Nuclear Catastrophes and the Theatre in Tokyo, 1945–2016

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I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own and has not been and will not be submitted, in whole or in part, to any other university for the award of any other degree.

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Abstract

Based on the analytical framework that nuclear threats have always affected Japan after World War II, this thesis develops an alternative narrative of post-war Japanese theatre through the socio-cultural analyses of selected A-bomb (atomic bomb) and post-Fukushima plays. By shedding light on those plays, which respond to Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Fukushima; and, by juxtaposing those theatre-makers not previously associated with one another, the study introduces five types of theatre, which are products of nuclear-afflicted society.

Drawing from Robert J. Lifton's contention that nuclear aftermath could be 'invisible', the study focuses on plays that not only report the tangible outcomes of the event, but also imagine beyond visible calamities. By adopting the interdisciplinary methodology of the Sociology of the Theatre, this thesis demonstrates how the plays in question materialised through constant dialogue with nuclear-afflicted societies. The keynote that this thesis strikes is that the languages, methodologies and aesthetics that are adopted in theatres, which respond to and represent various nuclear catastrophes, challenge the border of polar opposites such as here/there, life/death, science/ belief, rational/absurdity and present/past.

The five strands of nuclear-afflicted theatres and the set of theatre-makers introduced are: 'The Theatre of Collective *Kūki*' (air) developed by Noda Hideki; 'The Theatre of Guilt and Self-Censorship', introduced through works by Hotta Kiyomi, Inoue Hisashi and Okada Toshiki; 'The Theatre of Sensate Atomisation', which argues the political standpoints of Miyoshi Jūrō and Takayama Akira; 'The Comedy of Post-humanism Absurdity', that deals with the post-humanist and post-human theories of Betsuyaku Minoru and Matsui Shū; and 'The Theatre of Nuclear Nostalgia', in which Kitamura Sō and Fujita Takahiro present a bifocal time structure. Rather than chronologically, the

study is thematically structured, through which arguments on why analytical parallels could be drawn between theatres after Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima are developed.

Introduction

Nuclear catastrophes cannot be deciphered from either 'the hindsight' or 'from a vantage point'. This is because, on the one hand, these catastrophes are temporally and topographically unbounded. On 6 August 2014, at the sixty-ninth ceremony commemorating the day of the atomic bombing, Hiroshima City Mayor Matsui Kazumi (familial names are placed first as in the traditional Japanese style) announced that 5,507 new names had been added to the Memorial Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims in that year: the *temporal* boundary of Hiroshima is invisible.[1] By the same token, according to a citizen test conducted seven months after the Fukushima disaster, it was proven that the amount of radioactive caesium in a patch of dirt near a baseball field in Tokyo was equal to that in some contaminated areas around Chernobyl: the *spatial* boundary of Fukushima is also invisible.[2] The present and the past are disarranged and the 'here' and the 'there' are disoriented; this imperceptibility foments dramatised fear, which induces socio-psychological disorders in the population.

On the other hand, the nuclear narratives cannot be made sense of, because when observed from the purview of existing human law, nuclear catastrophes surpass prevalent ethics. To reason the instant killing of around 140, 000 unarmed people in Hiroshima and approximately 70,000 in Nagasaki is nothing short of impossible, and thus it naturally demands words beyond common ethics. To say more, when catastrophes of such scale are described in existing words, it seems as though the speaker is deliberately short-changing what has happened. More often than not, however, as the act of naming is one of the mainstays of human intellect, people reassure themselves that the situation is

under control by labelling all sorts of events with expedient yet not necessarily suitable words.

Along the same line of argument, it is important to note that the prefix 'post' generates a slightly misguided definition when used in such a context. A more acceptable notation to express the state after Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima is *intra-* or *inter-* nuclear eras. This is because once a nuclear disaster occurs, as Paul Virilio argues, 'a whole host of incidents and disasters [unfurl in] a chain reaction' (*intra*, Virilio, 2004: 257); it further generates ominous premonitions towards further or another nuclear tragedy in the future (*inter*). Therefore, although the prefix 'post' will be used in this thesis, purely on a linguistic level, one should always keep in mind that the prefix does not suggest that the event is already over.

Taking all this as a preamble to set the scene, it is important to note, first and foremost, that one of the contributions of this thesis lies in taking its very premise from the ethical and physical impasse of nuclear disasters. That is, when analysing those Japanese theatre productions that reflect, respond to and represent the collective psyche of the nuclear-afflicted society, the thesis will not even try to render a unanimous narrative of a nuclear catastrophe; nor would it suggest the ethically correct action *per se* or name the most damaged community through the theatre productions discussed. This is because when one fallaciously tries to depict the multivalent ramifications of the nuclear aftermath within the strictures of any given vocabulary, most tragedies would be curtailed to fit the ready-made concepts of the event. By contrast, the theatre productions dealt with in this study bring into relief the suppressed, the unfathomable, and thus the invisible narratives buried beneath the surface of notoriously decorous Japanese society. This is a standpoint less likely to be taken in this specific field of scholarship, as it is most often the case that

a Japanese theatre scholar restricts his or her study to the remit of the factual: rather than critically arguing the uncertainties, it is better to focus on certain fixed accounts.

Yet when taking nuclear-afflicted theatres as the topic of study, it should be noted from the outset that language, which has already crystallised as a social institution, will most likely fail to provide a viable rationale of any nuclear event. As testimony to this hypothesis, novelist Ōta Yoko, who was a survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, argued that many Japanese writers, who were also *hibakusha* (literally, 'explosion-affected people') thought that they were 'absolutely unable to depict the truth without first creating a new terminology' (Ōta, 1990: 148). By the same token, and by referring to writers such as Jean Genet, Takahashi Genichirō declared the impotence of language after the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster. Takahashi asserted that in everyday life (*jōji*), most people tend to use 'words and logics of others' in order to speak and write without a difficulty; however, in 'times of emergency (*hi-jōji*)', the expedient linguistic system falls short of meeting the overwhelming experience (Takahashi, 2013: 27). What follows is that many realise for the first time that they 'are obliged to use their own words, which, in fact, they do not retain' (ibid.). It is precisely at these times of emergency that exceptional artistic talents are required.

Almost anyone can provide factual documentations, emotive accounts and fragmented narratives of a nuclear event. However, this thesis boldly argues that only those artists who are equipped with critical, perceptive and aesthetic abilities can go beyond the banal accounts and invent a post-nuclear language *per se*. According to Takahashi, in 1982, Genet visited the Palestine refugee camp in west Beirut, as the first westerner to witness the massacre of Palestinians by the members of the Lebanese Christian militia. Whereas most would self-censor their words when standing in front of a heap of corpses, Genet did not. As Takahashi explains, he did not render words that were cramped 'in a hazmat

suit', but managed to weave a ravishing tapestry: an 'exquisite haute couture of words' (Takahashi, 2012: 49). This does not suggest that the Japanese playwrights and directors discussed in this thesis, who span seven decades, are all linguistically or aesthetically as potent as Genet. However, what is suggested through this brief anecdote is that precisely because of the ethical, temporal and topographical complexities of nuclear catastrophes, Japanese citizens were compelled to seek a form of expression that could transcend everyday languages; and this was primarily the task of an artist, who could develop a language that would not be subject to instrumentalised rationality.

Only around a year after the Fukushima disaster, there were already two six-tier bookshelves filled with literature on nuclear-related issues in a public library in Tokyo. Although these products of research are individually meritorious, perusing the pages, what was instantly noticeable was that most of them approached and assessed the nuclear disaster through scientific records and tangible outcomes. By contrast, as this thesis focuses on the topic of the theatre, which is fundamentally a site where components of fiction and non-fiction coalesce, the developed arguments take a slightly more imaginative path. That is, rather than only delivering empirical arguments on those outcomes that are visible and tangible, the thesis also focuses on what Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls the '*Logos du monde ésthetique* [the logos of the aesthetic world]', in which the word 'aesthetic' is interpreted through the Greek etymology of 'sensation' (Merleau-Ponty, 2007: 415). Rather than processing meanings through the empirical encoding system called language, the thesis focuses on those theatre productions which try to render visible the invisible: those pre-linguistic sensations, latent and ambiguous, yet still clearly experienced by the collective society.

When exposed to a catastrophe such as Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima, what naturally ensues immediately afterwards is that the survivors experience what American

psychologist Robert J. Lifton calls, a 'psychic closing-off' (Lifton, 1971: 10). As a survival instinct to shut off an excessive degree of threat and precariousness people tend to halt their intellectual system temporarily. Yet, no matter how hard they try to cease reasoning the situation, their body as a receptive totality is continuously exposed to chaos, through which pre-linguistic sensations are constantly generated. Based on these conjectures, rather than analysing the intellectually comprehensible narratives of the nuclear-afflicted reality, this thesis, through the aid of theatrical visions, delves into the realm of the unconscious – the unscripted narrative of the collective psyche.

Methodological Tenet: Theatre as an Epitome of the Dialogic Imagination

The methodology for approaching different forms of theatre as reflections of the latent social psyche is taken from the discipline of the Sociology of the Theatre. It is an interdisciplinary perspective, through which theatre and dance are understood in relation to the societies in which these practices operate. Founded by Maria Shevtsova, this method considers theatre, concisely, as not a self-contained art form solely imagined by individual talents, but, conversely, considers that there is a plethora of societal factors that hold sway over the artworks. As Shevtsova clarifies her point by referring to Pierre Bourdieu, all theatres are based on, 'a social practice since it is exercised in a social space of some kind' (Shevtsova, 2001: 134). It consists of 'a web' of social, political, cultural, economic, historical, and all other intertwined components, in which 'one thread, when pulled, unravel[s] many' (ibid.: 130). Indeed, noteworthy theatre scholars such as Uchino Tadashi, William Marotti and Tonooka Naomi among others have conducted similar sociological analyses on modern and contemporary Japanese theatre: primarily the post-war contemporary theatre for Uchino, the 1960s political theatre for Marotti and contemporary women's theatre for Tonooka.[3] Yet it should be noted that this

is the first academic work that analyses nuclear-afflicted Japanese theatres specifically through the interdisciplinary methodology, in which Shevtsova carefully interwove a variety of disciplines for delivering sociocultural, politico-historical and intercultural theatre analyses.

Shevtsova took the name 'the Sociology of the Theatre' precisely from Jean Duvignaud, not only because he conceived of the theatre 'as social (collective) and societal (belonging to a given society)', but also because he drew his heuristic and explanatory principles from discursive categories 'developed by sociologists and sociologist-anthropologists' (Shevtsova, 2001: 130). In addition to Duvignaud's interdisciplinary perspective that went beyond the unicity and univocality of previous theatre studies, Shevtsova integrates the approach guided by social scientists in the United States, 'which was largely spearheaded by Richard Schechner whose first references were Victor Turner and Erving Goffman' (ibid.: 131). In this sense, her field of study also includes the perspective of anthropology focusing on rites, rituals (Turner) and 'carnivals' (Mikhail Bakhtin), as well as that of urban sociology, which questions how people present themselves in everyday life (Goffman).

Above all, the most important aspect of Shevtsova's discipline is that, by intricately deploying the argument of Bourdieu, she focuses on how the system of sociocultural signs are formulated, guarded and reconstructed in a given time and space. Countering the argument of art for art's sake, which considers that theatres are hermetically sealed objects unaffected by the here-and-now, the methodology buttresses the notion that theatre is a social object through and through. Bourdieu argues, across his whole work, that individuals, including artists, 'traverse the immensely dense network that are societies', and, in doing so, 'they embody the various practices which they are called upon to know by doing them' (ibid.: 135). Therefore, as Bourdieu argues through the

concept of *champ* (field), it is important to realise that artworks always materialise in a certain 'field of production': the range of spheres that the artists inhabit (Bourdieu, 1993: 37). In other words, the logical explanation, the adopted form of aesthetics, the manner of utterance, the constructed narrative and all other artistic decisions taken by a certain theatre practitioner are affected by the given societal, political, cultural and other interrelated milieux in which the artist is situated.

Thus, when analysing plays through this methodology, readers gain insight not only into the theoretical ideas relevant to the performances, but also to the particular social context. And this interdisciplinary method is particularly useful when analysing the nuclear-afflicted theatre, because, to reiterate, the A-bomb plays and the post-Fukushima plays, which are discussed in this thesis attempt to render visible what is *latent* in society. Theatre is not a creation *ex nihilo*. Thus, once again, citing from Merleau-Ponty, one could argue that the role of the theatre-maker is to perceive and conceive perspicaciously the invisible reality as 'in-visible', which already includes the visible (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 257). Chiming with Merleau-Ponty and appropriating Bourdieu's matrix of concepts for a study of theatre, Shevtsova summarises that one of the most eminent features of a dramatist is to function as 'a seismograph' that picks up 'tremors below the social surface […] placing themselves […] in a situation of anomie in respect of the collective mind' (Shevtsova, 2009: 46).

It was Emile Durkheim, who argued that anomie is the outcome of the disintegration of the organic solidarity of a society, followed by the dissipation of self-regulatory behaviour. Although Durkheim defined the term against the mechanical society of his time, when the conceptual matrix of anomie is transposed for the consideration of post-nuclear society in Japan, one can easily see that the disintegration of the collective, and the subsequent disruption of social norms, were also observed after the nuclear disasters

discussed in this thesis. These are: the Hiroshima atomic bomb disaster on 6 August 1945, the Nagasaki plutonium bomb attack on 9 August 1945, the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant catastrophe on 11 March 2011 and, to a lesser extent, the radiation exposure of the Lucky Dragon No.5 (*Dai-go Fukuryū Maru*) tuna fishing boat on 1 March 1954.

After these nuclear disasters, the respective societies directly or indirectly affected by the events experienced a state of anomie to varying degrees. Prevalent meanings and values started to disintegrate because what was collectively considered normal could not remain as a unanimous norm: the fissures in communities assumed absent in a seemingly homogenous society, were ruthlessly exposed. In fact, playwright-director Okada Toshiki scrupulously depicted the state of fragmented society in *Current Location* (*Genzaichi*, 2012). As will be argued in Chapter Two, many people suddenly lost words, or to be more precise, they realised for the first time that they did not retain their individual lexicon, to begin with, vis-à-vis a nuclear catastrophe; and thus could not voice their opinion when the collective norm had disintegrated.

Owing to the intelligibility of the nuclear aftermath, people were impelled to broach uncharted domain. Thrown into disarray, people ended up generating miscellaneous narratives different from each other. Especially after Fukushima, completely contradictory opinions emerged, because the effects of radiation could be considered both absent and omnipresent according to one's interpretation of reality. When obliged to coexist with a nuclear calamity in which the situation changed day by day, people speculated at best, and at worst they completely ignored the threat. As will be explained in Chapter One, this was partially because the scale of the aftermath was always underplayed by the State, or more bluntly, internal and external bureaucrats censored the

information (with regards to the atomic bombs). Thus, to pursue factual truths seemed like a futile attempt.

Taking into consideration the impenetrable quality of the nuclear aftermaths, Jean-Luc Nancy argues that nuclear disasters disrupt our sense in two ways: in a manner of 'orientation [*sens*], direction path – and at the same time of meaning [*sens*] as signification or value' (Nancy, 2015: 16). And in extension of Nancy's consideration of the post-nuclear society, one can argue that the conceivable human reaction that follows can be categorised into two strands. On the one hand, a person could latch on to the visible yet already obsolete narratives, and construct his or her worldview based on what Rustom Bharucha calls 'dead certainties'; or, on the other hand, he/she could try to see the invisible – the 'living uncertainties'– that are just taking shape (Bharucha, 2014: 103).

Taking this as a seminal question that underlies the entire argument, this study carefully explores the idea that the respective nuclear events in Japan became watershed moments for theatre-makers to reassess their understandings of reality. They could not blithely assume that the worldview of yesterday was still valid today, as norms and values were now in confusion. In short, to borrow a term from Mikhail Bakhtin, this thesis argues that the nuclear disasters became catalysts for the development of new imaginations in Japanese theatres: a new 'dialogic imagination' that was cultivated by a constant dialogue between theatre-makers and the uncertain nuclear-affected reality (Bakhtin, 1981: 279).

At this point, the reader of the introduction might justifiably feel uneasy for two reasons: first, because the argument readily identifies the Japanese people as the victims of war; and, second, because the argument rashly juxtaposes the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bomb disasters and the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant accident. In order to avoid these misunderstandings, it is necessary to pause at this point. Needless to say, the

thesis does not intend to disregard those countless victims of the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II, in Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Guam, Papua New Guinea, Myanmar, Korea and China. Chiming with Okuda Hiroko, the thesis fully stands on the premise that responsibility for being the perpetrators, and not the victims, of violence in these countries is 'seriously lacking' among Japanese public (Okuda, 2010: 15). In addition, as is well known, it is not only the Japanese who died from Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs, but people of twelve other nationalities including Koreans, Chinese and even Americans (ibid.: 221).

Secondly, this thesis does not support the contention that nuclear catastrophes such as Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima are qualitatively analogous. Physically, politically, economically, environmentally and in all other intermeshed areas, there are, of course, conspicuous differences between a brutal military attack executed by the American army and an accident that was indirectly triggered by the government's ill decision on energy utilisation, yet was directly caused by an earthquake followed by a tsunami. Additionally, the different socio-historic contexts should not be dismissed when assessing the artistic narratives emerging from each nuclear catastrophe. In the case of the Fukushima disaster, a colossal amount of frustration and fury gushed out through the Internet, literally, from right after the event or even in tandem with it. Conversely, with regards to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, freedom of expression was heavily restricted. As will be elaborated in Chapter One, when the American Occupying Forces executed the 'Press Code' from 19 September 1945, negative reportage regarding the atomic bombs totally vanished from the media. Due to this censorship, the so-called Atomic bomb literature (*Genbaku bungaku*), including the Atomic bomb plays (*Genbaku gikyoku*), was considered anti-American and was banned from any form of publication. Artists were given back their voices only after Japan regained its independence on 28 April 1952.

In each of the following five chapters, several plays that respond to Hiroshima, Nagasaki or Fukushima are juxtaposed for critical analysis. To reiterate, the juxtaposition does not suggest that a single yardstick is capable of measuring the cause, the event and the ramifications of each significantly multivalent catastrophe. However, the side-by-side analysis of post-atomic-bomb and post-Fukushima plays does operate to constitute the principal originality of this thesis. That is, although sociologists and critics such as Yoshimi Shunya (2012), Arima Tetsuo (2012) and Suga Hidemi (2012) have linked Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima and other lesser-known nuclear accidents in Japan to develop a comprehensive argument on the nuclear-afflicted socio-history, conversely, a similarly extensive analysis that associates the plays responding to different nuclear catastrophes is without precedent in Japanese theatre studies. Much research on nuclear-affected Japanese cultures currently conducted by scholars such as Barbara Geilhorn and Kristina Iwata-Weickgennant among others focus primarily on post-Fukushima outcomes. However, a wider vision should be adopted when approaching nuclear-affected cultures in this island country, because, arguably, post-war Japanese society has been constantly threatened by different nuclear threats. Through its juxtaposition of theatre-makers, this thesis aims to do precisely this.

In so doing, this thesis makes four substantial contributions to the scholarship of Japanese theatre. First, it demonstrates that four sets of theatre-makers, previously never associated, could be fruitfully juxtaposed through the framework of nuclear-afflicted vision. Through the juxtaposition of theatre-makers, this thesis illuminates that several recurrent themes – such as guilt, absurdity, humanism, totalitarianism, and nostalgia – appear in theatres after different nuclear catastrophes (although with different strengths, intentions and aesthetics). Second, in order to substantiate why these themes have recurred after different nuclear catastrophes, this thesis exemplifies that the

interdisciplinary method of the Sociology of the Theatre is one of the most valid tools for the execution of socio-culturally comprehensive analyses of the plays. Third, through the adoption of this academic methodology, this thesis corroborates the hypothesis that theatre – with its phenomenological immediacy, critical capacity and unbound imagination – is the optimal device for giving voice to a collective threat, which is waiting to be exposed to the public. Lastly, taking all this together, this thesis reassesses the entire body of post-war Japanese theatre, vis-à-vis the series of nuclear disasters, which, to the best of my knowledge, has not been conducted by any theatre scholar. Reflecting the wide spectrum of plays and theatre productions that my thesis explores, the title of this study includes two dates. The first year suggests the point of departure at which the dialogue between theatre-makers and the first nuclear disaster began, and the latter year suggests the open endpoint: the word 'open' indicates that the perplexing nuclear dialogues are continuously unfurling.

Previous Studies and Definitions of A-bomb and Post-Fukushima Plays

The definition of atomic bomb plays, or A-bomb plays, is oblique, to say the least. Although the terminology is now customarily understood among Japanese theatre scholars and critics as plays that generally deal with atomic bombs or their ramifications, the scholars specialising in the area of studies, such as David G. Goodman (1986) and Hasebe Hiroshi (1993), do not provide a plausible definition. In fact, the analytical frameworks adopted by the two scholars are more empirical than thematic. Understandably, as academics who mainly specialise in 1960s and 1980s Japanese theatre respectively, the two scholars first select a number of seminal theatre productions from a restricted era, then loosely bind them together under the overarching topic of nuclear threat, which was constantly lurking in Japanese society. Therefore, even though

the two scholars brilliantly conceptualise the theatrical traits of the specific eras, ultimately, they do not transcend the viewpoint of chronological research. In fact, in a similar manner to Goodman and Hasebe, many scholars of Japanese theatre tend to limit their field of studies to a certain epoch and its playwrights. In contrast to the common methodology practised in the scholarship, this thesis prioritises the thematic over the chronological. That is, for the sake of developing a thematically coherent argument on nuclear-afflicted theatres, it freely transcends the epochs and integrates theatre-makers from distinct eras.

As a reference point for developing further arguments on the topic, the broad definition of A-bomb plays provided by playwright Kinoshita Junji has been invaluable. In a commentary for a volume of Japanese atomic bomb literature, Kinoshita argues that A-bomb plays could be charted according to two strands: 'first, it depicts reality as it is, in which the atomic bomb has been dropped. [And] second, it somehow symbolically depicts an issue triggered by the atomic bomb in any various ways' (Kinoshita, 1983: 478). When his commentary is read in hindsight, it could be argued that his categorisation is primarily delivered by discerning the A-bomb plays written in naturalistic *shingeki* format from those drafted in a more symbolic aesthetic, and thus the definition is reductive to say the least. The categorisation does not set a limit to any of the following questions: Who should be the playwright? (Should it be an artist from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or could it even be a foreign playwright); Who should be the characters? (Should they be physical victims of the atomic bomb, or could they be non-victims observing the event); When should the play be written? (Should it be written immediately after the bombings, or could it be written half a century afterwards); and what should the content focus on? (Should it focus only on the immediate after-effects of

the bombings, or could it portray the social psyche, which is belatedly and unconsciously affected by the event).

As for those post-Fukushima plays, or *Genpatsu gikyoku* (literally, nuclear-power plant plays), even though scholars and journalists such as Uchino Tadashi (2016), Fujii Shintarō (2012b), Sasaki Atsushi (2013), Nishidō Kōjin and Takahashi Yutaka (Nishidō, Takahash et al., 2016) among others have written a number of essays, their texts do not define the category. As for Uchino and Fujii, although the contextual arguments on why certain strands of theatre productions emerged from the event are considerably corroborated, they have composed only a few short essays on the topic. As for Sasaki, even though a book that focuses on the post-Fukushima situation has been published, it was a collection of essays that had appeared monthly in a literary magazine, through which light had been shed more on novels than theatres. The essays written by Nishidō and Takahashi were based on meticulous fieldwork of Tōhōku region, yet their heuristic research was more journalistic than academic. The paucity of comprehensive, reflective and analytical work on post-Fukushima theatre is, arguably, due to the relative recentness of the event; it makes it hard, even for scholars, to keep a distance from it. To say more, what could be called an escapist attitude towards defining post-Fukushima plays was taken, arguably because of the nature of the aftermath: that is, the invisibility of the destruction. It is not that millions of lives were lost from the nuclear accident. As Okada voices through a character in *Current Location*, 'it's not as if we hear gunshots at our doorstep. There are no land mines buried in the neighbourhood' (2012a:8). Nevertheless, when the situation was closely observed, it was far from peace.

In November 2013, I visited Minami-Sōma in Fukushima. The radiation dosimeter installed in front of the public library displayed that there was 0.71 microsievert per hour of radioactive doses in air: around triple the amount accepted by the state. I visited the

office of a non-profit organisation called Arts for Hope, in which various artistic activities were provided to the local people to give colour to their bleak lives. An amateur painter in her thirties, who worked with the organisation, greeted me with a welcoming smile on her face. She was warm, professional and completely composed. However, mid-way through the interview, when I asked how she felt about numerous foreign media proclaiming the reactions of Fukushima people to be 'orderly and calm',[4] she burst into tears and said: 'we are not calm; we are just so confused and do not know how to express our feelings'. The courteous calmness observed from afar is, in effect, a manifestation of excessive confusion. Underneath the mask of orderliness lay a magma of emotions in pandemonium.

When directly observing the tumultuous state, it is difficult to construe why, on 7 September 2013, in front of the International Olympic Committee, Prime Minister Abe Shinzō declared that Fukushima is 'under control' (Sieg and Lim, 2016). The rationale seemingly underpinning his announcement was that, for political reasons, the comment had to be delivered in order to secure the Olympic Games in Tokyo. Not only in the art industry but also in general, many conscientious people immediately rebutted his comment. The crux of their argument was that the Prime Minister lacked the ability to *see*: he did not see outside the tangible, or more specifically, economically countable outcomes. As will be argued in Chapter Three, this capitalistic principle was, in fact, the catalyst for implanting as many as 55 nuclear power plants in a country with no natural resources and with excessive seismic activity. If one decides to ignore the possibility of a critical accident, nuclear energy is highly cost-effective. Based on a similar capitalist principle, Abe dismissed the latent agony of thousands of people who, for instance, were displaced from their homelands, were struggling to sell their vegetables and fish and were quietly smiling to pretend that peace had been restored to their everyday life.

In other words, when defining post-Fukushima plays, an emphasis should be placed not on the visible expressions on stage but on the latent motives. This postulation will be unpacked later in Chapter One, but what should be acknowledged at this point is that if the theatre-maker, of any nationality, is completely conscious of the fact that the artwork was given impetus by the Fukushima disaster, and if he or she develops a renewed dialogue with the nuclear reality, it can be called a post-Fukushima play, irrespective of the fact that words such as 'radiation', 'contamination', or 'Fukushima' are not voiced from the stage. Conversely, if the play lacked that artistic impulse to see beyond the border of visibility, it will not be included in this category. For a theatre-maker dealing with the Fukushima disaster, it is a prerequisite that he or she fully understands that the dialogic imagination developed between oneself and the precarious reality is not reducible to prevalent logic, reason, or simple morality.

A similar definition focusing on the motives rather than the cosmetic variances could be applied to the A-bomb plays. No matter how slight and subtle, a will to see beyond the rehashed image of the horrific mushroom cloud, to go beyond the rote witnessing of the *keloid* scar (a skin injury indicative of an atomic bomb victim) and to stretch further the boundary of accepted norms of *hibakusha* is requested of the theatre-makers for the A-bomb play category to function. If the will to go beyond the threshold of everyday morality is missing in the play, it implies that the play does not even consider the pivotal standpoint taken by the thesis. That is, the language of post-nuclear theatre should be constructed on the premise of a physical and ethical impasse. If a theatre-maker blindly adopts the words of *hibakusha*, what is likely to occur is that expressions rendered through his or her play will be similar to the bland language and images of people meekly following the crowd. This is not to say that the words of *hibakusha* should be demeaned or ignored. A willingness to listen attentively to the *hibakusha* is of utmost

importance. Yet, in tandem with paying heed to the victims, the artists should never be absorbed sentimentally in their emotional morass, as such emotional reaction prevents them from speaking beyond what is habitually said and heard.

Tō-jisha, or, literally, 'those people concerned', was the buzzword that pervaded the social arena after Fukushima. As will be elaborated in Chapter One, when a unanimous narrative from the disaster seemed impracticable, people started measuring the validity of various testimonies by their physical proximity to the event. More often than not, a narrative told by a man residing in Futaba-machi, right next to the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant, was considered more valid than a story told by a woman in Tokyo. And when this principle of proximity was transposed to the thesis, all the delivered arguments could be considered irresponsible, or even vulgar, because even though the author made numerous fieldwork trips to Hiroshima and Fukushima, this thesis was not written by a *Tō-jisha*. Indeed, this study lacks the first-hand experience of a nuclear disaster: it does not retain the corporeal knowledge of the event, which victims do. I am fully aware of the lack of direct knowledge, and I do not wish to pretend that this could be supplemented. This thesis rests on alternative expertise: fifteen years of constant monitoring of the Tokyo theatre scene – annually attending approximately 150 performances as a professional theatre journalist and as a young researcher. Taking both the limits and the strengths of this scope of experience into consideration, this research decidedly focuses on those nuclear-afflicted theatre productions that were created and presented not in Hiroshima, Nagasaki or Tōhoku region, but in Tokyo – a socio-cultural field in which the author comfortably resides as an agent.

Thesis Structure: Finding Key Discourses on Nuclear Theatres

Those unfamiliar with Japanese theatre studies might assume that there exists a considerate amount of research conducted in the area of the nuclear-disaster-related theatre. Indeed, in term of Fukushima, a certain quantity of study exists, both in Japanese and other languages, even though they only provide a partial argument. In terms of the A-bomb plays, however, not only the comprehensive quality but also the quantity of study is absent. Here is a terrible but accurate 'rule of thumb' that Lifton has also observed when studying the psychological effects of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs: 'the more significant an event, the less likely it is to be studied' (Lifton and Falk, 1982: 38).

In order to overcome this dearth of comprehensive studies, the thesis underwent a slow yet necessary research procedure. For example; gleaning appropriate and trustable references from Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum Library (for references regarding Hotta Kiyomi, Betsuyaku Minoru and Kitamura Sō), The Museum of Modern Japanese Literature (for Miyoshi Jurō's diaries), Chihitsu-dō Bunko (for Inoue Hisashi's references), Ōya Sōichi Bunko (for collecting interviews of Okada Toshiki, Matsui Shū and Fujita Takahiro), Minami-soma Central Municipal Library (for reading poems and novels written after the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant Disaster) and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum (for perusing numerous diaries of *hibakusha*); obtaining images, videos and textual records of productions mostly from helpful individuals and companies (such as Gekidan Mingei for Hotta's work and SIS Company for Noda's works); and arranging thematically focused interview sessions with Akira Takayama, Matsui Shū, Okada Toshiki and Fujita Takahiro. Additionally, the author undertook all translations from Japanese interviews, records and references unless otherwise mentioned. Multiple visits to cities and villages in the Tōhoku region were undertaken, and interviews with local artists and theatre professionals, including Suzuki

Taku, the director of Art Revival Connection Tōhoku, were conducted. Collecting pieces of the puzzle for the first two years, and after a long period of gestation, the greatest challenge lay in configuring a structurally cohesive argument by interweaving various fragments, yet simultaneously maintaining the myriad of conflicting constituents in the narrative: not reducing them to a unanimous composite whole.

Taking full consideration of the fact that juxtaposing multiple nuclear catastrophes through the scope of post-war Japanese theatre is a relatively new focus of research, the first chapter lays the fundamental historical and sociological contexts necessary for understanding the arguments developed in the subsequent chapters. The central objective of Chapter One, 'The Invisible Catastrophe', lies in providing valid contextual accounts of why it is impossible to grasp a snapshot understanding of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima. To begin with, in terms of the atomic bombs, the horrific narratives were deliberately eradicated from the social arena, due to the already mentioned Press Code executed by the Occupying Forces. However, apart from these censorship codes inflicted by the American occupiers, there was a more latent societal code, which the author coins as the 'code of *wa* (harmony)'. Through the willing adoption of this social code, people suppressed dissident voices in order to follow the reigning narrative politely, to maintain social harmony and to avoid ostracism. By referring to the self-censorship conducted in the digital arena after Fukushima, and to the theatre production of Noda Hideki, the chapter will explain why the logic of conformism, or the politics of reading the '*kūki*' (air), tends to be consolidated in Japan, especially in times of crisis.

Taking Chapter One as the groundwork of the thesis, the following four chapters discuss how the selected plays, through various subject matters and presentational modes, attempt to render the invisible visible. The theatre productions in question operate as a medium that materialises a social issue already pregnant in society. In Chapter Two,

'The Theatre of Guilt and Self-Censorship', light is shed on the suppressed psyche of the survivors, who struggled to come to terms with their sense of guilt; generated because they drew a comparison between themselves and the most tragic victims (including those dead). As Lifton argues, in the face of an inhumane disaster, the natural order of living and dying was replaced by '*an unnatural order of death-dominated life*' (Lifton, 1971: 37, emphasis in the original). In short, the boundary between death and life was blurred when people were absorbed in the darkness of guilt: people lived a life engulfed in death. By referring to plays by Hotta Kiyomi, Inoue Hisashi and Okada Toshiki, the chapter first develops a socio-cultural analysis of why the sense of guilt tends to dominate the Japanese psyche after nuclear catastrophes, and, second, provides a detailed argument on how the respective theatre productions represent the matter in three distinct presentational modes.

Chapter Three, 'The Theatre of Sensate Atomisation', questions what forms of political ideology and dramaturgy are most appropriate and effective with regards to the A-bomb and post-Fukushima plays. Drawing an unnerving comparison between the totalitarian logic adopted by the Imperial military regime during the war and the rightist rhetoric of the post-Fukushima government, which suppresses small voices for the sake of consolidating the binding belief system, the chapter argues, referring to Jacques Rancière, that theatre should function as 'dissensus' rather than consensus (Rancière, 2010: 36-38). It does so by taking the case studies of Miyoshi Jurō and Takayama Akira, which question the basic function of virtuous political ideology upheld by an artist. By creating a fissure in the seemingly sensible political order, the two practitioners reawaken the audiences' senses through their plays, which, in turn, form the basis of redressed common sense that may be more suitable for nuclear-afflicted societies.

Chapter Four, 'The Comedy of Post-Humanism Absurdity', shows how the canon of the absurdist theatre was adopted and interpreted in the Japanese cultural context. In a country that lacks a history of monotheism, theological arguments occurred only in a restricted region after the nuclear catastrophes; especially in Nagasaki, in which the Christian heritage is strong. For this reason, the chapter focuses more on the ineptitude of not God but humans: how, after a short period of extolling the humanist concept, the *angura* theatre-makers in the late-1960s ultimately had to admit the failure of *shutaisei* (individuality, selfhood, human agency or subjectivity). With this in mind, the chapter mainly assesses the works of Betsuyaku Minoru and Matsui Shū. The former is a pioneer of Japanese post-humanist theatre, and the latter the foremost innovator of post-human theatre. The latter's theatre production blurred not only the demarcation line between an individual and another person, but also that between a human and an animal, in a comically absurdist manner.

In the final chapter, 'The Theatre of Nuclear Nostalgia', plays by Kitamura Sō and Fujita Takahiro are assessed through the framework of what is called 'nuclear time'. The chapter argues that, after any nuclear catastrophe, time cannot be represented through a linear model: time does not simply rush forward, but oscillates between the day of the disaster and the present. In a highly contaminated society, people are obliged to live in a temporal system consisting of a dual time frame: the past is always kept alive in the present. Drawing a parallel between the two plays brings into relief the analogous creative impulses underpinning the works of both artists. That is, more so than being affected by the nuclear disasters that happened in the past (such as Hiroshima and Fukushima), both theatre-makers, with more than a thirty-year age difference, predict an ominous future, in which the situation will be far worse than the already contaminated present. Given this premise, the temporal configuration of the plays in question becomes

warped, whereby both theatre-makers nostalgically dream about the temporarily peaceful present from the vantage point of a bleak future.

As is the case in any theatre history, the above structure is an outcome of my exclusions and inclusions. Thus, a number of important names in the canon of A-bomb plays such as Tanaka Chikao, Miyamoto Ken, Ōhashi Kiichi and Fujita Asaya, to name but a few, are consciously omitted. Moreover, some may rightly point out the absence of female artists such as playwright Murai Shimako, who has written a trilogy of A-bomb plays (*Hiroshima no onna sanbu-saku*), and theatre director Abe Hatsumi, who, together with dramaturge Nagashima Kaku, has composed a play called *Atomic Survivor* (2007) that reveals the money-driven politics behind the Japanese nuclear industry.

These playwrights and directors have provided equally noteworthy works of art, but they were omitted from the thesis solely because coherence and framework of the argument were prioritised over a formality of political correctness. Indeed, in the future, a completely new research with a different focus should be conducted to deliver a comprehensive argument on these excluded theatre-makers. In addition, it goes beyond the remit of this thesis to touch upon countless post-Fukushima theatre productions that sprouted from almost everywhere in Tokyo. In other words, the plays in this thesis were included in the argument precisely because, in one way or another, they exemplify that the once-evident border between column A and B (listed below) has been blurred and awaits a reconfiguration in the future.

	A	B
Space	Here	There
Being	Life	Death
Ideology	Science (Episteme)	Belief (Doxa)
Language	Rational (Human)	Absurd (Post-human)
Time	Present	Past

In order to develop a comprehensive argument on nuclear-afflicted theatre productions according to the above-noted framework, the analysis does not engage in assessing those plays that do not challenge the boundary between the prevalent antipodes. The tabulation of key theoretical points suggests that, apart from the physical damage caused by the radiation, metaphysical havoc was inflicted by the demolition of boundaries between what were once assumed as oppositional concepts. The thesis consistently argues that this factor distinguishes a nuclear-afflicted society and its plays. Keeping this in mind, one could argue that any critical study focusing on an A-bomb play or a post-Fukushima play cannot be merely empirical because a valid analysis only begins when it challenges the intellectual positions and conceptual nodes that have been fixed, and having been fixed, in respective societies.

By adopting a whole host of knowledge from politics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, which are integrated to the interdisciplinary remit of the Sociology of the Theatre, this thesis makes a multi-faceted contribution to the field of theatre scholarship, as well as to the greater understanding of Japanese society affected by nuclear disasters. It is an ambitious study, to say the least, especially when it is proposed to a society that venerates reticence and harmony. In addition, the ramifications of nuclear catastrophes are ongoing, with potentially conflicting voices erupting from every corner of society. Despite the daunting complexities of the topic, this thesis subscribes to a creed that it is the obligation of a Japanese theatre scholar to propose, humbly, an alternative Japanese theatre socio-history, which is, in fact, indivisibly intertwined with the nuclear-afflicted psyche of the people, from day one after World War II. Rather than erring on the side of caution and remaining silent, the thesis hopes that it becomes a lighthouse for those erring in the dark.

Chapter One

The Invisible Catastrophe

Amongst the oppositional concepts addressed through the table in the Introduction, the

first chapter, and to a certain extent the second chapter, will shed light on the spatial

disarray caused by the nuclear catastrophes. The tentative theory argued here is that in

nuclear catastrophes, the once static spatial boundary between the 'here' and the 'there'

is in constant flux, which, in turn, chronically perturbs the equilibrium of the people.

Many cannot feel safe, even at home, because their seemingly secure geographical

location could suddenly be designated as a contaminated zone; they could suddenly be

placed on the verge of a crisis appearing and disappearing in a chain reaction. The

parameters of victim and victimhood are thus constantly challenged. At times, the

disaster could envelop people with an immense sense of misery allowing them to

associate with the victims; yet, at other times, it could incur a feeling of guilt among the

same group of people for expressing pain though not being the most seriously affected

victims – whatever that terminology may suggest.

In order to extend the argument on the ambiguity of spatial configurations caused by

nuclear catastrophes, it is pertinent to refer to the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster in 1986.

According to Ulrich Beck, in the aftermath of the only level-seven nuclear accident prior

to Fukushima, trustworthy information turned into shameless lies overnight. That is, state

authorities made announcements that 'randomly switched the "contaminated" areas and

the "safe" areas' (Beck, 2011: 10). The aporia that Beck suggests through this comment

is what he calls the 'paradox of the unknown' (ibid.). Unlike other calamities where a

decision-making process becomes less difficult in proportion to the amount of

information attained, here, the situation is inverted. In nuclear catastrophes, as the

amount of knowledge increases and as the level of danger ascends, taking decisions becomes 'inevitable and also impossible' (ibid.). In tandem with the dismantling of physical boundaries marking safety and peril, the demarcation lines between 'the known (knowledge) and the unknown (absence of knowledge)' are blurred, raising the level of confusion and fear, and thereby deterring sensible actions (ibid.). When caught in the paradox of the unknown, people often cannot distinguish what is true and what is not: depending on the perspective upheld, the danger can be both absent and omnipresent. Due to the imperceptibility of the radioactive fallout, apart from those who lost their lives through its acute after-effects and its residual radioactivity, anyone can collect a whole host of information to support an essentially false theory without even noticing its fallacy.

Before the advent of nuclear catastrophes, both natural and man-made disasters have occurred, affecting and changing the order of a definite space. These disasters have been caused by seismic and cosmic movements such as mega-earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and asteroid collisions, or they have been triggered by human-related climate shifts like droughts, floods, avalanches and landslides. They have also been spawned by hygienic and medical calamities, including epidemics. In all of these cases, the range and amount of damage have been more or less visible. In pre-nuclear accidents, it has been possible to point to the hypocentre of the event and discern the geographical boundary between 'here' in the safety zone, and 'there' in the afflicted area. Conversely, when a plethora of lethal radioactive materials such as caesium, strontium, plutonium and other radioactive substances have been unleashed into the air and sea, the black-and-white evacuation map was suddenly repainted by an iridescent pattern. Depending on the capricious movements of winds and tides delivering massive amounts of toxic elements,

even a city located hundreds of kilometres away can be transformed into a hazardous area.

Additionally, in the case of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, known today more commonly by the subsequent Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant Disaster, the demarcation line between the here and the there was deliberately demolished by the government. That is, when the initial impact of the event was just beginning to abate two months afterwards, the Ministry of the Environment announced that the radioactive debris could be burnt in incinerators around the state, if the concentration of the radioactivity in those materials – when combusted to ashes and treated in a prescribed manner – was less than 8,000 Becquerel per kilogram. Three months afterwards the same Ministry announced a plan to deregulate the limit to 100,000 Becquerel per kilogramme.[5] US nuclear power expert and former nuclear industry executive Arnold Gundersen admonished the Ministry for its misconduct, claiming it was like 'recreating Fukushima all over again', sending into the air what had been deposited on the ground.[6] Despite this sharp warning, however, it was later reported that out of the forty-four prefectures and eighteen ordinance-designated cities that were asked by the government to accept the debris, nearly 60% of the regions agreed to the policy, with another 17% taking its adoption into consideration.[7]

Through the mass distribution of radioactive debris across the country, the common grammar of spatial comprehension disintegrated, since, apart from the toxic diffusion inevitably caused by the whim of nature, a colossal amount of malefic substances was widely spread by the will of men. A few days after the disaster, journalist Herald Welzer presciently noted in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that the name 'Fukushima', written either in the Roman alphabet or in Katakana (one of Japan's two syllabic scripts), was now regretfully being adopted globally as the tragic symbol of '*Abschaffung der*

Komfortzone' (Abolishment of the Comfort Zone, Welzer, 2011). Although this sweeping comment lacks evidence, it reveals the panic reactions caused in places thousands of miles away from Japan, in which even Germans assumed that no matter how far the place may be from the stricken Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant, there was no longer distinct proof that their area was comfortably free of radiation hotspots.

Illusory Digital Witnessing after Fukushima

To add even more complexity to the argument with regards to the spatial configuration of the Fukushima disaster, it is important to focus on the consequences that emerged in digital space. As is well known, the multivalent disaster that occurred on March 2011 was recorded as the first-ever 'computer-mediated catastrophe' in the history of Japan (Saitō, 2012: 46). Thus, apart from the seemingly omnipresent threat of the radioactivity, the disappearance of a comfort zone was triggered, perhaps more strongly, by the ubiquitous digital technology that made people feel closer to the event. Supported by Japan's high Internet penetration rate (87.2%) and Internet-connected mobile devices (96.3%), people across the state unwittingly encountered graphic images of, first, the monstrous tsunami waves swallowing villages like Onagawa and Kesennuma, and second, the pernicious hydrogen explosions of the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant – reactor one on 12 March and reactor three two days afterwards – and thus, even without physically being at the hypocentre of the event, millions of people became its 'immediate witnesses'.[8] For better or worse, the cyberspace connected the here and the there during and after the Fukushima disaster: the digital media eradicated distance.

Tropes adhering to the eradication of distance through cyberspace are addressed, most persuasively, through the words of Paul Virilio. With rhetorical eloquence, which reveals Virilio's infatuation with digital technology as well as abhorrence towards it, he argues that in the digital sphere, agents are able to perform instantaneous communication regardless of the intervals in 'time and space that actually separate them' (Virilio, 1997):

> Here the event does not take 'place' or rather, it takes place twice. The topic aspect gives way to the teletopic aspect, the unity of time and place is split between the transmission and reception of the signals, both here and there simultaneously, thanks to the technical wizardry of electromagnetic interactivity. (ibid.)

Before the massive expansion of the technological wizardry called the Internet, people living in Antarctica and Australia would never have experienced the same event simultaneously. However, no matter how advanced this technology may seem, there is still a drawback that hinders it from surpassing physical experience. A major problem occurring from the spatiotemporal synthesis is that online experience is ultimately a sensory illusion instigated by the real-time media that is only ostensibly defying distance. In fact, Virilio, who studied under Merleau-Ponty in the 1960s, consistently emphasised the primacy of human physicality. Despite being obsessed by technological advancements, he repeatedly asserted the importance of physical presence by citing his mentor's words: 'it is not the eye which sees, but *the body as a receptive totality*' (Virilio, 2004: 22, emphasis in the original). And because of the lack of receptive totality in these computer-mediated events, Virilio states that it inevitably causes untoward collateral effects. Chiming with the argument addressed in previous paragraphs, Virilio asserts that one of them is the destruction of the sense of reality, caused by the quasi-assimilation of the here and the there: a 'spatial and temporal disorientation, a sweeping deconstruction of the real environment' (Virilio, 2000: 68). Understandably, the digital agents could feel confused by being split between two realities; they could experience a perplexing bifocal

reality enhanced by the 'pollution of distances' (Virilio, 2004: 115), which eventually

winds up in a 'mental confusion of near and far, present and future, real and unreal'

(Virilio, 1995: 35).

Indeed, digital media is highly useful as it provides a welter of information that people of

previous generations could never have achieved over their lifetimes. However, in the

aftermath of Fukushima disaster, it was precisely this information overload, that

triggered mental disorientation. When they experienced the digitally-transmitted disaster,

people (especially those in the peripheral areas of the event), became confused as they

were caught between two synchronic realities of the online and the offline. When a

person residing in Tokyo went online, the chain reaction of disasters was far from over,

even weeks and months afterwards. Conversely, when the same person physically

glanced around, apart from the planned rolling blackouts and reduced lighting in the

cityscape due to imposed energy-saving policies, the disaster already seemed like

something in the past.

A comment provided by a psychotherapy patient living away from the afflicted Tōhoku

area substantiates this argument. The patient was tormented by a sense of guilt because

'the disaster area [over there] seems so horrible' and he/she could not validate the fact

that it was okay for him/her 'to be living normally like this [over here]'.[9] With chaos and

pain on the one hand, and normalcy and amnesia on the other, when the rift between two

conflicting realities widened, a moral quandary swelled up among the digital victims.

Thus, even when they, fortunately, recovered their sense of normal life, concurrently, a

tortuous sense of guilt ensued.

Owing to the unprecedented permeation of Internet technology, the old territorialized

notion of a disaster was more or less dismantled. Soon afterwards, the two separate

locations of the here and the there were, psychologically, united. It is crucial to note that

this should be called unification, and not synthesis or symbiosis, as in the latter cases, dissident opinions are retained within the entirety. In contrast, what happened immediately after the disaster was that many Japanese, especially those living in or north of Tokyo, attempted to unite mentally with the most serious victims under the slogan of *hisaisha no tachiba* (literally, 'from the standpoint of the afflicted people'). Despite the multitudinous nature of the event, they pretended as if the difference in outcomes, opinions and conditions was non-existent, and diligently tried to see reality through the eyes of the unequivocal victim.

Arguably, the unification was caused because people mistook the instantaneity of digital communication as the eradication of distance. That is, although it is ultimately an illusion, the digital merger of the here and the there made people feel physically closer to the event – allowing them to imagine the lives of the most serious victims. To expand the parameter of Virilio's argument on the primacy of human physicality, however, people soon realised that the act of digital witnessing crucially lacked the physical presence arguably indispensable to a testimony. Gradually, therefore, the level of legitimacy as regards the act of witnessing started to be gauged not by the measurement of speed but by the assessment of distance: when living physically closer to the hypocentre, the more trustworthy the information. And as a backlash against the mass amount of digital witnesses, who through this act claimed moral legitimacy to speak about the event, derogatory remarks towards those who only monitored the accident from afar gradually proliferated in the digital sphere.

A specific performance art event epitomised the polemic around the digital witnesses. On the morning of 28 August 2011, Takeuchi Kōta, a young performance artist based in Tokyo known for his politically-charged artworks, appeared in front of the so-called 'Fuku-ichi camera': a live webcam installed in front of the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear

Power Plant. Disguised as a worker clad in a full-body radiation suit, he directly pointed at the centre of the camera for approximately twenty minutes. According to art critic Sawaragi Noi, this performance of *Finger Pointing Worker* turned into a gesture of accusation aimed at two parties. First, the artist exposed the irresponsible standpoint of digital spectators. When a performer dressed in a Hazmat suit – a person who is risking his life to stop the nuclear fallout – aggressively pointed at the monitor, the act developed into a denunciation of 'those who safely watched the video from afar through a monitor free of radiation threat' (Sawaragi, 2012: 172). Yet, second, the artist also did not forget to include himself among those at fault. By holding a smartphone device in his other hand, in which the video of the performance was live-streamed, Takeuchi was 'also monitored by himself [on the screen of the smart phone], who was pointing at the camera' (ibid.). Through online media, the arrow of accusation boomeranged back to him, who, as an artist, became a temporary power plant worker only to deliver the audacious performance inspired by Vito Acconci: the New York-based artist who, mainly in the late-1960s and 1970s, agitated the public through numerous video performances (ibid.). Frankly speaking, Takeuchi's act was no less irresponsible, if not heedless, than those digital spectators blithely spreading rumours about his performance.

Takeuchi's performance is, indeed, full of contestations when considering the ethical responsibility to the catastrophe. However, his performance should be noted here because it exemplifies the collective psyche of the people weeks and months after the first ever computer-mediated catastrophe. In short, the digital sphere turned into a hotbed of criticism towards everyone and anyone, who sanctimoniously performed as if they were legitimate witnesses. It was an unproductive verbal assault, as it eroded the mental stability of most people, who were living physically away from the heavily afflicted areas. Nevertheless, they started blaming each other for their ethically irresponsible

conduct – irresponsible in the sense that they were voicing the event happening over there, whilst physically being safe over here. And, out of fear of being attacked due to unwittingly saying something indiscreet, many gradually started assuming that if they lacked consummate understanding of the experience, they should simply remain silent. Moreover, since inadequate witnessing could subsume the catastrophe into a false account, they started feeling not only reluctant but also guilty for voicing testimonies based on digital experiences.

The American Censorship and 'Atoms for Peace'

In the case of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, there were, of course, no digital victims and thus less topological confusion. Due to the lack of real-time 'interactive techniques', such as telephone or television, not to mention the Internet (Virilio, 1997), people who were affected by the events were only those living in the afflicted areas. To be precise, however, the proliferation of information on atomic bombs was restricted less by the lack of technological inventions, and more by the severe censorship applied by the American Occupation Forces. The 'Press Code', as it is infamously known today, played a lethal role in suppressing, and eradicating, the voices of immediate atomic bomb victims. Before expanding the argument on the Press Code, however, at this point it is important to provide the basic facts of what happened on the two historic days – 6 and 9 August 1945 – as these facts speak volumes about the extraordinary impacts of the event.

Let us take Hiroshima first. When the uranium 235 atomic bomb Little Boy was dropped from Boeing B-29 Superfortress Enola Gay, an enormous flash of light was first emitted at latitude 1,500 meters; 43 seconds later, at latitude 580 meters, the bomb exploded like

a 'little sun', and through the heat ray (35%), the shock wave (50%) and the radiation (15%), approximately 70,000 human beings were instantaneously erased from the planet. Before the end of that year, 150,000 citizens, mostly non-combatants like women, children and the elderly, lost their lives through acute after-effects and residual radioactivity (Okuda 2010: 28). On 25 July 1952, *Chūgoku Shimbun*, the daily newspaper of Hiroshima reported that, by 1950, bomb-related deaths had reached 282,000.[10] Three days after the tragedy in Hiroshima, on 9 August 1945, the Plutonium 239 atomic bomb Fat Man was dropped on Nagasaki from B-20 Box Car, killing 73,884 innocent people before the end of that year, including 250 American prisoners of war (ibid.: 32).

One of the first witness-poets of the event, Shōda Shinoe, vividly described in one of her poems how, in an instant, the city was transformed into a living hell: '*Pika-don* [an onomatopoeia, meaning 'flash-boom'], brief silence, eyes open to the mighty pandemonium of dreadful groaning' (Shōda, 1983).[11] Due to the gory images that the poem conveys in such clarity, Shōda later revealed that she published her anthology *Sange*, a collection of poems that reveals personal tragedies of the atomic bomb victims 'at the risk of capital punishment from the Occupation Forces' (Umehara, 2010). As Shōda's unequivocal testimony reveals, the Press Code prohibited 'dissemination of or agitation for any reports on the consequences of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings – including the consequence of a desire for peace' (Hersey, 2001: 180).

As for theatre activities, they all came under the purview of the Pictorial Press and Broadcast Division (PPB) of General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (SCAP). As James R. Brandon affirms in his diligent study of post-war theatre (mainly, Kabuki) and American censorship, within PPB, censorship and control of theatre became the responsibility of two agencies: the Civil Censorship Detachment

(CCD), which undertook the task of suppressing 'feudalist, militarist and ultranationalist messages in the mass media' that had led Japan to continue on with the war of annihilation; and, the Civil Information and Education Division (CI & E), which carried out the task of indoctrinating American models of 'democracy, freedom and individual liberty' through pertinent media including *shingeki*; literally, 'new drama', as opposed to Kabuki (Brandon, 2006: 9-11). Seeing *shingeki* as an 'antidote' to feudalistic Kabuki, SCAP used it as a propaganda medium to 'promote Americanism' as well as to 'refine the Japanese theatre aesthetics along Western (i.e. American) realistic lines' (Leiter, 2009: 260). Without much consideration for the local tradition and culture, they encouraged Japanese theatre-makers to present plays that proliferated what SCAP considered to be democratically superior ideas, written by writers like Thornton Wilder (ibid.).

To say more, in just one week in February 1946, to swiftly replace the Meiji Constitution of 1890, SCAP initiated, monitored and established the new national charter, which focused on 'Anglo-American and European democratic ideals' (Dower, 2000: 346). The SCAP presented themselves as if they were only lending a hand, merely helping the 'post-surrender conservative cabinets', which represented the 'freely expressed will' of people desiring democracy – something that no one, 'including SCAP, the people, and or the rapidly revolving governments themselves believed for a moment' (ibid.: 348). Witnessing the highly coercive indoctrination of democracy by the Occupation Forces, a cultural critic, Kawakami Tetsutarō once denounced the post-war liberation as 'a distributed liberty' (Kawakami, 1970: 446).

As Kyō MacLear argues through her study on artworks after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, during the censorship years, 'the tens of thousands of civilians who lived and worked in Hiroshima were eerily absent from official pictures. They inhabited a netherland beyond

the visible world' (MacLear, 1999: 164). Tamed by regulations, the Japanese assumed that they would be severely punished if they breached any protocol enforced by the Occupation Forces. Emasculated by such a sense of fear, most Japanese opted to remain silent, even when the CCD was disbanded in 1949. It was only after two years, on 8 September 1951, when the Peace Treaty of San Francisco was signed, and another seven months afterwards on 28 April 1952 when the Treaty finally came into effect to end the American occupation, that people gradually started voicing the horrific event. Though slowly and tentatively, artists in various genres began to express leitmotivs that underlined the unprecedented quality of the atomic bombs. That is, they assessed the trans-geographical quality of the event, which not only affected the lives over there at the epicentre of atomic bombings, but also arguably had a significant impact on all humanity.

On 6 August 1952, the weekly pictorial magazine *Asahi Graph* (*Asahi Grafu*) published the horrific photographs capturing the immediate impact of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. In October 1951, a collection of notes written by Hiroshima children, which was edited in a volume titled *Children of Hiroshima* (*Genbaku no ko*) by a pedagogy scholar Osada Hiroshi, was published. And the film of the same title based on Osada's book and directed by Shindō Kaneto, in which the heroine confronts the presence of ongoing tragedies through everyday living, was screened in Japan in August 1952 (and later abroad, including at the Cannes Film Festival, to critical acclaim). In 1955, Kurosawa Akira released a provocative film called *I Live in Fear* (*Ikimono no kiroku*), which depicted the fear-ridden psychology of an old factory worker, who desperately tries to persuade his family to relocate to Brazil as he does not want to be killed by nuclear accidents. In terms of theatres, in July 1952, right after the Peace Treaty came into effect, playwright Miyoshi Jūrō presented *He Who Risked* (*Okashita mono*). According to Ōzasa Yoshio, it was arguably 'the first play that was inspired by the

experience of Hiroshima, and confronted the unknown reality' (Ōzasa, 1985: 78).[12] Indeed, the theoretical tenet that runs through these artworks is the question of an unknown reality. The artists could not help but wonder if nuclear accidents affected not only the lives of immediate victims, but also all of humanity – damaging the mental equilibriums of countless people through invisible threat.

These artworks had a considerable impact on the public and resonated strongly with even those who did not directly experience the atomic bomb, because, in a very literal sense, the citizens realised for the first time that their lives were not free from the threat of contamination. In tandem with the proliferation of these artworks, the series of nuclear-weapon tests that were conducted around the time consolidated the sense of danger among the public. As early as 1946, the United States had already commenced testing nuclear devices in the Bikini Atoll, in the Pacific, both in the air and underwater. The Soviet Union (1949), the United Kingdom (1952), France (1960) and China (1964) soon followed. As Suga Hidemi clarifies, in most cases, sacrifices came from people living in the nearby colonial settlements or those who resided near the borders of the state (Suga, 2012: 17). Furthermore, the anti-nuclear voice gained momentum when the most crucial nuclear accident after the two atomic bombs tragically occurred on 1 March 1954: the radiation exposure of the Dai-go Fukuryū Maru tuna fishing boat.

When the US hydrogen bomb 'Bravo' was tested in the Bikini Atoll the blast was more than twice the size engineers had predicted, and was later announced to have the radioactive power equal to 1,000 Hiroshima bombs. Following US guidelines, a 28-meter-long Japanese tuna fishing boat, Dai-go Fukuryū Maru, was correctly operating outside the designated danger zone, a 150-kilometre radius from the detonation. Nevertheless, together with 236 Marshall Islanders, the boat and 23 Japanese fishers aboard were exposed to an enormous amount of radioactive ash (Teramoto, 2013: 83).

The boat immediately returned to Yaizu harbour in Shizuoka, but all crewmembers were later diagnosed with various radiation sicknesses. Six months afterwards, the radio operator, Kuboyama Aikichi, died aged 40 from acute radiation sickness.

The death report played a major role in increasing public fear of nuclear power, of which most Japanese had little or no information prior to the end of the Press Code. Moreover, it was later confirmed that other fishing boats in the sea the same day were also exposed to radiation, and that vegetables, tea and milk were contaminated due to the aerial currents carrying toxic substances (Yoshimi, 2012: 27). Not surprisingly, for the first time in Japanese history, the majority of people – 70% according to the *Asahi Shimbun* poll conducted after the accident – felt an imminent threat that could possibly take their lives. Thus, eventually, a 'mass panic was observed across the country' (Yoshimi, 2012: 193; Suga, 2012: 15). Induced by the third nuclear atrocity to kill Japanese citizens, many people, at last, realised that the events over there were also prevalent over here.

When transposed for a consideration of theatre, it is worth noting that after Fukushima, Romeo Castellucci and Ameya Norimizu wilfully presented a double bill site-specific performance in Yume No Shima (literally, Dream Island), an artificial island built using waste landfill, which was once the home to the tuna fishing boat exposed to the nuclear fallout. Since the two performances – *The Phenomenon Called I* (*Watakushi to iu genshō*) by Castellucci and *The Ground* (*Jimen*) by Ameya respectively – were presented on 16 and 17 September 2011, that is, only six months after the Fukushima catastrophe, many of the audience members were still in a state of chaos: struggling to cope with a gamut of unexpected aftermaths, they were still not able to restore stability to their lives. Thus, when the audience observed Castellucci's rather straightforward representation of the tsunami disaster, several rattled critics condemned the Italian theatre director for his imprudence to present such an unnerving performance.

In the performance, Castellucci presents a huge monument constituted of 625 white plastic chairs, twenty-five of them aligned in twenty-five rows, in an outdoor venue at Yume No Shima. The monument of chairs strictly laid out in right angles remains still, as audience members enter the site and slowly walk around it. In one of the chairs, a boy sits. When, finally, the audience is settled on a nearby hill to observe the monument from above, a middle-aged man, performed by Ameya, reminiscent of a prophet of Greek tragedy with a beard, a cane and a white cape, enters the site. He gradually approaches and securely envelops the boy with a cape he wears, which, by its scraping sound, could be recognised as a plastic sheet. Then, Ameya leaves the boy behind, rather reluctantly.
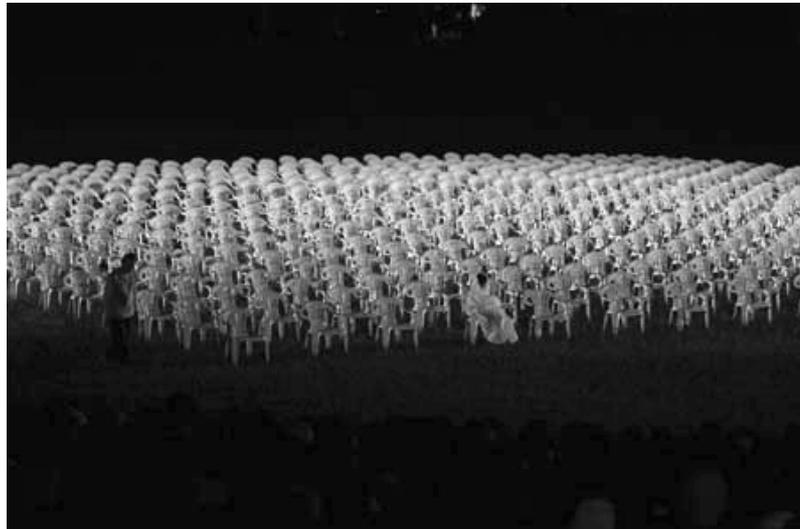
Kataoka, Yōta, 2011. *The Phenomenon Called I* by Romeo Castellucci. Festival/Tokyo.

Soon afterwards, one of the chairs trembles for a split second. At first, it seems as though the plastic chair has just been blown by the wind and thus moved an inch unplanned. A few moments later, however, another chair trembles, followed by another, and another, and in no time the audience witnesses a colossal cascading of chairs, which visualises a phenomenon reminiscent of the massive tsunami in March that swallowed the lives of more than 15,000. Accompanied by an enormous cracking sound, chairs are dragged into the eerie darkness of the far right-hand side of the field opposite the hill on which the audiences are settled. In no more than ten minutes, the field is demolished, leaving

behind several chairs here and there scattered like tsunami wreckage, and the boy wrapped in a plastic sheet, who inevitably recalls a disaster victim.

In reaction to this meticulously calculated performance, Japanese theatre scholar Morihiro Nīno argued that on the one hand, 'the cluster of chairs hauled to a single direction was, indeed, a magnificent spectacle to watch', however, on the other hand, 'it did not seriously consider how the victims of Fukushima would feel' if they had attended the show. What is called into question here is the aporia first introduced by Theodor Adorno after the Holocaust: weighing the ethical responsibility of the artist against the value of art. Reminiscent of Adorno's famous maxim, which declared that 'writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' (Adorno, 1967: 34), Nīno condemned Castellucci's lack of ethical consideration by stating that 'If I had lost a family member or a close friend in the March 11 catastrophe, I doubt that it would have been possible for me to watch that very straightforward moment, in which the cluster of chairs was dragged to somewhere' (Nīno, 2011). Despite being indubitably moved by the phenomenological spectacle, or, precisely because he was so viscerally affected by it, Nīno concluded that 'the capacity of a performance to generate a sublime ritualistic ceremony, and the ability of that same performance to heal the minds of the victims are different' (ibid.).

Whether or not a post-catastrophe performance should focus primarily on healing the minds of victims is highly debatable. Artists may indeed console victims by materialising a vision that transcends the dire reality and galvanises the people. However, an overly diligent consideration towards the victims could, in turn, inhibit the artist from delivering a powerful narrative that surpasses quick-fix and short-term solutions. To submit to the Adornian understanding of art as a language that defends human ethics is, indeed, understandable in times of crisis. However, it could also be said that, to borrow from Jerzy Grotowski, 'art cannot be bound by the law of common morality' (Grotowski,

2002: 257). To extend the argument by aligning with Grotowski, arguably, the political potency of art lies in its very capacity to exceed the boundary of platitudinous common sense. No matter how devastating the situation may be, an artist should always be unswayed and maintain a certain 'distance' from the event: although the initial creative impulse may come out from the subjective emotion towards the victims, the artist should also be able to objectively criticise that sympathy. In other words, an artist should always retain the tension between the poles of subjectivity and objectivity.

Distance is the crucial concept that underpins Nīno's accusation towards Castellucci. That is, the kernel of the argument is more or less the same with Takeuchi's admonishment of the digital victims. Even though Nīno admits that he is not the victim of the incident who has lost a close family member or a friend, he accuses Castellucci, a foreign artist who is far more distanced from the event, for expressing the incident. By the same token, it is interesting to note that, to the best of my knowledge, not a single critic has denounced Ameya, a Japanese theatre-maker whose father worked in the Tokyo Electric Power Company, for creating a huge balloon in the shape of Fat Man: the Nagasaki plutonium bomb. Once again, what is called into question is the confusion of distance: a critic residing in Tokyo is condemning an Italian director from the standpoint of a tsunami victim in Tōhoku. Nīno, as well as many others who attended the performance, demanded Castellucci abandon artistic objectivity and see from the standpoint of the afflicted people (*hisaisha no tachiba*). Put simply, although the racial aspect was not clearly mentioned, they assumed that it was irresponsible for Castellucci to represent the event happening over here, whilst physically being safe somewhere abroad.

In order to extend the argument on the conflation of different distances in post-nuclear catastrophe society, we should return to the public reactions incurred from the Dai-go

Fukuryū Maru accident. As Yoshimi Shunya argues in *Atoms for Dream* (2012), throughout most of the 1950s, the Japanese public felt closer to the nuclear threat than ever before. Due to the first nuclear accident, which was widely reported free of American censorship at the time, no matter where that person resided in Japan, the message from the majority of the public in terms of the proliferation of atomic and hydrogen bombs was 'No' (Yoshimi, 2012: 193). It was the start of what became known as Japan's 'nuclear allergy' (Osnos, 2011). Emblematic of the situation is a petition that was started soon after the accident. Yasui Kaoru, a law scholar and the leader of a community hall in the Suginami district of Tokyo, started a petition, supported by his wife Tazuko, for the abolishment of atomic and hydrogen bombs. The middle-class housewives participating in Tazuko's book club first spread the word, and, reflecting national concern over the incident, an astonishing thirty-two million petition signatures – approximately one-third of the population – were eventually collected (Yoshimi, 2012: 28).

Despite the upsurge of the anti-nuclear movement, however, neither the US nor Japanese authorities paid any serious heed to the poignant appeal. Lewis Strauss, the chairperson of the Atomic Energy Commission, blatantly declared after the accident that the residents of the Marshall Islands were completely 'healthy and happy' and even suggested that the Dai-go Fukuryū Maru fishing boat may have been 'a spy boat of the communists […] hired by the Russians' (Yoshimi, 2012: 27). Furthermore, even though Kumatori Toshiyuki, a doctor who cared for the crewmember Kuboyama, announced that his cause of death was acute radiation sickness, the US government claimed the death was due to hepatitis from a transfusion. The reactions of the Japanese authorities were no less outlandish. Nakasone Yasuhiro, an influential politician, who later served as the prime minister from 1982 to 1987, brazenly proposed the first nuclear power budget

to the Diet, only a day after the accident at the Bikini Atoll. Two days later, on 4 March 1954, the House of Representatives approved the budget (Suga, 2012: 21).

What these shocking responses reveal is that neither the US nor the Japanese governments wanted to abolish nuclear power; for different reasons, yet mutually underpinned by the aim for a more profitable future. For the US, nuclear power provided them with uninhibited military capital: an absolute hegemony in the global political sphere. Especially after the Soviet Union had succeeded in nuclear testing in 1949, the US feared losing its global dominance and thus, from 1951 to 1953, they conducted as many as 'thirty-six nuclear tests, including firings of nuclear cannonballs, in order to exhibit their military power' (Kuznick and Tanaka: 2011). What soon followed these experiments were the mass protests around the globe. Yet astutely realising that public revulsion could possibly derail the Eisenhower administration's plans, the US authorities conceived an alternative plan that could rebrand the negative image of nuclear power (Kuznick, 2011).

Stefan Possony, Defence Department consultant to the Psychological Strategy Board, suggested to the American government that 'the atomic bomb will be accepted far more readily if at the same time atomic energy is being used for constructive ends' (ibid.). Possony was proposing that the US should tactfully forge a future associating the image of nuclear power with life, productivity and evolution; and dissociated from the impressions of the atomic bomb – death, destruction and retrogression. To this end, on 8 December 1953, President Dwight David Eisenhower delivered his famous 'Atoms for Peace' speech at the United Nations. Taking in Possony's advice, the President promised that the US would devote 'its entire heart and mind to find the way by which the miraculous inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death, but consecrated to his life' (ibid.). At least ostensibly, many were persuaded by the hopeful vision of

nuclear energy, and the US government was given the approval to continue its nuclear development.

Nakasone was one of many who were moved by Eisenhower's powerful speech. He believed that if Japan did not participate in 'the largest discovery of the twentieth century', then it would 'forever be a fourth-rate nation' (Osnos, 2011). What appealed to him most was the economic boom and national development promised by the adoption of nuclear reactors. Therefore, Nakasone and many Japanese authorities also wished, like the US, to dissociate the stigmatised image of the atomic bomb from the presumably fruitful idea of nuclear energy. According to Okuda Hiroko, in order to accomplish this task, both the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law and Nagasaki International Cultural City Construction Act was approved by the Upper and Lower Houses by a unanimous vote on 10 May 1954, just two months after the first nuclear power budget had passed the Diet (Okuda, 2010: 90). It was a mindless attempt to crystallise the tragic history of the past by excessively commemorating the two cities, which, if done well, would perhaps let the people forget and move forward. Through the construction of the Memorial Monument for Hiroshima City of Peace and Nagasaki's Statue of Peace Memorial (note how the two words – peace and memory – are used in both monuments), the government wished to entomb the individual sufferings of the past, and transform the tombstone into a 'cornerstone of future peace and prosperity' (ibid.: 89).

As Japan's commemorative plan coincided with the US's nuclear rebranding strategy, at one point the two parties converged on an audacious solution: the construction of the first nuclear power plant in Hiroshima. In early 1955, representative Sidney Yates of Illinois introduced legislation to build a 60,000-kilowatt generating plant that would 'make the atom an instrument for kilowatts rather than killing' (Kuznick, 2011). Thomas

E. Murray, a member of the US Atomic Energy Commission, backed up this legislation

by saying that constructing a nuclear reactor in a country that had experienced the atomic

bombs could be considered 'a dramatic and Christian gesture' which would liberate the

people of two cities from atrocious memories (Kuznick and Tanaka, 2011). To our great

disbelief, even the then mayor of Hiroshima, Hamai Shinzō, agreed to the idea. When

Hamai was informed that a resolution for constructing a nuclear power plant in

Hiroshima was submitted by representative Yates, he responded as follows:

> Adopting a nuclear energy facility used for the first time for peaceful pursuits,
> in a city that was victimised by nuclear weapon for the first time in history,
> will form a commemoration of the dead victims. I think that the citizens of
> Hiroshima will agree with using the nuclear power of 'death' as a power for
> 'life' (Yoshimi, 2012: 31).

In the end, the Hiroshima nuclear power plant project did not materialise. As Yoshimi

argues, this was not out of respect for the atomic bomb victims, but most likely because

the Economic Council Agency feared that an import of US nuclear power plants would

cause financial damage to the Japanese electricity industry (Yoshimi, 2012: 31-32). In

short, only a decade after the two nuclear catastrophes, the ethical objectives aiming for

higher humanity had been taken over by monetary values in pursuit of economic

advances. As Nancy indicates, from this point onwards in Japan, 'wealth, health,

productivity, knowledge, authority' and even 'imagination', were measured by a single

guideline (Nancy, 2015: 34). That is, from the yardstick of what Marx calls the 'general

equivalent': a benchmark, which gauges all commodities of the world through the single

criterion of the mode of capital (Marx, 1990: 39-42).

Even though the audacious plan for the Hiroshima nuclear power plant was called off,

the campaign for the peaceful use of atomic energy, or the avid pursuit of economic

growth, continued without a hitch. The campaign was supported by proponents like

Shōriki Matsutarō, the owner of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper and the Nippon

Television network, who later came to be known as the father of Japanese baseball and nuclear power. It is through these historical complications that the director-auteur Okada Toshiki later developed his post-Fukushima play *God Bless Baseball* (2015). Reflecting on the fact that baseball and nuclear power are twin cultural imports, which equally consolidated the US political standpoint in Japan as well as other East Asian countries, Okada created a political theatre with the aim of uncovering the continuing American politico-cultural domination in Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

Presented in 2015 at the Asia Culture Complex in Gwangju, Korea, in *God Bless Baseball*, two women, one Korean and the other Japanese, each performed by an actress of opposite nationality, casually speak of the popularity of baseball in their countries. In due course, it becomes apparent that, in the play, baseball is a metaphor for American cultural propaganda blithely proliferated in both countries. An object that succinctly symbolises this cultural indoctrination is the looming scenographic backdrop reminiscent of a gigantic umbrella, created by Takamine Tadasu. Through the object, a synthesised voice with an American accent and a paternal poise is delivered to the Asian actors. Through the interaction between the voice and the actors, what becomes clear is the elaborate American diplomacy, through which the Asian countries have been controlled under the so-called US nuclear umbrella.

However, in this play, unlike the docile standpoints the Korean and Japanese governments take in reality, the characters take direct action, quite literally, to demolish the US dominance. The defiant act is made during the penultimate scene of the play. In the scene, the Korean actor Lee Yoon Jae shoots out water from a hose towards the umbrella-shaped backdrop. Since the object is moulded by solidified potato flour, when enough water is absorbed, lumps of flour drip and drop to the ground. Lee Hong Yie, the Korean dramaturge of the play suggests that the water spurting out of the hose reminds

Koreans of 'water cannons of the local police flushing out demonstrators' in recent anti-government movements.[13] Yet beyond the local Korean narrative, what the watering suggests in many Asian countries is that of one's decisive will to overcome the US political dominance, and imagine a liberated world beyond their control. In fact, just before Lee starts to drench the stage, the Korean actress Wi Sung Hee, standing close to Lee, asserts that 'up till here [before the watering] was an allegory about reality. From here on is an imagined fiction that does not yet have a reality to correspond to.'[14] The comment acknowledges the importance of developing an imagination that surpasses the status quo. Through the above-noted comment by Wi, who performs a Japanese woman, Okada suggests to both the Japanese and Korean audiences the criticality of imagining outside the collective narrative coerced from above: that is, the US. Through the daring act of a man melting down the umbrella-like scenography, Okada calls into mind the importance of fighting against the imminent threat and not being swayed by what John Dower, one of the leading historians on the study of post-war Japan, calls 'popular consciousness' (Dower, 2000: 36).

It is important to note that Okada was capable of producing a counter-history of Japan through his play, precisely because over sixty years have passed since the end of the Occupation. Conversely, in 1955, when Shōriki's newspaper co-sponsored the much-hyped Atoms For Peace Exhibition, it was almost impossible for ordinary citizens to imagine beyond what was proliferated through the media. Therefore, when the exhibition opened on 1 November of that year, and then toured around ten cities including Hiroshima, approximately three million visitors – one in every thirty citizens across the country – blithely attended the event (Yoshimi, 2012: 128). The exhibition was used as an apparatus to deliver a message from Eisenhower, who condescendingly declared that the exhibition was 'a symbol of our countries' [US and Japan] mutual determination that

the great power of the atom shall henceforward be dedicated to the arts of peace'
(Kuznick, 2011). The outcome of the campaign was greater than expected. When the
Asahi Shimbun conducted a poll in July 1957 asking citizens if they were afraid of
atomic and hydrogen bombs, around 90% answered that they were. However, ten years
later, when the General Administrative Agency of the US Cabinet conducted a similar
poll in Japan and asked if 'encouraging peaceful pursuit of nuclear energy would
improve the lives of people', astonishingly, 66% responded 'Yes' (Yoshimi, 2012: 193).

Through messages proliferated through the media ameliorating the image of nuclear
energy, the history of abominable power had now been transformed into an emblem of
hope. In merely a decade, despite the rise of a nationwide anti-nuclear movement in
Japan after the Bikini Toll accident, most Japanese had changed the country's future path
diametrically with regards to nuclear power *en masse*. To refer, again, to the phrasing of
Dower, unlike Okada's character in *God Bless Baseball*, many were swayed by the
power of 'popular consciousness' (Dower, 2000: 36). At this juncture, any *Nihonjin-ron*
theorists (literally, a theory of the Japanese) could readily conclude that harmony-
conscious ethics is a conspicuous trait observed among Japanese. While harmony-
oriented ethics, propounded by scholars such as Nakane Chie are widely persuasive, the
drawback of this theory is that it omits the social aspects underpinning human agency.
That is, harmony-conscious ethics are perceived as an attribute innate and exclusive to
the Japanese, rather than providing nuanced arguments in which specific circumstances
the predilection towards harmony is consolidated. Therefore, the next section expands an
argument on why subjecting to conformity is often considered an ethically commendable
act in Japan – specifically, in times of nuclear crises. Although *Nihonjin-ron* theories
would also be adopted, the argument will focus less on the ethnic and more on the socio-

historical: that is, how the harmony-oriented ethics is deeply embedded in Japanese societies and why that tendency is consolidated in post-nuclear societies.

Code of *Wa*: The Politics of Invisible *Kūki*

In order to understand why what Uchino describes as the 'unarticulated subjectivity', or the self that is closer to a 'pre-modern undifferentiated self', still pervades in contemporary Japan, it is necessary to take a few steps back at this point (Uchino, 2009: 56). To be precise, it is essential to understand how the words 'society' and 'individual' were imported to Japan in the first place. Neither the concept nor the word 'society', in the sense of European civil society, existed in Japan before the end of the nineteenth century. From 1796, when *genotschap* was first translated from Dutch to Japanese as 'gathering, meeting', until the 1870s, when the translation of *shakai* (literally, gathering of associations) was integrated into everyday language, Japanese struggled for around a century – with nearly forty different translations – to figure out the optimum term for describing a concept lacking in their culture (Yanabu, 1982: 4; Kimura, N., 2012: 270). Yanabu Akira argues that for 'at least the past millennium', the word *seken* (literally, between communities), which suggests a circle of close-knit relationships, had sufficed to describe everyday interactions (Yanabu, 1982: 19). For this reason, even when the translation of the word 'society' was finally fixed, the word did not immediately take root in Japan. The concept of private persons gathering to form a civic value, and passing it on to what Jürgen Habermas calls the 'public sphere' was, ultimately, a foreign activity irrelevant to their reality (Habermas, 1989).

The concept of society proliferated from the mid-1870s onwards. There are several arguments with regard to who holds the right to the first usage of the word *shakai* – from

Japanese enlightenment writer Fukuzawa Yukichi to philosopher Nishi Amane. However, in general, it is attributed to a prominent journalist and Kabuki dramatist, Fukuchi Ōchi, who adopted the word in a newspaper article on 14 January 1875 (Kimura, N., 2012: 279). Gradually, the word entered the arena of everyday language and, around a decade later, rather belatedly, the concept of 'individual' (*kojin*, literally 'individual person') was also translated and introduced to Japan (Abe K., 1995: 28). What should be noted from this brief linguistic history is that, oddly, in Meiji Japan, the idea of society preceded the concept of the individual.

Nishio Kanji argues that, in the strictest sense, the concept of 'society' came into existence 'only in Christian European countries, after the rise of the Third Estate in the French Revolution', and thus, arguably, the idea of society materialised on the premise of autonomous individuals (Nishio, 2007: 168). Hand in hand, the two notions were conceptualised: 'individuals could stand as individual only when they continuously managed the tension between respective societies' (ibid.: 108). In Japan, however, when the word 'society' was introduced, not only was the term individual (*kojin*) absent but, moreover, the notion of 'autonomous individual' was still largely 'lacking' (Saitō, 1977). In fact, before the abrupt and largely imported cultural modernisation in the Meiji era, achieving a harmonious consensus in units of *seken* was considered virtuous, arguably more than raising individual voices. Indeed, as Inoue Tadashi asserts, when he or she was said to have a good reputation in *seken*, it in effect meant that 'that person does not deviate from the convention of the village' (Inoue, T., 1988: 4). In other words, before the implementation of the concept of 'society', maintaining harmonious relationships was of utmost importance in the country.

The above-noted argument is provided not because the thesis wants to emphasis the *nihonjin-ron* viewpoint, which avows the innate difference between Japanese and others,

but because the correct understanding of *seken* is necessary when trying to analyse the collective unification in post-nuclear Japanese societies. In other words, the crux of the argument lies in highlighting the absence of what Uchino describes as 'dichotomous dynamics of the self and the other (whether setting the other as a person, or the other as a system)' in post-nuclear Japan (Uchino, 1996: 105).

Through etymological analysis of the Chinese kanji characters, Watsuji explains that although *se* (世) was first considered synonymous with the word for 'time', it simultaneously became noted as a character that suggests various 'spheres of human beings' (Watsuji, 2007: 34-35). By the same token, although *ken* (間) was first regarded as an inter-spatial concept literally suggesting 'a space between two geographical places', it also became to signify 'human relationships [and] behavioural associations' (ibid.). Watsuji's reasoning elucidates that, in contrast to most western societies, which, initially, were constructed upon the presupposed basis of the one-on-one dialogue between God and an individual, *seken* is mostly about maintaining the 'between-ness' of two or more humans appreciating the harmonious space. In other words, everyday actions are not bound by the absolute contract between one and God, but by miscellaneous voices and relationships developed between a person and another. Aligning with Watsuji, yet in a more critical register, Uchino articulated the above-noted nebulous sense of subjectivity as 'a self, as an unconscious collective, which is constructed through a heap of intuitions emerging from everyday interactions' (Uchino, 1996: 109).

Precisely owing to the fact that the politics of everyday action is generated from the space between multiple persons, when prevalent senses and values rooted in the cultural psyche of the people are disrupted through a catastrophe such as a nuclear disaster, an ethical tension unduly arises that one might unwittingly commit a faux pas in society. The tension is fuelled, specifically, from the invisible nature of the nuclear crisis. Since

the ongoing reality could be interpreted completely differently from one person to another, any person could unknowingly violate another person's convention. For example, simply mentioning that he or she does not drink tap water may indicate, for some, just an ordinary habit of a specific person, but for others, it may be a reminder of the threat of a possible contamination of the fluid. Extending this argument much further, Beck suggests it may be possible in the near future that 'buying uncontaminated bottled water may be taken as a sign of treachery against the state, and thus could be suspected of crime' (Beck 2011: 11). Although Beck's inference seems rather far-fetched, what his polemical comment reveals is when the solid geographical boundaries demarcating safe zones and dangerous areas are disrupted, people, in turn, tend to pay excessive heed to maintaining harmony in society. When many of the prevalent social boundaries are invalidated, people have to reconsider not only the ethics of the intra-relationship (within a group) but also the inter-connections (between groups), as nobody understands any longer which places – here, there or in between – are exempt from the guidelines of the specific *seken*.

The signs of dos-and-don'ts become opaque in the nuclear aftermath because the criteria with which people comply, for the sake of maintaining social harmony, become nebulous. To be specific, people start following what Yamamoto Shichihei calls *kūki* (the air, Yamamoto, 1977). *Kūki*, according to Yamamoto, is neither a rule nor a regulation, as it does not categorically define what is right and wrong. In fact, the rules of the game change in the middle of the game, by synchronising with the mood of the respective moments. On the one hand, it is possible to condemn that this is only an opportunistic behaviour allowing flimsy subterfuge, however, on the other, one could argue that it is a pliable contingency plan, through which the collective equilibrium of the people is

tentatively safeguarded, during which the ethically commendable action towards the urgent threat is still undecided.

Yamamoto extends his argument on the nebulous social code called *kūki* by referring to the irrational decision taken by military authorities at the end of the Second World War to send in the battleship Yamato to the Philippine Sea. Despite the authorities knowing full well from data, experience and the devastated condition of the troops that the naval mission was ultimately meaningless, they were 'impelled by *kūki*' to approve it (Yamamoto and Komuro, 1981: 135). This cannot be described as a simple case of mass panic or peer pressure as, however irrational the outcome could have been, the conclusion was elicited from an empirical discussion among specialists and not from the baseless emotions of laypeople. Nevertheless, when a number of indefatigable officers and military specialists gathered to decide the next step in the war, simply, nobody wished to break the state of harmony by admitting that Japan was losing the battle, even if all data suggested their defeat.

In other words, *kūki* could be described as the critical component that sustains the most expedient narrative, or mythology, disseminated in a given time and space. And, as is true of all mythology, the beliefs embraced obtain 'a quality of psychic truth, as well as psychic necessity, whatever their logical absurdity' (Lifton, 1971: 72). To say more, the unifying force of the myth becomes 'enormously strong' when society is under a certain condition: first, when the alternative narratives are not favourable compared to the provided myth, and second, when the crisis they face is visually and physically imperceptible (Yamamoto, 1977: 22). As long as the threat is invisible, no one wants to rationally refute the expedient myth. Taking all this together, it is easy to infer why *kūki* became a buzzword after the Fukushima disaster. Since most people, excluding the most immediate victims, were not physically affected by the nuclear damage, many

conformists blindly denied the worst-case scenarios and followed the invisible politics of *kūki*, in order to avoid untoward misconduct that could incur ostracism from respective communities.

In fact, Takahashi Yutaka, who closely monitored the post-Fukushima theatre community in Tōhoku and Tokyo from a journalistic standpoint, reported that, in the immediate aftermath, '*kūki* demanding self-restriction' was pervasive and therefore most people decided to conform to it (Takahashi, Y., 2011: 19). By 'conforming', he is referring to the act of mass closure observed by many theatres in the immediate aftermath in Tokyo. Most notably, all five national theatres in Tokyo – the National Theatre, the New National Theatre, the National Noh Theatre, the National Bunraku Theatre and the National Engei Hall – all operated by the same administrative institution, the Japan Arts Council, cancelled their shows for the entire month of March. Many other theatres, such as the Imperial Theatre, Nissei Theatre, Tokyo International Forum, The Galaxy Theatre and Sunshine Theatre took a similar path. Several noteworthy exceptions that calmly kept their turnstiles spinning were Kabuki shows at the Shinbashi-enbujō (Kabuki-za, the main venue for Kabuki performances, was going through a renovation at that time), musical performances at Shiki Company Theatres and Takarazuka Revue performances at Tokyo Takarazuka Theatre. Even though authorities did not mandate the closure, many mid- to large-scale venues in Tokyo went dark for several weeks, as that was the *kūki*, the generally correct behaviour, in the *engeki mura* (theatre village). When considered through the socio-psychological perspective as in the previous paragraphs, it is indeed interesting to learn that the *kūki* became omnipresent in society after the Fukushima disaster. When the surrounding radioactive threat was invisible, and when the circumference of *seken* was indiscernible, they had to 'read the air [*kūki*]'constantly, to

borrow from a Japanese idiom, so as to be correct within and among the group in order to avoid ostracism.

The coercive force of *kūki* was amplified not only in the insular theatre village, but also in the wider community. Put simply, the state widely encouraged people to take action that aligned with others. During the aftermath, for example, many companies carried out propaganda campaigns that explicitly called for unitary action: '*Tsunageyou nippon*' (Let's connect Japan) by East Japan Railway Company and '*Kokoro o hitotsu ni ganbarō nippon*' (Japan working hard to pull together) by All Nippon Airways. Although maintaining the harmony of the group may indeed be a necessary social decorum for cohabiting peacefully with others in a megalopolis, when the same ethics are endorsed by the state as a nation-wide agenda, it becomes nothing less than a violation of personal liberties. As will be argued further in Chapter Three, the nation-wide agenda may turn into a regulation that negates all anomalies – a doctrinal, or even totalitarian, code.

Nevertheless, when surrounded by the maelstrom of uncertainty, confusion, anxiety and fear caused by the Fukushima disaster, people willingly established an ethical code that had the potential to become an exemption certificate from being rejected from society. This code, which henceforth will be called the 'code of *wa*' (harmonious integration) is a unanimous moral blueprint fomented by the unitary power of *kūki*. The code was rapidly consolidated because, as long as they followed the protocols, it automatically spared them from making ethically wrong decisions. And, without surprise, when collectively forming this code of *wa*, what the post-catastrophe citizens in Tokyo relied on most was not their rational but their emotional yardsticks. Their rather reductive assumption was that the voice of the most serious physical victims was paramount. It was therefore necessary to construct a code in which vertical relationships were maintained by exalting the voice of the superior: the dead victims, in this case.

The consecration of the dead witnessed among many catastrophe survivors could be explained, most effectively, by referring to what psychiatrist Miyaji Naoko calls 'the conic island model of trauma' (Miyaji, 2011: 10). According to this model, survivors often believe that by mentally approaching the centre of the island mountain, the level of legitimacy in voicing the catastrophe ascends, which eventually reaches a summit at the centre where the most serious victims perish. Miyaji claims, however, that this attempt to approach the hypocentre of the event generally fails. This is because, basically, the conic island model is an illusory vision, belonging only to the psyches of survivors: a false perspective 'contradicting reality' (ibid.). Running counter to most assumptions, Miyaji argues that the validity of opinion does not increase in proportion to the mental and physical proximity of the event. In fact, if one wishes to adequately portray the legitimacy of utterances through a pictorial model, Miyaji asserts that it should alternatively be envisioned through 'the toroidal island model': the central point is not located at the summit of the island mountain, but, rather, below the surface of the landlocked bay (ibid.: 7). The toroidal model clarifies the point that what one encounters when approaching the centre of the event is not the legitimate voice of victims, but only the absolute silence of dead spirits.

Despite the fact that the very act of trying to grasp the voice of the most affected victims – the dead – transcends human competence, many cannot inhibit the impulse to sanctify them. In extreme cases, survivors assume that nothing that contradicts the viewpoint of the most serious victims should be uttered, as it may desecrate them. Therefore, when certain aberrant individuals violated the code of *wa* and voiced undesired premonitions such as 'victims will suffer the after-effects for years' or 'nuclear contamination will last for decades', they were fiercely criticised for stating something that was still uncertain. Even though several nuclear specialists had provided facts that backed up these

premonitions, nobody wished to be ostracised by making a statement that went against the collective *kūki* venerating the dead.

Noda Hideki and the Theatre of Collective *Kūki*

At this juncture, it is pertinent to refer to *Pandora's Bell* (*Pandora no kane*, 1999), written and directed by Noda Hideki (b. 1955). The play is considered by several critics, such as Hasebe, to be 'an apex of Japanese contemporary theatre in the 1990s', in which the author challenges the historical taboo of Emperor Hirohito's war responsibility and the interrelated topic of the Nagasaki atomic bomb (Hasebe, 2005:89). However, in light of the discussion noted in the previous section, it could equally be interpreted as a play that elucidates the politics of *kūki*: how the immanent social code is generated, amplified and sustained by the masses in order to ensure social survival. In fact, among sixteen characters in the play, seven of them act together in many scenes, like a school of fish, mumbling and brawling inaudible thoughts. There is a specific reason these anonymous characters, mostly devoid of individual expressions, move together as a mass on stage. By doing so, Noda makes them collectively represent a crucial role, through which the illogical unity of Japanese people, typically swayed by the force of *kūki*, is visually brought to the fore. More critically, Noda is echoing Adorno in condemning the dangerous trait of Japanese, who, especially at the time of an invisible crisis, are inclined to submit to bonds with whoever is powerful.

In the epic play, two settings, far away in time yet connected in space, are juxtaposed on the stage. To be specific, the first setting is an ancient kingdom where a young queen, Himejo (literally, 'princess woman'), has just taken the crown; and the second is a modern excavation site where archaeologists have discovered the bones of a historically

unknown queen (later identified as those of Himejo's). The play thrusts forward at breakneck speed by randomly switching between the two eras, in which a gigantic bell-shaped sculpture on stage becomes the hinge for connecting the two time frames. At the outset, characters in both eras cannot comprehend the intended purpose of the huge copper figure. Himejo first assumes that it is a capsized ship with bones of the drowned inside, which proves false, as there are no remains inside; whereas the modern archaeologists discover bones of a human being inside, though they cannot discern whose bones they are nor can they decode 'the scratch-like patterns' etched onto the bell (Noda, 2000: 87-88). Unlike the queen and the archaeologists who live in times before the invention of an atomic bomb, however, the audience instantly recognises what the bell-shaped figure represents. Since it is formed in the exact shape of the plutonium bomb dropped on Nagasaki, the audience understands that it is neither a ship nor a bell, but unmistakably an atomic bomb.

In tandem with the decoding of the huge lead sculpture by the characters, which gives the play a tingling analogous to a mystery fiction, the two seemingly unconnected stories in different times gradually approach one another to form a single provocative message. It is an allegorical yet unequivocal message, which accuses the Japanese Emperor of failing to take responsibility for the Second World War and the atomic bombs. Audience members equipped with adequate knowledge may notice that, historically speaking, this accusation is only half-valid. Although it is beyond the remit of the thesis to deliver a full argument on Emperor Hirohito's war responsibility, one thing to note is that the contested debate has not yet resolved, with various opinions mainly divided into two standpoints. The first group believe that the Emperor is an organ of the state (*tennō kikan setsu*), and this group of people include Minobe Tatsukichi among others, who argue that the state is considered as the legal entity capable of exercising its rights, and that the

Emperor is merely an organ performing acts prescribed to it in the constitution. The second group holds to the theory of imperial sovereignty (*tennō shuken setsu*), which postulates that the Emperor has limitless power (Kato, Hashizume and Takeda, 2000:143).

In all likelihood, before developing the politically contested play, Noda, an avid researcher, would have known the oppositional standpoints as well as various other perspectives that fall between the two with regards to the war responsibility of the Emperor. However, considering the fact that the playwright-director was born in Nagasaki only a decade after the dropping of the plutonium bomb, it could be argued that he could not help but stress that even if the Emperor had tried to take responsibility after war and thus after the atomic bombs, it was, in his view, a judgement made way too late. Therefore, by imagining an unknown kingdom whose queen takes a courageous act with absolute justice, Noda structures an ideal counter-history, in which an atomic bomb is never dropped on Japanese soil. In the play, when the ultimatum is sent from the enemy country of Mirai (literally, 'future'), Queen Himejo performs the most heroic act her subjects could ever wish for. Since she fully understands that she is the only person capable of averting mass destruction and thus saving the ancient kingdom, Himejo valorously buries herself together with the bell, which is etched with the secret code that could activate an atomic bomb.

When the heroic sacrifice is analysed through the prism of theatre, what comes to the fore through visual association is that in Japanese theatre, the act of a princess retreating back inside a bell unmistakably recalls the Noh play *Dōjōji*. In this traditional dance piece, the dead spirit of a woman enters a temple bell and reappears later as a snake-like demon, recalling her tragic memory of burning the bell together with a monk, who escaped inside it to avoid her affection. As if to mirror the tragic romance, Himejo also

enters the bell assisted by her lover Mizuo, who ironically happens to be a professional undertaker. The motive that lies behind the act is, however, drastically different between the woman in *Dōjōji* and Queen Himejo. Whereas the former is prompted by romantic affection for a man, the latter is impelled by a noble responsibility to save her kingdom. With an unwavering smile on her face and a halo around her grand posture embellished by a bright red dress, Himejo sacrifices herself for the sake of her subjects. It is an act of sanctity and justice, rarely seen today in heads of state.

Additionally, as if to augment the provocative message delivered by the author, a half-American girl called Tamaki, the girlfriend of one of the archaeologists that discover the bell containing Himejo's bones, recalls the ancient queen with utmost veneration. When Tamaki is asked by her boyfriend, the visionary archaeologist Ozu (implying his Wizard of Oz-like unbounded vision), if the secret code of Pandora's Bell could be used for military ends, she firmly answers: 'There is a king in Japan. […] Even if the Americans try to explode that other Sun […], I am sure that the king being a king will bury himself before his land perishes, like Himejo' (Noda, 2000: 129). When this unreserved praise is delivered on stage in front of the contemporary audience, it clearly becomes, as Noda has intended, 'a harsh criticism' of the Japanese Emperor (Shichiji, 2001: 145). And precisely because of the polemic content, even though the political message was coated and delivered in a form of allegorical fiction, rightist campaigners camped around the Setagaya Public Theatre, where the play was presented, to accuse Noda of criticising their immaculate Emperor.

Through and through, Noda develops the narrative on stage on the premise that history is a conflation of invention, distortion, construction, imposition and all acts of imagination. Through this anti-Hegelian standpoint, his play literally visualises how history is constructed, invented and delivered by the political sovereignty at any given time. His

point is delivered most clearly through the depiction of the time-travelling agent called Hannibal, who is the only character given a carte blanche to freely thread his way through the present/past and fact/fiction. When Hannibal, a petty crook, played by playwright-actor Matsuo Suzuki 'visits the future', even though he comes from an ancient kingdom as a servant of Himejo, he is disguised in a modern uniform reminiscent of special political police (*tokubetsu kōtō keisatu*, or *tokkō*) who, during the war, concealed crucial facts from the public.

As his accoutrement rightly reveals his social function, in a similar manner to the secret police, Hannibal interrogates Professor Kanakugi – the chief archaeologist who has stolen his disciple Ozu's discovery – and forces him to confess that the story of Queen Himejo sacrificing herself for war responsibility is only a matter of his imagination. Being a third-rate archaeologist with little ethical discipline, the professor cringes to Hannibal and affirms that, indeed, the story of the queen is merely a fiction. Suddenly, through a cowardly assertion of a heedless archaeologist, history is overturned. As succinctly described by Himejo, the audience sees on stage how easily historical facts can be blotted out and transformed into an apocryphal anecdote: 'by an affirmation of the future [Professor Kanakugi], the kingdom could perish and be erased [from history] as fiction' (Noda, 2000: 109).

Aligning with Adorno, who argues in his essay 'Education after Auschwitz' that 'people who blindly slot themselves into the collective already make themselves into something like inert material', what Noda brings into relief through the thoughtless act of the Professor is that, by blindly obeying hegemonic power, one 'extinguishes themselves as self-determined beings', and, in turn, consolidates violent state power (Adorno, 2005: 198). Hannibal represents the status quo, which preserves and protects the stature of the Emperor, and so, for him, the archaeologist's discovery had to be erased from history by

any means possible because a story in which people victimise their sovereign is 'a provocation to all subjects of the Empire of Japan' (Noda, 2000: 110). Hannibal's act inadvertently sheds light on how, even half a century after the war, many people were still likely to submit to hegemonic belief since, during the run, the rightist campaigners surrounded the theatre by claiming that the play was absolutely impermissible (ibid.: 110). To further emphasise that history is often rendered through blind obedience to powerful ideologies, Noda adopts a character called Hībā: a nanny, who serves for the Imperial Family for over seven generations, and who, in fact, is the most powerful figure in the Kingdom, plotting political conspiracy. The mastermind of history, suggestively played by the author himself, unapologetically avows that 'sometimes covering up is good, for saving the Kingdom' (ibid.).

The danger of conformism that begets mass hysteria, which Adorno criticised after the war, is depicted throughout Noda's play most effectively through the repetitive acts of covering, uncovering, discovering and re-covering. Professor Kanakugi attempts to uncover the history of Queen Himejo's heroic death; Hannibal, the time-travelling agent tries to cover it up, as it is an unpalatable fact for the state; Kanakugi's disciple Ozu still succeeds in discovering the secret history of Pandora's Bell; yet again, Hībā tries to persuade the general public that covering the truth with a more acceptable story is better for sustaining the order of the state. The political message that Noda indicates through the repetitive oscillation of the people is unequivocal. He accuses the historic and chronic irresponsibility of Japanese citizens, who 'blindly slot themselves into the collective' and instantly forget the abominable past (Adorno, 2005: 198). Perhaps even more than condemning the Emperor, Noda attacks the audience, that is, the masses, for their myopic acts of self-preservation, through which, owing to the lack of critical

reflection that sees beyond quick-fix solutions, the narrative of mechanical violence could recur in history.

The nameless masses on stage, represented by the aforementioned group of anonymous characters, who are easily swayed by *kūki*, aptly represents the irresponsible conformism of the Japanese public after the Second World War. For example, when the group is informed of the rumours of defeat and the unprecedented bomb, they instantly flee in panic and do not confront the situation. In fact, they cowardly enshroud the entire stage with a huge sheet of craft paper and hide underneath it, thereby suggesting their escapist attitude.[15] The author's condemnation of the irresponsible populace is represented, more clearly, through the inverted Japanese flag. Later in the same scene, a flag with a white circle on top of a blood-red background is projected on top of the aforementioned covering, which, in the next moment, is violently ripped to pieces by the people. It is an emblematic act alluding to the fact that the escapist citizens are the ones who are shedding more blood and destroying the state.

Going against harmonious unity in society may indeed be a fearful act for a seemingly powerless individual. However, by juxtaposing the heroic Himejo with the thoughtless masses, Noda strongly argues that, no matter how embattled one may be, only a decisive act taken by a rebellious individual is capable of avoiding a further downfall of the state. To cite from Adorno again, 'the single genuine power' that can stand against the principle of carnage such as Auschwitz is 'autonomy'; or, to use a Kantian expression, 'the power of reflection' (Adorno, 2005: 195). As if to substantiate this conviction, in Noda's play the autonomous Himejo is depicted as the hallmark of justice. She is the only person who fathoms the falsity of triumphant news delivered to the kingdom from the battlefield day in and day out. The authorities around her communicate not the *de facto* truth but only the psychic truth, so to speak, which is also believed and forged by

the masses. Nevertheless, Himejo manages to see beyond the chain of canards. Recalling the argument on *kūki*, unlike those military generals who could not say 'No' to the decision of sending in the battleship Yamato to the Philippine Sea, Himejo intelligently foresees the kingdom's defeat and sacrifices herself for the sake of avoiding senseless violence.

Through the dichotomous structure between the indefatigable queen unswayed by *kūki* and the irresponsible populace falling prey to mass hysteria, Noda agrees with the Adornian axiom and suggests that in times of crisis such as a war it is absolutely crucial to maintain a critical distance to the environment, as what seems like a sensible collective act could, in hindsight, be considered as an act of mass suicide. And, in order to guard against the propensity of Japanese, who are easily influenced by *kūki*, Noda gives Himejo a powerful speech at the penultimate scene of the play. Through this speech, the playwright pleads with the audience to understand the socio-psychological mechanism, through which a violent history is repeatedly constructed:

> People pretended not to see, just like the air [*kūki*]. You all have continued to believe in that *kūki*, in the fear of what might happen by naming that *kūki* as madness [*kyōki*]. This kingdom has been protected by covering up the madness and failure. However, the sound of Pandora's bell exposes everything. That is why you have to lend an ear to that echo, even if, that sound speaks of the end of the state. Have the courage [*yūki*] to listen to the bell. (Noda, 2000: 121)

With the abundant use of *jeu de mots* for which the author is known, Noda emphasises how citizens have irresponsibly overturned history: by interpreting *kūki* as *yūki* (courage) one day, and reinterpreting it as *kyōki* (madness) another. Additionally, the soliloquy becomes ever more persuasive because the words are delivered through the voice of Amami Yūki, the former star actress at the Takarazuka Revue, who is known for her magnanimous presence. As Amami delivers the speech with such brio, the ebullient words surpass the realm of fiction and become a cogent criticism towards post-war Japan,

during which the deadly facts of the atomic bomb were eclipsed by the popular discourse of Atoms for Peace. When reading the play after Fukushima, the speech could also be interpreted as an accusation directed towards the authorities that covered up the inconvenient data of the contamination, for the sake of shrewdly forging a narrative that propels the economic boom towards the Tokyo Olympics in 2020. Yet through all condemnations, what is ultimately brought to the fore is Noda's affectionate concern for the state. Even half a century after the atomic bombs, most Japanese still blindly follow the *kūki* and align with others, instead of listening to their respective inner voices. Through the play, Noda implores the public to summon up the courage to 'listen to the bell' (Noda, 2000:121).

Theatres that Render the Invisible Visible

One can easily imagine the complexity of speaking about an invisible aftermath of a catastrophe, such as the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs and the Fukushima nuclear disaster, when he or she lives in a society where conformism is exalted as a diligent act for the preservation of social harmony. As already noted, in terms of the former two catastrophes, the victims were 'eerily absent from official pictures' due to the Press Code enforced by the American Occupation Forces (MacLear, 1999: 164). As for the latter, the accident was (and still is) largely invisible, firstly because, unlike preceding atomic bombs, the radiation from the accident has fortunately not resulted in tens of thousands of known direct deaths; and secondly, because the collective *kūki* augmented by the state impelled people to believe that the damage caused was dismissive, if not absent.

Put simply, regardless of the different reasons causing the invisibility of the event, people fell prey to what John Berger calls the 'two-faced' dilemma of the visible (Berger, 1993: 215). In contemporary society where visual perception is considered as the primary source of information, many people seem to forget that the visible is surrounded by the much larger invisible; or, to borrow from Merleau-Ponty, the invisible is actually 'in-visible', which already includes the visible (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 242, 257). In other words, as Berger argues, the visible is, indeed, a double-edged sword, because although it 'brings the world to us', it could concurrently 'take the world away from us' (Berger, 1993: 215). And, when the collective code of *wa* urges one to believe in the expedient reality engendered by the masses, more often than not what happens is that individual expressions are demoted to invisible utterances. Even more so than one may assume, it takes time – in fact, a considerable amount of time – to bring these invisible utterances to the fore. The very fact that Noda drafted a play that impeaches the irresponsibility of both the Emperor and the subjects, over half-a-century after the dropping of two atomic bombs, is telling evidence of how deeply the code of *wa* is rooted in Japanese society.

Hindered by the sense of taboo that one might unwillingly disrupt the harmony in society, and also due to the very nature of the event in which information trickled out over time, the prolific development of the so-called 'A-bomb plays' were not limited to the years immediately after the end of the American Occupation: it spread across more than a half a century of time, and gained momentum again after the Fukushima disaster. One could argue that, willingly or not, throughout the history of post-war Japanese theatre, the multiple nuclear catastrophes have functioned as catalysts for playwrights and directors to invent novel forms of theatre. Just as Samuel Beckett first 'renounced about the absurdity of the human condition' after the Second World War, and developed the ground-breaking concept of the Theatre of the Absurd (Esslin, 2001: 25), the continuous

struggle with nuclear events pushed Japanese theatre-makers to devise idiosyncratic

theatre forms that in turn, became a motor for updating contemporary theatres in the

country.

Over the past decades, the atomic bombs have prompted the invention of numerous types

of theatres, which, for example, take the form of *shingeki* (literally, the 'new drama'

emphasizing its stylistic differences from traditional Japanese drama such as Kabuki)*,*

documentary theatres, the Theatre of the Absurd, to allegorical fictions. When

considering the wide range of theatres that deal with the horror of the nuclear aftermaths,

it is difficult to provide a singular definition of the so-called A-bomb plays. The simplest

rendering would suggest that they deal with the physical outcomes and noticeable

ramifications of the atomic bomb. However, this definition instantly fails to take into

account the invisible consequences on both personal and social counts: for instance, the

physical and somatic diseases that are not officially approved as the effects of nuclear

explosions (*genbaku-shō*); the latent mental issues of the people, who do not wish to be

approved as those affected by *genbaku-shō*; the immanent social discrimination towards

the atomic bomb victims; the self-censorship conducted by victims for the sake of

prioritising social harmony; the silent fear towards long-term radiation exposure that

could affect one's attitude towards the future; the implicit social divisions among various

victims and non-victims, which could change the fabric of society, and so on. To say

more, the play could completely symbolise or allegorise the atomic bomb, and never

refer to the actual event directly: Noda's *Pandora's Bell* could be categorised under this

genre.

As already mentioned in the Introduction, by paying heed to the invisible effects of the

nuclear catastrophe, in *The Japanese Atomic Bomb Literature Volume Twelve* (*Nihon no

genbaku bungaku 12*, 1983), playwright Kinoshita Junji cogently argues that the seven of

the A-bomb plays included in the volume could be divided into two groups (Kinoshita, 1983: 478). Plays such as *The Island* (*Shima*, 1957) by Hotta Kiyomi, *Under the Magnolia Tree* (*Taizan boku no ki no shita de*, 1962) by Koyama Yūji, *About the Tears about Hiroshima* (*Hiroshima ni tsuite no namida ni tsuite*, 1968) by Fujita Asaya and *The Lovers on the Galactic Railroad* (*Ginga tetsudō no koibito tachi*, 1971) by Ōhashi Kiichi are included in this category. The plays that are classified in this group mainly capture the visible effects of the atomic bomb and are written in the form of *shingeki*. The second batch of plays, by contrast, attempts to 'symbolically depict the issues, which are caused by the atomic bomb' (ibid.). According to Kinoshita, included in the category are plays such as *The Head of Mary* (*Maria no kubi*, 1959) by Tanaka Chikao, *The Pilot* (*Za pairotto*, 1964) by Miyamoto Ken and *The Elephant* (*Zō*, 1962) by Betsuyaku Minoru. In these plays, the ramifications of the atomic bomb are analysed more from a metaphysical level, such as social, religious and ethical standpoints.

While accurately raising awareness of the invisible outcomes of the atomic bombs, Kinoshita's dualistic definition has several drawbacks. First, he only includes those plays which are written after the end of the American Occupation. Therefore, although Kinoshita himself has written a play called *The Mountain Range* (*Yamanami*, 1949), which depicts the trajectory of an adulterous relationship between a wife and her husband's friend, who is later killed in the Hiroshima atomic bomb, he omits it from the genre of A-bomb plays. Considering that the play was written in the midst of the American Occupation, indeed, it may have been difficult for Kinoshita, a war veteran, to affirm back then that it is an A-bomb play that partially and indirectly argues the issues caused by the atomic bomb. However, in retrospect, excluding the pre-independence plays from the A-bomb canon may submit to the American censorship even after independence. With great respect to Kinoshita, who is one of the giants of post-war

theatre, the theatre critic Miyashita Norio argues that *The Mountain Range* has in effect 'laid the foundation for the following plays that dealt with atomic bombs' (Miyashita, 1985: 65). Second, the rationale supporting Kinoshita's definition is primarily a binary code, which divides the plays into authentic *shingeki* and those that deviate from the form. As Kinoshita himself challenged the rigid attitude of *shingeki* plays through his works, the reason he adopted the binary categorisation is understandable. However, in hindsight, one could argue that the classification is too reductive, and inadvertently omits those plays that refuse to be located within the binary scale of *shingeki* and non-*shingeki*: such as *He Who Risked* (*Okashita mono*, 1952) by Miyoshi Jūrō.

Moving across different fields of analyses, it is possible to say that the definition of the A-bomb plays should not be decided either by the date of presentation, the form adopted, or the topic of the play directly discussed, but rather by the ethical motive underpinning the play. In order to provide a new hermeneutic framework for an A-bomb play, it is important to understand that, firstly, the play is propelled by the moral indignation of the theatre-maker, who attempts to render visible the invisible ramification of the event, and secondly, prompted by this motive, the play tries to redress the confines between the accepted narrative of the victims and the unapproved victimhood. Similarly, if the given situation depicted in the play somehow questions, argues and transcends the prevalent reality, which is delimited by the post-nuclear politics, it could be defined as an A-bomb play, even if nouns such as 'Hiroshima', 'Nagasaki' or '*genbaku-shō*' are never mentioned. In other words, the crucial component in the A-bomb plays is the decisive will to overcome the given discourse on the atomic bombs, and to challenge and shift the parameter of post-nuclear reality accepted in society.

To elucidate the definition of A-bomb plays not through factual or visible components, but through the latent motive underpinning the artwork, becomes ever more useful when

trying to extend the argument to the so-called post-Fukushima plays. Since the damage caused by the Fukushima disaster is largely invisible, at least for the time being, it is even more difficult to define the post-Fukushima plays by focusing only on the tangible outcomes. Owing to the government strategy that downplays all untoward outcomes, most personal and social consequences of the Fukushima disaster are unarticulated, if not whitewashed. For instance, those consequences include the level of radioactive caesium found in crops grown in and around Fukushima, the level of radioactive caesium and strontium found in fish around Tōhoku, the physical damage to children caused by internal exposure to radiation, the high rate of depression and the increase of domestic violence among internally displaced people who still live in shabby temporary housing and, finally, the overwhelming fear regarding the future of the state, which implicitly impels youth towards a more conservative lifestyle. As Kageura Kyō rightly suggests, after Fukushima, the state propagated a narrative that asserts that all 'uncertainty is considered equal to non-existence' (Kageura, 2013: 25).

When various uncertainties with regards to the nuclear accident are negated by the state, the corollary is that most post-Fukushima theatre-makers are obliged to develop their plays on the premise that the gravest consequences are yet to come: still invisible. When dealing with the inherently invisible nuclear aftermath, the ability to see beyond the visible reality becomes a prerequisite for theatre-makers. In other words, post-Fukushima plays could be defined as plays written in any form after the Fukushima disaster, by either a domestic or a foreign playwright(s), which, by reflecting on the spate of implicit ramifications of the event, start to operate as a mirror reflection of the post-catastrophe collective mind. If the theatre-maker is more or less conscious of the fact that the artwork was given impetus by the Fukushima disaster, and if, to cite from Mikhail Bakhtin, the play develops a 'dialogic imagination' through conscientious discourse with various

'heteroglossia' emerging from society, then, arguably, it could be called a post-Fukushima play (Bakhtin, 1981: xxi, 7).

In defining A-bomb and post-Fukushima plays as those that render the invisible outcomes of the aftermath visible, the unvoiced pain of the people is immediately brought to the fore on stage. To be more specific, presented on stage is one of the most painful feelings that the survivors of either the atomic bomb or the Fukushima nuclear disaster express: a profound sense of guilt. In terms of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs, the rather reductive assumption of the survivors was that abandoning others saved their lives. As Lifton and Olson pertinently suggest, it is a common trait for survivors to feel that their 'life was purchased at the cost of another's' (Lifton and Olson, 1986: 312). Based on this rather distorted rationale, a scorching sense of guilt, underpinned by self-blame, started to plague survivors. For example, the City of Hiroshima Mayor Matsui Kazumi gave a speech at the sixty-ninth Peace Memorial Ceremony in August 2014, citing an agonising episode of a man who was twelve on the day of the Hiroshima bombing. According to the Mayor, this man is still suffering from a severe sense of guilt, as when he imagines 'those classmates who could not live even if they wished so' his heart aches with pain as he 'feels guilty for being the one alive' (Matsui, K., 2014).

Similarly, after Fukushima, many survivors living around the afflicted areas expressed a sense of guilt for voicing pain. For example, Suzuki Taku, a young and locally-influential theatre producer, who initiated Art Connection Tōhoku (ARC>T), the art-producing organisation that brings stage performances to traumatized victims in the devastated region, affirms that he provided dance workshops, art workshops, reading sessions, picture-story shows, tap dance and theatre performances only at venues where they were absolutely '*requested* to come and visit' (Suzuki, T., 2013). Or else, Suzuki

felt guilty for presenting something so useless, so non-instrumental, in front of people so desperate to survive. Even though Suzuki, based in Sendai, was an eyewitness to several of those 899 citizens (including ninety-four visitors from outside the city) who died from the earthquake-tsunami, he felt reluctant to voice pain when encountering people who were suffering from more severe loss and damage, including heavy nuclear fallout.[16] The rather guilt-ridden logic of Suzuki, as well as many other survivors, was that since 'people in the afflicted areas are suffering more, I should not even think that I am suffering'.[17] As it is one of the most painful feelings after Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima that were suppressed in reality yet expressed on stage, throughout the next chapter, light will be shed on various theatre productions that deal with the grave sense of guilt felt by survivors.

Chapter Two

The Theatre of Guilt and Self-Censorship

A pool of vocabulary expressing so-called survivor's guilt emerged after the Hiroshima

and Nagasaki atomic bombings and the Fukushima disaster. In fact, one could argue that

the most conspicuous phenomenon addressed through the canon of A-bomb plays and

post-Fukushima plays was precisely this sense of guilt. In varying degrees and forms, the

everyday actions of many survivors were more or less delimited, affected and governed

by the logic of guilt. More often than not, survivors suppressed their pains and

disquietudes, as they felt that it was inappropriate to complain about their struggles when

others had suffered more or had died. As will be demonstrated through the analyses of

three plays discussed in this chapter – namely, Hotta Kiyomi's *The Island* (*Shima*, 1957),

Inoue Hisashi's *The Face of Jizō* (*Chichi to kuraseba*, 1994) and Okada Toshiki's

Current Location (*Genzaichi*, 2012) – the rationale underpinning the sense of guilt in

each play varies slightly. Regardless of the subtle differences, however, the same moral

scrutiny ultimately forms the basis of all the suffering. What runs through the core of the

three plays is the looming question of whether or not it is ethically acceptable to live an

insouciant life whilst others are still afflicted by the event.

The sense of guilt and the ensuing self-censorship was twinned at its conception with the

harmony-oriented society called Japan. As argued in the previous chapter, when social

harmony was maintained not on the basis of the one-on-one dialogue between God (or,

alternative forms of superhuman figures or religious leaders) and an individual, but by

preserving the harmonious 'between-ness' of two or more people, what often happened,

in the aftermath of nuclear disasters, was that individuals felt guilty when voicing their

opinions at the cost of disrupting an already chaotic social equilibrium (Watsuji,

2007:35). To further complicate the argument, in the aftermaths of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima respectively, the rules for maintaining harmonious between-ness were also applied to the dead victims. The sense of guilt was augmented whenever a person felt that he or she had conducted an egotistical act without paying much heed to the more seriously affected victims: the dead being paramount. The unsurprising outcome of this guilt-ridden self-accusation was that, because nobody had the definitive answer to what the dead wished to bequeath to the survivors, many started to self-censor themselves or simply decided to remain silent.

Deeply rooted in the sense of guilt, the characters of the plays discussed in this chapter self-censor themselves in one way or another. In Hotta's *The Island*, Manabu, the protagonist, who is a victim of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, expresses his sense of guilt when he realises that his pursuit of freedom runs counter to the maintenance of public welfare. Before the war, as a young educated man, Manabu had dreamt of leaving the island where he resides so as to continue with his engineering education, work in the military industry and marry someone he truly loves. However, as Lifton argues, because of the irrational discrimination towards the atomic bomb victims 'particularly in employment and marriage' after the war, he is deprived of all hope (Lifton, 1971: 178). Still more, through the due course of time, Manabu understands that his affection towards Reiko, a young woman of whom he is deeply fond, is detrimental to her family. That is, even though Reiko's mother respects Manabu, she absolutely rejects the possibility of her daughter marrying a Hiroshima victim and 'shoulder[ing] the misfortune of the atomic bomb after everything' (Hotta, 1971: 42). Grasping the mother's rationale, Manabu suppresses his affection towards Reiko and decides to back off from the relationship.

The latent tension between an atomic bomb victim and society comes to the fore, whenever the courageous intervention of the former requests a change in prevalent social norms. In an ideal world, the social inclusion of the weak and the unprivileged is the basic premise for a democratic state. However, in post-war Japan, when the state aspired to become a 'first-rate' nation in economic terms, the society lacked the generosity to accept those less able to contribute to social development. To say more, in a tiny rural community in post-war Japan, still inundated with feudal ideas, Manabu is forced to reach the conclusion that his will to live an autonomous life contradicts the happiness of many others in the rural community. Therefore, rather than accusing other members of the society of depriving him of basic human rights, he condemns his egotistical act, so to speak, for not foreseeing the chaotic corollary of yearning to wed a non-victim.

Entrenched in a similar sense of guilt towards egotistical living, a blithe life without any qualms towards others, in Inoue's *The Face of Jizō*, Mitsue, a young woman who has survived the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, also decides to suppress her hopeful feelings. Yet one distinction that should be noted between Manabu and Mitsue is that, whereas the former expresses his sense of guilt whenever he feels that he has disrupted the peaceful life of others in his close-knit community, the latter also feels apologetic whenever she recalls friends and colleagues who died from the atomic bomb. In Hiroshima, guilt towards the dead was largely generated from remorse for inhumane actions in the immediate aftermath. Not surprisingly, only hours and days after the atomic bomb, people were preoccupied with their own survival. Induced by their animal instinct, they only 'took care of themselves or sometimes their relatives but not anyone else' (Lifton, 1971: 52). In worst cases, 'parents and children [...] fought with one another to get their food' (ibid.). Based on predatory survival instincts, people fought for their lives. Thus, when the survivors regained their composure and looked back to those hellish days, they

started to feel guilty. In retrospect, it seemed survival had been 'purchased at the cost of another's' (Lifton and Olson, 1986: 312).

Unable to shrug off her survivor's guilt, Mitsue condemns herself whenever she feels hopeful towards the future. Her guilt-ridden logic is: '[T]here are countless people who, by all rights, should have been able to lead a happy life. Who am I to elbow my way past them and make a claim on happiness?' (Inoue, 2004: 108). By 'them' she is specifically referring to friends and relatives who died from the bombing. From an outsider's standpoint, to sacrifice one's life for the sake of the dead is an unfathomable logic. However, when informed by appalling data that reveals 'one of every seven people in Hiroshima and one of every six in Nagasaki' were killed by the two atomic bombs, the reasons why survivors assumed that they should have died together with others becomes more intelligible (Treat, 1995: 3). Novelist Ōta Yōko manages to capture the specific feeling of guilt in her work *Shikabane no machi* (*Towns of Corpses*). In the novel, which records the first-hand experience of an atomic bomb victim in ghastly details, Ōta encapsulates her survivor's guilt as follows: 'I was sorry for the people who died because I was living' (Ōta, 1955: 152, 218).

It is important to note why the survivors of the atomic bombs started to be referred to as *hibakusha* ('a victim exposed to radiation') and not *seizonsha* (literally, 'the one who lived'). The neologism is deeply connected to the sense of guilt. Since survival was considered disgraceful, if not sinful at that time, the survivors started to avoid using the term *seizonsha* for describing themselves. They assumed that the word was politically incorrect as it 'emphasises the idea of being alive – with the implication that this emphasis is unfair to the less fortunate people who were killed' (Lifton, 1971: 13). Rather, they preferred the term *hibakusha* which, according to the use of different Kanji characters for *baku*, can signify distinct types of sufferers from varying degrees of

irradiation.[18] As Lifton rightly suggests, it is apparent simply from the choice of words that in Hiroshima and Nagasaki there existed a profound sense of guilt among those who survived. Lifton specifically named this type of self-accusatory feeling, 'guilt over survival priority': they felt guilty for prioritising their survival over other's death (Lifton, 1971: 42).

In Okada's *Current Location*, which was presented a year after the Fukushima disaster, the expressed sense of guilt was more muddled. Owing to the fact that the victims of Fukushima were less recognisable compared to those of the atomic bombs, the criteria with which people should comply for the sake of maintaining social harmony became nebulous. That is, even though people wished to refrain from uttering things that may hurt the feelings of victims, they could not envisage a single nuclear victim that represented the totality of the event. More still, due to the contamination that virtually defied space, the level of victimhood could not be charted simply by one's geographical proximity to the event. Due to the various scales and types of victimhood that stemmed from the disaster, it was significantly difficult for a person to measure ethically correct conduct in his or her life through a single yardstick. As it will be unpacked later, the unsurprising outcome of the disintegration of social norms and values was that the sense of guilt became almost ubiquitous. An undue sense of hesitance and guilt accompanied people whenever they voiced anything unsure about the nuclear catastrophe.

One could argue that the *sotto voce* used throughout the play by Okada mirrors the hesitant feeling of the post-Fukushima residents, who also murmured in low-key voices weeks and months after the event. However, in the play, excessive inhibition is expressed, most clearly, through the depiction of a young woman called Sana. Distressed by the invisible catastrophe pervading the village that she lives in, Sana is so confused that she cannot even decide whether it is acceptable to wear a particular piece of clothing.

If her village was unequivocally going through a state of collective mourning, it is easy to understand that putting on an attractive outfit is socially unacceptable. However, Sana is indecisive because she is crucially affected by the politics of the invisible; just like people after Fukushima. According to the different interpretations of the invisible disaster, the narrative of the everyday that others expect you to follow varies. Therefore, even though Sana first chastises herself for wearing a type of dress that is 'worn by people who do whatever they want without any regard for what other people might think', on second thoughts, she wishes to be 'thick-skinned' enough so that her judgements will not be swayed by others (Okada, 2013a: 5).

An ethical aporia underpins the sense of guilt expressed by the above-noted three characters. Like it or not, their actions veer toward the border of ethics, in which prevalent norms and values are brought into question. When living through the aftermath of an unprecedented catastrophe, the rules on which actions are considered as ethically commendable are inevitably also disrupted. As Nancy rightly suggests, people are forcibly exposed 'to a catastrophe of meaning' (Nancy, 2015: 8). To make things worse, what follows this catastrophe of meaning is that, the everyday actions of survivors are put under severe duress through the arbitrary censorship conducted by the peer survivors. Even though the agents of censorship do not have the correct answers to the situation either, they sanctimoniously attack others for the sake of justifying their moral legitimacy.

According to Lisa Yoneyama, the situation of talking about their victimhood was complicated first by the already mentioned discrimination towards *hibakusha*, which forced many victims to remain silent 'until retirement or the marriage of their youngest child'; second, the reluctance of the victims to pictorialise the situation in simple words, which could end in untoward 'interpretations of wilful audiences'; and, third, the sheer

'*munashisa*, or a sense of hollowness and pointlessness' of *hibakusha*, who fully understood the 'language's inability to reconstruct the past as they believe they really experienced it' (Yoneyama, 1999: 88-91). The corollary was that many started to self-censor, merely as a provisional solution to the complicated question. Indeed, even more than half a century afterwards, 'no more than a small scattering of the over 370,000 survivors who witnessed the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear atrocities have openly voiced their survival memories.[19]

The emotional vacillations that Manabu, Mitsue and Sana express in the three plays exemplify that moral standards, common sense, and 'universal' codes of ethics are far from absolute: they shift according to the opinion of the largest common denominator at a specific time and in a certain space. Collective social values are formed and transformed according to the unscripted narratives of everyday life. Thus, when the bulk of people constituting the common denominator are forcibly disintegrated to different scales of victimhood through a nuclear disaster, accordingly, given norms and values drastically change. The democratic right to marry anyone he loves transforms into a violation of public welfare when Manabu, as an atomic bomb victim, claims that right after the war. Pursuing personal happiness turns into an egotistical act when it is scrutinised through the eyes of Mitsue, an atomic-bomb survivor, who has observed tens of thousands of innocent people dying in vain. Freedom of expression is willingly abandoned by Sana, because, after Fukushima, an unmeasured self-expression was often damaging to others and ruinous to society. Whether it was the clash between individual rights and public welfare; the rights of the living and the obligation towards the dead; or the act of self-expression and the wish for collective preservation, they represent the moral conflicts that emerged immediately after the nuclear catastrophes. And, because

the survivors could not decide which of the two offered the optimum solution, they became reticent, which, in the worst cases, ended in self-censorship.

It is regretful to know that these acts of self-censorship followed the years of censorship in Japan. When adding up the years of the militaristic silencing of the Cabinet Intelligence Bureau and the ensuing enforcement of the Press Code, Japanese people were deprived of the freedom of speech for more than a decade. Among those most severely deprived of their voices were the *hibakusha* of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. According to Monica Braw, owing to the Press Code guidelines formed by the Civil Censorship Detachment, in which it ordered that 'there shall be no destructive criticism of the Allied Forces of Occupation and nothing which might invite mistrust or resentment of these troops', the atomic bomb victims could not publicly express their fury towards the perpetrators (Braw, 1991: 41). In fact, as Okuda asserts, following the guidelines that justified the acts of American troops, hence after for seven years, 'all forms of news that dealt with the nuclear bombs […] totally disappeared' (Okuda, 2010: 66).

When this historical fact is taken into consideration, it is even more distressful to know that *hibakusha* self-censored when, finally, the censorship by the occupier was lifted. Indeed, in several of the A-bomb plays, accusatory voices toward the American perpetrators are addressed in the play; however, it only provides a subtle undertone, rather than being delivered as the main theme (the rare exception being Miyamoto Ken's *The Pilot*, 1964, in which the flyer of the atomic bomb plane is silently accused by the villagers). To reiterate, one of the most urgent topics that was expressed in many of the A-bomb plays was the sense of guilt and the ensuing self-censorship. Further, playwrights such as Hotta believed that artists were obliged to give substance to these less noticeable struggles immanent in society. As a native playwright of Hiroshima, in

The Island, Hotta decides to render visible the discriminations and sufferings that many of *hibakusha* endure, and tries to give voices back to the atomic bomb victims.

Guilt in *Shingeki*: Hotta Kiyomi's *The Island*

In 1957, five years after Japan reclaimed its independence, Hotta Kiyomi (1922 – 2009) presented *The Island*. There were several A-bomb plays that antedated Hotta's play including Kinoshita Junji's *The Mountain Range* (1949) and Miyoshi Jūrō's *He Who Risked* (1952). But noteworthy scholars such as Goodman mark *The Island* as 'the first play about the atomic bombings to receive national attention in Japan' (Goodman, 1986: 11). One of the major reasons why the play attained nation-wide acclaim was because it was the first nuclear-related play to be presented after the Dai-go Fukuryū Maru tuna fishing boat radiation exposure, and the ensuing mass movement to ban nuclear bombs (Gensuikin undō, Nagaoka, 1983: 481).

As if to substantiate the play's public success as well as its critical acclaim, a year afterwards in 1958 Hotta received the Kishida Kunio Drama Award. However, for the playwright, the degree of attention that accompanied the play was unexpected or even unwanted: he did not intend to become famous as a playwright who writes daringly about Hiroshima. In fact, Okakura Shirō, the director of the premiere performance of *The Island* in 1957, reveals in a text in the official brochure that even though Hotta started writing the play immediately after the Dai-go Fukuryū Maru radiation exposure accident, 'Hotta refused to present the play' for three years, as he did not want to be labelled as the audacious playwright writing about the event (Okakura, 1957: 9). Rather, he preferred a low-key status, which he surely enjoyed until a few years before, as an amateur dramatist in the Hitachi factory in Kameari, Tokyo. Being primarily a proletariat artist with a

communist vision, working together with colleagues in the workers' theatre sponsored by the labour union seemed fitting, more so than basking in the glory of a bourgeois theatre award (Goodman, 1986: 11).

After the end of the Occupation, a number of amateur theatre troupes that were affiliated with corporations, schools and communities started to emerge. The burgeoning of these troupes was later collectively called the Self-Reliant Theatre Movement (*Jiritsu engeki undō*), since its continuation totally relied on the participants' will. Zealous participants of the Self-Reliant Movement almost exclusively came from the young, angry and impecunious working class, who took a critical stance towards established social norms. As already briefly mentioned in Chapter One, during the Occupation, the Civil Information and Education Division recommended American writers such as Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Edward Albee in order to propagate American-style democracy. These American writers more or less influenced many of the Japanese playwrights who later formed the Self-Reliant Movement. After the war, however, when the influx of information expanded exponentially, these playwrights started to worship proletarian playwrights such as Bertolt Brecht and Jean-Paul Sartre (Nishimura, 2002: 9). The major objective of the theatre-makers involved in the Self-Reliant Theatre Movement was to raise awareness towards workers' lives subsisting on a minimum wage in the midst of surging capitalism.

As Hotta affirms, the proletariat playwrights were primarily engaged with addressing the 'workers suffering in life and fighting against it' (Ogawa, 2004: 57). In other words, light was shed on personal struggles, and not on the national scale agendas that constituted the backdrop of those hardships. Staying true to this creed, Hotta wrote nothing directly linked to the atomic bomb in his earlier plays such as *The Son of the Motorman* (*Untenshi no musuko*, 1947) and *The Little Mouse* (*Konezumi*, 1949). In fact, the

playwright proclaims that even *The Island*, which was the first professional play that he wrote after joining *Gekidan Mingei* (People's Theatre) in 1954, could be included in the same category of proletariat plays. The objective of the play lies in portraying 'a banal and ordinary worker' fighting against the everyday struggles deriving from the atomic bomb; and not, developing an epic, a myth, or a heroic narrative completely detached from a commoner's life (Hotta, 1960).

The juxtaposition of the personal and the social, with the focus on the former, is a fixed form of writing quintessential to *shingeki*. Rather than abstracting the crux of the social issue, the theatre-makers pay meticulous attention to verisimilitude: to giving an authentic voice to the ordinary protagonists. Therefore, even when writing about a catastrophe of such scale as an atomic bomb, the play essentially focuses on personal struggles and often fails to address the larger picture of the event. For this reason, Goodman argues that this 'kind of formulaic writing' of *shingeki* becomes an issue when writing about the atomic bombing' (Goodman, 1986: 16). Indeed, a typical *shingeki* narrative always follows a certain path: a tragic fate befalls an ordinary person; the audience is enlightened by his or her battle to overcome the imposed hardship; and yet, the protagonist's desperate endeavour always ends in vain. Through this foreseeable plot where audiences already know the ending, 'what comes across most strongly is not the unique experience of the atomic bomb but the tragic formula' (ibid.). In other words, the fixed structure of *shingeki* involuntarily cans the experience of atomic bombs into a generalised format.

The very weakness of *The Island* lies in following the tradition of *shingeki* formulaic writing. The story unravels by tracing all the aforementioned markers comprising a typical *shingeki* narrative. Kurihara Manabu (played by Naitō Taketoshi, one of the founding members of *Gekidan Mingei*), the protagonist of the play, has been tragically

attacked by an atomic bomb in Hiroshima; he diligently fights through the hardship, which includes not only physical struggles but also social challenges like discrimination towards *hibakusha*; and yet his will to overcome them ultimately fails. The formulaic *shingeki* language, at best, may define the broad parameters of the event, but, at worst, may generalise the individual voice of the sufferers. Indeed, regarding *The Island*, when the atomic bombing is represented through the 'pre-fixed expression, grammar and syntax' of *shingeki*, it more or less impairs the singular significance of the incident (Hemmi, 2012: 15). As the aforementioned A-bomb novelist Ōta rightly claims, it is 'absolutely [impossible] to depict the truth [of the A-bomb] without first creating a new terminology' (Ōta, 1955: 148).

Regardless of the formulaic writing, however, a certain political cogency shines through the play. That is, through the deplorable narrative of a *hibakusha*, the play poignantly points out the failure of the democratic system in post-war Japan. Rather than blindly venerating the democratic rights, which were greatly propagated by the Occupation Forces, Hotta brings into question the validity and efficacy of those values; namely, 'democracy, freedom and individual liberty' (Brandon, 2006: 9-11). Through a Chekhovian psychological drama of an atomic bomb victim, who works as a junior high school teacher in a small island off the naval port of Kure in Hiroshima, what is brought into relief is a life of a *hibakusha*, who is arguably demoted to the state of a second-rate citizen. Indeed, *The Island* is considered an influential play because it was the first play to directly criticise the consequences of the atomic bomb; however, in hindsight, it is a contested play also because it critically depicted the post-Hiroshima reality, in which others wrongly considered the atomic bomb victim an embodiment of the ills of society. When Manabu is irrationally excluded from the villagers, the audience clearly realises

the failures of democracy. The play critically sheds lights on those people who are unreasonably excluded from obtaining basic human rights.

What augmented the ethical indignation towards failed democracy was Hotta's personal experience. In 1950, due to the sudden wave of Red Purge that absorbed the state, Hotta was suddenly dismissed from the Hitachi Company. The American Occupying Forces perceived that the labour movements were gaining too much power, even though the democratisation process that they induced after the war, basically, triggered it. Threatened by the possibility of the Japanese communists aligning with the Chinese and the Soviets, SCAP rashly enforced a prohibition that purged leftist and communist sympathisers from engaging in public service and private enterprises. When Hotta lost his job through the purge, he went back to his hometown Ondo on Kurahashi Island, Hiroshima (the village was merged with the city of Kure in 2005). At Ondo, Hotta met Tsuboi Sunao, a math teacher at the local junior high school, a colleague of Hotta's younger brother, and an atomic bomb victim who later became the Director of the Japan Confederation of A- and H- Bomb Sufferers Organisation.

Hotta asserts that the basis of *The Island* was formed through the 'three-to-four-hour-long conversation' that he had with Tsuboi: a casual chat conducted by 'eating tangerines around a *kotatsu* [table with an electric heater underneath a quilt]'.[20] Although the play is unmistakably a fiction, Hotta affirms that the story of Tsuboi and his wife Suzuko formed the crux of the story. As for Tsuboi, he recalls that he spoke about almost everything on the day, as he did 'not know that the conversation was going to turn into a play'.[21] When his hometown fell victim to the atomic bomb, Hotta was 'working in the Osaka area and thus survived the destruction of his city' (Goodman, 1986: 11). Nevertheless, Hotta resonated strongly with Tsuboi, an atomic bomb survivor, because of his circumstance at the time – a playwright deprived of a job and a voice – was greatly

analogous to the demoted status of a *hibakusha*: people divested of basic rights such as equal employment, free love and freedom of speech.

Therefore, one could argue that this play, which places at centre stage the issue of freedom of speech of *hibakusha,* was drafted specifically through the lens of Hotta's personal struggles. Through the play, Hotta declaims that nobody – whether a *hibakusha* or a leftist playwright – should be silenced for the sake of the preservation of the hegemonic narrative. In his words, Hotta explains the impetus for drafting *The Island* as follows:

> After the War, […] we young people – who had been educated to believe [during the War] that 'All is for the Emperor!' – shared this mutual feeling that this time we want to develop *our lives through our own wills and actions*. [W]e wanted to build our own lives as we saw fit. 'Let us live [our own lives]!' was the slogan that we were obsessed with. (Hotta, 1971: 473, emphasis added)

The war, or more specifically, the Imperial Japanese Army, deprived countless veterans and civilians of their prime of life. Due to the patriotic propaganda distributed by the Japanese army demanding that citizens risk their lives for the sake of their country (*okuni no tame ni*), it was impossible to conduct one's life according to individual will during the war. Furthermore, when paying heed to these suppressed voices, 'Let us live' becomes a cogent message. As a repercussion of the wartime coercion, in which 'young men were taught to fight for the Emperor', many men, like Hotta, yearned to reclaim their lost years by living an autonomous life, supported by their own will and actions (Hotta, 1957). Manabu experienced the atomic bomb in Hiroshima when he was twenty years old. Like his younger brother Ben, who was killed by the bomb, he was destined to die from heavy exposure to radiation. However, through the ardent nursing of his mother, Kurihara Yū, he miraculously survives. Having been spared his life, after the war he decides to make the most of it: he wishes to live a life devoid of any constraints.

However, it becomes apparent through the course of the play that being a *hibakusha*, he cannot fashion his own life, even after the war.

Manabu's hope to live an autonomous life is shattered due to the discrimination towards *hibakusha*, which was conducted often in the areas of employment and marriage (Lifton, 1971: 178). As many *hibakusha* were considered to have a much shorter lifespan than others, in terms of his career – in which, at that time, life-long employment was considered normal – Manabu is deprived of all paths that he seeks to pursue. Despite his excellence in studying proven before the war, he is left with no choice but to remain on the island, which is 'going through an economic downturn after the end of Korean War (1950-1953),' and quietly teach local children.[22] His intelligence is exercised only on those rare occasions when he gives the students a plaque inscribed with the words of Pascal – 'Man's greatness lies in his power of thought'; and, when he teaches them the humanism of Mahatma Gandhi. In fact, there is a desperate undertone when he teaches the axiom of Gandhi, as, through the humanist reflection, he is trying to persuade himself that someday all discrimination towards others, nurtured through ignorance and indifference, will be gone.

The possibility of betrothal to someone he loves proves equally impossible. However, as if to hold on to the last ray of hope, halfway through the play, Manabu makes a subtle declaration to his mother that he might 'marry Rei-chan (a nickname for Reiko)'. As if to reaffirm his humanistic creed, he continues that 'for once in my life I want to act by following my own will' (Hotta, 1971: 33). The hopeful affirmation to live an autonomous life, however, gradually withers. One case in point is when Manabu witnesses the sudden death of his neighbour Okin: a middle-aged woman who was a close friend to his family. When the radiation disease attacks and takes away the life of the woman, who seemed so robust until the day before, it becomes inevitable, even for an

optimist like Manabu, to imagine an ominous future. For the first time, he realises that promising marriage to Reiko, until death parts them, is an absurd proclamation because his life may end at any given moment. Manabu understands that his life is far from achieving freedom; it is always shackled to an imminent death.

Two years after the end of the Second World War, the new Constitution of Japan was enacted. Within it, Article 13 is considered the paramount clause for protecting the rights of the individual. The article clearly indicates that all people should equally 'be respected as individuals', and that the citizens' right to 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' should be protected. When his life is assessed against the proclamation of the article, Manabu feels as if his life has been excluded from the application of the law.[23] To say more, although it is not overtly mentioned in the play, when considering the latter half of Article 13, which states that the aforementioned right of individuals should be maintained 'to the extent that it does not interfere with the public welfare', Manabu feels he is being condemned for violating the article. When a *hibakusha* like Manabu exercises the right to pursue his career or have a fruitful marriage, the act causes havoc for those around him.

Even in real life Tsuboi and Suzuko, the aforementioned models of the play, could not win approval for their marriage. Thus, in the hope of 'living together in heaven', the two committed suicide by taking an excessive amount of sleeping pills. However, the couple woke up next morning still alive as the pharmacist, catching the tragic mood of the couple, astutely changed the pills to placebos. The two cried that they could not be together either in this life or the next. The tragic situation, however, resolved itself, when Suzuko's father, the strongest opponent of the marriage, died in an accident. Tsuboi's reputation as a good teacher in the community alleviated the doubts of other family members towards their marriage, and thus, in the end, the two got married – twelve years

after the war in 1957.[24] As argued in Chapter One, to have a good reputation in *seken* (public community) meant that 'that person does not deviate the convention of the village' (Inoue, T., 1988:4). When this criterion is transposed to the consideration of Tsuboi, it could be said that although he was an anomaly, a *hibakusha*, in the village, his reputation as a good schoolteacher ultimately won him the marriage. Rather than adopting Tsuboi's relieving narrative, however, Hotta deliberately concludes the play as a tragedy. For better or for worse, the playwright unfailingly follows the *shingeki* formula, in which the diligent struggles of the protagonist always end in vain, and puts a seal on the tragic image of *hibakusha*.

Among the spate of tragic narratives attributed to Manabu – for instance, deprivation of human rights, the daily intimidation of death and arbitrary discrimination conducted by the villagers – what is arguably most lamentable is the conclusion he deduces: he accepts the miseries as an inevitable outcome of his own wrongdoing. Confronted by the pitiless honesty of people he loves, such as Reiko's mother objecting to his marriage, Manabu assumes that perhaps the rights of *hibakusha* cannot coincide with the collective happiness of the community. Thus when Manabu becomes aware of the fact that he has been hurting the people closest to him, he feels guilty for spreading his misery. Driven by the sense of guilt, in one scene, Manabu persuades Reiko, who is sobbing as she equally loves Manabu, to marry another man for her own sake. He even apologises to Reiko: 'I was thinking only about myself, and was not thinking at all about Rei-chan's happiness' (Hotta, 1971: 42-43).

Notwithstanding the fact that the new Constitution of Japan, which idealised the western-style marriage proclaiming the equality of husband and wife, was enacted a decade before the first performance of *The Island*, the feudalistic convention of the Meiji Civil Law (Meiji minpō), which defined marriage as a socially responsible contract between

two families (*ie*), was still prevalent especially in rural communities.[25] Around the mid-1950s, 89.7 per cent of women still changed their family names to their husband's, and around 80 per cent of parents over 65 lived together with the family of the eldest son.[26] Thus, the label of *hibakusha* would stigmatise Reiko as well as her family once she had wed Manabu. Additionally, owing to the fact that 74.9 per cent of married women became housewives in 1955, most wives and her family were financially dependent on the husband, who was the sole breadwinner of the family.[27] Thus, observing matrimony from the woman's viewpoint, the risk of pledging one's troth to Manabu was too high. He might become ill and fail to support his family economically. Grasping the full picture of the event, therefore, Manabu apologises to Reiko. As one commentator in Lifton's interviews aptly puts it, his attitude could be summarised in one appalling sentence: 'I apologize for having been exposed to the atomic bomb' (Lifton, 1971:178).

Victims being held up as guilty through the lens of societal norms is a harrowing grief observed among *hibakusha*. Most often than not, the infirm and the weak are the ones who are most sensitive to pain; and, precisely because of this sensitivity, they soak up all misery for the sake of safeguarding others from also experiencing suffering. The last thing they wish to do is to harm others by diffusing their torments. Retrospectively speaking, however, a victim who has survived so much traumatic experience deciding to endure discriminations is, arguably an ultimate distortion of humanism. The act of Manabu succumbing to mass opinion epitomises a corruption of basic humanity. Rather than aiding the man at the lowest rung of the ladder, when people realise that Manabu unnecessarily complicates their everyday routines, they remove him, like vermin, from the fabric of society. A slight sense of hope is proposed in the final scene of the play however. Standing alone on the stage in a burning sunset, Manabu murmurs, although inaudible to the audience, 'Damn! I am going to survive!' (Hotta, 1971: 44). His eyes are

fixed towards the west, which in Shin-Buddhism (*Jōdo Shinshū*) is the place where heaven lies. Arguably, he is declaring to the Promised Land and to the people who await him there that he is going to live.

Despite this optimistic tone added at the end of the play, the plan to stage this production in Hiroshima city was, initially, cancelled due to the presumed 'disturbing effects it may have upon actual *hibakusha*' (Lifton, 1971: 474). It was only after Gekidan Mingei's successful yearlong tour, which travelled to prefectures such as Ōsaka, Kōbe, Kyōto, Wakayama, Nagoya, Niigata, Yamagata, Miyagi, Iwate, Aomori, Akita and Shizuoka, that the play was at last presented at a venue in Hiroshima: Fukuyama-shi Shimin Kan (*Fukuyama Civic Hall*), a municipal theatre, which was safely located around a hundred kilometres away from the epicentre.[28]

The initial cancellation of the show and the decision to present the play in Fukuyama-shi, impels us to reassess the tripartite relationship between victimhood, guilt and censorship. The logic of the cancellation is underpinned by guilt for possibly causing distress to the victims. Through the conscientious attempt to protect the victims from any disturbance, they decided not to show the play. This decision calls into question whether or not victimhood should be kept intact through excessive control of information. No matter how society attempts to shield victims from hardships and assume that there is no discrimination toward *hibakusha*, the actual conditions will never change. Excluding A-bomb plays from public discourse for the sake of encasing the lives of *hibakusha* in a soft protective cocoon could be considered a form of censorship. Unfortunately, by taking a measure to protect the *hibakusha*, it might conversely result in eradicating their voices from the social arena.

Should the artists yearning to articulate the voice of *hibakusha* be rejected, in order to maintain the harmonious, yet indifferent, integrity of society? Would it be worth doing

so, even if harmony were maintained at the cost of countless sacrifices, including the silencing not only of artists but also of suffering victims? Later in the chapter, these questions regarding the pros and cons of excessive social unity will be explored in detail in reference to Okada's post-Fukushima play *Current Location*.

Guilt Beyond *Shingeki*: Inoue Hisashi's *The Face of Jizō*

Apart from his extremely rich poetic cadence that freely interweaves the profane and the sacred, what made Inoue Hisashi (1934 – 2010) an unparalleled playwright was his purposeful voice, with ethical indignation at its base, which was uttered from the standpoint of the socially vulnerable. Unlike those *shingeki* playwrights with didactic intents, who aligned themselves predominantly with intellectuals, Inoue always spoke from the lowest rung of the social ladder. Director Ninagawa Yukio (1935 - 2016), another theatre legend, who always sympathised with lone rebels that countered the establishment, asserts that, as another 'artist coming from the same generation, I empathise with Inoue in the sense that he has always depicted the affection towards abandoned people' (Senda, 2012a: 155). Pitted against the idea that subalterns are inevitably deprived of their voices, it is the oppressed, the outcasts and the weak who are most eloquent in Inoue's plays. In fact, in many of his plays, the most vulnerable are provided with a silver tongue to reveal and condemn the corruptions of power. For example, a character such as Momohachi in *Beating the Drums* (*Taiko don don*, 1975), a clown-like figure comparable to Sganarelle in Moliere's *Dom Juan*, is provided with almost double the number of lines as his master, Seinosuke, the son of one of the wealthiest pharmaceutical merchants in Edo (Tokyo).

Within the rubric of the thesis focusing on theatrical repercussions of nuclear accidents, it is worth noting that Inoue's *Beating the Drums*, revived in May 2011 under the direction of Ninagawa, was one of the first productions to react to the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. In the penultimate scene of the play, Ninagawa has added a vivid visualisation of the gigantic tsunami, which, of course, was not written in Inoue's 1975 script. In the scene, Momohachi and his master Seinosuke return from the nine-year-long journey around Tōhoku. When they finally come back to the metropolis, the city of Edo is diminished to the scale of a miniature diorama as the cityscape is represented by an array of paper houses. Then, suddenly, the paper-crafted town is attacked by a tsunami: an enormous picture board of Japanese *ukiyo-e* painter Katsushika Hokusai's *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* abruptly slides in from the wings.

The thunderous sound and the vivid image of the contemporary calamity shocks the audience, as it is such an unexpected incursion after a three-and-a-half hour of the tragicomic narrative set in the Edo era (1603-1868). When the production is assessed on the basis of its fidelity to the original text, indeed, Ninagawa's direction could be criticised for textual distortion. However, being a coeval creator of Inoue, who died around a year before the 2011 Tōhoku disaster, and who was deeply concerned with the proliferation of nuclear power in Japan, Ninagawa arguably felt morally obliged to add a scene that responded to the event, in order to reinvigorate the victims. To this end, the play does not end in utter devastation. When the picture board of the tsunami slides in from the wings, *Amazing Grace*, arranged by Itō Yotarō, is played on the stage. When the emblematic folk music that venerates the souls of slaves surrounds the characters attacked by the tsunami, it becomes a hymn of salvation towards devastated spirits in Tōhoku. More still, soon after the sound of the tsunami and the music fades, a moment of silence prevails on the stage; yet a few seconds later, the lusty cry of a baby full of life

bursts into the air. Together with the vibrant cry of the baby, characters slowly stand up one by one as if to encourage the Tōhoku disaster victims that life will continue. It is an empathetic message delivered from two determined humanists, Ninagawa and Inoue, who always believed in the indomitable life force.

Already a prominent figure as a writer of television and radio in the 1950s, Inoue officially made his debut as a playwright in 1969 with *The Navel of the Japanese* (*Nihonjin no heso*). Company Theatre Echo (*Gekidan teatoru ekō*), a small-scale *shingeki* troupe that had been established in 1954 to introduce entertaining comedies, especially those of French boulevard theatre, presented Inoue's first play. As with any theatrical incarnation which transcends the boundaries of previous aesthetics, the play, along with many of his early works, were mercilessly attacked by many *shingeki* critics who thought that 'although Inoue's "fiercely-talented phantasmagoric world" should be acknowledged to a certain extent, his works are inevitably "shallow", "low-end" and are "lacking philosophical thought"' (Senda, 2012a: 20).

To a degree, this criticism is valid as, indeed, Inoue once declared that the crux of the play lies not in philosophy (*shisō*), but rather in its theatricality (*shukō*, ibid.: 19). He even openly denounced *shingeki* plays, which were still a dominant force in the theatre scene in the 1950s and the early-60s, because they dismissed the spatiotemporal elements intrinsic to theatre for the sake of complacently appraising intellectual philosophies: 'It is inadmissible conceit' (ibid.). For Inoue, the essence of theatre lay in developing a repository of playful, allegorical and politicised local words that were woven into a theatrical language *per se*. In order to achieve this objective, Inoue integrated different theatre styles (*shingeki* and absurdist theatre), transcending the boundary between the East and the West (Chekhovian comedy and Kabuki-esque spectacle), and assembled miscellaneous dictions, from the most profane to the sacred, with abundant *jeu de mots*

in order to invent his own language for the theatre. Theatre critic Senda Akihiko metaphorically described Inoue's writing by comparing it to 'a prism that diffusely reflects […] a welter of light' (ibid.: 11).

His English-language translator Roger Pulvers asserts that Inoue is one of Japan's 'most brilliant playwrights' because he developed a signature form of theatricality that goes beyond *shingeki* aesthetics (Pulvers, 2004). By not entirely rejecting the intellectual *shingeki*, nor the commercial bourgeois theatre, he invented his own vocabulary, his own style and his own language, which often was used to narrate a tale that seemed familiar in appearance but historically unknown to Japanese citizens in terms of its content. In addition to this life-long linguistic endeavour, Inoue was also known for his scholarly historic research (*Tokyo Trials Trilogy*, 2001, 2003, 2006), multi-narrative experimental theatres (*Shakespeare in the Year Tempō 12*, 1974), Brechtian (or, Kurt Weill-esque) musical composition (*A Crack in the Dream, 2007*) and humorous Chekhovian storytelling (Pulvers, 2004). By freely integrating all these styles, he transcended the boundaries inflicted on previous *shingeki* theatres. To again borrow the words of his coeval theatre director Ninagawa, who is a year junior to the playwright, Inoue develops a play that is like 'a gigantic universe reminiscent of François Rabelais' (Iwaki, 2009a).

Unlike many of the initiators of *Angura* theatre such as Ninagawa, Kara Jūrō, Suzuki Tadashi, and to a lesser extent, Satoh Makoto, who all predominantly focused on the physical and visual aspects of theatre-making, Inoue was unmistakably a man of words. By characteristically playing on words, he once described himself not as a wizard of theatre, but as a '*wozard* (kotoba zukai)' (Senda, 2012a: 12). Against the tide of physical theatre in vogue during the 1960s, in which many theatre artists established the practice of working as a playwright-director (Kara, Suzuki and Satoh among others), Inoue intentionally avoided directorial responsibility, as he believed, primarily, in the power of

words. When surrounded by the global predominance of visual culture, words compared to images seem so powerless. In a contemporary society venerating speed, words demand a slow, painstaking procedure for composition as well as comprehension. Already before the arrival of the digital age, Inoue foresaw the threat to literary culture. However, he never gave up his pen even after his writings became more sluggish, ironically earning him the nickname *Chihitsu-dō* (literally, 'Slow-writing enterprise').

Attempts to put events into words run the risk of the language becoming clichéd and reductive. For instance, when phrases such as 'Let's protect peace' or 'Let's fight against discrimination' were repeatedly disseminated from around a decade after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki disaster, gradually the words lost their social power as they were chafed from excessive, and mostly automated, usage.[29] At the same time, however, it is only through the literary endeavour that the surface-level understanding inundated with cheap slogans can be assessed in depth. Thus, being an artist with an aptitude for writing, Inoue felt obliged to shoulder the mission of translating the images of the atomic bombs into piecemeal words. To be specific, he wished 'to reinvent words' so that, unlike rubber-stamp slogans and pet expressions, the singular voice of the atomic bomb victims would 'be heard by people again'.[30] It was his creed as a playwright that words, when formulated in aesthetic perfection, could change the actions of people (Inoue, 2005: 219).

Born and raised in Yamagata Prefecture, relatively close to the afflicted areas of the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, Inoue experienced the end of the war in his hometown when he was in the fifth-year of the Japanese elementary school (equivalent to the last year of British primary school). The two atomic bombs had a great impact on the future playwright. He remembers reading the *Asahi Shimbun*, which reported that 'although a new type of bomb has been dropped, there is nothing to worry about, you should just wear something white' to express the will of surrender (Inoue, 2011: 3). In contrast to the

claim of the newspaper, however, he had heard rumours from the local high school and university students saying that 'an unimaginably horrible bomb has been dropped' (ibid.). He was later informed that it was called an atomic bomb. Soon afterwards, without any notice, all information about that mysterious bomb disappeared from the media. The next time Inoue read about the atomic bomb was when he was a high school student. He pored over the special issue of *The Asahi Graph* of 6 August 1952 in which, for the first time in history, the damage of the atomic bombs was recaptured and presented in twenty-seven photographs. Together with millions of other Japanese, the shattering images of the journal 'immensely shocked' the adolescent playwright Inoue, and implanted in him the seed to write about the atomic bomb (Inoue, 2011: 3).

This seed, however, did not bear fruit until quite late in his career. Although Inoue had longed to write about the atomic bomb ever since he read *The Asahi Graph*, he was hesitant to take on the task, inhibited by the idea that 'nobody who has not experienced the event can write about something so horrendous' (Inoue, 2011: 3). At different points in life, however, he came across two unforgivable phrases, which finally consolidated his will to write about the event. The first came from Emperor Hirohito on 31 October 1975: 'Although I feel sorry for the citizens of Hiroshima, since it was during wartime, it was inevitable' (Inoue, 2005: 219). The second was by Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro on 6 August 1983. When he visited the nursing home for the aged *hibakusha*, he moralised: 'Fancy may kill or cure. If you have strong guts, illness will run away' (ibid.). The two insensitive and insolent comments infuriated Inoue, to say the least. The two most powerful men in the country were thoughtlessly eradicating the singular sufferings of *hibakusha* from history by asserting that the atomic bomb was inevitable and that A-bomb diseases were merely psychological. In order to combat these abominable

declarations, Inoue promised himself that, even if the outcome was reductive and unfinished, 'I must write [about the atomic bomb]' (ibid.).

Determined to 'disseminate the subtle voices' of the *hibakusha*, Inoue visited Hiroshima countless times, pored over several hundred personal notes of the *hibakusha* 'like a Bible', and even strove to become an expert in the old Hiroshima vernacular by lingering around cafes in the city's Naka-ku district in order to voice the victims accurately (Inoue, 2005: 222). And, after years of extensive research, the playwright finally started composing a series of A-bomb plays. In 1997, he finished *Kamiyachō Sakura Hotel* (*Kamiyachō sakura hoteru*), which was performed for the inauguration of the New National Theatre in Tokyo (NNT). Roughly ten years afterwards, in 2008, Inoue completed a concise reading play *Little Boy, Big Typhoon* (*Shōnen kudentai 1945*), which was written specifically for NNT Drama Studio students. Since then, the third-year students of the drama school have performed the play annually.

Additionally of note is that a reading of *Little Boy, Big Typhoon* was presented around a year after the Fukushima disaster at a one-day symposium, *Sperrzone Japan – Ein Jahr nach Fukushima* (Evacuation Zone Japan – One Year After Fukushima), held at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin.[31] This symposium was one of the first of the kind to connect, through the theatre, the different *chronos* of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima, as well as different *topos* of Japan and Germany. As a case in point for the juxtaposition of two geographic points, we could refer to the set designed by Julian Grebe. When the play reading took place at the prestigious German theatre, Grebe built at the back of the stage a wall of drawers in which the first sets of data for nuclear power – the discovery of uranium in 1789, by the Berlin chemist Martin Heinrich Klaproth – were recorded and stored (Krug, 2012). The stage set connoted to the German audience

that, the Fukushima disaster is not an accident that occurs only outside of European civilisation.

In this chapter, however, where the discussion is focused on the sense of guilt, another of Inoue's A-bomb plays, *The Face of Jizō* (*Chichi to kuraseba*, 1994, directed by Hitoshi Uyama), is situated as the locus of the argument. It is a play that *Komatsu-za*, a theatre company launched by Inoue in 1983 to present his own plays, dutifully remounts every summer to remember the horrific event. As with many of Inoue's plays, the two central characters depicted in the play are commoners residing in a small shack in Hiroshima. Not as an authoritarian mandate but as a personal behest, Inoue tries to give a voice back to a *hibakusha* who suppresses excruciating agonies through the play. It is the author's first A-bomb play, now translated into eight languages, which attempts to liberate the *hibakusha* from the shackles of guilt.[32]

Fukuyoshi Mitsue, a twenty-three-year-old librarian who had experienced the atomic bomb in the city of Hiroshima three years previously, is the protagonist of *Chichi to kuraseba* (literal translation, *Living with My Father*). In this play, Inoue delicately weaves diverse psychological features pertaining to early stage atomic bomb *hibakusha*, with a dash of playfulness in his portrayal of the protagonist. Mitsue is arguably an incarnation of the spirit of the *hibakusha*; she more or less expresses the most typical emotions observed among the Hiroshima victims. For this reason, her psyche could be described most aptly by citing the psychological analysis of Lifton, who carefully monitored the inchoate psychological symptoms of *hibakusha*:

> Summarizing the psychological significance of this early phase, I would stress the *indelible imprint of death immersion, which forms the basis of what we shall later see to be a permanent encounter with death*, the fear of annihilation of self and of individual identity, along with *the sense of having virtually experienced that annihilation*; destruction of the non-human environment, of the field or context of one's existence, and therefore of one's overall sense of 'being-in-the-world'; and the

replacement of the natural order of living and dying with an unnatural
order of death-dominated life (Lifton, 1971: 37, emphasis in the original).

From the beginning of the play, Mitsue is already immersed in what Lifton calls the unnatural order of death-dominated life. What comes across to the audience immediately as her most recognisable trait, therefore, is her 'sense of painful self-condemnation over having lived while others die' (Lifton and Olson, 1986: 311-312). As was the case with *The Island*, it is also a play about survivor's guilt. However, as already briefly noted, what crucially distinguishes Inoue's play from the preceding example is that here the protagonist expresses a sense of guilt not only towards the fellow survivors but also towards those who were killed by the atomic bomb. And, in order to give shape to the internal struggle of *hibakusha* constantly feeling guilty towards the dead, Inoue adopts a theatrical ingenuity that enables Mitsue to develop a sustained dialogue with her inner guilt. To be specific, Inoue develops a two-hander tragicomedy with Mitsue and her dead father Takezō through which the dialogue between the living and the dead is embodied.

The apparition of Takezō cannot be interpreted through the *shingeki* aesthetics that predominantly views the world through the scope of factual data and psychological realism. In order to understand that he is an incarnation of Mitsue's guilty conscience, it is necessary to go beyond the realm of realism. Since Inoue knew that many *hibakusha* are excessively concerned with those who have died, he made sure that the audience would hear the unspoken struggles of *hibakusha*. In fact, in the early stage of writing, Inoue had only one character in mind: Mitsue. However, as he wished to convey a 'conflicting drama' occurring within the psyche of a *hibakusha*, who is split between life and death, he eventually divided the female character into two antipodes of the 'condemning daughter' and the 'wishing daughter' (Inoue, 2005: 213). If Inoue were developing a novel out of the same topic, there would be no difficulty in seamlessly juxtaposing the two voices, line after line, without confusing the reader. However, when

the same plan is transposed to the theatre, having one actress portray the two personae of Mitsue did not seem like an optimal option. The playwright, therefore, came up with an alternative idea whereby the protagonist's father voices the part of the 'wishing daughter, speaking on behalf of all the dead people' (ibid.). Explained differently, 'the father [character] wishing the happiness of his daughter' is a doppelganger of the daughter's forward-looking side: 'an illusion inside Mitsue's mind', who wishes to pacify her guilt and hopes for a better life (ibid.).

As Lifton and Olson pertinently suggest, a survivor of a deadly catastrophe is likely to experience split emotions. On the one hand, they are 'never quite able to forgive themselves for having survived'; yet, on the other hand, those same people 'experience relief and gratitude that it was *they* who had the good fortune to survive in contrast to the fate of those who died […] that in turn intensifies their guilt' (Lifton and Olson, 1986: 314). Arguably, what Inoue attempts to achieve through the dialogue between the surviving daughter and the dead father is to bring into relief these contradictory emotions of an A-bomb survivor. One part of Mitsue condemns herself for having lived; her other part, voiced by her father, wishes to achieve a happy life for the sake of those who could not live.

Despite the ethical morass that Mitsue is bogged down in, the play starts in a deceptively playful tone. According to Inoue's stage direction, 'music plays as the house light fades' and after some time the audience 'hears the rumble of tympani and see flashes of lightning coming from somewhere far away' (Inoue, 2004: 14). The lightning reveals a simple house – 'no more than a glorified shack' (ibid.). It is late afternoon in Hiroshima, the hot summer in July 1948, and Mitsue, 'wearing wooden clogs, dressed in an old-fashioned white blouse and a mottle-patterned pair of traditional work pants hurriedly rushes into the house' (ibid.). Lightning flashes again when she steps into the sitting

room, and as she is frightened by the light, she puts her hands 'over her eyes and ears' and screams like a little child: 'Daddy, I'm scared!' (ibid.). Hearing the daughter cry for help, Takezō slides open the closet door with 'a cushion over his head so as not to hear the thunder' and beckons Mitsue to come inside: 'This way, over here, Mitsue, quick. Get in' (*tossing a cushion to Mitsue*, ibid.: 16).

With the tossing of cushions and constant flashing lights, the play projects a lively and rather humorous tonality. Gradually, however, when the audience is informed that Mitsue, who, in her father's words, used to be a 'spunky little girl', became afraid of lightning 'about three years ago', the play starts to reveal its darker undertone (ibid.: 20). As occurs in most close kin relations, the string of conversation between Mitsue and Takezō is mostly conducted in a nonchalant manner. The unspoken words are brought to the fore only when the two recall the flashing images of the disaster. For instance, when they casually joke about their neighbour Nobu, an ex-photographer, who took a picture of naked women in a hot spring to show it off to a military officer, the light-hearted chitchat suddenly swings to the other side and ends by explaining that, due to the traumatic experience of the atomic bomb, Nobu had to give up photography: 'Every time one of his magnesium bulbs popped he couldn't get the flash of the bomb out of his head' (ibid.: 24). Through the repetitive swing between ordinary life and traumatic past, Inoue elucidates how the life of *hibakusha* always exists side by side with death. As one Nagasaki victim observes, 'those who died are dead, and must bear their fate, but the living must live with this dark feeling' (Lifton, 1970: 126).

In a similar manner to how a typical *hibakusha* is exposed to the bifocal reality of life and death, it gradually becomes apparent that Mitsue's feelings also often oscillate between the polar opposites of guilt and hope. The imbrications of guilt towards people that accumulated during three years of the aftermath are revealed, layer-by-layer, through

the course of the play. Takezō, however, never explicitly exhorts Mitsue to let go of her

guilt: indications, suggestions and allusions suffice in order to make one's daughter

understand. Also deliberately adopting the aesthetic of *shingeki* realism, to a measured

extent, in which the quality of the dialogue is judged mostly through its verisimilitude,

Inoue delicately develops a dialogue that is cogent enough to believe that it could happen

in any family in Hiroshima. As Pulvers asserts, since the characters in Inoue's plays 'acts

just like us, it seems very realistic': that is why 'we [the audience] could emotionally

connect to Mitsue, when she confesses her sense of guilt for not being able to save her

father' (Pulvers, 2004).

At face value, what are presented throughout the play are meticulously etched tableaux

of everyday life. For instance, the way in which hot baths are prepared by adding small

logs to the boiler, how the father and the daughter huddle up around a *chabu-dai* [tiny

dining table] for a frugal dinner, and how Takezō cares for Mitsue in a way that a strong

paternal figure protects his child under his aegis. Yet through tiny ruptures that appear

repetitively within the everyday narratives, gradually, the bigger picture of the play is

brought into relief: the sense of guilt Mitsue suppresses. Takezō only approaches the

kernel of Mitsue's guilt circuitously. This is because it is most likely that she will deny

her guilty conscience based on her warped logic: when compared to the horrific

experience of the less fortunate people who have died from the event, the scale of her

struggles is negligible. Understanding the daughter's susceptible feelings, when Mitsue

asks Takezō why he has returned, he does not confess that he has come to alleviate her

sense of guilt, but half-jokingly explains that he has visited her to become the leading

member of Mitsue's 'fan club' (Inoue, 2004: 46). The affection towards Kinoshita, a

young man who collects atomic bomb objects for research, is yet another feeling that

Mitsue conceals. Backed by her sense of guilt, she continuously tries to dispel the

positive outlook of being happily together with him. Approaching the same issue from the opposite angle, Takezō tries to dissipate her sense of guilt and liberate her affection for Kinoshita:

> Takezō: Think about it. I started showin' up last Friday, right, when your heart started throbbin' for the first time in a long time when you caught sight of that Kinoshita fellow comin' into the library. My torso was born out of that throbbing. Then when he started to approach the checkout desk a soft sigh slipped from your lips. Isn't that right? My arms and legs grew out of that sight. Then you made a silent wish, didn't you, that he would choose your desk to come up to. My heart came to life out of that wish (Inoue, 2004: 48).

Among various dichotomous standpoints that Mitsue and Takezō symbolically represent, such as guilt and hope, life and death, future and the past, self-negation and self-affirmation, the contradictory concept most clearly brought into relief through the above-noted passage is the tension between self-hate and love. Overwhelmed by a sense of guilt for being alive while many others have died, Mitsue, like most *hibakusha*, shows aversion towards life. For instance, in one scene, Mitsue confesses that she can by no means be happy, as she has already promised herself otherwise, after her deceased friend's mother had looked right through her and said, 'Why are you alive when my daughter isn't?' (ibid.: 126-128). Transforming other's aggressions to self-hate, as her affection for Kinoshita grows she firmly suppresses the feelings sustained through her sense of guilt. Facing this decisive self-denunciation, Takezō proposes repeatedly to his 'condemning daughter' to stop blaming herself and start loving.

There is a structural reason to why Mitsue's repentance, reproach and condemnation are expressed through the incarnation of her father. Mitsue specifically tries to appease her guilt through conversation with her father because, on the day of the bombing, she had unwillingly abandoned him under a pile of rubble. When his body was buried under 'pillars and beams and all the pieces of wood', she had desperately cried for help and

devoted all her might to save her injured father, even by digging up the earth and bloodily tearing off her nails, one by one (Inoue, 2004: 160). Yet seeing that her effort was to no avail, her father ordered his daughter to 'get outta here'.[33] Mitsue replied, 'No, I won't'. The futile argument continued for a while and failed to reach an agreement (ibid.: 160-162). Trapped in an endless argument, they ultimately chose to decide by means of the juvenile game of *chan-pon-ge* (the name for 'scissors-papers-stones' in the Hiroshima dialect), in which both already know that, as a familial ritual, the father always shows only stones. As expected, Takezō deliberately shows stones to let his daughter win with papers. Mitsue, however, only shows scissors. Astounded by her stubbornness, Takezō, unable to hold back his emotion any longer, imperatively shouts to Mitsue: 'Why in the hell don't you put out paper, eh? Can't you see that I want you to win and get outta here?' (ibid.: 165-6). At her father's behest Mitsue finally runs, yet later the emotions of sorrow, gratitude, apology and defeat, all belatedly culminate in an overwhelming sense of guilt. She cannot approve of her life, because it is founded on her father's ultimate sacrifice.

Even though the play sheds light on the feeling of guilt for most of its duration, Inoue, decisively, ends the play in a hopeful register. As the final scenes of the play unfold, it becomes apparent that the length of Takezō's stay in this world is dependent on the disappearance of his daughter's guilt. The 'wishing daughter' came to the world in the incarnation of Takezō to resolve all the guilt that the 'condemning daughter' possesses. When Mitsue's sense of guilt is sanctified, it enables the dead spirit to leave this world. In short, the dialogue on guilt developed throughout the play could be interpreted as a metaphysical conversation that any *hibakusha* would yearn for: a dialogue untenable in reality, in which the dead forgive the confessions of the living.

At the beginning of the play, Mitsue asks whether her father is going to stay for dinner. Takezō replies that it is 'up to you', and, indeed, he stays because Mitsue has not yet healed from the wounds of guilt (ibid.: 36). In the final moments of the play, the two repeat an identical conversation. Mitsue asks, 'When will I see you again?' Takezō replies that it 'depends on you.' This time, however, the subsequent situation seems to be different, as Mitsue responds 'might be a while' to her father with a radiant smile. When a smile shines out from a habitually intimidated woman, it carries an enormous amount of life, and thus it suggests that Takezō is more likely to vanish (ibid.: 170). The luminous light surrounding Mitsue – indicated in the playtext – suggests that she has finally come to terms with her sense of guilt by neither neglecting nor eradicating it, but by learning how to exist with it. She has decided to live and love her life.

Staying true to his creed to always write for the commoners, Inoue once even wrote a weekly column in a daily sports newspaper called *Sports Hōchi* (*Supōtsu Hōchi*). In a column published on 8 June 1998, which was titled 'The Adventurous Power of Love (*Ai no bōken ryoku*), Inoue declares that, from the time he had realised that the dropping of the atomic bomb had taken place with the connivance of President Truman and Winston Churchill, he decided to 'never trust any leader' (Inoue, 2005: 217). He could not believe that tens of thousands of lives were wiped out merely for a geopolitical power game whereby the two leaders wished to 'exhibit power to the Soviets and inhibit Stalin' (ibid.). Inoue makes a contested argument that the leaders of the militaristic Empire of Japan called The Court Group (*kyūtei gurūpu*) should have accepted the Potsdam Declaration, or the Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender, if they wanted to save the 'imperial subjects who are all children of the state (*teikoku shinmin mina waga sekishi*)' – even if the paragraph asserting the retention of Emperor Hirohito was

excluded (ibid.). Historically speaking, however, the leaders decided to save the Emperor and disregarded the subjects.

History bears out the fact that leaders betray commoners for the sake of gaining political power. As such, in the column, Inoue asserts that he trusts an alternative ideology that could, in his view, combat the violence. With a proviso that clarifies his prudent understanding of the ideology 'possibly being a bit naïve', the playwright unabashedly affirms that, more than anything else, he believes in the power of 'love' (ibid.: 216). By reprising *The Theory of Justice* (1971) written by John Rawls, who argues that the sense of justice is continuous with the love of humanity, Inoue argues that:

> When people love each other, they are never afraid of getting hurt or being damaged. No matter what happens, we do not regret our love; we think the decision to love is full of hope. In order to carry out that love, we try to live fully. (Inoue, 2005: 216)

The brief passage, indeed, sounds overly hopeful when considering the global proliferation of nuclear arsenals as well as the usage of depleted uranium ammunitions in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet, fully aware of his overly idealistic ideologies, Inoue never ceased to demand the total annihilation of nuclear warheads. His central conviction was that 'although it might be detrimental or even ruinous to people initially', the very will to relinquish nuclear ammunitions for the sake of love towards others will eventually save the world. When transposing this humanistic belief to the play, it is easy to understand why Takezō acknowledges Mitsue to live and love another. Through the voice of Takezō, Inoue is unflinchingly avowing that love can conquer the deepest sense of guilt. Throughout most of the play, Inoue succeeds in striking the right balance between emotive messages and interruptive criticality; the latter induced through the abundant usage of cynical humour. However, in the end, Inoue bends towards an idealistic narrative through which, in contrast to the tragic *shingeki* A-bomb plays, he lets

the *hibakusha* live and love. Fully understanding the possibility of receiving vitriolic remarks that the play was too idealistic and thus contradicted reality, Inoue was impelled to develop a happy ending because he wanted it to be a hopeful prayer for *hibakusha*. For Inoue, the right to the pursuit of happiness was not something to be verified but a principle to be upheld.

Guilt After Fukushima: Okada Toshiki's *Current Location*

After the 11 March catastrophe, the collective sense of guilt among numerous theatre people was symbolically enunciated through the mass closure of theatres in Tokyo. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, in the immediate aftermath, many mid- to large-scale theatres in Tokyo went dark for several weeks. To a certain degree, this collective act of silence was reminiscent of the Buddhist funeral ritual of *shijū-kunichi*, literally, the forty-nine days during which the bereaved mourn collectively. However, more than a matter of religious observance, this mass silence indicated, firstly, on a social level, the permeation of the code of *wa* (harmonious integration), a unanimous moral blueprint, which was sustained by self-censorship among people that induced patterns of unitary actions; and secondly, on an artistic level, the playwrights' difficulty in developing a coherent narrative out of the invisible, and thus unintelligible, Fukushima nuclear disaster. In contrast to, for instance, *tanka* poets, musicians and visual artists whose artworks could be developed without a clear storyline, most theatre artists were often initially reticent. It was only after several months that these artists, who are bound by their medium to configure their material temporally, started responding to the disaster. Yet, even when they began to react to it, most of their work was in forms not dependent on fictional narratives. In fact, the early post-Fukushima performances can

broadly be placed into two categories: installation-like representation and documentary theatres.

The first category, which also includes dance as a form of physical installation, aimed to express the inexpressible by installing signs such as bodies, images, lights, music and objects on stage. Arguably, these symbols could carry polyvocal meaning more so than language could, since the latter relies heavily on prefixed meaning. By not establishing quick-fix narratives, these authors avoided delivering unambiguous messages, and thus the risk of ostracism brought about by uttering things indiscreet to victims. Delivering conclusive messages through words was, at this stage, too imprudent, too hasty and a great social risk for the artists. Further, since the physical impact of the catastrophe was so severe at this inchoate state – there were 2,765 aftershocks in the first month alone – it made more sense for most authors to respond to the confusion physically, not verbally.[34]

The second category of artists adopted the form of documentary theatre, again out of sheer necessity. Due to the impenetrable veil of techno-speak, the shortage of valid scientific research on multiple nuclear meltdowns and, above all, the overall social confusion triggered by the invisible threat, it was too early for artists to connect the dots and the missing links to construct a cogent story out of it all. Reminiscent of the Tokyo-based reportage artists such as Yamashita Kikuji, who emerged from the rubble of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, these post-Fukushima artists also felt a sense of guilt when they did not succeed in portraying a clear vision of the event. Artists, in this context, considered that 'at best, the sensuous and imaginative dimensions of art are considered accessory to content; at worst, they are seen to impede an objective view of the events' (MacLear, 1999: 57). Based on the aspiration to remain faithful to the subject matter, what the artist could do was to transcribe earnestly, word for word, the

fragmentary utterances of the afflicted victims. Naturally, most often than not, the outcome of the transcription was a collage of vignettes devoid of a coherent plot.

Some noteworthy works in the first vein noted above (installation-like representation) were Teshigawara Saburō's *Saburo Fragments* (2011), Romeo Castellucci's *The Phenomenon Called I* (2011) and Yanaihara Mikuni's *see/saw* (2012). Works in the second vein (documentary theatre) were Nakatsuru Akihito's *Afflicted Lonely Island* (*Haisui no kotō*, 2011), Murakawa Takuya's *Words* (*Kotoba*, 2012), and Takayama Akira's *Referendum Project* (*Kokumintōhyō purojekuto,* 2012, and on-going). Takayama's work slightly differed from the other more straightforward documentary theatres, as, here, it structurally allowed the work to speak beyond a faithful recording of the event. In this project, Takayama interviewed junior-high-school students in the Tōhōku region by adopting Terayama Shūji's *machiroku* – an on-the-street interview methodology that Terayama developed in his documentary television programme *You Are* (*Anata wa*, 1965). Inside a small caravan, around a dozen television monitors were placed to project different short interviews conducted with the students. Since the interviewer calculatedly juxtaposed questions that resonated with the Fukushima disaster (What do you think of the future state of Japan?) with trivial questions (What did you have for breakfast?), the students unknowingly revealed a sense of fear, threat, uncertainty and intimidation that deviates from the mainstream narrative that covers over all negative feelings by collectively asserting that Japan would recover without any hindrance. The short interview films implied the existence of distinct voices hidden beneath the ostensible harmony in society – exactly as occurs in Okada's work. In fact, Okada was one of the first theatre artists to point out the danger of forced social unification through his artwork.

Okada Toshiki (b.1973), the writer-director of the theatre company chelfitsch [deliberately written in lower cases, it is a word coined to imply a child attempting to say the English word 'selfish'] formed in 1997, is considered as one of the leading theatre artists in Japan. From a domestic point of view, he initially received acclaim for voicing the uncertainties of the economically vulnerable Lost Generation (*Rosujene*), through the invention of the so-called 'super-real' colloquial Japanese matched together with ungainly, yet eloquent, body movements (Okano, 2005). Together with the collage of 'rambling dialogue' that often sounds like rhythmically composed solipsistic mutterings, and the 'noisy style of physical expression that [...] depicts the elusive and nondescript state of today's young people' (Sōma, 2010:1), he has achieved a unique position in the theatre scene as a voice representing the younger Japanese with an attenuated structure of *chien* (community ties), *ketsuen* (family bonds) and *shaen* (company contracts).

Okada entered the international theatre circuit in 2007, when he was invited to Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brussels, to present one of his most successful plays, *Five Days in March* (*Sangatsu no itsuka kan*).[35] Since then, he has expanded his theatrical vision beyond the solipsistic aesthetics of super-real Japanese. He was somewhat forced to do so by providing explanations to western theatre professionals, who wished to 'understand' Okada's works by placing them within their canonical intercultural framework of Theatre Studies. Hence afterwards, Okada started to be recognised, on the one hand, as a writer-director in the Brechtian vein due to the alienation effects he adopts (for instance, in *Five Days in March*, the actors heavily used indirect, third person speech); and, on the other hand considered as a *gestus* designer, slightly reminiscent of Japanese choreographer Tezuka Natsuko (b. 1970), who anatomises the involuntary peculiarities in everyday life. Yet, compared to Tezuka, it should be noted that Okada's movements

focus more on interrelations and inter-exchange between characters (as was the case in *Cooler*, which was shortlisted for the Toyota Choreography Award in 2005).

However, even before becoming a globetrotting theatre-maker, Okada has clarified that his interest in speaking equally through words and bodies has derived from his primary mission as an artist to serve what he calls, by borrowing from Ferdinand de Saussure, the 'signifié': images that precede a script or bodily expressions (Okano, 2005). Both verbal and physical languages developed by Okada are there to embody the signified – a larger image, which appears from an emergent reality. According to Okada, an artistic tenet that remains unchanged from the past to the present is the will to express the arising atmosphere: 'disquiet lingering in the air of contemporary Japan' (Iwaki, 2011: 111). He believes that the most crucial ability of a theatre artist is to operate as an apparatus that captures the uncertainties and uneasiness that are suppressed beneath the surface of prevalent harmony. In other words, what distinguishes Okada from many other Japanese artists is his potency to cogently detect, decode and visualise 'social incongruities' that are already pregnant, but are not yet expressed, in society (Okada, Fisher and El Sani, 2014). Not surprisingly, therefore, he happened to be one of the first artists who described the detrimental effects of the sense of guilt accumulating among many after the Fukushima disaster. He argued through his works that the guilty conscience that one had when failing to align with the mass narrative was causing a mental disorientation among people specifically residing around the Tōhoku region.

Okada sensed in the immediate aftermath of Fukushima that the social fabric of Japan was rapidly changing. Its patterns of multiple voices were becoming eerily monolithic. Similarly, Okada was bewildered by the unexpected loss of freedom of speech, as even artists, who are often considered the symbols of free expression, were implicitly requested in post-Fukushima Japan to comply with the social rite. Yet, as this subtle but

compelling coercive power swelled in society, Okada detected a reactionary anxiety growing beneath the smooth surface of unity. That is, the more oneness was demanded on the social level, the more mental disorientation increased among the public. Understandably, the imposition of a single voice, without any persuasive explanation as to why this should be so, only reinforced people's inner turmoil.

In order to shed light on the collective uneasiness, which was suppressed by the sense of guilt people felt, Okada developed a play that carefully elucidated the socio-psychological conflicts of post-Fukushima citizens, focusing especially on those who lived not *there* in the afflicted areas but *here* in the surrounding areas. Those in the peripheries of the disaster experienced a sense of social disorientation precisely because they were indirect victims who were perfectly safe as regards to the earthquake-tsunami, but who were relatively unsafe in relation to the nuclear fallout. Due to the multiplicity and invisibility of the catastrophe, these people were no longer capable of drawing a borderline between security and peril. And, in his first post-Fukushima play, *Current Location*, Okada captured the essential features of the murky psychological state of the peripheral victims who oscillated between *here* and *there*, not knowing which standpoint would alleviate their anxieties.[36]

On 20 April 2012, *Current Location* written and directed by Okada premiered at Kanagawa Arts Theatre (KAAT) in Yokohama, Japan. This production differed from the other post-Fukushima theatres, primarily because it clearly developed a coherent fiction. In terms of both subject matter and presentational mode, Okada's play explored beyond the constrained aesthetics of instantaneity, which more or less marked the installations, and the fragmented literality adopted by the documentary productions noted above. Through the usage of characters' measured speech, inhibited gestures and uncertain movements, via which the effects of the catastrophe were clearly observable, Okada

imaginatively developed a fictional story. In a more critical register, Okada's intention to develop a fiction was his strategy first to evade his own guilty feelings of drafting a play that could cause a stir in society, and second, to catch the audience off guard by announcing that it was only an innocuous fabrication. Precisely because the play presented a 'fictional' event, Okada could quell his self-accusatory feelings and the audience could evade social rites: enabling the play to penetrate the minds of post-Fukushima audiences more easily.

Notwithstanding the fact that the play was presented as a harmless fiction, to a certain extent, the play did cause a rupture in the audience's reality. The subversive dynamics were created specifically because the 'fiction', so to speak, resonated too strongly with the emergent reality: the metaphorical phrases in the play – such as, 'this rain is falling from the bad luck cloud from last night, so if you get wet, your life will be over' – inevitably rattled the minds of the post-Fukushima audience already feeling vulnerable at that time (Okada, 2012a: 4). In fact, as if to substantiate his awareness of using the subversive measure, in the programme notes, Okada defined the function of fiction as follows: 'fiction is there to create tension between itself and reality or the everyday' (Uchida, 2012a).

Owing to Okada's theatrical scheme to invert fiction to produce counter-reality, when Soma Chiaki the former director of Festival/Tokyo attended the premiere, she sensed that the seemingly harmonious mass 'in the auditorium was becoming divided' (Takahashi, A., 2013: 2). In real life, what happened during the immediate aftermath was that, unity was coerced by the state. As if to conceal the emergent divisions, the Kanji character for bond, *kizuna*, was selected as the one that best reflects the event of 2011. Without even a modicum of acknowledgement that society had been divided at least temporarily, the palimpsest of bond and unity was attached over the state. Okada's

Current Location deliberately went against this tide. Amidst the coerced social unity, he accentuated the divisions, dissociations and disparities under the surface of proclaimed harmony. To put it more bluntly, he aimed, through his play, to 'pick a fight with reality' (Uchida, 2012a). As a result, tension arose between individuals in the auditorium as they suddenly saw a rift cracking open between neighbours. Soma confessed that she had never in her life 'attended a theatre performance in Japan with such tension in the air' (ibid.).

Yet when considering Okada's emphasis on fiction, it is pertinent to know that, before the Fukushima disaster, Okada had had zero interest as a theatre director and playwright in creating dramatic fiction. Essentially, his aesthetics were 'post-dramatic' in the sense that he disregarded narrative, character and dramatic catharsis, believing them to be detrimental to the theatre: 'Theatre can exist without these elements, in fact, it can exist much better without them' (Okada, 2013a: 22).[37] However, after Fukushima, he was drawn to fiction precisely because he had realised how little difference there now was between fiction and reality. During the immediate aftermath, when people started uttering various narratives on the effects of the radioactive fallout, Okada could not discern which version of Fukushima fiction is most powerful, and thus valid to be approved as reality. That is, if one decided to be *there* in Fukushima, mentally together with the victims, the accident was omnipresent; by contrast, if one opted to stand *here* in Tokyo away from Fukushima, and rejected the possibility of any radioactive threat, the accident was absent. Fully conscious of the disoriented minds of the Tokyoites who felt guilty for not knowing whether to speak from here or there, Okada rendered a play that allowed the characters to speak, specifically, from both sides.

What makes *Current Location* excessively opaque is this polyvocality: even Okada himself was indeterminate in terms of which standpoint he should voice. This is why, in

the play, each character that utters different opinions simultaneously tries to maintain collective unity through their gestures. On the one hand, Okada brings to the fore the dissonant voices arising from the invisible disaster; yet on the other hand, as a Japanese artist, who empirically understands the importance of politely following tacit social agreements, he also strives to maintain the harmonious relationship between the characters. To be specific, the maintenance of the latter state of harmony is executed by ending most utterances with the same syllable of *wa*. By ending different lines with the matching sound, regardless of the different opinion, the characters express, arguably, a sense of resonance that emerges among them. In short, the play's content and form deliver conflicting messages. And, although it may sound irritatingly indecisive, this state of absolute contradiction in which people aspired to connect and disconnect with the victims concurrently was, in any case, one of the most salient features of the inchoate post-Fukushima psychology.

In the immediate aftermath of the event, Okada grabbed a copy of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.[38] Through perusal, he wished to understand how Anderson, who observed fragmented Indonesian society, had deconstructed and reconstructed the given notion of community. Deeply influenced by Anderson's argument, Okada sensed that in post-Fukushima Japan, 'the concept of "nation" is becoming more fictitious' (Iwaki, 2011: 113). There was no longer a singular *de facto* reality, but only collectively imagined realities, which each claimed an alternative facticity. Thus, for Okada, the Fukushima disaster became a watershed moment for changing his 'dialogic imagination', to use a term from Mikhail Bakhtin, with regards to the on-going reality (Bakhtin, 1981: 279). His pre-catastrophe understanding of reality was that 'reality is the truth and the fiction is the false version of reality' (ibid.: 28). After the catastrophe, he formulated a new hypothesis: 'reality is only the most powerful fiction at the moment […] and so,

fictions are not "lies" and "fabrications", but potential realities' (ibid.). Based on this ground, in *Current Location*, Okada depicted seven female characters who believed in, and spoke of, drastically different realities.

Alongside Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, Okada was reading two other books weeks after the Fukushima disaster. One was Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* which, arguably, inspired Okada to abandon city life and to relocate himself with his wife and two children to Kumamoto, one of the most southwestern prefectures in Japan. The other was Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, which, for Okada, became a strong affirmation for leaving a homeland that had already been lost. When Okada was rehearsing *Current Location*, he published a text that was a direct response to a question posed by the editorial team of the literary journal *Shinchō*. The question was almost naïvely simple: 'What did the earthquake disaster change within you and what did you read after the earthquake disaster?' Okada's answer was direct and concise. Adopting his signature colloquial vocabulary, the theatre-maker composed his thoughts in a brief two-page essay titled: 'I think I have changed, a lot.'[39] In the essay, Okada refers to *The Cherry Orchard* as one of the books he read with interest after the disaster. He specifically focuses on the passage of Chekhov's last play where Madame Ranyevskaya bids her old life farewell and leaves her beloved estate forever. Okada notes that when he read the passage again, he realised that in Japan there no longer existed a distinction between *here* and *there*:

> It was interesting to read Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* immediately after the disaster. [It was especially interesting to read the relationship between] the tragic Ranyevskaya who has to relinquish the land she loves and the high-spirited Lopakhin who successfully dispossessed her land. To see the two in this kind of dichotomous structure was, however, no longer possible. In fact, the two names were now almost synonymous. That is because I started to imagine that the cherry orchard might exist in Fukushima. Then we no longer know what the difference is between Ranyevskaya and Lopakhin, as the latter is now left with a contaminated possession. (Okada, 2012b: 174)

What Okada indicates here is that, after the disaster, the future of Lopakhin is no less tragic than that of Ranyevskaya. Due to the spatiotemporal nuclear disaster, whose effects spread not only across lands but also 'through generations, through the layers of the earth', one cannot decide which of the two characters are less fortunate. For instance, Ranyevskaya's sad fate to leave her ancestral estate could be reinterpreted as a positive act of fleeing from contaminated soil; conversely, Lopakhin is left with sterile land drenched with toxins. Further, when interpreted through the consideration of temporal scope, as Maria Shevtsova suggests, Ranyevskaya may tacitly know that the estate is no longer the same land she used to adore. Faintly yet undeniably, the estate has been transformed not by Lopakhin but by 'the invisible hand [of] history' (Shevtsova, 2004:133); by the invention of the express trains that could take Ranyevskaya to her lover in Paris in no time; and through the abolition of old times in which 'cherries used to be dried, preserved and bottled. [Then] sent to Moscow and Kharkov by the wagon-load' (Chekhov, 2008:250). The case might be that she somehow already knew that 'the concrete hands of 1917 and beyond' had unmistakably changed her land and thus, regardless of whether Lopakhin had won the estate or not, Ranyevskaya was no longer able to identify with her beloved land in the same manner (Shevtsova, 2004: 133).

In an analogous fashion to how Chekov marks 1917 as a turning point, Okada charts 11 March 2011 as a momentous date when Japan was irreparably changed. In hindsight, it may sound like an overly empathetic response to the event. Yet for Okada, even two years afterwards, it was his honest feeling to assert that it had become increasingly difficult for him to identify with Tokyo in the same way: 'More and more after the disaster, I felt that I could not 'identify' myself with Tokyo […]. I even thought that it [Tokyo] is something already over, or already lost, at least, for me' (Okada, 2013c: 225). For the past thirty-eight years, the city of Yokohama just off the southern outskirts of

Tokyo was the place Okada used to identify with as *here*, the homeland. After the disaster, that city felt no less foreign than the land *there* in Kumamoto with which he had not a single connection. Instinctively, thereby, he decided to move with his family to Kyūshū only four months after the event.

This sensation of foreignness was arguably generated by two conditions pertaining to the catastrophe: the physical threat and the psychological disquiet. To be more precise, it was caused, first, by the seeming omnipresence of the radioactive fallout that left him doubtful about feeling physically safe *here* in his homeland, and second, by the eerie univocality of the code of *wa*, to which Okada, as a free-minded artist, could not relate at all. Okada escaped from Tokyo not only to protect his children from potential future illness, but also to flee from the coercive moral code that strongly precipitated a confined freedom of expression:

> Nobody accurately knew how dangerous radioactivity is. Nevertheless, information like 'there is no physical harm' 'everything is okay,' was disseminated, and this mood of not caring about the disaster was becoming pervasive. [...] I was afraid that my senses were going to blend into the mood. Everyone's belief was heading in the same way and, amid all this, I felt a sense of 'discomfort.' [...] I moved [to Kumamoto] because it is important [as an artist] to materialise that discomfort into action.[40]

To reiterate, for Okada, one of the most basic functions of theatre is to visualise 'social incongruities' latent in society (Okada, Fisher and El Sani, 2014). However, in a nation in which harmony is largely venerated, the visualising act could cause unwanted derision, if not defamation, for the artist. Aligning with others is considered a necessary virtue, or, simply, a way of social survival, and so even artists self-censor for the sake of evading criticism. Yet courageously going against the tide, Okada admonished the Japanese public that one should rebut conformism, especially when people are rattled by a catastrophe throwing the society off balance. Okada argued that even if compliance with

the moral doctrine seemed to be a matter of good will so as to ensure social harmony, it could also be a matter of self-censorship, a way of stifling differing voices. To this end, Okada poses a question that perhaps the feeling of discomfort generated by the excessive social unity should be accentuated rather than concealed.

Despite Okada's ardent call for autonomous thoughts, however, people preferred to follow a singular voice. Days and weeks after the event, people in Tokyo and in other peripheral areas of the disaster started to believe, temporarily, in the groundless lull disseminated by the government. The chief cabinet secretariat, Edano Yukio, declared only three days after the event that 'there is a low possibility of a mass amount of radioactive materials to be disseminated'.[41] The Tokyo Electronic Power Company (TEPCO) also enunciated that 'neither the pressure vessel nor the containment vessel was destroyed,' even though Nuclear Unit Three experienced a hydrogen explosion on that day.[42] These repetitive platitudes started to gain greater strength as days went by, even though the evidence for their claims was flimsy. This affirmative act of blinding was understandable, since, people were already exhausted beyond their limit, they naturally craved the more optimistic position that the perfunctory announcements had aptly provided. It may not have been reality based on fact, but it was the ideal version of 'reality' so to speak. Unfortunately, no matter how often the assurances were repeated and no matter how earnestly people yearned to believe in them, the disquieting premonitions and ominous rumours did not, and could not, entirely vanish.

Current Location is an ominous parable about various rumours that were rife after the Fukushima catastrophe. It is an admonitory fable about the dismantling of a community, a disbanding of friendships and a disconnection of kinships unmistakably caused by an invisible threat looming largely over villagers' minds. Okada explains the outline of the play as follows:

One day, in a community called the Mura [literally, village], a bizarre blue cloud appears in the sky, and soon afterwards, a rumour starts to pervade that this cloud is an ill sign presaging that the village will be obliterated. Some believe the rumour and some do not. The village becomes divided between the different perspectives. One group abandons the Mura and takes off in a spacecraft. The other restores the same everyday life in the village as before. *Genzaichi* is a story like that. I wrote the play in order to bring into question the condition of 'us'. How the sense of this word has changed after the disaster (Okada, 2013a: 17).

When Okada says 'the condition of us', the word *us* specifically implies those Japanese who lived in and around Tokyo under threat just like himself. According to Okada, what happened in the peripheral areas of the Fukushima disaster was that a single coherent voice became incapable of representing a collective identity. Suddenly, people felt reluctant, or moreover guilty, to speak on behalf of Japan, or Tokyo, or even his or her own community: the person no longer knew whether he/she was 'included in the parent population' (Takahashi, A., 2013: 1). The dismantling of a collective identity was a significant threat to most Japanese, because, as in Japan, 'cultural engrained collective identity projects a strong, albeit constructed, an image of ethnic uniformity' (Pellecchia, 2013: 141). It follows that people tend to experience an extreme sense of fear, when the cohesion of sociocultural fabric, sustained by seeming homogeneity, is jeopardised: and, this dismantling of the collective was what happened exactly after Fukushima. Depending on the 'current location' of that specific individual, the interpretation of emergent reality started to differ.

To render visible how communities became a composite of conflicting standpoints, in *Current Location*, Okada created a collective character called the 'Voice', which was performed alternately by different actresses. The 'Voice' was a performative representation of collective opinion, often homogenised in Japan, yet after the invisible disaster, became an amalgamation of dissident opinions and contradictory rumours:

> Voice: There's a rumour that birdsongs have decreased recently. The rumour that we have been hearing bird songs out of season. The rumour that the grass growing along the side of the road has become a bit ashen. The rumour that, on the contrary, they have become an eerily lush green. The rumour that there have been more voices shouting in anger in the middle of the night. The rumour that the dogs and cats kept as pets have been losing their appetite, or if they eat, they quickly vomit, and the rumour that we've heard a lot of rumours about that. The rumour that the number of people who are making love at night has decreased. The rumour that, on the contrary, that number has curiously increased (Okada 2012a: 3).

By delivering myriad of uncertain, and often contradicting, accounts as a singular Voice on the stage, Okada clearly suggests to the audience how the play resonates with real life: how beneath the unified narrative lie the countless doubts of many after Fukushima. Through a monologue that is deliberately fragmented into a choppy rhythm, Okada tonally demonstrated how, from the cracks and crevices of univocality, innumerable ambivalent thoughts spilt out pell-mell. And, people in the auditorium felt uncomfortable listening to the cacophonic tone of the monologue, because, at the time of the premier performance just thirteen months after the Fukushima disaster, the village with the bizarre blue cloud appearing in the sky could not be considered as a complete fiction. When spectators in Japan listened to the Voice, they felt as if their feelings, which they had suppressed for the sake of mental equilibrium, were being revealed mercilessly under the spotlight.

To wrap up the argument, let us once again return to the bifocal structure of *Current Location*, through which contradictory messages are delivered through its uttered content (*what* the characters say) and presentational mode (*how* they say it). Let us take the former first. The seven characters in the play, who are all small, slight women in their twenties and thirties, indeed, reveal their distinct standpoints. Their resemblance in age, gender, ethnicity and the overall appearance connotes that Okada has chosen a specific cohort with analogous social status: a group of people who seem to share the same *habitus*, which Pierre Bourdieu qualifies as a 'socialized subjectivity' (Bourdieu and

Wacquant, 1992: 126). At first glance, the seven women seem to reach the same sociocultural judgement with regards to the ill omen by following the same set of rules, which form 'the basis of the perception and appreciation of all [of their] experiences' (Bourdieu, 1992: 54). Opposing the assumption, however, the seven characters voice different opinion with regards to the threatening rumours: namely, radical negation (Kasumi); thorough acceptance (Chie); perfunctory understanding (Ayumi); infantile helplessness (Nahoko); shame for indecisiveness (Sana); threat towards decisiveness (Hana); and a sense of guilt for not feeling furious enough about the event (Maiko).

All characters reflect a fragment of Okada's thoughts, which were somewhat indecisive, only around a year after the Fukushima disaster. Yet one is also tempted to argue that the character that seems to mirror the author's strongest standpoint is Chie: a woman who 'had always loved making up stories, since she was a little kid' (Okada, 2012a: 7). Chie is essentially an individualist, who desires to escape from the village by 'getting on the ship [spacecraft]', even if no one else joins her (ibid.: 16). Based on this individualist thought, and, in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts between others, she talks about her interpretation of reality as if it were a total fiction. In fact, being the author of a play within the play, and as a preamble to her short performance, Chie suggestively declares to the audience on and off the stage that although the narrative may resonate with reality, she is willing to 'tell the story as if it were a fairy tale' (ibid.: 6). Analogous to how Okada used the pretext of fiction to avoid counterattacks from society, Chie develops a 'fairy tale' about a kinship resembling that of Kasumi and Ayumi (portrayed here as Shinobu and Taeko), two sisters living in the village:

> Taeko: Hey, do you think it's crazy for me to think that we can no longer continue to live in this country?
> Shinobu: I can only tell you what I think.
> Shinobu: The way we are living now isn't any different to any kind of peaceful life anywhere else. It's not as if we hear gunshots at our doorstep. There are no land mines buried in the neighbourhood. We can hang our

laundry out to dry and take the bicycle out to go grocery shopping. It's not because I am particularly courageous or daring. There's simply no reason to be fearful.
Taeko: I understand what you're saying. I do, but I just can't agree with you.
(Okada, 2012a: 8)

When watching the short skit, the audience realises how various layers of reality are imbricated in Okada's play: the reality of the play within the play; the reality of the play; and *the* reality off the stage. The nested structure of the play reveals how so-called reality can easily turn into a harmless fiction, when it is observed from a standpoint of outsiders, bystanders and spectators of the narrative. As Pierre Bourdieu asserts, most judgements against reality depend not on logic or factual proofs, but on the given community's 'doxa', which is a set of fundamental beliefs 'which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, conscious dogma' (Bourdieu, 2000: 15). The condition of the doxa is so strong that blindly conforming to the norms of prevalent reality, in effect, becomes the strongest belief of people. To say more, when people are surrounded by an invisible threat, this doxa is reinforced in order to maintain visible normality in life. In *Current Location*, the scene that exemplifies the reinforcement of doxa in times of crises is when Kasumi silences Hana by literally choking her to death.

Kasumi is the most obstinate voice that decries all rumours. She is determined to stay calm, and affirms that: 'I am always wary of allowing my feelings to be swayed by trickery. I am always careful that the things that could cause anxiety stay far away from me and don't come near' (ibid.:11). The circumspect proclamations of being 'always wary' and 'always careful', in fact, underscore that she is no less perturbed by the unsettled state. Recoiled in horror, Kasumi makes audacious assertions to safeguard her doxa, preventing the smallest fractions of anxiety from breaking loose from her mind. Unlike her strong-minded friend, Hana is continuously indecisive. The decision is difficult for her because, out of guilty conscience for harming any party, she naively

wishes to come up with an ethically correct answer that is absolute across all of humanity. She says: 'The people who believe the rumours are beginning to look foolish to me. [...] But it's also difficult for me to disregard the rumours completely. [...] Because... I don't know whether I'm really right or not' (Okada, 2012a: 11). In order to alleviate her sense of guilt, Kasumi tells Hana that, regardless of whether it is right or wrong, 'the most important thing is that your feelings aren't swayed by trickery' (ibid.: 11). Yet when Kasumi sees that her persuasion is to little avail, she strangles Hana with her scarf in an unwavering manner. Kasumi eradicates all seeds of uncertainties for the absolute protection of social peace.

The confrontation between Kasumi and Hana symbolises the ethical question that lingered in post-Fukushima society. That is, whether a person should take into account all narratives and avoid divisive rhetoric; or, whether one should act as a solipsistic agent taking decisive measures even if it causes a stir among the public. The juxtaposition of the two characters brings into relief the collision between collective conformism and univocal absolutism: between the two positions, Okada questions which is the better viewpoint for delivering self-preservation and social survival. In the play, the author in fact implies the drawbacks of both standpoints. Okada emphasises, on the one hand, the danger of univocal absolutism. When absolute voice gains excessive power, a person who fails to serve society's univocal purpose could be killed just like Hana was strangled by Kasumi; in reality, perhaps not physically, but he/she could be socially killed. On the other hand, Okada also suggests that excessive relativism could dismantle one's mental stability. The endless oscillation between multiple opinions could exhaust one's energy, eventually making it impossible to come up with a new hermeneutic framework of the situation. What follows is that to end the endless endeavour, one could start to wish for anything that will rescue him or her from their Sisyphean agony; and, perhaps that is

why Hana hardly resists when she is strangled. Only once, and in a relatively mild tone, Hana asks Kasumi to stop. Understanding Hana's contradictory wish to end her agony, Kasumi continues strangling her: 'I'm not stopping. I also know that you don't really want me to stop' (Okada, 2012a:12).

When irreconcilable viewpoints meet, what naturally seems to follow is an aggressive confrontation. In *Current Location*, however, apart from the violence conducted by Kasumi, the characters never become explicitly aggressive: they do not decry, deny or yell at each other in an offensive manner. Even when Kasumi strangles Hana, it is done so with utmost poise: it is like observing a performance of the most 'humanistic' killing. The reason why the verbal dissonance does not culminate in a physical collision in the play is because Okada calculatedly avoids it through the 'fictitious' form of utterance. In other words, the performers' manner of enunciation and verbalisation did not match the content of the text.

Before the Fukushima disaster, Okada, as a post-dramatic theatre-maker, had little or no interest in 'modernizing the oldness of theatre' by composing well-articulated verses or prose, in which the developed language sounded alien to the contemporary Japanese people (Okada 2013a: 22). In *Current Location*, however, he taps into that 'oldness' of theatre for the first time, and delivers a fiction by using not the 'super-real' colloquial Japanese that he had been known for, but through a measured poetic rhetoric, which mostly ends in the rhyming syllable of *wa*. This is a particle normally attached to the end of a sentence when a woman speaks in a traditional bourgeois tone. Here Okada uses a superbly accentuated form of *joseigo* (literally, 'women's language'), a way of speaking that originates from how female students spoke in the wake of modernisation in the Meiji era (1868-1912).

Bertolt Brecht, who strove to capture the drastically changing twentieth-century conscience, once asserted that 'just the grasping of a new range of material requires a new dramatic and theoretical form' (Brecht cited in Innes and Shevtsova, 2013: 118). When trying to speak about finance and technology, heroic couplets were insufficient. Being essentially a Brechtian artist, Okada fathomed in an analogous manner that the nascent state of post-Fukushima Japan urgently demanded a novel theatre language that could speak beyond humdrum reality. He realised that his casual 'super-real' language no longer sufficed to capture the emergent world. Thus, although Okada never adopted the marked *joseigo* for his characters in his previous plays, after the disaster, he adopted the artificial mode of utterance for the sake of consolidating his fictional universe.

If the seven female characters were only speaking in a natural form of *joseigo*, its usage may have been dismissed merely as Okada's shift in aesthetic predilection. However, since most of the utterances are meticulously measured in order to end in the identical syllable, one has to admit that the artificiality adopted here is a completely deliberate choice. In his previous plays, Okada's characters babbled without much thought to what they were saying; conversely, in *Current Location*, they voice through a highly stylised language like a delicately woven tapestry without a single stitch out of place. Mirroring the post-Fukushima situation where people could not freely voice their sentiments, all characters in the play deliver their speeches like perfectly tuned instruments, never missing a note. Their opinions are undoubtedly divided, but the characters strenuously strive to maintain collective harmony, at least in form, by ending their opinions in this same sound, *wa*:

> Chie: Kouyatte mura o miteiru to hitome de wakaru-*wa*. Mura wa sukkari kawatte shimatta-*wa*. (Looking at the village from here, you can tell at a glance. The village has changed completely from before.)
> [...]
> Ayumi: Yama no ue made agatte kitano atashi itsu irai kashi-*ra*. (I wonder when the last time was I came up here to the top of the mountain.)

> Maiko: Watashi mo hisashiburi ni kita-*wa*. (I haven't been here in a long
> time either.)
> Ayumi: Mou nannen mo kite inakatta-*wa*. (It's been years.)
> (Okada 2012a: 12)

In the scene, Chie, Ayumi and Maiko stand on top of three desks placed next to each other. Their elevated position suggests that they are looking down on a lake in the village from the pinnacle of a small mountain. Far away beneath them, the lake glimmers in the sun. For a moment far too long for a natural pause, they remain in silence, as if to imply their hesitation in voicing an opinion different from the person standing aside. And, indeed, what the lake signifies varies between three women. For Maiko, the limpid lake is a sign of 'regained peacefulness'; for Ayumi, it encapsulates her indifference towards reality, as all the houses and buildings lined up around the lake 'look like toys'; for Chie, the lake is a symbol of doom, suggesting that 'the village has changed completely' (ibid.:12). If their assumptions were uttered in everyday language, the distinct viewpoints would end up disrupting their harmonious friendship. In order to avoid this collision, Okada configures a space of polyphonic harmony, in which the characters deliver opinions through the rhyming of *wa*: albeit dissonant in their views, they are nonetheless vocally in tune with one another.

Another non-verbal language, or, to reiterate from Merleay-Ponty, the language of the 'aesthetic world,' that was used to emphasise this harmony of the characters was the sonar-like soundtrack, composed by the Japanese post-rock band Sangatsu (Merleau-Ponty, 2007: 415). The echoing sounds, which are reminiscent of white noise, a mosquito, an echo of a bell or a rumbling of the earth, are never deafening, but nor do they completely fade out, even at the quietest moments. Analogous to the rumours that always lingered in society, the electronic sounds remain in space hinting at the subconscious anxieties underpinning all utterances. In fact, the experiment to use the electronic sound as a representation of suppressed collective voice is further expanded in

Okada's next post-Fukushima production *Ground and Floor* (*Jimen to yuka*, 2013). In this production, which premiered at Kunstenfestivaldesarts in May 2013, Okada collaborated again with Sangatsu by giving much more weight to the sonic components.[43] The eerie soundscape, which seemed to suggest a tsunami, an earthquake, subconscious anxieties or the crying of the dead, enveloped all characters equally, regardless of their viewpoints.

Through the eloquent electronic soundscape and the meticulous verbal rhyming of *wa*, Okada arguably succeeds in placing conflicting opinion on the stage without dismantling the mass narrative nor feeling guilty of causing a stir among the public. Although it may sound contradictory, in the play Okada manages to deliver the message of accord and discord simultaneously. It concurrently allows the characters to voice individual opinions, and stand harmoniously together with others. Reflecting the dual standpoint with which the characters are provided, Okada once asserted that it might have been better to translate the English title in the plural as *Current Locations* (the official English title was, however, kept in the singular, Takahashi: 2013). In any case, the play was Okada's attempt to surmount the sense of guilt, which was augmented in many minds after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Motivated by his own feeling of being stifled by a social imperative, Okada emphasises that the post-Fukushima realities should not merge into one but should remain '*bara-bara*' (segmented, Watanabe, T., 2012: 52). It is with this caveat in mind that Okada has succeeded in orchestrating an elegant polyvocal theatre, which effectively allows the characters to speak harmoniously in disharmony. It is a post-Fukushima theatre language *sui generis*.

Chapter Three

The Theatre of Sensate Atomisation

Through analyses of the after-effects of a nuclear disaster, which in time incur

metastases on ecological, economic, cultural, political and other mutually related levels,

as already mentioned in the Introduction, Nancy proposed that nuclear disasters are

catastrophes in two senses: 'it is a matter of orientation [*sens*], direction, path – and at

the same time of meaning [*sens*] as signification or value' (Nancy, 2015: 16). Chapter

One and Two mostly discussed the former, that is, the disorientation and the unification

of geographical ruptures. This chapter sheds light on the latter – how agents of post-

nuclear catastrophes deal with the meltdown of symbolic structures: the 'defiguration

[*sic*] and decomposition' of meanings (ibid.: 12). What generally happens when

meanings are deconstructed is that people latch on to a simplified narrative – a myth –

for the sake of stabilising their viewpoint.

However, the two theatre-makers analysed in this chapter, namely Miyoshi Jūrō and

Akira Takayama, rebut the action of blindly slotting themselves into the collective

narrative, as it could become the bedrock of totalitarianism. They suggest an alternative

survival tactic. They proffer to hive off from the collective narrative by believing more

in one's autonomous standpoint, which could be strengthened, specifically, by being

sensate and by focusing more on the nuanced voices emerging from within their own

minds. Homogeneity, rather than autonomy, is arguably the basic tenor of contemporary

Japanese society. Nevertheless, the two artists pronounce and propose to the public a

theatre of sensate atomisation, so to speak, in which emphases on individual views and

sensitivities are brought to the fore.

A society devoid of an understandable objective, a world that is driven by erratic logic, is likely to cause fear and attenuate the equilibrium of individuals. Individuals can suffer in equal measure from visible disruptions caused by the disaster, and from its invisible and immeasurable effects. As Susanne Langer observes, although humans can aptly handle anything 'his [*sic*] imagination can cope with', it is near impossible for humankind to grapple with that total disorder called 'chaos': one's greatest fear 'is to meet what he [*sic*] cannot construe' (Langer, 1957: 287). Through a philosophical discourse on forms and symbols, Langer describes chaos as a highly disoriented internal status, jolted by a drastic change in the external world in which a normative structure of symbols is disrupted and, thus, previous fragments of logic thereafter no longer seem to fit into place. The demarcations between the sensible and the senseless are demolished, as chaos demands that people grope beyond the threshold of present knowledge. In other words, when people suffer from waves of disorientation, or when the basic frames of the '*Weltanschauung* [worldview] and *Lebenschauung* [view on life]' are suddenly overthrown, many lose their mental anchoring, as they no longer know which window they should look through to make sense of the world (ibid.: 287).

Chaos, in other words, is not incubated solely from the disruption of the internal order or the disarray of the external world, but from the unexpected rupture of indices and interconnections between the two. When the two parameters of internal signs and external referents cannot be linked, people are left in a limbo of chaos. In our everyday life, in order to expedite daily processes, the existence of a 'vast intellectual structure' is required to enable meaning to emerge automatically from 'familiar signs and abbreviated symbols': 'we can think *with* them [the system of familiar symbols] and do not have to think *about* them' (Langer, 1957: 283). Once this semiotic structure collapses, or when the fixed conjunctions between symbolic codes and material referents are destabilised,

surviving even a day without hindrance, hesitation or intellectual halt seems less and less feasible. Langer elaborates upon this disorientation as follows:

> The mind, like all other organs, can draw its sustenance only from the surrounding world; our metaphysical symbols must spring from reality. Such adaptation always requires time, habit, tradition, and intimate knowledge of way of life. If, now, the field of our unconscious symbolic orientation is suddenly ploughed up by tremendous changes in the external world and in the social order, we lose hold, our convictions, and therewith our effectual purposes. (Langer, 1957: 291)

Langer composed this admonitory passage four years prior to the invention of the atomic bomb. In 1941, the technology of nuclear arms was still in its inchoate stage, and so only noted scientists and a handful of others were able to conceive of the infallible nuclear armament. Reflecting upon this historical background, it is pertinent to assume that Langer knew little about atomic development at the time, and so what had stimulated her to draft her text was not the 'tremendous changes' anticipated after the dropping of the atomic bomb, but rather the unsettling social changes already existing before the nuclear invention. Nevertheless, when her admonition is read in retrospect, it sounds like a gloomy premonition indicating the predicaments of post-Hiroshima and Nagasaki society.

Thinkers often utter what seems 'visionary or prophetic' decades before the genesis of certain events, because they are anticipating something that is already pregnant in the present: it is already 'seen clearly at that time' (Nancy, 2015: 19). However, most people simply fail to see the present, as their perceptions predominantly rely on the precipitations of the past. As Bharucha articulates, what sadly remains true is that many see the world through 'dead certainties' and not through 'living uncertainties' (Bharucha, 2014: 103). In most cases, a system of habits structured through years of repetition becomes their conviction, and so emergent events that seem more unreliable are neglected. However, when dead logics of the past are appropriately filtered out – for

instance, by experiencing a life-changing event that forcibly transforms a worldview –
the present springs forth as a collection of vibrant exigencies: a present that outstrips the
rules of the past and forestalls visions of the future.

Langer was one of those thinkers who went beyond the habitual viewing of the everyday
and faced the discomforting present. Through observation of contemporary society, she
noted alarming changes in ways of 'living' and 'working', in which social agents were
becoming increasingly accustomed to the capitalistic principle of more for less (Langer,
1957: 291). From money, speed, power, circulation and information, 'large numbers'
were starting to 'lay down the law' (Nancy, 2015: 34). And what generally happens
when the law of quantity dominates is that the largest common denominator, or simply
put, the masses, are endowed with the status of normalcy. Subsequently, subjects that
deviate from 'normal' standards are derogatorily labelled as anomalies – implying their
subjugated status. Through the elimination of onerous individual voices, modern society
has succeeded in reaching the apogee of cost- and time-efficiency. Furthermore,
ironically, it was this philosophy of quantity that eventually led a mass of people to
believe in the virtue of nuclear technology.

One of the most salient features of nuclear energy is that its technological performance is
highly cost-effective. According to the European Nuclear Society, which promotes the
advancement of nuclear technology all over Europe, only 8 kWh (kilowatt-hour, a unit of
energy measuring one kilowatt of power expended for one hour) of heat is generated
from one kilogram of coal, and 12 kWh from a kilogram of mineral oil, yet an
astonishing 24,000,000 kWh of power can be produced from an equal amount of
uranium-235.[44] On the naïve expectation that costly nuclear accidents will never occur,
it could be said that uranium epitomises the capitalist philosophy of more for less. Ōsawa
Masachi argues that after the end of the war, 'the threat towards nuclear weapons was

transformed [by the Occupation Forces and the government] into an infatuation towards it', because the nuclear armaments, in the eyes of many Japanese, symbolised scientific advancements suggesting social affluence (Ōsawa, 2008: 31). In a country with few natural resources, nuclear technologies became a beacon of a better economy in the midst of post-war poverty.

In contrast to this hope-driven narrative, Langer argued that capitalist society, which largely depends on technological advancements incomprehensible to laymen, would make many feel that their work was morally 'meaningless' (Langer, 1957: 291). In other words, they could be demoted to the status of what Marx named the 'working-animal' (Marx, 2012: 30). Marx was the first to concretely foresee the fate of humanity deriving from this new mode of working. Since this modern condition of labour alienation is so 'external', or heteronomous to the workers, and since it is 'forced' on them as a physical compulsion, very shortly the workers start to consider labour as a means to an end, but not an end in itself (Marx, 2012: 72). The workers can no longer consider work as an autonomous contribution to society. Rather, they feel 'mentally debased' as they are constantly denigrating, if not denying, their individuality in the work (ibid.). Thus, it could be argued that although modern Japanese succeeded in their mission of more-for-less and increased the value of the material world – as is indicative of the fact that Japan's GDP grew on average 8.4 percent in the 1960s (Kingston, 2013:15) – this was attained at the cost of the 'devaluation of the human world' (ibid.: 82).

An example emblematic of this devalued human status is the group of Japanese workers currently involved in the unprecedented clean-up at the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plants. Since its inception in the 1970s, the nuclear industry in Fukushima relied heavily on cheap labour by recruiting itinerant workers known as 'nuclear gipsies' from the Sanya neighbourhood of Tokyo and Kamagasaki in Osaka – slum areas known for

their large numbers of day labourers, who instantly become homeless when the economy falters.[45] Most subcontractors work for only a few months or weeks, as they are expected to leave the site, at least officially, when monitored radiation exposures exceed the limit. However, some writers such as Horie Kunio, who worked as a nuclear power plant worker for over six months between 1978 and 1979, asserts that, in reality, the planned limitations of contamination were adjusted irresponsibly so that the workers could continue working (Horie, 2011). In this regard, it could be said, referring to Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts 1884*, that nuclear power plants, which were constructed under the blind belief of being always under human control, are now, in turn, controlling human beings. Those workers in hazmat suits are transformed into an insensate being – a 'commodity' – expended in the interest of the material world (Marx, 2012: 85). For this reason, any nuclear worker could reach a point where he feels active 'only in his animal functions', that is, when he is 'eating, drinking and procreating, or at most also in his dwelling and in personal adornment'; while in his job, he is virtually 'reduced to an animal' (Marx, 2012: 30, 73). Now, after the Fukushima crisis, the alarming premonitions of Langer and Marx have become a reality at the sites of the meltdown.

The invention of the atomic bomb ironically became the flashpoint for an economic boom in Japan. This was induced by politico-economic strategy, in which the government leveraged the population's massive fear of the demonic atomic bomb and channelled that fear to instil a vision of peaceful nuclear power. Moreover, when the testimonies of the pernicious atomic bomb were transformed into the narrative of atoms-for-peace, or, when the two polarities of good and evil were swapped by the state, many could no longer configure the correct measurement for assessing the world. Engulfed in a wave of uncertainties, many consequently started yearning for a tangible escape route.

Knowingly or not, they approached the calculable law that has ruled the country up until the present: a guideline that could measure from 'wealth, health, productivity, knowledge, authority, [and even] imagination' (Nancy, 2015: 31). People started visualising the incalculable chaos by adopting the measurement of what Marx calls the 'general equivalent': a benchmark that gauges all commodities of the world through the single criterion of the mode of capital (Marx, 1990).

In this respect, Nancy boldly argues in *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes* (2015) that all post-Hiroshima and post-Nagasaki catastrophes are equivalent. They are not equivalent in 'amplitude', 'destructiveness' or 'consequences', but in terms of correlations: 'the repercussions from every kind of disaster hereafter', when spread or proliferated, are 'interdependent' (Nancy, 2015: 3-5). By this, he is suggesting that in the post-nuclear age, natural catastrophes are no longer separable from their 'technological, economical, and political' counterparts (Nancy, 2015: 5). This is because all systems are now mutually related by the singular logic of money. As supporting evidence to this argument, only ten days after the Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami, when the rough estimate of the damage, excluding the nuclear disaster, was just beginning to take shape, the World Bank announced that the destruction from the disaster could 'amount to as much as 235 billion dollars', the costliest natural disaster in world history.[46] The announcement implied that the welter of intangible descriptors of the catastrophe was now transformed into a palimpsest of bland numbers. The unheard narratives of the dead, the missing and the evacuated were converted into the language of digital currency.

Even if the implications and repercussions of the catastrophe could be gauged through the measure of profit, this does not cancel out the multifarious exigencies of a given event. In fact, precisely because multiple social sectors are now interrelated, generating a

multi-faceted catastrophe, it is much more difficult to deduce a simple equation from a tragedy. Considering the expansive outcomes of the event, one could argue that it is imprudent to develop a monolithic narrative out of uncertainties gleaned from every corner of society.

Theatre Against Post-Catastrophe Totalitarianism

When multi-faceted nuclear catastrophes are analysed through the lexicon of theatre, most nuclear tragedies are arguably no longer able to be resolved through catharsis as presented at the end of Greek tragedies. Nuclear narratives are fundamentally not finite, since they are continually reconstructed as the crisis stretches over time and across space. In this regard, yielding a comprehensible myth would just curtail or distort the indefinite picture of the event to bland clichés, which, through determination, must be avoided. As Nancy asserts, what is important with regards to the sense-making process in post-nuclear-disasters is to understand that, basically, the answer is not absolute; the necessity to install a theatre of sensate atomisation emerges precisely from this point. That is, since the wish for a universally correct narrative will never be achieved, one should not be subject to an external narrative, but should develop, with constant criticality, an autonomous narrative underpinned by a sensate focus on one's interiority.

As recent psychological research has proven, it is especially in moments of crises that the reliance on comprehensible narratives is 'once again activated as a necessary defence mechanism' (Berghaus, 1996: 41). When 'the environmental load of drastic change exceeds one's resources', one is likely to feel 'helpless to deal with the demand, which he or she is exposed to' and thus, in panic, start to seek a parental figure who may resolve the situation (Lazarus, 1999: 58). When exposed to a catastrophe of meaning,

people instinctively hold on to a larger narrative – a commercialised myth – in order to regain their stability (Maclear, 1999: 96). Nevertheless, theatres should not promote or sanction the wish to unite under the auspices of a saviour who may provide unanimous comprehension for the incomprehensible. Such an act could be a palliative solution for soothing people's unstable feelings, but, in the long-run, by hastily bypassing the important process of reflection, it could possibly reinforce a move towards totalitarian tendencies.

Individuals and institutions in post-Fukushima society reiterated terms such as 'bond', 'unity' and 'oneness' in an earnest attempt to stand together with the most afflicted. Against the backdrop of this eerie unity, Hirata Oriza, playwright-director, owner of Komaba Agora Theatre, leader of Seinendan Theatre Company and a former advisor to the deputy chief cabinet secretary, admonished the readers of a popular magazine. Rather provocatively, he asserted that 'if individual dissent is not voiced, *fascism* will pervade [in Japan]' (emphasis added).[47] His prediction was not corroborated, as it was voiced from the standpoint not of a social scientist, but of an artist. More still, there may be a misconstrued performative in readily using a hermeneutically narrow term such as 'fascism', which is a word mostly connected to the pre-1945 regimes in Germany and Italy.

A heated debate continues on how to interpret the Japanese political state from the 1930s until the end of the war. Japanese political philosophers such as Tosaka Jun, Hasegawa Nyozekan and, above all, Maruyama Masao argue the existence of Japanese-style fascism (*nihongata fashizumu*) or Emperor-system fascism (*tennōsei fashizumu*) in the decades preceding the end of the Pacific War in 1945.[48] American scholars such as Peter Duus and Daniel I. Okimoto, however, argue conversely that the term fascism 'must not be applied to Japan' between 1930 and 1941 (Tansman, 2009: 1-5, 20-21).[49] Yet the

influential historian Harry Harootunian rebuts the ideas of these American historians as 'easy and completely indefensible arguments,' and claims that what developed in the 1930s Japan was, indeed, a form of fascism (Harootunian, 2000: xxviii). Considering the historical perplexity of the debate, Hirata adopts the term far too readily to say the least. Having said that, however, his rather impetuous comment attests to how blind uniformity pervades post-Fukushima society, instigating fear among certain conscientious artists. Fascism may seem like a far-fetched description for assessing current Japanese society. However, considering the nation's historic predilection for unity under Imperial militarism during the 1930s and the 1940s, Hirata's anxiety is understandable, if not substantive.

In his book on fascism and theatre, Günter Berghaus provides a cogent argument on the multiple complicities that exist between fascism and theatre. According to Berghaus, the two were first bound together by the Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini. Understanding the potential of theatre's immediacy, Mussolini asserted that the 'theatre is one of the most direct means of arriving at the heart of people', as it speaks not only to the intellect but also to emotions. Mussolini knew all too well that theatre, with its immediate physicality, could most effectively communicate a binding belief system to the audience. During the inter-war era, he proliferated a hopeful and singular 'myth' through theatre in order to transfix his politically confused citizens (Berghaus, 1996: 50). Incongruities between hopeful myth and dire reality were deliberately maintained, because when the story told is simplified and sweetened, the myth becomes more appealing. To cite from Mussolini, it is not necessary for a myth 'to be a reality'; because a myth is, above all, 'faith' and 'passion': 'It is a reality in the sense that it is a stimulus, is hope, is faith, is courage' (Griffin, 1995: 44).

Roger Griffin, one of the leading scholars of fascism, suggests that the nature of fascism is definable by the 'core myth' that exists at a structural level. At the crux of fascism, a fascinating mythic core persists that offers the vision of a utopia: 'a perfectly co-ordinated national community as a total solution to the problem of modern society' (Griffin, 1995: 2, 6). A situation emblematic of the incubation of fascism is European society before, during and after World War I. Apart from the abominable war itself, Europe stumbled from one crisis to another, such as 'the *biennio rosso* in Italy, the *Inflationszeit* in Germany, and the world economic crisis of 1929-1932' and thus many of its inhabitants experienced a mental crisis (Berghaus, 1996: 47). The disintegration of the worldview generated fear among people, and suddenly the simplistic and persuasive worldview offered by fascist regimes seemed 'reasonable', 'obvious', 'normal' or *sensible* (Griffin, 2008: 79).

It is vital to note that the essence of politics, however, lies in disturbing these seemingly sensible arrangements. As Rancière asserts, whereas the law of the *police*, or the authoritative power, lies in the 'annulment [and] exclusion of what "is not"' aimed towards seamless consensus, the law of *politics* lies in creating and revealing a 'dissensus': 'the demonstration (manifestation) of a gap in the sensible itself' (Rancière, 2010: 36-38, 42). To reiterate the point through basic etymology, the word 'fascism' derives from the Italian word *fascio*, literally meaning 'bundle'; the term 'critique' stems from the Greek word *krinein*, 'to separate' (ibid.: 137). A simple etymological analysis speaks volumes, as it reveals that from the outset the binding centripetal force of the police and the distancing centrifugal force of politics were complete opposites. Based on this premise, Rancière even goes so far as to say that unanimous consensus is, in effect, the 'end of politics' (ibid.: 42).

History has proven that theatre is arguably one of the most potent apparatuses to function as social intervention. As such, it should ideally be one of the first institutions to flag up the danger of believing *en masse* in a seemingly sensible mythic core. Ideally speaking, theatre should acknowledge that, in moments of nuclear chaos, which are accompanied by continuous and invisible disruptions, it is actually more common to feel that things are 'out of place, out of sorts, disconnected (*fuan*, *fuantei*, *ibasho ga nai*)' (Allison, 2013: 14). Yet sadly, humanity abhors these abnormalities and so, as Griffin asserts, in extreme cases, a widespread crisis could suddenly drive millions 'herd-like into an alternative worldview, or ideology, which […] offers a way out in terms of a "new" sense of their surroundings, no matter how […] potentially destructive' it may be (Griffin, 2008: 76). For those who are desperately suffering in the midst of durational chaos, 'the only thing that matters about the new cosmology is that it restores to the world a sense of solidarity' (ibid.).

Erich Fromm, a social psychologist who discusses the human fear of isolation throughout his oeuvre, asserts that the desire for unity is one of the most powerful human motivators. In *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), Fromm argues that, in order for a person to feel 'at home', certain psychic needs that underpin 'the very conditions of human existence' should be met, namely: rootedness, unity, effectiveness and excitation (Fromm, 1973: 255-271). First, in order for a human being to feel 'effective', it is necessary for a person to avoid being 'entirely passive [as] a mere object'; if so, he or she would 'lack a sense of his [*sic*] own will, of his identity' (ibid.: 262). Second, Fromm continues that if the agent wishes for excitement in life, it is an imperative that he or she exists as a *sensate* being possessing the 'touchable stimuli' (ibid.: 271). This is because even the most stimulating poems 'will fail completely with someone who is incapable of responding', owing to their 'fear, inhibition, laziness [or]

passivity' (ibid.). However, since many are already mentally abased to the point of becoming insensate 'working-animals' in post-nuclear capitalist society, it could be said that these two components – effectiveness and excitation – are in peril, if not, extinct (Marx, 2012: 30).

Out of fear of losing the remaining two aspects – rootedness and unity – people may frantically struggle to maintain their sense of connectedness to others. The act of struggle can gradually grow desperate as, according to Fromm, social isolation 'condemns us to insanity': '[M]an, aware of his separateness, needs to find new ties with his fellowman; his very sanity depends on it' (Fromm, 1978: 105; 1973: 261-2). In this regard, and in resonance with Langer, Fromm uses a superlative rhetoric to assert that experiencing an 'existential split', or chaos, is simply 'unbearable' to human beings (ibid.: 262). Maintaining harmonious relationships between internal symbols and external referents, or sustaining 'oneness within man, oneness between man and nature, and oneness between man and the other men' are considered vital for preventing an ontological crisis (ibid.). In this sense, Fromm goes on to say that perhaps 'human beings are more afraid of being outcasts than even of dying' (Fromm, 1978: 105).

Connecting Fromm's tragic tenor with the concept of fascism, it could be argued that humanity is likely to assume the most irrational if, by doing so, solitude can be avoided. Hannah Arendt argues in her unfailingly resonant *The Origin of Totalitarianism* (1951) that totalitarian movements emerge precisely from 'mass atomisation' (Arendt, 1958: 318). In her writing, Arendt distinguishes the two often confused terms, fascism and totalitarianism, and argues that whereas the former requires a violent apparatus of coercion run by elites, the latter, by contrast, is internally regulated by each citizen (ibid.: 325). Explained differently, as a backlash against mass atomisation, people willingly approach excessive unity to evade loneliness: totalitarianism has 'discovered a means of

dominating and terrorizing human beings from within' (Arendt, 1958: 325). Contrary to most assumptions, what instigates totalitarianism is not the 'brutality and backwardness' of people, but rather their solitude pushing them to the brink of insanity: 'social atomization and extreme individualization' precede the emergence of totalitarian regimes (Arendt, 1958: 316).

Keeping this injunction against totalitarian unity in mind, we should now move on to the analysis of post-Hiroshima and Nagasaki societies. What awaited Japan after its independence from six years and eight months of gnawing American Occupation was not peace, free from nuclear threat, but continuous strife against nuclear armaments. When the Empire's thirty-five-year rule over the neighbouring country of Korea ended with the Japanese capitulation, the United States and the Soviet Union soon started claiming dominance over the peninsula. Since neither state could force the other to concede, they ultimately failed to agree 'on a trusteeship formula to produce a unified Korea', and hence the strip of land was divided along the 38th Parallel (Millett, 2007: 8). The country entered a 'three-phase Maoist war of national liberation', in which neither side of the political sphere was 'strong enough to eliminate the other' (ibid.: 116).

More still, in September 1949 the Soviets succeeded in carrying out their first nuclear weapon test. This prompted Josef Stalin to support the Korean People's Army (KPA) of North Korea and to guide them towards armed action against US-supported South Korea. He wanted to prove that their power matched or superseded the 'American strategic nuclear deterrent force' (ibid.: 15). Thus, under the auspices of Stalin, on 25 June 1950, the KPA surged across the 38th Parallel and, from this point onwards, what Bruce Cumings analysed as 'a civil war', transformed into a proxy war between the Soviets and the Americans (Cumings, 2005: 238). Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru brazenly called the Korean War a 'gift from the gods' as 'American purchases [of war-related

procurements from Japan] jolted the economy out of recession' (Kingston, 2013: 11).

Conversely, for most laymen in Japan, it was nothing less than an unwanted menace, as a large part of the US Asian military base was located in their country (Millet, 2007: 15-16).

For Japan, which was just beginning to recover from the devastation of the atomic bombs, the boasting of newly invented nuclear weapons by both superpowers was nothing more than a renewed nightmare. Additionally, in no time, just as many parts of post-war Europe were polarised into either Soviet-style communism or American-style capitalism, political voices in Japan splintered between the two global blocs. In the hope of somehow being saved from this lacerating state of chaos, people started choosing sides between two political powers. Only a limited number of intellectuals, not afraid to stray from the collective, requested that the public avoid allying with either side, because doing so could possibly lead to an atomic war.

The playwright Miyoshi Jūrō (1902-1958) was one of those few who admonished the public about the danger of subscribing to a dogmatic ideology.[50] Miyoshi was not an apolitical playwright. In fact, alongside proletariat playwrights such as Murayama Tomoyoshi, he was one of the most passionate participants in social movements such as syndicalism in the 1920s and Marxist communism in the 1930s. Yet when the leftist movement started to debilitate, and when the state entered the era of militaristic fascism, his disbelief towards the wartime authoritarian state grew, and later culminated in the complete abandonment of all political ideologies: he concluded that 'all beliefs equal fanaticism' (Miyoshi, 1974: 333). When read in context, this reductive renunciation becomes significantly problematic. At a time when progressive Marxist communism was still venerated by leftist intellectuals – not as any other ideology but as the apex of

'modern civilization' – for many colleagues, Miyoshi's comment sounded like a naïve sophistry, or even like the 'nonsense of a loser' (Goodman, 2003: 9; Ōkubo, 1959: 8).

It could also be argued that Miyoshi's renunciation of all ideologies is too nihilistic. Indeed, if disbelief of all moral, religious and metaphysical convictions is one of the primary tenets to define nihilism, the playwright could be included among the lethargic caucus. Having said that, Miyoshi cannot be called a nihilist *per se* because he does not attain the second most important tenet of a nihilist, as described by Nietzsche: the impulse to destruct. In fact, throughout his oeuvre, Miyoshi was one of the strongest advocates to affirm life in post-war Japanese theatre. And, as if to substantiate his humanistic creed, in *He Who Risked*, the nihilist character commits suicide at the end while a playwright character called I (*watashi*), reminiscent of Miyoshi, stands firmly and decries the atomic bomb with a humanistic tenor.

The ending is a clear manifestation of Miyoshi's affirmation of life over death. More still, when Miyoshi's renunciation is detached from the Marxist inclination around 1952, and analysed with the hindsight of half a century, it becomes apparent that his warning was not dismissed just because of its naiveté. His opinion was jarring to coevals because it was also too individualistic, to the extent that it was thought of as an inflammatory rhetoric that attacked social mores. The play had to wait over sixty years, until director Nagatsuka Keishi (b. 1975) restaged it after the Fukushima catastrophe in 2013, to be recognised as an almost prophetic play capturing how nuclear technology wreaks havoc on human life.[51] On its 2013 revival, theatre journalist Tokunaga Kyōko affirmed that she was shocked by its 'absolute contemporaneity', observing that 'a commentary on atomic bombs written in 1952 could also be read as a description of the uncontrollable [Fukushima] nuclear power plant disaster in the present' (Tokunaga, 2013).

Despite Miyoshi's prescience, even his good friend and a theatre director Sasaki Takashi confessed that he did not 'quite understand the play' when attending the premiere in 1952 (Ōkubo, 1959: 8). Therefore, in spite of the fact that it vividly captures the impact of living under the nuclear threat – with one character even being a *hibakusha* – the play is often excluded from the canon of A-bomb plays. A true intellectual, according to Miyoshi, should always be 'independent of all parties (*tōha-sei*) and localities' (*chihō-sei*, Katagiri, 2003: 383); this individualist viewpoint, so to speak, penetrated far beyond the accepted hermeneutic framework of *shingeki* plays. For this reason, Miyoshi was considered an outsider from the *shingeki* circle, or as Kan Takayuki blatantly admits, 'a heresy' (Kan, 1981: 137). The reason many critics ignored Miyoshi's play is quite evident. As is often the case with defenders of status quo, the advocates of *shingeki* dismissed the new-fangled *He Who Risked* for the sake of preserving the hegemony of *shingeki*. With a decisive will, they chose to start the history of A-bomb plays three years afterwards with the more authentic *shingeki*: Hotta Kiyomi's *The Island* (*Shima*, 1955).

Sensate Atomisation in Miyoshi Jūrō's *He Who Risked*

He Who Risked was first presented at the Mitsukoshi Theatre in Tokyo in July 1952, directed by Miyoshi himself with Okakura Shirō (1909 – 1959), the nephew of the renowned curator and scholar Okakura Tenshin (1863 – 1913). The post-nuclear pathologies portrayed in the play include: the sense-making crisis deriving from drastic social change; the consequent destruction of ethical values; the ascendency of economic power over human ethics, which is most clearly portrayed through the *panpan* girl (an unlicensed prostitute frequented by the American occupiers); the isolation of individuals each latching on to distinct belief sets, such as Marxism, rational science, US-led capitalism and Christian virtues; and the anticipation of an omnipotent saviour who,

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ironically, is portrayed by a young murderer. Overall, the welter of issues already addressed in this chapter are thrown into the play, creating a chaotic microcosm of a society bound by the nuclear condition. For better or for worse, as Ōzasa asserts, the play does not confine its issue to one single topicality concerning atomic warfare: 'it deals with a far larger theme' (Ōzasa, 1985: 78). In fact, Miyoshi jotted down in his journal only several days before he died on 16 December 1958 that he wanted the play to represent 'contemporary life in its totality' (*gendai seikatsu sonomono no zentai*) (Miyoshi, 1962: 99). Rendering lucid images from complex reality would eclipse, or representationally marginalise what was at stake, and so the playwright sought to part with the logical, though artistically reductive, narrative of *shingeki* plays.

The play is set in a vast and dilapidated mansion located in a suburb of Tokyo, which is owned by a former army officer who served and died in Manchuria. Several years have passed since the end of the war, but many people still have nowhere to go. As a consequence, nine men and women, including the character I, live together, forming a temporary community that symbolises a secure asylum. The character I, who is the playwright narrating the play, introduces all residents as 'all good people': those who are living 'a peaceful life that may be all-too-peaceful' by not being 'too intrusive' on others (Miyoshi, 1962: 318). The way in which he repeats the word 'peaceful' alludes that there is a potentially conflicting dynamic hidden beneath that peacefulness. Although through a circuitous rhetoric, the character I suggests that equanimity is maintained by deliberately avoiding confrontation with others as well as the chaotic reality of the 1950s. As is expected, however, the narrative of the play starts to swivel when the author disrupts the peacefulness with the intervention of a tenth character called Sunaga: a nihilistic murderer who epitomises destruction, much like the atomic bomb.

The arrival of Sunaga overturns the placid atmosphere. All characters depicted in the play are real-life characters that came into being through the playwright's diligent observation of everyday life; most specifically however, Sunaga was a faithful portrayal of his 'young friend who killed himself the previous year' (Ōkubo, 1959: 7). Analogous to the protagonist of *The Stranger* by Albert Camus, whom Miyoshi highly respected, the young playwright Sunaga enters the house after shooting three people related to his girlfriend Aiko: her step-father, her mother, and a rice dealer who happened to visit her house. The audience is later informed that Sunaga and Aiko had committed *shinjū* (a double suicide) a few days before, but by accident only the man had survived. Sunaga speaks indifferently of his girlfriend's death, even with a quaint smile on his face.

Historically speaking, immediately after the war, the so-called *après-guerre* crimes (*apure-gēru hanzai*), in which young people committed crimes seemingly without reason, erupted sporadically across the country. In the play, Miyoshi portrays Sunaga as a nihilist typical of this post-war crime. Perplexed as he was, the playwright sought to construe meaning from these crimes by framing them as a form of ethical debasement, cultivated by the inhumane nature of the atomic bomb. Thus, in the play, Sunaga acts according to this reframed ethics, which entail no boundary between 'life and death', and no division between the rights given to man and those to God (Nishimura, 1989: 37).

When the Emperor announced the end of the war on 15 August 1945 (factually speaking, Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration that had called for the surrender of all Japanese armed forces the day before on 14 August), it also signalled the beginning of humanity's subjugation to a global nuclear arsenal. With the recovery from the atomic bombs on the one hand, and the threat of a future atomic war on the other, life and death in post-war Japan could no longer be defined through previous ethics. Through the voice of Sunaga, Miyoshi explained this inscrutable situation of life-death involution as follows:

Sunaga: There are 2,000 atomic bombs in this world. Whether you say 'Yes' or 'No', you are already fixed to one side. […] When you choose not to kill, that becomes the necessary reason for killing. When you approach peace, you inevitably approach war. When you try to live, you have to die. (Miyoshi, 1968: 389)

The Japanese were now trapped in a catch-22 situation. It seemed impossible to develop a narrative of absolute peace, as all paths included some possibility of triggering an atomic war. Indeed, there is a fear-driven prejudgement at work here, because to suggest that every attempt to avoid belligerence transforms into an act of destruction is a dangerously simplified statement. Within this reductive statement, however, Miyoshi was at least right in pointing out that the Japanese were now facing a political conundrum. People knew that any serious inquiry into reality inevitably incurred an aporia: a sense-making crisis. For this reason, the nine characters in the mansion – excluding I, who, as an artist, openly questions the problematic situation, and Momo-chan, a *hibakusha* from Hiroshima – carefully keep their distance from the threatening reality by stiffly guarding their narrow myths.

For instance, Funaki, a doctor who holds an implacable belief in the integrity of science, is determined to live an imperturbable life by even becoming indifferent to his wife Oriko, a pious Christian. Funaki's younger brother, Shōzō, is a university student committed to radical anti-American activism, who proclaims that idealistic politics is the only true path towards the future. Wakamiya is a flaccid middle-aged broker, a mammonist, who asserts that egoists are much more reliable than hypocrites pretending to be socially committed. His daughter, Fusayo, a *panpan* girl, solemnly swears to her father that the only thing she trusts is 'dollars' (Miyoshi, 1968: 332).

Ryuko, an illegitimate child of the owner of the mansion, is a wealthy and seductive teacher of the *shamisen* (a three-stringed Japanese instrument), who lives an apathetic life by wilfully becoming both physically and mentally 'frigid' (ibid.: 332). Ukiyama is a

man distantly related to the widow of the owner of the mansion, who also lives in a state of apathy. Although he is the carer of Momo-chan, a taciturn girl aged around sixteen who lost her family and also her eyesight in the Hiroshima atomic bomb, the only activity he engages on a day-to-day basis is the cultivation of mushrooms in the sombre basement; which reminds the audience of the buried memory of the *mushroom clouds*. The final character living in the mansion is 'I': a middle-aged playwright, who has recently lost his wife, just like Miyoshi, whose first wife Misao died in 1933. Due to his wife's death, the life of 'I' has fallen into apathy: his eyes are 'fatigued from [scanning] meaning' and he is ontologically lost among piles of 'only vaguely sensible fragments of realities' (Miyoshi, 1968: 318).

At least for the first quarter-hour of the play, these nine characters, in their various frigid, aloof and apathetic states, cohabit peacefully by rendering their senses numb and safely withdrawing into their own microcosms. As Lifton observes, the post-nuclear reality is a universe where death exists *within* life: people live in a 'dead universe, or rather a universe in which life has become so numbed as to be more dead than death' (Lifton, 1976: 129). However, by stumbling across Sunaga, a man embodying a deadly nuclear threat, the senses of the nine characters are reawakened and the latent vulture-like desires come to the fore. Through the voice of I, Miyoshi analyses the situation as follows:

> I: By watching a dead man walking around, have we all suddenly realised
> that we are alive? … No, that's not it. Sunaga is not dead. Isn't it, rather,
> that Sunaga is the only one of us who is alive? […] And by watching him,
> each and every one of us has been awakened from the languid dreams of
> everyday life. Haven't we just been reawakened? (Miyoshi, 1968: 362)

The intruder is not a threat to others because he is a heartless murderer, but because he interrupts the conventional narrative and acts as a critical mirror, reflecting the others' hidden, almost animalistic, desires. For instance, Oriko reveals her fear of her husband Funaki, who could, as she exclaims, passively kill anyone who hinders his dream. Shōzō

manifests his animosity towards Fusayo and nearly chokes her to death. Ryuko becomes

obsessed with beastly pleasure; she disrobes her kimono, crawls near to Sunaga and begs

him to rape her. After the once torpid residents encounter Sunaga, what Fromm calls the

'touchable stimuli' are violently reactivated. Explained differently, it could be argued

that Sunaga forces others to relinquish their assumptions toward constructed reality and

go through what Lifton calls the process of 'communal resymbolization': a process so

'precarious and threatening' that itself can be 'falsely viewed as the cause for the cultural

breakdown' (Lifton, 1976: 129).

The process of 'communal resymbolization' could also be described as an awakening

procedure from what Paulo Freire calls 'semi-intransitive consciousness': a state in

which the agent's perception is 'limited, that he is impermeable to challenges situated

outside the sphere of biological necessity' (Freire, 2013: 13). With a critical tonality,

Freire continues that, when absorbed in this state, 'discernment is difficult,' as 'men […]

fall prey to magical explanations because they cannot apprehend true causality' (ibid.).

In order to prevent people from being submerged in magical beliefs, Miyoshi

deliberately avoids making sense, but rather *makes strange* through the maddening acts

of characters. Ultimately, his objective is to instigate the redistribution of the sensible of

not only the characters, but also the audience, who are habitually used to seeing the

world through 'dead certainties' and not through 'living uncertainties' (Bharucha, 2014:

103).

In sum, through the violent incursion of Sunaga, Miyoshi acknowledges a tentative

destruction and reconstruction of collective consciousness. As a playwright who stood by

the creed that a 'shattered (*uchikudakareta*)' state is the essence of all creation, he

requested that the people disown prevalent ideologies for the sake of later superseding

them with other more autonomous values (Nishimura, 1989: 146). Amidst the post-war

cacophony in which herds of people wished to submit to the most powerful narratives, Miyoshi calls on the audience to maintain an atomised yet sensate standpoint: to remain critical of all preconceived ideologies, yet also be socially sensate and equipped with 'touchable stimuli' (Fromm, 1973: 271). In order to counter the numbing effect of totalitarian unity, Miyoshi develops a theatre of sensate atomisation.

The discussions concurrently reveal that nuclear brutality predicates the numbing of the senses. Owing to the scale of the chronological (spanning generations) and the topological (spreading beyond seas and borders) destruction caused by an atomic bomb, which transcends human intelligibility, people can no longer link cause and effect; it seems dauntingly impossible to discern right from wrong. And since the eventuation of the nuclear invention is predominantly unimaginable, each scientist or politician at each step of the process can be entirely detached from the outcome. By being engaged in the division of labour and technological obfuscation, which is incomprehensible to a single human being, humanity is liberated from the moral responsibility of the mass killing. Their senses become ethically frigid – much like the characters in the mansion.

At this point, Butler's explanation as to how most contemporary wars are waged on the premise of 'the assault on the senses' could support the argument (Butler, 2010: xvi). She argues that, through the influx of selective and more comprehensible information coming into our visual field, our ethical dispositions are effectively regulated and reconfigured for the sake of justifying war. According to Butler, prior to the demolition of towns and cities, the ability to sense violence is destroyed; and, when the senses are numbed, people become purblind to violence accordingly (ibid.: xvii, 5). With curbed perceptions and filtered ethics, people fail to assess the causalities effectively, and, subsequently, they could collectively choose to make a calamitous act. That is, people

could fall prey to fanatic dogmas, and suddenly transform into radical supporters of violence towards others.

Extending the argument regarding the numbing effect, it is important to note that in our everyday lives, ethics and senses are indivisible. Ethics are not solid values, but only volatile principles that shift in accordance with our susceptible senses. The correlation of the two could be explained by calling into question the Aristotelian term of *sensus communis*. During Aristotle's time, *sensus communis* suggested a concept that is different from what we now apprehend as *common sense*: a concept that was developed by the Stoics and which later proliferated in the West as the ability to make prudent judgements in society. Aristotle's term referred to 'a distinct perceptual capacity in which the five senses are integrated' (Gregoric, 2007: vii). It was merely 'a linguistic coincidence' that these different notions had the same name (ibid.).

Aristotle also believed that within human beings, there existed a 'single cognitive part of capacity of the soul, which comprises both the perceptual and the logical capacity,' and, in this sense, it could be argued that when our perceptual ability is greatly paralysed, our code of ethics might be simultaneously damaged (ibid.: 53). Concurring with this, Japanese philosopher Nakamura Yūjirō asserts that *sensus communis* predicates the formulation of *common sense*. He maintains that 'the synthetic and general perceptibility formulated through the integration of multiple sensations,' is an indispensable ability for the wholesome development of 'a legitimate faculty of reason shared by people in a given society' (Nakamura, 2003: 37). Based on this conjecture, Nakamura claims that our senses are what challenge and expand the horizon of fixed conjunction between symbolic codes and material referents: our senses transform common sense.

When adapting this hypothesis to the rubric of post-nuclear society, one could submit that, in tandem with the numbing of internal *sensus communis*, the discernment of the

external world by common sense would be destroyed. Consequently, people start

violating the ethical laws previously imposed. And, according to Miyoshi, the dropping

of the atomic bomb epitomised this ethical infringement. Through an act no less casual

than turning off an incandescent bulb, a man could banally rob tens of thousands of lives

with only the push of a button. Equipped with this ethical immunity and illusionary

omnipotence bred by numbed senses, humanity was now capable of making an incursion

into the realm of God: people could erroneously proclaim the right to kill by judging

which lives were more valuable than others. Again, through the voice of Sunaga,

Miyoshi raised an alarm over the ethical infringement:

> Sunaga: The first person that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima – or
> the first person who decided to drop it – did something that human beings
> should never have approved. That person did something only God is
> allowed to do. In other words, that man stepped across the forbidden
> boundary: he violated [*okashite shimatta*] the line. (Miyoshi, 1968: 354) [52]

This passage reveals why Miyoshi decided to call the play *Okashita mono*, which could

be translated as *He Who Risked*; but also when given a more juridical tone, *He Who*

Violated. Miyoshi suggests that when fatuous humans 'violated the laws of God' and

used a bomb that could exterminate humanity, the acts both of giving lives and taking

them away suddenly became meaningless (Miyoshi, 1968: 391). Miyoshi argues that

people are now living in a time restlessly threatened by fortuitous death: death is not the

endpoint of life but exists side-by-side with it. Inevitably, this life-death inversion incurs

a sense of absurdity among people; which will be discussed at length in Chapter Four.

The Third Path Independent of Fixed Ideologies

The subtitle of *He Who Risked* – '*dedicated to the spirit of S*' – is a reference to

Miyoshi's late actor friend Maruyama Sadao. When Maruyama's *Kuraku-za Idō-tai*

(Traveling Theatre Company Joy and Sorrow), renamed in June 1945 as *Sakura-tai* (The Cherry Blossom Troupe), was temporarily stationed in Hiroshima, the actor, together with nine other members, tragically fell victim to the atomic bomb. According to the playwright's daughter Mari, whose godfather was Maruyama, the actor was one of Miyoshi's closest friends: 'He was closer [to Miyoshi] than to his real brother' (Miyoshi, M., 1981: 31). A well-known anecdote substantiates their intimacy. When Miyoshi was living alone in Tokyo, since his family – wife Kikue and daughter Mari – had already evacuated to Nīgata Prefecture during the war, the actor insisted the playwright join his troupe and tour together with them to Hiroshima (Katagiri, 2003: 312).

Miyoshi did not join the caravan in the end, because as an artist always responding to the zeitgeist, he felt responsible for witnessing what could happen to his hometown; he wished to 'witness the end of Tokyo in the not-too-faraway future' (ibid.). Thus in July 1945, the two friends shook hands at the front door of Miyoshi's residence in Akazutsumi, Tokyo, and parted for good: 'That was my last sight of Maruyama' (Miyoshi, 1947). The sudden death of his friend was a great blow for the playwright. From the following year, whenever the torrid month of August arrived, the playwright gathered with several friends in commemoration of Maruyama (Katagiri, 2003: 317)

Due in part to this personal loss, Miyoshi was a tenacious critic of the two atomic bombs in essays such as 'To All Americans' (*America-jin ni tou*) (Miyoshi, 1953). In this essay, published in the May 1953 issue of *Chūō Kōron,* Miyoshi demanded that the Americans provide a rationale that legitimised the disputable collusion between 'democracy', a seemingly unanimous yet largely unilateral concept, and 'the usage of atomic bombs' (ibid.: 181). He requested that the 'candid and energetic' Americans, who purportedly stood by 'justice and freedom', offer a plausible explanation as to how the voices of Americans were democratically reflected in the deployment of weapons of mass

destruction (ibid.: 176-177). The overt reasoning that underpinned Miyoshi's inquiry was that, if the Unites States was a democratic nation, as it proclaimed itself to be, then the country should be able to disclose information on how the atomic bombs were approved by the majority of Americans. Miyoshi's hypothesis was that 'perhaps the quintessence of political power – including violence, military, police, money […] – was becoming something fundamentally antithetical to democracy' (Shishido, 1983: 24).

A response was given in the next issue of the journal. Theodor Cohen, the former head of SCAP's Labour Division and Advisor on Economic Programs, and Herbert Passin, then an associate professor at the University of California, provided a somewhat evasive answer. In the tersely titled 'A Response to Mr. Miyoshi's "To All Americans"' (*Miyoshi-shi no 'Amerika-jin ni tou' e no henji*), the two authors Cohen and Passin circumvented the main topic – the valid link between democracy and atomic bombs – and criticised what they assumed to be the parochial view of the playwright. With feigned politeness, the two confessed that they were 'quite bewildered' by the reductive analysis provided by such 'a talented and sincere intellect' as Miyoshi: 'Mr. Miyoshi asks about the administrative procedure taken for a single weapon called the atomic bomb, and to what extent a single country called the United States has democratically controlled the weapon. This is as if to suggest, by answering these questions, all problems would be solved' (Cohen and Passin, 1953: 234). More still, in order to divert Miyoshi's accusation, they added that 'other countries, such as the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom' also possess atomic bombs, and that 'other horrific weapons' have also been developed by modern technology (ibid.). In a dignified tone, the two concluded: 'if we [the Americans] do not deter other powers, […] we will be continuously threatened by the danger of an atomic war' (ibid.).

Perhaps they were right to say that atomic weapons were not only an issue for the United States, but also for other nations that had the capacity to wage a nuclear war. Yet even when taking all that into consideration, the reason Americans were uncritically exempted from the possibility of generating an atomic war was not provided in the essay. Historically speaking, among the tens of thousands of nuclear warheads that existed (and still exist) in the global arsenal, the Unites States is the only country that has unleashed them against civilians. After dropping two atomic bombs, how could they claim their innocence? One answer could be provided, by referring again to a sharp analysis by Butler. With a trenchant commitment to protecting the politically marginalised and excluded, Butler provocatively asserts that the United States has been, and continues to be, a state that somehow 'understands itself as exempt from any number of international agreements' (Butler, 2010: 47). Indeed, based on this self-assumed immunity, Cohen and Passin avoided answering Miyoshi's question.

The fact that the play was presented in July 1952, only three months after Japan regained its independence, should be noted. Only a short time before, the citizens still suffered from the paucity of information due to nearly seven years of censorship carried out by the Occupying Forces. Yet Miyoshi boldly challenged social taboos, against the stifling condition in which many preferred to remain silent. Apart from the above-noted essay to the Americans, the slings and arrows were projected from a series of columns titled 'A Paradise of Fools' (*Gusha no rakuen*), published weekly in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper for two years from October 1951. In the politically charged columns, Miyoshi not only denounced the Americans, but also the Soviets, the Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru and anti-government communists, inducing ideological turmoil among his readers. In the essay, he essentially suggested readers avoid succumbing to ideologies that transform people into a docile populace. After perusal of the columns, even an

American, Keyes Beech, a correspondent for the *Chicago Daily News* and a Pulitzer Prize-winner, could not help but praise the playwright as a man 'equipped with honesty – an extremely rare characteristic for a Japanese' (Katagiri, 2003: 437). This honesty, which attracted both avid fans and vicious foes, was indeed one of Miyoshi's strongest traits as a playwright. Owing to this indefatigable candidness to his inner voice, he escaped falling prey to mass ideologies and was able to capture the fatal impact of the nuclear age.

To reiterate, a true intellectual, according to Miyoshi, should always be independent: 'a person stands by himself or herself, devoid of any support' (Katagiri, 2003: 383). Based on this conviction, in *He Who Risked* Miyoshi proposed to the audience a balancing act of standing between a blind attachment to partisan dogmas and a complete detachment from political regimes. For Miyoshi, radical political commitment and extreme social alienation were two sides of the same coin: both abandoned sensorial assessment of the present, and indolently depended on expedient narratives. More still, both political schisms were equally culpable because both could lead to totalitarianism; the former propagated unification under a monadic belief, while the latter produced socially isolated entities, which could entail yearning for irrational reunification. To this end, although idealistic rather than pragmatic, Miyoshi sought the possibility of establishing a third way lying between the two.

We should, of course, keep in mind that Miyoshi pronounced the theory of the third path decades before Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens adopted the same terminology in a greatly different context in the 1980s. The latter two theorists claimed the position of central-left, in which the adversarial models of politics, of us versus them, did not apply anymore. This move towards the centre, which claimed politically neutral terrain, was however later refuted by theorists such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe as a

conceptual impossibility: it is only ideologically possible as in reality, people moving

towards the neutral terrain 'are unable to grasp the structure of power relations, and even

begin to imagine the possibility of establishing a new hegemony' (Laclau and Mouffe,

2014: xvii). In hindsight, this argument delineating the limitations of the third path could

also be applied to Miyoshi's theory: he only denied the prevalent ideologies and could

not provide a vision towards a new hegemony. Preceding Laclau and Mouffe by three

decades, Miyoshi, unfortunately, could not foresee the theoretical impasse of his claim.

In fact, Miyoshi knew all too well of his logical weaknesses and admits that it could be

considered a flimsy subterfuge. In *He Who Risked*, Miyoshi admits, through the voice of

the character I, that the so-called 'third way' is largely idealistic: 'Well, I kind of think

that there is a thing called the third way. At least it is possible. […] But the thing is, it

does not mean a thing to talk about the third way that is detached from life' (Miyoshi,

1968: 340). Notwithstanding the vagueness of the thought, being an artist who always

stood by a humanistic creed, he did not want to relinquish the possibility of a third path

divested of all violence. Understandably, however, since Miyoshi's opinion was only an

ideological provocation, many of his contemporaries, such as the aforementioned leftist

playwright Murayama, accused him of espousing a seemingly apolitical rhetoric.

Yet one should keep in mind that Miyoshi was never completely detached from politics,

because a truly apolitical playwright will uncritically follow the prevalent hegemonic

discourse. As a matter of fact, Miyoshi was one of the very few artists who already

foresaw in 1952 what nuclear critics like Jacques Derrida and Drucilla Cornell advised

decades later: when living in an atomic age, no matter which political path you take, 'the

policy and possibility remain governed by the spectre of global annihilation' (Derrida

cited in Maclear, 1999: 34). As an unknown predecessor of the two nuclear theorists,

Miyoshi also argued that ethics in post-nuclear society were not about establishing a

common ideal, but about developing 'a non-violative relationship to the Other' (Cornell, 1992:13). The post-atomic-bomb ethical relationship was not about choosing the correct side, but about guarding otherness 'against the appropriation that would deny [its] difference and singularity' (ibid.: 62). Understanding the fact that the essence of post-nuclear ethics is logically constructed through *via negativa*, it could be said that Miyoshi suggested a meta-political solution. He encouraged Japanese people to develop an individual third path in which, by taking distance from the Right, the Left and all possibility of nuclear annihilation, subjects could become more critically conscious of their lives.

In this fight, Miyoshi was not alone. He was greatly encouraged by novelist Albert Camus's works such as *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) and *The Rebel* (1951), as the Algerian-French writer took up a similar issue (Takano, 2008: 106). In the latter novel, Camus proclaimed that a true rebel must simultaneously reject absolute detachment as well as complete attachment: a rebel should 'reject the frenzy of annihilation and the acceptance of totality'; what is required for a rebel to have an impact on the status quo is 'limitations' and 'moderations' much more than radical actions (Camus, 2013: 216, 226). The conviction is summarised most aptly in an essay titled *Le témoin de la liberté* (*The Witness of Freedom*). In this short essay, Camus asserted that a 'work of art, by the mere fact that it exists, denies the conquest of ideology' [*L'oeuvre d'art, par le seul fait qu'elle existe, nie les conquêtes de l'idéologie*] (Camus, 2006: 492).

Inspired as he was by this phrase, Miyoshi wrote a positive review for the Japanese translation of Camus's book, preaching to readers that art, as Camus insisted, cannot be bound by the law of prevalent ideologies. Echoing Camus, Miyoshi asserted that radical actions only lead to polarised ideologies incapable of changing society for the better. This is because when radical agents are submerged in implacable beliefs, they can

unconsciously commit a sin by violating what Camus calls the 'forbidden frontier': the boundary that discerns the authority given to humans and God (ibid.). Thus, for the sake of maintaining a sober society, there is an obligation for artists, who operate under the logic of creation, to 'fight' the logic of destruction and 'uphold it [the third way], unceasingly' (Camus, 2013: 227). In short, for Miyoshi, as well as for Camus, taking either of the two polarised standpoints were only indolent acts of a nihilist succumbing to existent values.

In *He Who Risked*, Miyoshi requested the audience to stand together with him on the third path. However, his call to reawaken from the post-war numbness as a sensate individual free of all parties turned against the social pattern at the time, which entailed submitting to bonds with whoever seems powerful. For this reason, the intent of his play was largely misunderstood as apolitical, naïve or nihilistic. As playwright Kawamata Kōji, who attended the play in 1952 notes, Miyoshi's play 'seemed to be at least ten years ahead of time' (Kawamata, 1960). Arguably, it was given full credit only when the performance was restaged over a half-a-century afterwards in 2013, after Japan had experienced another nuclear catastrophe.

Politics of the Senses in Takayama Akira's *Tokyo Heterotopia*

Together with playwright Okada Toshiki, one of the few theatre artists in Tokyo who immediately responded to the Fukushima catastrophe was Takayama Akira (b.1969). As the leader of the theatre collective Port B, which he set up in 2002, Takayama has always been one of the rare voices in the docile Japanese theatre community to address immediately relevant political issues through his works. Moreover, unlike most local theatre companies where the leader is both a playwright and a director, in Takayama's

loose-knit group of scholars, artists and researchers, the core members gather and exchange opinions whenever a new project is launched and their abilities are required. The outcome is rarely presented in a conventional theatre setting. More often than not, the collective abandons closed environments and stages its work in the given cityscape in order to challenge audience's preconceptions of theatre.

Okada and Takayama seem to have little in common: the former is predominantly a man of words, with several successful novels, and the latter is a conceptual theatre director, reminiscent of the city-jacking theories of the Situationists. Despite the variances in their modalities, however, when the visual and rhetorical embellishments are stripped away it becomes apparent that they both adopt a similar hermeneutic framework towards post-Fukushima reality. It is only at first that their approaches seem antithetical, because Okada responds to the event by emphasising the fictitious element of his theatre through harnessing the function of the proscenium arch, whereas Takayama moves away from the theatre and, physically, tears downs the confines between fiction and reality. Whether moving towards or away from the theatre, what lies at the very base of their creation is greatly alike. That is, they both challenge the boundary between fiction and reality in order to encourage the audience to disengage with a numbed, and thus obsolete, understanding of reality, and alternatively to develop a dialogically operative relationship with the world.

Takayama asserts that the term 'bypass (*ukai*)' is a key when grasping the inventiveness of his theatre (Takayama, 2016). Through his experimental theatre works, which are mostly devoid of scripts, actors, costumes, designed lightings and theatre buildings, he aims to implant in the audience 'a bypass that provides an alternative apprehension of reality' (ibid.). Needless to say, apart from the shrewd rhetoric he adorns, Takayama's theory is not new: providing a revised vision of reality through creative and critical

reflection is, in fact, one of the oldest functions that theatre has retained. Surely, the Japanese director is well aware of this fact. Thus, despite moving towards vanguard aesthetics such as Situationist détournements, happening pranks and Augusto Boal's invisible theatre in appearance, Takayama affirms that, in theory, he is predominantly a 'traditionalist (*dentō shugi sha*)': 'I always develop artworks on the premise of traditional theatre theories' (ibid.). Canonical rather than traditional may be a more suitable word for explaining his claim, but, in any case, staying true to his creed, Takayama primarily submits to three theatre thinkers: namely, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin and, though less 'traditional', Terayama Shūji (1935-1983). As Peter Eckersall suggests, even the company name is in fact 'a reference to the Spanish border town of Portbou' where Benjamin ended his life in 1940 (Eckersall, 2013: 132). Since references to Brecht will be explained later in the section, at this point we should briefly refer to the other two.

Taking into consideration that Benjamin and Terayama contradicted each other in certain principles, Takayama's theory seems to be replete with conflicts from the outset. For instance, the latter avant-garde polymath, who wrote haikus, poetry, novels, screenplays, stage plays and even essays about horse racing, continuously criticised Benjamin's notion of the mechanical reproduction of the work of art (Shichiji, 2003: 23). For Terayama, theatre primarily owed its debt to physical immediacy and thus could never be reproduced. It was a form of art which was heavily bound to the here and now.

Despite the apparent contradiction between the two, Takayama argues that there is a substrate at which the two theorists could be linked together. The crucial argument he develops through his artworks is that the way in which both thinkers approach history is hermeneutically alike. That is, they both interpret history as not a fixed narrative but merely a chain of events aligned together through the subjective scope of the agent.

Based on this thought, both thinkers ruptured the status quo by inserting a new insight, whereby a revised politico-historical constellation could be brought into relief. Moreover, when observed through their scopes, these shifting moments occurred whenever an outmoded code of narrative was imploded by newly introduced pieces of information. And these shifts, at least for the two theorists, were of 'revolutionary' importance, and were marked by the flash of a sensate moment that demolished empirical complacency.

The word 'revolutionary' is metaphorical, as neither thinker aimed for direct political subversion. For Benjamin, this transformative experience suggested a humble instance of redemption, which he called the moment of 'messianic revolution' (Benjamin, 1996: 37). It is the moment, marked by a sudden flash, in which seemingly eternal images of the past are disrupted; and, by contrast, past events are reconnected from the standpoint of 'now-time' (*Jetztzeit*, Benjamin, 1999: 463). Of additional note is that which Benjamin primarily refers to not as the subversions of personal narratives, but rather revisions of hegemonic history. In other words, a messianic moment, for Benjamin, is a revelatory spark, in which modernity's normative chronological timescale is suddenly interrupted and, from that fissure of time, a vision of past, present and future that sits outside of the collective historical construct becomes perceptible.

In like manner, yet focusing more on the personal arena, Terayama Shūji, who formed the theatre troupe Tenjō Sajiki in 1967, sought to accomplish the revolution of the everyday independent of politics (the company's name derived from the Japanese title, *Tenjō sajiki no hitobito*, for Marcel Carné's film *Les Enfants du Paradis*, with the name literally referring to the cheap balcony seats in a theatre). It was Terayama's conviction that the transformation of perception, which, ideally, instigates changes in thoughts and then in actions, was caused by a series of events that incessantly challenged people's common sense. On the streets, he implemented a virus called theatre, which could spread

among audiences. As a 'bad-boy trickster' who always revered fiction over reality, Terayama never 'actively participated in politics', but instead tried to implode reality by installing in it a gamut of scandalous and phantasmagoric theatre works (Sorgenfrei, 2005: 19, 31).

Even though Terayama was the very first Japanese artist to be presented at European avant-garde festivals alongside such theatre luminaries as Robert Wilson, Tadeusz Kantor and Peter Brook, his unruly and frenetic theatre works, performed by various pariahs, were despised by many Japanese intellectuals as 'low brow,' 'vulgar amusement' or 'common entertainment' (Sorgenfrei, 2005: 18). Senda Akihiko, who was one of the few Japanese critics to support Terayama, described his theatre as 'the great theatre of *kyo*'– the last Chinese character suggesting a double meaning of void and virtual (Senda, 1983: 152). In order to question 'the foundational elements consisting theatre', Terayama discarded conventional theatre venues, rehearsals and sometimes even actors and scripts. By going out to the streets in his *shigaigeki* (city plays) and developing a *mise-en-scène* composed of ordinary people, he inverted the realm of the real and the virtual, in which 'reality was suspended' for a moment 'to establish, so to speak, the theatre of *kyo*' (ibid.). For Terayama, this very moment, when one's basic frame of a worldview was reworked through the suspension of reality, was the instance of the 'revolution of everyday principles' (Terayama, 1983: 8).

With abundant influence from the two theorists noted above, in *Tokyo Heterotopia* (2013), Takayama's second post-Fukushima production after *The Referendum Project* (*Kokumin tōhyō purojekuto* 2011), he wished to achieve two objectives. First, he sought the most effective interruption of the status quo in a largely heterogeneous society where 'attempts by an individual to effect change' could potentially be considered indiscreet, as they could 'jeopardize the cohesion of the cultural texture' (Pellecchia, 2013: 141).

Second, through this temporal interruption, he hoped to achieve a messianic revolution of everyday principles, or in his own terms, 'a festival reminiscent of alienated awakening (*sameta kakusei no yō na shukusai*)', through which the prevalent understanding of reality was slightly renewed (Takayama et al., 2014).

When assessing how Takayama responded to the Fukushima disaster, the most obvious approach would be to analyse *The Referendum Project*, a mobile theatre project that used a small caravan to visit thirteen different locations in Japan. Owing largely to the provocative title, suggesting an allusion to Japan's first-ever national referendum on the continued usage of nuclear power, it seems more pertinent, at the outset, to identify this as Takayama's primary Fukushima theatre piece. As briefly explained in Chapter One, in this piece guest speakers such as poets, anthropologists, architects, critics and artists were invited to initiate a dialogue with Takayama at public halls and conference rooms as the caravan visited different locations in Japan. The audience was welcomed to attend each symposium in addition to watching videos inside the caravan stationed at each venue. Inside the vehicle, around half a dozen monitors were aligned along both sides, each playing different interviews with junior high-school students. After watching several videos of their choice, the audience could cast a 'vote': not to decide on the continued usage of nuclear power in Japan, but instead to answer the same questions that the students answered, which were such everyday questions as 'What is your dream?'

Even though *The Referendum Project* is one of Takayama's most notable theatre projects reacting to Fukushima, *Tokyo Heterotopia* is a particularly important example of post-nuclear theatre deserving further attention here for several reasons. The most important reason is Takayama's own assertion that *The Referendum Project* was only his 'immediate' reaction to the Fukushima disaster (Takayama, 2014). He also claims that as it was presented only six months after the disaster, the conceptual framework was rather

too 'simple' (ibid.). From poets and architects to students, he simply collected miscellaneous voices that had been suppressed after Fukushima. Thus, when interviewed two years after the event, Takayama responded that 'recording and collecting the voices of Fukushima was no longer enough' for responding to the event (ibid.). Rather than a direct one-off reaction, he confirmed that a 'longer-lasting project' was required to continually reassess the ever-shifting post-Fukushima state (ibid). This longer-lasting project was *Tokyo Heterotopia*. To be more specific, he suggested that visualising multiple images of past revolutionists was the obligatory task of an artist after Fukushima, who, ideally, should combat the univocal and utopic vision conveyed by the government:

> The image of Godzilla was rendered two years after the Dai-go Fukuryū Maru tuna fish boat radiation accident [which visualised people's fear towards nuclear disasters]. Images have the potency to visualise the latent psyche of the people. Thus, before the government could propagate a singular 'utopic vision' and install it inside citizens' minds, an artist should generate 'multiple images' that open up various future paths after Fukushima. In other words, we should not aim for a single political revolution *per se*; rather it is better to talk about multiple Asian revolutionists, who once lived in Tokyo, and who, indeed, changed societies in different degrees and scales (ibid.).

Takayama's thoughts were underpinned by his intention to rebut a singular utopic vision, one that was also inspired by Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia' – a counter-site, which functions like 'a mirror' through which one's gaze into the mirror comes back to reconstitute one (Foucault, 1984: 3-4). By creating multiple heterotopias, which could be defined as 'places that exist in reality, but are absolutely different from other sites,' the artist thought that a detour leading towards alternative realities could be developed (Takayama, 2017). According to Takayama, the political power of post-Fukushima theatre lies not in aiming for a single political revolution *per se,* but in constructing small heterotopias in Tokyo through which people could reassess and reconstitute themselves in order to construct their future paths.

Tokyo Heterotopia is the artistic culmination of Takayama's attempt to arrest the conformist perceptions of the audience, and to provoke their pre-political state of emotion. Just like most of his so-called 'tour performances', the production took place outside of conventional theatre venues. He used a promenade theatre-style performance format that he had been pursuing for the previous nine years, beginning with *Ippō tsūkōro: Sarutahiko eno tabi* (*One-Way Street: A Journey to Sarutahiko*, 2006). Yet in a slight divergence from his previous projects, the atomisation of each audience member – that is, the degree of his or her physical and interpretive individualisation – was much more extreme in this production.

For instance, in his previous works, the tour was conducted in a group, such as in *Sunshine 62* (2008) in which five audience members collectively toured together. In *Tokyo / Olympic* (2007), a Hato bus (a popular sightseeing bus) was hired, in which the audience went aboard to arrive at the multiple staging venues. In *Compartment City Tokyo* (*Koshitsu toshi Tokyo*, 2009), audiences were even provided with a chance to meet and communicate with employed performers, who were actual social pariahs. In these previous productions, the audience felt more assured as the director limited their freedom by providing the framework of the tour performances. More still, as these productions were designed to be collectively experienced, it constantly reassured the audience that their actions were appropriate. Even though the performances requested the audience to forsake the notion of conventional theatre, the experience was still framed, guided, and collectively organised by Takayama.

Conversely, in *Tokyo Heterotopia*, the audience, or more precisely, the tour participants, are given a carte blanche as to which places to visit, which means of transportation to use, and in what order and how long to take when visiting the designated venues. Some participants enjoyed the journey with a companion. However, as they wear a headset

during the procedure – inevitably making interaction with others difficult – many decided to visit the venues on their own. Within the loosely framed theatrical journey, the only thing the participants could cling on to was a small booklet and a portable radio, which were provided at the starting point of the tour. The booklet included simple maps with information on the thirteen designated places across Tokyo, appointed times (for certain venues), radio frequencies and short historical introductions to the sites. When the participants visited the historical venues, they would tune the radio to a set frequency to hear a true-life narrative about Chinese, Taiwanese, Nepalese, Cambodian, Filipino and other Asian revolutionaries (or ordinary people with visions of changing society) who all once lived in Tokyo. They are the real-life narratives of people who strove to create small changes – everyday revolutions – in their respective communities.

For instance, when visiting a grave at Shōunji Buddhist temple, the tour participants listened to a narrative of the linguist Wang Yu De, who edited the first Taiwanese dictionary in the local area, as he firmly believed that 'a language is the soul of people' (Suga et al., 2014: 206). The narratives were free interpretations of historical events developed by four different novelists depending on the visited site (Ono Masatsugu, Wen Yuju, Kimura Yusuke and Suga Keijirō); each story was only a single version of what is called 'history'. Additionally, as if to empathise with the director's question towards the authority of a written fact, these stories, by design, were orally conveyed through the radio by non-native Japanese speakers. Through constant stuttering and stammering, their locutions opened up space to 'facilitate a sense of *interference*' in the ostensibly monadic history of Japan (Eckersall, 2013: 140).

In a more corporeal register, Takayama also adopted epicurean aesthetics to kindle the pre-linguistic senses of the individual participants. By designating eateries and restaurants serving Asian cuisine as many of the visiting sites, he intended to make the experience

not only visual and aural but also sensory. The adoption of the gastronomic components not only metaphorically signified the director's wish to change the participants *from within*, but also theoretically encapsulated Takayama's artistic belief: in order for the audience member to alienate the target object critically 'one has to identify with it first, on a sensorial level' (Takayama, 2014). Based on this thought, when the tour participants arrived at the designated venues of *Tokyo Heterotopia*, they not only observed the site and listened to a revolutionary story from the past, but also partook of the food that the revolutionaries had relished. For instance, when enjoying the same meatball soup (*qīngdùnshízitóu*) as the young Zhou Enlai (the first Premier of the People's Republic of China), although the participants' senses of taste and smell may travel back a century, the mind stayed in the immediate contemporary environment.

Through the amalgamation of visual, auditory and sensory components, Takayama designed a tour performance, in which the dramaturgy of assimilation and separation came into play simultaneously; and, through the dichotomous experience, he aimed to interrupt the normative underpinnings of the participants. When listening to the Asian revolutionaries' narratives through the headset, and when enjoying the food that they partook of, the participating Tokyoites could remind themselves that history is not a buried past but a narrative still running beneath the skyscrapers: a vision that could be lost easily in the consumerist megalopolis. Additionally, there was an ancillary objective attached to the production. That is, Takayama wished to imbue a dissident idea in the audience – like those of the past Asian revolutionaries – which introduced them to the possibility of making small changes in society. To summarise the point by referring to Benjamin and Terayama, Takayama tried to achieve a 'revolution of everyday principles', which emerges from developing a new political 'constellation' through his theatre from the 'now-time' (Terayama, 1983: 8; Benjamin, 1999: 463).

The Pre-Political Theatre of Alienated Awakening

Tens of thousands of protesters started to fight to ban the nuclear power plants directly after the Fukushima catastrophe. Roughly four years after the Fukushima catastrophe, on 3 May 2015, students from Meiji Gakuin University and The International Christian University started an anti-government movement called SEALDs (Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy) to fight against the deterioration of constitutional democracy, typified by state announcements about the reactivation of nuclear power plants and the revision of the pacifist Constitution. Additionally, on 30 July 2015, 106 *shingeki* theatre groups across Japan delivered a united statement expressing their indignation regarding the government's eagerness to abolish Article 9, the so-called 'peace clause' that has historically prohibited belligerence.[53]

Against the backdrop of these political movements for the first time since the early 1970s, Takayama said that he once seriously considered becoming an activist. However, after a thorough reflection on the matter, he decided not to do so: 'after a while, I decided to no longer join the demonstrations, as it seemed futile. The shouting and the ranting were simply not working in Japan' (Takayama 2014). Thus, he developed a theatre that was not overtly political, but which was indirectly or implicitly political. However, understandably, when audiences with less contextual understanding viewed Takayama's artworks, they seemed lukewarm, contrived, or simply apolitical. His words echoed like a strategic self-justification, shying away from taking political responsibility as an artist. One of the strongest critiques of his work came from Matthias Lilienthal, the director of Munich Kammerspiele. When he was asked to comment on the reactions of Japanese theatre artists to the Fukushima nuclear catastrophe, he tersely disparaged them as 'too friendly':

> Despite the fact that a catastrophe of such a scale had occurred, the reaction to the event appears to be too friendly. […] In the 1950s in Germany, the mood in society strongly curbed the facticity of the Holocaust. […] The most important thing at that moment was to constantly irritate the nerves of others, and to continue to do so, even when they did not welcome you (Lilienthal, Ōtori and Soma, 2013: 57-58).

Lilienthal, who also worked as the dramaturge for the late German director Christoph Schlingensief, known for his hyperbolic aesthetics, held an antagonistic intent regarding political theatre when compared with Takayama. He didactically asserted that if Schlingensief had been alive, he would have 'created an artwork which endorsed launching Super TEPCO (Tokyo Electronic Power Company)': he would have agitated the audience by suggesting that 'we should launch new nuclear plants, not even hundreds but thousands' (ibid.: 59). Here Lilienthal is proposing what could be termed as 'the dramaturgy of stimuli': a theatrical methodology that engenders more controversial stimulation to the point where ignoring it becomes impossible. This was the strategy that Schlingensief adopted, with intellectual sophistication and ingenious vision, in projects such as *Ausländer Raus!* (*Foreigners Out!*, 2000). And, indeed, his works agitated audiences in German-speaking countries, who, unlike their Japanese counterparts, had retained the preconception that theatres should represent the socially marginalised and excluded.

Takayama disagrees with Lilienthal on the grounds that the dramaturgy of stimuli cannot be implemented without probing the different cultural context. Blindly imbibing the dramaturgy of stimuli that Lilienthal venerates just because it was successful for Schlingensief is, in fact, assuming there is a 'universal' moral blueprint in how artists should respond in regard to politically-charged situations. One could even extend the argument and say that Lilienthal committed one of the oldest *faux pas*, in which a westerner uncritically and unconsciously assumes that he has the better answer to the problem in the non-western, and thus 'less-cultivated', regions. It seems even absurd to

repeat these facts, but before importing any 'superior' theatrical methodology of Euro-American origin, the context of the specific society should be taken into consideration – politically, culturally, ethically and in numerous other intermeshed ways. Rather than reproaching Lilienthal, however, Takayama covered his frustration with Japanese politeness and continued making works based on his unwavering theatrical principles.

From the analysis of his post-Fukushima works, it is possible to extrapolate three reasons why Takayama believes that the dramaturgy of stimuli is not valid in Japan – in his case, specifically in Tokyo. First, he questions the artist's aptitude for political rhetoric. Since the rhetoric of direct action is the idiom of politicians and activists, if laymen, including artists, who are essentially not the owners of the language, hastily borrow the idiom to speak against the status quo, it is more than likely that their actions will be subsumed by the canny political system. This argument inevitably reminds one of the aforementioned theatre-director Terayama, the vanguard artist who overtly proclaimed that 'art needs to be severed from politics' (Ridgley, 2011: 127). And, to this end, no matter how harshly he was criticised by contemporaries such as Satoh Makoto, who called for more direct political engagement by 'performing a theatre of revolution' (*kakumei no engeki*), Terayama refused to participate in politics (ibid.). Knowingly echoing the words of his predecessor, Takayama concludes that theatres 'should avoid being political in the literal sense' (Takayama, 2012: 36).

Takayama consolidated this hypothesis after Fukushima. During the immediate aftermath, Takayama perused *Das Politische Schreiben* (*Writing the Political*, 2002) by Hans-Thies Lehmann, and realised that politics 'cannot govern the deceased and the unborn' (Takayama, 2012: 35). This awareness served as a critical reference point when the theatre-maker sought to develop works after Fukushima, as when experiencing a nuclear disaster, in which the gloomy after-effects transcend a single lifespan, he could

no longer ignore the voices of the afterlife and the unborn. Based on this thought, he started questioning the parameters of prevalent politics and tentatively concluded that, after Fukushima, 'perhaps the only possibility of theatre becoming political lies in *not* becoming political in the literal sense' (ibid.).

One of the drawbacks of this theory, however, is that an attempt to act responsibly for the dead could, in turn, become a shackle for the living. For instance, in the Tōhoku region, where many families reside in the same community for generations, even leaving the ancestor's grave behind to escape the contaminated land can be condemned as an act of betrayal. Yet when the logic of the dead overrides that of the living, the latter can become absorbed in a torpid life more dead than death: one cannot move from the house, change the interior decor, or even alter daily routines. Indeed, the voices of the dead cannot be ignored, but one should also keep in mind that they are ultimately imagined voices, constituting a fictional narrative that reflects the compunction of the living, arguably more so than the will of the dead.

Second, considering harmony-oriented ethics in Japan, where jeopardising the cohesion of the social fabric is largely abhorred, Takayama questions the validity of a performance that radically intervenes in society. One could instantly foresee that in post-Fukushima Japan, those acts could be rejected and ignored as outrageous *fukinshin* (indiscretion). *Fukinshin* was indeed a buzzword in post-Fukushima society, in which, as argued in Chapter One, the code of social unity was greatly intensified. In order to prevent a *faux pas* and avoid irritating fellow citizens, many preferred to remain silent, or to conform to collective decision-making. People intuitively prioritised harmony-conscious ethics in a desperate attempt to sustain the barely-controlled status quo. Thus, against the backdrop of the chaotic state, Takayama neglected to adopt the dramaturgy of stimuli that further enervated a vulnerable society.

Concurring with Takayama, Sōma mildly rebutted Lilienthal's opinion.[54] She empirically proclaimed that, in Japan, at least immediately after Fukushima, 'any provocative act by an artist [analogous to Schlingensief] was somehow nullified by society' (Lilienthal, Ōtori and Sōma, 2013: 59).[55] According to Sōma, this was due to the nature of public consciousness in Japan: whenever a free-minded artist acted in a way that deliberately disrupted public morals, such an act was considered to be an outrageous *fukinshin*. However, one thing to note is that while her comment impressionistically summarises the social mood induced after Fukushima, since a theatre artist as audacious as Schlingensief never appeared after Fukushima, it was not possible to evaluate the validity of her claim.

Third, Takayama brings into relief the numbed senses of the Tokyoites, who reside in a city oversaturated with an immense number of attractions: 150, 510 restaurants, 688 art galleries, and 24, 575 theatre performances presented annually.[56] Whereas a violent act of self-immolation in Tunisia functioned as a catalyst for the Tunisian Revolution and the wider Arab Spring, a similar action committed by a middle-aged businessperson in protest against the government's attempts to change the pacifist Constitution in Shinjuku on 29 June 2014 was simply ignored, arguably due to the countless events erupting every day. Although some saw the act of self-immolation as 'the most extraordinary act of political protest in the last quarter of a century' in Japan, the national public broadcasting organisation NHK completely omitted the event from its flagship primetime news programme (Ryan, 2014). This reaction from the media was expected, because many media outlets felt obliged to avoid encouraging further suicides and also because the president of NHK, Momii Katsuto, had expressed his loyalty to the government line. He said, 'if the government says right, I won't say left' (Kingston, 2016: 19). Yet when ordinary people, who learnt about the shocking event through social media, also

dismissed the self-immolation without expressing much frustration towards the docile mass media, one cannot help but assume that they could not perceive the magnitude of the event. They could only dimly comprehend the situation as just one of many carnivalesque events to be consumed and forgotten.

To further support this argument regarding numbed senses, playwright-director Hirata Oriza claims in his theoretical book, *Cities Do Not Need Festivals* (*Toshi ni shukusai wa iranai*), that today's mega cities like Tokyo arguably do not require any more festive events (Hirata 1997):

> [I]n an agrarian society, there was the monotonous everyday life consisting of planting, mowing and harvesting. Through the repetition, people suppressed their exceeding energy and desired an annual festival to give vent to the stress. […] However, is the everyday of the present also monotonous? […] We are surrounded with countless events and information; and amidst this flood, the urban dwellers are aggravated with a new type of stress. […] Due to the bottomless stimuli of the city, we are placed on the verge of being dismembered from the decisions that derive from our own bodily sensations. I call this threat […] the new 'stress of the city'. (ibid.: 34-38)

What Hirata argues in the brief passage is that, in cities like Tokyo, the situation between the everyday and the carnival is 'inverted' (ibid.: 38). People are less likely to yearn for an annual carnival, but, conversely, they might be in desperate need for 'a silent space that could shut out all information and just contemplate' (ibid.). In the current climate of cacophony, Hirata suggests that theatres should not function as a festive carnival, but should operate as a sanctuary for rituals: a place where audiences can distance themselves from the noisy secular world to rediscover their visceral sensations. In his view, theatres should decrease the amount of stimuli, because according to his hypothesis, 'stimulus demands a stronger stimulus,' and thus ends up developing an endless desire for stimulation (Hirata 1997:38). Detoxing from stimulation is needed to reset and revive the senses impoverished through city life.

When discussing the carnivalesque, it seems imprudent to dismiss Mikhail Bakhtin. It was the Russian scholar who suggested that one of the vital characteristics of carnivals is that they are 'not contemplated' (Bakhtin, 1984: 122): the most profound content is 'not clearly realised, but […] somehow dimly felt by the participants' (Bakhtin, 1993: 248). When Bakhtin's phrase is reviewed through the lens of contemporary Japan, it could be argued that, in a society where countless events of yesterday, today and tomorrow flow into one accelerating torrent, many people only consume them by readily dismissing the depth, detail and effect. In just over seventy years, Bakhtin's assertion has arguably become obsolete. As populist sociologist Suzuki Kensuke argues, the everyday of this Asian capital of materialistic consumerism has become carnivalesque: 'the carnival has been built into the everyday' (Suzuki K., 2012: 8).

When taking all three rationales into consideration, namely the inadequacy of prevalent political rhetoric, the risk of jeopardising the already vulnerable social fabric, and the invalidity of causing a stir in the carnivalesque society, Takayama tentatively concludes that, post-Fukushima, theatre functions more effectively when it embraces not the dramaturgy of stimuli, but the dramaturgy of sensate atomisation. When people's senses are numbed by the carnivalesque everyday, it has to be reawakened before plucking on their nerves. When considering the fact that self-censorship was largely enforced after Fukushima, the incendiary approach could only cause havoc; and, when causing a stir in society is considered as only one of countless events, a theatre that 'constantly irritates the nerves of others' may be silently dismissed (Lilienthal, Ōtori and Soma, 2013: 57-58). Based on this contextual premise, Takayama deemed that the pre-political task of the post-Fukushima artist is to reawaken the individual senses of the audience through an indiscreet dramaturgy, which atomises the scales of theatrical experience so as not to

violate the harmony-oriented regulations in society. Concisely, his theatre productions aim to implode rather than explode the status quo.

In order to develop a production according to this implosive dramaturgy, Takayama invents a theatrical structure in which his dramaturgy could penetrate the audience; ideally, without them realising it is happening. Takayama explains his politico-aesthetic objective in *Tokyo Heterotopia* as follows:

> In the past, many visionary Asian revolutionaries lived here. […] Most people no longer know about these revolutionary events. So, by collecting and connecting these hidden events [in *Tokyo Heterotopia*], I tried to form a *constellation*, bringing into relief an alternative history. Revolution, for me, is not about becoming bigger, louder and faster, but about becoming smaller, subtle and slower. Revolution is about *stepping on the break* of history. (Takayama, 2014, emphasis added)

This brief passage succinctly demonstrates the artist's regular allusions to Benjamin. As already mentioned, it was Benjamin who claimed that a person should grasp the 'constellation into which his own era has entered, along with a very specific earlier one', establishing a conception of 'the present as now-time shot through with splinters of messianic time' (Benjamin, 2003: 397). Additionally, in contrast to Marx who claimed that 'revolutions are the locomotives of world history', Benjamin argued that it was actually otherwise: 'revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on this train – namely, the human race – to activate the emergency break' (ibid.: 402). Chiming with the two concepts venerated by Benjamin, Takayama argues that 'revolutions' are triggered by moments of decisive cessations rather than passive, and submissive, transformations.

One is compelled to pause at this point. Although the concepts of renewed constellations and temporal cessation theoretically explain Takayama's artistic vision, they also throw up a number of questions as to how exactly he aims to implement it in practice. In order to seek answers to the latter inquiry, it is necessary to bring into relief the connection

between Brecht and the Japanese director. Brecht has been Takayama's primary reference point since he studied theatre in Germany. For instance, he commonly adopts the alienation effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*) to 'reactivate the role of the audience towards a more critical and creative role in their reception of theatre' (Eckersall, 2013: 140). In addition, he also refers to Brecht's lesser-known theories to construct the basis of his pre-political theatre, in which theatre becomes a device for activating and revising the pre-political perception of the audience. In *Tokyo Heterotopia*, he specifically refers to two Brechtian concepts to bear out his theories of the theatre of sensate atomisation; namely, the concept of *Theaterchen* (tiny theatre or adorable theatre), and the notion of the relaxed audience.

Let us attend to these one by one. When considering the most effective way to reset, restore and reframe the senses of the post-Fukushima audience, Takayama boldly proclaimed that theatres should no longer be discerned as theatres: they should become invisible. To this end, he literally atomised the scale of his theatre to the size of a smartphone application. In April 2015, Takayama introduced an iPhone version of *Tokyo Heterotopia*, in which the application was used instead of the portable radio when visiting the heterotopic sites, which would themselves increase over the next few years. Takayama ambitiously declared his intention to set up more than 200 heterotopia sites before the Olympics. Takayama explains the value of the atomisation of theatre by referring to Brecht's concept of *Theaterchen*:

> *Theaterchen* is pregnant with possibilities precisely because they are 'small, flexible and adaptable'. I want to expand the possibility of theatre by diminishing or, moreover, demolishing its form. (Takayama, 2014)

Lehmann first described *Theaterchen* as a theatre that is 'small, flexible and adaptable' in a symposium organised at Festival/Tokyo (Lehmann et al., 2014: 42). Takayama was also a speaker at this symposium and immediately imbibed the term, as it strongly resonated

with his own theory. Takayama says he wishes to develop a theatre that is reduced to a minimum scale in terms of the spectacle-spectator interaction: one could leave reality and enter the arena of the theatre without others ever realising the switch. To this end, in *Tokyo Heterotopia*, the physical distance between the two parties vanishes. As the spectators carry the spectacle-producing device – the portable radio or smart phone – the audience roam around the city of Tokyo, constantly surrounded by a theatrical bubble. It is a form of atomised theatre in its extremity.

Notwithstanding the conceptual spark of his atomised theatre, frankly speaking, most ordinary people in Tokyo will never recognise the existence of that theatre. If the realisation of revolution *per se* is the primary objective of political theatre, *Tokyo Heterotopia* is doomed to fail. Yet, fully aware of these criticisms towards his theatre, Takayama indefatigably maintains an artistic creed that venerates small, sensate and indiscreet dramaturgy. This is because Takayama wishes to 'do something, even if it's futile' pitted against the unification of voices that accelerates towards a larger and louder goal, culminating in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (Takayama, 2016). He wants to create a rupture in the utopic narrative proliferated by the state, which spuriously claims that everything in the country, including the aftermath of Fukushima, is under control. In other words, the heterotopic sites are developed as tiny footholds for dissident opinions: nodal points that can insert ruptures into the hegemonic narrative.

The concept of the 'relaxed audience' marks the second link between Takayama and Brecht. Historically speaking, through the conceptualisation of the relaxed audience, Brecht even encouraged the audience to smoke and drink while watching his epic theatre. To say more, Brecht refuted the aesthetics of Wagnerian immersive theatre by saying that when a person visits a theatre, along with their coats and hats, they hand in 'their normal behaviour: the attitudes of "everyday life"' at the cloakroom (Brecht, 2006: 39).

Consequently, imploding the continuum of norms becomes difficult, as, even before entering the auditorium, the audience have disrobed their normal attitudes. Concurring with Brecht and taking his theory further, Takayama claims that he wants his audience members to be equally relaxed, like tourists.

Tourism is based on the premise of safety. Although visiting an unknown land, the experience that awaits the participants is made innocuous by default. Tourism is an industry that sells constructed happiness and fabricated pleasure, through which participants enter exotic terrain with everyday norms maintained. For this reason, Takayama believes that tourists are 'much less guarded to novel perceptions', and thus are more likely to accept unknown values that they encounter (Takayama, 2014). In fact, acknowledging the similar tactics organised to see beyond the hegemonic narrative, after Fukushima scholars such as Azuma Hiroki started promulgating the political potency of so-called 'dark tourism': a sightseeing package organised to visit places associated with death and tragedy, such as the town of Chernobyl (Azuma, 2013). By adopting the strategy of tourism in theatre, Takayama wished to cause a rupture in the everyday narrative of the participants silently. And, in this aspect, he contradicts the aforementioned theatre-maker Terayama, who, in direct response to Antonin Artaud, adopted a shock doctrine to increase the tension of the audience.

Takayama does not strive to incite mayhem as practised in Terayama's 'guerrilla' theatre, which attacks the audience off-guard (Terayama, 1976: 341). According to Takayama, these shocking acts no longer have any eye-opening effect on the public, as they are likely to be dismissed by current Tokyoites 'as one of that many *misemono* [spectacles] in the everyday' (Takayama, 2014). In this sense, the political power of Terayama's event is nullified as the theatrical performance has turned into an illusionary spectacle. Based on this thought, in contrast to the daredevil Terayama who asserted that he wanted the

audience to experience 'a collective ritual for alienated fanaticism' (*samete kuruu tame no shūdanteki saigi*), transcending the ordinary and entering a distanced yet fanatic ritual, Takayama wished the audience to experience 'a festival reminiscent of alienated awakening' (*sameta kakusei no yō na shukusai*)' (Terayama, 1983: 18, Takayama et al., 2014):

> [L]et's say that you catch a fever and your temperature rises to thirty-nine degrees. Whether you are absorbed by the fever or are catabolized, many theatrical artists will claim that this condition of having a high temperature is where the theatre and drama lie. But what I am interested in is the condition when the temperature is cooling off, and when you sense that you are recovering. 'So, *this* is what people feel is normal.' You suddenly notice and appreciate every minor sensation with a fresh objectivity, even though you are the one who is experiencing it as yourself. (Iwaki, 2011: 44)

While Terayama exhorts the audience not to be absorbed in the rising heat of the spectacle, Takayama behests the same people to be fully attentive of the moment when the fever cools down. Ultimately, they focus on two different phases of experience: the ascent and descent of the wave of heat. To put it differently, whereas Terayama believes in the thrusting power of imagination as a force fully capable of subverting reality, Takayama argues that, although conjuring imagination is crucial in theatres, the image generated should not be forcibly inflicted upon the audience. Takayama argues that Terayama's tactics are disturbingly close to those of a terrorist: a violent strategy that physically instils messages in the recipients in order to realise the intended changes in society. Apart from the fact that terrorism and theatre both require performers and witnesses involved in a more or less structured narrative, a major analogy between them is that they both viscerally affect recipients' thoughts through highly emotive actions. However, terrorism and theatre are distanced by miles in the sense that whereas in the former case, the perpetrators exercise a unilateral power to decide the direction of change, in the latter, it is the individual audiences who wish to initiate their actions toward change. The will of the audience is neglected in the former and acknowledged in the latter. Vis-à-

vis oppressive forces rising in Japan and across the world, Takayama believed that artists should most cautiously retain the latter dramaturgy: allowing tour participants to relaxingly reflect upon the theatrical experience.

Having reached this point, we have enough content and context explaining why Takayama believed that the theatre of sensate atomisation is the most effective political intervention after Fukushima. While Takayama brilliantly theorises the relationship of effective aesthetics to post-Fukushima politics, however, the extent to which his intervention would actually work in the present is still highly contested. The concept of the so-called 'revolution' that Takayama promotes is only a meta-political ideal, and seems to fall short of the burning necessities that activists feel are necessary to change the status quo. *Tokyo Heterotopia* is arguably devoid of the crucial artistic kernel, which provides an innovative vision that goes beyond the scope of empirical language, enabling the audience to see alternative realities. In other words, Takayama lacked the political conviction that supported Brecht in days of exile, and the hypnotic imagination that provided Terayama with an escape route from his sickly life. For this reason, although his aim to reawaken the numbed senses of the post-Fukushima public and to achieve a messianic revolution of everyday principles is conceptually shrewd and theoretically plausible, one is tempted to suggest that it is purely theoretical. It lacks the magnetic vision of an artist that at times indeed changes the unchangeable.

Chapter Four

The Comedy of Post-Humanism Absurdity

When facing the massive destruction of the atomic bomb, people were likely to feel, as Lifton rightly asserts, 'immediately, excruciatingly, overwhelmingly *helpless*', as humans could be 'snuffed out instantaneously' (Lifton, 1982: 14). In addition to Lifton's perspicacious analysis, one could also argue that, apart from the sheer scale of violence inflicted by the atomic bombs, people were made to feel helpless because the politics of nuclear armament were full of contradictions. When the United States, the Soviet Union and other countries possessing nuclear warheads stood poised to destroy virtually all of human civilisation 'in the name of destroying one another', even Henry Kissinger stated that an all-out nuclear war could *not* be 'a meaningful instrument of policy' (Lifton and Falk, 1982: 31). A new political conundrum came into play with the advent of nuclear arsenals, as when the act of killing the foe was pursued to its limits, it advanced towards the total obliteration of humanity. As Otto Rank rightly summarised, weapons that could wipe out virtually all humanity seemed to be 'beyond psychology' (Lifton and Falk, 1982: 7). In other words, as Hans Jonas argued, the situation 'decisively changed' after the two atomic bombs, because, in all likelihood, humans were no longer in control of Nature, including radioactive fallout that remained in the soil and sea for decades; conversely, they were in thrall to it (Jonas, 1975: 35).

Transposed to the consideration of theatre, many playwrights who struggled to grasp the entirety of the event gradually realised that various outcomes of the atomic bomb could not be controlled by human will, and further that they veered towards the limitation of human imagination. To go back to the arguments made in the previous chapter, one

could say that it was partly for this reason that Miyoshi could not provide a single message at the end of his play. When all kinds of human action and imagination seemed to fail against a larger tragic fate, Miyoshi was trapped in a deadlock situation with no single direction, no absolute solution and no solid argument in which to believe. And, when prevalent logics and values were nullified, people had no choice but to live through a string of fleeting moments without any overarching purpose. This was a life condition that Lifton described in a single word: 'absurdity' (ibid.: 4).

The absurdity of life that victims of the post-nuclear catastrophe encountered can be analysed from three angles. First, it was absurd in condition; the world seemed patently absurd because now virtually all of human civilisation could be eradicated at any moment. Second, it was absurd in action; despite the dire situation, most people nonetheless went about their daily routines as if no such threat existed. Third, it was absurd in theory; no human being, at that time, was capable of rendering intelligible the detailed ramifications of a nuclear holocaust (Lifton and Falk, 1982: 4-5). It was as though human beings inherently followed an ethical code that prevented them from imagining the total annihilation of humanity. And, thus, post-atomic-bomb citizens could only endure, and not resolve, the nuclear predicament: a plight that made one's life all the more absurd.

However, as argued in the last chapter, it is near impossible for humankind to bear incomprehensible situations for long: one's greatest fear 'is to meet what he [*sic*] cannot construe' (Langer, 1957: 287). To this end, as a means of day-to-day survival, people started performing ordinariness by suppressing the absurdity. For most people, the most pragmatic solution at hand for maintaining a modicum of humanity in their lives was to perform their ultimately meaningless routines to live harmoniously with the insurmountable threat. To coexist with, rather than to combat, the threat was their way of

living. One could even say that to battle against a nuclear aftermath, that is, 'the shadow that *persistently* intrudes upon our mental ecology', is analogous to taking on an absurdly never-ending quest (Lifton and Falk, 1982: 3, emphasis added).

The Irish writer Samuel Beckett began writing for the theatre about the absurd reality in Europe after the Second World War. Although authors such as Albert Camus had already revealed the senselessness of life in essays such as *The Myth of Sisyphus*, it was Beckett who first 'renounced arguing about the absurdity of the human condition' and merely presented it 'in being' (Esslin, 2001: 25). Until Beckett, as Ackerley and Gontarski argue, authors in the West had 'turned to love, courage, and God for the strength to endure, to go on' (2004: 2). However, when the prevalent ideologies failed to explain the meaning of life, Beckett suggested a fourth path: 'accepting the comic, the absurd' (ibid.). Despite his Protestant upbringing, Beckett distrusted the Christian-rationalist tradition 'that asserts reason as the highest form of consciousness, leading the mind to God', and preferred to think instead like darker atomists, who denied the permanence of the soul in this world (Bailey, 1928: 64-5; Ackerley and Gontarski, 2004: 2). After the war, Beckett journeyed down this darker path, beginning to imagine that the structure of life, consisting of cause and effect that was presumably designed by divine providence, had transformed into a slew of random events. The orderly narrative of human life had now morphed into an inconsistent continuum.

Based on these thoughts, Beckett proclaimed that life was no longer a meaningful journey, but only 'a succession of habits' without cause, reason, or purpose (Beckett, 1965: 18-9). Unlike in classic tragedy deriving from Greek theatre, in which the crux of drama lay in the plot-structure of a protagonist with a personal fault (*hamartia*) trying to overcome a tragic fate to achieve a higher state, the characters in Beckett's plays lacked valid objectives in their lives. It is no wonder that Beckett's gospel was Arnold

Geulincx's *Ethica*, whose opening sentence states '*Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil velis*' (where you are worth nothing, there you should want nothing] (quoted in Ackerley and Gontarski, 2004: 278, 595). In light of this axiom, it is easier to understand why many characters in Beckett's plays live lives consisting of nothingness: they pointlessly repeat their actions (the repetition of norms), persistently fail to 'eff the ineffable', that is, comprehend God (the absence of a God-like figure), and fruitlessly live a life of 'incoherent continuum' (the fragmentation of time, ibid.: 273-278).

To emphasise the link between Beckett's play and the post-nuclear condition, one could refer to novelists who adduced the fragmentation of time as one of the crucial conditions after the Fukushima disaster. For example, the novelist Yoshimoto Banana affirmed that 'since it is more or less doubtful if humanity would survive in the future, I do not know if tomorrow will exist' (Yoshimoto, 2012:161). More emphatically, another novelist Saeki Kazumi confessed that he could no longer write words such as 'tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, next week and three months later' with the same kind of intention as before the catastrophe (Saeki, 2012: 194). This is because 'words', according to Saeki, 'postulate the condition of everyday repetition' (ibid.). Without confirmation that the same word would signify the same thing tomorrow, a novel would turn into meaningless scribble.

A temporal continuum exists on the premise that most members of society imagine collectively that a day not much different from today will come tomorrow. And, since this collective imagination is dismantled in many of Beckett's plays, words like today, tomorrow, greetings and farewells lose their ordinary meanings. In Beckett's plays, days do not accumulate as a week, and weeks do not compose a month. Every day is only another day in a Sisyphean ordeal, the *sine qua non* of the immediate post-nuclear society. In point of fact, Beckett had presciently noted in *German Diaries, Volume 4* (18

January 1937) that what many believed to be the 'necessary journey' of life – with a beginning, a middle and an end – was just 'an illusion'; and that analogous to the protagonist in *Murphy* (1938), who was tied to his rocking chair, modern people's lives had turned into an incoherent continuum of repetition. These plays represented, as Beckett asserts, 'the submission, the admission, the fidelity to failure': the dismantling of a coherent and meaningful life (Beckett, 1984: 145). More emphatically, Beckett describes the lives of his characters as those of 'ultimate penury' (Feldman, 2008: 3).

The term 'ultimate penury' requests further explanation. The phrase should not be taken literally, as it does not suggest physical starvation or economic deprivation. Although these conditions could also be included in Beckett's imagination, his vision had more to do with the complete absurdity of life. After the atrocities of the Second World War including the atomic bombs, life was absurd not only because of humans' earthborn fate. It became absurd because all the basic narratives that humans collectively believed in, including ethics, law, politics and religion, seemed to have been nullified. The atomic bomb uprooted the very mainstay of meaningful life. People could no longer believe in what Lifton calls the 'symbolic immortality', the affirmation of an eternal soul that biologically and metaphysically transcends one's life (Lifton and Falk, 1982: 32-34).

Japanese Beckettian scholar Okamuro Minako explains the dismantling of the symbolic immortality by dissecting the process to two different categories: the 'horizontal' and the 'transcendental' (Okamuro and Umeyama, 2012: 83). The horizontal axis, which runs through the chronological time of the past, the present and the future, represents the biological continuation of life through procreation and regeneration. It reassures people that their lives are meaningful as they are not isolated entities but are instead built into the ecosystem of life. Through this axis, their lives are connected not only with their ancestors and offspring but also with 'various elements of life', such as the cycle of the

seasons and the circulation of water (Lifton, 1976: 31-2). With the birth of the nuclear

arsenal, however, this horizontal continuation of life was disrupted as all humans,

animals and Nature could potentially be erased in an instant.

As for the transcendental, or vertical, axis, it provides a symbolic significance to human

lives through the ascendance towards a spiritual figure; a notion of divinity. This belief

in the numinous figure also guarantees an eternal soul. The metaphysical idea of 'life

after death' reassures people that their souls regenerate under divine providence (ibid.).

Yet as Beckett clearly suggests, after the nuclear catastrophe, the notion of divinity was

in peril, if not extinct. It seemed as though all the inhumane atrocity that humans

witnessed during the war was clear evidence of the absence of God. Consequently, when

people felt that their lives were abandoned in inane absurdity, they started to imagine, or

even fabricate, their own transcendent symbol: like Godot.

One of the principal reasons why Beckett's plays occupy an important place in the field

of post-war theatre is the urgent tenor of the question he poses: how could a life that is *a

priori* meaningless and deprived of all symbolic immortality be expressed on the stage

while still engaging the audience? By reflecting on this question, Beckett attempts to

develop a novel form of theatre through which the human condition under perpetual

nuclear threat could be represented not only in theory but also in form. Viewed from a

wider geographical perspective, his theatrical experiment, which irrefutably changed the

vision of European theatre, has also influenced numerous theatre-makers in East Asian

countries including Japan.

In Japan, it was Bungaku-za (The Literary Company), which presented the first Japanese

performance of *Waiting for Godot* in 1960 at Nihon City Centre Hall (Nihon Toshi

Centre Hall) in Hirakawachō. Attending the performance, theatre critic Tsuno Kaitarō

affirmed that *Waiting for Godot* was the 'ultimate modern drama', because 'there is not

the slightest suggestion that Vladimir and Estragon […] can expect to be saved through tragic irony, through unification with some transcendent historical or natural logic that will make their waiting and their inevitable, empty death meaningful' (Tsuno cited in Goodman, 2003: 350). As Tsuno's appraisal of the play suggests, the 'supposedly esoteric avant-garde' play, which 'bewildered the sophisticated audience of Paris, London and New York', was appreciated by the Japanese audience (Esslin, 2001: 21). In fact, Beckett's theatre seemed to provide a certain answer to the constant failures the Japanese playwrights faced when they tried to express the ramifications of the atomic bomb. One of those playwrights was Betsuyaku Minoru, whose plays will be analysed in detail in the next two sections.

Betsuyaku Minoru's Language of the Absurd

If Kara Jūrō is the pioneer of contemporary Japanese theatre, Satoh Makoto the initiator of new concepts of time, and Suzuki Tadashi the inventor of a new body, Betsuyaku Minoru (b.1937-) could be described as 'the first person to discover a new language' after the Second World War (Kan, 2000: 102-114). A prolific playwright with more than 140 plays to his credit, in his work the characters often live through what Senda Akihiko describes as the 'dramatic silence [*gekiteki naru shizukesa*]': a silence that emerges from the vertical tensions first between the peaceful everyday and suppressed indignations, and second, between monotonous secular life and transcendent matter, such as God, death, or the threat of nuclear war. The 'transcendental axis', to borrow from the aforementioned Okamuro, linking two different conditions – often represented by a telegraph pole on the stage – is one of the most important components of his plays (Okamuro and Umeyama, 2012: 83). In other words, the telegraph pole connotes the rage lying beneath the ostensible calmness of the characters.

By the same token, it is important to note that although Betsuyaku's voice differs in tonality from many of the politically agitating plays of the 1960s, which cry out 'sorrow, fury and words of protest', the silence on the stage should not be misunderstood as sheer emptiness or a feeling of contentment (Senda, 1982: 88). The concept of dramatic silence could be described by referring to the physics term of dynamic equilibrium: it is a steady state, in which action and reaction move towards opposite directions at an equal rate, and thus end in stillness. As a contemporary critic who followed Betsuyaku's plays from the outset of his career, Senda argues that his dramatic silence emerges from a tug-of-war between the two opposing life conditions. The critic describes the essence of 'dramatic silence' seen in Betsuyaku's characters as follows:

> They [the characters] are, always, bearing something bigger. [Yet] they patiently maintain the framework of calm everyday. This is never a peaceful or an easy way to live. By force of will, they resolutely suppress all energy that moves toward liberation and deviation, so that they could maintain, at least on the surface, a natural and silent form of life. […] [For Betsuyaku] a drama-filled life is no longer dramatic; a life of silence is the most dramatic. (Senda, 1982: 88, 92)

Analogous to Beckett's characters, who coexist with rather than fight against existential angst, the men and women depicted in Betsuyaku's plays do not attempt to overcome the intractable situation instantly. Alternatively, Betsuyaku adopts a long-range strategy that asks people to live a life constantly vacillating between two ends of the axis. That is, in the short term, Bestuyaku requests people accept the absurd condition to maintain a peaceful mental equilibrium; yet, in the long-run, he calls for a continuous negotiation with the overall threat that jeopardised their lives, such as the Cold War that could culminate in a nuclear conflict on any day. For this reason, although Betsuyaku's characters may give off an impression of aloofness at the outset, one spots at the root of their minds the imprint of a rebel, who is never content with the status quo and hopes to reach a state better than today's.

The dichotomous structure consisting of the vertical tension between the peaceful countenance and an agitated underside is already present in Betsuyaku's debut play *A, B and a Woman* (*A to B to hitori no onna*, 1961). In this play, the young man B, reminiscent of Betsuyaku, feels inferior to the young man A; and, as it turns out, the latter seems to be constantly bullying the former in everyday dialogue. However, at the end, the power balance turns as, through the culmination of fury and anxiety, B, unable to maintain his composure any longer, abruptly murders A. In fact, the latent indignation of B, not only towards A but also towards society, seething beneath the surface can already be spotted at the beginning of the play. For example, in a long monologue, B reveals his contradictory feelings about his future. At first, he speaks about his dream of running 'a small knickknack shop' to make ends meet. He wishes for a safe life by owning a shop that is 'adorable like a toy, [which] all the madam and mademoiselle of the town would adore' (Betsuyaku, 1970b: 151). However, moments later, he confesses his paradoxical impulse to destroy the small shop entirely:

> 'And, and, and, I will crash it [the shop] with this big stone, in tatters. […] I have to change my life […] Before I notice, I will be marrying this stupidly tepid woman, have three children, and go to work in a suffocating jam-packed train […] I feel like I am gradually smothered to death'. (ibid.:152)

Directed by Suzuki Tadashi, the play, 'influenced by André Cayatte's movie *Oeil pour oeil* (1957)', premiered in 1961 at the Ōkuma Lecture Hall (Ōkuma Kōdō), Waseda University (Betsuyaku, 2007). Sixteen years after the end of the Second World War, the play represents the confused emotional state of the youths, who were on the one hand enjoying a peaceful life devoid of wartime violence, yet on the other hand also enduring a sense of discontentment derived from the deceptive calmness emasculating their political anxieties. In Betsuyaku's plays, the characters are not portrayed as activists or revolutionaries trying to change the situation overnight. Rather, they persevere with the

everyday condition, yet simultaneously maintain the idea of social change. Living this bifocal life was a necessary post-nuclear condition for Betsuyaku, as he knew that time was needed for an ossified belief to change; whether to alter the US-Japanese political situation, or to shift behaviour against nuclear power. The playwright thus asserted that he was tired of the kind of theatre that was bound by a quick-fix 'political agenda, which forced people to achieve a socialist revolution' (Betsuyaku, 2007). Ranting and raving on the streets in order to achieve instant change was, for him, a waste of energy.

Betsuyaku's plays clearly marked the arrival of a new theatre language in Japan. When he started his career in the early 1960s, the Japanese theatre scene was experiencing the first wave of the so-called *angura* plays. The aesthetic traits of these seminal plays that henceforth changed the Japanese theatre scene were fourfold: first, the 'erotic, carnivalesque spirit of early Kabuki' was restored and merged together with impressionistic post-war aesthetics (Rimer et al., 2014: 321); second, the dramatic corporeality, coined by Kara Jūrō as 'the privileged body [*tokkenteki nikutai*]', could be witnessed on the stage as 'both social pariah and a medium through which the audience's dreams and desires could be manifested' (ibid.); third, popular music, mostly in the vein of Brecht and Weill's ragtag jazz idiom, was incorporated into theatres, in which, in most cases – especially, in Kara Jūrō, Satoh Makoto and Saitō Ren's plays – 'the actors themselves, instead of professional bands, played the instruments' (Senda, 2012b: 189); and, fourth, 'the comical elements' were greatly emphasised, which continued to be one of the trademarks of Japanese theatre well into the mid-1990s (ibid.: 199).

In addition to the four aesthetic components noted above, it is important to add a comment from a political viewpoint. Similar to many advanced democratic countries in the West, the 1960s and the early-1970s in Japan were years when political movements peaked and mass demonstrations in the streets of Tokyo were common events. One such

event was in June 1960, when infuriated crowds surrounded the Japanese parliament and the central government of Kasumigaseki to protest against the renewal of the ten-year Japan-US Security Treaty (Anzen Hoshō Jōyaku, or *Anpo*). The late-1960s saw 'the second wave of protest movements', which focused on opposition to the further renewal of *Anpo* in 1970, and 'its conversion into a permanent pact' (Betsuyaku, 1990: 9). Technically speaking, *Anpo* 1970 also converged with other political movements such as the opposition to the Vietnam War; the construction of Narita International Airport; and the American occupation of Okinawa (the southernmost prefecture in Japan), which continued even after the retreat of the troops from Honshū (the main island) in 1952.

In response to the drastic political climate, many *angura* theatre artists became preoccupied with sending out politically incendiary messages. However, in the thick of this political heat wave, Betsuyaku felt somewhat detached. To begin with, the playwright's 'taste', in Bourdieu's terms, did not align with the vehement sonority of the *angura* theatre. In addition, Betsuyaku sensed that the inflammatory tone of 1960s theatre was gradually becoming passé. Thus, the playwright criticised the *angura* plays as 'monologue-like, self-confessionary, and emotionally absorbed', which seemed to 'fall short of presenting the era [of the early-1970s]' (Okamuro and Umeyama, 2012: 76).

Following his artistic instinct, Betsuyaku thus started developing his own theatre language, which, for him, seemed more suitable for representing the unfolding present. Different from the mainstream *angura* theatres in the 1960s, his theatre was subdued, distanced and textual, rather than passionate, absorbed and corporeal. His theatre deliberately avoided becoming a vehicle of direct political action transmitting euphoric messages; it functioned as an allegorical magnifying glass that acknowledged silent rumination on the current state. To this end, he incorporated the tales of 'Miyazawa Kenji, Lewis Carroll, Hans Christian Andersen, the Brothers Grimm, and *manga*

(graphic novels)', to metaphorically reflect on the absurd nature of reality (Rolf, 1992b: 93).

As is often the case with artists in the vanguard of innovation, many initially rejected Betsuyaku's theatre language. Even the most insightful critics such as Tsuno Kaitarō, confessed later that even though Suzuki Tadashi, who directed Betsuyaku's *The Elephant* (*Zō*) in April 1962, 'stressed […] the newness of the "language" Betsuyaku had deployed', Tsuno himself was not 'able to get a firm grasp on the essence of that newness at first' (Tsuno, 1970: 60). More emphatically, the playwright later confirmed that, at first, *The Elephant* was 'almost totally ignored' (Iwanami, 1982: 28). In fact, as is exemplified by the fact that the audience denounced his play *The Story of Spy* (*Supai monogatari*, 1970), his theatre was still not accepted in the early-1970s. *The Story of Spy* was staged at Art Theatre Shinjuku Culture (*Āto Siatā Shinjuku Bunka*): one of the sanctuaries of *angura* theatre. As Betsuyaku recalls, around the time, Art Theatre Shinjuku Culture, which was a small cinema that presented theatre performances after its last screening, was becoming the hub for the *angura* movement. The theatre introduced 'countless great works by Modern Man's Theatre's (Gendaijin Gekijō), like *Such a Serious Frivolity* (*Shinjō afururu keihakusa*, 1968),' written by Shimizu Kunio and directed by Ninagawa Yukio (Okamuro and Umeyama, 2012: 76).

This politically incendiary play is now known as the sensational debut play of the theatre giant Ninagawa that dramatically portrayed how citizens, who cry out for political change, in effect fail to act against a robust political system. The play ended with an actual siege of the theatre by dozens of 'theatre attendants' who came in 'dressed as riot police, equipped with batons and shields' (Senda, 2010:63). Even though the audience knew that the police officers were fictitious, nobody could 'shove their way through the barricade […] out of an instance of fear': it revealed the innately docile attitude of the

populace (ibid.) The production by Shimizu and Ninagawa and the play written by Betsuyaku were polar opposites in appearance. Since many of the 1960s angry youths preferred the revolutionary tone of the former, the audience rejected Betsuyaku's play by saying that they had come to the theatre 'to eat meat, not sorbet' (Okamuro and Umeyama, 2012: 76). Indeed, compared to his contemporaries, Betsuyaku's language differed in structure and tone. In fact, Tanaka Chikao, 'an avant-garde playwright and the predecessor of anti-realism theatre in the 1960s' (Betsuyaku and Iwamatsu, 2015: 27), once audaciously labelled Betsuyaku's plays as the theatre of 'atonal sounds' (Okamuro and Umeyama, 2012: 86).

Betsuyaku's language of atonal sounds was nurtured through his complex upbringing. The playwright's father, Norio, was a bureaucrat working at the Publicity Department of Management and Coordination Agency in Manchuria. Minoru, the eldest son, together with three sisters and a younger brother, was born and brought up in the capital city of Hsinking (the current Changchun city in north-eastern China). In 1944, his father passed away from tuberculosis and in July 1946 the remaining family returned to Japan to live in Kōchi, on the island of Shikoku with the playwright's great-grandmother, who was the older sister of the renowned scientist Terada Torahiko. Two years later, they moved north to their mother's homeland in Shizuoka, but stayed only for a year. The next stop was further north in Nagano, where Betsuyaku entered a local high school while aspiring to become a painter. In 1957, after graduating from high school, he moved to Tokyo with his mother, and, in order to follow in his father's footsteps (he had studied Russian literature), he took the entrance exam for Tokyo University of Foreign Studies Russian Language Department. Unfortunately, Betsuyaku failed the exam and so the next year, in 1958, he changed direction and entered Waseda University Politics and Economics

Department in the hope of becoming a journalist (Betsuyaku, 2012: 108-111; Iwanami, 2012: 28).

This itinerant upbringing obliged Betsuyaku to adapt to different languages and dialects from a young age. Due to the repeated process of assimilation and alienation, he never had the chance to grasp the crux of any language; that is, the core set of rules allowing incidental linguistic changes, which transform the entire system of language over time. The playwright has affirmed that, in this sense, he does 'not know Japanese' as a mother tongue. Therefore, when he wished to articulate his thoughts with crystal clarity, he had no choice but to invent an artificial language of which, though it was 'extremely abstract', he nonetheless had a complete grasp (Betsuyaku, 1972: 32). What he meant by 'abstract' was that his theatrical language essentially lacked the 'tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, coexperienced [and] covert' meanings embedded in a given society, and thus was not based upon any historical articulations (Conquergood, 2002: 146).

The upside of this upbringing was that Betsuyaku nurtured an exceptional ability to maintain an objective distance from any language. No utterance was instinctively natural for the playwright; each was a culturally constructed craft reflecting its time and society. In this sense, it could be argued that Beckett influenced Betsuyaku not only in content but also in form. As Esslin asserts, Beckett chose to write his masterpieces in French because he 'felt that he needed the discipline that the use of an acquired language would impose upon him' (Esslin, 2001: 38). In order to achieve the same objective that enabled him to develop a linguistic discipline, which was free of specific localities, and which deterred emotional sways, Betsuyaku wrote Japanese like a foreign language. Later in his career, he affirmed that, due to the admiration that he held for Beckett, he felt a strong urge to approach and, soon afterwards, to distance himself from him. 'I was inspired by

his [Beckett's] plays and theatre', yet from the 1970s 'I was forced to struggle to break their spell' (Betsuyaku, 1990: 12).

Three decades afterwards, in 2007, Betsuyaku returned to his initial influence and composed a play called *Godot Has Arrived* (*Yatte kita Godō*). As the title suggests, and as the subtitle 'An Absurdist Slapstick Comedy' emphasises, this play is a ludicrous adaptation of the masterpiece that some Beckett purists may decry as sacrilegious (Betsuyaku, 2007). For Betsuyaku, comedy is more suitable for depicting contemporary reality, because modern people can no longer be analysed through the 'dialogue between God' (ibid) and themselves. If Nietzsche was right in saying that God died in the nineteenth century, the transcendental dialogue is an obsolete connection that forms the basis of tragic plays. He further affirms that 'nonsense comedy is the apogee of the theatre of the absurd', because post-nuclear lives have become *a priori* meaningless (ibid.). Based on these thoughts, in this absurdist comedy, a man named Godot, no less ordinary looking than any other Japanese businessperson, casually appears in front of the two tramps. He repeatedly introduces himself, asserting that he *is* Godot, he is *that* Godot, and that he has *finally* arrived, but nobody seems to grasp the significance of the fact:

> Godot: I am Godot……
> Vladimir: Yes……?
> Godot: I am Godot……. […] May I sit down……? (*pointing at the root of the telegraph pole*)
> Vladimir: Please…… (*To Estragon*) It's okay, right? This person says he wants to sit here……   (Betsuyaku, 2010: 34)

When Godot arrives, his identity is denied – just like any tramp sauntering the streets. The fact that he is forced to sit with his back against the bottom of the telegraph pole symbolises his social insignificance. The upshot is that the two tramps are arguably avoiding the arrival of Godot, or they desire the constant absence of Godot because, as long as his profile remains amorphous, 'he is whatever fiction we want him to be [and]

justifies our life-as-waiting' (Worton, 1994: 71). As Michael Worton suggests, Godot is indeed a 'function' rather than a 'meaning' (ibid.). They cannot approve of his manifestation because, when they are deprived of the metaphysical meaning of waiting for a significant figure, their lives would become inane. In the words of Betsuyaku, Vladimir and Estragon in his play see Godot yet 'cannot meet him' (Betsuyaku, 2010: 242-3).

Prior to reading Beckett, Betsuyaku was one of those angry young men of the 1960s who were committed to politics. The Freedom Stage [Jiyū Butai], established right after the war in 1947, was a student theatre company at Waseda University with around 200 members, which Betsuyaku joined merely on a whim (a senior student asked him to be an actor, as his height stood out from the crowd). The company, which later became the legendary Waseda Little Theatre (Waseda Shōgekijō, now Suzuki Company of Toga), led by director Suzuki Tadashi, was known for its strong socialist realist ideologies, and vehemently argued about topics such as class conflict, workers' rights and the obligations of intellectuals. Young and naïve as he was, Betsuyaku was affected by the feverish political temperament of the senior members. Subsequently, as Yuasa Masako writes in the English introduction to Betsuyaku's play *The Story of Two Knights Travelling Around the Country* (1987), he gradually lost interest in completing his degree, and 'left Waseda in the middle of his course in 1960' to take part in political activities (Betsuyaku, 1990: 8).

However, as is often the case with young and impetuous activists, readily espoused doctrines easily fall by the wayside. This was, indeed, the case with Betsuyaku and, in 1961, he rapidly lost faith in political movements as well as politically-engaged theatre. In the same year, as Yuasa affirms, Betsuyaku participated in the so-called Nījima Conflict, a political movement supporting local residents opposed to the establishment of

a missile base on Nījima Island, located 160 kilometres south of Tokyo. After living on the island for two months and witnessing the apparent rupture between the effete objectives of university intellectuals and the desperate local people, he 'began to have doubts about the role of Marxist class-conflict analysis and socialist-realism in [the] theatre' and subsequently 'came to abandon them' (Betsuyaku, 1990: 8).

Suzuki Tadashi affirms that it was around this time that Betsuyaku read Beckett and wrote his first series of plays: *The Mole Sausage* (*Hokuro sōsēji*), *A Room for Rent* (*Kashima ari*) and the aforementioned debut play, *A, B and a Woman* (Suzuki, 1982: 11). Betsuyaku does not clarify whether or not he saw the first Japanese performance of *Waiting for Godot*, but surely he had perused every page of the script, which was translated by Andō Shinya – who attended the premiere performance of *Godot* in Paris – in 1958 (Okamuro, 2006). Betsuyaku recalls that he was 'extraordinarily moved' when he first read the play, as not only himself, but many other theatre artists then 'understood that a completely new "theatre" had now appeared' (Kimura, 2015: 67). Chiming with Betsuyaku, Robert T. Rolf suggests that the first performance of this avant-garde play, as well as its translated script, became 'a major impetus for many of the generation of the 1960s' (Rolf, 1992a: 130).

Shutaisei and Negation of Western Humanism

Some contextual explanation is needed to explain why Betsuyaku and many of his contemporaries were drawn to the absurdist language of Beckett. To this end, it is most pertinent to refer to how the concept of subjectivity, or *shutaisei*, was implanted, accepted and shifted during the post-war years in Japan. *Shutaisei* has been given various translations such as 'individuality', 'selfhood' and 'human agency' in the past. However,

J. Victor Koschmann, whose study focuses on the post-war evolution of this concept, concludes that arguably *shutaisei* could be interpreted as 'the word for subjectivity in the Japanese context' (Koschmann, 1996: 1). And, in essence, the reverence towards individual subjectivity, indoctrinated by the US immediately after the war and imbibed by Japanese later on, was beginning to attenuate a generation afterwards.

The reason the concept of *shutaisei* attained an urgent tenor immediately after the war was deeply connected firstly to inhumane violence inflicted upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki citizens; and secondly to the long-lasting censorship that had deprived Japan of any freedom of expression for nearly three decades. In order to escape from the wartime totalitarian state that manipulated individual as well as society, an unswerving determination to express *shutaisei* had become the passionate mantra of intellectuals including theatre-makers.

As early as 1946, seven partisans of the literary journal *Modern Literature* (*Kindai bungaku*) started what is now known as the Debate of Post-War Subjectivity (*Sengo shutaisei ronsō*). The debate lasted for three years and involved writers and literary critics as well as philosophers (for example, Umemoto Katsumi and Shimomura Toratarō), social scientists (Maruyama Masao and Shimizu Ikutarō) and even a physicist (Taketani Mitsuo) (Kan, 1995: 87-8). In the debate, the participants fervently argued over 'the definition and the determination' of *shutaisei*, as well as 'its meaning and values' (ibid.: 87). Literary critics such as Honda Shūgo believed that what produced great art, including theatre, was the 'self's full extension and engagement', and not 'selfless devotion' (*messhi hōkō*) to the Japanese Imperial Army that apotheosized the Emperor (Koschmann, 1996: 41).

However, the generation of children affected by the atomic bomb started questioning the validity of *shutaisei* – just around the time when Michel Foucault asserted the 'death of

Man' in *The Order of Things* in 1966 (translated into Japanese in 1974). A scholar of English theatre, Takahashi Yasunari, affirms that 'at the intellectual level, fundamental modern Western or Westernised values were being contested', and that students entrenched behind barricades were reading, among others, Bataille, Foucault and Nietzsche. As for the younger generation of theatre artists, they avidly discussed Artaud, Brecht, Beckett, Arrabal, Grotowski and Julian Beck (Takahashi, Y.,1992: 1-2). Needless to say, all of these Western visionaries questioned the Aristotelian form of drama, which gave precedence to a human-centric point of view, and by contrast, freely adopted the methodology of non-Western theatre that embraced expressive means beyond human comprehension including spiritual, ritual, sensorial and absurdist components.

In his study of the 1960s *angura* space, Eckersall argues that this 'subjectivity', or what he calls the '*shutaisei* effect', was 'an expression of cultural rebellion' (Eckersall, 2006: 55). Eckersall's terminology of *shutaisei* slightly differs from others, first and foremost emphasising the sense of political engagement included in the word (ibid.: 29). By referring to Kersten's analysis of Maruyama Masao and the post-war democracy movement, in which Maruyama encourages the people to become a politically 'motivated entity' (Kersten, 1996: 104), Eckersall concludes that what is important in *shutaisei* politics is 'the recourse to action' (Eckersall, 2006: 28). Valorising the movement through the scope of theatre, he suggests that the 'newly formed *angura* groups' of the 1960s, 'mirrored a rising sense of performativity in political life that aimed to discover a radical selfhood (*shutaisei*) among young Japanese' (ibid.: 21).

According to Eckersall's argument, this strong sense of *shutaisei* in theatres culminated in the late-1960s and was eminent until the end of the 1970s: the 'experimental politics of the *shutaisei* effect was dulled by the emergent commodification of the 1960s space'

in the 1980s, the era of bubble economy (ibid.: 85). However, as a living witness of the *angura* movement, Senda conversely argues that the *angura* movement exalting human agency was much shorter. He suggests that it lasted from the beginning of 1968 to the early months of 1970: already in the latter months of 1970, the 'golden age of *angura* theatre' was gone, as plays 'were getting virulently more depressing to the point where one feels nauseous about it' (Senda, 1972: 412). Through the word 'nauseous', Senda indicates that the almost-invincible sense of *shutaisei* that propelled revolutionary actions was already putrid in the late months of 1970. Senda backs up his argument by analysing plays such as Satoh Makoto's *The Rat: Nezumi Kozō III* (*Aa, Nezumi kozō jirokichi*, 1971) and Shimizu Kunio's *Ten Thousand Years of Memories of Japan* (*Omoide no nihon ichimannen*, 1970); protagonists in both plays who once revolted against the status quo succumb to 'the darkness, that was too big for them to handle' (Senda, 1972: 414). Through the cogent analysis, Senda concludes that the two plays prove that the glorification of the liberated individual lasted only a few years in *angura* theatre.

Concurring with Senda, Goodman, whose *angura* scholarship is almost singularly influential in Anglophone academia, argues that 'the post-*shingeki* movement', that is, most of *angura* theatre, 'rejected both [the existence of] modern tragedy and humanistic concept of "the free individual"' (Goodman, 2003: 348). When the young dissidents failed, repeatedly, in the battle for a better state, their hopeful beliefs in political change receded. No matter how strongly they had believed in the power of autonomous individuals in the past, they could not help but feel that substantial political change was never going to materialise in the quasi-puppet state controlled by the United States.

The Declaration of Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States with the Charter of the United Nations forbids the victors of

war to change the state of the nation or to overwrite the Constitution of the vanquished. However, as Saeki Keishi argues, the American occupiers used duplicitous politics to override this rule: on the one hand, 'the Potsdam Declaration and the initial Japanese Occupation Policy affirmed that the political form would be relegated to the free will of the Japanese citizens. On the other hand, the Japanese Instrument of Surrender stated that Japanese sovereignty resides with GHQ' (Saeki, 2008: 198). Through artful tactics, the SCAP managed to devise the Japanese Constitution by 'posing' as if it came into effect through 'citizens' free will' (ibid.). Considering all the political manoeuvres the US has conducted, it could be argued that, from the outset, the SCAP manipulated even Japanese people's free will: *shutaisei*.

Expanding the argument on the failed implementation of *shutaisei* in Japan, after the end of the American censorship, people began to realise that the Americans had treated them merely as 'laboratory animals': the inhumane weapon had been 'tried out' on them (Lifton and Falk, 1982: 120). If 'crimes against humanity' were the major offence that Japanese war criminals were accused of in The International Military Tribunal for the Far East, also known as The Tokyo Trials, why had the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki never been tried under the same indictment? (Saeki, 2008: 198-99). By witnessing unequal degrees of freedom given to the Americans and to the Japanese, it became difficult for Japanese intellectuals to continue believing in the so-called humanism, designed, developed and deployed by the West. In other words, 'humanism' is a contrived concept, which cannily hides, through the Euro-American epistemic framework, the immanent imbalance between the lives of Western people and others.

Ōe Kenzaburō, a Nobel Prize laureate, provocatively commented in his essay *Hiroshima Note* (*Hiroshima nōto*, 1965) that humanism is, in fact, the 'attitude which allows people to remain indifferent to the suffering of others' (Ōe cited in Goodman, 2003: 21). By

probing the modalities of Western politics, Ōe suggested that whenever the word

humanism was hailed under a political context, the intention of the victors was to justify

their irreverent act as legitimate. Irritated by political figures' prevarications hiding their

indifference, Ōe emphasised the importance of attentively listening to the unheard and

the underrepresented: one example being a *hibakusha* man that Ōe had met in Hiroshima.

Ōe was greatly moved by the criticism given by this man, who summarised the novelist's

fury: the man argued that the Japanese political elite has been 'always busy flattering the

Americans, and have left the issue of humanity unattended' (Ōe, 1994: 13).

Observing the subhuman status inflicted on Japan by the US and its puppet government,

Ōe rejected the fixed notion of humanism, and started to seek what he defined as the

'humanism beyond popular humanism': 'a new humanism sprouting from the misery of

Hiroshima' (Ōe, 1994: 74-5). The central conviction of his argument was that resonances

of atomic bombs could not be subsumed in the law of existing morality. Thus, through a

trenchant commitment to criticality, people should continuously witness individual pain

and victimhood, rather than automatically doling out pity. Indeed, one could be derided

for questioning the value of humanism, but it should not be made into a dictum either,

for if so, the act of humanism would deteriorate to a perfunctory gesture.

The Elephant: Post-Humanist Theatre beyond Everyday Absurdity

The Elephant (*Zō*) was the first production of the New Company Freedom Stage (*Shin

Gekidan Jiyū Butai*), which Betsuyaku had formed with Suzuki Tadashi in 1962. Around

the same time as Ōe journeyed to Hiroshima to draft the *Hiroshima Note*, Betsuyaku

composed this play that fought against the same issue: the popular humanism that existed

on the premise of indifference towards others. Seventeen years after the dropping of the

atomic bombs, Betsuyaku noticed the emergence of a newly formed convention towards the victims of the atrocity. That is, the *hibakusha* of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were readily being dismissed as banal symbols of a bygone tragedy. In inverse proportion to the economic boom that Japan experienced from around 1954, people forgot the impact of the nuclear horror that was once deemed abominable. Many were occupied with the promise of a prosperous future and were less concerned about the misery of the past. Probing the issue of collective apathy, or rote witnessing of the atomic bomb victims, Betsuyaku responded in a newspaper article on *The Elephant* as follows:

> Protests against the atomic bomb have been chanted for years, but I think all of this has become too *habitual*. You give to charity and attend meetings… But will these actions verify the fact that those same people abhor the atomic bomb? For instance, look at a person's back covered with a keloid scar. Most people will look away. But, that is not the way to go because you are running away [by looking away]. You have to stare at it, and seek beauty through it. That is the only way to accept the tragedy of the atomic bombs. (Betsuyaku, 1970a, emphasis added)

Betsuyaku wrote the play without ever visiting Hiroshima. The play was inspired by the photographer Domon Ken's opus *Hiroshima* (1958), especially by one photograph in which a middle-aged man exhibited his 'greasy back covered with a keloid scar': a skin injury indicative of an atomic bomb victim (Betsuyaku, 1985: 87). The name of the man was Yoshikawa Kiyoshi, dubbed by locals as 'the first atomic bomb' (*genbaku ichigō*, ibid.). Betsuyaku had never met Yoshikawa in person. He only used the widely known episode – 'a man was showing his keloid scar on the street'– as a springboard for developing his play (ibid.). Since Bestuyaku preferred to draft a story devoid of factual restraints, in contrast to the fact that Yoshikawa in reality came into fame by showing his keloid scar, Betsuyaku's character – called The Invalid – was depicted as an unheroic *hibakusha*, or even a tragic clown, who, despite people's indifference, continued exhibiting the keloid on the street.

The major point that discerns Bestuyaku's play from the previous A-bomb plays in the 1950s is the tonal shift from tragedy to comedy: an absurd comedy, to be specific. As is exemplified by the depiction of The Invalid, the protagonist of the play was not portrayed as a mournful victim of the nuclear catastrophe, but rather as a clown of the overall post-nuclear society in which he unwillingly became the symbol of everyday absurdity. The existence of a painful *hibakusha* seemed even more absurd when juxtaposed with the prosperity that came together with the post-war economic boom and the excitement mounting towards the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. And in order to maintain the coherence of the collective narrative, the traces of war destruction had to be erased from the social arena. When people wished to cherish the emergent affluence without any qualms, to a certain extent, they had to become numb to the darker past represented by a *hibakusha*.

Betsuyaku's plays are for the most part allegorical rather than narrative. Thus, in a similar manner to many parts of Beckett's oeuvre, light should be shed on the structure more than the storyline. What comes to the fore when observing the structure of *The Elephant* is that the fundamental counterpoint that Betsuyaku places at the centre, and which should be given primary attention, is the comparison drawn between the two main characters, The Man and The Invalid, with regard to their responses to the atomic bomb. In sum, the two men, who represent two different generations of Hiroshima victims, exemplify the transition of *hibakusha*'s status from the heroic victim in the 1950s to the nonentity in the mid-1960s.

When the curtain rises, The Man is on his way to visit the hospital to see his uncle: The Invalid. From the outset, The Man obsessively murmurs about his wish to live in silence, which could be interpreted as a demand for the audience – the onlooker of a *hibakusha* – to stop intervening in the narrative of victimhood: 'Shhh. Please be quiet. Please. I'd like

you to be quiet. I must be pretty tired. My nerves are on edge. Please, I beg of you, be

quiet for just a few moments, please' (Betsuyaku, 1969: 74).[57] The Man confesses that

his only wish is for 'people to leave [him] alone in peace'. He only wants 'to sit idly in

the darkness' (ibid). Additionally, as if to represent his request for anonymity, The Man

'absently' emerges from the darkness 'carrying a black umbrella', which implies his

decisive will to remain in the shadows wherever he goes (Betsuyaku, 1969: 73).

In opposition to the low-key man shrouded in darkness, The Invalid, who represents the

older generation of *hibakusha*, is obsessed with the dream of fleeing his sickbed and

going back to 'that town', in order to show off his 'ugly' keloid scar as he did before

(ibid.: 79, 112, 143). As critic Tsuno Kaitarō succinctly describes, when arriving at that

town, he would 'strip in the centre of town, cut his arm with a razor, strike a special pose,

and then face the crowds of onlookers and shout, "Please applaud me. Give me an

impassioned round of applause!"' (Tsuno, 1970: 62). Then, in his dreams, a person in the

crowd would plunge a knife into his belly and assassinate him dramatically. In contrast

to The Man who begs the audience for silence, he asks the spectators to deify him as a

sacrosanct symbol of the nuclear tragedy. More than anything, The Invalid wishes to

'live passionately', as he is 'driven by the nightmare of slipping silently into the darkness'

(Tsuno, 1970: 62; Betsuyaku, 1969: 79). Thus, to reiterate the comparative structure, The

Man representing the younger generation asks for a silent, secluded and anonymous life

in the shadows, whereas the older Invalid clamours for a dramatic and glorified death in

the spotlight.

The ending of the play suggests which *hibakusha* character Betsuyaku more easily

empathises with. Diametrically opposed to the atomic-bomb plays depicted by

playwrights such as Hotta and Miyoshi, which both ended in the protagonist's heroic

monologue, in Betsuyaku's play, The Invalid is not even given a chance to deliver a

triumphant tirade. In fact, when his deranged fantasy of delivering a heroic speech reaches its limit, The Invalid gets suddenly attacked by The Man and dies in vain. Subsequently, The Invalid's body is placed on a stretcher and silently carried out of the hospital. Although The Invalid's wish is achieved posthumously as the undertaker says he will carry the body to 'that town', the ending is a far cry from the triumph of human will over inhumane atrocity. Conversely, the fact that the body quickly disappears into the darkness covering the stage suggests that his death will not be heroically remembered, but will be ingloriously forgotten. The ending substantiates Betsuyaku's will to metaphorically kill The Invalid, for the sake of putting an end to the obsolete mode of atomic bomb victimhood.

The allegorical ending symbolises the situation of a *hibakusha* seventeen years after the atomic bombings. As Tsuno affirms, The Invalid's 'death-defying-passion' is 'predicated upon a distorted perspective' that, in any case, he will be applauded and murdered heroically (Tsuno, 1970: 62-3). To the audience, to The Invalid's nephew, and 'quite possibly to Betsuyaku himself', the vision of a heroic death had already become an empty illusion (Tsuno, 1970: 63). The Invalid himself is half-conscious of his unrealistic act, as he continuously murmurs that he hears deriding voices from the silence: 'somebody said something'; 'the bastard laughed' (Betsuyaku, 1969: 81). In the 1950s, the consensus amongst the public with regards to the atomic bomb was that its use on civilians had been an absurd tragedy. In the 1960s, people had become increasingly indifferent to the unnerving event and started to accept the on-going absurdity as normality. And, in tandem with the transformation of the absurd tragedy to an everyday absurdity, the collective consciousness pertaining to *hibakusha* shifted.

Needless to say, Betsuyaku is not obliging the atomic bomb victims to stop reiterating the past tragedies. Rather, he is requesting the witnesses to cease their rote witnessing: an

act that allows only acceptable and habitual tragedies to be heard. Thus, when realising the shift of collective consciousness from absurd tragedy to everyday absurdity with regards to the atomic bombs, Bestuyaku was compelled to seek a way to open up a dialogue that goes beyond the automatic humanism dispensed towards a *hibakusha*. In fact, the title of the play epitomises his authorial intent: to approach nuclear catastrophe once again through a fresh eye that explores beyond accepted humanism. In a short essay titled *The Blind Sees the Elephant*, which was printed in the programme of the play, Betsuyaku alerts us that people have falsely valorised *hibakusha* by assessing only fragments of their victimhood. Confronting a catastrophe that is so 'vague and huge', most people have fallen prey to informational glitches and ceased to see beyond the impasse of endorsed narratives:

> There is a thought-provoking fable of the blind seeing an elephant. In the past, we just laughed and accepted the fact that the blind man saw the elephant as 'a thick column' or 'a huge fan'. However, the blind man later realised that it was indeed 'a column' and 'a fan' but also 'something bigger'. […] Why did the blind man touch the elephant? It is because he wanted to develop a relationship with something that is vague and huge. It did not matter to him, whether or not the non-blind people laughed at him […]. The reason I think that elephants ought to be better understood by blind men is because understanding *per se* should be like this. (Betsuyaku, 1972: 257-9)

This brief passage throws up a number of tropes with regards to the 'humanist' attitude taken towards *hibakusha*. In order to avoid rote witnessing, what Betsuyaku suggests to the audience is that they should, metaphorically, become like a blind man. He asks the audience to approach the elephant in the room, that is, the *hibakusha* character, in a manner similar to how the blind man touched the elephant in the anecdote. Although his injunction is nothing new in terms of content, the playwright maintains that one should not assess the misery, the trauma and the keloid scar with fixed assumptions; nor should they be reduced to understandable logic, reason or morality. The unchanging ugliness of

the scar, which, unmistakably, suggested the on-going struggles of *hibakusha*, prompted the observer to reflect again upon the past. It functioned as a wake-up call to people who were blindly absorbed in everyday comfort; a wound that forcefully reminded people that their daily calmness was superficial, that it was only covered with a thick scab. In other words, Betsuyaku thought that the scar could be a catalyst that let people keep a healthy critical distance from what was considered, sensible, normal, and thus humanistic.

Betsuyaku's intention behind the depiction of the keloid scar could be explained further by using the lexicon of the Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky. What the playwright asked for in *The Elephant* was a constant 'defamiliarisation' (*ostranenie*) of ordinariness. The main purpose of art for Shklovsky, on which Betsuyaku agrees, is 'to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known' (Shklovsky, 1965: 12). By this, Shklovsky suggests that art is a medium that speaks to perception more than intelligence, as art affects pre-emotional perceptions that come before any socially acceptable utterance and ideation. This theoretical formation could be readily adapted to Betsuyaku's works, as the playwright also maintains that the elephant's ears and trunk should be viewed by discarding ready-made understanding, and that it should be apprehended as an 'unfamiliar' object (ibid.).

Based on these artistic thoughts, Betsuyaku invented a Beckettian theatre language that favoured the unfamiliar over the familiar, and emotional detachment over empathetic attachment. This was a necessary process for Betsuyaku because, unlike the *shingeki* artists that aimed to create a dramatic verisimilitude of the extraordinary political events on the stage, he believed that for the 1960s theatre artists, the extraordinary always existed *within* undramatic ordinariness. He suggested that the platitudinous routine of the everyday was only a temporary obverse of our lives; the reverse basal side permeated

with deadly threats was always immanent in life. A scene that symbolises the condition of 'anti-everyday within the everyday' in *The Elephant* is the moment in which The Invalid and his Wife eat a rice ball, side-by-side, in a sickroom. Even though the two only munch a rice ball, a food that symbolises the everyday in Japan, their manner of eating is anything but relaxed. Since the Invalid gives a meticulous, almost militant, order to his wife, bite-by-bite, on how to eat the rice balls correctly, a swift unconscious action suddenly becomes impossibly abstruse. It was a performance that typified the defamiliarisation of the ordinary; an act that requested the audience to rigorously reassess those actions considered normal.

In order to expand the argument on the imbricated relationship between the anti-everyday and the everyday, it is useful to refer to the telegraph pole already noted at the beginning of this section. In Betsuyaku's plays, the telegraph pole manifests the vertical tension that emerges between powerless humanity and ineffable forces (Senda, 1982: 88, 92). According to Betsuyaku, the idea of a telegraph pole was imbibed 'from the tree that stands in *Waiting for Godot*' (Betsuyaku, 2007). Bland as it is, the pole represents 'an existence that is never seen, and the world that is always overlooked' (Senda, 1982: 97). And yet, the item, which Betsuyaku calls the object of 'partial space' (Betsuyaku, 2007), should never be dismissed rashly as it 'anticipates the entire world, or, the whole universe, beyond that space' (Betsuyaku, 2007). It is the catalyst that connects the ordinary to the extraordinary, the everyday to the transcendent, and 'the part' to the 'boundless infinite' (Senda, 1982: 92).

The 'will to reach a transcendent matter', often depicted in Betsuyaku's plays, calls for an elucidation of meaning (Betsuyaku, 2007). When assessing a play that is written outside of Judeo-Christian society, the term 'transcendent' should be interpreted more elastically, as it does not necessarily suggest the presence of God (Betsuyaku, 2007). In

fact, he clearly states that the figure residing high above in his plays is 'different from God' (ibid.). Betsuyaku affirms that what the characters in his plays are trying to reach is 'closer to the Buddhist notion of '*kū* [emptiness]' (ibid.). Being an atheist rather than a Buddhist, Betsuyaku's relation to the concept is rather elliptical. To say more, it is no use trying to explain the concept of *kū* in a few paragraphs as it impedes any simplistic understanding. Thus, in terms of the argument developed here, it is only necessary to note that the *kū* (Japanese), or *śūnatā* (Sanskrit), is a concept that goes against and beyond the concept of a singular God.

Nishitani Keiji, a disciple of Nishida Kitarō (1870 – 1945), who initiated an eclectic philosophy by merging Zen Buddhism and western philosophy, explains that *kū* – most commonly translated as emptiness, void, and non-substantiality – is 'the field of bottomlessness, or the None' (Nishitani, 2004: 125). The advent of God is not anticipated in this context, as the None, in contrast to the One, does not appear in front of us but exists 'somehow always in the back of us' (ibid). It is in the process of the revelation of latent meanings that people reach a higher spiritual status: the world at large is seen through clearer eyes and connotations turn into denotations. While the explanation may sound somewhat abstruse, what should be noted with regards to Betsuyaku's plays is that his characters wish to reach nothingness in order to corroborate their 'symbolic immortality', which makes their lives seem metaphorically more significant (Lifton and Falk, 1982: 32-34).

In order to understand this process of revelation, Betsuyaku touches upon another Buddhist concept: *satori* [enlightenment]. In Buddhism, *satori* is not the ultimate stability that an individual reaches through years of ascetic training. By contrast, the concept should be interpreted, in brief, as a chain of revelations that emerges from taking constant actions to help oneself as well as others. Explained from another angle, it could

be said that Betsuyaku's characters try to reach the state of *kū* through illuminations attained by being a protean self: a subjectivity that shifts and changes in tandem with interactions with others. In Betsuyaku's Buddhist-influenced philosophy, constant change is favoured over the consistent condition. He believes that, in a non-monotheistic country, the series of dialogic interactions could anchor their lives more solidly than wishing for an absolute self:

> Because there was never a solid tradition of God in the East, people never possessed the lurid ambition of 'creation'. Alternatively, they invented the everyday wisdom of 'harmonisation'. To harmonise is […] a process of constructing and reconstructing relationships, by transforming oneself according to the shifting Nature and society. And when you limitlessly relativize yourself as such, you become more assured in terms of who you are. It is the process of *satori* [enlightenment] (Betsuyaku, 1972: 59).

In a post-atomic-bomb universe devoid of a God-like saviour, Betsuyaku suggests that the optimal strategy for survival is to become more protean. According to the playwright, the state of *satori,* an eternally shifting condition that manifests revelations through its transformation, is a form of identity to which post-nuclear people should aspire. Indeed, the action of abandoning coherent subjectivity may sound inimical when reflected through the scope of preconceived humanism. Yet Betsuyaku requests that people deter from approaching the absolute self because, through approximation, the concept could become disturbingly close to the language of violence: more often than not, absolute beliefs are achieved by simplifying the message and violently filtering out a complex set of differences. Blind absoluteness is possibly followed by the so-called notion of 'humanism', which Ōe condemned as the 'attitude, which allows people to remain indifferent to the suffering of others' (Ōe cited in Goodman, 2003: 21). Conversely, protean agents, equipped with self-reflectiveness, humbly transform themselves through constant compromises and conciliations. It is a constant act of negotiation, in which, through the reactions of others, her or his existence is addressed and redressed. And, as

will be demonstrated in the next section, in theatres after Fukushima, several artists manifested a protean self, or, more specifically, a mutational subject through their works.

Becoming Non-humans in Post-Fukushima Theatres

After the Fukushima nuclear disaster, many could not reprise the pre-catastrophe narratives that rationalised *who* they were and *why* they lived. What thus ensued after the collapse of identity and purpose was the difficulty of maintaining linearity, coherence and permanence in communication. Dialogues often became a mass of muddled thoughts, fleeting opinions and diverted narratives; thus communicating, became not a relaxing activity but an onerous labour. Some may justifiably refute that what immediately became evident after the disaster was people's willingness to help and communicate with others: the so-called 'disaster utopia', in which people 'reset themselves to something altruistic, communitarian, resourceful and imaginative' (Solnit, 2010). Indeed, this transitory utopia lasted for days and weeks after the disaster and people developed libidinal connections with others (ibid.). However, what is analysed in this section is the miscommunication that emerged much later: months and years afterwards. When the euphoric feeling of disaster utopia withered, the dialogue that emerged from the multivalent catastrophe became greatly out of tune and out of control. In a word, what followed the chaotic crisis of sense-making, which was discussed in the past two chapters, was the equally confusing crisis of dialogue-making.

The Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant accident, in which the status shifted, day-by-day, from an equipment failure, a loss of coolant accident, three nuclear meltdowns, and three nuclear vessel melt-throughs, directly symbolised the state of being out of control. It was the apex of the unaccountable that humans abhor. After experiencing the

series of calamitous events, people started evading unpredictability; more still, they became more timid, conservative and protective of their lives. In extreme cases, those youths who were more susceptible to surrounding tensions decided to perform a radical protective act. That is, in order to avoid incalculable situations, they temporarily shunned other humans, who, indeed, were the cause of most *mendō*: untoward calamities.

The action of circumventing *mendō* was both beneficial and detrimental. It was helpful because people could avoid additional havoc amidst the already tumultuous situation. Yet it was also destructive because, as already argued in Chapter Three, 'rootedness' and 'unity' are one of the most crucial conditions of human existence (Fromm, 1973: 255-271). The deterrent act was contradictory in nature, as people cannot endure isolation any more than uncontrollable calamities. Thus, as an expected corollary, many young people became trapped in a double-bind. As much as they intuitively hoped for bonds and understandings, they were also afraid of executing profound communications, as differences in perspective on the post-Fukushima reality risked unwanted conflicts.

Genyū Sokyū, a Buddhist monk and novelist living in Fukushima prefecture, attributes the cause of this double-bind condition to the series of irresponsible actions taken by the government during the early days of the nuclear accident. Immediately following its occurrence, when nobody could have foreseen the overall picture of the event, the government made a series of deceitful announcements: for example, on the one hand, they said that the nuclear fallout 'does not have an immediate impact on people's health'; yet, on the other hand, they stopped 'all shipments of spinach and milk that came out of the [Fukushima] prefecture' (Genyū, 2011: 58-9). Consequently, people affected by this 'double-bind expression' started distrusting humans in general (ibid.). Together with the government's duplicitous announcements, which Genyū defines as the trigger point for collapsing 'the value of information', one's trust towards others was undermined (ibid.).

In an attempt to resolve the double-bind anxiety, months afterwards, several playwrights, such as Matsui Shū (b.1972), Yanai Sachio (b.1979) and Ichihara Satoko (b.1988), who are all discussed in the following sections, started developing on the stage what could be described as a post-human universe. That is, they started developing theatrical imaginations in which they could distance humans *and* divert loneliness at the same time by challenging the fixed border of humanness. Ontologically as well as physically, they approached something other than human, such as animals, insects or cyborgs. These playwrights questioned concepts such as coherent reason, single subjectivity and solid criticality – basic elements of western-based humanism – as they may be only onerous abstractions that needlessly complicated their lives. Alternatively, they dreamed of a post-human universe in which a subject 'no longer occupies a realm of stability and identity' but is instead turned into a constantly shifting 'movement' (Bruns, 2007: 703). To be more precise, they generated what could be called a post-human theatre, in which characters try to unload the burden of what was considered the essence of humans by becoming deliberately elusive in tandem with the indefinite society. In other words, they moved toward a nomadic identity, which had the potential to make their lives more carefree.

Nomadism strongly reflects post-Fukushima people's transitory status both in terms of identity and location; which are, of course, interrelated. It also resonates with the idea of the protean self that Betsuyaku had pronounced. Due partially to Betsuyaku's itinerant upbringing, and also as a riposte to the rumbustious political climate in the 1960s, he presented a new *modus vivendi*, which could be described as the earliest form of nomadic subjectivity in Japan. As previously argued, Betsuyaku asked people to consolidate the meaning of life, not by wishing for transcendental absoluteness, but by relativising themselves through interaction with other humans. Betsuyaku preferred a

fluctuating mode of living, a nomadic subjectivity, or, in his own words, a process of *satori*, which could be described, in brief, as limitless relativisation of self (Betsuyaku, 1972: 59).

Similar to Betsuyaku's plays, in which the characters' identities were willingly relativised, the above-noted theatre-makers after Fukushima also developed nomadic characters equipped with mobile identities. Yet what should be emphasised is that the latters' capacities to adapt to others were far more extensive than those of Betsuyaku's characters. Not only were they free of qualms about transcending the boundary between the self and the other, but they also seemed to be less hesitant in crossing the border between the human and the non-human. In order to evade unnecessary conflicts with other humans, yet whilst concurrently avoiding isolation, the post-Fukushima plays proposed a radical imagination, in which people willingly metamorphosed into animals, insects and cyborgs.

However, what should be noted is that these playwrights are only 'imagining' the metamorphic characters: they probe their experimental thoughts, but do not provide a concrete proposition. Therefore, as it will be revealed in later pages, they are not decisive with regards to abandoning humanness altogether. Among the playwrights noted above, Matsui, the eldest among the three, remains specifically irresolute. It seems as though Matsui is utilising his theatre as the site of a thought experiment, in which the characters transcend conventional human borders to test how far humans should relinquish reason, subjectivity and criticality. Matsui is not pronouncing a concrete vision of alternative humans *per se*, but only metaphysically exploring the border of humanness in post-Fukushima theatres.

The artistic principle that several of the post-Fukushima theatre artists adopted could be best described by the word 'post-human', which is, indeed, an ambiguous term. As

Parker-Starbuck argues, the idea first 'took firm hold in the 1990s with Jack (Judith) Halberstam and Ira Livingston's *Posthuman Bodies* (1995) and N. Katherine Hayles' influential *How We Became Posthuman* (1999)' (Parker-Starbuck, 2014: 248). However, as Cary Wolfe has emphasised in *What is Posthumanism?* (2010), the idiom has been interchangeably used between post-human, post-humanism, post-humanity, and so on, with numerous ramifications attached to each of them. As Wolfe and others suggest, more often than not, the term is reductively understood, especially in two ways. First, it is connected to the concept of trans-humanism: a movement towards cyborg man. What soon follows this interpretation is the doomed scenario, which proclaims that machines will control human consciousness in the future. The second reductive interpretation is of anti-humanism. The worst-case scenario, based on this thought, is that the predominance of the human species will give way to other creatures on the planet.

It is pertinent to note that, although the concept of post-human does not preclude both of these interpretations, it also 'does not necessitate the obsolescence of humans' (Halberstam and Livingston, 1995: 10). Conversely, most post-human theories including those of Halberstam and Livingston (1995), Hayles (1999) and Rosi Braidotti (2013), only attempt to reassess the boundaries of what it means to be human. In fact, as Hayles argues, one of the most important characteristics of the post-human concept is to disrupt various dualisms: 'there are no […] absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation' (Hayles, 1999: 3); or there is no hierarchy 'within the human (whether according to race, class, gender)' and also 'between the human and the nonhuman' (Halberstam and Livingston, 1995: 10). Nor should the motive behind the unlimited interaction be misunderstood; it is an action that moves towards human evolution and not devolution. It moves towards resilience and survival and not human extinction. Concisely, the post-human agents freely interact and integrate with other

humans, animals and objects in order to survive more aptly in the world.

Keeping this post-human concept in mind, let us return to the examination of theatres after Fukushima. Months and years after the nuclear catastrophe, theatre-makers such as Matsui, Yanai and Ichihara started examining a new mode of existence: the post-human self. In their works, they radically questioned what it means to be a human in the post-nuclear world by depicting characters that metamorphosed into non-human species, or were simply portrayed as animals and insects. To reiterate, the metamorphoses depicted in the plays were merely imaginative means of survival, presented to people struggling after Fukushima. However, since the absurdist visions are illustrated in such detail, one is tempted to surmise that, if the proposed non-human status seemed to be an optimum option for survival, and if the technological advancements would safely allow them to do so, then perhaps they would be willing to transform into non-humans in reality.

Referring to the words of Matsui supports this imaginative hypothesis. When discussing American zombie movies in which the residents of a village transform into un-dead beings one by one, Matsui confesses that he would be one of the first people 'to be bitten by them, and willingly transform into zombies' (Matsui, 2014). For the playwright-director, surviving as a human is not obligatory when living as a zombie is a better option. He further expatiates his post-human thought by referring to the homogenous Japanese culture devoid of a single God:

> In the West, individual actions, at least in the past, were stipulated by the contract with God. Most people in Japan, by contrast, do not believe in God. Thus, it is difficult to develop an absolute rule that guides all actions in our lives. Rather, we shift the rule by spontaneously reacting to others. At least, I am like that. People, especially in the West, may understandably say that I am only a conformist. However, from my view, this is a more biological and human act, which, I think, predates Western-humanism praising individualism (Matsui, 2014).

When reading the brief passage, it is possible to condemn Matsui for evading individual

responsibility. However, assessing his thoughts through a wider cultural purview – that is, by referring to the Confucius concept of non-self (*mushi*) – elucidates his belief that the abandonment of individualism is an act revealing one's humanness. As a preliminary note, what should be clarified is that the term non-self rather than anti-self describes the concept Matsui addresses more aptly. As Ishida Baigan (1685 – 1744), a Japanese Confucius theorist in the Edo era summarises, *mushi* suggests that 'by killing the self, and abandoning the ego' a person can reach a higher state: 'all orders in the universe are connected to the mind of a single man' (Ishida cited in Saeki, 2008: 155). As with most Confucius thoughts, the explanation seems paradoxical, if not equivocal; however, in a nutshell, what Ishida suggests is that one's sense of self is metaphysically illuminated by renouncing the ego and connecting with others: humans become more human by abandoning the self. Matsui is not a Confucian. Nor does he resort to any religious ideas. However, it is useful to refer to the traditional ideas ingrained in Japanese culture when trying to grasp his opaque idea. Resonating with the Confucian idea of *mushi*, Matsui continues as follows:

> I think that life becomes easier when people willingly adapt to others. Especially, in a mostly-homogenous country like Japan, when everyone looks pretty much the same, adaptation, rather than confrontation, seems like the natural way of living. The act of adapting, or metamorphosing, is, for me, the optimal way of survival. It does not create enemies; we could collectively survive happily (Matsui, 2014).

Terms like 'mostly-homogenous' and 'pretty much the same' obviously require further inquiry from a socio-anthropological perspective. However, at least for Matsui, he believes that the Japanese tend to praise adaptation by abandoning the ego, rather than to prefer belligerent confrontation. Although this preference could be observed in Japanese communities in various given moments, it could be argued that words that acknowledge the move towards adaptation resonated more strongly after the Fukushima catastrophe

for the sake of a collective survival. And the uniqueness of Matsui and other post-human playwrights was that they depicted characters that even adapted, or metamorphosed, to non-humans.

For example, in *Flowers and Fish* (*Hana to sakana*, 2011), written and directed by Yanai Sachio, the residents in a small fishing village transform, one by one, into a fish-like monster. The absurdist play is unmistakably resonant of Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* (1959). However, when asked about Ionesco's influence, Yanai naively responds that he did not know the classic example of the Absurd. Nevertheless, the protagonist of his play, the young researcher Nanao, resembles that of *Rhinoceros*, who valiantly shouts at the end that he will not capitulate to the seemingly irreversible situation: he declares that he will combat the inexplicable threat. There is a point of distinction between Yanai and Ionesco in that whereas the latter offers a character that indefatigably fights against the phenomenon of becoming an animal, the former insinuates the possibility of the transformation being a welcome evolution of humankind. Tellingly, a young local *kagura* dancer (a Shintō ritual dance that predates Noh theatre) fatalistically asserts that all is irreversible and that everything is written in 'our genes': 'a similar process might have been repeated time and again in history; we cannot stop what the world does to us' (Yanai, 2011: 53). The play suggests that to capitulate, to abandon humanity and to become a fish may also be one form of future reality.

Ichihara Satoko of Company Q is another young playwright-director who repeatedly depicts the situation of becoming-animal, in her specific case through projecting images of humans as animals. In *Life then Q II* (*Inochi nochi Q II*, 2013), most characters on the stage are domesticated dogs. In appearance, however, there is no sign indicating that the actors represent the anthropomorphised Yorkshire terrier or Pekingese. For Ichihara, the distinction between humans and dogs seems insignificant, if not irrelevant, because,

whether humans or animals, the characters in her plays mostly live at a libidinal level: eating, sleeping and copulating. If Cartesianism, as Wolfe argues, rests on the fundamental assertion that humans are superior to other species because 'animals, however sophisticated they may be, can only "react" but not "respond" to what goes on around them', it could be said that the characters in Ichihara's plays, who are only reacting to their libidos, are more animal than human (Wolfe, 2010: 40). Life is lived according to their instinctive drives: so much so that at one point, for instance, a male character who makes sushi anally rapes a crossbred dog (also performed by a male actor), while the dog continues eating sushi even while being sexually abused. 'Although the dog's anus is crying frantically with pain, his mouth is delicious and happy with sushi,' says the perpetrator (Ichihara, 2013). When the audience sees the sushi worker as a human being, it becomes the scene of violence. However, there is no harm done if one sees it as intercourse between animals. In contrast to the almost-violent physical interactions taking place between animals, or humans and animals, in her play, no two humans develop an intimate relationship. They decisively keep a distance from each other, so that they can remain physically and mentally intact.

Historically speaking, it is important to note briefly at this point that there is a long tradition of picturing zoophilia and bestiality in artworks in Japan, which can be traced back to the *Shunga* paintings (literally, spring pictures) that flourished in the middle to late years of the Edo period (1600 – 1868). They were explicit and elaborate sexual images, many painted by famous artists such as Katsushika Hokusai (d.1760) and Kitagawa Utamaro (d. 1753), who later influenced Western artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec, Beardsley, Rodin, Degas and Picasso (Bru, 2013: 483-9). Even though most of the *Shunga* paintings depicted heterosexual sex by both married and single people, the school of Katsukawa Shunshō (d.1792) moved toward more grotesque images, in which

humans enjoyed sex with animals, goblins and ghosts.

In one of the images of Shunchō (worked 1780s-90s), a disciple of Shunshō, we see a picture that 'includes a depiction of […] a Chinese man with a tiger in *Edo Miyage* (*Souvenirs of Edo,* or *Erotic Pleasures: What Beautiful Flowers!*) [and] a farmer with an ox in *Ehon warai-zume* of 1788' (Igarashi, 2013: 375). Shun'ei (1762 - 1819), another disciple of Shunshō, also depicts eccentric motifs. For example, there is a scene depicting 'a fisherman with a stingray, and the love-suicide scene of a couple having sex with a fox' (ibid.). Knowingly adopting these old eccentric images, in Ichihara's play there is a scene in which a female sushi worker is a hybrid of a man and a stingray. It is a grotesquely epicurean universe – depicted with a touch of the cute manner of girls' manga [shōjo manga] – where the characters fulfil their desire to elude complicated human relationships, yet feel connected by pursuing bestial pleasure.

From this rapid and incomplete account of post-human plays, one could argue that the basic tenor of humanism in theatres has changed after Fukushima. In the 1950s, the hallmark of humanism for *shingeki* theatre artists was *rational representations*: how to monitor the devastating reality of the post-war age predominantly from the standpoint of Western-based humanism by hailing the concept of *shutaisei* [selfhood]. From the late 1960s, the task of post-*shingeki* artists shifted to develop *radical imagination*: Betsuyaku developed absurd images reflecting a post-nuclear society, while playwright-director Kara Jūrō and Butoh dancer Hijikata Tatsumi invented a series of images which are grotesque, kaleidoscopic and corporeal, and which challenged the Western mode of narrative glorifying rationality. However, for several of the post-Fukushima playwrights, the very basis of humanism had shifted as they were willing to abandon the quintessence of humanness – consciousness, rationality and self-regulating ethical behaviour – for the sake of survival. The quirky post-human artists felt that the odds of survival might

increase through *excessive adaptation*, not excluding the possibility of transforming into animals.

Matsui Shū's Absurd Post-Human Theatre

If Betsuyaku Minoru could be described as one of the pioneers of Japanese post-humanist theatre, Matsui Shū is the innovator of Japanese post-human theatre. As a playwright-director who studied sociology – specifically, the particularities of a fundamentalist Shintoism community in Aomori Prefecture – Matsui unknowingly sides with Lifton in asserting that the flexible and 'protean self' is, in effect, an antidote to violence (Lifton, 2015: 11). Based on this thought, he asserts that one of his main artistic endeavours is to propagate the concept of what he specifically calls 'metamorphosis' (*hentai*) in a largely homogenous country like Japan. Rather than presenting a monolithic value on the stage, which could become no better than propagating a dogma developed by religious fundamentalism, Matsui asserts that he wishes to develop a theatre that obliges characters to go beyond social norms by adapting to the environment. If the possibility of survival may increase by doing so, Matsui has no qualms in depicting humans metamorphosing to non-humans.

One may, indeed, notice that this comment contradicts the playwright-director's own words cited in the previous pages: 'life becomes easier when people willingly adapt to others […] in mostly-homogenous country like Japan' (Matsui, 2014). Is he trying to pit against monolithic values, or is he acknowledging people to align with others? There is no single answer to this question because Matsui's thoughts are, in essence, contradictory. Between consolidating and liquidating the social norms, Matsui does not know which of the two is the better option for human survival. Thus, as it will be

revealed later in the section, many of his plays end in delivering indecisive perspectives.

Hentai in Japanese is slightly different from the more general term, *henshin*. Although the two words suggest an analogous meaning – the former could be translated as metamorphosis, and the latter as transformation – the clear difference is that the former also signifies perversion. Well aware of his choice of words, in his plays Matsui depicts many deviant characters such as radical transvestites, incestuous children, extremely docile humans and half-animal cyborgs. In response to the monolithic value of a largely homogenous society, he portrays characters who are often excluded from society. Also, it is important to note that his term 'hentai' holds a different context compared to the meaning applied in extreme adult manga, anime and video games.

Previously an actor in Hirata Oriza's Seinendan Company, Matsui formed his own theatre troupe, Sample, in 2007.[58] The company's name suggests two meanings: imitation and prototype. Matsui argues that what is considered as the 'human' aspect of life, that is, what Aristotle and many other Western theorists such as Giorgio Agamben defined as civilised life (*bios*) as opposed to bare life (*zoe*), is only a cultural construct: it is implanted through repetitive performance (Agamben, 1998: 9). According to Matsui, most normal acts in a given society are only imitated performances. Consciously or not, the members of society willingly repeat the acts, in order to prove that they are valid members of civilised life. And, indeed, executing the imitated performance well in a largely homogenous country like Japan is one of the easiest ways to get on in society. Wishing to challenge and reveal the fixed norms of humanness as cultural constructs, Matsui mockingly reveals diverse prototypes of human copies on the stage, including those which transform to animals. In order to expose the idea that people are only performing their marital, professional, racial, gender and even human statuses, and to examine whether delivering those performances is indeed the optimum way of living, the

artist creates contentious conditions in which the characters have no choice but to realise that their lives are full of pretexts and prevarications covered over by flawless acting.

In other words, Matsui's post-human theatre is about *questioning* all the borders of what it means to be human, without even the playwright knowing what the correct answers are. And, as will be noticed through the following pages, this indecisive attitude makes his plays contradictory in essence. For example, despite the fact Matsui started writing plays in order to counter the monolithic cultural insularities in the homogenous milieu, the affirmation of abnormal values and pliable identities – of even becoming animals – his post-Fukushima plays such as *Forgetting the Future* (*Mirai o wasureru*, 2013) end in delivering paradoxical messages. This will be unpacked later in the section.

Yet what is most instantly noticeable, even from his debut play, is Matsui's post-human tenet: humans are humans because they can perform – or, to borrow as he does from Japanese pop-culture lingo, cosplay (literally, 'costume playing') – their humanness. In his debut play *Passage* (*Tsūka*, 2004), he takes on the theme of the dysfunctional marriage, which is a recurring topic in later plays such as *World Premier* (*Waarudo Puremia*, 2005), *The Long Field Trip* (*Nagai Ensoku*, 2013), *The Departure* (*Ririku*, 2015) and *Root* (*Rūto*, 2016). In *Passage*, Katsuhisa, an impotent husband, and Yoko, his estranged wife, perform the prototype of an ideal couple, even though the husband implicitly knows about Hashimoto, Yoko's illicit lover. The superficiality of their relationship is further highlighted when Yoko's brother, Hisao, starts living in the married couple's house, together with an unknown man and woman. Hisao's *ménage à trois* represents a mirror reflection of the husband and wife's relationship. By presenting his abnormal affair out in the open, Hisao implies that the wedded pair should follow his path and proudly reveal, rather than conceal, their threesome status. As if to imply his affirmative attitude, Hisao declares that his deviant relationship could be 'the new

system' (Matsui, 2009b: 36).

The keynote that Matsui strikes in his debut play is reminiscent of Judith Butler's hermeneutics of performativity, although the playwright never openly refers to the theorist. In addition, it should be noted that the axiomatic tenor that runs through his play, which argues that being human is an embodiment of repetitive cosplay, differs slightly from Butler's classic and contested argument on 'constructed' gender (Butler, 2006: 272). The basic difference is that whereas Butler develops her theory on the premise that humans maintain a singular and coherent identity at their root, for Matsui the premise itself is merely an illusion. Situations are constantly changing in the modern world; and so Matsui argues that people should accordingly 'repeat a metamorphosis' (Matsui et al., 2013: 2).

Differing from Butler, what Matsui proposes through his theory is that humans, perhaps, do not have to struggle by proclaiming to be an *in-dividual* (indivisible entity) anymore; they could survive more expediently by cosplaying as different *dividuals* – a myriad of different, and potentially conflicting, constituents. For Matsui, humans 'cosplaying their professions, kinships, gender, nationality and all other categories […] is a way of survival: a way "to live"' (Matsui et al., 2013: 2). Yet it is also important to note that there is a major drawback in Matsui's post-human argument. Precisely because he upholds the elusive principle that one of the strengths of people lies in their ability to 'cosplay' various identities, his plays start to convey paradoxical voices, and lead the audiences into unnecessary confusion.

With all its pros and cons, dragging the audience to a maelstrom of uncertainties is the core principle of Matsui's plays. In order to dismantle the stabilised social norms, he throws up a number of tropes with regards to what is generally considered human in a society dominated by Western hermeneutics. According to Matsui, in Japan, one is

inclined to affirm, on the one hand, that the performances of a decent husband, a pious believer and a politically-engaged citizen are all ethically commendable; but, on the other hand, the cosplaying of a submissive woman, a polygamous marriage, and a religious radical could be deemed as abominable. There is an obvious imbalance at play here, with regards to which intellectual positions are considered normative. In order to challenge the impasse of certain intellectual viewpoints in Japan, which are in fact the underpinning force obliging people to perform, Matsui argues that no single identity should become a sanctified code: all identities should be fragmented and relativised according to shifts in society.

For Matsui, cosplaying multiple identities is not an act of self-negation. Conversely, multiplicity and the fluidity of self are, in effect, what distinguishes humans from other species. The ability to play certain roles, or to disrobe identities like costumes, is a human activity *par excellence* because only humans can 'act': 'becoming-animal is superlatively human, because cosplaying is an act of performance exclusive to humans' (Matsui, 2014). Moreover, Matsui implies through his artwork that to espouse the philosophy of metamorphosis – or the process of cosplaying – is one of the most pertinent ways to live in a post-nuclear world marked by constant shifts and turns. This strategy for survival is clearly portrayed in a play that he wrote after Fukushima: *Forgetting the Future*. It is a post-Fukushima play consisting of paradoxical voices, in which the playwright first draws the audience's attention to the migrant status of identities, and to the potential to freely cosplay diverse beings for the sake of optimal survival in a drastically uncertain world. Yet, he simultaneously implies the limits of his theory: when this cosplaying is performed to an extreme, naturally, it could uproot the ontological stability of that person.

Although most of his plays are presented by his own theatre company and are directed

by himself, this play, as a rare occasion, was commissioned by Bungaku-za, and directed by Kamimura Satoshi (b.1979). Owing to the fact that it was performed by one of the oldest *shingeki* companies, the play had a certain degree of verisimilitude. For better or for worse, because the six actors in the play were mainly trained in the vein of psychological realism, they were not consciously cosplaying the characters like those in Matsui's company, but were literally trying to become them, despite the fact one of the characters was a hybrid of a cockroach and a human. Kimura Mitsunori, a critic who attended the performance, asserts that the play did not become only an absurd fiction, but, rather, Matsui's 'outrageous imagery' became realistic enough that it could be believed as life in Tokyo in the near future (Kimura, 2013).

The play could be described as the abridged Book of Genesis, written from the standpoint of a non-human species. The narrator of the play, Shimada Burio (the name is a play on 'embryo'), is the first insect-human hybrid. He was born from an engineered human egg genetically modified by injecting the DNA of cockroaches – a vermin that is said to be able to survive any nuclear Armageddon. Since the story is narrated retrospectively from Burio's point of view, and as he introduces his own parents as the creators of this insect-human genesis, the story could be construed as reminiscent of the Bible: edited and embellished, like most myths. As if to mock the Old Testament or classic epic narratives structured with overly dramatic turns and events, Matsui describes how the first insect-man survived a chain of catastrophes in a hyperbolic register:

> Missiles fired by a neighbouring country destroyed two cities. A nuclear power plant was targeted, destroyed, and a massive amount of radioactive material has been diffused. The war ended in three months. The capital of the neighbouring country was annihilated by the US. Three volcanoes erupted, seven cities were swollen by pyroclastic flows, and hundreds of villages were ravaged by the mudflow. Three earthquakes greater than magnitude eight occurred. 200,000 people died, while 500,000 were evacuated (Matsui et al., 2013: 58).

Burio recites how all this had happened in less than a year, the first two months of which he was in his mother's womb. Due to one of many calamities, his human father, Ken (meaning, 'sound and healthy'), had died before his birth. Reminiscent of the woman in David Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986), who in a nightmare gives birth to a giant maggot, Burio's mother Raimi – the Japanese word *mirai* (literally, 'future') read upside down – brought Burio into the world as a hybrid species, as she had been ingesting drugs developed from the genes of cockroaches (ibid.: 56-7). The capsule, called 'Grow', had been invented by Raimi's scientist father in order to make human beings invincible (ibid.: 56).

Absurd as the story may sound, it is pertinent to note that this production was performed to an audience who had experienced the Fukushima catastrophe just two and a half years earlier. Thus, for many of those sitting in the Bungaku-za Atelier Theatre, Burio's story was, arguably, not just an outrageous science fiction: it was a story that sounded eerily familiar to a threatening imaginary. The invention of the capsule also sounded familiar to people in Japan as, precisely around the time the production was presented, Professor Yamanaka Shinya was in real life awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his research into stem cells that could be reprogrammed to develop into all cell types. In order to cure the incurable and treat the untreatable, scientists devote themselves to technologies that ultimately may reach the realm of God.

In reality, this is yet to be achieved. However, in Matsui's allegorical world, it is described as an absurd yet actual reality. For the audience living in Tokyo, the physical effects of the nuclear fallout were an on-going threat. In the play, by contrast, the characters could defy the threats, because by taking the capsule they became fit to the point of reaching immortality. Also in real life, many people became aware of the mental rift that lies between one and the other, no matter how close the relationship was before

the catastrophe; and so they started to feel isolated. In *Forgetting the Future*, some of the characters' sense of solitude was alleviated instantly, because by taking the capsule and becoming a cockroach – a creature devoid of consciousness – their sense of individuality, that is, the sense separating one from the other, was numbed.

Another topic that is constantly questioned in the play, and which has been addressed already in this chapter, is the subject of *shutaisei*. Throughout the play, Matsui provocatively questions the idea that, perhaps, when hoping for a collective survival after Fukushima, upholding a singular subjectivity is a drawback rather than an advantage. Maintaining a singular standpoint throughout various isolated moments may, in fact, hinder the person from smoothly adapting to a post-nuclear environment, which is a sum total of constantly shifting, and potentially conflicting, components. Taking all this together, Matsui questions, yet without offering any decisive answer, whether when the land they stand on is no longer stable, the actions and attitudes of the people standing on that piece of land should accordingly become pliable.

For Matsui, times of nuclear crisis that divide the community may call for unconditional affirmation rather than logical understanding. When one's biological existence is at stake, Matsui ponders that physical connections, rather than cognitive affirmations, may be needed temporarily. Although this opinion is among one of many other conflicting thoughts that Matsui maintains – which, in turn, makes it difficult for this thesis to retain its coherence – he backs up the argument of abandoning logical understandings by relating an experience he went through a month after the disaster:

> In April, a month after the Fukushima catastrophe, there was a party as I won the Kishida Kunio Drama Award with *My Son, My Pride* (*Jiman no musuko*). I remember people being bizarrely excited. I think that they were desperate to connect with others after the disaster. At least, I was. But the thing is, we never talked or discussed the catastrophe. Because we knew that, if we verbalised our opinions, they would differ from others. We knew that [there were latent conflicts], but we still wanted to be together

and feel together (Matsui, 2014).

The bizarre excitement that Matsui witnessed at the party could, arguably, be described as a euphoric state of cohabitation that safeguards their existence; it was engendered by humans' biological willingness to gather together in times of crises. Based on this premise, Matsui proposes in the play that when people face vulnerable situations, they should cease prioritising cognitive function (at least temporarily) to enjoy a non-linguistic and non-logical form of unity; Matsui terms this the status of 'environmental symbiosis' (Iwaki, 2011: 82). In the scope of the argument made in this section, the concept of environmental symbiosis could be analysed by connecting it with a theory from Gilles Deleuze. By doing so, it is possible to understand why Matsui encourages people to feel together on the level of bodies, intuitions and senses, rather than seeking rational and logical connections.

It was Gilles Deleuze who suggested that insects are capable of non-linguistic communication that transcends human abilities. Although from a purely philosophical, and not scientific, standpoint, he argued that since insects can interact through 'molecular vibration, chirring, rusting, buzzing, clicking, scratching and scraping', they possess the potential to go beyond the 'formal limits' of linguistic communication (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013: 359). By the same token, in *Forgetting the Future*, Matsui adopts Deleuze's radical imagination and portrays how Burio, the insect-man, can connect easily with other cockroaches without the hindrance of words. A semantic system in a given society, indeed, underpins the smooth execution and interaction among the social agents. However, when that system is dismantled, and terms such as 'home', 'safety' and 'future' signify different meanings, Matsui implies the possibility of other forms of communication: people should connect on the level of primal instinct. By borrowing the voice of Burio, Matsui argues that 'had humans not used something like

language, everyone would have been together without the division of "me" and "you"' (Matsui et al., 2013: 58).

However, at this point, one of the crucial incongruities emerging from Matsui's argument should be emphasised. Indeed, it was brave of him to question a number of tropes attached to humanness and to come up with a new hermeneutic framework of what it means to be human, but his argument is by all standards warped. The differentiation between calculatedly cosplaying an identity similar to an insect, and blindly slotting oneself to the collective is not clear. Without the lack of self-reflection in the environmental symbiosis, the dismantling of the division between 'me' and 'you' could end up diverging towards totalitarian violence.

As if to mirror his incoherent logic, *Forgetting the Future* ends with a tone that contradicts his earlier post-human argument endorsing the concept of environmental symbiosis. At the end of the play, Burio stands still on the stage in silence, while he attentively listens to the sound of other cockroaches around him. At this moment, the stage directions note that 'he is bearing something without an expression' (Matsui et al., 2013: 64). The theatrical element emphasised in this scene is the contrasting structure of noise and silence; that is, the collective sound generated by cockroaches and the solitary silence born by Burio. This juxtaposition of sound and silence highlights Burio's decisive will not to chirp together with other cockroaches. He chooses to stand alone in solitude, because, somewhere in his half-human mind, Burio understands that he cannot be satisfied with his life if he cannot affirm his individual existence. In fact, the very endeavour of developing an insect-being corroborates Burio's will to be inscribed in history as a unique existence.

Forgetting the Future is a post-human play that concurrently delivers conflicting voices. As much as Matsui acknowledges the audience to cosplay different identities and to

enjoy environmental symbiosis, in which humans forsake individual differences to feel safely connected on the level of primal instinct, he also suggests that cosplaying could morph into conformity, and that the state of environmental symbiosis could conversely render more uneasiness among people by making them abandon their unique standpoints. The main purpose of the play, however, does not lie in judging which is the better human state. The play is a thought experiment, which averts monolithic values and expands the limits of humanness, vis-à-vis the morass of post-Fukushima threats. If the cosplaying alleviates the mental pain, Matsui asks, why should one not choose to do so? It is an imagination, which sprouted from the post-catastrophe confusion, in the sense that it reflected people's wish to live through the absurd everyday more effortlessly.

Chapter Five

The Theatre of Nuclear Nostalgia

When assessing the entirety of the damage caused, what distinguishes nuclear catastrophes from other disasters is that they bring into play the whole metaphysics of temporality. As already discussed in Chapter One, Romeo Castellucci foresaw that the aftermath of Fukushima would amount to a complete 'tabula rasa' (Fujii, 2012: 14). He argued that whereas earthquakes and tsunamis disrupt tangible space, radiation extinguishes also intangible space, that is, time. Indeed, when considering that Plutonium-239 has a half-life (length of time in which fifty percent of nuclides will have undergone nuclear decay) of 24,110 years, nuclear aftermaths virtually defy time. And, when this quasi-eternal time frame is transposed to the consideration of art, it is significantly difficult for artists to represent the totality of the nuclear event. Nuclear disasters transcend the temporal purview of one's lifetime.

In a similar vein, Washida Kiyokazu argues that the Judeo-Christian concept of time, which most contemporary people are accustomed to, has been destroyed after Fukushima. In the conventional model, time is a one-way path in which the future fundamentally differs from what has gone before (Washida and Akasaka, 2012; 206). To use a Biblical image, time progresses from the Creation to the Judgment Day. However, after a nuclear disaster, such as Fukushima, time stops flowing from one point to another. The catastrophic past does not necessarily resolve in a restorative future. In fact, the chance of future earthlings equally being plagued with anxieties that stem from decades-old radioactive fallout is not slim.

Based on this reformed time structure, Jean-Pierre Dupuy asserts that Fukushima can always be described as 'a future catastrophe' (Dupuy, 2011:3). It is a catastrophe that always waits in the future, as toxic elements absorbed by humans, soil and sea could cause 'an agonizing scream of unborn children' (Dupuy, 2011: 122). Dupuy's comment specifically refers to the near-eternal contamination and its physical (most notably, genetic) effects on future children. When a disaster has a high possibility of unfolding further in the coming decades and centuries, it is more understandable to think that there is not much distinction between the past and the future; the two are indivisible, always juxtaposed in the present. Underpinned by this renewed sense of time, Washida asserts further that, although until now the future of humankind has been open to possibilities, after Fukushima, 'the next generation is already framed and fettered': the future is no longer a 'blank piece of paper' (Washida and Akasaka, 2012: 206).

Peace lodges as monotonous rhythm in life. People living in relatively safe societies tend to see time in the form of a linear continuum: it runs ceaselessly from the past to the future. By contrast, for survivors living in post-nuclear societies, time stops flowing in a linear structure and begins to draw a convoluted pattern. Time does not simply rush forward, but flows, back and forth, between the day of the disaster and the present. Even infants born in coming decades are prone to be drawn back to the day of the catastrophic event, as they could be damaged genetically from the radioactive exposure of their ancestors. Taking all this into consideration, it could be argued that, in a highly contaminated radioactive society, people are forced to live in a temporal system consisting of a dual time frame: time that *oscillates* between the past and the future.

As it is relevant to the concept of the so-called nuclear nostalgia argued throughout this chapter, at this point, it is pertinent to refer to the concept of oscillating time, which was first introduced by Edmund Leach in 1961 in his seminal text *Two Essays Concerning*

the Symbolic Representation of Time. The central conviction addressed through the essay was that in 'a primitive, unsophisticated community', time could not be represented through either the linear or the cyclic model (Leach, 1966: 126). In fact, Leach maintained that to describe time through 'geometric notation' is fundamentally modern man's making (ibid.). Geometric patterns are brought to the fore, only when one understands the existence of a metaphysical thread that weaves through distinct concepts of time, such as night and day. This transcendental focal point, according to Leach, was absent in people in what he calls 'a primitive' society. Even pairs of temporal concepts that seem to be obvious opposites in the eyes of modern people such as 'night and day, winter and summer, drought and flood, age and youth, life and death', were regarded not in pairs but as completely discrete entities. For this reason, time was less accumulative in their lives: days and nights did not add up to form a year. Rather, time was considered as a repetition, going back and forth between different temporal archetypes: a 'sequence of oscillations' between what we now think as 'polar opposites' (ibid.).

In borrowing Leach's consideration of oscillating time, Maki Yūsuke (the nom de plume of Mita Munesuke) explores Japanese primordial agricultural communities. Maki argues that for many villagers in these communities, 'a realistic concept of the future was confined to a few months or a year' (Maki, 2003: 103). Time was not envisioned as a continuum leading to indefinite future; it was considered as a limited scale, which began in planting and ended in harvesting. According to Maki, the agricultural discipline both expanded and delimited the concept of time. For the first time in the history of Japan, the anticipation of a fruitful harvest impelled people to 'instrumentalise the present for the sake of a possible outcome in a considerable future' (ibid.). Unlike modern day office workers who are inclined to think that a monotonous life will continue half-eternally, Maki argues that it was more plausible for pre-modern farmers to assume that disaster

from droughts, floods and wildfires could disrupt their future outcome. Thus, when anticipating the future seems like an unfeasible task, time ceases to be observed in the form of an endless stream.

When transposing Maki's consideration of time to the post-nuclear societies, one could argue that, although the two societies have little in common culturally and historically, there is one distinct similarity with regards to the understanding of time: that is, in both societies, anticipation for a safe and sound future is vulnerable. In other words, Leach and Maki are cited here at length precisely to provide a more lucid explanation of the concept of oscillating time. Owing to the fact that a secure future can no longer be promised once the land and the sea were heavily contaminated, arguably, a concept of time that goes back and forth between the past and the future emerged after both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Fukushima. At this point, we should refer to two pictures of different watches, which epitomise the overarching topic of this chapter.

Left: A watch of Futagawa Kengo, 59, who died of the Hiroshima atomic bomb when heading to work in a reconstruction site. Right: A tilted clock of a hair salon in Tomioka, Futaba district, Fukushima.[59]

On the left, a monochrome picture of a pocket watch, which was carried by a *hibakusha* in Hiroshima shows that the ticking halted exactly at the time when the bomb was detonated: 8:15 AM on 6 August 1945. On the right, is a coloured picture of a shop clock fixed in front of a hair salon in the town of Tomioka in Futaba District, Fukushima: only

eight kilometres away from the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant. The face of the clock reveals the time when the magnitude-nine earthquake hit the whole of North-eastern Japan: 2:46 PM on 11 March 2011. Despite the variance in weathering of the clocks and the photographic quality, which suggest the elapse of time between two pictures, the post-Hiroshima and the post-Fukushima clocks, in effect, capture the *same* time. That is, these clocks reveal the system of dual time exposure, in which a specific time in the past is always kept alive in the present.

Hirata Oriza was the first theatre-maker to suggest, publicly, the resemblance of time between post-Hiroshima and post-Fukushima. In April 2011, Hirata visited the evacuation zone of the disaster-stricken Tōhoku area, accompanied by French writer and theatre director Christophe Fiat, who happened to be in town for a Japanese theatre project. Fiat later described in his book, *Fukushima, Godzilla, Hiroshima* (2013, French title *Retour d'Iwaki*) that he shivered with fright when Hirata pointed at a discarded clock in a park in Hisano-hama and said: 'Look, the clock has stopped at the time of the earthquake [...] It's the same as Hiroshima!' (Fiat, 2013: 20). Once put into words, the relevance seemed obvious. Even though there is sixty-six years of time difference between Hiroshima and Fukushima, both clocks captured the same time: the dual time exposure of the past and the present, which Fiat called 'nuclear time' (ibid.).

From the moment exposed to high doses of radiation, residents in Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima had to live through an oscillating time that flowed back and forth between the tragic past and the on-going present. For many, it became difficult to imagine an unconstrained future devoid of worries, because, to reiterate, the future could no longer be seen as a 'blank piece of paper' (Washida and Akasaka, 2012: 206). By this logic, one could also argue that the desire to recover the unpolluted past was equally shattered for many residents, who dwelled in close proximity to the Fukushima Dai-ichi

Nuclear Power Plant. No matter how they craved to return to the nostalgic past, the safe haven lost was lost forever. Restoring the past and reconstructing a future were equally difficult tasks for those survivors of Fukushima.

A traumatic disaster of any sort, whether natural or man-made, is, indeed, likely to impair the matrix of quotidian life. However, after most of these disasters, what naturally ensues is the recovery process: humans stand up, once again, to restore their lives. An account given by anthropologist Akasaka Norio exemplifies that this survival instinct was also observed at the Miyagi and Iwate prefectures soon after the earthquake and tsunami on 11 March 2011. As a leading scholar who has continued his fieldwork in the Tōhoku region for over three decades, Akasaka asserts that the tsunami survivors in two prefectures were 'ready to float back [to normal life]' after several months, as they had 'already hit the rock bottom' of misery (Washida and Akasaka, 2012: 18). By stark comparison, Akasaka explains that the Fukushima residents, who coexist with the potential damage of radioactivity, could not 'see the bottom of the damage' (ibid.).

Setouchi Jakuchō, a Buddhist nun, writer and activist, confesses that when she preached in different outdoor venues in the Tōhoku region, the Fukushima people reacted differently to the tsunami survivors. When Setouchi reached out to the survivors of the earthquake and tsunami, they 'hugged her impulsively in tears' (ibid.: 17). By contrast, when she spoke to the Fukushima villagers, Setouchi recalls that no matter how passionate her speech was, the listeners' expressions remained 'blunt': they were 'completely unapproachable' (ibid.) This is presumably because many people who evacuated from the Fukushima prefecture were starting to understand the endless nature of the tragedy: it might continue for years, decades or even centuries. People feared that they might never be able to return to their homelands, or restore their previous lives.

In fact, tens of thousands of residents in and around Fukushima were displaced from their homelands after 11 March 2011. For example, as of February 2015, there were still 71,755 evacuees displaced within Fukushima and 47,219 who had moved outside of the prefecture – including 13,308 children under 18.[60] Considering the dangerous radioactive level in certain designated areas, many of these internally displaced people knew in their hearts that restoring their pre-catastrophe lives was impossible. An anecdote of a ninety-year-old woman, who committed suicide months after the disaster, speaks volumes about their cruel condition, separated from their erstwhile home.

The woman, who dwelled in Minami-soma city, committed suicide after leaving a note that said 'my shelter is my grave' (Washida and Akasaka, 2012: 18). For a ninety-year-old woman, sudden displacement from her home was not only a state of physical displacement, but also a deprivation of identity. Since a clear timescale for when the uncertain state would end was not provided, the woman felt that her home, identity, and thus the basis of her life, was indefinitely deprived of her. Not willing to prolong her empty life suspended in the dual time frame between the past tragedy and the uncertain future, she took her own life away. It is much easier for young people to recreate their homes whenever and wherever they decamp. However, for the elderly, being displaced topographically as well as temporarily is not only banishment from home but the eradication of hope.

Kitamura Sō's *Ode to Joy* and 'Buoyant Nihilism' in the 1980s

Based on the proposition that a nuclear catastrophe yields oscillating time, this chapter sheds light on theatre productions that adopt time frames, which are different from the linear and the cyclic types. Two plays will be specifically analysed in detail. The first is

Ode to Joy (*Hogiuta*, 1979) by Kitamura Sō (b.1952) drafted a few years before the

Chernobyl disaster; and the second, is a play consisting of three vignettes – *Chime for*

Return (*Kaeri no aizu*, 2011), *Waiting Dining Table* (*Matteru shokutaku*, 2011), and

World of the Pouring Salt (*Shiofuru sekai*, 2011) – all written by Fujita Takahiro

(b.1985) immediately after the Fukushima disaster. Three years afterwards in 2014, the

three small plays, which all dealt with nostalgia, or, more specifically, the impossibility

of returning home, were integrated into a single play and presented at the Tokyo

Metropolitan Theatre (Tokyo Geijutsu Gekijō).

No researcher, to this day, has juxtaposed Kitamura and Fujita as analogous playwrights.

Indeed, the verbal, gestural, musical and other stylistic elements that the two develop are

anything but similar. However, when all embellishments are stripped away, it becomes

apparent that the libidinal drives that underpin their creations are strikingly alike: their

plays are based on the wish to halt time, in order to prolong the memories of the

nostalgic past and to avoid approaching a threatening future. In their plays, time does not

simply move forward. Rather, just like the aforementioned clocks that preserve the past

in the immediate present, time drifts back and forth between two different dates.

Drawing a parallel between the two plays clarifies that there are three artistic traits that

can be identified in both works, which are all rooted in the unattainable wish to stop time.

The first similarity is the restless physical state of the characters, which could be

described as an aimless drifting. Characters in both plays are constantly moving to

another state or travelling to another place, without either an objective or a destination. It

could be said that the nomadic lifestyles that the characters adopt are reflections of the

physical insecurity of the nuclear-disaster victims in reality. Being deprived of both the

possibility of returning back home and that of positively moving forward, the only option

left for them is to drift around, suspended in time and between spaces, without much aim.

The second resemblance seems to contradict the first one, although only initially: it is the two playwrights' evasion of, or even aversion towards, change. From beneath the characters' restless physical transitions portrayed on the stage, both dramatists reveal their repulsion towards the constantly shifting precarious society. Deluged by the series of uncertainties in post-nuclear societies, the two theatre-makers reveal their adamant will to be fixated in an absolute state. That is, for the sake of assuaging their anxieties, they try to thwart change and maintain stability.

The third analogy is the two theatre-makers' wish to escape nostalgically into the past. Yearning for a time and a place that offer calmness amidst rampant capitalistic constructions and nuclear destructions, Kitamura and Fujita express their will to escape nostalgically into the past – even though both of them fully know that that wish will never be fulfilled. To be more specific, as will be discussed later as a crucial point in this chapter, their 'painful condition (*algia*)' to 'return home (*nostos*)' is different from an ordinary sort of nostalgia: more than willing to recall their past, they wish to prolong the present peacefulness from the standpoint of the grim future (Davis, 1979: 1). In this sense, it could be argued that what they depict is a *nuclear nostalgia*, so to speak, which is rendered through the bleak assumption that the state of the future will be worse than today. Based on this assumption, they wish to preserve the agreeable present, as it could be lost anytime soon. They cherish calm moments in the present in order to temporarily forget the rapid changes that lead them to the ominous future. Nuclear nostalgia is a remedial measure taken by the artists to halt time in the present – temporarily enabling them to escape to a safe haven constructed on the stage.

Noted above is only the crux of the analogies between the two theatre-makers, which will be unpacked later in this chapter. However, before moving on to assessing three similarities, the basic plot, structure and themes with regards to each play should be

provided. The explanation of key issues in the plays is useful for understanding where the two plays rest in the canonical map of contemporary Japanese theatre. By grasping the larger picture, both diachronically and synchronically, the importance of the main question posed in the chapter will, in turn, be highlighted. And, again, that question is: Why do plays written in different epochs and by different playwrights portray a similar imagination on the stage?

Let us first proceed with *Ode to Joy*. Written and directed by Kitamura Sō, the play premiered on 15 December 1979, at the Suzuran Minami-za (*The Lily of the Valley South Theatre*) in Nagoya. It was presented by Total Produce Organizers ★ Company (*Gekidan TPO shi★dan*), founded by Kitamura in 1970. The company name changed several times from Comet '86 (*Suisei '86*) to Project Navi (*Purojekuto nabi*), until it ultimately disbanded in 2003. Nearly four decades have passed since the first production, but it is still regarded by many critics as the first play that introduced the aesthetics of the 1980s Japanese avant-garde theatre.[61] Leading critics such as Senda Akihiko, Nishidō Kōjin, and Hasebe Hiroshi all agree that *Ode to Joy* is, indeed, the precursor of the 1980s theatre. The central point of their assertion is that it was the very first play to depict the post-nuclear condition not as a tragedy, but as a buoyant comedy (Senda, 2001:337; Nishidō, 1987:83; Hasebe, 1993:24). For instance, Nishidō argues that the common denominator of 1980s theatre practitioners is the tendency to adopt 'nihilistic humour (*Kyomu teki yūmoa*)' (1987:83). In like manner, Senda maintains, borrowing a phrase directly from an interview with Kitamura, that the psyche of the 1980s theatre-makers could be summarised as 'buoyant nihilism (*Akarui kyomu kan*)' (Senda, 2001: 342).

Despite the fact that *Ode to Joy* is considered the first Japanese play to envision a post-nuclear-war world, surprisingly Kitamura asserts that he personally has no anti-nuclear intentions. In fact, even after the Fukushima disaster, he boldly claimed that he had not

'abandoned the dream for nuclear fusion power production' (Kitamura, 2012: 172). This contentious comment, however, should not be taken too literally. Kitamura is a greatly elusive artist, who always parries attacks by deliberately making provocative comments such as that *Ode to Joy* is a 'completely slapdash play' (Yamato, 1996: 47). Therefore, a more plausible interpretation of the comment would be either that Kitamura is performing his lightness in order to rebuff blind venerations as well as meticulous analysis; or, rather, since Kitamura was diagnosed as hypochondriac two months before the premiere of *Ode to Joy*, he was just mentally muddled at the time, and literally could not decipher the logic of his thoughts (ibid.: 44).

In fact, more than three decades after the premier performance, Kitamura confessed that, initially, he 'could not grasp' what he had drafted. However, since he nevertheless wanted to understand the craft, he 'continued writing sequels of the play' (Kitamura, 2013). This comment is suggestive of the fact that, at the outset, Kitamura did not have a clear topic in mind. For Kitamura, theatre is a device in which a slew of random thoughts in life is sublimated into a more graspable form. And, in order to obtain a clear frame for his thoughts, in 1982, *Ode to Joy II* was written, specifically, in the form of 'a complete parody of the bible' (Kitamura, 2012: 171). In 1985 followed *Ode to Joy III: To the West*, written in a style reminiscent of a *kagura* performance (a traditional Shinto theatrical dance, ibid.: 172). And, in 2012, as a reaction to the Fukushima disaster, Kitamura wrote *Ode to Joy IV: Be Born in the Planet like a Fire* (*Hogiuta IV– Hi no gotoku hoshi ni umare yo*).

Perhaps, the primary intention of Kitamura's play was not to convey an anti-nuclear message. The play mines much deeper than a simple political agenda, and reflects the complicated psyche of post-nuclear citizens. Having said that, however, if Kitamura was completely indifferent to the negative outcomes of nuclear power, why would he respond

to the Fukushima disaster and draft yet another sequel, after a hiatus of nearly three decades? It seems as though when humanity is in peril, Kitamura is impelled to write a buoyant play, in order to rebut pernicious threats and reaffirm the indefatigable strength of humanity.

After the Chernobyl disaster, the sense of buoyant nihilism was highlighted in numerous theatre productions. Playwright-directors such as Ikuta Yorozu (b. 1949), Kōkami Shōji (b. 1958) and, to a lesser degree, Kawamura Takeshi (b. 1959) were among the representative theatre-makers. On 26 April, 1:23 AM, reactor number four of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant exploded in the city of Pripyat, Ukraine (then in the Soviet Union near the Belarusian border). It had been reported that it took only four seconds for the nuclear fuel rods to melt, which later caused the phreatic explosion (Hasebe, 1993: 19). According to Svetlana Alexievich, during the Second World War, the Germans 'wiped out 619 villages on its territory along with their inhabitants'; whereas, in Chernobyl, 'the country lost 485 villages and towns: seventy remain buried forever beneath the earth' (Alexievich, 2016:1). The provocative comments highlights that what took the Germans years to undertake was done in sheer seconds in the nuclear disaster. Observing a vast landscape transform to an uninhabitable area in a few seconds, Japanese playwrights – the only theatre-makers to live in a country attacked by atomic bombs – became greatly preoccupied with future nuclear threats. This is why in the 1980s, plays that were 'set in a post-nuclear-war world' became significantly popular (Hasebe, 1993: 24). In fact, a book written by Hasebe, which is devoted to assessing nuclear-haunted plays in the 1980s, is suggestively titled *Revolution in Four Seconds* (ibid.).

Two months after the Chernobyl disaster in June 1986, two plays opened in Shimokitazawa: a district of Tokyo known for fringe theatres, especially in the 1980s

and 1990s. One was Kōkami's *The Place Where We Can Hear the Swan Song* (*Suwan songu ga kikoeru basho*), and the other was Kawamura's *Last Frankenstein* (*Rasuto furankenshutain*, Hasebe, 1993:21). As Hasebe points out, Kōkami and Kawamura are 'irrevocably different in tastes, methods of expression and the directions they head toward'; yet both of their visions are unequivocally absorbed in the 'shadow of the nuclear disaster' (ibid.: 20).

In light of the argument developed in this chapter, it is noteworthy that a brief skit, clearly cited from Kitamura's *Ode to Joy*, is inserted into Kōkami's play. A few minutes into the play, an anonymous man pulling a cart appears on the stage. Then, he mutters: 'Kyōko, please wait. It's snowing. Do you think that it's also snowing in Mohenjo-Daro? Please wait, Kyōko' (Kōkami, 1987: 28). As will become clear via further analysis in this section, his appearance and words suggest that he is an incarnation of Gesaku, one of the main characters of Kitamura's play. Through the introduction of a character whose point of reference the audience would instantly recognise, Kōkami pays homage to Kitamura. He tells the audience that before all the 1980s playwrights, including himself, Kitamura had already written about Chernobyl in *Ode to Joy*: it was an omen of the post-Chernobyl world.

Notwithstanding that Kitamura wrote the play seven years before the Chernobyl disaster, *Ode to Joy* portrays the world that portends the nuclear event. Kitamura's landmark play includes all three characteristics of the 1980s Japanese avant-garde theatre defined by Hasebe. That is; first, the sensibility to consider 'destructions and desolations as beautiful places'; second, the decision to adopt 'a playful acting style'; and, third, to set the play in 'a post-nuclear-war-world' (Hasebe, 1993: 24). The reason the 1980s playwrights adopted these specific types of vision was underpinned by the sociocultural conditions of the time. Among many conditions, one was, of course, the effect of the

Chernobyl disaster; and another equally important factor was the soaring economic growth affecting every corner of society.

In the same year that *Ode to Joy* was presented, American sociologist Ezra F. Vogel published a provocative book called *Japan as Number One* (1979). Vogel asserted that, by 1978, the Japanese were 'producing approximately as much steel as the United States', and, out of twenty-two of the largest modern blast furnaces, 'fourteen were in Japan' (Vogel, 1979:10). The 1980s was a 'dreamlike decade', when 'the real estate value of metropolitan Tokyo exceeded that of the entire United States' (Rimer, Mori and Poulton, 2014: 504). Observing the bottomless human desire for money, Kitamura construed that 'the construction of modern civilisation predicates demolition' and, being influenced by the collective anxiety towards nuclear war apparent at this time, he surmised that its ultimate form was 'nuclear destructions' (Kitamura, 1991: 18). Based on this fear towards capitalistic development, rather than worshipping modern skyscrapers, Kitamura cherished 'a vacant lot with remnants of destructions, a disrupted warehouse, and empty spaces' (Chikushi, 1985: 49). For Kitamura, an empty lot, abandoned to oblivion, was a symbol of reassuring stability. Within the systematic cycle of destruction and construction repeated in the city, it seemed to be the only space exempted from the law of change. In other words, prompted by the deep-rooted uneasiness towards restless construction, and the reactionary impulse to beautify desolation, Kitamura was capable of imagining the desolate world after the ultimate destruction – the post-nuclear-war world – even before Chernobyl.

It is very well known that the epic *manga* (comic book) *Akira*, written by Ōtomo Katsuhiro in 1982, begins with a description explaining that the characters are dwelling in a ravaged world, in which World War III has destroyed everything. It is less well known among the public, however, that preceding Ōtomo's *Akira*, Kitamura wrote a play

that begins with a stage direction that also suggests that he envisions a dilapidated post-nuclear world. *Ode to Joy* begins with a stage direction as follows:

> '[A] local town in the western part of Japan, after a nuclear war. A road piled with debris. In the midst of the smell of the burnt air […] with their household goods piled on a cart, Gesaku and Kyōko enter'. (Kitamura, 1989: 3)

There are three characters in the play: Kyōko, a young woman and a petty street performer; Gesaku, a young man who performs a *Manzai* comedy (a traditional style of stand-up comedy in Japan usually involving two performers) with Kyōko; and, Yasuo, a beggar with peculiar abilities. In the opening scene, Kyōko sees a 'flash over there' and asks why missiles are still flying over the skies of Tokyo even though the war has ended (ibid.). In a manner no less casual than talking about the weather, Gesaku responds that 'the war may be over, but there's plenty of missiles left. No use saving 'em.' (ibid.). The undisturbed manner in which the two refer to nuclear missiles informs the audience that the play is set in a near future, where coexisting with nuclear arsenals has become the norm.

The 'playful acting style,' which Hasebe points out as the second characteristic of the post-Chernobyl *angura* plays, is adopted throughout *Ode to Joy* (Hasebe, 1993: 24). And one of the most critical elements to generate the buoyant atmosphere in the play is illocutionary; that is, the manner in which Kyōko and Gesaku speak. Throughout the play, the two communicate in an artificial dialect, which incorporates lingoes from the Kansai region (western Japan). By adopting an artificial Kansai dialect, which is arguably more rhythmical and colourful than standard Japanese, the play retains a light air. As a great number of comedians use the Kansai dialect, when the audience listens to the witty conversation of Kyōko and Gesaku, it is not difficult to link their blabber to a comic performance. In fact, Kamiya Tadataka asserts that the play is 'structured so that

when one leaves and two remain on the stage […], a *Manzai* comedy begins. And, when the three come together, it becomes a comedy skit' (Kamiya, 2005: 161).

The comical approach towards a nuclear disaster is most notably observed in the 1982 revival production directed by Katō Kenichi. In this production, which is considered as one of the most successful and 'comical' restaging of *Ode to Joy*, Gesaku, also performed by Katō, looks far away to the sky and murmurs, 'god… only a half of Mount Fuji has survived'[62] (Murai, 1982). The line is not written in the original play, yet it enhances the playful atmosphere that the playwright aims to render. For most Japanese, Mount Fuji is the most immutable cultural symbol that they can think of. The mountain being reduced to half is thus so nonsensical that the audience cannot help bursting into laughter. Even when Katō remounted the production thirty years afterwards in March 2012, a year after the Fukushima disaster, it was praised by critic Uchida Yōichi for its mixture of 'metaphysical dialogue [and] outrageous laughter', which results in 'heartrending sadness' (Uchida, 2012b). This juxtaposition of antipodes – extreme desolation and buoyant laughter – is, indeed, the quintessence of the post-Chernobyl plays in the 1980s. In these plays, uncontainable angst towards a nuclear disaster oozed out whenever the jovial laughter stopped. For the sake of contrastingly highlighting the darkness suppressed beneath the playfulness, in *Ode to Joy*, a 'light and comical' atmosphere, reminiscent of a '*kamigata-manzai* (a stand-up comedy delivered in Kansai dialect)' is adopted, even though the play concerns a grievous theme 'such as the extinction of human beings through a nuclear war' (Senda, 1985: 154).

There is a philosophical tenet underpinning Kitamura's preference for lightness over seriousness. His conviction is taken from the pagan philosopher Gilbert K. Chesterton. It is well known that throughout his oeuvre, yet most notably in *Orthodoxy* (1909), Chesterton venerated contradiction over consistency, and lightness over heaviness.

According to the philosopher, when a person overly tries to maintain rational coherence, the act could militate against maintaining one's equilibrium and could lead the same person to madness. Conversely, Chesterton, as well as Kitamura, believes that sanity is preserved through affirming contradictions. Permitting contradictions, rather than holding on to a single truth, is the optimal way for avoiding lunacy. Distinct from the widely accepted idea that links insanity to a lack of reason, Chesterton and Kitamura argue conversely that a lunatic is 'not the man who has lost his reason,' but 'the man who has lost everything except his reason' (Chesterton, 1909: 30).

When this thought is transposed to the consideration of a post-nuclear world, it could be said that in a society in which previous values are shattered, and conditions shift by the minute, life seems to be more feasible when a person is pliable rather than unshakable. Adhering to a monolithic belief in a post-nuclear society may render more damage than benefit to the subject. The more adamant the person becomes, the more ruinous the expected outcome could be. By latching on to an obsolete interpretation of the world, and by not updating this vision for decades, it becomes increasingly difficult for the person to be in concert with the environment. Ultimately, when one's interpretation of reality becomes completely out of kilter with the world-as-it-is, that interpretation suddenly transforms into an illusion. Inelasticity bourgeons madness.

Thus, concurring with Chesterton, Kitamura asserts that lightness is the optimal path to retaining sanity. For Kitamura, to be light and frivolous is an act of revolt against the 'grain of human nature' (Kitamura, 1983: 77). Once a person is stifled in the everyday, it is significantly easier to misinterpret one's navel-gazing narrowness with philosophical deepness. Subsequently, what frequently occurs is that people become needlessly tragic over the most trivial issues. As Chesterton asserts, 'solemnity flows out of men naturally' (Chesterton, 1909: 222). To render lightness is, however, much more difficult as people

have to maintain criticality towards the everyday, and 'leap', so to speak, from their habitual values: 'it is easy to be heavy; difficult to be light' (ibid.).

In Japanese, the name Gesaku literally signifies comical writing. In the Edo period, the playful style of fiction called *gesaku*, which dealt with worldly matters such as romance and humour, was widely popular among the public. Though deceptively light in appearance, these fictions, at least in the late-eighteenth century, were not considered merely ludicrous works. By speaking in hyperbole, and through calculated laughter, the *gesaku* authors indirectly criticised intellectuals and pundits (Marra, 1999: 277). In a similar vein, one could argue that the playfulness in Kitamura's play does not suggest a lack of depth. In fact, his comical characters, one of them suggestively named Gesaku, 'become a vehicle that triggers audience's self-awareness, through its many connotations and laughter' (Hasebe, 1993: 43). When laughing at the absurd post-nuclear world on the stage, the audience notices in turn that reality *per se* is not so different. The laughter cast towards the laughable returns back, like a boomerang, and attacks the laughing subjects, which then makes them correct their manners. As Henri Bergson asserts, laughter is, indeed, 'the corrective' (Bergson, 2005: 9).

Kitamura highlights the misery of his comical characters by placing them in a contrastingly desolate condition reminiscent of Beckett's apocalyptic world. After all, no matter how carefree they may initially seem, Kyōko and Gesaku are living in a state in which they might be the only survivors of the nuclear Armageddon. This is why there is always an undercurrent of darkness beneath the comical performances the two deliver in front of the townspeople. In fact, midway through the play, Gesaku confesses to Yasuo that not a single spectator has come to see their performance. In order to restore his nonchalant gaiety, however, Gesaku immediately adds that although 'you can never see' them, the audience *do* exist: they are just 'invisible' (Kitamura, 1989: 38). This response

by Gesaku should not be taken merely as a pretext. When considering the setting of the play, Kyōko and Gesaku may indeed be performing to the invisible audience: the dead spirits.

When drawing a further parallel between Beckett and Kitamura, the appearance of the third character, Yasuo, denotes the latter's influence from the Irish avant-gardist. At the beginning of the play, Kyōko and Gesaku are wandering about without much to do, just like Vladimir and Estragon. Then, a few minutes into the play, they suddenly encounter a nondescript man, mumbling indistinctively and nearly starving to death. When the man introduces himself as 'Ye…Shua,' it becomes clear that the structure of the play is borrowed from *Waiting for Godot* (ibid.: 7).[63] Since Yeshua, or Joshua, is a completely alien name to Japanese, Kyōko and Gesaku decide to call him Yasuo. Notwithstanding the misnomer, what the appellation suggests is obvious: like Godot, he is the anticipated saviour of the world. However, sadly, since the play depicts a world that has been 'already destroyed', the advent of the saviour is nearly pointless (Hasebe, 1993: 309).

Kitamura's portrayal of a shabby Yasuo connotes that even if he had descended onto the earth sooner, it is most likely that he would have failed to save the world. Divine power is required for undertaking the ultimate task, but Yasuo is far from omnipotent. The only trick he performs is to increase the number of small objects on stage, which are put into his pocket (ibid.). Even this is half-meaningless, as Yasuo cannot create *ex nihilo*. Owing to this lack of capability, at the beginning of the play, Yasuo, who has run out of food, is begging on the street. As Senda argues, the wretched act reveals that human beings now live in a hopeless universe, in which the saviour becomes 'a beggar', and, conversely, asks humans for pity (Senda, 1985: 155).

Amidst the buoyantly nihilistic atmosphere, a ray of hope is presented in the penultimate scene of the play. After travelling with the two for days, Yasuo declares that he will now

head to Jerusalem: the place where Jesus resurrects himself. Yasuo casually asks Gesaku to come along, but Gesaku rejects the offer and decides instead to travel to Mohenjo-Daro: the lost city of the Indus Valley civilisation, which, literally, means the mound of the dead. This parting between God (Yasuo) and humans (Kyōko and Gesaku) arguably connotes three mutually connected messages. First, it suggests the untoward ignorance of human beings. Even though God offers help, Gesaku neglects it and unwittingly chooses a road that leads to death. Second, it reveals the merciless reality that, after repeated nuclear disasters caused by the ignorance of humans, people are no longer guided by divine providence. In the present age, people have to pave their own way through individual effort. And, third, the slightly optimistic vision provided is that, despite all the destructions pervading the world, when Yasuo reaches Jerusalem, he may rise again to give humans faith and hope for the future.

The snow falling on the stage in the final scene substantiates the slight hope that humans are to be dispensed with. Kitamura ends the play with a stage direction, which reveals that 'from this day on, the ice age began' (Kitamura, 1989: 66). Considered at face value, the description reveals the approaching extinction of humanity. Yet, when reading in reference to Kitamura's critique towards rampant capitalist society, in which advanced technologies such as the nuclear power generates enormous quantities of heat and toxins, the frosty snow could be interpreted as a rebuff towards a greed-driven capitalist world. Through the depiction of the snowfall, Kitamura suggests that humans should slow down, cool down, and cease to generate redundant energy. When fat flakes of snow start to fall, Kyōko becomes excited like an adolescent girl and shouts: 'Look, it melts, it melts. When I grab it, it melts. This is a real snow for sure' (ibid.). Her unsullied innocence seems to suggest that the century-long ice age will wash away filthy pollution, and allow the future humanity to be born again, in an untainted land.

Fujita Takahiro and the Post-Fukushima Imagination in the 2010s

Whilst Kitamura's buoyantly nihilistic theatre was considered by some critics, such as

Hasebe, as an apposite device for social criticism, others, like Uchino, tartly criticised

the seemingly blithe theatre of the 1980s as too 'childish' (Uchino, 2000: 89). What

Uchino suggests by the term is that, simply, these theatre-makers are too immature to

cope with reality. According to Uchino, the apocalyptic views that the artists readily

adopt in their plays are nothing but the escapist attitude of an unfledged child, who,

alone, 'cannot face the real world' (ibid.). Indeed, when compared with their parent

generation of theatre-makers in the 1960s, who, more or less, considered their works as

instruments for expressing political anguish, the theatre-makers in the 1980s mined a

relatively narrow political seam. Observing this contrast in terms of political engagement,

Noda Manabu argues, by using homonymous terms, that whereas the first generation of

angura theatre-makers was politically 'aggressive' (*tōsō-teki*, using *Kanji* characters for

combat), the latter can be illustrated as politically 'evasive' (*tōsō-teki*, in this case, using

characters for escape, Noda, 2009: 75).

In the thick of the consumer society of the 1980s, in which the culture of so-called

'economic nationalism' was at its height, one of the few sanctuaries that remained

artistically intact was the Toga International Arts Festival (Iwasaki, Ueno and Kitada,

2008: 17). Launched by the theatre director Suzuki Tadashi in 1982, in mountainous

backwoods in Toyama prefecture, the festival invited prominent European and American

avant-garde artists such as 'Robert Wilson, Meredith Monk, John Fox, and Tadeusz

Kantor,' along with those Japanese counterparts such as 'Terayama Shūji [and] Ohta

Shōgo' (Uchino, 2000: 86). The fact that an international theatre festival of such scale

was organised not in the capital city, but in a tiny rural village, is telling evidence of the

difficulty of avoiding the effects of capitalist culture in Tokyo. Equally important to note is that the artists invited to Toga were mostly a generation older than the emergent artists. What could be inferred from this is that the politically engaged theatre-makers of the former generation were temporarily dispelled from the money-bound metropolis. In fact, Kara Jūrō, one of the few playwrights of the former generation, who decided to remain in Tokyo, was compelled to assert that the younger generation, buoyantly enjoying the rush of capital, was infected by what he sarcastically diagnosed as 'happiness syndrome' (Nishidō, 2002:4).

Retrospectively speaking, however, to conclude that the so-called childish theatre of the 1980s was altogether apolitical would be too reductive. In appearance, the buoyant atmosphere was indeed pervasive on stages, and, in some theatre productions, the empty embellishments were the only thing they offered. One exemplar of the rise of commercial theatres in the 1980s was the first makeshift theatre that the Shiki Theatre Company (*Gekidan Shiki*) opened in Nishi-shinjuku in 1983. The theatre was dedicated to a yearlong performance of the Broadway musical *Cats*, which ended in box office success with an astonishing thirty-two years of ensuing intermittent performances across Japan. Against the backdrop of the soaring popularity of entertainment theatres, several theatre-makers such as Kitamura, and also Kawamura Takeshi, adopted laughter and lightness as a deceptive measure to induce the political awareness of the audience, though in a distinct manner from previous generations. As already noted in the previous section, just like the *gesaku* writers in the late-eighteenth century, ludicrousness was used as a means to an end and not an end in itself: it functioned as a means for social critique.

More critically, the frenetic political mood of 1960s theatre was shifting from lively to moribund. Noda Hideki, the leading figure of the 1980s theatre, testifies that even though

'many artists were still preoccupied with the feverish and serious atmosphere of the former eras,' he already foresaw that 'doing the same thing in our generation would be meaningless' (Iwaki, 2009b: 62). When theatres lose touch with reality, which is perpetually in a state of becoming, they cease to be accepted by contemporary audiences. If the audience is not addressed in an appropriate register that feels true to their time, it is most likely that people will be alienated even before considering the content. Thus, countering the 'feverish and serious' temperament of their predecessors, it was necessary for the theatre-makers of the 1980s to invent their own language. As the anarchical spirit that underscored the earlier *angura* theatre was starting to distance younger audience members, theatre-makers such as Kitamura calculatedly adopted a blasé feeling to reincorporate the youth as active agents of the social discourse.

However, in the next three decades, the calculated tactics underpinning the lightness dissipated: theatres simply became inane. Especially for those theatre-makers who were born around the time that the so-called childish theatre was widely accepted, the art of theatre was no longer *a priori* political. For them, by contrast, theatres functioned as a form of closed haven that temporarily shut out the negative influences surrounding them. Living in a time of ceaseless terror and calamities, including the nuclear peril after Fukushima, theatres transformed into a subjective asylum, which at least safeguarded themselves, their families, and their immediate circle of friends from various aggressions.

At first glance, these theatre-makers of the *ten-nendai*, or, the 2010s in Japan, could be labelled as escapists. However, the escapist attitude should not be attacked impetuously without examining the sociocultural context. No matter how immature their sentiments may seem, and indeed by comparison to theatre-makers of former generations they are, it is always important to consider personal perspectives against their respective backgrounds. In this specific case, what should be noted is the lingering economic

depression that has overshadowed the future from the day these artists were born. The unavoidable outcome of the unprecedented depression in the modern history of Japan was that it cemented a torpid society, which subsequently generated a youth who are satisfied even with a timid life.

The collective understanding that they now live in a declining country has consolidated younger people's affirmation of the present, and, in turn, proffered the negation of the seemingly less affluent future. In fact, certain statistics reveal that, since the period after the Second World War, the highest number of people in their twenties are now content with their 'present' state. According to the Public Opinion Survey on National Life conducted in 2014, 79.1 percent of men and women in their twenties answered that they were 'satisfied' with their life. Contrastingly, however, when the same group of subjects was asked if they 'feel worried or anxious in their daily lives', 62.6 per cent of them answered 'yes'.[64] What these conflicting statistics suggest is that young people are more likely to appreciate their fleeting happiness, precisely because they are intimidated by what awaits them in the future. Underpinned by a viable assumption that the future is steered toward the state of decline, youths protect and prolong the small paradise felt in the here and now.

Fujita Takahiro, born in 1985, founded his company Mum and Gypsy in 2007. The company name already reveals the opposing instincts of the *ten-nendai* theatre-makers: the name, simply, is a juxtaposition of two concepts that Fujita equally values. 'Mum' infers a mother matrix, an ontological shelter, which is always stable and reliable. As a conscious decision to stabilise his artistic identity, Fujita works with the same team of trusted actors and staff. More still, he overly protects the motives and concepts that propelled him to become an artist during puberty. The artistic tropes that he often uses imply that Fujita, to a certain degree, sanctifies his adolescent days in his hometown.

'Gypsy', by contrast, refers to an itinerant working style. He often ventures out to collaborate with artists from various other genres, such as novelist Kawakami Mieko, *manga* writer Kyō Machiko, and performance artist Ameya Norimizu. Also, unlike many insular youths in the same generation, he enjoys touring with his company internationally. Until today, his company has toured Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China and Germany. A brief survey of the company name already reveals that it is a rendition of Fujita's ambivalent artistic disposition. He enjoys dwelling in the peaceful present with an immediate circle of friends, yet he equally looks outward to topple that very stability. It could also be said that the aesthetic frisson of his works appears precisely from the tension between these two poles.

Among theatre-makers of the same generation, such as Shiba Yukio (b. 1982), Miura Naoyuki (b. 1987), Nishio Kaori (b. 1985) and Yamamoto Suguru (b. 1987), Fujita has emerged as the leader of the *ten-nendai* theatre-makers, who focus on capturing present contentment, as it could be lost anytime in the future. Notwithstanding the fifty years' age difference, his talent was even hailed by Ninagawa Yukio, and, although it did not materialise due to Ninagawa's death on 12 May 2016, they had planned a collaborative project together called *Nina no Wata* (*Nina's Cotton*).[65] In order to grasp the creative root of the late theatre legend, Fujita drafted a biographical play by recollecting Ninagawa's memories, especially during his youth. Its biographical structure reveals Fujita's predilection for putting more weight on the personal than the political. Ninagawa's political agendas in the 1960s, his transference to the commercial theatre in the 1970s, and the intercultural clashes he experienced when touring abroad in the 1980s, were all merged and dissipated to reveal Ninagawa's personal agonies.

Certainly distinct from Ninagawa, and differing from previous generations of theatre-makers, *ten-nendai* theatre-makers such as Fujita seem to feel much less hesitant to be

absorbed in their solipsistic world. Without any qualms, Fujita asserts that he started making plays 'by referring only to personal matters' and that he 'sought to continue doing so' (Fujita, 2016). During the time when younger theatre-makers, especially in Europe, started looking outwards to society and to history in order to be committed to various forms of 'documentary theatres' (which Peter Weiss defined as 'a theatre of factual reports […] without altering the contents but structuring the form'), conversely, their Japanese counterparts began to develop what could be described as a *diary theatre* (Irmer, 2006: 17-18). That is, while the documentary theatre-makers gleaned external information, such as reporting of massacres (*Hate Radio* by Milo Rau), up-to-date facts on democratic rights (*Minsk 2011* by the Belarus Free Theatre), and statistics reflecting the diversity of a global city (*100% City* by Rimini Protokoll), the Japanese artists probed internally, to collect childhood memories and personal confessions. They developed a theatre that is reminiscent of a long monologue penned in an adolescent's diary.

In light of this thought, it is telling that Fujita first made his name by developing a series of plays that he calls the 'Children's Series [*kodomo shiriizu*]' (Tokunaga and Fujiwara, 2013: 45). Comparable to keeping hold of one's memories in a diary, the series of plays were drafted to recall various fragments of memories from his youth back in Hokkaido. This series consisted of plays such as *Children and Momo, All in the Forest* (*Kodomo mo momo mo, morino naka*, 2009), *Drifting, Burning* (*Tayutau, moeru*, 2010), *The Days of Bubbles (Shabon no koro*, 2010), and *Hello School, Bye-bye* (*Harō sukūru, bai bai*, 2010). Expressions such as 'children,' 'the days of' and 'school' used in the titles reveal that these plays deal with a nostalgic past, rendering visible the 'small and delicate world of vulnerable teenage girls' on the stage (ibid.: 45). Around three decades after Uchino

had pejoratively labelled the 1980s theatre-makers as 'childish', Fujita willingly developed plays that were not only childish, but in which the actors become children.

For Fujita, children are mnemonic devices that allow an audience to nostalgically recall a carefree past. They are the sensitive mediums that remember and regenerate the memories of the erstwhile home. It is a relief to know that the playwright-director is well aware of the fact that, in reality, he 'cannot go back to that place, or, that time' (Fujita, 2016). Nevertheless, Fujita admits he is unable to stop thinking about 'what it means to be not able to return,' and, from this deep sense of loss, he represents nostalgic moments in which he can feel, at least momentarily, that a peaceful past is securely preserved in the present (ibid.). According to Fujita, when trying to juxtapose the two different times on the stage – the nostalgic past and the on-going present – it can be done most effectively when the adult actors perform as innocent children. The performance itself is realised by mature bodies in the here and now, yet retains children's memories of the past. In order to present the dual time frame with utmost clarity, Fujita prefers working with young actors, often with a slight frame and a childlike voice, who can physically and mentally shift easily between maturity and adolescence.

Only three months after the Fukushima disaster, Fujita started writing another series of plays that shed light on the theme of nostalgia, or more specifically, the condition of displacement. When observing the huge number of people being displaced from their homes around Fukushima, the playwright-director felt the urge to grapple with the situation through writing. Thus, after the catastrophe, in June, he finished the first part of the triptych *Chime for Return* (*Kaeri no aizu,* 2011); in July, *Waiting Dining Table* (*Matteta shokutaku,* 2011); and one month later, *World of the Pouring Salt* (*Shio furu sekai*, 2011). At the beginning of the following year, Fujita won the Kishida Kunio Drama Award with these short plays; and in 2014 the three vignettes were combined

together into a single play. In the postscript of the published playtext, Fujita reveals the

motive behind drafting the three plays:

> What is returning? I don't know. Where should I return? And, suppose, I
> have a place to return, who is waiting for me there? Don't know either.
> […] Did we hear the chime for returning? In 2011, [places were] deluged
> with people who cannot return. I wonder if that dining table, back then, is
> still waiting [us]. In 2011, I had to become aware of dining tables. […] I
> started writing the plays in a mood that is not too heavy, yet, not light
> either. (Fujita, 2012: 196)

The convoluted register that randomly mixes the personal and the collective is evidence

of how, after the nuclear disaster, Fujita's sense of homelessness involuntarily resonated

with the collective angst of the internally displaced people in and around Fukushima. In

order to understand why he empathised with the Fukushima victims, however, one needs

to be reminded of Fujita's upbringing. Until the age of eighteen, Fujita lived in the tiny

secluded village of Date in Hokkaido prefecture. Surrounded by hills and a mountain

range, the 'only escape route,' literally speaking, was 'the sea' (Fujita, 2012: 194).

Nearly suffocated by years of dwelling in this insular environment, Fujita confesses that,

in his teenage years, he 'prayed everyday' in the hope of escaping the village (ibid.).

However, more than a decade afterwards, and after touring domestically as well as

internationally, Fujita says that he 'sometimes feels' a contradictory urge to go back

home (Fujita, 2016).

Unwittingly mirroring Svetlana Boym's description of a modern nostalgic person, Fujita

is revealing his contradictory tendency to be 'homesick and sick of home, at once'

(Boym, 2002: 50). Homecoming, for Fujita, no longer signifies the recovery of identity.

As with all expatriates, exiles or migrants, Fujita knows that, physically as well as

ontologically, he has already lost the place he once called home. As John Berger argues,

when a person is once displaced from his or her homeland, 'he [*sic*] knows in his heart

that it is impossible to return', because, even if he or she is physically able to return, 'he

does not truly return': 'he himself has been so deeply changed by his emigration' (Berger, 1984: 67). Intensive touring around the globe has indeed changed Fujita internally; and, thus, his sense of home has been dismantled. Nevertheless, Fujita has tried to restore his sense of home, because, again according to Berger, home neither meant family dwelling nor patriotic concepts originally, but the 'centre of the world […] in an ontological sense' (Berger, 1984: 55). To return home, in short, is not only geographical but ontological: a quintessential quest to restore one's identity.

The loss of home torments Fujita's mind, but for him, at least, the act of displacement was an autonomous decision: it was a necessary procedure for his artistic success. Conversely, however, people in Fukushima were forced to leave their homes against their will. Deploring the collective destabilisation of identity foisted upon the Fukushima victims, Fujita drafted three short plays in which the concept of displacement was placed at the core. One can see that Fujita tries to render a state of unrest, uncertainty and volatility through these plays. Even the settings of three loosely-connected plays are all placed in a season of transition, which visually reflects the unstable state of the characters: 'around the time when June is going to end', 'about the time when summer seems to begin in July' and 'in the middle of the summer: sweltering but a chilling air somewhere, in August' (Fujita, 2012: 10, 38, 120). Surrounded by the indeterminate weather and the sound of unsettling rain, the characters reveal their precarious emotions, with angst regarding displacement at their root.

In *Chime for Return*, the sense of displacement, and the consequential loss of identity, is considered a potential threat that may attack the characters in the near future. Quintessentially, Fujita tries to crystallise the moment when the three adult siblings portrayed in the play resided happily together in the same abode. Devoid of a linear narrative, the play goes back and forth in time, with the day of their separation situated at

the core. The eldest sister Riri, the only brother Kaede and the younger sister Suiren (meaning lily, maple and lotus), all in their twenties, are about to part from each other because Riri is moving to a larger city.

At a nondescript bus terminal, Kaede bids farewell to Riri and expresses his chagrin for Suiren not coming to the bus terminal with him. Being the only male character, Kaede supposedly represents the voice of Fujita; and he is fearful of the fact that once his older sister is gone, their collective sense of home will also be gone forever. Manifesting Fujita's obsession towards protecting this past relationship, the farewell at the bus terminal – when Kaede grunts 'What the heck, is she [Suiren] doing,' and Riri replies, 'No... It's all right' – is repeated nine times, at various moments in the play (Fujita, 2012).

Only a month after finishing the first play of the nostalgia series, Fujita drafted *Waiting Dining Table*, in which, as if to mirror the emergent post-Fukushima reality, he focused on the collective sense of displacement in the state of becoming. Around five years have passed since the time of *Chime for Return*, and the reunion of the now middle-aged siblings is placed at the centre of the play. From their casual conversation around a tiny *chabudai* (a low and round dining table), it becomes apparent that among the three, Kaede was the only one who stayed in his hometown. Moreover, as an additional temporal layer, Kaede, reminiscent of Tom in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, narrates the story retrospectively from fifteen years after the reunion enacted on the stage. It is essentially a memory play, in which, 'for the first time in many years,' Riri and Suiren have come back home. And, through the reunion, the opposing feelings of 'familiarity towards the past, and a kind of a shortage of the present' are revealed (Fujita, 2012: 38).

During the years the siblings have lived apart, their father has passed away; and, thus, even when they reunite around the familiar dining table, it is impossible for them to feel that they are protected under the same aegis: conversely, a sense of discomfort and displacement wafts through. Although they are surrounded by the quotidian aesthetics of familiar neighbours, customary breakfasts, cracked bathroom tiles, the same detergents and ever melancholic hydrangeas, the atmosphere lingering around the dining table has undeniably changed. Noticing the shift, Riri, who has returned home with her children, mutters that 'this dining table…is…kind of…somehow…different…from …those days…' (Fujita, 2012: 50). To cite from Berger again, what is revealed in the play is the invisible and intangible quality of a home: 'the mortar, which holds the improvised "home" together' exists only in their 'memory' (Berger, 1984: 64).

In the play, the loss of physical and metaphysical rootedness is represented in two ways: first, through the concentrically mounted stage setting; and second, through the erratic movements the actors perform. Whereas the stage settings for the other two plays in the series are designed through arrangements of rectangular objects, in *Waiting Dining Table*, the setting is developed through the disposition of concentric circles: in a tiny hexagonal room, a round carpet is spread, and on top of it a tiny circular table is placed, around which, siblings and neighbours gather around. Securely and stably, most of the time, the characters sit, relaxed, on the carpet around the tiny *chabudai*. However, when the flow of conversation is disrupted, and the linear structure of time is dissolved, the entire hexagonal setting slowly rotates clockwise, to suggest either the fast-forwarding or the retrograding of time. When time starts to oscillate between the past and the present, the stage starts to shift accordingly, suggesting the characters' unstable condition.

Moreover, whenever time elapses from the present to the past, or vice versa, the characters literally perform a movement that epitomises their uprooted status. When

Fujita abruptly changes the scene from a certain point in time to another, the actors on stage simultaneously perform a quick backward roll, like a child, to imply the elapse of time and their physical displacement. The movement, which is repeated to a vexing degree, suggests that, although the shelter – the dining table – remains fixed, the siblings become disconnected from home, precisely because their lives are constantly rolling and changing. Just like Fukushima evacuees, who were detached from their original social milieu due to forced evacuation, the siblings feel the sense of displacement, not because their home has been demolished, but because their perceptions towards reality have changed. To sum up, it could be argued that the concentric setting and the rolling movement aptly capture the state of a transient habitat of the characters, as well as that of the Fukushima evacuees.

Lastly, in *World of the Pouring Salt*, the sense of homelessness is portrayed as a given fact. The play is set in a remote village by the sea, reminiscent of Fujita's hometown. It conveys a story back in time, when the siblings were merely teenage students. Fujita explains through the stage directions that the crux of the play is twofold: to delineate 'the time and the bodies, changing from high school students to adulthood,' and to portray 'the death of a family member of a friend, and the remorse of those friends' (Fujita, 2012: 120). Fujita implies through the brief description that the adolescent characters in the play are being displaced both from their familiar corporeality and from their dwellings. Owing to uncontrollable and often awkward growth during puberty, the young students in the play consider their bodies as alien. Further, in tandem with the death of the main character's mother, the sense of a safe abode is irreversibly undermined.

A week ago, Hinagiku's mother has jumped off the cliff by the sea. When the daughter arrived at the scene, her mother was 'destroyed…squashed…like a watermelon, and

around her…seagulls […] flocked' (Fujita, 2012: 135). Thus, even when Hinagiku sits next to other girls as usual on the concrete breakwater, she feels as though the very meaning of the world has been already undone. As Berger argues, without a home 'at the centre of the real,' personal narratives, everyday routines and even the experience of time become fragmented (Berger, 1984: 56). As if to substantiate this comment, when Hinagiku sits next to Suiren and the girls by the sea, she experiences the elapsing of time differently. That is, when the girls giggle about the most trivial matters, Hinagiku acts in utmost composure, observing the infinitesimal details around her. The state of fragmented time is most clearly revealed through Hinagiku's obsessive depiction of a man passing by. 'In clarity and in calmness,' she dissects the man's appearance (he seemed to have been fishing), as well as the associated environment (he is blown by the salty sea breeze and seagulls are crying, Fujita, 2012: 122-124). She depicts reality as if it consists of fragments of static pictures, and scrutinises all the details by freely 'forwarding and rewinding the time' in her mind (Fujita, 2012: 122). Sitting next to her friends, Hinagiku cannot help but feel that she has already lost her home. She is no longer able to make sense of reality, as she is 'lost' and 'disoriented' in a world of fragments (Berger, 1984: 57). Her life attains colour only when a collage of past memories is superimposed upon the lethargic present.

At this point, the analysis draws a full circle and returns to the concept of oscillating time. Evidently, the manner in which Hinagiku experiences time resonates with the rhetoric of the nuclear victims: both parties are living in a dual time frame, so to speak, in which fragments of past memories are preserved in the present. Owing to the fear that nuclear catastrophes are perpetually threatening – economically, environmentally, physically, or in any other related forms in the future – they both yearn to preserve peaceful homes in their memories. Even if their shelters supported by walls are reconstructed, their socio-

historic continuity, the mainstay of a biographical concept of home, will never be restored. When devoid of a physical as well as metaphysical rootedness, time starts to oscillate between the past and the present. That is, as a human instinct, when people try to endure, or, at least ease the pain, they adhere to the petite paradise lost in the past. The nostalgic memory serves as an anodyne for struggling through an unsettling reality.

Three Traits of Nuclear Nostalgia

As the analyses conducted through past sections have demonstrated, even though the plays seemed childish and self-absorbed on the surface, both Kitamura and Fujita were deeply engulfed in, and thus affected by, their respective sociocultural conditions. That is, whereas the former, in the height of the economic boom, feared that the unstoppable acceleration of technological advancements could ultimately lead to a nuclear disaster exemplified by Chernobyl; the latter, stumbling at the bottom of long-lasting depression in which his distress was doubled by the anxieties stemming from the Fukushima disaster, felt rather hopeless about the future state. In a word, despite the variances in their economic conditions, both Kitamura and Fujita were deeply worried about the future, which was jeopardised by radioactive fallout. Consequently, when presentiments toward the future seemed more like a plausible scenario, they yearned to cease time to remain in the peaceful moment. As will be demonstrated throughout the last part of the chapter, the clear distinction between general nostalgia and nuclear nostalgia is that, whereas the former yearns for the nostalgic past perfect, the latter, from the standpoint of the future, longs for the prolongation of the present – which will soon become the past.

Earlier, this chapter engaged briefly with three similarities that derive from the wish to halt time, which were introduced as conceptual nodes connecting the plays by Kitamura

and Fujita. To reiterate, those three attributes were; the aimless drifting of the characters; the playwrights' aversion towards change; and their yearning to nostalgically escape to shelters in their minds. Provided through previous pages were various sociocultural contexts, demonstrating why analogous imaginings emerged from playwrights who came to be known in the 1980s and the 2010s respectively. Through analysis, the chapter has reached the postulation that the visions of the two artists arguably attained similar shape through the dialogues each playwright conducted between nuclear-affected societies. In order to somehow circumvent further nuclear calamities, the theatre-makers took on an escapist attitude, rather than trying to conquer the invisible nuclear threat. They were politically nihilistic, rather than confrontational; nostalgic, rather than pragmatic: from a random future point, they retrospectively recalled the present as a transient paradise, which eventually would be lost and forgotten. To recapitulate, these theatres emerged through the prism of fear-ridden nuclear nostalgia: a yearning to crystallise a less contaminated utopic time for the sake of temporarily safeguarding themselves from future threats.

Let us now approach three similarities of Kitamura and Fujita one by one. Read against the backdrop of post-Chernobyl and post-Fukushima society, in which a colossal number of people had migratory identity foisted upon them, the act of aimless drifting conducted by characters in their plays could be considered the mirror reflection of the nuclear victims. After these nuclear tragedies, both geographically and ontologically, many people were divested of a stable sense of home. Their biographical continuities, so to speak, were severed from the past; thus, a linear structure could only be maintained by incessantly recalling fragments of memories. In this sense, aimless drifting is an act of self-protection. Uprooted from their original social milieu without any clear vision for when or how their sense of home will be recovered, one of the most viable options left

was to deliberately enjoy a nomadic life, in which one is indefinitely suspended between yesterday and tomorrow with only an improvised shelter.

In *Ode to Joy*, Kyōko and Gesaku literally live in a temporary shelter: they pull a cart piled with household goods, and their home accompanies them wherever they decamp. Moreover, it is easy to point out that, as the Kansai dialect they speak consists of a mishmash of local lingoes, the two have continued the nomadic life for their entire lives. Echoing Braidotti's definition of nomadism, from the earliest days of their life, the two have lived in 'transitions and passages without predetermined destinations or lost homelands' (Braidotti, 1994: 25). In fact, the two confess that their journey, lacking linearity, will never end in a homecoming. Gesaku tells Yasuo that they are only 'from over there,' and Kyōko continues by saying that they are just heading 'around the corner' (ibid.: 7-8). In the words of Kitamura, *Ode to Joy* is a 'completely slapdash *road play* [a neologism that the author has developed from the term 'road movie'],' in which the characters wander about without any meaning or mission (ibid.). Deprived of the right to a stable home and to hope for the future, characters situated in a post-nuclear world are forced to continue their aimless drifting; indefinitely oscillating between the lost past and the uncertain future.

In Kitamura's play, the act of drifting is considered a plight inflicted upon future humanity by a fictitious nuclear Armageddon; contrastingly, in Fujita's play nomadic displacement is no longer a tragedy opposing reality: it is a given condition implemented in the present. The playwrights' differing perspectives on aimless drifting are tied to the different physical and imaginative distances they hold against nuclear accidents. When Fujita wrote the three vignettes, the Fukushima disaster had already occurred: the screen of clichés had become a reality.

When the nuclear nightmare that theatre-makers imagined in the 1980s materialised in March 2011, people soon realised that the predecessors' divinations were overly dramatic, if not unreal. Unlike the imagined scenarios, after Fukushima, reality did not transform into a post-Armageddon abyss; rather, quotidian routines continued right in the thick of the on-going tragedy. Due to the invisibility of nuclear fallout, reality continued as if nothing had changed. Lacking the physical urgency to escape the threat, most people, at least those outside the evacuation zone, decided to cohabit with the calamity. Different to Kyōko and Gesaku, most Fukushima survivors did not drift around the country with rickety carts. Whether they were fortunate enough to stay in their original abode or were housed in temporary accommodation, people at least had walls and roofs to shelter themselves. Having said that, however, one should never interpret the situation as simply peace. Even if people were physically safeguarded in temporary housing, many felt that they had not restored their equilibrium: metaphysically, they were drifting in the turmoil of unreality.

In order to shed light on the metaphysical displacements concealed under the ostensible peace, Fujita uses nondescript transitional places as settings. Crossings, corridors, pathways and roadsides are most often used as symbols, which uncover the characters' sense of unsettlement. Situated in the transitional settings, the characters deliver lines by strolling constantly from stage left to stage right (*Akko no hanashi*, 2016), or by dashing, leaping and lifting others (*Cocoon*, 2013). In Fujita's plays, the external condition designs and designates the movements of humans; they are forced to be in flux constantly. Thus, even if the characters' conversations consist of platitudinous repetitions, their restless movements reveal the uneasiness hidden beneath smoothly orchestrated routines. Additionally, as if to prevent the characters from settling in one place, chairs are rarely used, if not completely excluded, from Fujita's plays. Even when staging a

family drama set in a cosy dining room – as is the case in *Waiting Dining Table* – those that gather around the table are not fixed to their seats; rather, they stand up, move around and even perform backward rolls. By shedding light on various symbols of transition embedded within quotidian life, Fujita asserts that it is all too common for post-Fukushima residents to live in reality and be displaced in unreality.

In *Chime for Return*, the condition of metaphysical displacement is most clearly presented. In this play, most of the dialogue is set in a rainy crossing in front of a public transportation terminal. Workers rush towards offices in the morning and students stroll home in the afternoon. At first glance, people seem to be enjoying their stability with jobs, families, friends and homes. However, through the voice of a female character called Anko, who, like Fujita, lives a nomadic life, the playwright reflects upon the following: 'yes…we are…returning everyday…to somewhere…but, but…where…and how…are we…we…trying…to return…from now…I don't…know…' (Fujita, 2012: 32). Through the truncated muttering of a young woman, Fujita opens up such questions as: Is being physically fixed a prerequisite for stability?; Can one feel at home even when living in a mobile dwelling?; What if people who crossing intersections are only performing normality but do not have it? Through the juxtaposition of distinctive viewpoints - that of a young woman living a nomadic life, and that of people who go about their daily business – Fujita tries to go beyond the opposition of home and uprootedness. He thus suggests that after Fukushima the concept of home was dismantled; further, that most people, even when they had shelter, were forced to drift, metaphysically speaking (Fujita, 2012: 196).

The second analogy between the two artists comes to the fore in counteracting the state of aimless drifting. That is, in order to militate against the stream of uncertainties adhering to nuclear calamities, both Kitamura and Fujita reveal their wish to live in

eternal invariance: geographically as well as temporally, they wish to stay put. Owing to the nuclear aftermath, in which the peace and safety of yesterday could become obsolete tomorrow, it becomes difficult to maintain a coherent narrative in life. Thus for both theatre-makers, nothing could be more coveted than avoiding change. For this reason, in their plays Kitamura and Fujita respectively express their predilections towards static places such as old relics, vacant lots and dilapidated buildings.

As already noted, the sensibility to consider 'destructions and desolations as beautiful places' was valorised as a trait of the 1980s post-Chernobyl plays, and Kitamura was the predecessor of the genre (Hasebe, 1993: 24). One of the reasons why these theatre-makers venerated ruins was because they assumed that through capitalist constructions past memories were being obliterated. For instance, against the backdrop of an accelerating economy, Kitamura realised that his childhood memories, embedded in places such as second-hand bookshops, shabby candy shops (*dagashi-ya*), and the streetscapes of old neighbourhoods, had been eradicated. Kitamura asserted that the process of urbanisation 'has more or less erased all of [his] mnemonic devices embedded in the city,' and thus, through this sense of loss, he was driven to write *Ode to Joy* (Kitamura, 1991: 16). In the play, in contrast to the vertical landscape including countless skyscrapers in contemporary Japan, the two characters continue their horizontal journey without producing anything that can be monetised. Thus, one could argue that the nomadic journey represents an act of revolt against capitalist construction:

> You build and destroy, and destroy and build. This is the basic structure of modern civilisation. [In this play] I considered that the nuclear destruction is its ultimate form. And, thus, together with people who do not construct anything, I cast off a cart there. (Kitamura, 1991: 18)

In response to an interview conducted by psychiatrist Yamato Hiroyuki, the theatre-maker confesses his predilection to treasure 'ruins and relics,' precisely because they are

'places in which time has stopped' (Yamato, 1996: 45). For Kitamura, the ancient remnants are epitomes of stability, as they are exonerated from further progress. In 1974, the first 'Seven-Eleven convenience store opened in Japan' and the number increased exponentially for the next few decades (Miyazawa, 2008: 163). By invading desolate vacant lots in the city, these convenience stores virtually illuminated every corner of society: it was as though all blocks in Tokyo were demanded to consume more for the city's economic growth. However, for Kitamura these constructions suggested not light but blindness and not growth but destruction whose ultimate form was 'nuclear destruction' (Kitamura, 1991: 18).

With this caveat in mind, Yamato argues that perhaps in *Ode to Joy* the most important component of the play is the distinct quality of time that 'runs through the ruins' of the imagined post-nuclear-war world (ibid.). According to Yamato, neither the descriptions nor the facts of the nuclear war incorporated in the play need to be plausible, because the nuclear event is adopted merely as an optimum contraption to 'stop time' by creating ruins amidst rapid capitalist development (ibid). As if to substantiate Yamato's analysis, Kitamura asserts that when he visited Mohenjo-Daro for a research trip, he oddly felt that, standing amidst the ruins, he 'came back home' (Kitamura, 1991: 19). At the remains of the ancient city in Pakistan, which is completely liberated from the onus of industrial development, Kitamura intuitively felt that he was welcomed back to a permanent home. Similarly, for the two nomadic characters, the destination of Mohenjo-Daro is the ultimate safe haven because it provides them with the complete stability of time and space.

When asked whether he also feels at home when surrounded by relics and ruins, Fujita answered 'absolutely yes' (Fujita, 2016). Analogous to Kitamura, the young theatre-maker affirmed that he often wishes for 'a complete stasis' of the world, because then, at

least, he is given the time to overhaul and grasp the never-changing world (ibid.).

Although it sounds naïve, Fujita wants to feel safe by understanding every inch of

society, thereby attaining the omnipotence to deter unexpected calamities. Unreasonable

as it may sound, the absurd wish to achieve absolute stability was, arguably, one of the

reactions typical among the perturbed people in Fukushima. Understandably, when

submerged in a spate of threats and uncertainties, many people instinctively wished to

attain a solid ground that would clarify present conditions and elucidate their future.

No matter how forceful one's drive to attain stability was, however, its viability was slim

in the aftermath. As Beck asserts in 'Aus Gegebenem Anaß: Fukushima oder die Zukunft

Japans in der Weltriskogaesellschaft' (To Mark the Event: Fukushima or the Future of

Japan in Risk Society), after Fukushima it became more difficult to accurately draw the

contour of the world. Just like trying to sketch the form of the ever-changing clouds in

the sky, when people assumed that they had clarified the shape of the nuclear event, what

subsequently followed was that they realised how much 'the amount of the un-known'

had increased accordingly (Beck, 2011: 10). Thus, as a reactionary measure taken

against the post-nuclear-disaster confusion, Fujita was compelled to seek for a more

stable vision of society:

> My strongest wish is to situate myself in a place without time [like relics
> and ruins] and feel safe. I know it is impossible. But, still, [by doing so] I
> want to understand myself, and also my home. […] I have some friends
> who have died young, and when you think more about the last moments
> with them […] the images are not stable, details are vague, and memories
> are rearranged. […] And, for me, this is painful. […] Memories change
> because I am changing. And so, if I really want to stop time to avoid the
> fading of images, ultimately, I need to kill myself [laughs]. (Fujita, 2016)

Crystallising the past in the present has always been Fujita's primary obsession, even

before the Fukushima disaster. He was always preoccupied with assessing the quality of

time: how it numbs past tragedies, distorts precious memories, and tampers with the

picture of one's own life. At all points, Fujita asserts that these decaying qualities of time are 'unbearable' (ibid.). In order to bear the unbearable somehow, since presenting *Children and Momo, All in the Forest*, Fujita has adopted a performance methodology in which one block or section of a scene is tenaciously repeated on the stage until it is drilled into audiences' memories. Referring to musical terminology, Fujita calls the method 'Refrain'.

What should be noted is that 'Refrains' are not equal to mechanical repetitions. Distinct from mechanically reproductive artworks, which use mediums like texts and prints, Fujita emphasises that, in the theatre real-life actors embody the repetitions through which strong emotional responses are elicited from the audience. Due to the phenomenological immediacy of theatre, not only movements but also 'feelings' are reproduced on the stage, and are thus inevitably 'augmented' (Senda, 2011). Fujita asserts that the core importance of the method lies in extracting and 'amplifying the scenes,' just like a song would be embedded in listeners' minds more vividly through refrains (ibid.). In an interview with director Ninagawa Yukio, Fujita explains that he considers the method of the Refrain as a 'means of resistance': it is an apparatus to act against the 'flow of time and things being forgotten' (Tokunaga, 2015: 82).

The yearning to avoid change, and thus ultimately to halt time, is what constitutes the crux of nostalgia: the third axiomatic tenor observed in both theatre-makers. To withdraw into nostalgia is a common action taken by people when they feel that their valorised identities are at risk from untoward personal or social transitions. Fred Davis asserts that nostalgia thrives on displacements on two levels. Firstly, people tend to experience a sense of nostalgia when they go through 'subjective discontinuities': transitional phases 'from childhood to pubescence, from adolescent dependency to adult independence' and so on (Davis, 1979: 49). Secondly, nostalgia emerges from social discontinuities and

dislocation: that is, the 'rude transitions of history' wrought by phenomena such as 'war, depression, civil disturbance, and cataclysmic natural disasters' (ibid.). Nostalgia, in a word, is a completely 'normal psychological reaction triggered by fear of actual or impending threat' (ibid.: 9-10). It is a protective measure through which people aim to 'assuage the uncertainties and identity threats engendered by problematic life transitions' (ibid.: 69).

With a pool of vocabularies in the social milieu suggesting, in Kitamura's case, an anticipated nuclear destruction, and in terms of Fujita, prolonged nuclear contaminations, both playwrights expressed their will to preserve peaceful memories in their artworks. That is, they both developed a theatre of nuclear nostalgia, so to speak, through which various evasive actions were taken to circumvent the colossal cultural uncertainties that may await them in the future. What they portray on the stage is a vision of future-oriented nostalgia, in which an intense focus is given to the past, but in which the subject moves toward the future facing backwards. To complement the argument, it is pertinent to note that this action of moving forward facing backwards reminds one of Walter Benjamin's elaborations on the concept of progress, which were developed through his analysis of Paul Klee's 'The Angel of History.'

In this painting, Klee pictured an angel who looks to the past, yet is forcibly blown by a storm towards the future. In a similar manner to Klee's progressing angel, both Kitamura and Fujita look towards the past yet they are also blown towards the future, knowing that to freeze past memories intact, and to duplicate them in the present, is impracticable. Thus, the gaze of a nuclear nostalgic is always split between the past and the future. A creative nostalgic does not reconstruct the past 'the way it was,' but imagines an ideal future by referring to the past in the way 'it could have been' (Boym, 2002: 351). In this sense, the theatre of nuclear nostalgia adopts the time of double exposure: 'a special

optic on the word' is employed, through which a utopic reality is imagined against the backdrop of a seemingly dystopic future (Davis, 1979: 74).

A cinematic image of nostalgia, according to Boym, is a 'double exposure': a superimposition of two images – 'of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life' (Boym, 2002: xii-xiv). Chiming with Boym, the theatrical images of nuclear nostalgia presented in plays by Kitamura and Fujita are also juxtapositions of these polar opposites. However, because a nuclear catastrophe defies the laws of time and space, the boundaries dividing the past and the present are blurred in their plays. For instance, a character could imagine that the days before the nuclear catastrophe were the yearned-for utopic past. However, another person could equally imagine that, even after years of contamination, the present was still a temporal utopia, compared to the far graver damage that could unfurl in the future. As nuclear disasters are open-ended catastrophes, the prefixes of 'pre-' and 'post-' are used erratically in theatres of nuclear nostalgia. It is impossible to mark the point at which post-catastrophe time began and that at which pre-catastrophe peace ended.

Ode to Joy is set in the near future, in which, by observing the burning ion in space and lithium bombs launched into the sky, the characters nostalgically imagine realities in the audience's present, such as 'sunsets' and 'falling stars' (Kitamura, 1989: 15). By imagining present life in Tokyo from the future as an already lost memory, an intense sense of nostalgia surrounds the play. It is indeed a rendition of a future-oriented nostalgia because, from the standpoint of his freely imagined future, Kitamura looks back and deplores the anticipated loss of the utopic present.

Ikuta Yorozu, one of the leading theatre-makers of the 1980s, provided a phrase that encapsulates the condition of future-oriented nostalgia. In order to render an emotionally fitting description of the convoluted time frame that Ikuta also adopted in his plays, the

artist asserted that 'the past is always new, and the future is oddly nostalgic' (Nishidō, 2009: 35). The phrase suggests that what awaits society in the future is an event that has already happened, at least, in their imaginations, and thus 'oddly nostalgic'; whereas, the past seems new when it is observed through the prism of the imagined future, because it retains a condition unattainable even in the future beyond the future. The comment resonates strongly with Kitamura's play, because in *Ode to Joy*, the two nostalgic characters placed in the future are recalling the past as a far-fetched dream.

The conflated temporal configuration that imagines the present as an unattainable utopia from the vantage point of the future is also adopted in Fujita's play. A situation emblematic of this twisted sense of nostalgia is demonstrated through Kaede's narrative in *Waiting Dining Table*. As already noted, in this play Kaede constantly detaches himself from the conversation occurring at the dining table and nostalgically recalls the family gathering from the future. It is through such temporal complications that Fujita renders visible the invisible psyche of the people, suppressed after the Fukushima disaster. Due to the confusion of the aftermath, images of the future that ordinary people envision are often patchy and opaque. Yet through Fujita's plays, the vague imaginations are given shape, through which the nightmarish threat that may await them in the future is temporarily legitimised. And when the threat towards the future becomes compelling enough, or even accepted as *de facto* post-Fukushima life, nothing could be more coveted than the wish to prolong the peaceful present. Owing to the condition in Fukushima and the horrific announcements that 'seven nuclear reactors in Japan are likely to be in operation' by the end of March 2017, and 'twelve more' in 2018, Fujita avows that the given reality should not be considered as a never-ending dystopia, but rather as a temporal utopia that will be lost soon.[66]

In the theatre of nuclear nostalgia, the permutation of past, present and future is dismantled. Consequently, as has been demonstrated through assessing the plays, many people feel physically and metaphysically uprooted from their homes. They cannot anchor themselves in a solid place, nor in a fixed time. Because of this sense of perennial homelessness, on their stages Kitamura and Fujita amplified the intense feeling of nuclear nostalgia: the yearning to remain in the peaceful present, which will be lost in the future. Taking all this together, it is possible to conclude that a temporal disaster called a nuclear catastrophe has the power to change the modus operandi of theatre. That is, those conscientious artists, who did not ignore the invisible threat, but gravely considered the long-lasting radioactive effects, started to represent reality differently on their stages. For them, the invisible catastrophe on 11 March 2011 did not become a veil that concealed their understanding of the world, but a crack that opened their vision towards alternative reality. The invisible aftermath may not have radically changed the day-to-day life of people living in Tokyo, but it has indeed functioned as a catalyst for illuminating alternative realities in theatres.

Conclusion

It is somewhat misleading to provide a conclusion for a study on nuclear-affected Japanese theatre. The myriad of multi-layered after-effects which followed the Hiroshima atomic bombing and the Nagasaki plutonium bombing, let alone the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster, remain far from settled. As if to bear out this reality, at the time of drafting this conclusion, it was reported that the Fukushima nuclear reactor radiation was at its 'highest level since 2011'.[67] A leitmotif that runs through the study is that one of the core characteristics of a nuclear catastrophe, as distinct from one-off disasters, is that its aftermath defies both time and space. Even generations after the day of the event, an unborn baby could be affected by a genetic disorder; and even if a tiny village is a hundred of kilometres away from the epicentre of the nuclear power plant, a high level of radiation could still contaminate its soil. The aftermath does not end on a certain day, nor can it be confined to a restricted location. By transcending temporal and topographical boundaries, the ruinous outcomes continue to acquire new forms and manifestations. For this reason, on reaching a conclusion, one has to admit that any new study on a nuclear-related issue is already slightly out-dated.

Another issue that should be considered when delivering a conclusion for a study on nuclear-affected theatre is what Lifton calls the 'invisible' quality of the aftermath (Lifton, 1971: 66). After the initial – physically tangible – shocks of the event, it is often the case that the aftermath effects and mutates public consciousness in an imperceptible manner. The collective psyche shifts gear in a certain direction without the conscious recognition that this move is caused by the nuclear catastrophe. Therefore, there is indeed a possibility that the arguments developed in the thesis could be dismissed as incorrect. This is because once the invisibilities and the imperceptibles of the nuclear

catastrophe are given a concrete shape through an authorial framework, that framed narrative risks the possibility of unwillingly becoming the reigning voice – even though voices not included in the study are equally important. Notwithstanding the risks of violating the ethical limits imposed on a scholar in challenging these ideas, this study has ventured to probe beyond the traceable facts expressed in theatres, since multitudes of interpretations should be opened up even for A-bomb and post-Fukushima plays. To be specific, this study has paid focused attention to those theatre productions presented in Tokyo that did not only report, record, or retell the outcomes of the nuclear event, but also attempted to develop a dialogic imagination beyond their visible calamities.

In order to do so, unlike most theatre studies conducted by Japanese scholars that are based on rigorously empirical information, this study was developed through the method of the Sociology of the Theatre, in which theatres are understood to be an apparatus that unearths the 'in-visible' (already including the visible) in a given society (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 257). For this reason, strands of studies from history, politics, psychology, sociology and anthropology, which are integrated to the interdisciplinary remit of the Sociology of the Theatre, constitute the narrative spine of this thesis. As a result, the theoretical structure developed in this thesis has opened up an alternative perspective for interpreting Japanese post-war theatre and its contextual documents. Described from a different angle, the main objective of the study lay in addressing an alternative constellation of post-war Japanese theatre – another narrative developed through the concatenation of nuclear disasters – which has generally reigned over the collective imagination of the Japanese people.

Based on this methodological framework, my study opened with a chapter in which some historical and sociological preliminaries necessary for understanding the plays argued in subsequent chapters were laid out. To be more specific; first, the opening

chapter introduced aspects of Japanese post-war history through the rubric of the atomic-bomb aftermath; and second, it delivered a socio-psychological analysis of how Japanese people, especially in times of crisis, tend to follow the politics of *kūki* (air): an invisible code that constantly shifts according to the societal mood, and through which people are transformed into a unified mass. The latter account was substantiated by an analysis of Noda Hideki's play, in which the director-playwright illustrated how the harmony-oriented Japanese tend to follow what Lifton calls the 'psychic truth', regardless of the logical absurdity of it (Lifton, 1971: 72).

Using the initial chapter as the groundwork, from Chapter Two onwards appeared four thematic strands of nuclear-affected theatre models. In addition to providing a detailed analysis through each guiding theme, this study has brought forth an overarching framework in which – owing to the nature of nuclear catastrophes – the invisible boundaries between dichotomous concepts such as here/there, life/death, science/belief, rational/absurdity and present/past were challenged in the theatre productions attended to. The first two sets of binary oppositions were discussed in Chapter Two, and arguments with regards to the other three binary sets were developed in each of the following three chapters. While these five analytical frameworks are not the only valid perspectives to assess the nuclear-affected plays, they have helped to clarify the paradigm shifts – changes in thought, values and norms – that have emerged in theatres both post-Hiroshima and Nagasaki and post-Fukushima.

Apart from highlighting important strands of nuclear-affected theatres that have emerged after Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima, one of the noteworthy contributions made in this thesis is that, through the selected perspectives, it has juxtaposed a number of theatre-makers never previously associated. In Chapter Two, theatre productions by Hotta Kiyomi, Inoue Hisashi and Okada Toshiki, were specifically selected. Through

meticulous observation of each production, the chapter demonstrated that, although approached via distinct methodologies, the three plays represented various senses of guilt caused by a nuclear event. They showed that, in order to make sense of a chaotic situation in which neither the Japanese government nor the American counterpart were able to provide a plausible explanation, many characters of the plays selected here blamed themselves for constituting understandable narratives of the event. Along the same lines, the boundary between here/there and life/death was called into question. In the most drastic case, a character in one of the plays even felt guilty for being alive in a safe haven while others died at the epicentre of the disaster.

Chapter Three served to shed light on the 'political' theatre productions that emerged after the nuclear catastrophes. The term 'political' is put in inverted commas precisely because the theatre-makers discussed in this chapter, namely Miyoshi Jūrō, Takayama Akira and to a lesser extent Terayama Shūji, had abandoned the institutionalised rhetoric often accepted among theatre coteries to be correct political language. By contrast, they preferred to take a meta-political path, through which the most solid common sense precepts of the given society were challenged. In so doing, they indicated that a violent force was at work that unified people under the cover of collective consensus. In other words, through their meta-political theatrical languages, the theatre-makers tried to reawaken the senses of audiences who were traumatised by the nuclear catastrophe, which drove the latter to subscribe to a reassuring binding belief. The theatre-makers proved to be political in the sense that they questioned the boundary between belief and science, or doxa and episteme, in which the former, when consolidated, often ended in a unifying power reminiscent of the Japanese totalitarian regime during the war.

When the matrix of quotidian life was impaired by the nuclear catastrophes, playwrights such as Betsuyaku Minoru and Matsui Shū started questioning the negative influences of

those sanctified concepts in pre-catastrophe societies. That is, in Chapter Four, the concepts of humanism and human-ness were exhibited for analysis, once again, so as not to become obsolete or even absurd rhetorics, irrelevant to reality. Vis-à-vis an inhumane catastrophe such as the detonation of atomic bombs, which were rationalised by President Truman as justifiable acts, Japanese theatre-makers were impelled to question the boundary between rational humanism and absurd barbarism. By challenging the normative underpinnings of these concepts, the chapter has demonstrated how Betsuyaku and Matsui both became innovators of a novel theatrical language that reflects the absurdities of reality.

The last chapter contributed to the canon of A-bomb and post-Fukushima plays by focusing on the concept of time. By probing the temporal aesthetics adopted in plays by Kitamura Sō and Fujita Takahiro, the chapter demonstrated how the linear structure of time is substituted by so-called 'nuclear time': a dual time frame, in which time experienced by the characters constantly oscillates between the past and the present (or the future and the present). By forging a closer alliance between the two theatre practitioners, who are divided by three decades, the chapter also argued that both Kitamura and Fujita nostalgically cherished their present life from the vantage point of the desolate future. For them, the future is not full of hope, but is rather an untoward time ahead, in which further nuclear catastrophe will surely happen. Based on this conjecture, the thesis drew a full circle and concluded by returning to the brief account provided in the Introduction. That is, when analysing emerging theatrical visions that reflect local sensibilities, perhaps it is more suitable to state that Japanese people are not living in a post-nuclear 'epoch', but, to borrow from Jacques Derrida, they are struggling to come to terms with inter- and intra-nuclear-catastrophe 'epoché': a suspension of all judgments before absolute decision (Derrida, 1984: 27).

One apparent limitation of this study lies in focusing only on those plays presented in Tokyo. As explained in the introduction, this was done deliberately, for the sake of clarifying the authorial framework: the author, who is neither a *hibakusha* nor a direct victim of Fukushima, does not wish to be vocal on behalf of those victims. The arguments in the study are specifically developed from a certain distance: from the standpoint of a Japanese theatre scholar, who has closely monitored the local theatre scene for the past fifteen years. Considering this specific framework, what is required in the future is a study that focuses on theatre productions created, performed and presented by the people in Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Tōhoku region.

Conversely, the very potency of the thesis lies in exploring A-bomb plays and post-Fukushima plays through a previously uncharted interdisciplinary framework. That is, while a certain number of studies have been conducted on A-bomb plays and post-Fukushima plays, this thesis has connected the two, for the first time, with the overarching topic of a nuclear threat. By doing so, it has made five substantial contributions to the field of scholarship. First, by reassessing post-war Japanese plays through the perspective of nuclear-affected society, this thesis, to reiterate, has succeeded in juxtaposing a number of theatre-makers previously never associated together. Through the socio-cultural analyses on respective theatre productions, this thesis has substantiated the ways in which these theatre-makers can be fruitfully connected.

Further, in tandem with these novel associations of theatre-makers, this thesis has also demonstrated that there are several recurrent themes that appear in theatres after different nuclear catastrophes. Regardless of the distinct eras and communities in which the artists resided, the theatre-makers voiced similar issues, although through different styles, strengths and manners. Put differently, the thesis has clarified that beneath the cosmetic variances of the juxtaposed theatre productions, the theatre-makers shared a creative

impulse that was underpinned, in varying degrees, by anxiety, aversion and moral indignation towards nuclear threat.

Second, by reassessing post-war Japanese history in its entirety through the perspective of nuclear effects, the thesis has demonstrated how the themes, aesthetics and modalities of a great number of Japanese plays have been developed through a constant dialogue with nuclear-afflicted societies. More still, whereas previous scholars of A-bomb and post-Fukushima plays have made fine readings of the visible, tangible and verbalised outcomes represented in many plays, this study has looked further by focusing on those invisible affects and effects of nuclear catastrophes. Based on this analytical framework, this thesis specifically focused on theatre productions that brought into relief the latent psyche of given societies. Thus, it should be emphasised that this study has shed light on several plays that were previously not included in the canon of A-bomb or post-Fukushima plays; such as those by Miyoshi Jūrō, Matsui Shū and Fujita Takahiro.

Third, this thesis has proven that the interdisciplinary method of the Sociology of the Theatre is the most effective and comprehensive tool for explaining the compositions and impacts of the nuclear-afflicted plays. When examining plays that are deeply affected by different nuclear events and their ramifications, a purely aesthetic analysis does not suffice to explain the depths, strengths and significance of each play. Conversely, through the interdisciplinary scope of the methodology, theatre productions should be assessed as epitomising the collective psyche, reflecting a wide range of sociocultural aspects in a given society. When trying to understand the polyvocal significance of an A-bomb or a post-Fukushima play, it becomes imperative to adopt an all-encompassing analytical tool, which enables a researcher to dissect theatre productions not only through their form, but also through their context.

Lastly, and most importantly, this thesis has emphasised the sheer potency of theatre in bringing into relief the psychosocial impacts and amplitudes of nuclear catastrophes, which develop beneath the normality of everyday life. The surfeit of narratives that were suppressed after Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima and other locations affected by nuclear threat cannot be reduced to facts and digits, let alone be ignored as non-existent. Regardless of different degrees of victimhood, each narrative must be unearthed as an autonomous regime of experience, equally worthy of being heard. Throughout its distinct arguments, this thesis has proven that when taking into account the invisibility and individuality of nuclear-affected narratives, theatre functions as the optimal open forum, which enables artists and others to voice their latent opinions – exempt from the fear of being accused by others – under the guise of theatrical fiction.

The four key points noted above exemplify the contributions and significance this thesis has made to the field of Japanese theatre scholarship and, further, to the sociology and the psycho-sociology of nuclear-affected Japanese culture. Through its findings, this thesis will enable future scholars to approach post-war Japanese theatre through previously uncharted perspectives, as well as inviting many others to analyse repercussions and ramifications of nuclear catastrophes beyond rote witnessing. The nuclear aftermath in Japan remains far from settled, and thus further research in various fields of studies should continue in the future.

[1] 'Prime Minister "Obligation to Realise a World without Nuclear"' [Shushō "Kaku no nai sekai jitsugen e sekimu"], Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 6 August 2014.

[2] It has been reported by some alarmists that 'the vagaries of wind and rain had scattered worrisome amounts of radioactive materials in unexpected patterns far outside the evacuation zone 12 miles around the stricken plant.' Hiroko Tabuchi, 'Citizens' Testing Finds 20 Hot Spots Around Tokyo', *The New York Times*, 14 October, 2011 < http://nyti.ms/2lhKSkn> [Accessed 9 May, 2014].

[3] For more detailed information on sociocultural Japanese theatre analyses, see, among others: Uchino Tadashi, *Crucible Bodies: Postwar Japanese Performance from Brecht to the New Millennium*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009); William Marotti, *Money, Trains, and Guillotines: Art and Revolution in 1960s Japan* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013); and Tonooka Naomi's PhD dissertation, *Four Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre Groups: Subjectivity-Formation in Performance and Creative Process* (University of Hawai 'i, 1990).

[4] Buerk, Roland, 'Japan earthquake: Tsunami hits north-east', *BBC*, 11 March 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12709598> [Accessed 27 January 2017].

[5] 'The Ministry of Environment Accepts the Land Burial of Combusted Contaminated Ashes under 100,000 Becquerel', Asahi Shimbun, 27 August 2011 <http://www.asahi.com/special/10005/TKY201108270453.html> [Accessed 25 July, 2013].

[6] 'FORM: What should be done about Japanese burning radioactive debris?', *Energy News*, 1 September, 2012 <http://enenews.com/forum-about-japan-burning-radioactive-debris> [Accessed 25 July, 2013].

[7] 'Acceptance of Debris: 35 prefectures and ordinance-designated cities react positively', *Yomiuri Online*, 7 April, 2012 <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/national/news/20120407-OYT1T00019.htm> [Accessed 25 July, 2013]. When the state conducted a similar poll three years afterwards, however, 20 prefectures refused to accept the nuclear debris in their region, '20 Prefectures Refuse to Accept Nuclear Waste', *Sankei West Online*, 26 July 2016 <http://www.sankei.com/west/news/160726/wst1607260043-n1.html> [Accessed 14 April, 2017].

[8] Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Information and Communication White Paper* (Jōhō tsūshin hakusho), 2011.

[9] Nakano Keiko, 'After the Disaster, People Suffering from Guilt are Increasing', *Nikkei*, 15 April, 2011 <http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASFK1300J_T10C11A4000000/> [Accessed 5 August, 2013].

[10] Anonymous article, quoted in Masuoka Toshikazu, Hachigatsu no shijin: Genbaku shijin tōge sankichi no shi to shōgai, 311.

[11] Shōda Shinoe was one of the first poets to write about the atom bombs. She published her collection of A-bomb poetry in 1947 by secretly printing 100 copies at Hiroshima Prison and slipping passed the eye of censorship of the Occupying Forces. Shōda later stated in *Miminari: Private Notes of an A-bomb Poet* (1962) that she was 'prepared for capital punishment'.

[12] Deciding which play is the first A-bomb play differs from one theatre scholar to another. However, it has been a common place in the Japanese theatre circle to consider Hotta Kiyomi's *The Island* (*Shima*, 1957) as the first. The twelfth volume of *The Anthology of Japanese Atomic Bomb Literature* (*Nihon no genbaku bungaku*, Tokyo: Horupu shuppan, 1983) also starts from Hotta's play. Yet theatre critics such as Miyashita Nobuo counters the main stream argument and suggests that perhaps Kinoshita Junji's *Yamanami* (1949) could be considered as the earliest A-bomb play as, although Japan was still under American Occupation, and criticizing the atomic bomb was prohibited, it 'happened to include a *hibakusha* as one character' (Miyashita Nobuo, '"Yamanami" kara "Hogiuta" made ('From *Yamanami* to *Hogiuta*'), *Teatoro*, August 1985, p. 65).

[13] Kimura, Kan and Okada, Toshiki, 2015, 'Engeki de yomikomu nihon to kankoku sorezore no bunmyaku: *God Bless Baseball* o megutte', 18 December, < http://synodos.jp/culture/15770> [Accessed 25 July, 2016].

[14] Okada, Toshiki, 2015, *God Bless Baseball*, unpublished English text, p. 29.

[15] This scene was presented in such way when Noda himself directed the play in 1999. During the same period, Ninagawa Yukio was directing the same play at Theatre Cocoon. Ninagawa did not adopt the same visual image. Rather than focusing on the violence of the collective, Ninagawa's play shed light on the divinity of the Queen performed by Ōtake Shinobu.

[16] City of Sendai, *Heisei 23-nen 3-gatsu 11-nichi higashi nihon daishinsai, Sendai-shi higai iōkyō* [*The Disaster Report of Sendai 11 March, 2011*], December 2012 <http://www.city.sendai.jp/soumu/kouhou/bousai/0311jishin/higaizyoukyou.pdf> [Accessed 30 January, 2014].

[17] Nakano Keiko, 'After the Disaster, People Suffering from Guilt are Increasing', *Nikkei*, 15 April, 2011 <http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASFK1300J_T10C11A4000000/> [Accessed 5 August 2013].

[18] When *hibakusha* is written in Kanji characters as 被爆者, the word is applied to those victims who died or suffered directly from encountering the atomic bombing. When the middle letter is altered and is written as 被曝者, it suggests the victims who are afflicted from exposure to high level of radiation doses.

[19] From survey results in Hiroshima, *Genbaku hibakusha taisaku jigyō gaiyō* (Hiroshima: Hibakusha Support Department, Hiroshima-ken, 2014).

[20] 'Ikite: Nihonhidankyō daihyōiin Tsuboi Sunao-san (9) Kekkon' (Live: Tsuboi Sunao – The Representative Member of Japan Confederation of A- and H- Bomb Sufferers Organization. Episode 9: Marriage), *Chūgoku Shimbun*, 26 January 2013.

[21] ibid.

[22] Taken from the brief storyline on the official brochure of *The Island* by *Gekidan Mingei*. Numerous Japanese army troupes had their camps in Kure during the Korean War. After the war, many locals who had supported their meagre lives through temporary military employments lost their jobs.

[23] Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 'The Constitution of Japan' <http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html> [Accessed 1 December 2014].

[24] *Chūgoku Shimbun*, 26 January 2013

[25] A research by Kokumin shakai hoshō and jinkō mondai kenkyū jo [Research Institution on National Social Security and Demography], 'Jinkō to kazoku ni kansuru tokubetu iinkai hōkokusho (A Report by Special Committee on Demography and Family], 15 July 1988.

[26] ibid.

[27] See Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry, 'Sengyō shufu setai no hinkon: sono jittai to youin [Poverty in Family with Housewives: Cause and Reality], June 2015. The tendency for a woman to become a housewife increases in the 1960s and the 1970s. In a national census conducted on 20,000 women over the age of 18, more than 80 per cent of men and women agreed to the principle that 'men should work out and women should stay in.' (Sōrifu Kōhōshitsu, 'Fujin ni kansuru ishiki chosa [An Attitude Survey on Women]' October 1972).

[28] *Gekidan Mingei 50 nenshi* [Fifty Years of Gekidan Mingei], *Gekidan Mingei*, 2000. After the performance at Fukuyama-shi, it travelled to Okayama, Kagawa, Tokushima, Ehime, Kōchi, Kōbe, Kyōto, Fukui, Yokohama, and then, back to Tokyo (*Shinjuku Shōchiku-za*). The play was presented across the state for the total of 111 performances.

[29] 'Sensō hantai ya kenpō goken ni nessin datta' [Inoue was Passionate about Abandoning War and Protecting the Constitution], *Hokkaido Shimbun* 13 April, 2010

[30] ibid.

[31] The play was presented as part of a one-day symposium, *Sperrzone Japan – Ein Jahr nach Fukushima*, held on 3 March 2012 at Deutsches Theater in Berlin, which focused on reactions by Japanese theatre to the Fukushima incident.

[32] In 1995, a year after the premiere of *Chichi to Kuraseba*, Inoue started writing a sequel, *Haha to kuraseba* (*Living with My Mother*). Inoue wanted to write the sequel because even half a century after the bombing, the *hibakusha* live a 'hell harsher than hell'. Additionally, during the two atomic bombings, more than 70,000 Koreans lived in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and 30,000 of them died. Inoue started writing about the future of Mitsue who has married Kinoshita and gave birth to a boy Kenkichi. It is Mitsue, who appears as a dead spirit in the sequel, and talks with her son, who is in love with a Korean woman. (Inoue Hisashi, 'Mae kōjō (The Prologue),' *the-Za*, Vol. 31, 1995). In December 2015, a film of *Haha to Kuraseba*, with the English title *Nagasaki: Memories of My Son* was released. The film director Yamada Yōji rewrote the script with his team, and the narrative was completely changed. In the film it is the son, Kōji, who appears as a dead spirit. And the Korean implications are completely deleted.

[33] Mid-Western broken American English is used by the translator, Roger Pulvers, an American-born Australian playwright, in an attempt to mirror the texture of the Hiroshima vernacular. However, the simple, honest and rustic delicacy of the Hiroshima vernacular is lost by using this rough and tough language. When this play was presented at the Arcola Theatre in London, in 2007, the director Igawa Tōgo slightly changed this American accent. Nevertheless, Lyn Gardner criticised the production saying that 'the translation is very odd'. (Lyn Gardner, 'The Face of Jizō', *The Guardian*, 30 October 2007).

[34] 'Shinsai yoshin, yūkan jishin ga hassei ikkagetu de 2765 kai' (Aftershocks of the Disaster, 2765 Earthquakes in a Month], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 5 January 2012.

[35] Ten years after the performance in Brussels, Okada is now recreating *Five Days in March* with seven young actors under 24. According to a Skype interview conducted on 29 April 2017, Okada said that although the storyline will be the same, he is 'adjusting' the way in which the characters talk so that it feels natural for the young actors in 2017. The performance will be premiered at Kanagawa Arts Theatre in December 2017.

[36] Beginning with *Current Location* (2012), Okada developed a series of Fukushima plays. The other two are, *Ground and Floor* (*Jimen to yuka*, 2013) and *Time's Journey Through a Room* (*Heya o nagareru jikan no tabi*, 2016).

[37] For the concept of 'postdramatic theatre', refer to Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (London: Routeledge, 2006).

[38] Okada Toshiki and Ishikawa Naoki, Posuto 3.11 no ronten: Bokura no 'riaru' nitsuite kangaeru [Questioning Post 3.11: Thinking About Our 'Reality'], a symposium chaired by Kyoko Iwaki, Kanagawa Arts Theatre, Yokohama, Japan, 2 July 2011.

[39] Okada Toshiki, 'Boku ha kanari kawatta to omou' (I think I've changed a lot), in *Shinchou*, April 2012, (Tokyo: Shinchou, 2012), pp. 173-174.

[40] 'Enshutsuka Okada Toshiki Kumamoto ni ijū: shinsaigo shakai eno iwa hyougen' ('Director Okada Toshiki moves to Kumamoto: Expressing Discomfort Towards Society after the Disaster'), *Yomiuri Shimbun Seibu,* 28 April 2012.

[41] Articles such as 'Mr. Edano says "there is a low possibility of mass amounts of radioactive materials being disseminated" Fukushima Unit Three Explodes', *Asahi Shimbun*, 14 March 2011 and 'Hydrogen Explosure at Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Unit 3, Alarmed to Stay Indoors', *Asahi Shimbun*, 14 March 2011 are several examples among many others.

[42] ibid.

[43] I have attended the general rehearsal of this production at Théâtre Varia, Brussels, on the day before its premiere. One of the most distinct memories that I recall from attending the rehearsal is how Koizumi

Atsuhiro, the leading member of Sangatsu, was giving meticulous orders to the volume of the sound. He was saying, for example, that the volume should be 'precisely a half decibel louder' in a certain scene.

[44] European Nuclear Society, 'Fuel Comparison', <http://www.euronuclear.org/info/encyclopedia/f/fuelcomparison.htm> [Accessed 13 March, 2015].

[45] Antoni Slodkowski and Saito Mari 'Special Report: Help wanted in Fukushima: Low pay, high risks and gangsters', *Reuters*, 25 October 2013 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/25/us-fukushima-workers-specialreport-idUSBRE99O04320131025> [Accessed 7 April 2015].

[46] Victoria Kim 'Japan damage could read $235 billion, World Bank estimates', *Los Angeles Times*, 21 March 2011.

[47] *Nikkan Gendai*, 'Gekisakka Hirata Oriza shi "Igi tonaenakereba fashizumu hirogaru' ('Playwright Hirata Oriza: "If dissent is not voiced, fascism will pervade"'), 13 April 2015, http://www.nikkan-gendai.com/articles/view/news/158874/1 [Accessed 13 April 2015].

[48] See, for example, Tosaka Jun, *Nihon ideorogī ron* (A Theory on Japanese Ideology), (Tokyo: Hakuyōsha, 1936), Hasegawa Nyozekan, *Nihon fashizumu hihan* (A Critique on Japanese Fascism), (Tokyo: Ōhata shoten, 1932) and Maruyama Masao, 'The Ideology and Dyanmics of Japanese Fascism,' trans. Andrew Frase, in *Thoughts and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[49] To say more, even after four hundred pages of debate over Japanese fascism in *Nihon Fuashizumu kenkyū josetsu* (*An Introductory Research on Japanese Fascism*), Abe Hirozumi does not arrive at a 'conclusion about its [the term fascism] precise applicability' to the local context (Abe H., 1975).

[50] The Japanese title *Okashita mono* signifies multiple meanings and cannot be translated directly into English. Miyoshi deliberately uses the Chinese character 冒 rather than 侵 or 犯, although the latter two are more commonly used. When adopting the former, the verb 'okasu' could suggest both blaspheme and taking risks. Thus alternatively, the title could be translated as *The Blasphemer*. However, as this English word holds a strong Christian connotation, which is not relevant to Miyoshi's text, I have decided to go with the more general translation.

[51] In a private interview conducted on 2 February 2014, Nagatsuka Keishi said that 'it is absolutely necessary to develop new stories via new languages' after 3.11: 'we are living in an era, in which we have to reassess the power of narratives.' On Miyoshi's *He Who Risked*, he commented that 'it is a play that posed essential doubts towards humanity during the dramatic post-war years. Time represented on the stage gush like a muddy stream, swallowing all violent conflicts.'

[52] Miyoshi transcribes the verb '*okasu*' as 犯す in this phrase, which suggests committing a crime or infracting the law. The syllables sound exactly the same with 冒す, which is used in the title, although the suggested meaning is slightly different between the two Chinese characters.

[53] Asashi Shimbun, 'Engeki jin ra anpo hoan ni hantai seimei (Theatre People makes a Statement of Opposition against Security Bill', 30 July 2015 <http://www.asahi.com/articles/ASH7Z4SN8H7ZUCVL007.html> [Accessed 16 August 2015]. These theatre people were from *shingeki* troupes, and thus they had little or no connection with Takayama who works outside the *shingeki* community.

[54] Festival/Tokyo is one of the biggest performing arts festivals in Japan. Chiaki Soma was the programming director of the festival from 2009 to 2013.

[55] The ten-page long discussion was recorded on 14 February 2014: around two years after the Fukushima catastrophe. In the heated debate, Sōma says that although she highly respects the artworks Lilienthal has produced together with Schlingensief, she 'is not sure if the same tactics will work' in Japan: 'When the friction caused in the Japanese society is too drastic, maybe people will only reject the event. They might just pretend that they are seeing it and ignore it [*mite minu furi o suru*].'

[56] The World Cities Culture Forum, *City Profile Tokyo*, 2014, http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/cities/tokyo [Accessed 10 July 2014]; 'New York, London lead

cities worldwide in cultural offerings', Los Angeles Times, 2 August 2012
http://articles.latimes.com/2012/aug/02/entertainment/la-et-cm-new-york-london-lead-world-cities-in-cultural-offerings-20120802 [Accessed 14 January 2015].

[57] In July 2013, Betsuyaku's *The Elephant*, directed by Fukatsu Shigefumi was presented (the production premiered in March 2010) at New National Theatre Tokyo. In this production, when the curtain rises, a heap of second-hand clothes covered the stage, and The Man appears from under that pile. According to a review by Uchida Yōichi, the pile reminded the audience of 'massive fatalities.' (Uchida, 'New National Theatre *The Elephant*', 6 July 2013, Nikkei Shimbun).

[58] It was announced that the company would be disbanded after their final show, *Bridge*, at Kanagawa Arts Theatre from 14 to 25 June 2017.

[59] Online image of Futagawa's watch is available from: http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/virtual/cgi-bin/museum.cgi?no=0002a&l=j [Accessed 6 June, 2016]. An image of the clock in Tomioka hair salon is available from: http://www.j-cast.com/2013/12/11191445.html [Accessed 6 June, 2016].

[60] Fukushima Cooperative Restoration Centre, 'Information on Fukushima Evacuees', the official website, < http://f-renpuku.org/fukushima/evacuee_information>, [Accessed 27 May 2016].

[61] In Senda Akihiko's *The Voyage of Contemporary Japanese Theatre* (1997), J. Thomas Rimer has translated *Hogiuta* as *Song of Praise and Thanksgiving*. This thesis will adopt the English title *Ode to Joy*, which is more commonly used.

[62] *Ode to Joy*, by Kitamura Sō, directed by Katō Kenichi, Honda Gekijō, Tokyo, 1982, Performance (video recording).

[63] In the Japanese version, he introduced himself as 'Yaso'. This reminds the audience of the traditional Japanese name for Jesus, which is a rendition from the Latin version 'Iesus'.

[64] Office of Governmental and Public Affairs, Public Opinion Survey on National Life, 25 August, 2014, <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h26/h26-life/index.html>, [Accessed 11 August 2016].

[65] According to Saitama Arts Theatre, who produced the production, they are planning to mount it in the next few years despite the absence of Ninagawa.

[66] 'Japanese Institute Sees 19 Reactor Restarts by March 2018', *World Nuclear News*, July 28, 2016, < http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/NP-Japanese-institute-sees-19-reactor-restarts-by-March-2018-2807164.html>, [Accessed 15 September 2016].
[67] Justin McCurry, 'Fukushima nuclear reactor radiation at highest level since 2011', *The Guardian*, 3 February 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/feb/03/fukushima-daiichi-radiation-levels-highest-since-2011-meltdown> [Accessed, 3 February 2017].

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