CLARKE, J. 2020. Apocalyptic sublimes and the recalibration of distance: doing art-anthropology in post-disaster Japan. In Schorch, P., Saxer, M. and Elders, M. (eds.) *Exploring materiality and connectivity in anthropology and beyond.* London: UCL Press [online], pages 172-190. Available from: https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781787357488

Apocalyptic sublimes and the recalibration of distance: doing art-anthropology in post-disaster Japan.

CLARKE, J.

2020

11

Apocalyptic sublimes and the recalibration of distance: doing art-anthropology in post-disaster Japan

Jennifer Clarke

Introduction

> *Matter and meaning are not separate elements. They are inextricably fused together, and no event, no matter how energetic, can tear them asunder.*
>
> (Barad 2007, 3)

On 11 March 2011, a 'triple disaster' (an earthquake – the strongest since records began – a subsequent tsunami, and a nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant) devastated the Tohoku region of north-east Japan. This singular yet predictable event has come to be called '3.11', echoing the traumatic event of '9.11' (Iwata-Weickgenannt and Geilhorn 2017). The disaster was predictable insofar as Japan, situated within the 'ring of fire' – an area approximately 40,000 km long in the basin of the Pacific Ocean, associated with frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions – has long experienced ecological hazards. This earthquake and tsunami left 18,000 people dead and thousands more injured. Over 340,000 people were displaced from their homes, as hundreds of thousands of buildings were destroyed. As this is a coastal and rural region, many livelihoods connected to fishing and agricultural production were obliterated overnight. A hundred and ten thousand residents in communities in and around the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant were officially evacuated immediately, and many more 'voluntarily' evacuated (without support from the government) because of concerns about the dangerous

levels of radiation – a result of a nuclear 'meltdown' and subsequent explosions at Fukushima. To this day, only about half of the evacuees have returned home, a problem for the government since plans for recovery are based on people returning to their towns (Figueroa 2013; Slater, Morioka and Danzuka 2014). By March 2018, the national government had ended financial support for the majority of nuclear evacuees. While decontamination projects actively removed tons of topsoil and debris, cycles of rain and wind continue to carry radiation across the region and, with it, uncertainty.

Japan relies on nuclear energy, despite being the only country that has experienced the atomic bomb and nuclear 'accidents'.[1] This is Japan's fourth nuclear incident,[2] and repercussions continue. It is impossible to foresee all the implications of this disaster, or to grasp the geological temporalities, of hundreds of thousands of years, implied by nuclear radiation. The anti-nuclear activist Mari Matsumoto has remarked that the 3.11 disaster has fundamentally produced a 'recalibration of distance', something that one 'can't see … you can't reduce it to something economic or physical, but this breakdown of relationality is, to some degree, another injury caused by the nuclear accident, and is part of the current situation' (2017). Understanding something of how this recalibration of distance operates and how I have approached it through making 'art-anthropology' is key to my work. This chapter describes elements of the ongoing project I have undertaken as a response, generating anthropological knowledge through art, as a kind of thinking-by-doing, as the editors similarly set out in the introduction to this volume. I worked primarily in Tohoku (the region in the north-east affected by the disaster) as part of a European Research Council (ERC)-funded postdoctoral project, spending about ten months there in total, and also internationally, undertaking residencies, doing workshops and producing six independent but related art exhibitions under the umbrella title *Invisible Matters*. For a six-month period in 2015, I lived in Sendai, a large city with a population of over one million; just inland from the coast, largely protected from the impact of the tsunami, Sendai is about sixty miles (nearly 100 km) north of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

I came to this project by invitation. The question of whether anyone who did not experience this disaster can make work about it is a fraught one; early on it was viewed as distasteful for *gaijin* (outsiders) to engage in research (Gill 2014). The Japanese artists' collective ChimPom has suggested (2015) that responses to Fukushima will come to be seen as defining for contemporary Japanese art; arguably it has marked an important shift towards socially engaged practice in the country. Keiko

Mukaide, a Japanese artist based in Scotland, approached me in 2011, knowing that I had lived and worked in Japan. A question she asked stuck with me: what does it means to be an artist after such a disaster? Keiko put me in touch with artists from Tohoku, and I was introduced to Yasuko Sugita, who runs the 'therapeutic' organisation 'Iwate Future Project', formed in response to the increasing number of suicides in Japan. It is one of more than 50,000 NPOs (non-profit organisations) registered with municipal governments, and I continue to work with them. In doing so, I have learned about the entangled relationships between local government bureaucracy, academia, art and NPOs, which have provoked questions about political apathy, and *jishuku* (self-censorship), which are arguably connected to the notion of *gaman suru,* a Japanese term usually translated as 'enduring suffering' (which is interesting given that NPOs are the organisations arguably driving the country's recovery). Keiko's question became, for me, about what my role might be as an anthropologist and artist in Tohoku and beyond, in the years that have followed. I continue to return to Tohoku, by invitation.

This chapter, based on my experience of visiting 'stricken' sites and making artworks and interventions from a feminist perspective regarding 'situated knowledge' (Haraway 1988) combines descriptions of specific works and discussions of key concepts that emerged and were enacted in practice (Mol 2002): the nature of apocalyptic sublimes, and the meaning of *gaman suru*. *Gaman suru* is a central feature of the recalibration of distance and my experience of the 'deferral of reality' in post-disaster Japan, as well as an opening towards the immanence of things, through making artworks. In the following section, I outline the basis of my approach and introduce the first of the exhibition series *Invisible Matters*, followed by a more detailed introduction to the key term *gaman suru*.

Art-anthropology, *Invisible Matters*, and *gaman suru*

There have been important philosophical and political efforts to rethink the breakdown of relationality and the 'mutant ecologies' (Masco 2004) that have produced this 'current situation', in which, as the epigraph articulates, 'matter and meaning are … inextricably fused together' in particular ways (Barad 2007, 3). There are also excellent works of ethnographic anthropology about the disaster and the subsequent recovery processes written by Japan-based anthropologists (Gill, Steger and Slater 2013; Gill 2014; Morioka 2013; Slater, Morioka and Danzuka 2014). However, my work tips towards what I call an anti-ethnographic

approach, further developing the idea that anthropology is not ethnography (Ingold 2008). It is anti-ethnographic in that it does not seek to create anthropological knowledge retrospectively through writing, but works as a form of 'research creation' (Manning 2016a), generating knowledge through practical engagement in creative work. The focus of the work of art, in this view, is not a finished object for a gallery, but an intervention in the situation, framed in terms of relational aesthetics – a set of practices that take the social context as their theoretical and practical point of departure (Bourriaud 1998). Crucially, it is interdisciplinary. There are many definitions of inter- and transdisciplinary research, integrating or exchanging knowledge across subject boundaries; my approach aims at a combination based on a deep understanding of these related but distinct disciplines, and includes recognising the limitations of both (cf. Toomey, Markusson, Adams and Brockett 2015).

In *Invisible Matters*, I produced site-specific installations through durational (two-week) open-to-the-public residencies, creating and holding open spaces for self-reflection and shared conversation. During the residencies, I metaphorically and literally raised issues, including the fraught matter of radiation exposure, in a number of ways. For example, a key component of *REC. 3.11*, the first *Invisible Matters* exhibition, was the making of a series of cyanotype prints exposed in natural light. I used Prussian blue (ferric ferrocyanide, a solution for cyanotypes made with ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide) to make prints, after learning that this chemical compound was used in Britain after the Chernobyl disaster, when scientists were experimenting with ways to absorb radioactivity in the soil, by inhibiting the uptake of caesium-137 (see Figure 11.1).

Making work continuously in the gallery, creating performative, relational spaces, required my presence. By doing these things, I developed my approach to interdisciplinary research creation – generating forms of knowledge that are extra-linguistic (Manning 2016b). I do not see this work as ethnographic, partly because I do not claim to systematically *represent* a community or a group of individuals; the work is a personal response in a way that makes most sense to me within the discipline of art. Moreover, these works do not aim to 'capture' people's experiences as ethnographic data, a question some anthropologists later asked me. Nevertheless, elements such as the subsequent detailed discussion of *gaman suru* could be read as 'ethnographic theory' in the way that David Graeber suggests, as 'an attempt to grapple with the internal logic of an apparently alien concept or form of practice (bearing in mind here that concepts are always the other side of a form of practice)' (2015, 6).

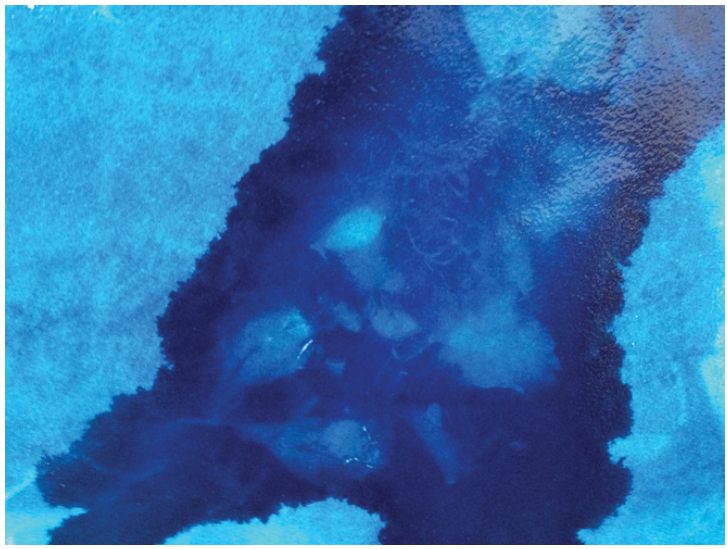

Figure 11.1 *Moly*, Jennifer Clarke, 2015. Cyanotype print using plant matter (galamanthus roots) on handmade paper, 60 cm x 60 cm. Photo by the author.

Gaman suru is central to my work, and, I suggest, to the 'recovery' phase in Japan, post disaster. A Japan-based academic called 'recovery' (*fukko*) 'one of the evil words of our day … because it excuses everything that is going on: the forced returns, the use of workers in very questionable circumstances and work environments, what is done to children' (quoted in McInerny 2016). *Fukko* employs the language of *gambare*, to 'fight on', a slogan that abounds in community as well as media and government materials: *Gambare Nippon!* Fight on, Japan! Some Japanese anthropologists have criticised the nationalist agenda implied, arguing that it drove a turn away from local communities (Okada 2012). *Gambare* is the imperative form of *gaman,* broadly interpreted as 'perseverance' or 'endurance'. In this form, it is meant to encourage cooperative activities, such as those led by the NPOs.

Gambare can be related to the notion of 'resilience' which is currently feted in environmental discourse, but also increasingly critiqued (it is used in Japanese too). While it is popularly understood positively, as a way of enduring, of surviving, Brad Evans and Julian Reid instead convincingly argue that resilience is *dis*empowering (2014); they argue that resilience is a 'neoliberal deceit' that reduces subjectivity to survivability in situations of ongoing catastrophe and crisis. Their argument

essentially is that resilience promotes adaptability, so that life may go on regardless of the situation. In this case, it can be seen as implying that one is expected to *adapt* to exposure to threats, such as radiation, which are fundamentally uncertain.

Like resilience, *gaman* has a complicated set of meanings that imply bearing or enduring suffering and adversity; with origins in Zen Buddhism, before 3.11 it was often attributed to Japanese prisoners of war. For me, it is felt in the phrase *shikataganai* (or more informally *sho-ga nai*, as I learned to say): 'there is nothing to be done' or 'it can't be helped', with the implication that one can only endure (Morioka 2013). *Gaman suru* is widely understood as a common, if not defining, national trait of Japan, and is certainly a local one in the north-east. I gained a strong sense of it during my previous years working in Japan, but especially during this project. While it originates in a negative Buddhist critique of self-attachment, related to the potential for arrogance noted above, *gaman suru* is now generally viewed positively:

> this term has deep Buddhist roots in that it is derived from the Sanskrit word *māna* (conceit). In its original Buddhist meaning this term had a clearly negative meaning in that it designated one of seven types of human conceit, that is, attachment to self (*ga*). Yet following the onset of the Edo period in 1600 the fact that 'self-attachment' was such an *enduring* human characteristic led to its negative Buddhist meaning being replaced with a positive meaning.
> (Victoria 2012, 6)

Nevertheless, Brian Victoria goes on to argue that *gaman* is intimately related to *ho-ben*, expedience or not telling the whole truth, and directly connects it to radiation: '*gaman* can and has been used to justify the endurance of *human-created* injustice, including exposure to nuclear radiation' (2012, 6; emphasis original) This points to the complexity of *gaman suru*, which I will further expand on below. The next section introduces the second concept, the apocalyptic sublime, to give further context for my approach.

Apocalyptic sublimes?

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, as the country moved from a state of emergency to the processes of recovery mentioned above, I was struck by how distanced and distancing were the views from outside, or

more often above, a maelstrom of mediated images of disaster circulated on repeat: devastated coastlines, fire, spreading radiation levels. Kate, a Japan-based sculptor I collaborated with, described her experience of driving along the Iwate coast with a singular image: televisions strewn across the beach, for miles. It was 'sublime', she said, 'terribly beautiful'. At its root, the sublime refers to an experience in which words fail, when we find ourselves beyond the limits of reason. I also came to understand this in a singular moment. In 2014, I was driving south with Yasuko, a collaborator, from Sendai towards Yuriage, a coastal village thirty miles (48 km) north of the 'difficult to return zone' (the evacuated zone around the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, and other off-limits areas into which radioactive materials had drifted). Crossing the bridge into the town, I took in my first sight of the destruction. The road bridge, cutting through the district, had acted as a barrier to the tsunami which rose 40 feet (12 m) high. Inland, the landscape of rice fields, dotted with houses under overhead electrical lines, was familiarly verdurous but on the coastal side there was quite suddenly a vast dark flatness, intermittently disrupted by remnants of structures, houses with no sides. We visited a primary school, Yuriage Shogakko; its clock had stopped at 3 p.m., the moment the rising water flooded the building.

I took many photographs of scenes like this one. While they might convey a sense of recovery as well as disaster (it was three years on), for me it evokes a form of the sublime: destruction, death and loss seeping in at the edges. There is a surreal silence to such images, a feeling of terrible beauty, at a remove. A muteness remains despite the noise; like earlier images of the event of disaster, even beautiful images of loss drive 'disaster tourism' (Shondell Miller 2008), or 'disaster porn' (Recuber 2013). Videos of the 2011 tsunami are usually wiped of sound: the cries for help, rarely heard, are so haunting and violent that I, and millions of others, cannot bear to hear them. Such apocalyptic images in news feeds feature the enormous cruise ship balanced precariously on the roof of a small building, fishing boats capsized in fields and lorries upturned under bridges, rows of pine trees suspended, surfing the wave of the tsunami. The problem is not that these images are not 'real' but that the reality they enfold is a vision of a moment of apocalypse, almost always seen from a distance, from above, from a position of safety: a sublime image. It is this distance that permits the potential of a sublime experience, the beauty in the terrible. These images usually focus on the event of disaster, as the well-worn phrase implies – the seconds before and the hours after the event, which these images hold in suspension, extending the time *ad infinitum*. Figure 11.2, which I made, is a snapshot, a moment; the force of the sense of loss

pushes at the limits of words. What do these images do, beyond invoking loss, generating pity? Does mine merely join the plethora of images presented and re-presented in international media and anti-nuclear art that are locked into a sense of the spectacular – cartoon mushroom clouds and ravaged earth, versions of the 'atomic sublime' (Carpenter 2016), which only serves to create distance? In my view, these do not reflect the real recalibrations of distance, the felt experience of a post-nuclear ecology, and the endurance of disaster; they are apocalyptic.

The root of 'apocalypse' is the Greek *apokalypsis*, which means an unveiling, or a revelation. The sublime has a similarly long history, though there are two dominant theories, from Edmund Burke ([1757] 1990) and Immanuel Kant ([1790] 2007). Dating back to the eighteenth century, these have shaped understandings of the sublime as primarily an aesthetic experience that may be transcended. By the time Burke published his treatise on the sublime and the beautiful in 1757, the term 'sublime' was already in common use. His thesis is pertinent because it relocates the sublime in the body, as a feeling, yet it also offers a clear dualism, opposing the sublime to the beautiful, which allows it to take on more fearful connotations. For Burke, 'whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*' (1990, 36). Though terrifying, this sublime carries

Figure 11.2 *Yuriage Shogakko* (Yuriage Primary School), Jennifer Clarke, 2014. Photo printed on card, 15 cm x 10 cm.

a sense of wonder and awe, through an experience of speechlessness in the face of the 'terrible beauty' of some indescribable event.

Immanuel Kant provides another enduring exposition of the sublime, in his treatment of aesthetics and taste in relation to the limits and conditions of knowledge, the *Critique of Judgement*, first published in 1790. Kant offers a more complex consideration of the sublime, conceiving of it as strangely seductive experience, a feeling of being in confrontation with the infinite. Kant's intricate analysis introduces two further aspects: the destabilisation of the subject, and the role of pleasure, specifically what he calls a 'negative pleasure' or 'respect'. This negativity is necessary, since his version of the sublime carries with it the sense of a failed *telos*. In sum, the Kantian Romantic sublime describes an awe-inspiring, even violent experience of *aesthetic (dis)pleasure*. It is this idea of the sublime that came to be exemplified by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, metaphorically marking the beginning of Enlightenment (Samuels 2013).

Some suggest that violent images allow new audiences to engage with the event and with political issues (Ritchin 2014). However, I follow Walter Benjamin, who wrote that the real work of photography is in the captioning ([1934] 1970). Susan Sontag makes a similar argument in her important text, her last publication before she died, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003). In it she argues for the value of painful images, but concludes that they require narrative to confer meaning. While, for Sontag, ultimately those who have not lived through these events 'can't understand, can't imagine' the experiences such images represent (2003, 126), this does not mean that no response is possible. With narrative, including interpretation material, which is central to the art-anthropological work that I do, visual work that is properly framed can provide a 'script for social responses', which in turn have *material* effects (Holm 2012). My argument and my art-anthropological work constitute a response to the above criticism that images of disaster are distancing, that they do not *do* anything beyond shock. In part, we need context to frame the encounter. Moreover, Japan is a particular case: we require an understanding of the recalibrations of distance that *nuclearity* insists on.

The journalist Debitou Arudou, a naturalised Japanese journalist for the *Japan Times*, characterised responses to the disaster as a deferral of the recognition of reality; this was also my own striking experience, buttressed by the responses of the government, slowed by the 'myth of safety' (*anzen shinwa*) regarding nuclear energy. Most people had no prior understanding of the risks, and had enthusiastically supported nuclear expansion. High-profile figures evoked a different sense of denial: the Governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara, was forced to apologise after suggesting that the

3.11 disaster was 'divine punishment' for the 'egoism' of Japanese people (McCurry 2011). What was shared was a sense of uncertainty. Immediately, a range of experts (scientists, activists and NGOs) began producing and reviewing data sets of radiation: where, when and how much; but still

> daily life continues, lived by rote amidst accumulating data that must be measured but whose significance is both deferred and opaque, at best. … *In the end, the sublime escapes us*, leaving us … years later with an ongoing disaster and a swirling affective environment of stupefaction, confusion, and impotence …, unable to grasp what it really means.
>
> (Knighton 2014, 8; emphasis added)

Uncertainty evokes another sublime but enduring moment: the inability to grasp the meaning of the impact of the nuclear accident, in the short or the long term. The notion of the sublime is clearly slippery; in contemporary usage it is so prevalent and contested that it is 'in danger of losing any coherent meaning' (Bell 2013, n.p.). It is important to be specific. I borrow the term *apocalyptic sublime* from Joshua Gunn and David Beard (2000), who draw on Burkean and Kantian notions of the sublime, as outlined above. Their essay identifies two key features of an *immanent* apocalyptic sublime, described as a postmodern alternative to traditional apocalyptic rhetoric rooted in a non-linear temporality and destabilised subjectivities. Their argument follows Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending* (1977), which suggests that apocalyptic views of crisis are contemporary ways of making sense of the world. I follow this attention to 'immanence' in my work, which is related to my experience of living and working in Japan, and to the notion of *gaman suru* introduced above. It is not that these concepts shaped my art-anthropological work in a linear direction; making art informed my thinking and my experiences, and informed the work, iteratively and even itinerantly, in a Deleuzian sense. The series of exhibitions entitled *Invisible Matters* are thus not ethnographic, but experimental 'art-anthropology', the compound term I use to describe my interdisciplinary approach as outlined above. The following section will describe elements of this practice in more detail.

Invisible Matters: REC. 3.11

REC. 3.11, in March 2015, was the first in the series *Invisible Matters*. It was a collaborative exhibition with Japan-based sculptors Katagiri

Hironori and Kate Thomson, designed as a commemorative event to mark the fourth anniversary of the disaster. After a year of planning, I spent a month in Morioka, north of Sendai, under a foot of snow. I created an exhibition through an open-to-the-public residency across two rooms of a large commercial gallery, *Kenreitei,* curated by the painter Sachiko Hayasaka. Our exhibition aimed to provide alternative stories, countering mainstream narratives about the disaster, exploring the role of art and artists (Clarke, Katagiri and Thomson 2015). In one room was the work *Moly*. While the gallery usually hosts commercial exhibitions, I began with no work displayed; every day for two weeks I made and displayed two new prints – cyanotype exposures, in natural light – using the decaying roots, stems and flowers of snowdrops, which I had brought from Scotland, and the Prussian blue compound solution described above.

Snowdrops carry symbolisms of hope and forgetfulness in Europe and Japan. According to myth, a single snowdrop blooming in the garden warns of impending disaster (Hessayon 2011). I produced a series of interpretative texts, in English, and, with Michiko Takahashi, in Japanese, which told stories of memory, hope and consolation, of the coming of spring, as well as of death, beginning with a Christian legend: when Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden, they arrived in a cold, barren land. An angel promised spring would arrive and blew on snowflakes, which were transformed into snowdrops when they hit the ground (Hessayon 2011). I drew on Homer's epic poem *Odyssey* to give the work its title: the god Mercury gave Ulysses a herb called moly, made from snowdrops. Moly made Ulysses immune to the forgetfulness and amnesia that a witch had inflicted on his crew. Today, scientists use an extract from *galanthus* (snowdrop), *galantamine*, in medicine for Alzheimer's disease. The complex of memory, hope and forgetting between the narratives and the prints provoked a number of conversations about the disaster, in a metaphorical manner. In other text exhibited alongside the prints, I explained my use of cyanotypes, made from Prussian blue. These texts were the starting point for a series of conversations, often about the colour blue and its significances in Japanese cultural history (Clarke 2017b), as well as conversations about loss, memory and hope. In these ways I aimed to reflect a sense of enduring through loss, through uncertainty, which is embodied in *gaman suru*. This was reflected in the way I produced and presented the cyanotype prints, and most importantly perhaps by working with decaying plant materials, and by allowing the exhibition to accrete over time. But I also wanted to make space for the self-reflection that is somehow suppressed or latent in

gaman suru, by means of a part of my *REC. 3.11.* exhibition that I called *The Generation of Personal Intimacy.*

The generation of personal intimacy

Despite the information 'tsunami' (Matsumoto in Matsudaira 2017) that followed the initial withholding of information by the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) and the government, new legislation in 2013 had made information concerning the nuclear plants classified (Gill 2014). In this moment of relative taciturnity, not least on the subject of the impacts of nuclear radiation and its ontological nature (what it *is* and how it is measured), but also the secretive politics and the silencing of people who raised questions by pathologising their attitude (Slater and Danzuka 2015), I felt it would be meaningful to create a space for private individual reflection, to make space for other stories. *The Generation of Personal Intimacy* was an installation for *REC. 3.11*, in what is known as the 'safe room', a small room with wooden floors and a wide circular hole in the corner of a wall, designed for the disposal of documents in the event of a raid on the house. Originally built in the eighteenth century for the Prefectural Governor, the building is Western in style, the oldest brick-built house in Morioka. My installation rule was that only one visitor at a time was allowed into the room, to reflect on a set of questions about life, family and memory.

The questions were adapted from a famous study led by the US psychologist Arthur Aron, who runs the Interpersonal Relationships Lab in New York (Aron 2019). Dr Aron's research focuses on creating interpersonal closeness, investigating the ways we incorporate others into our sense of self. His study created laboratory conditions for strangers to form close relationships quickly. I wanted to transform this into a moment for people to *self*-reflect. There were 36 questions in total, in three sets. Every day, over twelve days, three new questions were displayed. There was, therefore, a double translation at work: from an exercise about interpersonal relations to one about self-reflection, and from English to Japanese, working with an unusual grammar. How to have a conversation with yourself? How to generate intimacy and knowledge through speaking to yourself, and through the practice of listening, in a dialogic process? The instructions were to read and respond to the questions. There was a mirror in the room, and I asked that before they leave, they sit in front of it for four minutes, holding their gaze, then write their responses and leave them in a box.

I personally responded every day, in writing and drawing, which I later displayed. It was profoundly interesting to do it myself and then return to making prints and conversation with visitors who then wanted to talk to me about their lives. It was surprisingly engaging for people, a way to explore how we understand our relations with ourselves and incorporate our relations with others into our sense of selves. Having now produced this installation in different sorts of spaces, I find that it has generated interesting comments and feedback and facilitated unexpected conversations. A response from one anthropologist was that it was fascinating, that it transgressed their borders. Hearing about it, one artist thought it was intrusive, asking what would have happened if I had followed Marina Abramovich, and put myself in their gaze instead of a mirror? Another felt it 'got at who we really are and who we represent ourselves to be'. This work was important to me in somehow opening up in a context in which to endure, to *gaman*, is mostly a silent process of self-censorship and the suppression of personal feelings.

I came to understand this better through conversations about my work, especially *The Generation of Personal Intimacy*. My translator and Sendai o-kasan (mother) Michiko discussed the meaning of *gaman suru* with me while we were working together on this project. She told me that she found it difficult, since Japanese people use the word so often without paying any attention to what it really means. *Gaman* consists of two Chinese characters, *ga* (我) and *man* (慢); *ga* means self/I, and *man* is used to form other combinations of Chinese characters, such as *goman* (傲慢) (arrogance or contemptuousness). *Gaman suru* is *gaman* (noun) and *suru* (verb), but people often use the noun as a verb: *gaman gaman*. When the word is used as *gaman suru*, it is directed at the self (when used to other people it is *gaman shinasai*: 'please, bear it') to warn, caution or admonish oneself, to prohibit oneself from doing something or being arrogant – anything which would make it difficult to create good relationships, and thus, Michiko explained, 'to achieve anything':

> Of course, there is no rule but exception … but basically, Japanese are good at disciplining themselves. When [the] huge tsunami hit the coastal area in the Pacific Ocean Side of Tohoku region, evacuated people made a line to get a small meal without any fuss, and people throughout the world were surprised to see the video footage. *Gaman suru* includes that kind of sense. … You said in the previous mail that the word is not all about bad or sad thing. I cannot agree more.

A Japanese friend, Yuko, who had studied abroad in North America told me via social media that she had had to relearn *gaman suru* after coming back to Japan. We talked about the corollary expression, *shikataganai* ('there is nothing to be done'), which I understand as a feeling of inner collapse in the face of a situation once cannot change. She told me:

> Shikataganai has both positive and negative energy. When things go wrong or the way I don't want it, I often think 'shikataganai' … things are already decided and I can't really change it. Sometimes I can try to change it but I don't want to make efforts or don't really see better results coming along. I think you are thinking of the word 'shikataganai' with 'gaman suru' because Japanese people often think 'shikataganai', 'cause we don't want to bother anyone or make bad impressions by doing it. And that is true. I think we often don't speak up and think 'shikataganai' even though we don't always agree with others, but I think we are so used to it … just natural things we do in our daily life, and we often don't think it is negative but maybe positive cuz we don't need to disturb others' feelings and thoughts, and making peaceful conversations, discussions, environments, etc. Maybe we think we can create *wa* (和) [harmony] and *heiwa* (平和) [peace] by doing 'gamansuru' and thinking 'shikataganai'. I don't think it is always positive and healthy to do that, but I guess those words explain well about Japanese culture and people.

I came to these conversations and to a complex understanding of the recalibrations of distance that were – are – continuously in operation, through relation work such as the *Generation of Intimacy* and conversations and experiences with friends and translators while I was living in Tohoku. I have also tried to translate this understanding and these experiences into a different approach to making visual work.

Urato is part of a series of six prints, averaging 180 cm by 80 cm, made through a combination of analogue and digital print making, including *moku hanga* Japanese woodcut printing, drawing and photography, printed on *washi*, handmade Japanese paper. When I look at this image, I remember standing *between* the space where a house used to be and the shore of the small island Urato, part of the infamous Matsushima islands off the coast of Tohoku. Behind me the forest and the weeds are growing up, taller than people, in the absence of the house destroyed by the tsunami; in front the land at the edge of the sea, littered with sandbags, construction machines, and the beginnings of a new poured-concrete sea wall, a site in recovery. Here the sense of disaster is

Figure 11.3 *Urato,* Jennifer Clarke, 2017. Digital print of mixed media image, printed on washi, handmade Japanese mulberry paper, 91 cm x 185 cm.

Figure 11.4 *Ikebana portraits*, Jennifer Clarke, 2017. Photo of ikebana (Japanese flower arranging) installation, by the author. Installation view of 'Palimpsests and Remnants', an exhibition by Jennifer Clarke, curated by Alana Jelinek, Anatomy Rooms, Aberdeen, May 2017.

muffled; there is no sublime distance here, for me, but an intimacy with echoes of the relations and the responsibilities bestowed by experience.

This image was part of a series I included in my final exhibition for *Invisible Matters* entitled *Palimpsests & Remnants,* which took place in Aberdeen, Scotland, in May 2017, curated by the artist Alana Jelinek (Jelinek 2017) and which was accompanied by an 'artist book' (Clarke 2017a). *Remnants* presented selected 'remains' of collected materials from my archives: the vestiges of previous creative workshops alongside recent, collaboratively produced Japanese calligraphy, made by the calligrapher Ruriko Hanahusa with several of my Japanese collaborators. *Palimpsests* was made up of experimental print and photography on handmade paper and other materials (copper, wood), such as *Urato*, with associated *ikebana* – the Japanese art of flower arrangement, or the art of 'living flowers' which I studied with the contemporary *hana* (flower) artist Kazuo Konno in Sendai.

In learning the basic elements of *ikebana*, the art of 'living flowers', I embodied the recalibration of distance that I witnessed and experienced in post-disaster Japan. At first, I was responding to the scenes of remembrance at the 'stricken sites', where I witnessed memorials that included flower arrangements. One root of the art of *ikebana* is as a Buddhist 'act of consolation', both as a practice and in how it is experienced by others, in its final form. I was drawn to it after my visit to Yuriage primary school, where I saw long freshly made lines of marigolds, wreaths draped across the shrines barring entry to the building. There are over fifty schools of *ikebana*, which share seven key principles: silence, minimalism, shape and line, form (which is found, not planned), humanity (a reflection of the makers' feelings), Japanese aesthetics, and a constant relational structure, three constant points that represent heaven, earth and the body. I was taught to approach *ikebana* as a response to people and place, to express the meaning, and my feeling, through the relationships between materials, space and time. In making an arrangement, it is important to emphasise the hybrid and unstable nature of *ikebana* as an object: it is not merely a decorative object but a set of relations, which are expressed in the symbolism, shape and form of the materials chosen, whether fruit, flowers or non-natural materials, and in the relationships of lines in space.

For this exhibition, I made *ikebana* 'portraits' of four important women whom I have mentioned here: Michiko, my translator, Yasuko from the NPO, Sachiko, the curator, and my friend Yuko (see Figure 11.4). This work, in a different way, aimed to question, even challenge, the silent endurance of *gaman suru*, the learned but unconscious imposition of self-discipline, in a manner related to the critique of resilience

outlined above. Yet the immanent nature of *gaman suru* also works to hold open the moment of instability; for me, the work of *ikebana* also holds this sense of instability. In such acts of consolation, of remembrance or of tribute, as my arrangements were, there are glimpses of the recalibration of distance; this is inherent in the silent feeling-making that is *ikebana* practice (like other of my art-anthropology efforts where 'matter and meaning are … inextricably fused together').

Such acts of art-anthropology, or, more broadly, of research creation, thinking-by-doing, have been a means both to better understand extra-linguistic ways of being, and to attempt to convey these in creative work that does not contribute to the sublime and distancing images of 'disaster tourism', but rather confronts, feels through, and aims to open up a situated space to reconsider and attend to, the recalibrations of distance at work, and the immanent nature of things. The neurologist and Buddhist James Austin (2009) uses the word 'immanence' to describe the 'deep realisation' of 見性, *kensho*, the Zen term for a moment of enlightenment. Immanence is derived from the Latin *immanere*, to remain in; the Japanese equivalent is 内在 *naizai*, the state of being within. *Naizai* implies that meaning exists continually within us, around us. Thus, there is no salvation but only the ongoingness of the situation, which must be endured – *gaman shitei.* This kind of immanence, though complex to set out in language alone, is comparable to the Deleuzian sense (2001), and is key to my understanding of this situation in Japan. For Gilles Deleuze, the plane of immanence includes life and death; it is an unqualified immersion that denies transcendence. Without form, subject or structure, this plane of immanence is about the collapsing of all distinctions (mind or soul and body, interior and exterior), accepting, or enduring, the moment of *shitakataganai* (there is nothing to be done), a moment of collapse, and realisation. It is this moment that, for me, defines the recalibration of distance in the post-disaster, now nuclear, ecology of Tohoku, within which matter and meaning are inextricably linked.

Notes

1. An 'incident' is at level 2 of the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES), as determined by the International Atomic Energy Agency, from 0 to 7. An 'accident' is level 4 or 5, depending on the wider consequences. Fukushima was a 5. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were 7; nuclear bombs hit Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, then Nagasaki, days later on 9 August, during the final stages of World War II. More than 129,000 fatalities were estimated, mostly civilians.
2. This was the fourth event that had casualties. Following Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in 1981 workers were overexposed to radiation during repairs to a nuclear power plant in Tsuruga City, and in 1999, in two separate 'incidents' at nuclear plants, overexposure led to worker fatalities (see note 1 for definitions).

References

Aron, Arthur, Edward Melinat, Elaine N. Aron, Robert Darrin Vallone and Renee J. Bator. 1997 'The experimental generation of interpersonal closeness: a procedure and some preliminary findings.' *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23 (4): 363–77.

Austin, James H. 2009. *Selfless Insight: Zen and the Meditative Transformations of Consciousness*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Bell, Julian. 2013. 'Contemporary art and the sublime.' In *The Art of the Sublime*, edited by Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding, Tate Research Publication, January. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/julian-bell-contemporary-art-and-the-sublime-r1108499 (accessed 26 March 2018).

Benjamin, Walter. [1934] 1970. 'The author as producer', trans. John Heckman. *New Left Review* I/62, July–August: 83–96.

Bourriaud, N. *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland. Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 1998.

Burke, Edmund. [1757] 1990. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips. Oxford: Oxford University Press,

Carpenter, Ele. 2016. *The Nuclear Culture Source Book*. London: Black Dog Publishing.

Chimpon. 2015. *Don't Follow the Wind*. 11 March. Audio. http://dontfollowthewind.info/ (accessed 10 September 2019).

Clarke, Jen. 2017a. *Koryu* ('Exchanges'). Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen. https://knowingfromtheinside.org/files/koryu.pdf (accessed 8 June 2018).

Clarke, Jen. 2017b. 'Japan blues.' In *An Unfinished Compendium of Materials*, edited by Rachel Harkness, 84–8. Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen. https://knowingfromtheinside.org/files/unfinished.pdf (accessed 8 June 2018).

Clarke, Jen, Katagiri Hironori and Kate Thomson. *REC. 3.11*. Commemorative Exhibition. https://kenreitei.exblog.jp/iv/detail/?s=20990009&i=201503%2F12%2F72%2Fa0141072_0362276.jpg, 2015 (accessed 11 September 2019).

Deleuze, G. 2001. *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, trans. Anne Boyman. Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press.

Evans, Brad and Julian Reid. 2014. *Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously*. Malden, MA, and Cambridge: Polity.

Figueroa, Pablo M. 2013. 'Risk communication surrounding the Fukushima nuclear disaster: an anthropological approach.' In *Asia Europe Journal* 11 (1): 53–64.

Gill, Tom. 2014. 'Radiation and responsibility: what is the right thing for an anthropologist to do in Fukushima?' In 'Practicing a public anthropology of the East Japan disaster', special issue of *Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology* 15: 151–63.

Gill, Tom, Brigitte Steger and David H. Slater (eds). *Japan Copes with Calamity: Ethnographies of the Earthquake, Tsunami and Nuclear Disasters of March 2011*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Graeber, D. 2015. 'Radical alterity is just another way of saying "reality": a reply to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.' *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5 (2): 1–41.

Gunn, Joshua and David E. Beard. 2000. 'On the apocalyptic sublime.' *Southern Communication Journal* 65 (4): 269–86.

Haraway, Donna. 1988. 'Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective.' *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–99.

Hessayon, D. G. 2011. *The Bedside Book of the Garden: A Garden Miscellany*. London: Transworld Digital.

Holm, Isak Winkel. 2012. 'The cultural analysis of disaster.' In *The Cultural Life of Catastrophes and Crises*, edited by Carsten Meiner and Kristin Veel, 15–32. Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter.

Ingold, T. 2008. 'Anthropology is *not* ethnography.' In *Proceedings of the British Academy. Volume 154, 2007 Lectures*, edited by Ron Johnston, 69–92. London and Oxford: British Academy and Oxford University Press. (Edited extracts published in *British Academy Review*, 11: 21–3. https://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/08-ingold.pdf, accessed 8 June 2018.)

Iwata-Weickgenannt, Kristina and Barbara Geilhorn. 2017. 'Negotiating nuclear disaster: an introduction.' In *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, edited by Barbara Geilhorn and Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, 1–20. London and New York: Routledge.
Jelinek, Alana. 2017. Curator's statement in the exhibition leaflet for *Palimpsests and Remnants*, exhibition of works by Jennifer Clarke at the Anatomy Rooms. Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen.
Kant, Immanuel. [1790] 2007. *Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Kermode, Frank. 1977. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Knighton, Mary. 2014. 'The sloppy realities of 3.11 in Shiriagari Kotobuki's manga しりあがり寿がマンガで描く3.11のぞんざいな現実.' *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 11 (26), no. 1.
Manning, Erin. 2016a. 'Ten propositions for research-creation.' In *Collaboration in Performance Practice: Premises, Workings and Failures*, edited by Noyale Colin and Stefanie Sachsenmaier, 133–141. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Manning, Erin. 2016b. *The Minor Gesture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Masco, Joseph. 2004. 'Mutant ecologies: radioactive life in post–Cold War New Mexico.' *Cultural Anthropology* 19 (4): 517–50.
Matsudaira, Kōichi. 2017. Transcript of an interview with Mari Matsumoto: 'Thinking about radiation damage five years after the accident from a feminist perspective.' *Critique & Theory, Fukushima*, 9 February. English translation by Tomoki Birkett, Joshua Rogers, Neo Sora and Lita Hakoda published as part of 三・一一被曝被害者は語ることができるか」を海外で英訳・ご紹介いただきました 'Can 3.11 radiation victims speak?', https://jfissures.wordpress.com/2017/02/09/can-3-11-radiation-victims-speak/#f1 (accessed 20 March 2018).
McCurry, Justin. 2011. 'Tokyo governor apologises for calling tsunami "divine punishment".' *The Guardian*, 15 March. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/15/tokyo-governor-tsunami-punishment (accessed 11 September 2019).
McInerny, Peggy. 2016. 'Grappling with nuclear catastrophe in Japan.' UCLA, Terasaki Center for Japanese Studies, 7 July. http://www.international.ucla.edu/japan/article/165856 (accessed 8 June 2018).
Mol, A. 2002. *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Morioka, R. 2013. 'Mother Courage: women as activists between a passive populace and a paralyzed government'. In *Japan Copes with Calamity: Ethnographies of the Earthquake, Tsunami and Nuclear Disasters of March 2011*, edited by Tom Gill, Brigitte Steger and David H. Slater (eds), 177–200. Bern: Peter Lang.
Okada, Hiroki. 2012. 'An anthropological examination of differences between the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Great Hanshin Earthquake.' *Asian Anthropology* 11 (1): 55–63.
Recuber, Timothy. 2013. 'Disaster porn!' *Contexts* 12 (2): 28–33.
Ritchin, F. 2014. 'Why violent news images matter. *Time*, 2 September. http://time.com/3705884/why-violent-news-images-matter/ (accessed 11 September 2019).
Samuels, Richard J. 2013. *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Shondell Miller, DeMond. 2008. 'Disaster tourism and disaster landscape attractions after Hurricane Katrina: an auto - ethnographic journey.' *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research* 2 (2): 115–31.
Slater, David H., Rika Morioka and Haruka Danzuka. 2014. 'Micro-politics of radiation.' *Critical Asian Studies* 46 (3): 485–508.
Slater, David H. and Haruka Danzuka. 2015. 'Ethnographic perspective on oral narratives of risk communication.' Fukushima Global Communication Programme Working Paper Series, no. 11, December.
Sontag, Susan. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
Stahl, Titus. 2013. 'What is immanent critique?' SSRN Working Papers. http://ssrn.com/abstract=2357957 (accessed 11 September 2019).
Toomey, Anne H., Nils Markusson, Emily Adams and Beth Brockett. 2015. 'Inter- and transdisciplinary research: a critical perspective.' GSDR 2015 Brief. Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University.
Victoria, Brian. 2012. 'Buddhism and disasters: from World War II to Fukushima.' *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 10 (11), no. 7.
Zhao, Guoping. 2009. 'Two notions of transcendence: Confucian man and modern subject.' *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 36 (3): 391–407.