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KENZABURŌ ŌE, *THE SILENT CRY* (*MAN'EN GANNEN NO FUTTOBŌRU*): THE GAME OF SACRED VIOLENCE BETWEEN MYTH, LOGOS AND HISTORY IN THE JAPANESE CULTURAL MATRIX

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Abstract: Studies of mythology and the philosophy of religions ascribe violence an important role in understanding traditional societies. Whether perceived as sacred and capable of renewing the world, or as oppressive and destructive, violence acquires a twofold valence, whose constituents are interpreted in a complementary relation of interdependence and entail a world outlook with profound implications. Retrieving this ambiguous dimension of religious violence, Kenzaburō Ōe's novel imagines, against the historical background of post-war Japanese society, a game that enacts the eternal rivalry between two brothers. Lest the history of this seemingly lost present should fall prey to political abuse, the Japanese writer proposes a return to myth, without, however, idealising it; instead, myth is revalorised and tradition is re-conceived from the vantage point of rationalism, with full and alert awareness of the dangers inherent in an ideology that is imposed by force and aggression. Kenzaburō Ōe's novel is a lucid meditation on Japan's modern and contemporary history.

Key Words: religious violence, myth, logos, history, violence, Japanese Cultural Matrix, Kenzaburō Ōe

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> In Hiroshima, they said, the very first group to flee to the suburbs after the nuclear attack had been a herd of cows. Supposing a vaster nuclear war destroyed the cities of the civilized countries – would the elephants in the zoo escape?
>
> Kenzaburō Ōe, *The Silent Cry*

> Religion ou crime, tout effort human obéit, finalement, à ce désir déraisonnable et prétend donner à la vie la forme qu'elle n'a pas. Le même mouvement, qui peut porter à l'adoration du ciel ou à la destruction de l'homme, mène aussi bien à la création romanesque, qui en reçoit alors son sérieux.
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> Albert Camus, *L'Homme révolté*

Throughout history, violence seems to have always played an ambivalent, destructive and, paradoxically, constructive role. Undergoing perpetual transformation, the history of mankind appears to be defined "by fighting and violence,"[1] irrespective of the vantage point – mythical, socio-political, intellectual or psychological – one may adopt. Having emerged either amongst the gods or amongst humans, displayed either on earth or in the universe at large, violence has always engendered limit-experiences, in which normality is transgressed, constraints are disregarded and boundaries are exploded. As the purveyor of multiple, polyvalent meanings, the dialectic of violence has never solely targeted a mere reform, an ideological change or a political transformation; throughout history, its implications have oftentimes been transfigured, being invested with connotations of a sacred or resurrectional nature, which ultimately attest to man's re-humanisation through violence.

Over the past two centuries, Japanese history has been full of tempestuous changes; the speed at which these were imposed as "normal" has left inevitably painful traces. For two hundred and fifty years, Japan was isolated, closed to the Europeans and without any diplomatic relations with China. However, the Meiji Restoration from the second half of the nineteenth century enabled the Land of the Rising Sun to experience the "western adventure": the archipelago opened its gates to the West, entering thereafter into a twentieth century that was ambivalent, violent *and* peaceful, beset with various predicaments of a religious, cultural, social, economic, political and military nature.

The past century and a half has been coeval with Japan's "modernisation": the Meiji period, which began in 1868, replaced the feudal system with that of a nation that recognised the emperor's absolute authority. However, a historic moment arrived when what was required

was not a mere political reform but also the placement of Japan in an international context, after all these years of ... absence. History followed its course, and the country's forced development triggered the crisis[2] that entailed the rise and fall of Japanese fascism, China's invasion and the Pacific War, Japan's defeat in the war and the atomic bomb, post-war reconstruction and economic prosperity and, eventually, the so-called "apotheosis" of materialism.

According to specialised studies,[3] during the post-World War II U.S. occupation, the books of high interest in Japan were those related to contemporary history and society; in 1960, when the security treaty with the U.S. was renewed, these books vanished from the top rankings, being replaced by those of practical skills, such as *Improve Your Mind* (1960-61), *Wisdom on Sex Life* (1960), *I Am a Baby* (1960), *Collected Japanese Folk Songs* (1960), *Introducing to the Japanese Economy* (1960-1), and *The Citizen's Encyclopaedia* (1961). In the shadow of these statistics, we can nonetheless glimpse a phenomenon that in the Japanese press of the time was concealed behind the words "homemaking" and "homebuilding," which reflected the massive migration from villages to cities, where "new homes" had to be created – a social metamorphosis closely connected with the desire of the Japanese to start *a new life*. What is already detectible is the destruction of a social – domestic and mental – model, whereby the place that could be called "home" was no longer that where one lived or where one returned, but the place one built for oneself:

> "Traditionally, 'home' means the point of origin, the given place that one comes *from*, which means that 'creating a home' is a contradiction in terms. The growing acceptance of this paradox among the Japanese demonstrates that an unconscious Copernican revolution has occurred in their concept of Home."[4]

Material needs in Japan during the '60s or '70s of the twentieth century were increasingly satisfied (there was a 10% economic growth per year), while moral values had changed or were lost. The disoriented and alienated citizen of the great conurbations envisaged salvation only by reminiscing about the meaning of life and death as reflected in the ancient Japanese mentality, in an attempt to promote "an active model of life"[5] and "a human model"[6] for the present and for the future that would be more than a mere car or a computer. Anxieties emerged about the future of such a prosperous present, because man was born, lived and died in the "circularity" of a world that was half visible and half invisible. Progress and modernisation had finally revealed their purpose in Japan too, and in order for man to be extricated from the economic gear, he had to find his inner roots – his earthly and community roots. In the dilemmatic present context, the Japanese realised that they could find the sacred meaning of

life only in the synthesis between religion-culture-society-political order that defined the nature of reality, the source of its order, granting legitimacy and justification to the beliefs, thoughts, convictions and actions of both the individuals and society.[7]

However, a revision did not appear to be so necessary as the re-evaluation of human experience and Japanese history from a dynamic perspective, which avoided a centre-based provincialism, highlighting, instead, inter-religious, inter-cultural and inter-human relations, advocating the maintenance of a balance between their "inner" significance, or their dilemmatic core, and their "outer," phenomenological significance, derived from human experience.[8] Here literature stepped in, affirming and confirming the identity of a nation that was under the pressure of history, revealing the extent to which the profane carried the sacred at its core and the way in which a life devoid of the divine sign and domineered by various forms of violence might represent the beginning of a new religion:

> "The role of literature – insofar as man is obviously a historical being – is to create a model of a contemporary age which encompasses past and future, a model of the people living in that age as well."[9]

Kenzaburō Ōe (born in 1935) spent his childhood in a rural region, located somewhere in the middle of the mountains on Shikoku island, in a period marked by memories of the early loss of his father and the defeat of imperial Japan in World War II. He graduated from Tokyo University with a thesis on Sartrean imagery; existentialist philosophy became, throughout his life, the philosophical foundation of his literature and civic behaviour. At the age of twenty-three, he received the Akutagawa Prize, Japan's most prestigious literary debut award for his novella *Shiiku* [1958] (*Prize Stock*). His next novels – *Memushiki kouchi* [1958] (*Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*), *Warera ni jidai* [1959] (*Our Era*) – ensured Kenzaburō Ōe's acknowledgment as one of the major writers of his time. Although somewhat of an anarchist,[10] he believed in the values of democracy and created modern myths that reflected the politically contextualised conflict between rural life and modern culture in post-war Japan; these were the main lines he pursued in his works, such as *Dōjidai gēmu* [1979] (*The Game of Contemporaneity*) and *Moegaru midori no ki* [1992-1995] (*The Burning Green Tree*). However, the birth of his first son, who was diagnosed with brain herniation, in 1963, reverberated strongly in the Japanese writer's subsequent creation. From now on, this personal experience left its imprint, as he confessed, upon his entire work and social activity:[11] living with a disabled child became one of the persistent themes in his literary career. In 1964, he published *Kojintekina taiken* (*A Personal Matter*), for which he received the Shinchōsha Award, and in 1967 *Man'en gannen no futtobōru*

(*The Silent Cry*) came out, which was awarded the Tanizaki Prize. Next, Kenzaburō Ōe's literature constantly repeated the same themes; for instance, the novel he published in 1990, *Shizukana seikatsu* (*A Quiet Life*), was another long meditation on the same question: To what extent can one find any justification for selfishness in life and for artistic narcissism in one's career? Kenzaburō Ōe writes about personal experiences, which he re-lives through revision and rewriting. In his attempt to create a new literary style in the Japanese language,[12] the stylistic register of his novels is increasingly dense and allusive, his phrases are ever more twisted and intricate, and his sentence structures – more and more complicated. Considering himself to be the last writer of the post-war generation but without proposing an alternative system to today's society,[13] Kenzaburō Ōe's entire creation is a cry of protest and resistance, as well as a defence of fragile values such as humanism, humaneness, or the right to life:

> "Besides being a stunning creator of modern myths, Ōe remains a fiercely engaged human being, relentlessly trying to awaken not only his country-men but the world."[14]

Too young to enrol in the Pacific War that Japan waged until 1945, Kenzaburō Ōe had a childhood that was not only marked by the impact of imperialist ideology, but also steeped in mythical narratives; hence, the literature the writer produced later, albeit dissident, to some extent, became a fortunate blend between myth and historical reality, which carefully entwined the particular and the universal:

> "Besides this imperialist ideology, Ōe's other main influence was his grandmother and the wild natural setting in which he lived. Ōe's grandmother and other older village members regaled the young boy with myths and stories concerning the village's inhabitants and its many *kami* or deities. The villagers viewed their history as outside and even in confrontation with the authoritarian policies of imperial Japan. Ōe's work has retained this confrontational stance throughout his life, on the one hand celebrating the marginal and on the other hand excoriating imperialist ideology."[15]

Setting forth an identity theory whereby man tries to find his true place in life, Kenzaburō Ōe's novel entitled *The Silent Cry* (*Man'en gannen no futtobōru*, in literal translation, *The Football Match from the First Year of the Age of Man*) is a meditation on the revolt which seeks the restoration of the sacred. Through his revolt, a revolted man looks for something sacred. However, any revolt assumes there is a unity, and the quest for unity leads irrevocably to violence.[16]

The novel has two symbolic years at its core: 1860, the first year of the Man'en era, when the first Japanese delegation was sent to America, as a sign that the country had embarked upon the road to modernisation, and 1960, year 35 of the Shōwa era, when, in spite of mass demonstrations of protest, the security treaty with the U.S., which had been negotiated at the end of World War II, was extended. Based on folklore and mythology, Kenzaburō Ōe's novel *The Silent Cry* comes as an immediate challenge to the imperial system and to militarist ideology: for someone who lived in the '60s, the return to and recuperation of a peripheral culture – such as the native Japanese culture, which was strongly rooted in a cosmology that permanently reworked the cycle of life, death and rebirth – was the only chance of surviving that moment of alienation: "This has been my way of resisting, on a mythological level, the homogenizing, centristic culture that has exerted its influence even over my own home in Shikoku."[17]

Japan's modernisation after the war reached all the provinces, including Shikoku, the Japanese writer's his native region. In his novel, though, the centre and the periphery are connected, since the opening offered by the centre helps one to rediscover the values of the periphery: "One of the motives I had for writing this novel was my growing awareness at the time of a culture in Japan that was very different from the dominant Tokyo one."[18]

The novel – as "historiographic anamnesis"[19] – aims to identify the elements of a legend similar to other legends of the world, in which the "image system of grotesque realism or the culture of popular laughter"[20] may be used as a literary weapon for exploring the cultural characteristics of marginal areas. It highlights the importance of the principles of the world's materiality, their correspondence with the social or cosmic principles, the redemptive overlap between death and rebirth, and the laughter that can undermine hierarchies:[21] "Ōe is very close to completing the mythic elaboration of his native village in Shikoku, a myth that now encompasses the cosmos."[22] Kenzaburō Ōe's *The Silent Cry* – a *shishōsetsu* type of novel or an "I-novel" – amounts, ultimately, to an acknowledgment of the uniqueness of the periphery, to an acceptance of its values, which may foster the "self-recovery"[23] of the individuals who are immersed in contemporary history.

Ever since the Meiji period (1868-1912), Japanese narrative fiction has been considered as the privileged "medium"[24] for the content of the self, of the personal I. Although initially a version of Japanese naturalism (*shizenshugi*), *shishōsetsu* writing (the "I-novel") – a prototypal Japanese species – has become the prevalent novelistic formula in the modern and contemporary periods. A narrative written in first or third person, *shishōsetsu* is an attempt to render, in varying degrees of "fidelity,"[25] the author's experience. As an autobiographical novelistic formula, *shishōsetsu* has been compared with the *Ich roman*, whose equivalent in English is the

"I-novel" and in French, the "roman personnel." A fictional type in which the "I" becomes the safest place, the most suitable object of a "flat," "unadorned" description,[26] verging on absolute sincerity, *shishōsetsu* focuses on a short period in the life of its author, which, most often than not, is a period of crisis.

Nonetheless, any existential crisis calls into question not only man's presence in the universe, but also the reality of the world; as long as, at least an archaic level of culture, the human being merges with the sacred,[27] his existential crisis acquires an unavoidably "religious" dimension.[28] However, if religiosity is the "ultimate structure of consciousness,"[29] independent of the disappearance of religions, if the "sacred" and the "profane" are but different names for the same constituent structure of man, in order for the legacy of oral traditions to be of any interest for contemporary man, it should take the form of a book:

> "Le roman n'a pas accès au temps primordial des mythes, mais, dans la mesure où il raconte une histoire vraisemblale, le romancier utilise un temps *apparement historique*, et pourtant condensé ou dilaté, un temps qui dispose donc de toutea les libertés des mondes imaginaires."[30]

It seems, indeed, that for the human being there can be only two possible and complementary universes: one of the sacred and the other one of revolt,[31] the disappearance of one leading inevitably to the disappearance of the other. Kenzaburō Ōe's *The Silent Cry* experiences the sacred; the religious universe it accommodates features characters whose portraits emerge as the story progresses, while the end of the book seems to lead both to a contradiction and to a new interpretation. Each chapter in the novel acquires thus new meanings and any value becomes relative.

Mitsusaburo, the central character and the authorial voice in the text, is a married 27-year old man whose child is in a sanatorium; he is "in search of some ardent sense of expectation,"[32] a sentiment he experiences whenever he wakes up before dawn. Awakened from his sleep in the dead of night, Mitsusaburo leaves his house and takes refuge in a nearby pit, dug the day before by workers who are building a septic tank.

The descent into mother earth – an extremely frequent ritualistic gesture in the world's religions, equivalent to a symbolic funeral[33] – has the magical-religious value of baptism, while the patient, regardless of the nature of his illness, is regenerated; it is well known that in days of yore, a malady of the spirit was deemed to be as dangerous for the community as any somatic disease or as any crime. The cave, a place of initiations and a shelter for the Taoist immortals, has been replaced in current history with a septic tank.

This self-isolation, this withdrawal from the world of people and familiar objects for one hundred minutes provides Mitsusaburo with the proper environment for meditation, a meditation he commences now and will continue, in effect, until the end of the novel, when it is made available to the reader. Mitsusaburo's meditation is also reminiscent of the ascetic method of Naikan self-examination (literally, a "method of inner observation"), appearing in Japan in the twentieth century[34] – which coincides with the novel's time period – and was derived from the Shin Buddhist sect; devoid of any religious element, Naikan aims to be a method of pure moral rehabilitation for criminals and offenders. The physical circumstances required by this method include a room that is isolated from external stimuli, where the subject undergoing treatment may engage in an intense guided self-reflection in order to discover his or her self (*jibun*). Like in Naikan ascesis, Mitsusaburo's remembrance of the past does not seem to follow the path of free associations customary in psychoanalysis, but rather an encoded trajectory, sanctioned by reason, which leads him towards understanding both the incidental and the essential, both the mythical condition of being and historical reality.

Meditation begins on the bizarre suicide of his best friend, who hanged himself naked with a cucumber thrust inside his anus, after he had painted his crown and face scarlet; Mitsusaburo's reflexive duplication leads him to a proper understanding of the time of life and the time of death, of mythical time, which also "allows for the repetition" of historical, irreversible time:

> "As I watched the passage of this pure time on its once-only flight, I was made aware again of the fragility of that other kind of time, soft and warm as the top of an infant's head, that admits of repetition."[35]

Reflection reveals and recognises rather than knows; for Mitsusaburo thought becomes an act in which the past is engaged in anticipation of the future,[36] while doubt acquires significance, involving the human reality and its being in the world, since, as the Sartrean protagonist seems to suggest, "celui qui réfléchit sur moi, ce n'est pas je ne sais quel pur regard intemporel, c'est moi, moi qui dure, engagé dans le circuit de mon ipséité, en danger dans le monde, avec mon historicité."[37] Mitsusaburo's meditation continues, at this time of night, with the re-memory of the meaning implicit in *Sarudahiko*, a word that surfaces from the depths of memory, which he heard, for the first time, by his dead friend's coffin, when the latter's grandmother had likened the expression of despair on her grandson's face with that of the legendary *Sarudahiko*, the scarlet head of the twentieth-century dead man reminding her of the slug in the legend:

> "Sarudahiko - Sarudahiko the divine – had gone to Amanoyachimata to meet the gods descending to earth. Amenouzume, who had engaged in negotiations with Sarudahiko as representative of the intruders, had gathered together the fish who were the original inhabitants of the new world in an attempt to establish his dominance, and with a knife had slashed pen the mouth of the sea slug, who resisted in silence."[38]

Although the passage of time may seem to foster a level of abstraction and sophistication, myth is invested with the value of a model, granting, in its turn, meaning and value to existence. Through remembrance, it is not only the mythical past that is recovered, but also a hypothetically fabulous future, as long as the dominant function of myth is that of presenting exemplary models of all the rites and of all the significant human activities: food consumption, marriage, work, education, art and wisdom.[39] Myth is not deployed in Kenzaburō Ōe's novelistic text in order to satisfy a curiosity, but as a necessity which, by recollecting the originary reality, corresponds, in fact, to a "religious need."[40] One year before his death, the suicidal man had suddenly interrupted his studies at an American university, returned to Japan and checked himself into a psychiatric clinic (for patients with mild mental afflictions), called "The Smile Training Centre." After leaving the sanatorium, however, he began to live with the obsession of a phrase from Henry Miller's works, "Let's be cheerful, whatever happens,"[41] spending the last months of his life in continuous merriment and boundless excitement.

In Kenzaburō Ōe's novel, everything seems to be valorised in a religious sense. Mitsusaburo himself, left without an eye after a freak accident, is a wounded, imperfect universe, as long as his two eyes are equated, as in mythical beliefs, with the sun and moon. It comes as no surprise then that his friends die, that he is the father of a disabled child, whose bland eyes lack any expression, and that is the husband of a woman who has become an alcohol addict on account of her fear of life and the world, caused by the birth of her "vegetable baby." Mitsusaburo's child, converted, as it were, into an exponent of his time, was born into this world with a body that seems devoid of any religious and spiritual significance, as if the anthropo-cosmic approval system had been lost to contemporaneity and the cosmos had become opaque, inert, mute, no longer the bearer of any mystery, or of any deep significance.

The meditation continues and Mitsusaburo's thoughts return to his suicidal friend, who met his brother, Takashi, in New York, and to the latter's imminent return to the country. Thus enters the stage the second protagonist of the novel, the youngest member of the Nedokoro family. The surname of the two siblings, Mitsusaburo and Takashi, is Nedokoro,

whose meaning is "the place of one's roots." This name was adapted from a regionalism in Okinawa – the southernmost island of the Japanese archipelago, which was returned to Japan after World War II in 1969: "nendukuruu," meaning "a house that shelters the roots of one's clan member's souls."[42] Having participated in the June 1960 demonstrations against renewing the security treaty between Japan and the U.S., Takashi changed his political beliefs, joined a student theatre company, and moved overseas, where he played in a "penitential piece"[43] called "Ours Was the Shame," the apologetic words addressed to the American citizens expressing the Japanese people's regret at having prevented the American president's visit to Japan. Although he had initially explained to his older brother his alliance with the band as an opportunity to reach the U.S., the news correspondence showed that, in fact, Nedokoro had not left the company, but had continued to perform in that play in various American cities. At that point, Takashi already bore on his shoulders the guilt of having betrayed the demonstrators' group, and his return home could be related to this sense of guilt, which is inseparable from social relations in Japanese society.[44]

In studies of social psychology it is claimed that the term "reality" has three antonymous concepts: "ideal *v.* reality," "dream *v.* reality," and "fiction v. reality."[45] In accordance with the classification above, the post-war period in Japan could be divided into: an "ideal" period, which lasted until 1960 and was redefined, in economic terms, as pre-high-growth; a high-growth period of "dreaming" until 1970; and a post-high-growth period of "fiction." As for the "ideals" of the period that came to an end in 1960, they seem to have been those of American democracy and Soviet communism, which had reached a dead end after the renewal of the security treaty with the U.S.:

> "The 1960 Ampo uprising against the extension of the American mutual security pact was the final showdown between the idealists and realists of the period. When the Cabinet forced the extension through the Diet, the two idealist factions – those for American democracy and those for Soviet communism – joined forces and struck out together against the realists. They lost, and the Ideal Period in post-war Japan come to its end."[46]

Nonetheless, reality always seems to include two aspects:[47] one in which reality is limited and determined, and another in which reality is determined and shaped by and through human effort. While realists seem to notice only the former aspect, idealists also remark the latter. Pondering about Takashi's idealistic and somewhat incomprehensible attitude, Mitsusaburo is awakened from his meditation by a worker who helps him out of the pit to which he has retreated in order to analyse his

thoughts; only now does he realise that the pain in his frozen body was caused by his unconscious effort to remove the bricks from the earth so that the pit walls might cave in and bury him alive. Mitsusaburo's recollection was, in a way, a meditation on the destiny of humanity, on its paths of spiritual regeneration, on the resources of imagination itself, which always follows its own ways of manifestation. Mitsusaburo has also understood that meditation requires a special attitude to the law of memory,[48] and, in particular, to "dream memory."[49]

Takashi returns to Japan, Mitsusaburo waits for him at the airport and the two brothers make a trip to their native village in Shikoku, as Takashi suggests, so that they may start both start "a new life,"[50] in their own "thatched hut."[51] Of course, Takashi's reason is only partly true because, as the older brother finds out later, there is also a mercantile interest behind it: the Korean owner of a supermarket chain in Shikoku whom Takashi met in America and who already had almost full control over the region, is interested in buying the *kurayashiki*-style barn of their native house, once a symbol of their family's wealth and social position, and transporting it to Tokyo, where it will be turned into a traditional restaurant. However, Takashi's desire to return to his childhood place has yet another motivation: that of learning the truth about the story of his great-grandfather and his younger brother, which has become a sort of local legend in the meantime. Just like Mitsusaburo was only a disinterested observer during the protest demonstrations against the security treaty with the U.S., he is once again incapable of protesting when his younger brother proposes that they return to their place of origin, conceding to the journey without any pleasure:

> "[...] the one with the ratty, downhill appearance, I had a presentiment that in the end I would let myself be pushed into going along with Takashi's extremely shaky plan. For the moment, I'd lost the sheer toughness needed for a confrontation with him. As the thought occurred to me, the warmth from the gulp of whisky suddenly promised to link up with a sense of expectation in the inner depths of my body. But when I tried to focus on it I was hindered by the sober good sense that sees so many perils in any attempt to achieve rebirth through self-release."[52]

The return to his native land – a spiritual pilgrimage, after all – enables Mitsusaburo not only to distance himself from the capital where he has lived and which has been defiled by the death of his best friend, but also to get near to a place that appears to be the exact opposite of the profane space he has left behind. On his way back to his origins, the first place that reminds Mitsusaburo of his childhood is the forest he re-

encounters, which seems to be more and more steeped in holiness as he rediscovers its "power." In the archaic imaginary, the cosmos was represented as a giant tree,[53] given its capacity to regenerate infinitely and its symbolism of eternal youth; furthermore, the forest has always been deemed to be mysterious, majestic, which is why a man contemplating it may be seized by true *religious fear*. However, irrationality, superstition and mystery are the prerogatives of religious thought. Now, for Mitsusaburo, Chōsokabe, "the ever-present reality of the monstrous creature that still lived in the same age as ourselves,"[54] is not only the monster in the forest, which once had to scare off a stubborn child, at least in the threats professed by its grandmother, but also the huge and terrifying creature related to the founding myth of his native village: its inhabitants, the myth goes, had been driven deep into the forest Chōsokabe, but found a valley that had managed to withstand the forest and settled there. However, for Mitsusaburo, the forest becomes a secure shelter through which he can reconnect with his ancestors and where he can experience the sentiment of true freedom. The supernatural is but one manifestation of the sacred in the world; nature, which is always expressed in terms of something that transcends it,[55] activates its "supra-earthly valence and reveals the sacredness of the world:

> "Yet all the while a shrill voice, its frequency too high to be caught by the human ear, seemed to skirl between the high, black walls of the surrounding forest. It was the cry of the huge creature whose coiled body filled the void that lay above the hollow."[56]

Still, the memory of the mythical village has meanwhile entered history and another monster has taken Chōsokabe's place. Mitsusaburo's former nurse, Jin Kanaki, whom the press refers to as "the fattest woman in Japan," suddenly developed a pathological appetite and has gained so much weight that she weighs over a hundred kilograms. At a time when people are convinced that their lives can know no improvement, the emergence of such a monstrous creature, fallen prey to a mysterious and implacable disease, brings them hope: "So they made her a kind of object of worship."[57] The village priest, steeped in a mentality that seems to stem from the primordial depths, sees her "as the sacrificial lamb who would take upon herself the woes of all the other valley folk."[58] Jin seems to be possessed by a spirit and the role that she is required to play is not an individual role, since she has evidently become the mediating representative of the community in the valley, which she has to save.

In contemporaneity, myth is redefined, it does not simply preserve its valence of a narrated story, but acquires the dimension of lived reality, of a history that is real, sacred, exemplary and significant.[59] Kenzaburō Ōe's novel *The Silent Cry* eloquently demonstrates this. Having returned to

their native land, the two brothers discover in the *kurayashiki* barn, which they are about to sell, evidence testifying about events that happened a hundred years before, when their great-grandfather, who had been part of the official leadership of the region, had quashed a peasant revolt led by his younger brother, in 1860.

This revolt seems to recall, in anticipation, the peasant movements from around the year 1867, the year of the Meiji Restoration, incidents known as "Eejanaika" – "Why not? It's all right."[60] Entrenched in Japanese history as a movement of "ecstatic mass violence,"[61] they covered a vast territory in the archipelago, which included Nagoya, Tōkaidō, Kyoto, Osaka, Nishinomiya, Edo, Yokohama, Shinshū, Ise, Awaji, Awa, Sanuki, and Aizu. These were mass movements that strongly affirmed their unlimited "desire" ("across-the-board-affirmation of desire"), in a context where traditional Japanese society was run by the principle of alternating the *hare* cycle (the period of festivities and celebrations) with the *ke* period (normal everyday life).[62] For a people who observed the *shinto* animist faith, the onset of the *hare* period meant the arrival of the deities' world on earth, when desire was given free rein, with no restraint. More than a desire for mere eating, drinking or having sex, the real motivation for this movement seemed to be the desire to abandon the daily routine, in a society full of restrictions and sanctions; the desire for a liberation of the senses seemed to implicitly entail a desire for social liberation, rebellion becoming simultaneously not only a movement for affirming a new order, but also one of discarding what was already known:

> "The people, having stored up their dissatisfactions with the feudal order, did not look within themselves for the power to bring forth a new world. They required the power of a higher realm, be it divine or elite."[63]

The peasant mentality of this watershed period appears thus, in the terms of social psychology, as a movement of "exaltation" preceding the Meiji period, characterised by the "rebelliousness" generated by the economic constraints of the last years of the feudal period, by the "political realism" and "political fervour" required by the emergent ideology, all these against the backdrop of the "outrage" against the new authoritative actions of the Meiji government.[64] However, *desire* is not far from *murder*, and both *desire* and *murder* are "ferments of conflict,"[65] as demonstrated by the 1860 peasants' rebellion from the village downstream in Kenzaburō Ōe's novel. Mitsusaburo and Takahashi learn now from the local legends that the elder brother, that is their great-grandfather, had lured his younger brother in the same *kurayashiki*-style barn, where he killed him; the letters Mitsusaburo found later infirmed this. The great-grandfather who allegedly "killed" his brother had reached the threshold of a "sacrificial crisis,"[66] since his almost tragic gesture

ought to be interpreted in terms of a new order that was about to be born rather than of an order that was about to collapse. Having retired again in meditation, this time in the cellar of the *kurayashiki* barn after Takashi's death, Mitsusaburo understands that the fate of the heroes who fought or are fighting each other is the fate of the whole society, while the confrontation between the protagonists acquires a dramatic overtone, which will designate the future:

> "I shook my head in silence, still drunk with my revelation, which was taking increasingly well-defined shape. The central core of it, the realization that after the 1860 rising great-grandfather's brother had not in fact abandoned his fellows to their fate and set off through the forest in search of a new world, was already unshakable. Though he'd been unable to prevent the tragedy of their decapitation, he himself had carried out his own punishment. On the day of the final annihilation, he'd shut himself up in the cellar and there maintained his integrity as leader of the rising, albeit in a negative way, without ever going back on his beliefs."[67]

Reiterating the event from one hundred years before, Takashi gathered together the village youth, under the pretext of organising a football team, and trained them for attacking the new supermarket that had been built with Korean money. The attack thrust the community into a state of anarchy, and the two brothers found themselves playing the roles of their ancestors. Contemporary materialism may leave the impression that it can answer all questions, but, serving history, "it extends the domain of historical crime,"[68] whose justification appears to loom in the future. Violence, with its sacrificial connotation, has turned into a regenerating force not only for the individual, but also for the group. Abel was murdered by Cain, Remus by Romulus and Mitsusaburo, the murderer without a proof of his crime, as he appears in the eyes of his wife, is the one who compelled his younger brother to commit suicide by "plunging" the latter permanently into shame. Violence with its derivatives – trauma, victimisation, sacrifice and sacredness – which transcend the rational apparatus[69] – seems to be a force to be reckoned with in Kenzaburō Ōe's novel: the author aims to propose a new civilisational basis for the transfiguration of society and for man's rebirth. From here, the protagonists' assuming the condition of a hero is only one step away. Whether physical or verbal, violence brings to the fore opponents of equal strength and it is difficult to predict how the conflict will end. Will equality eventually tilt to one side, and will the world come out of the time zero that it seems to be locked in? Which solution will

prevail in the end? Returning to Takashi's world founded on *mythos* or entering Mitsusaburo's world based on *logos*? An essential mythical theme, the theme of sibling rivalry is, in itself, violent;[70] once violence has penetrated the community, it is difficult for it to be contained. Everything depends, however, on the power of sacrifice. When the religious element starts to founder, as there seems to be the case in Mitsusaburo's existential universe, it is not only physical security that is threatened, but also the cultural order,[71] because the institutions lose their vitality and the armature of society collapses. This destruction enables violence to advance further, threatening the balance and harmony of the community: it is not non-violence that appears to be the opposite of violence, but rather the human community.[72] Before the rebellion triggered by Takashi – which the elder brother calls "a riot of the imagination" – comes to an end, the younger Nedokoro is involved in a murder with sexual connotations, which appears to be an accident. Cornered, Takashi commits suicide, but his death will awaken Mitsusaburo to action and will make him accept a job as a Swahili interpreter, hoping that he will more easily build his "cane hut" on African soil:

> "As chief interpreter for the expedition, I could hardly persuade myself that an elephant with 'Expectation' painted on its huge grey belly would come lumbering out before my eyes as we lay in wait among the grass of the plains, but now that I'd accepted the job there were moments when I felt that, at any rate, it was the beginning of a new life."[73]

The mythical dimension of existence, constituted as a sacred history, demands its periodical "re-actualisation,"[74] either in its entirety or partially. Time reversibility makes it possible to get into contact with the ancestors, with history, with the founding moment of the community. However, "living" the myth means exiting profane, chronological time, in order to enter sacred, cyclical time, which is "both primordial and infinitely recoverable";[75] in other words, experience living a "religious" experience entails the temporary relinquishment of quotidian life. While Takashi seems to have sacrificed himself in the name of a mythical type existence, Mitsusaburo advocates a logical type of existence. The very succession and simultaneity of the two types of existence contribute to the making of history. Kenzaburō Ōe's *The Silent Cry* is an attempt to heal, in time, man's life affliction through myth, logos and history. Having become a passive receptacle of violence, Mitsusaburo says: "I wonder if I'll ever know what lay behind the events whereby my eye got like that"[76] – the eye that got damaged a few years ago by children acting in a fit of anger. He attempts to rationalise this violence, trying to understand, in rational terms, the role violence has in human societies; on the other hand,

Takashi activates violence, translates it into reality, in the name of transcendence,[77] whether of a religious, humanist or any other nature, ensuring its legitimacy:

> "'The young men of the valley can't do anything worthwhile without a leader', said Takashi with unconcealed disgust. 'They're helpless until someone like great-grandfather's younger brother comes along. They're incapable of getting themselves out of a fix by their own efforts.'"[78]

Living in a society that has alienated itself from the sacred, in a desacralised history, implies that contemporary time triggers permanent revolts and contestations, and that revolt becomes "an essential dimension of man."[79] In Kenzaburō Ōe's novel, the village in the valley turns into the centre of a universe where violence takes the form of rebellion and death. Through the riots of 1860 and 1960 – the latter somehow resuming the former under the leadership of the Tokyo-based great-grandson of the leader from one hundred years before – a temporal continuity is created, allowing the past to haunt the present as "knowledge."[80] Still, this very relation that enables the centre to prevail upon the periphery gives rise to "unilateral determinism,"[81] bringing to the fore the figure of a divine-king, of a supreme leader, who monopolises authority in the village downstream. Like in the ancient Polynesian myths, where the origin of the various clans and dynasties resembles genealogies, in Kenzaburō Ōe's novel the appearance and "gestation" of the leader amounts to a symbolic remaking of the world.

The leader's confirmation ceremony sets off a mechanism of increasing excitation amongst the rural community in the valley, activating a dynamics that feeds on the forces it deploys, and the hero takes on, one by one, all the positions in the system, eventually turning from sacrificer into victim. To gain membership in the community, Takashi organises and trains a team football. It is not only the characteristic of a leader that is important here, since Takashi can impart his to experience the young, but also the fact that, in this way, he can again become a member of the community downstream as he truly is, as a "creature of violence":

> "The reason why I deliberately chose to get mixed up in violence during the campaign against revision of the Security Treaty – and the reason why, when I found myself associated with the violence of the weak forced into opposition against unjust violence, I chose to ally myself with unjust violence, whatever its purpose – was that I wanted to go on accepting myself as I am, to justify myself as a man of violence without having to change..."[82]

What was once a "cosmic renovation,"[83] a mechanism in the cosmogonic scenario of the New Year, is now, in historical time, integrated within the leader's anointing ceremony: universal renewal is no longer in sync with the cosmic rhythms, but with the leader, with historical people and events. However, entry into history, when communication with the ancestors is resumed, can only occur at a violent moment. The consecration of the leader is like a second birth, a ritualistic rebirth, whereby the person concerned becomes not only socially responsible, but also aware of the cultural mission the group has entrusted him with and of the fact that, at the origin of the cultural order, there lies the sacrificial death of a man, of a community member, or even his own demise. Similar to any new birth, Takashi's "gestation" as a leader is "a symbolic recapitulation of the tribe's cosmogony and mythical history,"[84] a reminiscence of the moments when his father and grandfather imitated, in their turn, their ancestors, by returning in *illo tempore*, when the time of primordial origins could be recovered. Mythical thinking is thus revalorised; aware that chaos, violence and death are the prerequisites for establishing a new order, the villagers downstream attempt, with Takashi's help, to remember their own origin and identity:

> "Taka's rising might seem to have been a complete failure, but at least it served to shake the valley out of its rut. [...] So where the future of the valley as a whole is concerned, the rising was effective after all. It did something to re-establish vertical communication within the valley community, and to firm up the horizontal communication among the younger people."[85]

Understanding the cause and purpose of what appears to be a strange behaviour, devoid of any significance, means acknowledging it as a human act, as a cultural fact or a gesture of the creative spirit, rather than as a mere pathological instinctual manifestation or as an infantile game. Violence and the excesses in the village downstream have acquired a "religious value"[86] by establishing a state of chaos or a pre-cosmogonic condition, which was prefigured in Takashi's "dream memories" that allowed for the past to be "burned down."[87] Memory has enabled the community to liberate itself from time's agency through *anâmnèsis*. Takashi obsessively recalls the tale, which has become something of a local legend, about his great-grandfather and his brother; with the aid of his personal memory, he attempts to recover a primordial history, a myth, because its knowledge would somehow provide him with a "magical power"[88] over it. Its remembrance becomes for Takashi a subjective type of knowledge, turned into a soteriological science, which enables its practitioner to master his own destiny. It is this memory[89] that allows Takashi to belong to the community in the valley, while Mitsusaburo

considers that modern man is a product of history, although the tension of chronological time restores, subtly and indirectly, the course of one's return to one's origins. Symbolically, from time to time, this world is suppressed and replaced by the paradise of the world of yore, and political independence and cultural freedom can be seen as the retrievals of an originary state of bliss. Once, the founding of the village downstream had been a cosmic, existential gesture; then the village gained the connotation of an image of the universe (*imago mundi*), with the *shurayuki*-style barn at its core, transfigured, in a mythological type of symbolism, into the centre of the world. In Kenzaburō Ōe's novel, the mythical ancestor has become a messianic character or a cultural hero, while the manifestation of the sacred in this space is kept alive in Takashi's and the villagers' memory, through the legend of the 1860 conflict, when the two brothers contributed to laying the foundations of a new era. However, like in the case of any beginning, the life "transfer"[90] this entailed could only be grounded in a bloody sacrifice. In the cult of the valley community, the gods seem less significant than the mythical ancestors, who were the founders and, if necessary, the perturbers of the cultural order. When, however, a crisis sets in, the difference between the living and the dead is lost, the latter becoming entwined with the former: hence, the "purification" of the world requires a sacrificial victim.[91] The grandeur and the baseness of the destiny Takashi has assumed turns him into a hero, while his brother seems to become an anti-hero of contemporary times, the very future of the world resting on their antagonism.

Through the sacred calendar religious man observes, the participants become contemporaneous with the mythical event.[92] They "come out" of historical time and enter into mythical time, which is, in effect, a-temporalised into an eternal present. Religious behaviour helps to maintain the sanctity of the world.[93] According to endless sequences of cycles, in the course of which the same reality is made, unmade and remade, the only response to violence seems to be violence itself.[94] The more one may attempt to subdue violence, the more violent it becomes, turning into the "secret soul" of the sacred. The impurity arising within a community wants removing, the possible contamination requires purging, chaos demands a return to cosmos, and here is where violence steps in, most often with the force of renewal. One can no longer distinguish between good violence and bad violence, and what is impure seems to overlap with the pure. To become a man, in the full sense of the word, Takashi must die in natural life so that he may be reborn in another existence, which is both religious and cultural.[95] Before him, both his father, who had lost his fortune and life for the sake of an unlucrative job in China, and two more Nedokoro brothers had paid the price of personal and collective violence. The youngest sister of the four siblings, born with psychical disabilities, committed suicide after an incestuous relationship with Takashi, while the eldest brother S, having returned from the front,

was assassinated by the Korean community in the village in the summer of 1945, the revenge of his death becoming the indirect motive of the revolt Takashi prepared in 1960.

Brother S, the hero-victim, seems to have turned into the sacrificial offering that rebuilds the time connection between 1860 and 1945, and between 1945 and 1960, appearing as the victim intended to prevent a cycle of revenge. Violence could contaminate everything and become demoniacal, leading to total destruction, were it not for the "scapegoat mechanism."[96] Thus, in 1960, Mitsusaburo and Takashi realise that S's "spirit" has already permeated the Nembutsu dance during the Bon festival, when the villagers allow themselves to be consumed with enthusiasm to assuage the evil spirits: their brother's "spirit" has already been entrenched in the community tradition of the village downstream. This is what eventually also happens, in fact, with Takashi's "spirit".

Extreme freedom, the freedom to kill, has led man to terror and war. However, it is this extreme freedom, which has turned into extreme violence, that becomes the "measure of things and of man."[97] If it is not true that nothing makes sense, as, equally, it is not true that everything makes sense,[98] violence imparts the measure of sense that needs be conquered from nonsense and it also makes man responsible for himself and his existence,[99] condemning him to freedom. S's murder at the hands of the Korean community in the village downstream in the year 1945 and the 1960 attack against the supermarket owned by the Korean "emperor," a former lumberjack from the same community who had struck it rich, are incidents that clearly remind of Japan's relations with Korea – an allusive reference, we believe, among other things, to the 1894-95 war. Having its starting point in the hegemony over Korea that was disputed between Japan and China, the conflict known as the Sino-Japanese War was the first Japanese conflict waged abroad,[100] amounting, from the perspective of historical dynamism, to the birth of Japanese nationalism. The importance of this war in the region and in Japan has been compared by authorities in the field with the implications of World War II,[101] each of the two wars becoming a limit between two historical epochs: the pre-modern and the modern. The Sino-Japanese War marked, therefore, a fundamental political turning point in East Asia, while in Japan it gave birth to the idea of national identity and led to the founding of the modern nation-state:

> "Through its experience of the Sino-Japanese War, Japan became a modern nation-state: a political system in which all Japanese people saw themselves as ‚citizens of Japan', proud to serve their country and to collectively share its destiny. This formative experience occurred amid the madness and passions of the war and was lodged among the shared memories of the Japanese people. It deeply influenced the creation of Japan's sense of

> nationhood. The war was like an immense carnival. The abnormal excitement it inspired would periodically envelop Japanese society and propel it into the madness of a further half-century of warfare. The fuse that ignited the succession of Japan's wars up to and including the Pacific War was lit by the passionate support given by the broad masses of the Japanese people to the Sino-Japanese War."[102]

Japan won the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5), then the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), annexing, in the latter's aftermath, Korea, which it would dominate until 1945; Japan also ended World War I (1914-1918) on the winners' side. Next came, internally, an extremely unstable period, triggering a nationalist movement known as the "Shōwa Restoration", whose supporters came from young military personnel and the urban class of average-level intellectuals: this ended in a failed initiative of the right-wing movement, which, in an attempt to consolidate the imperial system of government, assassinated several statesmen, under the slogan "Talking is no use, shoot!"[103] The members of the ultranationalist group were executed after summary trials, and then silence set in. Beyond this silence, however, the frustration arising as a result of oppressing the freedom of expression led, eventually, to the exacerbated affirmation of nationalism and, finally, to the Pacific war, which imperialist Japan lost. The relations between the villagers downstream and the Korean community somehow replicate, albeit in reverse, the history of the Japanese desire for expansion, because in 1960 the village is ruled by the terror of a Korean "emperor," a supermarket owner, against whose domination Takashi with the young people in the village protest. Violence seems no longer to belong to man now: it seems to have turned into an absolute imperative, similar to the "order of a deity"[104] calling for blood revenge, so much so that murder, as the penalty for retaliation, loses its original primacy. An endless cycle of violence thus commences, in which one murder attempts to justify another:

> "Quite probably, the young men of the valley who raided the Korean settlement on the day S was killed not only plundered moonshine and candy but also took some Korean girl's best clothes and kept them hidden for more than twenty years. I suspected that on the first raid they'd committed not only murder but some other dreadful act that S's death alone could never atone for, and that it was knowledge of this that had driven S, even after he'd resolved to serve as sacrificial lamb on the second raid, to lie brooding in a state of despairing

> melancholy on the floor in the back room downstairs in the storehouse."[105]

The tragic conception of existence is the result of the religious valorisation of violent death. Cruelty and murder are part of a way of living, violent behaviour gaining "a religious value."[106] Violence has become a witness to the making of history: the destruction of the world is necessary for its periodical restoration. Hope in eternal life has given the crises, the encounters and the revelations in Kenzaburō Ōe's novel the connotation of privileged religious experiences:

> "I was thinking about the absolute truth which, if a man tells it, leaves him no alternative but to be killed by others, or kill himself, or go mad and turn into a monster. The kind of truth that once uttered leaves you clutching a bomb with the fuse irretrievably lit."[107]

Like in any primitive society where critical situations were answered through a sacrifice capable of staving violence off, the rebellion of 1860, similar to the one occurring one hundred years later, in 1960, attempts, through the sacrifice of the two brothers, to salvage the unity of the community from a crisis that might threaten its own internal balance. Primitive religiosity tries to give violence a new dimension, not of non-violence, but of coexisting violence and non-violence:

> "The placid life, moreover, would be the life of someone who had once been a creature of violence, backed up by the proud memory of having lived through a major upheaval."[108]

For Mitsusaburo, salvation can be likened to an "awakening," an acknowledgment of something that was already there but which he has realised only now. Before returning to his native village, the elder brother was neither dead nor alive, he merely survived. Forgetting will take the place of remembering, with the only exception that forgetting no longer means death, but a return to life. Falling under the dominion of time and obsessed with his own historicity, modern man attempts to re-assess the functionality of religious violence and, thereby, to arrive at a new understanding of the depths of time through which myth and history are leaking. *Logos* has triumphed over *mythos* without de-sacralising it. Regression into a chaotic mode of living means that everything that was eroded or soiled through time has been destroyed, allowing for a re-creation of the world and, with it, for a re-creation of man. Human beings are regenerated concurrently with the world to whose destruction they have contributed. The one who knows this, who is aware of this possible metamorphosis becomes capable of transfiguring any human experience and living it on another, transhuman level. Once born biologically, man

must experience a second, spiritual birth, since he was originally born imperfect. Therefore, experience entails rites of passage, through a series of successive initiations,[109] which deepen the understanding of responsibility and culpability, of sacrifice, punishment and redemption. In Kenzaburō Ōe's novel, the world is entirely one of memory, a demanding memory, which re-memories old memories, sometimes through dreams, rearranging them into a new world: mythical memory and historical memory. Through the manner in which the two brothers approach reality, each asserts, in their own individual way, the force of refusal: by refusing one part of reality, each of them affirms another. Too profound to be satisfied with "seeming," yet too sensitive to act, Mitsusaburo lets matters drift, while Takashi, like any man from a mythical society, strives to overcome death, turning it into a rite of passage and the beginning of a new spiritual existence. Death has transformed all experience into destiny. The ancestors' past has become their future, which, in turn, has become the past for the contemporaries. History advances, it progresses in a dialectical temporal relation that evolves within a well-defined time period: 1860 and 1960. Retrieved into memory by the year 1860, the mythical ancestor has become historical, contemporaneous with the year 1960.

The sacred encompasses everything that entails violence and more: order and disorder, peace and war, creation and destruction.[110] To understand, therefore, founding violence is to recognise unity in complexity, the saving unanimity that re-establishes non-violence as the very manifestation of the sacred. As a revolted man, Takashi has disavowed and rejected his historical condition, but he has been unable to escape it. The attempt to perpetuate and strengthen a particular socio-religious order has moved to another level, which has given way to the idea of "change," of "becoming." However unpleasant or terrible, the consequences of violence have been assumed so that a new order may be achieved. Man's destiny is within himself,[111] and man exists only through his actions. If the religious cannot dissolve itself into the social, and neither can the social dilute itself into the religious, is may the case that violence assumes the characteristic of a bond between the two, becoming, paradoxically perhaps!?, one of the founding principles in the formation of human societies. Mitsusaburo has turned into an engaged spectator, a social engineer, an advocate of punctual reforms based on the exercise of critical reason. He has become a witness of history, which he records in his own journal. Still, a survivor who recollects a violent event can influence its testimony, just like he may shape it according to his own will. What, at the time of experience, might have been ineffable, even unrepresentable, must acquire a discursive form. The moment of "unmediated experience" and "intuitive apprehension"[112] has been relived and re-grasped through narrative art. The first-degree witness experience gives way, in Mitsusaburo's "journal," to the paradoxical projection of hope.

Each generation seems to rewrite history, assuming a particular past based on the future which it is heading towards and which determines its present.[113] One of the brothers chose man in a society in which freedom may only be asserted through fighting and violence, while the other has reconciled action with historical consciousness. In Sartrean terms, however, thought *is* action and it may be enlisted in the quest for the human or historical future. Freedom exists as making, as action. Admixing elements of real history in a fictional trauma, Kenzaburō Ōe's novel amounts to what might be called a fiction of the real. In order for the history of this seemingly lost present not to fall prey to ideology and political abuse, the Japanese author proposes a return to myth, without idealising it, though; the appeal to *logos* demands the rethinking of tradition according to the future it may give rise to. Humanism has been interrogated and, eventually, revalorised. While Mitsusaburo disproves the innocence of the world and judges it methodically, Takashi replaces value judgments with exalted consent; despair acquires the overtones of joyfulness, bondage gives way to freedom, because being free means exactly abolishing goals. Once consented to, the innocence of becoming represents utmost freedom.[114]

The violence that triggered off the riots of 1860 and 1960 caused, in fact, the rebirth of a civilisation. By striking, violence tore the world in half; after the chaos, however, history renewed its mission of not coming to an end and of regenerating itself after an already known image. Violence has become a necessity of history; the progress of history means violence and terror, placed in the service of politics and ideology. Violence has revealed the meaning of the conflict between tradition and modernity, between the past and the future, between myth and history: the dynamics of history appears to manifest itself in endless tension. In Japanese history, for instance, the year 1960 prefigured the dramatic events at the end of the decade: the Tokyo protest movements, against the background of those in Prague, Chicago, Paris, Belgrade, Rome, Mexico, followed by the creation of the United Red Army, which saw its end with its own eyes when its members executed one another in cold blood. In an effort to understand its epoch, the broken course of historical events has gained, in Kenzaburō Ōe *The Silent Cry,* grotesque, cynical and ironic overtones. Trying not only to accept the reality of the present, but also to understand the murder that justifies it, and thinking in terms of the future, Kenzaburō Ōe allows, in this novel, the dilemma that was once translated through the phrase "crisis or war" to veer into the emblem under whose aegis the next century will begin:

> "There is no firm proof of this belief of mine, but 'weak person' though I am, with the aid of this unverifiable belief, I would like to 'suffer dully all the wrongs' accumulated throughout this century as a result of the uncontrolled development of

> inhuman technology. As one with a peripheral, marginal, off-center existence in the world, I would like to continue to seek – with what I hope is a modest, decent, humanistic contribution of my own – ways to be of some use in the cure and reconciliation of mankind."[115]

Notes

[1] Cf. Raymond Aron, *Istoria şi dialectica violenţei/ Histoire et dialectique de la violence*, Translated, introductory study and bibliographical notes by Cristian Preda, (Bucharest: Babel, 1995), 255.
[2] Cf. Kenzaburō Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself (The Nobel Prize Speech and Other Lectures)* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1995), 41-43.
[3] See Munesuke Mita, *Social Psychology of Modern Japan*, Translated by Stephen Suloway, (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1992), 314-17, 321.
[4] Mita, 327.
[5] Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 63.
[6] Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 64.
[7] Cf. Joseph Mitsuo Kitagawa, *În căutarea unităţii. Istoria religioasă a omenirii/ The Quest for Humanity Unity. A Religious History*, Translated by Claudia Dumitru, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), 266.
[8] See Kitagawa, 282-4.
[9] Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 66.
[10] See Sarah Fay, "The Art of Fiction No. 195", *Paris Review*, Issue 183 (Winter2007): 41.
[11] See Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 34.
[12] See Fay, 46.
[13] Cf. Shūichi Katō, *A History of Japanese Literature (From Its Origins to the Present Day)*, Volume II, Translated from Japanese by Kazuko Diaconu and Paul Diaconu, (Bucharest: Nipponica, 1998), 882.
[14] Susan J. Napier, "Ōe Kenzaburō and the Search for the Sublime at the End of the Twentieth Century", in *Ōe and beyond. Fiction in Contemporary Japan*, ed. Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 13.
[15] Napier, 11.
[16] Cf. Albert Camus, *Omul revoltat/ L'homme révolté*, Translated by Ligia Holuţă. Foreword by Michel Joseph, (Oradea: Sophia, 1994), 140.
[17] Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 35.
[18] Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 31.
[19] Mircea Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului/ Aspects du Mythe*, Translated into Romanian by Paul G. Dinopol, Preface by Vasile Nicolescu, (Bucureşti: Univers, 1978), 129.
[20] Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 33.
[21] Cf. Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 125.
[22] Napier, 24.
[23] Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 100.
[24] Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel, "Introduction", in *Ōe and beyond. Fiction in Contemporary Japan*, ed. Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 4.

[25] Cf. Kōjin Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, Foreword by Fredric Jameson, Translation edited by Brett de Bary, (London: Duke University Press, 1998), 214.
[26] Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit, "L'inspiration autobiographique", in *Littérature japonaise contemporaine. Essais*, Sous la direction de Patrick de Voss (Bruxelles: Editions Labor, 1989), 50.
[27] Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Sacrul şi profanul/ Le Sacré et le Profane*, Translation from French by Rodica Chira, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992), 196.
[28] Sandu Frunză**,** „The relational individual in a communication built society. Towards a new philosophy of communication", *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XX, No. 3, (Autumn 2011): 140-152.
[29] Eliade, *Sacrul şi profanul*, 9.
[30] Mircea Eliade, *Aspects du Mythe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), 232.
[31] See Camus, *Omul revoltat*, 31.
[32] Kenzaburō Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, Translated by John Bester, (Tokyo, New York, London: Kodansha International, 1981), 1.
[33] See Eliade, *Sacrul şi profanul*, 133.
[34] See Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Japanese Patterns of Behaviour*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976), 202.
[35] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 4-5.
[36] See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Fiinţa şi neantul. Eseu de ontologie fenomenologică/ L'être et le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, Revised edition and index by Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, Translated by Adriana Neacşu, Piteşti, (Bucharest: Editura Paralela 45, 2004), 232.
[37] Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 192.
[38] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 6.
[39] Cf. Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, 8.
[40] Malinovski, apud Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, 20. See also Mihaela Paraschivescu, "'We the People' and God. Religion and the Political Discourse in the United States of America", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 11, issue 33 (Winter 2012): 21-38.
[41] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 7.
[42] Ōe, *Japan, The Ambigous, and Myself*, 33.
[43] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 12.
[44] See Sugiyama Lebra, 12.
[45] Cf. Mita, 515.
[46] Mita, 517.
[47] See Mita, 516.
[48] Cf. Walter Benjamin & Jacques Derrida, *Despre violenţă/* [Walter Benjamin, *Zur Kritik der Gewalt*; Jacques Derrida, *Force de loi. Le „Fondement mystique de l'autorité"*], Edited by Ciprian Mihali, (Cluj-Napoca: Idea Design&Print, 2004), 60.
[49] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 74.
[50] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 35.
[51] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 134.
[52] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 40.
[53] See Eliade, *Sacrul şi profanul*, 138.
[54] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 42.
[55] See Eliade, *Sacrul şi profanul*, 108.

[56] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 239.
[57] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 52.
[58] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 52.
[59] Cf. Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, 1.
[60] See Mita, 149.
[61] Mita, 149.
[62] Cf. Mita, 149.
[63] Mita, 151.
[64] Cf. Mita, 153.
[65] Cf. Camus, *Omul revoltat*, 54.
[66] Cf. René Girard, *Violenţa şi sacrul/ La violence et le sacré*, Translated by Mona Antohi, (Bucharest: Nemira, 1995), 51.
[67] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 257.
[68] Cf. Camus, *Omul revoltat*, 322.
[69] Cf. Dominick Lacapra, *History and its limits. Human, Animal, Violence* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 94.
[70] See Girard, 70.
[71] See Girard, 57.
[72] Cf. Joseph Mitsuo Kitagawa, *În căutarea unităţii. Istoria religioasă a omenirii/ The Quest for Humanity Unity. A Religious History*, Translated by Claudia Dumitru, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), 289.
[73] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 274.
[74] Cf. Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, 13.
[75] Cf. Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, 18.
[76] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 2.
[77] See Girard, 30.
[78] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 60.
[79] Cf. Camus, *Omul revoltat*, 31.
[80] See Sartre, *Fiinţa şi neantul*, 610.
[81] Sugiyama Lebra, 14.
[82] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 211.
[83] Cf. Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, 39.
[84] Cf. Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, 32.
[85] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 266.
[86] Cf. Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, 4.
[87] See Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, 84.
[88] Cf. Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, 85.
[89] See Sugiyama Lebra, 23.
[90] See Eliade, *Sacrul şi profanul*, 54.
[91] Cf. Girard, 317.
[92] See Eliade, *Sacrul şi profanul*, 82.
[93] See Eliade, *Sacrul şi profanul*, 93.
[94] Cf. Girard, 37. See also Ioan Biris, "Religious Violence and the Logic of Weak Thinking: between R. Girard and G. Vattimo", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 11, issue 32 (Summer 2012): 171-189.
[95] See Eliade, *Sacrul şi profanul*, 173.
[96] Cf. Girard, 281.
[97] Cf. Camus, *Omul revoltat*, 312.
[98] See Camus, *Omul revoltat*, 314.

[99] See Sartre, *Ființa şi neantul*, 7.
[100] See Makito Saya, *The Sino-Japanese War and the Birth of Japanese Nationalism*, Translated by David Noble, (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2011), xii.
[101] See Saya, xxii.
[102] Saya, 162-3.
[103] Cf. Toshio Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese in Wartime*, (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1991), 77.
[104] Cf. Girard, 20.
[105] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 299.
[106] Cf. Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, 136.
[107] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 219.
[108] Ōe, *The Silent Cry*, 307.
[109] See Eliade, *Sacrul şi profanul*, 167.
[110] See Girard, 280.
[111] Cf. Sartre, *Ființa şi neantul*, 22.
[112] Cf. Lacapra, 63.
[113] Cf. Sartre, *Ființa şi neantul*, 190.
[114] Cf. Camus, *Omul revoltat*, 314.
[115] Ōe, *Japan, The Ambigous, and Myself*, 128.

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