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Among the most enduring effects of the Great East Japan Earthquake (Higashi nihon daishinsai) that struck Japan on March 11, 2011 is the total disruption of spatial order it produced. The earthquake struck the Tohoku region of Japan; the tsunami wiped away numerous coastal cities and their inhabitants, while the subsequent nuclear crisis released invisible radiation into the air and sea, and into the soil, creating “hot spots,” or discrete areas of high radiation throughout an even wider area. Residents in the immediate vicinity of the Fukushima nuclear reactor were forcibly evacuated while others fled eastern Japan (Kanto) entirely, dividing the country into largely imaginary safe and unsafe zones. Much of Japan watched the unfolding nuclear catastrophe at Fukushima as if from another country, diminishing the sense of national participation in an event that seemed at once national and radically denational. Fukushima might be said to have deterritorialized Japan, dismantling the state of Japan in the unthinkable return of radiation.

This paper looks at the ways in which films made after 2011 have sought to address the peculiar effect of disaster on geology, geography, and geopolitics. It seeks to understand the relation between the way that natural and unnatural disasters permeate the experience of space and the specific quality of this disaster, singular in its absolute heterogeneity. The paper looks at films after “3.11” that appear to question Fukushima’s finitude: not its singularity as an event, but rather the possibility of its containment as an apocalyptic event that exposes its spectator to a metaphysical radioactivity, to disaster without end.



**Akira Mizuta Lippit** is Professor and Chair of Critical Studies in the School of Cinematic Arts, and Professor in the Departments of Comparative Literature and East Asian Languages and Cultures in the USC Dornsife College. His interests are in world cinemas, critical theory, Japanese film and culture, experimental film and video, and visual studies. Lippit’s published work reflects these areas and includes three books, *Atomic Light* (Shadow Optics) (2005) and *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (2000), and his most recent book, *Ex-Cinema: From a Theory of Experimental Film and Video* (2012). At present, Lippit is completing a book on contemporary Japanese cinema, which looks at the relationship of late-twentieth and early twenty-first century Japanese culture to the concept of the world, and another on David Lynch’s baroque alphabets.

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