Art and Activism in the Nuclear Age

Exploring the Legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

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Introduction: The Relevance of *kizuna* in Time of Crisis[1]

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki surprised us at a very peculiar moment in human history. The global pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has affected not only human health but, above all, human relationships, now disciplined by contact avoidance, the frequent usage of sanitiser gel in public, and the strict recommendation of wearing protective masks while moving around. These forced, new habits have implemented a climate of mistrust, resulting in the disruption of social relations—wafting around the streets with quizzical looks has become common today. In addition, the overwhelming flood of reliable and flaky news powered by worldwide access to social networks has catalysed feelings of distrust, suspiciousness, and diffidence among people. Although social networking enables people to express their opinions directly without restraint, the message is always conveyed through a medium that removes voice tones, facial expressions, glances, and gestures from the equation, ignoring their crucial role in correctly delivering and interpreting others' thoughts. The flattening of online communication had implicitly implemented mutual mistrust just when the pandemic forced individuals to rely only upon shared ideals and beliefs. The perception that surrounding people no longer share the same values has made individuals feel even more physically and psychologically isolated. The result has been a slow but inexorable disruption of the social tissue due to anti-contagion measures and the widespread distrust towards others, thus implying a more deep-rooted fragmentation of the self. When social roots become dubious and unsteady, the self reflects the insecurity and instability, giving vent to psychological phenomena of isolation, self-destructive behaviour, and suicidal thoughts.[2] Although it is too early to conclude the negative impact the pandemic has exerted on human mental health, it is undeniable that there is an increasing number of people in need of psychological therapy due to social distancing or home confinement.

This brief digression on the psycho-social implications of the pandemic suggests deep reflection concerning similar circumstances experienced by

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the Japanese social environment in the aftermath of the atomic bombings and the wake of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident in 2011. The radioactive contamination—although of a different nature—involving Hiroshima and Nagasaki and later, Fukushima city, was the basis of a general radiophobia[3] directed towards the contaminated areas and their inhabitants. Grounded in a widespread belief that considered radiation sickness a transmissible disease (in 1968, Lifton called it an "epidemic"),[4] the survivors of the atomic bombings were susceptible to social discrimination. Medical investigations on atomic bombing survivors during the 1950s and 1960s debunked this prejudice. Notwithstanding, "hibakusha sociophobia" permeated Japanese society, especially regarding the risk of genetic disorders and the possibility of intergenerational trauma involving future generations.

History repeats,[5] and the citizens exposed to radioactive fallout in the surrounding areas of Fukushima Daiichi were also assumed to be physically impaired, thus undergoing a similar discrimination process. The homophonous term "hibakusha" denotes the victims of radioactivity—although of a different nature—in both 1945 and 2011. In the first case, the label "hibakusha" (被爆者) underlines the atomic explosion as the source of exposure to radioactivity. In the latter case, the character for "rays" (曝) strengthens the nature of the hibakusha (被曝者) condition, thus reinforcing the aerial essence of radioactive contamination. Regardless of the nature of the hibakusha victimisation, the most common outcome was the general rejection of the survivors by Japanese society—with a tinge of ghettoisation.

The hibakusha writer Ōta Yōko and the journalist Yoshida Chia addressed such an upheaval of the social framework in the works at the core of this investigation. Eventually, the three-fold catastrophe of earthquake, tsunamis, and nuclear meltdown that occurred on March 11, 2011, has shed new light on the resilient attitude of the Japanese people towards the natural as well as anthropogenic disasters which have littered Japanese history. Thanks to social media, all the world was able to admire, in real time, Japanese "ganbarism"—the "Japanese ability to endure hardship", as defined by Gebhardt and Masami.[6] This ethnopsychiatric theory by Devereux explains that the cultural background of a particular community empowers individuals with the defensive strategies necessary to cope with calamities, thus giving a source for this resilient attitude.[7] In addition, the theory of ethnolinguistic relativity expressed by the so-called "Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis" also supports the assumption that the more a people knows about a particular topic—such as disaster and catastrophe in Japan's case—the more it owns the knowledge to understand and handle it.[8] Further inquiries into this psycho-anthropological approach to the source of Japanese resiliency while exploring the long legacy of Japanese testimonial narratives are highly thought-provoking. Nevertheless, they require a broader space. Suffice it to mention how these theories find factual evidence in Japan in the philosophical concept of life known as "mujō".

This Buddhist principle underlines a sense of impermanence and frailty of life, which encompasses all aspects of daily life: changing seasons, weather variation, mood swings—everything is related to the circle of life and death. This sense of transience and ever-changing phenomenal reality is not associated with resignation and surrender. On the contrary, life's perishable and transitional, temporary character is conceived as a potential source of rebirth. It also provides the principal source for resilience, understood as the ability to cope with environmental and interpersonal stressors with distressing and disturbing attributes.[9] The "mujō" is far from being perceived as a mere theoretical framework: on the contrary, it results in care for daily routine and rituals. Devereux stressed the correlation between traumatic events and the importance of the daily routine, "*impressive* [*sic*] experiences generate the formation of habits". The reiteration of the same daily habits enhances the restoration of the individual's identity, fragmented by trauma and loss, thus representing the first step towards re-establishing social order. Hence, the "mujō" bears a double valence: on the one hand, the importance of rites, rituals, and daily habits in recovering the individual self, shocked by the traumatic event. On the other hand, rituality implicitly reinforces the central role of *kizuna* (human bonds) to strengthen the sense of belonging through mutual aid, support, and help. The result is the restoration of the identity roots of the self as well as the disrupted community's roots.

The world has seen a similar trend today with the pandemic. Although ambivalent and controversial in regards to social networking, the Internet has also proved to be a valuable source that has enabled individuals to preserve an ordinary lifestyle because work, learning, sporting activities, and entertainment have been carried out online with minimal discomfort. The quest for regular performance of human relationships has also forced individuals to reassess the role of social media as a powerful means of staying in touch with family and friends during the lockdown. Hence, during times of crisis, social networking services (SNS) have proved that human bonding is, without doubt, one of the most crucial sources of resiliency.

The documentary works by hibakusha Ōta Yōko and journalist Yoshida Chia describe trauma and resiliency in the post-Hiroshima and the post-Fukushima scenario respectively. In doing so, they address topics of social disaggregation and human bonding. Despite the different approaches to literature and the diverse nature of the radioactivity experience at the core of their writing, both authors have committed themselves to sharing testimonies of the atomic bombings and the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi. By touching similar topics of interest such as radiophobia and hibakusha discrimination, Ōta and Yoshida have expressed harsh criticism towards the Japanese government, which was considered, by both authors, unable to handle the crisis.

After a brief overview of authorial profiles—to help understand stylistic and ideological influences in writing—this chapter presents the main authorial works, *Shikabane no machi* and *Sono ato no Fukushima*, respectively.

The analysis of these journalistic inquiries will go beyond the above-mentioned keywords—political criticism, radiophobia, hibakusha discrimination, and intergenerational trauma. The author concludes by considering, from a broader perspective, the role of Japanese female journalism in the wake of catastrophe.

Profile Comparison

Ōta Yōko, born Fukuda Hatsuko (Hiroshima, 1906–Fukushima, 1963), was a promising writer long before becoming known among the literary audience for her testimonial accounts of Hiroshima's atomic bombing. She was, in all respects, the emblem of the independent, emancipated Japanese woman of the 1930s-1940s, with not the slightest intention of sacrificing her career to become a full-time housewife and mother. She married in 1925 but separated from her husband when she found he was already married with children. She then went to the capital to pursue her dream of becoming a writer. From that moment, her life became a set of ups and downs regarding her love affairs: she reunited with her husband in Hiroshima, finally separated, re-married in 1936 but divorced in the following year—she was not meant to deal with the traditional family fireside.[10] Regarding her personality, Lifton commented that she showed "a fragile aura of pride, anxiety, vanity, and suspiciousness".[11]

In 1940 Ōta Yōko won the Asahi Shinbun Prize for her novel *Sakura no kuni*, long before the hibakusha experience. At that time, she was working in Tōkyō and her career was committed to journalism and literary writing. By sheer coincidence, she came back to her hometown, Hiroshima, at the beginning of August 1945: her decision to leave Tōkyō, which had been abruptly devastated by the bombing raid in March of that year, was a turning point in her life and career.[12]

Ōta experienced the atomic blast at her parent's home, less than two kilometres away from the explosion's epicentre. The writer escaped from Hiroshima city together with her mother, her sister, and her sister's baby. Years after witnessing the atomic bombing, Ōta suffered from emotional breakdowns and mental instability, explicitly caused by the struggle with her attempts to depict Hiroshima's post-atomic scenario and the firm conviction of being unable to do so.[13]

Shikabane no machi represents the first in a long series of testimonial accounts devoted to the hibakusha experience, among which *Ningen Boro* ("Ragged humans", 1951) and *Hanningen* ("Half humans", 1954) are also worth mentioning. Ōta's writing style is dry, as is typical for journalistic reportage. At the same time, the narration is ferocious and penetrating, enriched by frequent insertions of quotes from newspapers and scientific data regarding the atomic weapons. Ōta was the first journalist ever to write a report about the atomic bombing—for the *Asahi Shinbun* on August 30, 1945. The article was entitled *Katei no yōna hikari: Genshi bakudan no kūshū*

in atte ("Light as on the bottom of the sea: witnessing the atomic bombing"). It described the bomb's dropping, the flash of light, and the deafening roar witnessed by hibakusha during the atomic blast. The onomatopoeic neologism "*pikadon*" suggests, both visually and auditively, the impact of the unknown weapon on the city.

Yoshida Chia's journalistic career saw a turning point due to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident. Originally from Fukushima, now living in Saitama, the journalist became a freelancer after working for a publishing house. She is the editor and author of the quarterly *Mama Rebo* (Mum Revolution), for which she has written about mothers and nuclear fallout, and for the informative magazine *Fukudama tayori* (Fukudama News) dedicated to people evacuated in Saitama Prefecture.[14] Yoshida has written three reports regarding the Fukushima meltdown since 2015. The first, *Genpatsu hinanjō hakusho* (Governmental report on the evacuation caused by the nuclear accident), is a collaboration with the Kwansei Gakuin University Study on Reconstruction Organizations,[15] the JCN (Japan Civil Network),[16] and the SAFLAN (Save Fukushima Children Lawyers' Network).[17] The report aims to shed light on governmental regulations concerning the evacuation of the surrounding areas of Fukushima Daiichi. The following year, *Rupo boshi hinan—Kesareyuku genpatsu jiko higaisha* (Reportage of the evacuation of mothers and children. The nuclear victims will fade) was published by Watanabe Shinsho publishing. It is a thought-provoking inquiry regarding the conditions of displaced mothers and children in refugee shelters. The reportage touches sensitive topics such as radiophobia (especially concerning pregnancy and infancy) and family disaggregation. *Sono Nato no Fukushima. Genpatsu jikogo wo ikiru hitobito* (Fukushima hereafter. People who live after the nuclear accident) 2018 represents a more comprehensive inquiry into the 2011 hibakusha's life, less focused on women's struggles. It answers the compelling plea for her to become a spokesperson for the refugees.

Yoshida's writing is scathing and dispassionate. Although journalistic inquiry about an issue such as nuclear catastrophe and radioactive contamination may not appeal to a vast literary audience, her works are accessible and enjoyable to the broader public.[18] In contrast with Ōta's struggle in seeking a language suited to depict Hiroshima's atomic experience, Yoshida focuses on accurately accounting for the situation she saw in the evacuated zones and the refugee shelters and reporting the interviews she collected while investigating Fukushima's meltdown. Remarkably, Yoshida did not experience Fukushima's evacuation firsthand: therefore, the author does not share Ōta's mental burden of being a survivor. Hence, she maintains a somewhat detached attitude towards the sensitive topics at the core of her works. Moreover, Yoshida is a freelance journalist with no ambition for a literary career, at least until now. This precludes her from any frustration when writing between reality and imagination—that is, between a

straightforward style typical of journalistic investigation and a more flowery language, usually associated with fictional novels.

Shikabane no machi versus Sono ato no Fukushima

Brief Overview

Ōta Yōko in person explains the genesis of *Shikabane no machi* in the afterward of her work, in the 1950 version of her account. Although the first draft of her testimony was completed in November 1945,[19] its publication was not possible until 1948 due to the censorship imposed by the American occupation of Japan.[20] The so-called GHQ press code was in force from September 1945 to April 1952 to prevent any report displaying criticism towards the US.[21] For this reason, *Natsu no hana* (Summer Flower), published in 1947 by the poet Hara Tamiki, is often considered the first testimonial account ever released on the atomic bombings. Notwithstanding, according to Iwasaki, *Natsu no hana* is only partially based on the notes written by the author soon after August 6. Other details, such as the fictionalisation of some dialogues and scenes, seem deceitful for a so-claimed "authentic" representation of Hiroshima's aftermath.[22] Hence, the record must return to *Shikabane no machi*, casting a new light on the relevance of Ōta's memoir as the first testimonial narrative on the Hiroshima atomic bombing. Furthermore, Ōta was a woman journalist with a sensitive attitude towards women and children's conditions in the bombing aftermath.

Particularly relevant in *Shikabane no machi* is the chapter now entitled *Muyoku ganbō* (Apathetic expression). It was sidelined from the first publication and reappeared only in 1950, with a complete review of the literary text, including the title revision of some chapters.[23] In the *Muyoku ganbō* chapter, Ōta detected, long before clinical examinations, the alexithymic state of hibakusha she encountered in the weeks after the atomic explosion. Alexithymia, also known as "emotional illiteracy", describes the inability to verbalise emotions. It constitutes, together with analgesia, apathy, and anhedonia, a wake-up call for a dissociative state common among post-traumatic sequelae.[24]

Considerations regarding the genesis of *Shikabane no machi* are also relevant in evaluating this testimonial work as "Trümmerliteratur", as defined by Tachibana Reiko about German and Japanese literature written in the aftermath of the Second World War.[25] By this term, Tachibana underlined the characteristics of literary productions that "evoke the ruins", that is, testimonial works written soon after the traumatic event at the core of their plot. These tend to be documentary novels, often offering an autobiographical perspective on the events. They also share the common urge which presses the author into writing and whose natural causes can be detected in the writers paying homage to deaths, denouncing any possible responsibilities

of the government regarding the tragic event or, as in Ōta's case, the fear of upcoming death.[26]

The so-called "literature of the debris" finds its counterpart in "long-distance literature", which is more measured and balanced. This literary production is characterised by re-processing the traumatic memories according to the first- or the third-person narrator, thus often assuming the aspect of a fictional account. The narration is mainly supported by historical and scientific data, adding reliability to the work. For this reason, time slips between the present and the past are frequent (the discontinuous time frame of Hayashi Kyōko's production is an example).

Hence, *Shikabane no machi* can be considered a full-fledged work of the "literature of the debris", written in Kushima, about forty kilometres away from Hiroshima, where Ōta took refuge in the months following the disaster. The original version of the memoir consists of thirty sections, divided into seven chapters. The account emphasises the urgency of testimony, and the author compares the Hiroshima devastation to *jigoku* (an inferno).[27] The result is a frenetic, feverish writing, reporting the first weeks after the atomic bombing:

> I was given some burned papers removed from the *shōji*, toilet papers and two or three pencils by acquaintances of the town where I took shelter and with death breathing down my neck I wished to die only after accomplishing my responsibility of writing.[28]

Her acute anxiety towards possible symptomatic manifestations of the so-called "atomic bomb disease" prevented Ōta from stylistically embellishing the account. It explains the authorial frustration of being unable to verbalise her hibakusha experience. In the *atogaki* (postface) of the 1950 edition of *Shikabane no machi*, the author released her resentment towards the Japanese language, understood as being too poor and inadequate to describe Hiroshima's aftermath. This constant dissatisfaction led her to never-ending stylistic research, which involved her following works and is also the main reason for the authorial textual revision of *Shikabane no machi* in 1950. Eventually, Ōta became so obsessed with the theme of the atomic bombing to the extent that Treat argued she was "a bitter, disturbed and perhaps even deranged woman whose writings on Hiroshima deserve to be discounted as equally bitter, disturbed, and deranged themselves".[29] *Shikabane no machi*'s reading is disturbing since it lacks rhetorical embellishment: mangled bodies on the verge of death, rotting flesh burned by the atomic blast, zombie-like survivors seeking aid and water in the wake of the atomic bombing. The title itself, *City of Corpses*, conveys Ōta's account well. Nevertheless, the authorial struggle regarding the literary representability of the reality of Hiroshima's aftermath is shared by many witnesses. It regards the "aesthetics of catastrophe", as to say, the debate which questions the legitimacy of any artistic performance or artistic representation on the theme of a traumatic event.

Sono ato no Fukushima resembles *Shikabane no machi* in structure, presenting an account of episodes and situations the author witnessed in person—especially in the refugee shelters. Hibakusha's interviews empower these scenes, which are also sustained by Yoshida's critical comments to provide the readership with a broader perspective on the referential law, thus underlining a gap between municipal procedures and the factual situation in the evacuated zones. In this sense, hibakushas' voices constitute the heart of the investigation. At the same time, Yoshida's point of view is limited to the corollary of information necessary to offer a balanced perspective on the topic in question.

As the introductory note explains, the focus of the inquiry is *Fukushima, sono ato*—Fukushima's aftermath. Yoshida pointed out that the beginning of Fukushima's recovery in 2017 also sets out the ending of any governmental subsidy to the evacuated areas in terms of supporting aid for refugee shelters.[30] Yoshida stressed that not all the former citizens of the evacuated areas surrounding the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant were subjected to the Japanese governmental evacuation. People living outside the thirty-kilometre radius established by the compulsory evacuation measures could remain in the area. This legal arrangement was controversial because it raised doubts about which families living near the thirty-kilometre evacuation radius should have moved away. People who decided to evacuate voluntarily were not provided with governmental aid because their refugee status was not recognised. The farm animals, and the farmhouses left behind, did not constitute critical elements in the balance of the damage claims.[31] This dichotomy of recovering/abandonment in the Fukushima Daiichi area is well addressed throughout the work, constituting the *fil rouge* that guides the reading.

In addition to the political criticism and the social radiophobia at the basis of hibakusha discrimination (these issues will be developed in detail later), *Sono ato no Fukushima* handles other critical topics also mentioned in *Shikabane no machi*. First, the collective burial of the dead after the earthquake and the great tsunamis implicitly deprived the deceased of their identity. Second, the fear and anxiety towards radiation sickness exhibited by Fukushima evacuees and their offspring. Last, the rediscovery of the fundamental role of *kizuna* (social ties) among people as a powerful source of support and mutual understanding of the hibakusha's peculiar conditions.

Shikabane no machi versus Sono ato no Fukushima

Political Criticism

Ōta Yōko does not make a mystery of her critical stance towards both Japanese and US governments' responsibility for the Hiroshima atomic bombings. The writer denounced both the war's irrationality, considering the Japanese defeat as an unsurprising and ill-fated certitude long before the

atomic bombings, and the US government's decision to deliberately treat the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on a par with human test subjects for the destructive potential of atomic weapons. Notably, the *Gyokuon-hōsō*, Emperor Hirohito's declaration of surrender, which was broadcast throughout the country on August 15, 1945, was perceived as mortifying and humiliating: as the saying goes, insult on top of injury.

Like other hibakusha authors (including the popular Nagasaki *kataribe* or story-teller par excellence, Hayashi Kyōko), Ōta emphasised the repercussions of the atomic blast, which was not a circumscribed event limited in time because it caused physical and psychological repercussions which have affected the second and the third generations of hibakusha, too: "Even though the war is over, we are still dying due to war. This is inexplicable to me".[32] Hence, Ōta accepted the challenge of making the hibakusha experience accessible to the broader public. In her purpose, she was encouraged by her commitment to giving testimony as a woman, as a journalist, and as a survivor:

> "Sister, you are observing them, aren't you? I cannot. I cannot stand and stare at the corpses". My little sister scolded me, and I replied: "I am a writer. I am looking at them in two ways—the first, the look of the human being, the second, the writer's look".
>
> "Will you be able to write? About it?"
>
> "I must. It is the responsibility of a writer who saw all this".[33]

Notwithstanding, Ōta exhibits a critical stance towards the accountability of the hibakusha's experience. Her writing amounts to a mission rather than a mere responsibility towards accounting the a-bombing experience.

The climate of insecurity and long-lasting disorientation of individuals that overwhelmed the Japanese population after the 2011 Fukushima meltdown was intrinsically intertwined with the so-called "*anzen shinwa*" ("security myth"). The term refers to the belief that nuclear energy was safe. The nuclear meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi forced the Japanese people to face the disillusionment of the *anzen shinwa*. Notwithstanding, the nuclear accident's actual scale was downsized by the joint action of TEPCO and the Japanese government to avoid panic, thus protecting the *anzen shinwa*.[34]

As seen before, this fracture of the social tissue underpinned a more alarming fragmentation of the self for the more fragile individuals. It was counterbalanced by "a quest for *kizuna*", which profited from the same social media channels and claimed to be guilty of false information regarding the Fukushima Power Plant's safety. Eventually, the "new" human bonds intertwined after Fukushima's nuclear meltdown implicitly created boundaries between hibakusha and non-hibakusha, despite the fact they were also claimed to suggest a nationalistic revival of Japan after the tragic events of March 11, 2011.

Shikabane no machi versus Sono ato no Fukushima

Radiophobia and hibakusha sabetsu

When dealing with the radiophobia issue, the 1945 atomic bombing experience and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear meltdown experience merge and show similar difficulties in coping with the fear of radioactive contamination, thus exposing a climate of diffidence and discrimination towards the hibakusha, as briefly explored previously. Japan is the *hibaku koku* par excellence: the only country in the world to have witnessed both the effects of atomic bombings and nuclear accidents.[35] Eventually, FUKUSHIMA has been written in the *katakana* syllabary (as HIROSHIMA and NAGASAKI had previously been) to distinguish the geographical location of the cities on the map from the historical trauma of those having witnessed the radioactive contamination.

Apart from the physical and psychological consequences linked to the radiation sickness, several literary references compare Hiroshima and Nagasaki's atomic explosions with Fukushima's radioactive fallout—from the *kuroi ame* (black rain) falling upon the cities soon after the blast/accident to the testimonial narratives of those traumatic experiences.

For the record, there is a difference between the radioactive contamination of Hiroshima and Fukushima. Generally speaking, the term "*genbakushō*" refers to the "atomic-bomb sickness" linked to the atomic blast. On the contrary, the radioactive contamination associated with the Fukushima fallout is usually addressed as "*naibu hibaku*" ("inner contamination", internationally known as "radiation sickness"), thus insisting on the invisible quality of radioactivity.[36]

Japan represents a peculiar breeding ground for social fragmentation when dealing with "*hibakusha sabetsu*" (hibakusha discrimination). The distinction of social groups into the philosophical paradigm of *uchi* and *soto* (内 "inside" versus 外 "outside") pervades Japanese culture to the extent of shaping the Japanese language (not to mention the different language registers required to address members of different social status or social groups adequately). From a sociological perspective, this discrepancy refers to the members of one's family distinguished from the general "others".

Eventually, this division of community into *uchi* and *soto* assumes particular value with respect to those who have or have not experienced radioactive contamination. In the first case, being a hibakusha means to be affiliated with the survivors' group, and being able to share the same traumatic memories of the experience. All the "others" (*soto*) were not directly exposed to such a traumatic event and, therefore, are considered to be unable to understand it. It goes without saying that strong bonds are intertwined among members belonging to the same group: they all share feelings of mutual comprehension, trust, and acceptance. Similarly to what is happening today with the pandemic, it seems that the trauma created a boundary between

infected subjects and non-infected/immune subjects, in between whom an impalpable wall of difficulty of comprehension was set up. Far from being unique in the panorama of testimonial literature (only think about Shoah's survivors, for example), this principle becomes controversial when referring to the testimonial narratives of the events in question and who has the right to talk about them.

Ōta Yōko did not dwell much on the "*hibakusha sabetsu*" (discrimination) topic in her *Shikabane no machi* since her account covers the first weeks after Hiroshima's atomic blast. Notwithstanding, the author does not fail to report the unsympathetic behaviour of non-hibakusha towards the survivors.[37] Eventually, the turning point for sociological recognition of the hibakusha occurred in 1957, when the Japanese government enacted the "Hibakusha health passport", by passing the Atomic Bomb Victim Medical Care Law. It provided funding for free medical check-ups, treatments for atomic bombing survivors, and better working conditions.[38] The designated hibakusha were defined as

> anyone who had been within city limits at the time of the bombings, those in areas where black rain fell, children affected by in utero radiation exposure and rescue workers and others who came into the city within the first two weeks.[39]

Providing proof of being exposed to the atomic explosion was the compelling requirement to obtain such a particular legal recognition, thus forcing people to dredge up that traumatic past. Eventually, many hibakusha still alive in the late 1950s were left alone—family, friends, or acquaintances had previously died, perhaps just due to diseases associated with the *genbakushō*'s (atomic bomb's) symptoms. In this sense, proving to be a hibakusha was doubly sorrowful. Moreover, hibakusha were considered unreliable workers because of their poor health; the benefits they obtained with their health passports were regarded with envy by other war victims, especially the survivors of aerial bombings. These circumstances only emphasised ostracism and discrimination among the population and implicitly accentuated the "survivor's guilt" of being alive. The discomfort of being labelled "hibakusha" was the origin of "a strong unconscious wish to separate oneself from the affiliated group".[40] In short, the Hibakusha health passport was perceived as a stigma and an obstacle to human relationships, especially contracting marriage and starting a family.

Conversely, Yoshida Chia called the discriminatory actions towards the hibakusha of the Fukushima nuclear fallout by their proper names, *genpatsu hinanjō ijime*, which refers to the bullying attitude towards the evacuees from the surrounding area of the Fukushima Daiichi, especially towards children and teens.[41] In contrast, *fūhyō higai* (harmful rumours) usually addresses defamatory forms beneath the refugees' dignity.[42]

The paradigm of societal division into *uchi* and *soto* does not save the 2011 hibakusha. However, it underlines the close link between Hiroshima and Nagasaki's atomic bombings and the Fukushima nuclear fallout. Eventually, Fukushima Daiichi's hibakusha experienced obstacles in obtaining legal recognition for their status in a fashion not dissimilar to the 1945 hibakusha. People who lived outside the thirty-kilometre radius of compulsory evacuation and who decided to evacuate were not recognised with refugee status, thus finding their request for governmental support rejected. Social issues such as suicides, social anxiety, and self-enclosure were the consequences of sociophobic behaviour which hit the newspaper's headlines in the months following the Fukushima accident. Yoshida reported these in full detail in her journalistic inquiries, especially in the short interviews in her *Sono ato no Fukushima*. Cases of adultery and divorce, which often led to substance abuse, were common among the *genpatsu hinansha* ("evacuees from the nuclear accident") as well as among the *saigai hinansha* ("evacuees of the disaster"), categories to which Yoshida pays much attention.

Shikabane no machi versus Sono ato no Fukushima

Intergenerational Trauma

The radioactivity concern stands symbolically as an element of continuity between the traumatic past, the present of the storytelling, and the feasible tomorrow. A radioactive event, regardless of the nature of its atomic blast or nuclear fallout, is conceived as long-lasting due to both the issues concerning nuclear waste disposal and the danger of genetic malformations related to communicable diseases in future generations caused by radioactive exposure. Moreover, being exposed to radioactive contamination means being condemned to lead a life constantly threatened by the fear of oncological symptoms, thus compromising the mental stability of individuals. Talking about the "A-bomb neurosis", which can be compared to the Fukushima fallout-related neurosis, Lifton explained it "as a precarious inner balance between the need for symptoms and the anxious association of these symptoms with death and dying".[43] Therefore, the radioactive events cannot be considered only as ill-fated historical dates on human history's timeline—to put it simply. They have never ended. Intergenerational trauma involves the offspring of survivors up to the second and third generations. According to Lifton:

> Psychologically speaking, leukaemia—or the threat of leukaemia—became an indefinite extension of earlier "invisible contamination"; and individual cases, particularly in children, became a later counterpart of the "ultimate horror" of the first moments of the experience.[44]

The future is not only threatened by fear of the insurgence of symptoms correlated to the radiation disease but also by the psychological trauma experienced firsthand by the survivors and implicitly (or not) transmitted to their offspring. For example, children raised in a family environment poisoned by overprotection, shame, secrecy, or even taboo or oblivion about the radioactivity exposure of the adults may suffer from disorientation. They may show difficulty in establishing lasting relationships with others. Moreover, as seen before, the stigma towards radioactive exposure affects, by extension, the offspring.[45] In this context, women represent the more sensitive gender concerning the guilt for transmitting both psychical and psychological sequelae to future generations. Although both parents concur on child-raising, the risk of radioactivity contamination even *in utero* involves pregnancy, thus assigning more weight to women's role in the safe offspring's growth.

Yoshida Chia makes room for this sensitive issue in her *Sono ato no Fukushima* and in her other journalistic works, especially when giving voice to mothers and children displaced in refugee shelters. Ōta Yōko also showed similar attention when describing the status of her sister and her little newborn in Hiroshima's aftermath.

Conclusion: The Role of Female Journalism in the Wake of Catastrophe

Testimonial literature has always been classified as secondary literary production and evaluated nearly exclusively for its educational purpose. As concerns journalistic reports and nonfictional accounts, these works do not always respond to the requisites of literariness, thus compromising their assessment in the editorial field.

The "ethics of disaster" regards the plethora of philosophical and moral principles that revolve around artistic representability and the critical discourse on the literary topoi of trauma and catastrophe. Ōta Yōko and Yoshida Chia respond with the parrhesiastic plea, committing themselves to the testimonial activity. They ignored the critique of riding the wave of the radioactive contamination topic, which was very much in vogue in 1945 and in the aftermath of 2011. In this sense, the authors did not enslave themselves and their literary production to the imperative of "producing literature". This critique was anything but unusual, especially among hibakusha groups who considered hibakusha survivors to be the only ones worthy of bearing witness to those traumatic experiences. Of course, these considerations generate an unsolvable dilemma. If hibakusha writers are seen as traitors of their unique experience for the sake of the popularity connected to the literary field, but at the same time, only hibakusha victims have the right to testify, how to answer the hunger for the truth of the broad public? A similar impasse was encountered by Shoah survivors, too, when their first testimonies came out on the bookshelves during the 1950s and 1960s.

Despite the diversity of their profiles, both Ōta and Yoshida committed themselves, as female witnesses and reporters, to shed some light on controversial and sensitive issues, from the responsibility of radioactive pollution to the social prejudice connected to radiation exposure. This chapter attempted to underline the analogies between Hiroshima and Nagasaki's atomic bombings and the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant's accidents relating to radioactivity concerns. Except for *Shikabane no machi* (*City of Corpses*), which was subjected to US censorship during the 1950s, both Ōta and Yoshida's documentary works express harsh criticism towards the Japanese governments and give voice to the victims through first-person interviews.

Eventually, the peculiar mechanism of transference should be examined from the journalists' viewpoint, considering the emotional cost of reporting traumatic events. Ōta and Yoshida acted like "middle voices",[46] accounting for Hiroshima and Fukushima's radioactivity concerns. By paying much attention to their interviews and dialogues with the victims, both journalists were exposed twice to the trauma linked to the hibakusha experience. The interviews with the survivors mirror the locus of a psychotherapeutic session between the therapist/journalist and the patients/interviewees, thus setting in motion the transference and counter-transference processes detected by Freud (*Übertragung*). Regarding any testimonial narrative, this sort of psychotherapeutic agency is echoed by the audience's agency in the reading process, which becomes evident in the empathic involvement or identification mechanism (Freud's *Einfühlung*) typical to the act of reading. The transference/self-identification is far from being only a menacing process: it is precisely thanks to the feelings of empathy that human beings can share a mutual understanding, sensitivity, and support. In a few words, the famous quest for *kizuna* mentioned earlier finds its source in the mental and sentimental competence of human bonding.

What will be the new frontier for women's journalism? The authors discussed in this brief chapter are an example of the value that women can add in dealing with reports in the wake of catastrophe. Although compassionate towards gender issues and intergenerational trauma involving victims' offspring, both authors showed opposite approaches to the so-called "therapy news", that is, the journalistic attitude that conceives interviews with the survivor as a confessional locus for traumatic experience to sensitise the public towards the issue in question.[47] Neither can Ōta's and Yoshida's accounts be considered "soft news", since the topic of radioactive exposure has nothing to share with gossip, leisure, and entertainment news, usually associated with women's journalism.[48]

Journalism today has to deal with crucial issues such as denuclearisation and global warming. The pandemic has also challenged the newspaper and news media in the broader sense, especially considering the recent expansion of social networking on a global scale. Moreover, by interfering

with the typical performance of human relationships, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2) has undermined the traditional concept of *kizuna*. At the same time, social media were fundamental in shaping new ways of reporting and media coverage and new ways of human bonding in terms of human communication and interactions. Hence, a re-evaluation of the role of the testimonial narratives, both in the nonfictional and fictional forms, should be considered to discover from the past the food for thought necessary to account for the ever-changing cultural phenomena of our times.

Notes

1 All translations by the author unless otherwise noted.
2 Laurie Santos (Professor of Psychology at Yale University), "The Science of Well-Being," Live Lecture, March 30, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/Coursera/photos/gm.530795624522086/2784802298304407.
3 Especially after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the term is no longer limited to addressing radiation hysteria and it has been implemented in the psychotraumatology field to focus on post-traumatic stress disorder connected with nuclear fallout.
4 Robert Jay Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (New York: Penguin Random House, 1968), 57.
5 Kenzaburō Ōe 大江健三郎, "History Repeats," *New Yorker*, March 28, 2011, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/03/28/history-repeats.
6 Lisette Gebhardt and Yūki Masami, *Literature and Art after Fukushima. Four Approaches* (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2014), 13.
7 Georges Devereux, *Saggi di Etnopsichiatria generale* (Roma: Armando Editore, 2007 [1970]), 29.
The validity of the "Sapir–Whorf hypothesis" is still debated.
8 John Leavitt, "Linguistic Relativities," in *Language, Culture, and Society. Key Topics in Linguistic Antropology*, eds. Christine Jordan and Kevin Tuite (Cambridge, MD: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 47–81, 66.
9 Roni Berger, *Stress, Trauma, and Posttraumatic Growth. Social Context, Environment, and Identities* (London: Routledge, 2015), 13.
10 Nihon Tosho Center, 日本図書センター, *Ōta Yōko shū* 大田洋子集, Accessed December 12, 2013, http://www.nihontosho.co.jp/2001/11/post-372.html.
11 Robert Jay Lifton, *Death in Life*, 402.
12 Yōko Ōta, 大田洋子, *Shikabane no machi jo* 屍の街序 (Tōkyō: Toga Shobou, 1950), 3.
13 Lifton, *Death in Life*, 405.
14 *Level 7 News,* accessed September 12, 2020, https://level7online.jp.
15 Kwansei Gakuin University Study on Reconstruction Organizations, accessed September 12, 2020, https://www.kwansei.ac.jp/fukkou.
16 Japan Civil Network, accessed September 12, 2020, https://www.jpn-civil.net.
17 Save Fukushima Children Lawyers' Network, accessed September 12, 2020, http://www.saflan.jp.
18 *Sono ato no Fukushima* ranks 73rd in the list of top-selling books about "nuclear topics" on amazon.co.jp while her last *Korui. Futaba gun shōbōshi tachi no 3.11* 「孤塁　双葉郡消防士たちの3.11 」 ("Isolated stronghold. The 3.11 according to the fireman from Futaba," 2020) ranks 32nd among "disaster books".
19 John Whittier Treat, *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 208.

20 Kazusuke Nakano, 中野和典, "'Shikabane no machi' wa dono youniyo-maretekitaka?" 『屍の街』はどのように読まれてきたか?, *Dai 48kai genbaku bungaku kenkyukai*, 2015, 211, https://www.cis.fukuoka-u.ac.jp/~nakanok/study/201512shikabane.pdf.
21 Politicwing, *The American Occupation of Japan—Press Code*, accessed October 12, 2021, http://www.politicwing.net/presscode.html.
22 Fumito Iwasaki, 岩崎文人, *Hara Tamiki: Hito to bungaku* 原民喜—人と文学 (Tōkyō: Bensei shuppan, 2003), 173–174.
23 Nakano, "*Shikabane no machi*," 211.
24 DSM-IV is the acronym for *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 4th Edition (New York: American Psychiatric Association – APA, 1952).
25 Reiko Tachibana, *Narrative as Counter-Memory: A Half-Century of Postwar Writing in Germany and Japan* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 32.
26 Ōta *Shikabane no machi jo*, 7.
27 Kazuo Kuroko, 黒古一夫, *Genbaku to kotoba (shō)- Hara Tamiki kara Hayashi Kyoko made* 原爆と言葉（抄）—原民喜から林京子まで (Tōkyō: San-ichi Shobou, 1983), 320–323.
28 Ōta, *Shikabane no machi jo*, 4.
29 Treat, *Writing Ground Zero*, 223.
30 Chia Yoshida, 吉田千亜, *Sono ato no Fukushima. Genpatsu jikogo wo ikiru hito-bito* その後の福島。原発事故後を生きる人々 (Tōkyō: Jinbun Shoin, 2018), 7.
31 Yoshida, *Sono ato no Fukushima*, 140.
32 Ōta, *Shikabane no machi jo*, 31.
33 Yōko Ōta, 大田洋子, *Shikabane no machi* 屍の街 (Tōkyō: Chūou Koronsha, 1948), 74.
34 Yoshida, *Sono ato no Fukushima*, 69.
35 Mikiyo Kanou, 加納実紀代, *HIROSHIMA to FUKUSHIMA no aida – gendaa no shiten kara* ヒロシマとフクシマのあいだ—ジェンダーの視点から(Tōkyō: Inpakuto Shuppankai, 2013), 24.
"Internal radiation exposure" (*naibu hibaku*) and "radioactivity exposure" (*hōshanōsen hibaku*) address the ingestion of contaminated food and water and the exposure to a radioactive environment, respectively.
36 Shuntarō Hida, 肥田俊太郎, *Hibaku to hibaku. Hoshanosen ni makezuni ikiru* 被爆と被曝。放射能線に負けずに生きる (Tōkyō: Gentosha, 2013).
37 Reiko Tachibana, *Narrative as Counter-Memory*, 51, 55.
38 Akiko Naono, "The Origins of 'Hibakusha' as a Scientific and Political Classification of the Survivor," *Japanese Studies* 39, no. 3 (2019): 333–352.
39 Susan Southard, *Nagasaki: Life after Nuclear War* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2016), 221.
40 Robert Jay Lifton, *Death in Life*, 61.
41 Yoshida, 203.
42 Chia Yoshida, *Sono ato no Fukushima*, 163.
43 Lifton, *Death in Life*, 119.
44 Lifton, *Death in Life*, 104.
45 Yuka Kamite, "Prejudice and Health Anxiety about Radiation Exposure from Second-Generation Atomic Bomb Survivors: Results from a Qualitative Interview Study," *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (August 2017): 2, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01462.
46 Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 42.
47 Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner and Carole Fleming, *Women and Journalism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 218.
48 Chambers et al., *Women and Journalism*, pp. 33–34.

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