

Excerpt from my chapter on Japanese literature after Fukushima.

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## **"Post-3/11 Literature: The Localisation of Pain – Internal Negotiations and Global Consciousness"**

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The threefold catastrophe of 3.11.2011 has changed the global image of Japan as well as the country's image of itself. Doubts have arisen concerning Japan's status as an advanced technological nation. 'Fukushima' has come to signify, therefore, not only the human disaster but also the damage to Japan's international reputation. Inside Japan politicians were accused of a lack of professionalism and integrity; they were also accused of lying to the public. (...).

In this essay I intend to present a number of writers who can be considered as representatives of a post-3/11 or 'post-Fukushima literature'. They all address themselves to the 'task', whether it was assigned to them or whether they chose it themselves, of finding a language to speak about Fukushima – possibly a language which runs counter to the official choice of words and the linguistic cold shutdown. Some have tried to come to terms with the triple catastrophe in brief comments, in essays and in fictional representations. Others, however, have preferred to remain silent, while the reaction of some, like Nishimura Kenta (b. 1967), author of first-person novels and a protagonist of 'precarity literature', react with obstinacy: they flatly refuse to write about Fukushima. (...).

Tsushima Yûko also looks beyond national boundaries when she declares in her brief comment *Bungaku no teikôryoku* that she uses foreign internet sources for information about the situation in Japan. She is aware, she says, that the 'country' (*kuni*) tends to cover things up when it finds itself in a perilous situation. Therefore she visited a German forum to obtain data about the spread of radioactivity (Tsushima 2012: 215). In another article she mentions how she thought of leaving Japan after the catastrophe and thus becoming a refugee. She was variously contacted, she says, by people, for instance in Beijing and Ottawa,

who advised her to leave the country and who even offered her accommodation. She prefers, however, to remain at the scene of events so as to be able to form an opinion of her own. She uses a wide historical and geographical frame of reference which reaches from the significance of the modern national state (*kindai kokka*) and Japanese democracy (*Nihon no minshushugi*) to the case of the journalist Anna Politkovskaya (1958-2006) and her analysis of the Russian problem with Chechnya and a possible ‘Chechenisation’ (*chechen-ka*) of Fukushima (Tsushima 2012a: 178-180). (...).

Some representatives of the cultural scene, most of them belonging to the older generation, in this way invoke an idealized past and the unity of the people, while others are involved in a debate about the dichotomy of nation and region. Some consider as the most important voices of a post-Fukushima literature those who are personally connected to Tōhoku. Kimoto Takeshi (University of Oklahoma) therefore rates Wagō Ryōichi and Fukukawa Hideo as the outstanding post-Fukushima writers. The authors from the North, he says, stand for the rural Japan which ‘often had to sacrifice itself for the industrial development of the nation (...)’ (Kimoto 2012: 14). (...).

Another important aspect would be representations of a Japan of tomorrow which does not simply adapt to the ‘new normality’ created by mass media, PR agencies and lobby agents. Perhaps the most interesting voices are those which have not yet spoken out. (...)