

BELLINI COLLOQUIUM

“Bodies in the Zone:

Literature from Japan’s Fukushima Disaster”

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Tuesday, September 23, 3:30 Washington Hall 315



A mutated adult butterfly from after the nuclear accident in Fukushima prefecture, Japan

On March 11, 2011, Japan’s Northeast coast was struck by a massive 9.0 earthquake which triggered tsunami waves of up to 40 meters, decimating the coastline. Within days, three of the reactor units at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant experienced a level 7 meltdown, making it the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.

This talk looks at the relative lack of human bodies in the literature written after the 3.11 disaster, which is striking given the fact that graphic images of bodies have been a mainstay in literary representations of previous disasters. Yet 3.11 literature is not completely devoid of bodies, they are just not the bodies of the human victims of the disaster. In their place are images of debris, animal carcasses and live animals, and the sexualized bodies that feature in Takahashi Genichirō’s novel *The Nuclear Reactor in Love* (Koisuru genpatsu, 2011), a story about a charity project that uses adult videos to raise money for the 3.11 victims. I explore the role these other bodies play in negotiating mourning and difference in the disaster zone, and in confronting the restrictions placed on the discourse of 3.11.