BEGIN THE CONVERSATION

HIROSHIMA/NAGASAKI, 70 YEARS OF SILENCE

Poems and Essays by Red Slider
There is no such thing as a ‘minor war’

I was born into the warlight of the world. There were beds in the corridor of the hospital and blackout curtains on all the windows. My unwrapped consciousness was already marked by in-utero rations and the pump of a daily cocktail of war-anxiety rippled through the soup of hormones in which I bathed. For the next three-quarters of a century it would remain so.

There are big wars and small wars, fat ones and thin ones; wars that only kill ‘them’, ones that kill us, too. In the beginning, there was supposed to be just one; the one to end all the other ones. It didn’t. The script went on, the Theater of Pain kept producing new ones. I expect I will also die in the warlight of the world.

I set about selecting a few anti-war pieces suitable for the annual get together of Poets Against War. I should not have been surprised that nearly all my work had some mark of war on it; on the surface or etched deep into the layers of the palimpsest of my life. Nothing, it would appear, can escape being marred by the years of reciting the same script, over and over. My mind simply cannot divorce itself from the scratches of war. Having some pure, peace-bent thought within a national consciousness that makes war the very centerpiece of its own ego is impossible. Everything we say or do is tainted by the fact that war is in the very air we breathe, the language we use and the thought we think. We cannot avoid the fact that we, too, are an occupied and preoccupied nation.

No matter that we say we will fashion ‘peace’ – we are so tilted by war that the very path to that wish only circumnavigates a globe of horror. We write, we cry out, we dance, we sing under the lamp of warlight. “Six big ones,” they said. But the reality is that the countless ‘little ones’, the ones that only spend a few days in the news, are not really any smaller. They all survive and metastasize and go right on re-enforcing our grand delusion that they are somehow “necessary steps” on the road to peace – “peacemaking” or “peacekeeping” we dub them as we bomb the daylights out of someone or something until the next war is on the horizon.

(continued inside back cover)
In Remembrance

Hiroshima, August 6th 1945

Nagasaki, August 9th 1945

An Album for the 70th Anniversary

of our silence
'Shock Cocoon', 'Thy Fearful Symmetry', 'Minor War', 'Silence of the Ghosts', 'Eradication of Popups', 'Intelligent Life', 'Peace&Reply' first appeared in "I Dream the Children", vols 1 and 2. Posters first appeared on the personal Facebook pages of the author. The remaining works were written for the event, "Begin the Conversation", held on May 27, 2016, a global effort to raise awareness and engage people in conversation about the urgent need to rid the world of all nuclear weapons. - rs
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Ash

We are all tired, always tired,  
sleepwalking around the edge  
of catastrophe, aroused from our dreams  
rising from the safety of our shock cocoons,  
the smoke of sleep still in our eyes,  
our skins paled under the fallen ash.

We awake to the dim light of ruin,  
the ghosts of Vesuvius underfoot  
as we wonder at one another,  
reach out towards the lost dawn  
guided only by the sound  
of children we will never meet.
Begin the Conversation

"What Conversation?"

"It's not about who was to blame for dropping the atomic bomb,"
"It's not about whether that 'saved lives or ended the war,'
"It's not about what THEY did or how horrible they were,"
"It's not the conversation about having to do it, or them trying to build a
bomb, too,"
"Not about who should apologize to whom."
"or about "moral awakening" or if science will be used for good."

"Then what conversation are you talking about?"

"The one about what it looks like to be on the receiving end of a nuclear
weapon,"
"What Hiroshima and Nagasaki really mean to us in the 21st century.""
"It's the conversation about what the world looks like when nuclear war
happens by accident, or blunder, or fear, or terrorism, or in defense, or
by sheer bad luck as it will.""
"It's about the certainty that the unimaginable will be inevitable if
something isn't done fairly soon."
"We can talk about what our kids will wake up to if we don't get rid of
nuclear weapons, or whether our kids will wake up at all."
"It's about what is as simple as it gets—get rid of nuclear weapons."

"It's about a conversation we should have had 70 years ago, and
didn't. So, take your "BEGIN THE CONVERSATION" sign to a
park, stick it in the ground and wait...for someone to begin the
conversation.
"Never doubt a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
-- Margaret Mead

Ikiru - 'to live'
To the victims of the Japan tsunami who have born their ordeal with grace and courage, and to first-responders everywhere whose daily work is a sacrament - 'an exterior visible sign of an interior state of grace'."

Shock Cocoon

They say, not to worry the clouds, the rain, do not worry the wind. The sea will wash away like the man on his bicycle turns and peddles away over the rooftops, or she holds her mask to her face, or carries kindling on her back, or someone's baby in his arms. Not to worry, to survive they say, *gaman*.

*they're leaving us to die*, the mayor said,

fifty without faces, *gaman*. a million without a place, *gaman*. ten-thousand without names, *gaman*. Not to worry, not to be forgotten.

The rain will wash away, the clouds, the sea number 4, number 2 will wash away, the faces without names will wash away and the places, only the places *gaman*, and the sea and the people, stunned.

*I resent the nuclear plant*, the doctor said.

Do not worry the clouds across the sea, the rain. I will show you with paper and broomstick and fan, the day, the sun, the means to not worry about things far away, about the way to put out fires from above, to retrieve the ashes of Pompeii, to remember the horrific rain of September, the woman beyond the door, the glass, the napkins on the table, undisturbed.
I'm having a real strange day, the officer said, in the blackness beneath the South Tower

We will build you a shock cocoon, and they will find it someday across the sea, in the clouds, beneath the rain, you comforted a wheezing man on the 62nd floor or played becalming music on the deck of a sinking ship or lingered with a speck of dying sun deep in your body while a thousand paper cranes still whisper omoiyari or as a rose—by name, the shadows of Vesuvius

the children of New York would grace the doll of Hercules, reclaimed

the dazed and stunned, though oft bemused witness to the split of wood, the lift of stone, capricious facts that hide their face in stubborn riddle as eons pass unnoticed by, to lie in wait at the House of Souls, their names to emerge from those fragile gray cocoons.
REFLECTIONS ON A DAY IN THE PARK:

"Begin the Conversation" Day was simple. Go to the park and plant a sign with the message, "BEGIN THE CONVERSATION". Then wait. It was May 27th. Obama and Abe were to meet in Hiroshima, lay some wreathes at a monument, exchange a few words and leave. The message was not complicated,

"LEADERS OF THE WORLD - BEGIN THE CONVERSATION TO GET RID OF ALL NUCLEAR WEAPONS."

In Hawaii, California, Kenya and New York, we spent the day in nearby parks, alone or with friends. a sign stuck in the grass that said "BEGIN THE CONVERSATION". That's was it...

POST-GAME REFLECTIONS

It wasn't the shot heard round the world, that's for sure. Of the thousands of people notified, only 30 or so people indicated interest. Of them, only 17 said they were "going" and, of those only 4 as far as I can tell actually went to a park and participated in the event.

So why do I still have the feeling that 'Begin the Conversation' was a success? By any quantifiable test, it wasn't. I tried to make it as easy an event to do as possible. I tried to make it as pleasant and enjoyable (a day in the park with family or friends) as I could imagine. And I left it as open-ended as I could, for people to supply their own content as they wished.

The event took place in the four locations, but hardly anyone showed up.
I still felt it was worth the effort. Maybe because it did happen and we all knew we were doing the right thing no matter how few of us there were or how uncertain the outcome. Perhaps it was because we did meet a few of our neighbors and had some interesting conversations that wouldn't have happened otherwise. Perhaps 'Begin the Conversation', even now, is working its own way toward becoming a meme for the world to express its resolve to rid ourselves of nuclear weapons forever.

For me that would make "Begin the Conversation" Day an unqualified success as well as a personally satisfying one. Not the one that is ultimately needed, but a success nevertheless.

Perhaps our event didn't actually start the conversation. Maybe it only shortened the time until it happens, by a little. That much is possible. That much will have made our small gatherings worth doing. As that thought ripples outward, so does my thanks to Frances, Mary, Bob & Cevus in California, Sandy, Yumi and Gabriel in Hawaii, Micah in Kenya and Morgan in New York, and to so many others who hold the same thought for a safer, saner world. Omoiyari to you all.
The President & The Cenotaph

An ironic side-bar on the visit of President Obama to Hiroshima and the laying of wreaths at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Cenotaph is hidden in the history of the cenotaph itself, that familiar arch in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park with the 249,446 names of the victims of the bombings stored in its registry. Its design was a commission first given to the sculptor Isamu Noguchi in 1952. Noguchi designed a much more elaborate memorial, one judged by many critics to be far superior to the one finally realized by architect Kenzo Tange, a friend and colleague of Noguchi's who also designed many of the park's other facilities and features.

Initially Noguchi's design was accepted by the Japanese, but later rejected. The reason for the substitution of designers was the government's objection to having a biracial American citizen with a Japanese father and American mother, born in the country that dropped the bomb, as their choice for designing a Japanese memorial to the victims of the bombing. Subsequent to the Japanese refusal to accept his vision for the cenotaph, Noguchi would attempt to get it built
in Washington D.C. and again, at the U.N. headquarters in New York. Those proposals, too, met with rejection. His cenotaph for the victims of the Hiroshima bombing would forever remain hidden within someone else’s design, a shadow of the original vision.

Throughout his career, there were attempts by Noguchi to resolve the tension of his polarized existence, the one handed him by accident of birth. Not least, was the string of designs and sculptures over the decades that bore the marks of this antagonism and ultimately left him straddling the divide between both his Japanese and American ancestries. One critic described Noguchi as "wily" and referred to one of his works, ("lynched man") as "a little Japanese mistake."

He would overcome the bigotry and cruelty of his critics through the sheer excellence and importance of his work. But the savagery of the attacks he endured not only impacted his career, they left personal wounds that would never heal. The denial of the commission for the cenotaph was of particular consequence. That work represented as much an avenue for resolving his internal conflicts about his ancestry as it was a way to bind the wounds that separated the two cultures and nations. Though he did receive the commission to do the Memorial Park Peace Bridge, the loss of the commission for the monument closed a door in his life and left him disheartened.

Later, another racially charged argument about the cenotaph would emerge over an inscribed prayer placed within the monument—”Let all the souls here rest in peace for we shall not repeat the evil.” Due to the nature of Japanese grammar, it is unclear who the 'we' refers to in the three-line Japanese version of that inscription. Japanese syntax does not express nominative subject pronouns the way English normally does. In Japanese, "we" is implied by context, but not specified. The result was that some Japanese thought the inscription referred to the Americans as the cause of the evil. Some thought it referred to themselves as the cause. Still others thought the implied “we” a neutral reference, accusing no one in particular. Unresolved racial and national hostilities
surfaced as they had during the earlier refusal to accept the Noguchi design for the cenotaph, and long years of bitter debate followed.

“Let all the souls here rest in peace for (we) shall not repeat the evil.” - Tadayoshi Saika

The author of the inscription, Tadayoshi Saika, a professor of English at Hiroshima University, considered the matter and then declared that the voice in the prayer was that of 'all humanity', and that it was “all humanity” that was vowing to never repeat their error.

Still, the often acrimonious debate over the matter continued for another 18 years. In 1970, nine years after professor Saika’s death, the cenotaph committee considering the matter accepted Dr. Saika’s interpretation of the text. A plaque asserting that interpretation, was installed nearby to insure visitors would interpret the lines just so. It read:

“The inscription on the front panel offers a prayer for the peaceful repose of the victims and a pledge on behalf of all humanity never to repeat the evil of war. It expresses the spirit of Hiroshima — enduring grief, transcending hatred, pursuing harmony and prosperity for all, and yearning for genuine, lasting world peace.”
However, to a visitor it is obvious that such explanations are but a thin veil over the shadow of hostility and contentious debate about who is responsible for the evil that was visited on our planet on that autumn day in 1945, a debate that continues to this day. Those who accepted professor Saika’s explanation and approved the clarifying plaque were undoubtedly of good intention. Still, the fact remains that the plaque can only serve to deepen the shadow that resides within the cenotaph in its attempt to mask the nature of the conflicted sentiments between the two nations, a shadow that first appeared with the earlier rejection of the Noguchi design.

Contrary to its aim of escaping from the mutual antagonisms over who was responsible for the horror of the bombing, the transfer of the original, if ambiguous, reference to the principle parties—Japan and the United States—to those of “all humanity” does little but widen the scope of hubris and error. Rather than putting the matter to rest, as it was meant to do, these displaced meanings have set up a self-fulfilling prophecy of latent hostility that can only lead to breaking the vow that such evil will never again be repeated.

Year after year, decade after decade, we have seen how these shadows have metastasized until there is no corner of the globe that is safe from the legacy of the atom bomb, nor any human being on the earth that is not a candidate for that grim registry left in the keeping of the Hiroshima cenotaph. We create more weapons of unimaginably greater destructive power than the original ones that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Our stockpiles multiply, our non-proliferation treaties see new members added to the roster of stakeholders, our resolve for peaceful engagement in the world erupts almost weekly into some new hostility whose trajectory could easily lead to the horrible repetition of what we vowed to prevent.

What we have done, what the presence of those shadows in the cenotaph portend, is that we have added “all humanity” to the list of candidates that might someday take their place in the registry. Though all of humanity has not yet succumbed to the wounds of nuclear
brinkmanship, it has certainly been marked by the radiation of blame, guilt and shaming from the original event to join the victims whose ghosts have warned us for 70 years, but cannot stay our hand. As much as those 249,446 souls, ‘all humanity’ had also been caught in the blast of the twin suns and the shadows they left on the fields of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We were all born in the warlight of the world, and have all been poisoned by the same toxic fallout as those we so earnestly bid to rest peacefully.

Now, in the 70th anniversary year since the bombing, another biracial American citizen places a wreath at the foot of the cenotaph. Along with his Japanese counterpart, Shinzo Abe, Barack Obama leaves behind the shadow of an unrealized design, just as Noguchi had done before him. This time it is a dialog, one that might have begun the long overdue conversation leading to nuclear disarmament. That conversation—a reflection of the cenotaph’s shadow— was rejected in the same contentious air that troubled Dr. Saiki and his inscription some 35 years earlier, or the rejection of the Noguchi design a dozen years before that. 70 years after the fact, nationalist Americans and their counterparts in Japan noisily object to their leaders discussing anything about the realities or implications of the tragedy that befell Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

American nationalists do not want anything said that does not rationalize and defend the bombing. Japanese nationalists are equally committed to rejecting ideas that do not brand the bombing as needlessly aggressive and criminal. Those on either side, who cannot let go of that history or contemplate its meaning for future generations, prefer to ignore the question of getting rid of nuclear weapons if doing so requires they stop fixating on blame and come to terms with their own shadows. In reality, it is all one shadow that haunts the human psyche and appears, at present, to reside in the Cenotaph at Hiroshima.

The undercurrents of nationalism and the national origins of the messengers continue to haunt this unresolved chapter of a common
history. As a result, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Barack Obama were constrained on the day of their visit from realizing an original and grander design for their meeting in Japan. Instead, they were compelled to confine their remarks to a lesser and partial realization of a conversation they might have had, and probably wished to have. The speeches within the shadow of the cenotaph were muted to simply honor the victims of the bombing and offer some vague, general allusion to the cause of world peace.

Shinzo Abe did mention his intention to take a resolution to the U.N. demanding an end to existence of nuclear weapons. Barack Obama was slightly more circumspect, remarking only that humanity required a “moral awakening”, and that he had a vision of children playing in peace. But there could be no mistake that the two leaders were carefully limiting their remarks in ways barred them from approaching the reality of those events or the need to put an immediate end to risking its repetition.

The pilgrimage of these two men and their mutual quest for peace had ended. The real mission they shared was left incomplete, delivered into the shadows of the cenotaph to join with hidden visions of others before them that had also been similarly cast into shadow. It is hard to miss the ironic similarity of the journey that brought President Obama to the threshold of the cenotaph, and the one taken by Isamu Noguchi more than a half-century earlier. Both of them have biracial ancestry and bi-national histories; both with first-hand experience in the cruelty and bigotry that accompany such accidents of birth. Each had spent their lives resolving any number of conflicts that come with being born straddling cultural and racial divides. Both had been drawn to the same symbolic monument through their desire to settle one of the world’s most dangerous and intractable problems, Noguchi as its first designer, Obama as the holder of a vision that might fulfill its true purpose - to insure the history that birthed it would never be repeated. And both, of course, arrived at the threshold of realizing their visions, only to find the way blocked.
In the latest attempt to embrace the meaning of the Hiroshima Cenotaph and release humanity from the shadows that inhabit it, Obama and Abe failed to accomplish that mission. Abe had his resolution, of course. Obama had his “moral awakening”. Perhaps they would return to their respective capitals to try again, as Noguchi did before them or as professor Saiki did in attempting to resolve the enigma of his inscription to the satisfaction of his critics. But for now, the two world leaders would return from their journeys empty-handed, at least in terms of the vision with which they began their pilgrimage.

Seventy years after the fact, the shadow of the cenotaph still refuses to yield, and the name of its next victim, all humanity, remains poised to be entered in the rolls of that registry. What is left to wonder is whether the troublesome prophecy of the shadow of the cenotaph will, indeed, repeat its evil? We can only wait and see if anything has been learned these past 70 years that might change that harsh prospect.

Can we find a way to begin a conversation that should have started August 10th, 1945, or are we destined to open the registry of victims to include all humanity, thus sealing the fate of its one final victim, the vow that 'we shall not repeat evil'?

Though time grows short, there is still a choice remaining. Indeed, it is a choice that was offered by one of the 249,446 names in the Cenotaph’s registry of victims, just prior to her death. Sadako Sasaki offered the world one word which might change the prophecy of the shadows of the cenotaph and set free a light that would end their long residence within that monument. The word was 'omoiyari'—"Putting others first."

Sadako released the power of that word on the wings of a thousand paper cranes shortly before she died (a task her brother, Masahiro, now continues to do, spreading his sister's words through numerous speaking tours and at international conferences). Whether all humanity is sane enough to receive the message of the cranes and transform the injunction to not repeat evil into the impossibility of repeating it
remains to be seen. Only ridding the world of all nuclear weapons can confirm that.

The shadows of the Cenotaph are, of course, all one shadow. A metaphor for the seeds of discord that seem to take shape from the very expressions of our grief and our failed attempts to come to terms with the fact of our inhumanity. It is a fact that refuses to go away even in the places of our most intimate regret.

This much is certain. Failure to heed Sadako's advice leaves us with only one other outcome. All humanity will certainly be added to the registry of victims and the earth itself will become a cenotaph for humanity. The remains of humanity, along with all else, will have been located elsewhere. There will be no one left to mourn the dead nor enter that final name in the registry of victims - 'humanity'.

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* 'cenotaph', a memorial for the dead whose remains are located somewhere else.

**an excellent history of the cenotaph’s inscription and plaque was written by Yoshifumi Fukushima for The Hiroshima Peace Media Center, "Hiroshima History: 1945-1995" (http://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/?p=27516)
noguchi designs, 1952
Omoiyari

Omoiyari wears two faces, though difficult to see sometimes, the first surrounded by a grace that beckons us to join her there.

Her second face is rarely seen, it hides behind her sister's mask, and there can only wait, deceived until the first face moves aside.
The Final Memorial:

War memorials do not really remember anything. There is no remembering to be done with them. They are testaments to the end of memory. If that were not so, if we really remembered something through their agency, we would not be repeating the occasion we pretend to remember, as we so often do.

Memorials serve only to diminish our memory, to replace it with some physical weight that purports to keep a tragic memory alive. Instead, what memorials actually do is to sever us from the memory and the certain knowledge that holding on to it brings—an understanding that we are about to do something that we remember having done before, and to the same end.

A true memorial, one that really could embrace us with the act of remembering would be one that vanished at the moment of recall, in an act of self-annihilation during which the memorial itself disappears.

Isamu Noguchi did a number of memorials and monuments in his lifetime, some realized some not. Maya Lin, of course, began her career and celebrity with her memorial and is currently working on what she designates as her "last memorial", 'What Is Missing?', the remembrance of a dying planet. What both of them seem to share in common is an ambivalence about the real function of memorials, Isamu on the reluctance of past, Maya on the recreation of the present.

My own discomfort seems to have something to do with the remembrance and forgetting of the future. What I sense our three views share in common is that they are all about the function of memorials as vanishing points that absorb the light of recollection in every tense—past, present and future. What we are left with is a black hole of recollected experience from which nothing can escape.
Twin Suns

Wreathes wither on a monument for the dead, a cenotaph
for a past we can no more change than a future we are incapable
of creating—our gestures of reduction, of non-proliferation, of MAD
treaties scattered like flocks of doves over oil-soaked beaches,
upgrades to arsenals we pretend, most of the week, are not there,
nor the sullen nations dressed in solemn poses as if to care
about marks etched on old stone monuments, the echo of apologies
that cannot be made to a promise not to be kept—a silence we declare
artifact of peace, watch from both sides of its arched back
in the pitiless glare of twin suns—shadows on name-burnt walls.

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Meeting in Hiroshima - a prologue to a conversation

Anticipating the first visit of a U.S. President to the city of Hiroshima, the title of an opinion column in a major American daily read, "A time to consider what U.S. did at Hiroshima". The text contained a few remarks about "moving forward" and peace and ending the prospect of nuclear war. But the context of the column was all about how "the trip has ignited debate over whether the U.S. should apologize to Japan". Over and over, the column mentioned that the visit will avoid any appearance of a U.S. apology for those events. There were quotes from government officials underscoring the fact that WWII was not going to be discussed as if to offer proof, like announcements that the water is safe to drink, or the danger of some tornado has passed, or like saying, "Don't think of an elephant."

Yet most of the article was taken up with the history of the debate over whether the bombing was necessary or not, or with Eisenhower's remarks that it wasn't, or with others that it "saved American lives." Some made the observation that it was a mistake in the past for some U.S. politicians to go to Hiroshima to pay their respects. In short, the column, along with its title, was all about who was to blame for those horrific events, and what to say or not say about that. Only in passing was there a brief mention about how the matters of those horrific days were to be put aside. The conversation on who was to blame, most of all, was not to be raised, though the article violated this constraint in every way it could. The commitment was certainly to the good. That conversation has gone on long enough and has never gotten us anywhere.

To be sure, it is a conversation on the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, one that persists today as much as it did 70 years ago. But it is precisely the wrong conversation. The one we should be having, the one it is essential we have, is not on culpability or necessity, but on the
reality of what happened on those two August days in 1945 that changed the world forever. What were the reality of those days for the people that lived through them, and what was the real meaning in them that changed the world forever? That is a conversation that has never taken place, not then, not now.

Masahiro Sasaki, the brother of the familiar Sadako, the 'Thousand Paper Cranes' girl who finally succumbed to injuries she received at Hiroshima, gives talks around the world about the meaning of those events and the urgent need to alter our perspective so that things like that can never happen again. In his talks Masahiro says, "the blaming chain gets stuck all the way in the past. Then we are completely derailed from the lesson that war itself is humanity's Pandora's box, and that nuclear weapons are something that came out of Pandora's box."

Masahiro has no interest in rehashing Pearl Harbor, or the responsibility for Hiroshima or who did what to whom and whether they needed to do it or not. To him, that is to be stuck in the past and goes nowhere. Remarking on Masahiro's caution, Charles Pellegrino, noted forensic archeologist who has conducted a minute inquiry into the actual effects of the bombing on those who perished and those who survived at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in his book "Last Train From Hiroshima", says, "If victimhood and blame become the lesson (Your country hurt me. You hurt me first!) then we become imprisoned in the 1930's and the 1940's forever trapped by our past."

Mr. Sasaki, further enlightens his audiences by relating to the teaching his sister imparted during the final days of her life, when it became clear that she would not live long enough to complete the job of folding all those thousand paper cranes of peace as she had set out to do. Sadako's message was not about blaming or being ashamed or even about forgiveness. Those were all things hopelessly tethered to something that could not be changed. Instead, Masahiro remarked that the thing "Sadako understood...more personally and intensely that most people ever will," is omoiyari. "This," he says, "is the best way to start," the essence of what it means "To think about the other person first."
Despite Mr. Sasaki’s talk, and the sincere attempts of many others to move on to the real conversation, we remain locked in the war of causes and responsibilities, none of which contribute an iota to preventing the same, and much worse, from happening again. Certainly, that realization must begin with thinking about those who perished on that day.

Yet we continue to do it in our press, in our public discussions, our schools and other forums. It is all about justification, or the lack of it. It is a conversation which simply guarantees that we will remain trapped in our past over the issue of nuclear weapons. Equally, we are just as trapped in the past if we remain silent about the matter and, as President Obama's visit to Hiroshima promised, avoid discussing the matter altogether. “Instead,” as the President’s Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications put it, we must, “...offer a forward-looking vision of our shared-future," That, of course, completely avoids talking about what happened. It is a cul de sac that omits altogether the conversation we need to have about the real meaning of those bombings. It can only perpetuate the seven decades of silence that have served to insure we have learned nothing from those events, because you can't have a "shared future" if it leave out the thing that is actually being shared.

Omoiyari is not about silence. Not at all. Silence is *gaman*, bearing up under circumstances one cannot change, as many of the internees during WWII had to do. Omoiyari is more kin to the golden rule or *grace* in more familiar western terms. *Gaman is personal*, something self-expressed through heroic silence. Omoiyari is relationship, an active conversation with others.

Absent an open and frank conversation about 'What the hell really happened, and what does it mean?' to be on the receiving end of a nuclear bomb, things not only can't move forward, they can only get worse. What has 70 years of silence gotten us? It has gotten us into a recurring cold war and a resurgent nuclear arms race—the insane
stockpiling of weapons of unimaginable power, a new request from our current President to spend one trillion dollars on upgrading our nuclear arsenal and a return to the frightful policies of keeping open the option to use nuclear weapons, as expressed by one of our current candidates for president. This does not sound like anything that promises to end our love affair with nuclear weapons or their threat to life on earth. Every one of those steps has done little but widen the scope of the threat, cling to our stockpiles and intensify the likelihood of a future nuclear war. No one can say for certain if a real conversation, had it been conducted back in 1946 or 1950, about what really went on at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, would have rid the world of nuclear weapons by now. But it is quite clear that not having that conversation is a sure path toward the expansion of our arsenals, the development of bigger weapons and the near certainty they will someday be employed.

Before that conversation can begin, however, there is something that must be understood and dealt with. It is the answer to the question, "Why the silence?"

Most of us know about the silence of the Japanese. Until recently, the survivors of that horrific experience (the hibakusha) were stricken with a mixture of shame, dishonor and gaman, the Japanese cultural response to be silent and stoically reserved about things one cannot change. Indeed, for a very long time the hibakusha were treated by their own countrymen as an untouchable caste, to be shunned and shamed. It is only in the past decade or so that those survivors still alive have come forward to tell their stories.

From the Japanese point of view, the Obama visit does not imply they are fishing for apologies or that such things even matter to them. As the head of a Hiroshima survivors group said, the visit would be "a first step toward abolishing nuclear weapons." That is all. That is also the frame of reference of the Japanese government for the upcoming visit. According to the New York Times and other sources, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo has characterized the visit as "a chance to honor the dead and
support the cause of nuclear disarmament." Abe has clearly moved past the wall of silence that has haunted his country's memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yoshihide Suga, has echoed Abe's sentiment in stating the visit would be “very meaningful in building momentum for a world without nuclear weapons." It is pretty clear that the Japanese have not only gotten over *gaman*, but that they fully realize a new conversation is long overdue.

The American side of the matter is a stranger case, and more complicated. Obama's visit has touched off a storm of contentious rhetoric and condemnation, equating the very fact of his visit with an apology by America for dropping the bomb. Nothing, of course could be further from the truth. It is only our own wall of silence that prevents an open conversation on the realities of atomic weapons and need to rid the world of them. That starting point is hidden behind the insistence that one of the most important conversations the 21st century can have is to be held hostage to some question of responsibility that was already irrelevant more than 70 years ago Why does America have such a hard time letting go of the past to make way for such a critical change of course for the future?

Certainly, there are a few who don't want to see the world rid of nuclear weapons. Abe has his nationalistic right-wing, and so do we. Both will oppose the leadership just because it is the leadership, if for no other reason. Any thought of demilitarizing on any level is an anathema to them. So too, to be downright cynical, there are those who profit from the persistence of these weapons and enjoy lucrative contracts made from servicing them. But there is also another reason that keeps to the shadows and operates by stealth to obstruct moving past the assertions of blame that Masahiro warned us about.

For decades there has been the persistent presence of a small group of self-appointed censors in the U.S. They have made it their business and mission to see that any story which doesn't glorify the role of the American military and its history is to be kept from public view. They
don't represent the view of the American people, they don't reflect the view of our veterans. They only promote and insist upon their own narrow, selfish view of how the conversation of military affairs must be conducted and what it can or cannot speak about.

This is especially true regarding attempts by Americans to present or publish details on the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki beyond the purpose of showing how effective the bombing was or how right we were to do it. The people who carry out this suppression of speech in America have embedded themselves in otherwise well intentioned groups and organizations, many of them representing various kinds of veteran's interests. From there, they carry out campaigns of distorted lies and misinformation to thwart the free speech of anyone who doesn't hold their view of military history.

These free speech terrorists will stop at nothing to achieve their goal. They were among the people responsible for lobbying Congress and forcing the resignation of a Smithsonian Director and historian, Martin Harwit, when he insisted on including a small number of photographs of the victims of the bombing in a larger, Smithsonian bicentennial exhibit covering those events. They even refused Harwit a platform when he offered to speak to their own organizations and explain why including that history was so important.

These free-speech terrorists will go after any publication that meets with their disapproval, with a vengeance. They will plant false news reports in legitimate newspapers where they can, create fake Facebook and other social media pages and host false Wikipedia entries to defame targeted authors and discredit their work or assassinate their character. They will attack the credentials of those they don't like, and hack or manipulate university records to cast doubt on their professional standing.

They have even intimidated publishers and threatened them with organized veterans' protests if they dare publish works which are on their targeted list. In the case of the above mentioned book by Charles
Pellegrino, they went so far as to intimidate its well-known publisher, causing them pull the book from store shelves after it had been distributed, and to shred all existing stocks. Even today, with a new publisher and a second edition of the book, these censors are hard at work and one is apt to find library copies with notes slipped in them that savagely attack the book and its author and warn would-be borrowers not to read it.

This conduct is not only reprehensible in a country where its soldiers have fought and died to protect, among other things, our freedom of speech, but it abets the crime of obstructing the very discussions that might help to relieve us from the dangers of a nuclear weaponized world, one which moves ever closer to the day of self-annihilation. News articles and editorials are going to have to change their focus from that of reviewing the history of blame to one of discussing the meanings of Hiroshima in the context of the Pandora's box that was opened that day. If we are really ever to "move-forward", as the Obama administration suggests they'd like to do, we will first need to end the silence that bars our way. We will need to have that honest and very public conversation with ourselves for the sake of future generations.

It is with some credit to Obama and Abe that they both seem to have recognized the need to begin the dialog leading to a discussion on the questions of war, peace and the prospect of future Hiroshima’s that must precede any real action to get rid of these weapons. Even if the dialog is a silent one, reduced to gestures and a few remarks that probe the edges of global disarmament, it is their refusal to give in to those who prefer no discussion at all and to remain stuck in the folly of history that distinguishes them from the silence of the past 70 years. Obama and Abe seemed willing to take the political risk of offending some who prefer not to understand this, than risk what happens had they disregarded the opportunity to meet, altogether.

For the rest of us, we who live with the prospect of being on the receiving end of the unthinkable, this may be the first small shot we
have at preventing thermonuclear catastrophe from ever happening. To have done otherwise than insist Obama and Abe show up at the cenotaph would be to insure that the unthinkable will happen, and it will leave no survivors to meet in the future and tell their stories.

A small tribute to those who suffered, to those who still suffer and, most of all, to those who work tirelessly to insure that the children of the future will not continue to suffer our folly—kodomo no tame ni.

Thy Fearful Symmetry

They say it didn't happen that way, some died quick, others not at all, all held in the sway of "necessity" called down from the sea to wash away our sins, yet even now burns brightly beneath their skins.

They say It didn't happen that way, but in that way success is born and for those whose time had come, and those that lingered to pray in silence at the altar of war, it was another day in gray light

    burning brightly beneath our skins.

Somewhere, deep in the skin of their ghosts, hubris burns brightly, renewed in the curse of Prometheus plucking our livers from the ashes of Fukushima-Daiichi where they said, again they said, "It didn't happen that way. But there in the distant keep of our desire,"
They say, to end the war we must light up the day or
to light a lamp, place a speck of sun upon a coastal ledge
where ashen ghosts are still at play among the ruins,
their shadows lengthened into rays of paper, fan and broom.

By fire or by sea are the sins of ignorance swept clean
while a thousand folded paper cranes pass by
in lingering review, they spin eternities in hubris gray,
they calculate the half-life of the day burning brightly

*beneath our skin.*

~ ~ ~

*THE ATOMIC BOMB
IS THE BUDDHA OF THE WEST*
This is a review of what I would argue is the best book ever written on the details of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the people who lived and died in that horrific event. It is the natural place to start for anyone who wishes to understand what the continuing presence of nuclear weapons in the world really means.


Actually, I give "To Hell and Back - The Last Train from Hiroshima" six stars. The first five are for content and the remarkable confluence of history, science and humanity which the story of Hiroshima from the POV at ground zero provides in abundance, and Dr. Pellegrino captures in painfully exquisite detail. Those are matters of content which I leave for other reviewers to take up and comment.

The sixth star is for courage, and it is shared by two recipients. You see, Pellegrino's book is a conversation that really should have happened 70 years ago. Indeed, it needed to take place the day after the bombs were dropped. It didn't. It began only a decade ago when the survivors, 'hibakusha', at long last began to come forward and lift the veil of
silence on their first-hand accounts of what nuclear weapons looks like from the receiving end.

It was an understandable silence on the part of the Japanese who suffered those days the sun fell to earth on two of their cities. Shame and guilt played their part. For who would not feel hubris when they realize they had conceded to power and wealth the atrocities of a war which their leaders visited upon them? 'Gaman' also played a part, the ancient Japanese tradition of bearing the weight of catastrophic events without complaint and enduring in silence those events which seemingly cannot be changed. Gaman was the invisible force which muffled complaint as Americans of Japanese descent were marched off to the internment camps of America. It played an even greater role in suppressing the stories of those who knew, first-hand, what the creation of a new class of weapons meant to the children of the future.

The other side of the conversation that has yet to take place is the American side and our full disclosure of the hubris and consequences of using such a weapon, even (especially?) in a case where our leaders feel it is a fully justified "necessity". Indeed, unlike the decades of Japanese reluctance to discuss the matter, the conversation from the American side seems to be completely limited to whether dropping atomic bombs was necessary, i.e. saved American lives, shortened the war, etc.

However, unlike the Japanese reluctance to discuss the matter, the American wall of silence has taken the form of active suppression of information and malicious forms of censorship, including false character assassinations of the author (a few more details on these "literary terrorists" and their assaults on the book is given in my August 28th, 2015 Amazon review of the first edition "Last Train from Hiroshima—The Survivors Look Back").

What is of importance is that these self-appointed censors fiercely insist that the only history of the bombing fit to tell is the one that justifies
and defends the decision to use the bombs. They will stop at almost nothing to silence any viewpoint which may be in disagreement with their own view of history. Any position which might lead to question whether the necessity of the bombings outweighed the consequences that have unfolded for the past seventy years is likely to receive the same hostility from these self-appointed censors who often operate, falsely, in the name of veterans and their groups.

"Last Train" is not a book about military history. The few military/technical facts in the first edition that were challenged were minor and much off the point of the whole book (I note, corrections were made immediately by the author when these were brought to his attention).

The conversation that has not yet happened, what the book is about, is what it means for any nation to have and ultimately risk employing such weapons. The meaning of the absence of that conversation, fully and publicly, is clear. It means we haven't yet begun to discuss the elimination of all nuclear weapons and the relegation of their horror to the "impossible" as well as "unthinkable." Instead, for the past 70 years, we have gone through dozens of permutations of keeping them, improving their destructive power and eventually, inevitably using them—from 'Fail Safe' and 'Mutually Assured Destruction', to 'Non-proliferation', North Korean bluster, and Iranian diplomacy debates—all of which can only succeed in normalizing and insisting on the presence of these weapons at the tables of an ever changing and always volatile geopolitical landscape.

"Last Train from Hiroshima" (in either of its editions) is not, by itself, the conversation that is still waiting to take place. But it is the beginning** of that conversation. At a minimum, it eloquently and courageously breaks through the taboos and walls of censorship and denial that America maintains to prevent such a conversation from happening. No one can be certain that such an open conversation would result in an
end to the insanity of thinking the human project is somehow advanced by the fact of these weapons being in the world. But it seems almost certain, without the dialog that appreciates the full range of meaning of their presence in our midst, elimination of the world's nuclear arsenals will remain quite impossible and the employment of these weapons quite thinkable and ultimately inevitable. For that, and for Charles Pellegrino's courage to persist in getting his book on the table of public discourse, six stars seems hardly sufficient (with a few stars for the publisher of this edition, Rowman and Littlefield, for taking it on and standing behind the work.)

Red Slider, August 2015

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Civil Defense

"In the event of an atomic bomb attack on your city, you may find normal postal service interrupted for several weeks and that your local post office has been relocated to the general area."

source: U.S. government civil defense pamphlet, circa 1952
radioactive fallout from coverage on the Hiroshima visit

(Press chooses to frame Hiroshima visit in past controversy)

If you look at recent press coverage on the President’s upcoming visit to Hiroshima what you will find. in article after article, paper after paper, are references to the "controversy" over apologies, blame and justification for the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some make a reference or give a quote or two in that vein. Some offer some remark about that subject every paragraph or so.

But it's there, like a flash of dark sunlight, in every one of them. Oh sure, some talk in the negative about the matter, "The visit is not going to be an apology for...", or "The White house will not being speaking about the necessity of the bombing, but will look to the future," etc. Many will even repeat the theme of 'ridding the world of nuclear weapons' and such. But you can be sure, all the articles are framed in the anxiety of blame and apologies, things so stuck in the past that moving on to the future becomes little more than a wishful footnote:

"Officials said Obama won't apologize for President Harry Truman's decision to drop the bomb, explaining that he's not traveling to Hiroshima to "re-litigate" the choice." - CNN*

“Last August, on the 70th anniversary of the attacks that killed about 200,000 people and ushered in the atomic age, we asked readers: 'Did the United States have to drop the bomb?'" - NYT

"Even with decades of perspective and more historical knowledge about what was happening at that time in the war, the debate over the use of atomic weapons has yielded little consensus." -- NYT

"Japan identifies mostly as "a victim rather than a victimizer," Stephen Nagy, an international relations professor at the International Christian University in Tokyo" -- AP
What President Obama Won't Say on His Visit to Hiroshima—but Should

“Not a single president has expressed regret for the devastation of Nagasaki and Hiroshima." -- Alternet

” Even before the president sets foot on what many consider hallowed ground, the announcement has sparked new debate on the decision to drop the bomb, and whether the United States should apologize or if a U.S. president should even visit." -- VOA

"The White House said there would be no apology for the bombings." A statement from Mr Obama's press secretary read: "The President will make an historic visit to Hiroshima with Prime Minister [Shinzo] Abe to highlight his continued commitment to pursuing peace and security in a world without nuclear weapons." -- BBC

“Apoloogy question hounds Obama’s planned visit to Hiroshima”

“TOKYO — Critics on both sides of the Pacific lashed out Thursday at President Obama’s plans to visit Hiroshima next week, highlighting raw emotions that remain more than seven decades after the world’s first atomic bombing.” -- USAToday

"As the White House announced that President Obama would visit Hiroshima, Japan, next week, it immediately pledged that he would not apologize for the United States dropping atomic bombs on that city and Nagasaki during World War II. But the real reckoning in Hiroshima should be about the future of nuclear weapons, not the past. Unless the
president acts and speaks forthrightly, his visit may mark not only the ashes of Hiroshima but also the ashes of his promise to move toward a world freed of the threat of nuclear annihilation." -- Washington Post

"He won’t apologize for the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki more than 70 years ago, officials said. But the symbolism of an American president commemorating the victims of the attack on Hiroshima is as close as the U.S. will have come to delivering one." -- Wall Street Journal

**President Obama will visit Hiroshima – but he won't apologize to the Japanese**

“Obama's presidency has been filled with firsts – Cuba, a prison visit and now Hiroshima – but he doesn't intend on feeding into Trump's view that America is weak and apologetic." -- U.K Independent

Here, for example, is the only letter on Hiroshima that the Sacramento Bee chose to publish on May 23, despite the fact that most days they will include at least one letter pro and con on a subject of some contention:

"Survivors hope Obama trip is a step forward” (Capitol & California, May 23): Japan owes America the apology, not the other way around. I vividly remember the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Thomas Lea Owsley from my hometown in Idaho went down on the USS Arizona. His name is on the memorial mounted on the ship where he and his buddies remain. I commend President Harry Truman for having the guts to end what Japan started. I also commend FDR for the internment camps for the Americans with Japanese heritage. It is easy for survivors of the bomb to cast blame, but those who would consider that America apologize are not looking at the full picture. The bomb did not just end a war and save many lives, but it served as a grim lesson. It tells the world what can
happen. Countries will remember what a nuclear bomb can do and will take every precaution to be sure it is never used again.

-- Sacramento Bee

AND ON, AND ON, AND ON....

So what do you think people are going to be focused on when they watch the ceremony and Abe and Obama laying their wreathes, offering a few condolences for the victims and giving a few platitudes about 'looking forward to a world without nuclear weapons'? On the plan to end nuclear weapons? No. They are going to be hanging on the edge of their seats looking for the slightest sign of apology or blame or rehash of the past that the President and Abe have promised will not happen, one on which the public can perform its customary 'gotcha!' The whole matter has been framed by our press as a "hold your breath' & 'gotcha!" exercise for the possibility of insult heard round the world. That's how it is set up. That's what it will be. And the conversation that ought to happen, the one that begins with, "The way we plan to get rid of these weapons...," that didn't happen 70 years ago when it should have? Given the framing of things by our media, that conversation is unlikely to happen for another 70 years. The whole matter has been reduced to symbols and empty gestures signifying silence.

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To CNN's credit, they did manage to do one article (May 25, 2016) that spent much of its copy on the need to discuss the horrors of nuclear war to the purpose of preventing it from every happening again, with only brief contextual reference to blame and apology issues. The article did justice to reviewing the steps forward and backward of our current nuclear policies and actions and what they represent in terms of our nuclear future.
"... now from head to foot I am marble-constant; now the fleeting moon. No planet is of mine."
— Antony And Cleopatra, V. II - 244

( Phases of August, 1945 )

Where are the remains the cenotaph tells are buried elsewhere, ones so easily said but with no spoke of their own? No earthly ray can be said to remain at all—specks, lest ghosts appear to confirm their vaporized denial, the present saying only shadows on the freshly mowed grass of Monday, or again on Thursday, a burnt rose shadow on the garden wall.

But for poetry, the moon says nothing—a soundless moon that speaks to us in forbidden cliché, parenthetical crescents that enclose the decay of a rising sun or the beheading of the setting moon, the wax and wan of August across its dead face. A spoken earth, the cenotaph equipped to observe the unnoticed, to say what otherwise cannot be said remains elsewhere—not here.

Safer Places

If you honestly believe that marginal reductions of nuclear stockpiles, non-proliferation treaties or "moral awakening" are going to make the world a safer place,

Then you probably think that hiding under your desk and shutting your eyes is going to prevent you or your children from being vaporized in the event of a nuclear attack. It won't.
THE SILENCE OF THE GHOSTS

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."
— George Santayana

Whether one uses their ouija board to serve drinks on the patio or write long poems channeling departed poets, ghosts are sending messages to us, like it or not. At least those that have had a fatal brush with catastrophe and didn't live to tell the tale. From the once molten slopes of Vesuvius, or 3k meters deep on decks of the titanic or rummaging through the pulverized dust of ground zero or Fukushima-Daichii, the ghosts of human folly have learned the hard way that we need to know what it is that we don't know that we know.

I say "our folly" since it is clear that they would not be so driven to send such messages —no matter they come from some spirit world or just the undead phantoms of our imagination— were it not for the crushing responsibility such creatures feel about their being witness to the misery of the future. Death is ultimately the greatest "now I get it!" experience of all. Stripped of all excuses, political realities, wishful expectations and cost-benefit analysis, ghostly wisdom has no place to hide from itself and the only mission it can possibly have -- "Warn them!" it intones, "Waaaaaarn Theeeeeeem," it drones on an on.

Unfortunately these ghosts also know that we, in the present, cannot hear them, refuse to listen to them. We are committed to making the same mistakes they did and, apparently, no ghost-note is going to stop us. The ghosts of catastrophes gave up expecting us to heed these warnings from our past hiroshima's, holocausts,
mass extinctions or the building of scaffoldings for even greater monuments to human inhumanity.

If we insist on "not getting it", why do these ghosts keep sending us warnings? Ghosts have no conscience to assuage, or redemption to anticipate. So, why bother? Perhaps it is because there remains the possibility that some future generation might "get it". Perhaps we in the present have merely become relay stations for uploading these messages to those that will follow us in hopes that some future generation will understand and act to head off catastrophes that their ancestors refused to take steps to prevent. Perhaps, provided future generations survive our incompetence, they will possess sufficient wisdom to heed those warnings from the grave and take appropriate action to prevent more avoidable suffering.

"Those who remember nothing but the past, are doomed to repeat it" — Red Slider

The present, it seems, cannot be persuaded to take another course in writing its own future history. Just read a newspaper or consider the coming American election or observe the behaviors of the Israelis or Iranians, or Chinese, or observe the follies of your own communities. Take note as they demonize one group or another, shuffle the homeless from one end of town to another for the crime of being "unsightly" or "bad for business. Do we get it? Do we understand the irony of denying someone, for any reason, the right to stand on the earth because they're "bad for business"? It doesn't appear that we do.

No, the ghosts of catastrophe are not going to waste their time whispering dire warnings in our ears with the expectation we can
understand them or act on their advice. Of that we can be sure. Oh, they will keep sending. They will continue to entrust their messages to individuals who make contact with them -- to scientists who dive the 3300 meters to the Titanic's 'zone', or forensic archeologists who sift through the ruins of WTC or Pompeii, or the faceless 50 who wait to die after volunteering to enter Fukushima-Daichii to prevent further catastrophe, hoping a few of their warnings will be uploaded to some future which is able to act on them. Perhaps a few poets may join in the effort as well, helping to translate some of these ghost-notes and prepare them for uploading.

Once aware that the hubris and inhumanity of the past was being recreated in the present, on a scale unimaginined by our ancestors, what else is there to do but try to pass some of those 'ghost-notes along in hopes a future generation might understand why their ancestors, even though they could "remember the past", had no immunity from repeating it.

Nothing is guaranteed, of course, save the fact that the warning of our ancestors remains dangerously unheeded in the present. The price of that arrogance and hubris will undoubtedly be to invite a very long dark ages into the life of the human project — a dark ages, the likes of which history has not seen before. I fear that can no longer be prevented and many generations may pay dearly for our folly. But perhaps, as Azimov's Harry Seldon observed, we might be able to shorten the duration, if only by a little.
The Eradication of Popups

Damn the green valley, 
the poppies in bloom, 
their mad-cow dances 
on the black-grazed fields, 
the dancers too; & too, 
you are there in nothing 
but your loose feet 
and perfect perfume, 
standing on the last rung, 
a ladder rising from the haze 
and lofted into the shroom 
of cloud-curdled capers, 
smoked on a hot green griddle 
popping open in surprise.

~ ~ ~

Word Magic

Has anyone considered that the exercise of giving or withholding apologies is the practice of five-year olds testing their ability to control the world through their newly acquired power of word magic.

That kind of turns the current overtures on nuclear disarmament into a bad case of arrested development, doesn't it.
PEACE&REPLY

Some say that peace is in the balance not in "absence", something smart that weighs in with empathy, at heart predictions of neutrality and valence.

They were men of stature and persuasion and none could say respect was unknown, yet plans hatched and weapons grown are the itch of readiness waiting to scratched.

Better to look to things that reason oils by desire or ambition; its profit-taking due the world as costs of sorrow-making and to the warriors, a zero sum in spoils.
INTELLIGENT LIFE

All us little meteors
sliding down
among the rain drops,
streaming blues and reds
and greens, our sleds
shining off the liquid sky,
brief flashes of delight
whose soul and only mission
is to scream
“wheeeeeeeeeeeeeee!
and bury our heads in mother earth
to the delight of pilgrims passing by
on their annual moment of respite
from their dreary human lives,
to spend a moment staring up
at the gardens
of the sky.
'There Is No Such Thing as a Minor War'

(...continued from inside front cover)

Truth is, there has only been one war – and it is huge. Iraq, Afganistan, Pakistan, India – one war: Vietnam, Lebanon, Indonesia, E. Timor, Chile, One war. WWI, WWII, the next war, Syria, Yemen, ISIS, the marketplace, the movie theater, the school, the hospital. They are all the same war, and they are all MAJOR WARS. From the very beginning, those who wage them and those who suffer them – soldier and civilian alike – are war’s victims. For our species and our planet, there has never been and never will be such thing as a ‘minor war’.

— red slider, November 2010
"Begin the Conversation" is a special limited edition printing by Red Slider for his friends, in remembrance of those who perished in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is hoped that by remembering we will find our way to ridding the world of all nuclear weapons and end, forever, the threat they pose to future generations.

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to live

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