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Shadows of Hiroshima:
The Evolution of Atomic Bomb Memories Explored Through Japanese *Manga*

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Honors College Thesis
The University of Vermont
May 2022

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Abstract

This thesis examines how memories of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, are depicted and explored through the works of two Japanese *manga* (graphic novel) artists, Nakazawa Keiji and Kōno Fumiyo. Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* series is one of the most well-known artistic depictions of the atomic bombing and two of Kōno's works, *Town of Evening Calm*, *Country of Cherry Blossoms* and *In This Corner of the World*, address the bombing and its multigenerational impacts. Nakazawa's status as a first-generation survivor of the bombing is compared with Kōno's experience as a later-generation resident of Hiroshima to analyze how memories of the attack have evolved over time and across generations, and how they are represented in popular media. Given the accessibility of works such as these, as well as their lasting reputation and legacy, examining how they convey and even transfer memories of this uniquely traumatic moment in the 20th century will develop a better understanding of how the atomic bombing is collectively remembered.

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This thesis is the culmination of four years' worth of research, deliberation, and discussion with numerous friends, peers, professors, and family. Thank you to Professor Kyle Ikeda for guiding my early research and ideas and the first two-thirds of my formal research and writing process, as well as advising and supporting me throughout my undergraduate career. Thank you to Professor Erik Esselstrom, who not only helped me develop ideas since the early stages, but also was able to advise this thesis during a challenging and unexpected time. Thank you to Professors Helga Schreckenberger and Kathleen Scollins for not only supporting me as a student and academic, but also taking an interest in my studies outside of their classes. Thank you to my family for loving and supporting me through the past four years as I developed this project from just a single experience abroad. Thank you to my friends Alex Insoft and Joey Geremia for looking at and giving feedback on this paper with little notice in the late stages of the semester. Thank you to the numerous other friends who have listened to my ideas and offered feedback or questions to consider. And thank you to my partner, A. M. Davis, for being by my side through the highs and lows of the project, offering valuable feedback even during the most difficult parts of the year, and always encouraging me with the utmost enthusiasm.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 – Brief Introduction to Topic and Authors

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan was a defining moment of the twentieth century, fully ushering in the Atomic Age as well as setting the stage for the Cold War's primary threat. Currently, this attack and the subsequent strike on Nagasaki remain the only uses of nuclear weaponry in combat. However, despite the end of the Cold War, which saw the mass proliferation of these arms, the danger of nuclear warfare has not subsided. Few understand this danger as well as the survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, referred to as *hibakusha*.¹ Their stories are internationally known, such as Sasaki Sadako,² the girl with leukemia who folded a thousand paper cranes to receive a wish. Bombing survivors' oral testimonies are undeniably powerful, but the bounds of human lifespans limit this method of sharing memories. Thus, literature and art become vital in memorializing the psychologically traumatic experiences of atomic bomb survivors for generations to come and illustrating detailed images of an event unfathomable to most. Understanding the collective memories of the attack—memories developed in groups from shared experiences—is an important aspect of achieving this goal and developing knowledge of how it is currently remembered and experienced.

Manga (graphic novels and comics) are some of the most recognizable products of Japanese popular culture, encompassing a wide variety of art styles, themes, and forms of storytelling. Since *manga* are massively popular both in Japan and—in recent decades—internationally, analyzing its value as art is important. Although there are fewer *manga* about the

¹ The Japanese language typically lacks plural forms, so nouns will be used singularly and plurally in this paper

² In this thesis, Japanese names will be listed as surname followed by given name.

atomic bombings than traditional literary works and film, it is undeniably a unique part of the atomic bomb literary canon. As popular literature, *manga* can be useful in gauging contemporary popular awareness, or public consciousness, and memories; thus, the development of collective memories can be seen through the comparison of *manga* from different times. In the case of atomic bomb *manga*, analyzing the differences in art and storytelling between the works of two authors existing in different generations and times can illuminate how the bombing is remembered and represented in public consciousness.

The most well-known atomic bomb *manga* are the *Barefoot Gen* series³, written and illustrated from 1973 to 1987 by Hiroshima *hibakusha* Nakazawa Keiji, six years old at the time of the bombing. *Barefoot Gen* has achieved modest international recognition and popularity and has become an icon for popular art of the Hiroshima bombing. Kōno Fumiyo, a Hiroshima resident—but not a *hibakusha*—produced another relatively well-known *manga* related to the bombing titled *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*⁴ from 2002 to 2003. Kōno would gain greater recognition with her later work *In This Corner of the World*,⁵ a series more broadly about the Second World War featuring a Hiroshima-born protagonist. Both authors have produced successful atomic bomb *manga* but with significantly different personal relationships to the bombing and a nearly three-decade gap in age; thus, the works of these two authors can be compared to build an image of collective memories of the attack. Such a comparison may help to

³ Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen (Hadashi no gen [はだしのゲン]) Volume 1: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima*, 13th printing, vol. 1, 10 vols. (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 2004).

⁴ Fumiyo Kōno, *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms (Yūnagi no machi, Sakura no Kuni [夕風の街桜の国])*, trans. Naoko Amemiya and Colin Turner, 3rd printing (San Francisco, Calif.; London: Last Gasp ; Turnaround [distributor], 2009).

⁵ Fumiyo Kōno, *In This Corner of the World (Kono sekai no katasumi ni [この世界の片隅に])*, trans. Adrienne Beck, 1st printing (Canada: Seven Seas Entertainment, LLC, 2017).

illustrate how these memories have evolved over time and generations and better predict how they will continue to develop.

1.2 – Introduction to Main Argument

Nakazawa and Kōno's works convey their respective relationships to the atomic bombing, illustrating a collective memory of the attack that spans across generations. Each author portrays the bombing through varying degrees of "psychological distance" (or just "distance"), defined by the amount of time, generations, and other personal factors of connection. These factors, either psychological or physical, separate an individual from the initial event; the more factors one has, the greater the "distance" from the event. Nakazawa and Kōno address the "distance" by highlighting the differences between the experiences of first and second generation *hibakusha*. First-generation *hibakusha* have direct memories of the bombing; there are no factors of psychological separation. Second-generation *hibakusha* and family members who were not present during the bombing itself both have "one factor of separation" away from the event, although those experiences are not inherently equal. Thus, a direct experience with the atomic bombing or inherited genes from a *hibakusha* are not necessary to have a personal relationship with the bombing as an event and memory.

Nakazawa and Kōno's expressions of *hibakusha* experience represent different aspects of collective memory since Nakazawa is a first-generation *hibakusha*, while Kōno does not consider herself or her family to be survivors.⁶ Nakazawa made *Barefoot Gen* autobiographical in nature, so his direct memories are the basis of its narrative. *Gen* is concerned with many contemporary issues from the early postwar period, creating a plot that often deals with matters

⁶ Kōno, *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, 103.

of life and death. Scenes of the bombing are rendered in graphic detail, based on memories of the aftermath that lack photographic counterparts. As a first-generation survivor with a conscious recollection of the attack, Nakazawa's work is not adapted from the works or memories of others, creating a point that later generations can learn and adapt from.

Kōno's childhood and long-term residence in Hiroshima has socially and psychologically placed her in a similar—or adjacent—position to second-generation survivors. The complexity of these different levels of psychological distance to the bombing is frequently addressed through the protagonists of her works. Characters such as Nanami (*Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*) and Suzu (*This Corner of the World*) experience the atomic bombing from generational and geographic distances and witness the violence through affected family. These complex relationships are also relevant in Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* through Gen's siblings, who returned to Hiroshima after the war had ended. People such as these still contribute to and participate in the collective memory of the atomic bombing even if they lack a "direct" biological link to the experience, thus not necessarily sharing the same concerns as *hibakusha*.

Nakazawa and Kōno's works show different experiences of the atomic bombing through the themes, perspectives, and structures of their narratives and art. This includes first-generation survivors' ability to remember and depict the bombing with clarity in comparison to later generations' reliance on abstraction, the focus on communal pain and action versus centering on individual trauma, and the types of political and social messaging that are prioritized. While contrasts between these works will be highlighted, it is important to note that these two approaches to atomic bomb storytelling are not in opposition to each other, but rather in conversation with each other. These multi-generational stories complement each other and illustrate the complexities of traumatic memory and its inheritance through art and narratives that

do not replace one another but recall different, often parallel physically and psychologically traumatic experiences. The narratives will be analyzed through the framework of varying “psychological distances” from the initial event, which describe generational differences. Analyzing “distances” and the factors that determine them helps to better understand how generational gaps affect the processing and perception of collective traumatic memories, and how said gaps result in different recollections and interpretations of the bombing.

1.3 – Outline of Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters, the first and last of which being an introduction and conclusion. Following this introduction, background for this thesis and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima is provided through a review of its history and the literature used. Chapter 3 introduces the authors and their works to establish intersections in their personal backgrounds and works as well as the basics of their works’ plots. Chapter 4 is a comparative analysis of these two authors’ works on a literary level, seeking to understanding how the authors’ experiences influence the structure of their work and depiction of atomic bomb memories. Chapter 5 analyzes the works of these authors together in the broader context of Hiroshima collective memories over time and across generations; the historical context in which these works were written and the different perspectives and transformations of these memories across generations will be addressed. The conclusion of this thesis will summarize the arguments and findings and frame collective memories of the Hiroshima bombing in a modern setting and beyond.

Chapter 2: Brief History of the Atomic Bombing and Its Literature

2.1 – Historical Background

On August 6th, 1945, the “Little Boy” bomb was detonated above the city of Hiroshima, Japan at 8:15 a.m. by the U.S.’s *Enola Gay* military plane. Upwards of one hundred thousand were killed in the blast and subsequent firestorm, with tens of thousands succumbing to injuries and radiation poisoning in the following weeks. Acute radiation syndrome (ARS) claimed many more victims decades after the bombing.⁷ This was the first use of an atomic weapon in warfare, and the second atomic detonation.

The nuclear strike came after months of devastating firebomb raids across Japan and was followed by a second attack on the city of Nagasaki on August 9th after no surrender was made. The two atomic bombings, as well as the Soviet declaration of war on Japan and invasion of Manchuria, are often credited as the impetus for Japan’s surrender,⁸ although the necessity of the nuclear strikes continues to be debated, particularly among Americans. The U.S.’s attacks have been considered war crimes, especially in Japan, where the status of being the sole country to receive atomic attacks has generated a sense of victimhood over the end of the war.

The city of Hiroshima was largely obliterated by the bombing, and the absorption of fallout into raindrops continued to put victims and relief efforts at risk.⁹ The long-term health effects caused by exposure to radiation are a unique aspect of nuclear weaponry, resulting in the survivors’ experiences varying greatly from those who experienced the firebombings elsewhere

⁷ Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 223.

⁸ Gordon, 221.

⁹ Keiji Nakazawa and Richard H. Minear, *Hiroshima: The Autobiography of Barefoot Gen*, Asian Voices (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 42.

in Japan.¹⁰ These survivors came to be known as *hibakusha* (lit. “explosion-affected person”), a designation that would be inherited by their descendants, exacerbated by perceptions of radiation’s effect on genes. *Hibakusha* have faced social and economic discrimination due to poor understandings of ARS; it was believed that ARS was contagious, impacted fertility, and was hereditary.¹¹ Additionally, guaranteed medical care for *hibakusha* was not implemented into law until decades later.¹²

Information on the bombing and the experience of *hibakusha* has historically been sparse due to the suppression and destruction of related materials by U.S. occupation officials from the end of the war until 1952. The modern Japanese government has also censored atomic bomb-related materials critiquing Imperial Japan. The narrative propagated by the U.S. is that the atomic bombings were a harsh but necessary evil to secure an end to the war, while the dominant narrative among right-wing elites in Japan has been that the bombings exempt Japan from wartime guilt. Both are simplistic and problematic since they limit the expression of *hibakusha* experience and anti-nuclear sentiment to only what serves said narratives. Expression of atomic bomb memories has also been limited due to the stigmatization of *hibakusha*, since sharing their stories reveals their survivor status.

Due to the biases of formal education on the atomic bombings in Japanese systems, one of the primary ways survivors’ experiences have been disseminated is through art. Paintings such as Toshi and Iri Maruki’s *Hiroshima Panels*,¹³ novels like Ibuse Masuji’s *Black Rain*,¹⁴ and

¹⁰ John Whittier Treat, *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 6.

¹¹ Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory*, Twentieth-Century Japan 10 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 88.

¹² Yoneyama, 93.

¹³ Toshi Maruki and Iri Maruki, *Hiroshima Panels*, 1982, Painting, 27 meters x 7.2 meters, 1982, Maruki Gallery for the Hiroshima Panels.

¹⁴ Masuji Ibuse, *Black Rain*, trans. John Bester (New York, NY: Kodansha USA, 2012).

popular media like Nakazawa Keiji's *manga Barefoot Gen* have been cited as important in raising public awareness of atomic warfare's nature. However, now over seventy-six years after the bombings, first-generation *hibakusha* have advanced substantially in age. Combined with the life-long health issues caused by radiation exposure, the living first generation is growing smaller. Thus, how the atomic bombing is represented and remembered has become a key issue for *hibakusha* as well as those opposed to atomic weaponry.

2.2 – Literature Review

Research incorporated a wide variety of literature to form a well-rounded knowledgebase of the bombing as a historical event as well as the culture of literature and media that has developed around it. This included history books, journal articles (including Japanese-language texts), novels, non-fictional books, oral histories, literature analyzing Hiroshima- and Nagasaki-related texts and narratives, and the fictional *manga* of Nakazawa Keiji and Kōno Fumiyo. In addition to Hiroshima literature, texts related to the memory and literature of other World War II atrocities were used to better understand the study of wartime traumatic memory, including Kyle Ikeda's *Okinawan War Memory: Transgenerational Trauma and the War Fiction of Medoruma Shun*¹⁵ and several Holocaust-related texts.¹⁶ Utilizing a diverse set of texts was essential to developing research questions and analytical strategies; reading novels and seminal books (authored by *hibakusha* and non-*hibakusha*) was necessary to better understand atomic bomb literature as a genre, analytical texts (both journals and books) provided information on the

¹⁵ Kyle Ikeda, *Okinawan War Memory: Transgenerational Trauma and the War Fiction of Medoruma Shun*, *Asia's Transformations: Literature and Society* 3 (New York: Routledge, 2014).

¹⁶ Alison Forsyth, "The Trauma of Articulation: Holocaust Representation in 'After the Fall' and 'Broken Glass,'" *The Arthur Miller Journal* 3, no. 2 (2008): 41–60; DAVID SHNEER, "Picturing Grief: Soviet Holocaust Photography at the Intersection of History and Memory," *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 1 (2010): 28–52; Martin A. Berger, "Photography, History, and the Historian," *American Art* 29, no. 1 (2015): 2–5; Susan A. Crane, "Choosing Not to Look: Representation, Repatriation, and Holocaust Atrocity Photography," *History and Theory* 47, no. 3 (2008): 309–30.

discourse of atomic bomb experience and Hiroshima’s culture, and journal articles covered a wide variety of atomic bomb-related topics from a diverse set of perspectives. Texts focused on memories of the Battle of Okinawa and the Holocaust were important for understanding the methodology of research into the literature of these experiences and memories, especially the latter due to a greater number of English-language resources compared to Hiroshima. These works also provided a framework for the terminology of collective traumatic memory; Ikeda’s work was particularly useful as the idea of “psychological distance” developed from his use of the term “psychic toxicity” when discussing geographic aspects of Okinawan traumatic memory.

When choosing texts for this research, it was also important to consider both primary and secondary texts. Most of the literature read was secondary, with the two most important books being Lisa Yoneyama’s *Hiroshima Traces*¹⁷ and John Whittier Treat’s *Writing Ground Zero* (see footnote 7), respectively covering the evolution of *hibakusha* collective memory and oral storytelling, and the history of atomic bomb literature. These texts formed the basis of research and introduced many of the most important concepts and terms related to the attack. Japanese journal articles were important for providing a better understanding of atomic bomb discourse and memory within Japan in its native language¹⁸ as well as the place of popular media

¹⁷ Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*.

¹⁸ Yoshiaki [福間良明] Fukuma, “‘Danzetsu’ No Fūka to Datsu Rekishi-Ka: Media Bunka Ni Okeru ‘Keishō’ No Yokubō (<tokushū> ‘Poppyurā Karuchā to Sensō’ No 70-Nen) 「断絶」の風化と脱歴史化: メディア文化における「継承」の欲望(<特集>「ポピュラー・カルチャーと戦争」の70年),” *マス・コミュニケーション研究* 88 (2016): 55–74; Yōko [近藤ようこ] Kondō, Fusanosuke [夏目房之介] Natsume, and Tomofusa [呉智英] Kure, “Sengo Hiroshima Manga (Nihon Manga Gakkai Dai 15-Kai Taikai Shinpojiumu ‘Hadashi No Gen’ No Tamensei) 戦後・ヒロシマ・マンガ (日本マンガ学会 第15回大会 シンポジウム 『はだしのゲン』の多面性),” *マンガ研究* 22 (March 2016): 110–51; Tairō [伊藤泰郎] Itō, “Hiroshima Ken No Shōchūgakusei No Heiwa Gakushū No Keiken Oyobi Sensō to Heiwa Ni Kansuru Chishiki Ya Ishiki No Bunseki 広島県の小中学生の平和学習の経験および戦争と平和に関する知識や意識の分析,” *現代社会学*, no. 13 (2012): 23–48; Tomoko [榎本智子] Matsumoto, “Challenging America’s Collective Memory of the Bombing of Hiroshima: An Analysis of U.S.

(including *Barefoot Gen*) in cultural and educational settings. Primary sources were novels and non-fiction literature, works written by either *hibakusha* or authors connected to either the bombing or the city of Hiroshima. Nakazawa and Kōno's *manga* are the most utilized texts, but Ibuse Masuji's *Black Rain* (a fictional novel about *hibakusha* experience years after the bombing, based on the journals of *hibakusha* (see footnote 8) and John Hersey's *Hiroshima*¹⁹ (a journalistic book in which Hersey follows the lives of six *hibakusha*) are important touchstones of atomic bomb literature in the Japanese and English language literary worlds, respectively, and served as an introduction to the genre and the culture surrounding it. Nakazawa's autobiography (see footnote 6) was also a useful text, providing a basis for comparison between *Barefoot Gen* and his own life.

As a note, most texts used in this research are natively written in or translated to English. As mentioned, several Japanese-language journal articles were utilized, but English-language texts were used to expediate the research process. The central *manga* examined (Nakazawa and Kōno's works) were read primarily in translation for this reason, although the Japanese-language originals were acquired and used for comparative and authentication purposes.

Not all literature read for this research will be utilized in the final paper due to low relevance; examples include *After Apocalypse: Four Japanese Plays of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*,²⁰ an introduction to and collection of several stage plays about atomic bomb experience, and *Hiroshima-Nagasaki: A Pictorial Record of the Atomic Destruction*,²¹ a

University Students' Reactions to the Anime Version of Barefoot Gen," 異文化コミュニケーション, no. 20 (2017): 147–66.

¹⁹ John Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1989).

²⁰ David G. Goodman, ed., *After Apocalypse: Four Japanese Plays of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

²¹ *Hiroshima-Nagasaki: A Pictorial Record of the Atomic Destruction* (Hiroshima-Nagasaki Publishing Committee, 1978).

photobook including many of the most well-known Japanese photographs taken in the bombings' aftermath. These works were not relevant to the topic of Hiroshima *manga* but aided in guiding research and provided an understanding of the bombings' influence of a variety of art forms as well as a photographic basis for the drawn depictions of Hiroshima and the bombing.

Use of the literature is distributed across the paper: history books such as Andrew Gordon's *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (see footnote 4) are primarily used in the background and sections detailing the historical and political contexts of Nakazawa and Kōno's *manga*. Journal articles are used to analyze the *manga*, supplement background sections, and to understand the modern context of these works as well as atomic bomb literature and narratives in general. Secondary source books (e.g., Yoneyama and Treat) are utilized in the analysis of the *manga* and for historical and political context. Primary sources not written by Nakazawa and Kōno are mostly limited to sections discussing atomic bomb literature as a genre, and Nakazawa's autobiography is used to supplement discussions of his work and personal background. The three central *manga* of this paper, Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* and Kōno's *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms* and *In This Corner of the World*, are utilized throughout the entirety of the authors' introductions, the comparative analysis of the works, and the analysis of collective memory development through *manga*; *In This Corner of the World* is of lesser importance since it is not primarily set in Hiroshima.

To understand the context of the literature used in this paper, defining and analyzing the term "atomic bomb literature" is important. In *Writing Ground Zero*, John Whittier Treat distinguishes "atomic-bomb [sic] literature" from "nuclear literature", referring to the latter as "the literature of a world harassed by inestimable megatonnage" and the former as a "Japanese

preserve.”²² The term “atomic bomb literature” is typically only applied to works about the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, which will likely remain true as long as these remain the last atomic strikes. The literature of these bombings has no true counterpart on an international scale, as comparisons to the other World War II atrocity texts such as Anne Frank’s *Diary* fall flat due to overall lack of translation and dissemination of these texts outside of Japan.²³ Atomic bomb literature is not easily defined as a genre due to its operation within other genres and literary conventions²⁴ as well as the diversity of experiences and connections with the atomic bombings. Thus, atomic bomb literature is best described as texts that react to the 1945 bombings within the context of human cultural and scientific development as well as the extreme violence of the twentieth century.

In defining atomic bomb literature, questions of authorship and authenticity arise. *Black Rain*, perhaps the best-known work of atomic bomb literature, is not written by a *hibakusha*, a fact that has brought the book criticism from survivors and, later, the author himself.²⁵ In the context of the *manga* being examined, Kōno, as a non-*hibakusha* Hiroshima resident, was hesitant to write on the topic until she felt that people outside of Hiroshima didn’t properly understand the city.²⁶ Deciding who is allowed to write “atomic bomb literature” is to decide who is allowed to write the legacy of the atomic bombings. This is perhaps why there has been pushback from *hibakusha* toward some non-*hibakusha*-authored works, as it takes the narrative out of their hands into others who may have incorrect assumptions about the bombings or ulterior political motivations. Although works such as Hersey’s *Hiroshima* are undeniably

²² Treat, *Writing Ground Zero*, 3.

²³ Treat, 4.

²⁴ Treat, 19.

²⁵ Treat, 270.

²⁶ Kōno, *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, 103.

important to the history of literature concerning the bombing, limiting the scope of “atomic bomb literature” to Japan reduces the chance of this legacy being overwritten by those who do not understand or seek to censor these memories and experiences.

Atomic bomb literature as a product of first generation *hibakusha* is finite due to the aging population of survivors. Inevitably, this mantle will have to be taken up by later generations of *hibakusha* and, perhaps, more non-*hibakusha* authors such as Kōno, so it is vital to constantly analyze and redefine atomic bomb literature as a genre. This also involves determining who has the “right” or is most “credible” to write this literature, which develops as this literature transforms to suit new experiences. Comparing authors like Nakazawa and Kōno reveals that this genre is continuing to develop, paralleling the overall formation of a collective memory of the bombings across generations. Keeping this genre distinct is valuable in developing and preserving this collective memory since it is one facet that contributes to it and can remain across generations through print, something that oral histories alone cannot necessarily accomplish.

This thesis will add to current studies and understanding of atomic bomb literature by offering a comparative analysis of *manga*, which is an underexplored area in this topic. The works of Nakazawa and Kōno have been utilized in atomic bomb studies before, but rarely are these works and authors discussed in the same context, much less directly compared. Through the works of Nakazawa and Kōno, what stories are being told and how they are changing can be seen and analyzed. This thesis will not only illustrate the impact and legacies of these authors, but also how the *manga* format uniquely contributes to a multigenerational collective memory.

Chapter 3: Introduction to Nakazawa and Kōno

3.1 – Nakazawa Keiji

Nakazawa Keiji was six years old when the “Little Boy” atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. If he had been even a few feet away from the concrete gate he had been standing by when it detonated, he would’ve likely died instantly in the blast.²⁷ Nakazawa wandered through the burning ruins of his city and eventually reunited with his mother, only to discover that his older sister, younger brother, and father had perished in their collapsed home. Nakazawa, his mother, and his newly born baby sister spent the next few days in the destroyed city, waiting for relief efforts and trying to recover anything that remained after the blast. Eventually, they reunited with one of his older brothers and moved in with relatives in the nearby town of Eba, starting their long, painful journey as *hibakusha* trying to survive in the postwar world.

Nakazawa was raised by a staunchly anti-war and anti-Emperor father. He was a painter notorious in their community for vocally opposing Japan’s imperial conquest, resulting in several arrests and the Nakazawa family’s ostracization.²⁸ These anti-imperial and pro-peace values stuck with Nakazawa for the rest of his life, despite it often putting him at odds with his peers and community.

A key moment in Nakazawa’s life followed the passing of his mother. After she was cremated, he was shocked to discover that her bones did not remain—they had disintegrated from exposure to the radiation from the bomb and its fallout. As an act of vengeance against atomic weaponry, Nakazawa decided to “do battle through manga”²⁹ through his art, conveying

²⁷ Nakazawa and Minear, *Hiroshima*, 34.

²⁸ Nakazawa and Minear, 4.

²⁹ Nakazawa and Minear, 152.

his messages to the people of Japan and ensuring that memories of the bombing would live on and that those responsible would not be forgotten.

As the self-proclaimed creator of “atomic bomb manga,”³⁰ Nakazawa created his first atomic bomb-focused work, *Pelted by Black Rain*, a revenge story that aired out his anger at the bombing and the American military forces behind it. After initial difficulties finding a publisher due to the stigma and legal threats associated with the topic, it was published in *Manga Punch* in 1967 to good reviews. The success of *Pelted by Black Rain* led to Nakazawa creating and publishing several more atomic bomb-focused works until he began to feel “suffocated” by the oppressive and traumatic subject matter.³¹ He returned to drawing atomic bomb stories after being angered about contemporary world affairs, such as the Vietnam War, debates over the U.S. Security Treaty, and issues surrounding the reversion of Okinawa to Japan.³² Nakazawa made several one-shot works depicting the atomic bombing as well as the experiences of first- and second-generation *hibakusha*, which garnered shocked reactions from readers who were surprised by the facts of the bombing.³³ Following these successes, Nakazawa’s publisher requested an autobiographical work; although initially reluctant, he created a 45-page single issue work. Impressed by it, the publisher encouraged him to create a serialized story. Nakazawa would take this opportunity to make a long and complex work detailing his experience with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, including before and long after the event: *Barefoot Gen*.

Barefoot Gen follows Nakaoka Gen, a young boy who serves as a stand-in for Nakazawa himself (reflected in the shared “Naka” in their last names). Gen’s family is largely a one-to-one

³⁰ Nakazawa and Minear, 152.

³¹ Nakazawa and Minear, 155.

³² Nakazawa and Minear, 156.

³³ Nakazawa and Minear, 157.

reflection of Nakazawa's family, with a few slight name alterations. Gen's story follows Nakazawa's life, with the timing of a few events being moved around and a few brief but significant alterations, such as Gen being present during the death of his father, sister, and younger brother. The series covers Gen's life from age six to fourteen but includes events from later in Nakazawa's life, such as the death of his (and Gen's) mother. *Barefoot Gen* also encompasses a wide variety of subplots and side characters, creating a detailed world with complex conflicts, commenting on many political issues present in Japan during the late 1940s and early 1950s, including political corruption, U.S. and Japan relations, widespread drug addiction, and economic struggles.

Barefoot Gen began serialization in 1973 in *Boys' Jump* and gradually gained popularity and high regard among readers. Nakazawa frequently received letters from readers that conveyed surprise, respect, and appreciation for his handling and portrayal of the heavy subject matter.³⁴ His work also faced critique from *manga* artist peers who deemed it too dark and unsuitable for children.³⁵ However, Nakazawa continued *Gen*, driven by his fiery anti-war passion despite falling into creative and emotional slumps several times throughout its publication. *Gen* eventually moved to being published as books, allowing Nakazawa to complete his series on a more comfortable schedule, and in a manner that attracted more readers.³⁶ Nakazawa was frequently encouraged by letters from readers who wrote to him about how his work had personally moved them. After fourteen years, *Barefoot Gen* was complete, totaling ten volumes.

³⁴ Nakazawa and Minear, 163.

³⁵ Nakazawa and Minear, 164.

³⁶ Nakazawa and Minear, 167.

3.2 – Kōno Fumiyo

Kōno Fumiyo was born in Hiroshima City in 1968. She identifies as “neither a *hibakusha* survivor of the atomic bomb, nor a second-generation *hibakusha*.”³⁷ Though she has left any potential familial connection to the bombing of Hiroshima unclear, her upbringing in the city had a significant impact on her. Her close psychological and physical proximity to *hibakusha* and their descendants has undoubtedly shaped her consciousness and memory. As a citizen of Hiroshima, she was still raised with the psychological scars of the bombing; Kōno has walked the same streets, seen the same destroyed buildings, heard the same personal accounts, and likely witnessed the same PTSD in survivors that her second-generation *hibakusha* peers have seen.

Kōno, while not a *hibakusha*, does have a connection to war memories through her mother.³⁸ In the afterword for *In This Corner of the World*, the story of a girl from Hiroshima who must live in the nearby city of Kure during the war, Kōno notes that her mother grew up in Kure, and that the twenty-three-year-long gap between the end of the war and her birth has created a noticeable divide between her and her mother’s generation. Kōno is aware of the “holes” in her memories and experience left by this gap, and with many of these older acquaintances having passed away before her career began, she has not been able to easily draw on direct experiences for her works. It is thus unsurprising that her war- and atomic bomb-focused works frequently draw attention to and center on the idea of experiencing trauma through family and carrying the psychological scars of events not experienced firsthand.

Kōno began serializing her two-part story *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms* in 2003. Though she had already drawn and written numerous *manga* by this time, she

³⁷ Kōno, *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, 103.

³⁸ Kōno, *In This Corner of the World*, 443.

had specifically been asked by her publisher to write a story about “Hiroshima”—not Hiroshima the city and region, but Hiroshima the historical event and place.³⁹ Kōno initially struggled with the assignment due to her avoidance of atomic bomb-related topics and memories throughout much of her life, but she had come to realize during her time living in Tokyo that people outside of Hiroshima knew little about the atomic bombings and the experience of *hibakusha*. Thus, she wrote this work to educate outsiders about the experiences of *hibakusha* and other residents of the city. The *manga*’s two parts focus on different protagonists: the first section (“Town of Evening Calm”) follows Minami, a *hibakusha* living years after the war, and the second (“Country of Cherry Blossoms”) follows Nanami, a second-generation *hibakusha* growing up decades after the bombing.

In 2007, Kōno began serializing a second work related to the War: *In This Corner of the World*. This work does not center on the atomic bombing, but through its Hiroshima-born protagonist, Suzu, the story retains a connection to it. As mentioned, this work has a more personal connection to Kōno and her family through her mother; although Kōno does not reveal biographical details about her mother, the numerous connections to Kōno’s experiences and memories suggest that at least some elements of *In This Corner of the World* are inspired by real people. This makes it a unique example of a later-generation work as a fusion of many experiences Kōno was exposed to while growing up; it combines elements of survivors from Kure as well as *hibakusha*.

Though Kōno’s works are difficult to classify as second- or later-generation survivor authorship, her familiarity with these memories allowed these works to develop an interesting relationship with the stories of survivors and memories of the past. They encapsulate the

³⁹ Kōno, *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, 103.

experiences of second- and later-generation survivors who have lost parts of their family history and memory—those who are biologically and psychologically affected by the atomic bombing without having been physically present.

3.3 – Primary Concerns of the Works

Nakazawa and Kōno wrote their stories with purpose: in Nakazawa’s case, to memorialize the atomic bombing and to prevent it from happening again, and in Kōno’s case, to educate people outside of Hiroshima about the bombing and to interpret and share the memories of her family and community. Though there is overlap in these goals, each author is concerned with a different perspective on the bombing and the War, deeply connected to their own personal relationship to these events. In a general sense, Nakazawa was intent on showing the world what the bombing did in hopes of more opposition toward nuclear weapons; rather than just the internal struggles of a single character, he focuses on a community and makes his work explicitly political to fit his goals. Conversely, Kōno is more concerned with the experience of the bombing in her life as well as the modern day, leading to a focus on the long-term biological, social, and psychology effects of this traumatic event; accordingly, her work centers on individual internal struggles and fears, as well as multigenerational connections.

Barefoot Gen’s messaging is unabashedly political, which is unique for a manga aimed at the *shōnen* (young boys) demographic in the 1970s. Nakazawa assigns guilt to specific forces and targets nationalism as a social poison. His most poignant critiques are perhaps those of the Japanese government and imperial system, holding the Emperor responsible for the war, and thus the atomic bombing. This is significant when compared to stereotypical narratives of the Hiroshima bombing, which often emphasize “not repeat[ing] the mistake” with little

specificity.⁴⁰ Nakazawa attacks political violence on a structural level, fitting *Barefoot Gen*'s serialized format; because it covers before and long after the bombing, Nakazawa developed a holistic critique of Imperial Japan, where he sees his anger toward the Japanese government as intrinsic to his memories and trauma, heavily influenced by his father's own views.

In contrast, Kōno's work largely avoids discussion of political forces behind structural and military violence. *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms* completely avoids it, and *In This Corner of the World* only briefly channels anger following the surrender with Suzu's outburst following the radio announcement: "the justice and righteousness of this country has all been blown away on the wind."⁴¹ Kōno's concerns regarding the atomic bombing revolve around the later impacts, especially those affecting the descendants of *hibakusha*. *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossom*'s Nanami, the daughter of a *hibakusha*, questions the long-term impact of the atomic bombing rather than why it happened, transforming it from a human military decision into a nature-like force. Thus, Nanami sees the atomic bombing in terms of who and what it has taken from her, and how it has made her fear her own body and others' perceptions of her.

By the end of *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, all the first-generation *hibakusha* characters introduced have passed away, showing another temporal anxiety: that the generational gap between first- and later-generation *hibakusha* is growing and it is becoming harder to connect with those collective memories. Though not explicitly highlighted, it is unlikely a coincidence that this theme arises in this story since Kōno is cognizant of the aging *hibakusha* population. Kōno's work encourages the building of connections between

⁴⁰ Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*, 16.

⁴¹ Kōno, *In This Corner of the World*, 380.

generations while they still exist and contributes to transitioning *hibakusha* storytelling toward the experiences of newer generations. When Kōno wrote her works, a wealth of first-generation stories describing the bombing and its aftermath was available, so someone with a greater psychological distance to the bombing adding to that material would risk being redundant and ineffective. Thus, this is another area where Kōno's own distance has affected her writing and storytelling: she offers the perspective of someone raised around an aging first generation, who is concerned about the disappearance of their legacy. Today, the second-generation's advanced age creates a need for their stories to be committed to collective memory as well. In combination with Nakazawa, both authors' goals are important and contribute to a better understanding of the atomic bombing and create space for future generations, as well as non-*hibakusha* who occupy similar a psychological distance to survivors, to contribute to this collective memory as well.

Chapter 4: Comparative Analysis of Literary Elements

4.1 – Differences in Artistic Direction and Styling

Nakazawa and Kōno utilize distinct art styles that are undeniably influenced by contemporary trends as well as the demographics they have published for, but their artistic decisions are also crucial to their depictions of atomic bomb memories. As a generalization, Nakazawa's art uses dark and heavy lines, well-defined features, simple backgrounds, and exaggerated facial expressions (see fig. 1). Nakazawa's art skews toward realistic, fitting *Barefoot Gen*'s autobiographical nature as Nakazawa's scenes draw from his memories. Nakazawa's literal and often visually harsh art is effective in grounding an event as

unfathomable as the atomic bombing. The use of realistic gore and violence contrasts the otherwise friendly and exaggerated character designs, making it more shocking.



Figure 1. (Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 1: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima*, 1: 6)

Nakazawa's grounded art style also fits *Barefoot Gen's* eschewal of subtlety in favor of strong messaging. Scenes of the bombing and its aftermath illustrate the destroyed city and victims in vivid detail. Nakazawa attempts to accurately reflect his own memories in a wide variety of aspects, particularly through depictions of bombing victims: women with countless shards of glass stuck in their front side, men with melting flesh, and burnt corpses (see fig. 2). Despite substantial photographic evidence of the bombing's devastation, there are no publicly

known materials that capture these scenes, as most photos date to several days and weeks afterward. Thus, art has become the sole medium for conveying the surreal violence of the bomb, with Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* being a widely recognized example.⁴² To achieve his goals of memorializing the bombing, Nakazawa uses immediately readable and recognizable violence to ensure accurate remembrance. After the publication of his earliest atomic bomb works, Nakazawa frequently received letters from readers in disbelief of the reality of these scenes.⁴³ Nakazawa's art did not just show the world what had happened but proved and validated the painful experiences of survivors. Highlighting the distinctiveness of the bombing and its uniquely violent nature is a common theme in first-generation *hibakusha* storytelling.



Figure 2. (Nakazawa, 1:271)

⁴² Matsumoto, "Challenging America's Collective Memory of the Bombing of Hiroshima : An Analysis of U.S. University Students' Reactions to the Anime Version of Barefoot Gen," 150.

⁴³ Nakazawa and Minear, *Hiroshima*, 157.

In contrast, Kōno’s work has an overall lighter look, with thinner, smoother lines, and use of cross-hatching and linework for shading rather than filling space in with pure black (see fig. 3). Kōno’s gentler, “looser” art gives her storytelling a less grounded feeling, thus emphasizing abstract feelings and reactions rather than literal depictions. This less-literal quality is most significant in scenes of traumatic recall, such as when Minami of *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms* experiences a PTSD episode. During an embrace with a love interest (Uchikoshi), her surroundings transform into the scorched aftermath of the atomic bombing, leaving only her and Uchikoshi rendered in the typical art style (see fig. 4). Minami is separated from her environment, most notably with the presence of vaguely outlined corpses, representing the dissociation accompanying the PTSD episode. Additionally, the abstraction conveys Kōno’s inability to concretely recreate the scene; a notable exception is the city’s architecture, as many landmarks remain intact and recognizable today.

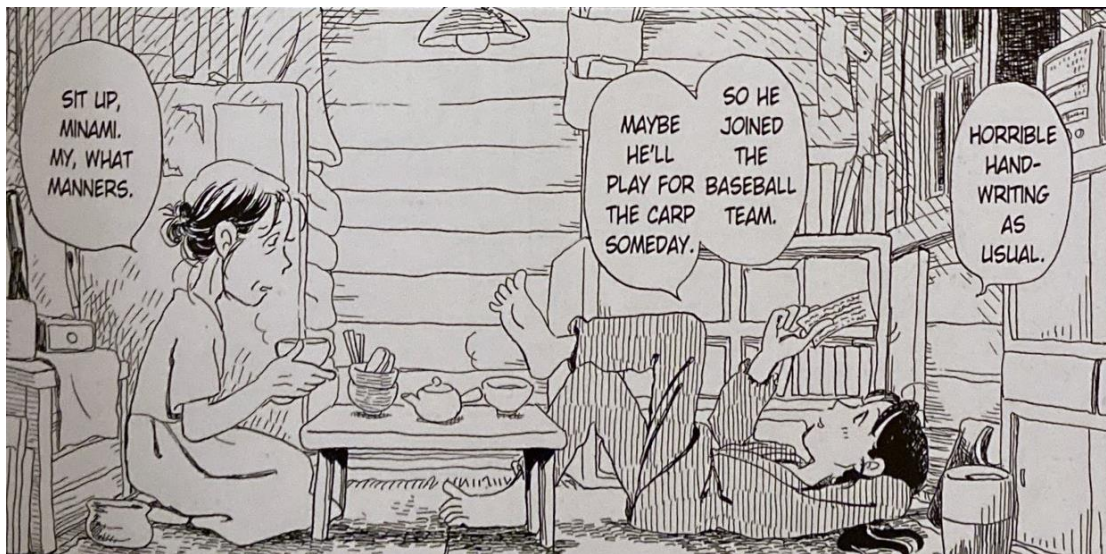


Figure 3. (Kono, *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, 10)



Figure 4. (Kōno, 22)

Transformations in art style also distinguish Nanami's father Asahi's flashbacks from the contemporary plot in the second part of *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*. The contrast is less significant, but the inking and lines become noticeably lighter and thinner, creating an effective visual indication of scene transition. This is immediately recognizable in his first flashback, where we see an older Asahi sit on a riverbank transform into his younger self on the next page. In a prior scene, dark, filled in spaces can be seen on clothing and hair, but following the transition, these darker spots are replaced with lighter cross-hatching, making the scene detached from the reality just shown.⁴⁴ *In This Corner of the World* also utilizes shifts in art style to convey significant moments. Though there are no flashback scenes, radical changes in

⁴⁴ Kōno, *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, 69–72.

styling can be seen in Suzu's drawings,⁴⁵ which reflect recent thoughts and events, and scenes of warfare and violence. The most pertinent example of the latter is the depiction of the Hiroshima explosion, where the stark white and visually dominating form of the cloud is accentuated by a background darkened by dense cross-hatching (see fig. 5). *In This Corner of the World* primarily uses white space and simple outlines of surroundings, so the sudden darkening of the background makes the moment shocking. This technique is a reverse of the art style shifts utilized in *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, giving it the effect of heightening the scene's realism and grounding the events of the story firmly in wartime violence.



Figure 5. (Kono, *In This Corner of the World*, 364)

⁴⁵ Kōno, *In This Corner of the World*, 239–47.

The literal and non-literal natures of these two authors' styles reflect the two authors' different psychological distances from the bombing. Nakazawa has little distance from the bombing and can thus remember and interpret it in a literal sense. First-generation *hibakusha* are in a unique position to depict and describe the experience of atomic destruction as the only people to have been so physically close to a nuclear explosion. Nakazawa's art is directly representative of the experience rather than a lens through which it can be interpreted. There are no factors other than time that separate Nakazawa from visual recollection of August 6th, which is why his art is rendered realistically, sometimes to a near-photographic level. The graphic realism of atomic violence in *Barefoot Gen* often contrasts otherwise simple, exaggerated character design, but this shows the difficulty (and conscious hesitation) in depicting the atomic bombing in any way other than as accurately as possible. First-generation *hibakusha* often describe artistic or literary attempts to represent the bombing as "much too diluted" and "nothing like their actual experiences,"⁴⁶ a feeling that Nakazawa himself experienced regarding his own art.⁴⁷ With a psychological distance so small, first-generation *hibakusha* cannot separate themselves enough to make their art anything less than faithful to their traumatic memories.

Kōno's much greater distance from the bombing results in depictions that differ significantly from Nakazawa's. She is mindful of the gap in experience and does not attempt to significantly show atomic violence; this acknowledges the impossible nature of representing the bombing and that those parts are not her story to tell. The two depictions she does feature, the river of corpses and the cloud over the city, are illustrated appropriately to her lack of direct knowledge: the bodies in the former scene are drawn abstractly with little detail, and the

⁴⁶ Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*, 89.

⁴⁷ Nakazawa and Minear, *Hiroshima*, 165.

illustration of the latter is likely based on publicly accessible photographs. A conscious effort to be respectful is likely a contributing factor, but it is also probable that Kōno's art in these works naturally developed into a more abstract style since she does not share the same experiences as her characters, unlike Nakazawa; the creation of these *manga* came through research and imagining others' experiences, which naturally are not photorealistic memories. Kōno's awareness of the link between realistic art and personal separation from the bombing also manifests art style shifts, utilized to reflect her and her characters' own distances and to the bombing. Later-generation survivors (and those adjacent) must move back and forth between their reality detached from the attack, and the memories of their family and community.

Through comparison of Nakazawa and Kōno's art, a correlation between realism and psychological closeness to the bombing can be observed. A greater closeness makes accurate depiction imperative, both to the story's messaging and the validation of the creator's experiences. Conversely, artistic depictions of the atomic attack become more abstract as one's psychological distance grows larger; this comes from both the impossibility of visualizing an event incomprehensible to most, as well as a focus on illustrating impressions of others' experiences rather than one's own, naturally leading to a less realistic depiction.

4.2 – Depictions of Traumatic Memory Recall

A major difference between the works of Nakazawa and Kōno is that when Nakazawa writes atomic bomb stories, he is forced to recall direct memories of the bombing, exacerbated by the autobiographical nature of *Barefoot Gen*. Nakazawa incorporates the experience of this traumatic recall into his work, but it is important to note that the very creation of his work necessitates his own recall.

Scenes of traumatic recall are few in *Barefoot Gen*. This is mainly due to the bombing itself being a part of the narrative, and thus, the reader will have already seen these scenes. However, a notable example of recall is the beginning of *Volume 5*, where Gen has been asked to write about his family in class. Although he starts general, he soon drifts towards the memories of watching several family members perish in the flames after the explosion, as well as other scenes of bombing victims.⁴⁸ While Nakazawa largely recreates the scenes from *Volume 1*, they are not exact copies, featuring new perspectives⁴⁹ on similar scenes⁵⁰ and pure black backgrounds⁵¹ replaced by cross-hatching.⁵² Though these changes may be a consequence of Nakazawa's artistic process, they reflect the alteration—and, perhaps, fading—of memory over time. Scenes of recall are also typical in introductions to other *hibakusha* characters, whose survivor status is often unclear at the start. An example of this is the artist Seiji in *Volume 3*, who initially begins antagonistic toward Gen but once he is offered a chance to explain his injuries and atomic bomb experience,⁵³ the two come to an understanding and Gen encourages Seiji to persevere.⁵⁴ This kind of traumatic recall allows these characters to bond over their collective wounds, and reflects an attempt at unification among *hibakusha*; even if they may disagree or conflict with each other, they have common demons from their past and direct their anger to the same political and military powers that led to the bombing.

⁴⁸ Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 5: The Never-Ending War*, 13th printing, vol. 5 (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 2008), 6–7.

⁴⁹ Nakazawa, 5:11.

⁵⁰ Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 1: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima*, 1:256.

⁵¹ Nakazawa, 1:262–63.

⁵² Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 5: The Never-Ending War*, 5:8.

⁵³ Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 3: Life After the Bomb*, 13th printing, vol. 3 (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 2005), 45.

⁵⁴ Nakazawa, 3:55.

Since Kōno is not a first-generation *hibakusha*, scenes of the atomic bombing and the following decade in her works are based off the accounts of others. This is not to say that Kōno's work has no basis in her own memory or experience; when Nanami—the second-generation *hibakusha* protagonist of the second story in Kōno's *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*—witnesses others' recall in *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, it is likely that this draws on Kōno's own experiences of growing up around *hibakusha*.

Second- and later-generations' experience is primarily in reaction to the first generation's, rather than a reaction to the atomic bombing itself. In Kōno's works, the ability or inability to recall is a divide between generations of survivors. Later generations of *hibakusha* cannot experience recall in the same way as their elders, and this inability is a defining characteristic of the later-generation experience: carrying trauma without having experienced it firsthand. Nanami, as a second-generation *hibakusha*, does not experience direct recall of the bombing, but does see these memories trigger for others. Nanami briefly witnesses an implied PTSD episode experienced by her grandmother. After Nanami feigns dizziness—resembling radiation sickness symptoms—her grandmother physically and mentally shuts down, completely quiet until Nanami explains that it was a joke, bringing her grandmother back to reality.⁵⁵ Nanami's connection to the bombing is further defined by the memories of others through her father's flashbacks of his and her mother's meeting in the second half of the story. Although it is not made explicitly clear how familiar Nanami is with these stories, her narration comes in at the end of her father's story to connect back to her and her current concerns;⁵⁶ the reader is led to make connections between Nanami's experiences and her family's. Nanami also experiences her

⁵⁵ Kōno, *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, 49.

⁵⁶ Kōno, 93.

own flashbacks of her mother's illness, triggered by her friend's sudden faintness.⁵⁷ This recall is of the bombing's impact decades later rather than of the attack itself, reflecting the reactive nature of second- and later-generations' perceptions. Additionally, her friend's symptoms are the result of an intense emotional reaction to the Hiroshima Peace Museum,⁵⁸ tying together Nanami, her mother, and memories of the bombing.

The different representations of traumatic recall differ between the works of Nakazawa and Kōno due to their varying levels of psychological distance from the atomic bombing. Recall is often an act of defiance and validation of one's experiences in *Barefoot Gen* and is also depicted as a form of reconciliation and solidarity between survivors. As a first-generation survivor, Nakazawa's own ability to directly recall and tell his experiences was a defining aspect of his *hibakusha* identity. Although such recall could bring great psychological pain, it also allowed him to identify and bond with fellow *hibakusha* and distinguished his experiences from outsiders ignorant of the bombing. First-generation *hibakusha* suffered discrimination and doubt in many aspects of life, but their memories confirmed that what happened to them was real and has had a tangible effect on global society; sharing those memories could thus make a positive impact by educating others on the horrors of atomic weaponry. As non-*hibakusha* later-generation resident of Hiroshima, Kōno lacks memories of the bombing, so her interpretation of recall is based on seeing it in others. This psychological distance from the bombing as well as first-generation *hibakusha* makes external symptoms much more noticeable, and thus the pain of remembering is highlighted over the complex personal meanings it has for the survivors themselves. The only recall Kōno can base on her own memories is that of characters witnessing

⁵⁷ Kōno, 79–80.

⁵⁸ Kōno, 78.

others experiencing it, leading to an emphasis on protagonists that are alarmed or confused by the visceral reactions of those recalling traumatic events. Additionally, given that Kōno herself as well as her *manga* are greatly separated from the bombing, there is more of a tendency to focus on the pain of the experience rather than the coping with it, which Nakazawa incorporates as someone who did have to learn to live life with that traumatic experience.

Thus, the different psychological distances each of these authors have to the bombing of Hiroshima impacts their personal interpretations of what recall means for survivors. Recall is acknowledged as painful by both authors, but Nakazawa chose to emphasize the positive coping aspects of it, while Kōno focused on trying to understand pain that one cannot reasonably fathom themselves. Nakazawa dedicated his career to spreading an anti-war and anti-nuclear message to Japan and the rest of the world, so he learned to use his memories to his benefit. Kōno does not attempt to show positive angles of atomic trauma recall since she cannot personally experience it; doing so would risk insensitive portrayals and misrepresentations of first-generation experiences. Both approaches, however, are valuable in depicting a complex web of memories related to the atomic bombing, developing a better collective understanding.

4.3 – Incorporation of Political Concerns

Political messaging is an important consideration when analyzing *manga* depicting the bombing of Hiroshima. The atomic bombing's legacy is tied to Japan's wartime actions as well as the U.S. government and military; thus, atomic bomb literature cannot be separated from politics. Some of the most prominent themes in atomic bomb literature include anti-nuclear, anti-Japanese government, anti-military, and class concerns. These issues can all be found in *Barefoot Gen*, a work that is profoundly political, especially by the standard of *shōnen manga*. Nakazawa saw these issues as deeply entrenched in his memories of the atomic bombing and its impact on

his life. In contrast, Kōno does not incorporate as many political themes into her works, choosing instead to focus on the day-to-day life of *hibakusha*. This difference in content is undeniably influenced by the decades in which they were written, as the early 2000s were rife with conservatism and historical revisionism, as well as the authors' psychological distances from the bombing. Recognizing these themes, or the lack thereof, situates these works in a broader context of atomic bomb literature and its "purpose," and how the goals of authors have evolved over time. Nakazawa created *Barefoot Gen* to educate and memorialize, thus, the blatant political messaging reacting to contemporary history cannot be ignored.

Barefoot Gen is highly critical of the Japanese government, going so far as to label it the greater cause of the bombing as well as responsible for the hardship that followed. A few figures are highlighted, such as Emperor Hirohito; his visit to Hiroshima after the war is incorporated into the story, with Gen opposing the making and waving of Japanese flags at his school and expressing his anger as the Emperor's car passes by.⁵⁹ Nakazawa indicts bureaucrats as well, with the character of Samejima Denjiro as a significant example. Samejima serves as an unabashedly pro-war local chairman prior to the bombing, targeting the Nakaokas due to Gen's father's anti-war sentiment.⁶⁰ However, years after the bombing, Gen reencounters him as a running political candidate claiming to have always opposed the war.⁶¹ Samejima represents post-war hypocrisy and could be viewed as a stand-in "rehabilitated" politician who now reclaimed power despite having been at the core of Japan's imperialism. Nakazawa also highlights the capitalist aspect of political corruption: Samejima is shown to be gambling money

⁵⁹ Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 5: The Never-Ending War*, 5:63.

⁶⁰ Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 1: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima*, 1:38–39.

⁶¹ Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 5: The Never-Ending War*, 5:138–39.

he has acquired through illegal and unethical means with other business owners and politicians.⁶²

The connection between war and profit is made very clear in *Barefoot Gen*, emphasized by the impoverishment of Gen and his family.

Nakazawa also frequently connects the rise of Japanese bureaucrats and the U.S. Occupation's power, showing the political and economic dealings between the two parties. This often comes in the form of discussing the accessibility of food and other necessary resources, much of which is stockpiled by U.S. forces and the wealthy.⁶³ One of the most notable Occupation forces at work in *Gen* is the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC). The ABCC was a U.S. research commission that studied the effects of the atomic bomb under the guise of providing medical aid to survivors. Gen quickly becomes aware of its promotion as essentially a trap and is quick to accuse Japanese collaborators to this project.⁶⁴ Nakazawa further explores the issue of Japanese collaboration with the U.S. military when he encounters a Japanese American soldier. Although at first he thinks he can identify with the soldier, he soon realizes the cultural gap between them and feels betrayed.⁶⁵

Barefoot Gen's reception is also tied to its political nature. *Gen* was, for many readers, an introduction to the realities of the atomic bombing and the aftermath even years later. Thus, it is unsurprising that it has been used in classroom settings and research. *Gen* is notable for subverting typical school bans on *manga* through its incorporation into school libraries—the film adaptation has also become a staple of “peace education,” often being screened for middle school

⁶² Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 6: Writing the Truth*, 13th printing, vol. 6 (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 2008), 68–71.

⁶³ Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 4: Out of the Ashes*, 13th printing, vol. 4 (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 2005), 70–71.

⁶⁴ Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 5: The Never-Ending War*, 5:182–85.

⁶⁵ Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 7: Bones into Dust*, 13th printing, vol. 7 (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 2009), 105.

students.⁶⁶ In her 2017 article “Challenging America’s Collective Memory of the Bombing of Hiroshima,” Matsumoto Tomoko analyzes American university students’ reactions to the *Barefoot Gen* film adaptation; many were surprised about Gen’s father’s leftist, antiwar activism and beliefs,⁶⁷ which challenged their view that the U.S.’s attacks were justified because all Japanese supported the war. The impact of *Gen*’s anti-war and anti-nuclear messaging has been vital in the work’s dissemination, with it becoming popular in Germany in the 1980s; the anti-authority themes resonated with frustrated students.⁶⁸ While the politics of *Gen* were praised by many, they also brought the ire of detractors. The series has been removed from schools due to its explicit depictions of Japanese violence against Chinese and Koreans during the war,⁶⁹ which followed the textbook controversies of the twenty-first century in Japan. While this was a reaction after the success and establishment of *Gen*, Nakazawa also struggled with publishing many of his earlier works without compromise; publishers ignored him or found it to be “too intense.”⁷⁰ Historically, many non-*hibakusha* have been hesitant to consume atomic bomb literature, which likely stems from a hesitancy to engage with the violence of the past.

Another political aspect of atomic bomb literature is how the *hibakusha* experience is defined. To “prove” their experience, *hibakusha* often describe their experiences within the legal frameworks provided by the Japanese government. This is perhaps most notable with the typical focus on their location during the bomb’s detonation. Knowing this position was essential to determining how far they were away from the explosion’s hypocenter, a measurement necessary

⁶⁶ Matsumoto, “Challenging America’s Collective Memory of the Bombing of Hiroshima : An Analysis of U.S. University Students’ Reactions to the Anime Version of Barefoot Gen,” 150.

⁶⁷ Matsumoto, 160.

⁶⁸ Matsumoto, 160.

⁶⁹ Liz Bury, “Japanese School Board Bans Acclaimed Anti-War Manga,” *The Guardian*, August 26, 2013, sec. Books.

⁷⁰ Nakazawa and Minear, *Hiroshima*, 153.

to prove legal *hibakusha* status to acquire the provided healthcare services.⁷¹ In his autobiography and in *Barefoot Gen*, Nakazawa describes the school gate he was near, even reflecting on how narrowly he avoided dangerous exposure to the explosion.⁷² There is also the matter of determining how much the atomic bomb affects the health of *hibakusha*. Due to the lack of information about the bomb, it was difficult to determine which health issues resulted from ARS. In the first few years after the attack, attributing health concerns to the bombing was simple (and typically the likely explanation), but decades later, it became difficult to pinpoint which issues were a result of the bombing. This manifests in *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, where Nanami reflects on her mother's death and how the ambiguity brought anxiety about if and how she could be affected eventually as well.⁷³ While Kōno's work is less explicitly political, she brings in this fear as well as the social discrimination faced by *hibakusha* of all generations through the uncomfortable ambiguity Nanami and her brother exist in.

Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms also acknowledges other political issues *hibakusha* faced, albeit more subtly than *Barefoot Gen*. This is accomplished through the setting, the "Genbaku [atomic bomb] slums," a small community of people left homeless and impoverished by the bombing living in temporary, often illegal, housing. This area was notably wiped out in the city reconstruction process, becoming the current Peace Memorial Park.⁷⁴ In the introductory scenes, Minami works on a tailoring project with her friend who lives in a higher-class district, where the two seek to replicate a dress in the window of a fashion store, emphasizing Minami's relative poverty.⁷⁵ When Minami moves from this area to her home in the

⁷¹ Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*, 113.

⁷² Nakazawa and Minear, *Hiroshima*, 34.

⁷³ Kōno, *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, 86.

⁷⁴ Tomoko Ichitani, "'Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms': The Renarrativation of Hiroshima Memories," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 40, no. 3 (2010): 368.

⁷⁵ Kōno, *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, 6.

slum district, she passes by a sign promoting the World Conference Against Atomic Bombs; this is illustrative of middle- and upper-class citizens' concerns, contrasted by signs stating "Resist Eviction!" in the slum district.⁷⁶ Kōno shows the differences between classes and generations of *hibakusha* through this subtle comparison, with the higher-class district's focus on memorialization and large scale political action and the slum district's centering on immediate economic issues. Kōno's depiction of the higher-class district also serves as a vision of the future Hiroshima, given that this area would eventually expand and overtake the slum district. Although this is not Kōno's narrative focus, this detail conveys how the political concerns of Hiroshima residents would shift over time and portrays the *hibakusha* whose concerns were suppressed in favor of creating a new image and collective memory of the city.

Through atomic bomb literature, an evolution of the politics of survivor memory and experience correlates with a growing psychological distance away from the attack on Hiroshima. While *Barefoot Gen* focuses a lot on the specific forces at work against *hibakusha*, later works such as *Town of Evening Calm*, *Country of Cherry Blossoms* are valuable as well in showing the different political contexts and priorities of later generations. With greater distance, topics shift toward those of health and discrimination since they remain relevant and commonly misunderstood topics. Kōno's work may appear "less" political than Nakazawa's since it does not address and educate the reader on specific actions and actors, but anti-war and anti-nuclear messaging is still present through more personally intimate issues, something that she is likely more familiar with as later-generation Hiroshima resident. The persistent fear of rippling health effects, the psychological trauma left on families, and the massive transformations the city has undergone convey a diverse collective experience across generations. The existence of modern

⁷⁶ Kōno, 8–9.

atomic bomb literature shows that these issues remain relevant, emphasized by Kōno's choice to set her work in time periods long after the bombing. While *hibakusha* inevitably acclimated to "normal" lives, non-*hibakusha* must understand that there is no "moving on" from this experience, especially as nuclear proliferation continues. This theming is present in Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* as well but shown through the lens of explicitly political narratives; the choice to bring these issues to the forefront is influenced by Nakazawa's own position as a first-generation *hibakusha*. To secure legal recognition and proper medical care, it was necessary to be aware of Japan's bureaucracy and political trends and speaking out on political issues often became a matter of life or death. Kōno did not face the same kind of political barriers in her day-to-day life nor the creation and publication of her works, so fighting for specific messages was not as important. Thus, Nakazawa's small psychological distance to the bombing resulted in politics being a vital part of his life and work, while Kōno has enough distance for it to be possible to not engage with these topics to the same degree in her atomic bomb works.

Chapter 5: Developing a Multigenerational Collective Memory

5.1 – Understanding Historical Context and Significance of the Works

Barefoot Gen, *Town of Evening Calm*, *Country of Cherry Blossoms*, and *In This Corner of the World* cannot be separated from the history during which they were written, just as they are inseparable from the War and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. *Barefoot Gen* was serialized from 1973 to 1987 and reflects the dormant anger left by 1950s, 1960s, and Cold War concerns. *Town of Evening Calm*, *Country of Cherry Blossoms* and *In This Corner of the World* were serialized from 2003 to 2004 and 2007 to 2009, respectively; they reflect the increasing rise of

conservatism, historical revisionism, and the growing gap between the generations that experienced the War and those born after it. These contexts are important to understanding the lens through which the authors view and remember the bombing, and how this factors into determining their psychological distance to the attack.

Barefoot Gen was written during the latter half of the Cold War, a period dominated by atomic fear. Nakazawa incorporates many concerns from this time as well as issues contemporary to the late 1940s and early 1950s setting of *Gen*. Two of the earliest Cold War-era issues relevant to *Gen* are the Korean War and the *Lucky Dragon* Incident. The Korean War is primarily mentioned to highlight the suffering of Koreans as an extended consequence of Japan's wartime actions, most clearly addressed through Mr. Pak, the Nakaokas' Korean neighbor. Mr. Pak weathers a substantial amount of tragedy due his forced separation from his family and the colonization of his homeland,⁷⁷ as well as being affected by the bombing itself. When he reunites with Gen, despite finding better financial circumstances, he finds himself unable to reunite with and protect his family still living on the Korean peninsula.⁷⁸ His anger over this gets through to Gen and makes him more aware of it, further fueling his hatred for war and the U.S. and Japanese governments. Additionally, Nakazawa complements Gen's story with historical information about the near-nuclearization of the Korean War, supporting the anti-nuclear themes of the overall narrative as well as emphasizing ever-present fear of the continued use of nuclear arms.⁷⁹ Although not a direct part of *Barefoot Gen*'s plot, the *Lucky Dragon* Incident is an undeniably important event for Japanese anti-nuclearism. In 1954, the U.S. military tested a thermonuclear weapon on Bikini Atoll, creating a large amount of radioactive fallout over a wide

⁷⁷ Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 1: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima*, 1:70.

⁷⁸ Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 7: Bones into Dust*, 7:45.

⁷⁹ Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 9: Breaking Down Borders*, 13th printing, vol. 9 (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 2009), 89–90.

area, in which the Japanese fishing boat *Lucky Dragon* was affected, causing significant health issues for the crewmembers.⁸⁰ This caused widespread outrage in Japan, leading to a significant ramping up of anti-nuclear and anti-war activism and organization—the most significant being the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (*Gensuikyō*)—and public support for these efforts; anti-nuclear test petitions received over thirty million signatures.⁸¹ The continuance of nuclear tests and the participation of an increasing number of countries—including Japan’s neighbor, China—would only further amplify anti-nuclear sentiment in Japan and across the world, turning nuclear proliferation into a key issue of the Cold War era. This angered and moved Nakazawa during the early stages of *Barefoot Gen*, thus, along with reader reactions, inspiring him to continue with *Gen*, a challenging and, at times, demoralizing project.⁸² Decades after the Cold War, it is more difficult to understand the omnipresent threat of nuclear war, but for Nakazawa and contemporary readers, it was an everyday reality.

Both of Kōno’s war-related works were written at the outset of the twenty-first century, decades after *Barefoot Gen*, and a mere decade after the end of the Cold War. This time also came after the economic crash of the 1990s, a transformative time for Japanese society that saw a brief fall of the dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).⁸³ The brief rise of the Japanese Socialist Party gave way to Prime Minister Murayama’s issuance of a formal apology for Japanese wartime atrocities, including the “comfort women” (forced sexual labor) system, which currently remains the most direct apology on record.⁸⁴ Despite this progressive acknowledgement toward Imperial Japan’s victims, the early twenty-first century would see a swing back to a

⁸⁰ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 272.

⁸¹ Gordon, 272.

⁸² Nakazawa and Minear, *Hiroshima*, 166.

⁸³ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 324.

⁸⁴ Gordon, 324.

strong LDP grip on politics and a move toward reactionary right-wing beliefs. Prime Minister Koizumi became infamous for his repeated “official” visits to Yasukuni Shrine (a memorial to the Japanese war dead), a controversial gesture that triggered anger in China, South Korea, and even within Japan.⁸⁵ In addition, the Ministry of Education approved new textbooks in 2005 that supported ultranationalist revisionism of Japanese war crimes, coinciding with the increasingly popular belief by nationalists that “historical consciousness” over-emphasized Japan’s crimes to a “masochistic” degree.⁸⁶ With textbooks erasing atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre, the public consciousness was starting to be led in a direction that forgot that past and embraced a new Japan. This is the time in which Kōno wrote *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*, a text she was initially hesitant to write but was inspired to after realizing how little outsiders were educated on Hiroshima. This, along with *In This Corner of the World*, sought to inform younger generations on wartime experience and memorialize the experiences of her family and fellow residents of Hiroshima. While Kōno’s works arguably seek to push back on ignorance of the war, they are also impacted by trends of revisionism. *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms* illustrates a picture of the Hiroshima slums and the families that grew in these areas as they were reborn in the postwar period. However, there is a noticeable lack of Koreans in this depiction, despite them making up the majority of these slums’ occupants.⁸⁷ Koreans, often forced to move to Japan and work as slave laborers, made up thousands of the deaths caused by the bombing, and have had unique aspects to the suppression of their experience and memories;⁸⁸ Kōno implicitly affirms the view that the atomic bombing

⁸⁵ Gordon, 327.

⁸⁶ Gordon, 331.

⁸⁷ Ichitani, “‘Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms’: The Renarratation of Hiroshima Memories,” 369.

⁸⁸ Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*, 152.

was an experience unique to the Japanese people, thus furthering a sense of victimhood. Japanese war crimes and colonial terror also go largely ignored in *In This Corner of the World*, which focuses on a young Japanese woman impacted by the war and bombing. This messaging is likely unintentional on Kōno's part, but it does speak to the growth of nationalist agendas that seek to emphasize Japanese victimhood and claim that Japan has done enough to apologize for wartime behavior or, in some cases, insist that said behavior never happened in the first place.

The environments that the *manga* of Nakazawa and Kōno were written in affected their psychological distances from the bombing, and thus influenced their works in conscious and unconscious ways. There is only a twenty-five-year gap between the creation of these works, but there are great differences in these two historical contexts, particularly regarding Japanese consciousness of World War II. Nakazawa wrote *Barefoot Gen* in the 1970s and 1980s, a period deep in the Cold War era where anti-war and anti-nuclear sentiment was high and war memories remained relatively fresh. Psychological distance to the war was naturally small due to the relevance of wartime experience to contemporary issues, so Nakazawa addressed themes related to the 1940s, 1950s, and the following few decades; he viewed the atomic bombing as a symptom of larger nationalist and imperialist entities and attitudes, so his characters' pain is ultimately derived from these sources. In contrast, Kōno's works were written over fifty years after the end of the war, a time when the war generation was advanced in age and nationalist forces sought to actively repress and rewrite history. Psychological distance to the atomic bombing, and the war in general, grew greater both through deliberate efforts and naturally through generational divides. In a way, Kōno's work reflects on this very issue through the illustration of generational gaps and her stated mission of informing a public ignorant of Hiroshima's experiences; in effect, her work seeks to recreate and preserve Japanese memories

of the war and identify its lingering effects. Although psychological distance is often an unconscious factor, it can be observed through these historical contexts that authors can directly analyze and engage with this distance, both on a personal level and with their audiences.

5.2 – “Inside” and “Outside” Perspectives

Nakazawa and Kōno approach their works from fundamentally different perspectives: Nakazawa’s is that of an “insider,” drawing upon his own memory to create a story about the bombing. Kōno’s perspective, however, comes from the outside looking in, based purely on the knowledge and memories of others. This “inside” versus “outside” division is another lens through which the idea of psychological distance can be articulated. Thus, like psychological distance, this distinction is not strictly binary. As a long-term resident of Hiroshima, Kōno understands the atomic bombing from a more detailed and intimate perspective than that of most non-*hibakusha*. These different perspectives are reflected in Nakazawa and Kōno’s works, particularly through the protagonists. While *Barefoot Gen*’s Nakaoka Gen parallels Nakazawa’s own experiences, Kōno’s works feature several protagonists with varied perspectives: Minami and Nanami in *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms* are first-generation and second-generation survivors respectively, and Suzu from *In This Corner of the World* is a first-generation war survivor with family caught in the Hiroshima bombing. Though none of Kōno’s characters are as close of a parallel to herself as Gen is to Nakazawa, the way she writes first-generation characters is different from Nakazawa, as she cannot draw on her own memories.

One of the ways in which Kōno’s greater psychological distance from the bombing manifests in her work is the avoidance of portraying traumatic scenes directly in her art and plot. Minami is a first-generation *hibakusha*, but her story takes place ten years after the end of the war, so scenes of the bombing only occur through brief flashbacks. While these short scenes of

recall are vivid, they do not utilize much of the typical imagery associated with the bombing such as fires, the mushroom cloud, or graphically detailed injuries. Although not primarily about the atomic bombing, this is handled similarly in *In This Corner of the World*. Kure, the setting for the story, is distant enough from the city of Hiroshima that it is not directly impacted by the attack, but close enough that the characters are somewhat aware of it. When the bombing occurs toward the end of the story, the only indication of what happened is a colossal cloud following a loud noise.⁸⁹ This significantly impacts Hiroshima-born Suzu, but she views the atomic bombing from an outside perspective due to her emotional and physical distancing from the city. By choosing Kure as a setting, Kōno also avoided depicting much of the war's damage until the third and final volume, so extrapolation used to illustrate traumatic experiences is minimal.

This is in stark contrast to *Barefoot Gen*, with its signature scenes of the bombing at the end of the first volume and beginning of the second. Nakazawa's retelling of August 6th, 1945 is vivid and meticulous, largely following his exact experiences: like himself, Gen narrowly avoids exposure to the blast, and wanders the burning ruins of the city trying to piece together what happened and locate his family. Nakazawa also includes the perspective of the American military in the development of the bombs and the final operation, complementing his personal experience with historical information.⁹⁰ Due to Nakazawa's inside perspective, he did not consciously self-censor in terms of art or narrative points; the entirety of August 6th is portrayed. This includes a detailed description of the moment of detonation—the blinding light, the intense heat, and the eardrum-shattering explosion—as well as numerous scenes of victims and the wreckage of the city, several of the scenes being shown on full-page illustrations rather than typically-small

⁸⁹ Kōno, *In This Corner of the World*, 364.

⁹⁰ Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen Volume 1: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima*, 1:105.

panels.⁹¹ Additionally, all the deaths that impact Gen are shown directly to us rather than happening when he is not present.⁹² This contrasts Nakazawa's own experience: he did not have a chance to see his father and two siblings one last time, and the scene of their deaths were left to his imagination after his mother recounted what had happened.⁹³ By including this scene, Nakazawa creates more closure for his own memories of his family's deaths and envisions how he would've reacted in that scenario.

Nakazawa using *Barefoot Gen* to explore unresolved aspects of his memory leads to another difference between these perspectives: the degree to which memories are "reconstructed" versus recalled. "Reconstructed memories" will be defined here as experiences codified into collective or public consciousness but are based upon the reforging and fusing of several different memories, typically by a second- or later-generation survivor through family members. All depictions and recollections of the war and the atomic bombing in Kōno's works are reconstructed since it was physically impossible for her to be present, and her storytelling came from the accounts of others. Scenes that may be less reconstructed are those such as Nanami's recollection of her mother's illness, which are likely somewhat based in Kōno's own experiences of growing up around *hibakusha*. In contrast, little of Nakazawa's work is reconstructed, aside from scenes based on family members' accounts. However, as intense as Nakazawa's memories may be, the thirty-year gap between the bombing and *Gen*'s publication leads to an increased level of psychological distance from 1945. *Barefoot Gen* as a work avoids the issue of holes in Nakazawa's memories by being fictionalized, so Nakazawa can composite memories to create scenes and characters representative of general trends in his experience.

⁹¹ Nakazawa, 1:254–56.

⁹² Nakazawa, 1:272–73.

⁹³ Nakazawa and Minear, *Hiroshima*, 60.

Through the comparison of these authors' works, it can be observed that those with an outside perspective must rely more on the reconstruction and compositing of memories to share stories of the initial event, while those with an inside perspective can more directly convey that information. Accordingly, outside-perspective individuals (especially second- and later-generation survivors) tend to focus on stories that react to the first generation rather than recreate their experiences. Their greater psychological distance from the bombing makes it impossible to engage with these narratives in the same way that inside-perspective individuals can, which is seen in the differences between Nakazawa and Kōno's stories. While the experiences of first-generation survivors will always be the closest psychologically to the bombing, comparing inside and outside perspectives highlights the value of later-generation experiences. Relatively speaking, Kōno's perspective is on the outside when compared to Nakazawa's, but her view is "inside" relative to people with less connection to Hiroshima. This is important because first-generation survivors will eventually not be around to share their experiences, so the perspectives of later-generation survivors and other Hiroshima residents will move inward to become the new inside perspective in a world growing increasingly further from the bombing of Hiroshima, psychologically and temporally. As the collective memory of Hiroshima develops, there will be overlap as newer generations take over for older ones in sharing atomic bomb narratives.

5.3 – Generational Inheritance of Atomic Bomb Narratives

It is undeniable that there are no accounts of the Hiroshima bombing as accurate as those of first-generation *hibakusha*, but these memories will inevitably have to be carried on by later generations. The memories that are handed down and the way in which they are transferred is determined by first-generation survivors and the communications and relationships they have with future generations of *hibakusha* and other residents of Hiroshima. These connections are, in

effect, able to bridge gaps in psychological distance to the bombing, so they are vital to overcoming the risk of atomic bomb memories fading. Thus, storytellers like Nakazawa utilize their close distance to the bombing to share vivid narratives, which are then received and interpreted into new memories by authors with greater distance, such as Kōno.

Hibakusha storytelling and testimonies have evolved greatly over time to suit changing cultural and political environments. In the early post-war era, *hibakusha* memories tended to be merged into a collective narrative; personal details were typically limited to one's "ontological relationship" to the bombing. Beginning in the 1980s, newer "testimonial practices" (*shōgen katsudōi*) allowed for *hibakusha* to share more deeply personalized stories incorporating elements aside from their survivor status alone.⁹⁴ However, restraints on this storytelling still existed and continue to; although *hibakusha* have long been free of the strict censorship of the U.S. occupation, social and emotional factors still make sharing testimonies difficult. Bomb survivors been criticized for supposedly profiting from storytelling through guided tours and have had their experiences used by various political groups, for both anti-government and pro-nationalist narratives.⁹⁵ Given that "*hibakusha*" identity is not centralized by nature of the entire city being impacted, it is also unsurprising that there is a great deal of internal disagreement on appropriate testimonial practices. Some survivors feel that sharing stories has "sensationalized" experiences and that the public sharing of memories is a "betray[al of] the past moment of deaths and suffering that they alone have witnessed." Thus, it has become a common belief that the very reluctance to share one's story is an "authentication" of the *hibakusha* experience.⁹⁶ Although the silence of survivors on their experiences goes beyond a perceived authenticity—social

⁹⁴ Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*, 85.

⁹⁵ Yoneyama, 87.

⁹⁶ Yoneyama, 88.

ostracization is a major factor—the belief that not sharing one’s experience is more respectful than the alternative can be problematic for ensuring that memories transfer between generations.

Barefoot Gen, despite starting serialization in the 1970s—prior to 1980s’ new testimonial practices—starkly contrasts the generalization of atomic bomb storytelling through its deeply personal, autobiographical nature that goes beyond the scope of health-related effects. Nakazawa did receive criticism for *Gen* and his other atomic bomb works, sometimes being described as “‘bring[ing] shame to [his] own family,’”⁹⁷ but ultimately pushed back against this to write his stories regardless. The ignorance of the atomic bombing Nakazawa witnessed in reactions to his work and the statements of politicians angered him and further motivated his work: “People didn’t know a thing about the atomic bomb. In face of this lack of knowledge, it was disgusting to hear successive Prime Ministers state that ‘Japan is the only country to suffer atomic bombing.’”⁹⁸ This reaction seems to contradict military reality, but with Nakazawa’s other responses to nuclear accidents and atomic proliferation, he expanded the definition of nuclear violence beyond Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁹⁹ This belief likely influenced Nakazawa’s outspokenness on his personal experience, viewing it as part of a larger picture vital to the education of future generations. *Barefoot Gen* thus can be viewed as a model for how *hibakusha* storytelling can become more permanent and transcend generations. Despite the three and a half decades that have passed since *Barefoot Gen* ended serialization—and the one and a half since Nakazawa’s death—it remains a widely accessible and popular testimony of the atomic bombing that describes the experience through words and images. Additionally, Nakazawa’s choice to extend the story far beyond 1945 ties the long-term social, economic, and psychological effects

⁹⁷ Nakazawa and Minear, *Hiroshima*, 158.

⁹⁸ Nakazawa and Minear, 157.

⁹⁹ Nakazawa and Minear, 131.

back to the bombing, which expands the definition of what an atomic bomb narrative is in the public consciousness. *Gen*'s impact and legacy is difficult to measure empirically, but future popular depictions of the attack fall in line with the larger scope narratives Nakazawa pursued.

Kōno's works continue this personalization of atomic bomb storytelling, as both of her *manga* make the bombing itself a small portion of the story. These works both utilize the perspective of someone who learns about the bombing through family, which begins the transition from first-generation memories to later generations. Kōno, both personally and in creating her *manga*, exists at a point in time where first-generation survivors are still alive and able to share experiences, but will also likely outlive them, so storytellers such as her are vital in the transference of memories. Inevitably, there will be later generations of *hibakusha* who develop their transgenerational memories of the bombing primarily off second-generational narratives. Thus, works that bridge this gap make this transition easier as well as speak to the fundamentally different relationship that later generations have with the bombing. Additionally, the strength of art such as *manga* is that first- and second-generation narratives can co-exist and continue to do so indefinitely. This develops a more inclusive collective memory that reflects the continuous development of *hibakusha* experience. It also allows survivors' perspectives to remain at the center, which is vital to establishing why these memories exist and matter. Without the core of first-generation experience, the edges of atomic bomb memory may begin to wear down, tempering the visceral trauma of the event.

Retaining first-generation experience but including how those memories impact later generations is important to ensuring that the gravity of atomic warfare continues to be understood, and the experience of *hibakusha* is validated. The bombing of Hiroshima left physical and psychological scars that have continued across generations, scars that are not

always visible to non-*hibakusha*. Continuing to interpret what that pain means will be left to later generations who will hold both personal and familial memories; they will likely continue to develop their own unique forms of atomic bomb storytelling influenced by and complementing a wealth of first-generation stories. This kind of multigenerational storytelling bridges gaps in psychological distance by pulling those further away closer and making use of the different distances themselves—recognizing these different experiences develops a more complex collective memory inclusive of ever-evolving interpretations of the atomic bombing. There will never be a generation able to recollect the events of August 6, 1945, as well as first-generation *hibakusha*, but the changes that come with time and future generations are just as valuable to the history and narrative of the bombing.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 – Summary

“Psychological distance” to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima determines the relationship an individual has with the event through the number of factors that separate an individual from the attack. This “distance” has impacted the works of Nakazawa and Kōno in many ways and creates two distinct forms of storytelling connected to the same topic, developing a collective memory. Nakazawa and Kōno’s stories are in conversation with each other, making for a more complete view of the bombing. *Barefoot Gen* is a thorough, angry, and passionate account of a first-generation *hibakusha*’s experience growing up in the shadow of the bombing. *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms* shares the cross-generational story of a family affected by the bombing, and how gaps in experience have shaped the younger generations; there

is also *In This Corner of the World*'s exploration of how a non-survivor existing contemporarily to *hibakusha* family members can have a relationship to the atomic bombing. These works represent different, but equally valid and valuable experiences when considering the collective memory of the atomic bombing, and its trajectory for the foreseeable future.

Barefoot Gen's first-generation perspective leads it to take a grounded approach that emphasizes the direct consequences of the bombing as well as its causes. Nakazawa's illustrations are both simple to understand for any audience, yet also realistic and viscerally detailed, which attempt to approximate the violent reality of his own memories. His work also reacts to contemporary affairs of the postwar period, emphasizing that many factors leading to the bombing continue to be issues and that ignorance of the atomic bombing leads to the risk of further nuclear violence. *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms* (as well as *In This Corner of the World*) is illustrated in a looser, more abstract style that emphasizes the emotions of its characters; since direct reactions to the violence of the bombing are rarely shown, a focus is placed on how characters recall and perceive an event far away in both time and generations. In line with Japanese political shifts at the twenty-first century's outset, Kōno's works do not often engage directly with larger sociopolitical forces behind the bombing and its aftermath, choosing instead to tell the story of characters who feel disconnected from the attack yet still suffer its consequences. Their primary concerns are in rediscovering and defining their own relationship to it, resulting in more concise atomic bomb narratives that leave room for first-generation narratives to serve as the primary testimony of the bombing itself.

Kōno's further psychological distance from the bombing results in narratives with different interpretations of and priorities in representing it, especially when compared to a first-generation *hibakusha* like Nakazawa. However, viewing these works as different elements of a

larger collective memory establishes a framework for how first- and later-generation narratives can coexist with and support each other. It is possible to see how memories of the atomic bombing have been shaped by changing historical and political environments, personal connections, and different forms of artistic expression and storytelling through the works of authors like Nakazawa and Kōno. These changes however do not make for contradictory narratives, but complementary ones; psychological distance to the bombing will vary greatly across all *hibakusha* and Hiroshima residents, so viewing these different experiences as part of a larger whole creates a more complex collective memory and allows for further inclusion as new generations of *hibakusha* storytellers appear. Thus, understanding how multigenerational narratives develop from each other and interact is of utmost importance to critically analyzing the future development of atomic bomb storytelling.

6.2 – The Present and Future of Atomic Bomb Narratives

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima, as well as Nagasaki, remains in the public consciousness almost eighty years later as a uniquely violent moment of the twentieth century and onward. The casualty counts of the atomic bombings were not as great as the firebombings of other Japanese cities, nor were the attacks on Japan the only contested bombardment of civilian populations by Allied forces in the Second World War, such as the bombing of Dresden. However, the atomic bombings exceeded conventional warfare through unparalleled destruction in a single moment and weapon, as well as creating psychological, medical, and environmental damage that has long outlasted their detonations.

The impact of the atomic bombings continues to be discussed due to the intimate connection between Japanese reactions to the attacks and Japan's war legacy, as well as the enduring threat of nuclear warfare. The bombings have undeniably been utilized as a moral

crutch for Japan in debates over wartime responsibility, specifically by conservative and nationalist forces that have appropriated the narratives of *hibakusha* for political leverage. Distortions such as this threaten the collective memory of the attacks by overwriting the reality of survivor experiences, further emphasizing a need for *hibakusha* narratives to be accessible and multigenerational. However, despite nationalist appropriation of atomic bomb memories, Japan remains a country largely dedicated to anti-war and anti-nuclear principles, with the famous “no more Hiroshimas” slogan emblematic of this popular embrace of peaceful values.

While the view of the atomic bombings as unjustified gains increasing international acceptance, nuclear warfare remains a threat; countries still possess hundreds of nuclear arms, with the U.S. and Russia having thousands, and others contemplate joining those ranks. With the ongoing invasion of Ukraine by Russia, a conflict speculated to risk an atomic exchange if another nuclear power formally declares war on Russia, the atomic peace believed to have come with the Cold War’s end has dissolved, and possibly never truly existed. As nuclear proliferation and modernization of arsenals continue, the threat of these weapons will not subside.

There must be better international understanding of nuclear weapons’ consequences before popular support can substantially push back on governments’ ownership of these devices. Formal education is the most direct method of achieving this, but the value of atomic storytelling and art in this goal cannot be understated. *Barefoot Gen* has remained praised and remembered decades after its publishing, and the creation of newer works such as Kōno’s *manga* shows that atomic bomb *manga* can continue to grow. Works like these convey anti-nuclear and anti-war messaging in terms easy for a wide audience to understand and relate to while preserving and validating the experience of *hibakusha*. As future generations of *hibakusha* continue to define what these memories and this identity means to them, the accessibility of atomic bomb art and

literature will aid in developing these understandings. It will also allow for expression of their own interpretations of the bombings, which will strengthen and develop collective memories. The collective memories of *hibakusha* have just as much meaning to survivors and their descendants as they should to the world; the lessons learned from these bombings show the universal importance of deeper understanding and appreciation for fellow human beings.

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