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Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Bienati Luisa

Assistant supervisor

Ch. Prof. Bayard-Sakai Anne

Graduand

De Pieri Veronica

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Tell me, somebody tell me, please tell me
声にならない言葉でも

Tell me, somebody tell me, please tell me
Even the words which do not become voice

hide, *Tell me*, Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 1994

Alguien dijo que el olvido está lleno de memoria.

Somebody said that oblivion is full of memory.

Mario Benedetti, Ediciones la Cueva, Buenos Aires, 2003

Note

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	p. 5
CHAPTER 1: The explosion of the phenomenon of the <i>net-poetry</i> : Wagō Ryōichi	p. 14
CHAPTER 2: The spirit of the nuclear power plant: Genyū Sōkyū.....	p. 51
CHAPTER 3: On the wave of narrative: Abe Kazushige.....	p. 74
CHAPTER 4: The 3.11 yarn: Kawakami Mieko.....	p. 86
CHAPTER 5: Fukushima...Mon Amour: Takahashi Genichirō.....	p. 100
Conclusion.....	p. 124
References.....	p. 132

Introduction

For its double essence of natural disaster and nuclear catastrophe, the Japanese 3.11 has been stirring up the public opinion since the early months after March 2011. Experts in the field of nuclear energy as well as seismologists were asked to make their contribution to the critical debate to tackle the crisis, thereby catalysing international attention on Japan. This actually helped in transforming a national state of emergency into a global concern. The whole Japanese population has mobilized in this sense:¹ mindful of the atomic past of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japanese people felt the urge to come out against the nuclear energy at the service of civic purposes - what is usually called “peaceful usage” of nuclear power.² The main argument was the protest against the quality of “safety” (*anzensei* 安全性) improperly attributed to the nuclear reactors during the promotional campaign started soon after WWII.

This is the backdrop to the call into action of writers and poets to contribute to the post-3.11 scenery with their literary production. The Japanese authorial figure is accustomed to answering the public demand for official statements and to take a stance towards social and political matters: no wonder that authors were highly encouraged to express their opinions even about the 3.11 crisis. In addition to this popular plea, the personal commitment of authors to become the spokesperson of Touhoku *Daishinsai*³ victims and to manifest - clearly or not - their viewpoints about the nuclear debate, has to be remarked too.

Ōe Kenzaburō’s *The New Yorker*’s article⁴ - the first to underline the double nature of the 3.11 and its relation to the atomic bombings - as well as Murakami Haruki’s Catalunya discourse⁵ -

¹ Among others, I should address the *Sayōnara Genpatsu Issenmannin Akushon* (さようなら原発1000万人アクション) whose anti-nuclear campaign gathered more than sixty thousands people on September, 19, 2011. Many public figures belong to this organization, among them the writers Ōe Kenzaburō and Murakami Haruki are to mention. More information on the official website: <http://sayonara-nukes.org>, 2016/2/12.

² *heiwa no tame no genshiryoku* 平和のための原子力 or *kaku no heiwa riyō* 核の平和利用 usually translated in English as “atoms for peace”.

³ Scientifically known as *Touhoku chihō taiheiyō oki jishin* 東北地方太平洋沖地震 (literally: “Earthquake off the Pacific Touhoku coasts”); the earthquake is often referred to as *Higashi Nihon Daishinsai* 東日本大震災 or simply *Daishinsai* 大震災.

⁴ Ōe, Kenzaburō, “History Repeats” in *The New Yorker*, March 28, 2011 issue.

⁵ Murakami, Haruki, “Speaking as an Unrealistic Dreamer” in *The Asia-Pacific Journal Vol 9*, Issue 29 No 7, July 18, 2011, pp. 1-8.

which suggests the Buddhist concept of *mujō* as a possible source for Japanese *ganbarism*⁶ - are both contributions that refer to the same literary effort. The prompt literary response breathed life to a lively, pressing production, born from the debris of the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, which also represents the main *leitmotif* of the literary publications soon after March 2011.

Among this huge amount of literary works, it should not be ignored the influential authorial response in the Japanese main literary reviews: *Gunzō*, *Chūōkōron*, *Bungeishunjū*, *Shinchō*, *Subaru* are just a few of the leading magazines that devoted entire issues to the topic of earthquake, tsunamis and nuclear energy, often by carrying outstanding comparisons with past catastrophic events in Japan. Some of these authorial productions were then properly printed in two literary collections which are worthy to mention because they represent a source for the first poetical, fictional and nonfictional approaches to the 3.11 catastrophe. I am referring to *Sore demo sangatsu wa, mata* 『それでも三月は、また』 (Kōdansha, 2012) and *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”*, 『震災とフィクションの「距離」』 (Waseda bungakukai, 2012). Notwithstanding, authorial individual publications cannot be dismissed too; this production has been increasingly flourishing during the past years, thus testifying the relevant influence the 3.11 had on Japanese contemporary literature.⁷

This research aims to explore how the testimony of the 3.11 is performed by Japanese authors soon after 11 March. The intention was not to propose a superficial review of the overwhelming number of publications on the theme - which would have resulted in an anthology-like study - but rather a deeper and intense exploration of different literary genres (poetry, fiction and nonfiction) and literary devices adopted by the authors to represent the 3.11 catastrophe. The ultimate choice was to focus the attention on only five case studies, each of which aims to emphasize particular characteristics able to transform these literary works into testimonies of 11 March and to label their authors as witnesses of the 3.11.

Actually, this study sheds light on the sensitive relation between literature and the testimonial product through the analysis of different authors who breathe life into diversified testimonial forms, discussed deeply in the following chapters: Wagō Ryōichi, Genyū Sōkyū, Abe Kazushige,

⁶ Gebhardt, Lisette, Yūki, Masami, *Literature and Art after Fukushima. Four Approaches*, Berlin, EB-Verlag, 2014, p. 13.

⁷ Suffice it to mention that one of the most popular Bookshop in Japan, Kinokuniya, devoted a section of its official website only to the publications on the 3.11 topic, which are actually divided into different categories (literature, economics, politics, reconstruction, etc). More information are available at the following link: <http://www.kinokuniya.co.jp/03f/bwp/catalog/book/shinsai/bungaku.htm>, 2016/2/2.

Kawakami Mieko and Takahashi Genichirō provide the opportunity to move literary - and geographically - through post-3.11 Japan. All the literary works are lumped together by the *fil rouge* of testimony which connects, in a final analysis, Fukushima and Hiroshima underlining the common denominator of cities exposed to nuclear radiation. Along these lines, not only the works by Tachibana Reiko but also the research by John Whittier Treat represented a fundamental source for this literary analysis as far as these critical works helped in recognizing analogies between atomic-bomb literature and post-Fukushima literary responses here analysed.⁸

The multidisciplinary of the subject in question is developed first of all by exploring the literary text in all its features according to the vision of the interpretative semiotic developed by Umberto Eco and his followers - Cesare Segre in primis.⁹ On the one hand the literary text is analyzed for its epistemic and ontological significance; on the other hand its reception assumes a fundamental role. A first look at the literary expedients adopted by each author provides evidence of the aesthetic value as literary work, eventually contributing to the ethical debate around the acceptability of a literary text on the theme of catastrophe, disaster and traumatic experiences. The famous statement by Theodor W. Adorno “Nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch”¹⁰ still resounds as a provocative message towards the lawfulness of fictional productions on a catastrophic event and its aftermath as well as its effects on the traumatised victims. In this perspective the Japanese literary sub-genre known as *genbaku bungaku* 原爆文学 and briefly mentioned before in its English translation - namely, the “atomic bomb literature” - represents the record of literary texts firstly refused by the Japanese establishment and by *hibakusha*¹¹ themselves sounding a critical note for the literary value of the fictitious (read: not truthful) testimonial accounts.

As concerning the background study at the basis of this research, I might spend a few words to introduce the critical works already published about the post-3.11 literature which actually were at the core of this study. At this point, I limit myself to introducing some considerations concerning the

⁸ Tachibana, Reiko, *Narrative As Counter-Memory: A Half-Century of Postwar Writing in Germany and Japan*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1998. Treat, John Whittier, *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995.

⁹ Among the main sources: Eco, Umberto, *Sei passeggiate nei boschi narrativi*, Milano, Euroclub Italia S.p.A, 1995. Eco, Umberto, *Lector in Fabula. La cooperazione interpretativa nei testi narrativi*, Milano, Bompiani, 2016. Segre, Cesare, *Avviamento all'analisi del testo letterario*, Torino, Einaudi, 1985.

¹⁰ translated as: “Writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”. Adorno, Theodor, *Prismen. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*, Berlin, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955, p. 30.

¹¹ 被爆者 (victims exposed to atomic bombings).

nomenclature of this literary sub-genre by identifying the literary topics and comparing the definitions the critics have been attributing to this literary production until now.¹²

The first work of literary criticism about the 3.11 topic was published by Kimura Saeko and it is entitled *Shinsaigo bungaku ron. Atarashii nihon bungaku no tame ni* 『震災後文学論。新しい日本文化のために』 (“A theory of the literature of the post-catastrophe. For a new Japanese Literature”, 2013). Even though by the definition of *shinsaigo bungaku* Kimura successfully addressed post-*Daishinsai* literary production, this solution seems not adequate to describe the three-fold catastrophe of 11 March as a whole, since the term *shinsai* 震災 often translated as “disaster” implies a seismic event; as noticed before anyway, the 3.11 represents a double-nature crisis that involved human mismanagement at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant too. Moreover, this term refers to the whole production published after 11 March 2011 as the Japanese appellation *shinsaigo* points out, without making difference between works based - or not - on the 3.11 keyword. For the same reason, even the choice of *Daishinsai bungaku* 「大震災文学」 (“literature of the Daishinsai”) adopted by Kobayashi Takayoshi in 2016¹³ seems incomplete to describe the 3.11-related literature because of lack in any reference to the Fukushima nuclear meltdown, although to the critic goes the merit to have distinguished the sub-genre *hangenpatsu bungaku* 「反原発文学」 (“anti-nuclear power plant literature”). For analogous reasons, even the term *shinsairoku* 「震災録」 (“recordings of the *shinsai*”) advanced by Shimura Kunihiro at the end of his *Daishinsai no kiroku to bungaku* 『大震災の記録と文学』 (“The recording of the Daishinsai and literature”, 2011)¹⁴ is not accurate because even though this label can fit quite perfectly a collection of historical accounts on a catastrophic event with seismic origins, in the case of 11 March it does not translate the three-fold quality of the *Daishinsai*.

In this light the label *shinsai-jinsai bungaku* 震災・人災文学 is thought as more appropriated to translate the English “literature of the catastrophe”. A variation could be *saigai bungaku* 「災害文学」 (literally: “literature of the disaster, calamity”) but its meaning is too close to identify a nature-

¹² Please note that any further inspirations from these sources are then properly developed in the following chapters.

¹³ 小林孝吉、『原発と原爆の文学—ポスト・フクシマの希望』、東京、菁柿堂、2016年。Kobayashi, Takayoshi, *Genpatsu to genbaku no bungaku - post Fukushima no kibō*, Tōkyō, Seishidō, 2016.

¹⁴ 志村有弘、『大震災の記録と文学』、東京、勉誠出版、2011年。Shimura, Kunihiro, *Daishinsai no kiroku to bungaku*, Tōkyō, Bensei shuppan, 2011, p. 248.

related event than a man-made accident. Following this approach, even the German term *Traumaliteratur* addressed by Lisette Gebhardt - usually transposed in English as “trauma narrative”¹⁵ - appears arguable, as far as its meaning refers to a literary production on trauma as the result of any act of violence, including rapes, abuses, discrimination and so on. This general definition does not require any natural or man-related catastrophe to happen but rather it perceives violence as catastrophic in itself.

As a matter of interest, it should be noted that another term implied to define this literary production is “clinical testimony” which actually includes other forms of artistic representations such as “video testimony”.¹⁶ Anyway the focus of this study is not on the literature produced by the “clinical testimony” as a whole - which may include notes of the psychoanalytic sessions too, for instance - but only on the transpositions into narrative or poetry of individual and collective trauma - such in case of 11 March 2011 - to reconstruct the self-identity of the narrator/author/victim as well as the one of the reader/receiver/victim.

For these reasons the *shinsai-jinsai bungaku* can be considered a possible translation for the “literature of the catastrophe” as part of the literary canon, while the literary responses to the 3.11 disaster can be addressed simply as the “3.11 literature” - the *3.11 bungaku* 「3.11文学」 in Japanese.¹⁷ Likewise, the term *Fukushima bungaku* 「フクシマ文学」 suits perfectly those literary works focused mainly on the Fukushima nuclear meltdown; in this sense the use of katakana emulates Hiroshima and Nagasaki as cities exposed to the nuclear radiation. At this point, Suzuki Akira’s solution to combine both *genbaku* (“atomic bomb”) and *Fukushima bungaku* under the label *kaku bungaku* 「核文学」 (“nuclear literature”) is worth to mention too, by adding that this epitome can well define any literary responses whose subject concerns a nuclear accident, like Chernobyl testimonies.¹⁸ Anyway, both *genbaku bungaku* and *Fukushima bungaku* - as well as the

¹⁵ Gebhardt, Lisette, speech for *Die Verarbeitung von Katastrophen und Traumata in Literatur und fiktionalen Medienproduktionen* Conference in Vienna, 26-28 September, 2016. Outlines available at <https://uni-frankfurt1.academia.edu/LisetteGebhardt>, 2016/2/12. The term finds an English translation in “post-traumatic literature”.

¹⁶ Weine, Stevan, *Testimony After Catastrophe. Narrating the Traumas of Political Violence*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2006, p. xvi-xvii.

¹⁷ I prefer the label “3.11 literature” instead of the “3.11 narrative” because the latter is at risk of being associated only with works of prose, while the “3.11 discourse” implies a broader meaning of social, political and even scientific debates which goes beyond the literary field. I should thank a thought-provoking conference on the theme of the post-3.11 literature held at Pembroke College in Oxford on June, 1st, 2017, for these considerations.

¹⁸ 鈴木武、『文学に描かれた大震災—鎮魂と希求』、東京、青柿堂、2016年。Suzuki, Akira, *Bungaku ni egakareta daishinsai - chinkon to kibō*, Tōkyō, Seishidō, 2016.

broader the *3.11 bungaku* - are to be considered as part of the *shinsai-jinsai bungaku* genre, in other words, the Japanese translation of the “literature of the catastrophe”.

This wide disclaimer regarding the *3.11 bungaku* led this research to focus only on the so-called *3.11 bungaku*. Actually, according to the semantic debate here briefly exposed, the post-3.11 literature and the *3.11 bungaku*'s definitions do not match at all: the first term tends to identify the literary production born after 11 March 2011 as a whole; the latter considers the 3.11 as a keyword, the main topic at the basis of the literary texts in question. Hence, this study focuses only on the literature that can be addressed as the *3.11 bungaku*. To distinguish the terminology the critics adopted was helpful in defining the topic of this study and at the same time it shone light to the approaches adopted by different critics towards the literary production after 11 March 2011.

Last but not least, since this study explores the relation between literature and testimony, a general definition of “testimony” is necessary in order to define to which extent the literary texts here analyzed can be considered as part of the testimonial archive of the 3.11. According to the Oxford Dictionary “testimony” is “a formal written or spoken statement, especially one given in a court of law.”¹⁹ The same dictionary explains that as a mass noun, “testimony” is a synonym of “evidence or proof of something”. To complete this semantic framework, it should be noted that “a public recounting of a religious conversion or experience” can be acknowledged as “testimony” too. Moreover, as an archaism, this word is attributed to “a solemn protest or declaration.” All in all, what is more significant for this research is the general meaning of “testimony” recognized by the dictionary in “a formal written or spoken statement” which finds its origins in the Latin “testimonium”, from *testis* “a witness”. Generally speaking, the testimony is then a formal declaration realized by a witness; in the case of a written testimony we are confronted with a kind of production described as “witness narratives” by Laub and Auerhahn.²⁰ This is the case of any testimonial accounts that help listeners to get in touch - when understanding is impossible - with the horrific experience in question.

What lacks in this definition is any mention of the role that the past assumes in relation to testimony. If we have to remain faithful to the Oxford Dictionary's definition, we are inclined to

¹⁹ Please note that this definition is the same reported by the Cambridge Dictionary. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary reports a slight different definition which actually represents a variation of the full Oxford's one: “testimony : a) solemn declaration usually made orally by a witness under oath in response to interrogation by a lawyer or authorized public official; b) firsthand authentication of a fact (evidence); c) an outward sign; [...] an open acknowledgment [or] a public profession of religious experience.” These dictionaries were chosen among others because they were evaluated as the best three English dictionaries according to the site goodreads.com, 2018/2/9.

²⁰ Laub, Dori, Auerhahn, Nanette C., “Knowing and not Knowing Massive Psychic Trauma: Forms of Traumatic Memory” in *The International Journal of Pshkychoanalysis*, no. 74, 1993, p. 297.

think that any words that come out of a human's mouth must be considered as testimony. However, it is not so. We have no difficulty to associate "testimony" to the assertion expressed in a court of law, but we are not used to apply this label to any common - although formal - statement, unless it is related to historical facts; in other words, any discourse whose contents focus on the evidence or proof of past events. In this perspective "past" represents the keyword to acknowledge - and then to interpret - testimony.

Following this approach it goes without saying that testimony is connected to memory, meant as the faculty of the mind to store and to retrieve information (Oxford Dictionary). However, individual memory is malleable and subjected to alteration and deterioration, eventually leading to amnesia and oblivion.²¹ Moreover, memory construction is a slow-moving process heavily influenced by collective understanding. The notions of counter-memory,²² social, collective²³ or cultural memory²⁴ are all referring to the same socially constructed memory which often becomes an act of political objectification, especially considering the role of the mainstream mass media since XX century. Hence, collective memory cannot be considered as the direct antonym of individual memory, because they are likely to affect each other in the process of memory formation. The deliberated manipulation of individual memory into a collective one is far from being irrelevant because it reveals the attempt of those in charge to transform memory into history.²⁵ In addition, this interference of political powers into memory formation is risky because casts doubts on the reliability of individual testimony, whose authenticity is then proved only by the accordance to the historical facts or what the dominant power (read: governmental institutions) establishes to be worthy of commemoration and memorialization.

To testify or to bear witness become synonyms of talking about the past and, in the majority of cases, this act is extremely troublesome: not only because based on the internal dichotomy between individual and collective memory, but also because often it implies to make reference to

²¹ See the discussion of Heidegger's definition of *Geschichtlichkeit* according to Ricœur. Ricœur, Paul, "Historicité" in *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris, Édition du Seuil, 2002, p. 480-535.

²² According to Lipsitz "Counter-memory looks to the past for the hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives". Foucault echoes Lipsitz in considering counter-memory as the resistance of individuals against the official versions of historical continuity. George, Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Culture*, Chicago, University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p. 213. Foucault, Michel, "Counter-memory: the Philosophy of Difference" in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1980, pp. 112-198.

²³ According to Maurice Halbwachs's *La mémoire collective*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950.

²⁴ The concept of "cultural memory" is based on Halbwachs' studies and was developed by Jan Assmann in his "Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis" in *Derselbe: Thomas Mann und Ägypten. Mythos und Monotheismus in den Josephsromanen Beck*, München, C.H.Beck, Auflage, 2006.

²⁵ Douglass, Ana and Vogler, Thomas A., *Witness & Memory. The discourse of Trauma*, Routledge, New York, 2003, p. 17.

violent and cruel events. In fact, the memory of the witness can be influenced by physical or psychological trauma (“wound” in Greek) which “violate(s) our normal mental processing ability and frames of reference”²⁶ thus resulting in a mechanism of “repressed memory” which increases the grade of not-reliability of the testimony in question. According to van Alphen, trauma is a “failed experience” because “an event becomes experience only when it is fitted into the pattern of existing discourses.”²⁷ Hence, the testimony is strongly linked to any historical recordings that allow access to the memory of a particular event experienced by a traumatised self - first personal account - or by a third party - any other oral or written productions.

These considerations about memory and trauma roles in testimony underlined the complexity in dealing with this topic and it stressed the interdisciplinary nature of the testimonial discourse, both in its written and spoken forms. In addition, when the focus of the research is - as this is the case - the written testimony, the critical analysis of literary works implies to discuss the aesthetic value of the piece of art and the ethical approach each author shows in transposing a catastrophic and eventually traumatic event into literature.

This is the framework at the root of this study which turns the attention on works published within a year from 11 March 2011, thus emphasizing the first impact that the catastrophe had on Japanese literary production. The analysis points out forms, styles and contents of what can be defined as “literature of the debris” (*Trümmerliteratur*)²⁸ to quote Tachibana Reiko in describing the first German literary responses to Shoah and the WWII. In this new perspective, the post-3.11 “rubble literature” represents the first literary transposition of the trauma the victims acknowledged, and, at the same time, it constitutes the first literary testimony of 11 March. To limit the analysis to the first literary responses to the 3.11 was all the more necessary in order to investigate literary works published in a period when the process of collective memory formation had just begun, thus resulting not enough influential to interfere with the individual memory at the basis of the testimonial accounts.

Eventually, the critical analysis of each literary work is particularly significant because it gives the chance to reflect on the ability of language to convey the testimony into words and, at the same time, it allows to point out which words are eventually able to represent what is commonly perceived as inexplicable. Eventually, while dealing with catastrophe and trauma, the imperative to

²⁶ Douglass and Vogler, *Witness & Memory*, p. 2.

²⁷ van Alphen quoted in van der Merwe, Chris, N., and Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla, *Narrating our Healing. Perspectives on Working through Trauma*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007, p. 56.

²⁸ Tachibana, *Narrative As Counter-Memory*, p. 7.

tell often clashes with the impossibility to tell. Two different responses can be detected, then: silence and discursivity. In the first case, the lack in any oral or written testimony sounds like a great shame for history; in the second case there is the risk to domesticate the event (read: the catastrophe, the trauma) or to minimize its scale, a concern expressed even by Primo Levi in relation to Shoah.²⁹

The attempt of this study to define the role and the engagement each author shows towards the 3.11 disaster resulted in the characterization of different testimonial figures: in this sense, even though the individual chapters attract the attention on a specific author, they cannot be read separately and their order cannot be reversed. Actually, it is thanks to the comparison of the diverse authorial literary responses here proposed that the investigation can shed light on distinctive testimonial figures: from the heart of the 11 March event - namely, Fukushima - Wagō Ryōichi is able to produce poetic lyricism by sharing on the social networks his (own, personal) truth of the 3.11 historical facts from the perspective of a first-hand witness. Gradually moving away from Fukushima city, the authorial point of view changes according to the major or minor involvement the author showed towards the 3.11 catastrophe. As a first-person witness not engaged at first-hand, Genyū Sōkyū provides the chance to analyse both fictional and nonfictional works on the theme, with the added value of his experience as a Buddhist priest to inquire the relationship between trauma and faith. Otherwise, Abe Kazushige, Kawakami Mieko and Takahashi Genichirō are examples of how 11 March can be narratively portrayed by strengthening its nature of three-fold catastrophe (Takahashi); or focusing only on one aspect of the disaster like in the case of the tsunami (Abe); or even by silencing 11 March while making it the main trope of discourse at the same time (Kawakami). Notwithstanding, by transposing into literary production 11 March 2011, these authors contribute to the testimony archive of the historical facts.

From verbosity to reticence, the literary texts analyzed here bring to light different authorial approaches to the catastrophe but also underline how literature represents the meeting point between authorial testimony and the reliability of the 11 March historical facts.

²⁹ Levi, Primo, “Appendice a *Se questo è un uomo*”, Torino, Einaudi, 1958, p. 175.

The explosion of the phenomenon of the net-poetry: Wagō Ryōichi

1. In the eye of the *Daishinsai*

Wagō Ryōichi's *net-poetry* (和合亮一, Fukushima, 1968 -) belongs to the so-called "literature of the debris" as to say the first literary production on the 3.11 theme. This poetic experimentation combines poetry and social networks as long as each poem was firstly conceived by the author as a regular post shared with web users on Wagō's official Twitter and Facebook profiles. The poems/tweets were then re-arranged and gathered in three poetic collections published ex-post: *Shi no tsubute* 『詩の礫』, *Shi no mokurei* 『詩ノ黙礼』, *Shi no kaikō* 『詩の邂逅』 (2011). This trend has not seen major changes until now, and nine collections of poetry have been published following the same procedural pattern.

Wagō's *net-poetry* actually arises from the evacuated zones surrounding the Fukushima reactors. The sensitivity of the poet returns to web audience the updates about the *Daishinsai* aftermath in Fukushima city and shows a predilection for the debate around the risk of radioactivity contamination. The lyricism³⁰ Wagō's poetry conveys into the tweets contributes to the controversy about the ethical implication of representing the 3.11 catastrophe in a literary form - some examples are analyzed in details below.

The psychophysical proximity of the author to the heart of the events influences his poetic production which reflects a kind of epidermal memory of the 3.11: *Daishinsai* images are etched into authorial skin and are mirrored by the portrayal of time and space of the catastrophe, clearly drawn and outlined in author's mind, first and into poetry, then. Wagō's sketches out the space-time references over and over again in his production. The 3.11 becomes for the author not only the driving force beyond his poetry but also a fixed point around which his *net-poetry* has been continuing to orbit during the following years.

³⁰ Please note that the term "lyricism", although difficult to define, is here implied to describe pieces of art - poetry as well as prose - in the sense of "aesthetically beautiful", "imaginative", "expressive".

2. A living heritage

As suggested by the first title, *Shi no tsubute* (conventionally translated as “Pebbles of poetry”) shows a first glance at the stricken areas: published in June by Tokuma Shoten, this collection of tweets covers almost three months of poetic production, from 16 March to 25 May and turns the attention on building and infrastructure damages along with the Fukushima nuclear accident including radioactivity releases.³¹ The title was chosen not before the publication of the work, as it is normally the case, but during the process of its enactment: the announcement appeared on Twitter on 18 March,³² among other poetical tweets, thus suggesting a form of projectuality of the poetical work. This planning unveils authorial consciousness of the ongoing literary production, eventually supported by a sort of daily repetitive pattern: after Wagō’s greetings to his followers on the socials the title of the poem of the day is announced, along with Wagō’s name, reclaiming authorial’s copyrights.³³ Then, the poetry itself follows the tweets to conclude with Wagō’s comments, greetings, word of thanks or apologies; sometimes the author answers to user’s questions or requests and occasionally he advertises his own publications or appearances at events on the theme of the 3.11. This routine seems to be a convenient tool to stay in touch with users on the social media; it helps to keep Wagō’s poetry in focus and even increases the number of followers. Notwithstanding, these tweets, with no apparent benchmark to poetry, were published along with the poetic collection. Perhaps, the wish to underline the circumstances that saw the birth of Wagō’s *net-poetry* and the intent to stress how rapidly the poet gained in popularity thanks to the socials are the reasons beyond this choice: pretty self-aggrandising. In addition to these first two kinds of tweets - poetry as such and “public relation” oriented tweets - a third type of post can be spotted as a blend of the first two: some tweets describing daily routine, encounters with people or updates about the situation at the Fukushima Daiichi, a production that resembles more a report of events or a journal entry rather a proper literary work. This study will give a taste of both poetical tweets and report-style poetical tweets to underline analogies and differences between the two. In doing so, the

³¹ 和合亮一、『心に湯気をたてて』、東京、日本経済新聞出版社、2013年。Wagō, Ryōichi, *Kokoro ni yuge wo tatete*, Tōkyō, Nippon Keizai Shinbun Shuppansha, 2013, pp. 49-53.

³² 「◎詩の礫 (シノツブテ) を、やります。」2011年3月18日 14:05 (“I’ll do Shi no tsubute”). 和合亮一、『詩の礫』、東京、徳間書店、2011年。Wagō, Ryōichi, *Shi no tsubute*, Tōkyō, Tokuma Shoten, 2011, p. 34.

³³ Example: 「詩の礫 05 和合亮一」 2011年3月19日 22:00 (“Shi no tsubute 05 Wagō Ryōichi”). Wagō, *Shi no tsubute*, p.50.

role of Wagō as a spokesperson for Touhoku disaster and the value his poetry achieved as testimony of the 3.11 will be underlined.

The poet, who let his family escape to safe zones, was left alone in Fukushima to take care of his parents.³⁴ Hence, the title of the collection: “Completely absorbed by Twitter I wrote and send out poetry. *Shi no tsubute* is the title I imagined from the pebbles of words that dropped like hurled on me at that time.”³⁵ In his poems the author poured his heart out to find the empathy of social media users. His poetry confesses about the anxiety of new aftershocks to come, the loneliness for being apart from his family, the fear of radiation sickness and survivor’s guilt, often hidden beyond the guise of a feeling of sorrow and mourning for the thousands of victims of the *Daishinsai*. His poems are an artophorion of memory: his poetical production serves as a vivid testimony of the 3.11 aftermath and it represents authorial war-horse to lead Wagō’s own battle to denounce the situation of the evacuated areas, also promoting a no-nuke campaign.

The poem that follows was chosen as the introduction for a documentary film on the 3.11 broadcasted on Asahi Terebi by the tv program *Ann Hōdō Tokubetsu Bangumi* 報道特別番組 in 2011³⁶ and actually it offers an overview of Wagō’s poetical features then briefly described.

あなたにとって、懐かしい街がありますか。暮らしていた街がありますか。その街はあなたに、どんな表情を、投げかけてくれますか。

2011年3月19日 4:15

あなたにとって、懐かしい街がありますか。私には懐かしい街があります。

2011年3月19日 4:15

その街は、無くなってしまいました。

2011年3月19日 4:16

³⁴ 田中茂雄、和合亮一、「震災は静かに続いている—詩、言葉、福島について」、『コトバ』、第5号、2011年。Tanaka, Shigeo, Wagō, Ryōichi, “Shinsai wa shizuka ni tsuduiteiru - shi, kotoba, Fukushima ni tsuite”, *kotoba*, no. 5, 2011, p. 27.

³⁵ 「[...]ツイッターに夢中で詩を打ち込んで発信した。『詩の礫』とはそんな中で礫のように降ってくる言葉からイメージした 題名です。」和合亮一、佐野真一、『3.11を越えて—言葉に何ができるのか』、東京、徳間書店、2012年。Sano, Shin’ichi, Wagō, Ryōichi, *Kotoba ni nani ga dekiru no ka – 3.11 wo koete*, Tokuma Shoten, Tōkyō, 2012, p. 40.

³⁶ Official Site of TV Asahi dedicated to the 3.11: <http://www.tv-asahi.co.jp/311/>. Video shooting broadcasted on April, 29, 2011.

あなたは地図を見えていますか。私は地図を見えています。その地図は正しいですか。私の地図は、昔の地図です。なぜなら今は、人影がない。・・・。

2011年3月19日 4:16

南相馬市の夏が好きだった。真夏に交わした約束は、いつまでも終わらないと思っていた。原町の野馬の誇らしさを知っていますか？

2011年3月18日 14:14

南相馬市の野原が好きだった。走っても走ってもたどりつかない、世界の深遠。満月とスキが、原町の秋だった。

2011年3月18日 14:15

お願いします。南相馬を救って下さい。浜通りの美しさを戻してください。空気の清しさを。(私たちの心の中には、大海原の涙しかない。)

2011年3月18日 14:28

海のきらめきを、風の吐息を、草いきれと、星の瞬きを、花の強さを、石ころの歴史を、雲の切れ間を、そのような故郷を、故郷を信じる。

2011年3月18日 14:43

2時46分に止まってしまった私の時計に、時間を与えようと思う。明けない夜はない。

2011年3月18日 14:45

(Have you a city you missed? I have a city I missed. Have you a city where you lived? That city, what kind of signals does it throw at you? / Have you a city you missed? I have a city I missed. That city, disappeared. / Are you looking at your map? I am looking at my map. Is it truthful? My map, is an old one. Because now, there is no trace of people.../ I loved summer time in Minamisōma. I believed that the promise exchanged in the middle of summer would never end. Do you know about the magnificent wild horses of the city of Haramachi? / I loved the fields in Minamisōma. No matter how much you run, it is a deep world you barely manage to reach. / The full moon and the grass are Haramachi's fall. / I beg you. Please, help Minamisōma. Please bring back the beauty of Hamadoori. The pureness of its air. (In my heart, there is nothing else but an ocean of tears.) / The sparkling sea, the breath of the wind, the strong smell of grass and, the twinkle of stars, the strangeness of flowers, the history of stones, the rifts of clouds: I believe in my home town, this kind of home town. / I am going to restore the time to my clock, stuck at 2:46. Every night come to an end.)³⁷

Apart from the lyricism perceived in these verses which will be discussed in detail later, some considerations should be addressed towards the number of characteristics this innovative *net-poetry* presents. First of all, any verse of Wagō's literary production represent a tweet in itself, although later properly printed in the collection of poetry. For this reason each verse, although free in the form of a traditional *gendaishi* (modern poetry) must respect the limit of not exceeding 140 characters, the maximum limit allowed by Twitter and for the same reason the order of verses can

³⁷ Wagō, *Shi no tsubute*, p. 35, 36, 38, 43.

be changed if necessary, as shown by the documentary version of the poem. It opens with verses composed on the 19 March, only a few days after the *Daishinsai*, to shift immediately to 18 March also ignoring some other verses published on the social first and in the collection, later. These observations shed light on one main feature of Wagō's *net-poetry*: although conceived as a unique long poem, each tweet of Wagō's production can, with some exceptions related to logical reasons, change place or being deleted (or simply ignored) in order to give birth to a new poem. This enables Wagō himself to resume a verse of a poem after weeks or months, to create a new poetry with new ideas, inspirations, impressions. Here is an example:

街を返せ、村を返せ、海を返せ、風を返せ。チャイムの音、着信の音、投函の音。波を返せ、魚を返せ、恋を返せ、陽射しを返せ。チャイムの音、着信の音、投函の音。乾杯を返せ、祖母を帰せ、誇りを返せ、福島を返せ。チャイムの音、着信の音、投函の音。

2011年4月09日 23:19

(Give back my town, give back my village, give back the sea. The sound of the bell, the sound of an incoming mail, the sound of an outgoing mail. Give back waves, give back fishes, give back love, give back sunlight. The sound of the bell, the sound of an incoming mail, the sound of an outgoing mail. Give back the cheers, let came home by grandma, give back the pride, give back Fukushima. The sound of the bell, the sound of an incoming mail, the sound of an outgoing mail.)³⁸

魂を返せ、夢を返せ、福島を返せ、命を返せ、故郷を返せ、草いきれを返せ、村を返せ、詩を返せ、胡桃の木を返せ

2011年5月26日 5:19

(Give back my soul, give back my dreams, give back Fukushima, give back my life, give back my hometown, give back the grass, give back my village, give back my poetry, give back the walnut tree.)³⁹

As shown by the comparison between the two poems, both productions were constructed around the same pattern of reiterating several times the imperative “Give back” although they were published with more than a month of distance from each other. A deeper analysis reveals that the same anaphora: “Give back”, was firstly used by the atomic bombing poet Tōge Sankichi in his famous

³⁸ Wagō, *Shi no tsubute*, p.213.

³⁹ Wagō, *Shi no tsubute*, p.259. For further investigations please refer to De Pieri, 2014, 2016a, 2016b.

Ningen wo kaese 『にんげんをかえせ』 (“Give back human race”)⁴⁰ engraved in a memorial stone in front of the Peace Memorial Museum of Hiroshima. This reference to the greatest *genbaku shijin* (poet of the atomic bombing) has to be interpreted not only as an homage to Tōge, the poet, but also as an allusion to a possible commonality of the experiences witnessed by both authors. Actually the word *hibakusha* (same pronunciation, different kanji writing)⁴¹ is a label implied to define who is suspected of having been exposed to radiations after the meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi. Radioactivity is one of the main tropes in Wagō’s production; in his quote of Tōge, the poet alludes to the *genbaku/genpatsu* debate and by doing so he underlines the presence of a *fil rouge* that connects Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima in terms of cities exposed to radioactivity contamination although for different reasons.⁴²

Coming back to the main point, the one concerning the broadcasted poem, for the same reasons that allow a free interpretation of verses - as far as the reader can change verse order or even ignore some verses - the social media also prevents from clearly understanding the beginning and the ending of poems; the reader has to pay attention and be careful enough to catch a common thread among the verses: a keyword, a theme, a feeling reiterated. And actually, this is the most incisive technique adopted by Wagō who often starts or ends a verse with the same opening or ending clause. In terms of reiteration, two approaches can be easily detached in this first collection of poetry, *Shi no tsubute*, but actually represent a common pattern of the other collections too.

The first approach consists precisely in finding a keyword that opens or closes the verse, creating a sort of double anadiplosis between the tweets. It could be just one word as in the following example, which opposes the same openings and closures represented by “*Shi yo.*” 「詩よ。」 (“Poetry.”) and “*Akumame*” 「悪魔め」 (“Devil’s eyes.”) in bold in the text:

詩よ。お前をつむごうとすると余震の気配がする。お前は地を揺すぶる悪魔と、もしかすると約束を交わしているのか。激しく憤り、口から涎を垂れ流し、すこぶる恐ろしい形相で睨んでいるのだな、原稿用紙の上に首を出し、舌なめずる**悪魔め**。

2011年3月23日 23:41

⁴⁰ 峠三吉、『原爆刺繍』、東京、青木商店、1952年。Tōge, Sankichi, *Genbaku shishū*, Tōkyō, Aoki Shoten, 1952.

⁴¹ 被爆者 (victims exposed to atomic bombings) and 被曝者 (victims exposed to radiations).

⁴² For further considerations about Tōge and Wagō’s comparisons, please refer to De Pieri 2014, 2016, 2017.

on paintings had for Fontana. Its presence fills a void, a space that perhaps would have remained empty. The social media language does not require any punctuation marks to close a discourse. Wagō's choice to point out the conclusion of the poem reveals the need to state that the poet has the last word. He owns the ultimate truth and with his pen he claims for himself the ability to circumscribe the catastrophe; to define it in a so clearly and accurately way that it can take the shape of only one full stop.

Here comes a different example in which the poetry maintains the relevance of the meanings of each verse: the visual effect is only a value added to the poetic production:

余震。原稿用紙に文字を埋める
。また余震。埋め尽くすしか
ないのだ、震える
現在を。

2011年5月23日 22:25

(Aftershock. Fill up the Japanese writing sheets with characters. Aftershock again. There is nothing else to do but filling up, the quavering present time.)⁴⁹

I tried to reproduce the same graphical structure realized on Twitter and then published in the collection. The breakdown of the verse by spacial interruptions mirrors a similar breakup in ordinary life, a crisis denounced by leaks in human security and system of values, both put to the test and corrupted like the poetic verse.

The search for a visual impact of Wagō's production is to be considered also the main reason under the choice of writing verse in bigger characters, as shown by some examples analyzed until now. In the last few years this new graphical approach to poetry has also taken the shape of a new form of *haiku* written in no more than 140 characters; eventually, Wagō's decision to add photos to his poems can be interpreted as an evolution of the *shashin haiku* 写真俳句 (photo *haiku*): a poetic phenomenon developed on the web which consists in the association of poetic verses in the traditional *haiku* style with evocative images representing the theme of the poem. This literary production has become so popular in the last few years to the extent that international contests like the matsuyama.jp are famous among users all around the world and fan sites on the topic are common even in other languages apart from Japanese and English.

⁴⁹ Wagō, *Shi no tsubute*, p.107.

Even though Wagō's poetic production does not show a predominance in this sense, it is noteworthy to draw attention to this recent development of his *net-poetry*, a trend began in 2013 and for this reason not taken deeply into consideration in this study focused on the first literary responses to 11 March. Anyway, a first step toward this direction is represented by the collection *Watashi to anata koko ni umarete* 『私とあなたここに生まれて』 (“Me and you, born here”) published on the day of the first commemoration of the *Daishinsai* (March 2012) and for this reason, although worthy to mention, not broadly investigated here. Moreover, this collection does not cast fresh light on Wagō's literary production, except for the association of poems and photos of the stricken areas; the combination of words and images contributes to increase the lyricism perceived in approaching this poetical production. The additional images remark the core of the 3.11 theme in poet's poetical works and the central position of Wagō in the 3.11 catastrophe.

Anyway, reiterations and repetitions in Wagō's *net-poetry* represent a constant feature and are anything but an ignorable blip. It should be remembered that according to the Freudian perspective⁵⁰ trauma and discomfort are often manifested through a psychological phenomenon of reenactment called *Wiederholungszwang* (“repetition compulsion”).⁵¹ In Wagō's *net-poetry* any form of recurrence of a particular pattern or keyword can be considered a symptom of 3.11 traumatic experience, thus implying Wagō himself is a victim of 11 March. But to which extent is he a victim of 3.11? Of course, as a Fukushima citizen he was directly involved in the provisional measures to evacuate the zones neighbouring the Fukushima Daiichi for a radius of 20-30 km from the nuclear power plant.⁵² His testimonial experience is focused on the isolation from the family, escaped to safer zones; on the food supply and petrol refuelling both troublesome during those days; on the risk of radioactivity contamination; and on the fear of the aftershocks to come. All these themes are frequently repeated in his poetry and actually define the limit of Wagō's testimony.

The examples encountered until now showed the authorial choice of almost restating one word or brief sentences; but more impressive is the repetition of same themes, among which I identify three topoi: places, time, *Daishinsai* keywords. It is not a coincidence that the poem I chose to start this study of Wagō's *Shi no tsubute*, as to say, the one broadcasted by the TV Asahi, offers the

⁵⁰ Cathy, Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, p. 10.

⁵¹ Freud, Sigmund, “Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten” in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 2 (6), 1914, pp. 485-91.

⁵² 外岡秀俊、『震災と原発。国家の過ち—文学で読み解く“3.11”』、大阪、朝新聞出版、2012年。Sotooka, Hidetoshi, *Shinsai to genpatsu Kokka no ayamachi – Bungaku de yomitoku “3.11”*, Ōsaka, Asahi Shinbun Shuppan, 2012, p. 26.

chance to develop further analysis of all these three topics, whose occurrence is indicative of a trauma not yet overcome.

I firstly mentioned places: Wagō Ryōichi is not only a poet who speaks from Fukushima debris; he is above all a victim, or better, a survivor. Even though he was not directly affected from the tsunami, which reached the high of over 9 m in Sōma,⁵³ about 50 km away from Fukushima city, he experienced the great earthquake on 11 March, with an approximate *shindo* of 6+ recorded in Fukushima, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA).⁵⁴ Most importantly, he was in the front line the following days when the surrounding areas of the Fukushima Daiichi (located in Futaba, about 80 km away from Fukushima) were evacuated due to the radiation exposure.⁵⁵ Two are the enemies with whom the poet fought during those days: the aftershocks, that followed one after another with a variable intensity of magnitude 6 to 7 (it was estimated that their number exceeded 5,000 by May 2011);⁵⁶ and the weather phenomena - strong wind and rain in primis - leading cause of concern for the dispersion of the radioactive substances in the air. Actually, a radioactivity comparison in the surrounding prefectures of Fukushima revealed that in Ibaraki, almost 100 km away from the nuclear power plant, the increment of the radioactivity contamination reached a level between 01 mSv/h and 100mSv/h, the last of which is considered the starting point for radioactivity contamination in a strict sense.⁵⁷ This data may not be relevant for the residents in Fukushima city, but it is highly probable that even Fukushima was subjected to a similar radioactivity exposure, as confirmed by further investigation reported by the Mainichi Shinbun in September 2011, showing a contamination of soil and rice field up to 307,000 becquerels-630 becquerels of cesium per kilogram in Ōnami District.⁵⁸

No wonder that Wagō's efforts are still now devoted to restore Fukushima city to its untouched environment before the radioactivity contamination. Nevertheless, the author does not mention only Fukushima city in his poems: Minamisōma and Sōma, Namie, Futaba, Ōkuma are the most quoted cities in Wagō's *net-poetry*. He usually revokes the history of those towns, together with their

⁵³ According to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Center for Tsunami Research, Seattle, WA). Available at: <http://nctr.pmel.noaa.gov/honshu20110311/>, 2016/12/1.

⁵⁴ JMA official site: <http://www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html>, 2016/3/11.

⁵⁵ Sotooka, *Shinsai to genpatsu*, pp. 39-40.

⁵⁶ Link available at: <http://www.livescience.com/20519-japan-earthquake-aftershocks.html>, 2016/4/23.

⁵⁷ According to a graphic realised by National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) available at <http://energy.gov/situation-japan-updated-12513>, 2016/5/13.

⁵⁸ Info available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20120115211207/http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20120113p2g00m0dm013000c.html>, 2016/2/23.

customs and traditions, extremely dear to the poet. This tendency is illustrated even by the poetry broadcasted by the *Ann Hōdō Tokubetsu Bangumi*: the poet turns the attention to a specific area on the map, a map that should show those beloved towns. But the poet seems to tell us that something went wrong: no possibility to advertise the attractive wild horses of Haramachi⁵⁹ or the flourish fields in Minamisōma. We will never know how wide are its boundaries that one “barely manage to reach”; and moreover, we will never enjoy the “purity of its air”. Everything is gone (その街は、無くなってしまいました。). In the following verses the poet is more explicit regarding what went lost: “the sparkling sea, the breath of the wind, the strong smell of grass and the twinkle of stars, the strangeness of flowers, the history of stones, the rifts of clouds”. What remains are Wagō’s memories which take the shape of poems, reverberating of sorrow, mourning, and even hope. And it is Wagō himself who is encouraging this hope to be trusted: “I believe in my hometown”. We know where this town is situated or at least, where it was, if we mark the evacuated areas as ghost towns. But what is this “hometown” in truth? Fukushima or Minamisōma? Wagō’s “hometown” is frequently summarized at once in one word: *urusato* 故郷 (homeland, hometown). In a wider perspective, it is to Japan, and even to the world that Wagō addresses his message: to the Earth deprived of the power to destroy itself, namely, the nuclear power. Wagō’s poetry speaks from a devastated land to a devastated land about a devastated land: from Fukushima to the world about the stricken Tohoku area. And the reiteration of towns and places - *urusato* and *hinanjo* 避難所 (safety zone) included - is a clear reference to how much profound are Wagō’s roots to be remarked constantly throughout his poetry. This is

à la fois une mémoire intime et une mémoire partagée entre proches: dans ses souvenirs types, l’espace corporel est immédiatement relié à l’espace de l’environnement, fragment de la terre habitable, avec ces cheminements plus ou moins praticables, ces obstacles diversement franchissables.⁶⁰

Pain is to be preferred than oblivion: this is the lesson Wagō’s *net-poetry* seems to tell to his audience and any efforts of the poet are actually devoted to keep the memory of *Daishinsai* victims alive.

⁵⁹ Please take note that Haramachi became a part of Minamisōma. Sōkyū Genyū, Wagō, Ryōichi, Akasaka Norio, *Hisaichi kara tou kono kuni no katachi*, p. 64.

⁶⁰ Ricœur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*, p. 184.

The geographical indications are “shut down” on the map; a no more fair map that still portrays an uncorrupted past: a clock, frozen like the evacuated regions reduced to ghost towns. Repetitions, recurrences, reiterations actually do not spare time, neither: “I am going to restore the time to my clock, stuck at 2:46.” This verse reminds without doubts the time described by the *hibakusha* writer Hayashi Kyōko for whom every day still represents the 9 August, a clear reference to the atomic bombing of Nagasaki the author witnessed when she was only 14 years old.⁶¹ For a survivor of radioactivity exposure every day can be the last one due to the sudden appearance of symptoms connected to the *genbakushō*, the “atomic bomb disease” which now assumed new forms in the radioactivity sickness. And it is with this fear, this invisible enemy that Wagō and the other residents in the Fukushima area must deal with daily. Moreover, the nuclear accident at Fukushima Daiichi masks its repercussion on the future generations on two fronts: one, linked to the radioactivity exposure on high levels which represents the danger to be responsible for potential genetic malformations in the future generations; the other consists in the waste-disposal of radioactivity substances, soil contamination, water pollution, all features of the no more lively area surrounding the Fukushima nuclear power plant; a destiny shared without doubt by the cities of Minamisōma and Sōma, Namie, Futaba and Ōkuma, frequently mentioned in Wagō’s *net-poetry*. The persistent return of the poet on the same space and time linked to 3.11 without any equivocation, emphasizes the fact the poetic production of the author is nourished by this unsolved and thumping traumatic experience.

Places and time are suspended like in a snapshot. Wagō’s feelings are a perfect blend of anger, sorrow, guilty conscience and powerlessness. Instead of being defeated by them, the poet stands out and tries desperately to call his enemy by name. And here come the *Daishinsai* keywords as another main theme of repetitions in Wagō’s poetry, in the forms of *sangatsu jūichinichi* 三月十一日 (11 March), *shinsai(go)* 震災 (後) (post-disaster) which appears in all its variants: *yūre* 揺れ (earth-shock) , *yoshin* 余震 (aftershocks), *shindo* 震度 (seismic scale of the JMA), *hōshanō* 放射能 (radioactivity) and so on. Any term connected to the 11 March catastrophe is brought into play by the author in the attempt to describe 3.11 disaster. But in the meantime, those terms actually represent his enemy, verbalized and pronounced in a painful sound: the personification of earthquake and nuclear power is achieved. Those words, turned into poetry become the shield behind which Wagō hides his trauma and insecurity for the future. Their poetic portrayal serves as

⁶¹ De Pieri, Veronica, “Auschwitz, Hiroshima & Nagasaki, Fukushima. La parola come veicolo di memoria.” Master diss., Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, 2014, chapter 2, pp. 57-68.

Wagō's armour to combat, and possibly defeat, the *Daishinsai* aftermath. And the strength of his armature is given by the lyricism intrinsic to his *net-poetry*:

放射能が降っています。静かな夜です。

2011年3月16日 4:30

(The radioactivity is falling down. It is a quiet night.)⁶²

Instead of living in fear of his enemy to come, the poet chooses to remember it every day; a constant and endless mourning, the memento of that 3.11 reiterated over and over again. Wagō represents a victim,

a traumatised self, locked in compulsive repetitions [and] possessed by the past. [...] mourning brings the possibility of engaging trauma and achieving a reinvestment in, or recathexis of, life which allows one to begin again.⁶³

According to LaCapra, mourning is a form of working through trauma - Freudian's *Durcharbeit* - but in Wagō's poetic perspective the only possibility to weaken the fear of radiations is to beautify - even to aestheticize - it with poetic lyricism, to transform the inexplicable harshness of destiny in a message full of hope. The radioactivity can not be reduced to a worthless matter but at least, as a result of Wagō's poetic efforts, it can be clad by hope, which makes it easier to deal with it: "The radioactivity is falling down. It is a quiet night." Otherwise,

窓を開けると春になる。

2011年3月28日 22:12

(Open the window, it becomes spring)⁶⁴

Metaphors are a great ally in Wagō's battle. Eventually, according to Isobe Ryō, Wago's *net-poetry* becomes a "window" (窓) through which to cast a glance to Fukushima city; a poem that resounds

⁶² Wagō, *Shi no tsubute*, p.10.

⁶³ LaCapra, Dominick, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 66.

⁶⁴ Wagō, *Shi no tsubute*, p.152.

the reality (リアルなもの) to the rest of the world.⁶⁵ Even the simple gesture to open the window, which in Fukushima means to let the enemy - the radioactivity - come in undisturbed, is converted in the optimistic faith that better times will soon be here: spring, the appropriate analogy for rebirth, reminds also the Buddhist concept of *mujō* according to which tragedy and catastrophe are just the prelude for recovery.

The poet is fully aware of the solitude entailed in his poetic (literary) engagement: a solitude eventually stressed by the discrimination to which were subjected people from Fukushima region soon after 14-15 March, as to say, after the main nuclear explosions in the Fukushima reactors. The reason is clear: the fear of having been exposed to radioactivity contamination contributed to label Fukushima peoples as *hibakusha*, a term that for its homophony reminds of the victims of the atomic bombings, as seen before. Hence, Wagō combines the image of the Fukushima hero, a warrior dressed by a poetic armour, with the one of the powerless victim; these two faces of the same medal have in common alienation and exclusive responsibility, spirit of self-sacrifice and exhausting indolence, all hallmarks of a tormented soul which has to cope with its own trauma before trying to help others in dealing with theirs.

Rhetoric figures are not the only device that helps Wagō in his fight against his traumatic experience: katakana, the syllabary generally used to transcribe foreign words, is combined by the author with kanji to create a total different outcome:

About the fact that katakana comes out [in my works], yes, I suppose I use it every time a particular thought comes to light. And I use it also when I would like to add a certain rhythm and tempo to the verse. Something particular, totally different from kanji and hiragana, comes into existence, then.⁶⁶

revealed the author during a private interview in 2013. Here is an example:

午後ヨリ風ハ北西。風下ノ方ハ、外出ヲシナイコト。ナオ、風ノ向キハクルクル、回りマ
ス。雨ニハ降ラナイコト。ナオ、雨ハ、ナレナレシク降ッテキマス。ゴ注意ヲ。

⁶⁵ 「和合さんのツイートは、詩を読むというよりも福島をのぞく『窓』になって、僕にとってはどんな報道よりもリアルなものとして響いてきたんです。」磯部涼、『プロジェクトFUKUSHIMA! 2011/3.11-8.15 いま文化に何が出来るか (DOMMUNE BOOKS 5)』東京、K&Bパブリッシャーズ、2011年。Isobe Ryō, *Purojekuto FUKUSHIMA! 2011/3.11-8.15 Ima bunka ni nani ga dekiru no ka (DOMMUNE BOOKS 5)*, Tōkyō, K&B Publishers, 2011, p. 96.

⁶⁶ De Pieri, Veronica, “Wagō Ryōichi’s *net-poetry* and the revolutionary «shared literature»” in *Annali di Ca’ Foscari. Serie Orientale*. Venice, Ca’ Foscari Digital Publishing, 2016, pp.351-370.

(From this afternoon, the wind [blows] north-westly. People who are leeward, do not go outside. Yet, the direction of the wind is constantly changing, around and around. Do not get rained on. Yet, it is raining over-familiarly. Pay attention.)⁶⁷

Nowadays any common Japanese-speaker may actually feel estranged by the cumbersome reading of katakana phonetic syllabary combined with Japanese characters. At a first glance the graphical effect contributes to create an estrangement feeling in the reader, a sense of astonishment due to the reading of the challenging syllabary. But although today katakana's main use is the transliteration of foreign words, along with the need of highlighting brands, names, sounds (onomatopoeia), this syllabary was normally implied in official documents, together with *kanji*, at least until the end of World War II. The poetical production by Miyazawa Kenji (宮沢賢治, 1896-1933) adopted this particular combination and his celebrated poems in katakana are even now subject of study.

Apart from the reference to the Japanese poetical tradition, as a matter of interest it should be noted that a similar effect of estrangement is achieved by Wagō also by using mostly *kanji* instead, in a production very similar to the ancient kango:

緊急地震速報。震源地は宮城県沖。緊急地震速報。震源地は茨城県沖。緊急地震速報。震源地は岩手県沖。緊急地震速報。震源地は冷蔵庫3段目。緊急地震速報。震源地は革靴の右足。緊急地震速報。震源地は玉ねぎの箱。緊急地震速報。震源地は広辞苑。緊急地震速報。震源地は、春。

2011年3月20日 22:52

(Urgent earthquake announcement. Epicentre off the coast of Miyagi prefecture. Urgent earthquake announcement. Epicentre off the coast of Ibaraki prefecture. Urgent earthquake announcement. Epicentre off the coast of Iwate prefecture. Urgent earthquake announcement. Epicentre in the third rank of the fridge. Urgent earthquake announcement. Epicentre in the right shoe. Urgent earthquake announcement. Epicentre in the box for onions. Urgent earthquake announcement. Epicentre in the Kojiken. Urgent earthquake announcement. Epicentre in spring.)⁶⁸

Wagō's calligrammatic style represents without doubts the authorial attempt to reduce catastrophe and its related trauma to a domesticated language through various linguistic and graphical experimentations.

Last but not least, I opened this paragraph by assuming two types of poetical tweets identifiable in Wagō's production: one, already analyzed until now and describable as poetic tweets in a strict sense and the other, definable as report-style poetical tweets, born from Wagō's memo taken soon

⁶⁷ Wagō, *Shi no tsubute*, p.71.

⁶⁸ *ibidem*.

after the first great quake and then after arriving in the safety zones, not later than 12 March.⁶⁹ The poem chosen by the TV Asahi for its documentary film about 3.11 offered the chance to deeply investigate Wagō's *net-poetry* in all its features, and this stenographic approach is included. Some words should be spent for the last characteristic associated to the report-style poetical tweets: the recording of date and hour. Although considered as an attribute of the social network (Twitter), its role should not be underestimated: it attested the historical value of the literary production, contributing to transform Wagō's *net-poetry* in a documentary report of events, despite its poetical form, a sort of "documentary poetry". What is arguable here is the very essence of some of those tweets, included in the poetic collection although no particular lyricism can be perceived from them. This particular production can be associated with the "literature of fact" mentioned by Hayden White and evaluated "for the kind of factual information it provides of that event."⁷⁰ Here is an example:

私はガソリンを求めて街に行く。もうじき切れてしまうからだ。地震、余震、津波、放射能、風評被害。昨日、発電所から20キロ～30キロ圏内の、最大20000人が避難対象となった。私は私を罵倒するようになった。かなり蝕まれてるな、精神。たくさんの影、風評。

2011年3月27日 22:14

(I go to the city to request for gasoline. Because it will finish soon. Earthquake, aftershocks, tsunami, radioactivity, reputation risk. Yesterday, a target of maximum 20000 people were evacuated for a radius of 20-30km from the power plant. It made me offended myself. My mind is pretty worm-eaten. A lot of shadows, rumours.)⁷¹

This example demonstrates the attempt to record information and at the same time, to provide updates for the web users. Actually, this was a very popular trend in post-11 March Japan, where social networks had a leading role in spreading information about the nuclear meltdown or the necessary aids in the stricken areas.⁷² As for Wagō's tweets, this sort of poetic hypotyposis that reports fresh and vivid descriptions of the immediate aftermath in the Fukushima district, stresses again authorial permanence in the 3.11 catastrophe; any recording serves as a testimonial account

⁶⁹ 玄侑宗久、和合亮一、赤坂憲雄、『被災地から問う この国のかたち』、東京、イースト新書、2013年。Genyū, Sōkyū, Wagō, Ryōichi, Akasaka Norio, *Hisaichi kara tou kono kuni no katachi*, Tōkyō, East Press, 2013, p. 34.

⁷⁰ White, Hayden, "Figural Realism in Witness Literature" in *Parallax Volume 10, Issue 1: Witnessing Theory*, London, Routledge, 2004, p. 114.

⁷¹ Wagō, *Shi no tsubute*, p.136.

⁷² Further information about social networks role in post-*Daishinsai* Japan can be found in 東浩紀など、『IT時代の震災と核被害』、東京、インプレスジャパン、2011年。Azuma, Hiroki, and others, *IT Jidai no shinsai to kakuhigai*, Tōkyō, Impress Japan, 2011.

that justifies Wagō's stance as spokesperson for Tohoku victims. There are also some exceptions as in the following tweets, to be read as one:

台所。メチャクチャになった皿を片付けていた。一つずつそれを箱に入れながら、情けなくなつた。自分も、台所も、世界も。

2011年3月17日 00:05

◎ばらばらになった皿の破片を集めているうちに、こんなふうに出の自分の思いを呟いてみようと思ひました。2時間でおよそ40ぐらゐの呟きをさせていただきました。

2011年3月17日 11:36

(Kitchen. I cleaned up the mess of plates. While putting them one by one in a box, I felt miserable. Me, my kitchen, the world./ ◎ When I was collecting the fragments of broken plates, I thought to try murmuring my reflections in this way. You let me murmur like this for about 40 times approximately in two hours.)⁷³

Unlike the previous case, these tweets cannot be considered as simple reports or documentary memos: they portray a scene of personal life of the poet, even encouraging a reading in a metonymic sense thanks to the passage from a private sphere to a universal one (自分も、台所も、世界も). This transference reveals authorial's intuition to look at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis as a collective problem that trespass Japan's national borders to appeal for world's awareness concerning nuclear energy. A deeper insight into the tweets also reveals the metaphor between the broken plates and poet's life - or daily routine - shocked by the earthquake. A quake that, with its consequences, messed up truly or figuratively Wagō himself, his kitchen (his private little world) and the entire world.

These tweets assume the form of a private entry on Wagō's journal, casting doubts about their reliability due to the subjective matrix of the writing. This is actually the main controversy of dealing with any testimonial account, oral or written. The facts described are always subjected to survivor's elaborations and interpretations, which eventually do not suffice for historical understanding.

All examples analyzed until now constitute a puzzle whose pieces show the multiple faces that testimony assumes in Wagō's *net-poetry*: places, time and 3.11 keywords as the most repeated topoi around which Wagō's net-poetry orbits; graphic and linguistic experimentations in trying to domesticate the catastrophe and to restore the daily routine in the *Daishinsai* aftermath; reports and

⁷³ Wagō, *Shi no tsubute*, p.18.

notes to record facts, in the attempt to gain in reliability as a 3.11 witness and for this reason included in the poetic collection although no apparent correlation to poetry in a strict sense. Wagō's poetic production represents the tangible portrait of survivors in the heart of events.

3. A wander thorough the debris

It is not by a mere chance that the paragraph dedicated to Wagō's *Shi no tsubute* took the longest analysis in this chapter: this first Wagō's poetical collection encompasses so many innovative features of his *net-poetry* that deserved a deeper inquiry. On the contrary, so do not the following two collections, *Shi no mokurei* 『詩ノ黙礼』 and *Shi no kaikō* 『詩の邂逅』, published within only 15 days apart one from each other by Shinchōsha and Asahi Shinbun Shuppan respectively, in June 2011. As a common denominator of both collections, there is no particular indication that the poems published were firstly posted on the social network, except for a note on the cover page reporting authorial information. Tweets are organized in longer poems: no data or hour recordings, no detailed information about the stricken areas. Although these marketing decisions will be investigated later, it is noteworthy to mention this different approach to the final literary text which contributes to create a more “classical” appeal to Wagō's *net-poetry*.

As regards 『詩ノ黙礼』 *Shi no mokurei* (“A poetic silent bow”),⁷⁴ the collection covers almost one month of poetical production, from 10 April to 16 May as clearly specified in the forward of the book: it can be considered as a spin-off of *Shi no tsubute*. The keyword *mokurei* serves as a *fil rouge* to guide the reader thorough the debris of the stricken areas, as suggested by the book's cover that portrays the poet while staring at the devastation provoked by the three-fold catastrophe of 11 March, a desolation he metaphorically compared to the sea.⁷⁵ This image seems also to allude to the possible role assumed by Wagō as a guidance through those rubble - “I wanted to face those lost souls”⁷⁶ explained the author - which makes the collection of poetry comparable to a pilgrimage. Or better, since this pilgrimage has no destination to reach, it can rather be described as a *via crucis* in itself, a painful path through the 11 March authorial memories conveyed into poetical form. Every poem represents a station, sometimes visually portrayed by a capital: small photos of the evacuated

⁷⁴ 和合亮一、『詩ノ黙礼』、東京、新潮社、2011年。Wagō, Ryōichi, *Shi no mokurei*, Tōkyō, Shinchōsha, 2011.

⁷⁵ 「瓦礫の海」literally, “a sea of debris”. 和合亮一、『詩ノ黙礼』、東京、新潮社、2011年。Wagō, Ryōichi, *Shi no mokurei*, Tōkyō, Shinchōsha, 2011, p 16.

⁷⁶ 「失われてしまった塊のようなものと向き合いたいと思いました」藤井貞和、和合亮一、『眼で聴く、耳で視る』現代詩手帖、七月2011年。Fujii, Sadakazu, Wagō, Ryōichi, “Me de kiku, mimi de miru” in *Gendaishi techō*, July 2011, p. 53.

areas or the evacuees in black and white. The reader, especially a no-resident reader, can do anything but follow the lead of Wagō and confine himself in mourning, every time he detects the epiphora *mokurei*: “It was the moment when literature stood up from the debris of information.”⁷⁷

The example that follows was chosen as the emblem of this collection because it offers the possibility to focus the attention on the numerous analogies with *Shi no tsubute*:⁷⁸

(4 / 2 1 詩ノ黙礼)

午後零時よ、来るな。

(4 / 2 2 詩ノ黙礼)

午後零時よ、来た。

午前零時より、第一原子力発電所、20キロ圏内。立ち入り禁止警戒区域指定。踏み出せない一步の足の裏に、たんぽぽの花は咲いていたはずである。

午前零時より、第一原子力発電所、20キロ圏内。立ち入り禁止警戒区域指定。踏み出せない一步の足の裏は、破かれていない地図の上を歩いたはずだ。

午前零時より、第一原子力発電所、20キロ圏内。立ち入り禁止警戒区域指定。踏み出せない一步の足の裏が、静かに足音の楽しさと軽やかさを奏でたはずだ。

午前零時より、第一原子力発電所、20キロ圏内。立ち入り禁止警戒区域指定。もう踏み出せない一步の足の裏、足の裏。

午前零時より、第一原子力発電所、20キロ圏内。立ち入り禁止警戒区域指定。踏み出せない一步の足の裏が、あなたの故郷を歩いている。

(4/21 Silent bow. Do not come, midnight./ 4/22 Silent bow. Midnight came./ Morning, from midnight, 20km radius from the nuclear power plant. No trespassing, danger zone warning. On the back of my feet which cannot start making a step forward, a flower of dandelion would have bloomed. / Morning, from midnight, 20km radius from the nuclear power plant. No trespassing, danger zone warning. On the back of my feet which cannot start making a step forward, I would have walked on an undestroyed soil. / Morning, from midnight, 20km radius from the nuclear power plant. No trespassing, danger zone warning. On the back of my feet which cannot start making a step forward, the enjoyment and lightness of silent footsteps would have danced. / Morning, from midnight, 20km radius from the nuclear power plant. No trespassing, danger zone warning. On the back of my feet which cannot start making a step forward anymore, the back of my feet. / Morning, from midnight, 20km radius from the nuclear power plant. No trespassing, danger zone warning. On the back of my feet which cannot start making a step forward, I am walking on your homeland.)⁷⁹

⁷⁷ 「情報の瓦礫の中から文学が立ち上がった瞬間だったのかもしれない。」 Isobe Ryō, *Purojekuto FUKUSHIMA!*, p. 96.

⁷⁸ Please note that the original poetry was published in the traditional Japanese style, as to say, up-down, right-left.

⁷⁹ Wagō, *Shi no mokurei*, p. 70.

The poem reproduced here is not complete due to its outstanding length that covers seven pages of the collection. However, the similarities with the previous publication are impressive even from the first impact. Reiterations occurs in the form of a long anaphora at the beginning of the verse: time, stuck at midnight; places, several times repeated in those 20 km of evacuated zone that are responsible for the abandonment of cities on the coastline; even the keywords of *Daishinsai* appears in the form of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

Again, the poet feels himself trapped in a cage: who is squawking mad at the sight of tamer, is not a lion, but Wagō and his tamer is the government - in the guise of TEPCO. Eventually, thinking about 311 (11 March) and 411 (one month-anniversary) the poet seems to lose his mind for real:

31132142141114121412232141232221141232142321431242231142214123214123211141
2141214322131142231142231⁸⁰

I firstly tried to identify a logical progression in this sequence of numbers but then I also lost my mind: 311 is easily to ascribe to 11 March; 321 represents one-month anniversary in the past (the poet published this poetry on his Twitter profile during the night between 21 and 22 April, as specified on the social network and then reproduced here in the brackets but not indicated in the collection); 421 is the current date, 21 April; 411 is one-month anniversary from the 11 March catastrophe. And then, I had to surrender: whatever the poet was thinking while typing these numbers on his laptop, will remain a mystery for us - or at least for me. What is amusing here is the challenge which intrigues the reader and the disarming impossibility to read this verse, altogether with a question already seen before: if this can be labeled as poetry, which is the poetical value of this single tweet? My opinion, as briefly stated before, is to look at the poem as a whole, rather than taking into consideration each single tweet/verse. And this example can neither be considered as an exception: there is a number of cases that drives the reader crazy, as in the following poem, almost constituted by the stylistic device of polyptoton seen before:

「切られたくない」と桜「切られたくない」と桜と桜「切られたくない」と桜と桜と桜
「切られたくない」と桜と桜と桜と桜「切られたくない」と桜と桜と桜と桜「切られたく
ない」と桜と桜と桜と桜と桜「切られたくない」と桜と桜と桜と桜と桜と桜

“I do not want to be cut off”, says the cherry tree “I do not want to be cut off” says the cherry tree says the cherry tree
“I do not want to be cut off” says the cherry says the cherry says the cherry “I do not want to be cut off” says the cherry
says the cherry says the cherry says the cherry “I do not want to be cut off” says the cherry says the cherry says the
cherry says the cherry “I do not want to be cut off” says the cherry says the cherry says the cherry says the cherry says

⁸⁰ Wagō, *Shi no mokurei*, p. 75.

These reiterations are symptoms, as seen before, of the constant authorial concern for the fate of Fukushima and its inhabitants. The poet also creates a direct link between *Shi no tsubute* and *Shi no mokurei* thanks to the following verse that clearly resumed a poem already analyzed before, by quoting “*akumame*” (in bold in the text):

私の心には依然として、黒い津波が押し寄せてくる、堤防、家、電信柱、車、道、命、花、窓、畳、様々なものを織り交ぜた、残酷な交響曲第九番が、私を狂わせて、私の詩を破綻へと導く。悪魔め。

(In my heart still, a dark tsunami comes close, levee, houses, telephone pole, cars, streets, lives, flowers, windows, tatami, different things weaved together, a cruel 9th symphony got me mad, leads my poetry to the failure. Devil eyes.)⁸⁵

Wagō’s anxiety for his poetical production he perceived to be destined for the failure also underlines a feeling of discouragement and powerlessness after the catastrophe. The author’s mood is an emotional swing that betrays authorial insecurity for his future. As concerns the analogies with the previous *Shi no tsubute*, a few words should be spent also on the report-alike style of the poems chosen as opening clause for this dissertation on *Shi no mokurei*. Again, Wagō’s *net-poetry* represents a blend of poetical production in a strict sense, thoughts of private daily life and reports from the stricken areas that reveals Wagō’s painstaking expertise.

Likewise, in the case of Tōge Sankichi, even *Shi no mokurei* proposes quotations from another Japanese poet, Miyazawa Kenji, mentioned in the foreword of the collection and even in the first poetry published:

「新たな詩人よ 嵐から雲から光から 新たな透明なエネルギーを得て 人と地球にとるべき形を暗示せよ」宮澤賢治

(A new poet, from the storm, the clouds, the light acquiring a new transparent energy suggests the form people and earth should take. Miyaza Kenji.)⁸⁶

The following alternating wordplay is particularly engaging:

怒 嵐 悲 雲 黙 光 礼

⁸⁵ Wagō, *Shi no mokurei*, p. 51.

⁸⁶ Wagō, *Shi no mokurei*, p. 9. Excerpt from *Seitoshokun ni yoseru* 「生徒諸君に寄せる」 published in the *Morioka chūgakkō kōyūkai zasshi*, 1927.

(Anger storm sorrow clouds silence light gratitude)⁸⁷

Storm, clouds and light are keywords identified in Miyazawa's poem; the other feelings are a genuine expression of Wagō's state of mind: anger, sorrow and finally, *mokurei*, a silent bow, to confirm the trend of using this particular term as the opening-closure of verse; again, Wagō developed a sort of enjambment that connects all poems of the collection. Anyway, no better explanation to this poem can be given than with Wagō's words:

Fukushima was visited by a storm similar to a bad dream that destroyed it. Then, after the disaster and still nowadays, the city is wrapped by heavy clouds. I think it would be wonderful if "Shi no kaikō" could become a light [...] to shine thorough the rift.⁸⁸

anticipating in this way his next poetical work.

And at the end of this *via crucis* around the stricken areas, Wagō does not miss to place emphasis to the active role of his readers. Social media crosses the borders between nationality, ages, genders; so does Wagō's *net-poetry*. This characteristic of his poetical production deserves further discussion that I will provide later. It is worthy to say now that only one limit could prevent the readers from a complete engagement in Wagō's call to Fukushima's recovery: the ignorance about Fukushima region, the danger of radioactivity and the real situation of the evacuated areas. *Shi no mokurei* provides all these information thanks to a poetical wander through the debris with the poet-Wagō as a modern Caronte. He then passed the torch to his readers: the one in charge now is, again from a metonymic perspective, the rest of the world.

世界は永遠の黙礼の準備をし始める

(The world starts the arrangements for the everlasting silent bow)⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Wagō, *Shi no mokurei*, p. 77.

⁸⁸ 「福島は悪夢のような嵐に見舞われて破壊し尽くされたわけです。そして震災後のいまも厚い雲に覆われている。私は『詩の邂逅』が光になってくれればと思うんですが「。」雲の切れ間からでも射し込むことができれば」 Tanaka, Wagō, "Shinsai wa shizuka ni tsuduiteiru", p. 31.

⁸⁹ Wagō, *Shi no mokurei*, p. 159.

『詩の邂逅』 *Shi no kaikō* (“An encounter in poetry”):⁹⁰ the third collection of poetry published by Wagō in 2011 does not share the same evocative appeal of the previous works: although the cover shows the same keywords already encountered - *Daishinsai*, *tsunami*, *genpatsu jikō* (nuclear accident), Twitter - obviously chosen to attract readers’ attention, the whole project reveals a more classical approach to poetry, both in terms of marketing solutions adopted for the graphic impact of the text and its contents. A summary introduces the reader to seven encounters with poetry and Fukushima people: each chapter is actually enriched with a *taiwa*, a conversation with the evacuees from the stricken areas. Wagō interviewed some survivors in a question-and-answer alike corner in the book; the poet took also the chance to tell something more about his experience of that catastrophic day. It must be said it was common for journalists, photographers and even for writers - Sano Shin’ichi and Ishii Kōta just to name a few - to visit the most devastated regions soon after 11 March - especially the surrounding area of the evacuated zones - and to report directly the situation seen with their own eyes. Actually these non-fictional products became so popular on bookshelves to the extent that the readers felt overwhelmed by information, sometimes contrasting one to another with the result to compromise the original intent to tell the true story of 11 March aftermaths. Wagō Ryōichi seemed to follow this approach when he chose to add those interviews to the poetry collection: “Because I felt the urge to let know widely the feelings perceived at Fukushima after the disaster”.⁹¹ He embodies the double role of 3.11 *kataribe* (spokesperson)⁹² who talks about “reality”⁹³ and inquisitor who advocates a human mismanagement at the Fukushima Daiichi; in this way he went beyond his responsibility as a poet, venturing in a territory that is apart from the literary production. The reason beyond this nonfictional shift of Wagō’s writings is, again, the attempt to make more reliable his poetic testimony.

As concerns the poetical production here published, no wonder that reiterations are all the rage again. A faithful reader immediately recognizes in those repetitions Wagō’s trademark, a synonym for his unsolved concern about Fukushima’s situation:

福島に泣く

⁹⁰ 和合亮一、『詩の邂逅』、東京、朝日新聞出版、2011年。Wagō, Ryōichi, *Shi no kaikō*, Tōkyō, Asahi Shinbun Shuppan, 2011.

⁹¹ 「なぜなら震災後の福島で感じていることを、たくさんの方に広く知ってもらわなくてはいけないと実感してきたからです。」 Fujii, Sadakazu, Wagō, Ryōichi, “Me de kiku, mimi de miru”, p. 55.

⁹² Term firstly used by the *hibakusha* writer Hayashi Kyōko. See De Pieri, “Auschwitz, Hiroshima & Nagasaki, Fukushima.”

⁹³ Fujii, Wagō, “Me de kiku, mimi de miru”, p. 54.

福島が泣く
福島と泣く
福島で泣く

福島は私です
福島は故郷です
福島は人生です
福島はあなたです

(Cry in Fukushima
Fukushima cries
Cry with Fukushima
Cry in Fukushima

Fukushima is me
Fukushima is hometown
Fukushima is life
Fukushima is you)⁹⁴

Here is an example taken from the opening poem of the book but actually this poetry became so popular to be printed again in other publications.⁹⁵ Although the original version is quite longer, the value of the apostrophe “Fukushima” should not be underestimated; in the form of reiterated anaphoras, the hometown of the poet is not only a place where to cry but also a city to cry with, eventually a city that cries for its own doom. Here the personification of the hometown is fully realized and stressed by the following verses where the poet specifies that Fukushima is “me, homeland, life, you” in a classical chiasmus. In a word, Fukushima is everybody. Among the devastation post-*Daishinsai* to address Fukushima, a city under radioactivity attack, as “life”, sounds like an oxymoron. Moreover, Wagō’s *net-poetry* exceeded again regional - and even national - boundaries to call into question the wide public of social network users and by opposing the personal pronouns “me” and “you” he also created a certain level of intimacy with his readers. Interesting is also the title given to this poem, 『決意』 *ketsui* (“decision”) which underlines a firm determination of the poet, a motion: to step up and denounce the situation of the evacuees.

⁹⁴ Wagō, *Shi no kaikō*, p. 7. Please note that the original poetry was published in the traditional Japanese style.

⁹⁵ See for example Wagō, Ryōichi, *Shi no terakoya*, Tōkyō, Watanabe Shinten, 2015 and Wagō, Ryōichi, *Wagō Ryōichi ga kataru Fukushima*, Kyōto, Kamogawa Shuppan, 2015.

No particular graphical plays with words are identifiable in this collection, although reiterations occur in the form of alliterations - as in the example just seen - or thumping keywords like in the following example:

父母 元気
春のまごころ
吾妻山の
雪うさぎ 也

河を
行きすぎる
移りゆく
春の水面 也

これは
完璧な春
間違いない気持ちのぬくもり 也
そうして

也
也也 . . .
私たちは鳥の
さえずりを聴くだろう

也也也
故郷也

清らかな
福島
也也也也 . . .
(Mum and dad fine

Spring's sincerity
Azumayama's
Snow bunny be

Go too far
Over the river
Come and go
Spring's water surface be

This
Perfect spring
Warmth of a correct feeling be
Like that

Become become become...
We may
Listen to the twitter of birds

Become become become
Homeland be

Clean
Fukushima
Become become become become ...)96

This poem without title here entirely reproduced offers the chance to investigate the ontological meaning of the term “to become” as a red thread between the lines (verse) - also in the form of epanadiplosis at the beginning and at the end of the verse - as well as a nagging reverberation in Wagō's mind. The importance of being alive assumes for survivors different meanings: sense of gratitude mixed up with guilt, sorrow and mourning for the unluckier victims; desire of coming back home and anxiety for the radioactivity contamination; anger for being evacuated and betrayed about the safety of the Fukushima Power Plant. In this sense Wagō's poetry shows the efforts of reintegrating the self after the catastrophe.⁹⁷

Even quotations from the previous works re-appeared as a constant in Wagō's production, like in the case of 「窓を開けると春になる。」⁹⁸ already analyzed for *Shi no tsubute*.

Trauma is always there, as it was perceived in the previous works: places are suspended out of time, likewise stopped at 2:46 PM, the chronological “zero” for the author. Generally speaking, a certain consciousness about poetic production and the social role Wagō's persona was assuming in the post-3.11 is recognizable in *Shi no kaikō*: even the report-alike poems are at the service of

⁹⁶ Wagō, *Shi no kaikō*, pp. 116-117.

⁹⁷ Robert Lifton interviewed by Cathy, Caruth, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, p. 37.

⁹⁸ Wagō, *Shi no kaikō*, p. 16.

Wagō's commitment to denounce the situation in the stricken areas. The repercussion of the nuclear fallout on the next generations is taken into account several times as a *leitmotiv* to take action and assert Japanese's rights to live in a safe - no nuclear, according to Wagō's point of view - country. The same *Daishinsai*-linked keywords individuated in the past two collections assume here a new nuance: with the aid of rhetorical figures - personification and oxymoron in primis - Wagō improved significantly the level of this literary work. Actually, although the usage of modern terms like Twitter, news media, television and so on in his poetry, the power of nature rules the roost both in its versions of natural catastrophe and possibility for a rebirth, frequently perceived in the seasonal changes. Tamaki Tokita defined as *kizuna* 絆 (bond) the particular connection Wagō's poetry established with nature: the quest for human relationship in dealing with disaster is answered by the poet through his *net-poetry*.⁹⁹

Actually Wagō seems to understand the effects of words in post-3.11 and plays with it to create particular ties among his readers. Wagō's friend Hirai Ken, poet and associate professor at Kwansei Gakuin University, describes his effect as *iwakan* 異和感 (estrangement) which sounds a pretty good definition for Wagō's *net-poetry*.¹⁰⁰

I should spend some words to introduce the fourth - and last - poetic work by Wagō published within a year from the *Daishinsai*. Under the evocative title 『ふたたびの春に』 *Futatabi no haru ni* ("In another spring")¹⁰¹ this collection gathers poetic production that covers a year from March 2011 to March 2012, as stated clearly on the book's cover with the captivating etiquette *shinsai nōto* 「震災ノート」 ("Notes about the disaster"). Although the reader can enjoy new poetry that has never been published before - at least on printed media - the fact that this collection covered March, April and May 2011 again sounds a critical note about authorial - or editorial - choice of including or not some poems in a particular collection. As seen before, *Shi no mokurei* can be interpreted as a spin-off of *Shi no tsubute*: the fil rouge *mokurei* was so significant for Wagō's production in March

⁹⁹ Tamaki, Tokita, The Post-3/11 "Quest for True Kizuna – Shi no Tsubute by Wagō Ryōichi and Kamisama 2011 by Kawakami Hiromi" in *The Asia-Pacific Journal Japan Focus*, col. 13, issue 7, no. 7, <http://apjif.org/2015/13/6/Tamaki-Tokita/4283.html> 2015/8/23.

¹⁰⁰ 平居謙、「自由詩時評 第145回 和合亮一『詩の礫』論2015」、『「詩客」自由詩時評』、<http://blog.goo.ne.jp/siikaryouzannpaku/e/c780c788729fd9bf3eff160b2a2c5b12>, 2015/10/04. Hirai, Ken, "Jiū shi jihyo dai 145 kai Wagō Ryōichi "Shi no tsubute" ron 2015", in *Shikaku* "Jiū shi jihyo", <http://blog.goo.ne.jp/siikaryouzannpaku/e/c780c788729fd9bf3eff160b2a2c5b12>.

¹⁰¹ 和合亮一、『ふたたびの春に』、東京、祥伝社、2012年。Wagō, Ryōichi, *Futatabi no haru ni*, Tōkyō, Shōdensha, 2012.

to deserve a book devoted only to the theme of the “silent bow”. It just begs the question about *Futatabi no haru ni* and the poetry here included. Actually the collection is divided into two sections: the first one reproduces poems organized by titles, with indication about date and circumstances of the production - place, thoughts, ideas of the poet and so on; the other is printed on a grey pattern and provides no information. A third section of the book consists in journal entries, more similar to private memos written by Wagō soon after 11 March.

On a poetical perspective, this collection does not differ from the previous works and does not offer any particular chance to investigate a new trend or technique in Wagō’s *net-poetry*, which actually does not surprise since the majority of the poetic production here published covered the same months of March, April and May 2011 as stated before. Anyway it could be interesting to make a comparison between the journal entries included in the collection and poetry published on Twitter - and then on the printed media - during those days: these memos can provide a detailed description of the circumstances or the background that saw the birth of Wagō’s *net-poetry*, revealing thoughts and ideas that inspired the poetic production. Considering the scale of this task, it justifies a proper research in the future.

4. The construction of a collective memory

It is noteworthy to spend a few words on the editorial marketing decisions which contributed without doubts to Wagō’s success. The first collection of poetry, *Shi no tsubute*, presents a Western-style opening and book’s *obi* (paper wrapper) attracts reader’s attention with images of the stricken areas and keywords like “Fukushima”, “Twitter”, *Kotoba no chikara* 「言葉の力」 (“strength of words”, often repeated in Wagō’s poetry). What is remarkable anyway is the actual layout of the collection, which retrieves tweets along with date and hour information; each day is forwarded by a cover page with a black-and-white photo from the stricken regions, the referential date and a brief list of updates regarding the evacuated areas, news from Fukushima nuclear power plant accident, toll of victims and missing. As far as the reader knows, there is no discernible reason to include this data in the collection since no connection is identifiable between poems and notes. Neither Wagō nor the editor gave explanations about this choice and the following hypothesis are born out of my interpretation.

The attempt to render more reliable the literary production stands to a first coherent motivation. By adding any further information about the *Daishinsai*, photos included, the collection of poems can be considered no more than a text of the imaginative mind of the author only but a documentary

report of events instead, sometimes similar to a private journal, as suggested earlier. The attempt is to transform Wagō's tweets into portraits of the reality of events (read: historical facts) from a poetical perspective but the historical fidelity should not be questioned because sustained by empirical data. The title of the preface, namely *Kotoba no naka no «shinjitsu»* 「言葉の中の＜真実＞」 (“Words in the middle of the truth”) is the umpteenth allusion to the reliability of the artwork in question. These authorial/editorial/marketing solutions contribute to construct Wagō's image as an honest witness who testifies his experience: the prize consists in obtaining the total confidence of his public.

Actually, testimony is not only “l’assertion de la réalité factuelle de l’événement rapporté” but also “la présence du narrateur sur le lieu de l’occurrence”¹⁰² which makes the witness as such, underlining the auto-referential character of Wagō's testimony. But this is not enough: “le témoin demande à être cru. Il ne se borne pas à dire : “J’y étais”, il ajoute : “Croyez-moi.”¹⁰³ This editorial strategy can also be interpreted as the desire to establish an emphatic relation between the author and his readers in so far that any detailed information about the *Daishinsai* is capable of catapulting the reader in the evacuated zones: even someone who lived abroad at the moment of the disaster and was not well-informed about Japanese 11 March has at his disposal all the necessary data to develop his own opinion about the *Daishinsai* and, in particular, the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi. As an immediate consequence, the reader is transformed from a no more passive subject who assists to events to an active agent instead, ignited to effectively take any action. This call is echoed every time Wagō's tweets/poems mention the second singular person *anata* (you), not always related to his beloved family but often addressed to the reader personally, and the first plural person “we” in all its variants (*watashitachi*, *wareware*,...), by shifting the trope from himself to the “others”. This direct appeal to the public takes often the shape of an inquiry, a question or even an invitation to participate in the literary production: Wagō's *net-poetry* assumes in this case the connotation of a “shared literature”, a literary production born from authorial traumatic experience but flourished thanks to users' encouragement to the extent that users themselves are suggested to contribute to Wagō's production, like in the following example:

あなたにとって

「詩を書くために必要なこと」とは何ですか

どうか

¹⁰² Ricœur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, p. 204.

¹⁰³ Ricœur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, p. 205.

続きをお願いします おやすみなさい...

2013年3月23日 23:50

(For you/ “To write poetry you need” what?/please, continue [doing poetry] somehow/goodnight)¹⁰⁴

The traumatic but private experiences of the poet become a collective suffering, a grief mourned by many, underlining the passage from the intimate sphere of the poet to a Japanese and even a universal one.

The same intention can be identified in the reasons under the busy schedule of Wagō Ryōichi, weekly updated with new events, conferences or symposium the poet attends to share his testimony and read some selected poems. All these occasions, generally related to the anti-nuclear movements or the *Daishinsai* commemorations, represent the perfect stage to perform in front of an audience his poetic production, as well as the chance to bring into play the public itself. Eventually, these literary performances encourage Japanese *ganbarism* (Japanese attitude to endure hardship)¹⁰⁵ and intend to be provocative by suggesting a revival of Japanese national spirit. It must be said that Wagō’s patriotism was born before the 11 March catastrophe but notably increased along with the nuclear crisis in Fukushima prefecture.¹⁰⁶ During his performances the poet puts emphasis on particular verses of his poems: physical gesture, facial expressions, unusual tones of voice are often supported by incidental music to fascinate and intrigue the public under the keywords “Fukushima” and “*furusato*”. Eventually, these literary performances took also the shape of proper printed media, like in the case of the already quoted *Wagō Ryōichi ga kataru Fukushima* (“Fukushima narrated by Wagō Ryōichi”, published in 2015 but performed in 2013).¹⁰⁷

Of course, Wagō’s relevance as a public figure increased hand-to-hand with the appearance of his publications in the bookstores. To say he deliberately took advantage of the *Daishinsai* to promote himself as a contemporary Japanese author would probably be unfair; notwithstanding it is a fact that his poetry became popular - even internationally - only after 11 March. Abe Kazushige reassumed it very well in a crosstalk with other authors in the *Waseda Bungaku* 2012 issue:

¹⁰⁴ Please take note that this example, chosen as the best representative, belongs to 2013 production of the author. Source: Wagō’s Twitter profile at <https://twitter.com/wago2828>

¹⁰⁵ Gebhardt and Masami, *Literature and Art after Fukushima*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ 大友良英、『クロニクルFUKUSHIMA』、東京、青土社、2011。Otomo Yoshihide, *Purojekuto Fukushima*, Tōkyō, Seidosha, 2011, pp. 260-313.

¹⁰⁷ I should add that Wagō’s activism is manifested often on radio programs, especially on radio Fukushima.

Even in the case of Wagō, the fact he lives in Fukushima didn't mean anything [until now] but since his poetry itself originates from the stricken areas now his poetry can't be apart from those zones: one can say it is like a full monty born from the context."¹⁰⁸

Similar considerations about a non-serious, carefree usage of words (言葉軽く) and preference for a great number of followers (多数派志向) were addressed by the poet Arakawa Yōji who argued Wagō's unconsciousness (無意識) in writing poetry about the disaster:

Wagō and others, poets of the disaster's poetry: didn't they unconsciously prefer "the great numbers"? There's a meaning in the fact that words of poetry penetrate profoundly and sharply a limited number of people. If all poets prefer "the great number", words will be pleasantly loved on the surface; there's a danger in making little of words pronounced after profoundly thinking.¹⁰⁹

Despite this controversy, Wagō's success among the public should be recognized. It is worthy to mention that *Shi no tsubute* saw its translation into the French *Jets de Poèmes* in 2017, which actually won the inaugural Prix de poesie de la revue Nunc on the ground that "poetic language was profound even under the tragic circumstances regarding the Fukushima nuclear accident."¹¹⁰

Perhaps to balance the first passionate/patriotic approach to poetry shown in the first collection, the third collection, *Shi no kaikō* appeared as more sober. Book's cover reports title and author in big type, with the only nuances of grey and yellow on the background. Even the *obi* does not show

¹⁰⁸ 「和合さんの場合にしても彼が福島に住んでは特別な意味を持たなかったけれど、被災地であるそこから詩を発信しているということ自体が、いまや彼の詩と切り離せないパッケージとしてコンテクストを産んでいるとも言えるわけでしょう。」阿部和重、川上未映子、斎藤環、辛島ダヴィッド、市川誠、「震災と「フィクション」との「距離」、『震災とフィクションの距離』、東京、早稲田文学回、2012年。Abe, Kazushige, Kawakami, Mieko, Saitō, Tamaki, Kawashima, David, Ichikawa, Makoto, "Shinsai" to "fikushon" to no "kyori" in *Shinsai to fikushon no kyori*, Tōkyō, Waseda bungakukai, 2012, p. 237.

¹⁰⁹ 「和合さんら震災詩の書き手は無意識に「多数派」を志向していなかったか。詩の言葉は少数の人に深く鋭く入っていくことに意味がある。詩人がみな多数派を志向したら、表面的な心地よい言葉が愛され、深く考えて発せられた言葉が軽んじられる危険がある。」藤井貞和、荒川洋治、「詩人は社会とどう向き合うか震災・原発事故」、『ブック・アサヒ・コム』、2013年09月11日。Fujii, Sadakazu, Arakawa Yōji, "Shijin wa shakai to dou mukiauka? Shinsai, genpatsu jiko", in Book Asahi, March, 11, 2013, <http://book.asahi.com/booknews/interview/2013091200002.html>.

¹¹⁰ Kyodo, "Fukushima poet Ryoichi Wago wins French award for tweets issued on 2011 disasters" in *Japan Times*, June, 23, 2017 <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/23/national/fukushima-poet-ryoichi-wago-wins-french-award-for-tweets-issued-on-2011-disasters/#.WYx9zK17GRs>

fundamental information: the references to the three-fold catastrophe and Twitter are only indicative of the themes addressed in the book. The popularity of the author is well-established, as to say, this collection does not need any captivating image because it is a text that “sells itself”. Even the internal format mirrors this change in style: a Japanese-opening book with a selection of tweets already composed to form poems, without any information regarding date and hours of publication. The fact that Wagō’s *net-poetry* saw its birth on Twitter, is taken for granted. By contrast, the collection is divided into eight chapters preceded by a poem and followed by two poems plus *atogaki* (afterward). Each chapter presents two poems of medium length, the second one arranged in increasing order by roman numbers and entitled *kaikō* to underline a progression of encounters with poetry - or disaster, or both. Each chapter, moreover, concludes with a *taiwa*, as mentioned before: brief essays on different topics, all entitled “A certain...” to stress the atmosphere of insecurity post-3.11.

Likewise, *Shi no mokurei*'s editorial format shows a similar approach, although the *obi* shares a suggestive image of the poet surrounded by nothing - that nothing to which the author offers his “silent bow”. This evocative photo of Wagō looking at a stricken and abandoned Touhoku area speaks for itself: the poet himself belongs to the devastated regions of the *Daishinsai*, and he, himself, was psychologically devastated on that day; this is reason enough for trusting his words, even when they take the shape of poetical expression. A watchful gaze on the *obi*'s photo reflects also the rarefied atmosphere of mourning and sorrow which gives a glimpse of collection's contents. The inner layout of the book shows a flow of long poems, one after the other, without any titles or indications of chapters: the text is interspersed only with black and white images, as small as the one in *Shi no tsubute*, to let the reader take a breath between different poems - or eventually be more shocked by the visual materials. These images represent a *memento* of 3.11, a transposition into icons of what the poet described in his poetry under the common term *mokurei*, “silent bow” which appears in every poem and serves as an enjambment to connect each single poetical production.

These three collections of poems by Wagō Ryōichi can, according to Tachibana's perspective, be addressed as works of *Trümmerliteratur* as far as they evoke, even literally, the ruins of Fukushima region soon after the *Daishinsai*. *Shi no tsubute* represents the encounter with catastrophe; *Shi no mokurei* establishes a relation with the deceased and *Shi no kaikō* brings back a glimmer of hope by reporting the interviews with survivors.¹¹¹ This kind of therapeutic step-by-step path throw

¹¹¹ Genyū Sōkyū, Wagō, Ryōichi, Akasaka Norio, *Hisaichi kara tou kono kuni no katachi*, p. 123.

Fukushima debris follows Miyazawa Kenji's *Seitoshokun ni yoseru* by attributing the keywords "storm, clouds, light" to the three poetical collections. Wagō's stylistic choice reveals the real meaning the poet attributes to poetry itself: as a *gen no hashi* 「言の橋」 ("bridge of words")¹¹² it is responsibility of the poetry - and by extension, of the authors - to tell Fukushima's truth.¹¹³

Every time a town is taken into account by the poet, his trauma, profoundly eradicated into those lands, is unearthed: this makes clear the efforts Wagō is putting into the recovery of his *furusato*, also trying to engage active participation of his public - both in terms of online users and audience at events. By restoring his *furusato*, Wagō also hopes to restore his life: his home in Sōma, collapsed; his family, broken up in the security zones; his daily routine, shocked by the earthquake first and by the nuclear meltdown later. These metaphors between the poet and the *Daishinsai* represent the main themes of Wagō's poetry but also reflect the common situation of the evacuees for whom Wagō acts as a spokesperson. The merit of his *net-poetry* is to have overcome regional and even national barriers to reach people all around the world but it is Wagō's poetical approach that transformed a private testimony which revokes the *Daishinsai* memories daily to a collective experience that demands for a joined force to restore Fukushima from its rubble:

Poetry has always the power to make a revolution happen, although little. In reality, what would be contemporary poetry without commitment, without fighting?¹¹⁴

Wagō embodies the moral commitment of the witness and feels the urge to set in motion his *net-poetry* aiming at the catharsis of the *Daishinsai* by relying on everything to the power of poetry, the scapegoat to sacrifice. His poetical production is the manifestation of a gradual transition from what in psychological term is defined as "abreactive catharsis" to the "catharsis of integration";¹¹⁵ the first, described as a state of desperation and self-blame accompanied by episodes of angry outbursts - as noticed especially in the first poetical collection of the author, *Shi no tsubute*; the latter corresponding to a release of pain against the emotional numbness (alexithymia) which represents one of the most common traumatic symptoms. Wagō's poetry is then the resilient struggle to defeat

¹¹² Genyū Sōkyū, Wagō, Ryōichi, Akasaka Norio, *Hisaichi kara tou kono kuni no katachi*, pp. 124-125.

¹¹³ Genyū Sōkyū, Wagō, Ryōichi, Akasaka Norio, *Hisaichi kara tou kono kuni no katachi*, pp. 134.

¹¹⁴ 「死には、小さくても革命を起こす力が必ずある。現実にはコミットメントせず、戦わず、何が現代詩でしようか。」 Fujii, Sadakazu, Wagō, Ryōichi, "Me de kiku, mimi de miru", p. 59.

¹¹⁵ Dayton, Tian, *Trauma and Addiction. Ending the Cycle of Pain through Emotional Literacy*, Florida, Health Communications Inc. Publishing, 2000, p. 296.

the emotional illiteracy whose recollections, thoughts, perceptions, dreams and dissociative flashbacks are only a few examples, majestically portrayed in Wagō's *net-poetry*. Obviously, author's life orbits 11 March as a dramatic moment, the turning point that changed his life. And his *net-poetry* represents, in the foucaultian perspective, the *parrhesia* par excellence:

In parrhesia, the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of self-interest and moral apathy.¹¹⁶

Wagō's free speech that tells the truth, the reality, the Story in which to place trust. Although it is impossible to ignore the power of persuasion that Wagō's *net-poetry* entails, as a matter of fact by remaining on site after 11 March and by sharing his poetry on the socials, the author revealed the choice to speak - against silence; to welcome criticism - against flattery; to face death daily - instead of escaping to safer zones. In short, he chose moral commitment instead of apathy.

Wagō's *net-poetry* presents the author like a reliable witness. His poetical production capture a 360° overview of 3.11 aftermath in the Touhoku region, especially focusing the attention on the evacuated areas surrounding the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant and the fear for radioactivity contamination in those zones. Authorial testimony assumes a poetic form, whose lyricism does not question the credibility of his first-hand experience, eventually stressed by the association with report-alike tweets and interviews (*taiwa*) with evacuees. Despite the publication ex-post on printed media, it should be kept in mind that the *net-poetry* takes advantage of the network of web users to trespass any geographical and nationality boundaries in order to reach a worldwide audience and, in so doing, transforming the 3.11 catastrophe and radioactivity problem in global concern for future generations.

¹¹⁶ Foucault, Michel, *Fearless Speech*, Cambridge, MitPress, 2001, pp. 19-20.

The spirit of the nuclear power plant: Genyū Sōkyū

1. Meditation upon the radioactive fallout

The next stop of this literary inquiry requires moving from Fukushima to the city of Miharu, about 40 km away from the Fukushima power plant. This is the location of the Fukujūji temple presided by the chief priest Genyū Sōkyū (玄侑宗久, Miharu, 1956) whose literary works bear stark testimony of the *Daishinsai* in different ways. Actually, Genyū felt the urge to publish soon after 11 March a number of brief essays and articles about the ongoing catastrophe. This production appeared even daily on his official website and on printed media too.¹¹⁷ Among them, a particular publication stands out for its argumentative force in denouncing the precarious condition of the evacuees in the places of refuge and the climate of fear that characterized the city of Miharu as well as other minor towns near the Fukushima Daiichi. The book, entitled *Fukushima ni ikiru* 『福島に生きる』 (“Living in Fukushima”)¹¹⁸ was published by Futaba Shinsho in December 2011 and consists in four chapters divided into smaller paragraphs which reveal the attempt to categorize the different topics handled in the book. Nevertheless, the author appears to come back on the same themes again and again during the writing, sometimes adding details, news and information. This restless repetition of a few topoi unveils unsolved matters which represent a cause for concern for the author and to which he himself is trying to dedicate the testimonial activity. For these reasons I prefer to analyse the work as a whole, by re-organising the topics exposed following similar patterns in order to clarify the main subjects Genyū proposed to reader’s attention.

As a preliminary remark, this literary work is surprising for the impossibility to fell into any literary categories: it is not a novel, although the rapid pace and engaging narration of the first pages can cheat the reader in this sense:

¹¹⁷ Genyū, Wagō, Akasaka, *Hisaichi kara you kono kuni no katachi*, p. 40. Actually, an outstanding archive of essays can be found on the official site of the author, at the address <http://www.genyusokyu.com/essay05/essai.htm>. Here all articles are collected by years and titles; a quick look reveals immediately the huge amount of essays on the radioactivity trope, among which the serial *Hōshanō to kurasu* 「放射能と暮らす」 (“Living with radiation”) is worth mentioning. As many of these brief productions were then conveyed in a more articulated printed book, to avoid any futile repetitions I rather focus the attention on the printed media.

¹¹⁸ 玄侑宗久、『福島に生きる』、双葉、双葉新書、2011年。Genyū, Sōkyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, Futaba, Futaba Shinsho, 2011.

The quake came shaky. I had just thought it would have finished soon, as always, when suddenly a great shake succeeded swaying everything from right to left. 10 seconds, 20 seconds, 30 seconds..... it lasted for a long time, anyway.

It was anew: a quake I have never experienced before.

“What!?”

I really felt like the building was torn off by the hands of a giant. Moreover, the building for the exclusive use of the *seitai* practice was a simple structure like a prefab hut so the fear that it might have crushed [shaking] in that way, passed by in my mind. Normally, if there's a quake at the temple I just wait inside the building that the shake stops; but this time I felt it was unwise.

I felt the danger for myself; I rushed out quickly in front of the building with the *seitai* master. For the violent quake, the cars parked on standby jumped up like real living creatures, making a “bang, bang”; the two cars which were side by side collided making noisy for a while.

There's no doubt this is serious - that moment I knew; I paid the bill, I jumped upon my car and I moved toward the Fukujūji temple, which is also my home. It isn't a normal quake, maybe the temple's building could be affected by some damages too. No, supposing the temple is fine, will be my family all right?¹¹⁹

It is neither a mere documentary report of events although the great number of information captured from newspapers, television and direct interviews with the evacuees, a characteristic that betrays authorial intention to claim this work as a journalistic inquiry:

¹¹⁹ 「グラグラッと地震がきた。いつものようにすぐ収まるだろう、そう思った途端、突然、ユッサユッサと右に左に大きな揺れが襲った。10秒、20秒、30秒.....とにかく長かった。これまでに体験したのない新しい揺れだった。「なんだ、これは!?’まるで巨人の手で、建物が引きちぎられるような気がした。しかも整体専用のその建物はプレハブ小屋のような簡素な造りだったので、このまま押し潰されてしまうのではないか、そんな不安が頭の中をよぎった。普通にお寺での地震であれば、建物の中で揺れが収まるのを待つだけだが、この時それではマズイような気がした。私は身の危険を感じ、整体師の彼と一緒に急いで表に飛び出しました。激しい揺れで駐車中の車がまるで生き物のようにバンバン跳ね上がり、隣り合って駐車していた2台がしばらく音をたててぶつかり合っていた。これがたいへんなことが起こるに違いない、そう直感し、急いで料金を払い、車に飛び乗って自宅でもある福聚寺に向かった。尋常でない揺れだし、寺の建物にも何らかの被害が出ているかもしれない。いや、仮に建物は無事だったとしても、家族は無事だろうか？」

Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, pp. 8-9.

Precisely on March, 16, in Fukushima city a radiation amount of $18.4 \mu\text{Sv}$ was observed for instance, in one hour. This is about 460 times the normal amount per hour. Then, the Disaster Countermeasure Office of Fukushima Prefecture announced that even from the tap-water, for instance per 1 kg of water, the unusual, incredible radioactive iodine was detected for 177 Bq and cesium for 58 Bq.¹²⁰

Definitely this *Fukushima ni ikiru* can be considered as a nonfictional production which gives wide space to Genyū's considerations about, above all, the concern for radiations, underlining authorial double stances as author and possible victim of radioactivity exposure who shares with Miharū's citizens the same worries for Fukushima Daiichi nuclear meltdown. Moreover, his vocation as a Buddhist priest emerges anytime he approaches survivors and reflects about the meaning of life in the *Daishinsai's* aftermath.

As seen before in the first quote, the narration starts with a first-personal account of what happened in Miharū on 11 March, where the earthquake and its aftershocks were registered between *shindo* 5 and 6;¹²¹ the writing does not spare any details about the surrounding areas and the damage experienced by other temples. A literary technique definable as stream of consciousness characterized this first description, contributing to the gripping reading of the story: the overture of *Fukushima ni ikiru* has the merit to engage the reader in the events to the extent that it is easy to imagine the earth trembling, the cars in the parking lot collapsing and the air reverberating of quake's echo.

Then, almost suddenly, the voiceover changes tone and his approach becomes more scientific: detailed information are reported about tsunami (Example 1) along with official communications about the Fukushima Daiichi meltdown (Example 2). A note should be addressed to the accuracy of date and time of the news and the governmental sources, which are quoted most of the time. Notwithstanding, there is also a number of cases in which the author shows a lack in mentioning accurately the source, like in the examples that follow (後で聞いた話):

(Example 1) Moreover, a tsunami warning for the coastline of Fukushima Prefecture was officially announced. The announcer was repeating that all people living along the

¹²⁰ 「3月16日の時点で、福島市では1時間あたり $18.4 \mu\text{Sv}$ の放射線量が観測された。これは通常時のおよそ460倍である。また水道水からも通常ではありえない放射性のヨウ素が水1kgあたり177Bq、セシウムが58Bq検出されたと、福島県災害対策本部は発表した。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 29.

¹²¹ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 58.

coastline should evacuate to high ground due to the danger of a big wave of almost three meter-high approaching. *According to what I heard lately*, at that time in Iwate Prefecture and Fukushima Prefecture it was the same high of three meters but in Miyagi Prefecture the tsunami warning was for six meter-high.¹²²

(Example 2) March, 14. About 11 AM: a great explosion occurred in the third reactor of the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant; the nuclear reactor was blown off. Still, the second nuclear reactor's fuel rod disclosed, its cooling facility stopped.¹²³

Anyway Genyū deserves the credit to have made clear the difference between *hōshanō* 放射能 (radioactivity) and *hōshasei busshitsu* 放射性物質 (radioactivity substance) with the immediate consequence to stress the contrast between the radioactivity contamination of the environment and the “*naibu hibaku*” 「内部被曝」¹²⁴ - what Wagō defined elsewhere as *seishinteki hibaku* 精神的被曝 (radioactivity of the soul)¹²⁵ - a form of radioactivity contagion of people and animals that, in the most extreme cases, can lead to the *genbakushō* 原爆症, the radioactivity sickness responsible for the death of thousands after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Again, Fukushima nuclear crisis brings to new light Japan's *genbaku* past: the bridge that connects Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Fukushima is represented by the *hibakusha*, victims of radioactivity exposure, although of different nature. The “*naibu hibaku*” was also the main cause for the refusal to sell Fukushima prefecture's vegetables and fruits, highly demanded before 11 March but rejected after the news of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear fallout. Actually the second chapter of Genyū's book opens with a brief description of Miharū to switch to one of the most compelling remark the author addresses to governmental disposition of evacuation, that is: the evacuation areas were

¹²² 「しかも福島県の沿岸部には津波警報が発令され、高さ3m以上の津波が押し寄せる危険があるので、沿岸部にお住まいの方は高台に避難してください、とアナウンサーが繰り返し告げている。後で聞いた話では、この時岩手県は福島県と同じく3mだったが、宮城県には6mの津波警報が出ていた。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 10, my italics.

¹²³ 「3月14日 午前11時頃、福島第一原発3号機で大きな爆発が起こり、原子炉建屋が吹き飛んだ。また2号機の燃料棒が露出し、冷却機能が止まった。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 26.

¹²⁴ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 82.

¹²⁵ 和合亮一、「福島から考える言葉の力」、『震災日本話どこへ行く。東浩紀の対談集。ニコ生思想地図コンプリート』、東京、Genron、2013年。Wagō, Ryōichi, “Fukushima kara kangaeru kotoba no chikara” in *Shinsai Nippon wa doko he iku. Azuma Hiroki no taidanshū. Niko namashisō chijl conpuriito*, Tōkyō, Genron, 2013, p. 23.

decreed for a radius of 20-30 km from the power plant but what about who lived among 30-40 km from the Fukushima Daiichi? In other words, how to consider the role of wind and rain followed 11 March in the process of the diffusion of radioactivity substances in the air, then deposited on the ground, on people and their belongings, even on the debris, let to rot for the following months?¹²⁶ Genyū's concern about what he defined as "*kudamono no tengoku*" 「くだものの天国」 ("Fruit paradise")¹²⁷ expresses the delusion for the climate of falsehood that blustered in the following months of March 2011 involving government, TEPCO and Japanese mass media.

Actually, this concern for the "*naibu hibaku*" involved Fukushima evacuees too, who were judged as "contaminated" and labeled as *hibakusha*.¹²⁸ Cruel was the case of a child from Minamisoma evacuated along with his family to Chiba prefecture. The heavy slander "You're infected by radioactivity!"¹²⁹ resulted in a new change of residence by the family, back to Fukushima city. To this point, thought-provoking is the label suggested by Kawamura Minato: "*genpatsu jipushii*" 「原発ジプシー」 ("gypsy of the nuclear power plant"), a clear reference to the roaming style of life the "new" *hibakusha* were forced to accept.¹³⁰ Another case, which deserves a mention, is the one of middle school students: "As for us, we could never marry a man from Tōkyō, right?"¹³¹ This is the first path which leads to *sabetsu* 差別, the social discrimination that involved Hiroshima and Nagasaki *hibakusha* in the 1950s and it was recently denounced even by Wagō Ryōichi on his Twitter profile by the words "*genpatsu hinanjo ijime*" 「原発避難所いじめ」 ("bullying the safety zones of the nuclear power plant").¹³² Genyū also points out that although full-body examinations were put in place in the last months of 2011, no one knows when the radiation sickness, in the form of cancer, would appear. This is one of the terrible consequences claimed by Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims too: the fear that every day could be the last one.

¹²⁶ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 57 and the following.

¹²⁷ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 53.

¹²⁸ I must stress the homophony between the atomic bombing victims and the Fukushima victims. Further comparisons can be found in Dudden, Alexis, "The Ongoing Disaster" in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 71, no. 2, 2012, pp. 345-359.

¹²⁹ 「放射能がうつる！」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 99.

¹³⁰ 川村湊、『震災・原発文学論』、東京、インパクト出版社、2013年。Kawamura, Minato, *Shinsai-genpatsu bungakuron*, Tōkyō, Impact Shuppankai, 2013, p. 73.

¹³¹ 「私たちって、東京の人なんかとは結婚したりできないんだよね。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 139.

¹³² Link available to the original tweet <https://twitter.com/wago2828/status/801770140136148996>, 2017/2/23.

Nevertheless, Genyū clarifies that further investigations will be done on Fukushima area in 2040,¹³³ although there is no solid evidence that a particular cancer decease can be correlated to a direct effect of Fukushima Daiichi 2011 fallout. Radioactivity is a difficult enemy to identify because odourless, colourless, tasteless. And moreover, it lasts for years.

The priest anyway refused to accept the invitation his wife received to escape to the safe Kansai region.¹³⁴ The responsibility for the rituals at the temple convinced Genyū to remain in loco and to take care of whom asked to accompany the victims in their last journey: “I took the resolution [to stay] “together along with the temple.”¹³⁵ Authorial spirit of abnegation emerges: the writer voluntarily acts as a spokesperson for Fukushima evacuees. His active commitment let the author contribute also in the *Mishō purojekuto* 「実生プロジェクト」 (“Seedling Project”),¹³⁶ an initiative which aims to protect children by monitoring radioactivity exposition regularly.

One of the most problematic consequences of 3.11 was, according to the author, the high number of suicides that reached the quote of five during spring 2011 in the only Miharū area, with an increment of 40% compared to 2010;¹³⁷ a phenomenon Genyū attributes to the fear of radiation: “I had the feeling that it was also due to media’s responsibility.”¹³⁸ Genyū’s statement clearly refers again to the ambiguous attitude shown by Japanese government and media in reporting the real situation at Fukushima Daiichi and summerized by the expression *anzen shinwa* 「安全神話」 (“myth that something is completely safe”).¹³⁹ Especially the hazardous reiteration that the nuclear accident “is not a level which affects directly human health.”¹⁴⁰ was proved wrong once the Fukushima fallout was compared to the one of Chernobyl.¹⁴¹ This doubtful situation was questioned even by a mail the author received from a professor at Tōkyō University whose name is protected by anonymity. The contents regarded a translation of studies conducted by a team at the University

¹³³ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 141.

¹³⁴ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 59.

¹³⁵ 「寺と共に」という覚悟を決めた。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 63.

¹³⁶ Genyū, Wagō, Akasaka, *Hisaichi kara you kono kuni no katachi*, p. 8.

¹³⁷ Genyū, Wagō, Akasaka, *Hisaichi kara you kono kuni no katachi*, p. 86.

¹³⁸ 「私はそこにメディアの責任もあるような気がした。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 64.

¹³⁹ 鎌田東二、玄侑宗久、『原子力と宗教—日本人への問い』、東京、角川出版、2012年。Kamata, Tōji, Genyū, Sōkyū, *Genshiryoku to shūkyō - Nihonjin he no toi*, Tōkyō, Kadokawa Shuppan, 2012, p. 38.

¹⁴⁰ 「ただちに健康に影響するのレベルではない。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 62.

¹⁴¹ The accident got officially a level 7 in the classification of the International Nuclear Event Scale, the worst since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

of Seattle about Fukushima radioactivity contamination,¹⁴² one mail that clearly fomented the accuse against Japanese government and the corrupted Japanese academic establishment, accomplice to have fostered economic interests beyond the development of the “*genpatsu mura*” 「原発村」 (literally: “nuclear village”),¹⁴³ the housing complex of economic enterprises and public services built in the surroundings of the nuclear power plants. Moreover, while Miyagi and Iwate prefectures, despite the heavy damages undergone due to the earthquake and tsunami, can think about a *fukkō* 復興 (reconstruction)¹⁴⁴ so does not Fukushima prefecture which has to deal with the radioactivity contamination for the next decades.

Genyū was not the only one to choose to stay in Miharu after 11 March: the shortage of gasoline and petroleum obliged many to reside in the area while others chose to remain because old, weak or both. A sort of “*carità del natio loco*”¹⁴⁵ mentioned by Gianluca Ligi can be perceived in this decision and it is confirmed by the presence of pets and farmed animals to feed and care about.¹⁴⁶ It is a matter of identity, explained the author in a crosstalk with Kanata Tōji:¹⁴⁷ to leave everything behind equates, to some extent, to give up a part of the self in the past and to find a new place for a new start is not so easy especially if it implies to recover one’s smashed identity. These considerations were on the agenda of the *Fukkō kōsō kaigi* 復興構想会議 (“Meeting for the planning of the reconstruction”), a meeting organised in Tōkyō on 14 October, among relevant personalities from Fukushima, Iwate and Miyagi prefectures; Genyū Sōkyū made also his appearance on behalf of the Fukushima region. Although to talk about the nuclear accident was not a topic of interest of everybody at the conference - a fact that set off author’s anger (“My brain burnt for the anger “for what purpose” “for what meaning” “how” I repeated questioning to myself “)¹⁴⁸ - a plan for the reconstruction seemed not possible without taking into consideration

¹⁴² Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, pp. 80-84.

¹⁴³ I quote the definition from Paul Jobin: “Depuis le mi-mars 2011 l’expression de *genpatsu mura* 原発村 a sourest désigné les connivences coupable entre le sociétés d’électricité, la NISA [Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency], le METI [Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry] et nombre d’élus du Jimintō 自民党 (Parti libéral démocrate, PLD).” Jobin, Paul, “Qui est protégé par la radioprotection?” in *Ebisu*, 47, 2012, p. 125.

¹⁴⁴ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁵ This expression means the attachment to one’s land, house and belongings. Ligi, Gianluca, *Antropologia dei disastri*. Roma, Laterza, 2009, p. 76.

¹⁴⁶ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, pp. 73-74.

¹⁴⁷ Kamata and Genyū, *Genshiryoku to shūkyō - Nihonjin he no toi*, p. 65.

¹⁴⁸ 「私は怒りに熱くなった頭で「何のために」「どんな意味があつて」「どうやって」と自問にもならぬ自問を繰り返したのである。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 110.

radioactivity contamination. In particular, as mentioned before, the problem concerning the “*naibu hibaku*” of animals. Considered to be members of the family, cows, pigs, chickens were also the main source of income of many Fukushima families - the region has always been known to be a flourish area for cultivation and breeding. The governmental disposition for evacuation anyway stressed the urge to abandon those animals, destined to rot to death. Sometimes, after ensuring their contamination, they were killed by euthanasia by NPO organizations.¹⁴⁹ Here Genyū makes his provocative statement by comparing animals to human beings:

Since they, are perhaps radioactive [内部被曝をしている] one can't let cows live; so, what about human beings who are probably radioactive? [...] The danger of radioactivity it's the same as for cows.¹⁵⁰

This provoking stance does not suggest a similar treatment for human beings, scrambling to add the author; it wants to stress only that cows are a gift from God¹⁵¹ and as living creatures deserve to live. In this context the comment frequently heard in Miharu's area: “It is exactly as Auschwitz”¹⁵² appears as no surprising at all.

Genyū is also particularly accurate in describing a plenty of problems Fukushima refugees had to face soon after the governmental evacuation of the surrounding areas of the power plant. After the earthquake and the violent tsunami - author said - heavy snow stole the life of those who had no gasoline to evacuate or were too old and weakened to survive even in the safety zones. In these regards, Genyū is particularly strict in denouncing the inadequacy of school gyms and public places for the evacuees, he himself visited, especially in terms of personal hygiene. Although the widespread mistrust among the refugees in realizing that a Buddhist priest was coming to visit the guests (“We don't need Buddhism!”),¹⁵³ someone showed gratitude for the meeting and Genyū made use of these encounters to develop critical considerations of governmental aids to the victims.

¹⁴⁹ Genyū, Wagō, Akasaka, *Hisaichi kara you kono kuni no katachi*, p. 97.

¹⁵⁰ 「内部被曝しているかもしれないから、牛が生かせておけない、とするなら、内部被曝しているかも知れない人間はどうなのか。[...] 内部被曝の危険性は牛同様なのである。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 138.

¹⁵¹ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 132.

¹⁵² 「まるでアウシュヴィッツですよ」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 330.

¹⁵³ 「別に仏教はいりません」 玄侑宗久、「生き方の問われる日々」、『Sanga Japan 震災と祈りPRAY IN THE DISASTER, vol. 6』、東京、2011年。Genyū, Sōkyū, “Ikikata no towareru hibi” in *Samgha Japan. Shinsai to inori PRAY IN THE DISASTER*, vol. 6, Tōkyō, Samgha Shuppan, 2011, p. 77.

For those who took advantage of these refuges, in addition to the absence of privacy, the community life in constant close contact with other evacuees did not help in preventing the diffusion of different forms of influenza. This situation is described in details under the title *Samusa ni furueru hisaishatachi* 「寒さに震える被災者たち」 (“The victims trembling for the cold”).¹⁵⁴ One more problem shared by the evacuees was the seek for a job: “Radioactivity is scaring, so let’s run away. But one need a job to live.”¹⁵⁵ commented to himself the author. Another thorny topic was the one concerning the “*kodokushi*” 「孤独死」 or “lonely death”: the difficulty to approach other people, the absence of job and the precariousness of life in safe houses led a lot of *Daishinsai* survivors - mostly men - to alcohol abuse and to die alone: a death sometimes discovered after weeks.¹⁵⁶

Notwithstanding, Genyū shares the admiration that worldwide media shown for the community spirit of Japanese people able to share meals together without even fighting. Although this attitude was also criticized to be apathetic or even heartless towards the mass toll the *Daishinsai* left behind, in reality this perception mistook the expression of composure of people used to mourn in private. Moreover, the Buddhist perspective of *mujō* well summarises Japanese habits, costume and mindset based on the concept of frailty of life. Actually the third chapter of Genyū’s book entitled *Tōkyō kara mita “Fukushima”* 「東京から見た「フクシマ」」 (“Fukushima seen from Tōkyō”)¹⁵⁷ explores in details Genyū’s considerations on this topics, sharing a prior observation about the meaning of *mujō*:

In the past, when I was asked about “what is the meaning of life” it happened to me to answer: “To enjoy the frailty of life [無常] by surrendering oneself to its great flow.

But for whom is facing directly a so considerable trial, there’s no doubt *mujō* is harsh to the point of being pierced.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, pp. 35-37.

¹⁵⁵ 「放射能が怖いから逃げよう。でも生活のためには働けなければならない。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 46.

¹⁵⁶ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, pp. 90-93.

¹⁵⁷ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, pp. 95-156.

¹⁵⁸ 「私は以前、「生きていく意味は何か」と訊かれて、「大いなる命の流れに身を任せながら、無常を楽しむことだ」と申し上げたことがある。しかし、これほど大きな試練に直面している人たちにとって、無常とは身を切るほど厳しいものに違いなかった。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 71.

In other words, Genyū argued that the faith in *mujō* perspective can help Fukushima to recover: the city, besieged by the invisible enemy of radiation, cannot hope to return as it was before 11 March - as many other authors, included Wagō Ryōichi, wish. It can aim to rebirth, to create a new better future. Albeit a recovery of the city can be achieved, so does not the one of its reputation, damaged for decades as a city exposed to radiation, a prejudice the Buddhist priest summarizes in *fūhyō higai* 風評被害:¹⁵⁹ how to add insult to injury.

As briefly analysed here, *Fukushima ni ikiru* offers a wide panoramic of the stricken areas with particular attention devoted to the everyday real problems faced by the evacuees. To the author goes the virtue to have recognized and given importance to the PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder) from which were affected many victims after the *Daishinsai*.¹⁶⁰ The symptoms of a psychological trauma are usually manifested by the victims only after years from the event; the fact that Genyū detected the first stirrings of a not yet latent trauma in 2011, as to say, when the wounds of 3.11 catastrophe were still fresh for the survivors, is remarkable.¹⁶¹ According to Shimokōbe Michiko, the post-traumatic disorder can reveal itself in two forms: in the first case the victims show symptomatic responses to a trauma affected in the distant past; the second case regards victims who carry on those traumatic scars in the daily life. The consequences are unequivocal: whereas in the former case trauma appears suddenly in victims' life, in the latter it is a painful evil with whom to fight every day and this distressing struggle can make the trauma even bigger.¹⁶² In this sense any acts of testimonial narrative - Hayden Whites' s "witness literature"¹⁶³ - can assume the function of "scriptotherapy",¹⁶⁴ a writing exercise to pour out survivor's feelings in a process that aims to help victims to "growth in consciousness and ethics in regard to his or her experience".¹⁶⁵ This seems not to be Genyū's case, who appears rather to serve as the mediator - what White and LaCapra would

¹⁵⁹ Frequently mentioned in all Genyū's productions after 11 March. See also 志村有弘、『大震災の記録と文学』、東京、勉誠出版、2011年。Shimura, *Daishinsai no kiroku to bungaku*, p. 65.

¹⁶⁰ Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 149.

¹⁶¹ 下河辺美知子、『トラウマの声を聞く。共同体の記憶と歴史の未来』、東京、みすず書房、2006年。Shimokōbe, Michiko, *Trauma no koe wo kiku. Kyōdōtai no kioku to rekishi no mirai*, Tōkyō, Misuzu Shobō, 2006, p. 23.

¹⁶² Shimokōbe, *Trauma no koe wo kiku*, p. 25.

¹⁶³ White, "Figural Realism in Witness Literature", pp. 113-124.

¹⁶⁴ Vickroy, Laurie, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2002, p. 146.

¹⁶⁵ Weine, *Testimony after Catastrophe. Narrating the Traumas of Political Violence*, p. 95.

address to as “middle voice”¹⁶⁶ - between victims and their trauma, conveyed into writings. Genyū’s testimonial voice does not reflect his own trauma but rather transposes into words the one of whom the author met. Genyū experienced face-to-face encounters with Fukushima evacuees that clearly exhibited a post-traumatic disorder associated to the fear of being exposed to radiation and the conflict between social discrimination and uncertainty for the future. Following this analysis, the victims of the “lonely death” described earlier by the author were likely to have experienced an emotional stasis:¹⁶⁷ the collapsing of social bounds and family ties, together with the loss of house and job, deprived many of any power to endure the hardship and often led to alcohol and substance abuses. Love is a catalyst for the stasis of trauma¹⁶⁸ and its absence translates into the complete loss of any hope.

Genyū’s 3.11 testimony leaves behind the consciousness that Fukushima region and its inhabitants will have to face the 3.11 aftermath for the next decades; in the worst perspective, radioactive contamination will even become a problem of future generations. A renovation of the Buddhist concept of *mujō* should be done in order to provide victims a new getaway of human suffering because:

In nature, there is anything in this world like “debris”. Many supply we should love changed in a moment to something you can’t call in another way than “debris”, due to the earthquake and tsunami.¹⁶⁹

Let’s see how Genyū interpreted this new *mujō* by analyzing secondary sources related to the *Daishinsai*.

2. The caducity of radioactivity

Firstly appeared on the bookshelves in November 2011, *Mujō to iu chikara* 『無常という力』 (“The strength of the impermanence”) published by Shinchōsha cannot be considered a work on Fukushima disaster but it is undoubtedly linked with the 11 March catastrophe as far as it suggests a review of Kamo no Chōmei’s *Hōjōki* in the new 3.11 perspective.

¹⁶⁶ LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, p. 25.

¹⁶⁷ Vickroy *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, p. 114.

¹⁶⁸ Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, p. 134.

¹⁶⁹ 「本来、世の中に「瓦礫」などというものはない。愛すべき生活用品の数々が地震や津波で一瞬のうちに「瓦礫」と呼ばれるしかないものになってしまった。」 Genyū, *Fukushima ni ikiru*, p. 123.

The book, divided into three main sections, consists in a detailed comment about *Hōjōki* 『方丈記』 (generally translated in English as “An Account of My Hut”) a work realized by the literate Kamo no Chōmei in the XIII century and nowadays considered as a masterpiece of the Japanese classics. The connection between this literary production and the 2011 *Daishinsai* is clear if considering that *Hōjōki* represents the narration of a series of calamities witnessed by its author during the Kamakura period (1185–1333). Genyū’s *Mujō to iu chikara* remarks the actuality of Chōmei’s *Hōjōki* and took the chance to reflect deeply on the concept of *mujō*. The last two sections of the book reported Genyū’s own translation of *Hōjōki* in modern Japanese and the original version of the narration. As this study is focused on the 11 March literary responses, the investigation of *Mujō to iu chikara* is limited to the first section, divided into eleven brief paragraphs.

There are many ways to translate the Japanese term *mujō* in English: “frailty of life”, “impermanence”, “caducity” all referring to a flew of events whose best evocative image is the one of cherry blossoms observed while falling down. The possibility of rebirthing implicitly incorporated in the seasonal changes is the best synthesis for the belief that if everything passes, so do suffering, pain, misery. Of course, as bad moments vanish, so do the happy ones: what remains is their memory.

I should point out at this stage that the title chosen for this second paragraph of the research prefers “caducity” among other translations; the reason is simple: the Latin root “cad-” refers to something falling down, which is an image frequently associated with radioactivity - even by Wagō as seen in the previous chapter. But there is more: as Genyū stated in his *Mujō to iu chikara*, “impermanence” is not a characteristic applicable to radioactivity that, on the contrary, will last for years; likewise “frailty” can be associated to something weak, which, again, is neither a typical feature of radioactivity. That is why a review of the definition of *mujō* should be done in a new Fukushima aftermath perspective.

In the preface to the literary work, Genyū Sōkyū defined *mujō* as “life, the natural way it is”¹⁷⁰ and quotes a sentence by the writer Terada Torahiko that became very popular after the *Daishinsai*: “Catastrophes will come when you forgot about them.”¹⁷¹ The hint suggested by this quotation leads the Buddhist priest to express, in the first section of the book, further considerations about the preparation or arrangement Japanese people have been used to for centuries. The “*kokoro no*

¹⁷⁰ 「人生そのものの本来的な在り方」玄侑宗久、『無常という力。方丈記に学ぶ心の在り方』、東京、新潮社、2011年。Genyū, Sōkyū, *Mujō to iu chikara. Hōjōki ni manabu kokoro no arikata*, Tōkyō, Shinchōsha, 2011, p. 1.

¹⁷¹ 「災害は忘れたころにやってくる」*ibidem*.

junbi” 「心の準備」 (preparation of the heart) and “*atama noi junbi*” 「頭の準備」 (preparation of the mind) represent two ways to perceive life arrangements in order to be prepared in case of emergency. The “*kokoro no junbi*” concerns a sort of psychological preparation mainly referred to a prompt spirit which can easily react to shock and be ready to take action; the “*atama no junbi*” reflects the need to be equipped with notions and useful information necessary to cope or even overcome the crisis. After giving a new definition of *mujō* in terms of: “In the flow of time, be deeply impressed by the [state of things]”,¹⁷² Genyū seems to raise a concern regarding *mujō* and the exaggerating quantity of manuals on the theme of earthquakes, tsunamis, floodwaters and so on that have been published in the last decades. All these literary products clearly aimed at helping in understanding the catastrophe and are useful to develop the “*atama no junbi*” if associated with an adequate “*kokoro no junbi*” for whom the role of *mujō* is essential.¹⁷³ Unfortunately, it is a necessary but not sufficient feature: this is what the author argues. Genyū also suggests between the lines how the large number of these literary works actually avoids people to learn how to deal with catastrophe: once printed, people forgot about this extremely important knowledge to rely on the printed papers. A literary instrument like manuals, born to help for the “preparation of the mind” becomes a sort of printed memory to be archived.

If this can be perceived as a weak point of the “*atama no junbi*” in the recent times, so the “*kokoro no junbi*” - and by extension the *mujō* itself - presents a vulnerability in the very essence of *mujō* perspective: if it consists in a ever-changing process, why is it necessary to be so worried about tragic events to happen? Why do people need to be prepared, to be ready? Why this useless waste of time and forces? The sun will shine again, anyway, it is only a matter of time. As it is easy to understand, it is a dog chasing its own tail, an infinite loop that Genyū had the merit to underline in his *Mujō to iu chikara*.

So, what is this “strength of *mujō*?” the author reveals that it is exactly the awareness that the only thing that would never change is *mujō* itself:

¹⁷² 「時の流れの中でもものの姿にしみじみと感じ入る。」 Genyū, *Mujō to iu chikara*, p. 11.

¹⁷³ “L'impermanenza non interessa solo le cose e i fenomeni fisici, ma anche le sensazioni, i sentimenti e gli stati di coscienza, anche i più elevanti.” Pasqualotto, Giangiorgio, *Estetica del vuoto. Arte e meditazione nelle culture d'Oriente*. Venezia, Marsilio, 1992, p. 40.

There's no change in *mujō*. [...] If I have to use a different metaphor of flowers, "Falling cherry blossoms; remaining cherry blossoms too, are falling cherry blossoms."¹⁷⁴

Genyū stresses then a parallelism between the disgraces described in the *Hōjōki* and the post 3.11 situation in Fukushima: the relocation of the capital from Kyōto to Fukuhara after a whirlwind is compared to the evacuation of Fukushima zones near the Daiichi power plant;¹⁷⁵ the heavy usage of horses and saddles but no cows and carriages is analyzed in comparison to the heavy quantity of radioactivity inhaled by Fukushima evacuees and their impossibility to eat cows' meat.¹⁷⁶ Even the famine narrated by Kamo no Chōmei is considered in the new "3.11 light": the radioactivity contamination of Fukushima soil transformed a flourish green area in one uncultivable land which produces anything to calm residents' hunger;¹⁷⁷ the phenomenon of looting in the temples during Chōmei's era is now a concern of the evacuated areas.¹⁷⁸

These are just a few examples of comparisons between Kyōto and Fukushima disasters; the author addressed further considerations to the term "tsunami" now part of the current terminology to indicate a big wave even though a closer look reveals how the repetitive movement of the tidal waves can be interpreted as a manifestation of the *mujō* itself.¹⁷⁹ These thoughts lead the author to conclude:

We must live *mujō*. We must live every day with a way of feeling that is *mujō*.¹⁸⁰

This is the strength of *mujō*: trying to live every day as it is the last; enjoying every moment, every meeting, every taste, smell, sound. There is no solution for the decontamination of Fukushima area right now: perhaps further studies will develop a way to dismiss the nuclear power plant safely,

¹⁷⁴ 「無常であることに変わりはない。別の花の比喩を使えば、「散る桜 残る桜も 散る桜」というわけですね。」 Genyū, *Mujō to iu chikara*, p. 17.

¹⁷⁵ Genyū, *Mujō to iu chikara*, p. 20.

¹⁷⁶ Genyū, *Mujō to iu chikara*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁷ Genyū, *Mujō to iu chikara*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁷⁸ Genyū, *Mujō to iu chikara*, pp. 28-29.

¹⁷⁹ Genyū, *Mujō to iu chikara*, pp. 32-33.

¹⁸⁰ 「無常を生きなければならぬ。無常という感じ方と共に、日々を暮らさなくては行かない。」 Genyū, *Mujō to iu chikara*, p. 36.

renewable energy will take the place of nuclear one and new treatments will provide a cure to those exposed to radiations.¹⁸¹ But right now, all survivors should embrace the chance to be alive, surrounded by family and friends. The *mujō* perspective becomes, in these terms, the basis for a “*kokoro no junbi*”.

At this point, it can be affirmed without doubts that Genyū’s idea of *mujō* greatly differs from the one of Chōmei: “Melancholy, nothing can move the heart, never”¹⁸² stated the literate in XIII century; a mindset really closed to Buddhism’s efforts in achieving the annihilation of the self. Genyū Sōkyū affirms a form of “control” (*kontororu*, コントロール) of the heart instead;¹⁸³ this “control” should be pursued but should not become a rule for a cold attitude. The “control” Genyū hopes for is a way of living *mujō* and for this reason, it should be taken as the basis of human life: “I think there’s the need to reflect with a cool head”.¹⁸⁴

Last but not least, the author adds to *mujō* the quality of “elegance, refinement”: this way of living one own life can be *fūryū* 風流: “*Fūryū* is this way, that is to say, the attitude to enjoy even one own’s *mujō*.”¹⁸⁵

3. Two fictionalised prayers

Genyū Sōkyū did not experiment only nonfictional writings in response to the 11 March catastrophe. This prolific author counts two short novels dedicated to the 3.11 in his portfolio of literary works published soon after the *Daishinsai*.

The first one lasts only two pages and it is entitled *Anata no kage wo hikizurinagara* 『あなたの影をひきずりながら』 (“While forcing your reflection”)¹⁸⁶. Published in *kotoba* revue in Summer 2011, this brief novel is a fictional transposition of all the concerns shown by the author in his

¹⁸¹ A very thought-provoking article that plays on a parallelism between impermanence and nuclear radiation is the one by Parkes, Graham, “Nuclear Power after Fukushima 2011: Buddhist and Promethean Perspectives” in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Vol. 32, 2012, pp. 89-108. The article is not taken into consideration in this investigation only because too religious-oriented.

¹⁸² 「ものうしとても、心を動く事なし。」 Genyū, *Mujō to iu chikara*, p. 52.

¹⁸³ Genyū, *Mujō to iu chikara*, p. 53.

¹⁸⁴ 「冷静に考えていく必要があると私は思います。」 Kamata and Genyū, *Genshiryoku to shūkyō - Nihonjin he no toi*, p. 33.

¹⁸⁵ 「風流とはこういうあり方、つまり自分の無常さえ楽しんでしまう態度なんですね。」 Genyū, *Mujō to iu chikara*, p. 61.

¹⁸⁶ 玄侑宗久、「あなたの影をひきずりながら」、『k o t o b a』、東京、集英社、十月号2011年。Genyū Sōkyū, “Anata no kage wo hikizurinagara” in *kotoba*, Tōkyō, Shūeisha, 2011, pp. 16-17.

previous works: the guilty conscience of the survivor who deals with the aftermath of the tsunami, the peculiar condition of a young boy employed at the power plant, socially discriminated even by the girl he was dating due to the rumour he is a *hibakusha* (たっぷり被曝してゐるって); and the first death for cancer at the *hinanjo* that calls into question also animal contamination in the restricted areas. Interesting is the solution to connect these three brief testimonies one to the other by opening and ending the writing with the “Minatomachi Blues” song 『港町ブルース』, which reveals the circularity of the catastrophe, a closed loop that has to deal with earthquake, tsunami aftermath and contamination exposure at the same time.

The second novel, and maybe the more relevant both in terms of length and topics covered, is entitled *Kōrogi* 『蟋蟀』 (“Cricket”)¹⁸⁷ and appeared in the 2011 Autumn Special Issue of the *Shōsetsu Shinchō* published under the English title “Story Power”, a number entirely devoted to the 2011 *Daishinsai* and the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995 that involved mainly Kōbe area.

The brief story develops in twenty pages: the omniscient narrator makes the reader part about the circumstances in which the two main protagonists, Michihiko and Aya, met. There is no specific time delimitation but a number of references about *ano hi* あの日 (“that day”), *are kara* あれから (“from that [time/event]”) which clearly reveal the connection with 11 March 2011. Outstanding was the choice to tell Michihiko and Aya’s story by alternating their points of view: the result is a chained narration, an intertwining testimony about the relationships born in the *hinanjo* and then continued outside the places of refuge.

“It’s saying it’s 6 meters. Let’s run away!”

But her father didn’t stop to pick up the things on the ground, his figure squatting down; her mother, rushing inside the house said:

“We’re coming, go farther”

Somehow, she felt the same mood after a quarrel.

She should have known how much her parents were attached to the clothing store they have been running as a married couple after her father changed his job from a salary man. But the sounds of the television came from inside and after Aya checked the

¹⁸⁷ 玄侑宗久、「蟋蟀」、『Story Power』、東京、新潮社、十月号2011年。Genyū, Sōkyū, “Kōrogi” in *Story Power*, vol. 10, Tōkyō, Shinchōsha, 2011, pp. 47-67. This novel was then published together with other fictional productions on the theme of the 3.11 and its aftermath in the *Hikari no yama* collection discussed later (2013).

temple was the destination, she trusted her mother's words and got on her colleague's car.

It seems that soon the radio corrected the high of the tsunami: 10 meters. But it was after they climbed the hill toward the temple and looked down to the tsunami.¹⁸⁸

Eventually, the real protagonist of the story is the tsunami: its advent is narrated in many detailed descriptions that betray how much the author had to be impressed by the media coverage of the stricken areas and the direct testimonies he received in the places of refuge by the survivors. The earthquake is mentioned, of course, but only as the cause of the great wave: the *Daishinsai* depicted by the author in *Kōrogi* is not a three-fold catastrophe but presents only one face, the one of a huge dark mountain of water. Actually the two testimonies of Michihiko and Aya and their attempt to escape tsunamis' violence reproduce the rapid pace of tsunamis' run-up: the tempo of the narration becomes more rapid and the reader shall hold the breath; the suspense makes this fiction gripping, if only one could forget it is based on real experiences. The rhythm is actually scanned by radio announcements of the gradual increase of wave's height: the prediction increases from 6 meters to 10 meters just as much as increases the anxiety perceived by the reader.

Genyū does not miss also the opportunity to share - between the lines - some hypothesis regarding the reasons under the great toll the tsunami left behind: 1) incredulity of the citizens; 2) belief that the prevision was overestimated; 3) *carità del natio loco* already mentioned earlier (see, for example, the case of Aya's parents swept away by the tsunami because did not want to leave their beloved shop).

Many are the references to Genyū's life too: the main character for example, the middle-age Michihiko, takes care of her dad, who fall ill in a hospital, and of a temple whose name is not specified but her figure reflects somehow the author himself. At the Buddhist temple, dominated by rituals' flow, the 25-year old Aya and the 5 year Miichan are welcomed as guests: after loosing their home and their families, Michihiko offers a place where to stay and to recover.

¹⁸⁸ 「六メートル以上だって言ってるよ。逃げようよ」しかし父親は蹲った姿勢で床から品物を拾うことをやめず、母親が奥へ小走りに駆け込みながら言った。「わたしたちもすぐに行くから、あんたは先に行ってて」なんとなく喧嘩のあとのような雰囲気を感じた。サラリーマンから転職して夫婦で始めた衣料品店に、両親がどれだけ愛着を持っているかは知っているつもりだった。しかし奥からテレビの音も聞こえていたし、亜弥は「神社でしょ」と確認し、母親の言葉を信じて同僚の車にまた乗り込んだのである。ラジオはやがて津波の高さを10メートル以上をと訂正したらしいが、それは亜弥たちが神社への坂を上りきり、眼下に津波を見下ろしてからのことだった。」 Genyū, “Kōrogi”, p. 57.

I should underline the great contrast between a slight feeling of *omertà* perceivable in Genyū's decision in not mentioning directly the catastrophe by its name and the meticulous care devoted to the portrayal of tsunami's devastation. The lack of any remarks about the Fukushima Daiichi fallout is explainable by the fact that the attention is focused on the meeting of the two protagonists and their testimonies.

Some remarks regarding the inadequacy of the places for refuge and survivors' guilt complete the portrait of the 3.11 by transforming *Kōrogi* in a mourning apotheosis that fits well Genyū Sōkyū's inclination to seek a spiritual force in the traumatic experience of 11 March.

4. Relentless Buddhist efforts in the wake of catastrophe

There is a text frequently used as source until now but yet introduced in this investigation, as to say *Genshiryoku to shūkyō - Nihonjin he no toi* 『原子力と宗教—日本人への問い』 (“Nuclear energy and religion - A question to Japanese People”). Published exactly after a year from 11 March 2011 by Kadokawa Shuppan, this *taidan* involves Genyū Sōkyū as well as Kanata Tōji, professor of Religion at Kyōto University. Since the nature of being a cross-talking book, its investigation was limited to the useful information considered relevant to explain or add further details to Genyū's literary production on the topic of Fukushima nuclear fallout and radioactivity contamination. This solution was believed to be the most appropriate rather than consider the work as a whole, a project on Fukushima radioactivity concerns. Nevertheless, a brief remark should be addressed to some voluntary activities and projects mentioned during the talking, such as the itinerant Cafe The Monk (カフェでモンク) where free tea was served at tea time to encourage the relationship between evacuees;¹⁸⁹ interesting also the considerations regarding the “royal touch”, the encounter between the evacuees and the imperial couple who has been visiting the stricken areas every year since the 3.11 disaster.¹⁹⁰

To complete the overview of Genyū's literary productions soon after 11 March, the nonfictional work *Inori no sakuhō* 『祈りの作法』 (“Manner of praying”)¹⁹¹ is worthy to mention too. Although published by Shinchōsha in July 2012 - and for this reason not deeply investigated in this study - this work appears as the most exhaustive production by the author on the *Daishinsai* topic, a

¹⁸⁹ Kamata and Genyū, *Genshiryoku to shūkyō - Nihonjin he no toi*, p. 90.

¹⁹⁰ Kamata and Genyū, *Genshiryoku to shūkyō - Nihonjin he no toi*, p. 96.

¹⁹¹ 玄侑宗久、『祈りの作法』、東京、新潮社、2012年。Genyū, Sōkyū, *Inori no sakuhō*, Tōkyō, Shinchōsha, 2012.

perfect blend of 1) Buddhist perspective of the three-fold catastrophe (first chapter, *Inori no sakuhō*, “Manner of praying”); 2) practical advice to deal with radioactivity concerns daily (second chapter, *Hoshanō to kurasu*, “Living with radioactivity”) and 3) a testimonial account of Genyū as a witness of the events (third chapter, *Shinsai nikki*, “Diary of the disaster”). As shown by its articulated structure, this literary work appeared as the result of the hard trial to understand the 3.11 catastrophe and explain it by conveying authorial’s knowledge with a manualistic approach. Apart from fictional production, a tendency that this study has been underlining until now is exactly the preference Genyū shows for the *ikikata no hon* 「生き方の本」, a term translated by Lisette Gebhardt as “self-help books”¹⁹², a sort of “do-it-yourself” manuals.

Genyū Sōkyū’s literary responses to the three-fold catastrophe of 11 March also underlined the lack of reference on the theme of collective graves that stole victims’ identity after the *Daishinsai*, a topic frequently rose by other writers devoted to the post-3.11 literature although less competent than Genyū on this matter. Actually the author spent a few words to talk about the crematories of towns located in the evacuated areas which have always been the reference point for Miharu’s families who relied on those towns for the funeral services and now have to go for miles looking for help.¹⁹³ The mass funerals organized one after another in March 2011 especially in Miyagi and Iwate prefectures represented a necessary measure for those corpses who were still awaiting an identification from the family but could not wait any longer. The majority part of victims were exposed to the violence of the tsunami and went to their death on 11 March. Mass media provided shocking images of Tohoku seashores roomed for cremation in the open air; unforgivable scenes that the skilled reader associated immediately to the one described by Hiroshima and Nagasaki *hibakusha* in the *genbaku* literary works - Ōta Yōko and Hayashi Kyōko in primis. Unfortunately, this seems not to be a topic touched by Genyū in his first literary approaches to the 3.11.

On the contrary, a great merit of Genyū Sōkyū’s investigations on Fukushima disaster consists in the extensive knowledge improved by the authors and Fukushima inhabitants in dealing with the “invisible enemy” (見えない敵),¹⁹⁴ the radiation exposure, starting from the radioactivity substances to better manage their different long-lived waste.¹⁹⁵ Olivier Isnard, head of the IRSN

¹⁹² Gebhardt, Lisette, “Ghosts, Spirituality and Healing in Post-Fukushima Literature: Yoshimoto Banana’s Bibliotherapy for National Recovery” in *Religion and Spirituality in Japanese Literature*, PAJLS, vol. 16, summer 2015, p. 260.

¹⁹³ Genyū, “Ikikata no towareru hibi”, p. 73.

¹⁹⁴ Kamata and Genyū, *Genshiryoku to shūkyō - Nihonjin he no toi*, p. 20.

¹⁹⁵ Genyū, “Ikikata no towareru hibi”, p. 63.

(Institut de radioprotection et de sûreté nucléaire), during an interview with Paul Jobin commented this situation using the following words:

À ce stade de l'accident, la population japonaise doit être actrice de sa radioprotection. [...] c'est à la société civile de s'organiser aussi et pas d'attendre du Saint État ce qu'il faut en penser. [...] ils sont acteurs de leur propre radioprotection, ils ont des appareils de mesure, ils mesurent régulièrement leur nourriture...¹⁹⁶

Actually, this familiarity of Japanese people with Geiger counter after the nuclear fallout at Fukushima Daiichi was a phenomenon also reported, not without admiration, by the journalist Paolo Giordano.¹⁹⁷

As widely seen before, Genyū's responses to the 3.11 do not lose to remark a feeling of dissatisfaction, or even anger, towards government's approach in solving Fukushima problems and the cooperation of Japanese media in spreading false information; a feeling shared also by Fukushima citizens and often denounced by other Japanese authors. The priest makes an appeal to a collective action considering the nuclear meltdown a concern not only of Fukushima evacuees but of Japan, the *furusato* par-excellent, instead. Main actors of this action should be, according to the author, young generations.¹⁹⁸ Perhaps this is the main reason why his successful *Hikari no yama* 『光の山』 (“The sparkling mountain”)¹⁹⁹ won the 41st Kawabata Literary prize: a short novel which sets off a dystopian story of a mountain of radioactive debris. The choice to put into stage a dystopic narrative confirms the belief that nuclear energy is perceived as a safe power as far as the consequences of a nuclear accident are a matter of concern only of future generations due to the radioactivity contamination that lasts for decades.

In these regards it should be stressed the role of the author in spreading information after 11 March. As suggested by Paul Ricœur, no testimony is neutral, impartial, because the *témoin oculaire* is also “qui tranche par un jugement sans appel sur une question”.²⁰⁰ It follows that, in a sense, the witness becomes the judge, and his opinions value as a documentary proof to the extent

¹⁹⁶ Jobin, “Qui est protégé par la radioprotection?”, p. 129.

¹⁹⁷ Giordano, Paolo, “L'isola della paura. A Fukushima un anno dopo” in *Corriere della Sera*. Milano, Rcs Quotidiani S.p.A, 2012, pp. 34-39.

¹⁹⁸ Genyū, “Ikikata no towareru hibi”, p. 80.

¹⁹⁹ 玄侑宗久、『光の山』、東京、新潮社、2013年。Genyū, Sōkyū, *Hikari no yama*, Tōkyō, Shinchōsha, 2013.

²⁰⁰ Ricœur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, p. 209.

that the readers should acknowledge “la capacité du récit à faire croire”.²⁰¹ Genyū’s post-3.11 literary production makes us confronted with his unquestionable ethical and moral judgments, especially in regard to Fukushima Daiichi meltdown.

His autoreferentiality and the self-assigned authority through which the author speaks from Miharu city was the cause for controversy and actually an attitude slightly polemic can be perceived throughout his writings. As a matter of interest, I may mention Genyū’s answer to Kariya Testuo’s *Oishinbo* manga²⁰² in which the Buddhist priest argued the possibility of a direct connection between some cases of nose bleed occurred among citizens after Fukushima accident and the nuclear meltdown at the power plant, thus casting doubts even on the testimony of the ex-town mayor of Futaba, Idogawa Katsutaka: “The actual Japan, Fukushima Prefecture included, has the same level of allocation of radioactivity amount of Canada.”²⁰³ stated Genyū. Public opinion came out against the author by accusing him to go beyond his responsibility as a Buddhist priest and to speak empty words about an extremely delicate issue like the one of radioactivity effects on human body, without any medical notion.²⁰⁴ A similar non-serious attitude was denounced also regarding the cases of suicide among the evacuees.²⁰⁵ The claim is that Genyū takes advantage of Fukushima matters to promote his public figure on the media.

Despite this controversy, as far as the literary analysis of the authorial production allows, it is clear that Genyū does not write to respond to the demand for an historical awareness; on the contrary he seems to obey to his moral imperative;²⁰⁶ the historical data and documentary proof he adds to his narration are a mere instrument sired to his commitment. Authorial prerogative in manifesting judgments about post-Fukushima scenario betrays Genyū’s desire for a political stance

²⁰¹ *ibidem*.

²⁰² 玄侑宗久、『福島の実』、東京新聞、東京、2014年6月7日。Genyū, Sōkyū, “Fukushima no shinjitsu”, in *Tōkyō Shinbun*, *Tōkyō*, June, 7, 2014. Now available online on Genyū’s official website, at the link: <http://www.genyu-sokyu.com/essey/ui/27.html>, 2016/7/23.

²⁰³ 「現在の日本は、福島県も含めて恰度カナダと同じ程度の線量分布である。」 *ibidem*.

²⁰⁴ See, for example, a comment by Tanaka Ichirō available on his official blog: 田中一郎、「坊主が屏風に上手に坊主のウソついた（僧侶・玄侑宗久氏の投稿について）」、『たなかいちろうちゃんのブログ』、2014年6月10日。Tanaka, Ichirō, “Bōzu ga byōbu ni umaku ni bōzu no use tsuita (sōryo Genyū Sōkyū no tōkō ni tsuite)” in *Tanaka Ichirouchan no burogu*, June, 10, 2014, <http://tyobotyobosiminn.cocolog-nifty.com/blog/2014/06/post-45a8.html>, 2016/2/23.

²⁰⁵ See for example 林晃、「道を誤った福島の方主 玄侑宗久」、『老いの一筆』、2011年6月27日。Hayashi, Aki, “Michi wo machigatta Fukushima no bōzu Genyū Sōkyū” in *Oi no ippitsu*, June, 27, 2011, <http://winelight.blog112.fc2.com/blog-entry-1697.html#comment>, 2015/8/15.

²⁰⁶ Felman, Shoshana, “Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, p. 16.

of Japanese people as a whole rather than the desire to create an historical account of the 11 March events.²⁰⁷ By considering “readers as important witness”,²⁰⁸ authorial efforts reveal the wish to engage the public in the problems faced by Fukushima region after the Daiichi nuclear fallout. Again, an author from the stricken areas transformed the regional radioactivity concern in a national affair that demands for attention and deserves it; the imperative of his writing is seeking understanding by citizens, politics in charge and literati of the Japanese establishment while readers who approach Genyū Sōkyū’s post-Fukushima literature look at his production as a source of knowledge and inspiration for better coping with the 3.11 aftermath. Genyū’s writing about the *Daishinsai* can be considered as a type of ethnographic authorship that integrates “the ethical and the moral aspects of serious human problems strongl[y] enough to permit a move from description to action”.²⁰⁹ A sort of testimonial writing in which the “survivor and the receiver work together”²¹⁰ in order to move forward with the healing process and cooperate for the complete *fukkō* of Fukushima prefecture.

In this regard a final consideration should be addressed to the topic of healing or *iyashi* 「癒し」 in Japanese (“comfort and healing”, as translated by Gebhardt).²¹¹ This trend born in the late 1990s to respond to the new popular culture (New Age, Yoga and Asiatic medicine boom)²¹² finds its counterpart even in the literary production, especially in the works by Yoshimoto Banana or, to some extents, Murakami Haruki.²¹³ The concept of healing in literature is easily summarized in a therapeutic narrative which aims to cure readers’ wounds and trauma by suggesting new ways to approach pain and suffering in daily life. Genyū’s literature has never been addressed as a “healing narrative” and Fukushima accident does not seem to have turned it in this way, which sounds odd considering the adding value of being both a novelist and a Buddhist priest. Although some

²⁰⁷ Hayden, *Forme di storia*, p. 56. According to this theory Genyū embodies the example of *écrivain engagé* highly praised by Sartre. Benoît, Denis, *Littérature et engagement*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2000, p. 25 and the following.

²⁰⁸ Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, p. 145.

²⁰⁹ Kleinman quoted by Weine, *Testimony after Catastrophe*, p. 108.

²¹⁰ Weine, *Testimony after Catastrophe*, p. 104.

²¹¹ Gebhardt, “Ghosts, Spirituality and Healing in Post-Fukushima Literature”, p. 257. See also Gebhardt, Lisette, “Der Konsum von “heilung” (*iyashi*) in der japanischen Gegenwartskultur und die Remigio-Reise nach Asien”, in *Gelebte Religionen. Untersuchungen zur sozialen Gestaltungskraft religiöser Vorstellungen und Praktiken in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Würzburg, Verlag Königshausen & Neumann GmbH, 2004, pp. 325-338.

²¹² Gebhardt, “Ghosts, Spirituality and Healing in Post-Fukushima Literature”, p. 262.

²¹³ *ibidem*. For further consideration of the concept of healing in Yoshimoto’s literature, please refer to De Pieri 2014 and 2016.

references about a *kokoro no kea* 「心のケア」 (“Cure of the heart”)²¹⁴ can be found here and there in Genyū’s production, it seems not a common trope in authorial writings. The need to recover from a traumatic experience like the 3.11 catastrophe could have lead people to address religion has the source of help or, on the contrary, could even result in a refusal of any faith. Genyū’s production suggests a slight different response in which the author offers his competence as a Buddhist guidance in the form of literary texts - mainly *ikikata no hon*, as seen before.

What appears clearly after this brief analysis of the first literary responses to 11 March, is that Genyū’s commitment in facing radioactivity problem will endure for decades, and it will weaken its brave impudence only when the scale of radioactivity contamination in primis will diminish. This first Genyū’s literary production after the 3.11 shows the authorial predilection for a documentary account in the form of the journalistic inquiry although there are minor attempts of re-elaborating the 3.11 in a fictional keyword. We are still in the heart of events and the author plays out literary products that let readers experience the problems evacuees have to face in the places of refuge. Genyū also senses that the great 3.11 tropi (quake, tsunami, nuclear meltdown) deserve an evocative (read: imaginative) transposition in order to let non-victims closer to the catastrophe and to arouse, thanks to the fictional language, feelings of sympathy and empathy with the survivors. The testimony is still vivid because based on a first-hand experience in Miharu city but it leaves room for fictitious portrayals, by removing reality - not reliability! - to the story. The empty space thus created has to be fulfilled by reader’s imagination through the process of reading.

²¹⁴ Kamata and Genyū, *Genshiryoku to shūkyō - Nihonjin he no toi*, p. 18.

On the wave of narrative: Abe Kazushige

1. Ahead on the curve of *Daishinsai* literary responses

This third chapter of the study leads to Higashine, a small town 122 km away from Fukushima, in the Yamagata Prefecture. This uncontaminated land surrounded by mountains saw the birth of the Akutagawa prize winning novelist Abe Kazushige (阿部和重, Higashine, 1968 -). His production on the topic of 11 March reflects the authorial sympathy with the victims despite not being involved in firsthand in the 3.11 disaster; his fictionalized production also betrays the primary role Abe attributes to literature in depicting this catastrophe.

RIDE ON TIME is the title²¹⁵ chosen for the short novel published in both literary collections in tribute to the 3.11 victims which appeared on the bookshelves one year later. The first collection, *Sore de mo sangatsu wa mata* 『それでも三月は、また』 (“Yet, it was March, again”)²¹⁶ was translated in English as *March Was Made of Yarn*;²¹⁷ the other, *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”* 『震災とフィクションの距離』 (officially translated as “Ruptured Fiction(s) of the Earthquake”)²¹⁸ counts an Italian translation too.²¹⁹ Both collections explore thorough the power of fiction the deep relation between literature, trauma and catastrophe beyond the particular keyword of the 3.11. It is worthy to mention that all authorial contribution to *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”* firstly appeared

²¹⁵ It should be noted that Kawakami Mieko, Abe Kazushige’s wife, referred to this short novel as “Notteke saafin” 『乗ってけサーフィン』 (“Get on, surfing!”) more than one time in a crosstalk with different authors, also included in the *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”* collection (pp. 201-240). A transposition in English of the cross talking is also included in the English section of the volume but it consists not in the whole translation of the interview. Hence, I rather suggest to have a look to the Japanese version instead. However, “Get on, surfing!” should be taken as the first title given by Abe to this short novel.

²¹⁶ 『それでも三月は、また』 東京、講談社、2012年。 *Sore demo sangatsu wa, mata*, Tōkyō, Kōdansha, 2012.

²¹⁷ *March Was Made of Yarn: Reflections on the Japanese Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Meltdown*, New York, Vintage Books, 2012. Please note that for English translation of “RIDE ON TIME” I will take advantage of this version, when not differently specified.

²¹⁸ 『震災とフィクションの距離』、東京、早稲田文学回、2012年。 *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”*, Tōkyō, Waseda bungakukai, 2012.

²¹⁹ *Scrivere per Fukushima. Racconti e saggi a sostegno dei sopravvissuti del terremoto*, Roma, Atmosphere Libri, 2013.

online on the site of Waseda Bungaku,²²⁰ thus providing free access available to all web users. The first literature on the theme was meant to reach a broader audience and this aim unveils again the wish to transform Japanese 11 March in a world-wide cause for concern about nuclear energy.

2. The fictitious 3.11

RIDE ON TIME is a 6-page novel that condenses Abe Kazushige's vision of the 11 March catastrophe in multiple ways. At a first glance, the story appears like a first-personal account of a boy - a surfer - and his challenge against a particular big wave that has not been occurring for 10 years and finally, is believed to approach the coast on a special Friday.

No peculiar information about the boy is provided by the voiceover: we do not know his name, his age and least of all his private affairs (no way of knowing something about his job, family, girlfriend). In a word, a very poor characterization. As far as we are aware, by reading the Japanese version of the story, the protagonist is certainly a male, as evidenced by the usage of the first-person *boku* 僕 to indicate a masculine subject. This lack in details about the protagonist gives wide space to the over-identification of the reader with the main character. Literature serves, one more time, as the bypass to trespass any national borders and it becomes a universal medium of the disaster, no more perceived as an individual experience but rather a collective one, or, at least, it demands a collective response.

Eventually, what catches reader's attention is the mention of that "special Friday". As we go through the reading of the novel, little traces concerning the 3.11 are discovered on the way, like footsteps in the sand left as hints by the author himself. Firstly, the time laps that revolves around that "special Friday":

The waves are always the same. It was like this yesterday, and it'll be this way tomorrow too. Bland, ordinary swells, unremarkable, average. [...] Truth is, we've gotten used to them.²²¹

²²⁰ The date reported for "RIDE ON TIME" is May, 3, 2011.

²²¹ Abe, "RIDE ON TIME" in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 183. 「今日のも昨日のも、そしておそらくは明日のうねりだって似たものにちがいない。それらはなんなら特筆すべきところのない、平々凡々たる並みの代物でしかない。[。] 単にぼくらが、このうねりに慣れてしまい」 Abe, "RIDE ON TIME" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 23.

Any reference to past, present and future is provided several times in the text with particular emphasis on the never-changing waves: Abe stakes an oxymoron between the natural movement of sea waves marked by the turn of the tide and their characteristic of being always the same, in the sense their swing is restless and always subjected to the same circular pattern: crashing-waves/receding-waves. The author also puts in place a comparison between the wave power and the time frame: in this case the oxymoron describes the unchanged situation of everyday life despite the hands of the clock keep turning time into past. Abe's *RIDE ON TIME* expands the timeframe to the extent the *Daishinsai* becomes part of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Although boring for surfers, the “ordinary” waves represent also a security, a guarantee of the immutable living space to whom Japanese people got used to, forgetting the true nature of Japanese country: a volcanic and seismic area potentially subjected to earthquakes and tsunamis ever since. This particular condition requires Japanese to be responsive and able to face catastrophe which can occur in the everyday life. The critique put forward by Abe here concerns the careless attitude towards the possibility of disasters to come, a remark well recapped by Terada Torahiko's quote introduced in the previous chapter: “Catastrophes will come when you forgot about them”. It also reminds Kawakami Hiromi's reflection on the *Daishinsai* in her *Kamisama 2011*,²²² when the novelist commented in the afterword that she felt astonishment toward the possibility that everyday routine could suddenly change heavily, for any reason.²²³

For Abe, the problem is exactly that the (false) security of everyday life to which we have become used to, prevents to pay more attention on small signs of alarm, with dramatic consequences. Kawakami manifests a similar concern and attributes to her literature the ambitious task to help Japanese people in getting in action now.

And actually, the turning point of Abe's *RIDE ON TIME* is exactly that “Friday”:

And now here we were, headed for a Friday unlike any other.²²⁴

²²² 川上弘美、『神様2011』、東京、講談社、2011年。Kawakami, Hiromi, *Kamisama 2011*, Tōkyō, Kōdansha, 2011.

²²³ 「日常は続いてゆく、けれどその日常は何かのことで大きく変化してしまう可能性をもつものだ、という大きな驚きの気持ちをこめて書きました。」 Kawakami, “Atogaki” in *Kamisama 2011*, p. 78. For more information regards this short novel and its remake of the 1994 *Kamisama*, please refer to De Pieri, Veronica, “Literature remakes: how catastrophe influences the communication of trauma in literature- An inquiry on Nakamori Akio and Kawakami Hiromi 2011 short novels -“ in *22nd Current Issues in Literary and Cultural Research Conference Proceedings*, Liepaja, 2017.

²²⁴ Abe, “RIDE ON TIME” in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 185. 「しかし今度の金曜日は、いつもとはまったく異なる金曜日になる」。Abe, “RIDE ON TIME” in *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”*, p. 26.

11 March 2011 occurred on Friday: the kairotic moment of the story, as well as the 3.11 catastrophe, is revealed by the author who counts on the meta textual reference into the hands of the readers to detach the allusions. The only mention of a “particular Friday” does not suffice to trace back this day as 11 March 2011; nevertheless the fact that the novel was presented as part of a collection of literary responses to the 11 March disaster represents the metadiscourse that contributes to the association of time and event of the story with the historical facts.

The reader should continue the reading to see how that Friday changed the voiceover’s life:

There was a tweet. At last, it said, this is the one you’ve been waiting for. It was almost, like, a certainty. The wave would hit the shore on Friday. This time, it seemed the information could be trusted.²²⁵

The umpteenth reference to the dichotomy of the unabated/ (then turned to a) changeable today - Friday seems to stress that the narrative dances around this point, with all the implications a change entails in people’s life. I will return to the topic of time later, by developing further considerations about its relation to memory.

The English version of the novel states that the wave will hit the “shore” but its location remains undefined; the original version on the contrary offers a more accurate position through the word *hokugan* 北岸 (literally: “north coast”). Moreover, a few lines right after, the protagonist clarifies that such a great wave has not been seen for almost 10 years. As far as my research conducted, there is no source of a particular tsunami event occurred in the Touhoku zone 10 years ago. Notwithstanding, the possibility that the “10 years” reference actually pointed out the presence of previous cases of tsunamis in the region, cannot be ignored. Indeed, the great amount of the so-called tsunami-stones all around Touhoku area testify this occurrence.²²⁶ Those stones are historical records written by local people over the centuries to warn future generations about the risk of tsunamis to occur along the northern coasts of Japan. Still, Abe’s character talks about an e-mail, received from a non-specific social network: the English version is slightly different from the original - naming Twitter - but does not avoid the reader to grasp the relation to the socials. The old

²²⁵ Abe, “RIDE ON TIME” in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 185. 「SNSからのEメール。長らくお待ちの皆さんいよいよですよとの通知だ。今週の金曜日、あのうねりがこの北岸に帰ってくるのはほぼ間違いのないことらしい。」 Abe, “RIDE ON TIME” in *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”*, p. 26.

²²⁶ Fackler, Martin, “Tsunami Warnings, Written in Stone” in *The New York Times Online*, April 20, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/21/world/asia/21stones.html>.

tsunami-stones were then replaced with a more modern communication system which provides a similar warning: a big wave is coming on Friday. Furthermore, this time there is no doubt. Details of the 3.11 are starting to emerge one after the other.

Some connections between Abe's *RIDE ON TIME* and the world of video games are identifiable too and are worthy to mention because they shed light on the role of the big wave for the author. Above all, the popular *Final Fantasy* saga and the outbreak of the Shin, a gargantuan whale-like beast that appeared to destroy the human world every 10 years. Moreover, this reference is strengthened by the "raging swell" and its weapon of destruction called - indeed - "tsunami", which is told to be "enough to consume even the fiercest of foes".²²⁷ This monster, incarnates a Good Spirit, despite its damaging nature: actually, Abe's character talks about the big wave in positive terms, despite the heavy toll it caused in the past. The wave is presented as a positive challenge (挑戦): all surfers and even a group of about 300 visitors are waiting for the big wave to come. Abe's portrayal of the bay mirrors a tourist spot on the verge of becoming the theater for history: "Whatever, we all want to come face-to-face with a legend."²²⁸

This grotesque wave is called by Abe in different ways, one more terrifying than the other: "monstrous swell" (クランド・スウェル), "dragon" (巨大な海龍, literally "enormous sea dragon"), "leviathan" (リヴァイアサン), and synonyms. In particular, the choice of naming the creature "leviathan" reminds not only the tradition of the Old Testament, but also the *Final Fantasy* series discussed above, since it is the same name chosen for the monstrous figure that appears in the saga. The familiarity of the author with Japanese modern pop culture is not a mystery: whatever the author got his inspiration from the video game or not, the ferocity of that big wave is portrayed by its name.

Actually, any association between monstrous figures and water are not new in Japan too and are part of the Japanese mythology, especially the one concerning a dragon-alike monster that lives in rivers and oceans. Mizuchi is considered the water deity par excellence, as testified by the root *mizu* 水 (water) of its name; Kuzuryū for example, is very popular in Hakone while the Nure-onna is considered a *yōkai*, a creature from Japanese folklore usually spotted on a shore shaving her wet hair. But the place of honour is conquered by Ryūjin 龍神, the God-dragon, and his beautiful

²²⁷ Dissidia *Final Fantasy* Summon Compendium available here [http://finalfantasy.wikia.com/wiki/Dissidia_Final_Fantasy_\(2008\)](http://finalfantasy.wikia.com/wiki/Dissidia_Final_Fantasy_(2008))

²²⁸ Abe, "RIDE ON TIME" in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 184. 「どちらにせよ、伝説との対峙を切望するものばかりというわけだ。」 Abe, "RIDE ON TIME" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 24.

daughter Toyotama-hime 豊玉姫.²²⁹ Since Ryūjin is often portrayed with a large mouth, I am inclined to think Abe Kazushige was inspired by this mythical figure together with the *Final Fantasy* game: “Each time the dragon wakes, always in early spring, it swallows a few of us, then vanishes again for years.”²³⁰ The verb used in Japanese, *kuu* 食う, clearly remarks the strong force of the King of the Ocean and the pathetic weakness of human beings who are simply phagocyted, victims of its insatiable hungry.

There is still much more to say about Abe’s wave. In Japanese, the author prefers the use of the word *uneri* うねり instead of the more common of *nami* 波 (from which the word *tsunami* comes): although they both appear in the text, *uneri* is used more frequently and this is not a coincidence. An accurate translation of the word includes “wave motion”, “undulation”, “heaving sea” which encourages linking *uneri* to the dichotomy analyzed before regarding the immutable/changeable Friday as far as the relentless movement of the wave suggests, in the imaginary of the readers, a continuous passage from a situation of stasi to one of chaos.

This fearsome wave, then, is coming on Friday, even though the voiceover does not make part the reader about how the prediction can be so accurate. Despite the danger it represents, veterans and rookies are ready to challenge the Leviathan. In the past “people had died trying to ride that monster. [...] Because nothing you read in a manual, no regular technique, would be of any use.”²³¹ So, what has changed from the previous attempts?

Although nothing you read in a manual, no regular technique, would be of any use, the overlapping of history gave life to our wisdom. [...] We succeeded for having been taught by past cases, one by one.²³²

²²⁹ 水木しげる、『決定版 日本妖怪大全 妖怪・あの世・神様』、東京、講談社、2014年。Mizuki, Shigeru, *Ketteihan. Nihon yōkai taizen. Yōkai, ano yo, kamisama*, Tōkyō, Kōdansha, 2014.

²³⁰ 「早春の時期に海龍は人を食らってまた何年もず型を消す。」Abe, “RIDE ON TIME” in *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”*, p. 27.

²³¹ 「かつて化け物に挑んで命を落とした[...]どんなマニュアルもテクニックも、そこでたしかに役立つという保証はない。」Abe, “RIDE ON TIME” in *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”*, pp. 26-27. Causal proposition anticipates the main clause in the original.

²³² 「どんなマニュアルやテクニックも、そこでたしかに役立つという保証はないとはいえ、歴史の積み重ねが知恵を生み[ました][...]過去のケースを逐一教えられていたことが奏功したのだ。」Abe, “RIDE ON TIME” in *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”*, p. 27, my translation.

This is a strong remark about the importance of history as a live platform that teaches how to avoid past mistakes; it also echoes the stance taken by the Nobel Prize winner Ōe Kenzaburō's *History Repeats*²³³ and offers to the readers the chance to raise questions about the vulnerability of the country. The author seems to show a concern about what value have handbooks and alike in the wake of catastrophe, since they proved to be useless in facing the *Daishinsai*. A similar viewpoint was shared by Genyū Sōkyū - as seen in the previous chapter - and suggests the 11 March disaster encouraged writers' awareness of manuals, essays and guidebooks on the topic.

As observed until now, the meta textuality of *RIDE ON TIME* assumes a relevant role in reading Abe's novel as a fictional portrait of the 3.11. A tsunami of almost 50 m tall²³⁴ will hit for sure Japan northern coast on a Friday in the early spring; its destructive potential is well-known from past recordings by victims. The result is a fictional account that warns future generations about the dangers a *shinsai-tsunami* disaster entails.

Or maybe not? The story ends with the brave decision of the protagonist to try to ride on time that wave. A courageous action or a suicidal gesture? There is no apparent evidence to help the reader understanding why to ride that wave is so important, why it is essential for the surfers to risk their lives in riding such a - potentially - fatal wave. The reader is inclined to think the wave as a metaphor, the *monito* of the toll 2011 tsunami caused: a consciousness Japanese people should preserve for posterity.

3. The wave: the symbolic language of trauma

The narrator's account portrays the tsunami as a monster and this is already a metaphor of the brutality of the ocean stressed by the reference to the tradition of the Old Testament, Japanese mythology and the more recent *Final Fantasy* video game saga and their evocative representations.

Abe's wave has no human appearance but rather the one of a dragon, a snake or better, its shape is mutable according to the movements of waters. *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, the worldwide famous *ukiyo*e woodblock print by Hokusai comes definitely to reader's mind while approaching *RIDE ON TIME* novel. Its crest, a claw-like hand ready to grab its victims by the neck, is approaching the coast looking for poor fellows. Abe decided to opt for a visionary language and depicted with words visual images of the 11 March tsunami approaching Touhoku shore. Further observations about the rhetorical prose played out by Abe regard the metonymical approach given

²³³ Ōe, "History Repeats".

²³⁴ It is worth noticing that actually the tallest wave recorded during 11 March *Daishinsai* was up to 40.5 m in Miyako, Iwate Prefecture. Info available at the home page of *Wasurenai Official Website*, <http://wasurenai.me>, 2016/7/14.

to the breathtaking wave that devours humans. It is not necessary to describe the act in details but the verb “to swallow” used to translate the Japanese *kuu* - as seen before - also involves torment and consumption: the crest of the wave represents the mouth of the creature ready to drag its victims to the seafloor.

To put it with Ricœur’s words, the big wave becomes for the author an “image mnémonique”, an *eikōn*, or even a symbol, of the 3.11.²³⁵ As to say that “l’expérience mnémonique” is exactly “où mémoire et image sont comme naturellement liées.”²³⁶ In Abe Kazushige’s *RIDE ON TIME* this overlap of memory and image finds its natural outcome in the big wave. The presence of a latent memory of the 3.11 acted out by the author through the symbol of the tsunami gives space to interpret his novel as a testimonial account of 11 March, although this witness is definitely disrupted. The writer actually chose to focus only on one face of the triple disaster - likewise done by Genyū Sokyū in his *Kōrogi* - by exploiting the role of the big wave and the devastation it caused. Eventually, Abe was not a first-hand witness of the *Daishinsai*, as the author himself affirmed. Notwithstanding his novel acts as a testimony, as far as the symbol/tsunami (*image*) serves as the access key to the 3.11 memory (*mnémonique*).

For the polysemic sense of the symbol, it risks misreading the testimony, due to the gap arose between witness’ authentic experience and what the testimony conveys into words. What is necessary is the recognition of the symbol by the reader - the one that Norma Rosen defined as “witness-through-the-imagination”²³⁷ - thanks to which authorial message can be correctly interpreted. This dialogic intercourse needs the efforts of both sides otherwise allusions and rhetoric remain covered: “testimony is more than production. It is also reception, gathering, interpretation, rearticulation, and communication.”²³⁸ In other words, the testimony finds its *raison d’être* only in the presence of both witness and receiver.²³⁹

²³⁵ Ricœur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*, p. 297. I found particularly compelling the essay entitled “Die Symbolik im Traum” by Sigmund Freud; although in this *Lesung* the author focused his attention almost on sexology (analyzing the *Sexualsymbol*), interesting are the examples about the association of trauma to everything that can, symbolically, remember that event (*Geburt* and *Wasser* for instance, p. 146). It should be kept in mind that sometimes some associations and images are not clearly understandable by the receiver, unless the aid of psychoanalysis to uncover and reveal those associations (see the case of Madeira-materia-mater-Mutter, p. 152). Freud, Sigmund, “Die Symbolik im Traum” in *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, Norderstedt, Vero Verlag, 2015, pp. 142-161.

²³⁶ Zyka, Jean-Roger, “La Mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli by Paul Ricœur review” in *Autres Temps. Cahiers d’éthique sociale et politique*, 2001, Volume 70 Numéro 1, pp. 111-112.

²³⁷ Norma Rosen quoted by Ezrahi, Sidra, Dekoven, *By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 210.

²³⁸ Weine, *Testimony after Catastrophe*, p. 93.

²³⁹ Anker, Jeffrey, “Metaphors of Pain: The Use of Metaphors in Trauma Narrative with Reference to Fugitive pieces” in *Literator: Journal of Literary Criticism, comparative linguistics and literary studies*, vol 30, no. 2, 2009, p. 49.

The adoption of a rhetorical language is attributable to the accessibility that figures of speech give to the account: the metaphoric trope removes the barriers between an incredible reality - the one of the 3.11 catastrophe - and the reader. The author is moved by the urgency of bearing witness of the 3.11 and, in doing so, providing the reader with direct access to its object.²⁴⁰

The novel was actually written soon after 11 March²⁴¹ and the imperative for literature to stand and cope with the 11 March aftermath results in Abe's choice to make use of visual images. Actually, recent psychoanalytic studies on trauma and narrative agree that any use of symbols and alike enables access to the unconscious by verbalizing emotional experiences which can foster emphatic reaction in the listener.²⁴² The result is the realization of the very meaning of metaphor - to which allegory, symbol and image are synonyms - from the Greek *metapherien*, "to transfer, to carry": the transmutation of an image - a feeling, a perception - into a word that even though does not literally denote it, it helps in define its object.²⁴³ Abe's figurative language is then able to return tsunami's violence; the author can depict the almost 16 thousand toll the big wave produced only by taking advantage of reader's imagination.²⁴⁴

As a consequence, the tsunami experience becomes affordable to everybody. It is no more confined to survivor's testimony but can approach and reach the heart of those who, even not personally involved, demonstrate sympathy with the victims. "On aurait ainsi la séquence : perception, souvenir, fiction."²⁴⁵ In the specific case we assist at the reverse course, where the fiction - *RIDE ON TIME* - enables the reader to remember 11 March - though a process Cathy Caruth called "amnesiac reenactment"²⁴⁶ - and then to perceive feelings of fear (of the wave), sorrow (for the victims), determination (to not be defeated again).

²⁴⁰ Bernard-Donals, Michael and Glejzer, Richard, *Between Witness and Testimony. The Holocaust and the Limits of Representation*, New York, State University of New York Press, 2001, p. 62.

²⁴¹ May, 3, 2011 according to the Waseda Bungaku publication.

²⁴² "In layman's terms, this means that speaking in metaphor allows a traumatized individual to talk about what happened without being re-traumatized by the memory of the event." Metaphor and symbolization, then, brings the illusion to control and master the trauma. Whigham, Susan, Lien, "The Role of Metaphor in Recovery from Trauma" in *The Schizophrenia Myth*, 2006, <http://www.theschizophreniamyth.com/metaphor.html>.

²⁴³ Mucci, Clara, "Trauma, Healing and the Reconstruction of Truth", in *Am J Psychoanalysis*, 74, no. 1, 2014, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24603171>, p. 31.

²⁴⁴ Bernard-Donals, Glejzer, *Between Witness and Testimony*, p. 35.

²⁴⁵ Ricœur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, p. 59.

²⁴⁶ Caruth, Cathy, *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative and History*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 154.

4. Time and memory of a wave

As briefly seen before, the discussion about the usage of time in the novel is quite complex; actually the temporal discourse recurs again and again in the analysis of *RIDE ON TIME* and it is even emphasized by the author in the title of the novel. Of course, the narration itself has its own temporal development with its beginning, development and ending.

Notwithstanding, the time frame is messed up by authorial resolution to confuse that “particular Friday” in the sense that the reader cannot detach if the reference is toward a 3.11 already passed or a future 3.11 to come. In other words, the character in the story speaks *in eventu* about a future “Friday” but the meta textual information remarks that Abe’s Friday refers to 11 March 2011. The result is an a-temporal novel in terms that the time of the story transcends and goes beyond any factual reference: it can be ascribed indifferently to past or future. The implications concern the value that the novel assumes as a fictional testimony based on the 3.11 memories. According to the Hegelian perspective of *Erinnerung* and *Gedächtnis*,²⁴⁷ memory achieves its completion only once a particular moment in the past is detected:

La memoria, in questo senso, trasforma il passato temporale in passato logico. [...] La memoria non è un’impossibile lente di ingrandimento sul senso latente della realtà passata, ma il veicolo per commettere il passato alla costruzione del presente e dei soggetti che vi abitano.²⁴⁸

In other words, memory becomes a way to process time while thoughts represent its essence, its true manifestation - what Guido Frilli called, respectively, *ratio conoscendi* and *ratio essendi*.²⁴⁹ This interpretation sheds light on the testimony’s value of the novel. Memory of the 3.11 in Abe’s *RIDE ON TIME* transformed a “special Friday” in an atemporal one which belongs to past, present and future. In this respect that “special Friday” performs the *anagnorisis*, the moment when the true nature of the situation - its ambivalence - is discovered, leading to the resolution of the story.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ In this context *Erinnerung* and *Gedächtnis* are considered according to Hegel’s idea of time and memory (*Erinnerung*: memory; *Gedächtnis*: capacity to remember).

²⁴⁸ Frilli, Guido, *Passato senza tempo. Tempo, storia e memoria nella Fenomenologia dello spirito di Hegel*, Trento, Pubblicazioni di Verifiche, 2014, p. 49.

²⁴⁹ Frilli, *Passato senza tempo*, p. 51.

²⁵⁰ Ricœur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*, p. 313. See also Gardini, Nicola, *Lacuna. Saggio sul non detto*, Torino, Einaudi, 2014, p. 25.

What is, then, the resolution of *RIDE ON TIME*? The English version of the novel concludes only with the following statement: “I know we can do it. Here I go.”²⁵¹ manifesting the voiceover’s intention to fight against the big wave. The Japanese version results more explicit in its provocation: “Believing that, I am going to ride that wave now.”²⁵² That “believe” refers to the hope that a different Friday can be turned into a “common, normal” one thanks to human efforts (力, literally “power, strength”). The wish to restore the classical routine, the boring but comforting everyday life clashes with the extraordinary extent of the devastating *Daishinsai*. Abe Kazushige’s message for his readers is hidden beyond these last words: the invitation to stand and cope all together with the 11 March aftermaths. As the author himself declared in a crosstalk with Takahashi Genichirō and Sasaki Atsushi: “When I thought about what literature could do [after 11 March] I am afraid to say anything came out to me. It is useless to the extent I was shocked.”²⁵³ This apparent fruitless stance of literature is remarked by the novelist in several interviews, sometimes arguing that the 3.11 underlined exactly this weakness in literary production.²⁵⁴ In particular, in an essay published in the *Asahi Shinbun* in March 2016 under the emblematic title *Kotoba mo mata kowasareta* 『言葉もまた壊された』 (“Even words crushed once again”), the author stated that “the trust in words incredibly faded”²⁵⁵ due to the political matters regarding the nuclear fallout, the lies of the Toden Company in charge at the Fukushima Power Plant and the agitation of the public opinion. “Wherein, it is necessary to restore the value of words one more time”²⁵⁶ stated the author. It is now time to transform literature into the potential to scale down the heated debate around the usage of nuclear power and Japanese social movements against it; a debate that prompted out among

²⁵¹ Abe, “RIDE ON TIME” in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 188.

²⁵² 「それを信じて、ぼくは今からあの波に乗ってみるつもりだ。」 Abe, “RIDE ON TIME” in *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”*, p. 30.

²⁵³ 「じゃあ文学というジャンルに何ができるかって僕なりに考えたときに、残念ながら何も出てこなかった。びっくりするくらい役に立たないな、と思って（笑）」阿部和重、佐ヶ木敦、高橋源一郎、「社会と文学—20年と震災後の小説たち」、『小説トリッパー』、東京、朝日新聞出版、2015年、p. 27. Abe, Kazushige, Sasaki, Azushi, Takahashi, Genichirō, “Shakai to bungaku - 20 nen to shinsaigo no shōsetsu tachi”, in *Shōsetsu Tripper*, Tōkyō, Asahi Shinbun Shuppan, 2015, p. 27.

²⁵⁴ 阿部和重、福富渉、「タイで自作を語る」、『あちこち・マガジン』、2014年3月。Abe, Kazushige, Futomi, Shō, “Tai de Jisaku wo kataru” in *Wochi Kochi Magazine*, March 2014, <http://www.wochikochi.jp/special/2014/10/kazushige-abe-thailand1.php>.

²⁵⁵ 「言葉というものの信頼が非常に薄れてしまった」阿部和重、「言葉も壊された」、『朝日新聞』、十日三月2016年。Abe, Kazushige, “Kotoba mo kowasareta” in *Asahi Shinbun*, 10 March 2016.

²⁵⁶ 「その中でもう一度言葉の価値というものを取り戻していかなきゃいけないんじゃないか」 Abe, “Kotoba mo kowasareta”.

scholars soon after the 11 March disaster. The crosstalk with Takahashi and Sasaki actually concludes with Abe stressing this is the real role of literature:²⁵⁷ to cool down the crazy and reflect to what can be done to recover Japan's devastated areas and help its refugees with a clear head.

Abe's *RIDE ON TIME* reflects this authorial point of view: without feeling the need for new literary experimentation, Abe portrays his own vision of the 3.11 catastrophe by using tsunami as the emblem of 11 March.

By exploiting the *Daishinsai* ellipsis Abe's *RIDE ON TIME* gives a central role to the meta textual discourse that enables readers to fill up the narrative void the never-mentioned 3.11 creates. Any omission of reference and keywords connected with 11 March does not represent the authorial choice to silence the catastrophic event, but rather the hints of something lost. Abe's decision to suppress and cut off any direct and explicit quote to the 3.11 encourages readers to be proactive and to seek the completion of what lacks. The ultimate goal is that the reader himself formulates his own opinions of the disaster through the process of reasoning. The symbol of the big wave carried out by Abe Kazushige helps in supporting the metadiscourse on the 3.11 and stimulates readers' imagination to accomplish the portrait of the 11 March catastrophe. Abe's *non detto* serves as Proustian interstices or Woolfian crevices: the absence becomes the allusive presence of the *Daishinsai*. And this presence is made clear in the temporal aporia that sees the 3.11 as past, present and future:

The word "bonds" was explained miserably [after 11 March]. The rhetorical flourish of that "bonds" is that words reverberate amazingly, of course, somehow they got a helpful side, I think. On the other side perhaps there are also people that feel the great pressure of the word "bonds". Literature must stand on the side of the minorities and shared that image of "bonds". That's what I realized.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ 「今の文学の役割なんじゃないかなということは考えてますね。」 Abe, Sasaki, Takahashi, "Shakai to bungaku - 20 nen to shinsaigo no shōsetsu tachi", p. 28.

²⁵⁸ 「絆」という言葉がさんざん説かれました。その絆という美辞麗句というのは、言葉そのものは非常に美しく響くし、何かある種の役に立った面がもちろんあったと思うんです。[...] 文学というのはやはりマイノリティの側に立って、その絆という言葉のイメージをずらさなきゃいけない。僕が考えたのはそういったことです。」 Abe, Futomi, "Tai de Jisaku wo kataru".

The 3.11 yarn: Kawakami Mieko

1. From Touhoku area to Kansai region

The next protagonist of this literary study thorough post-3.11 Japan is Kawakami Mieko (川上未映子, Ōsaka, 1976). The writer is the winner, among others, of the Akutagawa and Tanizaki literary prizes; she is originally from Kansai region where leads the fourth stage of this literary analysis. Her first commitment to 11 March was the short novel *Sangatsu no keito* 『三月の毛糸』 published into both *Sore demo sangatsu wa, mata*²⁵⁹ and *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”*²⁶⁰ literary collections. Actually, the English translation of this brief work inspired the English title for the adaptation *March was made of Yarn* (I will take the chance to come back to the title later).²⁶¹ Moreover, *Sangatsu no keito* was also included in a selection of short novels the author gathered under the title *Ai no yume toka* 『愛の夢とか』 (“Dreams of love and much more”)²⁶² published in 2013.

However, there is also another piece of work by Kawakami that may help to explore the authorial perspective of the 3.11 catastrophe: I am referring to *Zenbu no ato ni nokoru mono* 『ぜんぶの後に残るもの』 (“What remains after everything”)²⁶³ a nonfictional production written and published within a year from the *Daishinsai*.

²⁵⁹ 川上未映子、「三月の毛糸」、『それでも三月は、また』、東京、講談社、2011年。Kawakami, Mieko, “Sangatsu no keito” in *Sore demo sangatsu wa, mata*, Tōkyō, Kōdansha, 2012, pp. 79-100.

²⁶⁰ 川上未映子、「三月の毛糸」、『震災とフィクションの距離』、東京、早稲田文学会、2012年。Kawakami, Mieko, “Sangatsu no keito” in *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”*, Tōkyō, Waseda bungakukai, 2012, pp. 124-140. As for “RIDE ON TIME”, even this brief novel was firstly published online on August, 15, 2011.

²⁶¹ Kawakami, Mieko, “March Yarn” in *March Was Made of Yarn: Reflections on the Japanese Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Meltdown*, New York, Vintage Books, 2012, pp. 55-69.

²⁶² 川上未映子、『愛の夢とか』、東京、講談社、2013年。Kawakami, Mieko, “Sangatsu no keito” in *Ai no yume toka*, Tōkyō, Kōdansha, 2013, pp. 67-88.

²⁶³ 川上未映子、「震災の後で」、『ぜんぶの後に残るもの』、東京、新潮社、2011年。Kawakami, Mieko, “Shinsai no ato de” in *Zenbu no ato ni nokoru mono*, Tōkyō, Shinchōsha, 2011, pp. 1-33.

2. Ōsaka's yarn: the 3.11 story or a catastrophic thread?

Kawakami Mieko's *Sangatsu no keito* ("March Yarn")²⁶⁴ leads the encounters with Japanese post-3.11 literature to the city of Kyōto in the Kansai region, along with the company of a young married couple. It should be noted the connection between the spacial coordinates of novel's development and Kawakami's Kansai origins.

The short novel presents in only eight pages simple fragments of coupledness on a vacation: the 8 month-pregnant woman often complains about this and that, like many expectant mothers in her condition - even the visit to the Kiyomizudera Temple is a difficult task for her. Otherwise, the man seems suffering from a form of narcolepsy (ナルコレプシー)²⁶⁵ that makes the woman upset. There is actually a sort of red thread that can be summarized in the philosophical consideration the woman makes frequently regarding the everyday routine and their tedious (うんざり) life:

It's always the same thing, again and again, and before you know it, your life is over.²⁶⁶

Actually the opening sentence of the short novel portrays exactly this exhausting feeling but results more effective in the Japanese version: "It is tedious that, from tomorrow, the same every day will start again."²⁶⁷ Boring, annoying, tiresome life devoid of what the young woman calls "funny moments" (楽しいとき). In this regards Kawakami's *Sangatsu no keito* echoes *RIDE ON TIME* as far as both narrations suggest the need to a change in everyday life. Even taking care of woman's swollen calves is monotonous: "just like always, as if it was a ritual",²⁶⁸ states the narrator. The constant state of somnolence of the male protagonist looks interesting because new and different: "It had come from somewhere unrelated to the everyday sort of sleepiness I was used to".²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ Please note that for the analysis of this short novel I am taking advantage of the English translation by Michael Emmerich which was published in both collections.

²⁶⁵ Kawakami, Mieko, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 128.

²⁶⁶ Kawakami, Mieko, "Sangatsu no keito" in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 55. 「こいうことをくりかえして、知らないあいだに人生が閉じていくのよ。」 Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 124.

²⁶⁷ 「明日からまたおんなじ毎日が始まるなんてうんざり」 Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 124. The English translation states: "I'm so not looking forward to tomorrow, everything going back to normal" Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 55.

²⁶⁸ Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 59. 「何かの儀式みたいにいつものように。」 Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 129.

²⁶⁹ *ibidem*. 「それはこれまで僕が慣れ親しんだふだんの眠りとはまったく関係のないべつのところからやってきて」 Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 128.

Generally speaking a sense of apathy and listlessness is detachable in the novel: the protagonists have no interest in sight-seeing and even their voice's tone - described as monotonous (面白くもなさそう) - reflects this lethargic state. Eventually, author herself stressed some sentences referring to this apathetic attitude: "We are used to it"²⁷⁰, "It's nothing, right?"²⁷¹. The occurrence of these stances in the text is so frequent to encourage the perception these vague and nebulous expressions are symptoms of indifference for life. Even though no information is given in regard to protagonists' name or age, the story reveals the narrator is a first person, male, teacher. The reason of the trip is a quick visit to the parents of his pregnant wife in Shimane Prefecture before giving birth to the child she is carrying. The couple also decides to go along with a brief trip to Kyōto before getting busy with the newborn. The voiceover warns the reader that this brief journey is only an improvised stop on the way home, thousands of kilometers away. Nevertheless, there is no possibility to know where the couple lives, a country identified only as "that place" (あの場所). The narration reveals that they recently moved from Tōkyō where the woman wishes to return to kill the boredom of the new town. A cross-talk between Kawakami Mieko and Azuma Hiroki helps in identifying the provenance of the couple:²⁷² they are supposed to live in Sendai, almost 71 km away from the Fukushima Daichi nuclear power plant, a zone heavily damaged by the quake and the tsunami on 11 March.

Time, though, does not help in finding any relation to 11 March and actually the alternation between the present time of the story and protagonist's flash backs reveals a lack of stability in the narrative framework. The story actually begins *in media res* to switch to a retrospective narration of previous facts.²⁷³ Hence, the *fabula* is articulated as follows: 1) arrival at the hotel; 2) visit to Kiyomizudera Temple; 3) coming back to the hotel; 4) 5 PM. These different time spans are interrupted by narrator's recollections: how they decided to go on a vacancy, the first months of pregnancy, the first touch of his wife's belly. It seems these memories are not fundamental for the development of the fiction, which appears bland by itself.

²⁷⁰ 「本当に慣れてきているのだ」 Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 125, emphasis in the original.

²⁷¹ 「本当はなにもないんじゃないか」 Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 131, emphasis in the original.

²⁷² 東浩紀、川上未映子、「東日本大震災4年 東浩紀さん・川上未映子さん対談」、『朝日新聞』、2015年3月11日。Azuma, Hiroki, Kawakami, Mieko, "Higashi Nihon Daishinsai yonen Azuma Hiroki san-Kawakami Mieko san taiwa", *Asahi shinbun*, 11 March 2015.

²⁷³ Segre, *Avviamento all'analisi del testo letterario*, p 273.

There is only a reference to 11 March, 2:46 PM. The couple arrives at the hotel at about noon; when they wake up in the room after resting from their visit to the Kiyomizudera Temple is 5 PM. A message on woman's cellphone asks if everything is OK after the earthquake. It is not bold to think that in the lapse of time between 13 and 17, when the couple visited the Kiyomizudera Temple and came back to rest at the hotel near Kyōto station, the 9-magnitude Touhoku earthquake occurred. The message also endorses the conjecture the couple lives in the Touhoku area. Since the Kansai region was not affected by the quake, there is actually no apparent other reasons to ask if they are safe, unless the interlocutor - who knows anything about their last-minute trip to Kyōto - was worried about their safety assuming they are still in that zone. Again, as in the case of *RIDE ON TIME*, it is only thanks to the meta discourse - title in primis - that time and space of the novel, intrinsically correlated to the 11 March disaster, are defined.

As concern the title of the novel, *Sangatsu no keito*, Kawakami allows her characters to explain by themselves the meaning of this "March Yarn". After waking up that afternoon the woman explains a dream she had:

"About giving birth."

"Did you?"

"Our baby was born," she said. "It was yarn."

"Yarn?" I said, taken aback.

"Yes," she said quietly. "It was a world were everything was made of yarn."²⁷⁴

[...]

"Even March was yarn," she said eventually.

"March?"

"Yeah. March."

"*March* was yarn?"

"That's right," she said. "In that world, even March was made of yarn."²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 63. 「子どもを生む夢よ」「うん」僕は肯いた。「子どもが生まれる夢だったの。毛糸で生まれてくるのよ」と彼女は言った。「毛糸?」と僕は聞きかえした。「そうよ」と彼女は静かに言った。「その世界は、何もかも毛糸でできているの。」Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 132-133.

²⁷⁵ Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 64, italics in the original. 「そこでは三月ですから、毛糸なの」しばらくして彼女は言った。「三月?」と僕は聞きかえした。「そう。三月が」「三月が毛糸で?」「三月なのよ」と彼女は言った。「その世界では三月までもが毛糸でできあがっているのよ」Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 133-134.

The astonishment of the protagonist mirrors the difficulty in understanding how a segment of time can be perceived as a yarn. It is easy to imagine things or even people and animals made of yarn, but how can you figure out abstract things made of yarn? As a dream, it does not appeal the common rules; fantasy world projects fictitious images. But eventually, this dream is opened up for interpretations. Kawakami's yarn can actually represent different things: it is a soft envelop that wraps human life, contributing to a sense of numbness that makes sore human relationships, as seen before; eventually, that soft envelop protects humans from external attacks: in this sense the boring routine constitutes a comfort zone, peaceful and safe, although monotonous. Interesting is the accurate choice of the English word "yarn" which can refer both to a "thread" or to "a story, a tale" - in its metaphorical meaning. This ambivalence gets lost in Japanese language, where *keito* 毛糸 means literally "fur (wool) thread". The original Kawakami's text stands out for its impartial stance in representing nothing more than the boredom of a couple on a vacancy. In *Sangatsu no keito*, more than in *RIDE ON TIME*, authorial *reticentia* towards 11 March is essential to enact the process of readers' interpretative freedom, as to say the literary means that enables the readers to participate in the creation of the artwork. In a sense, the very absence of the 3.11 in Kawakami's short novel forces the readers to focus the attention and look for what is missing, thus referring to the meta textual information at their disposal.

Eventually, the author pokes the readers to urge reflections about the ethical dichotomy of good and evil:

Everyday, day after day, there's always someone bleeding somewhere, and the only reason it hasn't been us yet is that our turn hasn't come. Maybe it's just not the right time yet, that's why we didn't bleed today, that's why we're here in this hotel. Maybe we were just lucky.²⁷⁶

Kawakami, thorough the voice of her female protagonist, seems argue that life or dead is a simple matter of chance (運, タイミング). There is no pathetic or whiny tone in her voice; no signs of a sort of survivor-guilty feeling in her words. There is only room for resignation: human beings are

²⁷⁶ Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 67. 「毎日毎日、あんなふうにして必ずどこかで血が流れづけていて、わたしたちの身にまだ何も起きていないのはただ順番がまわってきていないだけなのよ。今日わたしたちがあんなふうにあんなふうに血を流さずにすんでここでこうしていられるのは、まだその順番がきていないだけのことかもしれないのよ。わたしたちはただ、運がいいだけなのかもしれないのよ」 Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 137.

defenceless when circumstances force them to be vis-à-vis with accidents, calamities, disasters. There's an evil in this world, and always there will be: "there's seriously no hope for this world",²⁷⁷ remarks again the woman. And even when nature has no fault, humans are responsible for their own suffering: "Someone gave birth to them too"²⁷⁸ she cries, revealing her concerns for the future of her child's behaviour while discussing a scene of a man probably punched at his nose, a man the couple met on the stairs hours earlier. A little glimmer of hope is actually given by the Japanese version of the text in which the main verb is at the present - not past - tense: "Maybe we are just lucky." We are still alive and safe.

Although Kawakami's literary commitment post 11 March appears without doubts pessimistic, there is evidence the author tries to balance the fatalistic attitude of the young bride with the confident belief of her husband: "It's not all bad. [...] There's a lot of bad in the world, but there's just as much good."²⁷⁹ he states. The Japanese term for "optimistic" used by Kawakami - *maemuki* 前向き - is better translatable as "proactive" to be true to the original nuance of the word: the capacity of "front-facing" difficulties and endure hardship is perceived as a dynamical quality often ascribed to Japanese people after 11 March.²⁸⁰

Notwithstanding, two gloomy images close the novel: the first, hallucinating vision of a single piece of yarn climbing from woman's belly button toward the roof; the second, a whirlpool - *uneri* (うねり) in Japanese, which consciously or unconsciously resumes Abe's big wave - on the verge of pushing every human being down to the bottom. A very simple interpretation of both images sees the yarn as an outstretching hand in surrender - or maybe looking for help? - while lower to the ground, a powerful vortex is ready to swallow - to bleed out - not only the protagonists but also the entire world. Actually the English translation seems ambiguous at this point, while the original version stresses the common fact that many people in the world were sleeping at the same time; and that's exactly toward that deep sleep that the swirling is going to drag the protagonist: "This time, I

²⁷⁷ 「そして、この世界が本当にもうどうにも救いようのない場所だっというふうに思えてしかたがなくなるの。」 Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 136.

²⁷⁸ 「いつか誰かから生まれてきて」 Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 137.

²⁷⁹ 「悪いことばかりじゃないよ。おなじぐらい、いいことだっ起きてる。」 Kawakami, "Sangatsu no keito" in *Shinsai to fikushon no "kyori"*, p. 138.

²⁸⁰ Gebhardt, and Masami, *Literature and Art after Fukushima*, p. 13.

closed my eyes to go into the bottom of a real sleep”.²⁸¹ Any allusion to the “deep sleep” as the eternal slumber is upon the reader.

3. Engaging testimony: reader’s dialogical role

When dealing with trauma and its verbalization into literary text the main concern of the inquiry often turns to the reliability of the testimony in question and the ethical implications this critical writing entails. Thus, because the poetical and rhetorical elements typical of fiction place more emphasis on the *mise-en-scene* of the story and its imaginative power rather than the historical accuracy of the facts.²⁸² According to Hayden White, the term “real story” defines a commentary of facts occurred in reality while “true story” is a mere interpretation of real proof.²⁸³ The result is a literal or a figurative representation that casts doubts about the accuracy of the facts; any aesthetization of a traumatic experience is perceived as an offense to the morality of the victim. Hence, Adorno’s statement about the impossibility to write poetry after Auschwitz²⁸⁴ and the efforts *genbaku bungaku sakka* like Ōta Yōko put in describing the atrocity of the atomic bombings without finding a satisfactory compromise - according to the author - between documentary report and aesthetic portrait. These considerations led White to quote Lang in saying that: “only the most literalist *chronicle* of the facts [...] comes close to passing the test of authenticity and truthfulness”.²⁸⁵ What is dangerous is, indeed, the potential reduction and downgrading of survivor’s trauma due to the process of imaginary representation that scales down and diminish the impact of the catastrophe. A fear well expressed by Primo Levi who was afraid to comprehend - if possible - the meaning of Nazi’s “Final Solution Plan” in the sense that the act of understanding implies, to some extent, the acceptance of it.²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ 「今度こそ本当の眠りの底へ降りていくために目を閉じた。」 Kawakami, “Sangatsu no keito” in *Shinsai to fikushon no “kyori”*, p. 140. The original English translation states: “I [...] closed my eyes, sure that this time, this time, I would make it all the way down to the bottom”. Kawakami, “Sangatsu no keito” in *March Was Made of Yarn*, p. 69.

²⁸² White, Hayden, “The Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth” in *Probing the Limits of Representation*, ed. S. Friedlander, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992, *Forme di storia*, p. 38.

²⁸³ White, “The Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth”, p. 39.

²⁸⁴ “Nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch” translated as: “Writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”. Adorno, Theodor, *Prismen. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* (“Prisms. Cultural Criticism and Society”), Berlin, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955, p. 30.

²⁸⁵ White, “The Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth”, p. 44, italics in the original.

²⁸⁶ “Maybe what happened can’t be understood, on the contrary, it doesn’t have to be understood, because to comprehend almost means to justify. [...] If understanding is impossible, knowing is necessary, because it happened therefore it can happen again, consciences can be seduced and obscured again: even ours.” Levi, “Appendice”, p. 175.

What is at issue here is that the nonfictional and fictional productions frequently addressed as “trauma narrative” does not only provide definition for survivor’s testimonial accounts. It also identifies non autobiographical writing on the topic of trauma, as well as “fictional narratives that help readers to access traumatic experience.”²⁸⁷ In other words, the “trauma narrative” so described includes also any narrative product in which trauma, although not explicitly mentioned by the author, is hidden between the lines of the novel and implicitly detachable in characters’ behaviour and dialogues. In this case, the traumatic experience protagonists may - or may not - have witnessed is re-created in reader’s mind through a process of transference.²⁸⁸ Thus, because “the reading can bring about a catharsis of suppressed emotions.”²⁸⁹ Through identification with the characters presented in the story, the reader becomes a kind of witness: he may identify similarities with his own fear, anxiety, horrors and even episodes of past violence. Here comes “the trauma writer’s task: to help readers discover their own sympathetic imaginings of humanity in extremes.”²⁹⁰

This is the principle of Yoshimoto Banana’s “healing narrative” as conceived by critics like John Whittier Treat²⁹¹ and this is also the strength of Kawakami’s *Sangatsu no keito*. The point of view staged by the author is exactly the one of a common couple living the everyday routine: it is not difficult to recognize oneself in the protagonists’ shoes. The strong point in her novel is exactly the attribute of “commonality” (read: universality) that can be ascribed to the story. Every reader can see himself living 11 March as a day not different from the others, at least until something extraordinary happens. The three-fold catastrophe disappears, it is related to its original exclusivity. The *Daishinsai* is circumscribed again: its peeping out through the mail received on the cellphone by the couple is limitative. An instant, a staple in a chronological line of events. To bring back the catastrophe to its evenemential dimension does not mean to scale down its extent but simply to re-inscribe it in the everyday life. The magnitude of the event does not cast any doubt; it is only led back to its uniqueness, its unicum: the catastrophe is not a daily occurrence but a tragedy that cyclically reappeared in human’s life. Authorial’s *reticentia* is the allusive practice by which

²⁸⁷ Vickoy, Laurie, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, London, University of Virginia Press, 2002, p. 1.

²⁸⁸ van Alphen quoted in van der Merwe, Chris, N., and Gobodo-Madikizela, *Narrating our Healing*, p. 59.

²⁸⁹ van der Merwe, Gobodo-Madikizela, *Narrating our Healing*, p. 60.

²⁹⁰ Vickoy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, p. 2.

²⁹¹ see Treat, John Whittier, “Yoshimoto Banana writes Home: Shojo Culture and the Nostalgic Subject” in *The Society of Japanese Studies*. 19, 2, 1993, pp. 353-387. See also De Pieri, Veronica, “Nostalgia as a means to overcome trauma: the case of Yoshimoto Banana’s Sweet Hereafter” in *Conference Proceedings of the Memory, Melancholy and Nostalgia, the 4th International Interdisciplinary Memory conference*, Gdańsk, Gdańsk Przymorze Uniwersytet, 2017.

Kawakami speaks about the 3.11 without pragmatically mentioning it.²⁹² 11 March 2011 is portrayed in *Sangatsu no keito* as an ineffable silence, a declared omission that presses the reader to look for any allusion, however small. By doing so the author forces readers to reflect about the frailty of life stressing the powerlessness of human beings in front of *mujō*.

Kawakami's novel is as much part of post-Fukushima literary scenario as the straightforward Wagō's *net-poetry* because it provides the reader with the chance to open up the heart and reflect about the negativity of this world:

Trauma narrativists endeavour to expand their audience's awareness of trauma by engaging them with personalised, experientially oriented means of narration.²⁹³

Social acknowledgment is essential: testimony actually does not suffice by itself but need dialogism; the empathy of the audience - for just the psychoanalyst - is fundamental to make effective the working through and to enable the healing process. In this sense even the non-victim can co-star in experiencing the catastrophe's trauma through an emphatic response that, as we saw, can be put in action through the recognition of a symbol (Abe Kazushige) or, as in the case of Kawakami, through the personification of the readers with the actors of the story.

4. "What remains after everything" is media records

I would like to spend some words for *Zenbu no ato ni nokoru mono* to reflect about literature as written testimony. A literary work that deals with memory and trauma always calls into question the reasons under the act of writing; in other words, what are the aims and the role of literature in facing trauma and catastrophe. In the brief excursus around the post-3.11 literary production explored until now I tried to stress the peculiar approach each author showed toward Japanese *Daishinsai*. Wagō, as a witness directly affected by the radioactivity contamination resulted from the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant accident writes for a couple of reasons: 1) to not feel alone - at least during the first months; 2) to give voice to the evacuees; 3) to record facts and feelings; 3) to share them on the web in order to find the empathy of others - which combines the 1st and the 2nd goals; 4) to be remembered by political institutions and Japanese people; 5) to promote the reconstruction of the Fukushima area and some other minor reasons. As for Genyū, his productions betray the efforts to: 1) give voice to the evacuees; 2) record facts and feelings; 3) locate political support for the

²⁹² Gardini *Lacuna*, p. 33.

²⁹³ Vickoy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, p. 3.

reconstruction; 4) find a way to help people healing their wounds and going on. Whereas Abe's novel reveals at least the attempt to: 1) warn Japanese people about future disasters to come; 2) criticize the neglected attitude towards natural disasters in Japan; 3) give room for tsunami's victims.

Although in different ways all these approaches to 11 March are, some more, some less, definable as the literary efforts of contributing to testify the event, regardless the form taken by the writing - poetry, nonfiction, fiction - or the author - first-hand witness or connoisseur of the facts. The value of a first-hand testimony or an eyewitness' testimony is generally not questioned, unless it casts doubts about its fidelity to the facts. It is exactly this issue that Kawakami's *Zenbu no ato ni nokoru mono* rises in the first section of the book entitled *Shinsai no ato de* 「震災の後で」 (“After the disaster”).

This section of the book that lasts only 23 pages is divided into eight smallest essays - as the writer called them - which cover about a month from the *Daishinsai*, starting from 11 March. The contents range from the first impressions while watching TV announcements in Tōkyō to the fear for the radioactivity contamination to spread in the Kantō area too. Criticism toward TEPCO and government's mendacious attitude as well as the social harassment against the refugees - the *fūhyō higai* 風評被害 already denounced by Genyū - and brief testimony of Kawakami's acquaintances are included too. Interesting is also the introduction to the collection, a brief panoramic of authorial's reactions at the evacuated areas - in particular in Minamisanriku; a zone the writer visited for working (filming) purposes. The preface also explains the choice of the title in the sense that the collection sets the aim of portraying “something inside us that can't be stolen by earthquakes or tsunamis”,²⁹⁴ in other words “what remains after everything” (*Zenbu no ato ni nokoru mono*).

What I would like to advocate here is the role of Kawakami as a possible “witness” of the 3.11 event, together with the aims of her literary commitment in writing *Sangatsu no keito* and *Shinsai no ato de*. Although the author remarked in different occasions how the *Daishinsai* did not influence her approach to literature²⁹⁵ - likewise Abe Kazushige - her authorial *engagement* was fulfilled by

²⁹⁴ 「津波にも地震にも奪いきれないものが、わたしたちのなかにある。」 川上未映子、「前書き」、『ぜんぶの後に残るもの』、東京、新潮社、2011年。Kawakami, Mieko, “Preface” in *Zenbu no ato ni nokoru mono*, Tōkyō, Shinchōsha, 2011, p. 2.

²⁹⁵ Just to mention one among others, here is an excerpt from Kawakami Mieko's *Jinsei ga yōi suru mono* published in *Watashi no hikidashi*, <http://kmoto.exblog.jp/20827615/> 2017/02/23.

her writing,²⁹⁶ an imperative that has frequently demanded her literary contribution during the past years: suffice it to mention *Jinsei ga yōi suru mono* 『人生が用意するもの』 (“What life provides for”)²⁹⁷ published in August 2012, in which the *shinsai* theme is touched; or *Mae no hi* 「まえのひ」 (“The day before”)²⁹⁸ an essay published on author’s official website in 2015. Since this study is focused on the first impact the 11 March catastrophe had on the literary productions of authors here analyzed, the most recent works on the themes by Kawakami are taken into accounts only as long as they help in underlining how the 3.11 topic became frequent in Kawakami’s work.

Actually the novelist assisted to the devastation of the Touhoku zones by cable and got overwhelmed by the constant updates on social media.²⁹⁹ As often discussed before, the social networks played a key role in the diffusion of any information - reliable or not - about the *Daishinsai* and, above all, the nuclear fallout at Fukushima Daiichi. The possibility to get all information in real time represents an added value to the media in question to the extent that, starting from Azuma Hiroki,³⁰⁰ scholars’ debate around the role of social media after 11 March was often questioned. Eventually, authors like Hirano Keiichirō argued that the presence of testimonies in real time on the web undermines the fieldwork.³⁰¹ However, what makes the difference here is not only the amount of information available to the public but especially the fact that these communication systems enable anyone to sense the *Daishinsai*. A simple research under the keyword “tsunami 2011” on YouTube Channels for examples, provides direct access to a variety of videos - both private and official recordings - on the big wave coming to the shore of Touhoku: the emergency sirens are ringing when the tsunami slowly approaches the seaside sweeping away boats

²⁹⁶ 「今自分にできる労働はこれだ」と思いながら書いていました。」Azuma, Kawakami, “Higashi Nihon Daishinsai yonen Azuma Hiroki san-Kawakami Mieko san taiwa”.

²⁹⁷ 川上未映子、『人生が用意するもの』、東京、新潮社、2012年。Kawakami, Mieko, *Jinsei ga yōi suru mono*, Tōkyo, Shinchōsha, 2012.

²⁹⁸ Kawakami, Mieko, “Mae no hi” in *Kawakami Mieko Official Site*, <http://www.mieko.jp/blog/2015/01/17/744.html>, 2016/2/23.

²⁹⁹ The author herself quoted Wagō Ryōichi’s works in the interview for the Waseda Bungaku collection (p. 236), although he was not the only colleague that Kawakami mentioned: Takahashi Genichirō’s statements about radioactivity contamination were quoted in *Zenbu no ato ni nokoru mono* too (pp. 16-17).

³⁰⁰ Azuma Hiroki is a critic whose popular cross-talks with politics and authors yield great success after 11 March. Among the topics often discussed there are refugees’ problems in the evacuated areas after the *Daishinsai* and the nuclear debate. I took advantage of some of these cross-talks to investigate Wagō, Kawakami and Takahashi’s literary production, although this critic is often mentioned by Abe Kazushige too.

³⁰¹ 江国香織、堀江敏幸、綿矢りさ、平野啓一郎、「Paris: Ecrire après la catastrophe — ポスト3.11の日本文学—」、『文學界』、2012年6月。Kaori Ekuni, Toshiyuki Horie, Risa Wataya, Hirano, Keiichirō, “Paris: Ecrire après la catastrophe - posuto sangatsu jyūichinichi no nihon bungaku -” in *Bungakukai*, no. 6, 2012, p. 217.

and cars that were standing there only one minute before. And houses: thousands of houses dragged off by the violent stream of water. Where there was a lively town, in a minute only devastation remains. The internet allows web users to witness live coverage of hundreds of people dying on the small screen.³⁰²

That is the same for the quake: one only has to look for the keyword: “earthquake 2011” to watch people falling down on the streets, others running here and there, screaming in terror; walls trembling and furniture crushing to the ground; skyscrapers shaking dramatically. And all these data are provided by smartphone’s video recordings as well as live cam. Of course, all these examples are associated to 2011 catastrophe in Japan because this is the topic of this study. Anyway media coverage allows direct access to other catastrophic events too, from the 2001 Twin Tower attacks to the 2017 India earthquakes. And, I should repeat, many of these footage are recorded in live stream.

How can be defined a person who experienced a disaster or a tragic event from a cam? I used the term “witness” before because there is no need to sense the danger with all five senses to be shocked and traumatized by it. There are cases of PTSD discovered in eyewitnesses not directly involved in the dramatic event itself. The reverse is also true: the realistic effect of media can be not confused with the re-constructed images, videos and voices they conveyed - especially “the framing, the montaging, *the compression of the time of the event*”.³⁰³ And here is the question related to Kawakami’s role as a witness: to which extent is she a witness?

It is not excessive to state that media changed the way of bearing testimony not only because now recordings and data are available to all, but also because everybody can - hypothetically - bear it.³⁰⁴ What differs a first-hand witness from what I call - in this specific case - “media witness” is the quality of the experience they shared. The first-hand witness got physically involved in the event to the extent he can suffer from a direct trauma; whereas the “media witness” is likely to have experienced the facts with only two senses - view and deaf - because “mediated” by the medium - TV, radio, social networks, video footage on the web. The consequence is a total different approach

³⁰² I should spend some words about “Witness Media Lab Project” that - recognizing the powerful role of social media in bearing witness - “is dedicated to unleashing the potential of eyewitness video as a powerful tool to report, monitor, and advocate for human rights.” More info at the Official Website: <https://lab.witness.org>, 2017/2/23.

³⁰³ Agacinski, Sylviane, “Media Time” in *Time Passing. Modernity and Nostalgia*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, p. 169.

³⁰⁴ I may suggest two further readings on this topic. The first one is a tutorial to identify a culprit by social media: Reifman, Jeff, “Using Social Media to Locate Eyewitnesses to Important Events” in *Envatotuts+*, May, 4, 2015. <https://code.tutsplus.com/tutorials/using-social-media-to-locate-eyewitnesses-to-important-events--cms-23563>, 2017/2/23. The other is an article about the role of social media in recording the event in question: Ballin, Sofiya, “Bearing witness through social media. From Minnesota to Philly to Dallas, capturing the moment for the world to see” in *The Enquirer Daily News*, July, 9, 2016, http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20160710_Amid_turmoil_a_week_of_witness_and_protest_via_social_media.html, 2017/2/23.

to testimony. The struggles of a first-person witness - definable as *shōnin* 証人 in Japanese - in bearing testimony implies to recognize his own trauma and verbalize it into words. Often, this process needs psychotherapeutic sessions that stimulate a first oral testimony. Only after time trauma can be re-elaborated in a written production which represents the efforts of reorganizing facts, thoughts and feelings: no wonder that the practice of keeping a journal - the scriptotherapy briefly mentioned before - is one of the most common therapeutical tool to work through traumatic experiences.

The second kind of witness is what I defined as “media witness” - in the case in which media are primarily involved as a means to approach the events - or, generally speaking, any connoisseur of facts - *tachiainin* 立会人 in Japanese - who assisted to events without being engaged:

it involves a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other’s position while recognising the difference of that position and hence not taking the other’s place.³⁰⁵

Although this is not a rule, it is worthy to recognize a trend in the literary production for which the form of a hybrid or fictionalized work is more often adopted by *tachiainin* author than survivors. Thus, because no physical - or psychological - trauma prevents the fictitious revision of the historical event. On the contrary the *shōnin* author is unlikely to revise the facts he witnessed from a fictional perspective because any adulteration of events could be perceived as a sacrilege; an insult to the authenticity of the traumatic experience itself. Hence, Levi considered as abominable any novels written on the topic of the deportation to the Nazi concentration camps.³⁰⁶ Of course, the refusal of any introduction of fictitious elements in the narrative does not compromise the eventual adoption of a metaphorical or symbolic language to talk about the event, as long as these devices help in transposing into words survivor’s experience. In the case of a non-victim author, fiction actually allows, through imagination, to sympathize better with survivor’s feelings. In a few words, the quality of the testimony changes according to the quality of the experience of the witness (*taiken* 体験 versus *keiken* 経験 in Japanese).

³⁰⁵ LaCapra quoted in Vickoy, Laurie, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, London, University of Virginia Press, 2002, p. 21.

³⁰⁶ “Because the theme of the massacre is not open to revision and fiction. The few novels written on the topic are odious, they are disgusting to read.” Levi quoted by Sullam, Simon Levis, “Elie Wiesel e Primo Levi, memorie divise di Auschwitz” in *Oltre la Notte. Memoria della Shoah e diritti umani. In occasione degli 80 anni di Elie Wiesel*, Giuntina, Firenze, 2010, p. 108.

For Farrell, the violence presented on news programs and in other media offers the public mediated ways to deal with its horror and dread and to find meaning while keeping a safe distance from the disasters of the world.³⁰⁷

The “safe distance” here mentioned represents a synonym of clearheadedness: the absence of any direct trauma prevents the formation of any block to impede the subjectivity of the self to collude with the need to express and describe the events in writings.

This quite long discussion leads to consider Kawakami’s - but also Abe Kazushige’s - literary works as the 3.11 narrative not only considering the meta discourse around their production, but above all the role that their literary efforts assumes in the constitution of the 3.11 collective memory.

Despite her impartial stance Kawakami seems to suggest with her novel a reprimand toward the carefree attitude of everybody who share a (fleeting) happiness (喜びをシェア);³⁰⁸ this frightens the author and represents the driving force behind her anxiety connected with the 3.11 aftermath. In this way the novelist gives testimony to the widespread pessimism after 11 March by emphasizing not the occurrence of the catastrophe but its extraordinary nature; by confining its interference in the narrative, hence, in human’s daily life. To read *Sangatsu no keito* means to mirror ourselves in the monotony that wrapped - like wool - our everyday routine; an envelope of security that momentarily covers our lack of preparation; an envelope that forgets - or tries to forget - the human vulnerability in the wake of catastrophe.

³⁰⁷ Vickoy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, p. 7.

³⁰⁸ Kawakami, “Shinsai no ato de” in *Zenbu no ato ni nokoru mono*, p. 34.

Fukushima...Mon Amour: Takahashi Genichirō

1. From *genpatsu* to *genbaku*

The final author to be taken into consideration in this research about the 3.11 Japanese literature is Takahashi Genichirō (高橋源一郎, Hiroshima, 1951 -): famous writer, essayist, critic as well as teacher at the Meiji University. His literary commitment after 11 March 2011 on the topic of the 3.11 ranges from fictional to nonfictional products which are mainly devoted to the concern for the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident and the usage of nuclear energy. In this sense, a remark should be drawn to the emphasis the author put in dredging up the Hiroshima *genbaku* experience by discussing the nuclear fallout at the Fukushima Daiichi. Author's origin from this city are likely to be considered as influential in authorial production. The nuclear meltdown is particularly compelling in his novel *Koi suru genpatsu* 『恋する原発』 (usually translated in English as “A Nuclear Reactor in Love”)³⁰⁹ which is the main subject of study in this chapter. Other nonfictional works like *Hijōji no kotoba* 『非常時のことば』 (“Words of emergency”)³¹⁰ and “*Ano hi*” *kara boku ga kangaeteiru “tadashisa” ni tsuite* 『「あの日」から僕が考えている「正しさ」について』 (“About the “correctness” I have thought since “that moment”)³¹¹ are taken into account as far as they help in shedding light on authorial stance toward nuclear energy and, above all, they provide exhaustive information to reconstruct the background that saw the birth of *Koi suru genpatsu* and the following authorial contributions on the theme.

2. A love-making nuclear reactor

No better title could be chosen for this analysis of *Koi suru genpatsu*, as love and nuclear energy represent the main topics of this novel, intertwined together to create a provocative, sometimes

³⁰⁹ I actually prefer the translation “A love-making nuclear reactor” for the reasons I am going to explain in commenting the novel. 高橋源一郎、『恋する原発』、東京、講談社、2011年。Takahashi, Genichirō, *Koi suru genpatsu*, Tōkyō, Kōdansha, 2011.

³¹⁰ 高橋源一郎、『非常時のことば』、東京、朝日新聞出版、2012年。Takahashi, Genichirō, *Hijōji no kotoba*, Tōkyō, Asahi Shinbun Shuppan, 2012.

³¹¹ 高橋源一郎、『「あの日」から僕が考えている「正しさ」について』、東京、河出書房新社、2011年。Takahashi, Genichirō, “*Ano hi*” *kara boku ga kangaeteiru “tadashisa” ni tsuite*, Tōkyō, Kawade Shibō Shinsha, 2011.

eventually blasphemous story. The body of the text - proper words will never be spoken - is articulated around seven chapters distinguished by a musical (mainly English) title, then translated into Japanese: 1) “What’s going on?” by Marvin Gaye 2) “Love come back to me” by Stevie B; 3) “What a wonderful world” by Louis Armstrong; 4) “Over the rainbow” by Judy Garland; 5) “I was born to love you” by Queen; 6) *Mamotte agetai* 『守ってあげたい』 (“I want to protect you”) by Yuki Matsutoya; 7) “We are the world” by USA for Africa. The songs chosen are far from pure entertainment and serve as theme songs for the chapters or, in the most cases, as a musical interlude. The lyrics are often resumed by the voiceover, sometimes reproduced in their complete length, although in Japanese. This stylistic choice emphasize authorial interest in the entertainment world, which actually constitute the background for the story of *Koi suru genpatsu*. In fact, the main plot gravitated around the filming of an AV with the purpose to collect money for the stricken areas of Touhoku region.

The first page of the novel starts with a provoking message:

It is too simple to sayit is dedicated to the victims. (According to a collection of wise saying on the web).³¹²

The source for this statement - the “collection of wise saying on the web” - is ambiguous and does not find any narrower correspondence on the internet. The absence of any page reference or authorial signature also contributes to create incertitude in the reading: is it already part of the novel or does it represent a critical message from its author? These questions sound everything but futile if compared to a second message the reader finds after turning over a new leaf. It says, in a handmade-like font:

Too much imprudent. I/We hope for the punishment of the people in charge. — Letter to the editor.³¹³

³¹² 「すべての死者に捧げる……という言い方はあまりに安易すぎる。（「インターネット上の名言集」より）」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, first page.

³¹³ 「不謹慎すぎます。関係者の処罰を望みます。—投書」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, second page. The first personal pronoun, subtext in the original, can be translated both as singular or plural.

These two brief sentences represent reader's feedback about *Koi suru genpatsu*, whose first debut dated back to November 2011 when it was first published in the literary review *Gunzō*;³¹⁴ only after a couple of weeks *Koi suru genpatsu* made its proper appearance in the bookstores. What is outstanding here, is the choice of these peculiar two messages and the decision to put them at the beginning of the novel, affecting the first impact of the audience with the fictional production. Both internet audience and "bookstore" readers' opinions are called into action by the author/editor. The opening comment reveals reader's perception that the literary work is devoted to Tohoku victims; but there is more, something the reader was not able to convey into words or deliberately did not mention. The second message questions the imprudence of - what? Of the Fukushima Daiichi accident, blaming both TEPCO and Japanese government for the failed security measures? Or the novel itself, and in this case to which extent the literary text was imprudent and its "people in charge" (関係者) must be prosecuted? There is also the possibility that these two messages are completely fake, since no evidence proves their reliability and after all, the reader is dealing with a fictional work.

Looking for any answer, the reader has no other choice but to turn the next page. Here, in bold, there is another message that roosts alone. This time, the writing can be attributed indifferently to the author or the voiceover - the two figures do not match, anyway. It is a clear claim for the fictionality of the work in question: "It is superfluous to say but this is **completely a fiction.**"³¹⁵ One can argue that, if it is superfluous, there is no need to spend one page insisting on this point. Moreover, this statement does not help in understanding the value of the two reader's feedback published at the beginning of the novel, in other words, outside the influence of this claim for the fictionality of the work. I rather focus the critical attention on the usage of editorial expedients like bold and different font size to attract audience's concern to particular assertions; a technique which is highly diffused in *Koi suru genpatsu*. The colloquial closing formula of this last message - "So, see you later"³¹⁶ - acquires new significance once the reader encounters a piece of literary critique entitled *Shinsai bungaku ron* 「震災文学論」 ("Literary criticism of the disaster")³¹⁷ in the middle

³¹⁴ 高橋源一郎、「恋する原発」、『群像』、東京、講談社、2011年11号。Takahashi, Genichirō, "Koi suru genpatsu" in *Gunzō*, Tōkyō, Kōdansha, no. 11, 2011.

³¹⁵ 「いうまでもないことだが、これは**完全なフィクション**である。」Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, third page.

³¹⁶ 「じゃあ、後で」Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, third page.

³¹⁷ Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, pp. 199- 128.

of the novel. And actually, this closing formula seems to sketch out a link between the warning message and the critical essay by tracing back both productions to the pen of the same author, namely, Takahashi Genichirō in person. We will have the time to discuss the literary essay in details later; for now, I will limit myself in underlining the particular circumstances that make a start for *Koi suru genpatsu*.

As briefly noticed before, each chapter presents its own particular musical theme, highlighted by the never changing label “Making” (メイキング) followed by a serial number. The “making” refers to the filming production of the AV, sometimes described through its scenes, sometimes reported via the full dialogues of the actors. The language is salty, foulmouthed, even ungrammatical and it often implies AV jargon: certainly not suitable for a young audience, which actually narrow the target of *Koi suru genpatsu*'s readers. However, the narration is enriched by graphical punctuation such as ♪☆☠, the latter used to separate different paragraphs - occasionally as long as one sentence - in the chapters. This graphical solution reminds the *keitai-shōsetsu* genre, a literary production (*shōsetsu*) born thanks to the simultaneous diffusion of cellphone (*keitai*) and internet connection especially among the young generation.³¹⁸ To stress this playful writing which perfectly fits the entertainment world at the background of the novel, there is the practice of the homage (from the French *hommage*, オマージュ) which is frequent in the literary production of authors like Yoshimoto Banana and Murakami Haruki.³¹⁹ It consists in calling on stage stars from the popular culture from singers to actors, live concerts, movies, tv show and so on. This trend is actually definable as one of the main feature of *Koi suru genpatsu*. Among the well-known celebrities mentioned by Takahashi, some sociopolitical personalities have their resounding role: Emperor Akihito, Putin, Bush, Berlusconi, Obama, Queen Elisabeth are just a few of the public figures that show up in the novel in the final scene, which actually deserves further considerations later.

As the reading proceeds little by little, new details about *Koi suru genpatsu*'s characters emerge: Yama chan is the leading actress, a woman no more in her twenties (she is between 30 and 40 years old); the company president and its chairman make their own appearance too. Among the other protagonists, the singular figure of Jōji is remarkable: introduced as an alien (宇宙人), he has

³¹⁸ *keitai-shōsetsu* (携帯小説 or ケータイ小説): this genre, which attracts mainly young people, is characterized for an online service thanks to which the subscribers can receive on their smartphone the new chapter of a novel daily; the author, protected by nickname, can see his literary work properly published on printed media insofar it gains success among the audience. Since the target is mainly characterized by teenagers, it is not difficult to find graphical punctuation, as long as musical and filmic references in the novels.

³¹⁹ Amitrano, Giorgio, *Il mondo di Banana Yoshimoto*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1999, p. 45.

paranormal powers like telepathy and mind-reading, the latter a capacity that can result even disturbing for the surrounding people. His power of erasing things and going back in time is, surprisingly, not fully performed by the voiceover that once wonders about the possibility of preventing the 11 March disaster by taking advantage of Jōji's powers:

Wait a moment. I hit on a better idea. Well, wouldn't be good to ask Jōji to make it as neither earthquake nor tsunami occurred? Wouldn't be good to get all the dead people resuscitated?

I felt it was an extraordinary good idea. **To get everything, all back to the origins.**³²⁰

Notwithstanding, the narrator changes his mind and begs Jōji to ignore his idea. The only reason given is: "Because maybe **it's wrong**".³²¹ This slight variation of ideas reveals a lot about the ethical approach of its author toward catastrophe; his narrator/protagonist actually returned to work, the filming of the charity AV. The moral lesson implicitly expressed here suggests rolling up one's sleeves and look ahead to the future as the only way to cope with catastrophe. Again - like in the case of Kawakami's *maemuki* - to be proactive is considered better than the simplistic choice of crying over split milk. Of course, this does not mean it is an easy attitude to take.

The episodes which are worthy to extensive investigations are a few, like in the case above-mentioned. The narration is structured as a sort of long stream of consciousness of the film director: the figures of the voiceover and the author (Takahashi) do not match at all. Although the main focus of the narration is given to the other characters, the reader comes to learn a lot about this film director in his 50s: divorced with a little girl, often engages conversations with Tomoko, a new-techno inflatable doll. Again, the linguistic register of the narrator is very colloquial, full of *kansaiben*³²² slang - which actually shines a light on the narrator's origins - and vulgar idioms which clearly belong to the AV world. Interesting is that the voice of the narrator frequently serves as a contra field to describe AV scenes that in this way got filtered by his own point of view. Frequently, those descriptions are interrupted in their climax by the director's fancy and

³²⁰ 「ちょっと待て。もっといい考えがひらめいた。それじゃあ、最初からジョージに頼んで、地震も津波も起こらなかったことにしてもらえばいいじゃん！死んだやつを全員を蘇らせてもらえばいいじゃん！それはものすごくいい考えに思えた。なにもかも全部元に戻してもらおうんだ。」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, p. 266, bold in the text.

³²¹ 「たぶん、それは間違ってるから」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, p. 268, bold in the text.

³²² Dialect of the Kansai region (関西弁).

hallucinatory thoughts, reflections and considerations which sometimes are related one to another with logical connections difficult to understand for the reader. The presence of dissociative flash backs contributes to the loss of the logical thread and the time reference: the narrator results not reliable.

Without doubts some of the most quoted topics of discussion are relevant to note because directly associated to the 3.11 disaster: the *sabetsu* - a term already seen with Genyū - in other words the discrimination of people exposed to radioactivity fallout at the Fukushima Daiichi, makes its appearance in the first pages of the novel;³²³ the media coverage of earthquake and tsunami, criticized for its omnipresence on the TV screen after 11 March, thus affecting especially young audience;³²⁴ the 9.11, taken into consideration as a keyword for the terroristic attack at the Twin Towers in 2001 and here often mentioned in comparison with the 3.11 and the consequent production of charity AV in the sake of the victims.³²⁵ It should be reminded that authorial interest in the 9.11 is also underlined by a literary work Takahashi once wrote on the topic but unfinished.³²⁶

The 3.11 itself is present in the narration: “There’s no doubt this is the shock of hell’s kettle cap.”³²⁷ commented the narrator during a meeting with Ishikawa and Masayoshi on 11 March, around 3 PM. The metaphor sounds convincing. Brief flash backs on “that day” (あの日) are frequent in the novel and intersperse from time to time the narration. In particular, the Daiichi power plant is mentioned again and again although with no particular intent: the narrator is not trying to take part in the debate on nuclear energy, neither is he criticizing TEPCO behaviour in managing the crisis. The main reason behind the redundant nuclear power plant’s appearance is the big bee narrator’s mind that sets in motion the AV filming. At this point, I am not referring to the outstanding critical observations Takahashi shares with the reader in the section entitled *Shinsai bungaku ron*, which deserve further investigations, as stated earlier. For now, I may just make it clear that for the narrator any 3.11 keywords are not understandable:

³²³ Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, p. 13.

³²⁴ Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, p. 96.

³²⁵ See, for example: 「このAVを9.11同時多発テロで亡くなった人々に捧げます」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, p. 49 and the following; bold in the text.

³²⁶ 杉田俊介、「高橋源一郎論—銀河系文学の彼方に」、『東日本大震災後文学論』、東京、南雲堂、2017年。Sugita, Shunsuke, “Takahashi Genichirō ron - Gingakei bungaku no kanata ni” in *Higashi Nihon Daishinsaigo bungakuron*, Tōkyō, Nan’undō, 2017, p. 477.

³²⁷ 「この揺れは、**地獄の釜の蓋の震動**にちがいない。」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, p. 76, bold in the text.

Disaster, earthquake, tsunami, nuclear reactor, self-defence force, prime minister's residence, power outage, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry...I don't understand anything.³²⁸

stated the film director in watching TV news. The recurring allusions to the nuclear power plant and radioactivity concern betray the widespread anxiety of the citizens in the uncertain panorama post-Fukushima accident. And, in these regards, I would like to point out the reference to the radioactivity rain (雨の中で、濃い放射能性物質の雲)³²⁹ that fall down on 16 March and which clearly reminds of the black rain (黒い雨) reported to have fallen on Hiroshima soon after the atomic bombing. This is a particularly compelling aspect if considering that the voiceover himself tells a story about the city. It was August, 5, 1945: the date is not a mere coincidence. His mother was supposed to go to the city, but she did not feel very well and her young sister went instead. The consequences are evident: the woman died in a fire outbreak. His mother then married her sister's fiancée, a practice very common at that time. That is why the narrator truly thinks to have had two mothers: his actual mother and the one who should have become his mother.³³⁰ We will have the chance to come back on Fukushima-Hiroshima discourse later.

It is time to focus the attention on the making of the AV only. I am taking into consideration especially two moments of the novel, its opening and ending, because here is condensed the essence of *Koi suru genpatsu*: charity AV, earthquake, tsunami and love - in all its nuances - are the main keywords of this romance exploit. The following text is the introductory message broadcasted on the TV screen at the beginning of the AV; the text in bold is sometimes alternated with narrator's comments, here not reproduced:

We [...] support with all our strength Everybody who is suffering for this earthquake Do your best, Japan Japan is one We also are Japanese [...] We will donate to the victims All the sales of this production [...] Charity AV A love-making nuclear reactor We're sorry, it's an AV [...] But we're Japanese But we're humans We'd like to be of some help to the victims [...] You, who usually use this

³²⁸ 「震災、地震、津波、原発、自衛隊、官邸、停電、経産省……なにひとつ理解できない。」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, p. 195, bold in the text.

³²⁹ Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, p. 172. See also some pages later, p. 180.

³³⁰ Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, p. 185 and the following.

service avoiding other people In the isolated corner of the video rental shop You enter paying attention to other people's gaze Even if it's not to steal something You, who paid attention to surrounding's glance Please, borrow this production without shame Then, please jerk off without shame Every drop of your semen is precious It becomes a charity contribution Have an erection, you, starving people You, weak people, joint We are the one who really understand the feelings of weak people Fuck! Earthquake Fuck! Tsunami Fuck! Nuclear power plant All we need is love! All we need is vagina! All we need is penis! All we need is sex! & All we need is masturbation!³³¹

Many of the literary features described before are here revealed on paper: rough language, very explicit in its terms; musical reference - "All we need is love" by The Beatles; explanatory reasons under the choice of making this particular AV - namely, the *Daishinsai* occurrence.

Further analysis can be drawn on this excerpt. First, the narrator feels the urge to apologize for the form the charity activity assumed, the one of the AV (ごめん、AVで); the reason beyond this choice is that the one in charge of the filming (我々) are Japanese and human beings (我々だってニッポン人だ 我々だって人間だ).³³² The need for love shines through a little, although in a mere physical connotation. A second remark regards the emphasis given to the AV costumers: frequently ashamed people who prefer to keep their filming tastes masked. The narrator advocates for a coming-out instead. This calling can be interpreted in two opposite ways: the first, the appeal to be truthful to oneself and to show up because the only fact we are human beings justifies our physical needs - read: our weakness (弱き者, 弱者), a characteristic that emerges in time of crisis in the form of powerlessness; the other, a subtle critique to everybody who washes himself without

³³¹ 「我々は[...]この度の震災で被災した皆さんを 全力で支援します 頑張れニッポン ニッポンはひとつ 我々もニッポン人だ[...]我々はこの作品の売り上げをすべて、被災者の皆さんに寄付します[...]チャリティーAV 恋する原発 ごめん、AVで[...]我々だってニッポン人だ 我々だって人間だ 被災者の皆さんの役に立ちたいんだ[...]ふだん日陰者の扱いを受けてきたみなさん レンタルビデオ屋の隔離されたコーナーに 他人の目を気にしながら入りこみ 別に盗むわけでもないのに周りの視線を 気にしていた皆さん この作品は堂々と借りてください そして堂々とオナニーしてください あなたの精液の一滴一滴が貴重だ 義援金になるのです 勃て、飢えたる者よ 弱き者たちよ、今こそ連帯せよ ほんとうに弱者の気持ちがわかるのは我々だ ファック! 震災 ファック! 津波 ファック! 原発 オール・ウィー・ニード・イズ・ラブ! オール・ウィー・ニード・イズ・おまんこ! オール・ウィー・ニード・イズ・ちんぼこ! オール・ウィー・ニード・イズ・セックす! & オール・ウィー・ニード・イズ・オナニー!」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, pp. 14-24, bold in the text.

³³² At this point I may say that to be a Japanese seems to be an aggravating circumstance!

getting wet: the hypocrisy and falsehood here encountered in relation to the AV world are then observed in the novel too, although related to the sociopolitical dishonesty (read: censorship) around the 3.11 nuclear crisis. Considering the final exclamations, I rather suggest this preliminary message is actually the attempt to exorcise the 3.11 disaster by literary “say fuck” (ファック!) and physically - although only literary - possess it. The salty language plays a leading role in conveying this idea and actually overwhelmed the reading.

This debut sees its counterpart in the conclusion of the novel. The final scene actually mirrors the opening end - if possible - exacerbates its contents, constructing a circular novel. The film director puts in place a world-wide reunion of people - not actors! - without reserve for different races, ages, genders, classes. Even death people are invited - which actually fuels the impression this ultimate set is a mere imagination of the director. Famous stars from the show business along with politicians, clerics and others are taking part in the filming. After being gathered in a wide place, people approach each other following the instructions of the director himself, who assists to the scene from a relevant distance and makes adjustments for the filming with his megaphone. The *Daishinsai* is put on stage and then performed: the quakes the narrator and Jōji perceive are the result of thousand of bodies making love at the same time;³³³ the collective orgasm resolves in a phallic explosion (爆発) that metaphorically reproduces the fallout at the Fukushima Daiichi. Again, as seen before, Takahashi’s writing betrays the need to possess the otherness: the physical possession functions as a synonym for domination and control. By enacting a scene of collective love-making - an orgy - Takahashi does not scale down the disaster: he phagocytes it. He incorporates the 3.11 catastrophe in a new physical dimension, the one of a collective corpus. This collective effort can be interpreted as the joint force of all human beings, revealing, again, how the transposition of Touhoku disaster and Fukushima crisis into a global concern is common in the literary production on the theme. Even the presence of death people assumes a new light if taken into consideration the *Shinsai bungaku ron*.

What is incredible is that, despite the extremely sarcastic and paradoxical parody of the 3.11 through a sexual keyword, it does not result offensive, neither disrespectful for the victims. In the extreme case, it can sometimes hurt the sensitivity of the audience, like the (quasi) blaspheme conversation between grandma and niece in chapter five:³³⁴ it is evident that grandma is showing an

³³³ 「揺れていた。余震だ。いやちがうかも。何万人ものやつらのセックスの運動？わからねえ。」
Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, p. 267, bold in the text.

³³⁴ Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, pp. 124-179.

AV to her niece in the aim to educate her in preventing any physical abuse. The fact that any suggestion of the woman is actually averse to the common expectation results in the strong estrangement feeling perceived while reading. Grandma issues a warning towards male adults: teachers, neighbourhoods, whoever. But instead of suggesting ways to escape the risky situations, she encouraged the niece to accept the violence, including oral sex. To escape is impossible, argues the grandma; then, it's better to bite, and of course, get paid. The shocking believes of this woman are imaginative enough to portray a future in which acts of sexual intercourse between actors are performed during class. A sex education developed around the importance to see, to touch, to feel with all five senses human sexuality and homosexuality. And at the end of this imaginary sexual seminar students will assist to childbirth. This extremely provocative chapter can arouse dismay in the readers because it welcomes sexual harassment, rapes, sale of sexual services. However, if contextualized in *Koi suru genpatsu*, it confirms authorial advice to mature a more mindful consciousness related to the sexual sphere. What Takahashi puts in scene is a life lesson that only marginally touches the 3.11 themes, but it actually contributes in the ontological debate of the novel around the life/death dichotomy.

This bipartition is one of the main fascinating topics analyzed by the author in his *Shinsai bungaku ron*.³³⁵ This piece of literary critique lasts about 30 pages and according to the writing style and the tone of the conversation, it is likely to be directly attributed to Takahashi, rather to his voiceover, the film director. It is appropriate to talk about an essay not only because of the title - "Literary criticism of the disaster" - but above all because the author proposes his own gateway to four literary works starting from *Kamisama 2011* ("God Bless You")³³⁶ by Kawakami Hiromi.³³⁷ Since that is not the case to make a commentary of the commentary - which actually could sound redundant - I will limit myself to underline a few points that actually shed light on Takahashi's perspective on the 3.11 and give explanations to some stylistic choices of *Koi suru genpatsu*.

In particular, by comparing the two versions of Kawakami's novel - the original 1994 *Kamisama* with the re-written *Kamisama 2011*, which obviously manifests changes due to the 3.11 aftermath - Takahashi reveals that the dystopic story puts in place what he calls "*mirai no shisha*" 「未来の死者」 (death people of the future). In a central scene of the novel the children encountered at the river

³³⁵ Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, pp. 220-228.

³³⁶ Kawakami, *Kamisama 2011*.

³³⁷ I had the chance to deepen my studies on this post-3.11 production in my Master Thesis (see De Pieri, 2014), then drawn in an article on the topic (see De Pieri, 2017).

in the 1994 version disappeared in the 2011 one: “**Now, there isn’t a single child in this area.**”³³⁸ The first hypothesis that comes up in reader’s mind is that, since “that thing” (あの日) the radioactivity contamination of the soil has put into risk children’s health, so, for security measure, no child is allowed to play at the river banks like in the past. Takahashi actually interprets this absence otherwise. Those children are perceived by the author like ghosts (幽霊) who speak from the future.³³⁹ This idea is supported by the editorial choice of Kawakami to publish her *Kamisama 2011* not alone, in its new post-3.11 version, but together with its old 1994 version; hence, the result is not 1+1=2 but rather 1+1=1, as explained by Takahashi in a mathematic joke in his essay.³⁴⁰ In other words, *Kamisama 2011* is not a mere rewriting of *Kamisama* through the 3.11 keyword, but rather the sum of both novels, for which the latter does not replace the first, but on the contrary, they complement each other. The implications are significant: the dystopic novel is talking about future children, never born. The nuclear energy becomes as much a problem of future generations as much the current one are not able to cope with the crisis.

Following these considerations, Takahashi investigates a particular dialogue of *Kaze no tani no Naushikā* (formally translated as “Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind”)³⁴¹ a 1984 animation movie by Miyazaki Hayao frequently attributed to his Studio Ghibli, although founded ex-post in 1985. It must be specified that there is a clear discrepancy between Takahashi’s introduction of the anime, presented as a post-disaster production, and its first release in 1984. Notwithstanding, it does not change the focus of Takahashi’s analysis, as to say, the risk of human extinction. In this dystopic animation a particular passage seems to confirm Kawakami’s theory:

I’m speaking about human beings, as a species. The children born will decrease little by little; they could not escape from the incurable disease of petrification. You don’t have a future. Humanity will perish without us. You can’t go forward that day.³⁴²

³³⁸ 「今は、この地域には、子供は一人もいない」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, pp. 205, bold in the text.

³³⁹ Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, pp. 210.

³⁴⁰ Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, pp. 208.

³⁴¹ 宮崎駿、『風の谷のナウシカ』、東映株式会社、1984年。Miyazaki, Hayao (commonly attributed to Studio Ghibli), *Kaze no tani no Naushika*, Toei Company, 1984.

³⁴² 「種としての人間についていっているのだ。生まれてくる子はますます少なく、石化の業病から逃れられぬ。お前達に未来はない。人類はわたしなしには亡びる。お前達はその朝をこえることはできない。」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, pp. 214, bold in the text.

The Sea of Corruption (腐海) is a bioengineered toxic forest that covers a great part of the surface of Earth, extensively polluted after a terrible cataclysmic global war that saw almost the annihilation of the industrial civilization. But eventually, it is the one that enables humans to live because created to clean the contaminated soil. That is why no future is possible without technology and - incredibly - without pollution. What is remarkable here is the similarity with Kawakami's vision of forthcoming life on Earth, where no children are present and hence, human race is likely to disappear soon. Thanks to his commentary, Takahashi suggests that the concern should be turned to future generations rather than present crisis. To explain it with authorial words:

Since “that day”, what we have come to face, or [better], what we may always face from now on isn't this state of things?³⁴³

Lastly, Yamamoto Yoshitaka's *Fukushima genpatsu jiko wo megutte* (“Concerning the nuclear accident at Fukushima”)³⁴⁴ and Ishimure Michiko's *Kukai Jōdo* (officially translated as “Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow: Our Minamata Disease”)³⁴⁵ are taken into account in order to stress that “**It's impossible to take control of human's stupidity**”,³⁴⁶ a clear reference to how human beings continue, undaunted, to pollute and contaminate the Earth with different substances, putting off until tomorrow the problems concerning the consequences this attitude has on soil, air, land and water. This *Shinsai bungaku ron* is everything but irrelevant in the construction of *Koi suru genpatsu*: this is the reason why I am reticent to consider it as much as fictional as the rest of the novel in the light of the opening message claiming the fictionality of the work. In fact, what follows is actually the last chapter, the one that describe the marasma of the AV final scene. Here is the solution adopted by the author to conclude his novel and to answer the questions raised by his

³⁴³ 「あの日」以降、ぼくたちが直面するようになった、あるいは、これからずっと直面することになるであろう事態そのものではないのか。」高橋源一郎、「3.11を心に刻んで2013」、『岩波書店ブックレットNo. 865』、東京、岩波書店、2013年。Takahashi, Genichirō, (no title) in *3.11 wo kizande 2013. Iwanami shoten bukkureto No. 865*, Tōkyō, Iwanami Shoten, 2013, p. 64.

³⁴⁴ 山本義隆、『福島原発事故をめぐって。いくつか学び考えたこと』、東京、みずず書房、2011年。Yamamoto, Yoshitaka, *Fukushima no genpatsu jiko wo megutte. Ikutsuka manabikangaeta koto*, Tōkyō, Mizuzu Shobō, 2011.

³⁴⁵ 石牟礼道子、『苦海浄土。わが水俣病』、東京、講談社、1969年。Ishimure, Michiko, *Kukai Jōdo. Waga Minamata byō*, Tōkyō, Kōdansha, 1969.

³⁴⁶ 「人間の愚かしさをコントロールすることが不可能である」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, pp. 220, bold in the text.

literary critique. The risk of the annihilation of humanity is counteracted by an exploit of love. If it is true that the human race risks the total destruction, then time urges something to do. To educate people to be respectful towards the environment is quite complicated and requires a lot of time; Takahashi prefers to leverage human instincts and plays out a world-wide orgia that releases love and contributes to preserve - by reproduction - human species. The reason why even death people are invited in this party represents authorial response to Kawakami and Miyazaki's productions; in particular, the mention of the ghost-children/never-born children. In a few words, *Koi suru genpatsu* performs, pragmatically, a definition his author gives to the literary works commented in his essays: "What is there, is a story that exists with the "dead", materialized in front of the eyes".³⁴⁷

After analyzing briefly the *Shinsai bungaku ron* frequently mentioned until now, I better come back to the Fukushima-Hiroshima discourse for a while. There is a special homage hidden between the lines that actually is worthy to further investigations. *Hiroshima mon amour*, the famous 1959 film by Alain Resnais, makes its appearance in *Koi suru genpatsu* as a thought-provoking cameo. The common features of both productions can be summarized in a few points: 1) both works stem from the need to film a movie, although of a total different genre; 2) in both works the most emblematic scene is the one of the protagonists making love, although - again - for different reasons; 3) both works take advantage of this scene to stimulate discussions about the debate of nuclear energy because 4) both works oppose love (read: life) to the devastation and the human diseases (read: death) provoked by the usage of nuclear power. The illusion³⁴⁸ shared by both works is to be able to understand and comprehend everything about the disaster through the reconstructions and the reenactments which are as much serious as possible.³⁴⁹ This remark, addressed by the woman protagonist in *Hiroshima mon amour*, is actually echoed in *Koi suru genpatsu* by the critical note arose by the narrator towards the TV coverage of the 11 March tsunami: we pretend to have seen everything but we cannot share the experience of the victims. Thus, lays the foundation for the lovers' argumentation in Duras' story:

LUI: Tu n'as *rien* vu à Hiroshima. Rien.

³⁴⁷ 「ここにあるのは、目の前に現れた「死者」と生きる物語である。」 Takahashi, *Koi suru genpatsu*, pp. 224, bold in the text.

³⁴⁸ I am taking advantage of the official French script by Marguerite Duras here. Duras, Marguerite, *Hiroshima mon amour*, Paris, Gallimard, 1960, p. 25.

³⁴⁹ "Les reconstitutions ont été faites le plus sérieusement possible." Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, p. 25.

ELLE: J'ai *tout* vu. *Tout*.³⁵⁰

[...]

ELLE: Je n'ai *rien* inventé.

LUI: Tu as *tout* inventé.³⁵¹

By visiting Hiroshima Peace Memorial and its museum, the woman got overwhelmed by the history here archived and shared with the posterity. Her ability to identify with *hibakusha*'s story and to empathize with the victims reaches such an extent she affirms to have felt the ten thousand degrees developed on the Place of the Peace during the atomic bombing: she pretends, she believes she really felt those incredible heat.³⁵² What is at issue here is the ethics of transference and, as a consequence, the ethical approach of the medium that enables this transference, namely, the work of art. If it is true that the process of identification the reader enacts with the protagonists of the story actually helps in moving closer to victim's real experience, it should be kept in mind that anyway this movement is the fruit of readers' imagination: it is a fabrication of his imaginative creativity. Sympathy and compassion are catalysts for this mechanism but do not assure a complete understanding of the traumatic experience, thus casting doubts about the ethics of a fictional work on the theme. It is one thing to read a book on catastrophe and trauma, to go to the sites and to learn History by oneself; another to pretend, in this way, to know the absolute, ultimate truth.

ELLE: ...Écoute-moi. Comme toi, je connais l'oubli.

LUI: Non, tu ne connais pas l'oubli.³⁵³

In Duras's narration, the conversation between the two lovers goes farther. When is it possible to forget? Only when there are memories to forget. However, the woman, a Parisian actress, in no way could experience the *nuage atomique*.³⁵⁴ But she pretends she witnessed it. Oblivion comes to the fore to silence the "educative memory", the one non *hibakusha* formulate by learning History. "Je

³⁵⁰ Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, p. 22, italics in the original.

³⁵¹ Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, p. 28, italics in the original.

³⁵² "J'ai eu chaud place de la Paix. Dix mille degrés sur la place de la Paix. Je le sais." Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, p. 25.

³⁵³ Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, p. 31.

³⁵⁴ Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, p. 30.

sais...Je said *tout*³⁵⁵ repeats the young woman: but in so doing she betrays human arrogance to detain the power of knowledge. Similar words were written by Takahashi for an article published in the New York Times: “Humans have become increasingly arrogant, believing they have conquered nature. [...] The catastrophe facing the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant epitomizes this phenomenon.”³⁵⁶ *Koi suru genpatsu* denounces this attitude especially in the final scene of the AV. This deep insight into *Hiroshima mon amour* helps in speculating why Takahashi chose exactly an AV for the *mise en scène* of the charity activity. Love - a synonym of life in both *Hiroshima mon amour* and *Koi suru genpatsu* - is the main character of both artworks; it is not only the starting engine for life in a strict sense, but also what sets in motion our everyday activities. Duras insists on this point: “Je t’en prie. Dévore-moi.”³⁵⁷ It is the young woman who talks again: she identifies in the Japanese lover the city she has fallen in love with, to the extent he will be renamed Hiroshima in the final scene of the movie.³⁵⁸ And it is Hiroshima that possesses her, both physically and psychologically in the guise of a young Japanese architect: she asks to be possessed, devoured, consumed. In this calling for self-annihilation there is the desire to assimilate and absorb the catastrophe; to fully introject the disaster as the only way to digest its traumatic aftermath. An analogous response is the one found in *Koi suru genpatsu* and analyzed before by commenting the closing scene of the novel. If Kawakami Mieko managed to circumscribe the catastrophe, Takahashi reveals the will to take over it; to take full possession of the 3.11 disaster with the illusory belief to be able to control its destructive violence.

At a first glance, in *Koi suru genpatsu* it seems the author tones down the scale of the 3.11 disaster by associating this irreverent and derisive AV making with the charity activity in the sake of Touhoku victims. On the contrary, the filming represents the pretext to reflect about the ontological meaning of disaster: what actually makes us feel alive. Its reading represents the chance to explore the very meaning of life and death in our everyday life and the importance we give to all that seems able to make our needs satisfied. It enacts the return of the atavistic human: physical urges (うんこ) and survival instinct in the form of reproduction of the specie - see the *Shinsai bungaku ron* - dominate the scene. It is not a coincidence that a first response to trauma pushes for survival skills; the ones Bessel Van der Kolk addressed as “body emotions”: the traumatic experience is likely to be

³⁵⁵ *ibidem*.

³⁵⁶ Takahashi, Genichirō, “A Country’s Lasting Aftershocks” in *The New Yorker*, March, 20, 2011.

³⁵⁷ Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, p. 35.

³⁵⁸ Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, p. 124.

re-enacted through somatic sensations.³⁵⁹ Notwithstanding, the novel makes a fool of sexual intercourse in the AV world and the surrounding business, perhaps considering it an example of inward-looking, sick sexuality; an act of sterile satisfaction of the senses deprived of its intrinsic *potere creatore*.

The only flaw is that Takahashi limits his novel to the physical sphere; but if we consider the reading as food for thought, *Koi suru genpatsu* represents just the driving force behind a research we should pursue by ourselves.

3. A series, B series

The extremely prolific production of Takahashi Genichirō was described by the critic Sugita according to a bipartition which reflects two kind of authorial literary approaches:

A series....literature. Poetry. Pain. Silence. Tenderness.

B series....Non literature. Talkativeness. Porno. Absurd product of low level.³⁶⁰

Despite the downgrading definition of the B series, *Koi suru genpatsu* is likely to belong to both literary productions since the main plot of the novel responds better to the character of “porno, absurd product of low level” but the intrusion of the *Shinsaigo bungakuron* revalues the work to the A series, although in the form of nonfiction.³⁶¹ It is now time to focus the attention only to this last category of literary works.

If *Koi suru genpatsu* catches readers attention among the bookshelves for its captivating cover - a full glowing yellow wrap that clearly reminds of nuclear hazard warning - “*Ano hi*” *kara boku ga kangaeteiru* “*tadashisa*” *ni tsuite* presents a more comforting cover with a manga: a person from behind - thus confusing the age and gender - is sat together with a bear - that actually became a popular mascot in the literary portrait of the 3.11, only think of Kawakami Hiromi’s novels already mentioned - and a radio from which the keywords *shinsai*, *genpatsu*, *3.11* come out ruling the scene. This work was published in February 2012 and it is conceived as a nonfictional production which recaps authorial thoughts about the 11 March, politics and literature influenced by this catastrophic event. According to the preface, those thoughts were firstly shared on Twitter and then gathered in a

³⁵⁹ Dayton, *Trauma and addiction*, p. 101.

³⁶⁰ 「Aシリーズ・・・文学。詩。痛み。沈黙。優しさ。Bシリーズ・・・非文学。饒舌。ポルノ。馬鹿馬鹿しく最低のもの」 Sugita, “Takahashi Genichirō ron”, p. 491.

³⁶¹ Sugita, “Takahashi Genichirō ron”, p. 524.

proper publication - a similar path I have already pointed out in the case of Wagō Ryōichi's poetical collections. The main purpose of the author seems to reflect about the role of words in facing catastrophe, or better, to meditate about how it has changed after 11 March, a question that will continue to demand authorial response throughout Takahashi's post-3.11 literary production. In particular, Takahashi's considerations lead to interpret the "correctness" (正しさ) as the "public sphere" (公) with all the complications the relation between catastrophe and government creates through words.

The text is divided into two main sections. The first one is entitled *Nikki - Nisenjūichi sangatsu jūichinichi kara kangaeta koto* 「日記—2011年3月11日から考えたこと」 ("Diaries - What I thought since 11 March 2011") and reports the monthly entries of Takahashi's "diary" in a progressive order. The choice to appoint these entries as "diaries" is remarkable because it associates tweets - updates targeted to a wide audience - with the intimist act of keeping a private journal. Takahashi's "diary" starts from the month of March 2011 and ends with January 2012. Each month is introduced by its own cover with the same radio logo reproduced on the book's cover. On the back, an - exhaustive? - list of events occurred during the month is schematically reported, together with the details about the date; no source is given for the information here collected, which are of different nature: news about Fukushima Daiichi accident, updates about the situation in the stricken areas and so on. Again - as seen in the first chapter by analyzing Wagō's production - it seems there is the need for the author - or the editor, or both - to make more reliable the literary account by reporting scientific news and historical facts: it functions as an added value for the reportage. This list, which remains unaltered throughout this "diary" section, is always entitled [Month] *no deki goto* 「月」のできごと ("Events of [Month]"); then, the proper "diary" begins by specifying the date again (month and day) together with the weekly day between brackets and a brief title probably chosen ex-post by the author himself. Here is an example:

3月11日 (金) 東日本大震災 発生

March, 11 (Friday) *Higashi Nihon Daishinsai* occurrence³⁶²

Then, the tweets follow one after another, identified only by the symbol ■ . The contents are more or less limited to 11 March emergency situation with particular focus on Fukushima Daiichi nuclear

³⁶² Takahashi, "*Ano hi*" *kara*, p. 17.

crisis in the first months of 2011; the author loved to comment TV and radio news, together with the official statements by public figures - from politicians to colleagues who expressed themselves about the crisis on the socials; at this point, I should remark that Kawakami and Wagō were among the authors mentioned by Takahashi. Sometimes, the writer also shared some private information more directly attributable to a classical journal entry: his family, his works - the writing of *Koi suru genpatsu* is among them - his movements in Tōkyō where he was on 11 March. Noteworthy is that to this first section of the book also belongs the *Gozen zero ji no shōsetsu rajio* 「午前0時の小説ラジオ」 (“The radio novel of midday”) better described according to Takahashi words, like a sort of - media - “program” in which, for one or two hours, the author rises a particular theme and shares his thoughts on Twitter no-stop.³⁶³

The main second section of “*Ano hi*” *kara* is called *Bunshō - Nisenjūichi sangatsu jūichinichi kara kaita koto* 「文章—2011年3月11日から書いたこと」 (“Text - What I wrote since 11 March 2011”). It does not show any significant difference from the *Nikki* section, despite smaller notes regarding the title, that adds information about the format of the text - essay, literary criticism and so on - and the writing, which is no more divided into brief tweets but is shaped in a longer text instead. The topics covered are almost the same of the “diary” seen before, with special emphasis on the “critical time” (「非常時」) and the value of words in dealing with the disaster. Again, works by Kawakami Hiromi and Wagō Ryōichi are mentioned, although not deeply analyzed. Interesting, is the full quote of Takahashi’s *Koi suru genpatsu*, or better, its opening messages I had the chance to investigate in the previous paragraph. It remains unsolved why the author decided to report those messages on 7 October: one hypothesis recognizes in this behaviour the wish to promote the literary production by advertising it on the socials, firstly, and on “*Ano hi*” *kara*, then.

All things considered, this nonfictional production concerning the 3.11 reveals many common features with Wagō’s poetical works, at least as regards the editorial (read: marketing) solutions that contributed to publish on the printed papers a literary work firstly appeared on the social media. The desire to reach a broader audience than the one of the web users is to be considered as the reason under this choice, as it is likely to confirm the author himself in the preface, by underlining the need to get readers’ feedback.³⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the purpose to add more reliability to the account by transforming tweets in a proper literary work, is to be considered as relevant too.

³⁶³ Takahashi, “*Ano hi*” *kara*, p. 5.

³⁶⁴ Takahashi, “*Ano hi*” *kara*, p. 7.

Moving on to *Hijōji no kotoba*, a preliminary remark should be done about the publication date of this work, as to say, August 2012. Although the impressive title manifestly addresses topics concerning the 3.11 crisis - as highlighted by the subtitle *Shinsai no ato de* 「震災の後で」 (“After the disaster”) - there are no detailed reference about when the numerous essays that constitute the book were written. Further information are retrievable in the premises of this nonfictional work, in which Takahashi explained the circumstances that seen the birth of the book: these essays were actually part of a particular column entitled *Bokura no bunshō kyōshitsu* 「ぼくらの文章教室」 (“Our class of text”) that had been published on the literary review *Shōsetsu Tripper* 『小説トリッパー』 since 2010. Hence, I will limit myself to introduce this work by stressing some strong points without deeply investigating its contents: in this way I will preserve the time limit chosen for this study, as to say, literary works published within a year from 11 March; the aim was actually to examine the first literary reaction of authors. According to the title, this collection of essays is presented as a critique (評論) and responds to two main 3.11 keywords: crisis and words. As confirmed by the author throughout the work, authorial goal was to point out the heavy changes words have seen after the *Daishinsai* and the nuclear fallout at the Fukushima Daiichi. According to Takahashi, words demonstrate their inability to depict the catastrophe. Moreover, what people read before 11 March changed completely if compared to the post-3.11: what really was affected by the three-fold catastrophe was people’s sensitivity even towards literature. Actually, a common metaphor sees the disruption of buildings and infrastructures in the Tohoku area reproduced in the fragmentation of family and social communities, as well as the disjunction between words and their meanings. This form of *shitsugo* 失語³⁶⁵ denounced many times by Takahashi, is actually not mirrored by his production, extremely prolific after 11 March.³⁶⁶ It seems that, afraid about losing words or unlearning their usage, the author hurried up in writing as much as possible, experimenting word combination in poetical, fictional, nonfictional ways that even explore the world of internet connection.

Anyway, by sharing these considerations about the frailty of words after 11 March, Takahashi implicitly pokes the reader to reflect about the ethics and the aesthetics of the disaster: in other

³⁶⁵ Sugita, “Takahashi Genichirō ron”, p. 475.

³⁶⁶ It must be said that Takahashi himself diagnosed a form of light *shitsugo* (失語症) after writing *Koi suru genpatsu*. 「実は、『恋する原発』を書き終えてしばらくして、軽い失語症になりました。しゃべれず、書けず、なにも読めずです。ツイッターを眺めることもできませんでした」 Takahashi Genichirō’s Twitter profile on November, 15, 2011.

words, the ethical behaviour of authors who have to be particularly shrewd about the role of words in dealing with trauma and radioactivity contamination; and the aesthetization of the catastrophe produced - deliberately or not - by their literary texts. Since it is the effort of literary criticism, the author do not fail to quote colleagues' production - Kawakami Hiromi in primis - and to passionately reflect about authorial commitment in facing traumatic events.³⁶⁷

Last but not least, there is another short novel published in 2012 which is worthy to mention, although it is not taken into account in this first literary study because it appeared on the bookshelves in July. I am referring to *Nandemo seijitekini uketoreba ii to iu wake de wa nai* 『なんでも政治的に受け取ればいいというわけではない』 (translated as “Not everything can be taken politically”). This fictional production that last only 30 pages was included in a volume edited by Azuma Hiroki and entitled *Nihon 2.0* 『日本 2.0』 (“Japan 2.0”). The story sets in place a man who is driving, drunk, toward the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant with a Geiger counter to act as a background music.³⁶⁸

All in all, this brief introduction to the first literary productions by Takahashi Genichirō underlined authorial interest and vivid participation in the post-3.11 literary debate, both as a writer and critic. By deeply reflecting on the meaning of words, disaster and radioactivity, the novelist experimented fictional and nonfictional writing in seeking the best way to ethically fulfill his commitment as a writer avoiding the risk to reduce the 3.11 exceptional scale through the process of its aesthetization.

4. The end of an era

Thinking about it, The postwar period didn't finish only with the tsunami. It finished because of the nuclear accident. In other words, it can be said that the post-war was the

³⁶⁷ There is a special passage which reminds of the *hibakusha* writer Ōta Yōko and her imperative to write about the atomic bombings. *Hijōji no kotoba*, p. 53.

³⁶⁸ 東浩紀、『日本2.0。思想地図β vol.3』、東京、Genron、2012年。Azuma, Hiroki (ed.), *Nihon 2.0. Shisō chizu beta vol.3*, Tōkyō, Genron, 2012.

one of nuclear reactors. Both previous era and modern times have finished because of the nuclear energy.³⁶⁹

These are the words pronounced by Takahashi Genichirō in a crosstalk with the novelist Yahagi Toshihiko in the review *Kotoba* (2011). Authorial conviction confirms the importance that nuclear power plant has in Takahashi's literary production to the extent it became the subject of his first novel on the theme of the 3.11: an aesthetic object profoundly perturbed to the point to appear blasphemous when it touches the intimate sphere of human beings. The economic recover of Japan after WWII was heavily nourished by the introduction of nuclear energy in the power system of the country. Notwithstanding, now it became the architect of its downfall, suggests Takahashi. As is often the case, the truth lies somewhere in the middle: the nuclear energy was not the main topic of debate before the Fukushima Daiichi fallout: the energy source was transformed in a source for danger only after 11 March due to the radioactivity contamination in the surrounding area of the power plant.

Koi suru genpatsu born from the impertinent and outrageous attitude of its author who actually puts in place two antithetical actions - charity activity and AV filming - pushing to the limits readers' capacity to tolerate such a fantasy play: "I made it said also by one character: "There's no charity AV for disasters". I think the same (laughs)."³⁷⁰ The cynicism which is profuse in the novel was compared by Sugita by the one perceived in Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), the worldwide classical work about misfortune and the - highly provocative and cynic - positive approach to face it. *Koi suru genpatsu* may assume the role of the "Japanese Candide" 「日本のカンディード」³⁷¹ according to Sugita and in doing so, its ridiculous, even nonsensical (馬鹿馬鹿しい) play around disaster and adult video will turn to be inspirational for the audience.

³⁶⁹ 「思うに、津波だけだったら戦後は終わらなかった。原発事故があったから、戦後が終わった。つまり戦後とは原発のことだったともいえる。前の時代も今の時代も、原子力で終わったんだ。」高橋源一郎、矢作俊彦、「福島を遠く離れて」、『k o t o b a』、Issue No. 5、東京、集英社、2011年。Takahashi, Genichirō and Yahagi, Toshihiko, "Fukushima wo tōku hanarete" in *Kotoba*, Issue No. 5, Tōkyō, Shūeisha, 2011, p. 21.

³⁷⁰ 「登場人物にも「震災チャリティーAVはないだろう」と言わせているんですが、僕もそう思います（笑）」高橋源一郎、市川真人、東浩紀、「3.11から文学へ」、『震災ニッポンはどこへいく。ニコ生思想地図コンプリート』、東京、ゲンロン、2013年。Takahashi, Genichirō and Ichikawa, Makoto and Azuma, Hiroki, "3.11 kara bungaku he" in *Shinsai Nippon wa doko he iku. Niko nama shisō chizu konpurīto*, Tōkyō, Genron, 2013, p. 344.

³⁷¹ Sugita, "Takahashi Genichirō ron", p. 479.

Indeed, Takahashi's novel is thought-provoking in the sense that encourages - not only his audience but also his colleagues - to meditate about the epistemological and ethical meaning of writing about catastrophes. The desire for omniscience, which aspires to know the absolute truth about the disaster, and the ability to convey it into words, clashes with the impotence and frailty of being simple actors at the mercy of the stage of life. The brief comparison between *Koi suru genpatsu* and *Hiroshima mon Amour* actually stressed this point.

In the final scene of the AV - and by extension, of the novel - the author places at the same level the living and the dead: he forces them to confront each other and the result is a physical exchange between sexuality and annihilation:

As Derrida suggests, these excesses, these remains, these "ghosts", call forth infinite responsibility and an aspiration to live "more justly".³⁷²

As we have already seen, those dead characters are the incarnations of the absence: they function as "ghosts of tomorrow"; they represent Takahashi's own response to Kawakami and Miyazaki's warning for a possible (read: probable) future human extinction. This concern is shared even in the *Hiroshima mon Amour* movie when the Duras' makes her female protagonist said: "...Écoute-moi. Je said encore. Ça recommencera. Deux cent mille morts. Quatre-vingt mille blessés. En neuf secondes. Ces chiffres sont officiels. Ça recommencera."³⁷³ Hiroshima and Fukushima are linked by the common concern for nuclear radiation. As the nuclear fallout pointed out, a change in the approach people live the everyday life is necessary in order to not be responsible for one own's nihilism. It is not a coincidence if this claim was remarked by all the authors analyzed in this study on the first literary responses to 11 March.

Sexuality and annihilation: the source for life and the source for death are firstly objectified into characters for a charity AV and then brought together on the stage. Through the act of love making the bodies of the living and the dead intermingle, merge, join together.³⁷⁴ The sexual intercourse is more than a mere quest for fulfillment of the senses; it reveals the power of life to possess - to incorporate - the death. And in this sense *Koi suru genpatsu* leaves a positive message at the end of the novel: life prevails over death and, through its physical possession, it phagocytes it. The 3.11

³⁷² Maclear, Kyo, "The Limits of Vision: Hiroshima mon Amour and the subversion of the Representation" in *Witness and Memory. The Discourse of Trauma*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 236.

³⁷³ Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*, p. 33.

³⁷⁴ Vickoy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, p. 189.

catastrophe is no more a symbol that re-evokes thousands of toll (Abe) neither the reticent amnesia that restores the disaster as an event out of the ordinary (Kawakami). In this fictional portrait, the catastrophe is an extraordinary occurrence - a “limit-event” according to LaCapra³⁷⁵ - whose violence goes beyond our capacity to describe (read: to understand) it no matter how we try to possess it. The sexual life emulates the social body³⁷⁶, disrupted and corrupted by the trauma; it also echoes the same fragmentation in words Takahashi detected in his nonfictional production soon after the 3.11

As concerns the attribution of “testimony” to Takahashi’s works here analyzed, it is remarkable how authorial experience is always mediated by the literary production: in *Koi suru genpatsu* it takes the shape of isolated flash on the life of the protagonists on 11 March, as briefly presented in the first paragraph; otherwise, in *Ano toki kara* the reader deals directly with authorial testimony through the tweets and the journaling the author shared with his audience. Takahashi too - as Abe Kazushige and Kawakami Mieko - does not impersonate the figure of a witness in the sense of first-hand survivor, but his literary production on the theme - on the very edge of parody and critique - contributes resonantly to the debate in the 3.11 aftermath.

As the impact of the 3.11 disaster was heavy not only in the Tohoku area but also in Japan - and even in the rest of the world - due to the nuclear debate it arose, so the impact of *Koi suru genpatsu* on the audience was considerable and demanded a critical response: “At this time only strong words are delivered.”³⁷⁷ justifies the author. In a moment of crisis dominated by the loss of words, Takahashi remarked again and again in his literary commitment that instead of rich, meaningful sentences, simple but straightforward phrases are to be preferred. “What is important is not imposing “emergency cloths” (「防災服」) on words.”³⁷⁸ A statement that - consciously or not - goes hand-to-hand with Wagō’s production, as attested by an essay published on his official website on 18 September 2012 and entitled, indeed, *Kotoba ga bōgofuku wo kite shimatta* 「言葉が防護服を着てしまった」 (“Words wore protective clothing”).³⁷⁹

³⁷⁵ LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, p. 64.

³⁷⁶ Vickoy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, p. 199.

³⁷⁷ 「今は強い言葉しか届かない時期ですね。」 Takahashi, Ichikawa, Azuma, “3.11 kara bungaku he”, p. 355.

³⁷⁸ 「大事なことはことばに「防災服」を着せないこと」 resumed by Abe, Masahiko. 阿部公彦、「掘っ建て小屋みたいな文章で、とタカハシ先生は言う」、『小説トリッパー』、東京、朝日新聞出版、2012年。Abe, Masahiko, “Hottategoya mitaina bunshōde, to Takahashi sensei wa iu” in *Shōsetsu Tripper*, Tōkyō, Kōdansha, 2012, p. 331.

³⁷⁹ Link available at the official website of Wagō Ryōichi, <https://wago2828.com/essay/4053.html>, 2016/2/23.

It does not sound surprising that this literary inquiry on the first literary production after the three-fold catastrophe occurred in Japan on 11 March presents a sort of circularity that from Hiroshima brings us back to Fukushima and the Daiichi power plant. Both Takahashi and Wagō, although in different ways, showed a concern regarding the usage of social media soon after the 3.11 and actually made use of Twitter, in primis, by publishing literary works firstly born on this social network.

This first literary investigation that portrays the *Daishinsai* in poetical, fictional and nonfictional works pointed out that the post-3.11 reconstruction involves not only the infrastructure damage but also people's bonds (絆) and their communication (ことば):

Not only the destruction of townscape, but also the “words” that connect people have to be restored.³⁸⁰

³⁸⁰ 「壊滅した町並みだけでなく、人々を繋ぐ「ことば」もまた復興されなければならないのである」高橋源一郎、「論壇時評」、『朝日新聞』、2011年4月28日。Takahashi, Genichirō, “Rondan jihyō” in *Asahi Shinbun*, April, 28, 2011.

Conclusion

This study of the early literary responses to the Japanese the 11 March disaster explored different poetic, fictional and nonfictional experimentation in coping with the 3.11 catastrophe. In this sense, the choice of authors here encountered was far from being a simple case selection; on the contrary it helped in revealing similarities and differences among the first authorial approaches towards the 3.11 disaster and the trauma it carries. Beside the literary commentary of each work, the analysis explored different testimonial products in order to contribute to the trauma study debate by identifying the meeting point between literature and trauma in facing disaster, namely, the testimony. The hypothesis, thrashed out throughout the research, is to be pointed out here below.

The literary works investigated here belong to the so-called *3.11 bungaku* and were accurately selected in accordance with restricted temporal and spacial frames. The spacial dimension which encompassed the whole Japan country served to underline the connection between authorial origins and the main literary themes developed in their works, that is to say Fukushima and its nuclear accident (Wagō); refugee camps near Miharu (Genyū); the Touhoku's tsunami (Abe); a holiday trip to Kansai (Kawakami); and the nuclear debate around Hiroshima/Fukushima (Takahashi). To restrict the research to works published within a year from the *Daishinsai* occurrence was essential in order to stress the very first impact of the disaster on authorial production and, as a result, their first literary reaction to it. Moreover, as anticipated in the Introduction, this temporal choice allowed handling texts not yet influenced by the interference of a collective memory constructed by the political power but rather it enabled to discuss literary texts based on individual recollection and perceptions of historical facts. The role of trauma - when and if detected - in the process of individual memory formation had to be taken into account too.

This study focuses on Japanese written sources here claimed as testimony of the 3.11 disaster; in the Introduction as well as in the individual chapters, the literary production was distinguished between “first personal account” - or “private account” - by the victim and fictional or nonfictional productions by a third party. The first is generally referred to as *kiroku bungaku* 記録文学 in Japanese (literally: “literature of the recordings”) and is likely to be composed of journals, autobiographical notes, *mémorial*, Barthes's *journal intime*³⁸¹, Foucault's *hypomnemata*³⁸², etc.

³⁸¹ For the discussion of the term, see Barthes, Roland, *Critique et Vérité*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, p.54.

³⁸² “Les hupomnêmata, au sens technique, pouvait être des livres de compte, des registres publics, des carnets individuels servant d'aire-mémoire.” Foucault, Michel, “L'écriture de soi”, in *Corps écrit, no 5: L'Autoportrait*, Paris, 1983, pp. 3-23.

These literary works were addressed by Dominick LaCapra as “confessional literature” easily recognizable by the referential sentences and the chaotic and disorienting narration that mirrors the traumatic *Erlebnis* of the victims. The practice of writing about the traumatic experience - namely, the scriptotherapy - is often suggested to trauma victims because “scriptotherapy offers the possibility of reinventing the self and reconstructing the subject ideologically.”³⁸³ The analysis of these testimonial accounts had to focus the attention on the possible aporias and the internal struggle of the author who tries to fight against trauma but unconsciously is overwhelmed by it - as seen, for instance, in the case of Wagō’s poetical production.³⁸⁴ The result is the questionable reliability of the work. It must be noted that the same critique can be addressed towards those works that, although nonfictional, for the significant involvement and concern shown by the author, lose their accuracy on the historical level - see for example the case of Genyū Sōkyū.

Otherwise, as regards the fictional production it must be kept in mind that, for the semantic proximity of the term *fictio* with *inventio*, both translatable as “shape with fantasy”, the reliability of fiction as an (historical) account calls into question the reliability of any testimonial accounts since these productions rely on survivors memory, usually corrupted by trauma. Notwithstanding, it remains true that the aid of symbols and metaphors allows to approach the unconscious part of the psyche: fiction results in being one of the psychoanalytic devices to engage in a dialogue with trauma.³⁸⁵ The case studies of Abe Kazushige as well as Kawakami Mieko and Takahashi Genichirō here proposed confirm these considerations.

Eventually, there is the need to find a missing link, a form of “history-telling that includes both the voice of the historian and the memory of survivors.”³⁸⁶ If we assume that trauma is a critical part of the catastrophe itself - in its perpetration first and its effects later - a fallacious memory subjected to defense mechanisms such as oblivion and silence intended to protect and to restore survivor’s identity is to be considered as a valid historical source on par with the historical proof. If this statement appears as epistemologically coherent, according to the debate relating to the reliability of victim’s testimony discussed earlier, it is a source of controversy. Memory and oblivion are to be acknowledged as the two faces of the same coin. Extremely traumatic experiences can actually lead to a loss of words due to the difficulty in finding structures of meaning able to

³⁸³ Vickoy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, p. 9.

³⁸⁴ LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, pp. 17-23.

³⁸⁵ Segre, *Avviamento all’analisi di un testo letterario*, p. 219.

³⁸⁶ Young, James, E., “Between History and Memory: The Voice of the Eyewitness” in *Witness and Memory. The Discourse of Trauma*, edited by Douglass, Ana and Vogler, Thomas, A., London, Routledge, 2003, p. 277-278.

describe them. While the intellectual memory - the one associated with historical facts - can be transposed into words generating scientific or historical accounts, the deep memory does not, the one connected with emotions and therefore, the one most affected by trauma.³⁸⁷ According to Lacan the inexpressible will return to the symbolic use of language: narrative is considered the solution to transpose survivor's experience and to express trauma into structures of meaning - the passage from "knowing" to "telling" advanced by Hayden White.³⁸⁸ In this perspective, a scholarly book about the Shoah, atomic bombings and nuclear accidents like the ones occurred at Chernobyl or Fukushima should feature both rational historiographic approaches based on empirical data and victims' testimonies.³⁸⁹ In other words, the testimony here is not meant to describe what happened but what the survivors perceived: although dangerous for historical truth - historical data are unimpeachable while humans are psychologically fickle - the testimonial account is true to itself³⁹⁰ and allows to access the extraordinary impact catastrophe had on the self.³⁹¹ Thus, the combination of both memories - empirically-based historical memory and psychologically traumatized memory - could lead to the formation of a collective memory of a society who aims to learn from the past.

In short, writing responds to 1) the imperative of history, which is to provide a report of events; 2) the ethical and moral imperative to share with everybody the testimony; 3) the self-imperative to break the silence in order to articulate the trauma into words, which usually allows the victims to process it. The third point does not necessarily refer to a written account, although psychoanalysts agree that oral testimonies are not as effective as written ones. In this regard, the psychoanalytic method called "bibliotherapy" promoted by the psychologist P. J. Rossouw proved to be particularly effective in "cognitively restating" the self: "Literary narratives can play a vital role in the working through and healing of [...] different kinds of trauma."³⁹²

As repeatedly mentioned in this study, trauma is likely to be manifested by the victims through small signals of stress and discomfort that only after a period of acting out - detection, definition, recognition - can be worked through - Freud's *Durcharbeiten* - by verbalization, scriptotherapy, journaling, all of which can be considered as exercises of testimony. The process of memory-

³⁸⁷ Anker, "Metaphors of Pain", p. 53.

³⁸⁸ White, Hayden, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" in *Critical Inquiry* no. 7, 1980, p. 5.

³⁸⁹ Young, "Between History and Memory" in *Witness and Memory*, pp. 278-279.

³⁹⁰ According to Stevan Weine, testimony is truthful because it "consists of what the survivor believes is true; if they know that they are lying, then it is not testimony." Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe*, p. xiii.

³⁹¹ Young, "Between History and Memory" in *Witness and Memory*, p. 281.

³⁹² van der Merwe, Gobodo-Madikizela, *Narrating our Healing*, pp. 58-59.

construction goes hand in hand with the progress achieved in facing the trauma: testimony can be perceived as the fruit of victims' efforts in struggling with their trauma and the complexity of its representation. The process of the exhumation of the traumatic memories is anything but painless and sometimes it implies an implicit agreement between the witness and the receiver - psychotherapist, reader, audience - to deliberately ignore part of the memories in order to let the victims' story be narrated with powers of persuasion. In addition, it must be kept in mind that a truthful testimony consists in what the witness believes is true,³⁹³ not necessarily what has been historically proved as true.

This recap reclaims a couple of questions proposed in the Introduction regarding the first literary responses to the 3.11 analyzed here: Can we consider all these works as testimonies of the 3.11? If yes, to which extent are these testimonies subjected to any form of manipulation or repercussion linked to the process of memory construction and trauma detection? And finally, can their authors be considered as witness?

Actually, the investigation conducted until now underlined the presence of a different kind of testimonies - and by extension, witnesses. The testimony par excellence is the one given by a first-hand witness (*shōnin* 証人 in Japanese), who generally was at the "crime scene" when the tragic event occurred. This person experienced the facts by his/her five senses and for this reason he/she is likely to suffer from a form of trauma or shock. In Japanese, the term *taiken* 体験 (experience) well reflects a full-body involvement of the victim: 100% of his/her *persona* is likely to have been affected by the event. He/she may suffer from a form of alexithymia which makes him/her emotionally illiterate to the extent that he/she is not able to formulate a first-impact impression of it; in other words, he/she is frozen, stuck on the moment. The testimony, at this stage, is oral, first; only after a reasonable quantity of time that varies from person to person, the testimony can assume also the form of a written recording. In this process the help of psychotherapeutic sessions could prove fundamental to verbalise the experience. The written testimony is the result of the victims' struggle against trauma: a literary production steeped in documentary data, a diary or a documentary novel. There are only a few documented cases in which the victim approaches his/her own trauma through a fictionalized work, but always after decades: memories of time, places, faces are so vivid in him/her that he is most likely to refuse any form of imaginary manipulation. The case of Primo Levi discussed in chapter four is an emblematic example.

³⁹³ Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe*, p. xiii.

In this sense, Wagō Ryōichi appears as one anomalous case of first-hand witness because he fights the alexithymic distress in face of the Fukushima disaster and radioactivity exposure with his extremely prolific activity that in less than seven years has been seeing the publication of seven collections of poetry and several other works (interviews, essays, photobooks). The criticism moved by haiku poets like Sekai Etsushi and Morinaka Takaaki³⁹⁴ focused on the insensitive usage of words in Wagō's production and definitely compounded the voice of Arakawa Kōji, as already argued in the first chapter. Notwithstanding, Wagō's frequent reiterations of time and places directly connected to 11 March clearly attested to authorial permanence at the core of the events. Those repetitions are the signals of a traumatized self, stuck in a particular spatial and temporal dimension: his *net-poetry* shows the recurrent fear of radioactive contamination, thus forcing the author to lock himself in home, alone, always mumbling about the 3.11 disaster and its aftermath. Even though the poet regained the possibility to move throughout Japan and even abroad, often promoting his poetical production, the 3.11 still appears like a big bee in his mind, preventing any form of obliteration of the 11 March memories. This condition somehow continues to justify his attitude as a spokesperson for Touhoku victims even after seven years after the *Daishinsai*. Moreover, the authorial attention for the recordings of date and time results in literary texts definable as documentary accounts or "documentary poetry" that contributes to increase Wagō's reliability as a witness.

The second type of testimony is the one heard by someone very close to the first-person witness but not involved at first-hand. In this case his engagement in the event can be assumed to be 50% of intellectual participation (empathy) and 50% of physic of participation (transference). The choice of the two terms - empathy and transference - is not by mere chance: they belong to two different sensorial spheres both involved in the dramatic experience. By "empathy" or "intellectual participation" I mean that the eyewitness (*mokugekisha* 目撃者 in Japanese) shares with the first-hand victim feelings of fear, anger, mourning; nonetheless these sensations are aggravated by thoughts of transference like: "It could have been me", "If they touched my family...!" and so on. The engagement in this case is even corporal because thanks to the process of transference the person can perceive on his skin the danger: the traumatic event is not a tragical circumstance occurred to unknown "others" but a reality that can also affect "my" life, in primis. It is worth mentioning that PTSD cases were detected even at this stage. This kind of testimony is the one of an eyewitness very reliable and passionate in his recordings. Cases of hybrid literary production -

³⁹⁴ Angles, Jeffrey, "Poetry in an era of nuclear power. Three poetic responses to Fukushima", in *Fukushima and the Arts. Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, London, Routledge, 2017, p. 149.

that, for example, narrates real facts but changed places and names of the protagonists for privacy reasons - occur too.

The *mokugekisha* label can be ascribed to the person of Genyū Sōkyū, considering his proximity to Fukushima nuclear power plant that enabled the author to perceive the fear and the anxiety of radioactive contamination but, at the same time, his residency in Miharu prevents him from being directly subjected to the evacuation measures advanced by the Japanese government soon after 11 March. His participation in victims' suffering is encouraged even by his stance as Buddhist priest although a slight cold approach allowed him to deeply criticize the Japanese government and TEPCO's behaviour in handling the crisis. Nevertheless, his writings still betray the typical passionate, heartfelt commitment of the eyewitness. Trauma also appeared in Genyū's production, especially in the first detection of PTSD cases among the evacuees he himself encountered at the refugee camps. The nonfictional accounts of the writer underline a kind of strict respect toward the 3.11 historical facts which included a loyal report of refugees' testimonies from the evacuated zones; and, implied the refusal of any form of adulteration (read: manipulation, obliteration) of their accounts. Even Genyū's first literary attempt to fictionalize the 3.11 confirmed this ambivalent stance toward the 11 March triple disaster: the made-up stories are actually based on real testimonies and the reader has the impression the protagonists might be real survivors. Only years after the *Daishinsai* the author managed to realize a fully fictionalized novel like in the case of the rewarded *Hikari no yama*.

The third - and last - type of testimony regards people not actually involved. Their participation is 100% intellectual, while no physical engagement is required although at this stage the person could have assisted at first-witness testimony or watched live-broadcast earthquakes, terroristic attacks, rapes, gunfight. At least two senses are then involved - view and deafness - but what really matters is the approach to those events. They are perceived only as historical facts which occurred to "others". There is no transference and therefore, no remembrance - in the sense of body-memory recollection - is taken into account. Of course, an empathic manifestation of sorrow, guilty, pity and so on can result from the passive participation in the event and it is, in my view, highly fostered because it is what makes us humans. Nonetheless, the testimony given by these "witnesses" (*tachiainin* 立会人 in Japanese) is an intellectual approach to historical facts, a report resulted after years of psychotherapeutic interviews with first-hand victims, investigations or field research; visits to the concerned places and watching of video recording testimonies. For these reasons, this "witness" can also be called "connoisseur of facts" (*sankōsha* 参考者 in Japanese).

The Japanese term that well translates this experience is *keiken* 経験, for which, I should repeat, no physical engagement is needed. The written testimony can assume the form of fictionalised works, fantastic re-elaborations of someone who was not actually involved. Despite the historical fidelity of the artworks, their reliability is highly questioned, even though the literary value of the works is not:

le “lieu” de l’engagement se dessine à la croisée du *témoignage*, qui en constitue le “degré zéro”, et de la *fiction*, qui en est la modalité la plus haute et peut-être la plus authentique.³⁹⁵

At this point, I may argue that Abe Kazushige, Kawakami Mieko and Takahashi Genichirō have demonstrated, through their first literary productions, to be “connoisseur of facts” who, pushed by the desire to contribute to the 3.11 debate, struggled with its fictional representation. Although 11 March represents - at least for the moment - a literary cameo in Abe’s authorial production, Kawakami and Takahashi revealed to have turned their attention to the 3.11 topic more than once, especially considering Takahashi’s authoring. His literary commitment approached all the three faces of the 11 March catastrophe, by parodying Japanese society and the critical relationship between words and disaster. Moreover, these authors were probably highly influenced by media, documentaries and TV coverage about the 3.11 events - as discussed in the case of Kawakami as a “media witness” - thus influencing their interpretation of the facts.

Trauma takes different shapes in Abe, Kawakami and Takahashi’s production: it is represented as a symbol - the tsunami - a challenge which must be met and from which it is vital to learn (Abe); in Kawakami’s novel, the trauma provoked by the 3.11 catastrophe is a nameless reticence, an exceptional chronological reference in the timeline of the boring everyday life; Takahashi makes fun of the 3.11’s trauma in order to criticize the illusory conviction of human beings to be able to possess (read: understand) it. Likewise, some forms of ellipsis were detected in Abe, for whom the 3.11 is reduced to the tsunami occurrence and whose correlation with 11 March is defined only by the metadiscourse that guides the reader in revealing any 3.11 evidence. Kawakami, as seen before, opted for transforming the *Daishinsai* to a silent writing, an inarticulate tragic event that only the implicit agreement between the reader and the author can uncover, again, thanks to the intertextual reference of the novel. Otherwise, Takahashi chose to make the three-fold catastrophe explicit in all

³⁹⁵ Benoît, *Littérature et engagement*, p. 48.

its facets, by joking with irony in the attempt to exorcise the 3.11 anxiety and distress. In this case, not only 11 March regained its name and its place in Japan's history, but it is also compared to the 9.11 terroristic attacks, the so-called "Minamata disease" and the Hiroshima atomic bombing. It is, in Takahashi's view, a fatal as well as hard-to-describe event. Hence, authorial attention to the crisis in wording after the 3.11.

Moreover, it is quite interesting to note how this investigation started from the nuclear fallout in Fukushima prefecture and ended up by putting emphasis on the Hiroshima atomic bombing, stressing the common denominator of the cities exposed to radiation and, between the lines, the recidivist behaviour of Japanese government in dealing with the nuclear crisis. Japan appears as the *hibaku koku* 被曝国 par excellence, the only country victim of both atomic blast and nuclear radiation.

To conclude, it is relevant to mention also the enthusiasm showed by both Wagō and Takahashi in sharing their literary productions on social networks - Twitter in primis - before a proper publication in print. The role of the socials right after the 3.11 disaster was deeply inquired by critics like Azuma Hiroki but found in Wagō and Takahashi's productions one of the most valuable artistic expression.

All in all, these first poetical, fictional and nonfictional representations of the 11 March catastrophe show a similar attention towards victims' trauma and the extreme difficulty in coping with the aftermath. The different literary devices adopted by the authors reveal the common aim to try to reproduce and describe what is humanly inconceivable, thus, ineffable. These literary productions can be considered as the struggles of authors in the attempt to fulfill their commitment and take part in the literary debate around trauma, catastrophe and its transposition into testimonial accounts. In this sense, although to different degrees, Wagō, Genyū, Abe, Kawakami and Takahashi are all witnesses of the 3.11 disaster, and their literary approaches can be considered as poetical, fictional and nonfictional testimonies of 11 March 2011.

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