

Living with the Living: Discourse on the Dead in Post-Fukushima Japan

Hideto Tsuboi

In this paper, I will critique the discourse on the dead that has been prevalent after the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011 (hereafter 3.11), by examining the representations of the “3.11 Literature.” In 2015, numerous Japanese citizens and student activist organizations such as the Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy (SEALDs) surrounded the National Diet Building in Tokyo and protested against the military legislation of the Third Abe Cabinet. In my opinion, the most impressive aspect of SEALDs was the verbal eloquence displayed by its student-leaders; there was earnestness in the leaders’ voices, which was built on the understanding that their voices were of those alive who must continue living. Significantly, following 3.11, the voices of the living were wholly suppressed by a dominant discourse of the dead that focused on listening to the voices of the dead and living their memory. Considering the social conditions in Japan after 3.11, I consider as to how we might overcome the discourse of *living the dead* as advocated by critic Wakamatsu Eisuke and others.