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Chapter 10

Virtual Solidarities in the Wake of Catastrophe: A Case Study on the Japanese Net-Poetry by Wagō Ryōichi

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Abstract

The triple catastrophe of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown that devastated Japan on 11th March 2011, encouraged a fervent artistic response from novelists and poets, raising a debate about the incommunicability of collective trauma and the role of literature in representing the disaster. The poetry by Wagō Ryōichi 和合亮一 (born 1968), a poet originally from Fukushima, remains an example of collaborative practice in digital spaces by transforming the online commitment of Twitter users into proactive communities engaged in digital activism. Wagō began sharing his "pebbles of poetry" directly on his Twitter profile on 16. March 2011 and has not stopped since, gaining international acclaim as evidenced by his invitations abroad. Wagō's net-poetry could record in real-time the psychological distress, anxiety, and emotional struggles related to the natural disaster and the risk of radioactive contamination in Fukushima and then transformed into a tool of social denunciation in defence of the rights of the evacuees and the controverse disaster recovery of the Tōhoku region. Moreover, thanks to automatic translation and sharing typical of social media, authorial net-poetry became a global literary means capable of conveying messages of solidarity and social support with psychotherapeutic outcomes. This chapter aims to present Wagō Ryōichi's net-poetry phenomenon through an interdisciplinary approach that combines an interest in the digital humanities with trauma studies and a socio-anthropological perspective on disaster recovery. The final aim is to demonstrate how Wagō's net-poetry became an example of participatory culture in the wake of 3.11 by stressing the crucial role played by social media in dealing with psychological trauma, poetic representations and disaster recovery.

Keywords Digital Humanities · Net-poetry · Trauma Studies · 3.11 Disaster · Fukushima Testimonies

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Introduction: Disaster Recovery and Digital Humanities

The triple catastrophe of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown that devastated Japan on 11th March 2011, encouraged a fervent artistic response from novelists and poets, raising a debate about the incommunicability of collective trauma and the role of literature in representing the disaster (Abe et al., 2012). Studies have shown that social media are sometimes the only functioning communication method in disasters (Peary et al., 2012, 4). They become instrumental in emergencies, especially since mobile phone lines are often congested due to an overload of calls, and individuals with smartphones rely on mobile data to obtain and share information (Peary et al., 2012, 8).

In Japan, during the triple catastrophe of the Tōhoku region, social media proved to be a key resource for mapping the crisis, especially for performing relief functions by sharing up-to-date information on evacuation centres, displaced persons locating, hospitals and shelters, emergency rescue numbers and support for disabled and elderly individuals, damage scale and tsunami warnings, volunteer organization and fund-raising (*Konpyūtā tekunoroji henshūbu*, 2011). Twitter and Facebook were the primary online platforms that encouraged community participation and connectedness among everyday users as well as active rescuers and relief workers. In particular, Twitter had approximately 200 million users in July 2011, and the social media platform was virtually accessible through 115 million mobile phones for a population of 126 million (Peary et al., 2012, 7). On 11th March, 72% of the tweets were quake-related (Slater et al., 2012, 97). This synergy has not only been shared by the Japanese population but has taken on global dimensions. Such an example of this is the hashtag #prayforjapan (*prayforjapan.jp*), which "has become a social media norm internationally as a universal, compassionate response to disaster" (Petrovic, 2019, 86).

As noted by the journalist Inose Naoki (2011, 7), the mass media had a crucial role in the dissemination of information with special issues dedicated to the tsunami and earthquake updates, via radio and television, but social networks (Facebook and X *in primis*) guaranteed a persistent flow of data. According to Joo-Young (2012), X was the principal social network to cope with March 11th. Within an hour after the earthquake, more than 1.200 tweets were shared per minute from Tōkyō area alone, and the number of new accounts created on 12th March marked 572.000, a dramatic increase from 460.000 per day in February (Yoshitsugu, 2011).

The digital humanities study field shares the aim of managing and communicating culture in the digital age, providing a privileged analytic lens to investigate how social media helps develop networked communities in the wake of catastrophe by enhancing collaborative practices in digital spaces. Eventually, these virtual solidarities extend beyond online engagement to become digital activism: Wagō Ryōichi's net-poetry is an example.

As a teacher at Fukushima High School, Wagō Ryōichi 和合亮一 (born in 1968 in Fukushima) and his family were directly affected by the evacuation order in the area following the nuclear fallout at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant. However, the author decided to care for his elderly parents in the city, separating from his wife and son, who were evacuated to disaster shelters. Even though Wagō's literary production began before the 11th March triple disaster, that date became a turning point in his literary career, as his poetry shared on social media transcended national borders to reach a vast global audience in real time.

The 'twitterature' is not a new phenomenon. The term was probably conceived as a portmanteau word of 'Twitter' and 'literature' by web users and became popular thanks to Alexander Aciman and Emmett Rensin's book *Twitterature* (2009). It testifies to the serialized fictional productions shared on social media under the neologisms 'tweet fic' (Twitter fiction) or 'twiller' (Twitter thriller), among others. Similarly, 'net-poetry' addresses social networks as a vehicle for poetic production. Through social

media, Wagō's poetic verses coped with the psychological trauma of the triple disaster, rebuilding a living and supportive online community that shared in both the poetic production and the reconstruction of Tōhoku area.

According to Petrovic, "[t]he concept of affective communities in digital space moves beyond the feelings of the individual to a broader consideration of the emotional flows and bonding between users online which generate digital affect culture" (2019, 84). The emergence of affected communities is thus facilitated by the interactive nature of social media, which crosses spatial boundaries to strengthen cohesion, empathetic understanding, and shared emotions.

This chapter aims to present Wagō Ryōichi's net-poetry phenomenon through an interdisciplinary approach that combines an interest in the digital humanities with trauma studies and a socio-anthropological perspective on disaster recovery. The final aim is to demonstrate how Wagō's net-poetry became an example of participatory culture in the wake of March 11th by stressing the crucial role played by social media in dealing with psychological trauma, poetic representations and disaster recovery.

Wagō's Net-Poetry: One Time, One Space, Multiple Traumas

The net-poetry by Wagō Ryōichi appeared for the first time on his Twitter profile in the wake of 11th March. His wife and son decided to evacuate, even though Fukushima City was not included in the evacuation-designated zones. Their decision was due to the weather conditions, which played a crucial role in dispersing the radioactive fallout, with wind direction and precipitation patterns significantly affecting the spread of contamination.

Notwithstanding, Wagō decided to remain in Fukushima to take care of his elderly parents and this sense of isolation encouraged the poet to find social connections on the Internet (Kobayashi, 2016, 18). The anxiety caused by the emergency, the insecurity, the constant aftershocks, the concern for his loved ones, and the mourning for the many victims of the tsunami constitute the source of his literary production, as well as the central theme of his net-poetry.

More precisely, it was on 16. March 2011, that the author began sharing his thoughts on the ongoing disaster on his X profile, also capturing the attention of users unfamiliar with the poetic genre (Wagō, 2012, 16). Initially, his tweets were daily notes about his everyday life, updates on the crisis, and comments on the TV coverage of the disaster. Then, the tone became more intimate and lyrical, assuming the form of poetic verses, which drew the attention of an increasingly welcoming and engaged audience.

Eventually, although Wagō's poetry was first conceived for and disseminated on social media, his poetry was later published in different poetry collections, starting from *Shi no tsubute*『詩の礫』[Pebbles of Poetry], *Shi no mokurei*『詩ノ黙礼』[Poetry of the Silent Bow], and *Shi no kaikō*『詩の邂逅』[Poetry of the Chance Meeting] (2011), a trend that has continued for over a decade now, fomenting some criticism about still employing 11th March as a source of poetic inspiration after Fukushima recovery.

Wagō's earliest production can be considered part of what Tachibana (1998) called "literature of rubble" (*Trümmerliteratur*; 1998, 32), characterized by immediacy, a lack of accurate stylistic reworking, and a quasi-documentary recording of events and feelings during the ongoing disaster. In particular, the report-style, poetic tweets, sometimes following a stenographic approach, recorded the date and hour of submission to social media. This feature of X is relevant since it attested to the historical value of Wagō's net-poetry, a sort of 'documentary poetry'. Hence, this poetic production had a testimonial nature, considering the authorial efforts in recording the events and sharing his emotional investment, which reflected fear, anxiety and a sense of insecurity concerning the national crisis (Bacon & Hobson,

2016). The experimental component of Wagō's net-poetry, which combines poetic production, social media, and psychological trauma, naturally contributed to the great success of his X profile.

This paragraph examines the quality of Wagō's net-poetry as a testimonial narrative of the psychological trauma caused by the March 11th disaster, while the relationship between this poetic production, social media and online communities will be explored subsequently.

The author's proximity to events – especially the nuclear emergency at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant – played a crucial role in his production, which reflects a visceral memory of the ongoing crisis. Wagō's tweets exhibited a form of poetic hypotyposis, as they provided vivid descriptions of the aftermath in the Fukushima area, emphasizing the author's enduring presence in the March 11th catastrophe.

This is evident in the redundancy of time and space, verbalized and reiterated in the attempt to anchor in the here and now as the author was coping with the overwhelming anxiety over the state of insecurity in which the city of Fukushima was trapped. The repetition of towns and places – Fukushima, *furusato* 故郷 (homeland), *hinanjō* 避難所 (refugee shelter) – remarked, on the one hand, the emotional bond with Wago's hometown, and on the other hand, it let the anxiety of its irreparable corruption due to radioactive contamination shine through (Vyner, 1988).

Moreover, the insistence on turning public concern to Fukushima revealed the author's intuition that the nuclear meltdown is a collective problem that has transcended Japan's national borders, appealing to the world's awareness of the dangers of nuclear energy:

> 福島に泣く
> 福島が泣く
> 福島と泣く
> 福島で泣く
> 福島は私です
> 福島は故郷です
> 福島は人生です
> 福島はあなたです
> *Cry in Fukushima*
> *Fukushima cries*
> *Cry with Fukushima*
> *Cry in Fukushima*
> *Fukushima is me*
> *Fukushima is hometown*
> *Fukushima is life*
> *Fukushima is you*
> (Wagō, 2011c, 7)

For example, the value of the apostrophe 'Fukushima' in this poem worked as a reiterated anaphora: Wagō's hometown is not only a place where to cry but also a city to cry with, eventually a city that cries for its doom. The personification of the hometown is stressed by the verse "me, homeland, life, you" in a chiasmus. As to say that Fukushima is everybody. It sounds like an oxymoron to address Fukushima, a city under radioactivity attack, as 'life'. Notwithstanding, the poet alluded to the recovery process and

the resilient attitude in overcoming the March 11th disaster, and by using the personal pronouns 'me' and 'you', the poet involved his readers, sharing the common responsibility for the catastrophe.

At the same time, *sangatsu jūichinichi* ３月１１日 (March 11th), *ano hi* あの日 (that day), and 11.3. became a timeframe from which the author is unable to deviate; a time of crisis, both individual and collective, that marked his personal history and that of the country. Moreover, any recording served as a testimonial account that justified Wagō's stance as a spokesperson for Tōhoku victims.

The Daishinsai (the great disaster) is the main protagonist in Wagō's net-poetry: *shinsai(go)* 震災（後) (post-disaster), *yoshin* 余震 (aftershocks), *shindo* 震度 (seismic scale of the JMA), *hōshanō* 放射能 (radioactivity) were some of the most frequent keywords implemented by the author, especially in the first two, three years of poetic production after 11th March 2011. These poetic topoi sometimes became slogans that the author repeated loudly during his poetic performances, such as "*Akenai yoru wa nai*"「明けない夜はない」 ("Every night comes to an end") or "*Fukushima ni ikiru Fukushima wo ikiru*"「福島に生きる フクシマを生きる」("Living in Fukushima Living Fukushima", which implies living with radioactivity). In describing the catastrophe, the author also verbalized his fears, underscoring human frailty and helplessness in the face of such a disaster.

This may equally be the reason why the author's entire production has revolved around the theme of March 11th in the past ten years: as an overwhelming traumatic experience, memory of time and space of the Tōhoku triple catastrophe became fixed points in his autobiography and consequently, in his poetic production.

In Wagō Ryōichi's net-poetry, reiterations are expressed not only thematically but also stylistically. For example:

the double anadiplosis between the tweets (Wagō, 2011a, 112):

> 詩よ。お前をつむごうとすると余震の気配がする。お前は地を揺すぶる悪魔と、もしかすると約束を交わしているのか。激しく憤り、口から涎を垂れ流し、すこぶる恐ろしい形相で睨んでいるのだな、原稿用紙の上に首を出し、舌なめずる悪魔め。
>
> 2011 年 3 月 23 日、23:41
>
> *Poetry! When I try to speak out, there is an aftershock sign. Perhaps you [the aftershock] made a promise with the demon who shakes the earth? Violent indignation, foaming at the mouth, with a terrifying look it is watching, putting out its neck on the Japanese writing papers, licking its lips, you, evil demon* (March 23, 2011).
>
> 詩よ。筆で書き殴る度に余震の気配が濃くなる。決着をつけなくてはなるまい。これから先、俺の筆を少しでも邪魔しないようにな。いくら地を動かそうとも、俺の握力は詩を掴んで離さぬぞ。少し顔を出したら、のど元をかみ切ってやるぞ、悪魔め。
>
> 2011 年 3 月 23 日、23:44
>
> *Poetry! Every time I hit you with my writing brush, the aftershock' sign becomes deep. Must find a conclusion. No. From now on, do not interfere with my brush even a bit. No matter how much you try to move the earth, my grip strength grasps poetry and does not let it go. If you look out a bit, I will bite off your throat, you, evil demon* (March 23, 2011).
>
> 詩よ。お前を支配しようとすると、恐ろしい大魚となって俺の鼻先を、鮮やかに荘厳に、ひるがえっていくのだな。暗闇から、せせら笑う声がする。そうやって覗いているがいい。いつかお前をひざまづかせてやろうぞ、悪魔め。
>
> 2011 年 3 月 23 日、5:46

Poetry! When I try to control you, I become a frightening big fish; my nose's tip skillfully, ceremoniously, suddenly changes. From the darkness, a sardonic laugh. It is fine to sneak a look at me. I will bring you to your knees one day, you, evil demon (March 23, 2011).

- epanadiplosis (opening and closure with the same verse) which contributes to the circularity of the poem. The verse becomes a breath of stillness amidst the storm of the aftershocks (Wagō, 2011a, 112):

しーっ。余震だ。

2011 年 3 月 27 日、22:44

Shh. It is the aftershock (March 27, 2011).

- the repetition of a single term; it mimics the repetition compulsion (*Wiederholungszwang*, according to Freudian perspective; Freud, 1914) suffered by the author and at the same time it contributes to the incisiveness of the poem; Wagō, 2011b, 13):

放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能降り続く放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能降り続く降り続く放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能降り続く放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能放射能

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Eventually, this persistent repetition echoes a tongue twister, driving the poet to the edge of insanity, like in the following case (March 16, 2011) (Wagō, 2011a, 15):

行方不明者は「行方不明者届け」が届けられて行方不明者になる。届けられず、行方不明者になれない行方不明者は行方不明者ではないのか。

2011 年 3 月 16 日、23:18

A missing person becomes a missing person when receives the "missing person notification". If they cannot receive it, the missing person who cannot become a missing person can be considered as a missing person?

This approach can also be achieved by implying asyndeton, as to say by omitting any logical conjunction between the verses or polyptoton, for which words from the same roots are restated, thus resulting in a prank of alliterations and (quasi-)homophones (like in the previous case).

Reiterations in Wagō's net-poetry constitute a trademark which underlines the scope of the traumatic experience of being in Fukushima during March 2011. The author embraced the witness' moral commitment and welcomed the exhortation to set in motion his net-poetry, aiming at the catharsis of the Daishinsai through the power of poetry. Thus, his poetic process is a gradual transition from what, in psychological terms, is defined as "abreactive catharsis" to the "catharsis of integration" (Dayton, 2000, 296). The first defines a state of desperation and self-blame accompanied by episodes of angry outbursts; the latter corresponds to a release of pain against the emotional numbness (and eventually alexithymia), which constitutes one of the most widespread traumatic symptoms after a great catastrophe.

Wagō Ryōichi's net-poetry is thus equally transformed into a scriptotherapeutic exercise in which the author reworks his traumatic memories with a resilient attitude. This is an adaptive coping mode through which the potential damage of acute stress trauma is limited, opening the way for the individual's posttraumatic growth (Tedeschi at al., 2008; Berger, 2015).

The stylistic choices are not only a manifestation of the psychological trauma Wagō suffered, but also testify to his interest in literary classics. The homages Wagō paid to Japanese authors (especially those from Hiroshima; De Pieri, 2016) likewise served as a legitimation of publishing poetry via social media, an unconventional tool for approaching poetic lyricism.

All these examples constitute a puzzle whose pieces reveal the multiple traumas of surviving the March 11th catastrophe: earthquakes, tsunamis, and radioactivity contamination are crystallized in places and times described by Wagō's net-poetry, contributing to the portrait of a witness in the heart of the events.

Net-Poetry as an Emotional Bond for Online Community Formation

Wagō's poetry was conceived as form of *gendaishi* 現代詩 (free verse), but had to comply with certain restrictions imposed by social media, such as the 140 characters available for each tweet. According to Hashimoto and Ohama (2014, 110), feelings of surprise and sorrow were honestly expressed precisely because of the limited character count on X. This required the author to make a meticulous choice of words (fonts or kanji) and a shrewd study of the graphic layout of the poem on different devices before publication. For example, in the following poem:

。

2011 年 3 月 20 日、23:43

Wagō's decision to make a point reveals Wagō's need to state that he, as a witness and as a spokesperson of the Fukushima nuclear catastrophe, had the last word on the disaster. He owed the ultimate truth epitomized by only one full stop, followed by the date (March 20, 2011).

In this other case (May 23 2011) (Wagō, 2011a, 107),

余震。原稿用紙に文字を埋める
。また余震。埋め尽くすしか
ないのだ、震える
現在を。

> 2011 年 5 月 23 日、22:25
>
> *Aftershock. Fill up the Japanese writing sheets with characters. Aftershock again. There is nothing else to do but fill up the quavering present time.*

the epanalepsis served as a strategic tool to achieve a particular visual impact in poetry (graphical poetry). The verse's breakdown by spatial interruptions mirrored a similar breakup of ordinary life due to security failures and the disruption of community life, both of which were put to the test and corrupted by the radioactive fallout, much like the poetic verses. Wagō's calligrammatic style represented the author's attempt to domesticate catastrophe and its related trauma through various linguistic and graphical experiments.

Moreover, Wagō's decision to incorporate photos into his poems remind of the *shashin haiku* 写真俳句 (photo *haiku*), a poetic phenomenon spread on the web that involves combining poetic verses in the traditional *haiku* style with evocative images that represent the poem's theme. In the last few years, this literary works have gained significant appreciation in Japan and abroad, to the extent that international competitions like *Matsuyama.jp* have become renowned among the users worldwide.

Social media allowed Wagō's followers some artistic freedom in interpreting the verses, as the reader could change the verse order or even ignore some verses (tweets). Social media also hindered a clear understanding of the beginning and end of poems: sometimes it was necessary to catch a common thread among the verses – a keyword, a theme, or a reiterated feeling, as in the above-mentioned examples. In a private interview released to me in 2013, the author stated: "social networks offer us what would be a revolutionary way of communication. Poetry should be sensitive to the demands of that communication, above all. So, poetical means should change. I think every day about the meeting point between social networks and poetry" (De Pieri, 2014).

The success of Wagō's net poetry in Japan and worldwide was achieved through the formation of a web community, made up not only by Tōhoku survivors and evacuees but also by people all around the globe who shared supportive messages, mutual understanding, and an empathetic attitude towards the Japan March 11th catastrophe. According to Petrovic (2019, 77),

> social media can serve as a space for emotional and therapeutic support, as it allows users to discuss and share their emotions online with other individuals [and it] facilitates a process of cathartic sharing, which allows individuals to work through the experience of trauma or crisis and opens up new opportunities for community-building.

Machine translation on the X platform enables multiple and simultaneous translations that reach a global audience in both synchronous and asynchronous modes, encouraging users' responses regardless of their language or location. This feature of the social media empowered the dissemination of Wagō Ryōichi's net-poetry, and massive user participation online. Petrovic (2019, 76) confirmed that, especially sharing posts in real time "invites individuals to engage with and experience events as they unfold, thus enabling users to imagine a sense of place and communal belonging".

These interactions are familiar to X and other social media but cannot be acknowledged as poetic productions. Notwithstanding, they had often been published in print editions of Wagō's collections. This choice questions the boundaries between poetic lyricism and the testimonial nature of net-poetry, strengthened by the collective effort in supporting Tōhoku's region.

Moreover, as Wagō's popularity increased, the number of his followers proportionally increased too, and the author seemed to have modified his literary intent accordingly. He established a daily routine with the audience in what can be defined as a 'public relation tweets' pattern: greetings, sharing the title of the poem of the day, posting the poem, and appointing an authorial signature attesting to the

creative authorship of the verses. This formula, released on social media before being reproduced in the printed collection (see *Pebbles of Poetry*), suggests the author's awareness of the success of his ongoing literary production. There was no shortage of comments by the author, responses to followers, and promotions for future publications or events (talks, shows, performances).

These hybrid characteristics also constituted the most successful elements of Wagō's net-poetry. They contributed to a sense of cohesion between the author and his audience, an aspect emphasized by the common ongoing crisis that was not limited to Japan but involved the entire world due to the air and sea dispersion of radioactive material. In some cases, the net-poetry transformed into 'shared poetry' to the extent that the author and the readers cooperated in its production. Indeed, social media allowed for direct, daily interactions, and it was impossible for the followers' comments not to have influenced the author's themes, styles, and responses. Wagō himself encouraged audience co-participation, as seen in the final verse (tweet) of this poem:

あなたにとって

詩を書くために必要なことは何ですか
どうか
続きをお願いします おやすみなさい...
2013 年 3 月 23 日、23:50
In your opinion
What is fundamental to write poetry?
Please,
I beg you to continue [the poetry] goodnight. March 23 2013

The author encouraged readers to contribute to poetic production: Wagō's followers were no longer passive subjects but active agents inspired to take action in the recovery plan for the Tōhoku region, starting with net-poetry and its messages of hope (*maemuki* 前向き). This is particularly evident when the author addressed his interlocutor (*anata* あなた (you), *watashitachi* 私たち (we), *wareware* 我々 (we)), encouraging *ganbarism* (Japanese attitude of enduring hardship; Gebhardt & Masami, 2014, 13).[1] The scope of March 11th catastrophe "triggered new interactions among individuals, reconfiguring their sense of social connection and communal belonging" (Petrovic, 2019, 75).

Social networking, ongoing emergencies, psychological trauma, and poetry were the ingredients of Wagō Ryōichi's net-poetry, strengthening the online social bonds and users' recognition in a common social identity supporting Tōhoku's recovery: "according to Social Identity Theory, such identities are dynamic [...] and have the potential to influence thinking and emotional behavior, both online and offline" (Pacilli et al., 2021, 59). Tamaki (2015) defined the term *kizuna* 絆 (emotional ties) as the peculiar connection that Wagō's poetry entertained with his community: the quest for human relationships in coping with disaster was - at list in part - accomplished by his net-poetry. According to Pacelli and colleagues (2021, 190), emotional contagion online is possible through both direct interaction and passive exposure to others' posts; text alone can transfer emotional contents and their contagion. Odagiri commented: "despite its apparent straightforwardness, Wagō's work is neither a simple representation, nor message, nor even a call for action [...] nor simply an inert report of post-earthquake experiences. [...] Wagō's tweets accidentally become acts generated by historical circumstances" (Odagiri, 2014, 368).

[1]The neologism, whose roots are the verb *ganbaru* 頑張る meaning 'to persevere', 'to persist', goes beyond enduring hardship. It is a proactive mental attitude which finds philosophical background in Buddhism (e.a, the *mūjo* 無常 perspective, on the impermanence of life). It also provides beneficial and therapeutic outcomes while facing hardships, enhancing resilient skills (De Pieri, 2023).

Wagō Ryōichi's net-poetry thus contributed to the construction of a collective memory of 11th March 2011, on the one hand, by consecrating poetry on social media as a testimony to the triple catastrophe, and on the other hand, by revealing the importance of digital space in the formation of virtual solidarities.

Conclusion

Hashimoto and Ohama (2014, 100) emphasized the importance of considering how social media can become the sole information source available in disrupted information situations, such as the Tōhoku triple catastrophe, thereby questioning its reliability. However, the communicative immediacy of social media still prevailed in the wake of the Tōhoku triple disaster to the point of encouraging a form of media activism (Pacilli et al., 2021, 358).

As straightened by Petrovic (2019, 78), "Online expression can be therapeutically beneficial as it facilitates the process of coping with trauma or crisis, thereby opening up opportunities for community building". Although feelings of community and solidarity are ephemeral on social media, Wagō Ryōichi's net-poetry not only served as an anxiety relief immediately after the disaster but also became a powerful persuading tool to encourage Tōhoku's recovery and reconfiguring disrupted local communities.

Sometimes, virtual solidarities (or "virtual voluntarism"; Pacilli et al., 2021, 160) took on a form of digital activism when net-poetry provocatively suggested a revival of the Japanese national spirit (*Ganbare Nippon! Ganbare Fukushima!*「頑張れ日本！頑張れ福島！」((Go for it Japan! Go for it Fukushima!)). During his poetic performances, Wagō sometimes emphasised particular verses. Physical gestures, facial expressions, and unconventional tones of voice were often accompanied by background music to fascinate the public under the keyword "Fukushima" (フクシマ in katakana, to strengthen its radioactive experience).

Moreover, among others, Wagō's participation in local activism such as Project FUKUSHIMA (プロジェクト福島) is worth mentioning for raising awareness about the devastation of the Tōhoku area and the need for recovery (Iwata-Weickgennant, 2015). Peary and colleagues (2012, 16) suggested that organizations and government bodies should implement social media for disaster preparedness, relief and recovery, considering how social media is an effective tool of disaster backchannel communication, contributing to disseminate information and mobilitate resources, thus encouraging the wide community to actively participate in disaster relief.

Wagō's net-poetry was an example of collective activism in the digital space, able to create cohesion among users worldwide, regardless of physical location or defined time intervals. In his *via crucis* around the stricken areas, Wagō's poetical verses testified to the psychological trauma of March 11th, emphasizing the active role of his readers. Social media crosses the nationality, age, and gender borders; so did Wagō's net-poetry. The poet-Wagō, as a modern Caronte, handed over the reins to his readers; from a metonymic perspective, the one in charge now is the rest of the world.

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