

Avisuality of Atomic Violence: A Study of Keiji Nakazawa's *I Saw It* (1972)

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Abstract

Keiji's Nakazawa's firsthand witness, a 48-page graphic memoir *I Saw It* (1972), responds to the mechanical objectivity of photographs in the twenty-first century. It is assumed there cannot be any "authentic photography" of the atomic war because "the bombings themselves were a form of total photography, testing the very visibility of the visual" (Akira Mizuta Lippit). This avisuality, both as a concept and a construct, dragged on even after years of people returning to normalcy. Keiji Nakazawa's nonfictional autobiography *I Saw It* acts as a "counterinscription" to give materiality to the "avisuality" of the atomic violence in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Therefore, the book visually and verbally resists the majoritarian culture of silencing Japan after the nuclear blasts. The survivors still are living embodiments of the terrors forcibly imposed on them. It is also one of the first spectacles of a graphic reaction against the injustice faced by a Japanese artist-writer to speak about the unspeakable through his comic book.

This paper intends to discuss the relevance of hand-drawn imprints to represent violence in an era of technologically advanced photographic accuracy. This paper aims to bring forth the politics of hibakusha, silencing the survivors from sharing their side of the story on the cataclysmic event of 1945. The research paper will also discuss the possibilities and scopes of the medium of comics as a counter-discourse resisting the hegemonic invisible culture of hiding the truth of Japan beneath the infamous mushroom cloud. Finally, the paper also wishes to address the motif behind a defamiliarized representation of the banality of violence through the beautifully colored panels of the text.

Keywords: Avisuality, Violence, Counterinscription, Graphic Memoir, Hibakusha, Hegemonic