

Poems of the Atomic Bomb

(*Genbaku shishū*)

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Winner of the University of Chicago William F. Sibley Memorial Translation Prize, 2011

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- Dedicated to those stripped of their lives by the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima on August 6 and on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, to those who even now continue to be tormented by pain and by the fear of death, to those whose anguish and sorrow will remain with them forever, and lastly, to those the world over who loathe atomic bombs.

Prelude

give back the fathers! give back the mothers!

give back the elderly!

give back the children!

give me back! give back the human beings

connected to me!

for as long as there are human beings a world of human beings

give back peace

a peace that will not crumble!

August 6

can we forget that flash?

suddenly 30,000 in the streets disappeared

in the crushed depths of darkness

the shrieks of 50,000 died out

when the swirling yellow smoke thinned

buildings split, bridges collapsed

packed trains rested singed

and a shoreless accumulation of rubble and embers – Hiroshima

before long, a line of naked bodies walking in groups, crying

with skin hanging down like rags

hands on chests

stamping on crumbled brain matter

burnt clothing covering hips

corpses lie on the parade ground like stone images of Jizō, dispersed in all

directions

on the banks of the river, lying one on top of another, a group that had crawled to

a tethered raft

also gradually transformed into corpses beneath the sun's scorching rays

and in the light of the flames that pierced the evening sky
the place where mother and younger brother were pinned under alive
also was engulfed in flames
and when the morning sun shone on a group of high-school girls
who had fled and were lying
on the floor of the armory, in excrement
their bellies swollen, one eye crushed, half their bodies raw flesh with skin ripped
 off, hairless, impossible to tell who was who
all had stopped moving
in a stagnant, offensive smell
the only sound the wings of flies buzzing around metal basins

city of 300,000
can we forget that silence?
in that stillness
the powerful appeal
of the white eye sockets of the wives and children who did not return home
that tore apart our hearts
can it be forgotten?!

Death

!
wailing voices inside my ears
increase without a sound
and lunge at me
distorted space
shadows running crazily about
in a fluttering, enveloping cloud of dust
that smells of smoke
"ah,
I can
run away"
scattering remains of bricks from my hips
I jump up
my body
is burning
the fiery hot wind
that, from behind, knocked me to the ground
set fire
to my sleeves and shoulders
the concrete edge of a water tank
I seize in the smoke

my head
is already in the water
the clothes on which I sprinkle water
burnt and lying scattered
are no longer
electric cables, lumber, nails, glass sheets
an undulating tile barrier
nails burn
and heels come off
and stuck to my back, molten lead sheet metal
"oh – oh – oh – oh"
already, flames
blacken
both telephone poles and plaster
whirlpools
of fire and smoke
spewing into my broken head
"Hiro-chan Hiro-chan"
pressing down on the breast
ah! a bloody cotton hole

fallen
– child, child, child, where are you

from where in the smoke that creeps on its stomach
did they appear?
one hand joined to another
they continue to go round and round doing the *Bon Festival* dance
a circle of naked girls
stumble and fall
from beneath the tiles
another shoulder
a hairless old woman
broiled, forced out by the hot air
writhing, shouting loudly
at the roadside where flames already flicker
red clumps of flesh
stomachs swollen like drums
and even the lips ripped off
hands that seize my ankles
slip off, peel off
an eye that's fallen to the floor gives out a shout
heads boiled white
hair, brains my hands press
thick steaming smoke, fire's striking wind
in the darkness of crackling sparks
the children's golden eyes

burning body
fiery throat
suddenly crumbling
arms
caving in
shoulders
oh! I can go forward
no longer
alone in the depths of darkness
the deafening roar in my temples
suddenly goes away
ah!
why
why in this sort of place
on the roadside
separated from you too
must I
die
di
e
?

Flames

pushing smoke aside
from a world partly dimmed
by a low-hanging cloud
the shroud that struck the canopy of the heavens
that turned inside out and spread
showing their teeth
dancing up
joining forces with one another
black red blue flames
blowing about glimmering sparks
now tower
over the entire city

shaking like seaweed
a line of thrusting, advancing flames.
a group of cows being pulled to the slaughterhouse
avalanche down the river's banks
and one ashen pigeon,
its wings contracted, tumbles onto the bridge.
now and then
crawling out from beneath dense smoke
swallowed in fire

innumerable human beings
on all fours.
in a pile of embers that spout and collapse
hair torn
rigid
smolders a curse

after the concentrated
moment of explosion
only a hatred of fiery proportions
spreads out, boundless.
blank silence
accumulated in the air
thrusts aside the sun
uranium's heat rays
seared onto a girl's back
the flowery pattern of her silk clothing
and in an instant set ablaze
the black garment of a priest

August 6, 1945
midnight in broad daylight
people inflicted on God

a punishment of fire
this one evening
the fires of Hiroshima
are reflected in the beds of humankind
and, before long, history
will lie in ambush
for all those who imitate God.

Blindness

from the depths of the rubble
of the crumbled maternity hospital by the riverside
men who'd been helping their wives
drag their arms, their legs
and gather round the barge at the stone wall

the beached barge is painted with sparks
in the darkness of glass that attacked chests and faces
and the blind, driven away by the heat
grope their way down to the riverbed
groping legs
lose their balance in the mire

and on the fallen group
Hiroshima burns desolately
burns and crumbles
already evening high tide

the tide approaches the riverbed
and reaches fullness
arms are soaked, legs are soaked
and sea water seeps into the countless wounds
of those who don't move

in the darkness of wavering consciousness
nerves that grope for things lost
collide with the exploding curtain of that flash
and once again
burn out

instincts that passed through that tremendous collapse
are torn to pieces by floating arms and legs
and in charred beams that tumble into the river
the flickering after-images of life

(the smiles of wives with their babies
breakfast by the window of the transparent delivery room)

now

gathered

in eyes gouged out by glass

bloody pus and mud

and in a break in the smoke and clouds

the setting sun on the mountain tops

At a Field-Dressing Station

you

you cry, but there is no outlet for your tears

you scream, but there are no lips to become words

you try to struggle, but your fingers have no skin to grasp

you

who let flutter your limbs, covered with blood, greasy sweat, and lymph

and who let eyes shut like a thread shine white

your underwear's elastic, all that remains on your swollen stomachs

and you, who no longer feel shame, even when exposed

oh! that until a little while ago you all

were lovely schoolgirls

who can believe it?

from the dimly flickering flames

of a burnt and festering Hiroshima

you who are no longer you

fly and crawl out one by one

and struggling along to this meadow

you bury your heads, nearly bald, in the dust of anguish

why have you had to suffer like this?

why have you had to suffer like this?

for what purpose?

for what purpose?

and you children

do not know

already what form you've become

how far from the human you've been taken

only thinking

you're thinking

of those who until this morning were fathers, mothers, little brothers, little sisters

(meeting them now, who would recognize you?)

and of the houses where you slept, got up, ate meals

(suddenly, the flowers along the fence were torn to pieces, and now not even a

trace of their ashes remains)

thinking thinking

sandwiched between classmates who stop moving one by one

thinking

of before, of the day you were girls

human girls

Eyes

unknown shapes look this way
in a dark storehouse of an unknown time
of an unknown world
from bent latticed windows falls light of neither night nor day
shapes that were faces piled in heaps, shapes that were the front sides of heads
faces that, at the top part of the human body, reflected like flickering water
the joys and sorrows of life.
oh! now lumps of decayed and rotten flesh, the eyes alone afire
the stamp of human beings, wrenched away
sinking into the concrete floor
pinned down by some force, without even a shiver
those swollen tender heavy round objects
letting move only white light from torn flesh
and staring at every step I take.
eyes that adhere to and will not leave my back, my shoulders, my arms.
why do they look at me like this?
one after the other, from all around me, thin white eyes begin to shine on me
eyes, eyes, eyes,
from far ahead, from that dark corner, and from right here at my feet
oh! oh! oh!

eyes pierce me, fixate on me
who despite everything forehead skin is attached and nose rests properly
clothed, standing, continues to walk, a human being
from the floor transmitting hot air
from the stifling walls, from the corner of the solid pillar that supports the hollow
roof
emerging, *emerging*, eyes that never go out.
alas! looking for the person who just this morning was my sister
from my back to my chest, from my armpits to my shoulders
stuck on me all over, eternally on me, the one who rushed into this darkness
eyes!
urine from somewhere soaked through the stitches, plugging up the straw matting
on the concrete
crumbled cheeks
slippery with ointment, and secretion, and blood, and burnt ashes, the shadow of
a
face of death
ah, ah,
eyes that moved, shedding drops of a transparent secretion
and from ripped lips
teeth of foaming blood
gnawing out my name.

Record of a Storehouse

That Day:

In a field of lotus plants, all leaves burned into the shape of a horseshoe, the place: the second story of the army clothing warehouse. A concrete floor with dim light from a single tall latticed window. A layer of army-issue blankets are spread on the floor; those who have fled lie here facing all directions. All are naked save for the fragments of underpants and workpants on their waists.

Those who so fill the floor that there is nowhere left to step are nearly all younger schoolgirls who had left to take care of the evacuated houses. But the scars that cover their entire bodies from their faces on down, the mercurochrome, the clots of blood, the ointment, the bandages, transformed by filth, make them look like a group of old beggar women.

Shaded by thick posts, the pails and buckets by the wall are full of dirt, and into these they pour excrement, and amid the foul, chest-piercing smell,

"Help me daddy, help me!"

"Water, hooray, we have water! Oh, I'm so happy!"

"Fifty *sen*! Hey, here is fifty *sen*!"

"Take it away that dead thing at my feet take it away!" The
voices are high and thin and unceasing; the minds of some of the schoolgirls have
already been torn apart; half of the girls have become corpses that no longer move,

but there's no one to take them away. Occasionally, a parent bound in air-raid clothing will enter looking for a daughter; flustered, he'll look around for familiar features or for workpants of a particular pattern. When they know this is going on, the girls briefly cry out desperately for water and for help.

"Water, sir! Draw some water for me!"

Hairless, one eye in a spasm, her entire body swollen, a girl emerges partway out of the shadow of a post and holds up a crushed canteen, waves it in the air, and repeats her plea again and again and again. But the adults have heard that they are not to give water to the burn victims, and they pay no attention to these cries. So most of the girls get tired of calling and spitefully drop their voices, and that girl too finally collapses back into the shadows.

The storehouse without light sends into the earth the echoes of the far-away city that continues to burn, and, its crazed voices wasting away and rising up, is swallowed by the darkness of the night.

The Second Day:

Morning, quiet, a day of unearthly silence. The group on the floor has dwindled to about half, and there are none of yesterday's cries. The bodies of those who remain are uniformly bronzed and swollen, arms as thighs, thighs as abdomens, the shade of the burned and singed handfuls of hair, underarm hair,

young pubic hair, gives unmoving shadows to the extremities jumbled together and the hollows of the distorted lines of bodies, and dull white eyes alone remain in this stagnation, thin and melted.

Here and there a father and mother who have spotted their daughter stoop down to give her something to drink; the metal basins by the bedsides hold thin rice gruel with pickled plums and have become the gathering place of flies.

An airplane-like boom shocks the people here; the number of people who do not move continues to increase amid these signs of fear, and discovered alongside these figures are the eyes of Mrs. K.

The Third Day:

Mrs. K's condition, respiration 30, pulse 100, burnt areas, half of the face, all of the back, a little of the hips, both heels, an attack of fever, no appetite, a fever rising in the whites of her eyes that throughout the morning have looked silently on the crazed voices, trembling hands clinging to the pail of excrement she straddles. "More water, more tea; I want to eat some cucumbers with vinegar," are the words she speaks in the evening as the delirium sets in.

From her arms crumbles away the memory of her husband who died in Iwojima, from her eyes crumbles the figure of the child she left with the neighbors as she went off to labor service – the agony of instincts coming off from inflamed flesh.

The Fourth Day:

Severe, white, and watery diarrhea. Her eyes, their lashes burned, turn upwards, and no longer is there even the shadow of a smile; all burnt areas festering. Only oil for the burns, cranesbills for the diarrhea. And before long blood mixes in with the diarrhea. Small purple and red streaks begin to appear on what skin remains, and this evening, between groans from increased vomiting, the rumor that Attu Island has been retaken is spread in whispers.

The Fifth Day:

Hair that falls out at only a touch. Maggots gather on the festers, when dug out they fall in pieces, and, scattering on the floor, they again crawl up into pus.

This storehouse where not so long ago there was nowhere to set one's feet is now virtually empty, with only several people remaining, and in a corner over there, in a shadow here, people are swollen and without hope. Two or three orderlies, their faces dark, move around and drive away the flies that swarm in the wounds. When the sunshine from the tall windows moves along the stained floor, dusk steals its way in early, and the mask-like expressions of those who have collapsed on the floor follow with their eyes those who, relying on candlelight, are on their way to the next aid station in search of their relatives.

The Sixth Day:

In the shade of a pillar over there a young factory worker, his eyes alone emerging from a body wrapped entirely in bandages, sings the national anthem in a faint voice.

"What are the B-29's of the enemy? We have Zero fighters and Hayates. The enemy thinks they're so great. Hang in a little more, everybody, a little more," he says with weak and feverish breath.

"Keep your spirits up, get some sleep. If you call me Aunt, I'll come to you right away," calls out a one-eyed woman next to him, crawling over on her knees, her head wrapped in bandages.

"Aunt? You're not my aunt; Mother, you are my mother!"

His arms motionless, little by little he turns away his dark red cheekbones which are running with greasy sweat, and the tears from both glittering eyes flow under the bandages in two tracks.

The Seventh Day:

In the gloom of the empty storehouse, in a corner over there the form of a person who sobs the entire day, and in the shadow of this pillar a figure lies silent

as a rock, the chest sometimes arching and curving, panting for breath, the last of
the wounded.

The Eighth Day:

An emptied storehouse. Today too, into the sky of the twisted iron grating,
rises the smoke from the corpses that are piled up outside in the open. From the
shadow of a pillar there suddenly emerges a hand waving a water bottle,
a dark wall with layers of innumerable frightened eyeballs.

Mrs. K. is also dead.

----- patients, none; the dead . . . -----

the ink is dry on the notice put up at the gate

lotus petals, torn off and scattered, lie white on the pavement.

once again

you've turned toward you the cracked features of your dear son

and daughter-in-law and grandchild

and you continue to talk with them, don't you?

the faded picture on the Buddhist altar

slightly cracked

smiling

yesterday a man from the company

brought you

your son's gold-crowned front teeth

exhumed from the area

around his desk

it's said that your daughter-in-law and her son

burned over their entire bodies like everyone

around Dobashi

crawled to the nearby Tenma River, fell in,

and were swept away by the current, one after another

every day, under the blazing sun

I took one hand, in the other you held a cane

you walked around searching, in shadeless Hiroshima

crossing mountains of tiles and walking along collapsed bridges
from west to east, from south to north
from the street corner where people said dead bodies had been deposited
to temples and schools on the outskirts of town
to aid stations on the small islands
turning over pages of half-torn registers of the wounded
going around, searching
among people who continued to groan
indeed, the seventh day
heading toward the hospital in a mountain village about which you'd heard
 accidentally
again traversing ruins left by the fires
you, who until then
had been stout-hearted to the point of obstinacy
suddenly squatted
by a telephone pole reduced to its base
sputtering and smoldering
"Oh, I've had it
I've had enough
why do we
have to experience such pain?"
raising your voice little by little
you burst into tears

your umbrella falling into the ashes

a bit of dust rising

in this ridiculously blue sky

nothing

nothing at all

only a line of white smoke

rising tediously . . .

your husband died when you were young

sewing, fulling

even selling noodles at night, you raised your only son

who left college and for five or six years suffered from tuberculosis

at last recovered, got married,

had a child, six months later

on the morning of August 6

your daughter-in-law left as always, laughing

carrying your grandchild on her back

set out to clear structures to help prevent the spread of fires from bombing

and just like that,

leaving you alone in the house

these three people who never returned

Alas! mother

aged mother

you must not die in this way

is it fatigue from walking around, searching the ruins?

is it exposure to the remaining poison?

feeling tired

soon to go to sleep

now, not really understanding

the words you mutter, mother

your grief that is something other than grief

your hatred that transcends hatred

will join with the thoughts of all those

who that war left without family

and will become a force that will prevent such a thing

from occurring again in this world

those mutterings

the streaks of those tears

spelled out only on your shriveled ribs

you must not end up dying like this

you must not end up

going

Season of Flames

FLASH!

the entire city

in burning

magnesium

like a shadow, falls apart.

not a sound

that

is consciousness flung away

lightly.

a far away

self

at the instant of burial,

ten million pieces of glass scattering.

old beams heavier than lead

plaster that comes down with a flop

thrusts the finishing blow,

outside

a net of electric wires

of strangely gray roofs

lying bent clumsily
the stench of people
people extinct
several miles in all directions
the silence of death.

in the depths of the crater formed
when dark brown mountain ranges suddenly stood erect
over crumbled Hiroshima
what an eruption!
swelling, raging, vibrating, turning, thrusting up
cloud –
cloud –
cloud –
red – orange – purple –
a crimson eruption high in the sky.
exchanging blows,
explodes,
from fissures in the earth's crust, smoke rising like a whirlpool
boiling up into the atmosphere
air!
for the first time on earth
the sound, the groan, the roar!

uranium number 235
as planned
creates an artificial sun
500 meters in the sky above Hiroshima
and at 8:15 in the morning
so to be sure
that the city's residents
are swarmed together downtown.
Hiroshima
is no longer visible.
in the depths of smoke like pubic hair
at the base of the glimmering sun
that swells, doubling and tripling its size, then wilts
the tongues of flame crawl about,
lick the torn-off skin
of human beings
and flutter in a whirlwind
a sudden black shower
obstructs the lips of those shouting for their people

lines,

lines,

passing through a strange rainbow, continuing
a parade of ghosts,
like ants whose home has been destroyed
they flee toward the outskirts of the city
they fill up the roads
both hands drooped in front
slowly
for a time
for a time
this parade of living beings
who once were humans.

both sky and earth have been lost
between fiery-hot winds and offensive smells
gentle water moving
flowing in seven branches
roughly
like a sponge
continues forever
strikes against the islands
at the entrance to the bay.

(Alas! we

are not fish
so we cannot go silently, our bellies to the sky,
reflecting the tens of thousands of tons of sea water
spouting up at the Bikini atoll
were the blank eyes – eyes – eyes
of the animals used in the experiments
pigs –
sheep –
monkeys.)

the sun continues to burn,
the rain permeates,
widespread, widespread, nearly nine square miles of rubble
leveling bleached bones and remnants of bricks
certainly
Hiroshima has been raised
about three feet.

dead 247,000
missing 14,000
wounded 38,000
found in the atomic bomb display hall
burnt stones,

melted tiles,
crushed glass bottles,
and covered with dust
pamphlets of the city's plans for a tourist hotel.

but
in 1951
the cloud that today too blazes up.
skimming along it
and gently floating
yes! those are two white spots,
yes, that's what they are!
controlled without wires from the other side of the world
parachutes measuring the results of the atomic bombing.
we
the tribe of Hiroshima, from our eyes
it never disappears
that morning's
parachute
is playing
softly
in the shadow of the cloud.

Little Child

little child, dear child

where can you be?

like a stone stumbled on accidentally

that clear morning, parting

from your eyes, open so wide

you have no mother

suddenly

behind your pupils, which sharply reflect the sky

a dark red cloud rises

and up above is turned inside out and spreads

the disaster of that light with no sound

in front of your endless questions

who will tell you of that day?

little child, dear child

where could you have gone?

leaving you with the neighbors, she went off to work detail

thinking of you

supported only by that devotion

your mother raced to you through burning streets

not strong enough to be bothered
by even the maggots beginning to fester on the putrefying soles of her feet
in the darkness of a temporary aid station
silently died

leaving her behind, pregnant with you
your father was torn to pieces by cannon fire on the southern islands
her gentle body once covered in the tears of parting
is swollen with burns, pus, and spots
and is piled up with tons of similar corpses, in agony
only her handbag was spared the dirt and the flames
leaving by her bedside
the new picture book for you
she stopped moving
who will tell you about
the events of that evening?

little child, dear child
why in the world are you here?
the naked sun quivered beyond the cloud
and on the deafening unforked road of burning dust
with raining fire, flying shards of shimmering glass
driven, she ran

the skin of her heart drawn tight
stammering
your mother called you
you alone
to you alone she wanted to tell
the story of your father
the story of your mother
and now
her pain at leaving you alone
who will tell you this
tell you this?
Yes! I
will set out and find you
and will put my mouth to those tender ears
and will tell you
how throughout Japan that war separated mothers and fathers
one by one from their dear boys
how they were wrung by a dark power
and finally like flies
were struck to death
and were stabbed to death
and died from madness
just how

war burned the sea and burned the islands,
and burned the town of Hiroshima
how from your clear eyes, from your clinging hands
the war took away father
took away mother
I will tell you what really happened
I will tell you!

Grave Post

you stand huddled together
like children playing in the cold trying to keep warm
gradually growing smaller, shoved into a corner
and now no longer
does anyone notice you
a grave post small and thin?

"The War Casualties of Seibi Elementary School"¹
a foundation enclosed by burnt bricks
and a strip of wood standing not even three feet
a cracked bamboo pipe is leaning, no flowers inside

A B Advertising Agency
C D Motor Scooter Firm
and, an enormous signboard
for Hiroshima Peace City Construction Company, Inc.
behind a row of buildings with false fronts
painted green

¹ Seibi Elementary School admitted only the children of military personnel.

on the corner of the road leaving to the M Cup Tennis Courts

on that corner of discarded and piled tiles and crumbled cement

where the fallen gate post of the school lies half buried

and where it gets so muddy when it rains

where from the municipal barrack residences that appear beyond repair

cries of infants never stop

you're standing

gradually becoming a rotted tree

with neither hands

nor legs

not acting spoiled

not nagging

silently silently

standing

no matter how much you yelled

no matter how much you cried

neither your daddies nor your mommies

could come for you

shoving away your clinging hands

other daddies fled

pinned under heavy *heavy* things
a hot *hot* wind
in that dark dark place where you cannot breathe
(Oh! Just what kind of naughty mischief have you been up to?)
tender hands
small neck
spouting out blood from below rocks and steel and old lumber
crushed with such ease

when in the shadow of Hijiyama
a line of your friends, their eyes burnt like buns with bean-jam filling
flustered, squatting
in the din of weapons, carried by running people
called, "soldier, help me!"
even then no one came to you
and when by the darkened water tank
you called "take me!"
pointing west, then also
no one came to take your hand

then, imitating those you saw, you submerged yourself in the water tank
placed fig leaves on your faces
and understanding nothing

you died

you children!

you can neither smell apples

nor suck candy

you who've gone to a place far away

who was it

who told you to say, "we will ask for nothing . . .

until victory"

"The War Casualties of Seibi Elementary School"

standing silently at this street corner

in these uncomprehending pupils you can see

the field gun to which your elder brothers and fathers had to hold fast

rusted red and turned over

and in a hollow of clover

a foreign soldier and a woman

sprawled out

through the open field beyond this street corner

those who said, "stop the war"

today too are being led, bound

toward the direction of the prison enclosed with a new high wall

truly what kind of strange thing this is
your ears sharp as a rabbit's hear
from the eaves of a chipped roof
a radio with static
in triumph spill out the news with a devilish voice
a bomb of how many hundreds of tons dropped where
and how many billions of dollars the budget for the manufacture of atomic
weapons has been increased
and how reinforcements are landing in Korea
from the depths of the grassy smelling horseweed
even rusty spikes
are picked up and bought
Alas! you will be cleaned away
and forgotten
this small thin barely remaining grave post too
soon will be buried in the earth and sand as an engineering company expands
the place the bones of those small hands
and necks are buried
will be beneath something
eternally forgotten

"The War Casualties of Seibi Elementary School"

in the flower tube there are no flowers
but two butterflies chase each other
and on the dark wood grain
the wind blows in from the ocean
and like the morning of that day
the sky is still glittering blue
won't you come?
mix your tender arms
won't you rise?

grandma

"I would never go to the gala-like Peace Festival."

still waits for you

and grandpa

in the shade of the rose of Sharon

secretly hides your old shoes

the children too of that day, the ones who sucking at the breasts of their fallen

mothers,

survived

are already six years old

your friends too

who hung around rainy streets
stealing
going around begging
burnt black by the sun
are as strong as men
"never give in
never give in
your Korean friends
in the scorching sun of Hiroshima Station
collect signatures to prevent war
"never give in
never give in
the children of Japan
throwing away their shoe-shining supplies
sell newspapers that have written the truth

you children
this is enough this is enough silence
to fight adults the world over
who try to start wars
let those round eyes sparkle
and with those clear and penetrating voices
sending up a cry, jump out

then

open those arms that would embrace all

and thrust on us the cheeks that would call back proper tears to everyone's hearts

and calling forth, "we are Hiroshima's

Hiroshima's children"

fly

into the arms of everyone!

Shadow

movie theaters, bars, open-air markets
what's burnt rebuilt, what's standing falls, and spreads like the itch
oil dissolves
on the shiny head of the young Hiroshima
in its shameless revival
so quickly have signboards with Western writing been hung
found here and there, their number growing
"Atomic Bomb Historic Site" is another of these
surrounded by a painted fence
on a corner of the bank's stone steps
stained deeply into the grain of the dark red stone
a still pattern

that morning
a flash of tens of thousands of degrees
suddenly branded someone's loins
on thick slabs of granite

scorched onto the pale red, cracked steps

the marks of the blood that ran as intestines melted into jelly
the shadow

Alas! suppose you're a resident of Hiroshima
who that morning
within the inexplicable flash, and the intense heat, and the smoke
was thrown about in the whirlpool of the glaring flames and the cloud's shadow
and crawled about, dragging the skin that had fallen off
your body transformed so that even your wife and children,
had they met you, would not have known you
this shadow too
crawling about in the wounds of your memories
how could it be erased?

near where the people of the city come and go
with goodness and pity but entirely indifferent
bleached by the sun, hit by the rain, buried in the dust
growing fainter with each passing year, that shadow.

the bank with "Historic Site" written at the foot of its entrance
disgorged into the street rough burnt rubble, glass rubbish
and finishing a large-scale restoration
made the entire enormous building shine in the descending sun

and in the square diagonally across
a charlatan dressed as a mountain priest, surrounded by people

"Unless we cover it with glass it eventually will disappear . . ."

the authorities say insincerely
today too

the foreign sailors who come idling by
clanking their white shoes stand still,
and each, having had his picture taken, leaves
the shoeshine boy who came behind them
looking puzzled
peeps through the fence, then leaves.

Friend

when he took off his dark glasses, tears oozed out
from the scar left when his eyelids, ripped off, healed and stuck together
at that aid station, they moistened the congealed blood
and removed sheet by sheet the white cloth that covered his entire face, and when
the last piece of gauze was torn off
a thin trickle oozed out from his eyes, which had healed as a single mass
he talked about the wife and children he'd lost, his fingertips, groping for a hand
towel, trembled

(where is this, what kind of place?) carried out of the morgue
speaking again
the same words he'd uttered when first regaining his senses,
he got a firm grip on the thick green bamboo, and feeling for the doorsill with the
ends of his gaitered legs,
left slowly.

– what's happened must be understood as God's will –
– one massage will bring me fifty yen; before long I'll provide for you –

he attended mass, learned massage, and all his troubles were buried in the depths
of time

one evening close to winter

I saw him from inside a train – dressed in military attire, his new wife, her hair
tied up, taking his hand

(where is this, what kind of place?) in the noise of the street

he stopped as though to check his balance

and turned only his face in its felt hat to the glaring sky

looking as always as though he were about to ask his wife something

several years later I saw him

again he approached from the corner where the north wind was blowing

his back bent double and evading a group of reservists,

his now utterly exhausted wife firmly supporting one of his arms

and turning directly into the wind

he went quickly, as though attempting to overtake something

what had oozed out from the folds of skin behind the dark glasses had dried up

long ago

and going into his heart

were the marks of suffering

Landscape of Rivers

already, the setting sun rests cold above the city
the city lies hushed inside the bay, its bridges standing on tiptoe
in the twilight, between the sparsely spaced houses
breaking up fragments of the autumn sky, from which time has been lost
the stream's back like a lizard

lost mountain ranges, blanketed in snow, sleep at the river's source.
from far away, snow's blade places its light on the middle of the forehead of
everyday life

wife, this evening do you again grieve as you prepare the winter clothing?
withered chrysanthemums coil around the promenade of a vase
our days of joy when we dreamed of raising children also have passed

when you close your eyes and open your arms – in the wind of the riverbank
above this leveled city of bleached bones

we too

are living tombstones

rising flames on the surface of the waves

breaking and falling echoes in the folds of the mountains, once imperial property

then

the setting sun no longer moves

with a murmur the river billows in the wind

Morning

people dream,

sweat accumulating on the marks of the flash, resting the hand with his pickax, the

laborer dreams

the stench of her armpits, skin slipping off, suddenly vaporized, face down on her

sewing machine, the wife dreams

hiding both arms cramped like the legs of a crab, the girl who sells tickets also

dreams

fragments of glass buried in his neck, selling matches, the child also dreams

of the element of white light extracted from pitchblende and carnotite ore

in the power of infinite division

transforming barren deserts into undulating and fertile fields

of a glittering canal passing the broken foot of a mountain

of a man-made sun enabling the construction of cities of dazzling gold

on even the barren land of the North Pole – they dream,

of working men relaxing, the festival flag swaying in the breeze under the leaves

of the story of Hiroshima being told with gentle lips – they dream

the pigs wearing human skin
who use the power of the earth's bursting veins and of the trembling of the earth's
 crust only in slaughter
will remain only in children's picture books
energy ten million times more powerful than gunpowder, one gram equivalent to
 10,000,000
will be released from inside the atom into the arms of the people
in the peacetime of the people
the rich fruit of science
like a heavy bunch of grapes
damp with dew
will be embraced and taken up
of this morning
they dream.

Smile

then you smiled
since that morning you've had nothing to do
with either enemy or ally either air raids or fires
what you wanted so much sugar and rice
you no longer can use
you, who'd been blasted out from a throng of people fenced in by war
news of the war's end
as the only remaining medicine I rushed to whisper it
you faced me
and you definitely smiled

you even stopped groaning and opening the eyelids
of your maggot infested body with no eyelashes
at human me far away
you smiled tenderly
the shadow of a smile

in the stench of pus, enveloping as though to suffocate
robbed even of hate, of terror

the final smile you sent to human beings
that quiet smile
has been building oppressively within me
three years five years the pressure increases
toward the power that wants war that again has forced its way back
and toward those people who are losing their ability to resist
now is likely to explode
the smile you gave me
with a violence ready to hate even that smile
yes now
is ready to explode!

August 6, 1950

running, they draw near
running, they draw near
from that direction and from this direction
seizing the pistols on their hips
police officers approach at a gallop

August 6, 1950

the peace ceremony has been outlawed
and at street corners in the evening on bridge approaches at dawn
the policemen stand guard squirming
today at the center
of Hiroshima at Hatchōbori intersection
in the shadow of F Department Store
the stream of people, coming to offer flowers
at memorial towers for the dead, at fire ruins
in a moment a whirlpool
chin straps riding up with sweat
swarm into the crowd
divided by the black battle line

staggering
all look up at the department store
from the fifth floor window the sixth floor window
fluttering
fluttering
against a backdrop of summer clouds
in shadows lit by the sun
innumerable flyers dance
above upturned faces
into outstretched hands
into the bottoms of starving hearts
slowly scattering
they gathered them,
arms knocked them down,
hands seized them out of the air,
eyes read them,
laborers, shopkeepers, students, young girls
the elderly, children, from the countryside, from the suburban districts
a crowd of people representing all Hiroshima for whom August 6
is a death anniversary, and policemen,
jostle, and an outcry
flyers for peace
the antiwar flyers that will not be taken from them

violent appeal!

trains stop

traffic signals collapse

jeeps roll in

fire engine sirens whip in the air

two vehicles three vehicles the trucks of an armed police force drive up

into a line of plainclothes officers

an expensive foreign-made car pushes through

and the entrance to the department store is transformed into a strict checkpoint

but the flyers still fall

slowly slowly

hands emerging with brooms carefully sweep off

flyers gathered in the eaves

and one by one like living beings

like voiceless screams

lightly lightly

they all fall.

the peace ceremony where doves are released, bells rung,

and the mayor's message of peace is blown away by the wind

is stamped out like a firecracker

and lecture meetings,

concerns,
UNESCO meetings,
all gatherings are prohibited
and Hiroshima is occupied by armed and plainclothes policemen

the smoke of rocket guns
rises from the screens of movie theaters
and from alleys the shouts reverberate
of those – including children – who signed the antinuclear petition
in Hiroshima's sky on August 6, 1950
scattering light onto the disquiet of the residents
reflecting shadows onto the silence of a cemetery,
toward you who love peace
toward I who want peace
making the police rush forward,
flyers fall
flyers fall.

Night

the countless small lights of Hiroshima
lay siege to my field of vision
and make my optic nerve ache
drawn up by the smooth, slippery skin
of swollen keloids
damp rails squirm
and buds sprout from the trunks of charred trees
that line the muddy road smelling of entrails
in the depths of an endlessly falling rain
a woman's eyes are redder than the end of a cigarette
she doesn't hide the ulcerating bruise on her thigh

Hiroshima

your night, the swelling of which the atomic bomb left sterile
women forget how to become pregnant
my sperm lose their tails
and its glistening leasehold in Hiroshima
pregnant in the shade of the trees at Hijiyama Park
the lighted arch of the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission

in the taillights of the high-class cars that leave its womb
the native music of the New Mexican desert spreads
night fog!

(in the frame of a window on the riverbank over yonder
a woman of the cat family
stands on tiptoe takes off her petals
plucks a stamen
even here the night trade prospers)

on the roof of the station where trains rest, eyes covered in bandages
the mercurial lights of the newsreel
this evening again spell out blind characters
and tell us of the second, the third, the one hundredth atomic test
blood trickling out in drops
drunks from somewhere stagger and fall
a dark place by the waterfront
from within

a rocking and squeaking rowboat
a tall soldier who suddenly rises up
washing over the footprints of those hunting for scrap iron
the evening tide sneaks in from the sea

and something dark like a moth
flies across the sky with only a flap of the wings
from night to dawn
from dawn to the darkness of night
lights hanging in the balance
lights that were caught just as they were about to fall
lights that, frightened, are about to forget
lights of splattered foam
lights that shudder lights on the brink of death
one moment at a time
leaving a trail of blood
and today too estranging themselves from that day
crawling to an unknown place – the lights of Hiroshima
in the darkness of history
quiet and subdued
the lights of Hiroshima overflow

In the Street

Oh! those things

the rage of the black market women

screaming from the train's window at the policemen of the station they're leaving

the laughter of the ladies painted white

clustered in the dark, their especially happy voices raised

the distress of the drunk lurching along

blood trickling from an open wound

beneath this

beneath this

were there to be one thrust

they would suddenly gush forth – those things

To a Certain Woman

the ghost of a cart horse stepping on the air
torn belly to the sky
hovers around the stone flooring of the water trough
this street of temporary shelters where once there was an armory

you live hidden in the depths of this back street
and for about a year since that summer
hidden under an umbrella for rainy days
you've gone to the hospital
the transparent shadow of a B-29
suddenly dropped on your face
the scar of that flash
a lump from eyelids to nose
you
no longer will show your face

one arm wrested away
in this ramshackle house you knit
the woolen yarn that gives you life

what kind of bloody matter
do you draw from that palm?
this quiet town where the pinwheel gently turns round
and children play in vegetable gardens

how many times have I doubled back in my tracks
but today I go visit you
this street of fire rubble
your skin bulging like that of a reptile
shiny, without a strand of soft hair
in the pale red light of the setting sun
it calls back to my lips the taste of my family's bones
in the shadow of thick dried scabs
where trickles foul-smelling pus
from scars that forever throb with pain, in the heat and in the cold
reduced to ashes, your girlish innocence lies congealed

I will tell
of the strength of the flames as the overwhelming desire that oozes from within
is burned onto all people
of the fight to exhaust the world's darkness
carried on by the thousand like you
covered once again by an explosion

I will tell

my rage

your curses

when they become a countenance of utmost beauty

Scenery

always, we carry with us a burning scenery

city on a sandbar of an island chain of fire

building windows emit colorless flames

traffic signals stop and release homeless people decorated by fire

chimneys crumble into fire large station clocks hidden in flames

ships loaded with fire going in and out of the breakwater rings on the headland's

tip a sudden whistle of fire without sound

the train drags along at top speed, penis covered in fire

fiery pus accumulates in a woman's crotch stopping, a foreigner scatters the

fire of a lighter

beggars in black fight for it

oh! over there seized tobacco continues to burn

always, we live in a scenery of flames

these flames will never die out

these flames will never stop burning

and we too can anyone say that we're no longer flames?

night lights all around the city above flickering neon embers in sky dark as a
tunnel
congealed and flickering indications of flame siblings of the marked in throngs
oh! legs that are only legs arms that are only arms in both open wounds licked
by flames
in the end brains split apart and the Milky Way burns
and crumbles
roses of flame blue sparks
a squalling whirlpool
darkness with voices raised together
enmity repentance anger curses hatred appeals lamentation
sky where, having struck the earth, all the groans flicker
the us inside ourselves another I the foul stench of my burned and ulcerating
body
your torn skin the woman's bald head the child's spots oh! the living family
of the atom
humans no longer humans
we rise up even at experiments on atolls on the ocean shore
each and every bomb that is constructed dangles on a black parachute above
our crucible
the dance of tongueless flames

the convolutions of lungless tongues
teeth pierce lips lips spout forth liquid fire
and little by little voiceless flames spread out across the world
Hiroshima burning fiercely in London
Hiroshima blazing in New York
Hiroshima clear and incandescent in Moscow
the voiceless dance that permeates the world the rage of the figures
we are still we ourselves
like a forest like lava
covering the entire earth, flames heat

the lumps of fire the madness that crushes to death
the plans, again refined, for death by the atom

Appeal

it's not too late, even now

it's not too late to summon your true strength

just as long as the tears continue to trickle from the wound

caused that day when the flash that struck your retinas penetrated your heart

provided that you carry with you the brand of Hiroshima

that today too

makes the bloody pus that curses war trickle out steadily from those fissures

the true you

who abandoned your little sister, reaching out both her hands

from beneath the main house, where flames were closing in

who, covering not even your privates with scraps of charred clothing

both arms of raw flesh, hanging down in front of your chest

falteringly, on burnt and bare feet

wandered off through a desert of self-reflecting rubble

on a journey with no solace

to extend high those deformed arms

and together with the many similar arms

to support the cursed sun
that is soon to fall again
it is not too late, even starting now

to cover up with your back that carries the brand of death
the tears of all the gentle people
who although loathing war simply loiter about
to take up and grip firmly
in both your palms, raw and red
these trembling and drooping hands
no
it is not too late, even now

When Will It Be That Day?

1.

streets buried beneath hot rubble and crumbled buildings

come together from three directions

and intersect where a streetcar has fallen on its side, tangled up in copper wires,

burnt black

in the center of Hiroshima, in a corner of Kamiyachō square

you lie, not yet cleared away

no sound, yet signs of a heat that cracked every fragment of tile

no movement, yet in the blinding August sky

smoke that rises with a blur

the remainder – in the middle of a brain-scorching emptiness, complete

destruction

you, your body bent at an angle, like a little girl

and like a small bird, both your hands clinging desperately to the ground,

lie half prostrate, dead,

there are only naked corpses of raw flesh

why then are you alone clothed

even one shoe in place,
your beautiful hair lies on a cheek covered with a bit of soot
neither blood nor festering is visible
only the back of your flowing workpants
is entirely burned away,
revealing your rounded bottom
where the bit of feces squeezed out in the agony of death
lies dry and sticks
shining on it the light of the shadowless, broad daylight sun,

2.

your house was in Ujima
ever since the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars
Japan's youth have been given guns
grieving the separation from their loves, into their pillows they've shed their tears
with their saké
and loaded into ships' holds, they've left this port town of Hiroshima for their
deaths,

in the recesses of a squalid back street
enveloped by the stench of the ditches
after the death of your own mother, you were mother to your family, your father a
foundry worker and your younger siblings

your life, like that of a plant growing in the dark, was sparse
at last you became a young woman
but with the approaching defeat
a life of days of anxiety and rumors
for why was Hiroshima alone not burned
when every evening the towns of Japan were consumed by flames like bundles
of straw

your beloved home pulled down by the ropes of those enforcing the evacuation
your family of four rented a hut in the eastern part of the city,
gnawed at soybeans buried in a hole,
and boiled horseweed into rice gruel,
you fought for bamboo life preservers for your family
with adults frightened by the rumor that the city would be overtaken
and you fled, your hands in theirs, those evenings of air raids
and were knocked over by the vigilantes guarding the bridges
days of running to and fro,
your young hands, your young body,
desperately trying to help your neuralgic father, to protect your young siblings
from the power of the raging war

3.

and with the approach of August 6

little did you know,
that the Japanese army was without weapons, that on the southern islands and in
the jungles
starving and sick, they'd been torn asunder
that their fuelless warships lay hidden and motionless on the other side of the
island
that the entire populace was deluged in a shower of flames
that the fascists did not even know a way to end the war

little did you know,
that once the Soviet power, which had defeated the Nazis,
confronted imperial Japan with the information
that it would not extend the nonaggression pact,
the world believed Japan's surrender
only a matter of time.

little did you know,
that because the swastika had been torn down
and the Red Flag raised quickly in Berlin
the Soviet entrance planned for three months later
was beginning to flutter larger in the skies of history.

(they hurried to drop the atomic bomb

they felt the need to crush Japan to pieces themselves before the arrival of that
day
with a dark and ugly will
they hurried to drop it
from the test in New Mexico on July 16
until the Soviet entry
there was so little time!)

4.

the night before midnight, the night of the fifth,
scattered from the sky came the certain rumor that Hiroshima would be
consumed
the people, running away to the surrounding mountains and watermelon patches
and staying up all night,
although frightened by the siren that would not stop
breathing a sign of relief when morning came without any bombing, returned to
their homes
and setting off to work, to insignificant jobs, they began to flood the streets of the
city
that morning August 6, at that hour

you sent your father off to the factory
you packed a lunch for your little brother who had just entered middle school

after that, sending your little sister off to play
like always, at your relatives' place in a separate part of town
you locked up the door of your rickety house and set out for your place of work,
mobilized labor
leaving today too to do unfamiliar work and be scolded

you were silent, halfway there, and hurrying,
when at some sign you threw yourself down
a flash hit you directly from behind
and when the dust cleared and you regained consciousness
despite all that had happened, you tried to grope your way toward the factory
you passed through waves of fleeing people, until you came to this place and sank
to the ground
a judgment of this incident hidden within you
in that way, meekly, you closed your eyes,

of which of your thoughts, young girl
at that time could you be certain
how could that earnest mind of yours have grasped the atomic bomb
those hands, yearning for the future, like small birds fallen to the ground
their wrists bent, lie outstretched on the ground
and those knees
as though feeling shame at lying down in such a place

are brought together and neatly contracted

only your hair, woven into braids

lies disheveled on the asphalt,

you knew only war

the rainbow of your modest and restrained hopes was also reduced to flames

your gentle existence

living, working, hardly noticed by others

this most atrocious method on earth

now has killed you here,

(alas! this was not an accident, not a natural disaster

the first of the earth's atomic bombs were planned with incomparable precision

and owing to a will of insatiable ambition

were dropped on the chosen cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki of the Japanese

archipelago

as one of the 400,000 siblings who were extinguished contorted and writhing

you died.)

at that time were you thinking

about the sunflowers in the ditch from your childhood

about the fragrance of the necklace your mother wore once a year

about your little sister's clamoring for things after conditions got bad

about putting on and wiping off lipstick in the shade of the storehouse with your
friend

about the flowery skirt that you wanted to wear

and I wonder if you could have imagined

that soon a road connected to a square in this our precious Hiroshima would be
extended

and would be called MacArthur Boulevard

that the time would come when the handkerchiefs of Japanese women selling their

bodies to foreign soldiers

would flutter and get caught in the rows of willow trees

and I wonder if in your grief you could have thought

that even if they'd not dropped the atomic bomb

the war would have come to an end

no, how would you have been able to think of such things

there are so many things that even those who survived

do not know

why the dropping of the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki

occurred the very morning the Soviet army

crossed south over the Manchurian border

why several years later, when the third atomic bomb was ready to be used

the target was, once again

the people of the yellow race

5.

Alas! this was not an accident, not a natural disaster

mankind's first atomic bomb

owing to a precise plan and a will of insatiable ambition

was dropped with a flash, one flash

over the eastern archipelago, the Japanese people

as one of the 400,000 victims extinguished contorted and writhing,

you were murdered,

there is no one to lift up into his arms

your murdered body

there is no one to cover the shame of your burned workpants

naturally, there is no one to wipe away the traces of your anguish stuck there

working with all your might

in the battle for your modest life

living always with only a shy smile

you suppressed the gentle thoughts gradually swelling in your heart

at that age when a person is most easily embarrassed

your tender bottom is exposed to the sun

and now and then the people who pass through searching for corpses

only look at the filth of dried feces

with a faded expression and walk away,

that is atrocity
that is suffering
that is pathos
no, more than that
what are we to do with this mortification!
no longer do you feel any shame
but this mortification, burning itself onto the eyes of those who saw,
with the passage of time will vividly penetrate their hearts
already having separated itself from you,
this mortification is carved on all Japanese!

6.

we have to endure this mortification,
have to endure it for a long time,
also have to endure that night when a snowstorm covered the child run over
by the jeep
also have to endure that May when foreign-made helmets and pistols
made the blood of Japan's youth gush forth
also have to endure that day our freedom is enchained
and this nation receives the indestructible fetters of subordination

but you tell me, what should we do when the day arrives when we can no longer

withstand this

even should you, with hands extended like a small bird,

try to placate us from the distant world of death

no matter how gently you might try to repress it in your heart, so easily

embarrassed

the day will come when the mortification of your corpse that has burned itself

onto our hearts

piles up like subterranean heat

when the power that that mother, that child, that little sister of the populace

that would once again be driven into war by the menace of an ignominious will

filled with ambition

can no longer endure

becoming the rage of a people craving peace

explodes

that day

your body will be covered without shame

and this mortification will be washed away by the tears of the nation

and the curses of the atomic bomb that have collected on the earth

will for the first time start to wear away

Alas! that day

when will it be that day?

Plea – for *Pictures of the Atomic Bomb*

before these monstrous shapes let me stand

before this severity let my steps be exposed

the voices that close in on me as I follow the pages are something of the deepest

darkness

the shower of tears that falls as I go from picture to picture is so heavy it will never

dry

within this book I see vividly

the faces of those I knew who fled, of the loved ones who died

shudders consume my heart

at the incalculable agony of the swarms of naked bodies in these pictures

beyond the flames, stretched out, staring fixedly on me

I dare say, my own eyes!

Alas! who would be able to arrest the need

to make bent legs straight

to cover naked loins

to unravel one by one clenched fingers covered in blood

who would be able to restrain deep, awakening anger

toward the fact that above a perishing Japan, as the threat of a new war
the light of the atomic bomb was released
and that in an instant the lives of 200,000 of our people were snatched away

before these pictures let me pledge my steps
and before this history I will make sure the future will not need to be repented

Afterword

The atomic bomb was dropped the morning of August 6, 1945, just before I left home for downtown, so I was more than three kilometers from ground zero. I suffered only cuts from shards of glass and several months of radiation sickness. But the people who had been within about a two-kilometer radius of the city's center were not so fortunate: those who had been inside either died of shock or were buried alive and then consumed by fire and those who had been outside simply disappeared, burned to death, or, escaping with burns, died within a week. People who had been a bit farther away from the epicenter died within several months from either burns or radiation sickness. Those at a slightly greater radius barely survived. Families in the surrounding municipalities all had someone who had been sent by the neighborhood association to help clean-up after the evacuation effort and who never returned. Making the tragedy all the more difficult to bear were such factors as the rumor that Hiroshima would be consumed by fire the night of the fifth, a rumor started by the flyers dropped during an air raid over nearby towns and villages a few days before the bombing, and the mobilization of junior high-school students and those in the lower grades of the girls' schools to help in the evacuation effort.

Today everyone knows that in Hiroshima about 200,000 people were killed by the explosion of one atomic bomb. Everyone is also aware of the figures concerning Nagasaki. These, however, are only generalized facts. Those incidents were of such great magnitude that there is no end to the cries of grief of all those who confront them; the true essence of these incidents is incomprehensible. Even those of us captured within this whirlpool could not know in our bones the full story of the tragedy. But now, social circumstances have changed, and we have distanced ourselves from this event, so we are allowed to remember it only as reminiscences.

Even so, these reminiscences, tinged with grief and resignation, always add new tears and increase the bleeding of those who survived and who day and night must shoulder the burden of leading unstable lives. Moreover, the tears that have been exhausted and the blood that has congealed from anxiety about and insight into the terror both of this most brutal atrocity and of the complete transformation of the meaning of war that it brought about have become so extreme as to strike us in the most tender of spots.

This year the eighth anniversary of the atomic bombing draws near, and in Hiroshima no small number of families, recognizing that the temples are not capable of accommodating everyone at once, have moved the date of their memorial service to before or after the sixth. So these ceremonies are already taking place. But is it at all possible for anyone to know fully just what manner of anguish lies pent up in the depths of those who sit in these seats? Already having become words that can never be spoken, tears that will never be able to fall, entombing itself deeper and deeper in the recesses of the heart, in the unfolding of history, regardless of whether we are aware of it, this anguish is taking on new shapes. The meaning of this event, thanks to the goodwill of

humankind, has the potential to be greatly augmented and is steadily gaining an incredible force.

I have now brought my manuscript to a close, but I am ashamed of having waited for six years to write poems dealing with this event, that this collection of poems is too meager, and that I have been too weak to transmit the actual essence of this incident effectively, to extend to the hearts of all people the substance of these facts, and to demonstrate that in the progression of history they – and they are not simply memories – preserve their meaning and weight for each person, people, nation, and all humankind.

However, this is my gift – no, the gift of we the people of Hiroshima – to the entire world, to those eyes that every person has, which blink stealthily no matter what the situation, into gentle hands that cannot help but reach out to others, as a human being, with unlooked-for compassion. Please, receive this heart.

I would like to add that in my poems I simply sing in this way of my desire for peace, yet things are regressing so much that even fundamental human freedoms must be forcibly taken from us. Needless to say, things are such that there is no chance at all of my being able to make a living by doing this sort of literary activity, that visible and invisible pressures are constantly increasing, and that conditions are getting worse. This is nothing other than proof that the current political situation in Japan is such that the will of the people is completely disregarded, that once again we are being pulled toward war.

In addition, I would like to add the following. Those people who are the driving force of this pressure against me are acting in a way antagonistic to all humanity.

This collection of poems is at once a gift to all those who love humanity and a warning to those referred to above.

May 10, 1952

Tōge Sankichi