

Chapter 3

The True-Based Narrative: An Analysis on John Hersey's *Hiroshima*

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ABSTRACT

In 1946, John Hersey, an employee of The New Yorker magazine, proposed the reality of the bomb that was thrown into Hiroshima for the agenda, and interviewed six coincidental survivors in the area and published the records within the frame of a truth-based narrative form. This work, which may be considered as a product of 'literary journalism' or a reflection of 'transmedia' or a 'cross-media', is a true-based narrative in which six survivors' dramatic lives are constructed and embedded successfully. The study aims to describe and analyze the narrative structures in which the author tries to influence people in Hiroshima book, and the relationship between these structures will be tried to be revealed through narrative analysis, and a certain contribution to the narrative literature is targeted as well.

INTRODUCTION

One of the indescribable sufferings that had been written to world history with tears was at around 8 am on 6 August 1945. The world was conceived by the most dramatic scenes of the century. (The Spirit of Hiroshima, 1999, p. 34)

The reason for this pregnancy was the disposal of the atomic bomb. On the morning of 7 December 1941, Seven months before the bomb was thrown, six airships, some armoured and small ships, and 12 battleships were destroyed at the Pearl Harbor in the USA. The Pearl Harbor Raid commanded by Japanese Admiral Nagumo. As a result of this raid, the USA broke its neutrality in the war by declaring war on Japan. Thus, on the morning of 6 August 1945, the USA dropped atomic bombs on Japan. In 1995, ABC Channel started a discussion about Hiroshima; Who decided to throw an atomic bomb on

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Hiroshima and why was it dropped onto Hiroshima? The discussion began with the following sentence of president Harry S. Truman, “I made the only decision I ever knew how to make. I did what I thought was right.” In the same documentary, the young lady says: “Mr President, why did you drop the atom bomb?” “My chief purpose was to end the war in victory with the least possible loss of American lives. I never had any qualms about using an instrument that finally ended the war in which we would have had 250,000 to 300,000 of our youngsters killed and 700,000 of them maimed. I made the only decision I ever knew how to make. I did what I thought was right.”

Hiroshima, written by John Hersey, author of “A Bell for Adano”, was first published by The New Yorker magazine on 31 August 1946. John Hersey, who was sent to Hiroshima by the magazine to report the incident in May 1946, wrote the first narrative about the effects of the atomic bomb dropped by the USA on Monday, 6 August 1945 on people living in Hiroshima. (Hersey, Hiroşima, 2017, pp. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) The Book Hiroshima is a true-based narrative constructed through 6 tellers and interviews held with them by chance. Tellers are Ms Taşiko Sasaki, Dr Masakazu Fujii, Ms Hatsuyo Nakamura, Priest Wilhelm Kleinsorge, Dr Terufumi Sasaki and Mr Kiyoshi Tanimoto. The interview begins with the illustrations what Terufumi Sasaki and Mr Kiyoshi Tanimoto witnessed and what happened when the atomic bomb exploded on Hiroshima. “Hiroshima” was published in The New Yorker on 31 August 1946 under the following headings; I- A Noiseless Flash, II- The Fire, III- Details Are Being Investigated, IV- Panic Grass and Feverfew, and there is another section under the title Panic Grass and Feverfew, called M. Fujii M.D Medical & Venereal. In this episode, Hersey explains the tragic traces left by the ‘historical’ drama dealt with throughout the narrative to six people, and ends the narrative with their reactions about the atomic bomb and war by stating the final situation of these six people. According to the information obtained, John Hersey prepared the fifth episode, which he wrote forty years after the incident. This section referred to the sources as ‘The Aftermath’, falls outside the limitations of the study’ “A true-based narrative: A narrative analysis on the book ‘Hiroshima’ by John Hersey, the New Yorker’s journalist.” (Editors, 2003)

Hiroshima, an example of True-Based Narrative, which was initially planned to be serialised and consists of 30,000 words, was published in one time to cover the entire magazine and all copies were sold out within a few hours. Albert Einstein bought 1,000 copies. Also, many magazines such as the New York Tribune, Washington Post, Chicago Sun, and Boston Globe have demanded copyrights to serialise true-based narrative named Hiroshima. Besides, this narration, written by the reporter of American Broadcasting Company, John Hersey, was read on the radio in four parts. Additionally, the narration was requested to be played on the theatre stage. The BBC Third Program, which aired on 29 September 1946, received permission to publish the true-based narrative of John Hersey as a four-part story. Penguin Books requested copyright from Alfred A. Knopf to distribute the book, Hiroshima, which was turned into a book. (Hersey, Hiroşima, 2017, pp. 8, 9). The picture we show shows that John Hersey deals with the truth-based narrative roots he deals with, a sociological approach to the destruction of war, with a foot that feeds on facts, returns to history with one foot (Lemann, 2019) As a narrative that keeps up to date, it has been demanded to be adapted to many channels other than its own, and transformation is a relatively accomplished narrative. From this point of view, this true-based narrative (Hiroshima), which was adapted to various media environments without losing time to benefit from the sensational state of the atomic bomb and Hiroshima, which was used as a transmedia example, was used to earn more money.

It is no coincidence that such a tremendous historical reality turns into a narrative, just as Homeros did in his time. This text, which can be read as a historical narrative in a way, also has a dramatic structure that includes an event, people, place and time. It was seen that this narrative should be a narrative

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