

# The Event, the Subject, and the Artwork



# The Event, the Subject, and the Artwork

*Into the Twenty-First Century*

Edited by

Ann McCulloch and R.A. Goodrich

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# INTRODUCING EVENTS, SUBJECTS, ARTWORKS: THE “MODERNIST” CENTURY AND BEYOND

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Guided in part by Alain Badiou’s controversial *The Century* and its interpretation of events and related art of the last century in terms of “not what took place in the century, but what was thought in it” (2005, 3), this book opens debates around these concepts for the twenty-first century. Badiou repeatedly saw the last century as having a “passion for the real” (2005, 64, 99, 108, 131-132 & 150-151). In acknowledging its genocidal terror and horror, he nevertheless asks his readers to acknowledge what he previously called its “emancipatory politics” (1992, 147ff.). To what extent, can we apply this perspective to the first decades of the twenty-first century, that is, to what extent can analyses of events in the modernist period be re-thought from the viewpoint of this century? By contrast, Gilles Deleuze (1988) sees an event as a synthesis of forces, not a happening, but something that has become actual. Therefore, an event is always there in its potentiality, but may not be recognised at the time of its occurrence. An event has no goal; it is pure effect. It is not based on any prior model; it is a creative and original production and it emerges as a rupture of the times from new immanent but not determinate forces. An event may carry a momentary productive intensity. It will signal new creative possibilities, but will be about “becoming” rather than “being.” In the light of these thinkers amongst others, this book will invoke events of the twentieth and twenty-first century as well as artistic responses to them.

Collectively, as signalled by its title, this anthology focuses upon the relationship between the subject, the event, and the arts. The subject may be a person (artist, thinker, activist) who might designate an event or

contribute to an event by presenting the rupture without being its cause or its result. The subject may be a practitioner who mediates the significance of event within his or her own discipline. The subject may be hailed by contemporaries or a future generation as a militant of “truth,” that is, someone who opens new theoretical understanding or fields or who fights for the emancipation of the oppressed or downtrodden. The subject may equally be a lover who enters enchanted worlds by way of his or her transformed subjectivity.

Turning to the event in the context of this anthology, it is construable as an actual historical event, as a philosophical, psychological, or aesthetic realisation by artists and writers often in revolt against the times from which they are emerging. In practice, the relationship of event with the subject and the arts represents modernism as an unfinished event. Here, contributors to this book posit, for example, avant-garde moments as heralding events; socio-political events as being mediated in artworks; eco-political events as temporal ruptures and rifts; and events, whether in the form of cultural, literary, religious, or artistic responses to, for instance, environmental or psychological occurrences, as harbingers of an indescribable future.

Art and architecture, philosophy and poetry are the means and the subjects of this four-part study of the event. Whereas Part One examines the memorialising of actual historical events, Hiroshima and Vietnam, Part Two investigates poetic, architectural, and psycho-linguistic manifestations of confronting anomalies of revolt in modernist representations. Part Three explores that which dominated ways of seeing and the extent to which appeals to “being” are re-conceptualised in terms of “becomings.” By contrast, Part Four traverses the political contexts in which intellectual and actual events have instigated changes of consciousness or subjectivities.

Against the more general background sketched above, let us briefly pursue the principal contentions of individual contributions in order of appearance, beginning with the chapters in Part One (“Memorialising and Aestheticising War”). In “Reconstruction and Verisimilitude after the Event: A Poet and a City,” Kim Roberts alights upon the posthumous discovery of the notebooks of Araki Yasusada in the mid-’nineties which was met by the international literary community with enthusiasm and acclaim. The dissemination of selected works by the previously unknown Japanese poet and Hiroshima survivor created something of a literary event. The force of this event began to intensify with the dawning revelation that the personage of Araki Yasusada and the elaborate biography that framed and informed his work were fictitious. It is with a similar “disordered devotion to the real” (to cite the words of Jack Spicer)

that this chapter considers two disparate subjects engendered in the wake of the same event - the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima. These artefacts – an “imagined” poet: Araki Yasusada, and a ‘real’ city: the reconstructed Hiroshima - are things founded on absence, things that were not. They are things that are nevertheless paradoxically reconstructed, Janus-faced, with an eye to an event that was and an eye to that which might be. Within them notions of verisimilitude are problematic.

In “The Art of Jennifer McDuff and Others: Representations of Post-Traumatic Stress and the Vietnam War at The Australian War Memorial,” Kate McCulloch principally deals with the 1992 print works of Jennifer McDuff. These prints plunge viewers into the post-traumatic stress syndrome suffered by the artist’s husband. McDuff’s twenty-two prints confront the issue of the impact of emergent repressed memories of the Vietnam War through the artist’s experiences as the wife of a veteran. The artwork not only enacts the relationship between the event of a war, the subject, and the arts, it also contributes to the event by mediating its significance in terms of the aftermath of war. This body of artwork exhibited at the Australian War Memorial provides insight into the collective memory of the Vietnam War during the period when another event took place, when post-traumatic stress syndrome was just beginning to be acknowledged in Australia as a serious medical condition. McDuff’s artwork was considered significant because it fulfilled the need to commemorate soldiers who fought in the war as well as to present a social history of the war on the home-front in Australia. In such circumstances, Kate McCulloch contends that the artwork of McDuff raises political questions related to, for example, arbitrary military conscription, the use of chemical warfare, the displacement of children in warzones, and the futility of war, especially when defeat made the Vietnam conflict “the forgotten war.”

The first two chapters do not hesitate to confront a dimension of aesthetic realisations of events that haunt questions of artistic verisimilitude. What are we to make of the event of Hiroshima as the subject of a fictitious poet (Araki Yasusada)? What are we to make of the event of the Vietnam War as the subject of a former soldier and painter-cum-activist who never participated in it (Clifton Pugh)? Do such questions gain purchase only when we presume that art does or ought to become an act of documentation, a mode of reportage? Or do such questions testify to the constructed nature of events, historical or otherwise?

Part Two (“Metaphors of Modernism: Subjects in Revolt”) begins with Thomas Mical in “Badiou’s Brasilia” who examines the visionary utopian

design of Brasilia in terms of Badiou’s difficult question of not what Brasilia means, but how it means. This third chapter situates the urban, architectural, and landscape designs of Lúcio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, and Roberto Burle Marx respectively as an opportunity to stage high modernism as an event that interpolates subjects around the concrete construction of conceived space. Applying Badiou’s philosophical principles in conjunction with architectural discourse can be seen both to refine his abstractions and to contradict them. However, Mical argues, there is much to be gleaned from Badiou’s theories when used to organise the reading of the event of modernity that leads to the event of Brasilia. In tracking the parallels between Badiou’s early and later theories, and the processes of creation and use in Brasilia, this chapter, in its entirety, begins to re-characterise Badiou’s processes as design processes with particular emphasis upon discrepancies between the architectural discourse of modernity and Badiou’s claims for Brasilia as a world.

The editors’ co-authored chapter, “‘Soul and Form’: Christopher Norris, Veronica Forrest-Thomson, A.D. Hope,” examines three poets engrossed by the advent of late modernity and its relationship to their artform. The point of contention during the last third of the twentieth century was between those poets who gave priority to content and those who gave priority to form. Adherents of content might, for example, emphasise the value of confessional poetry whereas adherents of form would focus upon verbal aspects of individual works. In the first part of the chapter, Goodrich analyses Christopher Norris’ extended critique of the intensely formalist theoretical concerns of Veronica Forrest-Thomson, later to become the subject-matter of his verse-essay, “Soul and Form,” which appears at the end of this chapter. Whilst doing so, particular notice is taken of Norris’ contemporaneous critiques which similarly raise questions of the limits of critical discourse as well as of the more phenomenologically informed approach associated with Roman Ingarden. In the second part of the chapter, McCulloch juxtaposes Norris and Forrest-Thomson with the artistic and critical practice of the Australian poet Alec Derwent Hope who, like Forrest-Thomson, extolled the complex artifice of poetry whilst vehemently opposing its use as a confessional. At the same time, she returns to the debate over the nature of detachment where representation of human and natural worlds becomes entangled with revelation and concealment within the verse of Hope and Forrest-Thomson.

Part Two of this anthology ends with the fifth chapter, “Eventful Metaphors: The Event, the Subject and Writing,” by Dominique Hecq. Pitting philosophy against psychoanalysis, Hecq reconsiders the meaning

of the event for subjectivity. Why subjectivity? By posing such a question Hecq argues that we gain insight not only into the present post-Romantic “crisis of subjectivity” and its political implications, but also into the complexity of our own subjective make-up as writers in the act of authorship. The dismantling or decentring of the humanist view of the self began at the turn of the twentieth century when Freudian theory divided the self into three components (id, ego, and superego). This construct contributed to a rich multi-disciplinary field of enquiry aimed at understanding subjectivity. Ironically, the dismantling of the humanist view of the self has, over the last century, led scientists to challenge both humanist thinkers and their opponents. Freud and some of his followers were challenged along the way only to be confirmed nowadays by the neurosciences. The ultimate irony is that the “crisis of subjectivity” begun at the turn of the last century now manifests itself as a return of emotion and humanism, thus indirectly validating Alain Badiou’s affirmation that the twentieth century has arguably “witnessed the return of ontology” (Clemens 2001, 201-202).

The three chapters of Part Two all allude to modernism in the last century. Collectively, they may be seen to grapple, albeit implicitly, with two kinds of general questions about modernism. On the one hand, can its chronology be assumed or depicted, that is, when did the event of modernism begin (or, for that matter, end)? On the other hand, what is the conceptual character of modernism, that is, how can its nature and repercussions be portrayed? Both sets of questions are closely connected in so far as the historical emergence of modernism basically depends upon what we take to be its principal features. Indeed, if, like an artistic compendium, this set of chapters was content simply to contrast it with a pre-modern epoch or movement divisible into, say, the neo-classical, the romantic, the humanist, and the like, we would quickly find ourselves dealing with another set of terms in need of explication. More bluntly expressed, would we now be confronted by a definitional circularity in which the latter set of terms become covertly if not negatively defined in terms of modernism itself? Is it for that reason, we find each of the three chapters moving towards an exploration of modernism by way of its epistemological and ontological dimensions, into what modernism in the arts is saying about our experience and understanding of subjectivities and realities without recourse to the transcendental?

In the first of four chapters comprising Part Three (“Being and Becoming”), “The Truth of Fantasy: Exploring Badiou’s Truth Process in Young Adult Fantasy Literature,” Lara Hedberg more specifically examines the recent emergence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender

characters. Hedberg regards this occurrence as signalling a dynamic shift both in young adult literature and in identity politics regarding non-normative sexualities. No longer are such characters confined to a restrictive realm of the real, they are now shape-shifting their way into complex fantastical worlds that engage in a pursuit of what is just. Central to this chapter is Alain Badiou’s focus on a “primacy of the Same over the Other” and “the rejection of Difference as a principle of classification” (cited in Hallward 2003, xxix). Here, an exploration of Badiou’s truth process in newly emerging twenty-first century young adult fantasy discloses a shift in the way we view alternate sexualities. Hedberg contends that it forces us to look at the possibility of how multiple sexualities can be imagined and thought in such literature. More particularly, she focuses upon how these texts present us with a politics of acceptance where acceptance here is no longer predicated on hierarchy, but, rather, on the understanding that there is indeed nothing that must of necessity be accepted.

The next chapter, “Actualising Intensities through the Eyes of Schizophrenia: Sartre-Laing-Guattari,” co-authored by Douglas Kirsner and Ann McCulloch, explores how the latter half of the twentieth century was characterised by a reaction to claims that psychiatry was a clinical and a scientific means of controlling if not curing mental ills. This reaction was embodied in R.D. Laing’s writings and what Kirsner in the first part of this chapter argues was Laing’s insistence upon an existential view of the human condition that was largely drawn from Jean-Paul Sartre. Laing’s refusal to impose rigid categories upon human processes of becoming was further demonstrated in an extended interview Kirsner conducted with Laing in February 1980. Human madness, Laing argued in the interview accompanying this chapter, was a perfectly rational response to an insane world. After recently unearthing an unpublished interview Kirsner had with Félix Guattari shortly after that with Laing, Ann McCulloch argues in the second part of this chapter that the writings of Guattari embody ideas endemic to Laing’s work. Furthermore, she contends that perhaps these writings reflect how Laing’s ideas about schizophrenia have found through Guattari transformative powers into the future. McCulloch explores connections between David Cooper and Laing’s anti-psychiatry and Deleuze and Guattari’s dismissal of the Freudian tripartite system of id, ego, and superego which projected desire upon the limited stage of domestic life. She also investigates the novel way in which Guattari deals with schizophrenia as a philosophical method from the perspective of the writer and analyst, rather than directed at the schizophrenic analysand, as a means of interpreting and changing his or

her behaviour. Guattari's embrace of the schizophrenic frame is one that embodies Laing's existential, phenomenological, and experiential concepts. McCulloch, in searching for the intellectual relationship between Laing and Guattari, does so with an explanation of how post-structuralism subverted positions assumed by structuralism and phenomenology of the late modernist era. She primarily positions this in relation to Kirsner's rendering of Laing's (and Sartre's) insistence that humans are agents first of all, not objects, and should be understood in terms of a context which would make sense of those social events which seem irrational.

Antonia Pont begins the eighth chapter—"Reactionary Actions? Thinking Non-Doing as a Process of Discipline and Fidelity in Badiou"—with a statement which serves as a pithy preface and a provocation for her enquiry. The statement was penned by André Gide in his journal on 10th January 1906: "I am becoming that ugliest of all things: a busy man" (1967, 101). We must assume, she continues, that the salient aspect of this change is the "becoming-busy" rather than the "becoming-man." As a man, Gide claims to be undergoing a qualitative alteration. However, from the perspective of a Badiou, what may well be under threat is not just the quality of his subjectivity, but his subjectivity proper. Accordingly, her chapter explores the notion of busyness by way of applying Alain Badiou's focus since the late 'eighties on the process of audacity and rigour underpinning the realisation of truth manifested in science and art, love and politics. That, in turn, allows busyness to be contrastingly explicated in terms of subjectivities, those identifiable with the faithful subject and those with the reactive subject. If busyness is ever to be productive of truths, it demands discipline.

One of the great events of the twentieth century, writes Adrian Alder in "'Shudder, Tremble, Anticipate, Obey': Weber and de Sade," has been the event of managerialism. The bureaucracy, conceived as the modern answer to coercive individuality, brought with it a pervasive dehumanisation. Max Weber had long warned of the impact of secularisation and the subsequent disenchantment in what he termed the "iron cage" for twentieth-century humanity (1905, 182). Chapter Nine analyses *The 120 Days of Sodom* by de Sade from the perspective of Weber's bureaucratic, scientific rationality. The question becomes for Alder whether this approach would highlight the degree of disenchantment endemic to places dictated by bureaucratic control. In other words, given that the subject of the analysis is the most primal, chaotic, and desirous aspect of being human, might not the application of a Weberian methodology to the sexual fantasies of de Sade enact the capacity for the rational to destroy what Freud would argue most defines us, our sexual

drives? This chapter indirectly reinstates the finding of *Civilization and its Discontents*. However, in this instance, it speaks less of the civilisation that determined the current technological world and more of one that has employed managerialism as the new most effective means of keeping humanity caged in the service of global bureaucracy. This chapter, in the Deleuzian sense, sees the event of contemporary management, of contemporary bureaucracy, as a synthesis of forces, not a happening, but something that has become actual. This event is therefore metaphorically invoked in the pairing of Weber and de Sade as always there in its potentiality, but perhaps not yet recognised at the time of its occurrence.

The four chapters comprising Part Three of this anthology are preoccupied with ways of reconstruing subjectivities as modes of becoming rather than being, although from radically different perspectives or contexts. It is almost as if Friedrich Nietzsche’s injunction in his early notebooks, “On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense,” operates as an implicit point of departure: fear or rejection of “the testimony of the senses because they showed multiplicity and change,” not “permanence and unity,” which was supposedly countered by Herakleitos of Ephesos “with his assertion that being is an empty fiction” (1873, pp. 80ff.). At the same time, all four chapters delve into values attached with questions of alternative sexualities, schizophrenic experience, fidelity and beauty, and bureaucracy and dehumanisation respectively. By so doing, their readers are immediately confronted by the kind of “thick” descriptions demanded by what W.B. Gallie (1956) first called “essentially contested concepts.”

With Benice Spark’s “Inhuman or Overman: Arendt and Badiou on the Short Century,” readers enter Part Four (“Politics: Beginnings and Endings”), the final part of this anthology. Her chapter critically examines Alain Badiou’s theory of the event in its political contexts across the twentieth century to the present. Spark aims to demonstrate that Badiou’s perception of the events of the so-called “short” twentieth century contrasts with Hannah Arendt’s perspectives of this period and thereby marks the radical difference in their political thinking. Her chapter questions whether or not Badiou’s formalist eventual philosophy can offer new beginnings for humanity as his usage of the term “emancipatory philosophy” implies. Instead, she argues, Badiou’s engagement with the ideas of an idealised past was one whose paradigm was antagonism and whose glorious promises dreamed up in the nineteenth century were realised. Arendt, by contrast, saw the century as characterised by objectives that would perniciously alter the human condition through processes of dehumanisation. These changes were incurred through the imposition of systems of thought—totalitarianisms—which denied the



fundamental fact that “the human condition of plurality is the *sine qua non* for that space...which is the public realm” of political life (Arendt 1958, 220). It was an era of *absence* of thinking-as-judgement. However, Badiou (2005, 162) contends that the short century enabled a potential for an “inhuman rival of being” through enactment of a univocity where all judgement is suspended.

Chapter Eleven by John O’Carroll, “Event Horizon - Fiji 1987: The Eventness of the Event,” begins by delimiting the notion of event and its context or horizon, focusing in particular on the apperception (or act of consciousness) of an event occurring only indirectly and afterwards. Next, the capacity of the arts to obscure and to reveal the nature of event is demonstrated by the short stories of two writers, Nemani Mati and Subramani, writing about the time of Fiji’s 1987 military *coup d’état*. Thereafter, O’Carroll returns to the debate amongst such theorists as Badiou, Baudrillard, and Derrida over the undecidable character of event and context before reconsidering the representational and reframing role played by narrative.

The closing chapter by Canadian artist Wendy Coburn ruminates upon a series of artworks, the “9/11” Suite, the “Swiss Cheese” Model, the Suicide of James Hubley, and *Die Trauernde*. As she situates them in their respective socio-political contexts and her personal circumstances, Coburn depicts the artist as one who grapples with the horrors of what it is to be human, as one who grapples with the interpretation and representation of events that seem beyond comprehension. As she does so, she keeps asking herself: How do I situate my subject? Which words are the “right” words to express that subject? Which images shall I choose to convey my limited intimacy, my proximity, in relation to my subject – the violence that we are both witness to and detached from as technology collapses boundaries of time and space? As a maker of objects that often depend heavily on the economy of the image, how do I frame those thoughts about my subject? Finally, she turns to us, her readers: How do I speak to my audience so they will not walk away unmoved?

The last three chapters comprising Part Four (“Politics: Beginnings & Endings”) remind us that historical events from the perspective of the twenty-first century were (and are) experienced politically. What the arts do is transform such events: at times, “inserting the reader into an unstable temporal vortex of event-revelation” (in John O’Carroll’s terms); at other times, becoming “an experiment of sorts” which “tests the boundaries and attachments between the self and others” (in Wendy Coburn’s terms); and again at times, reminding us of “a perniciously reduced and impoverished socio-political landscape,” whether in another time and place or in our

own, “one so much leaner than at its artistically innovative start” (to cite Bernice Spark).

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**PART ONE:**

**MEMORIALISING  
AND AESTHETICISING WAR**

## CHAPTER ONE

### RECONSTRUCTION AND VERISIMILITUDE AFTER THE EVENT: A POET AND A CITY

KIM ROBERTS  
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*You flicker,  
If I move my finger through a candleflame, I know that there  
Is nothing there. But if I hold my finger there for a few  
Minutes  
Longer,  
It blisters.  
This is an act of will and the flame is not really there for the  
Candle, I  
Am writing my own will (Spicer 1996, 241)*

*If I pass my tongue through your speaking mouth, I know that there  
is nothing there. But if I hold my tongue inside a written  
sentence,  
It blisters.  
This is an act of forgetting that the dead are dead and that is  
That. Forgetting the candle held behind the figure speaking  
Behind the screen (Yasusada 1997, 81)*

In the mid-1990s the posthumous discovery of the notebooks of Araki Yasusada was met by the international literary community with enthusiasm and acclaim. The dissemination of selected works by the previously unknown Japanese poet and Hiroshima survivor in a number of journals between 1994 and 1996 created something of a literary event. Upon reading the Yasusada works published in *Conjunctions* in late 1994, American poet Ron Silliman, announced the arrival of “a poet whose work simply takes my breath away” (cited in Perloff 1997, paragraph 3). The force of the Yasusada event intensified with the dawning revelation that

the personage of Araki Yasusada and the elaborate biography that framed and informed his work were fictitious.

The appearance of Eliot Weinberger's July 1996 article, "Can I Get a Witness?" was conclusive confirmation of rumours that had been circulating in less formal media. Weinberger pronounced Araki Yasusada to be the "pseudonym of an anonymous, possibly American poet" whose works were a "telling case" regarding the "inherent value of 'witnessing' as a measure of poetry" (paragraph 8). He claimed that, had Yasusada's identity not been called into question, "he would have become 'our' primary poet-witness of the nuclear disaster – much as the greatest witnessing of plague is Daniel Defoe's entirely fictional first-person account" (paragraph 8).

International media interest in the case followed, fanned by the publication of *Doubled Flowering: From the Notebooks of Araki Yasusada* in 1997. Accusations of cultural misappropriation, ethical effrontery, and authorship speculations have continued since. In contrast to many literary hoaxes, no perpetrator has either stepped forward to claim the work or had a confession extracted. Citing the rather deliberate factual and historical anomalies built into the Yasusada biography and editorial commentary, Marjorie Perloff (1997, paragraph 6) convincingly argued that the hoax was meant for discovery. But, as suggested by Brian McHale (2003), this complex "mock-hoax" was not simply a trap for unwary editors as the enduringly authorless status of the Yasusada works attests.

This paper represents a departure from the overriding critical preoccupation with the authorial controversies connected with *Doubled Flowering*. The focus of this inquiry is the way in which the Yasusada works are an imaginative attempt to measure and map the global meta-event that prefigures, frames and pervades the work. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that it is in these words of Yasusada's favoured American poet, Jack Spicer—post-war heir to the elliptically broken language and orientalist gestures of earlier modern American poets such as Ezra Pound (see McHale 2003, 244)—that I find something of the territory with which this paper is engaged:

With fifteen cents and that I could get a  
subway ride in New York. My heart  
Is completely broken. Only an enemy  
Could pick up the pieces.  
"Fragments of what," the man asked, "what?"  
A disordered devotion towards the real  
A death note. With fifteen cents...

I could ride a subway in New York. No  
Poet starved. They died of it. (Spicer 1996, 271)

It is with a similar “disordered devotion to the real” I intend to consider two disparate subjects engendered in the wake of the same event, the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima. These artefacts—an “imagined” poet, Araki Yasusada, and a “real” city, the reconstructed Hiroshima—are things founded on absence, things that were not. They are things that are nevertheless paradoxically reconstructed, Janus-faced, with an eye to an event that was and an eye to that which might be. Within them notions of verisimilitude are problematised.

Araki Yasusada, despite his inauthenticity, his temporal latency and geographical and cultural dislocation, is a subject of the event known by the polyseme “Hiroshima” as much as he is a subject of the duplicitous event of his creation. In saying this, I draw upon the philosophy of Alain Badiou in which, broadly speaking, the subject comes into being as agent of an event; or, rather as agent of the “truth,” not subjective but infinite, that he or she discerns within the event. The subject, in this sense, endures to the extent it maintains event “fidelity” (Badiou 1988). By “coming after the Event,” as Slavoj Žižek (1998, paragraph 5) explains, “the subject persists in discerning its traces within the situation.”

Yasusada, like so many of us who dwell in the wake of the monumental events of the twentieth century, is a creature of “postmemory.” His perspective is a product of events that he did not directly witness. As Marianne Hirsch has it, “postmemory,” like other “post-” categories, shares:

their belatedness, aligning itself with the practice of citation and mediation that characterize them... Like them, it reflects an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture. (2008, 106)

The focus of Hirsch’s research is on the generational transmission of memory, specifically the eventual engagement of children of Holocaust survivors. She investigates the ways in which the Holocaust is mediated for and by this later generation that grapples with it retrospectively through art and writing. Like many such artists however, the “post-” of Yasusada’s relationship to the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima is not solely temporal. It also represents an alternative cultural and geographical posting or out-posting. His relationship to the event is defined not by personal recollection, but mediated “by imaginative investment, projection and creation” (Hirsch 2008, 107).

Taking these artefacts, poet and city, I will initially consider photographs of Hiroshima, a type of data that has been influential in mediating and contextualising first-hand international and scientific accounts of the event. Like the primary artefacts of this study, these photographs imply referents and so suffer representational limitations. Their capacity to capture small fragments of “real” moments in time and space nevertheless makes them some of the most tangible data the event yields.

The image-making and imagining of the city-subject, which these images reflect, will secondly be discussed in relation to the layered construction of the Yasusada works and the reconstruction of the imaginative core of the city itself, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. Whereas Hirsch’s 1997 “postmemory” study looks to the catalyst of the family photograph, this study pursues Yasusada’s “writing the image” across a wider historical archive (1997, 3). A detailed analysis of the poem “High Altitude Photo of Hiroshima (Circa 1944)” will follow this thematic thread into the possible “truths” offered by his constructed world.

## **The City That Was: The Event, Part One**

The condensed instance of human and urban devastation wrought by an atomic bomb at 8.15 a.m. 6th August 1945 has ensured the name Hiroshima is synonymous with one of the pivotal events of the twentieth century. The historical and technological first-ness of the event with its lingering local and global fall-out of suffering and anxiety was a formative factor in Hiroshima’s reconstruction. The event drew the eyes of the world to a city that previously had no international profile, unlike the former European trade hub, Nagasaki, struck three days later.

After the war, photographs capturing the ground effects of the bomb were carefully censored, particularly during the Allied Occupation of Japan up to 1952. The aerial view of Hiroshima before and after the bomb, however, was internationally disseminated in publications such as *Life Magazine* as early as 20th August 1945. The photographs presented in the periodical appeared amidst advertisements for shaving cream, bed sheets and hay fever cures. Smoke rises from the ground plain of the after-image and the crisp outlines of the earlier figure-ground are blurred and smudged within the bounds of the devastated area, giving little indication of the staggering scale and horror of the event.



Figure 1: Kim Roberts (August 2013), Photograph of a watch stopped at 8.15, Hiroshima Peace Park Museum.

Concerned, however, that these images did not represent the dramatic “reality” of the bombing, the article did not lead with the aerial images themselves. These appeared at the end of the piece after photographs of the infamous atomic clouds above both Hiroshima and Nagasaki and aerial views of other Japanese cities extensively damaged by incendiary bombing raids. Instead, the frontispiece was an artist’s interpretation of the event in which a billowing cloud obscures the ground plain of Hiroshima, seen again from the air. The accompanying caption reads: “This drawing shows more graphically than aerial photographs...effects of the atomic bomb hit on Hiroshima” (*Life Magazine* 1945, 25). Where the real fails is where Hiroshima city’s transnationally assembled and transnationally damaged dossier begins its global consignment.

The space of Hiroshima, so radically deterritorialised by the bomb, is subject to a further deterritorialisation by the proliferation of images such as these reinforcing its iteration as event (Deleuze & Guattari 1980, e.g. 9-10). The U.S. military photographs of Hiroshima before and after the event are diagrammatically augmented, showing concentric circles radiating from a centre marked by a cross:



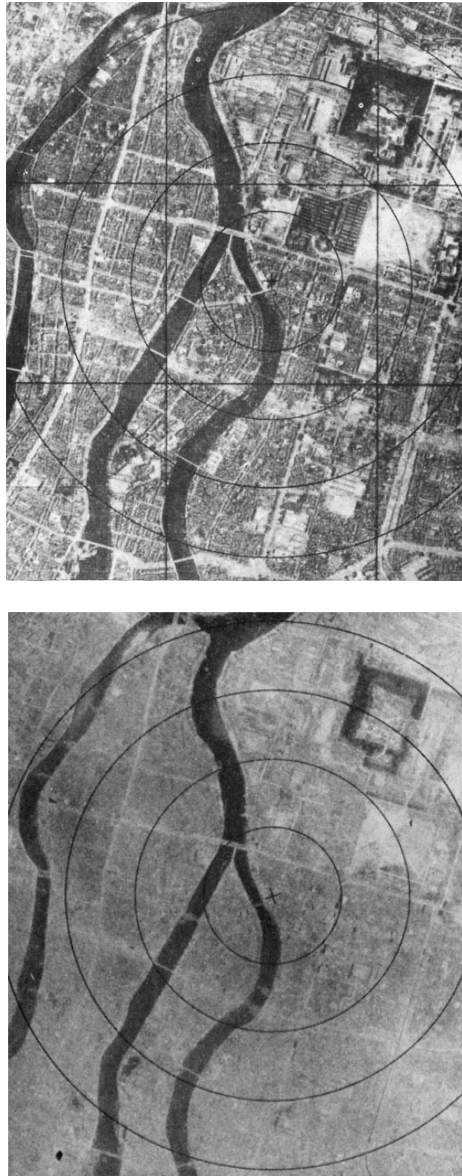


Figure 2: C.P. Chen (2004-), Aerial photographs of Hiroshima before and after the atomic bombing in July/August 1945.

This site—ground zero—represents the geographically grounded location of the bomb's flashpoint approximately 600 metres above the earth. The radiating circles mark the relative distance from the centre of the event. The grid situates the image in the geographic co-ordinate system of longitude and latitude. The singular focus of the cross-hairs sees only the urban object of the image. The viewer behind the lens is all but erased, with only these latent marks to denote the presence of an active Other. The event's hypocentre marked in this way becomes an almost tangible point of origin which is a key reference point within authentic Hiroshima survivor or *hibakusha* testimonies as well as the U.S. Strategic Bomb Survey studies into the bomb's effects.

Survivor testimonies, as noted by J.W. Treat (1995: ix), almost invariably recount their relative distance to the bomb's hypocentre at the moment of the event's occurrence. In addition to these retrospective attempts to objectively situate their own experience, many *hibakusha* recall immediate responses to the blast: the assumption that their precise location was subject to a "direct hit." The reference point of ground zero is central, too, to the recent digital archive project *Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Archive* (Watanabe 2011). This archive situates survivors' accounts on a city map with the aim to "tell the reality of Hiroshima atomic bomb." Concentric circles measure the relative distance of the survivors' location during the event to the hypocentre. Here, the event is geometrically modelled and geographically situated about a singular focus or singular empirical core. This diagram of the event—a stone thrown into a pond with its concentric waves of consequence—is repeated again and again. The emphasis it places on the centre, the target, the bomb, the precise location of ground zero is pervasive, legible, and readily comprehensible. It is an island of objective knowledge grasped in a sea of flux, confusion and the failure of language to represent an experience only dimly apprehended. The archive's conjunction of images comprises points located at different times and in superimposed but different spatial plateaux of the event. Somewhere in the void between these foci, outside representation, is the event flashpoint. By extension, this unrepresented and half-imagined flashpoint is situated between the two different spatial and temporal location of any individual witness. What action may or may not be initiated next determines the becoming-subject of the event.

So we might imagine a new geometric form which moves to embrace these foci, a multiple evental site that shifts from a circle to form an ellipse. Although one could describe such a figure mathematically, there is something in the lack of mathematical precision that I find appealing in a string model. The properties of the ellipse are determined by the

longitudinal measure between the two foci along the major axis and the extent to which the string line extends beyond this distance before doubling back to form a loop. It is the movement of the hand that inscribes the line. It is the hand's speed, precision and lightness of touch that determine the faithfulness of the line to its mathematically projected orbit. Even with care each subsequent pathway alters a fraction: the hand trembles, the angle of the pencil wanes, the string stretches, and the pins lean at their posts.

## **The Poet Who Was Not: The Event, Part Two**

*One has so many things to say, but speaking always feels like a lie*  
(Shiro Ozaki, in Treat 1995, 28)

*Doubled Flowering* is a literary work and event-emergence that is elliptical in form and in its continuing discursive materialisation. The image and implied subject position of the poet is created, novel-like, by a collection of written fragments assembled within a biographical framework. Outside this—a result of revealing the authorial hoax—exists a wider field of critical agitation. The ethical debates that arose in response to the Yasusada project are an important part of the entire work. They in many ways echo questions regarding the ethical and aesthetic problems of representation embedded within the cross-currents of *Doubled Flowering* itself.

Critical shell, biographical dermis, and poetic viscera are all bound within the orbit of the ultra-real and yet incomprehensible event: Hiroshima. This collective corpus is punctuated but is also actively shaped by ellipsis, gaps and parenthesis:

### **Rice and Bones Waka** **May 20, 1949\***

Tugging her spilled rice  
from the black-bear rug  
I have become the bones  
of this young pine's shade (Yasusada 1997, 19)

[\* Five days after Akiko's death]

The default response of the Yasusada work to the Hiroshima event is pervasively indirect and oblique. Unlike so many *hibakusha* accounts, at no time does this “witness” try to represent directly what he has supposedly seen or experienced of the event. Yasusada's most direct views

of his world occur in the fragmented, intimate, and myopic void of familial loss found in his supposedly early post-war works and in a certain preoccupation with the excesses and shortcomings of language found in the supposedly later pieces such as the Spicer-influenced poems. His vision is otherwise as dislocated and long-range as that of the cameras within the U.S. military aircraft:

19.

When I loved watching her take the wrong path  
 And calling her name to turn back.  
 A young maiden afraid to step on cicada shells and  
 In place of small flowers and the shadows of small flowers  
 Where her voice would move toward the only window of  
 Through which the shadows flew in and out  
 Through which the moon plainly fell upon the tatami mats.  
 And the dew of the blossoms was succulent to the prince (1997, 61)

In their introduction to *Doubled Flowering*, the work's three editors and translators tell us that the selections within the volume are from fourteen spiral notebooks found in 1980 by Araki Yasusada's son eight years after his father's death. The whole editorial ensemble, including the fictive editors themselves, however, combines with the fragmented "manuscript"—manifest as both published words and missing pieces—to form a "destroyed dossier" (McHale 2012). This dossier encompasses both the works collected within *Doubled Flowering* and the extra-textual biographical existence of the poet himself.

The *Doubled Flowering* corpus is a work that is spatially and ethically transgressive. The informed reader oscillates between a practised "playing-along" with the narrative line offered by the biographical frame and an acute and at times challenging awareness of the constructed and culturally translocated nature of the work. The interior of the manuscript, which is the realm of "fiction," extends beyond its boundaries, creating the semblance of an empirical author. The biographical exterior of the work, the realm of the "real," likewise invades the interior. The editorial commentary repeatedly invites the figure of the author and his cultural and historical milieu to inhabit the innermost part of this literary world. But, at its heart and at every subsequent "exterior" layer, the subject, and the subject's truth, is revealed as split.

## Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park: Ground Zero

The Peace Memorial Park, designed between 1949 and 1955 by architect Kenzo Tange, is located in the middle of contemporary Hiroshima close to the atomic bomb hypocentre. It is an empty space where previously there was none, open to public access with a ritualised construction of views. The Peace Memorial Park forms the commemorative core of the city. It is from this place every year on the anniversary of Hiroshima's destruction that the city speaks, issuing its annual Peace Declaration.

The Peace Memorial Park is more insinuatingly restless and subject to displacement than the smooth and assured aesthetic and compositional disposition of its design would suggest. Upon seeking the singular authentic centre implied by its design, only dislocated and multiple representations are found. As this early occupation-era photograph in Antonio Martínez Ron (2007) suggests, a true centre in Hiroshima is always just around the corner:



Figure 3: Antonio Martínez Ron (2007), Photograph of the centre of the explosion.

Or, as articulated by Roland Barthes (1970, 32):

[The] centre is no more than an evaporated notion, subsisting here, not in order to irradiate power, but to give to the entire urban movement the support of its central emptiness, forcing traffic to make a perpetual detour.

In this manner, we are told, the system of the imaginary is spread circularly, by detours and returns the length of an empty subject.

Since the 6th August 1947, annual commemoration events have been held under different names almost without fail in the Nakajima district, site of the Peace Memorial Park. The site, near the fork of the Ota and Motoyasu Rivers, is just south-west of ground zero. Marking it is the ruin of the distinctive 1915 Meiji-style building designed by Czech architect, Jan Letzel, which has been World Heritage listed since December 1996 (see E.W. Lollis (2008-) in Figure 4 below). In this international context, it is now known as the “Hiroshima Peace Memorial, Atomic Bomb (Genbaku) Dome.” As Lisa Yoneyama (1999, 2) notes, “Nothing epitomises the Heideggerian irony of Japan’s imperial modernity more solemnly than the incorporation of the monumentalised ruins” of this structure into the Park:



Figure 4: E.W. Lollis (2008-), Photograph of the Second Peace Festival, Nakajima, Hiroshima, 6th August 1948.

In the slogan seen in this 1948 photograph, the event is named “Hiroshima” in a way that distinguishes it from a name that simply designates a city. “No More Hiroshimas” is a call to the outside, a call made in a foreign language from the outside within. The phrase sees the event semiotically connected with the city and with the global duty it