

No More Hiroshimas

Review by

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James Kirkup first heard of Hiroshima when the American atomic bomb was dropped there in 1945. He describes Hiroshima as “that place that was to become a universal symbol of man’s inhumanity towards his fellow-men.” In 1955, after seeing an exhibition of realistic paintings on the horrors of the atomic bombings by two Japanese artists, he wrote the poem, “Ghosts, Fire, Water.” In 1959, he moved to Japan and taught English literature. In Japan , he had the chance to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki , and continued writing the poems in this book. Kirkup first published the book in Japan in 1983, and this is the republished UK version. Kirkup’s poems are intense, haunting and piercingly honest.

Here is the first stanza of “Ghosts, Fire, Water”:

“These are the ghosts of the unwilling dead,/ Grey ghosts of that
imprinted flash of memory/ Whose flaming and eternal instant haunts/
The speechless dark with dread and anger.”

These ghosts continue to haunt humanity. This is an important book that
should be read by anyone concerned with the impact of nuclear weapons on
humanity and the future of life on our planet.

For the poem [*No More Hiroshimas*](#)