

## EMBRACING HIROSHIMA

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*Abstract: The main purpose of this paper is to examine an episode in John Hersey's book *Hiroshima* (1946) and the occupational policy of General Headquarters (GHQ), the organization which administered the defeated land of Japan during the Occupied Era (1945-1952). It is John Dower and his readers that should be interested in the episode because in his seminal work, *Embracing Defeat* (1999), Dower touches on Hiroshima in terms of the GHQ's censorship of Japanese writings about the atomic bombs dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. What matters most in terms of the episode is that in 1951 the GHQ allowed copies of *Hiroshima* to be imported from the United States to be sold in Japan. In the same year some of Japan's university professors were invited to teach it in their English classes. A controversy over the use of this work as a textbook arose among Japanese university teachers of English, and Rintaro Fukuhara and Takashi Nozaki exemplified these opinions. Their contrasting views on the text suggest the ways in which intellectuals or academics can or cannot cope under the pressure of a hegemonic cultural power.<sup>1</sup>*

The purpose of this paper is to show an episode that John Dower, the author of *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (1999), should be interested in. It examines John Hersey's famous non-fiction book *Hiroshima* (1946), as well as the occupational policy of the General Headquarters (GHQ's)

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in censoring any atomic bomb related writings published in Occupied Japan (1945-1952). Most importantly, the episode shows the ways in which Japanese academics negotiated with, if not directly resisted, the power of the GHQ and of the United States. Their reactions to the GHQ give us insights into the effects of censorship on intellectuals as well as academic freedom during occupation.

### I. *Hiroshima* in 1951, Japan

In Chapter 14 of *Embracing Defeat*, “Censored Democracy: Policing the New Taboos,” Dower discusses “a new taboo” against the atomic bombs that the US Army dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

Writing about the atomic-bomb experience was not explicitly proscribed, and in the year or so following the surrender, especially in local publications in the Hiroshima area, a number of writers were able to publish prose and poetry on the subject. At the same time, however, survivors such as Nagai Takashi found their early writings suppressed, many bomb-related writings were severely cut, and the most moving English-language publication on the subject – John Hersey’s *Hiroshima*, a sparse portrait of six survivors that made a profound impression when published in *The New Yorker* in August 1946 – though mentioned in the media, could not be published in translation until 1949. (Dower, 1999: 414)

It seems unnecessary to talk much about Hersey’s *Hiroshima*. This famous reportage holds a secure place in the history of the twentieth century American journalism. In 1993, Bart Barnes wrote an obituary to Hersey (1917 - 1993) in *The Washington Post* that “it was in *Hiroshima* that Mr. Hersey produced a literary classic and made publishing history with a non-polemical description of the atomic blast in the Japanese city of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945” (Barns 1993). The most important phrase is “a non-polemical description,” suggesting that Hersey focused not on who dropped the first atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima but on how six people experienced the terrible explosion and survived it. Due to this “non-polemical description,” “as a book *Hiroshima* sold 118,000 copies in hardcover and more than 3.4 million in paperback” (ibid.), and the GHQ permitted the Japanese translation of the book to be published in 1949. No Japanese readers of the book could find such a straightforward description that,

for example, the US Army dropped the Fat Man on Hiroshima City and killed tens of thousands of civilians there. A simple question lingers here. In 1949, did Japanese people welcome and accept (or embrace) Hersey's "non-polemical description" of the atomic blast that destroyed Hiroshima city? The *Hiroshima* controversy that I will discuss in what follows can be a key to answering the question.

## II. To Read *Hiroshima* or not to Read It

In 1951, *The Rising Generation (Eigo Seinen)*, one of the most influential monthly magazine in the field of English Studies in Japan<sup>2</sup>, ran a short article entitled "*Hiroshima* is Being Sold in Japan" ("*Hiroshima* no kokunai hanbai"). John Hersey's *Hiroshima* is now being sold by Hosei University Press<sup>3</sup> (Fujimicho, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo), which is a special case. The original publisher Knopf volunteers to sell the book with no care for commercial concerns – a copy of it costs \$1.75 [US dollars], but it is sold in Japan for 200 hundred yen<sup>4</sup> – because the original publisher would like to support the '*No more Hiroshimas*' movement and to make a contribution to the peace of the world. It is said that bulk orders of the book for textbook, for instance, will be further considered in terms of price. (*The Rising Generation*, June 1951, 45)<sup>5</sup>

It is too naïve to believe in Alfred Knopf's spirit of volunteerism or the publisher's "support" for peace movements. The phrase "which is a special case"

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<sup>2</sup>*The Rising Generation*, or *Eigo Seinen* (most of the articles are written in Japanese), has a 115 years history (from 1898 to 2009 in print; to 2013 in web), and has long been regarded as a kind of the official report of English and American literary studies, English linguistics and English education in the twentieth century Japanese society. *The Web Eigo Seinen* ceased to exist in March 2013.

<sup>3</sup>Hosei University Press (Hosei Diagaku Shuppan Kyoku) was founded in 1948, and it is this publisher that published the first Japanese translation of *Hiroshima* in 1949 that was in truth the publisher's first publication. Since then, Hosei UP has published innumerable academic translations of European and Anglo-American philosophies and literatures.

<sup>4</sup>In 1951, one dollar was equal to 360 yen. Undoubtedly, Knopf and Hosei UP sold *Hiroshima* at a bargain price.

<sup>5</sup>Except for Hersey 1946, Barnes 1993 and Dower 1999, all the quotations in this paper are translated from Japanese texts into English by the author of the paper.

strongly suggests the presence of an organization that made the selling of copies of *Hiroshima* “special.” A certain organization directly or indirectly controlled the event, and it is safe to conclude that GHQ, the organization that had allowed a Japanese translation to be published in 1949, making copies of *Hiroshima* to be available for Japanese students in 1951 - so that they were invited to read a “non-polemical description” about Hiroshima and the atomic bomb. They could gratify their desire to know about what happened, but they could hardly think about who was responsible for the bombing. The important fact is that the proliferation of the book *Hiroshima* within Japanese society brought about a controversy. Two months later, the same *Eigo Seine* ran another short article entitled “*Hiroshima* Chosen as Textbook” (“*Hiroshima* kyokasho ni”).

We have already reported here that John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* was made available in Japan. The news is that the book was chosen as a textbook in eight universities including the University of Hiroshima. *Asahi Shimbun* (May 23) reported university teachers’ contrasting opinions on this issue. Professor Takashi Nozaki (Chuo University<sup>6</sup>) chose *Hiroshima* and told the newspaper that “I would like to teach living American English and with this book in hand I would also like to ponder on peace.” Professor Rintaro Fukuhara (Tokyo University of Education<sup>7</sup>), who rejected it, told: “it takes almost one year to teach it in our classes, and many of my colleagues told me that it was terrible to teach, in each class hour, the fact that people were killed in air raids.” (*The Rising Generation*, August 1951, 45)

It is here I introduce Nozaki and Fukuhara, who are less known in and outside Japan, in order to address what matters in this quotation. Nozaki (1917 – 1995) was born in Hirosaki, a city in the Aomori Prefecture, in the northern part of the mainland of Japan, Honshu. He studied English Literature at Tokyo Imperial University in 1941. He started his academic career in Hirosaki but soon moved to Tokyo. He taught English literature in Chuo University (1950); Tokyo

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<sup>6</sup>Established in 1885, the university has been long (and still is) regarded as one of the most popular and famous private universities in the Tokyo area.

<sup>7</sup>Tokyo Higher Normal School was founded in 1872 as a kind of the *École normale supérieure* in order to train high school and university teachers. The name of the school has changed three times: Tokyo University of Science and Literature (1929); Tokyo University of Education (1949); University of Tsukuba (1973 - present).

Metropolitan University<sup>8</sup> (1971-1981); Teikyo University (1981-1995)<sup>9</sup>. In his life he has been a prolific translator of American literature: his translations include Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor*, to name a few.<sup>10</sup> His fame as a translator still owes much to his hugely successful 1964 translation of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) in which Nozaki boldly used 1960's Japanese slangs: about 250 million copies had been sold until Haruki Murakami's 2007 translation replaced Nozaki's.<sup>11</sup> He has devoted his life to university education and translation of the famous (and less famous) twentieth century American literary works. Fukuhara (1895 – 1981) is no less famous than Nozaki both in and outside the field of English literary studies and education in the twentieth century Japan. Born in the village of Kamimura, in the western part of Hiroshima Prefecture, he entered Tokyo Higher Normal School to learn English in 1912. He was so excellent that he was invited by the editors of *The Rising Generation (Eigo Seinen)* to write essays and ultimately to be its editor-in-chief. In 1921, he became an associate professor of his old school. In 1929, the Japanese Government sent him to England, and he studied in London and Cambridge Universities (1929-1931). In 1939, he became a professor of the same school. In 1946, he became the President of Japan Association of English Literature (1946–1953). In 1949, he became the head of the Department of Literature in Tokyo University of Science and Literature (1949-1953). In 1964, he was named as a member of the Japan Art Academy. In 1968, he was named a Person of Cultural Merit. His literary and occasional essays and academic studies (on Thomas Gray and Charles Lamb, for instance) are collected in *Collected Works* in 12 volumes (1969-1970) and in posthumously published *Collected Essays* in 8 volumes (1983).<sup>12</sup> The fact that many of his writings were collected

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<sup>8</sup>Tokyo Metropolitan University (Tokyo Toritsu Daigaku) was established in 1949 and was closed in 2011 by the Metropolis of Tokyo (succeeded by Shuto Daigaku Tokyo [the English name is Tokyo Metropolitan University]).

<sup>9</sup>Established in 1966, this private university is one of the largest universities located in the Tokyo a.

<sup>10</sup>In terms of Nozaki's biography, I have referred to Koizumi (ed.) 1990, Ueda et al (eds.) 2001 and an obituary in *Asahi Shimbun* May 17, 1995.

<sup>11</sup>See Chujo 2003.

<sup>12</sup>In terms of Fukuhara's biography, I have referred to Saito (ed.) 1985.

and published during his life and immediately after his death amply proves that Japanese society has needed him during the Cold War era. With the knowledge of Nozaki and Fukuhara, let me touch on the implications of the fact that the former accepted *Hiroshima* and the latter did not.

### III. Nozaki's Choice of *Hiroshima*

I have no clear answer as to why he chose it, mainly because there is no study of the ways in which he thought on a book bearing the name of Hiroshima city that was given by the former enemy whom destroyed the city.<sup>13</sup> A clue to this question can be found in Nozaki's study on Ernest Hemingway (1960).<sup>14</sup> In the last chapter entitled "Beyond Hemingway" ("Hemingway wo koete"), he showed his social concerns about "the horrifying development of nuclear weapons, the recent appearance of an artificial satellite, the fear of 'death ash', the fear of the World War III, and our expectation of the meeting of the leaders of the Big Two" (Nozaki, 91). He continued to argue that some of contemporary American writers who were inclined to represent the experiences of ordinary people could hardly find something new to express (*ibid.*), and he concluded that Hemingway avoided "issues concerning society and humanity in *The Old Man and the Sea* (1954)" so that Nozaki hoped "a new generation of writers - Irwin Shaw, Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, William Styron, Ralph Ellison, J. D. Salinger - to inherit Hemingway and to go beyond him" (*ibid.*, 94). Nozaki so earnestly hoped "a new generations of writers" to be read in Japan that he translated some of them (Ellison and Salinger, for instance). He didn't prefer literature to society.

It is undeniably the fact that Nozaki chose the "non-polemical" *Hiroshima* that was deemed safe by GHQ, but Nozaki's views on literature and society in his 1960 study shows that he was not a kind of scholar-translator who would easily like to love pureness of literature and to dislike social issues in the nuclear age. In other words, he chose *Hiroshima*; but it is still possible to assume that he read the text with his students in order to "ponder on" (or examine) the nature of peace or *Pax Americana*.

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<sup>13</sup>There is no detailed study of the cultural and political significance of Nozaki's translation (including the hugely successful 1964 translation of *The Catcher in the Rye*) in the last quarter of the twentieth century, either.

<sup>14</sup>To my knowledge, this is the only academic study that he has published in his life.

#### IV. Fukuhara's Rejection

Fukuhara's rejection of *Hiroshima* can be justified in what follows. First of all, he was right when he said to *Asahi Shimbun* that it took at least one year to teach the book. Until recently, many of Japanese university teachers of English have often told their students to translate only one or two pages of the whole textbook into Japanese in each class (90 minutes long) and the teachers have spent most of the time to correct the student's translation so as not to help students discuss it but to help them become a kind of translators like Nozaki. In Fukuhara's view, a book with 118 pages was not a good choice for his Japanese students who could not read faster than native speakers of English. Secondly, it is important to note that every reader of the book has to read a series of descriptions of the victims by the atomic bomb, one of which is as follows. After "a tremendous flash of light" (Hersey 1946, 8), the Reverend Kiyoshi Tanimoto, one of the six survivors on whom Hersey focused, saw in the street where he rumbled on,

[...] a squad of soldiers who had been burrowing into the hillside opposite, making one of the thousands of dugouts in which the Japanese apparently intended to resist invasion, hill by hill, life for life; the soldiers were coming out of the hole, where they have been safe, and blood was running from their heads, chests, and backs. They were silent and dazed. (ibid: 9-10)

With these words, Fukuhara and his colleagues, many of whom lived in Tokyo, might have remembered a series of air raids on the city that culminated in the Great Tokyo Air Raid (March 10, 1945) in which lives of 100,000 people are reported to have been lost; some of the survivors of the raid saved their lives in the "dugouts" that they had made by themselves. Although Fukuhara was not directly wounded by the air raids, he saw a part of his study room in his university bombed and burnt. When Fukuhara told the *Asahi Shimbun* that "it was terrible to teach, in each class hour, the fact that people were killed in air raids," he was honest enough to show his anger against those who told him to choose a book that could help the Japanese readers remember the terrible experiences that they actually had.

I would like to add another explanation of Fukuhara's rejection that he didn't tell in the *Asahi Shimbun* interview. The third reason has much to do with his

indifference toward the atomic bomb and with his isolationism. As I have argued elsewhere in detail<sup>15</sup>, he has written so little about the atomic bomb that USA dropped on Hiroshima. In fact, he has written only a few words about it in his *1945 Diary (Showa 20 nen no nikki)*, and he has written only three short essays in *The Rising Generation (Eigo Seinen)* in which he wrote briefly about the damages that University of Hiroshima suffered and about his hope for its swift reconstruction. They are all of what he has written about Hiroshima and the atomic blast. Let me touch on his *1945 Diary*. On 7 August, he noted that “yesterday, Hiroshima was attacked with a new-type bomb” (Fukuhara 1959, 84). On August 8<sup>th</sup>, he noted that Mr. Furusawa, a bureaucrat of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told him “the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima resulted in immense harm” (ibid. 85). On August 11<sup>th</sup>, he showed sympathy with a Hiroshima-born lieutenant commander named Sato who lost all communication with his families in Hiroshima (ibid. 90). On 21 August, Fukuhara noted that Shin’ichiro Tomoaga, one of his colleagues and a Nobel Prize laureate (physics in 1965), told him that the bomb that “the US Army dropped on Hiroshima was undoubtedly an atomic bomb” (Fukuhara 1962, 97). This is the last reference to Hiroshima and the atomic bomb, although he continued to write his diary until October 20 in 1945.

In this regard, Fukuhara’s 1955 essay entitled “A Retired Professor Has Free Time” (“Teinen kyoju kanka ari”) deserves attention. This essay contains his 1952 lecture entitled “English Literature as Political Literature” (“Seiji bungaku to shite no igirisu Bungaku) that he made to the audience of the University of Hiroshima. The main topics of his speech were his idea that in England political consciousness permeated literature and literature was no less concerned with politics (Fukuhara 1955: 457), and his comparison between English political literature and the counterpart in Meiji Japan (ibid: 457-8). Surprisingly, he talked about literature and politics in the Meiji Japan but didn’t say a word about the most important political issue in Hiroshima -- the explosion of the atomic bomb. It can be said that he was so traumatized by the destruction that an atomic bomb brought about that he lost his words to express it. It is no wonder that Fukuhara didn’t like to choose Hersey’s *Hiroshima* in 1951.<sup>16</sup> His 1957 essay entitled “My

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<sup>15</sup>See Saito 2014.

<sup>16</sup>Contrary to Fukuhara, Stephen Spender, an English poet, began his 1957 Hiroshima lecture entitled “Problems of Modern Poetry” as follows: “It is impossible to speak in Hiroshima about modern poetry without saying something about the atomic bomb falling



Peace Movement” (“*Watashi no heiwa shugi*”) is also noteworthy here. It is full of his antagonistic view of anti-nuclear war movements that were active in 1950’s, movements that were initiated by the Lucky Dragon No 5 Incident (Daigo Fukuryu Maru Jiken) in 1954 -- a Japanese tuna ship was contaminated with nuclear fallouts from USA’s Castle Bravo experiments in Bikini Atoll and a crewman died due to excessive exposure to radiation -- and the incident raised a series of anti-nuclear movements that did swiftly spread nationwide in 1955.

One important point in this essay is that he was antipathetic toward any type of peace movements or anti-nuclear demonstrations. He was afraid of peace movements backed by communists because a dangerous communist hero would appear and finally control people (Fukuhara, 1957: 193). He was also indifferent toward peace movements with religious backgrounds: in fact he touched on a non-communist peace movement, one of whose members was his female acquaintance who believed in Quakerism, but he immediately made clear that he was unwilling to join it (Ibid: 194). He explained the reason why he was indifferent to peace movements that surrounded him.

I might possibly be dependent on others in order to live a life by myself, but I desperately need independence and as a consequence I prepare myself for being alone. It can hardly be helped that I am influenced by others while I am unaware, but I do not want to be influenced by any propaganda. I do not want others to govern my thought, either. (Ibid: 196)

He was an anti-communist, an isolationist and, in short a bigot who preferred literature to politics. This rigidity of his mind and attitude can be understood as one of the reasons of his popularity during 1960’s and 70’s; some of Japanese people felt exhausted in the middle of the age of politics (before and after 1968) and needed something that had nothing to do with politics. An irony is that it is his non-political individualism and isolationism that helped him to reject one of GHQ’s indirect but powerful interventions to the education of Japanese universities in the Occupied Japan.

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on Hiroshima – partly because we are here and partly because in a way it illustrates very well the main problem of modern life and modern destruction which I want to discuss this afternoon in connection with modern poetry.” (Spender, 1958: 119)

### Conclusion

As a traumatized isolationist, Fukuhara didn't come to read *Hiroshima* in his English classes. His rejection of the book can be understood as his antagonistic attitude toward USA and its occupational policy, but it is important to remember the fact that his students lost their chance of carefully reading the text and the context that GHQ introduced it to the Occupied Japan. A younger scholar of American literature, Nozaki chose it in his classes, although none of us know about whether or not he was truly welcome to read the text and to appreciate its message. Further researches on Nozaki and other teachers and scholars who read *Hiroshima* are urgently needed in order to write an alternative history of Japanese scholars of English and American literature who indirectly resisted against the cultural policy of USA. None of those lived in the Occupied Japan should easily embrace *Hiroshima*, and we should never do it. All they had to do then and we have to do now is to read and analyze it.

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