



John Hersey, 1952. Photographer unknown. Wikimedia Commons.

Under the Influence: The Impact of Johannes A. Siemes, SJ's Eyewitness Report on John Hersey's "Hiroshima"

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Abstract: August 6, 2020, marked the passage of seventy-five years since the bombing of Hiroshima. It is fitting, therefore, to re-examine well-known, little-known, and forgotten details that influenced John Hersey's classic work of literary journalism, "Hiroshima." Hersey often noted that Thornton Wilder's fictional morality tale, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, inspired the plot device he used in "Hiroshima." Similarities between the two works include a catastrophic event, a focus on the handful of disaster victims whose alternating tales are woven together, and lingering questions about morality and decency. The connection to *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* is not the whole story, however. "Hiroshima" was also influenced by the reportage of a German Jesuit priest, Father Johannes (John) A. Siemes, SJ, versions of whose eyewitness account from Hiroshima appeared in *Time*, the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, *Jesuit Missions*, a report by the Manhattan Engineer District, and other publications. The tone and diction of "Hiroshima" reflect the unadorned language of the Siemes report. Siemes, mentioned by Hersey in the last pages of "Hiroshima," also appeared in two U.S. propaganda films, *The Atom Strikes!* and *Tale of Two Cities*, recounting observations from his Hiroshima report. A published scholar, historian, and professor of philosophy at Sophia University in Tokyo, Siemes resided at a Jesuit novitiate on the outskirts of Hiroshima at the time of the bombing. This study explores the provenance of Siemes's eyewitness account, the nature of its influence on Hersey and "Hiroshima," as well as Hersey's relationship with fiction, nonfiction, and authorial boundaries.

Keywords: John Hersey – Hiroshima – Johannes Siemes, SJ – World War II – literary journalism

In his obituary of John Hersey, published in the *New Yorker* after the “Hiroshima”¹ author’s death in 1993, Hendrik Hertzberg praised Hersey’s “meticulous” reporting as well as his “clear, calm, and restrained” narrative about the bombing and its aftermath.² During his lifetime Hersey was known primarily by his written works, as he rarely granted interviews. In the years since Hersey’s death, his literary legacy has been carefully curated.³ Two major books about Hersey were published in 2019 and 2020—books that generally portray Hersey as a “straight arrow” or as a heroic reporter who revealed “the Hiroshima cover-up” to the world.⁴ These books on Hersey’s life and work—which, at times, border on hagiography—shape a view of Hersey that idealizes the author and minimizes controversies and complexities that influenced him as a writer.

This study examines the inspiration and sourcing of Hersey’s writing—with an emphasis on his most famous work—and argues a more nuanced view of the author as a writer who frequently struggled to find a literary style that fit the stories he wanted to tell. As he experimented with a variety of genres, he occasionally blurred the boundaries of authorship and the line between fiction and nonfiction—tendencies that would cause him difficulties from time to time throughout his literary life. Hersey’s blurring of authorial boundaries might also have contributed to the faded recollection of the Hiroshima narrative of Johannes Siemes, SJ, an important source of both facts and expressions included in “Hiroshima.”

Understanding how these tendencies had, and still have, an impact on Hersey’s literary legacy is critical to achieving a comprehensive understanding of Hersey as a writer. It is important to reflect on Hersey, not merely as a mythical figure, but as a real human being who despite a privileged upbringing, education, and working life⁵ faced substantial literary challenges throughout his career. He faced down some of these challenges and fell short on others.

Genesis of “Hiroshima”

“Hiroshima,” a classic work of literary journalism⁶ (some say an antecedent),⁷ remains a compelling nonfiction exposé of the aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima seen through the eyes of six *hibakusha*.⁸ “Hiroshima” appeared in the August 31, 1946, issue of the *New Yorker*, filling its pages with an account of the horrifying experiences of people who survived as well as those who succumbed to the atomic bomb blast of August 6, 1945.⁹ The cover of the issue in which “Hiroshima” appeared in its entirety displayed banal scenes of men, women, and children swimming, cycling, playing tennis, flirting, and engaging in all the activities that would resume in the United States after the war ended.¹⁰

In *About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made*, Ben Yagoda wrote that William Shawn, then editor of the *New Yorker*, suggested to Hersey the idea of writing about the Hiroshima bombing.¹¹ On the way to Japan and “confined to the sick bay,” Hersey apparently read Thornton Wilder’s *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and liked the structure of the Pulitzer Prize–winning novel about five people who, bound together by fate, died in the collapse of a rope bridge in Peru.¹² In the novel, a Franciscan priest—witness to the bridge collapse—investigated the lives of the dead, hoping to discover how and why they became enmeshed in their shared tragedy.¹³ Hersey explored similar themes throughout his career, as he noted in *Here to Stay: Studies in Human Tenacity*.

Looking back, I find that in most of my storytelling, in both journalism and fiction, I have been obsessed, as any serious writer in violent times could not help being, by one overriding question, the existential question: What is it that, by a narrow margin, keeps us going, in the face of our crimes, our follies, our passions, our sorrows, our panics, our hideous drives to kill?¹⁴

In the framework of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, Hersey found a device for his story about Hiroshima, so he began to search for survivors who would tell him their tales. Once in Japan—having previously read at least one version of a report on the aftermath written by Johannes Siemes, one of a number of Jesuit priests who survived the blast—Hersey identified survivors of the bomb, interviewed them, then selected six and recorded their post-apocalyptic struggles in “Hiroshima.”¹⁵ Unlike the fictional character of Father Juniper, the storyteller in *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, Hersey did not personally witness the event that joined the fates of his subjects. Hersey told the story of Hiroshima through the accounts of others—at least one of those accounts being Siemes’s published narrative.

Why the Backstory to “Hiroshima” Matters to Literary Journalism

John Hersey is easily the most visible and most renowned of a line of writers who have used some of the techniques of fiction writing to enliven their nonfiction. According to Nicholas Lemann, “Hiroshima” is “often called the first nonfiction novel.”¹⁶ For these reasons and more, reflecting on Hersey’s 1946 *New Yorker* story, the provenance of his sources for this famous nonfiction work, as well as Hersey’s relationship to fact, fiction, and authorial prerogative are all worth exploring.

The stylistic framework for “Hiroshima,” the derivation of which rests in part on *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and in part on the reports of Hiroshima survivor, Johannes Siemes, SJ, was the most successfully applied and acclaimed of Hersey’s literary styles. Hersey did not, however, repeat the de-

tached, restrained style of “Hiroshima” in his later works. Lemann, in his 2019 article about Hersey, mused that “Hersey himself, oddly, used the technique relatively seldom during his subsequent career. He kept experimenting with form, but never as successfully.”¹⁷ Hersey, a consummate journalistic storyteller, appears to have been cursed with the yearning to be a novelist.¹⁸ This yearning is reflected in Hersey’s body of work, which meandered from reportage to fiction and back again.

Hersey’s chameleon-like literary style was not just the experimentation of a young author. An examination of the myriad prose styles Hersey used throughout his literary life suggests that his adoption of a new genre reflected, in part, his frequent reliance on plot or stylistic frameworks furnished by other writers or on scaffolds built from the true-life events of individuals whose stories he borrowed, fictionalized, and frequently enhanced. For example, *Men on Bataan* relied on the reportage of the Jacobys and Mydanses, who were *Time* and *Life* correspondents.¹⁹ *A Bell for Adano* relied on events in the lives of Frank Toscani and the citizens of Licata, Italy.²⁰ *The Marmot Drive* reads like a Hawthornesque allegory.²¹ *The Algiers Motel Incident* resembles (at least in places) a concatenation of police reports.²² As he planned each of these works and others in which he experimented with a new literary style, Hersey must have had grand visions, some of which fell short.

Blurred Lines

Hersey’s blurred boundaries were likely the result of the rewrite culture prevalent in journalism when Hersey was coming up through the ranks. Many journalists, especially those who wrote their stories based on the dispatches of others, grew accustomed to cannibalizing their source material—a technique that sometimes led to “borrowing” without sufficient attribution or acknowledgement.²³

In the second of his two Hersey studies, David Sanders noted that at *Time* magazine Hersey—“one of the anonymous young men writing ‘Milestones’ and ‘Miscellany’”—was routinely assigned the task of “summary and reduction” of materials provided by others.²⁴ Hersey’s beginnings as a journalist who developed copy from other writers’ materials—what some called a “rewrite” man—had a considerable impact on his craft and reputation.²⁵ Ann Fadiman writes that her mother (from whom Hersey had “borrowed” material) said *Time*’s method of having staff compose articles from correspondents’ files “ruined” Hersey.²⁶

Hersey repeatedly ran into problems when he rewrote from source materials authored by others. He was accused of plagiarism or copyright infringement at least twice, both times acknowledging his transgression and

apologizing (although some might say insufficiently).²⁷ *New York Times* writer William H. Honan noted that Hersey said the following about his alleged copying from Laurence Bergreen's *James Agee: A Life*: "I make a distinction between credit for the facts, which are public property and don't belong to anyone, and the expressions of a writer, which are another matter entirely." According to Honan, Hersey also said, "I don't believe my real offense in terms of normal practice is great. There's always a fine line between facts and the work of another writer."²⁸

Hersey ran into a distinct class of blurred-boundary problems with his fiction. He had a habit of modeling fictional characters on real-life individuals—often adding a whiff of scandal to the portrayal to spice things up for his readers. David Sanders writes that Hersey dropped one project—a novella titled "Sail Baker Dog"—because one of Hersey's models "was offended" when he read a draft of the work.²⁹ In 1946, while Hersey was in Asia working his way toward Japan, he was sued by Lieutenant Colonel Frank E. Toscani, the former senior civil affairs officer in Licata, Sicily, who had been the inspiration for Major Victor Joppolo in Hersey's *A Bell for Adano*.³⁰ Toscani alleged that Hersey's portrayal held Toscani up to public scorn and ridicule because it represented Joppolo/Toscani as having had an affair and having been removed from his post for defying his commander's orders—events that Toscani maintained had not occurred in real life.³¹ Hersey and Toscani are said to have resolved the suit over dinner at a restaurant named "A Bell for Adano."³²

At least twice, Hersey blurred the lines of fact and fiction by creating a composite character, a practice that has become verboten in journalism. A July 3, 1944, article in *Life* magazine titled "Joe Is Home Now" only partially revealed the creative process Hersey used to develop the story of an injured World War II veteran struggling to adjust to civilian life. "Joe Is Home Now" was presented as "in fiction form" but "based on fact."³³ Many years later, in a 1962 collection of his essays, which included "Joe Is Home Now," Hersey explained what this meant. Hersey combined pieces of his interviews of forty-three returned soldiers and "cannibalized" the facts in these interviews to create "one flyable airplane from the parts of several."³⁴

This did not fictionalize the account, Hersey maintained, as he had merely "dovetail[ed]" the accounts of a number of individuals.³⁵ Hersey argued, in effect, that by creating one Joe from many GI Joes he was protecting the privacy of the men involved, who were already vulnerable by virtue of their injuries.³⁶ Hersey writes that he also created a composite veteran for "A Short Talk with Erlanger," the story following "Joe Is Home Now."³⁷

Hersey's self-described "cannibalizing" of the life events of multiple

real-life prototypes in a supposedly nonfiction work is a noteworthy violation of the ethical stance Hersey took in his 1980 essay, “The Legend on the License.”³⁸ In this essay, Hersey focused energetically on Tom Wolfe’s *The Right Stuff*, Norman Mailer’s *The Executioner’s Song*, and Truman Capote’s “Handcarved Coffins,” accusing those authors in particular, as well as others who might try to imitate their style, of blurring fiction and journalism—putting journalism “in a very bad way.”³⁹ “The time has come to redraw the line between journalism and fiction,” Hersey wrote.⁴⁰ Where Hersey drew those lines, however, usually inured to his own benefit.

Hersey complained of the lack of ethics of the aforementioned writers while exonerating himself of equally troubling conduct. The blurring of fiction and journalism was wrong, Hersey noted—but he himself had created composite characters. “In fiction that *is* fiction, no holds need be barred,” wrote Hersey. “Novelists may introduce or disguise real people and real events as they choose.”⁴¹ In his own fiction, however, Hersey sometimes added scandalous character flaws to a portrayal patterned so closely on a real person that it offended and sometimes caused real-life problems for a still-living model.⁴² In “The Legend on the License” Hersey also absolved himself of the offense of lacking objectivity:

As to journalism, we may as well grant right away that there is no such thing as absolute objectivity. It is impossible to present in words “*the truth*” or “the whole story.” The minute a writer offers nine hundred ninety-nine out of one thousand facts, the worm of bias has begun to wriggle. *The vision of each witness is particular* [emphasis added]. Tolstoy pointed out that immediately after a battle there are as many remembered versions of it as there have been participants.⁴³

Hersey omitted from “The Legend on the License” the offense of borrowing too much of another writer’s work, although (as mentioned earlier) he had noted that facts were up for grabs, but a writer’s “expressions” were their own.⁴⁴ This raises the question of whether Hersey viewed Johannes Siemes, SJ’s written expressions regarding his experience of the Hiroshima aftermath as Siemes’s own or merely as reports consisting of facts available for cannibalization.

Who Was Father Johannes Siemes, SJ?

Few details concerning Johannes Siemes’s life are available, but a few facts regarding his life and scholarship can be garnered from his publications and from newspaper reports.⁴⁵ A short bio of Siemes, appearing on the dust jacket’s end flap of his 1968 book, *Herman Roessler and the Making of the Meiji State*, noted that Siemes was born in 1907 in Cologne, Germany; that

he first traveled to Japan in 1932; that he studied in Berlin and Münster from 1934 to 1939; and that he received his PhD from the Gregorian University in Rome.⁴⁶

Also noted in the bio was the fact that Siemes began working at Sophia University in Tokyo in 1940, where he was a professor of German philosophy and that he had authored a number of articles on German “philosophers and social thinkers,” including Friedrich Schlegel and Herman Roesler.⁴⁷ The latter, a German legal scholar and advisor to the Japanese Empire during the Meiji period, was a little-known source of advice on constitutional law during the writing of the 1889 Meiji constitution. Siemes’s articles and books about Roesler’s contributions to the establishment of a Westernized constitution in Japan brought increased scholarly attention to Roesler’s previously overlooked role in Japanese constitutional history.⁴⁸

By August 6, 1945, Siemes was an established philosophy professor at Sophia University, an accomplished historian, and a scholar with at least three published scholarly works to his credit. He escaped the firebombing of Tokyo by fleeing with a group of his students to a Jesuit novitiate in Nagatsuka, north of Hiroshima.⁴⁹ The report recounted his personal experience of the bombing, his description of a trek from the outskirts to the city center to rescue his fellow Jesuits, as well as his observations of the bombing victims he encountered on the way to the city center and back. As an historian, it would have been natural for Siemes to record coolly and clinically his observations of the aftermath. His account was not merely recorded testimony, it was an actual chronicle that Siemes sent to the Holy See for publication in the magazine, *Jesuit Missions*.⁵⁰ To produce that chronicle, Siemes processed his observations and developed a narrative. Multiple versions of Siemes’s narrative were published prior to the publication of Hersey’s “Hiroshima” in the *New Yorker*.⁵¹

Writing under the Influence

While plagiarism might be too strong a word for Hersey’s use of Siemes’s material to formulate and write “Hiroshima,” it is fair to say that he wrote while under the influence of the Jesuit—assuming a voice, style, and diction that in many respects resembled Siemes’s. In 2019, Nicholas Lemann wrote that in deciding Hersey should write about Hiroshima, both *New Yorker* editor William Shawn and Hersey “grasped that an on-site report on the effects of the first-ever atomic-bomb attack would be a monster story. That they were so obviously right obscures how unobvious the idea was at the time, which is why Hersey had the story pretty much to himself.”⁵²

Putting aside the fact that many accounts of the bombing and its effects

on Hiroshima survivors were censored by U.S. officials,⁵³ it is not accurate to say that Hersey had no competition on the Hiroshima story. The notion that juxtaposing a calm, unemotional chronicle of events with a narrative illuminating the horrific details wrought by the bomb was not new. Siemes himself used that approach in his own account, which was circulated in military circles, the mainstream press, and in popular and scientific magazines of the time.⁵⁴ In fact, a translation of Siemes's report was one of the first widely published English-language accounts of the bombing.⁵⁵ In addition to the appearance of Siemes's account in a variety of print media, the priest apparently spoke about his experiences to sailors on the H.M.S. Tyne in March 1946.⁵⁶

Today, Siemes's contributions to the "Hiroshima" narrative have largely been forgotten, in spite of the fact that Hersey derived both information and inspiration from Siemes—an actual eyewitness who personally experienced the bombing of Hiroshima and the devastation that followed.⁵⁷ One might say that Siemes was a literary muse in the writing of "Hiroshima"—an imperfect muse, as the records will suggest, but a muse nevertheless. Siemes's report helped Hersey identify sources (both major and minor) for "Hiroshima," including Father Kleinsorge, one of Siemes's Jesuit colleagues, and the heroic Reverend Tanimoto.⁵⁸ In addition, Hersey ended "Hiroshima" by quoting Siemes's devastating commentary on the ethics of using an atomic bomb.⁵⁹ The provenance of Siemes's report is, therefore, important to the "Hiroshima" backstory.

Interestingly, Hersey was not the only journalist who used Siemes's material. William Leonard Laurence, a *New York Times* reporter who was embedded for four months in 1945 with the U.S. War Department as the department's "historian" (while still on the payroll of the *New York Times*), used Siemes's material extensively in two books—without adequate acknowledgment or attribution in either.⁶⁰

Excerpts from a U.S. government interview with Siemes, which included the priest reading (in excellent English) from his recorded observations of the Hiroshima aftermath, appeared in two U.S. War Department propaganda films—*The Atom Strikes!* produced in 1945 by the Signal Corp's Army Pictorial Service; and *Tale of Two Cities*, an edited version of *The Atom Strikes!* produced in 1946 by *Army-Navy Screen Magazine*.⁶¹

Provenance of Siemes Reports

The first English translation of Siemes's eyewitness report, which was originally written in German, Siemes's native tongue, is probably the translation rendered by Yale physician Averill Liebow, who kept a diary recording his own experiences as a member of the Joint Commission for the Investigation

of the Effects of the Atomic Bomb in Japan.⁶² In his book, *Encounter with Disaster: A Medical Diary of Hiroshima, 1945*, Liebow recalled the circumstances under which he was asked to translate Siemes's report, alluding to the fact that this document "became a major source of material for John Hersey's masterful *Hiroshima*."⁶³

In *Encounter with Disaster*, Liebow describes having, at the request of Colonel Stafford Warren, translated Siemes's report on September 27, 1945, dictating it to "a remarkably skillful sergeant of General Farrell's Manhattan District Group [*sic*] who typed the translation directly as it was spoken."⁶⁴ Liebow noted in *Encounter with Disaster* that he read Siemes's story "spellbound and horrified."⁶⁵ A copy of the resulting typescript, hereinafter designated Typescript 1, is located in the Averill A. Liebow Collection, maintained by the Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library, Yale University.⁶⁶

A second version of the Liebow translation (hereinafter designated Typescript 2) appears in Hersey's archives at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University,⁶⁷ and is in the same box as the *Time* magazine version of Siemes's report, a report that *Time* noted was "an extraordinary document, the first detailed account of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima . . ."⁶⁸ Typescripts 1 and 2 are quite similar. It appears that minor typographical errors in Typescript 1 were corrected in Typescript 2 and a slightly different font or font size was used in Typescript 2.⁶⁹ The way Hersey appears to have acquired Typescript 2 and the meaning and importance of certain markings on the document have not previously been described in detail.

Typescript 2 is accompanied by a memorandum signed by Richard Reeve, Commander of the United States Naval Reserve, from the Headquarters of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific). The memorandum (hereinafter designated "Richard Reeve memorandum" or "Reeve memo")⁷⁰ is addressed to "All Divisions" regarding an "Eyewitness Account of the Bombing of Hiroshima," with notes as follows regarding the associated document:

The attached document was obtained by joint investigations of a U.S. Army and Naval Technical Mission, Japan.

This account was written by Father Siemes, S.J., Novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Nagatsuka which is approximately two kilometers from Hiroshima.⁷¹

The Richard Reeve memorandum, dated December 6, 1945, is marked "Restricted" at both the top and bottom. The location of folds and staple marks on both the memorandum and Typescript 2, suggest the memorandum was folded over and stapled to Siemes's report (Typescript 2). From the December 6, 1945, date on the Reeve memo, it appears Hersey could

not have obtained this version of the Siemes report until on or after December 6, 1945, more than nine months before the *New Yorker* published “Hiroshima.”⁷²

The classification of sensitive government documents within the United States military has been a work in progress for more than a century. The U.S. Army and U.S. Navy have revised their classification schemes occasionally, introducing inconsistencies between the two classification systems, particularly throughout the interwar years.⁷³ Both Army and Navy classification protocols, however, required distinctive markings and special handling of classified documents. For example, U.S. Army regulations promulgated in 1921 required that classified documents should be sealed within a cover document.⁷⁴ In 1935, the U.S. Army introduced the term “Restricted” (less restrictive than the “Confidential” category and not to be confused with “Restricted Data,” which was established pursuant to the Atomic Energy Act of 1946).⁷⁵ The “Restricted” category was applied to a variety of materials including those related to military defense research projects the U.S. government deemed sensitive. Army Regulation 850-25, dated February 12, 1935, provided a detailed description of the “Restricted” classification including the following:

Information regarding a “Restricted” project may be communicated only to persons in the military or naval service of the United States (including civilian employees) whose duties it concerns and to American citizens of undoubted loyalty and discretion who are cooperating in the work on this project.⁷⁶

In 1936, revised classification regulations brought the U.S. Army and Navy classification systems into some semblance of uniformity, which included marking restricted documents with the word “Restricted” at the top and bottom of each page.⁷⁷ As late as the publication of Executive Order (EO) 10290, issued in 1951, the classification “Restricted” was still in existence. Pursuant to EO 10290, restricted information was transmitted in “a sealed wrapper or envelope” and the pages were to be stamped or marked “Restricted.”⁷⁸

The Richard Reeve memorandum states on its face that it was obtained by the U.S. Army and Naval Technical Mission, Japan—a joint mission—and the letterhead on which the memorandum was typed refers to the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific).⁷⁹ The condition of the Reeve Memorandum is telling. The contents of the memorandum, “Restricted” notations at the top and bottom of the memorandum itself, and the marks suggesting that the memorandum had once been folded and stapled to the typescript all suggest that the document was intended to be handled with a considerable measure of secrecy. All of the foregoing supports the conclusion that, at some point, the Siemes report had been classified as a restricted document

which, pursuant to military regulations, would have curbed its handling and distribution.⁸⁰ Although there is no indication on the face of the Reeve Memorandum or Typescript 2 indicating that either document had ever been *declassified*, the fact that versions of the Siemes report were released to the press between September 19 and 20, 1945 (see following), suggests that, by those dates at least, some of the contents of the Siemes report might have been declassified.⁸¹

How a document labeled Restricted, with no indication on its face that it had been declassified, got into Hersey's hands is a mystery that might not be resolvable, although evidence exists that Hersey had at least one close connection to an individual associated with U.S. intelligence⁸²—a person who might have been able to facilitate Hersey's obtaining a copy of the restricted document.⁸³

Lingering Doubt Regarding Provenance of the Siemes Report

Although Liebow's diary entry asserts that he translated the Siemes report on September 27, 1945, there is lingering uncertainty regarding that date and other elements of the report, because between September 19 and September 20, 1945, news accounts, including quotations that appear to be taken from the Siemes report, appeared in mainstream newspapers distributed across the United States.⁸⁴ Perhaps Liebow misrecalled the date on which he translated the Siemes report, or perhaps there was another translation. There were certainly several variants of the Siemes narrative distributed widely to the public in the first year or so after the bombing of Hiroshima.

A number of newspaper articles published in 1945, for example, noted that Siemes had been "smoking an after-breakfast pipe at the mission in Nagatsuka and lazily looking out a window toward Hiroshima when disaster struck."⁸⁵ These details do not appear in either the Liebow translation or any of the many variants of Siemes's eyewitness report referenced herein. These "pipe-smoking" reports attributed authorship of the article using the phrase "By Father Siemes as Told to United Press."⁸⁶ As of this analysis, no sources establishing that Siemes was interviewed by a reporter from the United Press, beyond the attribution referenced above, have been identified.

Accounts regarding the discovery and distribution of the Siemes report also vary. For example, on March 22, 1946, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported that Major Gen. Arthur M. Harper of the 98th Infantry, Osaka, Japan, sent a copy of the Siemes report to the Rev. Celestin J. Steiner, SJ, President of Xavier University.⁸⁷ On May 19, 1946, the *Palm Beach Post-Times* reported that a copy of the Siemes account, "bearing the signature also of a U.S. Naval commander found its way to the *Post-Times* through Mr. and Mrs. E.N.

Castlen . . . to who [*sic*] it was sent by a son, Robert C. Castlen, who is with the UNRRA in China.”⁸⁸

War Times Journal, “a research centered website that covers all periods of military history and military science,”⁸⁹ archived on its website a version of the Siemes report titled, “The Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima, by Father Johannes Siemes.” Introductory remarks to this version of the Siemes report noted that Bishop Franklin Corley, a soldier who was part of the U.S. occupation and reportedly “one of the first American soldiers to enter the stricken city” of Hiroshima, encountered Father Siemes. According to the notes, Father Siemes gave Corley a typewritten copy of his report. Corley brought it back to the United States, “where it lay for fifty years.”⁹⁰

In his report, Siemes commented on suggestions that radiation from the bomb had lingering effects. Small but important differences exist between versions of his report in this regard. In Typescript 1, Siemes said, “[t]here thus seems to be some truth in the statement that the radiation had some effect on the blood.” But in *Jesuit Missions* he wrote, “[t]here cannot be any doubt but that the rays, whatever they were, had some effect on the blood.”⁹¹ Regarding allegations that the ruins of Hiroshima emitted dangerous rays, Typescript 1 quotes Siemes as follows:

[I]t was also noised about that the ruins of the city emitted deadly rays and that the central district would be uninhabitable for some time to come. I have my doubts as to whether such talk is true and myself and others who’d worked in the ruined area for some hours shortly after the explosions suffered no such ill effects.⁹²

Sometime after the bombing, U.S. occupational forces encountered Siemes, translated his report, and released a version (or versions) of it to the public. A newspaper article, appearing in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on November 22, 1945, reported that the Siemes eyewitness account “was made public for the first time last night as the highlight of an address by Major General Leslie R. Groves,” commander of the Manhattan Engineer District that developed the atomic bomb.⁹³ This was a bit of hyperbole on the part of either Groves or the reporter, as excerpts from the Siemes report had already been released by this date.

A version of the Siemes report titled *The Day the Bomb Fell*, which appeared in a 1983 pamphlet published by the Catholic Truth Society, noted as follows:

. . . the text of the talk given by Father Siemes to the crew of H.M.S. Tynne in March 1946, and taken down in shorthand by a ship’s writer. One of the crew, Robert J. Bloomfield, then a nineteen-year-old stores assistant and now a writer and journalist, kept a copy of Fr Siemes’s talk, and has made it available for publication.⁹⁴

For a time, Siemes became a subject of exaggerated and, in some cases, inaccurate media attention. For example, a television drama about Hiroshima presented a diminished vision of Siemes's character to the world. And on August 4, 1990, long after Siemes had died, two Australian articles, one published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and another in the *Age*, a Melbourne newspaper, mentioned (with no sourcing) that, four years after Hiroshima was bombed, Father Siemes "began to show signs of a manic-depressive illness that became more serious after 1958." The articles also noted, accurately, that Siemes died on Hiroshima Day (August 6) in 1983.⁹⁵

In 1990, NBC aired a made-for-network-television docudrama about the bombing of Hiroshima. Titled *Hiroshima: Out of the Ashes*, the movie featured the then sixty-one-year-old Max von Sydow in a surly portrayal of Father Siemes (who was thirty-eight years old on the day the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima).⁹⁶ The narrative arc of the movie—which, *Washington Post* staff writer Ken Ringle writes, was "[w]ritten, acted and directed with a restraint that makes it look positively alien on network television,"⁹⁷—included Siemes's purported evolution from a stern enforcer of doctrinal propriety before the bomb to an affectionate humanitarian after the bomb. As of the writing of this historical report, no evidence has been found that Siemes made such a transformation in real life. The screenwriter appears to have taken liberties with Siemes's life story, blurring the lines between fact and fiction.

Regardless of the path Siemes's narrative took as it made its way from real life to screen portrayal, versions of his Hiroshima account had circulated widely long before Hersey's "Hiroshima" was published in the *New Yorker*. The process of translating, transcribing, and distributing Siemes's own Hiroshima report might have altered some of the details, but the report's tone and tenor, as well as the events each version recounted, were similar. Hersey appears to have cherry-picked selected details from one or more of Siemes's reports and used them in his "Hiroshima" narrative.

The Siemes Report's Influence on Hersey's "Hiroshima" Narrative

It is undeniable that the Siemes report was a major source for Hersey's "Hiroshima" and that Siemes was himself an author and historian at the time Hersey became acquainted with the Siemes report(s).⁹⁸ A close reading of the Siemes report and "Hiroshima" reveals a multitude of shared details suggesting the degree to which Siemes's observations influenced Hersey's story. For example, both "Hiroshima" and the Siemes report describe Siemes and several Jesuit colleagues traveling from the Nagatsuka novitiate into the city of Hiroshima to rescue their Jesuit colleagues. Along the way Siemes and his companions encountered other bombing victims and saw firsthand the

condition of the city.⁹⁹

Most if not all versions of the Siemes report begin by describing “rumors” that “the enemy” (or “America”) had something special in mind for Hiroshima. “Up to August 6th, occasional bombs, which did no great damage, had fallen on Hiroshima. . . . There were fantastic rumors that the enemy had something special in mind for this city, but no one dreamed that the end would come in such a fashion as on the morning of August 6th.”¹⁰⁰ Hersey wrote that “a rumor was going around that the Americans were saving something special for the city.”¹⁰¹ Both Hersey and Siemes emphasized the time of the blast—although Siemes recorded that time as “approximately 8:14” while Hersey noted the time as “exactly fifteen minutes past eight.”¹⁰²

Siemes reported that the flash from the bomb resembled “the magnesium light used in photography”¹⁰³ and that “the whole valley was filled with a garish light, like a magnesium flash by a giant photographer.”¹⁰⁴ Hersey wrote that, according to one of his sources (not identified as Siemes), “the light of the bomb was reflected, like a gigantic photographic flash, in the corridor.”¹⁰⁵ Hersey also wrote that, according to Dr. Fugii, many of the people fleeing the city had horrible burns (likely flash burns from the explosion) even though few fires had started at the time.¹⁰⁶ Siemes also reported terrible burns on the procession of people he saw fleeing from the city.¹⁰⁷ Both Siemes and Hersey reported a strong wind or whirlwind in Asano Park, weather possibly generated by the fires that ultimately incinerated Hiroshima.¹⁰⁸

Of the many shared details, a noteworthy trio of incidents stands out. In both the Siemes report and in “Hiroshima,” a line of grotesquely injured soldiers supported themselves, on what both writers called “staves,” as they walked across the Misasa Bridge, while a group of severely burned horses stood on the bridge hanging their heads.¹⁰⁹ Both Hersey and Siemes also wrote about the mission secretary, Mr. Fukai, who refused to leave the burning city, evaded attempts by the priests to forcibly carry him to safety, and eventually ran back toward the conflagration, never to be seen again.¹¹⁰ A third shared incident involved a confrontation between the Jesuits and a group of Japanese soldiers who, hearing “a foreign language” being spoken among the priests, suspected that the clergymen were Americans.¹¹¹

Siemes and other priests from the novitiate on the outskirts of Hiroshima headed to the city to bring the Hiroshima-based mission priests, including Kleinsorge, to safety. Both Siemes (in his report) and Hersey (in “Hiroshima”) recounted the reunion of the two groups of priests in Asano Park as well as additional details about encounters the priests had with other bomb victims seeking shelter in the park.¹¹² Siemes mentioned an unnamed Japanese Protestant pastor who, with his boat, was the priests’ “succoring angel in this

difficult situation.”¹¹³ This unnamed pastor appears to have been the kindly “Reverend Mr. Tanimoto,” a main subject in Hersey’s “Hiroshima.”¹¹⁴

In a July 21, 1985, letter, Hersey answered the inquiries of Robert H. Donahugh, then director of the Public Library of Youngstown and Hahon- ing County, Ohio, regarding the inspiration for “Hiroshima.” Hersey wrote:

I arrived in Hiroshima in April, 1946, eight months after the bomb was dropped. I had earlier read an account of the bombing in a report to the Holy See by a Jesuit priest named Father Siemes, and my first move on arriving was to get in touch with the Jesuit mission in Hiroshima. There I met Father Kleinsorge, who spoke a smattering of English. He introduced me to Reverend Kiyoshi Tanimoto, whose English was good. And those two paved the way for my interviewing about thirty other people, from whose number I chose Mrs. Nakamura, Miss Sasaki and Drs. Sasaki and Fujii.¹¹⁵

In the same letter, Hersey mentioned the plot device already referenced— weaving the lives of a group of characters together—which he acknowledged he had borrowed from *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. Hersey noted that he chose the six Hiroshima survivors he used “so that their various fates would keep touching one on the other.”¹¹⁶ Hersey also remarked that he realized the six individuals he chose did not represent a cross section of Hiroshima—suggesting, however, that their experiences were “representative of all victims of the bombing.”¹¹⁷

Siemes did not figure personally in the “Hiroshima” narrative until the end of the story, but the nature of his eventual appearance suggests that Siemes’s words held great importance to Hersey, who adopted one of the priest’s phrases (in italics in the quote that follows) as a “calling card” of sorts when Hersey signed autographs.¹¹⁸

Father Kleinsorge and the other German Jesuit priests, who, as foreigners, could be expected to take a relatively detached view, often discussed the ethics of using the bomb. One of them, Father Siemes, who was out at Nagatsuka at the time of the attack, wrote in a report to the Holy See in Rome, “Some of us consider the bomb in the same category as poison gas and were against its use on a civilian population. Others were of the opinion that in total war, as carried on in Japan, there was no difference between civilians and soldiers, and that the bomb itself was an effective force tending to end the bloodshed, warning Japan to surrender and thus to avoid total destruction. It seems logical that he who supports total war in principle cannot complain of a war against civilians. *The crux of the matter is whether total war in its present form is justifiable, even when it serves a just purpose.* Does it not have material and spiritual evil as its consequences which far exceed whatever good might result? When will our moralists give us a clear answer to this question?”¹¹⁹

Two important accounts that appear in “Hiroshima” but not in the Siemes report are worth noting, as they are unforgettable and oft-repeated illustrations of the stark horror Hersey described. In the account’s segment three, titled “Details Are Being Investigated,”¹²⁰ Hersey described Father Kleinsorge’s interaction with a group of twenty soldiers in the underbrush of Asano Park. Here the voice appears to be Hersey’s and Hersey’s alone as he deviated from his prior restrained narrative style to report a horrific incident. In this incident, Kleinsorge offered water to the group of soldiers, only then noting that:

they were all in exactly the same nightmarish state: their faces were wholly burned, their eyesockets were hollow, the fluid from their melted eyes had run down their cheeks. (They must have had their faces upturned when the bomb went off; perhaps they were anti-aircraft personnel).¹²¹

Hersey recounted a second vivid scene in the same segment, another scene not in the Siemes report. It was an incident where Kiyoshi Tanimoto, Siemes’s “succoring angel,” attempted to assist a woman into a boat when the skin of her hand and arm sloughed off like a glove.¹²²

Why Did Siemes Not Play a Larger Role?

Siemes was clearly an important source for Hersey. Why, then, did Hersey not feature Siemes as one of his primary subjects? While it is difficult at this distance in space and time to determine with certainty why Hersey wrote what he did—especially as he was reluctant to be interviewed about his writing—a few factors might have swayed his decision to feature Kleinsorge, in spite of the fact that Kleinsorge spoke only “a smattering” of English while Siemes was a fluent speaker of English.¹²³ Hersey’s choices regarding what incidents to report and what language to use suggest that Hersey might have cherry-picked details from the Siemes report.

It appears that fairly quickly after the bombing of Hiroshima, the U.S. military identified Siemes as a possible source of information who might refute a few of the most troublesome, post-Hiroshima accusations the United States was facing. After the bombing, the U.S. occupation faced rumors of lingering “rays” in Hiroshima, as well as the possibility of a dread disease affecting Hiroshima victims who initially seemed to be in relatively good health.¹²⁴ Siemes noted in one version of his report that he did not believe there were any such lingering rays or diseases in Hiroshima, as he and other Jesuits who had not been in the city at the time of the bombing but had ventured into the city later appeared to suffer no ill effects.¹²⁵ Siemes noted in his *Jesuit Missions* article that there appeared to be “relatively little hatred toward the Allies on the part of the people themselves, although the press has taken

occasion to stir up such feelings.”¹²⁶ Lastly, Siemes suggested in his report that the poor nutritional health of the population in Japan, the lack of adequate medical care after the bomb, and the lack of will or ability of the Japanese to organize rescue efforts, all contributed to the high death rate in Hiroshima.¹²⁷

These statements by Siemes were seized upon by the U.S. military, circulated to the public, and used to convince critics that complaints by the Japanese that many deaths were due to the aftereffects of the bomb were merely “Japanese propaganda.”¹²⁸ The fact that Siemes was featured in two U.S. propaganda films might also have influenced Hersey’s decision not to feature Siemes more prominently. Kleinsorge, on the other hand, suffered the effects of the bomb. His hospitalization was noted in “Hiroshima.”¹²⁹

Hersey understandably used his author’s prerogative to feature those individuals who best illustrated his narrative about the bomb and the horror of surviving nuclear war. It is also possible that Hersey did not want to feature Siemes because the priest’s story and his reports had, by then, already been published in multiple venues.

Conclusions

The factors that shape an author’s craft are usually more complex than they appear at first glance and are often more nuanced than affectionate biographers might suggest. That is the crux of the matter here. This essay reflected upon that complexity, on the choices Hersey made in composing his “Hiroshima” narrative, on little-known historical facts that shed light on Hersey’s authorial process, and on the tortuous path the Siemes report took before it reached Hersey’s hands and was subsumed within the Hersey legacy.

While authors, even of nonfiction, have considerable latitude when deciding how to frame their characters and hone their storytelling, it was not unheard of for Hersey, who bounced between journalism and fiction over his lifetime as a writer, to assemble the parts and pieces of reality that best suited his story. Hersey chose to minimize Siemes’s role in the evolution of the “Hiroshima” narrative. One explanation for this might have been concern that the complex provenance of Siemes’s eyewitness report had the potential to taint the message of “Hiroshima” with allegations of government influence.

Hersey minimized Siemes’s role in shaping “Hiroshima,” even as he cannibalized portions of Siemes’s report(s)—including Siemes’s restrained diction. Hersey thus filtered many of the people and places in “Hiroshima” through Siemes’s eyes but did not acknowledge the extent of the priest’s influence until the conclusion of the story, a fact that is difficult to understand given the author’s widely disseminated statements regarding the influence of Thornton Wilder’s *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* on “Hiroshima.”

Hersey's "writing under the influence" stretched journalistic mores just as important as the mores Hersey defended vociferously in "The Legend on the License." Despite the issues raised herein, Hersey's "Hiroshima" remains a well-written, terrifying, and critical vision of the consequences of surviving a nuclear holocaust. Hersey's existential battle over whether to be a novelist or a journalist and the boundary-bending this battle entailed has had an impact on his legacy, however, notwithstanding the careful curation of Hersey's literary reputation and the publication of two twenty-first century biographical works that largely portray Hersey as a heroic figure.

Rather than engaging in heroic mythmaking, Hersey scholars and biographers might consider that, while Hersey was a writer of tremendous range—with gifts, privileges, connections, and accomplishments beyond those achieved by most people—he was also an author who struggled with the boundaries between nonfiction and fiction. For example, Hersey sometimes had difficulty discerning the border between the factual component of a story and the creative expressions of another writer. Siemes, a scholar and a writer in his own right, deserves to have his contribution to Hersey's "Hiroshima" recognized. In this, the seventy-seventh year since the bombing of Hiroshima, it behooves all scholars, careful students of history, as well as those interested in the global impact of the atomic bomb to read or re-read both Hersey's "Hiroshima" and Siemes's narrative about the devastating event the author-priest experienced personally.

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Notes

¹ “Hiroshima” refers specifically to the *New Yorker* article, published August 31, 1946, John Hersey’s classic account of the bombing of the city of Hiroshima. Alfred A. Knopf published the story in book form later that year. Titled and referenced herein as *Hiroshima*, the book was published in a new edition in 1985, with a final chapter written forty years after the bombing. Page references are to the 1968 and 1985 Knopf editions.

² Hertzberg, “John Hersey,” 111.

³ Shorto, “John Hersey, the Writer Who Let ‘Hiroshima’ Speak for Itself,” online.

⁴ Treglown, *Mr. Straight Arrow*; Blume, *Fallout: The Hiroshima Cover-Up*.

⁵ Sanders, *John Hersey*; Sanders, *John Hersey Revisited*.

⁶ Wolfe, *The New Journalism*, 3-52; Wolfe, “The Birth of ‘The New Journalism’”; Kerrane and Yagoda, *The Art of Fact*; Hartssock, *Literary Journalism and the Aesthetics of Experience*.

⁷ Weingarten, *The Gang That Wouldn’t Write Straight*, 24.

⁸ The Japanese term “*hibakusha*” or “person affected by the bomb,” is still used by Japan’s atomic bomb survivors. See “75 Years On, Abolition Pleas from the Last Generation of Hibakusha.”

⁹ Hersey, “Hiroshima,” 15–68.

¹⁰ Hersey, see cover art.

¹¹ Yagoda, *About Town*, 185–86.

¹² Yagoda, 186; Wilder, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*.

¹³ Wilder, 7.

¹⁴ Hersey, *Here to Stay*, viii; see Yavenditti, “John Hersey and the American Conscience,” 33n35.

¹⁵ Yagoda, *About Town*, 186–87.

¹⁶ Lemann, “The Art of Fact,” 68.

¹⁷ Lemann, 68.

¹⁸ Lemann, 68–69.

¹⁹ Hersey, “Thanks and a Dedication,” *Men on Bataan*, v–vi; Sanders, *John Hersey*, 23.

²⁰ Hersey, *A Bell for Adano*; Martin, “F. E. Toscani, 89, Dies,” 20.

²¹ Hersey, *The Marmot Drive*.

²² Hersey, *The Algiers Motel Incident*.

²³ Sanders, *John Hersey*, 23; Sanders, *John Hersey Revisited*, 2–5; Swanberg, “Borrowed Chronicles: William L. ‘Atomic Bill’ Laurence and the Reports of a Hiroshima Survivor,” 29–48.

²⁴ Sanders, *John Hersey Revisited*, 2.

²⁵ Bauman, “Rewrite Men Are Legends of Journalism History.”

²⁶ Fadiman, *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*, 109–111; Hersey, “Thanks and a Dedication,” *Men on Bataan*, v–vi.

²⁷ Hersey, “Department of Amplification,” 54; Honan, “Hersey Apologizes to a Writer Over an Article on Agee,” 1; Mehren, “John Hersey’s *New Yorker* Mea

Culpa,” F1; Fadiman, *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*, 109–11; Hersey, “Thanks and a Dedication,” v–vi.

²⁸ Honan, “Hersey Apologizes to a Writer Over an Article on Agee,” 1.

²⁹ Sanders, *John Hersey Revisited*, 5, 111n14.

³⁰ “\$250,000 Libel Suit Started by Army Officer against Author of ‘A Bell for Adano,’ Others,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1946, 27; “Echo of ‘Bell for Adano,’ Action against Author,” 1. As of the dates of these articles, Hersey had not been served with the lawsuit because he was in China. Lesley Blume writes that Hersey was apparently in China in spring 1946, preparing to head for Hiroshima. Blume, *Fallout: The Hiroshima Cover-Up*, 54–60. Hersey was not the only defendant in this suit. Several others involved with publishing the book, or producing a screenplay and movie based on the book, were also sued.

³¹ “\$250,000 Libel Suit,” 27; “Echo of ‘Bell for Adano,’ Action against Author,” 1.

³² Martin, “F. E. Toscani, 89, Dies,” 30. Court records and a *Michigan Law Review* article, however, indicate that the case against Hersey and several other defendants was dismissed on appeal. Price, “Torts: Right of Privacy: Invasion of Privacy through Fictional Works,” 1064–66; *Toscani v. Hersey* 271 App. Div. 445 (N.Y. App. Div. 1946).

³³ Hersey, “Joe Is Home Now,” 68.

³⁴ Hersey, “Strength from Without,” in *Here to Stay*, 107–108.

³⁵ Hersey, 107.

³⁶ Hersey, 107–108.

³⁷ Hersey, 107–108; Hersey, “A Short Talk with Erlinger,” in *Here to Stay*, 137–59.

³⁸ Hersey, “The Legend on the License,” 1–25.

³⁹ Hersey, 1.

⁴⁰ Hersey, 3.

⁴¹ Hersey, 1.

⁴² Hersey sent Toscani’s wife an inscribed, pre-publication copy of *A Bell for Adano*. She apparently became quite upset upon reading the fictionalized account of Joppolo’s involvement with an Italian woman. See “\$250,000 Libel Suit Started by Army Officer against Author of ‘A Bell for Adano,’ Others,” 27.

⁴³ Hersey, “The Legend on the License,” 2 (emphasis in original and added, as noted).

⁴⁴ Honan, “Hersey Apologizes to a Writer Over an Article on Agee,” 1.

⁴⁵ Johannes Siemes, *Hermann Roesler und die Einführung des Deutschen Staatsrechts in Japan* (Hermann Roesler and the introduction of German constitutional law in Japan); Johannes Siemes, “Hermann Roesler’s Commentaries on the Meiji Constitution” (1962): 1–66; Johannes Siemes, “Hermann Roesler und die Einführung des Deutschen Staatsrechts in Japan,” 181–96; Johannes Siemes, “Über Japans Verfassung” (*About Japan’s constitution*), 358–66; Johannes Siemes, “Hermann Roesler’s Commentaries on the Meiji Constitution” (1964): 37–65; Johannes Siemes, *Hermann Roesler and the Making of the Meiji State*; Johannes Siemes,

“Karl Marx im Urteil des sozialen Rechts. Zur ersten wissenschaftlichen Rezension von Marx ‘Das Kapital’ ” (Karl Marx in the judgment of social law: On the first scientific review of Marx’s ‘Das Kapital’), 376; Johannes Siemes, Review of *Nippon Seiji no Kijun* (Die Norm des Japanischen Staatslebens), by Yasuzō Suzuki, 269–71; Suzuki and Siemes, “Hermann Roesler und die Japanische Verfassung,” 428–53.

⁴⁶ Johannes Siemes, *Hermann Roesler and the Making of the Meiji State*, dust jacket, end flap.

⁴⁷ Siemes, dust jacket, end flap.

⁴⁸ Johannes Siemes, introduction to *Hermann Roesler and the Making of the Meiji State*, xi–xii.

⁴⁹ John B. [sic] Siemes, “Report from Hiroshima,” 30.

⁵⁰ John B. [sic] Siemes, 30–32.

⁵¹ John B. [sic] Siemes, 30–32; John A. Siemes, “The Atomic Age: Hiroshima Eyewitness,” 24–25, 40–44; John A. Siemes, “International: From Hiroshima,” 28; Johannes Siemes, “Hiroshima—August 6, 1945,” 2–6; John A. Siemes, “Appendix: Fathers Siemes’ Eyewitness Account.”

⁵² Lemann, “The Art of Fact,” 68. Ben Yagoda in *About Town* writes that Shawn said to Hersey in a cable, “NO ONE HAS EVEN TOUCHED [the Hiroshima story],” Yagoda, 186 (emphasis in the original).

⁵³ Brodie, “Radiation Secrecy and Censorship after Hiroshima and Nagasaki,” 842–64; Dickerson, “Atomic Legacies in Censored Print Newspapers and the Meaning of Nuclear War,” 9–27. After World War II ended, Japanese newspaper and radio outlets were suspended for a time. See, for example, “Jap Council to ‘Legalize’ MacArthur’s Orders,” *Neosho Daily News* (Neosho, MO), September 19, 1945, 1; Dickinson, “Mac Abolishes Jap HQ, Puts Censorship On,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel* (Knoxville, TN), September 10, 1945, 1; “Japanese Newspaper Suspended by Allies,” *Globe-Gazette* (Mason City, IA), December 26, 1945, 13; “Japanese Newspapers Are Suspended,” *Clovis News-Journal* (Clovis, NM), 6.

⁵⁴ John B. [sic] Siemes, “Report from Hiroshima,” 30–32; John A. Siemes, “The Atomic Age: Hiroshima Eyewitness,” 24–25, 40–44; John A. Siemes, “International: From Hiroshima,” 28; Johannes Siemes, “Hiroshima—August 6, 1945,” 2–6; John A. Siemes, “Appendix: Father Siemes’ Eyewitness Account.”

⁵⁵ John B. [sic] Siemes, “Report from Hiroshima,” 30–32.

⁵⁶ Johannes Siemes, *The Day the Bomb Fell, Hiroshima, 6 August 1945*.

⁵⁷ John B. [sic] Siemes, “Report from Hiroshima,” 30–32; P. [sic] Siemes, “Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima,” Typescript 1, MS Coll 28, Box 3, Folder 36, Siemes Manuscript, Averill A. Liebow Collection, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library, Yale University (Hereafter cited as P. [sic] Siemes, “Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima,” Typescript 1).

⁵⁸ John B. [sic] Siemes, “Report from Hiroshima,” 30–32; P. [sic] Siemes, “Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima,” Typescript 1; Hersey, “Hiroshima,” 15; see Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 2–6; Liebow, *Encounter with Disaster*, 82–83.

⁵⁹ Hersey, “Hiroshima,” 68; see also, Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 89–90.

⁶⁰ Laurence, *Dawn over Zero: The Story of the Atomic Bomb*; Laurence, *Men and Atoms*; see Swanberg, “Borrowed Chronicles,” 29–48.

⁶¹ U.S. Army Corps Pictorial Service, 1945, *The Atom Strikes!*; U.S. War Department, 1946, *Tale of Two Cities*, 1946.

⁶² P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima, Typescript 1; Liebow, *Encounter with Disaster*, 82–83.

⁶³ Liebow, 83.

⁶⁴ Liebow, 79–83, 82. "General Farrell" was likely General Thomas Farrell, Deputy Commanding General to Major General Leslie R. Groves, Jr., who assembled a team that investigated the Hiroshima aftermath. See Atomic Heritage Foundation, "Thomas Farrell." Groves appointed Stafford L. Warren Chief Medical Officer for the Manhattan Project. In September 1945, Warren traveled to Hiroshima to study the medical effects of the bomb. See Atomic Heritage Foundation, "Stafford L. Warren."

⁶⁵ Liebow, *Encounter with Disaster*, 82.

⁶⁶ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," "Typescript 1" is identified as the Siemes Manuscript in the Averill A. Liebow Collection, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library, Yale University.

⁶⁷ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima, Eyewitness Account of P. [sic] Siemes," "Typescript 2," YCAL MSS 707 Box 37, File 14, is in the John Hersey Papers, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter cited as "Typescript 2").

⁶⁸ John A. Siemes, "International: From Hiroshima," 28.

⁶⁹ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1; Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima, Eyewitness Account of P. [sic] Siemes." (The corrected proof of Typescript 1 is hereinafter designated "Typescript 2, and is, as noted in the preceding endnote, in the John Hersey Papers at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.)

⁷⁰ Richard Reeve, memorandum, December 6, 1945, YCAL MSS 707 Box 37, File 14, John Hersey Papers, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University. Interestingly, on the copy of the Reeve memo archived in the Beinecke Library there is a drawing of a hippopotamus, perhaps a doodle made by Hersey. Results of an internet search, using the keywords "Hersey" and "hippopotamus," included, as the top result, the online, *New Yorker* version of "Hiroshima," which contains an anecdote about a hippopotamus. See Hersey, "Hiroshima," online version. Perhaps the doodle was a reminder for Hersey to include the excerpt that follows, in "Hiroshima." This is, of course, pure speculation, but it is an amusing (and possibly accurate) interpretation of the doodle.

"At the Novitiate, the motherless Kataoka children were inconsolable. Father Cieslik worked hard to keep them distracted. He put riddles to them. He asked, 'What is the cleverest animal in the world?,' and after the thirteen-year-old girl had guessed the ape, the elephant, the horse, he said, 'No, it must be the hippopotamus,' because in Japanese that animal is *kaba*, the reverse of *baka*, stupid."

Hersey, "Hiroshima," 42; see also, Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 62.

⁷¹ Reeve, December 6, 1945.

⁷² Reeve, December 6, 1945.

⁷³ Quist, "Classification in the United States Prior to World War II," 27–31.

⁷⁴ Quist, 28.

⁷⁵ Quist, 29–31.

⁷⁶ Quist, 30.

⁷⁷ Quist, 31–33.

⁷⁸ Executive Order No. 10,290.

⁷⁹ Reeve, memorandum, December 6, 1945.

⁸⁰ See notes 74–77.

⁸¹ Reeve, memorandum, December 6, 1945.

⁸² Hersey's oldest brother, Arthur Baird Hersey, a Federal Reserve economist, served in the OSS (the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the CIA) during World War II. He also worked briefly in Japan after the war. "Arthur B. Hersey," *Washington Post* [Obituaries], not dated; Personnel Files of the Office of Strategic Services, Arthur B. Hershey [*sic*], National Archives Identifier: 2175580, Container Identifier: 330 HMS Entry Numbers A1 224; "Alphabetical Listing of Members: [A–L]," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 40, no. 232, Part 2: 587. John Hersey also wrote in his May 6, 1946, dispatch to the *New Yorker* of his rather chummy relationships with U.S. intelligence officers. Hersey, "Letter from Peiping," 88–89. While these relationships are not proof that Hersey used his connections to access Hiroshima and/or restricted military documents, it provides tantalizing circumstantial evidence that Hersey's privileged access to Hiroshima might not have been merely a matter of luck.

⁸³ For additional information about classification and declassification of government materials during the relevant period. See Quist, *Security Classification of Information*, vols. 1 and 2; Wellerstein, *Restricted Data*, 2021; Executive Order 10290; 16, no. 188, Federal Register (September 27, 1951).

⁸⁴ "Severe Hurricane Hit Hiroshima after Bombing, Priest Reveals," *Journal Times* (Racine, WI), September 19, 1945, 2; "Hundred Die in Hurricane Caused by First A-Bomb," *Dayton Herald* (Dayton, OH), September 19, 1945, 22; "Windstorm, Probably Caused by Explosion, Hurlled Many into Rivers; Jesuit Found Center of City Razed; Rising Waters Drown Helpless," *Courier-Post* (Camden, NJ), September 19, 1945, 3; United Press, "Eye-Witness Says Atomic Bomb Caused Hurricane," *Neosho Daily Democrat* (Neosho, MO), September 19, 1945, 1; "Jesuit Missionary Was Nearby as Atomic Bomb Destroyed City," *Hanford Sentinel* (Hanford, CA), September 19, 1945, 7; "Jesuit Missionary Describes First Atomic Bomb Explosion," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), September 19, 1945, 1; "Hurricane Caused by Hiroshima Bombing," *Sheboygan Press* (Sheboygan, WI), September 20, 1945, 6; "Gale Followed Atomic Blast at Hiroshima," *Gazette* (Cedar Rapids, IA), September 20, 1945, 2; "Hurricane Hit Hiroshima after Atomic Bomb Fell, Eyewitness Priest Says," *Nevada State Journal* (Reno, NV), September 20, 1945, 7; "Jesuit Father Sees Blast at Hiroshima," *Santa Cruz Sentinel* (Santa Cruz, CA), September 21, 1945, 12.

⁸⁵ "Severe Hurricane Hit Hiroshima after Bombing, Priest Reveals," *Journal Times* (Racine, WI), September 19, 1945, 2; "Hurricane Hit Hiroshima after

Atomic Bomb Fell, Eyewitness Priest Says," *Nevada State Journal* (Reno, NV), September 20, 1945, 7; "Hurricane Following A-Bomb Blast Killed Many in Nagatsuka District," *Courier-Post* (Camden, NJ), September 19, 1945, 3; "Jesus Missionary Describes First Atomic Bomb Explosion," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), September 19, 1945, 1; "Jesus Missionary Was Nearby as Atomic Bomb Destroyed City," *Hanford Sentinel* (Hanford, CA), September 19, 1945, 7.

⁸⁶ See articles referenced in note 84.

⁸⁷ "Garish Light, Loud Explosion Filled Valley as Bomb Erased Hiroshima, Witness Says," *Cincinnati (Ohio) Enquirer*, March 22, 1946, 16.

⁸⁸ Pfister, "Jesus Priest Tells of Stricken Jap City of Hiroshima after Atom Bomb Blast," *Palm Beach Post-Times* (West Palm Beach, FL), May 19, 1946, 24.

⁸⁹ *War Times Journal*, <http://www.wtj.com>.

⁹⁰ Johannes Siemes, "The Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima, by Father Johannes Siemes," para. 1, 2.

⁹¹ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 11 (unpaginated); John B. [sic] Siemes, "Report from Hiroshima," 32.

⁹² P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 11 (unpaginated).

⁹³ "Hiroshima Japs Got Doom Omen," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 22, 1945, 4, 14; P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1.

⁹⁴ Johannes Siemes, *The Day the Bomb Fell, Hiroshima, 6 August 1945*.

⁹⁵ "God's Witness to the Atomic Apocalypse," *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 4, 1990, 45; "Atomic Dawn," *Age* (Melbourne), August 4, 1990, 176.

⁹⁶ Goodman, "Review/Television: Aftermath of the Hiroshima Bomb," C14; Johannes Siemes, *Hermann Roesler and the Making of the Meiji State*.

⁹⁷ Ringle, "NBC's 'Hiroshima': Horror without Hype," B1.

⁹⁸ Liebow, *Encounter with Disaster*, 82–83; Hersey, "Hiroshima," 67; Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 117–18.

⁹⁹ Hersey, "Hiroshima," 25–26; Hersey, *Hiroshima*, 43–48; John B. [sic] Siemes, "Report from Hiroshima," 31–32; P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, pages 4–7 (unpaginated).

¹⁰⁰ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 1 (unpaginated); John B. [sic] Siemes, "Report from Hiroshima," 30. See published versions of the Siemes report referenced in note 53.

¹⁰¹ Hersey, "Hiroshima," 15; *Hiroshima*, 5.

¹⁰² P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 1 (unpaginated); Hersey, "Hiroshima," 15; *Hiroshima*, 3.

¹⁰³ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 1 (unpaginated).

¹⁰⁴ John B. [sic] Siemes, "Report from Hiroshima," 30.

¹⁰⁵ Hersey, "Hiroshima," 19; *Hiroshima*, 20.

¹⁰⁶ Hersey, "Hiroshima," 21; *Hiroshima*, 32.

¹⁰⁷ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 2 (unpaginated); John B. [sic] Siemes, "Report from Hiroshima," 30.

- ¹⁰⁸ Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 4 (unpaginated); Hersey, "Hiroshima," 25; *Hiroshima*, 47, 52.
- ¹⁰⁹ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 4 (unpaginated); Hersey, "Hiroshima," 26; *Hiroshima*, 57–58.
- ¹¹⁰ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 5 (unpaginated); Hersey, "Hiroshima," 23, 39; *Hiroshima*, 39, 73.
- ¹¹¹ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 6 (unpaginated); Hersey, "Hiroshima," 30; *Hiroshima*, 63.
- ¹¹² P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 4–5 (unpaginated); Hersey, "Hiroshima," 24–25; *Hiroshima*, 47–48.
- ¹¹³ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 6 (unpaginated).
- ¹¹⁴ Hersey, "Hiroshima," 15, 23; *Hiroshima*, 4, 24.
- ¹¹⁵ July 15, 1985, letter (on library letterhead) from Robert H. Donahugh, director of the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County, to "Mr. John Hersey, 420 Humphrey Street, New Haven, Connecticut, 06511," and copy of July 21, 1985, response from John Hersey to Mr. Donahugh, YCAL MSS 707 Box 63, John Hersey Papers, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- ¹¹⁶ Copy of July 21, 1985, response from John Hersey to Mr. Donahugh.
- ¹¹⁷ Copy of July 21, 1985, response from John Hersey.
- ¹¹⁸ Montini, "'Hiroshima': Hersey's Bombshell," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, AZ), March 25, 1993, 18; Montini, "The Bomb: We Are All 'Hibakusha,'" *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, AZ), August 6, 1995, 8; Swanberg, "Crux of the Matter: Renewing an Acquaintance with John Hersey," 175–78.
- ¹¹⁹ Hersey, "Hiroshima," 68; *Hiroshima*, 117–18 (emphasis added).
- ¹²⁰ Hersey, "Hiroshima," 26–44; *Hiroshima*, 56–86. Segment subtitles that appear in the original *New Yorker* article are omitted from the online version.
- ¹²¹ Hersey, "Hiroshima," 33; *Hiroshima*, 68.
- ¹²² Hersey, "Hiroshima," 28; *Hiroshima*, 60.
- ¹²³ U.S. Army Corps Pictorial Service, 1945, *The Atom Strikes!*; U.S. War Department, 1946, *Tale of Two Cities*.
- ¹²⁴ Laurence, "U.S. Bomb Site Belies Tokyo Tales," *New York Times*, September 12, 1945, 1, 4; Burchett, "The Atomic Plague," 1–5.
- ¹²⁵ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 11 (unpaginated); John B. [sic] Siemes, "Report from Hiroshima," 30–32.
- ¹²⁶ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 11 (unpaginated); John B. [sic] Siemes, "Report from Hiroshima," 30–32.
- ¹²⁷ P. [sic] Siemes, "Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima," Typescript 1, page 3–4, 11 (unpaginated); John B. [sic] Siemes, "Report from Hiroshima," 30–32.
- ¹²⁸ Laurence, "U.S. Bomb Site Belies Tokyo Tales," *New York Times*, September 12, 1945, 1, 4.
- ¹²⁹ Hersey, "Hiroshima," 52–54; *Hiroshima*, 97–99.

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