

### **3/11 and the crisis of representation**

#### **– reflections on the potential and limits of writing about a nuclear catastrophe –**

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The catastrophe of 3/11 marks a turning point in Japan's nuclear age. Until 2011, a-bomb (*genbaku*) and nuclear plant (*genpatsu*) have constituted the discursive field of the "atom" in post-war Japan, the former considered part of an overcome past, the latter regarded as a promise for a bright future. But, after 3/11, things have radically changed as the alluring bright future of Japan's clean energy has revealed the dark side of the almighty nuclear myth.

After 3/11, the catastrophe and the aftermath of Fukushima have become a central theme in a large number of quite different kind of works (literature, poetry, essays etc.) expressing, more or less, critique and discontent with Japan's nuclear dream. New literary labels such as "genpatsu bungaku" or "shinsai bungaku", introduced in several academic studies on that very topic, give rise to the impression that 3/11 has paved the way for new forms of representation and literary protest nowadays widely and well received by society. But has 3/11 really brought about a fundamental change in terms of *dialogicity* as R. Weimann characterised the essential bond between writer and reader?

The paper presented will focus on *genbaku bungaku* (a-bomb literature), a highly controversial literary genre that has sparked long ago a debate on some very crucial questions such as the legitimacy of authorship, the authenticity of depiction and the adequate mode of representation. Authors of a-bomb literature were confronted with a highly difficult and controversial task. On the one hand, they felt personally obliged to give an authentic and accurate account of the events of August 1945. On the other hand, they needed to find ways of representation for the unrepresentable experience, so the addressed reader would be able to connect this experience with his own world of experience – problems many writers on 3/11 had to struggle with, too. In this sense, a-bomb literature shall serve in my paper as a kind of blueprint for what might be the potentials and limits of the new literary genres of "genpatsu bungaku" or "shinsai bungaku" that seem to have strikingly much in common with it – as being a crucial element of Japan's discursive field of the "atom".