

ISBN 978-88-97000-26-6
ISSN 1972-3598

Orientalia Parthenopea

XVII
[2017]

a cura di

GIOVANNI BORRIELLO



Orientalia Parthenopea Edizioni

VERONICA DE PIERI

KINTSUGI IDENTITIES IN THE POST-CATASTROPHE JAPAN:
THE HIBAKUSHA IN THE POST-1954 AND POST-2011 LITERATURE

Introduction

Kintsugi (金継ぎ) refers to a Japanese term to identify the ancient art of repairing broken pottery using lacquer mixed up with powdered gold, silver or platinum. The result that comes up is a new artefact whose beauty resides precisely in the emphasis given to its injuries. The surface of the manufacture is crossed by gold and silver ribs, proudly sparkling like a knight who fiercely shows his wounds. A philosophical message is steeped into those shining ribs: past might have hurt you, but it is part of you and it is exactly what makes you precious.

In contemporary Japan *kintsugi* represents a metaphor to reveal the fragmented nature of Japanese society. Although six years have already passed from the nuclear fallout occurred at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant (原発), Japanese national identity still appears disjointed and its open scars reflect the unsolved problems the mismanagement at the Power Plant caused. Japanese people, who always have appeared to be unanimous in face of a catastrophic event, turned to be split up in multiple small groups: the evacuees at the refugee camps are still seeking aids from the Japanese government; the workers at the Fukushima Daiichi are still fighting to obtain justice for the violation of any occupational safety regulations by TEPCO; the collective burials have swept

away the identity of those injured to death by the tsunamis and survivors are still struggle to restore those lives, in order to not let them fall into oblivion. All these figures have in common the same experience of the three-fold catastrophe of 11 March 2011: they all represent different pieces of the same pot, held together by gold and silver ribs, the *hibakusha* identity.

Japanese people are far from being unaware of natural disasters. A seismically active area like Japan, subjected to earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions ever since is used to catastrophic events which disrupt the everyday routine. It is not a mere chance that the writer Murakami Haruki turned scholars' attention to the Buddhist perspective of *mujō* (無常) in his speech in occasion of the Catalunya Prize in 2011. Defining it as the transience of the things of the world and the frailty of life, this mindset explains the stereotype of Japanese as passive, yet hardworking people simply used to environmental accidents and traumatic events.

Eventually, 11 March nuclear catastrophe also brushed up the Japanese *genbaku* (原爆) past in terms of the double atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The most outstanding common denominator of the A-bomb literature and the post-3/11 literature consists in the ambiguous double-faced identity of the *hibakusha* (被爆者・被曝者), the victims exposed to radiations. According to *hibakusha*'s perspective, there is no way in which the no-victims can pretend to understand the singularity of their experience: they speak for an élite of people, the only one who can strike at the heart of the atomic bomb or the nuclear power and its tremendous consequences on human's body. On the other hand, the fear for the *genbakushō* (原爆症)¹ and the impact of this disease on the future generations entail their discrimination to a lower class comparable to the one of *eta* (穢多).²

This attitude was firstly described in the *genbaku bungaku* (原爆文学) accounts but found an echo in the post-Fukushima literature too: both the double writings, *hibakusha* (被爆者, "victim exposed to the atomic bombings") and *hibakusha* (被曝者, "victim exposed to radiations") connects the *genbaku* past of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the recent Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant fallout underlining the internal corruption which divides Japanese society in terms of identity: disowned but recognized identity; awarded and at the same time hampered identity; protected even though refused, identity. In a word, *kintsugi* identity of contemporary Japan.

This article aims to portray a brief overview of three identity-making figures that have been dominating the social panorama of Tōhoku region soon after the Higashi Nihon Daishinsai (東日本大震災),³ namely: the group of volunteers (and not) who worked at the Daiichi Power Plant to contain

the nuclear fallout and known by Japanese media as “Fukushima 50”; the evacuees, whose conditions in the refugee camps are still precarious, looking for a recovery of normal routine; and lastly, the victims, whose individual identities went lost as a consequence of the collective graves. A selection of post-3/11 literature on the theme provides a description of these singularities through works of poetry and prose. Literature is precisely the art that identifies similarities and connections between Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s *hibakusha* identities and Fukushima’s *hibakusha* identities: thanks to a comparison between these two literary responses, this article underlines how *hibakusha* literature represents a red thread that crosses and unites Japanese society like the gold ribs enable to keep together the pieces of a kintsugi artefact.

Fukushima 50

“I am very nervous. It’s hot in there and the mask gets wet soon, so I’d like to take it off. But if I take it off I’ll get exposed to radiations. So, I really can’t do it.” (Sano 103)

“Fukushima 50” is the label given by Japanese media to those heroes who remained to work on-site during the following days of 11 March, in the desperate attempt to put into security the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Highly damaged by the violent tsunami, reactors 2 and 4 accused instability in the cooling system, eventually leading to minor explosions. These 50 employees worked constantly to cool the system down and avoid major damage, although their number decreased and increased irregularly during March and April activities at the nuclear power plant. It is said that TEPCO employed at least 1000 units (Taguchi 130), a collaboration between regular workers, firefighters and soldiers all from Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant and other companies like Toshiba and Hitachi; this significant deployment of employees went along with the call for national forces from minor and major cities among which Tōkyō, Osaka, Yokohama and Kyōto (Asahi). This technical enforcement of people was explained by TEPCO’s motto of “Get in, everybody’s fine, even the yakuza” (Sano 103). Notwithstanding, the name “Fukushima 50” was kept unchanged to pay respect to the first 50 men who heroically stayed on site after the evacuation of almost other 750 colleagues and managed to contain the meltdown. Their efforts had, ultimately, put into risk their own lives: “If you think it’s full of radiations there, you get scared.” (Sano 104).

In the confusing climate of debate about the safety of the *genpatsu mura* (「原発村」),⁴ the voice of the nonfiction writer Sano Shin’ichi reported the testimonies of workers and evacuees the journalist directly met in the

stricken Tōhoku area soon after the disaster. His book on the theme, entitled *Tsunami to genpatsu* (津波と原発) (Big Wave and Nuclear Follout, 2011) was published in June and highly criticizes the ambiguous attitude shown by Japanese government, TEPCO and the media in reporting the real situation at Fukushima Daiichi, frequently referred to as *anzen shinwa* (安全神話) (Kamata and Gen'yū 38).⁵ The reprehensible attitude of Japanese government in dealing with Fukushima crisis is away from being a one-time episode: governmental efforts in trying to cover the danger of radioactivity contamination on Fukushima surrounding areas seemed to have mirrored the position of the Liberal Party in 1946 towards the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: “The government is a faraway presence.” And again: “We trusted its lie.” (Hayashi, 48, 62). These are the words of the *hibakusha* writer Hayashi Kyōkyō who witnessed Nagasaki’s bombardment at only 14 years old when she was mobilized in the Mitsubishi Munitions Factory. Her experience is masterfully depicted in the accounts entitled *Matsuri no ba* (祭りの場) (*Ritual of Death*, 1975). As noticed by the Nobel Prize winning Ōe Kenzaburō, the stance taken by Japanese government in coping with nuclear disasters impresses for its recidivistic nature. Especially the hazardous reiteration that the nuclear accident was not a level which could affect directly human health was then proved wrong once the Fukushima accident was compared to the level of Chernobyl: “No, I don’t want to go anymore in a place with such a high level of radiations.” (Sano 82). The Fukushima radioactivity contamination, now no more denied, is confirmed by the direct exposure of workers at the power plant to ionising radiations; among them, the cases of Kazuhiko Kokubo, 24, and Yoshiki Terashima, 21, are worthy to mention because directly killed during the emergency procedures soon after the earthquake (Takahara). Many other employees accused the so-called radiation sickness symptoms including nausea, loss of appetite, fatigue and, in the worst cases, injuries to bone marrow, lymph nodes and the spleen. Sano has estimated that a minimum salary of 50000000 yen was guaranteed; the dangerous nature of the work was calculated for an amount of 100000 yen, as confirmed by the daily schedule of workers now available online (Mainichi).

““Oh, smoke comes out, let’s run, come with me!” K was incessantly urging on me.” (Hara 21) Although these words, at a first glance, can be considered as the umpteenth quotation of Sano’s work, they belong to the *hibakusha* writer Hara Tamiki instead. His famous *Natsu no hana* (夏の花) (*Summer Flower*, 1949) sheds a new light on the literary responses to Fukushima Daiichi nuclear fallout compared to the Hiroshima atomic bombings. This passage is interchangeable: the smoke coming out from the fire outbreaks that

contributed to the devastation of the post-bombed Hiroshima can actually be mistaken for the realize of the atomic smoke at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant. Again, literature underlines the analogies that connects Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic experiences with Fukushima nuclear meltdown: to be brought into play is always Japanese government and its dubious actions; the danger portrayed by the 1945 and 2011 accounts is always the inexplicable power of nuclear energy and the anxiety for radioactivity contamination.

Sano Shin'ichi was not the only author to promote inquiries and interviews on the field with the purpose of giving voice to the ones directly involved in the evacuated zones of the Fukushima Prefecture. Ishi Kōta and Wagō Ryōichi, just to name a few, perceived the same need to verify the story spread on the social media and on newspapers (what Sano identifies as the “big characters”; Sano 12). Hara, on the contrary, was a direct victim of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima and his hibakusha literature serve as testimony of August 6, 1945.

Anyway, it goes to both authors the merit of having been among the first to try in awakening public consciousness about hibakusha situations and to have denounced it.

Evacuees

Following this comparative approach between *genbaku* (原爆) and *genpatsu* (原発) experiences, I would like to turn the attention on the devastated Tōhoku area, starting from the common definition of “ghost town” (ゴーストタウン) applied to the evacuated zones. “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.” (Wagō, 35, 36, 38, 43) This series of tweets was shared on authorial official profile by the poet Wagō Ryōichi soon after 11 March, thereby launching a form of poetical production that involves the social networks, namely, the so-called “net-poetry”. This perfect blend of poetic lyricism and tweets gained a resounded success not only among the web users but also among the public audience, once the poetry was published on a print media. In this case, Wagō’s “net-poetry” is likely to give a comprehensive idea of the post-Fukushima’s “ghost towns”: cities along the coastline of Fukushima prefecture where there is no more a living soul due to the governmental evacuation measures. The association with the *genbaku bungaku* author Ōta Yōkō is immediate: *Shikabane no machi* (屍の街) (City of corpses, 1948) is the title chosen by this reporter to refer to the first literary work ever written on the topic of the atomic bombings. *Shikabane no machi*

is evocative enough to recall in readers' imagination the crowd of bodies, no more really alive, not yet dead, but still human bodies, who struggled around the destroyed Hiroshima city soon after its bombardment. Of course, what differs Wago's "ghost town" from Ōta's "city of corpses" is the nature of the inhabitants: while Wago's portraits a lively city where nobody is living after 11 March, Ōta reproduces the agony of a city which is dying in front of her eyes; it is not a mere coincidence if Hiroshima and Nagasaki's hibakusha are often described as "living dead" or zombies. A similar, although less terrible, future could have been the one of Wago's "ghost town" if Fukushima's residents had not observed the evacuation measures arranged by the government.

Similarities between the two hibakusha experiences can be detached even in the *hibakusha* accounts about the frequent downpours that followed the heavy release of radioactivity in the air, in Hiroshima as well as in Fukushima:

I became aware only when my uncle told me, that I was soaked, sprayed of mud [...] While staring into the mirror I remembered the black raindrop which fell on us when we were getting on the clandestine boat with Nojima. [...] The black-thunderous clouds arrived from the city and what was falling was a rain that left ink-alike black stripes on the skin. [...] That rain faded away like it came, as to deceive my senses. A deceiver rain. (Ibuse 32)

The well-known novel *Kuroi ame* (黒い雨) (*Black Rain*, 1965) has become the emblem of the *genbaku bungaku* genre in the world thanks to the masterful pen of Ibuse Masuji. The author managed to combine historical facts based on the existing hibakusha diary by Shigematsu Shizuma with a fictionalized writing about the *sabetsu* (差別) and his documentary novel was considered worthy to a movie transposition by the Japanese director Imamura Shohei in 1989. The main topic of the story is a form of *sabetsu*, a term which refers to the discrimination that involved Hiroshima and Nagasaki *hibakusha* in the 1950s and that found its counterpart in the "genpatsu hinanjō ijime" (原発避難所いじめ) ("bullying the safety zones of the nuclear power plant") after 2011. Scandalous was the cruel case of a child from Minamisoma evacuated along with his family to Chiba prefecture and bullied by the outrageous slander "You're infected by radioactivity!" (Genyū 99). This popular conviction was born from the common belief that any atmospheric precipitation occurred in Fukushima prefecture soon after 11 March was bringer of radioactivity substances. "There is strong radioactivity in the rain [...] Without paying attention to the laundry sodden by rain, we folded it." (Hayashi 17) Again, the voice of Hayashi speaks to us from the atomic bombed Nagasaki, but her words are more actual than ever: "The more you're young, the stronger is the radioactivity damage" (44).

The fear for the *genbakushō* and its impact on the future generations entails hibakusha societal reject to a lower-class group, and actually the literature on the theme, namely, the *genbaku bungaku*, has never found its own place in the Japanese literary establishment. What is at issue here, is, again, the incredible topicality of the atomic bombing literature, still able to portray people dealing with radioactivity, although provoked by Fukushima nuclear accident.

Actually, there are literary examples about the radioactivity contamination believed to have fallen down Fukushima citizens in *Shi no tsubute* (詩の礫) (Pebbles of poetry, 2011), the first poetical collection post-3/11 published by the poet Wagō Ryōichi: “Radioactivity is falling down. It is a quiet night.” (10). The author still emphasizes his fear in the next literary work entitled *Shi no mokurei* (詩の黙礼) (*Poetry of the Silent Bow*, 2011):

radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity
radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity
radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity continues raining radioactivity
radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity
radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity
radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity continues raining continues
raining radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity
radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity
radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity continues
raining radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity
radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity
radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity
radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity radioactivity” (13)

This outstanding epanalepsis which focus readers’ attention on the main authorial apprehension, as to say, the fear for radioactivity contamination, results in a redundant repetition of the term *hōshanō* (放射能); the literary outcome is a sort of “graphical poetry” realized by the exacerbation of Wagō’s anxiety. The main concern regards the “naibu hibaku” (内部被曝), the “internal exposure to radiation” supposed to involve not only Fukushima’ soil but also its inhabitants. This contagion is believed to attack the body from inside and in this sense, it appears not different from Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s *genbakushō*: “Without even being hurt, they die in a while.” (Ōta 37). Japan appears as the *hibaku kuni* (被曝国) par excellence, the only country victim of both atomic bombings and nuclear radiations. And literature skillfully depicts this condition.

The nuclear accident at Fukushima Daiichi forced a great change in everyday life in order to cope with 3/11 aftermath. One impressive example is the one of the Geiger counter: no more considered as an equipment for the mere radioactivity research but a must-known scientific instrument instead.

According to an interview between the anti-nuclear activist Michael Yan and the journalist Ikegami Yoshihito:

“However, if one thinks about the reaction of people after [the nuclear accident], a response that exceeded all expectations came out: everybody demonstrated a great desire to live. Radiations can’t be seen, smelled or tasted. So, how to do? Let’s study them. What are Sievert? The alpha, beta, gamma waves, what are? What’s the difference between plutonium, cesium and strontium? [...] An astonishing number of people have accidentally been studying radiations.”
(Michael and Ikegami 2011; Giordano 2012)

The admirable Japanese reaction to 11th March tragedy also underlines the capacity of adaptation to a new reality without being defeated by it. To describe this particular Japanese attitude Gebhardt and Yūki coined the term “ganbarism”, a word that summarizes the ability of Japanese to endure hardship (13). Today, just like 70 years ago, hibakusha have to deal with the trauma of being exposed to radiations and the struggle of survival which implies defeating the symptoms of radiation syndrome every day; thus, can entail some cases of survivor’s guilt of being alive and healthy.

Victims

One of the main topics arose by post-3/11 as well as *genbaku bungaku* authors is the one concerning the collective graves. The hasty burial of victims for hygiene reasons “les privant de rite funèbre et donc de mémoire” (Judet de La Combe 649). A similar destiny is shared by victims whose body was never found contributing to consider them “ontically missing” according to Edkins (129). This impossible mourning contributes to the extreme difficulty of the healing process of the traumatized victims.

“The man in charge told me to pay attention to not step on dead’s head, so I walked with agility among the sheets in which the corpses were wrapped.” (Sano 222). This first quotation draws attention on Sano Shin’ichi’s portrayal of the 3/11 tsunami victims and can be easily compared to Hayashi’s young memories of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki: “In order to find out immediately one’s family, the corpses were lying to the ground.” (43). One more term of comparison can be added, the one, again, written by Ōta: “He thought he would have become crazy to sleep together with corpses, remembering the flames risen from those burned here and there every night with the rumor of the toxic uranium; but it seems he stayed there until wind and rain destroyed the barracks.” (172) Despite of the different nature of the disaster, some

common elements can be detached in these literary representations, starting from the way the inert bodies of the victims were accurately arranged on the ground and the presence in the air of the radioactivity pollution. Again, literature appears as a vehicle of memory that underlines connections between such different traumatic experiences like the one of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the more recent Fukushima city.

Conclusion: hibakusha's identity

What I hope I managed to portray by this rapid comparison between the *genbaku bungaku* and the post-3/11 literature is the interchangeability of those literary responses which can describe the atomic experience as well as the nuclear meltdown, thus underlining the presence of a fil rouge that connects Hiroshima and Nagasaki's *hibakusha* with Fukushima's *hibakusha* and the reasons under their discrimination. This comparison was possible only taking into consideration the similar nature of 1945 and 2011 disasters, in other words, catastrophes provoked by the nuclear energy which got out of human being's control.

One common denominator consists in the ambiguous double-faced identity of the *hibakusha*, discriminatory and protective at the same time. On one hand, the singularity of the experience they witnessed is considered as unique and no understandable by others; to borrow Paul Ricoeur's words, the "ipséité" of the group clashes with the "altérité" of their interlocutors, enacting the Lacanian process of recognizing and being-recognized. This self-recognition seems a proactive action to preserve the integrity of the membership, as the refusal of any literary works written by non-*hibakusha* confirms. On the other hand, the fear for the repercussions the *genbakushō* may cause on future generations results in the *hibakusha sabetsu*, as to say, their discrimination among Japanese society. In addition, they must take responsibility for the contamination of future generations and at the same time *hibakusha* have to fight against prejudice and the trauma derived from being rejected, refused, discriminated.

The process of the reintegration of the personhood in the society can help in coping with the traumatic aftermath although there is no chance for a metonymic transposition of *hibakusha* identity on Japanese society as a whole due to their very essence: only the direct exposition to radiations allows new members to join the group. On the contrary, as the recent cases of Fukushima radiophobia showed, Japan assisted to a revival of *hibakusha sabetsu* which underpins the artificial construction of the identity of the victims. Their ties do not depend on common biological characteristics like in case of human ra-

ces, neither to voluntary association of people with common interests, ideals, history or costumes like in the case of migrant minorities. *Hibakusha's* identity is rather “le produit d’une imposition arbitraire” (Bourdieu 66), the result of military strategy and the tragic consequence of a human mismanagement at nuclear power plant. *Hibakusha* is an imposed identification by the society in order to circumscribe the “infected”, a discriminative label ascribed to identify a group of survivors who established natural closure of solidarity and allegiances thanks to the common experience they shared. While Erikson’s definition of identity implies no major changes but a flexible adaptation to better interact with the external milieu (22), *hibakusha* represents a label that like it or not, defines the survivor for a lifetime. Their condition is comparable to the one of *Häftlinge*, survivors of Nazi concentration camps: they represent a social heritage and their storytelling is a source for historical testimony about the traumatic experiences of the atomic bombings and the nuclear meltdown. *Hibakusha's* definition has no relation to Freudian tradition which locates identity in the deep psychic structure of the individual, but it is rather a clear example of how identity is socially constructed and historically contingent. *Hibakusha* represent the “hétérotopie de l’identité” in the Foucaultian perspective (Foucault): the locus for the interchange of past and present; the site for the encounter of the heterogenous identities of contemporary Japan I tried to partly portray today.

“Le séisme touche tout les habitants, riches et pauvres. Les minorités, les politiques, les chômeurs, les élites, les enfants, e les membres de la mafia: tous sont également concernés.” (45) commented the novelist Tawada Yōko. Those heterogenous identities are the disowned identity of the refugees, the awarded identity of the “Fukushima 50”, the protected but at the same time refused, identity of 11 March victims: in a word, kintsugi identity of contemporary Japan.

NOTES

1. *genbakushō* 原爆症 is the Japanese term used for “radiation sickness”.
2. The *burakumin* 部落民 class to which the *eta* 穢多 class belongs, was considered as impure (*kegare* 汚れ) during the Japanese feudal era.
3. *Higashi Nihon Daishinsai* 東日本大震災, commonly abbreviated in *Daishinsai*, means literally: Great Seismic Disaster of East Japan”.
4. 原発村, literally, “nuclear village”. It refers to the urban agglomerate born around the nuclear power plant (schools, shops, minor industries and so on).
5. 安全神話, “myth that something is completely safe”.

WORKS CITED

- “Eiyū ‘Fukushima 50’ ōbei media, genpatsu no sakugyōinra shūsan.” (Heroes of “Fukushima 50” in the Western Media: the Pride of the Workers at the Power Plant). *Asahi Shinbun* 18 March 2011. <http://www.asahi.com/special/10005/TKY201103180477.html>. Accessed 26 Aug. 2017.
- Belson, Ken. “Elders Offer Help at Japan’s Crippled Reactor.” *The New York Times* 27 June 2011. www.nytimes.com/2011/06/28/world/asia/28fukushima.html. Accessed 26 Aug. 2017.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. “L’identité et la représentation. Éléments pour une réflexion critique sur l’idée de région.” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 35 (1980): 63-72.
- Brubaker, Rogers, and Cooper, Frederick. “Beyond Identity.” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1-47.
- Edkins, Jenny. “Time, Personhood, Politics.” *The Future of Trauma Theory. Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*. London: Routledge, 2014. 127-39.
- Erikson, Erik. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: Norton, 1968.
- Foucault, Michel. “Des espaces autres.” *Dits et écrits*. Paris: Gallimard, 1984. 752-62.
- Fearon, James D. *What is Identity (As We Now Used the Word)?* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999.
- Gebhardt, Lisette, and Yūki, Masami. *Literature and Art after Fukushima. Four Approaches*. Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2014.
- Gen’yū Sōkyū. *Fukushima ni ikiru*. (Live in Fukushima). Futaba: Futaba Shinsho, 2011.
- Giordano, Paolo. “L’isola della paura. A Fukushima un anno dopo.” *Corriere della Sera* 26 Aug. 2017.
- Gleason, Philip. “Identifying Identity: A Semantic History.” *The Journal of American History* 69.4 (1983): 910-31.
- Hall, Stuart. “Who Needs Identity?” *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage, 1996. 1-17.
- Hara, Tamiki. *Natsu no hana*. (Summer Flower). Tōkyō: Mitaka Bungaku zasshi, 1947.
- Hayashi Kyōko. *Matsuri no ba*. (Ritual of Death). Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1975.
- Ibuse Masuji. *Kuroi ame*. (Black Rain). Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1965.
- Judet de La Combe, Pierre. “Catastrophe et crise: de l’épopée à la tragédie (grecques).” *Critique. Penser la catastrophe* 783-784 (2012): 642-52.
- Kamata Tōji, and Gen’yū Sōkyū. *Genshiryoku to shūkyō - nihonjin he no toi*. (The Nuclear Energy and Religion - a Query to Japanese People). Tōkyō: Kadokawa Shuppan, 2012.
- Kwame, Anthony Appiah, and Gates, Henry Louis Jr. “Editors’ Introduction: Multiplying Identities.” *Critical Inquiry* 18.4 (1992): 625-9.
- Lan, Kyung. “Japanese seniors volunteer for Fukushima ‘suicide corps’.” *CNN Official Site* 2 June 2011. <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/asiapcf/05/31/japan.nuclear.suicide/>. Accessed 26 Aug. 2017.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *L’identité. Séminaire*. Paris: Grasset and Fasquelle, 1977.
- McNeill, David. “‘I am one of the Fukushima fifty’: One of the men who risked their lives to prevent a catastrophe shares his story.” *The Independent Official Site* 2 March 2013. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/i-am-one-of-the-fukushima-fifty-one-of-the-men-who-risked-their-lives-to-prevent-a-catastrophe-8517394.html>. Accessed 26 Aug. 2017.
- “Fukushima Daiichi: Sakugyōin, kibishii kankyō. Shokuji nikai, yoru wa zakone.” *Mainichi Shinbun* 28 March 2011. <http://mainichi.jp/select/jiken/news/20110329k0000m040150000c.html>. Accessed 26 Aug. 2017.
- Melucci, Alberto. “The Process of Collective Identity.” *Social movements and culture*. Ed. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans. Vol. 4. *Social Movements, Protest, and Contention*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. 41-63.
- Murakami Haruki. “Speaking as an Unrealistic Dreamer.” *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 9.29.7 (2011).

- Ōe Kenzaburō. "History Repeats." *New Yorker* 28 March 2011. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/03/28/history-repeats>. Accessed 26 Aug. 2017.
- Ōta Yōko. *Shikabane no machi*. Tōkyō: Chūōkōronsha, 1948.
- Ricœur, Paul. *Soi-même comme un autre*. Paris: Le Seuil, 1990.
- Sano Shin'ichi. *Tsunami to genpatsu*. Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 2011.
- Taguchi Randy. *Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima: genshiryoku wo ukeireta nihon*. Tōkyō: Chikuma Shobo, 2011.
- Takahara Kanako. "Two missing Tepco workers found dead. Crews hit pit leak with polymer after concrete fails." *The Japan Times* 4 April 2011. www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2011/04/04/national/two-missing-tepco-workers-found-dead/#.WaGHv617GRs. Accessed 26 Aug. 2017.
- Tawada Yōko. *Journal des jours tremblants: Après Fukushima précédé de Trois leçons de poétique*. Paris: Verdier, 2013.
- Taylor, Charles. "The Politics of Recognition." *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994. 25-73.
- Wagō Ryōichi. *Shi no mokurei*. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 2011.
- Wagō Ryōichi. *Shi no tsubute*. Tōkyō: Tokuma Shoten, 2011.

Abstract

Kintsugi identifies the ancient Japanese art of repairing broken pottery using lacquer mixed up with powdered gold, silver or platinum: the result is a new piece of art whose beauty resides in the emphasis given to the injuries. The surface of the manufacture is crossed by gold and silver sparkling ribs, proud as a knight who shows his wounds.

A watchful gaze of the Tohoku area after the 11th March 2011 Daishinsai reflects the kintsugi identity of Japanese society in its full controversy: the evacuees at the refugee camps are still seeking aids from the Japanese government; the workers at the Fukushima Daiichi are still fighting to obtain justice for the violation of any occupational safety regulations by TEPCO; the collective burials have swept away the identity of those injured to death by the tsunamis and survivors are still struggle to restore those lives, in order to not let them fell into oblivion. All these figures have in common the same experience of the three-fold catastrophe of 11 March 2011: they all represent different pieces of the same pot, held together by gold and silver ribs, the hibakusha identity.

Japanese literature stands as a spokesperson for this social fragmentation returning the voice of the victims and by encouraging Japanese ganbarism it reveals the internal corruption which divides Japanese society in terms of identity: disowned or recognized identity; awarded or hampered identity; protected or refused identity. In a word, kintsugi identity of contemporary Japan.

Veronica DE PIERI (veronica.depieri@unive.it) is a Ph.D. candidate of African and Asian Studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice under a cotutelle program with Paris INALCO; the Ph.D. thesis is entitled "Fukushima mémoires" and focused on post-3/11 literature. After graduating with a BA in Languages and Cultures of Eastern Asia at Ca' Foscari University dr. De Pieri got her second cycle degree in Language and civilisation of Asia and mediterranean Africa at the same University with a master thesis entitled: "Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima: words as a vehicle of memory" (2014). Dr. De Pieri's research has always been focused on the literature of the catastrophe with a special emphasis on genbaku bungaku and the literary responses to Fukushima disaster. Dr. De Pieri is collaborating with the NET-GTAS (Peace Memorial Museum, Hiroshima) to translate hibakusha's testimonies in English and Italian and is a member of Orto dei Sogni non-profit organization which provides a short-term stay in Sardinia for children from Fukushima Prefecture to recover from radiation exposure.