

Turning Crisis into Blessings: The Evolution of Japanese Culture Through Disaster

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The purpose of this thesis is to examine three major turning points in Japanese history and the evolution of Japanese culture as a result of disaster, as well as the evolution of disaster narratives. The 1923 Kantō Earthquake, the post-World War II era, and the 3.11 triple disasters will be examined to show not only how Japanese culture has evolved over time in response to these disasters, but also how some aspects of the culture have remained the same. The Kantō earthquake and the post-World War II years will be examined to give a historical context of the culture of disaster in Japan so as to show how they informed the narratives and culture that arose in the aftermath of 3.11. Responses from the government, the general population, cinematic, and literary responses to 3.11 will be examined in more detail than the other disasters since it is the main focus of this thesis. Using Jeffrey Alexander's theory on the creation of cultural trauma, we will examine these disasters as socially mediated rather than purely psychological experiences shedding new light and new ways of thinking about the experience of disaster and the creation of cultures of disaster.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	DEFINING “CULTURE OF DISASTER”	4
2.0	1923 KANTŌ EARTHQUAKE	10
2.1	THE GENERAL PUBLIC: FEAR, PANIC, DESPAIR.....	12
2.2	THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDS: ANTI-SCIENCE, ANTI-REASON..	14
2.3	CONCLUSION	17
3.0	POST-WORLD WAR II JAPAN	18
3.1	GOVERNMENT IN TURMOIL.....	19
3.2	VICTIMS OF DISASTER AND REWRITING HISTORY	21
3.3	RESPONSES TO NUCLEAR POWER	25
3.4	CONCLUSION	29
4.0	3.11 JAPAN.....	31
4.1	SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTIMATE EXPERIENCE WITH DISASTER	34
4.2	THE HUMANIZATION OF DISASTER: DESPAIR AND HOPE.....	36
4.3	THE ANTI-NUCLEAR NARRATIVE, A GOVERNMENT UNDER PRESSURE	40
4.4	INSIDER VERSUS OUTSIDER NARRATIVES.....	44

4.5	CONCLUSION	50
5.0	FURTHER QUESTIONS AND EXAMINATIONS	53
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	54

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Imagine sitting in your home enjoying lunch, or that you are out with colleagues for an afternoon meal while you are on a break from work. You are enjoying your tea and noodles when suddenly a massive earthquake strikes. The ground beneath you feels as if it is going to split open. The walls shake, pictures are flung from the walls and ceiling lamps plummet around you. Six minutes pass and you surmise that the worst is over. Then it gets worse, a tsunami warning of the highest degree is issued. Waves as high as twenty feet¹ are predicted in some areas and in vain attempts to escape from the shore, the tsunami hits. Its gargantuan waves and unparalleled force level the trees and land as it crashes upon the shore. It fells houses with ease as it washes over them carrying away with it any memories that may have existed within its walls. The ocean that once provided fish, food, and other forms of sustenance was now turning against you. Like a scene out of a science-fiction movie with the monster Godzilla rampaging and destroying the town, the tsunami waves consume all.

Everything you had known was essentially erased, no trace of your former life left behind outside of a pile of rubble that was once your home. In a moment of respite when silence covers the land, you have survived. You reflect on the terror that was just experienced. You take a moment to breathe and thank the *kami* that you are still alive. Then, in the distance, you hear the

¹ Japan Meteorological Agency, "Tsunami Information", *Japan Meteorological Agency*, http://www.jma.go.jp/en/tsunami/info_04_20110311145026.html.

sirens that warn you of a nuclear meltdown. The earthquake was so powerful that it caused the tsunami which in turn caused the reactor in your town to meltdown. Radioactive material was released into the ocean, the air, and the very ground that grew the food you eat. The triple disaster, the trifecta of anything that could go wrong had just unfolded before your eyes. This scene is a portrayal of the events of March 11, 2011, the day the Tōhoku earthquake struck Japan in the middle of the afternoon. The earthquake, coupled with the massive tsunami that struck the northern coast of eastern Japan, caused the meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

Japan holds a cultural memory that is steeped in natural disaster. The Great Hanshin earthquake of 1995 in Kobe, the Great Kantō earthquake of 1923, and many other earthquakes recorded from pre-modern history show that Japan is no stranger to the wrath of the earth. And with many earthquakes come tsunamis of varying sizes and destruction. Even given the modern state of affairs and emergency preparedness in Japan, the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami was the most destructive in Japan's history. To make matters worse, the sleeping giant that is nuclear fear stemming from World War II in Japan's cultural memory was reawakened with a jolt.

As radiation soaked the land in poison and crept into the ocean's waves, the very core of Japan was shaken as the nuclear threat reared its head once more. The nuclear issue has been part of Japanese culture and has been the center of a number of riots and protests throughout much of the post-World War II history, especially in the past few decades. There were protests in the post- World War II era after the Lucky Dragon² incident, and even after 3.11 there were multiple movements in areas across Japan against the Prime Minister Abe led government restarting the nuclear reactors that were previously shutdown following the 3.11 disasters. The increasing

² The Lucky Dragon was a fishing boat that was affected by nuclear testing by the United States in the Bikini Atoll near Japan. The effects of this will be discussed later.

reliance on nuclear power has been the cause of concern for many Japanese, and the 3.11 disaster and meltdown in Fukushima only invigorated the voices that are against the nuclear reactors. As we will examine later in the section on 3.11, we will see that public opinion was against nuclear reactors as a major power source in Japan and that others felt Japan should move to safer forms of energy production such as wind and solar power.

This thesis is dedicated to three disasters throughout Japanese history – the 1923 Kantō Earthquake, the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and finally the 3/11 triple disaster, to examine the narratives that stem from them and to also examine how past disasters influence and condition responses to other disasters. The Kantō and World War II sections will serve as historical context for 3.11, as they help inform and shape the narratives and culture that emerge from 3.11. The main focus of this thesis will be on 3.11 in conversation with the narratives from Kantō and World War II. These moments in time represent different types of disasters and also serve as modern reference points in history. The Kantō quake serves as an example which is entirely natural, with the nuclear bombings during World War II serving as our nuclear and man-made reference. The nuclear disaster is significant as it will tie into our examination of 3.11, which encompasses both a natural and nuclear disaster. But before we examine these disasters from multiple angles, we must first explore the idea of cultural trauma, how we view disaster, and how we come to define what is traumatic. In doing so I will define what a “culture of disaster” is. After defining “culture of disaster”, the examination of Kantō, World War II, and 3.11 will carry forth. Using the term “culture of disaster” is advantageous in that it allows us to examine disaster and the narratives from disaster from numerous angles, and as we will see shortly with an exploration of Jeffrey Alexander, it also allows us to think of trauma and disaster outside of purely psychological terms. There are artists, filmmakers, authors,

and poets memorializing the disasters so that they are never forgotten; and the list of creative works surrounding disaster goes on. I chose to examine such an array of responses to 3.11 specifically because I want to paint a whole picture of the culture and narratives being formed rather than focus on one sole aspect and ignore the rest of the culture and narratives that are forming congruently and as a response to the rest. Kantō and World War II will not receive the same treatment as 3.11 since I am using them to anchor the narratives of 3.11 to other points in Japanese history, to show how the narrative and culture of 3.11 were influenced by past responses to disaster.

1.1 DEFINING “CULTURE OF DISASTER”

My first task is to first define what a culture of disaster is so that we may examine its evolution in Japanese history. First we need to define culture. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, culture is defined as “a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization.”³ Then we have disaster: “Something that happens suddenly and causes much suffering or loss to many people.”⁴ But how we can combine these two to make one idea or concept? I will answer this by examining cultural trauma theory through Jeffrey Alexander because his examination and discussion of the creation of trauma contributes much to the discussion on disaster culture. Without the creation of cultural trauma and the shared experience of disaster, we could not easily define and identify cultures of disaster.

³ Merriam-Webster, “Culture”, *Merriam-Webster*, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture>.

⁴ Merriam-Webster, “Disaster”, *Merriam-Webster*, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disaster>.

Alexander states that “a cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves a mark upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.”⁵ This begs the question of what is considered suffering. What can be considered an event so terrible that it, as Alexander states, marks the group consciousness? Do these disasters need to be on a grand, national scale, or can they be smaller and community based? You could create a community culture that responds to suffering in one particular way, but then have a larger, national response to suffering; it can go as far as the community response influencing the national response to the disaster.

Japan often suffers natural disasters; tsunamis and earthquakes strike the country with regularity, most minor without causing much damage. However, there have been memorable disasters throughout its history: the Kobe earthquake⁶ of 1995 and the Kantō earthquake⁷ of 1923 are two within the modern era, with numerous others noted in Japan’s pre-modern history before scientific documentation. These smaller quakes and the two aforementioned quakes did not quite shake the foundation of Japan as the 3.11 quake did. The damage was severe and ravaged the eastern coast of Japan. The events that took place on 3.11 were, for the most part, natural. The 9.0 magnitude earthquake and the subsequent tsunami were acts of nature, something that the Japanese are used to. What made these disasters different was the enormity of them. No Japanese person had never experienced a 9.0 magnitude earthquake, much less tsunami waves that towered over twenty feet in height. Their world order was shaken, the securities they felt that would protect them failed. They had been traumatized.

⁵ Jeffrey Alexander “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma,” *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

⁶ Officially referred to as “The Great Hanshin Earthquake” (阪神淡路大震災 *Hanshin Awaji daishinsai*).

⁷ Officially the “Great Kanto Earthquake” (関東大震災 *Kantō daishinsai*).

Alexander argues that trauma as we know it is not organic, that is to say it is not a purely psychological experience. This is an important distinction to make because previous scholarship focuses rather strongly on the psychological effects of trauma and how the experience is defined due to these psychological aspects. Using Alexander allows us to view how trauma and a culture of disaster is a social construct. Alexander states that using a psychological analysis of trauma means disaster and trauma are experienced unconsciously, that the understanding and truth of the disaster is not mediated in any way and is experienced naturally without the affected parties creating and sense of truth of the disaster for themselves.⁸ The social mediation of disaster and trauma, according to Alexander, can occur before, during, or even after the event has happened. He goes into detail as to how a trauma (and therefore trauma narrative) is created:

1. Claims are made: A group that claims to represent the social collective claims a trauma has happened. Usually a group of status or clout can get people to follow them without much effort.
2. Collective follows: The people agree that a trauma has befallen them. They listen to the leading group and do as they say in experiencing this trauma be it through religion, literature, government decrees, etc.
3. Responsibility: The leading group attributes responsibility. This is easy when the trauma is inflicted by people (such as the nuclear bombings). When it comes to natural disasters, the experience of trauma is more direct, but people still need to find someone to blame. This sometimes falls to a god in some cases, but mostly the blame is pointed to government organizations and their handling and response to the disaster.
4. Memorialization: Create statues, memorials, physical objects that will forever serve as a reminder of the trauma.⁹

Alexander's model is compelling, and rather convincing, and is advantageous in the following discussion due to the fact that he does not focus on the psychological aspect of trauma, but rather of the social creation of it. It is easy to attribute his claims to traumas that occur due to human actions, but Alexander seems to lack analysis concerning natural disasters, which is what

⁸ Ibid, 5.

⁹ Ibid, 11-24.

I believe the examination of Kantō and 3.11 will add to his theory. To briefly touch upon some areas that will be focused on, after the 3.11 disasters, the then Liberal Democratic Party led government became the focus of blame because of their lack of response, infrastructure to help, and lack of foresight to help mitigate damages, much like the United States government's response to Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Alexander's theory can also be attributed to the Kantō quake. We will examine how conservative voices in government took control of the narrative that arose in the aftermath of the disaster and used the fear of heavenly wrath to control the population. We can similarly use Alexander's theory in post-World War II as the Japanese government had little choice but to succumb to the whimsical policies of the occupation forces as they faced a cultural identity crisis in the aftermath of the war and nuclear bombings. These narratives will show that the experience and creation of a culture of disaster is not a solely psychological process, but is in fact influenced by outside forces be they in local communities, nationally, or even internationally. It will be shown that trauma and cultures of disaster occur at national, local, and individual levels and that these narrative inform one another to create a more complex and nuanced understanding of disaster culture.

Now that we have examined Alexander's theory of the creation of trauma, we can turn to other theorists to determine how narratives are created surrounding disaster. With this in mind, we can then combine them to create a definition of "culture of disaster."¹⁰ Let's begin by looking at fiction; more specifically, science-fiction. Susan Sontag, in her essay on "The Imagination of Disaster," visits the idea of science-fiction and what makes science-fiction unique. Reading through the essay, her five phases are similar to Alexander's.

1. The arrival of the thing

¹⁰ A culture of disaster cannot be made without the creation and attribution of trauma. This is why Alexander's theory is central to this definition.

2. Confirmation of the hero's report of the disaster
3. A national emergency is declared
4. More atrocities occur
5. The eventual destruction of the monster¹¹

Sontag gives us a glimpse as to how science-fiction is planned out. It is carefully articulated in order to create a narrative of disaster and destruction, and in the following discussion on the disasters in question, we will see how these narratives are carefully made. The usual response to disasters is through creative means, and there was an astounding outpouring of art, literature, and poetry in the aftermath of 3.11. Sontag points out that film allows us to process emotions, achieve some form of catharsis about the disaster. Viewing disaster on the big screen invites a “dispassionate, aesthetic view of violence and destruction.”¹² Films are a common escape from reality, and in the case of a culture of disaster, it comes as no surprise that films are an outlet for emotions dealing with the disaster. So in this we have part of our definition of what a “culture of disaster” is – creation. Creation of works of art to process emotions and to process the disaster itself.

Finally, I would like to borrow from J. Charles Schencking, who will be used in the following discussion on the Kantō earthquake. Schencking states that the Kantō quake helped grow in Japan what he calls a “culture of catastrophe”. He states that a culture of catastrophe is “a mindset, discourse, and set of actions intimately shaped by the disaster and its aftermath.”¹³ Combined with our previous examination of Alexander, Sontag, and Schencking, we can conclude that a culture of disaster is a set of discourses, narratives, and reactions that are direct results of a disaster and its ensuing aftermath. These responses and narratives can be from many

¹¹ Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays*, (New York: Picador USA, 2001), 209-210.

¹² Sontag, 216.

¹³ J. Charles Schencking, "Catastrophe, Opportunism, Contestation: The Fractured Politics of Reconstructing Tokyo following the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923," *Modern Asian Studies* 40, no. 4 (2006): 833-73.

sources be they religious, cinematic, governmental, artistic, and literary. This definition grants us the ability to take full advantage of the complex culture that is created as a result of disaster in Japan, specifically in the aftermath of 3.11. It also allows us to examine the history and evolution of disaster culture in Japan and how past experience informs present day culture.

To summarize, the first two parts of this thesis will examine the Kantō earthquake and post-World War II era in order to establish a history of a culture of disaster in Japan. These disasters and the narratives and culture they create will then be used to examine 3.11 in more complex detail using film, literature, government, as well as popular responses to the disaster and its aftermath. Using Alexander's theory of cultural trauma is advantageous in this examination because it allows us to think of trauma and the experience of it in terms that are not psychological. It allows to, in a sense, give trauma and disaster physical qualities that lends themselves to more complex examination and interpretation and to create a history and evolution of disaster culture in Japan.

2.0 1923 KANTŌ EARTHQUAKE

The 1923 Kantō earthquake was a quake that shook much of the Kantō¹⁴ region of Japan. It was one of the largest tragedies that Japan had faced up to that point in history. This was also a point of much tension in Japan, especially with the Korean population. The Koreans were blamed for poisoning water wells throughout the Tokyo area, and were widely massacred by vigilante groups in Japan. The disaster was also a turning point for Japan as far as building safety and regulations are concerned. Because of how easily the fires spread due to the buildings being made of wood, Japan started to move toward more modern buildings made of brick and mortar.¹⁵

The Kantō earthquake is being examined mainly to give historical context for the culture of disaster in Japan to see how it evolved and informed narratives and cultures that arose from disasters that follow. It informs discussions of 3.11 in that it helps us to better understand parties within the government using disaster to their advantage. It allows us to create a conversation between the Kantō and the film *Godzilla* in that Tokyo is seen as the center of Japan and Japanese culture which was destroyed in both the Kantō earthquake and in *Godzilla*. It also introduces the idea of using disaster in order to spread a narrative and ideology. Religious, government, and general population reactions and narratives will be examined in order to paint a picture of what was happening in the aftermath of the disaster. J. Charles Schencking examines

¹⁴ This is considered the larger Tokyo area on the eastern side of Japan.

¹⁵ The disaster occurred during prime lunch time when many people were home cooking their lunches. Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 140-141.

the Kantō earthquake, and he goes as far as to say that disasters become embedded in political structures in that the disaster influences government decisions and actions as well as sects of the government using the disaster as a means to create new laws, decrees, and even using them to their advantage to rally people behind them. Schencking states that the disasters additionally become part of society and culture.¹⁶ The trauma that occurs is mediated by government actions, literature, memorials, etc. The experience of the disaster affects more than the psyche, which we extracted from our discussion on Alexander.

On the surface, the Kantō earthquake increased racial divisions in Japan concerning the Korean population. The Korean population in Japan was widely blamed with attempting to poison water wells and kill the Japanese. Andrew Gordon tells us that “encouraged by the authorities, residents throughout the region organized nearly three thousand vigilante groups. Their stated goal was to keep order in devastated neighborhoods and protect property from looters as well as rebellious Koreans or leftists.”¹⁷ These vigilante groups went as far as to use linguistic means to discern who was Korean and who was Japanese.¹⁸ The rumors and news spread nationally as Japanese newspapers such as *Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun* released stories about lawless Koreans who were engaged in arson and rioting and looting.¹⁹ False perceptions of the Koreans were spread easily, and helped fuel the fire of anti-Korean sentiments in the aftermath of the Kantō earthquake.

But there was much more to the Kantō quake than the Koreans. What happened as a result of the disaster? What ideological shifts occurred in Japan, or more so what ideologies were

¹⁶ Schencking, 297.

¹⁷ Gordon, 153.

¹⁸ They would have people say the Japanese “ba bi bu be bo.” The Korean language doesn’t have a true b, but rather a b/p sound, so they had difficulty saying the Japanese version of the syllables.

¹⁹ Gordon, 153.

brought to the surface in the wake of the quake? Japan is a deeply religious society, but not overtly. There are no slogans to *kami* (*Shinto* gods) on currency and on government buildings like one would find in the United States. The role of religion in government in Japan, at least in contemporary society, is nearly invisible – a stark contrast to American society. Religion actually played a much larger role in the Kantō earthquake ideology than we see on the surface. Rather than pointing the blame solely at the Koreans, the Japanese pointed the finger at themselves as well, making the Kantō quake a reflexive exercise in the “why” of the disaster. And the most prominent religious ideology that gained hold in Japan was that the Japanese were being punished by *kami*.²⁰

2.1 THE GENERAL PUBLIC: FEAR, PANIC, DESPAIR

The general public of Tokyo had similar primal responses to the disaster that even the most educated and composed higher members of society had. There was fear, panic, despair. The destruction caused Kantō earthquake was vast and quick. The conditions of nature that day were perfect for a fire to catch wind, grow, and spread at alarming speeds. Haruno Ogasawara recounts tales that people in Tokyo told of a clothing depot that was no longer in use – refugees were running from the destruction and the fire, but their clothes became fuel that allowed the fire to grow. One can only imagine the scene that followed once the clothes began to catch flame.²¹ Ogasawara recounts also the tale that one survivor recorded of her harrowing experience during the earthquake. The words this survivor uses evokes very visceral images: “the massive

²⁰ Haruno Ogasawara, *Living With Natural Disasters: Narratives of the Great Kanto and Great Hanshin Earthquakes* (Doctoral Thesis, Northwestern University, 1999), 88-90.

²¹ *Ibid*, 68.

earthquake howls with rage.”²² She says. “Sand and dust cover the sky, dyeing the sun a copper color, then gray, and gradually adding darkness.”²³ The survivor continues her tale, of piercing screams, Buddhist prayers carried through the air, roof tiles flying and houses falling in an instant. “Horror, tragedy, misery, and terror – it seems to be the end of the world and of the human race.”²⁴ There is no denying the state of affairs while the quake was taking place. These sentiments of terror, panic, and despair, as we will examine later, carry forth throughout other disasters in Japan’s history – especially after World War II and the aftermath of the 3.11 triple disaster.

There are even responses to the disaster that we would not consider, ones that we consider in the twenty-first century due to social media. We hear of a disaster, we run outside and use our smartphones to take pictures and videos of what is happening. While there were no smartphones available to do such things in 1920s Tokyo, people heard news of the earthquake and the fires and the spreading disaster and would go outside to gawk at what was happening before them. These people would check surrounding areas for safety, then promptly run away from the danger.²⁵ In the twenty-first century we will see this occurring again with 3.11 as victims of the disaster would run outside and record videos on their smartphones. Obsession with disaster and destruction, it seems, is engrained in the human brain.

²² Ibid, 66.

²³ Ibid, 66.

²⁴ Ibid, 66.

²⁵ Ibid, 69.

2.2 THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDS: ANTI-SCIENCE, ANTI-REASON

In the 1920s Japan was becoming a materialistic society just as the West. But on September 1, 1923, the ideas of modernity and materialism were brought crumbling down in the aftermath of the Kantō earthquake, in other words, one can say that the earthquake changed the course of Japanese modernization in the 1920s and approaching World War I. We can see this shift in how the government created a narrative surrounding science in Japan at the time of the earthquake.

Minami Orihara and Gregory Clancey discuss the role of science during the aftermath of the Kantō earthquake and how the public opinion of said science was greatly altered because of government spreading lies about the earthquake scientists within Japan. Orihara and Clancey begin by mentioning the Japanese word *hijōji* (emergency) was a keyword that remained in the minds of those who led militarist Japan in the 1930s. But the word didn't become prevalent in the 1930s, it actually gained traction in the 1920s shortly after the Great Kantō Quake.²⁶ And to relate it to the previous point of the state of science, she states that “previous ‘great earthquakes’ had been opportunities to strengthen Japanese participation in the global project of science” however, the Great Kantō earthquake “led more dramatically to a crisis of reason, and indirectly contributed to the spiritual, non-western, and anti-rational rhetoric of what became the ‘Showa Restoration’.”²⁷ The train of thought that Orihara and Clancey present to us follows fairly well with the one represented to us through Schencking. That is, conservative voices within government and intellectuals took the Great Kantō Quake as a means to an end. According to Orihara and Clancey, it was through the word *hijōji*, emergency, that these parties succeeded in

²⁶ Minami Orihara and Gregory Clancey, "The Nature of Emergency: The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Crisis of Reason in Late Imperial Japan," *Science in Context* 25, no. 1 (2012): 103-126.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 103.

this endeavor. The term was used very liberally and widely in writings coming out of state and right-wing intellectuals during this time, and it just so happened that these intellectuals supported the rise in imperial and military power which would propel the disaster narrative in a direction the allowed the government to, in a sense, control the population moving toward World War I.

The government officials who relied on the emergency language of the time thought of the Great Kantō Earthquake as what many called a test from the heavens. Examples of such officials and high-ranking members of society are Masuda Yoshikazu, a powerful businessman. He pointed the blame at socialism and Marxism, which he considered to be selfish ideologies, as the cause of social corruption and the cause for retribution.²⁸ There was also Mamiya Heizō who wrote an article on the anniversary of the disaster that said, essentially, the Communist revolution in Japan was quelled by nature's fury.²⁹ There were also authors and who joined in on the retribution theory. Two such authors are Kōda Rohan and Murakami Namiroku. Both authors agreed on the theory of retribution from the heavens, with Murakami stating that the people should think of the disaster as a great warning from heaven, and to turn the crisis into a blessing.³⁰

Japan was being punished for immorality, corruption, greed, and materialism. These officials drew heavily from Buddhist teachings and writing to relate what they meant not only to other government officials, but also to the common person in the general population.³¹ The narrative that government officials, authors, and high-ranking members of society relied on with these phrases and writings provoked fear in the hearts of those who read it – at least for the

²⁸ Ibid, 112.

²⁹ Ibid, 112.

³⁰ Ibid, 113. He stated that *“yononaka no yarinaoshi”* (We should redo society) and *“ningen no denaoshi”* (Restart human lives). – Murakami Namiroku, *“Shinsaigo no kansō”* (Impressions after the Earthquake).

³¹ Ibid, 105.

general population. It raised questions for them of why the *kami* were punishing them, and what could they do to stop future atrocities from occurring? These questions are exactly what the right-wing thinkers in the government wanted the Japanese people to ask, and the fear was just a happy coincidence that just so happened to work in their favor. These right-wing thinkers took these fears and doubts and fed upon them to manipulate the people to their whim.

Orihara and Clancey state “In one sense, *emergency* seems fundamentally related to the creation and projection of fear – the socio-political equivalent of *fight or flight*.”³² Officials like those mentioned previously were using the general population’s fears and supernatural beliefs to their favor, to elicit this flight or fight response in the people. And since the right-wing was able to use the *hijōji* to their advantage, they were able to spread their ideologies to the people easier – militarism, reflection and moving away from Western views as we saw in Orihara and Clancey. From the beginning of the disaster politics were involved. In Schencking’s article it was stated that disaster becomes imbedded in government and politics. It took no short amount of time for politicians to cast their lot in on how Tokyo should be restored and how Tokyo was only setting an example for the rest of Japan and how the Japanese needed to shape up before the *kami* decided to smite the rest of the country.

So what is the main ideology being spread here? There is no denying that fear and panic were running rampant in the aftermath of the disaster. However, we can also easily see that the right-wing took the disaster as an opportunity to create a culture of disaster surrounding that of *fear* – fear of destruction, retribution, and punishment from the gods. And what would have caused this? This fear of disaster and retribution from the heavens, in a way, presents itself again in 3.11, as we will examine later.

³² Ibid, 107.

2.3 CONCLUSION

In short, the Kantō quake was a major turning point in Japan's cultural growth in the early twentieth century. The right-wing government fostered a culture of fear going into World War I and World War II. The government also fostered a culture of anti-science and anti-reason with the strong focus on religious rhetoric and the disapproval of seismology as a valid science as we saw with Orihara and Clancey. These attitudes of control, fear, and anti-western sentiments will carry forward as we continue our examination of World War II Japan.

As we saw, there is more than one side to the culture of disaster which is what makes this examination interesting – there are multiple sides to each story, so which one is ultimately right? The answer is that none is right, they are all considered part of the larger narrative that creates the culture of disaster. In the Kantō earthquake we have the government that wanted to spread fear through religion and retribution from the *kami*. The people rose up as vigilantes to eliminate the Korean problem in Japan. The Kantō quake easily has a culture of fear and hatred of not only foreigners in their country, but also of science and reason as we saw with the examination of seismologists.

The creation of a trauma narrative is complicated, but Alexander's theory helps us simplify the process and look at the individual steps to create a whole narrative that creates a culture of disaster, like the culture of fear that grew out of the Kantō aftermath. Since we have examined the Kantō quake, let us move forward to World War II and conduct an examination of a nuclear disaster that will help inform our later discussion on the nuclear aspect of 3.11.

3.0 POST-WORLD WAR II JAPAN

August 6, 1945 is a date that has been the progenitor of volumes of text; and one that scarred a nation and world history. The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki three days later have had a profound effect on Japan creating a deep-seated fear of anything relating to nuclear power and weapons for the Japanese. Despite these fears, Japan still eventually became home to a number of nuclear reactors as means of creating electricity for the country – an issue that will be discussed later in the section on the 3.11 disasters. This fear of nuclear power has inspired generations of not only Japanese scholars, but also psychologists, anthropologists, and film studies because of films that arose out of the atomic bombings – the most famous of those being Honda Ishirō’s 1954 film *Godzilla*. For example, John Dower wrote *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* in which he discusses at length the effects that World War II, the atomic bombings, and the American occupation had on Japanese culture and society. He discusses how Japan was forced to change in the face of the occupation, and how Japan had to remake their identity and morals during this tumultuous time.³³ His examination is close to what I am trying to accomplish with mine and that is a cultural examination paralleled with government narratives. This allows for a fuller picture and better understanding of how the disaster culture was being shaped and informed by multiple narratives.

³³ John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, Vol. 1, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1999).

Japan in a post-nuclear world was in chaos. They had just been forced to surrender from their participation in World War II and were relying on the United States and other Allied Powers in order to become a functioning country once more.

The reason this particular era of Japanese history is being examined is because of the nature of the disaster in that there is no nature involved with it at all other than human nature. This is a one-hundred percent man-made disaster, a good foil to the natural disaster of 1923 and a way to intersect the 3.11 disasters that are both a result of man-made deeds and the wrath of nature. We can also examine how the Kantō quake, in a way, conditioned the post-war responses to disaster. We will not see as extreme views on religion and foreign groups as we did with Kantō, but we will see that, in a sense, the government under Hirohito, the Emperor of Japan at the time, still felt the need to be involved in the creation of a narrative surrounding the disaster despite their narrative diverging from the narrative that the general population was creating.

3.1 GOVERNMENT IN TURMOIL

Let us begin by discussing the political environment of Japan at this time. It was a state of chaos. Japan had been floored by the actions of the United States as they not only forced Japan out of the war and to surrender, but they also took over the reformation of Japan in nearly all aspects, the most prominent of those being the new constitution for the country. That is not to say the United States and Allies forced Japan to commit to X, Y, and Z – the Japanese officials were included in these discussions the entire time. The most famous result of the American Occupation was Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. Referred to as “The Peace Article” or the “Anti-military Article,” Article 9, in essence, stripped Japan of having a standing army for

purposes of war. Japan was allowed to have a police force and a Self-Defense Force, but are generally only used in peacekeeping operations.³⁴ It should be noted that the Self-Defense Forces did not come until later in 1954 after the constitution had been promulgated. It seemed as if those in power had little control over the people during the tumultuous occupation years – a stark contrast to the government during the aftermath of the Kantō quake. There was no fear-mongering, no anti-Korean and anti-Western propaganda to fuel the flames of dissent to unify the people. As William Tsutsui puts it, “the nation was shattered industrially and psychologically, dependent on the United States for economic aid and political guidance...”³⁵ It was also difficult to actually voice opinions against the United States since there was intense censorship that prohibited such practices.

What truly had the Japanese people lost during this time was perhaps one of the most earth-shattering moments in Japanese history – the denouncement of the Emperor’s status of godhood. It was always believed that the Emperor was a descendent of Amaterasu herself, and that was where the Emperor received his right and power to rule over the people of Japan.³⁶ The place of the Emperor was fiercely debated among those who were helping the reformation of Japan, but in the end, Mamoru Shigemitsu signed the surrender documents on September 2, 1945 with the condition that the imperial institution be preserved. As such, the Emperor still remains as a figurehead within Japan.³⁷ The wording of the document itself, the “Japanese Instrument of Surrender,” made it so the Emperor was still in some seat of power within the government. Every

³⁴ Recent world events, such as rising tensions with North Korea, have opened up many discussions of having Japan repeal Article 9.

³⁵ William Tsutsui, 6.

³⁶ This still despite the sullied history of the Shogunate and other government groups ruling Japan for generations leaving the Emperor as a figurehead rather than a leader.

³⁷ Gordon, 220-222.

provision written in it included the Emperor as a separate entity from the rest of the Japanese Government.³⁸

So what ideology is being spread here? What message was the government sending to its people? To the United States this was an opportunity to transform Japan into a pro-American democratic state and was able to achieve this by their presence in Japan and also through censorship of films, literature, etc. Japan was an enigma, and “perceived as somehow passive, premodern, tradition-bound, timeless and inferior.”³⁹ The message that the government was sending to the people was that of submission. Japan had been emasculated by the atomic bombings and had little choice than to do what the United States said as they reshaped the country. The other major ideology that formed in the post-war era, especially much later in the 80s, was that of victimization. These ideas of victimization, as we will note in the next section, also served as a means for the government to attempt to rewrite history. Nothing of this scale occurs with 3.11, but we will see that in the aftermath of 3.11 the government was in a state of turmoil facing criticism from within as well as internationally in how relief efforts and management after the disaster were conducted.

3.2 VICTIMS OF DISASTER AND REWRITING HISTORY

Japan, as we know, was decimated by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was all too easy for those in power to take this tragedy and use it to their advantage in numerous ways. The

³⁸ The wording in the document itself refers to the parties in question as “the Emperor” and “the Japanese Government.” “Japan Surrenders,” Featured Document: Japanese Surrender Document, https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/japanese_surrender_document/.

³⁹ Tsutsui, 6.

message of victimization is more than apparent today as historians look back on the actions of Japan in the eras that followed the post-war occupation. How did the those in power spread this message of victimization? The simple answer is through revisionist history, or rather, those who are in charge of teaching the history are rewriting it so that Japan is painted in the light of a victim. This has come about in a number of ways, even in the last century or so. The most prevalent way in which the Japanese government has made their stance on the victim narrative is through museums. Walter Hatch, in “Bloody Memories: Affect and Effect of World War II Museums in China and Japan,” examines the message that is being shared in memorials to World War II in China and Japan. The most famous and simultaneously notorious of these memorials is Yasukuni Shrine. The shrine “served as a symbolic center in a system of state Shinto, a system that treated Japanese citizens as members of a national family led by a divine emperor.”⁴⁰ It is a site where war heroes and important historical figures were enshrined so as to remember their honor. And in the twenty-first century, the prime minister of Japan has visited the shrine to honor the fallen. This has been a great point of contention not only in Japan, but also internationally because the Class A war criminals from World War II are enshrined and remembered as heroes that fought for the greater good of Japan. These visitations have been a source of irritation between Japan, China, and Korea considering the atrocities Japan committed against them in the Pacific War.⁴¹ Hatch gives a fascinating description and analysis of how the message of victimhood works so well as a result of Yasukuni. He summarizes that through video, photographs, carefully chosen words, and artifacts that a museum or memorial can resonate with

⁴⁰ Walter Hatch, "Bloody Memories: Affect and Effect of World War II Museums in China and Japan," *Peace & Change* 39, no. 3 (2014): 366-94.

⁴¹ This includes the Nanjing Massacre as well as the Japanese occupation of Korea during the war.

the people it is aimed at an affect far greater than any semblance of truth might be able to.⁴² He theorizes that this is true, because earlier he took his half-Japanese-half-American daughter to the Hiroshima Peace Museum where she proclaimed that she “hated Americans.”⁴³ This message is exactly what the Japanese government wanted to spread. This is the *ideology* that the government wanted to permeate the Japanese mindset well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Hatch discusses the Japanese battle with history and how the government chose to represent it as well. This Japanese reflection on the actions of the Americans and the treatment of Japan in the post-war era did not truly show itself until the 1980s after Japan had a significant, and miraculous, economic boom. This was the first time in thirty years that Japan was able to finally reflect on the *past*. In the immediate post-war Japan looked to the future, which is a stark contrast to the nostalgia driven politics of the past.⁴⁴ Hatch says that “when [the Japanese] looked back, they view Japan as a victim, a nation hijacked by rogue militarists who carried out misdeeds in the rest of Asia and pushed it into a suicidal confrontation with the United States.”⁴⁵ This is the ideology that is so strongly supported and purported by Yasukuni and the Hiroshima Peace Museum. But why is this important? Why this obsession with how the Japanese viewed their position of victim in the post-war occupation? Until the 1980s, the narratives that surrounded World War II did not shy from the atrocities that Japan committed during World War II. School children were even taught about Japan’s actions against their Asian compatriots during the war. This changed in the 1990s when more conservative officials gained control of the

⁴² Ibid, 367.

⁴³ Ibid, 367. Specifically, she said “*Amerikajin ga daikirai desu*” which translates to “I hate Americans.”

⁴⁴ For example, the Kanto quake where the Japanese government saw modernity as a negative. Moving forward and adopting present day (at the time) practices wrought the wrath of *kami*.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 369.

government. In 1996 a new textbook called *Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho*, literally *The New History Textbook*, was published by a group of the same name who was led in 1997 by Shinzō Abe,⁴⁶ the current prime minister of Japan. The textbook itself has been edited and updated and released with a new version as recently as 2001, which sold nearly 500,000 copies.⁴⁷ This new textbook did more than simply revise history. Many say that it utterly whitewashed what Japan had done during World War II. Much of Japan's involvement with the Pacific War, such as the occupation of Korea and the Nanjing Massacre, were not mentioned in these textbooks and painted Japan to be one-hundred-percent a victim of the aggressive United States. This battle with history – or *rekishi mondai* “history problem” – is still waging on into 2016 as Japanese youth express they feel the government's actions cause them to be more widely discriminated against in the larger Asian sphere in relation to World War II narratives. They see it as “unyielding, unfair ‘Japan-bashing’ from Asia and constant kowtowing by Japanese politicians.”⁴⁸ So while the Japanese government is attempting to continue this ideology and sentiment of victimhood, a majority of the Japanese do not agree with them concerning World War II narratives. There is a divide in what the government wants for the people and what the people want from Japan. This is shown to us in Hatch's article when he tells the story of looking through the Yasukuni gift shop and stumbling upon a book titled *Of Course the Prime Minister Should Make the Pilgrimage to Yasukuni*. As he was looking at the book, a middle-aged woman approached him and told him that most of the Japanese do not agree with the message the book

⁴⁶ Sun Xingjie, "Shinzo Abe And The Return Of Japanese Nationalism - A View From Beijing," Worldcrunch.com, May 13, 2013, <http://www.worldcrunch.com/opinion-analysis/shinzo-abe-and-the-return-of-japanese-nationalism-a-view-from-beijing/shinzo-abe-japan-nationalism-populism-revisionism/c7s11792/>.

⁴⁷ Masayoshi Kanabayashi, "Controversial History Textbook Tops Bestseller Lists as Dispute Rages On," WSJ. July 19, 2001, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB995477831560376218>.

⁴⁸ Hatch, 371.

portrays.⁴⁹ In relation to 3.11, we will see that the Japanese general population was not pleased with the government on a national level. In a sense, the people felt that they were victims of shady business and safety practices when it came to nuclear reactors and how government organizations handled these regulations. These narratives and concerns will be examined later in the section on 3.11.

This does not mean that the outlook remains grim concerning the Japanese government. The people have made it more than apparent that they recognize what Japan did during the Pacific War, and they do not deny what happened. In 2005, the Women's Active Museum opened in Shinjuku, Tokyo as a means to share knowledge of the atrocities committed against women during the war. The Liberal Democratic right-wing would, as Hatch puts it, describe the museum as a form of masochism because it focuses so strongly on the treatment of women being forced into sex slavery for imperial troops. So Japan is making strides to recognize the atrocities that were committed during the wartime, even though right-wing extremists seem to want to ignore or not truly respond and apologize for the actions of Japan during that time.

3.3 RESPONSES TO NUCLEAR POWER

There is no denying that the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki created lasting impressions on Japan when it comes to nuclear power. This disaster has left a deep-seated fear and hatred of nuclear power and weapons within the Japanese well into the twenty-first century, especially after the 3.11 disasters. But we are going to focus here on how World War II and the

⁴⁹ Ibid, 383.

post-war era shaped the public opinion on nuclear energy. During the post-war era approaching the beginning of the Cold War, the United States and Russia conducted a fair amount of nuclear weapon testing in the areas around China, Korea, and Japan. There was also a significant amount of testing in the Bikini Atoll where Japan sent fishing vessels out to gather food due to Russia, and the United States taking control of much of the waters Japan usually used for fishing. It was here, in Bikini Atoll, that the Lucky Dragon incident occurred, an incident that would cause nationwide panic and was partly the inspiration for *Godzilla*. This incident would have a great effect on the Japanese and how their opinions of nuclear power would become even more solidified after the horrific events of World War II.

Many believe that the events at Hiroshima and Nagasaki are the sole factors in shaping Japan's opinions on nuclear power. This is a very limited one-dimensional conclusion to draw. I am not ignoring the impact that the bombings had on Japan, I am simply agreeing with scholars who say that more than one single event helped shaped the nuclear culture of Japan. One such scholar is Toshihiro Higuchi. In his article, he examines the effect that the Bikini Atoll testing had on Japanese grassroots movements opposing government opinions concerning nuclear power. I also decided to examine this particular piece because it has strong connections to 3.11 due to government decisions concerning radiation testing and fears over irradiated food, as well as how the people created movements against nuclear energy and power. It also further solidifies the Japanese mentality of victimization as he states "many Japanese have recalled the incident through the lens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and regarded the event as 'the third case of Japan's atomic victimization.'"⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Toshihiro Higuchi, "An Environmental Origin of Antinuclear Activism in Japan, 1954–1963: The Government, the Grassroots Movement, and the Politics of Risk," *Peace & Change* 33, no. 3 (2008): 333-67.

Higuchi examines how food affected the Japanese people and their opinions during this period of history. When the United States conducted their testing in the Bikini Atoll, it effected the fisherman on the fishing vessel Lucky Dragon and in turn contaminated all the tuna that was on the ship. Higuchi states that “after the Pacific War, with the dire shortage of tilled lands and fertilizers for agriculture, Japan turned to the sea to feed nearly eighty million people with much-needed animal proteins.”⁵¹ Tuna is a large staple in the Japanese diet, so the effects that this contaminated tuna had on the Japanese people were immense. As with any disaster, news spread quickly. And from news came sensationalism, and from there we arrive at nationwide panic. The Japanese were now focused on the “atomic disease” of the foodstuffs they were being offered. Rumors that the tuna stored on the Lucky Dragon was contaminated circulated throughout Japan and did little to assuage the fears and panic of irradiated food. As a result, the tuna market plummeted with tuna selling at roughly 60 percent of its original price. As response to the economic crisis facing the tuna market, the government responded with safety regulations concerning the contaminated tuna. A radioactive monitoring system was instated and workers who found cargo over the allotted allowance of radiation were ordered to destroy the cargo.⁵² The fear of irradiated food shows up again after 3.11 with the radiation that leaked into the ocean waters near Fukushima, so the reactions to this particular disaster help inform discussions of the narrative that arose after 3.11 as well.

There are also films that give us insight to the Japanese psyche concerning the atomic bombings. In the years following the bombings, a strong distrust of nuclear weapons took root within Japan, and not just of nuclear weapons, but of nuclear power in general. The original *Godzilla* film presents an excellent portrayal of the Japanese distrust of nuclear power and their

⁵¹ Ibid, 339.

⁵² Ibid, 336.

fear of non-natural destruction. In the opening scene of the film, a fishing boat off the coast of Japan is attacked by Godzilla, an allusion to Lucky Dragon. The opening scene of *Godzilla* (1954) shows a fishing boat that is consumed by a mysterious force, and an investigation is carried out only to have the investigation destroyed as well with only a few members surviving. Reporters then arrive at the island that the fishing boat was near, and a village leader tells them that “Godzilla,” an ancient creature, was the source of the attacks. Then that night, an unseen power comes on the shore of the island and attacks the village during a violent storm. This idea of “unseen power” and “unseen energy” will become a large focus of the Japanese fear of nuclear later in our discussion.

As the film continues, it is discovered that Godzilla was awakened because of repeated nuclear tests in the area which he slumbered. In a futile attempt to subdue the creature, warships are sent into the ocean to fight against him, but Godzilla easily survives. Susan Napier notes this finale in her essay “Panic Sites: The Imagination of Disaster.” Human intervention was not enough to destroy Godzilla⁵³ (or end nuclear science). Godzilla rampages across Japan until he ultimately reaches Tokyo where he causes the most havoc and destruction. There is no thinly-veiled allusion to the nuclear bombings here. Godzilla *is* the physical manifestation of the Japanese fear of nuclear power. Napier points out that the film demonizes the United States since Godzilla is a direct result of American nuclear science showing that Godzilla is, indeed, nuclear in physical form.⁵⁴ He destroys buildings and bridges and any form of life that will crumble beneath his feet. He does not discriminate in his destruction, much like the might and force of the nuclear bomb. Not only is there a portrayal about the fear of nuclear weapons to be had here, but

⁵³ Susan Napier "Panic Sites: The Japanese Imagination of Disaster from Godzilla to Akira." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993): 327-51.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 332.

also of nuclear power. The movie can also be seen as a direct reference to the fire bombings that happened in Tokyo during World War II. Connections to the Kantō earthquake can also be drawn here as Tokyo was viewed as the center of Japanese culture during both disasters, and in the Kantō earthquake as well as *Godzilla*, Tokyo is destroyed making some sort of allusion to the “destruction” of Japanese culture and a means to recreate what it means to be Japanese. Nothing of this sort actually happens in *Godzilla*, but in the post-Kantō era, Japan did redefine and reevaluate what it meant to be Japanese, and this was done through the destruction and rebuilding of Tokyo.

3.4 CONCLUSION

There is much to be said about World War II Japan and the eras that followed it. We examined how the government was in turmoil at the conclusion of the war and how they worked together with the Allied Powers to rewrite the constitution. We saw a people defeated with the denouncement of their emperor’s divinity. We even saw the birth of antinuclear movements in Japan. What was interesting about these movements was that they were not born as a direct result of the atomic bombs but rather of the testing in Bikini Atoll a few years later that caused widespread panic as Japan’s major food source was poisoned by radiation. The Japanese fear of nuclear never truly subsides, and is actually memorialized in numerous ways such as museums and films like *Godzilla*. And as we will explore in the final section on 3.11, we will see that this fear of nuclear power comes back with a vengeance.

This part of our examination is in the middle of our timeline and is also part of the conditioning that has been occurring in Japan as far as creating narratives around disaster as well

as cultures of disaster, and serves as an intersection with which we can examine 3.11 considering the Kantō quake was a natural disaster and World War II was a nuclear one. Compared to the Kantō quake, we have a total 180 degree turn in terms of government control of the people. We do not have a Japan that is reflecting on the past, but rather one that is looking toward the future, which is an attitude one does not normally consider in a nuclear disaster. This attitude and ability to look forward to the future will present itself once more in the aftermath of 3.11, which will be examined next.

4.0 3.11 JAPAN

The afternoon of March 11, 2011 will forever leave a scar on the people of Japan. The earthquake that lasted for six minutes that afternoon which is significantly longer than what the Japanese are used to. Many stories, first-hand accounts, and reports all express that the earthquake felt as if it lasted a lifetime; it was going on without end. Checking in at a magnitude of 9.0, it was the fifth largest earthquake in the world.⁵⁵ The amount of death is also staggering - nearly 19,000 dead, and 3,000 still missing.⁵⁶ Of these victims, it is estimated that 65% of them were over the age of 60. What made the death toll so high in this disaster was not necessarily the earthquake itself as only 4.4% of the victims died from being crushed. The tsunami that followed after the quake was even more devastating. Ninety-two percent of the victims were victims of drowning which goes to show that Japanese building safety standards were well-prepared for earthquakes, but not necessarily so for tsunamis. The greater majority of those who were saved during the disaster were saved by family, friends, and neighbors, showing the importance of self-sufficiency in the aftermath of disaster - which can also be used to highlight the lack of government response to the disaster, a major point of contention among the Japanese. And let us not forget the third and final aspect of the disaster - the nuclear meltdown and explosion at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant. Even with the nuclear meltdown excluded, the damages were

⁵⁵ Gordon, Andrew, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa times to the Present*. Vol. Third, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 345.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 345.

estimated at nearly 17 billion yen. Let us also consider that before the disaster, Japan relied on nuclear power to generate roughly 30% of its electricity.⁵⁷ After the Fukushima incident, all 54 nuclear reactors in Japan were shut down until further notice in 2013. Since then, three reactors have been started again after maintenance and safety inspections were conducted. As we will explore, the decision of the Abe led government to restart the nuclear reactors has brought them under severe scrutiny from the Japanese population.

3.11 is a good final destination on our examination of the Japanese culture of disaster. The first disaster we explored, the Kantō earthquake, was purely natural. It was seen as a test from *kami* and as punishment for Japan's movement toward modernization. World War II was a man-made disaster in that the atomic bombs were made by the hands of man, and it was man who decided to drop the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as war itself being a man-made disaster. 3.11 is an intersection of the two forms of disaster we have explored in that it is natural (the earthquake and the tsunami) and man-made (the Fukushima reactor). What connects all three of these points in history together is that they were all out of the control of the Japanese. No one could predict when an earthquake would strike or that a monstrous tsunami would wipe out the coast of Tōhoku. No one would actually believe that the United States would drop the atomic bombs or that the Fukushima reactor would explode and leak nuclear radiation all over the land and into the ocean waters. After the discussion of the 3.11 disasters, we can see how the disasters converse with one another, where they connect, historical consistencies between them all, as well as discuss how the Japanese culture of disaster has not only evolved, but has also remained somewhat the same over the course of history. In our discussion of 3.11 we will

⁵⁷ *Nuclear Power in Japan*, World-nuclear.org, <http://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-g-n/japan-nuclear-power.aspx>.

examine numerous aspects of Japanese culture - government responses, responses from the general population, literary, artistic, and even cinematic responses to the disaster. These lenses will provide an insight to the disaster that we did not previously receive with the Kantō earthquake and post-World War II and help develop more complex narratives since we have easily accessible information about the disaster and are able to explore the impact that media and social media has on the creation of disaster narratives. We will see more intimately how the Japanese people handle and respond to disaster, and better understand how the Japanese people create a culture of disaster for themselves rather than relying on the government to create one for them as we saw with the Kantō earthquake and somewhat with post-World War II. We will see several narratives arising out of the disaster, like a Phoenix who cannot be contained by death.

One of the more astounding aspects of 3.11 is the sheer amount of creativity and information that came out as a result. There are at least two collections⁵⁸ that contain short stories, interviews, and cultural discussions of 3.11. There are documentaries and fictional films that were made and released as quickly as one year after the disaster. Poetry, amateur footage, paintings, and murals⁵⁹ – it may be a product of the times, but it seems that with 3.11, there is a newfound obsession with cataloguing disaster, to collect every piece of information and interpretation possible to help understand the experience of disaster and to fully catalogue the culture that was created surrounding it.

⁵⁸ These works are “Soredemo Sangatsu Wa, Mata” (March Was Made of Yarn), which was released in both English and Japanese versions, as well as “Shinsai to Fikushon no ‘kyori;” (Ruptured Fiction(s) of the Earthquake), which has not been released in the United States.

⁵⁹ The Japanese artists group ChimPom “vandalized” a mural in Shibuya station that was made in the 60s to represent the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by adding in the corner a mushroom cloud.

4.1 SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTIMATE EXPERIENCE WITH DISASTER

There is no denying that social media permeates every aspect of our lives in the twenty-first century. Many modern freedom movements and political campaigns rely on Facebook and Twitter to reach a broad audience as quickly and efficiently as possible. Social media simply is convenient no matter how invasive it is to our daily lives. This is no different with 3.11. Larissa Hjorth and Kyoung-hwa Yonnie Kim, in their article “The Mourning After: A Case Study of Social Media in the 3.11 Earthquake Disaster in Japan,” explore the impact that social media had on creating a narrative around the disaster as well as how it aided the Japanese in the grieving process in the aftermath. They state that “grief took on new technocultural routes in its connection of different communities. Not only did the mobile phone collect and disseminate these horrific events; it also helped shape the affective nature of the event.” To the authors, the presence of the mobile phone, videos, and pictures put the real to reel. Digital media via mobile phones seems limitless, allowing the Japanese to spread knowledge of the disaster as quickly as you can search for information on Google.

But this is to the contrary. The Japanese were actually quite limited and constrained by technology. As they all tried to call friends and family to check on their safety, phone lines were down or jammed. However, they were still able to use their Wi-Fi or data connections to access Twitter,⁶⁰ Facebook, and Line. These media allowed the Japanese to get news of the disaster out quicker than typical news media outlets. It allowed them to inform friends and family that they were safe despite phone lines being jammed, allowing victims to feel connected to friends and

⁶⁰ A Japanese poet, Wagō Ryōichi, had a constant feed of bits of poetry cataloguing his experience and thoughts in the aftermath of 3.11. He was limited to Twitter's character count, and later released the tweets as a collection of poetry.

family. This helped create a sense of belonging, a feeling of intimacy when we feel connected to other victims. The mobile phone is one of the most intimate objects we own - it contains a bevy of personal information, text messages and emails from loved ones, and even serves as our connection to friends and family through social media. This is proven through Hjorth and Kim who conducted an in-depth focus group on five graduate students living in Tokyo at the time of the disaster. One of the students, a female, expressed her anxiety over her connection to her mobile phone during the earthquake. But her phone, she said, also provided her some form of comfort and connectedness since she was able to access Twitter and see that her fellows were faring well and safe.⁶¹ Another student had the complete opposite response. “The picture he painted of social media is one of overwhelming bombardment to which he responded by switching to older media that had no relationship to the current events.”⁶² He literally shut off his connection and handled the disaster by his own means without the connection that the others sought. One of the other female students as well refused to use social media as a coping mechanism, opting for physical human contact and staying with friends for several days. This goes to show us that while social media does provide some form of comfort and connection to other victims, it also shows that older media and offline connections are still needed in order to cope with the disaster to create an intimate experience – social media is just a convenient tool to help aid in the process as the online forum is sometimes the only option of remaining in contact.

⁶¹ Larissa Hjorth and Kyoung-hwa Kim, “The Mourning After: A Case Study of Social Media in the 3.11 Earthquake Disaster in Japan,” *Television & New Media* 12, no. 6 (2011): 552-559.

⁶² *Ibid*, 556.

4.2 THE HUMANIZATION OF DISASTER: DESPAIR AND HOPE

Rachel DiNitto examines how the disaster and trauma become socially and culturally constructed, how the disaster, the trauma, and inversely the culture of disaster, create national narratives. She states that it “tells the story of a communal suffering on the national level.”⁶³ She goes on further to explain that in doing this, the narrative that is created avoids any actual discussion of the disaster. There is no discomfort about it. It moves the nation and narrative away from the site of danger and aids in rewriting the story of individual suffering into a story that encompasses a nation.⁶⁴ In the film *No Man’s Zone* (2012), director Fujiwara Toshi explores not only “ground zero” of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, but also the surrounding areas which tells a story of not only individual narratives, but of a communal and national narrative. He shows the audience not only physical mayhem and destruction, but also directs our attention to the invisible. This invisible aspect to the disaster, the arguably manmade side of it, is the most unsettling.

Fujiwara’s *No Man’s Zone* is an excellent launching point for discussing how and why we experience disaster the way we do, a way to explore the narratives that are created and how we tell those stories. The Japan Society describes the film as “a complex reflection on the relationship between image and fear, on being addicted to the apocalypse, on the ravaged relationship between man and nature.”⁶⁵ The interviews that Fujiwara conducts in the film only expand upon this relationship between man and earth, and raise concerns such as the fear, or lack

⁶³ Rachel DiNitto, "Narrating the Cultural Trauma of 3/11: The Debris of Post-Fukushima Literature and Film." *Japan Forum* 26, no. 3 (2014): 340-60.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 341.

⁶⁵ Japan Society, *No Man's Zone*, <http://www.japansociety.org/event/no-mans-zone>.

thereof, of the invisible monster “radiation,” and locals discuss the idea of a poisoned land that they can no longer use to provide themselves food.

Many of the scenes and interviews within *No Man's Zone* focus on nature and agriculture. In one of the voiceover sequences, the narrator mentions that the area being shown south of the no-man-zone is being required to evacuate despite being outside of the danger zone that was established by the government. Because of the spread of nuclear radiation, they will soon be forgotten, nothing but a memory of days gone by because of “invisible small molecules” that carried with them the fear of radiation. An employee of Tokyo Electric Company mentions during his interview that the village in which he lived had about 90% of the residents partaking in part-time farming. Because of the nuclear fallout from Fukushima, their lifestyle was all but over because of the radiation. Another man mentioned that it would be decades before his ground could be used to grow anything again, before his cattle could eat the grass again, before his life would be back to the way it was before 3.11. Nearly every interview conducted during the film expresses fear and anxiety over the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima, making it apparent that the fear of nuclear radiation ran rampant in Japan in the aftermath. We are given the impression that if it had just been an earthquake and tsunami, the recovery would have been much easier to handle, and the narrative would have gone in a different direction.

The disaster also resurfaces memories of World War II. One of the older women interviewed repeated many times during her interview “but that’s life.” She discussed how her family moved to their village during World War II and became farmers due to food shortages and that “we survived World War II... but that’s life.” It gives the impression that she realizes there is nothing that she can do to overcome this most recent disaster. Although her family has survived before, this might be more than they could handle.

Lucy Walker's *The Tsunami and the Cherry Blossom* (2011) presents the viewer with a stark contrast to Fujiwara's film. Where we had darkness and rubble and debris, Walker presents hope, moving forward, and looking to the future. Iain Stasukevich, in a review about Walker's film, gives the reader a visceral image of the opening. He states that the first four minutes of the film are from an amateur videographer. The earthquake had just struck and the tsunami waves are beginning to crash upon the town of Minamisanriku. The sea water crashes through buildings sweeping away cars, animals, people – anything in its path. The camera then pans to a hill that shows an elderly couple trying to escape the waves. People rush to help them, but the power of the wave is too much consuming the elderly couple and those who went to help them.⁶⁶

Director Lucy Walker conducts a series of interviews in this film that questions the Japanese people about their experiences and thoughts on 3/11 at the beginning of spring when *hanami*⁶⁷ – cherry blossom viewings – are happening. When the triple disaster occurred on 3/11, cherry blossoms were starting to bloom in the southern regions of Japan where the climate is warmer. Usually a time of celebration and jubilation, the cherry trees in 2011 were something more somber, a reminder of the life and death that happened that fateful day. During the *hanami* that year, everyone in the film remembered lost loved ones and reflected upon the ephemerality of life and death as the cherry blossoms would quickly bloom then float away in the wind in a matter of days. The cherry trees themselves are the embodiment of this ephemerality. There is an older couple that is interviewed at various points throughout the film as they are working to restore their home to live in it once more. At one point in their recordings they speak on the

⁶⁶ Iain Stasukevich, "A Poetic Portrait of Survival," *American Cinematographer - The International Journal of Film & Digital Production Techniques*, 93, no. 6 (2012), 10-16.

⁶⁷ *Hanami* in English literally means "seeing/watching flowers." Festivities and parties are usually held underneath the blossoming cherry trees every year during spring to celebrate the end of winter; the leaving of the cold weather and the onset of warmer weather.

cherry tree, what it means to them and Japan. The husband looks outside and mentions that the cherry tree in their backyard is blooming, so he, his wife, and the filming crew follow them into the backyard to appreciate the beauty of the cherry tree that has survived the tsunami. The wife writes a Japanese character down for Walker to describe the cherry tree – 優雅 *yūga* “beautiful, but not showy.”⁶⁸

These interviews, and even the film itself can be seen as a memorial to the disaster. In our discussion earlier concerning Alexander’s theory, he claimed that the apex of the trauma was memory and ritualization.⁶⁹ What is interesting about Alexander’s interpretation of memory is that it means the trauma no longer stings, it no longer pangs the cultural memory because it has reached a point where it can be studied and discussed without emotional attachments.⁷⁰ But that is not so here. Walker’s documentary was filmed just one month after the disaster. The Japanese had barely begun to start their healing process from the wounds inflicted upon their society and lands. This is apparent from the beginning of the film when Walker is filming a young woman who worked at a retirement home. She said that she watched as elderly and their rescuers were swept away by the force of the tsunami. She “couldn’t believe it was happening in real life.” An older man that was interviewed also shares these sentiments as he watched his life-long friend get swept away before his eyes and he was helpless, unable to do anything. Both of these scenes showed the interviewee crying – a side of the Japanese that is not often seen in mainstream media, especially concerning disaster. Many images we typically think of when it comes to Japan

⁶⁸ The kanji literally mean gentle, elegant, refined. They carry a nuanced meaning of representing beauty without being flashy or showy.

⁶⁹ Alexander, 23.

⁷⁰ Alexander, 23.

and disaster is composure, order, and calm. Walker shows us the other side of the coin here, that the Japanese do face disaster like anyone else, through strife and mourning.

Outside of the natural disaster, there is also some discussion about the nuclear aspect of 3.11. One man mentioned that his wife made him wear a mask so as to protect him from radiation. He recognized that there was little the mask could do, but he wore it anyway, but that he also avoided the rain because it was radioactive. A fisherman mentioned briefly that essentially his livelihood was over. No one wanted to buy irradiated fish, or fish that could possibly be nuclear. And yet another woman expressed no fear of nuclear fallout. It “won’t affect me for 20 years. I’ll be 85 by then.”

4.3 THE ANTI-NUCLEAR NARRATIVE, A GOVERNMENT UNDER PRESSURE

Anti-nuclear movements in post-Fukushima Japan occurred as early as nine days after the disaster. On March 20, 2011, a young man, Ryota Sono, stood outside of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) shouting “No more nuclear plants!”⁷¹ Sono’s initial cries against nuclear power ignited into a force so strong that it created an event that took a life of its own in September of 2011. Sayonara Genpatsu (Goodbye Nuclear Power Plants) took place on September 19, 2011 at the Meiji Shrine complex in Tokyo. Nearly 60,000 people joined in the marching while chanting *sayōnara genpatsu* “Farewell, nuclear power.” The movement itself was led by very prominent public figures and intellectuals that also worked on peace movements

⁷¹ Akihiro Ogawa “Young precariat at the forefront: anti-nuclear rallies in post-Fukushima Japan,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 14 no. 2, (2013).

and other nuclear related issues.⁷² Among them were writer Kenzaburō Ōe, historian Shunsuke Tsurumi, and authors Hisae Sawachi, Katsuto Uchihashi, and Keiko Ochiai. The organizers reiterate ideas that others have written on in the past, mainly concerning the Japanese history with nuclear power. In the post-war period, the Japanese government painted a picture of nuclear power as a good thing to the point that communities received stipends for accepting nuclear power plants in their areas. Satoshi Kamata, a journalist for *Asahi Shinbun*, wrote on these issues comparing the relationship to “Little Red Riding Hood,” with the communities being the eaten grandmother and the government being the wolf as the government took advantage of these communities. Ogawa continues to describe the corruption of the government with nuclear power by stating anti-nuclear movements in certain localities were bought out with money, and those areas now house nuclear plants.⁷³

Following in the aftermath of the 3.11 disasters, especially the Fukushima accident, there were expectations within Japan and internationally that Japan would quickly join Italy (1987) and Germany (2000) in phasing out the use of nuclear power altogether. This was the narrative the Democratic Party of Japan gave the people initially, since then Prime Minister Naoto Kan stated that he did not believe nuclear reactors could be operated safely in Japan because of the amount and magnitude of natural disasters that Japan faces. He went so far as to state Japan would phase out all nuclear plants by 2030. Jeff Kingston, in “Nuclear Power Politics in Japan,” discusses the state of nuclear politics in Japan from 2011 to 2013. He states that there were “hundreds of thousands of antinuclear protesters.”⁷⁴ He presents us with some staggering numbers as well – in 2012 and 2013, public opinion polls showed that nearly 70 percent of

⁷² Ogawa, 319.

⁷³ Ibid, 320.

⁷⁴ Jeff Kingston "Nuclear Power Politics in Japan, 2011-2013." *Asian Perspective* 37 no. 4 (2013), 501-21.

Japanese wanted to phase out nuclear power following Prime Minister Kan's plan.⁷⁵ There was what he calls a "summer of discontent" as the antinuclear protests gained momentum in 2012. The government had little choice but to respond to this resounding dissent to nuclear power. They started out by holding seminars to educate citizens on the benefits and shortcomings of nuclear energy.⁷⁶ This was done in hopes that it would better educate the people on nuclear energy and help change their opinions on phasing out nuclear reactors. But this backfired as the more knowledge that the people obtained, the more likely they were to be in favor of phasing out nuclear energy. But public opinion matters little in these matters, especially when the government is being influenced by money from activist groups.⁷⁷

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) lost control of the government in 2012 turning control over to the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).⁷⁸ The LDP was under immense pressure from the nuclear village – a collection of businesses with heavy ties to nuclear reactors, energy corporations, and of course, the government – to discontinue the plans to phase out nuclear energy. The LDP pointed to the DPJ's faults and weaknesses when it came to handling the 3.11 aftermath, which angered the people and allowed the pro-nuclear party take hold in a majority anti-nuclear society. The narrative they created was not about nuclear fears, it instead "focused on the DPJ's mismanagement of economic and security issues."⁷⁹ These security issues focused very harshly on energy policies. Kingston states that "collusive relations between nuclear watchdog authorities and the utilities compromised safety in Japan's nuclear plants and was a

⁷⁵ Ibid, 501.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 502

⁷⁷ Ibid, 502.

⁷⁸ This was a major loss for the DPJ. They previously held 230 seats in the House of Representatives and they fell to only 57, with the LDP increasing their presence to 294 seats. Gordon, 349-350.

⁷⁹ Kingston, 508.

major factor leading to the accident at Fukushima.”⁸⁰ The LDP used this to their advantage to oust the DPJ and to create a culture of anger within the Japanese and to take their minds off the nuclear issue and focus instead on the recovery that the LDP promised. This is like what happened in the aftermath of the Kantō earthquake – the government used the disasters as a means to an end. The difference here is that the government used anger rather than fear to control the people.

The Japanese Diet even went as far as to blame the Japanese people for the tragedy that befell them. A Diet committee was formed after 3.11 to investigate what happened at Fukushima. They presented their findings to Japan and the world. In the chairman's opening statement, he says that “What must be admitted- very painfully- is that this was a disaster 'Made in Japan'.”⁸¹ The message that the chairman is portraying to his audience through the commission report is that the cause of the nuclear meltdown was not because of the earthquake and tsunami, but rather that of Japanese cultural and societal problems. Due to the Japanese ideas of submitting to authority and obeying those in power, the nuclear power plants were not up to safety regulations, causing the meltdowns to occur. The Chairman even states that “[the meltdown's] fundamental causes are to be found in the ingrained conventions of Japanese culture: our reflexive obedience; our reluctance to question authority; our devotion to ‘sticking with the program’; our groupism; and our insularity.”⁸² The Chairman's message is a direct attack at the Japanese psyche. He is almost insulting the Japanese way of life, which gets the attention of all who read his message. The victim in this case is Japan, but Japan is also the perpetrator, which once again brings out the identity crisis that Japan faces when looking back at

⁸⁰ Ibid, 503.

⁸¹ *The National Diet of Japan: Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission: Executive Summary*. Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, 2012, 9.

⁸² Ibid, 9.

World War II and the aftermath of the atomic bombs. The audience relates to the victim in this case because they are the victim themselves. The disaster became memorialized due to the nature of the disaster, which was man-made, and the place that nuclear power holds in Japan's history. There is at least one author who shares the chairman's views – Hiromi Kawakami. In the *March Was Made of Yarn* collection, her work “God Bless You, 2011” was included with a postscript from the author herself. She stated that she was angry at the disaster for disrupting life, for the destruction that it caused, and for the reliance the Japanese (and humans) have on nuclear power. She stated that “Yet, in the end, this anger is directed at nothing other than myself. Who built today's Japan if not me, and others like me? Even as we bear this anger, we will carry forward in our mundane lives.”⁸³

4.4 INSIDER VERSUS OUTSIDER NARRATIVES

In a conversation between Shigematsu Kiyoshi and Furukawa Hideo, the authors discuss distinctions between novels and literary reportage as a response to Furukawa's novel released earlier that year, a work of fiction that had obvious strong ties to 3.11. It became the topic of debate between the two because to Furukawa, the novel was at time like reportage because it establishes fact about a visit he took in April 2011 to the disaster zone itself. This brings to light questions of what is considered correct when writing on disaster – is fiction an appropriate means by which authors can report on disaster, or should they adhere to truth and fact telling? To

⁸³ Hiromi Kawakami, “God Bless You, 2011,” in *March was Made of Yarn* 2012, ed. Elmer Luke and David Karashima (New York: Vintahe Books), 37-53. The story was a rewrite of previous version of the story she released in 1993. The updated version changed minor aspects of the story, but made it very apparent the 2011 version was a direct response to 3.11 and nuclear as characters wore protective suits versus the summer wear they had in the 1993 version of the tale.

Furukawa “literary reportage relies on a first-person voice centered around the author and a third-person voice that conveys the words and stories of the victims. Fiction, in contrast, is a kind of “second-person” writing that builds a relationship between the writer and “you,” the unseen reader.”⁸⁴ Furukawa seems to imply here that first-person and third-person stories are not able to convey the same emotions and stories that a second-person “conversational” work can. Oddly enough, through many first-person and third-person stories, it can be seen that this is not the case. Many stories such as “Lulu,” as well as films such as *The Tsunami and the Cherry Blossom*, show us that first-person and third-person narratives can allow fiction to form from fact. As Furukawa and Shigematsu's conversation continues, Shigematsu raises a concern about fiction only portraying the truth, where the author doesn't write about facts, but of truth.⁸⁵ Paired with Furukawa's comments, the idea is formed that fiction needs to rely on truth rather than facts to portray a story as fiction rather than literary reportage. Just as the story and film mentioned above will show that point of view does not affect the power of a narrative, they will also show that truth-telling versus fact-telling is not a deciding factor when considering a work as fiction or reportage. As such, it will be shown that outsiders, as well as insiders, can speak of disaster. Not only are they able to speak and write about disaster, but both insiders and outsiders can narrate equally as truthful and poignant literary fictions and films.

First we will examine a work that contains the extreme of third-person narrative. In Ishii Shinji's work “Lulu,” the reader is implanted into the mind of a dog who resides within what can be assumed to be an orphanage (although the English translation calls it a municipal children's facility). Throughout the story, Lulu witnesses translucent women who float above the children

⁸⁴ Hideo Furukawa and Kiyoshi Shigematsu, “Like a Cow, Like a Horse,” translated by Christina Yi in *Shinsai to Fikushon no 'kyori'*, ed. Yoshikawa Yasuhisa (Tokyo: Waseda Bungakukai, 2012), 142-146.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 143.

each night, as if to care for the children. It is never revealed if these spirits are the spirits of the children's dead mothers, or simply of mothers lost during the quake of 2011. "Lifting her gaze above the sonic waves of the scream, she saw the women, who had earlier been floating playfully near the ceiling, looking at her with half-smiles on their faces. It was a kind of half-smile that understood about giving up on something and allowing the self to be turned inside out many times over."⁸⁶ From this passage, the reader, as Lulu, is given some insight into the past of these women who have suffered. These women seem to understand the suffering that the children in the room have gone through as a result of the tsunami that ravaged the coastline in March 2011. Lulu experiences the sensation of being turned inside out too as she "experiences" the trauma that has been afflicted upon the children. "After a slow, burning silence, Lulu was overtaken by a scream that blazed like hellfire through her body... She could not imagine what had happened to the girl; she did not want to know."⁸⁷ This is only a sampling of the colorful language that fills "Lulu." Ishii does a superb job of leading readers to become invested in the story as Lulu goes through excruciating trials to help save the five silent children from their worlds of death and despair. The language and emotional investment in "Lulu" can be used to argue against Furukawa's claim about point of view being a deciding factor in portraying disaster-literature. Ishii provokes the reader with vivid descriptions of the suffering Lulu endures on behalf of the five silent children. Through Lulu, the reader comes to understand the affect that the tsunami had on the children. The suffering that they endured is portrayed in a figurative manner as Lulu enters into the black holes of their souls and helps cure them of their sufferings. One of the more important aspects of the story is that we experience it from the viewpoint of a dog. The reader is planted into the body of Lulu to experience the story from her perspective. This speaks strongly

⁸⁶ Shinji Ishii, "Lulu," in *March Was Made of Yarn*, 71-91.

⁸⁷Ibid, 78.

to the complexity by which we process trauma – the desire and need to distance ourselves from the human component and experience of disaster so we can process it easier. From this story, we can see that a third-person perspective is just as effective as any other in terms of portraying suffering and victimhood. Also, an outsider is just as capable as an insider in portraying the suffering as well. Ishii Shinji is not from the area that was affected by the tsunami, as he was born in Osaka and lives in Kyoto.

Ishii continues to portray suffering later in the story through the five children Lulu helped. Twelve years have passed since their time at the municipal building. The children that were living in the building at the time have gathered for a reunion and are joined by townsfolk as well. Throughout the gathering, the five that Lulu helped are gathered in their own group, separated from the rest of the party-goers. They are described in this way:

“These five were the only ones who traveled from afar to attend the reunion. After leaving the center, they were unable to find a school or workplace in town that was willing to take them on. They were estranged from one person to the next until, finally reaching a place that offered no sense of belonging, they slipped through junior high school and landed jobs that did not require human contact.”⁸⁸

The fact that these victims sought employment that did not involve human contact is telling. In our earlier discussion on social media and the intimate experience of disaster, we were left with the impression that human contact was needed in order to process trauma and create a disaster narrative, yet these victims wanted nothing to do with other humans. They had their own insular group to process these emotions in the aftermath. This passage also represents, in a sense, hope. There is a time jump here as we are told the children made their way to adulthood, which when we look at other works done on nuclear disaster, it is usually bleak and apocalyptic. “Lulu” shows us that a future is possible, a sentiment that was shared in the aftermath of World War II.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 88.

Japan was able to look forward and the possibility of rebuilding, just as Ishii presents to the reader the future that is within reach in the aftermath of 3.11. This passage also allows Ishii to have a conversation with the reader about the lives of these five children. Ishii is presenting the difficulties that, what can be assumed are radiation victims, are faced with not only as children, but as grown adults as well. The reader is not given insight at any point in the story as to where the children are from, or any more about their backgrounds other than they have suffered through a great tragedy. As the reader, we are not certain of how close the children were to the nuclear zone created as a result of the tsunami and earthquake. The reader can only assume that they are nuclear victims, given the way that the five children in particular were treated after they left the center in comparison to the way the other children were welcomed into the community. Ishii, in this case, is very much an outsider for not being a direct victim himself. Yet, he is still able to express the difficulties that victims of trauma face in contemporary Japan, he is showing that outsiders are able to speak on disaster. Shigematsu's claim about truth-telling is supported by Ishii's story as well, since Ishii is portraying some semblance of the truth on the treatment of disaster victims.

Next to be examined is Lucy Walker's *The Tsunami and the Cherry Blossom*. Textual interjections throughout the film present the viewer with facts, mainly focused on the importance of cherry blossoms in Japan. But these facts are also truth. Shigematsu's distinctions between fact-telling and truth-telling should not be viewed as clear-cut because the lines between these two are blurred, and are not mutually exclusive. One cannot have truth without fact, and one cannot back up facts without truth. As such, Furukawa claiming that the difference between reportage and fiction is the distinction between truth-telling and fact-telling is invalid because one cannot exist without the other. Granted, Walker's work is not fiction, but it still supports the

claim of facts and truth not being mutually exclusive. Walker also represents the view of an outsider looking at insiders who experienced the disaster first hand. In other words, the insiders are having a discussion with the viewer. We are listening to their stories and relating to them on an almost personal level due to the complexity of human emotions. Similar to “Lulu,” the audience is experiencing these stories from a third-person perspective, that of the camera, because they are on the other side of the screen watching the events take place. Similar to Lulu, the audience does not have a human experience here – it is through the perspective of the camera, once again disconnecting us from the true human experience of processing the trauma. Yet again, a third-person perspective that is representing both facts and truth is doing exactly what works of fiction are capable of doing. Fact-telling and third-person stories are seen by Furukawa and Shigematsu as reportage and not fiction (or in Walker's case, reportage versus truth-telling documentary). And like Ishii, Walker is speaking on behalf of victims as an outsider. She is able to convey their messages through the cinematic medium and have viewers hear their voices despite being outsiders to the disaster.

Through Walker and Ishii, it is apparent that third-person and first-person accounts of disaster are just as capable of portraying disaster and victimhood as a second-person account is. Furukawa seems to claim that second-person stories are the true vehicle for literary fiction, while all other points of view are reportage. As “Lulu” and *The Tsunami and the Cherry Blossom* showed, this claim is not true. The story and film were both able to become works of art rather than reportage. “Lulu” was able to support Shigematsu's claim of fact-telling versus truth-telling as it represented the truth about the treatment of radiation victims in Japan. Walker was able to break the wall between truth-telling and fact-telling by showing that the two are not mutually exclusive. Facts are supported by truth, and truth is created from facts. These two

works break the barrier that creates a distinction between literary fiction (and works of art) and reportage.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Compared to the relative lack of information of the Kantō quake and the overwhelming amount from World War II, 3.11 allows itself to be examined from multiple angles, which is what I attempted to accomplish with my examination of news media, social media, film, and literature. This is valuable to the examination because it gives more dimension to the culture of disaster that surrounds 3.11; it helps create a deeper narrative concerning disaster. I also examined how the government responded to the disaster which had echoes from Kantō and World War II with fear of nuclear power spreading and the idea that once again Japan was being punished by the gods. We saw a country standing strong and united in the face of disaster – a culture of togetherness, strength, compassion. We saw outsiders offering aid and succor to the victims of the quake, tsunami, and nuclear fallout. And Japan has proven through its resilience that they will once again remain strong and recover from yet another disaster.

We examined three disasters at key points in Japanese history. Over the course of 90 years, the Japanese culture of disaster has evolved in such a way that Japan is able to look toward the future, rather than lamenting on a lost history – the culture of disaster that surrounded the Kantō quake. We can see how the Kantō quake and World War II helped condition Japan in such a way to handle disasters with more finesse in the twenty-first century. One major connection that joins these three disasters is this sort of schism between the government and the general

population. The government has one idea of a narrative that needs to be created while the population believes in another as we saw in our examination of World War II and 3.11. This idea continued into 3.11 when the government was creating narratives surrounding the nuclear disaster and how nuclear was still a good means of energy production, yet the people dissented. We also saw this in World War II with the right-wing intellectuals and leaders in the government writing one narrative of World War II (victimization) while the people did not agree with it and know the “true” narrative. The Kantō earthquake serves as our foil of to 3.11 and World War II in that the Kantō earthquake’s post-disaster response was one of fear and control. We do not see these sentiments as prominently in World War II and 3.11 – unless we consider the American Occupation and censorship during the post-war era.

This examination has helped us understand Japan’s disaster culture on a deeper level. As I mentioned in my introduction, many scholars who examine disaster focus on one aspect of disaster response be it government, cinematic, or literary. My examination allowed us to look at all these aspects together, how they converse with one another, align or converge. We are better able to understand the nuances and complexity of narratives that are created out of disaster and how disaster has inspired Japan to move beyond looking to the past as a means of salvation and a country that now looks to the future, how to improve and grow stronger. I believe my methods could be applied to other disasters as well – looking at disasters from all angles to understand the complex narratives that arise from them. It gives us a better understanding that no one narrative is the true narrative. There might be narratives that dominate the culture at the time of a disaster, but that does not mean it is the sole narrative. I believe that the way in which this examination was conducted brings to light just that – a culture of disaster is complex, its narratives so closely intertwined that one cannot be ignored, they must all be considered.

The evolution of disaster culture and the effect it had on the direction and growth on Japan is profound. Andrew Gordon states it well:

“Disasters of this extent have the potential to provoke significant new departures... After World War II Japan changed profoundly in some important ways, above all the emergence of a deeply rooted aversion to military action in the name of a nation-state. In contrast to the 1923 Kantō Earthquake of 1923, which came in a time of relative optimism about progress and the future, the disasters of 2011 struck a nation whose mood was pessimistic. In that context, many in Japan and abroad expressed hope that destruction and crisis might release new energies and new creative, and change the nations direction.”⁸⁹

The historical context of 3.11 is important in understanding how and why the Japanese reacted the way they did to the disaster. In the face of what seemed to be a never-ending economic depression since the decline of the housing market in the 1990s, Japan, as Gordon stated, was in a state of pessimism. The disaster, much like the Kantō Earthquake and the post-war era, can be seen as a chance for Japan to renew their identity, create a culture of disaster that does not sit around and wait for the next one to strike, but rather one that looks toward the future and to rebuild. We moved from a nation who used fear to move forward (Kantō Earthquake) to a nation who used disaster as a chance to reform a nation (World War II) and ended up with a nation experiencing one of the most disastrous natural events in history and using it as a chance to change the direction of a nation (3.11). Using Alexander’s theory was useful in this examination because his definitions and theory allowed the opportunity to not focus on the psychological experience of the disaster, but rather on the socially mediated experience of disaster. It is through this social experience that we are able to define and examine a culture of disaster, and as was done with this thesis, explore the history and evolution of that culture within a nation and how previous responses and experiences inform future responses.

⁸⁹ Gordon, 352.

5.0 FURTHER QUESTIONS AND EXAMINATIONS

There are so many more questions that I would like to explore, but time simply does not permit me to do so. I will list some lingering questions that I have here to hopefully inspire my readers to look into and answer for themselves.

When discussing the section on insiders versus outsiders, I began to question the creation of a culture of trauma. Up to this point I considered only the original culture could create their own culture of disaster – in this case only Japan could do so. But with our connection to social media and numerous other means of connectedness and globalization, are cultures created in an insular environment anymore, or are they shaped by outside voices as well?

Can we take Alexander's definition of a culture of disaster and apply it to all disasters, or is his definition simply one of convenience?

Can my method of examination be applied to all disasters? I started asking this question when writing the Kantō portion of my paper where there was a drastic lack of information to draw from.

How has social media affected our perception of disaster? Are we desensitized to it when it doesn't affect us directly, or does it help us create a more global sense of connection to others as disaster is a universal experience?

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