

**“JAPAN IS COMING HERE”: READING ANTICIPATION FOR CANADA’S
FUTURE(S) IN CANADIAN LITERARY AND FILM REPRESENTATIONS OF THE
2011 JAPANESE TSUNAMI**

by

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Abstract

On March 11, 2011, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake rocked Japan, the aftermath of which caused a tsunami that devastated several coastal regions, taking the lives of nearly 16,000 Japanese people and displacing hundreds of thousands more. This disaster also affected countries on the other side of the Pacific Ocean, and the marine debris that washed up on the shores of British Columbia following 3/11 has prompted several Canadian artists to portray this event in their work. This thesis explores the ethical implications of representing the tragedy of another country in three works: the novel *A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki, short film *Debris* by John Bolton, and feature-length documentary *Lost & Found* by John Choi and Nicolina Lanni.

This project examines how these Canadian narratives respond to and memorialize the 2011 Japanese tsunami. Employing rhetorical, literary, and ecocritical theories, the thesis uses discourse analysis to consider how national narratives of recovery and safety, as well as orientations toward the future, materialize in these works. It notes the differences that arise between literature and film representations, and between fiction and non-fiction. By tracing conceptions of time and nationhood in the three primary works, this project argues that shifting temporalities within memorials complicate the process of mourning for Japan's loss, and remind those in Canada, especially BC, that we too could be in this position.

This thesis concludes that artists depicting the earthquake and tsunami in their work confront the complications inherent in their own positions and their medium of choice, yet, at times, replicate the very issues they are bringing up. Read together, these works show how narrative representations of disasters play a specific role in the reconstruction of relationships to place and identities following an event so tragic. Additionally, they illuminate just how much memorials are intertwined with hopes and fears of a future which has yet to be determined.

Lay Summary

Following the devastating Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan in March 2011, Canadian artists have memorialized the disaster from the vantage point of the west coast of North America. This thesis examines works that think through the implications of lost objects that wash up on the shores of British Columbia and in the Pacific Northwest: *A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki, *Debris* by John Bolton, and *Lost & Found* by John Choi and Nicolina Lanni.

This thesis aims to contribute to scholarship on memory and disaster narratives through its analysis of the portrayals of Canada as vulnerable to both what is coming over from Japan and a similar disaster happening here. By tracing how these texts discuss time and place, we can learn more about the ways in which natural disasters are changing our relationships with ourselves, where we live, and our visions for the future.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, and independent work by the author, Lauren McGuire-Wood.

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Dedication

For my mom. I will never be able to thank you enough.

Chapter 1: Exploring works on the 2011 Japanese tsunami in the Canadian context

On March 11, 2011, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake rocked Japan, the aftermath of which caused a tsunami that devastated several coastal regions, taking the lives of nearly 16,000 Japanese people and displacing hundreds of thousands more. This disaster demonstrates that the Pacific Ocean is a particularly volatile source of catastrophe, with eastern Asia, Australia, and the western coast of North and South America susceptible to its whims. In addition to this immense loss of human life, the earthquake damaged the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, sending radiation into the surrounding area and ocean. The dual effects of the earthquake and nuclear consequences have compelled environmental scientists, critics, activists, and artists to bring up challenging questions of responsibility around energy consumption and climate change. As much as it is a force of nature, the ocean is connective, bringing together people separated by thousands of kilometres. The 2011 disaster affected not only people in Japan, but on the other side of the Pacific as well. In particular, the onslaught of marine debris on Canadian shores in the wake of the tsunami has prompted a few Canadian artists to portray this event in their work. This thesis examines three of the works that focus on the tsunami and its effects on coastal towns, especially in British Columbia (BC): Ruth Ozeki's novel *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013); director John Bolton's short film *Debris* (2015); and filmmakers John Choi and Nicolina Lanni's documentary *Lost & Found* (2014).

In *A Tale for the Time Being*, Ozeki shows the formation of a transnational and diasporic connection between Ruth, a Japanese American woman who lives on Cortes Island in BC, and Naoko (Nao), a teenaged girl in Japan who struggles to process her father's depression and the

bullying she faces at school. Ruth bonds with Nao through reading her diary, which arrives on the shore at Cortes Island; Ruth wants to believe that the diary is debris from the March 11th tsunami. Nao desires to both connect with her imagined diary reader and commemorate the life and politics of her great-grandmother, Jiko. The transnational effects of the tsunami are also explored in John Bolton's *Debris*: the film follows intertidal artist Pete Clarkson as he builds a memorial to the victims of the tsunami using found objects that have surfaced near his home in Tofino, BC. He wonders, from a space of relative safety, what a similar event might look like in his town. As well, Clarkson is a central figure in John Choi and Nicolina Lanni's *Lost & Found*, which moves back and forth between stories from post-tsunami Japan and interviews with beachcombers from Alaska, Washington, and BC. Besides Clarkson, the film shows three other men on the west coast of North America who find Japanese objects and set out to return them to their original owners. In the process, they develop meaningful, long-lasting friendships with the Japanese survivors. Rather than focusing on a single subject or town, Choi and Lanni's film shows the tsunami's bioregional effects on cities across the Pacific Northwest.

This thesis examines how these three different Canadian narratives respond to and memorialize the 2011 Japanese tsunami. While the subjects in the novel and two films find that discovering the marine debris helps forge bonds with Japanese victims and brings new life to the objects, there is another dimension I wish to explore. By tracing conceptions of time and nationhood throughout the works, I argue that shifting temporalities within these memorializing narratives complicate the process of mourning for Japan's loss, and remind those in Canada, especially BC, of its vulnerability to a similar event. This coastal relevance is indeed important since there is speculation as to both the prospect of debris, invasive species, and nuclear waste coming to Canada's shores from the 2011 tsunami, and risk of a tsunami devastating Canada

itself, given BC's own precarious position along active fault lines. Though the three works shift between genres, and between fact and fiction, each reflects on transpacific relationships, all while contending with a world driven by disaster capitalism and ongoing crisis. This thesis puts these three works in conversation to outline how, as disaster narratives which both remember the past and anticipate varying futures (especially as disasters become more frequent), they situate Canada and Japan similarly given their shared Pacific Rim locations and their susceptibility to the same kinds of natural disasters. Despite these apparent similarities, these two places are not mirror images on either side of the Pacific, and their contexts mean that these nations would respond to a natural disaster differently. By studying the positioning of the two countries relative to one another in these works, we can understand more about how disaster narratives operate under the threat of climate change.

This thesis asks the following guiding questions: 1) what are the rhetorical strategies deployed when Canadian artists represent the natural disaster of another country?; 2) how do disaster memorials speak to national narratives of recovery and safety, especially in transnational contexts?; and 3) how does anticipation of the future manifest itself through works that remember past events? My project uses discourse analysis, informed by literary, ecocritical, and rhetorical theories, to provide answers to these questions. In this first chapter, I will situate my research among these theories and literary criticism on Ozeki's novel¹, and establish the work that disaster narratives do in their specific contexts. In the second chapter, I will analyze the fictionalized account of the tsunami in *A Tale for the Time Being*. Finally, I will contrast the approaches in the documentary films *Debris* and *Lost & Found*, with special attention to the

¹ As of the completion of this thesis, there is no critical academic work published on *Lost & Found* or *Debris*.

differences in techniques of visual communication. I will conclude by reading the three works together to establish larger patterns within these Canadian disaster narratives.

1.1 Remembering Disasters and Constructing Time

When memorializing natural disasters of this magnitude, artists and scholars often invoke the tension between memory and futurity. Grief is punctuated with thoughts of prevention for the next time; this appears through the assembly of artifacts which help to form public memory. As rhetoricians Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian Ott (2010) state, public memory is made up of selective reproductions, which are activated by concerns, issues, or anxieties of the present (6). This highlights two key points. First, memory does not remain limited entirely to past events. Second, representations of disasters are not immune to the ideologies and positions of those who construct them. The way a disaster is represented is necessarily dependent on cultural, social, and historical contexts of the place in which the event happened, and on who creates the memorial.

Disasters become part of public memory when memorials are constituted by the state itself, or are opened up into the public sphere through artistic or media representations. Public memory is thus ‘invented’ in that it is constructed of rhetorical resources (Dickinson et al 13). Those inventing the works which form public memory are invested in representing a disaster in a particular way. Anthropologist Mark D. Anderson (2011) is concerned in his work with the way that disaster is written into being, especially how these events are represented in literature. He argues that “disaster narratives not only organize the facts into a coherent, meaningful explanation of catastrophic experience but they also factualize their version of events through careful use of documentary and testimonial modes of discourse” (7). Disaster narratives, as a way of making sense of and memorializing the event itself, create a particular representation of

the timeline of events often held up as truth. It can be difficult to criticize disaster narratives due to the fact that they do such important work to encapsulate a tragic event. As Anderson puts it, “literature constitutes a powerful method of persuasion: the rhetoric of disaster and crisis was particularly effective in promoting ideological points of view, particularly given the atmosphere of irrefutability that disaster narratives generate” (18). Because disaster narratives are inherently political in what they do and do not include, and how they do so, interrogating these narratives is critical to determine the part literature plays in reconstructing identities and places post-disaster.

Literary disaster narratives provide one sub-genre for discussing the ideologies around remembering disastrous events. Film depictions have a similar purpose, yet they combine images, words, and sounds to provide a perspective that literature does not allow. As film scholar Bill Nichols (2017) discusses, documentary film, in particular, is “neither a fictional invention nor a factual reproduction” but a representation that refers to historical reality from a certain perspective (18). He states that documentary filmmakers rely on editing to convey a logical flow of evidence to follow a particular argument about a factual instance (30). A certain representation, then, can be produced in disaster documentaries through strategic directorial decisions, including the use of various shots, camera angles, lighting, and sequencing, and the choice of location. With visual messaging in addition to verbal, film interacts with language and disaster in a different form than literature.

Though it must be kept in mind that the three works in this thesis do take certain rhetorical positions, bearing witness to a disaster is vitally important work. Sociologist Fuyuki Kurasawa (2009) posits that the act of transnational witnessing, or seeing a violent or disastrous event happen from another place, is a form of labour with five central purposes: giving voice to mass suffering against silence, interpretation against incomprehension, the cultivation of

empathy against indifference, remembrance against forgetting, and prevention against repetition (95). In this thesis, I am most interested in the fifth tenet: prevention against repetition. I see these three works taking up questions of how to prevent another disaster – not in Japan, but in Canada. Though the Japanese disaster is thought to be natural and thus working toward prevention would seem impossible, scholars from the Stockholm Environment Institute agree that human interference gives way to increased risk and that climate change, which has been rendering disasters more frequent, is squarely in the hands of human activity (Schipper et al. 2016). Additionally, there is little that is natural about the construction and location of the Fukushima Daiichi power plant and Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO) response to its meltdown. In recognizing this, prevention against repetition becomes important in both the genocides that Kurasawa writes about and climate change-related disasters. Kurasawa argues that, in order to propel transnational witnessing and to make it feel necessary, there must be an appeal to audiences to which they can respond (96), which may explain the focus on Canada and the Pacific Northwest in the three works to be discussed in this thesis. He believes that taking up memorializing elsewhere, or "restaging", may be "essential to counter state-sanctioned strategies of denial and social forgetting at the original site" (104). In the case of the 2011 tsunami, for example, the distance afforded artists from outside of Japan could lend itself well to criticism of TEPCO. It is of interest to note how these state-sanctioned strategies arise within the memorials, and which nation-state stands to benefit from them. Kurasawa also suggests that, while "the performance of dialogical and public tasks cannot rectify historical disasters, nor does it stand as an iron-clad set of procedures to avoid future ones", it can offer a path to resistance against something similar happening later (106). By expending this labour of bearing witness, there is a turn toward the future. It is worth exploring how work to prevent climate-related natural disasters

or to mitigate their effects can potentially be fostered in part through transnational witnessing, and how this is connected to representations in literature and film.

It is virtually impossible to look at natural disasters or climate change apart from their contexts, and to discount what took place before and what stands to happen after would be to see only part of the picture. Recently, memory studies scholars have been working to advance their field by focusing more closely on memory from a future-oriented perspective. In his newest work, postcolonial literature scholar Stef Craps (2017) reads several literary texts in the climate fiction genre wherein the narrator tells a story of Earth following a catastrophic climate change event. In particular, his research asks “what record might remain of us after _____” (482), leaving a blank where the reader can insert one of many possible disastrous outcomes. He then looks at literature that attempts to fill in that blank, preparing for any one of these situations. From this method, he suggests that looking at climate change from the future “offers a way of overcoming the imaginative difficulties created by the vast dimensions and enormous complexity of climate change, making this elusive phenomenon visible, tangible, legible, and morally salient” (482). While climate change certainly can be hard to pin down, climate-related disasters are already tangible and visible to the communities who have suffered through them. Similar to Kurasawa, Craps argues that, in looking into what has yet to come, there is a chance to see an outcome and prevent it from happening: “mourning future losses proleptically in order for those losses not to come to pass in the first place, the [texts he discusses] refuse to depoliticize mourning, mobilizing it instead as a possibly revolutionary force” (489). To him, mourning becomes a way to understand why loss happens and how to prevent it in the future. However, since memory studies scholars are just starting to focus more toward the future, there is very little scholarship that explores how future-oriented memory studies operates when looking at two

real places, rather than the more science fiction/dystopian approach taken by Craps. Whereas, in Craps' examples, a disastrous future is being simulated and taken as a lesson for readers, the disaster in the three works I will read here is being planned for and anticipated, at least from a Canadian perspective. In these works, the artists mobilize memory in the hope of averting what has yet to happen: in this case, a near duplicate version of the very catastrophe being remembered, the Japanese tsunami. As I will expand upon later, there are complicated issues within this orientation toward anticipation, which highlight cautions to be heeded when looking into the future(s).

1.2 Uncontained Transpacific Movement and National Identity

Part of the complications involved in anticipation comes from looking forward with a transnational lens while still maintaining and reproducing national categorizations. These works by Ozeki, Bolton, and Choi and Lanni, as they pertain to climate change and natural disasters, are entangled with ecocriticism and ecocosmopolitanism, which take up the creation and perpetuation of these different geographical categories. Ecocriticism has been called that which has one foot in literature and one foot on land (Glotfelty 1996), but it aims to bring to equal footing both human and non-human relationships. It often examines how these relationships are reimagined in literature and beyond. In one such instance of this, ecocritical theorist Ursula Heise (2008) acknowledges that local and national identities are difficult to navigate: they can be limiting yet also key to identity formation, especially in terms of talking back to colonial and imperialist influences. In the face of the inadequacy of these more local identities in establishing solutions for global issues (climate change, for one), she speaks of the urgency to develop “ecocosmopolitanism”, an environmental world citizenship (10). She states that new forms of

connectedness through technologies make it easier than ever to form relationships “no longer anchored in place” (10). This is in addition to another concept she mentions, Ulrich Beck’s idea of a worldwide risk society, where global risk of disaster creates a shared community. Heise advocates for deterritorialization, itself a future-oriented process, wherein the world collectively moves past borders to open up the possibility for this connectedness. While a global environmental citizenship would not erase local or national identities, the idea of ecocosmopolitanism requires a complex discussion about the very nature of these boundaries in the first place.

Literary theorist Karen Thornber is similarly interested in ecocosmopolitanism in her book *Ecoambiguity* (2012), in which she calls human contributions to the environment ambiguous: neither good nor bad, or sometimes both. She notes that ecocosmopolitan texts can “depict problems in one space as analogous to those in other spaces” (14). A literary work focusing on a polluted field, she asserts, can “speak of the resemblance between damage done to this tract of land and similar harm done to another at some distance” to establish a larger pattern of pollution (14). Heise brings in the work of novelist Ronald Sukenick, who is critical of using a visual shorthand for disasters, such as an oil-covered duck or a beach littered with debris, and how these images can stand in for many different ecological catastrophes. In her analysis of his work, Heise states that these “visual synecdoches can make risk perceptions portable, easy to transfer from one specific context to another, but [can also] occlude an understanding of a particular risk scenario as it is being interpreted in terms of images derived from another one” (138). If visuals of one place in turmoil comes to represent other places, it becomes less clear how each individual area would experience and respond to disaster. Further, Thornber discusses “environmental actuality” within a text, or events that have already happened, and

“environmental possibility”, the harm that a text “more abstractly implicates” (15). Though she calls both important given the global effects of ecodegradation, she wonders if a text’s “environmental possibilities can or should take precedence over its environmental actualities” (15). This thesis also considers how these two types of references to disaster, one that has happened and one that has yet to, appear and overlap in transnational narratives, and what this means in terms of memorialization.

While I see that ecocosmopolitanism has its strengths in generating shared concern over global issues and recognizing that our collective behaviour results in patterns across the planet, I question the efficacy of an ecocosmopolitan approach that too directly compares two places that are susceptible to the same disaster, which I see in the works of Ozeki and Bolton. Looking at similar tracts of pollution, as Thornber mentions, to determine the way greenhouses gases from human-created waste circulate in the atmosphere is very different than assessing the destruction and response of certain places, each situated in their particular context, to their own unique natural disasters. In the three works I will analyze, the approach of aligning Japan and Canada, two contextually separate places, depicts the anxieties of Canada in terms of its own safety ahead of a natural disaster as much as it shows Canada memorializing the recent events in Japan.

These anxieties arise in part because, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, plastic, nuclear waste, and invasive species are moving in ways that are outside the realm of human control due to the drift of the tsunami. In coming to Canada from Japan, they transgress national borders, and, from some perspectives, stand to put the safety of Canada at risk. This movement renders the event that involves these so-called ‘foreign’ objects – in this case, the tsunami – uncontrollable. Several scholars discuss how nuclear disasters such as Chernobyl transcend the place in which it happened because of the unpredictable behaviour of the radiation (Heise,

Nixon); this is also true, as Guy Beauregard (2016) discusses, in the case of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant failure in *A Tale*. The effects of both of these disasters move past their origin points toward other places. In his article on the rhetoric of nuclear museums, Bryan C. Taylor (2010) states that the “development of nuclear weapons thus destroyed and reconfigured traditional boundaries that had organized the cultural experience of political, military, and social spaces” (58). As discussed earlier in this chapter, Mark D. Anderson says that something similar happens with natural disasters. The compound disasters – nuclear and natural – that happened in Japan in 2011 have and are continuing to reshape these boundaries extensively. Engaging with a quite literal lack of containment in terms of lost objects and traveling nuclear waste can help to negotiate ideas of other forms of containment: these are invisible but very materially felt structures that fence people in or out, and that create the conditions for recovery from disaster.

The objects in the ocean after the tsunami, as the catalysts which facilitated these three works, are politically charged and bound to a particular nation. Literary critic Michelle N. Huang (2017) considers containment and deterritorialization as she follows the flow of plastic in Ozeki’s novel. Though she calls the ocean an extranational space, the tiny bits of human existence in the form of plastic that accumulate within the ocean are hardly free of national categorization. Huang argues that, although many nations are involved in the production and consumption of plastic items, Asian countries bear the brunt of the responsibility for plastic in the ocean; the “Made in China” label becomes a scapegoat for other countries who ignore their complicity in this industry (108). This is also true when Japanese objects drift up on the shores of western Canada. Though they are no longer contained within the spatial boundaries of a nation, they are once again reinscribed with Japanese origin from a Canadian perspective. Though these

objects are artifacts of a natural disaster, they have been used to draw attention to responsibility for the plastic in the ocean, though Japan is the only country specifically named as this is brought up. The conflation in intent between these objects and garbage being in the ocean is one example where deterritorialization falters. Despite the transnational inclinations of these three works, there are still ties to national identities and ownership where these objects are involved.

In addition to what is drifting over from Japan, Canada faces the ongoing threat of its own natural disaster. In particular, the western coast of BC has been waiting for The Big One – a massive earthquake – for many years, and the focus on this risk is where anxiety and anticipation around the future materializes. The feelings around this future that arise within some of the works in this thesis are complicated by the fact that the risk of a disaster is experienced differently across the hierarchies which create societal injustices. As literary scholar Rob Nixon explains in his book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), environmental risk is different for each country: it is disproportionately loaded onto poorer countries, and almost always onto people of colour (65). In his work, Nixon advocates for a redistribution of risk from the current, more disproportionate arrangement to one that offers a more equal share. Sharing risk equally starts with working against the assumption that risk is currently felt or experienced by every country the same way. Addressing global risk, then, must question national identities undergirded in ideas of safety: for whom is this country safe and how does the country mitigate its risk (or on whom does it displace its risk)? The topic of safety, especially in Canada, arises frequently in both Ozeki and Bolton's works, and the rhetoric of safety in narrative must be examined to determine the ways in which risk operates and can be redistributed.

Disasters are often described as a national event, since a nation rallies together in the face of adversity and resources from across the country are sent to assist in recovery. This is

especially true for transnational witnessing; though parts of Japan were hit harder than others, North American news outlet typically refer to the disaster as the Japanese earthquake and tsunami. As such, disasters stand to challenge the dominant narratives of a nation, should it be subject to a devastating event or preparing for one. Anderson notes that the way disaster narratives are created is “inevitably tied up with definitions of what constitutes loss”, and the concern over what is absent following a disaster includes concepts of ‘progress’ or development (5). Those who stand to lose the most in a disaster, then, are those nations who subscribe to the alignment of a successful civilization with linear progression. Defying normalized Western constitutions of progress can be helpful when considering global impacts of climate change and determining solutions to mitigate its effects. One alternative to a focus on risk is looking toward a shared future, or multiple possible futures, which instead reframes the conversation and positions humans to look at potential solutions rather than bonding over the idea of catastrophe. This can become especially apparent in literature and film, when authors and filmmakers can ruminate on what is to come and even make some futures come to life through their work.

1.3 The Future is Now: Crisis and Anticipation in Disaster Representations

Though looking into the future presents many opportunities to consider change, doing so is not an entirely positive experience, especially when preparing for a natural disaster. Several scholars agree that feelings of risk and anticipation of a number of different disaster scenarios have become a part of daily life (Heise; Mbembe; Roitman; B. Anderson; Adams et al.). Heise asserts that people no longer fear environmental disasters in the future so much as they “dwell in crisis”, and as a result of looking solely into what is ahead, past warnings are not heeded (141-142). In “The Figure of the Subject in Times of Crisis”, Achille Mbembe (1995) sees crisis as a

structuring device which does the work of constituting subjectivity. Janet Roitman, expanding on her translation work with Mbembe in her book *Anti-Crisis* (2013), further conceptualizes this idea, and maps the movement of the word ‘crisis’ from standing in for a singular event to an ongoing state of being. Roitman states that the notion of a constant crisis implodes the very concept of crisis. This implosion also serves to free crisis from its “temporal confines”, moving crisis from within its context to “crisis as a context” (Vigh qtd. in Roitman 66). Much like the lack of spatial containment as objects once contained in Japan now move toward Canada, crisis now breaks free of its former constraints of time to enter everyday life. In the process, this mode begins to reconfigure one’s very identity. As for how this state of perpetual crisis has come into being, Ulrich Beck suggests that the fact that knowledge about risks comes in such a highly mediated form leads gradually to a transformation in logic that structures everyday experiences (Heise 151). Mediation then plays a key role in determining how one responds to and lives within ongoing crisis. With this in mind, this thesis will pay particular attention to mediation of the disasters within the texts, especially from a national perspective.

Relying also on the idea of a structuring logic, Vincanne Adams, Michelle Murphy, and Adele E. Clarke (2009) discuss what they call “regimes of anticipation”. Anticipation is the affective response to the thought of crisis and, as a regime, anticipation takes on an organizing function. This anticipation becomes an economy which strategically shapes boundaries between bodies and relationships to objects, continually renewing and expanding (Ahmed; Adams et al.); it acts not as an emotion residing within a particular individual but in alignment with particular narratives, national and otherwise. Though it appears in many different forms, anticipation is especially relevant when considering climate change and natural disasters. To that end, anticipatory regimes are reactionary structuring systems which “*bring future disasters into the*

present in order to know how to organize ourselves” for what they predict (Adams et al. 248, emphasis mine). By blurring the lines of temporality in this way, anticipatory regimes enact an orientation toward a particular future. This future then takes shape as feared because present actions prepare for exactly that timeline; this can serve to reproduce the very conditions that developed this mode of preparation in the first place². An anticipatory orientation, which suggests that the future is “already formed, as if the emergency has already happened” (249), helps construct the very environment out of which these works are written.

This is similar to what Craps suggests can take place through literature: imagining the emergency as already having happened can help prevent it through noting what steps have led to that disaster in the literature and working against that outcome outside of the texts. However, Ben Anderson (2010), who studies how anticipation and its various iterations can affect the geographies of the world, is concerned with the ways in which simulations of the future can privilege one future over others. In choosing one future to be simulated, Anderson states that it is then “legitimized, guided, and enabled” (787), restricting the possibility of other futures. It is hard to determine exactly how climate change will take effect in BC, though the threat of an earthquake and tsunami is geographically possible. Moving ahead with this in mind and taking steps to counteract this specific disaster narrows many possible futures into one. If, as Anderson says, one of the tasks of grappling with a future yet to come is to “understand how the experience of the future relates to the materiality of the medium through which it is made present” (793), it is again important to look to media which choose to enact one specific future in order to understand how anticipation for that future materializes. If literature and film might offer a way

² Rather, both the works of B. Anderson and Adams et al. advocate for a more active approach: preparing and enacting a future that communities would like to see instead of fearing for the worst and watching that worst case scenario play out as imagined.

to play out possible futures, or simulate a particular one, how much should these media take up a very similar past event elsewhere to enact the future? To be more specific, this thesis will investigate how the three transnational representations of disasters I have chosen depict previous events in Japan and simultaneously position BC and the Pacific Northwest toward the future.

In addition to looking speculatively to the future, literary and cinematic representations are also sources of remembering, amplifying voices, and making some sense of tragedy. Scholars can turn to these works to understand more fully how they function within and push beyond the operating structures which can determine futures. These works focusing on the 2011 Japanese tsunami offer an opportunity to participate in acts of transnational memorialization, yet there is also a visible turn inward to question the position of Canada heading into possible disaster. This is fraught with complications: the event of the 2011 tsunami is not even over yet as there is still rebuilding to do in Japan and some of the effects of the tsunami, both nuclear and environmental, are still unknown. In structuring possible future(s) for Canada, memorializing artists must not overshadow the fact that a 9.0 magnitude earthquake has already hit Japan.

Chapter 2: Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*

In *A Tale for the Time Being*, Ruth Ozeki shows the extent to which relationships to the water shape the lives of the people along the coasts of the Pacific Ocean. Though her novel is about the Japanese earthquake and tsunami, it is not a typical disaster narrative, in that Ozeki does not directly depict the event. She brings to light just how heavily disasters are mediated, by recreating and even exaggerating these levels of intervention in her work. This is shown by the structure of the book: the reader sees Nao's diary not firsthand but through Ruth's interpretation of it, at the whims of her pacing (38) and where she feels the need to give more contextual information via footnotes. Though Nao lives in Japan, the entire novel takes place in British Columbia, since it is only through its discovery by Ruth and her husband Oliver that the diary has come into being for the reader. The memorializing aspects of this novel then take place from the distinct positioning of Ruth as a person living on a coastal island in BC. This particular island, and in effect the Canadian context, is central to the way various relationships to and around the Pacific – past, present, and future – are determined throughout the book.

In many ways, the Japanese earthquake and tsunami becomes a catalyst for Ozeki to generate compelling questions about transnational relationships, human and non-human interactions with environments, the importance of acknowledging and remembering shared (and usually asymmetrical) histories, and the future(s) of Canada. By working through these questions, Ozeki imagines new forms of kinship and understandings of place. Elsewhere, though, she limits conversations about the future, and her characters resign themselves to what seems to have already been laid out ahead. She writes about risk and loss associated with natural disasters, especially earthquakes, but locates these concepts as much in Canada as Japan. The potential in newfound transpacific relationships that her work creates turns to discussions of vulnerability

that centre around what is to come for the characters on Cortes Island. Thus, Ozeki's fictional portrayal of the March 2011 Japanese tsunami from the other side of the ocean is problematized by its Canadian perspective of the event and its anticipation of a similar disaster on the BC coast.

2.1 Writing Transpacific Futures: The Novel as a Medium for Disaster Memorialization

Memorializing the tsunami through fictional narrative offers Ozeki a unique way of working through the questions her work illuminates. By using the novel as her medium of choice, she is able to show dimensions of the disaster in a way that the two documentary films, to be discussed in a subsequent chapter, do not; she does so through variations in time and perspective, and moving in and out of reality. *A Tale* is metafictional: there are stories within stories, time within time. The novel bears witness to the disaster transnationally, and it becomes a treatise on the act of remembering, and how world-shifting events like this are informed by past events and can alter the future. Importantly, it expands the idea of reconstruction to encompass more than the material process of rebuilding after a disaster. Ozeki considers the remaking of identity, relationality, and spatiality following such a devastating event. In his work on literature after disaster, Mark D. Anderson finds that it is “through a process of dialogue and negotiation that disaster narratives emerge to explain individual and collective experiences of the catastrophe” (6). *A Tale* makes room for this dialogue through its shifting narration, epistolary elements, and philosophical musings, and demonstrates how the form of the novel enables the process of identity (re)formation in the midst of a disaster.

Ozeki contextualizes the 2011 disaster within both national and personal histories. She weaves together the lives of her two primary characters, Ruth and Nao, and these characters bring with them the many other relationships that help constitute them as subjects. As she writes

her own memoir, Ruth memorializes Nao, who has stated that she is writing the diary in part to memorialize Jiko, her great-grandmother³. In Nao's world, the tsunami has not yet taken place; there is no reference to it in her diary. However, Ruth finds the diary following 3/11, and so her understanding of what she reads within it is structured not only by the historical relationships between Japan and Canada, but also by her understanding of shifts in the world since September 11, 2001 and March 11, 2011. Ozeki notes that the changes in media coverage after 9/11, especially how quickly news outlets move from story to story, have affected how disasters are memorialized; this is compounded by the way politics between Japan and Canada, and even other adjacent countries, have played out over decades of time. More specifically, Ozeki presents a picture of Japan before the earthquake and a closer look at a life that may or may not have been lost in the disaster, which gives the opportunity to consider this formative role that nature plays for those living on both sides of the ocean.

With the entries in the diary interspersed with Ruth's story, Ozeki provides not only a profile of a tsunami victim⁴, but gives an intimate picture of her life. When Nao introduces herself, Ozeki has not yet established that her words are being mediated through Ruth. Though her story is disclosed by another character, Nao has a chance to tell it, something that many victims are never able to do. Nao narrates her own life in the blank pages cleverly disguised within the cover of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, or *In Search of Lost Time*. Concerned with temporality herself, Nao thinks about how, through the act of writing and the eventual reading of the diary, the song she is listening to plays in her reader's past, but her present, while she wonders about her reader, who is somewhere in her future (3). Nao's focus on

³ Memorialization is clearly of great importance in the novel, as Jiko at one point even has a small funeral service for a number of pieces of waste in the temple that have served her and Muji well (205).

⁴ If it is assumed, as Ruth does at the outset, that Nao has not survived 3/11.

time and her outlook on life renegotiates how Ruth considers these same concepts. Because these philosophies are so deeply rooted in Japanese and American cultures, Ruth, who feels connected to these cultures as well, becomes invested personally in both Nao and the 2011 tsunami. Through this, Ozeki contemplates the great strength in diasporic relationships in growing connections across place and time.

By including Nao's story in addition to Ruth's, Ozeki presents important cultural aspects of Japan that speak to narratives of both loss and recovery. The novel portrays the fundamental relationship that people on the Japanese coast have with the water, and how the ocean organizes their everyday lives. Nao describes herself as ronin, which translates to a "samurai warrior who doesn't have a master", but notably, she states that the word is drawn with "the character for wave and the character for person" (42). Through the use of Japanese characters, Ozeki shows that the form of the water makes its way into language, which structures Nao's very understanding of herself. Nao says this is what she feels like: "a little wave person, floating around on the stormy sea of life" (42). The idea of being lost or without direction is depicted through her relation to a wave; the ocean becomes a way of relating to and making sense of the world. Similarly, Jiko points out that "a wave is born from the deep conditions of the ocean ... [and] a person is born from the deep conditions of the world. A person pokes up from the world and rolls along like a wave, until it is time to sink down again. Up, down. Person, wave" (194). Again, Ozeki depicts strong spiritual associations between waves and people, that waves are a way of understanding human existence and time in Japan. As Nao learns about how her family lives – and dies – relative to the ocean, she comes to understand them more, especially Jiko and her great-uncle Haruki #1, who flew his plane into the Pacific as a pilot in World War II. In constructing this version of the 2011 tsunami, Ozeki is able to pay tribute to the links between

people and place in Japan, and specifically what it means to live somewhere that is surrounded entirely by water.

It is not as though Ozeki implies that Japanese relationships with the ocean are entirely peaceful; no one living along active fault lines is immune to a force so unpredictable. She gestures to the ways national narratives are formed through this proximity to the ocean. Nao notes that Jiko's "little temple is falling apart and there's no money to repair it, and [Jiko's caregiver] Muji says she wonders what's even holding it to the mountain. She worries about earthquakes and is afraid the buildings will just collapse and slide down into the gulch and wash out to sea" (178). Though this example shows how Ozeki marks the ocean as a point where Japan could become endangered, she counters the frightening side of the ocean by considering it the final resting place of Jiko: "Nao knew that Jiko's little wave was not going to last and soon she would join the sea again" (195). Here, Jiko is a wave brought up to shore, only to wash out with the tide again in death as part of a cycle of recovery and renewal. Through her memorialization of the 2011 event, Ozeki shows that the Yasutani family's relationship with the ocean is one of balance; though there are times of fear and uncertainty, there is also rebirth.

Through this representation of Japan and her corresponding depiction of Canada, Ozeki emphasizes the many factors which affect how memory of an event is constructed across the Pacific. After Ruth finds the diary on the beach in Whaletown on Cortes Island, she discusses its contents at length with her husband, Oliver. As an environmental scientist, he always has a logical approach to counter Ruth's more whimsical imagination. Through the conversations between these two characters, Ozeki negotiates the rational and the emotional sides of contending with a disastrous event. She allows herself this room to work through and dispute various theories of time and its connection to the environment: Oliver's scientific side is

frequently challenged by natural occurrences and Ruth finds herself having to rein in her creative interpretations of events to align with fact. For example, Ruth's excitement about the diary's contents is contrasted with Oliver's explanation of gyres in the ocean and the drift of objects coming from Japanese homes following the tsunami: "all that stuff from people's homes in Japan that the tsunami swept out to sea? They've been tracking it and predicting it will wash up on our coastline. I think it's just happening sooner than anyone expected" (14). Oliver, concerned with how debris is coming so quickly that it overrides even the most scientific of data collection and renders expectations of events less useful, counters Ruth's joy in having found a lifeline to a world outside Cortes Island. While she looks at the diary as treasure, he refers to people's belongings as "all that stuff" and speaks of "our coastline" as if it is upon Canada's own possession that these othered objects have encroached. Through their debates, this and others to come, Ozeki contends that there are difficulties in memorializing a natural disaster created by contrasting perceptions of the same spaces or even opposite sides of the ocean. She shows that the ways in which memory is formed are often at odds with each other.

Since the novel allows Ozeki to move between these perceptions, as well as time and space, in ways that filmmakers may not be able to access, this literary disaster narrative offers a unique representation of 3/11. In one brief section of the book, Ozeki moves outside of the worlds of her two main characters and returns to the site of destruction in Japan. This is her most direct memorialization of the tsunami, and a significant narrative choice, in that it takes place somewhere between the time when Nao's diary was written and when Ruth finds it. Imitating the style of a documentary film in literary form, Ozeki describes a series of mediated interactions with Japanese people during and in the immediate wake of the tsunami. The first is a television interview with a tsunami survivor, a sanitation worker, as he stands where his house used to be.

He had lost his daughter and was looking for a single object by which to remember her. His conversation with a reporter is summarized by Ozeki: “the smell, he explains, is unbearable, a choking odor of rotting fish and flesh, buried in the wreckage” (111). Focusing on the smell is a reminder of the reality that is missing through the barrier of the television camera, and even the novel itself. This is not an experience that is the reader’s, nor Ozeki’s, but is all information gleaned secondhand, and through a variety of media. This is not Ozeki’s story to tell, and she can only tell the story from the perspective of Ruth, who has found the diary that contains Nao’s words. However, this section includes the parts of the tsunami and its aftermath that neither Nao nor Ruth’s perspectives can cover. For example, as the wave hit, Ozeki writes, “those tiny people didn’t stand a chance, and the people standing off-screen knew it. Hurry! Hurry! Their disembodied voices cried, from behind the camera” (113). The idea of seeing the victims but hearing the survivors through this video further expresses the challenges of knowing of an event about which one can do nothing. Here, Ozeki suggests the limitations of transnational witnessing and the complications of speaking for something that can only be perceived through someone else’s senses.

Remarking perhaps on the novel as a form of memorial, Ozeki repeatedly shows the failures of language and, at times, translation to either express or prepare for disasters. Just following these television examples, she draws attention to the letters carved in stone spelling out “do not build your homes below this point!” (114). Though these warnings stand the test of time far better than information distributed through paper or online, they are still not enough: “A few [stones] had been shifted by the tsunami, but most had remained safely out of its reach. ‘They’re the voices of our ancestors,’ said the mayor of a town, destroyed by the wave. ‘They were speaking to us across time, but we didn’t listen’” (114). The warnings, either in the moment

in the video, or created hundreds of years in the past on stone, suggest that these technologies are insignificant given the magnitude of the movement of the earth. Ozeki comments on the specific power of language as that which continues past human life, though it is also language that organizes conceptions of time. After she notes that past warnings were not heeded before the tsunami, Ozeki lists items in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch gyre in the present progressive tense: within a tidal wave, there is “a mobile phone, ringing deep inside a mountain of sludge” (114), among other examples (Moss). These possessions, each having once belonged to a person, continue to live past their time with humans; they have withstood disaster to remain amongst the other lost belongings in the ocean. The objects do not exist solely within the confines of the novel, but the verb tense brings them beyond the novel and into the future. In remarking on the endurance of both the stones and these objects in the gyre, Ozeki considers the human mark on the earth that continues past our life spans. These artefacts of human existence are able to survive through disaster while humans may not. Though she has not given any further information about these objects within the gyre, they are all connected to their own stories, much like Nao’s diary. Though *A Tale* delves more deeply only into Nao’s story, this segment of the book hints at the many other stories it cannot tell, as they are outside the bounds of this text. Ultimately, Ozeki underscores the complications of language in attempts to convey and prepare for events, and its ability to memorialize. Though she experiments with time and consciousness, especially in these sections, Ozeki locates other aspects of the novel in reality. This is evident when she writes of the connection between nationality and disaster, especially around the rhetoric of risk and safety.

2.2 Shaping National Narratives of Safety and Risk through a Transnational Context

As mentioned previously, Ozeki uses the form of the novel to take liberties with how she depicts time and place. One benefit of this is that she gives herself the freedom to move between national borders with ease. When she shifts between nations, her novel provides a more global picture of the 2011 disaster that could not be achieved when rooted in just one place. However, her characters remain reliant on their nationalities through which to structure their understandings of the world. In his article on the novel, Guy Beauregard is critical of Ozeki's portrayal of the characters as so closely tied to their countries so as to almost personify them, especially that Nao – and in effect, Japan – needs to be rescued while Ruth/Canada becomes a place of refuge (102). In my own research, I am concerned with the way Ozeki establishes Canada's safety, as I assert it is integral to the rhetorical positioning of Canada as potentially unsafe. To be unsafe is to be exposed to danger and risk; this threatens to eliminate the qualities for which Canada is so well known and the national narrative of safety that many Canadians uphold. Ozeki's increasingly uncanny comparisons between Japan and Canada through the novel parallel the two places in a such a way that it puts the very safety of Canada at question. Setting up this potential for vulnerability creates room to think about Canada's own position as under threat of a natural disaster, especially given Ozeki's direct references to a possible earthquake. By alluding to what threatens Canada's safety, Ozeki presents the possibility of a country at risk.

Ozeki strongly associates Ruth and Nao to the countries in which they have each lived. In part, this is what makes the blossoming diasporic connection between Ruth and Nao so strong; when Ozeki shifts perspectives across the ocean and parallels the lives of the two characters, this connection becomes more visible. Their relationship is healing: finding the diary inspires Ruth to renew her connections to Japan after her parents have died, while writing the diary gives Nao a

sense of purpose during a traumatic time in her life, though she never knows her reader. Ruth feels “a keen and sudden sense of kinship with this woman [Nao] from another time and place” (150). The intensity with which they form this bond is juxtaposed with the distance between them, both spatially and temporally, almost as if it is enough to make up for how far away they are. Akin to Heise’s notion of ecocosmopolitanism, this suggests that national borders are permeable, as these relationships can happen in spite of these boundaries.

However, Ozeki’s portrayal of the two countries is deeply complicated, and she often reminds the reader of the friction that national borders have and continue to cause. Ozeki invokes the myriad historical connections between Japan and Canada, and brings a distinct awareness of national events into her novel to show how they continue to play out into the future. For Japanese people, relationships with Canada, in particular British Columbia, are born from a storied and violent history, especially the legacy of internment camps in the 1940s. Ruth works against the erasure of Japanese history on Cortes Island: she still calls a formerly Japanese-owned property (pre-internment camps) there by its former name, Jap Ranch, though the moniker makes the white people in her vicinity – including Oliver – uncomfortable (32), and thinks of Akira and Kumi, two Japanese climate refugees, who have been trapped in Campbell River, BC, since the tsunami (234). These examples, and the similarities across time of being confined in a place that was supposed to feel like a home, suggest that relations between Canada and Japan in the past will continue to form the basis of relations in the future.

There is tension, then, between Ozeki’s weaving of historical treatment of Japanese people in BC with present day politics, including the ongoing effects of colonialism in what is currently Canada, and her reproduction of the idea that Canada is a safe country. Both Ruth and Nao have lived in America and, throughout the novel, they each refer to the difference in

perceived feelings of safety between America and Canada. Nao's father, Haruki #2, compares safe Canada to its sexy and dangerous counterpart: America (44). Similarly, Ruth remembers how she could not wait to return to Canada after 9/11 because Canada was safe (271). Ozeki uses repetition frequently as a rhetorical device; in this case, her repeated use of the term "safe" to describe Canada reveals how this qualifier has come to become normalized by those living in Canada and outside of it. However, Ozeki's insinuation that one is more protected in Canada forgets the complicity of the country in innumerable world conflicts as well as the colonialism and racism that define Canada as a nation-state. This is again at odds with her depictions of violence and discrimination in Japanese and Canadian relations, and with Indigenous nations, throughout the novel. Ozeki points out that these contradictions in memory are constantly at play. What becomes troubling is how her parallels between Japan and Canada, especially when portraying Japan as a country that has become unsafe, infer that Canada is under threat of natural disaster.

In describing these parallels, Ozeki illuminates issues of risk and potential loss. What particularly resonates in the context of this novel is the promise that Mark D. Anderson suggests literature has to "construct local concepts of risk, vulnerability, loss, and recovery" (15), especially when technical knowledge comes up short in these areas (17). Ozeki's novel on the Japanese disaster begins to construct these concepts for Canada, a country potentially subject to the same catastrophe. While trying to understand the fallout of the disaster in Japan, Ozeki thinks about what is at stake elsewhere. The focus on nationality returns thoughts to how each country functions when considering a crisis instead of looking at natural disasters and climate change as world issues. Ozeki repeatedly reinstates Canada's national narrative of safety through dialogue between the characters, and in effect, considers the country's susceptibility to risk and loss.

Discussions of safety do not arise just for Ruth and Nao, but come up between all of the characters in the book. Many of those significant conversations are located on Cortes Island, where there are feelings of blame toward Japan for Canada's newfound position of being on the receiving end of what is arriving from Japan. Though Ruth feels a strong connection to Nao, the conversations she has with her neighbours ultimately help construct her understanding of Nao's diary. Beauregard refers to this group of Ruth's acquaintances on Cortes Island as a "community of engagement", borrowing the term from Lawrence-Minh Bui Davis (100), to show the effect they have on Ruth as she reads. These are the characters with whom Ruth converses, willingly or not, about life on the island. Her investigation of the diary would not have been the same without the expertise and input of Oliver and their neighbours. The diary reinvigorates feelings of unease for the islanders, who cannot land on one main cause of what is unsettling to them following 3/11: radiation, invasive species, or another tsunami altogether. They become increasingly concerned with what will determine their own future rather than what has already happened in Japan. Here, Ozeki demonstrates the failure of the islanders to connect the tragedy to people's lives and their own (and their country's) complicity in global events. The small town community becomes a microcosm of those nationally who uphold the narrative of Canada's safety.

When Ozeki reproduces these perceptions of safety through conversations between her characters, the containment of Canada as a safe place, one free of harmful toxins that belong to other countries, is at question. Ozeki again uses specific grammatical inferences to emphasize the potentially threatening movement over from Japan, and how risk is centred on the lives of the islanders, those on the receiving end of Japan's nuclear waste. There are several instances in which the islanders *are worrying* – again in the present progressive tense – about the Fukushima radiation, and its unknown effects. In one such example, Ruth goes to the post office on Cortes

Island, a key gathering place for the island community, where everyone already knows about the diary and is concerned about contamination. One islander, a retired schoolteacher, states “I don’t know about you, but if stuff’s washing up from Japan, I’m worrying about radiation” (145). The colloquial term “I don’t know about you” suggests that this person is looking to see if others share their opinion. They refer to “stuff” rather than personal effects, which removes humanity from the disaster and maintains a form of blame on Japan, considering it only at a national level. In this example and others, the islanders’ uncertainty is both about the future and continues into the future. The discussion turns to catastrophizing: they talk about how the radiation would first get into oysters and salmon, then the rest of the food supply and the air. Interestingly, the post office, the place in which the islanders get their information from the rest of the world, is the setting where the community worries about the world outside the island. Whereas Ozeki shows Ruth making a connection to a Japanese life after the tsunami, she depicts the islanders as relating the contamination of their food and water – and, in effect, their basic necessities for survival – directly back to Japan. This ongoing concern for maintaining Canada’s safety supersedes the disaster in Japan and Ozeki conveys how these conversations help reconfigure relationships to place and to others.

Ozeki further demonstrates that the islanders are concerned for, and are anticipating, the future. In the two weeks following the earthquake, Ozeki states that, globally, “we were all experts on radiation exposure and microsieverts⁵ and plate tectonics and subduction” (113). Though she points out that other countries quickly forgot about the tsunami when more current news was picked up by media outlets, those in Cortes Island continue to discuss this information,

⁵ A unit of measurement used to determine the effects of radiation in the body.

likely due to its relevance to their own position next to the ocean. While Ozeki uses complicated jargon that may confuse a lay person, she implies that the islanders were so well-versed in this vocabulary that they would at once know the terms to which she refers. The need to carefully collect information and cultivate expertise on the subject of radiation is also aligned with this uncertainty for BC's future. In effect, possessing more information is seen by Ruth and the islanders as having the potential to mitigate their sense of risk and help safeguard the island. The concern for and research on what is happening suggest the islanders are anticipating a particular future for BC. What makes anticipation an especially powerful affect is that the threat does not come from one absolutely knowable place but from many, each with its own particular type of concerns attached. This is why Adams et al. argue that global warming and other human-caused environmental crises "infuse a sense of looming time limits that generate urgency and anxiety about acting now to protect the future" (248). With the present progressive tense and the need for expertise, Ozeki portrays the islanders as concerned with how their current actions will translate into what is to come and their future safety; they live with a sense of ongoing crisis. Though Ozeki states that "questions about time were meaningless on the island" (224), her representation of the islanders defies this very statement, as they are very interested in how the 2011 disaster affects them. With all of the uncertainty about when the radiation will arrive or if it has already, the islanders are thinking of Canada's future as their utmost priority. Even Ruth is not immune to this: despite her sense of kinship with Nao, she cannot prevent herself from thinking about her own position, as will be discussed later. Ozeki constructs the concepts of risk and lack of safety locally on Cortes Island through the conversations between the islanders as they think about what is still happening in, and because of, Japan.

In addition to the debris and radiation coming over from Japan, Ozeki highlights eerie geographical similarities between Japan's islands and Cortes Island, in addition to the proximity of each to the ocean. In doing so, she further alludes to Canada's vulnerability to a similar natural disaster, through having the countries mirror each other in extraordinary ways. Ozeki compares Fukushima prefecture, where the nuclear power station was located, and Cortes Island, where Ruth and Oliver live, which, in spite of its morbid nickname, Island of the Dead, is "a relatively benign and happy little isle" (141). Fukushima had been a happy place pre-tsunami as well, as the name even means "Happy Island" (141); here Ozeki demonstrates how easily the islands can fluctuate between happiness and death. Additionally, Oliver and Ruth's neighbour, Muriel, talks about how anthropologists will be one day "trying to make sense of our material culture from all the bright hard nuggets they'll be digging out of the middens of the future" (94). Middens are piles of old refuse that almost become a type of archaeological site, one that remembers the objects of the past that have made up a civilization. On Cortes Island, dump operator Benoit assists Ruth's mother, who has Alzheimer's, in finding old treasures from the free bin, and helps with the French translation of the diary of Haruki #1. Ozeki depicts the dump – a midden in the making – as a source of both joy and knowledge, that even a heap of garbage can contain insight into a culture and the potential for new information. Later, Ozeki again uses the word, referring to the wreckage in Japan as "a ghastly midden piled several meters deep" (112). These piles are the sites of potential answers to why something has happened, especially when the event has already left the humans of that time erased. Ozeki links the two sites through the use of the term "midden": the ones in Japan are being examined while the ones in Canada, yet to be assembled completely, will be there to consider when the time comes.

As she draws these similarities between each place, Ozeki maintains a strong connection to the nationhood of each. After her trip to the post office, Ruth tells Oliver that “some of the oyster guys are worried about nuclear contamination” (187). He does not seem concerned, but rather connects the type of oyster they are eating, which he points out is not native to BC, with the place from which they were originally found, Miyagi. The Miyagi coastline was “one of the areas hardest hit by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami” (132); as it happens, “old Jiko’s temple was located somewhere along this stretch of coastline” (141). Ozeki draws another parallel between the countries through the oysters. Upon learning of their origin place, Ruth feels “the Pacific Ocean suddenly shrink just a little” (187). Here, something that was once prevalent in Japan has now taken up residence in Canada, and without warning, the wide expanse of the ocean is felt to close in on her a little more. Just like the “sudden” rush of kinship Ruth felt with Nao and the use of the term “midden”, Ozeki employs repetitive language to show similarities and affect a collapse of time and place, which brings Japan then and Canada now closer. The oysters, an invasive species, are at once another connection between Ruth and the diary that seems too strong to be coincidental and also inextricably linked with talks of contamination in Canada now. The transfer of the oysters from one place to the other, potentially contaminated with radiation, is still enmeshed with nationality. While Ozeki highlights that the characters’ discussions about the radiation reconsider the boundaries of the space that were once familiar, the islanders find it worrying, and would rather maintain their boundaries and safety. While these natural occurrences supersede geographical limitations, Ozeki shows that these phenomena are still heavily associated with narratives the islanders uphold for each country.

The uncanny similarities coming to Ruth’s attention since finding the diary begin to further bring the future into the present. Oliver talks about how lucky they are to live in a place

where the “water is still clean” and “we can still eat the shellfish”. With Ozeki’s use of the word “still” multiple times here, she implies that the food and water are safe for the present but that the future is unknown. In response, Ruth thinks of Jiko’s temple clinging to the side of the mountain in Miyagi – or not – and says “I wonder how much longer we have...” (188). Ozeki makes a direct connection here between Jiko’s temple withstanding an earthquake and concern for another unnamed threat to Canada. Oliver further signals that the clean water and safe food could be coming to an end closer than they think, and that they must prepare for a future which is always already on the way, when he replies “who knows ... better enjoy it while you can” (188). Though Oliver means it in a casual, even flippant, way, Ruth has immersed herself in tsunami facts, radiation conversations, and the diary of a girl’s life before she may or may not have fallen victim to the disaster; this is becoming more of a reality. While the novel offers new realms of possibility within the world, especially for transnational relationships, Ozeki shows that the conversations between the islanders, by contrast, are quite definitive and even limiting with regard to the future of the BC coast.

Though the novel moves between time and place throughout its entirety, there is a progression which develops similarities between Japan and Canada in a way that troubles the certainty of Canada’s future. As Ruth finds that the diary has a startling effect on her own life, Ozeki turns the tides of reflection to BC’s own susceptibility to a disaster. In some ways, these explicit comparisons in the novel may strengthen the power of transnational witnessing by bringing a personal connection into the fold. However, they also cast doubt on Canada’s place as a safe country when Ruth expands ideas of risk from Cortes Island to Canada; these conversations about nationality at times place Canada and Japan in opposition as victim and aggressor, respectively. Ozeki establishes how concepts of safety, risk, and vulnerability

manifest through conversations between the islanders, and how a disaster reconstructs the very narratives for which a place is known. She shows how anticipation as an affect becomes powerful through concern for natural disasters as well as national narratives that isolate countries rather than bring them together.

2.3 Bringing Future Disasters Home

The novel anticipates and prophesizes the oncoming natural disaster that will one day hit BC when Ozeki moves from alluding to the possibility of a tsunami happening in BC to referencing it directly. This anticipation for the future is shown through shifts in time and through the melding of the present and the future as the characters question how language affects these conceptions of time. For Ozeki, wondering about the future of BC and Canada makes space not only to react to the Japanese tsunami, which happened despite all warnings, but to speculate as to what the disaster might look like elsewhere. Again, through diction and repetition, Ozeki uses language to strategically position Canada as potentially expecting the same disaster through which Japan recently suffered.

Through a number of direct references, Ozeki brings the focus of the novel onto a disaster in BC. In one such instance, Ozeki positions nature and technology in opposition through Ruth and Oliver's differing opinions on a cell phone application Ruth learns about. She finds an app that uses imagery of the folkloric Japanese giant catfish that is said to be the cause of the islands' earthquakes – in an attempt to “heal the political and economic corruption in society by shaking things up” (189) – and shows it to Oliver. The app, Yure Kuru, which alerts users to movements

in the earth via their phones, does exist in Japan and is widely used⁶. Oliver responds: “that’s cute. We’re due for a big one here. I wonder if it’ll work in Whaletown” (199). He moves immediately from admiring the app aesthetically, rather than for its functionality, to bringing the conversation again back to the possibility of an earthquake in BC. While Ruth thinks of the app in the context of the diary and as a modern interpretation of Japanese theories on the positive aspects of earthquakes, Oliver returns to thinking about technology’s capacity to save his own place of residence. Ozeki positions technology as a double-edged sword: it is both able to predict the future, while simultaneously being unreliable. She does this through the dialogue between Ruth and Oliver. The caveat in this case is that Whaletown is so behind the times that the app may not serve a purpose at all, leaving the islanders as vulnerable as they would have been even without it. Ozeki establishes the app and older technologies, such as the writing on the stones to warn about building homes below a certain point, as insufficient in the event of a natural disaster. Despite the technologies put in place to protect one through these disasters, she implies there is no way to feel completely safe.

Ozeki unequivocally shows this when she again uses the word “safe” to describe Canada, though now she does so in express relation to a possible earthquake. In a later conversation, Oliver and Ruth discuss the app again, extending their anticipation from the regional perspective to the national. When Oliver looks up Yure Kuru, he mentions “it won’t tell us anything about earthquakes here in Canada”, to which Ruth replies: “I thought Canada was safe” (202). Matter-of-factly, Oliver responds “no place is safe”. Ozeki uses the discussions between Ruth and Oliver

⁶ Yure Kuru is available for only \$1 US per month and offers a number of services including earthquake and tsunami warnings (and an earthquake countdown clock), a function to alert family as to the user’s safety, and a way of measuring the shaking users are feeling. Users can see others’ emoji reactions to the quake they felt, creating a kind of crowd-sourced acknowledgement that the event happened. It currently has a rating of 3.8 out of 5 stars.

to query Canada's safety, representing emotional and logical responses along traditionally gendered lines. Their research into what happened to Nao is replaced with an inward turn to earthquakes in Canada. Ozeki locates the possibility of an earthquake within their world as Oliver suggests that they do not have to go to Japan to use the app since "Japan is coming here" (202). The effects of the tsunami are not the only thing drifting closer; Japan itself is as well. For dramatic emphasis, Ozeki ends this section of the chapter here; with the spacing between the statement and response, she allows the gravity of this moment to settle in. The next chapter begins with Ruth's reaction of disbelief. Oliver explains that the earthquake moved the coast of Japan closer to Canada through the release of subduction⁷ (202). Not only that, Oliver reminds Ruth that the shift caused the earth to rotate faster, and the increase in that speed of rotation affected the length of the day: "our days are shorter now" (203). With both the shift of the island and the drift in the ocean, Japan is both literally and figuratively moving closer to Canada, and more quickly than ever. With this, Ozeki introduces the idea that Japan's past – the earthquake and tsunami – is coming ever nearer to Canada as well.

After planting this imagery of the inevitable future approaching faster and faster, Ozeki depicts Cortes Island specifically as defenseless in the face of a powerful storm. Technology is seen to repeatedly fail the islanders, with the Internet frequently going down for days at a time during storms and the aforementioned post office, a fairly outdated service, as the main source of incoming news and knowledge otherwise. In the event of a storm with prolonged effects, the islanders may be virtually unreachable and difficult to rescue. By outlining conceptions of time

⁷ Subduction had been all over the news in the two weeks after the tsunami, along with information about radiation (113). When Ruth does not remember this word when Oliver first brings it up, Ozeki is at once critiquing the lifespan of disaster information in the 24/7 news cycle and media's role in forgetting disasters, and confirming that expert knowledge is important to being prepared for what will come and staying safe.

on the island, and especially what the storm does to that time, Ozeki shows that wild storms render the island nearly incapacitated as it is, setting up the question of whether the island could survive an even bigger natural event. In the book, Cortes Island is brought to a near standstill by two storms, most notably a particularly bad one toward the book's end. During the first, Ruth contends that "storms on the island were primeval, hurling everything backward in time... [the storm provokes] that ghastly sensation of being cast back into nothingness, nonbeing, of reaching for her face and not finding it" (148). Ozeki locates the storm in direct and violent opposition to human life, and against ideas of progress, especially with her phrasing "primeval, hurling everything backward" (148). Though she means that storms such as this one have been happening long before humankind, or that this kind of natural event is timeless, the relation of this particular storm to her own existence centres the human experience once more. Later, when the storm ends, it was as if "the world was restored to its time and place" (172), which suggests that the storm and the modern world could not co-exist. Ozeki evokes the possibility of loss and grief through the imagery of the storm, when Ruth no longer considers herself as in existence during the height of the storm. Again, she shows that Cortes Island is able to fluctuate between happiness and potential disaster.

Ozeki further demonstrates the inability of language alone to do justice to the storm and suggests through the collapse of time in language that the future is already almost here. Nao considers her association with the word 'now': "The word now always felt especially strange and unreal to me because it was me, at least the sound of it was. ... But in the time it takes to say now, now is already over. It's already then. Then is the opposite of now. So saying now obliterates its meaning, turning it into exactly what it isn't" (98-99). Her suggestion that now never really exists means that the future is already here, that there is no time to act in the now

before it is over. Ruth repeats Nao's exact words later, feeling "the world of the diary becoming strange and unreal" (227). Ozeki reflects the two women in one another, and as Ruth picks up the same language, the past repeats itself. If Ruth had to describe the feeling, it would be "a temporal stuttering, an urgent lassitude, a feeling of simultaneously rushing and lagging behind" (227). As if words are increasingly less useful, Ozeki depicts this feeling typographically, with the words moving from lower case to upper case, to ever larger and bolder font, rather like a tsunami wave as it swells to its crescendo and crashes. On the opposite page, Ozeki writes only the smallest word "stops" at the bottom right of the page, a tiny aftershock (229). Ruth struggles here with the concept of 'now' as well, as she is caught between her new understandings of connections across time and place from the diary, and applying this as she meditates on the future of BC's coast. Through this undoing of Ruth's conception of 'now', Ozeki troubles how language is used to describe time, and the future is brought into the present.

In addition to the typographical wave, Ozeki uses the description of literal waves during yet another, more powerful storm as a metaphor for losing time; this becomes a way for Ruth to make sense of what Nao is teaching her. When the storm hits, the fate of the island looks even more bleak. According to Ruth, the storm makes everything "so dark she could barely see the line between the sky and sea" (329). It renders previously easily delineated natural features indistinguishable and the surrounding blackness threatens the island life they know. As the storm progresses, Ruth ponders the island's total visual annihilation: "one minute the island was there, its presence marked by clusters of tiny glinting lights, and the next instant it was gone, plunged into the darkness of maelstrom and sea. At least that's how it must have looked from above" (342). With this storm materializing immediately following her conversations earlier with Oliver about BC's Big One, its ominous appearance offers a premonition of how the island would fare

in a larger natural disaster. The ambiguity of Ozeki's use of the word "maelstrom" is of particular interest: in this context, it could mean either whirlpool, or turmoil and upheaval, which coincidentally enough, evokes images of the very havoc an earthquake or tsunami would wreak on the island. Picturing how it looks from above suggests others around the globe watching rather than experiencing, bestowing on Cortes Island the treatment of Japan during the 2011 tsunami. Through this imagery, Ozeki simulates the disappearance of the island to further trouble conceptions of the difference between past, present, and future.

Though the reader knows the book's entire timeline, as it is contained conveniently within its covers, Ozeki makes frequent reference to futures that exist outside of the book. She strengthens the previous parallels she has made between what has already happened in Japan and what is likely elsewhere, sooner than ever. Invoking the theory of quantum mechanics, Oliver and Ruth discuss that there are innumerable other possible worlds within the universe, in which outcomes besides the tsunami have taken place. Despite seeming fairly open to this theory, Ruth eventually grows impatient about learning of the other worlds and wants to know if Nao is alive or dead in *this* world, which she describes as a "harsh reality" (400). Here, Ozeki shows the complications of making sense of the world after disaster and through grief: Ruth moves between thinking there are multiple worlds outside of her own and that on one of those planes Nao is alive and well, and strictly adhering to what is happening in her own universe. Ozeki describes the complexities of dissonant quantum theories, one that suggests that time collapses into one future and another where other worlds continue to be added into a "web of unknowable worlds" (415). Ozeki does not claim to have an answer to this problem but presents it as a hindrance around considerations of the future. The conflicting theories, with no mathematical equations to back them up, become representative of dueling perceptions of what will happen in the future. By

offering these disparate conceptions of time, Ozeki represents the complications of considering the future, though in many ways Ruth remains tied to the one for which BC seems to be headed. Throughout the novel, Ozeki contrasts the feeling of anticipation for the future that is created through media coverage and conversations amongst the islanders, and Ruth's wish to see the future as a multitude of possible worlds, even one in which climate change and natural disasters have not happened. Through this, Ozeki shows how disaster can constantly remake understandings of the world and one's position within it, even across an ocean.

A Tale for the Time Being attests to the relationships of coastal peoples to the ocean and to others across the water, and questions current constitutions of time. Though Ozeki shows Ruth rethinking her relationship to Japan and to her own island after reading Nao's diary, she considers BC through the lens of a possible crisis. In writing such a strong connection between just two countries, Ozeki sets up the islanders to perceive Canada's potential loss as somehow greater than Japan's, first with radiation then with its own oncoming disaster. *A Tale* conjures up uncertainty: in some ways, Ozeki imagines many futures, but limits that to the possibility of just one future in other instances. This novel considers historical and cultural differences when it comes to strengthening transpacific relationships, and sees these nation-to-nation relationships as worth tracing through the past and present to determine how they affect future actions. In equal measure, the novel documents the reinforcement of national narratives following natural disasters, even when it is simply the threat of a disaster in Canada's future that questions these narratives. In telling this tale of multiple lives entwined despite the separation of the ocean, Ozeki establishes a version of Canada's future that looks similar to what already happened across the Pacific in 2011; Canada's prospective loss and vulnerability begin to overshadow conceptions of the same for Japan.

Chapter 3: John Bolton's *Debris* and John Choi and Nicolina Lanni's *Lost & Found*

Debris, a short film by John Bolton, and *Lost & Found*, a documentary by John Choi and Nicolina Lanni, are two Canadian-made works that explore the impact of the tsunami on the western coast of North America. While they each discuss found objects from Japan that wash up on shores across the ocean, the films take very different approaches to the objects. The objects in *Debris* are eventually used to construct a large-scale monument to the Japanese tsunami victims in BC, and the film itself chronicles the artistic process of the man who made the monument, Pete Clarkson. *Lost & Found* is not so much focused on what is lost as what is found: those who meet through the making of the documentary form lasting transpacific friendships, and the film represents the ocean not as a potential obstruction to or source of loss of modern life but the site of reciprocity between the countries which border it. *Lost & Found*, like *Debris*, interviews Clarkson about his art but Choi and Lanni also tell the stories of three other men in the Pacific Northwest and a number of Japanese survivors, showing the multiplicity of relationships that surround each object, much like in Ozeki's novel.

This chapter will contrast the rhetorical approaches of the filmmakers and consider the role each has in creating public memory of 3/11. *Debris* compels the viewer to imagine a particular future; the tsunami in Japan becomes a way for Clarkson, and perhaps many Canadians, to consider and even regulate their own behaviour when thinking of their own eventual memorials. In *Lost & Found*, the tsunami opens up a number of different futures. For each family involved in the film, their response to what is yet to come parallels their own particular experience of the tsunami; the 2011 disaster does not become a point of comparison

from which to consider any other country's likelihood of experiencing something similar. Both films involve carefully structured conversations between interview subjects and linger on landscape shots to suggest meaning. In particular, the filmmakers use physical signage – street signs, posters, and otherwise – to relay affective messages. Through their narratives, the films present divergent ways of considering the future following a disaster, both from a Canadian perspective.

3.1 Filming the Disaster Aftermath: Visual and Material Memorials

Both of these films rely on social testimony to achieve their desired effect, which illuminates the way temporality plays into these documentaries. Film theory scholar Chris Cagle (2012) states that character-driven documentaries have a “strong bias toward the present tense”, as even historical subject matter is shown through its present-day impact on the film's social actor (56). Thus, the choice of social actor plays a large role in whose conception of the present – and the anxieties about the future this reveals – is favoured in the film. Ursula Heise and Karen Thornber each claim that narrative genres have a distinct ability to take data and information on disasters and organize it into stories that can point to a particular political stance. Given this, Heise emphasizes the need to question how such stories can “postulate certain causal sequences, to make some scenarios plausible and others less so, make some appear more threatening, and outline likely future courses of events” (139). This is evident here, as the filmmakers choose particular locations and people to feature in a certain order, play music that will most effectively evoke the desired emotional reaction, and leave out what they do not consider necessary to relay their message. These subjective choices that determine relevance and importance help shape these artifacts of public memory through the manipulation of time and emotion.

Though Bolton focuses primarily on Clarkson's experience of the tsunami in *Debris*, he uses visual metaphors to suggest that this one experience is but a single piece of a larger picture. Bolton establishes the setting for the film with long shots of the ocean and the forest (00:00:20-00:00:43, 00:02:00). Through his framing of Clarkson within the vast size of these natural features, he defines Clarkson's relationship to his surroundings and locates him within them. Contrasted with the expansive natural elements, Bolton transitions to the fenced off area, guarded by a gate and barbed wire in his yard (00:01:00), where Clarkson brings a Japanese beam he has found. Unlike the shot in which the beam is first shown, alone on the beach after its tumultuous voyage, it is securely contained within that area, where Clarkson can manage and inventory all of his findings. Bolton shows Clarkson bringing order to the chaotic destruction wrought by the ocean, through his careful attention to each object. Interspersed in Clarkson's narrative, Bolton features strategic shots of particular objects first on their own, then within a greater context. This is often first seen as a close-up of the object as it would appear washed up on shore. The camera then pans out to show the object in its context within Clarkson's art: what first appeared to be a buoy is actually a bird, then revealed even further to be part of a piece featuring two birds (Figure 1, 00:03:15-00:03:22). Bolton emphasizes through visual means what Clarkson states verbally: that each object represents, and is in relation to, a life. Before assembling the memorial, Clarkson shows the many pieces of debris he has collected from the beach, each remembering, for him, "a trip to the beach and back" (00:04:57-00:04:59). Bolton not only connects the objects as symbols of the lives of Japanese victims in that they each tell a story, but shows that the collection has also become a measurement of Clarkson's life.

As he documents Clarkson's conceptualization and construction of a replica of the tsunami wave, Bolton creates a narrative arc for one of the found objects to represent the

significance of each object apart from the mass of plastic in the ocean. He films Clarkson taking a particular trip to the beach, punctuated by wide shots of the ocean. Clarkson finds a plastic shipping pallet with a Japanese character on it; from the gooseneck barnacles on it, he can tell it has come from the middle of the ocean (00:05:34-00:05:42). Instead of focusing on Clarkson as he drags the piece of plastic along the sand, Bolton frames Clarkson's legs, which are level with the Japanese character on the pallet (Figure 2, 00:05:45); this centres the object itself rather than Clarkson. Bolton shows the entirety of the pallet's journey once in Tofino: it was picked up at the beach, transported by car then by foot to the forest, and finally installed in the monument. He then replicates a similar technique within the memorial as with the bird art: the camera closes in on each object, then pulls back to reveal their place within the art project as a whole (00:12:39-00:12:51). The camera frames the objects within the blue netting, to position them as if they were back in the ocean. Through strategic use of distance and framing in his shots, Bolton indicates that each object is an individual piece of memory work with its own life and history that exists within a greater context in the world.

Choi and Lanni also show the relationships between place and self that these objects, and the absence of objects, represent. The filmmakers capture the many different ways of creating memorials, the locations of which span multiple countries⁸. The tributes they show are not always large in scale: they are in old schools, in homes, or represented by a single family photo. Others are memorials that have changed form since the tsunami, such as the Obon Summer Festival in Japan, which started long before 2011 and now annually honours the victims (00:45:19-00:45:30). Choi and Lanni commemorate some losses by showing the lack of physical

⁸ Choi and Lanni undertook a fundraising campaign in Toronto wherein they raised \$30,000 to send their interview subjects to Japan to return the found objects (J. Adams); they thus had the budget to film in many locations.

possessions with which survivors can connect to loved ones; they refuse to let the objects stand in for their human owners. In one particular interview in Japan, they film a woman trying to find memories of her family, who were all lost. No photographs remained, only formal government documents such as report cards and pay slips (00:03:33-00:03:43). This particular part of the film raises a salient point about the types of information that linger after a disaster. The genre of the remaining documents reinforces government sanctions of personhood as that which survives; this no longer shows a life as it is lived. As Rebecca Hankins and Akua Duku Anokye note in their article “Documenting Disaster” (2016), it is helpful to record the stories and lives of survivors to ensure that the “‘official’ accounts” are not the only ones on record, and that historians and archivists must capture the “reactions of those impacted beneath the view of political history and its narratives of power” (228). The unofficial accounts that these records forget help encapsulate the spectrum of loss, which is not accurately represented by government documents. In filming the survivors coming to terms with a sense of their past life and moving forward, *Lost & Found* offers survivors the chance to make new visual memories of the families, to depict them outside of the formal documents and narratives represented by statistics.

Further, Choi and Lanni remark upon the constraints of even these more unofficial accounts to portray the full magnitude of a disaster. When Clarkson visits Japan with John Anderson, his fellow beachcomber from Forks, Washington, and they explore the damage done in the cities, Clarkson notes that they actually have not seen much of the ocean since being there, given that most of the damage took place many kilometers away (00:53:20-00:53:38). Though the ocean is not visibly present in the shot, Choi and Lanni show the enormity of its strength as they follow this conversation between Clarkson and Anderson; this counters the peaceful establishing shots of the ocean they use when introducing each interviewee. Though they have

moved away from the ocean to show more of the disaster's reach, they still cannot capture the full extent of the damage, which exposes the restricted nature of documentary film as a medium. Choi and Lanni then use mixed media techniques to reproduce footage of the disaster they could not have had any way of capturing themselves. As the men walk further along the road, an illustration of housing infrastructure begins to build up on the side of the road and then crashes down again (Figure 3, 00:29:30-00:29:33). The thin lines of the drawing allow the rubble in the background of the documentary footage to show through. This rendering almost gives a glimpse into the future, of a Japan that has been rebuilt, then reenacts the tsunami's destruction. In this moment, Choi and Lanni mimic the entire lifespan of a building sped up into mere seconds, collapsing time into that one moment. In showing the nonlinearity of time through this drawing, they open up depictions of the rubble for reinterpretation. A brief glimpse of what has been or could be there is disrupted by a return to its current state. The combination of media troubles the truthfulness of the documentary, in that the artistic liberty taken in the drawing may not equate to reality. At the same time, it adds another dimension of witnessing to it with a reenactment, but does not reinforce the trauma of the first time the houses crumbled through reliving footage from 2011⁹.

While they memorialize the disaster differently, the filmmakers of both *Debris* and *Lost & Found* endeavour to contradict the alignment of the Japanese 'debris' with 'garbage'. As one volunteer on a Japanese beach in *Lost & Found* states, "when you use the word debris it implies garbage but can be so much more" (00:15:03-00:15:09). Choi and Lanni use the objects to keep an unofficial historical record of what is found, and begin to account for the object's past,

⁹ Choi and Lanni briefly show video footage of the wave at the beginning of the film for context but do not show it again as they bring in the survivor testimony. They use the line technique again to re-enact the destruction of Sakiko's restaurant (00:30:02-00:30:06).

present, and future. Despite Bolton's invocation of this word in the very title of his film, he shows the intimacy and sentimentality tied up with each personal object, and depicts Clarkson undergoing a shift in his own perception of the items he finds, though he has been picking up objects from the beach for years. However, the filmmakers cannot control the perception of their work after it has been completed. During the uptake of *Debris*, Clarkson's work was shown in an exhibit called "Art, Aliens and Radiation", sponsored by the Vancouver Aquarium. This included a panel of speakers, including Clarkson himself. The panel combined Clarkson's memorial work on the tsunami (separate from *Debris*), and the rhetoric of invasive species as "alien" and radiation all in one breath. To align Clarkson's project with scientific predictions about what else is washing up is disconcerting. In the further mediation of his work, Clarkson's art, and to an extent *Debris*, becomes aligned with these breaches of Canada's containment. During the presentation, there is a video clip advertising the Great Shore Clean-Up event, in which volunteers laugh together as they remove garbage from the beach. The objects are dissociated here from their previous owners; this seems incongruent with the message in Bolton's film. Though the filmmakers dispute the conflation of intent between the loss of the Japanese objects and global disposal of plastic waste, they are unable to control which conversations arise as a result of their work. These discussions around *Debris* after it had been released are also indicative of an orientation toward the future, and particularly what stands to harm Canada.

3.2 National and Bioregional Conceptions of Place in a Time of Crisis

Each film considers the importance of place in memorializing a disaster, especially when the effects of that disaster extend past national borders. With perceptions of risk and safety so

heavily tied to national narratives, it is important to interrogate these narratives to understand how nationhood determines the ways disasters are remembered. Rachel DiNotto (2014), who looks at three post-Fukushima works from Japan, argues that the national narratives that followed 3/11 were at times problematic for its memorialization. First, they do not allow for the existence of a perpetrator “beyond the uncontrollable forces of nature” (343), which she points out excludes TEPCO from taking blame for the portion of the disaster for which they were responsible. DiNotto adds that these narratives prioritize bonding as a nation and rely on stereotypes of Japanese people, which depict them as “if not fully at peace with nature, at least better equipped than Westerners to accept and even appreciate the disruptions of nature and the evanescence of life” (343). These stereotypical depictions leave little space for the grief and trauma which accompany an event like this. Canadian films of course have their own sets of limitations in terms of knowledge of the event, especially a lack of direct experience. Both films analyzed here are structured through particular narrative choices with regards to nationality and this affects their portrayal of the disaster.

Choi and Lanni deliberately minimize the effects of national narratives in the film when they show the bioregionalism of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. The text on the screen at the beginning of *Lost & Found* states that the tsunami washed into more than 90 cities near the Pacific Ocean (00:01:13). The film does not mention which countries those cities are in, nor which side of the ocean they are on. In doing so, Choi and Lanni move beyond borders while still very much considering that the tsunami’s effects have varying levels of severity depending on which side of the ocean their interviewees are on. With their establishing shot of each different town a peaceful view of the ocean, Choi and Lanni make it difficult to distinguish between the towns as the film progresses, which associates the town less with the nation in which it stands

and more with the people featured there. Notably, the name of each town is displayed in text on the screen first in Japanese then English, regardless of the country being featured. This suggests that the film is made for the Japanese viewer as much as it is for the North American one. The introduction to each place has them all on equal footing, which attests to the connectivity of the body of water rather than portraying the towns as part of a larger nation grappling with the aftermath of 3/11.

In contrast, Bolton focuses more explicitly on BC, and in doing so, offers a perspective that addresses the particular threat of an earthquake and tsunami along the western coastal shores of Canada while it remembers what happened in Japan. When describing the items, Clarkson is able to give a brief background into the use of some of the items and suggest their significance in Japanese culture; he is still removed from any authority on them. While the length of his film likely precludes Bolton from showing many more people, it is notable that none of the social actors in the film are Japanese. In fact, the whiteness of those interviewed is especially telling in terms of who is permitted to speak on behalf of BC and even Canada, and who feels threatened about the future that may already be on its way¹⁰. Clarkson and his family appear to be in a place of relative safety: their large, oceanfront home suggests at least some degree of wealth, and this makes clear what stands to be lost for the Clarksons in the event of an earthquake. As Clarkson confronts what he and the rest of BC stand to lose, the specific dialogue that Bolton chooses to feature reinscribes feelings of unease about Canada's safety in anticipating a disaster toward the end of the film. When he is in the forest getting set to build his memorial, Clarkson keeps thinking back to tsunami, and specifically "how safe [people] would've felt in their communities,

¹⁰ There are many voices that are left out of this conversation around memorializing the disaster in Tofino. Given the length of the film – less than 15 minutes – it was likely not within its scope to interview many more people.

and suddenly, you know, out of nowhere came this horrific wave” (00:11:43-00:12:13). He explicitly names the wave as the source of this loss of safety in Japan. Later, he talks in more depth about the memorial, saying that it is “fitting for this setting”, which feels “like a safe place”, in that it is “really contained, almost like you would [feel] in your home” (00:12:14-00:12:28). Bolton then cuts to a shot of the choppy ocean outside to the Tofino Botanical Gardens, showing just how close the memorial is to the waves (00:12:37). Shortly after discussing the disruption of Japan’s safety by the tsunami, Clarkson describes the site of the memorial as safe too. Bolton portrays nature as that which provides safety and takes it away; this idea of safety is structural to the very composition of BC and Canada. Safety is inherent in the very way this memorial of the tsunami is constructed.

However, Bolton challenges this feeling of safety that Clarkson so assuredly states is located within the forest. In one such scene, Clarkson considers: “If this happened to us, how would we want people to treat it, how would we want them to remember us? I try and ask myself that question all the time” (00:07:06-00:07:19). This is one of the most direct conversations that Clarkson has in which he imagines the risk for BC and even begins to anticipate his own memorialization. Clarkson distinguishes between ‘us’ and ‘them’ but it is unclear to whom he is referring here. In this context, it seems as though he is considering how Japan would view Canada in the event of a similar disaster, since he refers to Japan only by nation and not specific regions, and how they would reciprocate the labour of transnational witnessing. By repeatedly asking himself about this, Clarkson envisions a particular future already on its way and a similar disaster that is preordained. From that, he determines his own behaviour based on how those in the future will perceive him. Bolton’s juxtaposition of the memorialization process with these self-reflexive thoughts is potentially generative: by repeatedly questioning how others would

read his memorial, Clarkson holds himself accountable to the victims and survivors in Japan. However, he conditions this accountability on suffering a similar fate to the one he is currently memorializing. Geography scholar Ben Anderson warns of associating ‘the future’ with a “disruptive eruption of the unexpected”, and suggests that there is the risk of missing the way that geographies are constructed through the “constant folding of futures into the here and now” (793). In other words, thinking of the future only in terms of the worst that is bound to come is limiting to the way temporality and even new forms of spatiality are formed. In Bolton’s film, Clarkson considers his own demise, but lets his anticipation of that particular future guide his actions. Asking what kind of mark Canada leaves on the world as he considers the same question about Japan places the prospective memory of one country in the same position as the material loss of another. Whereas Choi and Lanni defy this separation through their depiction of affected cities rather than specific countries, Bolton establishes that national ties remain important points of reference in memorials and can evoke a sense of duty.

Choi and Lanni depict scenes of what DiNotto considers Japan’s national narrative of recovery, with paper cranes and signs that read “May Peace Prevail on Earth” (Figure 4, 00:26:53) and “Love Save Japan” (Figure 5, 00:27:06). Though these signs appear in the film, they are not necessarily the focus of the scene. Instead, the film captures the efforts of the many volunteers removing debris, documenting the physical labour involved in recovering from a disaster. The volunteers continue to work in spite of the signs; this demonstrates the way survivors are agents of their own reconstruction, and questions the national narratives of recovery that are relayed through the signs. Choi and Lanni draw attention to the fact that some survivors are still living in temporary evacuation housing (00:26:15), which indicates the lasting impact of a disaster; there is not much that love can do to expedite the process of survivors

returning to more permanent homes. Although the film displays the differences in the removal of debris in Japan, then in Canada and the United States, Choi and Lanni rarely concern themselves with nationalities outright, besides using Japan as their starting point. Rather, they explore how the disaster extends itself across borders and across time. Their bioregional approach contends that Japan and the Pacific Northwest are similar in some ways, but does not make a direct comparison between any of the places. The ocean is what connects each city and town together, and their future is imagined through these similarities, which are not seen as risks. Rather, Choi and Lanni conceive of futures that defy commonly held national narratives.

3.3 Just the “Beginning”: Future Ocean-centred Relationships

Perceptions of nationality appear differently within these films as the filmmakers consider futures beyond the earthquake. *Lost & Found* muddies the lines of nationality to the point that each country is nearly indistinguishable from one another, at least at the ocean. By contrast, in *Debris*, Clarkson’s location is central to how he conceives of the future, and his position in Tofino leads him to consider a particularly ominous future, bolstered by Bolton’s choice of music and sequencing. Whereas the peace and love signs in *Lost & Found* are juxtaposed with survivors’ physical reconstruction efforts, Bolton features several more ominous signs in *Debris* that are meant to alert those reading them of what is to come. For example, one of the first signs appears as Clarkson is going through his vast collection of found objects. After commenting that, to him, signs with letters on them are particularly intriguing, he extracts one from the pile. The sign says “beware of” in capital letters, and the sign was torn in two right before its declarative statement ends (00:04:28-00:04:53). Whatever was meant to be fear-inducing has now been obliterated by something much larger. This uncertainty, the call to

beware of perhaps the very force that destroyed the sign, foreshadows the other content of the film. In the sign's new location in Tofino, Bolton implies that it has a different meaning: it cautions against risk that is unknown.

Shortly thereafter, Bolton provides one such potential risk: he shows a tsunami warning sign on a hill leading down to the beach. It flashes into view as Bolton begins to trace the path of the plastic shipping pallet. The camera then zooms in, allowing the sign to take up a significant portion of the screen, a deliberate focal point (Figure 6, 00:06:00-00:06:06). This sign is not in Japan but in Tofino; this serves as a reminder that BC's coast could be susceptible to the same conditions as what has recently destroyed the coast of Japan. This is reminiscent of Ozeki's reference to the physical tsunami warning signs, which went unheeded. When read together, the film and novel offer parallels between Japan and Canada that make clear their shared seismic insecurity. The two signs in *Debris*, one broken in half by a mighty blast of force, and the other disputing the very safety of those who choose to go past it are the only ones represented in the film. The signs warn of the very same occurrence to which Clarkson's monument is paying tribute. Bolton establishes the similarity in the locations of tsunami risk, one in which disaster has already struck and the other where it has yet to.

Bolton creates a further likeness between the two places when he shows how the displacement of an object, a table in this case, can disrupt familial traditions and rituals. When Clarkson remembers where he was during 3/11 as he and his family eat dinner, he notes that, upon watching all the "overwhelming" media images (00:08:13), his thoughts turned to fear about a tsunami coming back toward Tofino. He thought that "the whole world must be upside down" there (00:08:30-00:08:32). Even his teenaged son says that when a tsunami comes it is most likely "going to wipe out our area", which is "pretty scary to think about" (00:08:34-

00:08:42). Their language evokes concern for their own safety; Clarkson's first thoughts after hearing about the disaster went immediately to his family's potential exposure to what Japan was facing at the time; this conversation centres the family's thoughts about BC's own disaster in the wake of 3/11. Following the Clarksons finishing their meal, Bolton lingers on a shot of the wood dinner table that his family just vacated (00:08:43-00:08:48). This shot is contrasted by one a few moments earlier of a long wooden table in Clarkson's collection of found objects from the tsunami. Clarkson suggests that a Japanese family likely used a table like this for dinners and special occasions (00:06:19-00:06:32); the tables are the setting of life-sustaining nourishment and bonding between families. With these frames so close together, Bolton invites a comparison between the two tables through the long, focused shots: both tables have been the location of meals before a tsunami, though only one tsunami has happened.

Though the ending of *Debris* is left open, there is one particular future that seems more likely than others. The final frames of the film are almost reminiscent of the Gothic genre: Clarkson stands on the deck of his home, looking out onto the dark and dangerous waves. First, the camera is in close to his face, then pans out to show him dwarfed by the crashing waves (Figure 7, 00:13:25-00:13:38). The film ends on an ominous note: the music is in a minor key and the screen goes black (00:13:39). While the music likely reflects the somber completion of Clarkson's memorial, it also recognizes the potential future of this side of the coast. Through showing Clarkson's self-reflexivity and paralleling similar objects, Bolton leads the viewer to draw comparisons between Japan and Canada in the context of a disaster, inviting contemplation of one's own memorial through watching the construction of another.

Conversely, Choi and Lanni consider the complex formation of transnational relationships that develop after the tsunami. Each object becomes a mark of the relationships it

has facilitated and helps represent the many people with whom the object has come in contact. After introducing each person's location, Choi and Lanni list the object underneath the name of the person each subsequent time they appear on the screen instead of their hometown. For example, Kevin Easley, from Alaska, is also referred to by the object he found: a helmet belonging to a young boy named Tsubasa. Because he found the object and its owner, he is able to bear witness to a direct experience of the tsunami. When Easley visits Tsubasa's family, they share stories of resilience and renewal through a translator: the family has been able to re-open a smaller version of their company that had been swept away. When Easley returns the helmet to Tsubasa, he has added his own touch to the found object by carving pictures onto it. This shows that the object, just as their relationships, can evolve and take new shape over time. Easley calls the return of the helmet and his meeting with Tsubasa and his family a new "beginning" (01:08:45): multiple pasts collide to bring about this particular future. Here, rather than representing the tsunami as an irrefutable end point, something from which it is too difficult to come back, Choi and Lanni rethink what it means to live in Japan, and across the Pacific, following the disaster, through their narrative and subject choices.

In addition to showing relationships to place, Choi and Lanni suggest that there is potential within transpacific friendships to aid in the healing process after 3/11. The primary narrative arc within the film follows David Baxter, who finds, among other treasures, a large buoy in Alaska. His wife, Yumi, is Japanese and they have three sons. Baxter locates the owner of the buoy, Sakiko Miura. She had three buoys outside her restaurant, which closed after it was destroyed on 3/11. The buoy that the Baxter family found was one of them: on it was the character for KEI, which was part of Sakiko's husband's name, Keigo; he died over 30 years ago. Even though Sakiko's husband did not die in the tsunami, Choi and Lanni show the

accumulation of loss which exacerbates the disaster's wake. They allow the viewer to witness the complete story of a lost item, from its history before the tsunami to its safe return. Later, the entire Baxter family returns the buoy and they have dinner with Sakiko. The bond between Yumi, who translates, and Sakiko is especially strong, as they share the same language. Sakiko says the boys came to visit "like [her] own grandchildren", for her birthday (Figure 8, 00:51:49-00:51:53). Choi and Lanni feature the buoy in the background of this scene, which highlights its role in enabling these new relationships and represents Keigo at the table and through her past, present, and future. It is presented here that healing is non-linear, because even though Keigo was lost many years ago, he was almost lost again during the tsunami. His memory still continues to shape Sakiko's life in innumerable ways. As they present the burgeoning diasporic friendships that the tsunami debris facilitated, Choi and Lanni underscore how Sakiko's idea of family is redefined after the tsunami to include the Baxters.

In *Lost & Found*, the future is conceived through the combined knowledges and experiences of those from across the bioregion. In the final frames of the film, Choi and Lanni show Sakiko flying to Alaska to visit the Baxters, where she looks over the other buoys David has found and explains the origins of the various sizes (1:15:44). While in *Debris*, Clarkson speculates as to the significance of objects he has found, here Sakiko is able to share what she knows with the Baxters and reciprocate some of what they have done for her. The trip seems fated; both the Baxters and Sakiko think it was her husband that brought them together (01:17:01-01:17:03). When they take her to the location where David found the KEI buoy, Sakiko holds up a picture of her family on the beach, taking them across the ocean with her (1:19:43-1:19:48). This represents her anticipation for a future that involves the extension of family, renewed prosperity in the form of opening up her business again, and a new adventure.

As Choi and Lanni depict the survivors of the tsunami, they show that loss is not their only defining factor. Similar to DiNotto's criticism of the Japanese works, some survivors here are positioned as Japanese stereotypes, almost appreciative of nature shaking up life; this is somewhat true in terms of Sakiko's representation in the film. Largely though, the responses of the multitude of Japanese survivors shown in the film constitute a more complex national narrative than is portrayed through the signs, featuring what it is like to live with the wreckage day by day amongst claims that love will save Japan. Importantly, the film considers the relationships that can spring forth through shared futures, and how temporality is reconstituted as ways of memorializing overlap. Further, Choi and Lanni do not position Canada as particularly at risk of the same thing, but show the men from the Pacific Northwest coming to understand the implications of the ocean's power, expanding their understanding of who lives on the other side, and crossing borders as a means of opening them up instead of reinforcing them.

These films both consider the stories behind the objects that one day appeared as if from nowhere on the western coast of North America; these objects are the gateway to an understanding of 3/11 not generally offered by traditional news media. The objects become a way to trace conceptions of nationality and temporality, as these possessions mark relationships to specific places and have their own histories. Affective responses, such as anticipation, joy, and fear, are moderated through the movement of the objects. Each film has a particular response to anticipation however: whereas Bolton conceptualizes the future in a particular direction, even with physical signs pointing to it, Choi and Lanni leave the future open to a number of possibilities.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Through reading *A Tale for the Time Being*, *Debris*, and *Lost & Found* together, I have examined the rhetorical stance taken by each of the Canadian artists as they portray the 2011 Japanese earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant leak. These works exist as part of a larger conversation about disaster capitalism, crisis, and shared risk theories. While the texts do not take up these concepts explicitly, each is located within a world that is molded by relations to these ideas. With climate change an ever more threatening daily reality and becoming part of the lived experiences of many people globally, it becomes pressing to analyze narratives that provide responses to climate-related issues. It is increasingly clear that natural disasters are rarely simply natural, as human behaviours and policies preceding the disasters, and reactions following them, determine the impact and, ultimately, the type of recovery that is undertaken afterward. Each of these texts unfolds within these structures of climate disaster representation around the world, and considers relationships along the Pacific Ocean under regimes of anticipation. They all undertake the work of bearing witness to the tragedy in Japan while differing quite drastically in their approaches.

These narratives, which help constitute public memory of the disaster, are specifically organized with an eye to the future(s) of Canada and the Pacific Northwest following 3/11. The ways in which the Japanese disaster is mediated throughout Canadian works illuminate the anxieties and anticipation of those within Canada, and portray the differing mindsets toward what is to come. The ocean as a connecting force is both vilified and celebrated in these works, and is shown to be central to whichever future happens for BC and its coastal American neighbours. Each narrative does not stop at the end of the book or film, but rather prompts viewers and readers to further consider the issues outside of the medium of the work itself.

Ozeki, Bolton, and Choi and Lanni have deployed varying strategies in their storytelling. Ozeki and Bolton provide direct comparisons between the two locations, which highlights that BC, like Japan, is prone to seismic activity and is at the whims of the ocean. Choi and Lanni, on the other hand, show the ocean as the visual entryway into each community, the common thread that connects each story. The viewer, knowing the context of the film, is already aware of what the ocean is capable of and *Lost & Found* has no need to continually reproduce or envision traumatic events.

As they represent Canada grappling with the tsunami and its aftermath, these works bring up ethical issues of portraying another country's natural disasters. The novelist and filmmakers take up certain positions as they acknowledge the problematic aspects of borders and, in some ways, reinstate them. In *Debris*, Clarkson's conversations in the forest and at his family's dinner table discuss life outside of Tofino while reinscribing the safe containment of his community. His thoughts about the Japanese tsunami often centre his own life and the future of Tofino. Throughout her novel, Ozeki elucidates historical relations between Japan and Canada, and shows how they continue to shape the present, which suggests that our current actions will also matter for the future. Her novel wrestles with the tension between reinforcing national borders and striving to think past them, and exposes how this comes into play through mediation.

Like Ozeki, Choi and Lanni weave Japanese voices into their Canadian film and expand the understanding of the tsunami by bringing life to found objects. Choi and Lanni allow the survivors to create different narratives, which opens up the conversation around the future by including those directly affected. *Lost & Found* does not portray a future that is destined for a particular event, but opens up a web of possibilities: each survivor's story may overlap but it represents just one of many ways forward.

Previously in this thesis, I refer to recent work by Stef Craps, especially his claim that future-oriented narratives, in his case speculative fiction, “aim to ward off the imagined catastrophe by sensitizing readers to the enormity of [climate change] losses they or later generations will face, inviting them to consider prevention” (487). In other words, this allows people to generate conceptualizations about their own memorialization rather than seeing it come to fruition. A similar type of proleptic memorialization is seen in *Debris* and *A Tale*, where the texts contend with a particular future for BC. The issue that arises from this is twofold: the multiple forces at work during a disaster are distinct to its primary location and could never directly transfer; and that this preemptive work, as Ben Anderson might call it, is done at the site of already thousands of deaths complicates memorials for Japan. While it is certainly helpful in terms of transnational witnessing to have a point of commonality between the two places (Kurasawa), the Japanese tsunami seems an unsteady jumping off point from which to turn to a discussion about Canada’s susceptibility to a similar disaster. If this type of narrative makes the elusive nature of climate change tangible (Craps 482), its propensity for generating climate action should not come at the expense of an event that has already happened. Using the disaster in Japan as a reference point, the threat of a disaster in BC may suddenly face becomes more immediate. By tending toward a future that foresees an earthquake, these texts limit other narratives of futures that imagine ways of preventing or mitigating disasters related to climate change.

With this research, I have aimed to intervene in the burgeoning field of future-oriented memory studies to ask what it means to imagine a future that has yet to happen in one place but is directly linked to the very material effects of the disaster in another place. This way of approaching the future falters when it is predicated upon the memorials of people who have

already been through such a disaster. Since I am limited to just three examples here, further areas of study around this topic could look for similar patterns toward the future in other instances of transnational witnessing in literature and film, especially around natural disasters. In my own work, I did not examine speculative fiction texts about BC that imagined an earthquake without relating it to 3/11, but it would be useful to seek those out and investigate how they play into this conversation¹¹. I also found myself constrained by my own conceptions of temporality. That these events exceed time exposes the limitations of the language of temporality in three seemingly separate parts: past, present, and future¹². I have myself reproduced this language here out of a necessity to describe these works.

Though they differ in the ways they portray the future, these texts all contend with the barriers presented by the language of linear time and current conceptions of geography. In considering how to make space to grieve the losses of other countries without making Canada the subject, and to understand the barriers presented by borders while creating futures across them, these works represent only the beginning.

¹¹ For example, Canadian poet Steven Price wrote a novel called *Into That Darkness* about an earthquake hitting Victoria, BC. It was first published on March 12, 2011, one day after the earthquake and tsunami in Japan.

¹² This is the case in English at least. Ozeki's use of Japanese words and characters in *A Tale* starts to take this up the differences in these conceptions through language.

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Appendices

Appendix A



Figure 1: Lost objects become two birds. Bolton, John, director. *Debris*. National Film Board, 2015.



Figure 2: Japanese character on a plastic shipping pallet. Bolton, John, director. *Debris*. National Film Board, 2015.



Figure 3: Line drawing reenactment of buildings crumbling. Choi, John and Nicolina Lanni, producers. *Lost & Found*. Frank Films, 2014.



Figure 4: Signage around Japan following the tsunami. Choi, John and Nicolina Lanni, producers. *Lost & Found*. Frank Films, 2014.



Figure 5: Signage at volunteer organization for reconstruction. Choi, John and Nicolina Lanni, producers. *Lost & Found*. Frank Films, 2014.



Figure 6: Close-up of tsunami warning sign in Tofino. Bolton, John, director. *Debris*. National Film Board, 2015.



Figure 7: Clarkson dwarfed by the size and close proximity of the waves. Bolton, John, director. *Debris*. National Film Board, 2015.



Figure 8: The Baxters visit Sakiko in Japan, KEI buoy in background. Choi, John and Nicolina Lanni, producers. *Lost & Found*. Frank Films, 2014.