

Give back peace that will never end:



Hibakusha poets as public intellectuals

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Noam Chomsky has argued that the most effective public intellectuals are dissident intellectuals who act from the margins. The US censorship of public discussion of the bombings during the Allied Occupation of Japan ensured that the public did not understand all that had occurred in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This lack of discussion about the A-bomb and the scientific testing on hibakusha saw them stigmatised, however this marginalisation makes them powerful public intellectuals. Hibakusha poets such as Toge Sankichi and Eisaku Yoneda offer a kind of authentic 'evidencing' and recording of the horror of the events of the atomic bombing. The simplicity and accessibility of these poems are essential to the public dissemination of their message, however this has worked against their preservation in the literary canon. This is, in part, because the literary canon prioritises a greater sophistication of language and range of poetic techniques. This paper examines the way in which hibakusha poets can be recognised as public intellectuals. It hinges on a number of considerations centred on public intellectualism, canonicity and use of language.

Cassandra Atherton is an award winning writer, critic, interviewer and one of Australia's leading experts on public intellectuals. She has published six books (with two more in progress) and over the last three years has been invited to edit five special editions of leading refereed journals. She will take up Visiting Scholar status at Harvard University in 2015 – 2016 and is an affiliate of the Monash Centre for Japanese Studies. Cassandra has been awarded five literary awards for her books and articles and has been a successful recipient of more than fifteen national and international research grants and teaching awards. She was a judge of the prestigious *Australian Book Review* fiction award in 2014 and was recently invited to be a judge of the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards in 2015.

Lecture in English / No registration necessary

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