atrocities committed by Japan during the war both domestically and overseas.

Barefoot Gen highlighted the desperate situations Japanese citizens were forced into as a result of the war. One passage informed readers, “War education taught the

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid., 70.

²²⁴ Ibid., 72.

Japanese that it was an honor to die for the Emperor. People were brainwashed into throwing their lives away.”²²⁵ The passage was accompanied by drawings of Japanese citizens jumping off cliffs and plunging to their deaths after the U.S. military successfully conquered their town.²²⁶ As they were drowning they sang, “Whether I die at sea or on land, My death is for the Emperor, I have nothing to regret...”²²⁷ This showed the extent to which the Japanese government had control over its citizens. The Japanese people were made to believe by their government, that they should commit suicide instead of surrendering.

As the story progressed, it depicted the escalating horrors Japanese citizens were subjected to by their government, as it grew desperate as the war progressed. The book emphasized the government’s order to “fight to the last man!”²²⁸ Toward the end of the war, the Japanese government was struggling to maintain the public’s support and as the book explained, “the war leaders tried to repress the growing dissatisfaction of the people by tossing them in jail. Military and police authorities were used to force everyone to cooperate with the war effort.”²²⁹ Nakazawa presented the fact that as the American military put more and more pressure on Japan, the Japanese government forced students to give their lives to the war effort by clasp bombs and jumping in front of the U.S. military’s tanks.²³⁰

Nakazawa provided unlimited evidence to support the idea that the Japanese people terrorized by the atomic bomb had already suffered at the hands of their own

²²⁵ Ibid., 108.

²²⁶ Ibid., 107-8.

²²⁷ Ibid., 108.

²²⁸ Ibid., 110.

²²⁹ Ibid., 176.

²³⁰ Ibid., 180.

government. Children starved and people were brainwashed into supporting the war effort to the point that they would kill themselves to avoid accepting defeat. While Nakazawa presented an honest account of the Japanese experience during the war, the overwhelming evidence used to show that the Japanese civilians killed by the atomic bomb were innocent victims, and that their government was to blame for the war, actually provided support for the American rationale that the use of the bomb was necessary to end the war and save both American and Japanese lives.

Art Spiegelman, the creator of *Maus*, the perhaps best known graphic novel, argued that “by locating the causes of the bombings exclusively in the evils of Japanese militaristic nationalism..., Nakazawa may make the work a little *too* pleasurable for American and British readers.”²³¹ The first *Barefoot Gen* book stressed Japan’s unwillingness to surrender. By portraying the desperate measures that Japan took, such as turning students into suicide bombers, it showed that the Japanese would go to any length not to surrender. This indirectly provided support for the idea that America needed to force Japan to surrender. Hong also commented on the fact that Nakazawa’s story in some ways supported the American rationale for the use of the atomic bomb. She argued that the book’s portrayal of the Potsdam Conference read “as though ripped out of an Occupied Japan history textbook.”²³² Nakazawa specifically stated that the Allies “presented Japan with a demand for a cease-fire and unconditional surrender. Japan was also warned that further resistance would only result in the defeat of her armies and the destruction of the Japanese homeland.”²³³

²³¹ Hong, 140.

²³² Ibid., 140-1.

²³³ Ibid., 140.

Nakazawa's inadvertent support for the American narrative can perhaps best be explained by John Whittier Treat's analysis of Japanese portrayals of Hiroshima in "America's Hiroshima, Hiroshima's America." He explained, "It is important to remind ourselves that speaking of America's 'Hiroshima' and Hiroshima's 'America' cannot ever mean speaking in compensatorily balanced equivalencies. As the target of nuclear war, and then as client state and proxy, the Japanese have never been as free to construe 'America' as vice versa."²³⁴ Treat argued that the United States has always been able to openly discuss Hiroshima, and Japan for that matter, in its discussions about the atomic bomb. This, he stated, even allowed for the United States to exclude Hiroshima from the narrative entirely.²³⁵ Japan on the other hand, when discussing the atomic bomb, was forced to approach the role of America with caution. This explained why there were few, if any, examples of Japanese stories of the bomb that outwardly placed blame on the United States.

The most important aspect of the *Barefoot Gen* series was its anti-nuclear message. This was more apparent as the series progressed and as the story moved farther from August 6, 1945. However, there were elements throughout the series that supported the argument for a non-nuclear future. *Barefoot Gen* showed the horrors of nuclear warfare and the devastating effects it had on people, much like Hersey's *Hiroshima* did. In *Barefoot Gen*, however, there were images to depict the physical injuries the bomb inflicted. *Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon History of Hiroshima* showed children burning to death. The second book in the series, *Barefoot Gen: The Day After*, took place in the immediate aftermath of the Hiroshima bomb. The book contained drawings of corpses

²³⁴ Schwenger and Treat, 238.

²³⁵ Ibid.

with burns covering their bodies and maimed survivors with their intestines outside their bodies.²³⁶ Scenes of death seemed to surround Gen wherever he went.²³⁷

Barefoot Gen and other Japanese books containing images were the most explicit in recognizing the effects the atomic bombs had on human beings. Other stories, both from the United States and Japan told the stories of victims, however, they never considered the victims much in terms of the trauma they endured. One such victim was Sadako Sasaki. Sadako Sasaki was only two years old when the atomic bomb was dropped over Hiroshima, her home city, and while she survived seemingly unscathed, in 1954 at the age of ten, she was diagnosed with acute leukemia.²³⁸ While in the hospital receiving treatment, she recalled an old Japanese story in which if someone were to successfully fold one thousand cranes out of paper, they would have a wish come true.²³⁹ Sasaki began to fold paper cranes in hope that when she completed folding her thousandth one she would be cured of her leukemia and while she did fold over a thousand paper cranes, she died in October of 1955 at the age of twelve.²⁴⁰

Sasaki's tragic story was the subject of many published stories. The best-known version of her story was written by Eleanor Coerr and was published as a children's book in 1977, entitled *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. Coerr, the wife of a Canadian politician, lived in Japan for a short period after the war.²⁴¹ While she was not American, Coerr's story was considered to be representative of the North American perspective of the atomic bomb, a perspective that was seemingly that of the United States.

²³⁶ Nakazawa, Keiji. *Barefoot Gen: The Day After*. Trans. Dadakai and Project Gen (London: Penguin Books), 1990.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Yurita, Makito and Reade W. Dornan. "Hiroshima: Whose Story is It?" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 34.3 (2009): 230.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

In *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, Coerr was brief in her explanation of the event of the bombing itself. The prologue of her text, which served to introduce both Sadako and the bomb simply stated, “She was in Hiroshima when the United States Air Force dropped an atom bomb on that city in an attempt to end World War II. Ten years later she died as a result of radiation from the bomb.”²⁴² Coerr was so brief in her discussion of the bomb that she did not even suggest whether or not the bomb was successful in bringing about an end to World War II. In doing this she was able to avoid offering an opinion on the bomb’s use.

Coerr’s story of Sadako began with Sadako anxiously waiting for her family to go to the remembrance event on the August 6th anniversary of the Hiroshima bomb. Coerr’s depiction of Sadako’s excitement rivaled that of a young American child for Fourth of July festivities. First, Sadako referred to the event as a “carnival,” for which she was scolded by her mother.²⁴³ Coerr wrote of Sadako’s memories of the prior year’s Peace Day, writing, “She loved the crowds of people, the music, and fireworks. Sadako could still taste the spun cotton candy.”²⁴⁴ She subsequently wrote, “The best part, Sadako thought, was looking at all the things to buy and smelling the good food. There were stalls selling everything from bean cakes to chirping crickets. The worst part was seeing people with ugly whitish scars. The atom bomb had burned them so badly that they no longer looked human.”²⁴⁵ This was Coerr’s only mention of the effects the bomb had on people.

²⁴² Coerr, Eleanor. *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. Illus. Ronald Himler (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1977), 7.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes altered the true story of Sadako folding one thousand paper cranes. In actuality, Sadako had completed over one thousand cranes before she died. In Coerr's story however, Sadako was only able to complete six hundred and forty four cranes before she became too weak to continue.²⁴⁶ In Coerr's version of the story, Sadako's classmates completed the remaining three hundred and fifty six cranes, allowing Sadako to be buried in the company of all one thousand paper cranes.²⁴⁷ Coerr's story ended with an explanation of how Sadako's classmates arranged for a statue to be built of Sadako in honor of "her and all children who were killed by the atomic bomb."²⁴⁸ The statue at Hiroshima Peace Park was completed in 1958 and beneath it read the words, "This is our cry, this is our prayer; peace in the world."²⁴⁹ This was Coerr's reference to the hope for a nuclear weapon free future.

Coerr's story of Sadako was met with various criticisms. Aki Sakuma of Joetsu University in Japan disagreed with the fact that Coerr's story, as the most well-known account of the juvenile experience of the atomic bomb in North America, focused so intently on one child suffering from the effects of radiation, when so many met similar fates.²⁵⁰ This was evident when Coerr wrote that the statue at the Hiroshima Peace Park was a tribute to Sadako. Sakuma objected to this statement arguing that the statue was dedicated to all the children who lost their lives as a result of the war.²⁵¹ that the text's intense focus on Sadako may have led to Sadako Sasaki being a more well-known figure in America than she is in Japan.²⁵²

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 64.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Yurita and Dornan, 231.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

The primary issue with Coerr's text was that she ignored completely the fact that people were outraged by the use of the atomic bomb. Her book made no indication that the bombing was at all controversial. By ignoring the controversial nature of the atomic bomb, Coerr contributed nothing to the international discussion of the bomb. Gaps exist today in the historical narrative of the bomb because people have ignored opportunities to mend opinions. Books such as Coerr's *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* did not address the bomb's horrendous consequences for human beings in the way Japanese comics had. Americans have continually displayed an unwillingness to remember and consider the bombings, in spite of vast public support. This is the result of a long-established ignorance of the facts of the bombings and a calculated campaign by officials to promote a narrative that disregarded those facts and portrayed the bomb in a positive light.

Conclusion

In Japan today, the atomic bomb is still prevalent in education and in popular culture. Japan continues to emphasize the horrors of war through programs aimed at children. Japan hopes that by exposing children to the awfulness of war, their generation will not see war as a solution to international disagreements. Each August, children's programs host showings of animated films that portray this anti-war message.²⁵³ These films are similar to Japanese children's books that depict the atomic bomb in that they do not shy away from presenting graphic accounts of nuclear warfare. For example, one film, *Kuro ga ita Natsu*, or, *A Summer with Kuro*, tells the story of two children who live with their parents and their kitten, Kuro, in Hiroshima. The children and the parents

²⁵³ Nakamaru, Ryotaro. "Anime Teaching Kids About A-Bombs." *The Japan Times* 7 Aug. 2014. Web.

survive the bomb's initial blast only to find Kuro dead and covered in burns.²⁵⁴ This is a visibly morbid story for children.

In the United States, however, the atomic bomb seemed to fade from our national consciousness when the Cold War came to an end. Since then, the only true mention of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are when their memories are evoked in support of non-proliferation movements. In the United States, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are the events that marked the end of the Second World War, and in that way, they are history.

The bombings are not remembered in America in the way other events of World War II are. There are no formal commemorations held on August 6th and 9th each year. For the most part, Hiroshima and Nagasaki are only remembered in regards to discussions related to the future use of atomic weapons. There is an apprehension in the United States toward remembering the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki despite widespread approval for the use of the bombs. This is the result of decades of ignorance of the facts of the bombings coupled with a calculated campaign by public officials to promote a narrative that disregarded those facts and portrayed the bomb in a favorable light.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

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