The end of modern Japanese literature has been prophesied since its start a century and a half ago, but today the critique is especially panicked as literacy itself looks under attack. This talk surveys the current state of writing in Japan and links it with larger changes in a geopolitical world facing not just technological innovation, but unprecedented challenges to the modern nation-state as the consequences of both globalization and the Anthropocene become clearer. Writers discussed include Ōe Kenzaburō, Takahashi Gen’ichirō, and Tawada Yōko.

John Whittier Treat is Emeritus Professor at Yale University. He is the author of Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb, winner of the John Whitney Hall Prize; Great Mirrors Shattered: Homosexuality, Orientalism and Japan; and a novel, The Rise and Fall of the Yellow House, a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award for Best Gay Fiction in 2016. An essay on Hannah Arendt and the Second World War is forthcoming in the Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, and his The Rise and Fall of Modern Japanese Literature will be published by the University of Chicago Press in 2018. He is currently researching pro-Japanese intellectuals in colonial Korea and writing a novel about a stutterer who saves the world.

All are welcome // Monday 30 October 2017 // 5-7pm

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