

**EATING AFTER THE TRIPLE DISASTER:
NEW MEANINGS OF FOOD IN THREE POST-3.11 TEXTS**

by

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Abstract

Known colloquially as “3.11,” the triple disaster that struck Japan’s northeastern region of Tōhoku on March 11, 2011 comprised of both natural (the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and resultant tsunami) and humanmade (the nuclear meltdown at the Tokyo Electric Power Company’s Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant incurred due to post-earthquake damage) disasters. In the days, weeks, months, and years that followed, there was an outpouring of media reacting to and reflecting on the great loss of life and resulting nuclear contamination of the nearby land and sea of the region. Thematically, food plays a large role in many post-3.11 narratives, both through the damage and recovery of local food systems after the natural disasters and the radiation contamination that to this day stigmatizes regionally grown food. This thesis seeks to examine the new meanings of food in three Japanese-language texts produced after 3.11.

First, I examine Kawakami Hiromi’s (1958 -) “Kamisama” (1994) and its rewritten version “Kamisama 2011” (2011) to consider the textual construction of human and animal bodies and their interaction with food and environment through a salted fish, made newly inedible in the 2011 version, to consider the new potential of food after 3.11. Next, I examine loss and anxiety tied to geographical place, as well as the portrayal of “truth” in the post-3.11 chapters of Kariya Tetsu’s (1941 -) controversial and long-running manga about food, *Oishinbo* (1980 - present). Finally, I consider the ways that post-3.11 thought has influenced the representation and issues of food in “Iganu no ame” (2014), a short science fiction story by popular idol and writer Katō Shigeaki (1987 -), in order to consider ways that precarity now includes shifts and changes in eating after the triple disaster. In these three texts, I find common themes of memory and intimacy through food, mistrust toward the “official” positions on the safety of food after 3.11, and the articulation of new anxieties in the present and future of eating.

Lay Summary

Food is an integral part of our daily lives, and intimately ties us to the land upon which it is grown. This thesis examines representations of food in three texts written after the triple disaster that occurred in northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011. By looking at the meaning and interpretations of food in these texts, I find that these authors explore issues of bodily safety, memory, tradition, suffering, and hope through food and its relationship to the land, sea, and sky of post-3.11 Japan. Two texts, Kawakami Hiromi's "Kamisama 2011" (God 2011, 2011) and the post-3.11 chapters (pub. 2012-2014) of Kariya Tetsu's manga *Oishinbo* (1980 - present) deal directly with the changed meaning of food after 3.11; the last text, Katō Shigeaki's short story "Iganu no ame" (Iganu Rain, 2014), does not mention 3.11—instead, the effects of the triple disaster are made apparent in the eating of aliens.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Rosaley Gai.

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Acknowledgements

I, like so many others on this good Earth, love food. To me, within food exist the greatest sources of joy and sorrow, of emotional and personal connection, of pain and healing. Yet food is also a source of anxiety for me and for many others, as its cultural and visceral qualities take on new meanings as society shifts and changes. Food is both biological and symbolic, an object that certainly can be interpreted as a part of daily life but also contains within it the limitless psychological and social attachments built by individuals, communities, and even nations. In many of my academic endeavors and personal life, I have attempted to squeeze the meanings out of food and its representations in all that surrounds me. This thesis is partly an attempt to navigate through Japanese fiction my own experiences as a consumer, especially during my total three-or-so years spent living in Japan after the triple disaster of March 11, 2011. (To clarify, my first contact with post-3.11 Japan was in the summer of 2014, after American media moved on from the triple disaster.) I could write pages and pages about what I ate in Japan in those years, and the feelings that possessed me before, during, and after all of those bites of food.

This thesis, however, is about *fictional* representations of food after 3.11, and it would not have been possible without the support and advice of many wonderful individuals. First, I would like to express my deep gratitude for my committee, Dr. Sharalyn Orbaugh, Dr. Christina Yi, and Dr. Ayaka Yoshimizu, who have provided invaluable feedback, directions to sources, critique, and encouragement throughout the writing of not only this thesis, but during the whole two years of my M.A. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Sharalyn Orbaugh, who as my adviser has humored so many of my wacky, feverish ideas (and non-ideas) and reminded me that our bodies (leaky, fleshy, soft, vulnerable) are what make us so interesting.

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Dedication

To my family,

To my friends,

And to anyone who has ever taken the time to eat with me,

Eat well.

Chapter 1: Introduction

On March 11, 2011 at 2:46PM JST, a magnitude 9.0 undersea earthquake occurred off the east coast of the Tōhoku region in northern Japan. The earthquake, officially titled the *Tōhoku chihō taiheiyō oki jishin* (東北地方太平洋沖地震 Tōhoku region Pacific Ocean earthquake), triggered a series of tsunami waves—some fifteen meters tall—that caused enormous damage to the Tōhoku region, took many lives, and displaced a great number of people. As of 2019, the official count of people killed in the earthquake and tsunami numbers nearly 16,000, with over 2,000 individuals still missing. Tens, if not hundreds of thousands of Tōhoku residents were displaced, with many still living outside of the region. Worse, still, the earthquake caused the meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant run by the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), and the tsunami damaged the plant’s physical barriers. Flooding and subsequent attempts to cool the damaged reactors with water resulted in the release of radioactive steam into the air, which carried to the surrounding areas due to wind and movement of water, forcing many to evacuate their homes. Over the course of the following months and years, coolant water contaminated by radioactive isotopes leaked out of the plant, quickly contaminating the sea and surrounding land.

The event, colloquially known by any number of names in English and Japanese (“Fukushima,” “3.11,” “the triple disaster,” “*Higashi Nihon dai-shinsai* 東日本大震災,” etc.) marked a sudden shift in the daily lives of Japanese people and perceptions of Japan throughout the world. For those living on or near the affected coastline, the physical, psychological, and economic damage of the triple disaster was staggering. Situated near a series of fault lines, Japan is no stranger to natural disaster; in 1995 the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster shook southern Hyōgo prefecture, resulting in over 6,000 deaths. However, still coping with the lasting

after-effects of this natural disaster and the 1991 sudden drop in land prices after years of real estate and stock market inflation and the resultant twenty years of economic stagnation, seeing images of damage and destruction from the earthquake and tsunami dealt a blow to the psyches of even the Japanese people who were not directly affected by the devastation of the natural disaster. Moreover, the lack of clear information regarding the damage to the nuclear power plants in the following months meant that for many, the horrors of 3.11 were physiological and psychological, even hundreds of miles from the nuclear disaster. Concerns about food and water contamination were bolstered by conflicting information from local and national governments and scientists, rumors, and conspiracy theories, as well as divergent perspectives based on regional media and assumed safety due to distance. Even years after the incident, there is a conflict of opinion regarding whether areas deemed safe to return to are truly livable, and the name “Fukushima” still attaches stigma to anything—and anyone—from the prefecture.

My first contact with post-3.11 Japan was in 2014, the summer before I was set to study in Kyoto. I accompanied my father to a physics conference in Iwate prefecture, approximately 150 miles north of Fukushima prefecture. Our bullet train ride took us through Fukushima prefecture on the way to Ichinoseki-shi. I had heard about 3.11 when it happened and seen countless images of disaster in the three and a half years since, but on that train ride north I felt an irrational anxiety settle into my stomach. I realized, as the bullet train glided over the landscape, that I was in closer proximity to a nuclear disaster than I had ever imagined I would be—and at the same time, the long-term effects of nuclear meltdown did not feel real to me. For the rest of my time in Japan that year, this anxiety would rear its head occasionally—was it really safe? Would the food I eat affect my body years into the future? Would my year in Japan somehow fundamentally alter my biology through proximal absorption of radiation? My

consumer choices especially felt different than they did at home, and I could not articulate why I felt so ill at ease at times. Mostly, I assuaged the fear with proximity—Kyoto was so far away that I did not need to worry. And so, I spent my study abroad doing a number of things, but most importantly and memorably eating, believing that whatever food entered my body was an unnegotiable part of living in Japan, both a right and a privilege. However, the embodied anxiety of post-3.11 eating I felt stayed with me.

Indeed, 3.11 is an event that marks a shift Japanese literature as well; in her analysis of writers producing post-3.11 literature, Lisette Gebhardt finds that 3.11 “appears as a turning point in contemporary Japanese history, offering an opportunity for reflection and change” through various means of writing (15). Some creators found unconventional means of producing art in reaction to the natural disasters; poet and Fukushima native Wagō Ryōichi turned to Twitter to at first pronounce his safety in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, then began to produce threads of poetry in reaction to the event. Jeffrey Angles elucidates that Wagō’s Twitter feed is “not just a flat, straightforward device to convey objective information; instead, his tweets serve as a means to come to grips with the enormity of the disaster” (147). Others, such as Shiina Makoto in his second serialized installment of *Kaijū-tachi ga yattekita* (The Monsters Have Come, 2011), interrupted their usual work to navigate their trauma and loss within novels started before the triple disaster. Koichi Haga suggests this rupture occurred due to Shiina being “so absorbed in the disaster and the aftermath that he could not continue writing his pre-disaster story” (9). Still others shifted criticism and commentary to the political and corporate systems that obfuscated truth and stymied free flow of information, especially regarding nuclear contamination in Fukushima.

My goal in this thesis is to explore the object of food within three texts by Tokyo-based¹ authors after 3.11 to more deeply understand the ways that literary and popular perceptions of food have undergone changes in the post-3.11 era. In Chapter 2, I look at Kawakami Hiromi's 2011 rewriting of her debut novel "Kamisama 2011" (God 2011), read next to its 1994 predecessor "Kamisama" (God), to consider the textual construction of human and animal bodies in new nuclear contexts, as well as the new meanings that food can take on by becoming inedible. In Chapter 3, I use visual and textual analysis to discover how loss, gastronomic affect, and reader-textual interaction create "*jikkan*" (real feeling) in two story arcs of Kariya Tetsu's long-running food manga *Oishinbo* dealing with the post-3.11 damage and recovery of the Tōhoku region. Finally, in Chapter 4, I find issues of post-3.11 precarity in idol-writer Katō Shigeaki's 2014 short story "Iganu no ame" (Iganu rain), a science fiction story about eating aliens which at first glance seems to have no connection to 3.11 at all. In each text, themes of loss, destruction, memory, and bodily safety tie together to create new meanings and potentialities for food and eating after 3.11.

Food, Literature, and Food in Literature in Post-3.11 Japan

Scholarship on post-3.11 literature consistently states that the triple disaster marks an epochal shift in Japanese thought and literary production. Just as modern Japanese literature is easily broken up into pre-, inter-, and postwar categories, there is a "before 3.11" literature and there is an "after 3.11" literature (or pre- and post-3.11). Moreover, these categories are shaped by social, political, and cultural discourses that occur over months or years. Although we live in the aftermath of 3.11, the consequences of the disasters continue to unfold, giving birth to new

¹ Although some texts dealing with the triple disaster are produced by writers who come from Tōhoku or who experienced the disaster firsthand, many of the most prominent voices come from writers central to Japan's literary landscape, yet who are removed from the immediate bodily harm of the disaster zones.

meaning and new implications for the event over time. Even when issues of nuclear contamination are not necessarily at the forefront of people's minds nearly a decade after the nuclear meltdown, reading after 3.11 reveals that a confluence of factors relating to personal experience, gender, socio-economic class, nationality, and center-periphery positionality influence both production and reception of these texts. In particular, bodied relationships to disaster and nuclear contamination are prominent in post-3.11 literature, a traumatic and long-lasting physiological and psychological aspect of the disaster with no foreseeable end.

North American scholarship on post-3.11 literature seek to expand on these themes from various perspectives. To briefly summarize but a few, Rachel DiNitto's *Fukushima Fiction: The Literary Landscape of Japan's Triple Disaster* (2019) focuses on *junbungaku* ("pure literature" or "belles lettres") written in reaction to both disaster and human mismanagement of the disasters from varied political, conceptual, and regional perspectives. Koichi Haga's *The Earth Writes: The Great Earthquake and the Novel in Post-3/11 Japan* (2019) takes up similar texts as DiNitto, but approaches them through the question of agency from non-human perspectives, particularly that of the Earth itself. Tamaki Mihic's volume *Re-Imagining Japan After Fukushima* (2020) examines the changed domestic and international views of Japan through creative texts produced after 3.11, both in and outside of Japan. Yuki Masami's work, such as the chapters "Meals in the Age of Toxic Environments" (in *The Routledge Companion to Environmental Humanities*, 2017) and "Post-Fukushima Discourses on Food and Eating: Analysing Political Implications and Literary Imagination" (in *Literature and Art after "Fukushima": Four Approaches*, 2014), look specifically at the literary, social, and political ways that consumers perceive food after 3.11.

Generally, Japanese media texts often use food as a symbol or tool to explore the relationships that humans have to nature, society, and themselves. More recently, there has been

scholarship that explores meanings of food in Japanese literature. One example is Tomoko Aoyama's volume *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature*, which has been of great importance throughout my studies on food in Japanese literature. Aoyama's book, published in 2008, spans all of "modern" Japanese literature, extending into the more contemporary years through analysis of the role of food in literature for women and about women. One subsection of *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* is dedicated to examining Ariyoshi Sawako's 1975 novel *Fukugō osen* (Compound Pollution), though it ultimately departs from the issue of food safety to focus on how Ariyoshi addresses the role of women in mass society (89-93). As it is, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* provides a broad overview of the socio-cultural role that food has played in Japanese literature throughout the 20th century. Aoyama makes apparent the multiple meanings and roles that literary food, long neglected in studies of literature, have played in exploring issues of gender, class, desire and repulsion, and race.

What happens when food in literary texts takes on the question of post-3.11 nuclear contamination? Here, it is helpful to think of the number of notable convergences between food in post-atomic bomb literature and post-3.11 literature, including the ways that food is configured and the distinct experiential differences apparent between works produced by metropole/central writers and the *hibakusha*, people who were exposed to radiation from the bomb. In both, the relationship between food, the body, and systems of access become tenuous. In particular, due to wartime rationing and food shortages, food (and lack of food) is a common theme in wartime and postwar Japanese literature. Take, for example, Ibuse Masuji's *Kuroi ame* (Black Rain, 1966), in which food takes on both direct and indirect meaning. Food is scarce for ordinary citizens, and the disparity between the way normal residents and authoritarian figures eat in the text is a point of tension. Tomoko Aoyama writes that in *Kuroi ame*, food "does not

simply point to general shortages and difficulties; it also signals the dissent of ordinary people from the authorities and their last hope of survival amid the man-made disaster of war” (39). Food can also be healing—when there is no cure for mild radiation sickness, food becomes a means to intake the nutrition needed to hopefully recover. Yet food and rest alone are not enough to save Yasuko, the protagonist’s niece, from the radiation sickness that eventually consumes her.

Moreover, Sharalyn Orbaugh draws out links between food and the irradiated body in Ōta Yōko’s *Shikabane no machi* (City of Corpses, published in full in 1950) and Hara Tamiki’s “Natsu no hana” (Summer flowers, 1947), narrative recollections of the Hiroshima bombing. The narratives configure the body as *consumed* by all manner of things, literally by flies and maggots, and metaphorically by the enormous power of the atomic bomb (210). As Orbaugh notes, the social construction of the “normal human body” is marked by a number of approved conditions: clean, modest, pure, free of disease, and unmarked (191). The atomic bomb upended these conditions through not only the violence of the explosion and the immediate effects of exposure to the bomb, but the radiation poisoning over time in those who had to live and eat in irradiated areas. Much as in post-3.11 literature, there is a divergence in the experiences of firsthand victims of the atomic bomb and the eventual centering of the event to frame the entire nation of Japan—specifically the metropole *center*—as the victim of the atomic bombings. The real suffering of the peripheral Other becomes the symbolic suffering of the Center. The process of central writers producing literature in reaction to a traumatic event in the periphery raises questions regarding the category of victimization and the resultant media produced.²

² Attempts by important central voices to re-center this narrative on the voices of the firsthand victims can be found in both post-atomic bomb literature and post-3.11 literature, such as Ōe Kenzaburō’s *Hiroshima nōto* (Hiroshima Notes, 1965; English translation by David L. Swain published in 1981) or Kariya Tetsu’s *Oishinbo* chapters on Fukushima prefecture and Tōhoku, a comparison I will return to in the conclusion of Chapter 4.

Returning to post-3.11 literature, texts such as the three analyzed in this thesis are a small slice of many post-3.11 texts that ask readers to contemplate the relationship their bodies have to food, but they address clearly the “endless anxiety of eating” that Faye Kleeman suggests was sparked by the nuclear radiation leaking into the land, sea, and air from TEPCO’s damaged nuclear power generators. Kleeman writes that Japan has in recent decades dealt with the bleakness of the post-economic “bubble burst” “lost decades,” including two major disasters: the Sarin gas attacks and the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster, both in 1995. The aftereffects did not, as Kleeman points out, immediately affect the food in ways that caused a “gnawing sense of anxiety toward an odorless, shapeless, invisible element that may be plaguing the food supply” the way that 3.11 did (304). The public, skeptical of assurances that the food is safe, turn to media not driven by large commercial interests or governmental politics. Kleeman focuses analysis on Ishimure Michiko and Taguchi Randi, two women writers whose work on eating after non-3.11 humanmade disasters to examine the changes presented in post-disaster eating.

Kimura Saeko’s two works, *Shinsai-go bungaku-ron* (Post-Disaster Literary Theory, 2013) and *Sono ato no shinsai-go bungakuron* (Post-Post-Disaster Literary Theory, 2018), deal with the ways that literature has attempted to cope with the disaster, as well as the new literary theory that must be made in order to consider these post-disaster literature works. Bridging texts written in both Japanese and French, Kimura traces new ways that creators confront 3.11 and elucidates threads of post-3.11 thought in a wide variety of literature. Food comes up a few times in both books, and it is often accompanied with analysis of the persistent sense of unease and anxiety. In *Sono ato no shinsai-go bungakuron*, Kimura makes the point that

[W]hat people who decided [the area and food] were safe and people who viewed [the area and food] as dangerous had in common was the problem that they could not bear the

uncertainty and unease of the existence of invisible radiation. They could not bear the strange anxiety (*etai no shirenai fuan* 得体の知れない不安) germinating at each meal. (84)

This “strange anxiety” that Kimura points out is clearly evident in *Oishinbo*, in which the fictional main characters battle a sense of concern toward what they are eating even while they are enjoying local feasts, but it likely also makes itself known in reader reactions to witnessing characters eat food of clear origin and questionable safety.

Despite post-capitalist systems that often divorce us from the origins and conditions of our food, we still maintain a consciousness toward the fact that the food we eat is tied to the land and sea of specific regions. The adage “you are what you eat” is a signifier not only of scientific processes that break down and absorb food within our bodies, but also the cultural, social, and political significance of food and eating within our personal contexts. Moreover, it signifies a conceptual link that we feel as eaters and buyers to the place our food comes from: *terroir*. As explained by Ronda L. Brulotte and Michael A. Di Giovine, “*terroir* explicitly links heritage claims with a specific environment, in all of its socio-cultural and natural particularities... the biological components of an environment bestows [*sic*] uniqueness and authenticity onto a place’s product,” thus disavowing that the same food can be produced anywhere else in the world, no matter how similar in taste and appearance the final product is (6). Brulotte and Di Giovine use the idea of *terroir* to explore cultural heritage and ethnic identity, but the idea of *terroir* changes when placed into a region that both has a strong culinary heritage and is now steeped in nuclear contamination. The nuclear leakage from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant meant that consumers in Japan were now more conscious of the *biological* component of the food that they bought and ate.

In the wake of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor meltdown, people in nearby areas

and in places where radiation could be carried downstream via wind or water, or through modern shipping processes, gained a collective and altogether traumatic set of associations with the affected areas and the things that came from Fukushima prefecture. Most affected was Fukushima's agricultural, fishing, and livestock economy; no matter how much farmers, fishers, and ranchers worked to produce food, if they had to evacuate their land or their products were deemed too contaminated for sale then they could not produce food that could be put on the market. Moreover, the association with contamination attached to the prefecture, despite campaigns to support Fukushima farmers through buying and eating locally produced food, resulted in enormous negative economic impact. Since, there have been various measures taken to promote food from Tōhoku—and especially from Fukushima—to consumers, including local and national government campaigns. There have also been challenges to the prevailing “official” idea that the area is truly safe and that the food produced there is safe to eat, coming from both local concerned citizens' groups and internet trolls. Both perspectives utilize logical and emotional means of swaying consumers through media such as literature, television programs, animation, and manga.

Yuki Masami points out that post-3.11 government campaigns to support Fukushima through eating—such as the “Tabete ōen shiyō!” (Support through Eating) campaign run by Food Action Nippon, a governmental campaign led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing in the hopes of to spark a “citizen movement” (*kokumin undō*)³—often impel viewers to support disaster-stricken areas through vague, morally-tinged language without discussing issues of food safety or radiation levels (“Post-Fukushima Discourses on Food and Eating,” 41). This

³ For more discussion on the role of Food Action Nippon in revitalizing local foodways, please refer to Stephanie Assmann, “Food Action Nippon and Slow Food Japan: The Role of Two Citizen Movements in the Rediscovery of Local Foodways,” in *Globalization, Food and Social Identities in the Asia Pacific Region*, ed. James Farrer. Tokyo: Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture, 2010.

discourse manipulates the citizens to feel apathetic about the food they eat; rather than thinking about their personal relationship with the food they are eating, consumers instead choose what to eat based on the creatively packaged advertising campaigns around them (42). Conversely, Yuki suggests there also exists a literary discourse around food and eating which ties the body intimately to the surrounding world based on past values, which can “only be preserved through literature” (42). Yuki addresses the gap between the two discourses that emerge in post-3.11 society, wherein the latter allows the reader to contemplate “intense physicality of life and death” through food and eating, while the other forces consumers to detach themselves from the physical reality of the things they are putting into their bodies.

Throughout this thesis, I focalize much of my analysis through Pasi Falk’s work on consumption and the human body. Falk suggests that the body is a site of construction, both discursively defined and defining itself and the world through the “flows” of society and culture. As part of this study on consumption and the body, Falk embarks on a careful attempt to define a cultural history of the body, and finds that the pre-modern lack of distinction between of body and soul meant that the corporeal body was open to the cultural and political flows and boundaries defined by other bodies, and in the process of modernization (or, at least, the making of the “modern man” and their soul), the body was distanced from the idea of the “self,” “spirit,” or “soul.” This distinction between body and soul allows for equalization of *bodies* in nineteenth century discourse on the body in the “development of a (modern) society of equals” (52). Here, Falk cites for this “body concept” Gunter Gebauer: “(a) no man has the right to another’s body (corporeal sovereignty, physical inviolability), (b) the bodies of prince and bourgeois do not differ (they are in principle alike) and (c) the body acquires its right according to the

performances its owner achieves” (qtd. in Falk 52).⁴ At the same time, Falk attempts to engage in the redefinition of epistemological terms for the body and corporeality but also specifies the goal is to define *human* corporeality and sensuality. I find this attempt to differentiate the divide between human and animal particularly relevant here, especially when Falk’s previous discussion emphasizes the historical creation of the concept of *equal bodies*.

Although we may have come to conceive of real-life human bodies as being equalized, bodies are not treated equally, especially in fiction; binaries are drawn between normal/abnormal, clean/dirty, safe/unsafe. The treatment of bodies in fiction differs in narrative description and in the ways characters interact with these bodies, as well as the ways that readers perceive the bodies in question. In fiction that deals with radiation, binaries such as contaminated/uncontaminated, child/adult, and sick/healthy also appear. Falk’s discussion of the body is useful in understanding not only how we come to figure bodies within texts, but also how we then receive these fictional bodies and the ways that they consume in relation to our own bodies. Moreover, Falk’s focus on the human body allows us to ask questions about the physical and social properties of human and animal bodies in post-3.11 texts, whether eating or eaten, as in “Kamisama 2011” and “Iganu no ame.”

My work in this thesis attempts to examine the role of food in three post-3.11 texts, drawing on much of the scholarly work described above. My goal is to focus analysis on the food depicted in each text and the meanings and interpretations of food and eating within each text. Like many scholars, I chose “Kamisama 2011” because it is one of the first pieces of literature by a widely-known author that dealt explicitly with the event. Many have investigated post-3.11

⁴ See Gunter Gebauer, “Ausdruck und Einbildung. Zur symbolischen Funktion des Körpers” (in *Die Wiederkehr des Körpers*, edited by Dietmar Kamper and Christopher Wulf, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982, pp. 313-29), 318, qtd. in Falk 52.

issues present in “Kamisama 2011,” such as Kimura Saeko’s analysis of the textual changes, depictions of the bear, and the religious associations that come up in both stories in *Shinsai-go bungaku-ron* (2013); Koichi Haga’s analysis of the bear’s treatment from an anthropocentric point of view in *The Earth Writes: The Great Earthquake and the Novel in Post-3/11 Japan* (2019); Linda Flores’s analysis of the intertextual relationship between “Kamisama” and “Kamisama 2011,” revealing meaning-making by both author and reader in “Matrices of Time, Space, and Text: Intertextuality and Trauma in Two 3.11 Narratives” (2017); and Rachel DiNitto’s reading of human/animal difference and sameness in *Fukushima Fiction: The Literary Landscape of Japan’s Triple Disaster* (2019), among others. My analysis focuses on the changing meanings of the *fish* as edible food made inedible, and the significance of the narrator’s choice not to eat the fish.

Some previous scholarship on the Fukushima chapters of *Oishinbo* exist, including Lorie Brau’s article “*Oishinbo*’s Fukushima Elegy: Grasping for the Truth About Radioactivity in a Food Manga,” a detailed study on ways that *Oishinbo* tackles issues of truth, loss, and hope in post-3.11 Fukushima, and Derek Moscato’s article “Fukushima Fallout in Japanese Manga: The *Oishinbo* Controversy Through the Lens of Habermas’ Discourse Ethics,” which analyzes the ways that the manga encouraged post-3.11 discourse between Fukushima residents and the rest of Japan through its controversy. Kimura Saeko also briefly touches on the sense of loss and anxiety present in the “Fukushima no shinjitsu” (The Truth About Fukushima) arc of *Oishinbo*, drawing the conclusion that not only are the foods themselves lost, the joy of eating is lost as well (*Sono ato no shinsai-go bungaku-ron*, 97-8). These texts are important for contextualizing *Oishinbo* as a post-3.11 text on food. My analysis of *Oishinbo* is more narrative-based, focusing specifically on scenes of food and eating that confer the ramifications of the loss of culinary

heritage, bodily risk, and systems of food distribution in post-3.11 Japan.

Finally, I have found no English- or Japanese-language scholarly work on Katō's short story, perhaps because he has a fairly minor literary presence in Japan. Having started his career as member of male idol group NEWS, Katō's writing is viewed as a part of his idol persona, and his work as an entertainer influences his fiction and those who read his work. As pop culture writer and critic Yano Toshihiro points out in an essay on Katō's literary persona, "it is impossible to cleanly separate the NEWS member Katō Shigeaki and the novelist Katō Shigeaki... the sincere attempt to evaluate the novelist Katō Shigeaki, excised from his position as an idol, would actually be overlooking the critical point of his works" (Yano 106). Although "Iganu no ame" does not explicitly refer to 3.11 as a point of change, by analyzing the text through the effects of the narrative's paradigmatic shift in taste and foodways, I uncover new threads of precarity and generalized anxiety toward food systems that can be read in young Japanese people's worldview in post-3.11 Japan.

General Notes

I will use a variety of terms to refer to the events that occurred on and after March 11, 2011: the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear meltdown or disaster, 3.11, the triple disaster (earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown), and a variety of combinations of and abbreviations of the three. I hope to avoid, as much as possible, referring to the event through the name of the prefecture "Fukushima," in order to confer less stigma onto an area that has already been irrevocably stigmatized by the world. (In Japanese, there are those who have drawn a distinction between "Fukushima" 福島 in kanji and "Fukushima" フクシマ in katakana to distinguish between the two.) However, I also realize that much like "Chernobyl,"⁵ the name "Fukushima" still evokes

⁵ As well as "Hiroshima" or "Nagasaki," as Lisa Yoneyama points out, for these names are "temporally fixed sign[s]" that signal a "universal referentiality" (23).

association with disaster and radiation, especially because the topic of my research is food, eating, and bodies that eat—in this case, near, around, and after the triple disaster. Fictional as though these beings, objects, and acts of eating are, they reflect real anxieties and pain from people who lived (peripherally, tangentially, and vicariously) through the days, weeks, and months following 3.11.

I also realize that the three works I have selected are from creators based in Tokyo—central and prominent voices, rather than creators from Fukushima or Tōhoku. By reading literature from the center, we can see how those who experienced the triple disaster through media (television, newspapers, radio, social media, etc.) used literary works to express their own anxieties and concerns in the months and years following the disaster. Their tangential experiences of the disaster are encapsulated in a cascade of post-3.11 texts, which has often made them the loudest voices in the deluge of media addressing 3.11. Though the bodies of these Tokyoites were not at immediate risk of injury, the emotional and social trauma of witnessing the post-earthquake and tsunami damage was followed by a fear of lingering physical trauma from radiation, carried downward to Kantō through environmental factors such as wind and water, and through food grown in Fukushima as well. Food is present in literature and media created by people from Fukushima or its surrounding prefectures, those areas most afflicted by all three of the disasters, and I do not mean to erase their battle with the cultural and literary landscape that has, in some ways, attempted to move on from the events of 3.11. It should come as no surprise that much scholarship has been dedicated to decentering these voices and examining 3.11 literature by writers from Tōhoku, including Rachel DiNitto's and Koichi Haga's analyses of writers like Furukawa Hideo and Kimura Yūsuke.

DiNitto makes the important point that 3.11 fiction “has been predominantly written by

non-victims, meaning those not directly affected by the disaster, and tells the stories of both immediate victims and those far removed” (23). Victimization, she reminds us, is a category of self-identification which shifts and changes based on individual experience, geographical and social distance, and voyeurism. This means that much of the post-3.11 disaster literature that has been produced can be both heartfelt and exploitative, including all three texts I will analyze in this thesis: heartfelt in that each text frames post-disaster change in a different way, depending on the voices highlighted and stances each writer takes; exploitative in that each draws on experience of a *collective* victimization⁶ that effectively focuses the consequences and realities of post-3.11 eating on the experiences of the center—of a universalized “us.” Producing media that garners sympathy and empathy for those most vulnerable and affected residents of the irradiated zones and disaster-stricken areas is not a bad thing; however, what becomes obscured in the process of centralized processing or imagining of their experiences? And of course, what role does food play in the decision of which bodies are made to matter in post-3.11 consciousness?

Finally, all translations of non-English language texts are my own, although more literary and excellent translations of “Kamisama” and “Kamisama 2011” by Ted Goossen and Motoyuki Shibata exist (“God Bless You” and “God Bless You, 2011,” in *Granta*). Any inconsistencies or inaccuracies are my own mistakes and interpretations. At times I have had no choice but to cite texts via other texts, due to the limitations and restrictions of library loaning systems set in place

⁶ Lisa Yoneyama writes on the process of national collectivizing victimization that occurred in postwar Japan resulting in perceived binary categories of victim and victimizer—regular Japanese civilians were innocent; military leaders, government officials, and soldiers were solely responsible for the war (20). Yoneyama elucidates that this was exacerbated by Western-centric categorizations of “humanity”—by not including the atomic bomb in “crimes against humanity,” Yoneyama writes that widespread sentiment that the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal was perceived widely as nothing more than “victor’s justice,” and that this resulted in Japan’s self-perceived victimization (not being a part of the “humanity” of Western nations; repeated fire bombings of cities; the atomic bomb) to be conflated with the victims of Japan’s aggressive colonial empire. This has led to the “shroud[ing of] the critical differences, the historical specificities and the asymmetrical positions, that distinguish Japan from its neighboring countries” (21).

due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has also, for better or for worse, shaped the ideas and analyses within this thesis in ways that I cannot quite articulate. Time will tell how COVID-19 influences the way we perceive our bodies and food, but I imagine that there are many comparisons to be drawn to 3.11. In sickness and in health, food has socio-political, cultural, and emotional meanings and resonances that change with the contexts in which it is imagined and consumed.

Chapter 2: Irradiated and “Cooked” Human and Animal Bodies in “Kamisama 2011”

Kawakami Hiromi (1958 -) received the Pascal Short-form Literature Newcomer Award (パスカル短編文学新人賞 *Pasukaru tanpen bungaku shinjin shō*) in 1994 for the short story “Kamisama” (『神様』, lit. “god”).⁷ “Kamisama” would go on to win the Murasaki Shikibu Literary Award (紫式部文学賞 *Murasaki Shikibu bungaku shō*) and the Bunkamura Deux Magots Literature Award (文化村ドゥマゴ文学賞 *Bunkamura du mago bungaku shō*) in 1999 as well. Kawakami’s literary career has since been studded with elite literary awards, including the Akutagawa Prize for her 1996 novel *Hebi o fumu* (蛇を踏む *Treading on a Snake*, Bungei Shunjū).⁸ Starting with “Kamisama,” Kawakami’s work has tended to focus on the personal relationships of its (most often women) protagonists, usually with a touch of the fantastic.

Later published in book form by Chūo Kōron in 1998, “Kamisama” details a peaceful day out shared by the unnamed narrator⁹ and a male bear who has moved in down the hall. Following the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear meltdown, Kawakami rewrote “Kamisama,” and in May 2011 published “Kamisama 2011” (『神様 2011』) in the literary journal *Gunzō* (群像) in

⁷ The Pascal Short-form Literature Newcomer Award was partly a promotion for an internet service provider, ASAHI-NET, as submissions were received only through online submissions using ASAHI-NET. Kawakami’s story won the first Pascal Award under the judgment of Tsutsui Yasutaka, Inoue Hisashi, and Kobayashi Kyōji, three popular men fiction writers. The contest only took place three times, ending in 1996.

⁸ Kawakami’s many awards place her in a central position within the contemporary Japanese literature landscape, for it means she has accrued the symbolic capital of the prize names, and with it, a sense of literary celebrityhood. Edward Mack writes that the Akutagawa Prize bestows upon its recipients “symbolic capital... [which] takes the form of benefits usually grouped under the rubric of canonization: legitimacy... publication... a place in cultural memory... and a vastly expanded readership” (183). Upon earning the Akutagawa Prize, Kawakami was placed into the category of *junbungaku* (lit. “pure literature,” but often translated as belles-lettres). *Junbungaku* sits in opposition to *taishūbungaku* (lit. “popular literature”), the category in which Katō’s work fits.

⁹ The gender of the narrator is never explicitly revealed to the reader, neither through the narrator’s own words nor through other characters’ reactions or voices. Much of this could potentially be incidental, due to the ambiguity of language and the lack of detail regarding the narrator’s body, but it could also be intentional on Kawakami’s part. Whether or not we take the narrator to be a woman, as Kawakami is, is to me, ultimately inconsequential to the content of my analysis. While gender of course plays heavy roles in the ways that writing is configured and that food is consumed, I choose here to use the neutral pronoun “they” when referring to the narrator to emphasize not the gendered bodily experience but to highlight the *human* and *animal* bodily experience. I hope this causes no confusion.

three parts: first “Kamisama 2011,” then the original “Kamisama,” then an afterword detailing why she rewrote the original story. The narrative framework of the two works does not diverge greatly: a male bear moves into the narrator’s apartment complex. After realizing they share a common acquaintance, the bear invites the narrator on a walk, and so the pair stroll along a highway to a riverbank. Other humans interact with the bear by the river, and then the two share a picnic. Afterward, the bear catches a fish in the river and salts it, then gives it to the narrator as a memento of their day together. The narrator naps, and upon awakening finds that the bear has caught more fish. The two characters return home, and right as they part in the hallway the bear asks the narrator if he can hug them; the narrator acquiesces. They embrace, the bear thanks the narrator, hopes that the bear god will bless the narrator, and finally reminds them that the salted fish will not last long so they should eat it soon. The narrator muses upon the image of the bear god as they prepare for bed, and, thinking that it was “not a bad day” (16; 36), the story ends.

Where the stories depart is in the continual intrusion of information that places the narrator and bear’s home to a contaminated zone in the 2011 version. On the way to the river, passing cars avoid the two pedestrians, perhaps because they are not wearing protective gear. The river the characters visit in the original is clear and clean with many visitors; in “Kamisama 2011,” the river seems abandoned save for a few visitors. The fish the bear gifts to the narrator is altered by Kawakami’s additions; in the original, the bear guts and salts the fish to prepare it for eating, then tells the narrator that it is a gift for the narrator. The rewrite, among other things, has the bear explain to the narrator that the fish are not safe for consumption due to cesium contamination. Despite this, the bear still prepares the fish by slicing it open, washing it with bottled water, and salting it before placing it to dry. The bear tells the narrator, “Even if you don’t eat it, I thought it could be a memento” (32). Finally, after parting with the bear, in the

original “Kamisama” the narrator grills the fish, takes a bath, and writes in their diary. In the 2011 rewrite, the narrator places the fish upon the shoe cabinet, carefully washes themselves in the shower, writes in their diary, and “as always, measured the total radiation dose” they were exposed to that day: “Today’s estimated external radiation dose: 30 microsieverts, internal radiation dose: 19 microsieverts. Total estimated external radiation dose since the beginning of the year through today, 1780 microsieverts,” before going to sleep (36).

These changes in information, routine, and situation are placed into high relief when reading the texts side-by-side. Because all publications of “Kamisama 2011” have followed the same pattern of placing the original next to the 2011 adaptation, the reader is forced to consciously compare the two texts. My analysis of Kawakami’s texts focuses on the configuration of animal and human bodies in both texts, and how nuclear narratives alter readings of the bear’s and narrator’s bodies. Moreover, this thesis specifically highlights the changes that occur vis-à-vis the depiction of the salted fish present in both stories. I wish to emphasize that in the process of adaptation, the fish becomes inedible, especially when further compared to the other food in the text. The perception of animal and human bodies in the text shows that in certain acts of consumption, mundane food can reveal its potential for danger, and *not* eating is a choice that creates new meaning through food objects. The narrator’s actions, including their decision to take the carefully prepared fish home, show an ambivalence in the choices to be made in the age of post-3.11 eating.

Textual Issues: Rewriting and Republishing

“Kamisama 2011” signals that it is an updated version of the original “Kamisama” through its title and the publishing format of the stories. Often said to be one of the first pieces of

literature published about the Fukushima disaster¹⁰, “Kamisama 2011” appeared in the June 2011 edition of *Gunzō* (released May 7, 2011). *Gunzō* is a monthly literature magazine published by Kōdansha, one of Japan’s largest publishers. The magazine releases both serialized novels and stand-alone short stories by contemporary literati, as well as essays relevant to current themes and issues by critics and writers. The English-language website landing page boasts that *Gunzō*’s past contributors have included luminary writers such as Tanizaki Junichirō, Kawabata Yasunari, and Abe Kōbō.

In *Gunzō*, “Kamisama 2011” is followed by the original “Kamisama” (with a specific note that this is a “republication”) and an afterword. Emphasis is clearly on “Kamisama 2011” rather than the original. However, this does not mean that the original is a mere afterthought; readers could easily read “Kamisama 2011” as a standalone piece, but the placement of both the original and updated texts side-by-side suggests the reader should compare the two *during* their encounter with the text. The book release of *Kamisama 2011* (September 20, 2011, Kōdansha) placed “Kamisama” first, followed by “Kamisama 2011” and the afterword. The thin hardcover volume contains only these three items, focusing reader attention onto these stories alone, rather than collecting a number of short stories by Kawakami as occurred with the original publication of “Kamisama” (in *Kamisama*, 2001, Chūō Kōron Shinsha).

Readers may, of course, skip around and read only the section or pages that they would like to, but the side-by-side placement of these stories emphasizes the shifts and changes that occurred within the 2011 rewrite, which include both direct or indirect references to nuclear contamination and the triple disaster. I will analyze more deeply below specific alterations most

¹⁰ Koichi Haga argues that the first piece is likely the second installment of Shiina Makoto’s *Kaijūtachi ga yattekita* (The Monsters Have Arrived), published on April 6, 2011 in the May edition of the literature magazine *Subaru* (Haga 6).

significant to food, bodies, and the act of eating and preparing food in this text. Here, I would like to point out that the arrangement of these texts forces the reader to confront one of two emotional processes. If they are reading “Kamisama” first, or have read it in the past, what lingers is the peaceful exchange between human and bear, and the friendly bond that the two have built over their outing, soured only slightly by the bear’s interaction with some humans at the river but, overall, “not a bad day” (Kawakami 16). Moving on to “Kamisama 2011” and its outright discussion of going out without protective gear after “that incident” (あのこと *ano koto*), conversations and numbers revealing how much radiation their bodies can and do handle, the altered landscape, and the lack of active human life allows these adjustments to spark the reader’s attention, especially as many passages are exactly the same between the two texts. What occurs is an emphasis on the aftereffects of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear meltdown—things have changed since “that incident.”

Reading “Kamisama 2011” first invokes a different kind of anxiety, one that troubles the reader with the narrator and bear’s unprotected outing, the contaminated river, and the sheer amount of radiation that the narrator estimates their body has absorbed today. Following this tonally peaceful but troubling piece directly addressing the nuclear disaster, reading “Kamisama” may spark a different kind of anxiety—when will we be able to return to those days of the past, when the only trouble the bear and narrator encounter is the “innocent” (無邪気 *mujaki*) violence committed against the bear’s body by a small child?

The unique intertextuality created by the arrangement of the original and rewritten text side-by-side sparks affective response from the reader. Linda Flores suggests that the republishing of “Kamisama” next to “Kamisama 2011” allows the reader to “move spatially as well as temporally between the texts, as access to the source narrative is immediate... [but

meaning-making] can only be achieved through the intervention of the reader” (157). Flores points us to the concatenation of time, a clear “before” and “after” of everyday life made explicit through Kawakami’s updates to her earliest work. Flores’s analysis suggests that “these alterations can also be regarded as a kind of textual violence... the story that launched her career, has been symbolically defaced” (156-7). This “defacement” of Kawakami’s work occurs through the author, but also in the minds of readers—after they have read “Kamisama 2011,” there is no way to disassociate the altered versions from the original, just as it is now impossible to completely disassociate aspects of daily life from the events of 3.11, especially for the residents of the affected areas.

Today, nearly a decade past March 11, 2011, it may feel that life has returned “to normal,” and that the fears of the ill after-effects of radiation from TEPCO’s failed nuclear plants are a distant memory, no longer intruding on daily life for those outside of the shrinking contamination zone. However, as many scholars working on post-3.11 texts have suggested, there still exists a collective memory and awareness of the disasters. Rachel DiNitto mentions a dissonance between the apparent progression away from 3.11 that daily life in Japan has made, the news tracking nuclear leakage and TEPCO leadership, and the selection of a novel including a death linked to the tsunami for the prestigious 2017 Akutagawa Prize (160-2). For people living away from the areas with the highest contamination, it may seem that there is little fear of exposure to radiation from the nuclear meltdown—until food is involved. Even today, there remain numerous campaigns that promote the region of Fukushima for tourists, and perhaps most relevant to daily life, the deliciousness of food from Fukushima.¹¹

¹¹ One example of these campaigns is Fukushima Pride, a promotional campaign run by the local prefectural government of Fukushima prefecture. The website of Fukushima Pride boasts the deliciousness of locally grown Fukushima produce and introduces visitors to farmers, fishers, and ranchers, as well as listing recipes that can be made with ingredients from Fukushima. One can buy from the online store on Fukushima Pride seasonal produce,

The ongoing effort to promote the products and stories of food producers in Fukushima reveals the lingering economic effects of the prefecture's association with the disasters, especially the nuclear meltdown. Of course, the foods that come out of Fukushima must necessarily be safe, or they would not be commercially viable. However, for those eating in post-3.11 Japan, the area of Fukushima retains its association with disaster and nuclear contamination—an issue clearly discussed in the final volumes of *Oishinbo*. For those eating within or near the contaminated areas, however, a different set of issues appears: how can one control the amount of radiation taken into the body when contending with both external and internal exposure?

Human Bodies and Animal Bodies

Before delving into food, discussing the bodies that consume food and expose themselves to radiation is important to analyze “Kamisama 2011.” The narrator’s body and the bear’s body are not textually similar—and of course, human bodies are not equal to bear bodies. However, “Kamisama” and “Kamisama 2011” are replete with events and descriptions that emphasize the bodily difference *and* similarity between humans and bears. In “Kamisama,” Kawakami presents the bodily binary of human/animal, which in the rewritten version is affected by its nuclear contexts. I argue that while there are certainly distinctions to be made by not treating bodies equally, I also believe that Falk’s discussion (mentioned in the introduction) on the equalization of solely *human* bodies becomes suspect when we think of nuclear narratives. Falk even makes the point that all bodies, human and animal, are sensory—what makes human bodies differ is

rice, and meat from the region, or watch the animated shorts introducing the special qualities of produce from Fukushima entitled *Tabechattatte ii no ni na!* (translated in English as *You Can Enjoy!*) through anthropomorphic fruit, vegetables, fish, and livestock. The last item on the Fukushima Pride site is a link to a page where visitors can look up the contamination levels contained within products of agriculture, forestry, fishing, and processed foods that come from Fukushima prefecture (<https://www.new-fukushima.jp/top>).

that they are *sensual*, driven by a “logic of desire” formed within society rather than being innate within the human body itself (57-8). Even if we are to distinguish between body and soul to argue that flesh may be equal, the divide Falk draws between human and animal bodies must then fall under question. Kawakami’s texts allow for cultural dynamics to shift; the bear and human bodies are similar and dissimilar in both texts, and at different points the bear and the narrator are more or less vulnerable to physiological or social harm. The bear may follow human customs—perhaps almost *too* politely—but the narrator never stops remembering that the bear is a bear, and the bear reminds the narrator that its body is still susceptible to radiation. In Kawakami’s texts, human and bear bodies are shaped and affected by both cultural, biological, and environmental forces. But exactly how different are this talking bear and the humans that surround him and how does this affect human-bear relationships?

In the original “Kamisama,” the two encounter two men and a child. The child repeatedly says, “It’s a bear” (くまだよ *kuma da yo*) while their father (referred to as “Snorkel,” while the other man is “Sunglasses”) looks on, checking the bear’s and the narrator’s expressions but never looking at the bear straight on. The child pulls at the bear’s fur, kicks, and punches the bear before running off, and the two men blithely follow without a word of apology. The bear attempts to shrug the experience off, saying, “Small humans are so innocent... There are a lot of humans in this world, but children are all innocent,” then quickly heads toward the river before the narrator can respond (Kawakami 9-11).

In “Kamisama 2011,” the narrator and the bear encounter two men (“Long Gloves” and “Sunglasses”) wearing protective clothing at the abandoned riverside. The absence of a child means that the conversation identifying the bear occurs between the two men, though this time it is marked with jealousy rather than curiosity:

“It’s a bear, isn’t it,” said Sunglasses.
“I envy bears,” Long Gloves continued.
“Bears are strong against strontium, and plutonium too.”
“Because they’re bears.”
“Right, because they’re bears.”
“Yes, because they’re bears.” (Kawakami 29)

All this while Long Gloves conducts an examination of the bear; he pulls on the bear’s fur and runs his gloved hands over the bear’s belly. Finally, the two men leave, and the bear speaks: “I’m sure they didn’t mean any harm... Yes, my maximum permitted dose is a bit higher than humans, but that doesn’t mean that I’m strong against strontium or plutonium. But how would they know?” (Kawakami 30).

In the original “Kamisama” this interaction between a human child and the bear highlights the distinction between human and animal bodies, and the “innocent” cruelty of humans against animals, for the humans are not aware of the bear’s hurt feelings and the bodily pain he suffers at being kicked and punched. The narrator does not speculate, only narrates what they witness. In “Kamisama 2011,” however, the bear emphasizes his bodily *similarity* to humans, in that both are vulnerable to radiation. The uninformed humans assume that based on the biological differences between human and animal (perhaps in the bear’s fur or fat, as emphasized by Long Gloves’s actions) that animals must be affected by radiation differently than humans. Perhaps Kawakami’s commentary here implies that the biology of living beings is similar enough between all bodies that size is the primary factor which affects how much radiation a body can take. At the same time, the bear also mentions that the humans simply do not *know* how bear biology works against radiation, for how would they when information in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster was focused on how humans would be affected? Here, bringing in Falk’s discussion of the modern equalizing of bodies allows us to conceptualize a certain harmony between the vulnerable bodies of human and animal, while also revealing the

marked difference in perception in the social production of the bear's body *through* the humans' assumptions, versus the bear's knowledge of his own body. If the difference between human and bear bodies is the sensuality of human bodies vis-à-vis desire formed through (human) society, then the construction of the bear's body by humans is different than the way that humans construct their own bodies. Kawakami's bear, however, is constructed as being a part of human society, filled with knowledge and awareness of human customs, speech, and sentiment while also retaining his bear body and skills. Moreover, the bear is not only perceived differently, he is *treated* differently due to humans' misguided perception.

The interaction with the bear's body is further mediated by the fact that he is being touched by a man wearing long gloves, while the bear and the narrator are both unprotected. The narrator, in the opening of the text, tells the reader that this is the first time they are packing a lunch and going on an outing without wearing protective clothing—the narrator makes it a point to mention that they will be “baring [their] skin” (肌をだし *hada wo dashi*) to the external radiation (Kawakami 23). The other humans go to great lengths to avoid external radiation—Long Gloves and Sunglasses by wearing protective clothing and by physically interacting with the bear's unprotected body through a protective barrier; a car approaching as the narrator and bear stroll down the highway slows and gives them a wide berth, to which the narrator says, “Maybe they're avoiding us because we're not wearing protective clothing” (Kawakami 26)—while the narrator and bear choose to expose themselves instead. This external radiation is clearly a concern for most people in the story; despite the annual allowance of radiation exposure, most humans still choose to protect themselves despite some time having passed between “that incident” and the present. When the bear requests a parting embrace, the narrator is not unconscious of the fact that the bear likely does not frequently wash himself, so there is

more radiation collected on the surface of his body. Yet, the narrator also notes that it was their own choice to stay in this area, so they have no intention of worrying about the external radiation. The bear and narrator embrace, the bear voices his content and tells the narrator, “May the blessings of the bear god pour down upon [them],” and finally reminds the narrator that the fish will not last for long and to throw it out the next day if they are not planning to eat it (Kawakami 36).

The bodies of the bear and the humans are irradiated largely due to outside exposure to the environment—a contrast to the *internal* radiation that the characters also worry about. By wearing protective clothing and by washing themselves, the characters can shield themselves from excessive external radiation. And yet, a contradiction appears in the narrator’s actions toward their body: if the narrator chooses to expose themselves to external radiation, why not eat the fish as well? The final numbers they calculate at the end of the day—“Today’s estimated external radiation dose: 30 microsieverts, internal radiation dose: 19 microsieverts. Total estimated external radiation dose since the beginning of the year through today, 1780 microsieverts”—apparently exceed their annual limits (Kawakami 36; DiNitto 10).¹² What is the

¹² Here, DiNitto cites Komori Yōichi’s reading of “Kamisama” in *Shisha no Koe, seija no kotoba: Bungaku de tō genpatsu no Nihon* (ShinNihon Shuppansha, 2014) to make the point that Kawakami’s work revealed how the nuclear disaster quickly became entrenched in everyday life. Although the text never explicitly states that the narrator has exceeded their annual radiation dose limit, Komori assumes that “readers would quickly realize with horror that [the narrator] had exceeded [their] annual limits” (Komori 88, qtd. in DiNitto 10). To unpack this a bit further, 1000 microsieverts is equivalent to 1 millisievert, far below the “official” recommended limit of 100 millisieverts per year. Going on these official numbers, the narrator’s exposure is far lower than is safe, so why would it exceed annual limits? The answer likely lies in the difference in consciousness toward 1 versus 100 millisieverts per year from central and peripheral voices. Inoue Yoshiyuki suggests that the problem of 1 millisievert was both “a fixation” for evacuees and residents, as well as a “trump card” (*kirifuda*) when negotiating with TEPCO and the government (23). At the same time, repeated reporting that up to 100 millisieverts per year would cause no significant increase in the chances that one would develop cancer from radiation exposure was an idea repeatedly pressed in journalism and scientific opinion in Tokyo, which led to the concerns and desire to relocate of those living in or evacuated from areas contaminated by the nuclear meltdown being brushed off by the general populace. Perhaps the takeaway from these varied reports of how much radiation exactly is safe is that the numbers ultimately feel arbitrary—the desire to feel bodily safety and anxiety of radiation contamination cannot be reconciled through numbers alone.

difference between choosing to expose oneself to radiation and consuming contaminated food? If we consider the food eaten by the narrator and the bear in both texts and consider the difference between these foods and the altered narration, preparation, and final action taken toward the fish, perhaps we can better understand the new relationship between food and consumer in post-3.11 eating. Specifically, I argue that food itself takes on new roles once its edibility comes into question after 3.11.

“Clean” Cooked Food, Contaminated Fish

Besides the fish, there are other foods present in both texts. The bear gives an old-fashioned gift of moving-in soba noodles and ten postcards to each of the apartment’s residents when it moves in (Kawakami 23). The noodles create a point of conversation for the bear and each of his new neighbors, who in “Kamisama 2011” seem to have chosen to stay in the disaster area. This gift of food is a pretense for meeting new neighbors, but the addition of a gift that is useful and useable makes them more receptive to building a positive rapport with the new tenant. The narrator and the bear use this time to build their initial connection, which is when the bear notices the narrator’s nameplate and the two trace their surprising mutual connection through their last name—a person who helped the bear had an uncle working in the town hall with the same surname, and the bear and narrator figure out that the uncle and the narrator’s father are likely second cousins. Though the noodles go unmentioned after this, it is clear that food also plays a role in building this initial connection which eventually sparks the outing.

The two bring lunch to eat by the river: the bear has “French bread which had been cut at various points and pâté and radishes sandwiched within,” while the narrator has “a rice ball with pickled plum,” and the two have “one orange each for dessert.” Upon finishing their fruit, the bear asks the narrator if he can have their orange peel and turns his back to the narrator to gobble

it up (Kawakami 32). Quite clearly there exists a divide between narrator's meal and the bear's meal—the narrator eats “Japanese” food, while the bear eats “Western” food. Kawakami uses ラディッシュ (*radisshu*, referring to the small red-skinned variety) rather than 大根 (*daikon*, referring to the variety of radish often seen in Japanese cuisine). The katakana of radish, French bread, and pâté (ラディッシュ, フランスパン, パテ) are juxtaposed with the hiragana and kanji of the narrator's umeboshi onigiri (梅干しおにぎり). Through both content and textual choice, the cultural origins of the food that each character eats are made apparent, which may have an effect on the reader's perception of the characters' meals: the bear's meal feels luxuriant and unusual compared to the character's familiar and comforting rice ball. Another difference between the narrator and the bear's meal is the bear's request to eat the peel at the end, marking his departure from regular human behavior (though his polite request and turning away from the narrator to “speedily eat” the peel may mark his awareness that seeing such behavior may upset or bother the narrator (32)).

It may seem obvious that there is a difference between the food and eating behaviors of the bear and narrator, animal and human. Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Raw and the Cooked*, a thorough analysis of myth, ritual, food, and eating in South American mythology, suggests that cooking is the process through which natural becomes cultural (164). Lévi-Strauss's theory here is not so much that cooking is what divides humans and animals, but that all “natural” processes such as cooking are in fact cultural. Indeed, if cooking feels natural to us, it is because it is so ingrained in our daily lives that we cannot and will not eat certain food unless it has been cooked or processed in some way, even if it is still technically edible in its original states. The components that make up the narrator and bear's meals are both highly “cooked”—literally cooked, in the case of the rice, wheat, and liver, as well as figuratively “cooked” in terms of the

very human processes that go into making the food more familiar or accessible or delicious, such as the bread, pâté, rice, and pickled plum. What I believe matters about this scene between the narrator and the bear is that despite the cultural divide that can be drawn between their respective meals, both are eating highly “cooked” food, rather than raw food. Although the bear diverges from normal human eating habits by eating the orange peel and from normal human food-gathering habits by catching a fish using his bare paws, the emphasis that Kawakami makes is on the ways that the bear has ingrained himself into human—“cooked”—society.

The lunch passage is unchanged between the original and the 2011 version of the text. However, in a post-3.11 context, fundamental questions about the food that the characters eat change, especially because this passage immediately follows the fish-catching scene and contains the added discussion of the cesium that collects in fish bodies. This juxtaposition of eating lunch and the now-dangerous fish caught in the river sparks questions about the *physical* origins, rather than cultural origins of the food that we eat post-3.11.

In the original text, the bear rushes off to the river after his interaction with the child and two men. The narrator sees small fish darting about in the clear river. The bear stares intently at the water and the narrator wonders, “What is he looking at? Do bears see what’s in water the same ways that humans do?” when suddenly the bear leaps into the river, plunging his paw into the water and “pull[s] up a fish” that is “three times larger than the small fish [the narrator] had seen swimming along the riverbank” (Kawakami 11). Clearly, the bear’s animal eyes are able to see something different than the narrator’s human eyes. Upon his return, the bear lays the fish before the narrator, and the fish’s fins gleam in the sunlight. The other humans at the river point in their direction, seemingly discussing the bear’s skill in fishing. The bear then prepares the fish for the narrator:

“Allow me to give this to you. In memory of today.”

Saying this, the bear opened the bag he had brought along. From the cloth bundle he pulled out came a small knife and cutting board. The bear deftly used the knife to slice open the fish, sprinkled it with coarse salt that he seemingly had brought for this purpose, and laid it upon a spread-out leaf.

“If we turn it over a few times, it will be perfectly salted by the time we return.”

The bear really thought of everything. (12)

After this, the narrator and bear have lunch, then the bear goes to turn the fish and rinses the knife, cutting board, and cup in the river. At the bear’s behest, the narrator takes a nap and upon waking up, sees that there are only a few people left at the river—all fishing. The narrator lays a towel on the slumbering bear and goes to turn the salted fish, only to find that there are three fish now. Upon their return home, the bear and the narrator embrace. Before parting the bear reminds the narrator that, “the salted fish will not keep for very long, so [they] should eat it tonight.” Once the narrator returns to their apartment, they “grill the fish, bathe, and before sleeping write a diary entry.” The story ends as the narrator states that “it was not a bad day” (16).

In the 2011 rewrite, the bear similarly rushes off to the river after his interaction with the two men. The passage up until the bear begins to prepare the fish is altered in only two minor places. The major changes occur in the following passage:

“Well, the moss growing on the riverbed which the fish feed on is prone to accumulating cesium.”

Even while saying this, the bear opened the bag he had brought along. From the cloth bundle he pulled out came a small knife and cutting board. The bear deftly used the knife to slice open the fish, rinsed it with bottled water he had seemingly brought along for this purpose, and cleansed the body of the fish. Then the bear sprinkled it with coarse salt, and laid it upon a spread-out leaf.

“If we turn it over a few times, it will be perfectly salted by the time we return. Even if you don’t eat it, I thought it could be a memento.”

The bear really thought of everything. (31-32)

That the lunch scene is preceded by this altered fishing scene brings up new questions about the food that the narrator and bear eat, while also imbuing the fish itself with new

processes, anxieties, and meaning. Moreover, the origins of the other foods come into question, especially of the narrator's rice ball. Rice is one of the most highly valued foods in Japanese culture, and most of the rice consumed in Japan is domestically grown. Despite the fact that Japan only produces about half of the food energy consumed by the population domestically, contemporary government regulations keep domestic rice production just above the national demand to ensure stable prices and stock of this staple food (Ishige 17). Although on average Japanese consumers derive only a quarter of their daily calories from rice, rice—domestically grown *white* rice—remains a staple food in the Japanese diet (Rath 65).

Fukushima prefecture is one of Japan's rice-producing regions, and prior to the triple disaster it was the fourth-largest rice producer in Japan (Aoki). In the months after 3.11, local rice shipments were tested for cesium. In November 2011, the Japanese government banned the shipment of rice harvested in Onami district in Fukushima prefecture because it exceeded the "safe" limit of 500 becquerels of cesium per kilogram (Dickie). In studies of wheat, rice, and peaches harvested from the city of Koriyama in Fukushima, researchers found that much of the radioactive cesium absorbed by these crops remained affixed to the surface of the crops, save for the rice, which absorbed radioactive cesium dissolved in the water of the rice paddies. Most of the cesium was concentrated in the rice bran and germ rather than in the grain itself, so through processing the rice into white rice, the amount of cesium in the rice could be lowered to an average of 500 becquerels per kilogram, the high end of the "safe" limit (Nakanishi et al. 986-8).

This does not, however, mean that rice from Fukushima has been well-received by consumers, and especially not in 2011 when Kawakami published "Kamisama 2011." Because rice harvesting season is in the late summer and "Kamisama 2011" was published in May 2011, there was likely not enough information regarding how the rice harvest would go in the autumn.

It is uncertain at what time the events of “Kamisama 2011” take place, whether it is in the spring or summer following “that incident” or months or years later. If the narrator is eating locally grown rice, then there is no guarantee that it is not free of contamination, even if it was purchased through conventional means (i.e. at a supermarket) and therefore deemed legally and scientifically “safe” to eat. Thus the narrator, in choosing to eat rice at all, makes a decision to either shun the rice of the area in which they live, thereby rejecting additional radiation, or to purchase it regardless of the awareness that it could contain radiation, consequently allowing a minute amount of cesium into their bodies on top of the radiation that they are exposed to just by living in a contaminated area.

What *is* clear, however roundabout it may seem, is that the origins of the rice and other foods eaten by the narrator and the bear are not revealed. This may seem like a strange point to make after revealing the issues that rice growers from Fukushima faced after the triple disaster due to contamination and social stigma, but here I believe it is clear that the ties that food has to *space* and *place* are essential to revealing the ways that eating after 3.11 have been affected by the nuclear disaster. The origins of the other foods eaten by the bear and narrator are never revealed, implying that they are safe to eat. Conversely, the only food tied to a specific origin is the fish that the bear gifts to the narrator. As I will discuss in the following section, the alterations in the 2011 version discussed above show how certain food becomes inedible in the wake of nuclear disaster, but that now-inedible food can still hold sentimental meaning even if it is *not* consumed.

Inedible Fish as Memento

This new meaning comes about in two ways: first, the bear’s effort in preparing the fish; second, the narrator bringing the fish home rather than leaving it at the riverbank. These two

processes are altered in “Kamisama 2011” to mark the narrator and bear’s new perception of the once edible fish. The body of the fish hides within it the cesium that it has eaten, which the bear ensures that the narrator and the reader are aware of by mentioning that the fish eats contaminated moss.

In “2011,” the fish becomes *inedible*, a food substance that transgresses the normal boundaries of culinary sensibility. Here, I find Falk’s discussion of the edible vs. inedible binary within culture particularly useful in thinking about the transformation of the fish. There is a difference between the “natural” edible and inedible—foods that bodies physically cannot ingest, digest, and get nutrients from—and the “cultural binary opposition of edible/inedible,” which follows “a minimalistic principle of *dissolution*: incorporation must have some effect on the body (assimilation) in the act of ingestion (sensory response) and/or in the process of digestion (from satiating hunger to pharmacological effects)” (Falk 69). This cultural binary opposition differs from culture to culture and involves not only the belief in the edibility of inedible things (made *consumable* through processes such as drying, salting, detoxifying, etc.) or the inedibility of edible things (forbidden alimentary structures, such as within tenets of religion or class hierarchy).

The fish is literally edible; it is likely that the taste has not palpably changed and eating it will likely not cause any immediate harm to the narrator’s body, though their continued exposure to radiation in the environment and through eating contaminated food will eventually make them sick. That which makes the fish inedible is the knowledge that is likely highly contaminated, even though no effort is taken to prove that it may in fact be “safe” to eat.

What also matters is that these are human-defined categories, which the bear has now taken into his own awareness. Gutting, salting, and drying the fish are strictly *human* activities,

taken on by the bear. This process of preparing fish to be eaten is conducted by the bear, who uses human tools to prepare the fish even though he used his own bear tools (his paws and senses) to catch the fish. The bear's actions are halfway between human and animal, learned and instinctual. Based on taste alone, humans and animals cannot distinguish between contaminated food and uncontaminated food; it is within the realm of human knowledge that food can be deemed radiation-free or low enough in radiation that it is safe to eat.¹³ Edibility is not merely based on the immediate harm it causes to the body, or the physiological reaction that a human or animal has to eating the food, but on cultural and social factors as well. For the fish in the river, how is it to know that the waters in which it swims are contaminated, and that the moss it eats absorbs high amounts of cesium?

The bear, however, has enormous amounts of human knowledge and awareness, including the fact that certain rituals must be conducted to cleanse the fish. In the 2011 version, the bear cleans (清める *kiyomeru*) the innards of the gutted fish with water from a bottle, which the narrator thinks “[the bear] had seemingly brought along for this purpose” (Kawakami 31). The connotation of the kanji used here is “purify” or “cleanse,” especially in religious contexts. The act of cleaning oneself with pure water is a ritual commonly conducted before entering shrines or temples in Japan, and here the bear rinses the fish with clean water—not water from the river, as he uses to wash his tools in the original story—before salting it. The narrator, however, seems not to have these skills or chooses not to partake in the ritual, as they admire the bear's thoughtfulness and foresight.

The bear prepares the fish for the narrator, and he also is the one to attach meaning to the

¹³ Notably, the image of animals unknowingly eating contaminated food comes up in other post-3.11 literature such as Kimura Yūsuke's *Seichi Cs* (Sacred Cesium Ground, 2014, Shinchōsha; English translation by Doug Slaymaker published 2019 in *Sacred Cesium Ground and Isa's Deluge*, Columbia University press).

fish regardless of what the narrator does with it. In the original, this act of feeding the narrator is something that the bear does earlier by bringing the gift of noodles for all of its new neighbors. The fish is different from the noodles, for this gift is attached to the bear's innate animal skills and his thoughtfulness *toward the narrator specifically*, as he prepares the fish in front of the narrator's eyes *after* he tells the narrator that he will give the fish to the narrator "in memory of today" (Kawakami 12). Although the bear catches two more fish while the narrator is napping, it is the fish that the bear prepares in front of the narrator that the narrator takes home. The gift of an edible thing made more delicious through the actions of the bear attaches special meaning to the fish when the narrator takes it home and grills it. A path toward eating is clearly taken, and while the narrator does not tell us that they ate the fish, or how it tasted, Kawakami's original story utilizes the fish, whose body is prepared for eating by *both* the bear and the narrator, to show the bond that has formed between the two characters. This fish is not only literally edible, it is edible and *special*, a relatively normal food made special by the contexts in which it was given to the narrator.

In the 2011 version, the specialness of the fish is not undone; instead it is given a different meaning. Across the two versions, the fish as food becomes not-food, and its double-meaning makes it desirable in new contexts. Falk discusses the transformation of food in terms of festive food, "...currently bad and forbidden but good and permissible in a future role or position, [which] creates a kind of enticement or anticipatory tension, making possible a positive representation" (82). Rather than taking the straightforward path of forbidden food becoming permissible food, the fish takes a more winding and even reversed path through both texts: everyday food, permissible and ordinary, becomes imbued with special meaning as it is prepared for eating; years later (or perhaps moments later, for readers approaching the two versions

published together), this special fish becomes forbidden food due to the context it is made to exist within, and through preparation similar to its previous iteration, it becomes imbued with the ambivalence of the narrator and bear's knowledge of its dangerous, contaminated flesh and the positive feelings of the bear who prepares it for the narrator. If the reader were to read the texts in the order they were published in *Gunzō* or in the English language translations in *Granta* or *March was made of Yarn*, then the fish turns from a food immediately wielding danger to a food that, although it is apparently safe, now carries with it the doubt and anxiety that it may contain dangerous substances that past readers—and eaters—may not have given any heed to before.

Yet the narrator still brings the fish into their home in 2011, even though it is not cooked or eaten. The bear makes a point of telling the narrator that if they do not eat it, then they should throw it out the next day, differing from the original in that there is now the option to throw it out at all. The narrator chooses instead to display (飾る *kazaru*) the fish atop their shoebox (a shelf at the entryway) before going about their nightly routine: showering carefully to wash the external radiation from their body, writing in their diary, and then recording the estimated amount of radiation they have been exposed to, both internal and external.

Ambivalence abounds in the narrator's actions. The narrator rinses their body with water after their outing, as the bear purified the fish with "safe" water, but that does not erase the radiation that they have been exposed to. They also choose to embrace the bear's body without protective gear, even though their internal narration reminds the reader that the bear's large body has high amounts of radiation on his fur. Despite the decisions they make to stay in the contaminated area, to not wear protective clothing on this outing, to hug the bear, they make the decision *not* to eat the fish. The inedible fish is a memento, a physical representation of the day that the bear and the narrator spent together, but it does not have the same positive bodily effect

as the fish in the original. Once the narrator chooses not to eat it that evening, it ceases to pose harm or hold benefit toward the narrator's body. By leaving it on the shoebox rather than placing it in the refrigerator, the narrator rejects the raw fish as a food substance that needs to be preserved in some way. All it can do now is rot in its place at the entryway until the narrator chooses to throw it out.

Moreover, the bear faces the same kinds of choices that the narrator makes. Removed from nature, living among humans, the bear is subject to the same dangers that the narrator faces, even though his body is perceived and treated differently by the other humans. It is the bear that reminds the narrator and the reader that the fish's body is contaminated, and the bear that prepares the fish for the narrator. The fish is fundamentally transformed by the bear; the bear is fundamentally transformed by the society under which it faces the dangers of contamination. The bodies of narrator, fish, and bear become "cooked" by society, and the meanings of these bodies change for the post-3.11 reader.

Falk's analysis of festive food, applied to the fish, poses a hope—perhaps if we avoid the fish now, taking away its cultural edibility until the radioactive matter in the environment abates in some odd number of decades, then we may once again welcome it into our diets in the future as a marker that the danger of nuclear contamination in northern Japan has passed. Kawakami's story, however, does not trace the potential of the fish that far. The narrator and the bear never voice discontent with the fish and do not express hope that things will get better. The choices they and the bear make throughout the stories are predicated upon the immediate situation they are in. They eat what they eat, assuming it is safe, and they do not eat what they know is likely not safe. Navigating the relatively straightforward choice of eating "safe" food comes with a plethora of other ambivalent choices, which Kawakami's narrator and bear engage with, coming

away with a changed outlook on food objects.

Conclusion: A New Everyday

Kawakami's updated text grapples with the supposedly straightforward choices to make in order to keep oneself—one's *body*—safe in a radiation contaminated environment. The invisibility of radiation and the repeated exposure of oneself to it makes the daily routine of life for the narrator and the bear a series of conflicting choices. If food is banal, quotidian, omnipresent, then the narrator's choice to eat or not eat the contaminated fish versus the other food in the novel marks the specialness of the fish in these new nuclear terms. Above, I have discussed bodily issues of humans and animals, the culturally symbolic and nutritional qualities of foods, as well as the shifting nature of food in our consciousness.

Food is tied to place, and place to living. The narrator is not choosing to become sick simply by exposing themselves to radiation that day, nor would they likely fall ill by eating one contaminated fish. They do, however, choose to live in a contaminated zone, to expose their body to radiation, and not to consume a contaminated body, all of which are choices that affect the processes that make up their everyday life. Kawakami's story is a meditation on the ways that life has been “cooked” subtly in the aftermath of the humanmade disaster.

Tonally, the two texts maintain a certain quietude, even when the afterword contains Kawakami's ire and frustration toward humans'—including her own—willingness to exploit radioactive materials for personal gain, without considering the existence of the “uranium god” (ウランの神様 *uran no kamisama*). Much like the way that the bear has been abused in both stories, Kawakami's afterword muses on the ways that humans have exploited uranium-235 for their own personal gain. While Kawakami notes in the beginning of the afterword that there are tens of thousands of gods in Japan stemming from ancient beliefs, those that she lists are gods of

both natural and humanmade things: mountains, rivers, toilets, hearths, and of course, animals. It is unclear, in her writing, if the “bear god” and “uranium god” are good or bad, or if they protect bears or uranium particles or humans. In the original, the “bear god’s blessings” conferred upon the narrator by the bear seem to imply that the narrator, having built a positive and meaningful relationship with the bear, is worthy of the bear god’s favor. In the 2011 version, the bear god’s blessings are still conferred upon the narrator, but in this case, it is borne out of a new bond in the text’s new nuclear contexts: by agreeing to an outing with the bear, by accepting the radioactive fish despite its inedibility, and by hugging the bear despite the contamination built up on its fur, the narrator embraces the new landscape vis-à-vis the bear.

Ultimately, Kawakami’s story changes the contexts, the fish, and the actions of the narrator and bear in order to suit the new everyday of life in post-3.11 Japan. Toward the end of the afterword, Kawakami writes:

At the end of March 2011, I rewrote “Kamisama 2011.” It was not at all for the haughty purpose of warning people of the dangers that accompany the use of nuclear power. Rather, I injected into the writing of it my feelings of surprise that daily life goes on, yet there is the possibility that this daily life can be greatly altered by something. My quiet rage (怒り *ikari*), since the nuclear accident, will not depart. Of course, this rage is, in the end, rage directed at myself. Because Japan was made by no one other than me. Even while I harbor this rage, we dispassionately live our everyday lives, and even if it’s just out of stubbornness, I don’t want to say, “I’m tired of this (もうやになった *mou ya ni natta*)” and give up on this life. I mean, living itself is supposed to be a great happiness. (44)

Here, Kawakami points to the everyday (日常 *nichijō*) as both a given and a tenuous attribute of life. “Kamisama” and “Kamisama 2011” skirt the ordinary and extraordinary—the talking bear, of course, is extraordinary, but their outing is ordinary for the most part. If not for the bear’s bodily bear-ness, an outing between two humans might have followed the same sort of pattern. Despite these interruptions, originally of the animality of the bear, and in the rewrite the intrusions of radioactive-conscious numbers, actions, and facts, Kawakami’s weary ire is left for

the reader to add on their own, a reactive, affective, compulsive sympathy for the bear and the narrator, each for different reasons.

The processes—the “cooking”—that change the fish in both the original and the 2011 version fundamentally change the meaning of the fish for the narrator, for the bear, and for the reader as well. That the fish is cleaned, salted, and grilled in “Kamisama” presents a collaborative relationship between human and bear, which ultimately gives greater meaning to the day that they have spent together. That the fish is cleaned, washed, salted, and then *displayed* in “Kamisama 2011” marks a new kind of value that the fish has, having lost its edibility due to its own eating patterns. The fish as memento reminds the narrator of their day out with the bear, but also of new definitions of safety and the loss of their old lifestyle. There is no going back—the body of the fish, the body of the bear, and the body of the human are all subtly and fundamentally changed physically and socially by the nuclear meltdown, and thus in readers’ perceptions of these bodies as well. At the same time, Kawakami herself notes that despite the exhaustion and rage she feels toward the people of Japan for the choices that led up to this new way of life, she recognizes that the act of living, which “is supposed to be a great happiness,” means living with and through these new changes, these new bodies (44). For narrator, bear, writer, and reader, this means attaching new meanings to food.

Moreover, “Kamisama 2011” is one of the most widely read and analyzed examples of post-3.11 literature. Kawakami, a Tokyo-born and based writer, “cooks” the idea of irradiated landscapes and food through these fictional bodies. Her afterword imagines the feelings of exploited uranium and the uranium gods and expresses the rage she feels toward herself and others for the way things ended up but does not make explicit note of her own centralized position. Her rewrite places the first-person narrator into the irradiated zone and, in imagining a

future in which people and animals live and make meaning together, sympathizes with animal bodies only through *irradiated* human bodies. The issue of choice in the text—to stay, to not wear protective clothing, to not eat, to estimate rather than to measure—comes at the cost of obscuring the numerous decisions that those living in irradiated areas were forced to make due to their own bodily concerns or due to national policy, such as mandatory evacuation.

While Kawakami's characters choose not to eat food tied to a contaminated landscape, some post-3.11 texts directly address questions of eating contaminated food. Rather than disavowing food tied to disaster-stricken areas, texts like *Oishinbo* address the complex emotional, economic, and physiological impacts that the decision to eat or not eat may have on consumers and producers.

Chapter 3: The Portrayal of “Real” and “Truth” through Eating in *Oishinbo*

Oishinbo (『美味しんぼ』) began publishing in the serial *seinen*¹⁴ manga magazine *Big Comics Spirits* (1980-present, Shōgakukan) in 1983. Written by Kariya Tetsu (1941 -) and illustrated by Hanasaka Akira (1956 -), the manga’s title is a portmanteau of “*oishii*” (美味しい delicious) and “*kuishinbō*” (食いしん坊 glutton). Though certainly not the first manga to deal with food, *Oishinbo* was impressive in that it was both a travel manga, often leading its characters all across Japan and sometimes even internationally, as well as a manga that focused on finding the best local food and discovering the minute differences that took food from good to great. The goal of the main characters is to search for the culinary delights and create the “Ultimate Menu” (究極のメニュー *kyūkyoku no menyū*) to celebrate the history of the fictional newspaper, the *Tōzai Shinbun*. Lorie Brau writes that *Oishinbo*’s goal is to “entertain with a story and to educate with recipes and other ‘real life’ information about food and cooking,” and the text “assumes the role of guide, steering its readers through a dizzying array of culinary possibilities in a time of rapid change” (“*Oishinbo*’s Adventures in Eating,” 37). Over the course of 30 years, 111 volumes and other adapted media, it has certainly fulfilled this role.

At the time *Oishinbo* began publishing, Japan was an economic superpower, and the strength of the yen meant that Japanese people could afford—and thus demanded—greater luxuries in life, including food. *Oishinbo* contributed both culinary knowledge and experience to the hungry consumers of the 1980s and 1990s, who could then apply the information they learned through the manga’s varied story arcs to their real-life eating habits in the pursuit of more gourmet or authentic eating experiences. For the most part, the manga follows the

¹⁴ Manga genres are often split into categories of age and gender, such as *shōnen* (for young boys), *shōjo* (for young girls), *redizū* or *josei* (for adult women). *Seinen* is a manga genre geared largely toward an audience of adult men and teens. Of course, the intended readership of the manga is not exclusive to only one demographic, and there are many areas of overlap between the genres, both narratively and artistically, as well as in terms of readership.

adventures of its protagonist, *Tōzai Shinbun* culture department staff member Yamaoka Shirō, whose lazy attitude and penchant for betting on horse races is a stark contrast to his wide breadth and depth of culinary knowledge. His knowledge stems from the strict and nightmarish upbringing by his father, series antagonist Kaibara Yūzan, a famous ceramics artist and the founder of the Gourmet Club (美食倶楽部 *Bishoku kurabu*), a group of rich socialite men who pursue high gastronomic dining experiences. Yamaoka resents his father because he believes that Kaibara's demanding attitude toward even home cooking drove his mother to her death, causing him to leave home and renounce his father's last name, taking on his mother's maiden name. A secondary protagonist is Kurita Yūko, another employee of the *Tōzai Shinbun* who was selected alongside Yamaoka to develop the "ultimate menu." Over the course of the manga, Yamaoka and Kurita fall in love, get married, and have children, and her kind, enthusiastic demeanor and naivete often serve as a foil to Yamaoka's stubborn confidence during their encounters with restaurateurs, farmers, buyers, and of course, Kaibara. A number of other recurring side characters include the frequent appearances of the other newspaper employees, members of Kaibara's club, assorted fictional and non-fictional restaurateurs and food producers, and many others. At every turn, Yamaoka and Kaibara come head to head, and their encounters leave both the other characters and the readers with a greater understanding of certain dishes, farming practices, and even entire cuisines. Moreover, the often photo-realistic depiction with which food is rendered in the manga is mouthwateringly detailed, leaving readers with more than just knowledge—they come away with cravings and emotional reactions.

Oishinbo falls into the category of *gurume* (グルメ gourmet) or *ryōri* (料理 cooking) manga. Certainly, both categories are served in the text, considering the pursuit of the highest culinary achievement in order to construct the Ultimate Menu, and the emphasis on careful

preparation of ingredients that unfolds within the thirty-year-long serialization. It is also one of the most popular and well-known *gurume* manga, having been the publisher Shōgakukan's second most popular manga series from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s (Kinsella 82). The manga that fall within the *gurume* or *ryōri* genres have a relatively uniform visual language. Though the primary art style may differ greatly, food tends to be rendered in high, photo-realistic detail—especially when rendered alone in a single panel—while the characters tend to be more two-dimensional. This flatness of the characters allows for what Scott McCloud calls “masking”: a simplified, cartoonish character allows for the reader to identify with the character more than a photo-realistic character. Combined with realistic scenery or landscapes, readers are allowed to “*mask* themselves in a character and safely enter a sensually stimulating world” (43).¹⁵ Brau explains how masking in food manga such as *Oishinbo* “produces different effects” than this masking of cartoonish characters in a detailed background: “Rendering the food illustrations in crosshatched, photographic detail often makes them more prominent... These drawings emphasize the difference between food as fact and the story as fiction” (“*Oishinbo*'s Adventures in Eating,” 37). Masking is present in both the backgrounds drawn in *Oishinbo* as well as the food depicted in its chapters, which is especially prominent in the photorealistic renderings of disaster-stricken landscapes in the volumes I will analyze. The manga's relatively simply drawn characters are distinct and identifiable but have nowhere near the same level of realism as the food or backgrounds depicted on the same pages, allowing readers to objectively imagine themselves into the characters' shoes as they see, smell, and taste the detailed food on the page. The panel layout of *Oishinbo* often tends to be straightforward as well, jumping between subjects

¹⁵ Although he discusses comics in general, McCloud notes that manga in particular utilize another type of masking to a high degree for dramatic effect; a simple object that suddenly becomes very realistic looking to denote its importance emphasizes the object as “something with *weight*, *texture*, and *physical complexity*” (44).

and objects or revealing scenery. The pages themselves have straightforward, linear layouts, with little panel-breakout. The uncomplicated visual language of *Oishinbo* allows readers to immerse themselves into the landscapes and eating experiences depicted.

Unfortunately for fans of the long-running series, *Oishinbo* has been on an extended pause from publication since 2014, when the final chapters of the story arc titled “Fukushima no shinjitsu” (福島の真実 The truth about Fukushima) were released. The story arc followed the journalistic pursuits of Yamaoka and company as they made trips to Fukushima prefecture in the months and years following the triple disaster. “Fukushima no shinjitsu” deals specifically with the effects of TEPCO’s nuclear meltdowns on local food producers, citizens, and government officials, finding fault with the national government and TEPCO for their irresponsibility in not keeping locals informed of the dangers of nuclear power generation, for deceiving the masses into allowing a nuclear power plant to be built, and for insisting that people could return to the contaminated areas with no risk. The most controversial moment in these final chapters was when Yamaoka suffers a nosebleed and fatigue, with no clear cause. Though a visit to the doctor suggests that he had not been exposed to enough radiation to cause the mysterious nosebleed, the following pages reveal that others who had visited Fukushima a number of times for research or as a part of the *Tōzai Shinbun*’s trips, such as Kaizan, their Tōhoku region guide Saitō, and the Gifu Environmental Medical Research Institute’s chief researcher Dr. Matsui Eisuke, had suffered nosebleeds and fatigue as well (239-244). Brau notes that the book version alters in this scene a line from the former mayor of Futaba, Idogawa Katsutaka. In the original chapter released on April 28, 2014 in *Big Comics Spirits*, Idogawa says, “In Fukushima” to refer to people suffering nosebleeds after radiation exposure. In volume 111, published December 15, 2015, the line was changed to “Among people I know” due to controversy (“*Oishinbo*’s

Fukushima Elegy,” 186). Criticism toward the depiction of the nosebleed came swiftly “from industry and government leaders, as well as media pundits, for what they deemed to be the irresponsible sensationalizing or falsifying of the situation at Fukushima” (Moscatto 387). At the time, there was no research officially linking nosebleeds to exposure to radiation, so Kariya’s decision to include the episode was criticized for being both scientifically inaccurate and fearmongering (Ochiai). Following this controversy, the publishing company overseeing *Big Comics Spirits* defended their decision to publish the chapters but placed the series on an indefinite hiatus.

My goal in this chapter is not to agree or disagree with the content and depictions in *Oishinbo*, nor is it to analyze the accuracy of the characters’ experiences. Regardless of the ethical implications of Kariya’s decisions and the resulting controversy, these two story arcs reveal the ways in which food and the people who make and eat it are affected by natural and humanmade disaster, as well as how the resulting shifts in food consciousness, food production, and cuisine itself are conveyed to fictional and real-life consumers in post-3.11 life. Through visual and textual analysis, I elucidate the ways that the manga engages with post-disaster issues of food, the body, memory, and place, especially as the fictional text creates “*jikkan*” (実感 real feeling) and “*shinjitsu*” (真実 truth) for the reader.

Textual Hybridity and Fictional Food

The primary focus in these three volumes is on post-tsunami and post-meltdown food production and the affected livelihoods of the farmers and producers in Tōhoku, northern Japan. Yamaoka Shirō and his fellow journalists visit various food producers and partake of what food the farmers and food producers can offer, while learning their stories and the difficulties they face due to property damage, issues of bodily safety and radiation, the refusal of consumers

outside of Fukushima to purchase products from Fukushima even though they are deemed safe, and their desire to maintain local customs and foodways despite the economic and psychological loss that they face.

Visually and narratively, *Oishinbo* attempts to clearly capture “*jikkan*” (real feeling) and “*shinjitsu*” (truth) within the affected areas. The main characters Yamaoka and Kurita are newspaper staff members whose primary job is, ostensibly, to conduct investigations and interviews to eventually write articles for the newspaper they work at. Yet almost none of *Oishinbo* depicts their own newspaper writing; the manga has the reader follow them on various adventures through Japan and sometimes abroad. The aftermath of these trips, whether the wrap-up of their research for the Ultimate Menu or their actual production of this menu, is often left out entirely or used primarily as a frame to bring the events of their latest story to a close. In the post-3.11 Tōhoku chapters examined in this thesis, this remarkable documentary-style narrative building is particularly apparent in its retelling of the traumas and hardships interviewees have gone through since the triple disaster. In this way the manga itself is a documentarian endeavor—Kariya, Hanasaka, and other staff conduct their own research and interview local farmers, restaurateurs, and other people to compile the stories (Brau, “*Oishinbo*’s Fukushima Elegy,” 178). Many of the landscapes and images are drawn based on reference photographs, some of which are labeled with source credits in the page margins. By adding commentary and drawing conclusions through beloved fictional characters, Kariya is able to comment upon real-life experiences in a multitude of voices.

The post-3.11 chapters take place over three years and were published intermittently in *Big Comic Spirits* from September 2011 through May 2014. The story itself begins in late May 2011, so within the diegesis there has been some time to temper the sorrows resulting from the

natural disasters and enough time to watch the development of the unfolding nuclear disaster. The episodes track Yamaoka and a few other employees from *Tōzai Shinbun* as they travel through the disaster-stricken areas of Tōhoku. Starting from the southeast corner of Aomori prefecture, the group travels across much of the Tōhoku region, particularly areas near the coastline affected by the earthquake and tsunami. They survey the enormous damage to nature, cities, and homes and visit various chefs, farmers, and food producers. This trip, later collected in volume 108, is subtitled “Hisaichi-hen: megenai hitobito” (被災地編・めげない人々 Disaster Area Episodes: Undaunted People). The following story arc—not analyzed in this chapter because it does not directly address an area immediately affected by the events of 3.11—depicts a trip to Shimane Prefecture, which the *Tōzai Shinbun* team take at the behest of Kaibara, who suggests that Shimane holds the key to understanding what is necessary for the revival of Tōhoku after 3.11. The arc also deals with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, an ongoing issue at the time Kariya was doing research and publishing these chapters.¹⁶ The final story arc, published from February 2013 to May 2014, is titled “Fukushima no shinjitsu” (The Truth About Fukushima). In these chapters, the “Ultimate Menu” team make multiple trips to various locales in Fukushima¹⁷ in order to grasp the “truth” of the situation in Fukushima with their own eyes, because, as Yamaoka explains to the editor-in-chief Tanimura, “Our department also receives a

¹⁶ A blog entry on Kariya’s blog indicates that he conducted research for the Shimane chapters in late 2010, before the events of 3.11. At the time, the blog was still titled *Oishinbo nikki* [Oishinbo Diary]. The blog title changed in July 2011, after a four-month long break during which Kariya closed his blog due to a post he made after the earthquake and tsunami. It is not surprising that he put the Shimane Prefecture chapters on hold after the events of 3.11 to write instead about the disaster-stricken area, and then to reconnect his previous research and plans to the events that followed. This work requires a reshaping of time and linearity; it is unclear whether Kariya went to Shimane again to conduct further research or if he rewrote the storyline he already planned out, but regardless, whatever pre-3.11 Shimane chapters existed certainly held different meanings than the published post-3.11 chapters. The potential for these pre-3.11 chapters is lost now, and never can they be recovered in the post-3.11 epoch.

¹⁷ Their trips in “Fukushima no shinjitsu” take them to areas such as Sōma-shi and Minami-Sōma, regions directly north of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor. Over the span of approximately two diegetic years, the crew visit different towns and farms, Fukushima University, an abandoned town near the plant, as well as to Hokkaidō to visit a relocated cattle rancher and Saitama-shi north of Tokyo to interview evacuees. They are even allowed to take a tour of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor, although their trip is highly surveilled and controlled.

lot of reports from the area, but they're so disparate that we cannot grasp the whole image. With only reports via television or newspapers we cannot grasp the real feeling (*jikkan*). We want to support Fukushima from the bottom of our hearts. However, in order to do so we need to know the truth about Fukushima" (*Oishinbo 110*, 8).

During their trips to Tōhoku, they meet a variety of real locals; in "Megenai hitobito," many of the people they meet are those whom they have previously encountered in trips to Tōhoku in search of things to add to the "Ultimate Menu." Most of them are chefs, fishers, or locals who prepare food for the visitors to eat while also explaining how the disaster has affected their lives and livelihoods. However, these people are not discouraged or hopeless even after the disaster and are forging ahead despite their situation. In "Fukushima no shinjitsu," the team meet a greater variety of people on their visits to Fukushima, including scientists, government officials, farmers, ranchers, fishers, and university professors, all of whom express concern toward living in Fukushima. Dominant in the discourse of "Fukushima no shinjitsu" is the distrust toward large corporations and the national government and the dilemma of allegiance to place versus one's bodily safety. Like the narrator in "Kamisama 2011," most of the people they encounter have chosen to stay in or to return to the prefecture despite the contamination, which they take measures to self-guard against. A year after the disaster, the primary struggle of the food producers is economic—while their crops and fishing hauls technically fall far under the maximum radiation limits set by the government, consumers nationwide refuse to buy the very food that the locals and producers themselves partake of. The manga includes interviews with producers who take various measures to reduce the amount of cesium that accumulates in their crops. Moreover, Kariya and Hanasaka take measures to clearly include facts and figures and depict the rage of the *Tōzai Shinbun* employees, who realize that the cowardice of the nation's

consumers deeply impacts the livelihood of these local food producers.

In *Oishinbo*, food is tied to place and people; eating local delicacies is a dominant theme of the entire manga, and “Megenai hitobito” and “Fukushima no shinjitsu” are no different. Locals share the area’s food culture with the outside visitors, who rejoice in the flavor of seasonal delicacies and the region’s specialties, but each meal is also plagued with new kinds of sadness: the food may be contaminated so the characters are potentially risking their health, the locals are risking their bodily health because they eat this food every day, and people will not be able to experience the same meals ever again due to the (fear of) contamination. The distress this causes culminates in stone-hearted Kaibara shedding a tear during a meal, about which he says, “I was thinking about the severe circumstances of Chieko-san and realizing that the ingredients that we see in front of us are the last of Iitate-mura’s [pre-3.11] ingredients. When the thought occurred to me that these foods are so valuable because they will not be obtainable for over ten years from now, I was overwhelmed with emotions” (*Oishinbo 110*, 186). Kaibara’s unusual emotional response prompts the characters (and the readers) to taste more carefully and cherish every bite of these last reserves of Iitate-mura’s pre-3.11 local specialties.

The people who appear in these arcs to host, educate, feed, and tell the cast of fictional characters at the center of the narrative about their experiences are all real individuals, with real farms or businesses affected by the 3.11 triple disaster.¹⁸ This documentary-style manga construction occurs throughout much of *Oishinbo*’s later volumes. How much of the final manga rearranges or fictionalizes the interactions with real people remains a mystery, but Kariya maintains that the post-3.11 episodes are truthful and accurate. Following the publication of the

¹⁸ Based on my own preliminary research, I have been able to find references to the same individuals, companies, and restaurants featured in these chapters of *Oishinbo*. Since some of those individuals featured have appeared in previous chapters as well, it is clear that Kariya and his staff have used this pattern of research and story integration for at least a decade.

nosebleed chapter and in response to the ensuing criticism, Kariya wrote on his blog, “I spent two years in Fukushima researching, and have no idea why I must be criticized for writing the truth exactly as I scooped it up... I can only write the truth” (“Hanron wa, saigo no kai made, omachikudasai”). *Oishinbo*’s compelling depictions of “real feeling” and “truth” are bolstered by its use of photorealistic renderings of scenery, food, and the real people who appear in the manga. Brau writes that this mixing of artistic styles “within the same picture plane emblemizes the hybrid nature of *The Truth About Fukushima*” (“*Oishinbo*’s Fukushima Elegy,” 178-9). In “Fukushima no shinjitsu,” the hybridity Brau refers to includes the documentary and journalistic elements that transport the reader to the locale depicted on the page, so readers can even better immerse themselves in the manga.

The effect of visual hybridity is that the food is made more accessible to the reader. Brau notes that *gurume* manga like *Oishinbo* rely on the text of the story as well as the visuals in order to “engage in vicarious eating. In the absence of color, sound, and smell, [readers] recall their own eating experiences in order to interpret the illustrations, sound effects, and characters’ verbal descriptions of food” (“*Oishinbo*’s Adventures in Eating,” 39). This “vicarious eating” is present throughout all of *Oishinbo*, but is utilized in the three post-3.11 volumes not only to express the deliciousness of the food that the characters are eating, but also to convey the deeper meanings and the gravitas of the food that the characters are eating, as well as the fact that the characters are eating at all. What does it mean that these fictional mouths are tasting food disappearing from the Japanese culinary landscape due to damage from natural or humanmade disaster? What does it mean that these fictional bodies are consuming food that could be contaminated? How do these events manifest through the fictional narrative and documentary mixing of *Oishinbo*?

The answers to these questions can be found in the “*jikkan*” the manga attempts to capture through visuality and documentary-style interviews, as well as the “vicariousness” of seeing, eating, and feeling that the reader experiences through the characters. The conflict, hope, sorrow, anger, and despair that the characters feel is conveyed to the readers through the food that they eat. Food breaks up the deluge of images of destruction and information regarding the safety of the area, but it is not enough to merely see the food; one must *experience* it in these chapters to feel the real anxiety, sorrow, and hope that food presents in post-3.11 Japan. The vicariousness of eating through the manga is described not only through image but through the characters’ descriptions of their eating experiences *and* the stories and information provided to the readers through the progression of the story. With the context of each dish, readers build meanings even around the eating of fictional food, even if they cannot experience the same act of eating for themselves.

The public, skeptical of sweeping “official” assurances that the food is safe, turn to media not driven by large commercial interests or governmental politics. Kariya’s emphasis on the “truth” of the situation in Fukushima is supported by his own research and interviews, including trips to certain areas, and many of the individuals featured in the later volumes of his work are depictions of the local people whom he meets on those trips. The work of a text like *Oishinbo* is in its portrayal of consumption and the affective joy and sorrow, moral conflict, and care toward local rather than national interests, reflecting the public’s collective post-3.11 reaction. Kariya’s often polemical and educational manga presented the information in ways that were compelling, straightforward, and encompassed the same ambivalence that consumers likely felt in the years following 3.11 when radioactive contamination became a national concern.

The result is a comic replete with conflicting emotions, journalistic elements, and pages

upon pages of photorealistic renderings of food, landscapes, and documents related to the triple disaster and the locations most affected. The stories of the producers are compelling—the food is technically safe, yet the farmers are struggling to find buyers. The characters in *Oishinbo* choose to partake in the food despite the trepidation some initially feel toward eating food grown in irradiated areas, showing that consumers can do the same without dismissing their anxiety completely. In some ways, *Oishinbo* replicates the goal of the “Tabete ōen shiyō!” movement and other governmental campaigns that exist to motivate consumers to purchase Fukushima goods—but it does not do so with the same apathy of the government campaigns that Yuki describes. By drawing real food producers and documenting their enthusiasm, their hardships, and their ties to the land, Kariya manages to portray the importance of supporting communities and individuals post-3.11. At the same time, *Oishinbo* blames the corporations and governments who continue to ignore the concerns and anxieties of those *living* in and those who escaped from affected areas. By conducting real interviews, carefully explaining scientific facts to his audience, and faithfully replicating scenery and documents, Kariya’s manga admonishes TEPCO and the national government for their pre- and post-3.11 conduct, especially in terms of policy and propaganda. Kariya’s characters function as interpreters; it is largely through the voices of the characters, both those original to *Oishinbo* and those real scientists, food producers, and other locals portrayed, that the gravity of government action, scientific fact, or information in media is voiced. This pre-masticated content allows Kariya’s criticism, bolstered by Hanasaka’s expressive drawings, to lie at the forefront of the manga’s narrative.

Ultimately, however, *Oishinbo* is dedicated to food, and it is through food that the criticism and conflict discussed above come to a head. It is through the discussion of foodways and through eating the food—or having eaten the food—that the *Tōzai Shinbun* staff members

experience the trauma and loss that the characters they interview have already gone through. The past, present, and future of local and national eating are present in the discussions of food production, and the consequences of this comparison emotionally affect not only the real and fictional people in the manga, they leave an impact on the consciousness of the reader as well. Brau notes that the fictional characters' repeated "visual chorus" of sad expressions throughout the manga show how they "absorb and reflect the tragedy of the entire situation, and express emotions that those interviewed do not usually reveal to their interlocutors" ("*Oishinbo*'s Fukushima Elegy" 190). Often, this "visual chorus" of sadness comes during mealtimes, when the characters realize the importance of the food that they are consuming, or the potential that the dish or ingredients have of being lost forever.

Eating in these volumes of *Oishinbo* is different than the usual story arcs because there are different things at stake. *Oishinbo* has tackled various political, social, and cultural issues relating to cuisine before—American rice imports and Thai rice imports (volume 36, 1992; volume 49, 1995), chemical additives in food (volume 101, 2008), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (volume 109, 2012), among others. These issues of food production and consumption were not signaling epochal shifts in life, nor were they happening on a large-scale way that immediately affected consumers and producers to the extent that the 3.11 triple disaster did. Kariya's manga deals with the immediate trauma of the natural disasters that affected the entire Tōhoku region, as well as the fallout of the humanmade nuclear disaster. Both of these result in food safety anxieties, affected livelihoods, and the loss of local food culture. Yet the people of Fukushima are willing to share their stories, including the particular methods of food production, fishing, or farming that make their products special—usually tied to attributes of the local area (*terroir*)—as well as their sorrows, and their hope for the future, and most importantly, their food.

Disaster and Hope through Local Taste

The first story arc dealing with the events of 3.11 was titled “Hisaichi-hen: Megenai hitobito” (Disaster-stricken Area: Undaunted People; the original chapters were published from October 2011 to February 2012). True to the arc’s name, the local people they encounter are not discouraged despite the tremendous losses they have dealt with. The *Tōzai Shinbun* journalists’ trip opens with a visit to Hachinohe-shi in southeastern Aomori prefecture to eat cuisine cooked by farmers who utilize slash-and-burn techniques. The team is puzzled when Saitō, their guide, tells them that this is their first stop, but Saitō explains: “In order to understand the real damage that the affected areas received from the great earthquake and nuclear incident, you must learn the actual conditions of slash-and-burn agriculture” (*Oishinbo* 108, 15). They arrive at Yama no Gakkō (山の楽校, lit. “The Mountain’s Funstitution,” a pun on the characters for “learning institution”), an old elementary school building now used for various culinary experiences for visitors, taught by locals. They are treated to a menu cooked by older women residents, which includes *bakke miso* on tofu; *seri* mashed with tofu; a stew made with locally grown carrots, *fuki* gathered from the mountains, shiitake mushrooms, and frozen tofu; as well as soba noodles, and rice cooked with *mochiawa* millet, all of which use grains and pulses grown with traditional slash-and-burn techniques in local fields and mountains. On these pages, panels alternate between the cartoonish characters eating, detailed dishes, images of harvesting, and cooking, all signaling the processes that went into the food that the characters are enjoying.

This long-term growing cycle creates the dishes that Yamaoka and the others eat with great gusto, marveling at the fragrances, textures, and flavors that the locally grown soy, millet, wheat, and buckwheat contribute to their meal. Yamaoka remarks, “We’re supposed to be visiting disaster areas, yet we’re being fed so well,” to which Saitō responds, “Yamaoka-san, it is

precisely because you are visiting a disaster area that we had you taste the flavor of slash and burn crops.” In the next panel, Yamaoka and Kurita both look shocked, and Saitō continues: “The flavor of slash and burn crops is the flavor of the soil of Tōhoku, the flavor of the blessing of nature. This blessing from Tōhoku’s soil is being threatened by the great earthquake and the nuclear incident” (24). The following page depicts the characters’ contemplative expressions as their task in Tōhoku resettles itself in their minds.

The food in this scene is not a distraction from their main task, although its bountifulness and deliciousness certainly bring the characters immediately into their normal routine of eating and commenting on the food presented to them. Their descriptions of the food are alternated with information about the process of growing the crops, as well as scenery of the fields, food, and producers at work, and the characters’ (and readers’) experience of eating is enhanced by the extra information provided. The gravity of Saitō’s statement pulls the characters and the readers back to reality—though at first glance things seem normal, there is great damage both in the present and waiting in the future legs of their trips.

The damage that the characters encounter on this trip is environmental, bodily, and culinary. Upon their arrival at Yōbōsō, a real restaurant, inn, and organic cooking center, they greet owner and chef Satō Kazuhiro.¹⁹ At first the building looks to have suffered no damage, but upon entering the building they see that the interior is in the process of being repaired, which means that the restaurant is not operational. Yamaoka presses Chef Satō to explain the events of 3.11 in his own words. Satō recounts what he witnessed and shows the group photographs taken during the tsunamis. He describes the sound the water made as it receded after the second wave:

...the water made a dreadful sucking noise and disappeared past the far end of the wharf. It made a sound like when you pull the plug from the bathtub and the water is almost

¹⁹ Chef Satō and Yōbōsō were featured in *Oishinbo 100* as well, during the Aomori prefecture trip of the team’s 47 prefecture tasting tour, published in 2007.

done draining. ‘This is bad, something big is coming,’ I thought and the three of us, my wife who took these pictures and my son climbed to the area above our house. And then it happened... A pitch-black thing splashed ashore, pushing forward as if it were a tiller plowing a field. The color of the spray was black because it dug up the soil as it moved forward. Then it overtook the wharf in one gulp and plunged ahead. The water continued to rise. When the third wave receded, it swallowed the small fisherman’s hut in front of our house. And even our house flooded. (*Oishinbo 108*, 31-37)

Satō’s story is accompanied by photorealistic renderings (the “photographs”) of the event, interspersed with the characters’ facial expressions and comments as they react to his retelling of the event. Satō moves onto his recovery efforts, expressing that he thought about closing his restaurant entirely, but the students of his cooking lessons brought him funds, money, gas stoves, and other things in order to allow him to continue teaching people the importance of organic foods. Their help allowed him to find the encouragement to continue Yōbōsō. Satō’s thirteen-year-old son Motoshige also states how he hopes to uphold the legacy of Yōbōsō in the future. Satō and his son cook for the team²⁰, then Yamaoka and the other *Tōzai Shinbun* members leave, relieved that the Satō family is making attempts to recover.

The remaining chapters of “Megenai hitobito” play out similarly: the team passes through the destruction, hears firsthand the locals’ experiences with the tsunami and their concerns and hopes for the immediate and long-term future, then eats a meal and, feeling reassured that the local people are not giving up, moves on. In Iwate, the group stops to have dinner, and each member orders fried oysters. Yamaoka takes a bite, then lowers his chopsticks as he says that they are due to visit an oyster farmer, Hatakeyama Shigeatsu (previously introduced in a chapter

²⁰ First, a sauté of smoked scallops, whale meat steak, heavily spiced with black pepper and dressed with a splash of the last dregs of a bottle of soy sauce that has been infused with kombu for five years—luckily not washed away by the tsunami—and garnished with a mixture of *nobiru* (wild rocambole), white sesame, and horseradish, and *nobiru* and *rakkyō* (Japanese leeks) pickled in rice bran. This is followed by mixed wheat and buckwheat flour tempura of king crab and a mixture of shredded vegetables from the family’s own fields, prepared by both father and son. Motoshige prepares squid, crab, and vegetable-tempura sushi for the group, and they marvel at his skill despite his youth. Chef Satō continues putting out dishes: fermented squid and innards; shiitake mushrooms and carrots topped with grated turnip, all steamed together; brown rice mixed with grains, and a vegetable curry made with vegetables grown in the family’s fields and homemade miso.

published in volume 46) the next day. He wonders, “What has become of that dreamlike, beautiful aquaculture farm?” This page is filled with a large panel that takes up more than half the page, of the bay in which Hatakeyama’s oyster farm exists, interlaid with a photorealistic rendering of a perfect shucked oyster—presumably from Hatakeyama’s oyster farm. Yamaoka’s rumination is not accompanied by his face; the speech bubble is placed to the side of this panel depicting the oyster farm to highlight an image from Yamaoka’s memory. On the bottom half of the page, the other newspaper employees exchange looks, their faces filled with dread (144).

When they arrive in Karakuwa-cho, Hatakeyama recounts his experience witnessing and escaping from the tsunami, then shows them the damage to his oyster farm. Yamaoka and Kurita recall the landscape they once saw, bamboo frames stretching across the glittering bay, manifesting in a panel that takes up more than half the page (156). This peaceful landscape is juxtaposed with the scenes of post-tsunami destruction. After surveying the damage, Yamaoka asks Hatakeyama when he expects to be able to recover. Hatakeyama responds, “As you have seen, everything was washed away, so I am restarting from less than zero” (159). However, there are boats cleaning up the debris gathered on the bottom of the bay, and after a local university evaluated the water, he has learned that the ocean itself has not changed. “The ocean isn’t broken at all,” he says, smiling (160). The relief on the characters’ faces is short-lived, however—Hatakeyama notes that while he can restart soon, the radiation from the nuclear disaster is a worry. But he quickly turns the conversation positive—he has received donations from Michelin-starred chefs so he can continue his work.

The reporters make their way south to Kesenuma-shi in Miyagi prefecture to visit Fukuyoshi, deemed Japan’s number one grilled fish restaurant by Yamaoka and his associates. Again, the documentary aspects of the text are highlighted here. The chef of Fukuyoshi,

Murakami Keni'chi, shows them a video his son took of the tsunami, and the panels of the video are accompanied by sound effects—the first sounds of the tsunami that the *Tōzai Shinbun* team has heard. Yamaoka requests that Murakami show them the restaurant, to find that while the *robata* grill inside has survived more or less intact, the ash inside, built up over decades, is gone, meaning that the symbiotic relationship between the ash and the fish grilled upon it is gone—“Sand won't do. The fat from the fish will soak into it and produce unpleasant odors. Ash absorbs all of that up, so it won't produce an unpleasant smell. And the heat from charcoal fire burns away all of the fat from the fish. That's why I could always grill up delicious-smelling, crisp fish” (186). When asked about re-opening, Chef Murakami laughs; if he waits for the local government's reconstruction plans to go underway, it will take more than five years. Instead, he plans to reopen the following spring. His face darkens in one panel—“However, the nuclear reactor... when I think of that I feel weak”—but moves on quickly (188). Finally, he states that he will definitely reopen again soon.

After one final stop, the manga takes us back to Yamaoka and Kurita's home in Tokyo. While the team discusses their visit to Tōhoku, they eat dishes prepared from the gifts they received while in Tōhoku. Yamaoka summarizes their experience: “Just like the slash and burn farm products that we ate at Yama no Gakkō in Aomori, the blessings of the Tōhoku area can only be tasted at places like Yōbōsō. However, the flavor of today's cooking makes us think of the disaster-stricken areas and the willpower of the undaunted people and help to encourage us.” Tobisawa contributes: “The undaunted people will certainly bring back the flavors of the Tōhoku area.” Others chime in, and Tomii has the final word: “Let's eat!” Everyone cheers, and Kurita and Yamaoka exchange glances: “Happiness to the undaunted people of the disaster-stricken area,” says the final bubble between them (213-4).

In this story arc, it is revealed that the food producers are able to find hope for the future, making steps to carry on their work despite the losses they face from the disaster. Eating represents hope and loss; the flavors of foods tied to specific places spark associations as the characters eat them, as Yamaoka expresses in the final pages. The tastes of the slash-and-burn cereals and soy that make up their meal at Yama no Gakkō are only momentary enjoyments; Saitō reminds them that these very tastes are being threatened due to the damage the region has suffered. During a seemingly one-off dinner, Yamaoka eats a delicious fried oyster, but his expression quickly changes as he recalls that they are due to see more destruction at an oyster farm the next day (143). Moreover, the prior relationships that the characters have with many of the people they visit on this trip mark a distinct before and after of the food landscape, one that can only be discovered by going and witnessing the destruction themselves. The oysters, harvested the previous year from the Sanriku Coast and made available out-of-season through modern preservation methods, come out of the past, reminding the characters of the rich food landscape of the year before. Juxtaposing Yamaoka's musings with the image of Hatakeyama's beautiful oyster aquaculture from their last visit, Kariya's manga simultaneously negotiates the past and present of both the manga and reality. By linking the oysters from pre-3.11 and post-3.11, this transitional meal creates further anxiety about the aftermath of the natural disasters at Hatakeyama's oyster farm—what is happening *now*?

The locals the *Tōzai Shinbun* staff meet are in the process of recovery, but the reporters are constantly reminded that the process cannot happen overnight. The return to normalcy is far off and it will require multiple months or years to recover the *wakame* or oyster farms, or to rebuild up the distinctive ash at the bottom of the hearth that allowed Chef Murakami to grill such delicious fish. Though there is certainly hope, there is also some fear: while people can

rebuild their restaurants and farms and, as Hatakeyama says, “The ocean isn’t broken at all” (160), he and Murakami bring up the looming anxiety of the aftermath of the nuclear meltdown. And indeed, the tastes of Tōhoku that Yamaoka and company experience are literally from the past: almost everything they eat on their trip was made from previous years’ harvested ingredients, save for Chef Satō’s meal at Yōbōsō. There is already a pause in the production of “flavors of the Tōhoku area” that Tobisawa mentions at the end, and there is no guarantee when or if these flavors will return. The present state of Tōhoku after 3.11 is already one mired in post-disaster experience, and the change this state entails occupies the tastebuds of the reader. Regardless of whether or not they have tasted the same food as the characters, the imagined potential of the food “consumed” through the vicarious eating experience in the manga is relayed to the reader. There is hope that the area will recover and that they will one day get to taste the same foods. These foods, however, cannot transcend the disaster; even if they recapture the “flavors of Tōhoku,” whatever future foods are created, they will be of post-disaster Tōhoku.

Economic Loss and Psychological Loss: A Humanmade Disaster in Food Manga

The same pre-, present-, and post-3.11 framing of food exists in “Fukushima no shinjitsu” (The truth about Fukushima, published from January 2013 to May 2014, about a year after the end of the “Undaunted” story arc), wherein the characters are now grappling with the further danger of nuclear contamination and the economic, social, psychological, and bodily effects that the manmade disaster has on locals, visitors, and the food that both parties eat. For the food producers, fear and anxiety come from the fact that they continue to live in contaminated areas, as well as the concern of economic and cultural loss. Set in 2012 and 2013, the chapters in “Fukushima no shinjitsu” are often a collage of newspaper headlines, photo-realistic images, maps, and charts, as well as the usual food cut-ins and characters.

One such representative episode occurs on a visit to the Sōma Futaba Fishing Association, where the *Tōzai Shinbun* staff meet the head of the general business section of the association, Endō Kazunori. He shows them photos from the disaster and explains the damages that the fishermen and the local fish market suffered in the tsunami and earthquake. However, the added pressure of nuclear contamination led them to embargo fishing between April and September. The catch they finally made in September, however, measured far too high in contamination—*hirame* flounder measured between 1000 and 3000 becquerels of radiation, far beyond the allotted limits. Here, a large panel of the fish being measured in a Gamma ray spectrometer stands out on the page. Endō’s dejected expression is looked upon by Kaibara in the following panel, and after that a worried-looking Kurita and Yamaoka react. The last panel is of a newspaper headline “Leaking of Contaminated Water Has Been Prevented” splashed across the page, with smaller sub-headlines referencing “Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Reactor” and “Currently, the likelihood that contaminated water has leaked into the ocean is low,” dated with the year 2011. Endō states that despite TEPCO’s claim that contaminated cooling water has not leaked into the ocean yet, the ocean *is* contaminated (*Oishinbo 110*, 61). On the next page, he explains the economic damage that the people have suffered: next to an accounting spreadsheet, Endō’s portrait appears, explaining that “Before the disaster, sales were between six billion and seven billion [yen].” Following, there is an image of the bustling Futaba Fishing Association’s market in the past, as he continues explaining that the markets were overflowing with fish and their sellers, and that it was truly “a treasure of an ocean.” He falls silent, and the panel below shows all the characters looking dejectedly at the floor or at Endō, leaving the reader to absorb the blow of this lost treasure (62). An encounter on the way to the Futaba Fishing Association explains another why these tremendous losses have occurred. Two men the group meet on the

way are fishing salmon, which are safe because they swim south from the north, rather than spending long periods of time in the most irradiated patches of ocean. One says, “Well, you know at the market, even if they can fish it’s all moot,” to which the other responds, “Nobody’s buying fish from Fukushima” (55). The fishermen’s words signal another force at work—a food’s origin in Fukushima prefecture is enough to stop sales.

Indeed, in future chapters the team meet various farmers, fishers, and restaurateurs who face the same dilemma. Although the discussion with Endō implies high levels of contamination, the stories that take place through the two years that make up the “Fukushima no shinjitsu” chapters portray the continued efforts of local food producers to ensure that the food that they make measures far below the official limits of allowed radiation. Even then, the very *terroir* that the producers pride themselves on affects sales and the production of their goods. The story arc begins with a visit from rice farmer Sutō Hisataka, who grows organic rice using ducks to eat the pests off his rice plants. Sales of his “Aigamo-saibai kome” (Duck-cultivated rice) have been affected by the nuclear disaster, because “since it’s Fukushima-grown rice, it’s suspected of being contaminated, and the sales of the rice we produce at Sutō Agriculture have decreased dramatically” (13). He reports that although his farm is located in Fukushima, the area his farm is located in, Aizu, has sustained low levels of radiation contamination, and even had his rice tested for contamination; the rice, if contaminated at all, contained less than 1.0 to 1.4 becquerels/kilogram of cesium, far below the national limit of 500 Bq/kg. The rice is therefore extremely safe—safe enough that Kurita feeds it to her children later in the chapter—but both distributors and individual buyers have refused to buy the rice even after Sutō sent out the test results. “Because consumers,” Sutō laments, “think that every food product from Fukushima prefecture is dangerous and don’t buy it, even if the people of Aizu say that our area is different,

they won't believe us" (17). The concerns of consumers are not passed off as meaningless, but the test results are powerful enough to convince Yamaoka, Kurita, and the rest of the *Tōzai Shinbun* employees to try the rice. Visiting an *egoma* (perilla) seed and oil producer reveals a similar story—though the employees are using largely the seeds that were produced prior to the nuclear disaster, and testing yielded “ND” (not detected) results from the products, large companies refused to buy the seeds and oil produced this year from last year's crop. “I guess being from Fukushima prefecture is enough to make them refuse it,” says one of the employees (91). Using food products from pre-3.11 is not enough to override the consumer concerns that companies use to lead their buying decisions post-3.11.

At the same time, for the consumers in the manga and *Oishinbo*'s readers, eating food in post-3.11 Fukushima has new anxieties, dangers, and emotional chords laced throughout the eating experience—especially for Yamaoka and the rest of the *Tōzai Shinbun* staff, because they come from a central area. The only non-Tokyo-ite in the *Tōzai Shinbun* group is Nanba, a relatively new transplant from the newspaper's Osaka branch. In this way, Kariya's characters mirror Kariya and his staff—the central voices documenting and relaying their interviews and experiences with local farmers, as well as the duress of being temporarily exposed to the same dangers that the locals living in the area face daily. Their anxiety toward bodily exposure is heightened in the manga by Nanba's repeated rattling off of readings from his Geiger counter, a device which measures the amount of radiation in any given area.²¹ He and deputy chief Tomii are the most concerned about their exposure to radiation and are often seen reacting in shock to

²¹ Brau suggests that the reason Nanba announces the elevated numbers and Tomii reacts to them so strongly are due to their position as “other” within the manga: Nanba is from Osaka and speaks Osaka dialect, “which pegs him as ‘other,’” while Tomii “is the butt of jokes for his short temper and his emotionality” (188). By having the “other” react the most strongly, Brau writes that “Kariya may be seeking to avoid generating undue anxiety among people who have no other recourse but to live in a potentially hazardous environment” (188).

the Geiger counter's numbers. At first, Yamaoka dismisses their concerns, but Kurita admonishes him for his judgmental attitude, stating "At the moment, we don't know anything about the effects of exposure to low amounts of radiation" (*Oishinbo* 110, 33). Nanba, using the numbers from his Geiger counter or from monitoring posts scattered through the prefecture, often calculates how much yearly exposure this number means, and how much greater it is than the ICRP's (International Commission on Radiological Protection) dose uptake limit of 1 millisievert per year.

Furthermore, repeated meals in contaminated areas affect the psyche of Yamaoka's group during their travels. Although they are repeatedly reassured that the food is safe, a conscious element of anxiety permeates their meals. At a meal in Aizu-Wakamatsu-shi, organic farmer Watanabe Yoshino and her friends serve the group a local favorite, *koi no umami* (carp simmered in soy sauce, mirin, sake, and sugar). The whole fish dish is rendered in high detail (147). Before the group eats, Watanabe tells them that the carp comes from Ibaraki prefecture, far south of Fukushima prefecture. *Tōzai Shinbun* writer Nakaguchi Shinsuke makes the offhand comment, "What's the [radiation] dose?" to which Watanabe says that while she believes it is safe, she has not measured the radiation dosage in the fish. Yamaoka jumps in, serious-faced: "We'll be eating local Fukushima food many times over this trip, and fundamentally I will eat the food that is given to us, trusting that the local people have deemed it safe. However, those who are worried don't have to eat it." The other staff members agree: a reporter from magazine *Shūkan Time* along for this leg of the trip comments that it is "a personal judgment and responsibility" (自己判断と責任 *jiko handan to sekinin*) to eat or not to eat (148). Everyone, of course, partakes in the meals in the pages that follow.

This does not mean that the characters are free of anxiety, however. Seeing the repeated

destruction and entering various areas high in contamination appears to impart a psychological effect on their appreciation of local food. Unvaryingly, the people of Fukushima share their local foods and traditions with the reporters without a shred of hesitancy. They seem to understand the uncertainty that outsiders show toward their local food despite testing results, but this does not stop them from trying to share the food with the characters who are visiting. The stronghanded criticism comes mostly from the Tokyo side—Kaibara, despite his gruff exterior, is deeply appreciative of the hospitality of their hosts, and is quick to criticize the others for the fear and hesitation that prevents them from fully appreciating their meals. In one chapter, the group visits the mountains of Yamato-machi in Kitakata-shi to witness a trip for wild herb and vegetable forage that, according to their guide Saitō, has not been tested this year but *should* be safe. The looks on the characters' faces are deeply worried; even as Saitō continues to reiterate Yamaoka's previous statement that he will eat the same food that the people of Fukushima eat and that those who are concerned do not have to, the speech bubbles are overlaid across shared looks of concern and apprehension (*Oishinbo 111*, 78). The scene that depicts the journalists eating dishes prepared from the results of their forage afterward seems relatively normal—the characters eat, they react, and express the deliciousness of their experience. However, Kaibara looks unconvinced even as Tomii and Nanba seem to joke around as usual.

As the group leaves, Kaibara chastises them: “While joyfully gathering mountain vegetables, Hide-jii [the elderly forager] was sparkling with the light of life. Yet the hearts of all of you, eating the mountain vegetables that he went through the trouble of gathering for us, were hesitant and unnerved.” His words are met with looks of shame from some of the characters, all portrayed blushing and looking down at the ground in discomfort (87). “Hide-jii, who welcomed us warmly, the beautiful mountains, the fresh mountain vegetables—all were so wonderful,

lacking not a single thing. And despite that, why were your hearts so stiff? It is because,” he continues, the panel shifting from a tight close-up of his face to the mountains around them, “something invisible and atrocious has stolen the beauty and abundance of the land of Fukushima. That atrocious (*kyōaku* 凶悪) existence has deeply wounded the land of Fukushima and frozen the hearts of people. That is the truth about Fukushima.” With this, he climbs into the van. Tobisawa admits that Kaibara saw through them, and Kurita solemnly adds, “He doesn’t need to say what that atrocious something is” (88). The atrocious thing is not merely the radiation itself but the systems and entities that built and permitted the nuclear generation plant, and the resulting anxiety that the disaster has left within the outsiders. Kaibara’s statement, framed by the invisibly damaged landscape, points the reader to the idea that nature itself is, as oyster farmer Hatakeyama said in volume 108, “not broken” (160). Instead, it is the contamination, as well as the fear and anxiety of not knowing—or even while knowing—that ingesting food that is or could be contaminated could have negative effects on the body, even if it is under official limits. Despite this, Kaibara calls for the other characters to align themselves with the people in Fukushima who still choose to eat their local foods and make decisions based on vague information while facing the economic and social fallout of the nuclear meltdown by not only visiting and hearing their experiences, but by *eating* the same foods. Without doing so wholeheartedly, they show distrust toward the people of Fukushima, and fall into the trap of forgetting that the food and the people are not at fault. The double burden of not knowing exactly how much radiation the food contains and knowing too much about radiation interferes with their gustatory enjoyment and their ability to experience “*jikkan*” in order to find the truth about Fukushima.

Blame is placed on public figures with power, such as politicians who manipulate the

media to convince the nation that the situation in Fukushima is not dire; conversations with real farmers, restaurateurs, scientists, university professors, and local government employees point the finger at the real-life national government and TEPCO for the long-term nuclear situation. The voices of the fictional characters and the real people they interview are critical; Tomii calls those who would refuse to acknowledge the reality of life in Fukushima “cowards” (*Oishinbo 110*, 206). The bulk of two chapters focuses on analyzing pamphlets and documents dedicated to creating what Kaibara calls “myth[s] of safety,” first of the safety of nuclear reactors, and then post-accident, the safety of low-level radiation (*Oishinbo 111*, 112). *Oishinbo* does not shy away from criticizing the powers and institutions that allowed a natural disaster to become a humanmade disaster. The stories that comprise “Fukushima no shinjitsu” are aimed at revealing the hypocrisies and misinformation that the national government and TEPCO spread in order to allow people to believe the nuclear reactors were safe, and the contemporaneous reporting that implies that the prefecture is safe to live in. The question is no longer “what caused this,” but “who caused this,” as Tomii screams out when seeing an abandoned, overgrown crop of *tara* (Japanese angelica), which much like bamboo is only edible when harvested as shoots: “Who put Iitate-mura into this state! Who can tell the people of Iitate-mura, whose hope and life’s purpose were stolen, to persevere!” (*Oishinbo 110*, 175). It is evident that Kariya’s characters are at liberty to say what the marginalized people in Fukushima do not—or *cannot*—say within the manga. Instead, their emotional reactions come in reaction to the well-articulated, often scientifically backed information and experiences of the food producers and researchers they meet. Based off real people and interviews, Kariya endeavors to relay the clean and clear “truth” through the words of real-life individuals, presenting clear, objective information for the reader, who is likely already emotionally and geographically aligned more with the *Tōzai Shinbun*

reporters than the Fukushima residents.

Another paradox exists: the desire and even moral compulsion to eat the same foods as the people of Fukushima, and the fear and anxiety of eating this food despite the fact that it is scientifically safe. As Yuki Masami notes in an analysis of Ishimure Michiko's *Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow: Our Minamata Disease* (1969), there exist "two conflicting approaches [to examining local people eating poisonous food]: one derived from a modern value system that associates people's eating of contaminated fish with their poverty, and the other is a view of the villagers who see their life as being inseparable from their place" ("Why Eat Toxic Food?," 738). The narrative of *Oishinbo* encapsulates the conflict of this desire to follow the second approach with the outside characters' fear about the safe-yet-dangerous foods that make their way onto the table. They trust the people of Fukushima who feed them, and it is only by going to the area and eating the same food that they can experience for themselves the situation that people in Fukushima face. However, the manga characters clearly feel their bodily safety *is* at risk²² by pursuing this truth and "*jikkan*" of the area to relay back to their readers (and by proxy the manga reader), through eating in irradiated areas.

By pursuing "*jikkan*" this way, the journalists are able to taste flavors that will soon be gone due to restrictions and safety. These episodes impress loss upon the reader through visual and textual elements. During a trip set in June 2012, the team heads to Yamatsuri-machi, an area

²² The consequence of their pursuit is Yamaoka's deep fatigue and nosebleed, depicted late into the story arc after their trip to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. This fatigue is experienced by other members of the newspaper team. After Yamaoka's nosebleed, he goes to a meeting in Saitama prefecture (north of Tokyo) where he learns that Kaibara and a number of real-life figures portrayed in the manga also experienced nosebleeds after spending extended amounts of time in the irradiated zones. As previously mentioned, the doctor he visits notes that Yamaoka was not likely exposed to enough radiation to cause nosebleeds, but the narrative set-up and following dialogue clearly indicates that this series of nosebleeds and fatigue are not isolated phenomena. It is notable that the Yamaoka, a fictional character, is shown as being physically affected by the time spent in irradiated areas, and it is the *fictional* characters who cartoonishly panic and react to the Geiger counter readings—they are also the only ones depicted as putting food into their mouths during this story arc, while the real food producers portrayed act as host and explain the importance and significance of the food the fictional characters eat.

in the very southern tip of Fukushima prefecture, to see the state of Fukushima's rivers. The reporters come to Kuji River, which runs alongside a number of shops. They visit the restaurant Fujimi-ya, run by Kanazawa Eiji and Fumiko, which serves a number of dishes utilizing fish from Kuji River. Although the perennial *ayu* (sweetfish) from Kuji River have been deemed safe to eat, the restaurant has no diners, and few visitors have come to fish for *ayu* in the river. Kanazawa Eiji expresses that while *ayu* have been deemed safe to eat because they are eaten while young, fish such as *haya* (a local name for a category of long-bodied, medium-sized fish, usually in the carp family) accumulate radiation due to their diets and long lifespans in the contaminated river. He also reveals the implications of time for eating this species of fish: "Cesium reduces by half after thirty years. I wonder when the ban on them will be lifted..." (*Oishinbo 110*, 243). Tobisawa asks if TEPCO has offered any reparations; Kanazawa Eiji reveals that they received one payment of 40,000 yen (approx. 400 USD). Tomii and Nanba are outraged; Nanba sarcastically calls TEPCO a "generous company" (*futoppara na kaisha*; lit. fat-bellied company).²³

Rather than share in their outrage, Kanazawa Eiji asks the group if they would like to eat the previous year's *haya*, fished when the rivers were still uncontaminated. His special way of preparing the fish by skewering, quickly roasting, then freezing the fish allows for the *haya* to retain their color and open their fins for a more aesthetically pleasing fish. He serves the group salt-grilled *haya* with *sanshō miso* (ground Japanese peppercorns and/or leaves mixed with fermented soybean paste) and *amaro haya* (*haya* simmered in a sweet sauce) and explains the special way that they catch female *haya* before they lay eggs, while they are still delicious. The result is a dazzling, plump fish filled with roe, without the usual muddiness of *haya*. The dishes

²³ The next panel contains a note that since this episode, the Kanazawas received monthly compensation payments after "complicated calculations," but it was "not enough money to live on" (244).

and fishing process are rendered in a close-up with striking detail, and many panels are drawn with the flat, 2-D characters placing the detailed fish into their mouths. The characters gobble them up enthusiastically. After Nanba is shown talking with two fish in his mouth at once, Yamaoka looks down. "...however, these are the last *haya* available as of now," he says. The Kanazawas are shown with sad expressions. Kurita speaks: "The nuclear power plant robbed Fukushima of the treasures of its oceans, the treasures of its mountains, and the treasures of its rivers as well." Newspaper writer Nakaguchi Shinsuke grits his teeth; "This is frustrating, frustrating, too frustrating," he mumbles, and the other staff members look downcast (248). Quickly, Kanazawa Fumiko breaks the silence by telling the employees that they should visit again in the winter, and Kanazawa Eiji brings out *haya no karaage* (battered, deep-fried *haya*). Tomii is shown stuffing his mouth with the fish, tears in his eyes: "These are the valuable, pre-earthquake disaster, last of the *haya*. I am grateful, I am grateful, sob" (250).

The *haya* episode reminds the reader that while some local food remains safe and available despite the nuclear fallout, there is damage to the landscape as a whole, including those who rely on the land and water of Fukushima for their livelihoods. The Kanazawa's story presents a conundrum: the *ayu* are deemed safe, yet no one comes to fish for them because they live in contaminated waters. The *haya*, however, much like the fish Kawakami Hiromi's "Kamisama 2011," have accumulated much too much cesium to be safely edible, and legal guidelines have been set to prevent fishing and consumption of these unsafe fish. The chance that the *Tōzai Shinbun* employees get to taste the last of the local *haya* for many, many years weighs on them heavily; the fish are delicious, but their value goes beyond the taste on the palate—they are the last remnants of a part of the couple's livelihood, as well as a flavor that will not be known again for years. Though the Kanazawas are not as aged as some of the individuals the

employees meet in their travels through Fukushima, the half-life of cesium does not guarantee that they will be able to obtain *haya* while they can still run the restaurant, and Kanazawa Eiji's technique of preserving the fish may never be of use again in his lifetime.

Time in this way is an endless challenge, as well as a reassurance for the food producers and restaurateurs affected by the triple disaster. The progression of time ensures that the amount of radiation in the environment will abate naturally, yet the long timeframe necessary for this to happen means that there will inevitably be a gap between the “last” of the safe crops and fish and the “first” of the post-3.11 safe crops and fish. This gap is not only a scientifically-proven one, it also exists in the minds of consumers and producers—the *ayu* are safe, but the collective consciousness toward food from Fukushima is that the fish are not yet safe because of their ties to the irradiated land and water. To eat the last of something means that no one else can taste it. *Oishinbo*'s depiction of eating *haya* conveys the affective experience of eating the last of these fish, and the heavy emotional effects of knowing that no one will be able to taste the same delicious things for a long time, if ever again.

Bygone Peaches and Taste as Internal Experience

The “Fukushima no shinjitsu” chapters also bring to a close the intense animosity that Yamaoka feels toward his father. The first volume is studded with Kaibara's repeated provocations toward Yamaoka—“[Fukushima] is where your roots are”—while Yamaoka struggles to understand what this means. The second half of “Fukushima no shinjitsu” opens with the truth: Fukushima prefecture is where Yamaoka's mother Toshiko and Kaibara met for the first time.

We learn in a flashback that young Kaibara, a student at an art university, is agonizing over the meaning of “beauty” (美 *bi*). During the summer vacation of his first year in art school,

he spends the summer staying at Ryōzen Shrine in Ryōzen (Mt. Ryō) of Date-shi, Fukushima prefecture. One morning, he goes to a peach grove to do a sketch study but is captivated by the beauty of the fruit and cannot draw—until a young woman appears. She notices him but begins picking peaches without a word. At this sight, Kaibara is stuck with inspiration and begins sketching this young woman picking peaches. She approaches, and the two converse; Kaibara expresses his anxiety that he “does not comprehend the essence of beauty” (*Oishinbo III*, 11). Toshiko offers him a peach from her basket, stating, “I heard that when you’re tired from thinking too much about difficult things, it’s good to eat some sweet fruit,” and reveals that the peach grove belongs to her grandfather (12). Kaibara begins to peel the fuzzy skin away from the flesh, which startles Toshiko, though she brushes it off. Kaibara expresses that he has never eaten a peach so fragrant before, and Toshiko explains that it is because thirty minutes after picking, ripe peaches begin to lose their fragrance. Thus, “the only people who can taste that flavor are those in this grove” (12). On another day, Kaibara is still struggling with his questions when he receives a visitor at the shrine. Toshiko appears with a single peach on a white porcelain plate, which she has washed carefully to remove the irritating fuzz on the skin. She bids him to “please taste the whole peach, including the skin. If you don’t, then you won’t know the true deliciousness of peaches” (15). Toshiko leaves, and Kaibara turns the plate over to discover that it was made by a famous ceramic maker. Returning the peach to the plate, he realizes that the two combined are “the melding of human aesthetic sense and the beauty of nature” (17). The effect of this image still ringing in his heart, his expression softens, and he takes a bite of the whole peach, skin and all. The next panels show him taking frenzied bites of the peach, its fragrance and sweetness amplified with the skin. He throws his head back in ecstasy—“What trivialities I was captured by. Art and music and such, these things appeal to the human body

from the outside. However, deliciousness is directly tethered to food, the source (元 *moto*) of human life, and appeals to the body from the inside” (18). It is through the peach that Kaibara realizes that beauty must appeal to all five senses, internal and external, in order to pierce people’s hearts. He finds his aesthetic purpose through the peach and his future wife.

In this flashback, nature is rendered in lush detail, making the relatively flat characters stand out, such as when Kaibara and his future wife are portrayed sitting and amid the grove. In every panel, the peach looks almost photorealistic in the hands of Toshiko and Kaibara, which are mere outlines in contrast to the hatching that comprises the deeper reds and pinks of the peach skin. His eating experience is a perfect example of “vicarious eating”—Kaibara does not only eat the peach, he also describes the intensity of its sweetness and fragrance. Imagination and sensual description combine in this chapter to relay the intensity of Kaibara’s revelation, and the importance of space, place, and sensation in moving one’s soul. His realization that taste is the sense that only occurs from putting something *into* your mouth/body to experience deliciousness could not have taken place anywhere else. Toshiko noted previously that the peak flavor of the peaches lingered only within thirty minutes of picking, and thus Kaibara’s stay near the peach grove allowed for this to happen. While readers may have consumed a peach before, the description may lead to not only the memory of the taste of peaches but also allows the reader to imagine the result of this amplification of taste memory.

At the same time, *Oishinbo*’s inclusion of this chapter is misleading: Yamaoka, receiving the same porcelain plate that Kaibara received from Toshiko, believes that Kaibara wanted him to know that Fukushima was merely the place where his parents met. Kaibara responds in anger: “For what purpose are you visiting Fukushima? Look hard at things. Take what you see and chew it apart in the bottom of your heart. Then grasp your roots” (27). Shocked, Yamaoka and

Kurita watch as Kaibara storms off. A few pages later, the group visits the former vice-chair of the Ryōzen Taiko Conservation Association, Ōhashi Mangorō, to see what Ryōzen looked like in the past. There, they also meet the chairman of the Association for Taking Back a Clean, Radiation-Free Oguni Association, Satō Nobuhiro. The two men reveal that Ōhashi used to grow a specific type of peaches, until the silkworm trade in the area became more lucrative, leading local farmers to replace the peach groves with mulberry bush farms to feed the silkworms. Not long after, the importation of Chinese silk put Japanese silk makers out of business. Quick-moving capitalistic ventures, it seems, are an expedient means to the loss of local food culture. Kaibara says that he once ate peaches in Ryōzen that resembled peaches out of a children's picture book, to which Ōhashi responds, "Yes, those were Tenshin peaches. They're peaches from the past," linking their current trip to Kaibara's story (43). After the group looks at an old O-bon (lantern festival) songbook of the area, Ōhashi sings for them one of the songs. Yamaoka, hearing the song, bursts into tears—"The Bon song squeezes my chest" (45). The panels that close the chapter go from Kaibara's stony face to a flashback of Kaibara and Toshiko's meeting in the grove, to Yamaoka's face scrunched up in tears, to Kurita's moved expression (46). The peaches, the groves, all those things that make up the memory of Kaibara's peach are long gone, and no one, including the reader, can taste those same peaches again. They can only be experienced through memory and imagination, told through the characters' experiences.

Fukushima, as both place and associated event, takes on special meaning for all the characters. Even before certain parts of food culture were lost in Tōhoku as a result of the damage caused by the earthquake and tsunami, there was loss incurred due to trends and shifts in economic demand. Today, the foodways in the process of being lost due to fear of nuclear contamination now face endless barriers to recovery, including the difficulty of selling and

sharing food for fear of its contamination, the anxiety of potentially eating contaminated food, and the apprehension of allowing others to eat contaminated food in order to pass down the exact same ingredients in the same food heritage. Memory, experience, and affective textual and visual storytelling intertwine in the visual and textual elements of *Oishinbo* to tell the stories of food producers and their intimate ties to the land, as well as to emphasize to the reader why the food cultures of Tōhoku, including Fukushima prefecture, need to be supported into the future.

Conclusion: The Future of Eating in *Oishinbo*

Eating in *Oishinbo* is linked to an abundant past; the livelihoods of food producers in Tōhoku are portrayed in these final volumes of the manga as being closely tied to the fertile and contaminated land and sea. Moreover, the long-term pursuit of food production tied to *terroir* affects the present and future goals of these same producers: an aged rice farmer cannot give up on his land despite harvests deemed too contaminated for sale, a cattle rancher resettled in Hokkaido hopes to one day return to his hometown of Iitate-mura to raise cattle, a young teen plans to take over his father's organic restaurant. All of these food producers' lives are disrupted by the events and ongoing effects of 3.11. The manga, despite and even perhaps because of its nosebleed controversy, manages to tell these food producers' stories and, as Moscato points out, "giv[es] voice to the affected residents of Fukushima who were not being heard" (392). The voices of these residents are focused on the ties that they have to the environment, and in the face of disaster both natural and humanmade, they are depicted as actively striving to maintain their food traditions, their rights as producers, and their livelihoods.

Oishinbo taps into more than just the visual sensory experience to convey the "*jikkan*" that its characters are trying to grasp on their trips to Fukushima. This "*jikkan*" is bolstered by the art and the storytelling, as well as the sound effects and descriptions of the food. *Oishinbo*

manages to convey the *meaning* that these foods and their flavors hold, an emotive and affective experience of hope, loss, sorrow, and anger, all directed toward the past, present, and future state of eating in Northern Japan after the triple disaster. Kaibara's revelation as a youth that "deliciousness is directly tethered to food, the source of human life, and appeals to the body from the inside" points out the fact that consumption and *tasting* food is an internal experience (*Oishinbo III*, 18). For the readers, this internal experience of tasting is not limited to the physical experience of tasting, it comes from the memory and imagination of tasting. Readers consume *Oishinbo* with their eyes, but they also consume it with their taste memories—and barring that, their taste imaginations. Saitō's warning to the group that these flavors are being threatened due to the events of 3.11 becomes a palpable warning to the reader: the triple disaster has fundamentally changed eating, and that the flavors obtainable in the Tōhoku of the past may never again be found in the Tōhoku of the present or the future.

This longing and desire to pass down local foodways and flavors are bolstered by the risk that the food producers face in a post-3.11 world. Those depicted in "Megenai hitobito" are able to slowly find a way back to something as close to "before" as they can, but their work has been deeply affected by the earthquake and tsunami, now and into the future. "Fukushima no shinjitsu" expresses not only the stories and cooking of the local food producers suffering due to the humanmade disaster, it also reflects the anxiety and fear of those living outside of the affected areas toward food and land. Despite their best efforts to accept the food offered to them, some of the characters show strong concern for the way that the ingredients could affect their body if grown in contaminated land or fished from a contaminated body of water. This conundrum never fully disappears; even when the characters seem to get over their fear of eating food in Fukushima, Yamaoka comes down with the infamous nosebleed. One conclusion

Yamaoka comes to is that the area of Fukushima is not safe for people to live in, despite the close ties that the producers interviewed throughout the manga have to the land. This mixed message is fitting for a text that deals with the complicated relationships that people have with food, bodies, and social and political mores. The “truth” about Fukushima is that people within it are suffering, both at the hands of consumers who associate all food from the prefecture as being contaminated and due to the neglect of a government and mass media who obscure the reality of living and eating in an irradiated land.

Oishinbo’s status as an educational and often political manga through food means that it conveys information to non-Fukushima consumers that might otherwise be lost in the media landscape. Part of this is amplifying the voices of local food producers, but it is also the presentation of flavors and tastes that might be lost due to the lingering effects of disaster. Those lost flavors may be conveyed to local future generations through word of mouth, but the memory of the food and its flavor will be marked with what C. Nadia Seremetakis calls “a double absence,” in which food once eaten and remembered becomes “a captivating fairy tale... digested through memory and language” (298). *Oishinbo* offers these foods a sensory and emotional depiction in a post-3.11 landscape and gives readers a chance to tap into this memory—even if it was not accessible to them through local geographical connection in the first place. It is precisely for these reasons that the potential of *Oishinbo* to stir broad reader reaction and attention is so important in my discussion of food and eating in post-3.11 Japan. *Oishinbo* conveys to readers most directly *through food* the implications of the triple disaster on local and national foodways, maximizing emotional impact on the reader.

Yet it is for the same reasons that *Oishinbo*’s effort to convey “*shinjitsu*” and “*jikkan*” plays back into voyeuristic concerns. Kariya’s manga does not necessarily feel exploitative; as

mentioned in earlier in this chapter, Kariya's use of multiple voices, both real and fictional, allows him to highlight the difficult situation of those who have suffered from both the natural and humanmade disasters. At the same time, he has his fictional characters to call for action in the final pages of the manga. After their reconciliation, Yamaoka tells Kaibara:

The nuclear meltdown has still not been quelled, and if it spreads then Fukushima prefecture will be ruined. That won't stop at Fukushima, but all of Japan will be destroyed. The future of Fukushima is the future of Japan. While we think of Japan in the future, Fukushima comes first... No matter where I am in the world, my roots will be in Japan. The nuclear incident made me realize how important the nation of Japan is to me. Protecting Fukushima means protecting Japan. If that's so, then my roots are in Fukushima. (*Oishinbo 111*, 286)

Yamaoka then goes on to describe the hypocrisy of not speaking about the danger of living in Fukushima for fear that it will further pain and stigmatize the residents. Kaibara agrees:

The safety of low amounts of radiation cannot be guaranteed. The nation and TEPCO have a duty (義務 *gimu*) to move the people of Fukushima to a safe place. As one person, I want to express that I hope the people of Fukushima will have the courage to escape from this dangerous place using compensation from the nation and TEPCO. I especially want them to think of the future of the children. Because I believe that the recovery of Fukushima is not the recovery of soil, but the recovery of humans. (287-288)

The two men look out over the landscape of Aizu-Wakamatsu-shi, where the *Tōzai Shinbun* reporters began their journey the previous year. When they state how important Fukushima is to them, as a place of meeting and reconciliation, the focus is not on the region and its suffering, but on the joys that have been passed to them *through* the food, the history, and the opportunities afforded by the prefecture. Yet Yamaoka's emphasis is on the fate of the whole nation of Japan *through* Fukushima, and Kaibara's desire to compel the government to evacuate the area seems to undermine the specific suffering already conferred and the individual attachments residents have to this specific place. This ending effectively re-centers the choice upon the judgment central (and fictional) voices, rather than on the desires of the locals they have interviewed, many of whom have expressed that they want to (or have no choice to) keep

cooking, farming, fishing, and gathering in Fukushima—without the stigma of radioactive contamination attached to their life’s work.

Throughout these three volumes, Kariya’s characters tread the line of “insider” and “outsider” to post-disaster Tōhoku. The same questions come up in other post-traumatic works written by “outsiders,” such as Ōe Kenzaburō’s *Hiroshima nōto* (Hiroshima notes), a series of essays by Ōe, at that time a Tokyo-based writer, on 1963 Ninth World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs for the literary journal *Sekai* (World). David Stahl highlights a number of precautions that Ōe takes in his writing and composition vis-à-vis his own positionality as an outsider. Quoting the introduction to Ōe’s compilation of essays, Stahl writes:

[Ōe’s] primary concern was with intersubjectivity, with what [the *hibakusha*] could teach him (and by extension other ‘outsiders’) about himself, his values and how he could live more genuinely and positively in the nuclear age, and what he could do to help assuage their suffering, contribute to their causes, and make their experience meaningful. Through close, interpersonal relations, he sought not only to become more critically self-aware, but also to reform himself by scrutinizing his own image as reflected in the ‘mirror’ of his Hiroshima Other. (214)

Both texts thus appear to take on the quest of reflecting on the writers’ own ability to help victims/survivors, so that readers will feel compelled to take action rather than voyeuristically consume the images and narratives spoon-fed to them via national media. Ōe frames himself clearly as “outsider,” and positions the suffering of *hibakusha* within the local and individual rather than subsuming them into the national narrative of victimization as “appropriated symbolic objects” (Stahl 213). Kariya seems to do the same with his characters. Perhaps despite (or in fact, because of) the controversial nosebleed episode, Kariya’s manga manages to give voice to the previously ignored individual victims of 3.11 and spark debate among non-resident readers, as Moscato points out (395). Yet by taking the liberty of telling this story through fictional characters, Kaibara forms a narrative history for Kaibara and Yamaoka tied to the land

of Fukushima prefecture and literally “roots” his characters there via the peach. The attempt to tell these stories through fictional characters can thus be seen as a well-intentioned—but ultimately flawed—attempt to get readers to scrutinize themselves and their roles in the suffering of non-central victims.

It is for these reasons that food plays such an important role in the relationship between central consumer and peripheral producer portrayed in *Oishinbo*. Kariya carefully focuses on the deep connection the farmers, fishers, and foragers have to the land within Tōhoku and, combined with Hanasaka’s photorealistic illustrations, portrays the food in a way that allows readers to engage in vicarious eating. *Oishinbo*’s narrative lets the readers reach a level of empathy for the victims of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown that they could not without these firsthand interviews. Certainly, the mouths of Tokyo-based fictional characters act as a conduit for “outsiders” to connect to Tōhoku through its food. It also emphasizes the irresponsibility of the central government and the goodwill of others in recovery attempts. Yet this is not a perfect relationship; I discuss above the anxiety of central consumers not in opposition to their desire to align themselves with suffering locals, but as an effect of the decision to put “safe” food into their bodies to economically support the individuals. In the end, this relegates decision-making and suffering back onto the privileged center, which benefits from the continued marginalization of non-metropole areas such as Fukushima. Even if they decide to financially or politically take action to help the victims and survivors of the triple disaster, at what scale will this action take place, and will it be *through* food? Or *for* food?

This chapter does not address a number of important episodes in *Oishinbo*, particularly those that do not directly depict acts of eating. I have chosen not to spend much time discussing chapters that focus on farming practices or that scrutinize pro-nuclear power plant documents. I

have also not explored the scenes from the drives and stops that the *Tōzai Shinbun* staff make to take in the destruction and scenery, of which there are many scattered throughout the manga. It is because of the primacy of images of destruction in post-3.11 media that I imagine these parts spark both a sense of vicarious trauma and sorrow in those who read *Oishinbo*. These contexts are important in framing the depictions of food and eating that take place in the manga, as well as building the sense of “*jikkan*,” but they ultimately fall outside of the primary focus of my analysis.

My next chapter will depart from the immediacy of post-3.11 food and nuclear contamination to address the consciousness of changing national foodways after 3.11 through a science fiction short story. Much like *Oishinbo*, “Iganu no ame” deals with issues of memory and cuisine, as well as the loss of local ingredients in the face of shifting appetites. The story also presents a “perfect” food, and its new place in the diets and bodies of the near future. Although not directly a post-3.11 story, “Iganu no ame” reveals the ways that fictional eating is affected by the mistrust that young people feel toward the government in a post-3.11 age of misinformation and seemingly arbitrary rules, while also discussing the loss of culinary heritage and memory through food.

Chapter 4: Precarious Foodways and Desire in “Iganu no ame”

In December 2014, volume five of quarterly young women’s magazine *chou chou ALiis* (pronounced “shu shu arisu,” from the French “chou chou,” meaning “sweetheart”, 2013-2016, Kadokawa Shōten) was released, featuring actress Inoue Mao on the cover. The headline of this issue was “The secret to eating without getting fat!” (太らない食べ方の秘密 Futoranai tabekata no himitsu), and the sub-topics featured included information on stretching, eating while burning calories, facts and fictions about diets, and a commissioned short story on “food” (食 *shoku*) by idol and novelist Katō Shigeaki (1987 -). This story, titled “Iganu no ame” (「イガヌの雨」 Iganu Rain), was not Katō’s first appearance in *chou chou ALiis*—his idol group NEWS had previously been featured in a photoshoot and interview published in volume one (October 2013) and on the cover of volume four (September 2014), and Katō himself had solo spreads on his writing work in volume two (April 2014)—but this was the first time and only time that the magazine published one of his short stories. In fact, it appears to be the only piece of fiction that the magazine published at all in its ten-volume run.²⁴ Katō’s short story is accompanied by a photoshoot and short interview, in which he is mostly interviewed about his own eating habits.

The story itself is a science fiction story that takes place in the year 2035. The protagonist, Misuzu, is a seventeen-year-old girl whose eating habits are dictated by her grandfather.²⁵ For Misuzu, meals are almost like tests—pick the right seasoning to enhance her dinner or be firmly corrected. Furthermore, her grandfather forbids the family from eating a food

²⁴ *chou chou ALiis* occasionally included interviews with or conversations between writers, such as Kakuta Mitsuyo and Wataya Risa, and book-related news.

²⁵ There is clearly a gender and age dynamic here as well; the elderly family patriarch controls the consumption habits of his family, which has a negative effect on the psyche of his young teenaged granddaughter and inevitably fans the flames of Misuzu’s rebellion. Here, the grandfather’s control is more an issue of culture and authenticity than it is a way to police Misuzu’s body, and even Misuzu agrees that her grandfather’s lessons are, indeed, important in unexpected ways throughout the story.

called “iganu,” small alien life creatures²⁶ that rained down on earth every December from 2017 to 2029. Because iganu is intoxicatingly delicious and nutritionally complete, the Japanese government set an over-18 age restriction on the consumption of iganu because it was unknown what long-term effects iganu would have on developing bodies. Despite this, everyone around Misuzu has apparently grown up eating iganu, leaving her the only one who does not know the taste of the alien creature. Although during her childhood the iganu were plentiful, in the last six years the “iganu rain” stopped entirely, leaving people to consume their increasingly limited stock in the final days before the Japanese government’s ban on all eating iganu goes into place. Misuzu, on a celebratory outing with her boyfriend Ren, best friend Noa, and Noa’s boyfriend Kaito, is taken to a restaurant that specializes in iganu—and also does not check I.D. There, Misuzu fights with Kaito when he interrogates her about why she doesn’t eat iganu. Misuzu orders a flabby crab cream pasta, while the others eat iganu. Watching her friends eat the creatures, Misuzu feels isolated and sad, and spoons some iganu up for herself. The taste is electrifying; euphoria spreads throughout her body, the indescribable taste both savory and sweet on her tongue. Unregretful, she returns home and quickly cleans herself and her clothes to erase the smell, then falls into bed.

The next morning, her grandfather confronts her, and they fight. Misuzu screams that he does not have a good reason to forbid the family from eating it—he only states that he “hates” iganu—and in response, her grandfather kicks her out of the house. Misuzu goes to Noa’s home, where she spends the winter break eating her fill of iganu before the government ban goes into

²⁶ The physical features of alien creatures are described clearly late in the story: “A head like a monkey with three eyes and a small, toothless mouth. Without a torso or arms, only two thin legs sprout out from its cranium” (142). The iganu are small enough to fit into serving bowls the size of finger bowls, and preparation consists of simply splitting the creature open between its legs. The grotesque appearance and violent preparation of the aliens do not deter its eaters, though some prefer not to slice it open themselves.

place. It is at Noa's house that Misuzu receives the news that her grandfather has collapsed.

The story shifts perspectives to a letter written to Misuzu by her grandfather, explaining that he despised iganu so much because it began to replace not only other foods in people's diets, but also the memories of the foods they loved and their associations with those foods. He names as an example a simmered *kabocha* squash that he and his now-deceased wife used to eat for celebrations, for the heirloom squash they used to use was scarce even before the iganu began to fall. With the rising prominence of iganu in people's diets, however, heirloom vegetables became even scarcer, and once-common ingredients became rarer and more expensive. More so, he also grew to fear the addictive effect it had. He ends the letter hoping that once he and Misuzu reconcile, he will make simmered *kabocha* squash for her.

The wake and cremation are held the day of and after Misuzu's birthday, which is coincidentally also the day that iganu first rained eighteen years ago. At the post-cremation meal, Misuzu cannot believe her eyes—there, among expensive seafood and meat dishes, are dishes of iganu. The smell stimulates her appetite and sickens her at the same time. Everyone eats the iganu only; murmurs rise among the family that they are glad they are able to eat it before it is completely outlawed, and Misuzu's blood boils. She confronts her family for going against her grandfather's wishes, kicks over a table of food, and runs out of the venue.

Eventually, she runs out of energy and trips in a busy shopping street, but no one pays her any heed. As she sits and cries among the happy shoppers and Christmas atmosphere, she feels something hit her back. She turns to look at it, only to find that it is an iganu, still alive and softly crying out the sounds that gave it its name. Around her, people begin frantically cramming the falling iganu into their bags. Misuzu watches a homeless person tear open an iganu and bite into its head. At the crude sight of people wildly collecting iganu, Misuzu feels sick and begins to run

again, covering her nose at the sickly-sweet smell of the raining iganu. Upon her arrival at home, she finds her parents piling up iganu in the doorway of their house. She returns to her room and frantically begins playing the piano given to her by her grandmother in order to drown out the cries of the alien creatures as they continue to rain. The next morning, exhausted, Misuzu opens her eyes and looks out the window, where the streets bear no trace of the rain that fell previously. When she opens the window, the unbearable stench of iganu assaults her, causing her mouth to water. Sickened, she begins to close the window when a sound stops her. Looking up to the rooftop to find what the source of it is, she sees an iganu caught on the edge of the roof. The iganu's three eyes stare back at her, and unconsciously her mouth begins to water again. Misuzu swallows audibly, and the story ends.

Filled with questions of unstable farming systems, culinary heritage, memory, and desire for food, Katō's story seems an odd choice for this magazine issue, for the story does not deal at all with the topic of exercise, diets, or body image, nor does it serve as a warm, fuzzy piece to brighten the moods of the magazine readers. In later interviews, Katō revealed that "iganu" is actually "unagi" spelled backwards, and that he was writing the story at the time that unagi, the Japanese eel (*Anguilla japonica*), was officially placed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resource's "Red List of Threatened Species" (Takii). This reveals an environmental link to Katō's short story, including the moral and ethical implications of a desire to eat foods that are forbidden or endangered.

My analysis of Katō's text may seem out of place following chapters on texts that explicitly reference 3.11. It is true that while "Kamisama 2011" and *Oishinbo* deal directly with questions of eating and producing food after the triple disaster, Katō has not linked "Iganu no ame" to the events of 3.11. Admittedly, "Iganu no ame" was published nearly four years after the

triple disaster, and Katō has never spoken of “Iganu no ame” being influenced by 3.11. However, Kristina Iwata-Weickgennant reminds us that “due to both the perceived opacity and the fundamentally different temporality of nuclear issues, ‘Fukushima’ [as a nuclear event] involves a psychological dimension missing from the natural disasters... ‘Fukushima’ unfolds over time” (“Precarity beyond 3/11,” 188). Thus, Katō’s readers may not have immediately connected Katō’s story to the news on unagi, but they may have, as I did, connect it to their own experiences of eating in post-3.11 foodways. Connected to the idea of “precarity” in Japan as discussed by Anne Allison, “Iganu no ame” explores exacerbated issues of heritage, memory, and taste within a future society that has suffered great loss and holds deep mistrust toward governmental and corporate systems. Precariousness tied to ideas of post-post-war work, labour, and capitalist systems—today, the opposite of increasing economic growth and stability after the war—reveals social, cultural, and political disconnect for generations young and old (Allison 7-8). Food, often seen as a given and relatively stable object in memory, is made even more precarious after 3.11.

It is no surprise then that “Iganu no ame” as a post-3.11 text deals with shifting food supply, changed taste, and human choice in food production chains, all continuously unfolding over time under late capitalism. The text’s focus on tradition and food supply reveal a precarity in the ways that Katō perceives consumer taste and food accessibility in the near-future, linking back to events happening around 2014. Unlike the contaminated food presented in “Kamisama 2011” and *Oishinbo*’s “Fukushima no shinjitsu” chapters, iganu is safe, nutritionally complete, and delicious to boot, bearing no traces of danger to the bodies of those who eat it. At the same time, iganu displaces the cuisine and ingredients of Misuzu’s grandparents, and tasting iganu breaks individuals’ affective culinary links to memory. “Iganu no ame” can be linked to post-

3.11 thought in relation to the sense of precariousness associated with food after disaster. My goal is to discuss in this chapter the hand that Katō's text has in revealing the complex interplay between desire and repulsion, nostalgia and memory within food, as well as changes—or fear of change—in cuisines linked to place, stemming from a sense of precarity in post-3.11 Japan.

Celebrity Writers and Magazine Fiction

Katō Shigeaki (b. 1987) published his first novel on January 28, 2012 to great success. The novel, titled *Pinku to gurē* (Pink and Gray, Kadokawa Shōten), sold 280,000 copies in the first week after publication and reached fourth in the Oricon ranking of top-selling books on February 6, 2012 (“Oricon: NEWS Katō Shigeaki no shojo saku ga sōgō 4-i ni hatsu tōjō”). Much of this success can likely be attributed to the publisher Kadokawa's aggressive promotions of the novel beginning in late November 2011, due to Katō's preexisting celebrity status: Katō is a member of the popular idol group NEWS, which debuted in 2003. Moreover, only a month prior to the announcement that Katō would be releasing a novel, the two most popular members of the group announced that they would be leaving NEWS.

Katō's novelist debut was not entirely unexpected for fans; he had a popular fan club-only blog and had written essays for a number of idol magazines in his late teens and early twenties. He was also not the first Japanese celebrity to write a novel; in the prior decade alone, actor and artist Lily Franky's *Tōkyō tawā ~okan to boku to, tokidoki, oton~* (*Tokyo Tower: Mom and Me, and Sometimes, Dad*, 2005, Fusōsha), comedian Tamura Hiroshi's *Hōmuresu chūgakusei* (*Homeless Middle-School Student*, 2007, Wani Books), and comedian Gekidan Hitori's *Kagehinata ni saku hana* (*Flowers that Bloom in the Shadows*, 2006, Gentōsha) obtained critical and commercial success, even receiving film adaptations within a few years of

publishing.²⁷ Katō's novel, however, was hailed as particularly significant because it made him the first idol from his agency to write a novel.²⁸ The novel follows a failed actor whose broken relationship with his childhood best friend, now a successful actor, is suddenly rekindled at a school reunion. After promising to make the protagonist famous, the protagonist's friend commits suicide the following day. *Pinku to gurē*'s dark themes and shocking turns gave the novel a fair amount of media attention, but more importantly, setting the novel in the entertainment world led people to question who and what the novel was based on. Over the course of his literary career, even four full-length novels and multiple short stories later (including two ongoing serializations at the time of writing this thesis), Katō is sometimes still met with jokes and probing questions that imply he may, in fact, have a ghostwriter after all.

Katō's status as a non-literary celebrity informs the way that his texts are read. Although his first three longform novels were related to the entertainment industry in some way, his writing has slowly moved away from the world of actors, musicians, and playwrights to a broad range of settings and themes. Yet the worldview of his work remains drenched in media, especially television, popular music, and communications media such as social networking services. Readers cannot easily divorce the writer from his contexts, and his act of writing-as-idol is consumed by the fans of his idol group—who may never read the book—as well as the actual readers of the text—who may hold no interest in Katō's idol career outside the influence it has on his writing.

The publishing of "Iganu no ame" in *chou chou ALiis* consists of many firsts, for it was

²⁷ *Pinku to gurē* was also adapted into a film, released January 2016. In the same month, a TV adaptation of Katō's anthology of short stories (in which "Iganu no ame" is published) aired on Fuji TV.

²⁸ NEWS is a part of Japan's largest and most well-known male talent agency, Johnny's & Associates (members of the agency all carry the mononymic label "Johnny's"). Other Johnny's have released books before, but they are autobiographical rather than literary fiction.

the first of Katō's short stories to be published in a young women's magazine as well as his first foray into what he deemed "science fiction." The story was commissioned by the magazine itself, and as mentioned above, this issue was entirely dedicated to diets and food. In the following interview, Katō states that he deliberately decided to write something encapsulating his own thoughts on food and eating, a piece that would twist reader expectations and perhaps spark conversation among readers—"Would you eat the iganu? Or not?" (Takakura 69). This conscious desire to stimulate the young woman reader is telling when juxtaposed with Katō's history with the magazine; Katō's previous features in the magazine have largely focused on his idol group, NEWS, who celebrated their tenth anniversary prior to this issue, or revealed the writing process of his third longform novel, *Burn* (2015, Kadokawa). He is writing for an audience aware of him as an idol-writer, and aware of themselves as girls or women who likely enjoy idols—and who therefore consume his star text through the faces and bodies of idols. Moreover, Katō specifically points to his desire to subvert more common sentiment about food within *chou chou ALiis*'s diet issue by writing a text that confronts issues of food sources, traditions, and memory, as well as desire and repulsion unrelated to bodily image.

Katō's decision to write *this* story for a young women's magazine is a fairly puzzling decision, but my theory is that it is within the confines of a non-literary magazine that the story has its greatest impact. Even with limited readership, "Iganu no ame" is essentially a story about consumers' desires and choices, and the makings of meaning and bodily affect through their food decisions. Tucked away among how-to articles on eating out without gaining weight, stretching techniques, recommendations for diet foods and menus, and advertisements for beach getaways, Katō's story on temptation and the link between food and memory serve to add another dimension to the endless consumer choices that the reader is faced with in the story: how does

what they choose to eat contribute or cause detriment to their own culinary heritage and history? And for what reasons are they truly eating?

“Iganu no ame” was re-published six months later in an anthology of Katō’s short stories, titled *Kasa o motanai ari tachi wa* (Ants Without Umbrellas, 2015, Kadokawa), where it could reach a much wider readership. Regardless of how popular the story itself is, I believe that it is important to analyze this kind of “light” literature written for, in this case, an audience consisting of young women whose primary aim in buying the magazine is not likely the story, but the other content. Even within popular literature texts that may be deemed not “serious” exist ways of tackling issues surrounding food and the body, especially for young Japanese readers who consume Katō’s literary and idol persona. I have chosen to read “Iganu no ame” in terms of its potential connections to the unfolding precarity after 3.11—eating food, like all acts of consumption, is precarious and negotiated within the contexts of late capitalism. Iganu is a food that comes from outside of our seemingly stable systems of food production, and thus is only obtainable when and if the iganu rain falls. Its lack of ties to land, memory, or heritage are betrayed by the sudden way it has taken up an important position within the text’s systems of eating and enjoying food. And much like the Japanese government setting seemingly arbitrary restrictions on how much radiation exposure is safe post-3.11, in “Iganu no ame” the government’s restricts the eating of iganu to those eighteen-and-up despite there being no ill effects (and even positive effects) on the bodies of the young people who eat iganu.

Non-Iganu Food: Familiar, Memorable, Undesired

Food in “Iganu no ame” is divisible into two categories: iganu and not-iganu. The foods that fall into the not-iganu category are either familiar, comforting dishes to the contemporary Japanese reader: *chikuzenni* stew, fried *aji* (horse mackerel), crab cream pasta, simmered

kabocha squash—all dishes that one could find on their own dining table—or the festive and costly foods served at the post-cremation meal: sushi, lightly seared *wagyū* beef, and steamed abalone. The depictions of these foods, however, are both highly detailed and also altered by their in-text contexts, distanced from “normal” eating patterns. Take, for example, the opening scene in which Misuzu eats *chikuzenni* and fried *aji* during a meal at home. In this scene, Katō uses descriptive words to evoke familiar flavors of the foods in the minds of the readers:

Biting down on the carrot from the *chikuzenni*, the flavor of the bonito fish stock and the faint earthy fragrance from the shiitake mushroom spread through her mouth. A sprinkle of salt on the fried *aji*, and into her mouth it went. *Crunch*, and immediately the savoriness of the fish and fat tangled over her tongue and slid comfortably down her throat. (121)

The concrete descriptors both relay Misuzu’s own eating experience and stimulate the appetites of the readers. However, Misuzu’s familiar meal quickly moves out of the ordinary when she reaches for a sauce—her grandfather’s gaze places pressure on her decision, and when she gets the answer wrong she thinks that “tests at school are much easier than this,” even while conceding that her grandfather’s judgment was correct (122). These strict meals are delicious—even made *more* delicious by her grandfather’s authoritarian seasoning commands—but Misuzu feels abnormal pressure during these meals. That home dinners become tests, combined with her grandfather’s strict household ban on *iganu*-eating, places Misuzu outside of normal eating habits, as shown when she goes to an *iganu* restaurant with her friends.

A glance around the restaurant reveals that everyone has ordered *iganu*, and her decision to order something else from the menu causes laughter to erupt in the kitchen (130). While Misuzu tries to deflect Kaito’s badgering, her best friend Noa brings up the fact that “families who don’t eat *iganu* at all are like, super rare. I’ve never heard of anyone but Misuzu’s family doing that,” and the other three banter about how often they eat *iganu* at home (131). When her

crab cream pasta arrives, the dish is described in unfavorable terms: “The crabmeat was overcooked and tough, and on the other end of the spectrum the pasta was overboiled and flabby. It was a dish made by someone who didn’t know how to cook” (133-4). In contrast to Misuzu’s delicious home meals, the pasta dish is “awful” (ひどい *hidoi*), made worse by the euphoric expressions on the faces of Misuzu’s friends as they eat *iganu* (133). Forcing herself to eat the unpalatable pasta among diners all sharing in the same delicious dish, Misuzu feels further alienated within the communal dining experience, which pushes her to taste the *iganu*.

The final non-*iganu* dish vividly described in Katō’s story is the simmered squash that holds great meaning to her grandparents. In this case, Misuzu stirs up the memory of the dish while gazing at her grandfather’s face during the wake. The realization that he will never move again sparks in her a craving: “I want to eat Grandpa’s simmered *kabocha*,” she thinks; “the gentle sweetness and abundant fragrance” and “the fluffy texture” of the dish are described wistfully and regretfully (147). The memory of the flavor of simmered *kotsuma nankin* (勝間南瓜) heirloom squash returned to her as she read his letter, and she realizes that she will never have the same dish again. The food other than *iganu* is described in concrete terms that stimulate in the reader familiar flavors of accessible, comforting cooking. At the same time, these foods are also presented in uncomfortable ways to heighten the meanings of each dish as test, as distance-marker, or as inaccessible memory. In a future where “everyday” food has been replaced by *iganu*, Misuzu’s sensitive, developed palate and her family’s carefully curated dinners distance her from culturally “normal” eating habits. The conflict this creates against the reader’s perceptions of these dishes as normal and even as a given highlight the deep changes in everyday eating habits in 2035 Japan.

Iganu: Alien, Taboo, Desired

On the contrary, iganu is a perfect food—unlike the bland meal replacements that people have manufactured to date in real life, it is delicious and even addictive. Iganu is also nutritionally complete; though the iganu rain initially caused widespread panic, “children in the most impoverished area of Africa²⁹ were the first to eat iganu” (142). These children quickly recovered from their bodily ailments, and soon the entire African continent, and then the world, was eating iganu. Iganu contains all the protein, carbohydrates, calcium, vitamins, and even fiber that a person needs, and even has strong antioxidant properties (142-3). Moreover, the annual iganu rain ensured that iganu cost nothing—as long as “you caught them, they were free,” Noa’s mother reminds Misuzu and Noa, “Just put up a net on the roof” (140). It is no surprise that the plentiful and perfect iganu became so important a food to people all over the world that iganu displaced the food systems previously in place. Although Misuzu’s grandfather only wrote of vegetables and ingredients disappearing or becoming inflated in price in Japan, we can assume that iganu likely replaced the need for as much agricultural food production all over the world.

Yet for Misuzu, eating iganu is a familial taboo. Of course, iganu consumption in Japan is limited to those over eighteen, as is stated many times throughout the story. The law prohibiting minors’ consumption of iganu came into place fourteen years prior to the beginning of the story under the reasoning that it was unknown what effects the alien life form, which “had only appeared on earth a few years ago,” would have on the bodies of children (132). The reader’s introduction to Ren is when Misuzu calls him on his eighteenth birthday, after a celebratory dinner during which he allegedly ate iganu for the first time with his family. Legally eating iganu for the first time is a social coming-of-age event, akin to having a first legal drink. Much like the

²⁹ Katō never names which country or area in Africa.

dual characteristic of festive food that Falk discusses, iganu is “something to be avoided now but welcomed in the future... [which] creates a kind of enticement or anticipatory tension, making possible a positive representation” (82). As a teen on the cusp of adulthood, Ren legally eating iganu is so positive an event that his father sheds tears, saying, “There’s nothing more worth celebrating than finally being able to eat iganu with you [Ren]!” (123). The *shared* eating experience here is also highly valued, especially once it is revealed that there is only a month left before eating iganu is banned across the nation. However, it becomes clear that this legal iganu celebration is not the first time that Ren has eaten iganu, despite his earlier fanfare.

Moreover, Kaito boasts that as a child, his parents fed him iganu three times a day when they were busy, and as a result he has never so much as even had a cold (131). Although Noa and Ren gibe that his mother is too “laissez-faire” and question whether or not his body is okay, it seems indeed that Kaito—and everyone else who has eaten iganu—is perfectly healthy. Kaito points an accusatory finger at the adults who made the law. “Saying that it’s to protect the children is just pretext for the adults to keep all of the iganu for themselves,” he says (132). In return, Misuzu expresses shock that Kaito has been eating iganu since he was a child, reminding him that “The law is the law” and “You’re purposely breaking the law just to eat iganu” (132). However, Noa reveals that she first ate iganu when she was eleven or twelve, and Kaito reveals that he and Ren ate iganu together in middle school. Thus, the taboo inflicted by the law is broken down greatly—to Misuzu, it seems that everyone around her has eaten iganu except for herself and her family. Moreover, the weakness of the restriction makes it far less festive; it ceases to hold special meaning for those who eat it.

Misuzu’s first taste of iganu is built up primarily through her grandfather’s family-wide iganu ban. She acts on her desire to eat the iganu out of a need to be included in the shared

experience of her friends rather than an immediate compulsion to *taste* the iganu. Exclusion from understanding what the others are experiencing makes Misuzu, eating her awful cream pasta, feel “a bottomless alienation” (底知れぬ疎遠感 *soko shirenu soenkan*) and that she is “surrounded by a clear wall” (透明な壁に囲まれている *tōmei na kabe ni kakomareteiru*), blocked off from all the other diners (134). It is not the personal *choice* to not eat iganu that isolates her, it is the familial restriction placed upon her by her grandfather. Not knowing the truth behind her grandfather’s forbidding of the family to eat iganu, the negative associations of iganu disappear for Misuzu. The taboo surrounding iganu breaks down, and for the first time Misuzu is able to share in the act of eating that she has watched unfold so many times before. It is only after she eats iganu that her friends’ attentions return to her, as they smile and share in the experience. Iganu captures Misuzu’s appetite and for the rest of the story, she is only depicted eating iganu or nothing at all. During her time at Noa’s house after being expelled from home by her grandfather, Misuzu eats her fill of iganu. Her memory of simmered *kabocha* is a desire borne out of sorrow and nostalgia, but it does not make her hungry. Even during her grandfather’s wake dinner, though there is other, more luxurious food present, it is the sight of iganu that makes her stomach growl (148). The other people at the wake dinner tuck into the iganu at the table, leaving the other food untouched.

The taboo of iganu is constituted as forbidden first by Misuzu’s grandfather and then by herself. The desire and repulsion associated with iganu are not enough to make or break its taboos, but they certainly function to build its position within Misuzu’s psyche. When Misuzu learns the true reason that her grandfather despises iganu, she loses positive association with it. Falk writes that for food associated with taboos, the breakdown of these taboos can make food gain a positive representation—but only after the “*indexical* (material and causal) link between

the food and the negative consequence of taboo transgression is broken that the positive representation becomes effective” (84, italics in the original). In the text we see both a progression of this process, when Misuzu eats iganu for the first time, and the reversal of it, when Misuzu realizes the reason her grandfather hated iganu.

Falk states that the reason for prohibition of a food “is conceived of as materially present in the food’s substance or essence (maintaining the double meaning: as the inner nature and as the existential form of the ‘matter’)” (84). The reason why her grandfather deemed iganu a taboo was out of a hatred of its effect on the palates and memories of people, rather than its taste alone. He writes in his letter that he despises iganu for two primary reasons: first, that its increasing place in diets meant that the ingredients that made up the food that he and his wife loved, such as the *kotsuma nankin* squash they commemorated their anniversary with each year, became increasingly scarce and expensive; second, he is “terrified that eating that delicious iganu would result in becoming its captive, and [he] would forget even the dishes [he] once loved, and all the memories from the dining table would be glazed over (上塗りされてしまう *uwanuri sarete shimau*) by iganu” (146). It is while reading this letter that Misuzu’s memory of the simmered squash returns, and in her grieving she feels that “now, she sought (求めていた *motometeita*) the taste of her grandfather’s simmered *kabocha* more than the iganu she had been so addicted to” (148). Indeed, what her grandfather feared happened to Misuzu—she forgot the flavors and positive associations of the food her grandfather had treasured in favor of iganu and its transcendent flavor and euphoric effects. And now, regretfully, it is too late to return to the iganu-free dining table she shared with her grandfather.

The Taste of Forbidden Fruit Versus the Taste of Phantoms

Iganu is a veritable “forbidden fruit,” a food that exists in the link between “wrong” and

“delicious.” Falk points out that “forbidden fruits” are “regarded as *uncontrollable*, both symbolically and practically... [they] are dangerous and to be feared precisely because they tend to invert the eater/food relation” (85, italics in the original). Those who eat iganu in Katō’s story find themselves blissful and happy, unable or unwilling to see the effect it has on them from a non-eater’s perspective. Misuzu’s outburst at the wake dinner stems from the fact that despite it being her grandfather’s *funeral*, her parents, relatives, and the monk overseeing the funeral rites are all taking part in the “conscienceless” (不謹慎 *fukinshin*) act of eating iganu (149). Indeed, her parents’ reactions to eating iganu reveal how glad they are that they have a chance to eat again it before it is outlawed, making the grandfather’s death a happy occasion when Misuzu believes they should be in mourning. The people around her abandon their routines as soon as they realize that iganu is falling from the sky, catching it out of the sky in a scene that is “more violent (荒々しく *araarashiku*) than it was in the past, pure chaos” (152). Although after reading her grandfather’s letter Misuzu is mentally repulsed by iganu, her body seems to have other plans; the sight and smell of iganu set off physiological hunger responses—her stomach growls and her mouth waters unconsciously. At first, she rejects even the saliva produced at the smell, spitting it into a tissue because she feels “impure” (不浄 *fujō*) (154). However, as she gazes at the last iganu hanging from the roof, she swallows her saliva. Indeed, iganu seems to have taken control of those who have eaten it before, whether or not they are conscious of it. Misuzu’s consciousness toward iganu moves from forbidden to permitted and back—in more affective terms, Misuzu develops a taste for, then a distaste for iganu in the short span of Katō’s story.

Out of the three texts analyzed in this thesis, taste and distaste play the largest role in “Iganu no ame.” In “Kamisama 2011” the taste of the fish is never known—the fish itself is the object of meaning, and the processes and not-eating (not tasting) imbue it with the social

connection and bond between the bear and the human. In *Oishinbo*'s chapters, taste is a link to memory and loss, but the characters are only ever shown reacting positively to the food when they eat it. No one truly rejects food, even when they feel apprehension and anxiety toward its radioactivity level. Iganu, however, captures the stomachs and minds of those who eat it. Indeed, the world has developed a taste for iganu, pitted against those who feel strong distaste for iganu such as Misuzu's grandfather. When I use "taste" in referring to iganu, I mean of course the verb and noun that constitute "tasting," that chemical and physiological process that happens on the tongue and in the nose, sent to the brain. However, I also refer to the idea of "taste," defining the "good" and the "bad" of things, the "desired" and "undesirable." Ben Highmore defines taste as "an orchestration of the sensible, a way of ordering and demeaning, of giving value and taking it away... the very basis of culture, not simply its system of values but the way that set of values gets under your skin and into your bones" (126). Indeed, iganu forms both societal and cultural food norms which dictate the appetites and beliefs of the characters living in an iganu-based world. Misuzu's developed taste for iganu sets her in opposition to her grandfather, whose strict dining room manner dictated her tastes for so long. While Misuzu has certainly grown up in an environment that is firmly anti-iganu, eating iganu is a part of the culture surrounding her: when she realizes that she is surrounded by peers who regularly eat iganu with their families even despite the age restrictions, her grandfather's distaste for iganu seems truly irrational.

On the other hand, Misuzu's taste for her grandfather's pre-iganu dishes was developed over her entire life—her eating habits and emotional attachments are grounded in the memories and flavors that he passed down to her even without her realizing what they truly meant. Just as her grandfather remembers the happy days of the past through the taste of certain foods, Misuzu learns to associate the taste of simmered *kabocha* with the memory of her grandparents. Kimura

Saeko, writing on poet and translator Sekiguchi Ryōko's post-3.11 essays, notes that Sekiguchi's writing points out that "the act of eating inevitably contains the simultaneous consumption of something that we cannot perceive through the sense of taste," which eaters recognize as having an effect on their body (*Sono ato no shinsai bungaku-ron*, 98). Although Sekiguchi does not use the words "radioactive contamination" (放射能汚染 *hōshanō osen*) here, Kimura suggests that a clear link exists between eaters' awareness of this phantom (*fantôme*) quality of eating and the anxiety caused by eating food that could potentially be contaminated. Iganu have no ties to land and pollution or contamination, which perhaps frees the iganu-eater from the anxiety of eating the unknown. But within eating also exists positive phantoms, such as those found in Sekiguchi's writing on the taste of *sekihan* (red adzuki beans and glutinous rice), for "when [she] tastes for the doneness of the rice, [her] grandmother's tongue is revived (蘇っている *yomigaetteiru*)" (*Dîner Fantasma*, Ribon and Sekiguchi 24, cited in Kimura 99). For Misuzu, however, the taste of her grandfather's simmered *kabocha* is a memory, conjurable in her sadness but unavailable in a world where even her parents prioritize the taste of iganu over her grandfather's memory. The phantoms of the past, positive and negative, are almost universally forgotten with the appearance of iganu.

The resonance of "taste" is particularly notable in the story's futuristic setting: the characters live in a society not unrecognizably changed from Japan in 2014, but one whose entire cultural and social eating habits and tastes have shifted considerably after the spontaneous appearance of iganu, and is in the middle of a tremendous shift to a society that will soon be banned from eating iganu at all because Japan is running out of iganu. For a young character in the story like Misuzu, there is no knowing a pre-iganu world except through the taste of foods produced by her grandfather. Yet none of the characters speak of desiring foods other than iganu,

save for Misuzu at her grandfather's funeral and her grandfather in his letter. They also seem not to think of food other than iganu as being particularly meaningful—or if they do, iganu takes priority. This change in taste identifies a sense of loss similar to the one found in *Oishinbo*, in which the characters face the loss of the flavors of certain area-specific food due to contamination, but the causes and consequences are different in “Iganu no ame.” This loss is linked to the threat not from the nebulous, invisible, damaging radiation, but the addictive, delicious, mysterious alien creatures that fall from the sky. Katō seems to propose through his story that this change in taste is negative, and that the shift away from meaningful food tied to memory, family, and place toward the extra-terrestrial “forbidden fruit” threatens something deeper than just eating habits—it threatens industry, culture, and society.

Precarious Foodways in Post-Iganu Japan

The plentifulness of iganu in the text sits in opposition to food that comes from modern systems of food production, especially rarer varieties of farmed or foraged food. The annual iganu rain apparently left people with more iganu than they could eat, and as it could easily be frozen and stored for later, iganu-eaters could keep a stock until the next year or beyond, as is the case in the story. As previously discussed, due to its heady taste and euphoric effects, most of the population in Japan (and likely the world) seems to find eating iganu is preferable to eating other foods. Even age-restrictions placed on iganu did not halt its widespread, all-ages consumption. Iganu's replacement of other foods in the everyday diets of Japanese people inevitably led to a lower demand for other foods. According to Misuzu's grandfather, once-cheap ingredients skyrocketed in price, becoming ten times more expensive than pre-iganu prices.

Interestingly enough, Misuzu's grandfather had already experienced the loss of availability of a beloved ingredient, the *kotsuma nankin* squash, to mass-production and farming

practices; the shift to eating iganu shut down production of the squash entirely. For these reasons, as well as those related to memory and taste, Misuzu's grandfather leaves in his letter the testimony that "The food humans have eaten comes from the earth. Not the sky," reminding Misuzu of all that is lost when one chooses to eat iganu (146). Her grandfather's statement outright states the connection that the foods that he loved, the foods that hold the memories of his wife, have to land and water. By identifying the *kotsuma nankin*, an heirloom varietal of *kabocha* squash from the Osaka region, as one of those lost ingredients, he ties food to place and region. Moreover, he states explicitly that it was not merely that the vegetables disappeared from the markets, but that "since iganu rained down, farmers who raised heirloom vegetables went bankrupt (潰れてしまった *tsuburete shimatta*). Of course, that included *kotsuma nankin* farmers too" (146). Katō's story seems to play largely on nostalgia and loss, the desire to return to a time when food was more "real" and "authentic," perhaps in order to urge readers to hold on to the food culture that they have and appreciate the bounty and variety of food available today.

However, I argue that it is this very direction of readers' attention to the hardship of farmers that ties this text to a post-3.11 food environment. Unlike *Oishinbo*, which deals directly with the stories of individual food producers, Katō's story gestures more broadly at a generalized—but still *local*—food producer who fell victim to the overwhelming demand for iganu. "Iganu no ame" forces readers to think about the ways that farmers' livelihoods are affected by supply and demand chains, especially due to consumer *taste*. It is not that the food available is any less delicious than it was before, it is that consumers do not choose squash when there exists the better-tasting, plentiful iganu.³⁰ The qualities of iganu actively turn consumers

³⁰ Contemporary consumption of heirloom vegetables such as *kyōyasai* (Kyoto vegetables) in Japan is not based wholly on taste, as Greg de St. Maurice points out in an article on the production of authenticity and culinary heritage through *kyōyasai*. St. Maurice's article makes a number of excellent points on the complicated ways that culinary authenticity is ascribed socially over time rather than naturally. In terms of taste, however, *kyōyasai* are

away from choosing foods that exist within traditional food production systems, toward something perceivably tastier—just as the threat of radioactive contamination pushes consumers away from purchasing food from Fukushima prefecture, toward something perceivably safer.

In pre-3.11 Japan, government-supported food movements such as Food Action Nippon were focused on increasing domestic food self-sufficiency by pushing for the consumption of more domestic food products. Stephanie Assmann writes that this occurred in two ways: first, through establishing food-related safety laws, and second, through “seeking to invoke trust in domestic food products by making food processing and the origin of food products more visible... Food Action Nippon aims to convince Japanese citizens of the safety of domestic food products by establishing personal ties between domestic food producers and food consumers” (6). However, in the years immediately following 3.11, there existed a strong distrust toward even domestic food products if they were tied to certain origins, no matter how much producers tried to prove their food was safe.³¹ Katō’s text reveals a paradox in the thinking of post-3.11 Japanese consumers—he imagines a future in which they are willing to eat aliens that fall from the sky to the point of eradication from the world, but they do not care about the eradication of foods associated with their heritage, or the economic ills that befall the affected farmers. Moreover, they seem only interested in their short-term pleasure, rather than worrying about

most critically evaluated based on their closeness to an ideal appearance rather than on taste, and interviewees often described the taste of the vegetables differently than others. St. Maurice suggests that this may be because of the “subjective nature of taste experiences” or “lack of ready vocabulary” to describe the different flavors of similar varieties, but in any case, *kyōyasai* are often perceived to be “inevitably more delicious than their counterparts from other prefectures” (71). It is clear that even in reality, the issue faced by farmers is of consumer (non-physiological) taste—why would consumers purchase more expensive heirloom vegetables without the production of authenticity around the vegetables? For Misuzu’s grandfather, the association of memory and person with the heirloom vegetable was what created his strong attachment to the *kotsuma nankin*, rather than the flavor of it.

³¹ At a press conference on April 23, 2018, Fukushima governor Uchibori Masao revealed that in 2017, Fukushima prefecture had transported 210 tons of locally grown produce and grains, the highest number since 2010 (“Chiji teirei kisha kaiken”). In 2011, this number had been nearly zero, and it took multiple years and endless monitoring, testing, and promotional campaigns to prove that food from Fukushima was indeed safe to eat.

long-term effects of eating iganu on their bodies or on their food supply systems.

The threat of iganu to cuisine itself is ignored by many people in the story, though it exists at the crux of Misuzu's grandfather's hatred of iganu. The sameness of iganu means that any and all iganu are equally good within the minds of its consumers, and that one can maintain a successful restaurant simply by having iganu. The restaurant where the teens go is one such example; Misuzu's crab cream pasta is described as being "a dish made by someone who doesn't know how to cook," yet the restaurant is filled with customers (134). Although Misuzu's mother cooks for the family, she is shown happily eating and collecting iganu at the end of the story, revealing no moral or culinary opposition to iganu. With such damage to food production and enormous shifts in people's tastes, Katō's story seems to make the point that there is no true point of return now that the desire for iganu has erased most desire for other foods, even for nostalgic or sentimental purposes. The lack of iganu rain and the impending iganu ban create potential for modern food production systems to slowly recover as Japan reestablishes the need for non-iganu food, but this potential is halted by the reoccurrence of iganu rain. Tracing this back to the events of 3.11, even though the agricultural industries of Fukushima prefecture have gradually recovered from the nuclear disaster, the threat of nuclear contamination still exists in people's imaginations—although perhaps more so in 2014 when "Iganu no ame" was published than today. Thus, "Iganu no ame" explores the potential of enormous and irreversible changes to food production through consumer taste in post-3.11 Japan.

Conclusion: New Precarity in Eating

My aim in this chapter has not been to prove that Katō is making a point about eating after 3.11, but to draw out the issues surrounding food and eating that reveal that his text necessarily carries with it a tinge of post-3.11 memory, anxiety, and nostalgia. In Katō's text

there is the before, the now, and the future of *iganu*, just as in the previous two texts exists a past, present, and future of eating influenced directly by 3.11. Ties to current events are almost never revealed within his work; Katō's novels often take place in narrow, confined worlds of dramatic tension, emotionally driven young teens and adults, and popular music and media.

In fact, Katō's debut novel *Pinku to gurē* was allegedly written between the two months³² of February and March 2011 (Kondō). Despite this, he has never spoken publicly about the way that the disaster affected his writing, and interviewers have not asked, preferring instead to question whether or not the novel is based on himself or his idol group. (Most often, the answer is no.) The focus on Katō's place in the entertainment industry further pushes reporting on his work into the sphere of popular entertainment literature rather than *junbungaku* like Kawakami's work. Whether or not he simply chose not to speak on the process of writing during the events of 3.11 during the press tour on his debut novel or was forbidden to do so by his agency is unclear—either way, the novel has to do with the precariousness of image-making and celebrity status and manages to make no reference to the triple disaster. Perhaps it does not matter.

Clear ties to current events in “*Iganu no ame*,” however, have been established extra-textually. In a conversation with novelist Asai Ryō published on Katō's short story anthology promotional website, Asai expressed that he felt Katō's short stories were a conscious attempt to “whittle down the modern age (現代 *gendai*),” particularly “*Iganu no ame*.” Katō responded:

I was asked to write a ‘food’ themed short story. It was right about the time of the news that unagi were designated as endangered species on the red list, and from there I expanded the story. Actually, ‘iganu’ read backwards is ‘unagi’... Since the short story was about eating space aliens, it's about the near future, but it ended up being satirical... Instead of consciously trying to carve out the ‘now,’ I prioritize writing what I want to write. However, as I write, whatever I feel within society leaks out. But directly writing

³² Katō has stated that the actual writing took place over a month and a half (Suzuki; Takii). Regardless, this time period would have encompassed March 11, 2011. However, I have not found any interviews in which he has mentioned the influence of 3.11 on his writing work, though his idol agency Johnny's & Associates put forth support and supplies following the event itself.

what piques my interest in the news is the job of journalism, so by broadly interpreting it a little in a story, I feel that I can consequently relay information and hopefully raise the alarm bell. (Takii)

If Katō's hope is to raise the alarm bell about the endangered status of unagi, his attempt is somewhat opaque—Asai only realizes the connection when Katō tells him. To briefly explain the endangered status of unagi, according to a report produced by TRAFFIC Japan³³, the endangered status of eels is due to both high consumer demand for eels and changing environmental factors, such as loss of habitat due to pollution, changing ocean currents, pollution, and disease (Crook and Shiraishi 4). Eels cannot be farmed the same way that other fish can—eels cannot be productively bred in captivity, so eel farms rely on capturing young wild eels and raising those eels to feed consumers (1). Yet this difficulty in producing eels is at odds with the continued consumption of eels in Japan, particularly on holidays such as *Doyō no ushi no hi* (the day of the ox in midsummer), during which the nutritious eel is eaten in order to bring cool thoughts to the mind and give stamina to the eater, according to tradition. Despite attempts to use ingredients such as white fish and sweet soy sauce to simulate grilled unagi, it is never the same kind of eating experience as the real thing.

The same exists in Katō's story: the mysterious qualities of iganu and its increasingly limited supply of seem not to discourage its eaters. No one in the story seems concerned about what they will eat once iganu is gone; instead people seem intent on eating their remaining stock before it is banned, just as Misuzu does after her first taste of iganu. What use is it, after all, if it remains dormant in their freezers? And despite Misuzu's newfound distaste for iganu, this happy event is seen only in its negatives, yet she cannot fight against her physiological craving for

³³ TRAFFIC, an international wildlife trade monitoring network, is a 'strategic alliance' between the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, the same group that produces the "Red List" that Katō refers to), and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF). Occasionally, it publishes reports such as this one on the commercial trade of endangered species.

iganu any more than the others in the story can. Even though she feels resentful toward the food, her body cannot seem to deny its deliciousness.

Until he later revealed the contexts that built the story, Katō's story is not explicitly a story about the endangered status of eels; it is up to readers to make sense of his work in their own social and cultural contexts. The events of 3.11 were neither too close nor too far for readers of *chou chou ALiis* to make—or not make—the explicit connection, but as discussed previously, the nuclear disaster has continued to unfold and make itself apparent in discussions and discourse surrounding food, environment, and place in post-3.11 Japan. The same psychological dimension can be applied to the sudden changes in food systems resulting from the nuclear disaster, such as those detailed in *Oishinbo*. Thus, even though the story maintains no explicit link to the events of 3.11, thematic issues can be drawn forward to trace the psychological links that built up a narrative like Iganu. We can find in the perfect food iganu of Katō's story a desire to have food that is abundant, accessible, easy, and safe for the body. "Iganu no ame" contains the same fear of losing foodways as in *Oishinbo* and troubles the idea of edibility and inedibility found in "Kamisama 2011." If both the previous texts analyzed show the changes in ways that food is thought about and eaten in near-post-3.11 eating, then "Iganu no ame" does the same, imagining a future in which national (or perhaps international) eating habits have shifted deeply and drastically when a new, better food source is made available. Yet it also challenges the presence of this utopic foodstuff, presenting the erasure of traditional, meaningful food as one consequence of throwing away one's culinary heritage and familial bonds in favor of an ultimately alien (if perfect and precarious) source of nutrition.

One message the story seems to impart through Misuzu's relationship with her grandfather is that consumers greatly influence which foods are available. Desire, changing

tastes, and iganu's druglike effect on the body all mean that consumers in "Iganu no ame" choose iganu over other foods, which in turn causes the loss of those foods, according to Misuzu's grandfather. As much as iganu can replace all food, from one's everyday meal to a feature of birthday celebrations and funerals, its disconnection from the land and sea prompts a series of questions in the post-3.11 reader: what *is* worth eating? Is it worth eating food from Fukushima even if it risks contamination? How much can we really trust the government to tell us what not to eat? And finally, how does what we choose to eat affect not only our bodies but our psyches?

I would like to point out that Katō's lack of specificity in defining which food producers are most at risk in a post-3.11 context means that he is likely talking generally about the dangers that small, locally-based farmers face in producing heritage cultivars of vegetables rather than engaging with massively productive farming methods. By not mentioning the triple disaster in *any* terms, he manages to avoid a directly political critique of post-3.11 policies that failed to significantly aid Tōhoku food producers in recovering from natural or humanmade disaster. What criticism Katō has for the Japanese government comes through in the story in the distaste teenaged Kaito expresses toward the over-eighteen iganu eating policy. Yet the young people in the novel do not know pre-iganu foodways: Misuzu was born at the same time the iganu rain began. She and her friends grew up in a world where iganu, a food disconnected from any narrative of production, was the most desirable food. The divide between the priorities of young people and older generations is apparent in Misuzu's food-based relationship with her grandfather, but also in a conversation that Misuzu's friend Noa has with her mother. A television documentary about iganu reminds viewers that in 2029 when iganu rain stopped, an electricity generation plant run on iganu was built in nearby Chiba, to which Noa whines, "It's

fine if we don't have electricity, I just want to eat iganu" (143). Noa's mother responds, "If we don't have electricity, I'll have it rough... There are plenty of other things to eat, so the prohibition on eating iganu can't be helped" (144). This gesture to the divergent desires of Noa and her mother signal the different food cultures that each has come to know.

Moreover, Katō's inclusion of a power plant run on iganu sparks associations with 3.11—iganu as food is perfect, but it also gains a productive non-food potential when used as a source for power generation. If we draw the connection to Japan's decision to build nuclear power plants in a non-central prefecture to provide power to Tokyo³⁴ despite pre-existing knowledge of the potential of nuclear damage due to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the decision to build an iganu power plant *very* close to the political and economic center of the nation, Katō seems to indicate the precarity of Japan's drive for self-sufficient power generation within the context of contemporary technology as well. Due to its proximity to Tokyo, Chiba prefecture is associated with the center, while also maintaining agricultural importance within Japan. And although the safety of this iganu power plant is not discussed, it does not maintain the same immediate sense of traumatic experience and innate danger of nuclear power generation. Perhaps iganu energy is green, clean, and safe, just as iganu are to eat.

Yet these iganu power plants reveal the expectation that the annual iganu rain would

³⁴ Koichi Hasegawa discusses in detail the non-central locations of all nuclear generation plants in Japan, highlighting as an example the geographic categorization of region through postal codes. Tokyo, for example, has postal codes starting with 1, while nearby Chiba (east of Tokyo) and Kanagawa (west of Tokyo) have postal codes starting with 2. The numbers spiral outward: peripheral prefectures such as Fukushima and Aomori have postal codes beginning with 9 or 0. Hasegawa maintains that this postcode system "clearly shows which parts of Japan are more socially and politically valuable—a uniquely Japanese sense of 'town and country,' a superiority complex in towns, especially metropolises, and an inferiority complex in the country, especially peripheral areas" (34). While this postal code sense of "town and country" seems weakened when one considers non-Tokyo economic and cultural city Osaka has a postal code beginning with 5, Hasegawa's point remains pertinent in thinking of the power imbalance inherent in center/periphery-based power generation governance. Hasegawa goes on to explain that these regional disparities of "town and country" have influenced decisions to build nuclear power plants in the "country" rather than in the "town": "...there is a discriminatory structure in which underpopulated areas hosting nuclear power stations suffer most of the negative consequences of such disasters such as radioactive contamination, while metropolitan regions enjoy the benefits of electrical power" (35).

continue year after year, for enough years and with enough iganu to sustain Japan in terms of both diet and electricity into the future. The conversation between Noa and her mother seems to imply that the iganu ban is going into place so that the remaining iganu can continue to be utilized for electricity, meaning that the increasingly scarce resource has had its potential redirected in terms of not individual desire but broader good; the sacrifice of the citizen means the preservation of the nation (or at least, of the center)—just like the logic behind the decision to build nuclear power plants. Yet the source itself has revealed itself to be precarious and unsustainable: the iganu rain does stop. And even if the iganu rain falls again at the end of the story, the people in the streets prioritize their own collection of it over the impending government ban and its potential for electricity generation. After all, what are the immediate needs of the homeless person who tears into the freshly fallen iganu right away?

Nonetheless, the iganu power plant is a minor point in a broader story about yearning and memory. Katō's story recognizes the role of desire in continuing to eat the food (or to keep doing the action) that threatens and alters the food landscape of Japan, all to fulfill one's own desires without considering the consequences beyond themselves. Perhaps Katō's alarm bell is a signal for his readers to carefully consider the origins of the food they eat, and to encourage them to make meaningful choices and support the culinary heritage of Japan, despite the precarious nature of present and future society. It is then up to the readers to make the connection to 3.11, but even without linking iganu and nuclear power generation, it is not a far stretch to make: his idol status, after all, associates him through his agency's senior group TOKIO with their promotional movement to eat vegetables from Fukushima.

For these reasons, "Iganu no ame" is not merely about the extinction of Japanese eels, it is about consumer choice in shaping—and erasing—culture. Read in a post-3.11 context, I argue

that Katō's story manages to present through iganu, a food both simultaneously delicious and terrifying, the heightened anxiety toward the instability of food systems that rely on the land and waters of Japan, leading to inevitable changes in eating patterns. Desire and loss are applied to both food in the process of being lost and those foods already lost, both in terms of supply and in terms of memory. While the story does not directly deal with radiation exposure, farmers' dilemmas, or even the trauma of the natural disaster, eating in "Iganu no ame" occurs after a paradigmatic shift, and brings up constantly unfolding consequences, similar to those that come up in "Kamisama 2011" and *Oishinbo*, regarding food, eating, and the social, cultural, and economic systems in which food exists and amplified by the changing environment of post-3.11 Japan.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the spring of 2018, I quit my Tokyo-based teaching job and before leaving Japan toured a few northern prefectures with a friend. One leg of our trip took us north to Sendai, in Miyagi prefecture. While living in Tokyo as a working adult for two years, I had not thought much about 3.11 and my previous anxiety had more or less been quelled by temporal and geographical distance, as well as the knowledge that if everyone else seemed to be carrying on with their lives, then I could as well. Tired from traveling, I watched the bullet train monitor as it tracked our journey northward: next stop, Ōmiya, in Saitama prefecture north of Tokyo, where another friend lived; next stop, Utsunomiya in Tochigi prefecture, known for its dumplings; next stop, Shin-Shirakawa, marking our entry into Fukushima prefecture. As the bullet train sped on forward into Fukushima prefecture, I felt that familiar queasiness of anxiety at the base of my ribs, and I found myself taking slow, shallow breaths.

As a child, I had the habit of holding my breath while passing graveyards because I was afraid that I'd accidentally swallow a ghost. As an adult, I thought I had outgrown much of my superstitious side, but here I was, afraid of something that my senses could not capture and that I did not know for sure existed here, within the air and land that the train whizzed us through. Schrödinger's radiation—unless I could test for it there and then, I had no way of knowing if I was truly exposing myself to it in any way. Soon after, we made it to Sendai, where we browsed souvenirs in the station while waiting for another friend. Of course, neatly wrapped local specialties abounded, boasting locally grown vegetables and fruit.

I found myself thinking more broadly about food and radiation on that trip, while also for some reason not thinking much about how much radiation I was potentially taking in. For me, radiation was never really a worry, but it had still marked a fundamental shift in the way that I

perceived the effects of consumption on the environment around me and the bodies that exist within it. At times I felt guilty for having such a skewed and negative view of the prefecture. Leaving Sendai to return to Tokyo, we passed once again through Fukushima prefecture and I forced myself to breathe deeply, to take in the same air that the people living there did. Yet in my last weeks in Japan, I still found myself more anxious and jittery, selective of what food I was putting into my body. Eating, for whatever reason, seemed to strike a different chord within me, even knowing that food would probably not be sold if it was not safe.

In this thesis I have examined three texts by authors who, like me, are not geographically located within Tōhoku and thus have different physical and emotional ties to the land than authors such as Fukushima native Furukawa Hideo. However, as I noted in the introduction, DiNitto's reminder that much post-3.11 literature has been produced and consumed by those who were not directly affected by the triple disasters reveals that victimhood is an imperfect category. As it stands, the media landscape is uneven and often drowns out marginalized voices. I recognize that my position as a non-Japanese person also affects my positionality as a consumer of post-3.11 Japanese literature in media, and these selected texts reflect my own experience more than the experiences of those at the epicenter of the disasters.

It is in food that I believe anxiety about post-3.11 safety and stability is most evident, especially to those who do not live in or near the most contaminated or disaster-stricken zones. Modern food production and transport systems means that food grown in different regions comes to us, not necessarily at a price but indeed because those food items are most cheaply or most productively produced there, decentering the onus of sustainability and productivity on urban centers. As discussed above, there is also an aspect of *terroir* that makes its way into the way we think about food and locality, even (perhaps *especially*) food grown in contaminated regions. All

of these things make food produced in Tōhoku, as well as food *in general* after 3.11, both meaningful and at times dangerous to consumers.

In these three texts are the threads of the past, present, and future of eating and reveal changes in the way that food holds meaning to its producers, eaters, and non-eaters. The shift from eating to not eating the fish (yet still taking it into the narrator's home) in "Kamisama 2011" finds that food can take on new meanings when it becomes inedible, rather than losing its meaning altogether. In *Oishinbo*, food as regional heritage and economic livelihood affects local producers viscerally, but also becomes a worthy cause for the non-marginalized central readers and consumers to protect. "Iganu no ame" teases out the anxiety that young Japanese consumers feel about their food systems and the disconnect they feel from the greater institutions and systems that stabilize their connection to the environment and local heritage, coming out of post-bubble burst precarity and further destabilized by the post-3.11 socio-political environment.

Ultimately, my goal was to fill a lacuna in current post-3.11 research by taking a deeper look at the role of food through human desire and interpretation and the ways that food both real and imaginary affect the body and psyche. While much previous scholarship has made it a point to look at the role of food as it appears in trauma literature, the analysis is often less about food as an object so much as it is a supporting literary device in the text. I chose to look at food because the act of eating food is never a singular event; it is connected to past and future experience, and may in fact draw one closer to the food's physical or cultural origins—and eating food that has no clear connection to a place can distance one from locality. Take, for example, the difference between eating in *Oishinbo* and eating in "Iganu no ame." For the *Tōzai Shinbun* staff, going to Tōhoku to see the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami, interviewing local food producers, and eating the food produced creates a sense of "*jikkan*," which is then

vicariously conferred onto the reader. Food is shown to have a visceral effect on the eater even before questions of contamination and damage are at the forefront of everyone's mind. As discussed in Chapter 3, the flashback where Kaibara eats the peach reveals an intense physical and emotional response to eating food tied to place. It is not only the peach on its own, but the confluence of factors—meeting Toshiko, being taught to eat the peach with the skin, the porcelain plate, proximity to the peach grove, and his own existential battle with the meaning of “beauty”—that creates such an explosive “Eureka!” moment. Kaibara's emotional reaction is depicted not internally, but externally, through his exaggerated facial expressions, sound effects, description of the flavor and fragrance of *this* peach, and spoken train of thought. Kaibara's attachment to Fukushima prefecture and his demand that Yamaoka figure out why the prefecture is where Yamaoka's true origins lie reveal a direct link to place. The same experience in Fukushima then informs Kaibara's later art career and gourmand sensibilities. This awareness borne out of experience is certainly one of the reasons why Kaibara, despite all of Yamaoka's best attempts, seems to have all the answers and a keen eye for the “truth” behind the situation in Fukushima over the last two volumes.

In “Iganu no ame,” however, the eating experience of iganu is told in vague, hazy terms and tastes. The taste descriptors applied to iganu are mostly the sweet (甘い *amai*) scent and flavor, with focus placed on the bodily and psychological reactions that eaters experience. Unlike the crunch of the fried mackerel or the fluffy texture of the simmered squash described in the story, iganu has no textural descriptors or clear flavors. The reader cannot eat iganu vicariously—it is too alien a food to be described accurately in language. Eating iganu causes Misuzu and the others to spiral into ecstasy, momentarily distracted from the world around them. Misuzu watches experienced iganu-eaters like Kaito relax and flush at the taste; when Ren opens

his eyes, they are “unfocused,” and he does not respond to her probing smile (134). Its most prominent effect is the ecstasy eaters experience at each bite; their cheeks flush, their faces and bodies relax, and their minds seem momentarily elsewhere. When Misuzu gives in and tastes *iganu* for herself, the experience is a “sensation that transcends flavor,” one that causes her “mind to slacken” and to “sink into ecstasy” (135). Misuzu’s own *iganu* experience is the same; she “yields herself” (身を委ねる *mi wo yudaneru*) to the sensation and “sinks into ecstasy,” only to come back to her senses speechless (135). The experience reads, if anything, more drug-like and pleasure-seeking than an act of eating. The very same pleasure then breaks their emotional associations with food with traceable origins; because *iganu* seems to come from space, it is an unreliable and mysterious food with no clear links to earth. For consumers who have lost stability and certainty, seeking moments of pleasure through food objects even at the expense of future stability becomes perfectly acceptable.

That is, of course, when eating is in question. Read next to these two texts, the new meaning of the fish in “Kamisama 2011” is positive because it can never influence the body physically, as the narrator does not take it into their body. On the other hand, neither the original nor the rewrite has the narrator explain the emotional reaction that they develop through eating the gifted fish; the process of preparation is made more important. At the same time, the shift sparks a new sense of impossibility and uncertainty: real danger is present, yet unlike the food in *Oishinbo*, no one measures the radiation levels in the fish. Ultimately it does not matter within the text because (with blessings from the bear) the narrator does not eat the fish. Though the narrator writes down their daily estimated internal and external exposure to radiation, they have no real way of knowing if these numbers are true or not. For both human and animal bodies, the question of food safety exists not as a hard number or a carefully measured level of acceptable

radiation, but in the connections that food has to the local area—and the severed connections found at the grocery store. The more “cooked” and “processed,” the further from contaminated land or water the food originates, the safer it is deemed. “Safe” food for residents of radiation-soaked landscapes comes from those same precarious food systems Katō critiques in “Iganu no ame,” and overcomes the intimate producer-consumer relationship that texts like *Oishinbo* attempt to build by focusing on the tribulations and effort of real-life producers.

Moreover, the issue of “cooking” as Levi-Strauss constructs it, the process through which the natural becomes cultural, comes through in all three texts. Although I applied this idea in Chapter 2, looking at the way that the bear and human characters in “Kamisama 2011” both eat cooked food rather than raw food, the process of “cooking” can be found in *Oishinbo* and “Iganu no ame” as well. In each of these texts, cooking is not only the application of heat, but the loving labour of the bear’s careful preparation in “Kamisama” and “Kamisama 2011,” the detailed information on harvesting local ingredients and the narratives behind local foodways in *Oishinbo* that allows each pictured dish to be more than just an image, and the construction of memory and meaning around the home meals that Misuzu and the others eat. Even though iganu is never cooked (merely split open between the legs and consumed), it grows to gain new cultural meanings over time—yet it still fails to be meaningful in the same way that simmered *kabocha* or even fried mackerel can be. Food as a cultural object is meaningful because it nourishes, but also because it brings us new meaning through interactions with each other, ourselves, and the environment around us through dealings with even fictional food.

By bringing these three texts in conversation with each other by investigating the role of food, I have managed to explore the new meanings that food can hold in post-3.11 fiction. Because each text is so different in terms of readership, style, publishing timeline, and message,

the interaction between these three texts also proves to be fruitful in exploring the continual unfolding of 3.11 over time for a wide range of readers. While readers may be able to navigate the before and after between “Kamisama” and “Kamisama 2011,” reminisce by returning to *Oishinbo*’s pre-3.11 Tōhoku chapters, or read “Iganu no ame” as completely disconnected from 3.11 or the endangered status of eels, readers’ individual consumption—of literature or of food—inherently takes place in a post-3.11 socio-cultural and environmental world. Narrative temporality is key in understanding each of these texts in relation to each other: perhaps because they are post-3.11 texts, none functions as a snapshot of an unchanging moment. Despite their differences in form, publishing, and readership, each reflects on food of the past, interrogates food of the future, and pursues new meanings of food in the diegetic present. And of course, all three texts allow for new understandings of food and culture to be made simultaneously on the individual, community, national, and global levels for both characters and readers.

However, I have not been able to address many questions that have arisen while writing. Because the goal of this thesis was to look specifically at *food* after 3.11, I have not spent much of this thesis dedicated to comparing and contrasting media form, though formal analysis is integrated within each chapter to an extent. I have also not incorporated as much theory on food and eating or discussed the issue of post-3.11 eating in the context of the history of modern Japanese food culture.

There are various ways in which this thesis is overtly focused on questions of eating and the living body. I have taken a more human-focused approach to imagine the ways that food and environment are connected, and specifically how these things affect *human* bodies and psyches. Koichi Haga points out that the earth, animals, and the environment have agency explorable through literary works, and in the lens of post-humanism, animal studies, and eco-humanities, it

is certainly worthwhile to explore the agency of *food* and the plants, animals, and chemicals that become (irradiated) food in post-3.11 literature. As Hatakeyama the oyster farmer says in *Oishinbo*, “the ocean isn’t broken at all” (*Oishinbo* 108, 160)—yet we do not know of the changes that occur in the bodies of animals in these texts due to radiation contamination, whether bodily or psychological. In Chapter 2, I discussed the new equalization of human and animal bodies; perhaps “Kamisama” suggests that there is a new paradigmatic shift occurring in the way that humans conceptualize not only their own bodies after 3.11, but also animal bodies (and the animal bodies that they eat). The texts do not clue us in well, and although Kawakami’s text gives the bear human-like agency, it is not the animal being eaten. Iganu too are given voice—pitiful cries as they rain down upon the earth, but this does not stop the humans from collecting them, still alive, toward the end of Katō’s story.

I have also not spent much space or time dedicated to the discussion of gender, including characters, readership and authorship for each of the texts; because food itself is so gendered and often viewed as a “feminine” object of focus, I would like to expand on this issue in future research on this topic. Again, though it may seem that the triple disasters cause suffering equally, the effects of these disasters have made themselves known differently in different bodies—some bodies are made to matter more, and some less.

Finally, I have sought to briefly question the issue of authorial voice and center/periphery relationships in each of these texts, though far more so in “Kamisama 2011” and *Oishinbo* than in “Iganu no ame.” Each of these texts frames “victims” in different ways, and by choosing texts written by centrally based authors with powerful voices who have highlighted non-central victims in their texts, I have centered the conversation in ways that inevitably causes marginalized voices to be drowned out. No matter how sympathetic Kariya’s characters are to

the victims they meet, no matter how much Kawakami's narrator accepts the irradiated fish and the Othered bear, and no matter how much Katō urges his readers to consider non-central sources of food *because* they are so precariously positioned in modern food systems, they are not the direct victims of the triple disaster. Should I expand this study, I would seek to more deeply interrogate the differences in food portrayed in post-3.11 texts by Tōhoku natives and other marginalized groups with the work I have already done in this thesis. If the idea of radiation in food affected me, an outsider, how must it have affected and continue to affect the survivors of the triple disaster? I would also like to draw deeper connections to the portrayal of food in post-atomic bomb literature and the victim/survivor narratives to interrogate the ways that food can in fact exacerbate issues of individual and national identity and culture.

In the end, food, often thought of as a healing or comforting object (or merely as a signal of quotidian life) in contemporary Japanese literature, can in fact both heal and harm, especially after traumatic natural and humanmade disasters. New consumer habits, bodily danger and anxiety, local heritage, and questions of authenticity stemming from food are present in each of the texts that I analyzed, discovering that whatever we choose to put into our bodies—or not put into our bodies—has an effect on us, physically, emotionally, culturally, and socially. Food in fiction reflects how consumers and eaters feel about society and themselves. The old adage has a point: we are what we eat, but I posit that we are also what we *want* to eat, what we *choose* to eat, and how we *feel* about eating in our current contexts—and especially after 3.11.

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