

# Performance, Mourning and the Long View of Nuclear Space

## パフォーマンスと喪 核の空間、長期の視線

Peter Eckersall

### Abstract

In their responses to the Fukushima disaster, artists may struggle with the problem of representing these calamitous events in ways that connect meaningfully with audiences. Related to this is the durational experience of nuclear catastrophe; how can theatre deal with the long term effects of radiation? Some plays have tackled these issues realistically, whereas others explore the disaster in more existential ways. In this essay I discuss two such works, Hirata Oriza's *Sayonara* (2011 version) and Okada Toshiki's *Jimen to Yuka* (Ground and Floor, 2013) to show how these plays depict the "swarm of ghosts" in the irradiated landscape around Fukushima. Peggy Phelan's notion of mourning is used to reflect on theatre's capacity to embody the wider dimensions of human suffering after Fukushima.

### Keywords

Japan, Theatre, Fukushima, Hirata Oriza, Okada Toshiki, mourning.

Thousands of spirits had passed from life to death; countless others were cut loose from their moorings in the afterlife. How could they all be cared for? Who was to honour the compact between the living and the dead? In such circumstances, how could there fail to be a swarm of ghosts?<sup>1</sup>

### Mourning Fukushima

Faced with the magnitude of disaster in the aftermath of the Fukushima earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident in March 2011, many people have sought to respond through the arts. As time passes and the immediate memory of these events gradually fades we are faced with the longer temporality of the disaster – not so much an immediate sense of loss, but an expression of grief and mourning that gradually unfolds over time. How might these experiences be expressed, especially given the calls to recover from the earthquake and move on?<sup>2</sup> These calls are likely both necessary for the future health of the community but also cynically political. Such an instruction might presage an ideological message to get over this and stop asking difficult questions. Moreover, the longer temporality of the disaster is self-evident in the toxic long-term effects of nuclear contamination. Such contamination will continue for generations and require containment and vigilance, suggesting the need for an extended and durational mourning practice.

In this essay I consider how theatre can imagine the extended time of radioactive fallout. With its connections to community and ritual practices, theatre is particularly interesting to consider in this regard. It is formed from the elements of time, space, story and embodied performance and is often considered as a "window to the world". Theatre is also ephemeral and enacted with an audience in a single encounter. The double sense of immediacy and extension into the world that this implies means that theatre combines the enactment of singular human

experiences with the awareness of duration.

I focus on two plays which treat loss and mourning as durational emotional states in the aftermath of Fukushima. Hirata Oriza's *Sayonara*, with its coda written in late 2011, includes a sequence where a malfunctioning android is tasked to read prayers to the dead souls inside the radioactive containment zone at Fukushima. By contrast, Okada Toshiki's *Jimen to Yuka* (Ground and Floor, 2013) does not directly reference Fukushima. Instead it uses influences from Nō theatre to include the figure of a ghost in the story of a family struggling to exist in the malaise of a dystopian future in Japan. Both plays defer the question of directly representing Fukushima and speaking for its communities. Rather, they adopt the idea of haunting as a spectre of loss and mourning. By reading these plays with reference to performance theorist Peggy Phelan's work on mourning, I explore how the depiction of haunting enables new understandings of the experience of Fukushima and a sensitivity to the long view of nuclear space.

Phelan's work makes a plea for a new poetic awareness of loss expressed as the urgent need for "a writing towards and against bodies who die".<sup>3</sup> She notes how this loss is often intensified in the history of theatrical performances and she subsequently theorised performance as a critical act of mourning. Her book, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*, addresses questions of mourning by challenging contemporary western approaches to death. In her focus on sexuality and death she seeks to expand on the limited scope for acts of mourning in western culture. She argues that these are currently regulated by Judeo-Christian precedents and detachment from expressive acts of mourning.

The question I ask here is, what would Phelan's intensely personal and performative writing look like in post-Fukushima Japan? Phelan's

understanding of mourning as an embodied, poetic and liminal practice is highly suggestive. For Phelan this is not centrally the province of religion but an idea of mourning that invokes the need for new social performances that are not bound by national history or religious practices. Her idea of mourning is simultaneously able to foster differing ideas of existential awareness – as evident in the interplay and reversal of the phrase *towards and against bodies who die*. I find this helpful in gaining insights into how the expression of mourning in new Japanese plays has been revived after Fukushima. Following from this, I consider how such an idea of mourning is expressed through ghostly images and representations of entities that move between worlds and seem to be able to negotiate the claims on Fukushima that are made by the presence of both the living and of the dead.

### The space of theatre and nuclear space

Before considering the detail of these plays, it is appropriate to make a few comments about theatrical space and how it is expressive of and able to represent human experiences. How does the representation of space in the theatre equate with a spatialisation of nuclear fall-out? While it can be said that all theatre has a spatial dimension, not all theatre is spatially aware, nor does it necessarily draw attention to space as an aesthetic and social encounter. This, I argue, is what these plays do.

A "spatial turn" in theatre dates from the 1960s when artists consciously adopted dramaturgical strategies to lead their work into an awareness of the social construction of space. At the same time, performers adopted tactics to reconfigure community expectations about theatrical ownership and permitted uses of space. They made site-specific performances, for example, and turned political protest into carnivalesque parades. One early example of this in Japan is the unruly city incursions by performance group Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension). Kara Jūrō's

tent theatre provoked censure by pitching in a Shinjuku park without authorisation in 1969. Slightly later, Terayama Shūji (1935–1983) directed *Nokku* (Knock, 1975), a site-specific play which transformed Tokyo into a *theatrum mundi*, or theatricalisation of the everyday world.<sup>4</sup> More recently, scholars have developed new theories of art and space, responding to such notions as claims on space made by economic interests, communities and indigenous groups, and by theorising spaces of difference. Michel Foucault's theory of heterotopia (1984),<sup>5</sup> or the artistic possibilities of regenerating urban space through art are both instances of this trend.

The enduring characteristic of space in theatre is its liminality; it is real and symbolic, fixed and transforming. The mobility of bodies and how they inhabit and interact with space is also a key aspect of theatrical communication. Audiences also occupy the space of theatre, be it inside a theatre building or at site-specific locations. As the theatre scholar Benjamin Wihstutz notes, this affords the consideration of political distinctions in the utilisation of spaces in theatre.

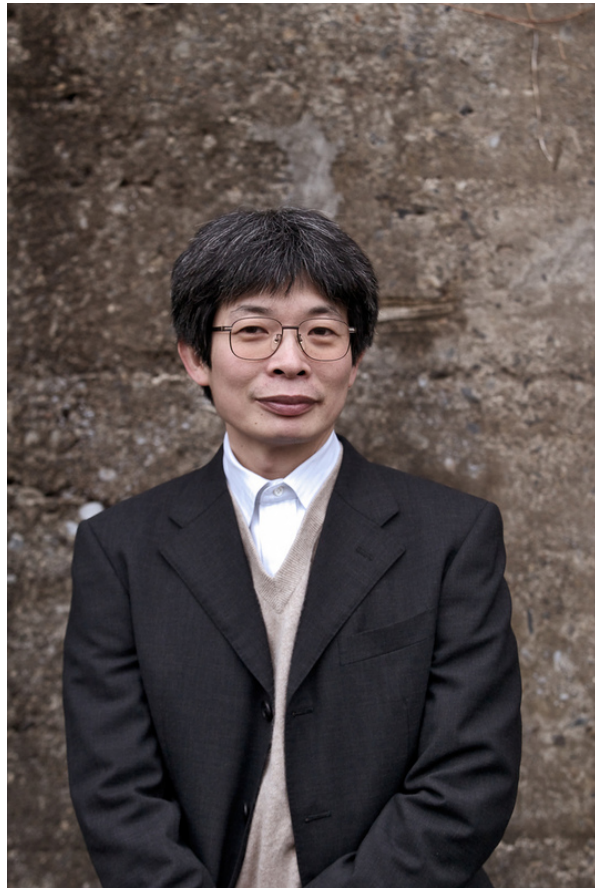
The history of theatre clearly speaks to the ambivalent potential inherent in the social space of performance to either transform it into a space of dispute, scandal and rebellion or to serve the interests of (state) power.<sup>6</sup>

Figuratively, then, images of other worlds and those of liminal spaces which blur the borders of life and art – and life and death, as in the case of the plays discussed here – create new understandings of theatre space which have real world impact. This impact might not, however, be as visible now as it was in the 1960s when theatre was overtly confrontational in its activation of space. Instead of literal space, we need to think about the sensibilities

of atmosphere and environment, or what the philosopher Jacques Rancière calls, in respect to theatre's encounter with an audience, "the distribution of the sensible". This is an expression of what is felt by the spectator in the experience of art, something that might be uncanny and beyond the means of conventional explanation.<sup>7</sup> In such an encounter people can be moved by something indescribable and have their awareness shifted by an atmosphere or an environment. In other words, audiences are affected by the depiction of space and in this case by the presentation of its shifting boundaries, its liminal qualities and extended sense of emptiness and desolation: they are moved by a sense of the space being present but empty, a space that is potentially haunted.

These comments illustrate ways for thinking about urgent aesthetic responses to spaces related to the Fukushima disaster. The region itself was subjected to the most disruptive forces. A consequence of the nuclear meltdown is an extensive and ongoing leakage of radioactive material. What Foucault might call a "crisis heterotopia" of magnified dystopian forces is an exclusion zone of some twenty kilometres around the power station.<sup>8</sup> Theatre faces the challenge of depicting human suffering and death in this context of a massive geological and cultural upheaval that has literally moved the earth, left thousands of people displaced, and polluted the environment to an extraordinary degree. As already mentioned, my first example of a play responding to Fukushima is directly concerned with this space of the exclusion zone. It addresses the question of how we might be able to give comfort to the souls of those who died there. In this way, the play shows how the exclusion zone is temporally as well as spatially liminal.

### Hirata Oriza's *Sayonara*



Hirata Oriza. Credit: Tsukasa Aoki.

Hirata Oriza's *Sayonara* depicts a human technological encounter to match the apparent failure of technology to prevent the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima. Hirata is a playwright and director known for his creation of contemporary colloquial theatre (*gendai kōgo engeki*), a style of theatre which aims to show everyday Japanese social interactions in precise and realistic detail.<sup>9</sup> Recently, Hirata has also been working with robotics scientist Ishiguro Hiroshi with the aim to "transform a conventional display of robots at scientific expositions into a robot theatre artwork".<sup>10</sup> His robot play *Sayonara* was originally written in 2010. Following the 2011 earthquake Hirata wrote a short coda to his original story where a lifelike female android comforts a young woman who has a terminal illness.<sup>11</sup> The care

taker in *Sayonara* is a robot model "Geminoid F", described as,

a female type of tele-operated android that has an appearance similar to [the] original person. ... Due to the features, Geminoid F is hoped [to become] a more common communication media for everyday life.<sup>12</sup>

The *Sayonara* coda begins after a minute of darkness which marks the end of the first section – the melancholic conclusion of the original play. As the light fades in slowly, we can make out the android slumped in her chair. There is no longer anyone sitting in the rocking chair opposite, where the dying girl had been seated. Hirata's stage instructions state that "the geminoid is broken, and keeps reading poetry to an empty space".<sup>13</sup> One of the ways that the android tried to comfort the dying girl in *Sayonara* was to recite poetry and engage her in conversations about existential beauty. This scene bridges the two parts of the play.

A man comes to repair the android so that it can be transported to Fukushima. He is speaking on his phone to his employer, reporting that the robot is "not completely broken, but it's a bit broken" and that "it looks like it [the android] doesn't know what's wrong with itself". Later he has a conversation with the android.

You are going to a place where there are no people. ... We want you to keep reciting poems there. ... Many people died there, but we can't go there, and we can't recite poetry to them. ... So I'm asking you to do it.

The android replies: "Yes. If I can be helpful,



even in this state, then I am very happy".<sup>14</sup> The short coda ends with the android being carried off stage reciting a well-known poem by Shimazaki Tōson (1872–1943).<sup>15</sup> The closing lines reflect the sense of loneliness depicted in the poem: "But thinking of the coming and going of the waves, I know that one day I will return to my home".



Beverly Long (right) and Robot in Hirata Oriza's *Sayonara*. Photo Credit: Tatsuo Nambu/Aichi Triennale 2010

It is no longer possible to return home for some thousands of people made homeless by the earthquake and by the radiation zone around the Fukushima reactor. The reference to being half-broken and the robot not knowing what is wrong with itself can be interpreted as statements about Japanese society and its inability to deal with so many aspects of the nuclear accident. Literary symbolism aside, however, the figure of the robot itself is not a metaphor but a part of what Japanese artists are calling the new reality of a nuclear disaster. Robots are the only means of accessing no-go areas in the reactors in the longer term. Moreover, the image of the geminoid giving comfort to the souls of the dead by reciting poetry is not to be taken as a metaphor. Prayers must be said for those whose bodies have not been recovered, no matter how it is to

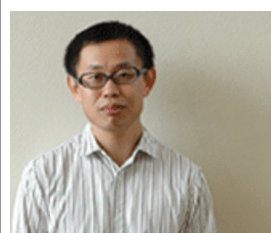
be done. Long-standing depictions of Buddhist limbo in Japanese visual arts, theatre and poetry are reminders of the need to honour the dead in this way. Otherwise, Buddhists believe, their souls will remain in an indeterminate state of being.

Making things more complicated are questions of the symbiotic relationship between humans and androids that are explored in Hirata's robot plays. Speaking at an after-show talk in 2012, Ishiguro expressed the view that androids *are* human and that the border between android and human has been broken by technology.<sup>16</sup> Hirata concurred, saying that, from the standpoint of the artist, there was no border of separation between android and human.<sup>17</sup> The android seems to identify with poetry more than humankind, emphasising a point about the increasingly shared experience of technological reality between humans and machines. Hirata and Ishiguro both aim to make such differences indescribable and irrelevant. Their robot stage plays explore how androids have become intimately connected to humanity.

The one thing separating androids and humans is the fact that androids function in places that humans cannot. Rather than depicting this fact as dystopic, the play has the android enact compassion and empathy where humans cannot. The android is not, here, distanced from the experience of death, but is a bridging figure who reimagines the exclusion zone as a space of *bardo*, a Buddhist limbo, painfully lying between the experiences of life and death. A heightened awareness of the border of the exclusion zone is realised and simultaneously challenged in this image. Only the android is able to wander through the irradiated space making intercessions on behalf of the dead; but it is also able to enact the most intimately human of mourning practices. The lack of separation of human and non-human experiences of grief depicted here challenges our normative view on mourning and even brings a sense of comfort that the souls of the

dead may be given their due recognition. Perhaps they are saying that humans have reached the point where they are incomplete as humans without accepting robots. This is certainly something that Ishiguro explores in his work.

### Okada Toshiki's *Ground and Floor*



岡田 利規  
Toshiki Okada  
Playwright, Director,  
Novelist

Okada Toshiki: Photo by Misako Shimizu

In the act of having the robot say prayers to Fukushima's restless spirits, *Sayonara* bears comparison with the interstitial cosmology of Nō theatre. The connection here is that many Nō plays are about ghosts and the experience of *bardo* and they often end with prayers of intercession on behalf of the unsettled dead. This is a symbolic connection to Nō, whereas writer-director Okada Toshiki's *Ground and Floor* directly adapts aspects of the Nō theatre as a mourning practice. With his company Chelfitsch (named after a Japanese pronunciation of the word selfish), Okada is perhaps the leading playwright of his generation and is an insightful critic of Japanese society, culture and politics.

Described by Okada as "musical theatre with ghostly apparitions", *Ground and Floor* depicts a group of people experiencing an intense post-Fukushima malaise. The play contains a bitter commentary on the failure of politics in Japan. While the play is contemporary in style and adopts some of Okada's characteristic separation of the physicality of the performer and their spoken text, it also references aspects

of Nō, including, for example, the character of a ghost. The play also adopts some of Nō's distinctive design and staging conventions. Okada's interest in referencing Nō was also present in early works including *The Sonic Life of a Giant Tortoise* (Zōgame no Sonikku Raifu, 2011).<sup>18</sup> The reference in that case was oblique, while here it is direct and explicit and was acknowledged by Okada in post-performance discussions.



Chelfitsch. *Ground and Floor*. Photo by Misako Shimizu

We first see a reference to Nō in the stage design for *Ground and Floor*. A low riser sits laterally on the stage and, with its deep-grained hue and smooth, delineated performance space, the design is reminiscent of the surface of a Nō stage. At the left end of the riser (if facing the audience) is a raised glowing disc that, from the audience perspective, looks like a pool of light. This is a device to signify the presence of the ghost in the play – the mother – and other actors come to this corner of the stage to address it as a character. Further off to the left is a rectangular mirror that is large enough to reflect the whole body of an actor. This is a device for showing moments of interior reflection and at other times literally signifies the split identity of characters. It also references the *kagami no ma*, or mirror room, in Nō, where the actor absorbs the essence of his masked role as a ghost prior to entering the

stage. A large backdrop in the shape of a cross (although I think too wide in its sections to reference a Christian cross) is used to project surtitles. The first in the sequence reads "Japan, in the distant future" a phrase that soon changes to "Japan, in the not too distant future". Another slide announces "The stage is a place where ghosts can be seen". The program synopsis gives the note: "The country is heading into decline, and is cloaked in an atmosphere of impending war".<sup>19</sup>

Dramaturgically, the play combines the dystopian suggestion of place and time folding in on itself – Japan, in the distant/not too distant future – with references to the uncanny space/time of *Nō* and its enigmatic personages. In this way, the lifeworld of *Nō* and the politics of post-Fukushima Japan become entwined. Okada's adaption of formal elements of *Nō* are of foremost importance here because they bring with them liminal qualities and the sense of crossing between places and times. I maintain that Okada's use of *Nō* signals a wider capacity for reverberations between the functional reality of the space on stage and in the theater and the spaces between worlds that the play references. These reverberations delineate a porous notion of space, time and mortal being. They draw attention to the existential malaise that haunts post-Fukushima lifeworlds along with its ghosts.

The ghost of a woman named Michiko appears before her living sons. Yutaka, the eldest son, is accused by his mother of not caring for the dead, while a second, apparently more caring, son is named Yukio. The other characters are Yutaka's pregnant wife Haruka, who is planning to leave Japan for the sake of her unborn child, and the enigmatic Satomi, who is identified as Michiko's daughter in the script. In the synopsis she is described as a woman who has cut herself off from society and become an exile without leaving Japan. The synopsis notes that Satomi

proceeds to rattle on aimlessly in Japanese, a language whose usage is rapidly shrinking. The play turns on a conflict of interest between the dead, whose only wish is to rest in peace under the ground, and the living, who are determined to safeguard the lives of those to be born, against the backdrop of a restive Japan not too far over the horizon.<sup>20</sup>

This synopsis likely reflects on Okada's own experience of life in Japan after Fukushima. Following the earthquake, Okada moved his young family to Kumamoto in western Japan, far away from Tokyo and the possible effects of nuclear contamination. At the same time, he felt the need to think about what he could do as an artist to help people come to terms with the disaster. In an interview with the theatre critic Iwaki Kyōko, he spoke at length about the play being his response to what he had come to think about as the rights of dead people.

For me, thinking about the people who decided to stay in the radioactively contaminated land to guard the graves of the ancestors is a relatively important proposition. Frankly, it is impossible for me to act in the same way. However, we should absolutely not impeach them by stating that it is sheer nonsense. I kind of feel that our disposition to consider such things as nonsense is, probably, more or less related to the fundamental causations which forged the overall issue that we are confronting at the moment. The problem is still there, precisely because we are disregarding or neglecting the interests of the dead.<sup>21</sup>

Okada discusses how his "interest in spirits" gradually led to the decision to work with the form of Nō theatre in his play. An important aspect of this was a collaboration with the composer Koizumi Atsuhiro, member of the ambient jazz ensemble Sangatsu. Their haunting and spare jazz score lends an uncanny atmosphere to the experience of viewing *Ground and Floor*. Okada comments that "certain sounds in the piece obviously remind you of [the] sound of an earthquake, and I know that Koizumi-san also has that image in his mind".<sup>22</sup> They use sound not only as an absorbing device to convey the sense of emptiness experienced by the people in the play, but also to reinterpret the musical component of Nō. Music in Nō typically provides the element of dramatic tension through its rising intensity; and, through the use of the traverse flute (*nōkan*), it conveys the sense of the performer passing between worlds. Sangatsu's score sounds nothing like the performance of the *hayashi* musicians in Nō, but their ambient improvisation and integration with the action of *Ground and Floor* evokes a sense of the uncanny that is comparable with Nō theatre. In this way, *Ground and Floor* adapts musical elements from Nō to suggest the experience of a post-Fukushima malaise that is, for many people, a life experienced as exhaustion. The mourning of those lost at Fukushima is translated into an image of existence as the living dead. Hence, as the character of Haruka states towards the end of the play:

The ghost of a dead person.

A living person who is like a ghost.

They're the same thing.<sup>23</sup>

The existential struggle over what to do in the face of the disaster – whether to flee or to mourn or to collapse into depression – is explored in the play in a long monologue that

the enigmatic Satomi delivers directly to the audience. It begins with a gesture that the script notes should be like someone testing the level of a microphone. It concludes with a discussion about how the surtitles are out of synch with her speaking, an effect that she notes likely will not matter because nobody is listening. Nobody can understand her as she is speaking Japanese, a language that is depicted in the play as being on the verge of extinction. The beginning section of Satomi's speech reads as follows.

Hey what do you think, isn't this your first time in a place like this where nothing is there, nobody is here or comes to visit, like a place that has no involvement with people, that is clearly or completely cut off from the normal world? What do you think, what's your honest opinion? Aren't you wondering, what is so interesting about being in a place like this, there's nothing at all interesting about being in a place like this. But I would like to say that there are actually quite a few people in the world, like me, but not just me, who are most comfortable in a place like this, and to be comfortable here, or like it actually isn't really comfortable but, there are people who have no choice but to be in a place like this, and those kinds of people have the, not right, but they have a part of them that allows them to be here, that's what I wanted to say, and I think that people like you, because you are like normal people or like extremely commonsensical people, probably say that those kinds of people have no relationship with the rest of the world, or like, there's nothing that can be done



for them, and you disrespect them, and if you want to respect them, that's fine, go ahead and disrespect them but, like I can no longer take part in shaping the world or do anything in order to preserve the world or anything like that, and I'm sure that I never will do anything like that in the future, but there's nothing I can do about that because I, or like people like me are already in a state in which we don't have a single drop of strength or will left to do anything like that.<sup>24</sup>

Emotions unfold here as jumbled thoughts and the non-sequitur passages of text seem to be energised by an anxious and uncertain interior monologue. As Satomi addresses the audience her disempowerment is also ours; as she makes it clear that our intercession would be nothing more than a gesture of sympathy which would not fix anything. The depiction of place in her speech has multiple interpretations. It is a space of exclusion, cut off from the normal world. It is an ambivalent space that is not without a sense of internalised comfort. Above all, it is a space conveying the sense of exhaustion of people defeated and unable to escape their circumstances.

The end of the play offers some sense of resolution but is again deeply uncertain. Yutaka finally faces the spirit of his dead mother and he is seen standing before the glowing disc. The surtitles adopt a typical Nō form that seeks to resolve the problem at hand. They announce:

When the sleep of the dead and the preparations of the living are equally battered,

Isn't there a possibility in which both sides will extend their hands to each other?

The mother speaks to her son:

MICHIKO: I'm going to spend my time remembering what it was like when you were just able to start talking and writing.

When you wrote the letter "ho," the line stuck out at the top like "ha." Your "ya"s were tilted the opposite way and looked more like "ka"s. And you always wrote the letters "to" and "ke" backwards.

The first word you learned was "Mama."

Your first word was not Japanese.

[YUKIO exits. Then MICHIKO exits.]

What is suggested here is not so much the intercession of the prayers for the resolution of the karmic struggle of the ghost-character in Nō, although, if one is familiar with Nō theatre this is something one might initially anticipate from hearing the first line of the scene. Rather, the tone is unresolved and continues to express confusion and loss. The lack of transparency about the nuclear meltdown, the upheavals and life in temporary accommodation, the loss of land and community, and the dearth of reliable information about radiation leaks, or the sense that people have not been listened to in the government's insistent campaign to restart nuclear power stations across Japan is a bitter pill to swallow. The scene refers to the confusion of language and the loss of something intrinsic to Japan. Speaking to this sense of displacement, of Okada's own feelings perhaps, and the displacement of people, and their memories, cultures and way of life, Okada explains this as a painful shift towards something unknown. As he says in the interview with Iwaki: "the death of the last

speaker will be mourned but the death of that language will not be lamented. [This is] simply because a speaker to grieve the death of their language will not exist anymore".<sup>26</sup> I read this statement to be a way to take the sense of loss at Fukushima into an understanding of mourning that is intrinsic to Japan as a whole after the earthquake. Okada's appropriation of Nō, a form of theatre that itself has a tenuous existence, is not simply a bridging device to mediate between the rights of the dead and the living. Perhaps more than this, it is itself a mourning practice; in light of Phelan's work, it is a social ritual to recognise the limits of an exhausted society where people's rights, living or dead, are often denied.

## Closing

In this essay, I have discussed Phelan's call for theatre as an extended expression of mourning and a space that is often haunted by the presence of uncanny sensibilities. In thinking about what this might look like in Japan since March 2011 I have shown how some playwrights have returned to the classical figure of the ephemeral ghost.

In Hirata's play, a malfunctioning android gives relief to the dead in the form of prayers, an act that also stands for wider questions about robotic technologies which give assistance to humans. The fact that human and android are depicted as being more alike than different gives a further dimension to a consideration of our symbiotic relationships with machines. Both human and machine are needed, but both failed in the aftermath of Fukushima. Meanwhile, the play's depiction of human souls trapped in limbo gives a powerful sense of the need to mourn.

The need to mourn is also a singular concern in Okada's play, which adopts many of the dramaturgical and design aspects of Nō. In his play, both the living and the dead are depicted inhabiting a shared space of endless exhaustion. The mourning here is not only for

humankind, but also for the loss of a community and language. Even the possibility of existence is questioned. If Hirata's play is faintly hopeful in its resolve to care for the dead, Okada depicts the expression of mourning as endless and unresolvable. His play offers none of the calming sensibilities of a future normality once the spirits have been appeased. We take, instead, from this melancholy play the idea that there is no longer a language of conciliation and remorse.

Mourning Fukushima in both these plays is an uncomfortable and incomplete act; a writing for and against bodies who die, and for and against existential selfhood. If Okada's play suggests the endless irresolution of grief, I also find the image of the android endlessly wandering the crippled irradiated space of *bardo* similarly unconsoling. In the final consideration, it is perhaps this extended depiction of mourning – a mourning without end – which evokes the dystopian longevity of the post-Fukushima nuclear space of contamination, suffering and death.

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## Author Biography

**Peter Eckersall** is Professor of Asian Theatre at the Graduate Centre, City University of New York. Recent publications include *We're People Who Do Shows, Back to Back Theatre: Performance, Politics, Visibility* (co-edited with Helena Grehan, Performance Research Books, 2013), *Theatre and Performance in the Asia-Pacific: Regional Modernities in the Global Era* (co-authored with Denise Varney, Barbara Hatley and Chris Hudson, Palgrave 2013) and *Performativity and Event in 1960s Japan: City, Body, Memory* (Palgrave 2013).

## Related Articles

Christopher S Thompson, "Are you Coming to the Matsuri?: Tsunami Recovery and Folk Performance Culture on Iwate's Rikuchū Coast", *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 12, Issue 5, No. 2, February 3, 2014.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Richard Lloyd Parry, "[Ghosts of the Tsunami](#)", *London Review of Books*, vol. 36, no. 3, 6 February 2014, pp. 1-11. Retrieved 9 February 2014.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, "[Abe Tries to Speed Up Fukushima Recovery](#)", *The Japan Times*, 21 December, 2013. Retrieved 12 March 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*, London and New York, Routledge, 1997, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Eckersall, *Performativity and Event in 1960s Japan: City, Body, Memory*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2013, pp. 15-36 and 96-7.

<sup>5</sup> A heterotopia is described by Foucault as a mirror of utopia; in some senses it is a space of possibility. "As a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live, this description could be called heterotopology." Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces and Heterotopias", *Architecture/Mouvement/ Continuité*, October 1984, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Wihstutz, "Introduction", in Erika Fischer-Lichte and Benjamin Wihstutz (eds.), *Performance and the Politics of Space: Theatre and Topology*, London and New York, Routledge, 2013, pp. 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> The exclusion zone was at 20 kilometres as of December 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Hirata Oriza, *Hirata Oriza no Shigoto: Gendai*

*Kōgo Engeki no Tame ni*, Tokyo, Banseisha, 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Hirata Oriza, "About our Robot/Android Theatre", *Comparative Theatre Review*, vol.11, no. 2, March 2012, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> The robot theatre project was founded, in 2009, by Seinendan theatre director and playwright Hirata Oriza and Ishiguro Hiroshi, from the Intelligent Robotics Laboratory at Osaka University. They produce plays using human and robots actors. See [here](#).

<sup>12</sup> See "[Geminoid F](#)". Retrieved 9 February 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Hirata Oriza, *Sayonara (with coda)*, unpublished manuscript, 2011, unpaginated.

<sup>14</sup> Hirata, *Sayonara*.

<sup>15</sup> Tōson was a novelist and poet who in his later work was a key exponent of Japanese naturalism. Hirata is likely responding to this awareness in citing Tōson here. As I argue elsewhere, Hirata's plays are concerned with debates about naturalism and modern theatre in Japan. See Peter Eckersall, "Hirata Oriza's Tokyo Notes and the New Modern", in Denise Varney, Peter Eckersall, Chris Hudson and Barbara Hatley, *Theatre and Performance in the Asia-Pacific*, London and New York, Palgrave, 2013, pp. 64-78.

<sup>16</sup> See also Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century", in David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy (eds.), *The Cybercultures Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, pp. 291-324 [originally published 1987].

<sup>17</sup> Hirata Oriza and Ishiguro Hiroshi, "Sayonara: Android-Human Theatre", after-talk, Victorian Arts Centre, 25 August 2012.

<sup>18</sup> See Peter Eckersall, "Youth is not the only

thing that passes at sonic speed': Speed and Private Lives in Okada Toshiki's *The Sonic Life of a Giant Tortoise*", in Varney, Eckersall, Hudson and Hatley, *Theatre and Performance in the Asia-Pacific*, pp. 112–25.

<sup>19</sup> Okada Toshiki and Iwaki Kyoko, "Synopsis". Retrieved 9 February 2014, from [jimen.chelfitsch.net/en/information](http://jimen.chelfitsch.net/en/information).

<sup>20</sup> Okada and Iwaki, "Synopsis".

<sup>21</sup> Okada Toshiki and Iwaki Kyōko, "[Toshiki Okada Ground and Floor Interview](#)", 2013, p. 3. Retrieved 9 February 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Okada and Iwaki, "Interview", p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Okada Toshiki, "Ground and Floor", translated by Ogawa Aya, unpublished manuscript, 2013, unpaginated.

<sup>24</sup> Okada, "Ground and Floor".

<sup>25</sup> Okada, "Ground and Floor". The hiragana syllabary mentioned here is a basic component of the Japanese writing system and is learnt by young children.

<sup>26</sup> Okada and Iwaki, 2013, n.p.