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# *The Silent Cry* (1967) Revisited Through Affect Theory

REIKO ABE AUESTAD

**Abstract:** The 1994 Nobel laureate Ōe Kenzaburō, (1935–) is well-known for his moral commitment as a writer to remind us of the dark legacy of WWII and the Japanese role in it by critically reexamining history. Representative of work in this regard, *The Silent Cry* (*Man'en gan'nen no futtobōru* 1967) introduces multiple perspectives on the past both diachronically and synchronically to challenge the normative perception of history. This article attempts to close-read the novel through the lens of affect theory by tracing the trajectories of affect that propel the narrative machinery forward and investigate how they influence the perception of history on the part of the characters. In contradistinction to more self-conscious emotions, affect often catches us unawares and gets us unhinged. Rereading the novel with focus on the affective unconscious among the characters, I hope to bring into relief their partiality, vulnerability, and limited self-knowledge, which according to Judith Butler, should be seen as a sign of our 'sociality', that which *connects us* rather than *divides us*. This may in turn guide us toward new Butlerian ethics 'based on our shared', 'partial blindness about ourselves', that is less judgmental and more generous.

**Keywords:** Ōe Kenzaburō, *The Silent Cry*, affect theory, Silvan Tomkins, Judith Butler, history vs heritage

There is a real question whether anyone may fully grasp the nature of any object when that object has not been perceived, wished for, missed, and thought about in love and in hate, in excitement and in apathy, in distress and in joy. This is as true of our relationship with nature, as with the artifacts created by man, as with other human beings and with the collectivities which he both inherits and transforms. There are many ways of 'knowing' anything. Only an animal who was as capable as man could have convinced

himself that the scientific mode of acquaintance is the only ‘real’ mode through which he contacts reality. (Silvan Tomkins 1995b, 55)

### **Introduction: the context**

The winner of the 1994 Nobel prize in literature, Ōe Kenzaburō (1935–) is known for his active engagement with history, particularly for his moral commitment as a writer to remind us of the dark legacy of WWII and the Japanese role in it. Ten years old at the time of the Japanese surrender in 1945, Ōe witnessed the value system of his childhood being shattered to pieces as he heard on the radio the supposedly divine Emperor announcing the Japanese defeat in a human voice (Rodden 2002, 285). In the aftermath of the war, he saw adults in his Shikoku village and elsewhere, ostensibly, and promptly turning democratic and pro-American, the emperor included. This trauma seems to have taught him to distrust ready-made histories, a trauma that became a creative reservoir to tap into when he later became an author. Aware of the necessarily discursive nature of history, Ōe is adamant about scrutinizing the same historical events over and over in the hope of shedding new light on them.

Unsurprisingly, his literature has most often been read in view of Ōe’s particular concern: to not forget the lessons of modern Japanese history in ‘exorcising’ the demon of ultranationalism.<sup>1</sup> *The Silent Cry* (Man’en gan’nen no futtobōru), one of his major works which won him the Tanizaki prize in 1967, is representative in that regard. Albeit with a different focus, prominent Japanese critics such as Komori Yōichi (2002), Narita Ryūichi (1995), and Karatani Kōjin (1995) have all emphasized in discussing the novel how it problematizes our normative perception of history with the special attention it pays to the gaps in our collective memory. As Komori argues in his monograph, Ōe does this by introducing multiple perspectives on history, both diachronically and synchronically, in order to challenge us to critically examine each one of them. The main perspectives in the novel are represented by two rivalling brothers of the Nedokoro family: the elder, Mitsusaburō, and the younger, Takashi (Mitsu and Taka for short). The two offer widely diverging views of events that took place in their native village in Shikoku and elsewhere at three important historical junctures: 1860, a time of social instability during rampant peasant riots 8 years before the Meiji Restoration (one of which swept up their great-grandfather, who was on the side of the establishment, and the great-grandfather’s younger brother, who was on the peasants’ side); 1945, the year of the Japanese surrender which witnessed the home-coming of many defeated soldiers (one of whom was the elder brother of the Nedokoro family, S-Niisan who was later killed when he joined the village youth to raid a neighboring Korean camp); and lastly, 1960 which saw the anti-security treaty movement reaching its turbulent peak, with Mitsu observing from the sideline, and Taka actively participating in the demonstrations. The questions that Mitsu and

Taka disagree on, and argue about, concern the evaluation of the members of the Nedokoro family involved in these historic events: Did the great grandfather's younger brother who sided with the peasants die as a hero? Did S-Niisan also die a heroic death? Did Taka succeed in reliving the ancestral hero role by leading another uprising in their native village? Following Taka's suicide after the brothers' final showdown, Mitsu continues to reflect on the ramifications of the past for him, the family, and the village.

Investigation of all these events, on a macro-level, has implications for our understanding of modern Japanese history, and on a micro-level, for our understanding of the fictional Nedokoro family's position in history. Mitsu takes a sober, distanced, rational approach to the past, at least most of the time, whereas Taka takes a passionate, parochial approach, wanting to make heroes out of the great grandfather's younger brother, as well as S-Niisan. Through this multifaceted and multilayered take on the past, *The Silent Cry* exposes gaps and blind spots in our collective memory, and between different levels of representation; an aspect of the novel which has received much academic attention earlier.<sup>2</sup> Critically examining them with a view to providing correctives is no doubt important, as many of the afore mentioned scholars have done. This is obviously also Mitsu's preferred method within the novel. It is my contention, however, that it is equally important, if not more so, to understand how these gaps and blind spots come about in the first place; that is to say, how perception and memory often 'fail' us through our affective bias without our conscious knowledge.<sup>3</sup> As has been pointed out by neuroscientists,<sup>4</sup> this is a common tendency that we as humans seem to be all prone to, including Mitsu. Mitsu, the narrator, seemingly represents the level-headed intellectual, who has set his mind on 'correcting' his brother's bias throughout the novel, but I will argue that Mitsu's approach, too, can be read as equally affectively inflected if we pay attention to the subtle movements of emotions in the text. And I believe it is here, in the problematization of the schematic contrast between the sober Mitsu vs. the hot-headed Taka that the strength of *The Silent Cry* lies, an aspect of the novel which deserves to be explored and appreciated more. Also problematized by implication are other categorical binaries such as Ōe's own prototypes, the 'political human' vs the 'sexual human',<sup>5</sup> as well as objective vs subjective view of history, and history vs heritage, to which I will come back later.

Most importantly, *The Silent Cry*, as a fictional narrative, dramatizes the affectively charged personal dynamics between the two brothers, revealing ways in which they are variably opaque to themselves and to each other. As the story progresses, the constellation of affects in the narrative machinery undergoes significant changes, and we begin to see how these changes, in turn, influence the brothers' respective understandings of history by creating different versions of the past. Going back to the quote from the American psychologist and pioneering affect theorist Silvan Tomkins (1911-1991) in the beginning, 'there are

[indeed] many ways of knowing anything’ and history is no exception. Whether it is ‘thought of in love and in hate, in excitement and in apathy, in distress and in joy’ makes a difference. *The Silent Cry* beautifully enacts and accentuates these ‘many ways of knowing’ history. My hypothesis is that critics have been too focused on identifying the brothers’ manifest thought and ideology and have missed the importance of their emotional stakes. Before discussing the novel, I want first to sketch out some of the theoretical assumptions underlying affect theory to clarify its ‘cognitive’ tie to our perception of history, as well as to Judith Butler’s ethics in post-9.11 writings that I believe the novel is ultimately gesturing toward.

### **Affect, cognition, history and butlerian ethics**

The popularity of affect theory has increased since the early millennium, which can be considered a part of the larger cognitive turn in the humanities in general—an attempt to understand cultural practices as a complex manifestation of the human mind on a continuum with bio-evolutionary phenomena.<sup>6</sup> My own interest in affect theory was first sparked by Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank’s 1995 edited collection of essays by Silvan Tomkins. Sedgwick recalls how she fell in love with Tomkins’ writing for its fascinating account of the ‘truly diverse developmental possibility’ of our emotional life which is firmly (and yet) flexibly ‘rooted in the body and brain’ (2011, 145). In his pioneering works on affect in the 60s, Tomkins made a ‘crucial move in identifying *interest* as an affect – one that’s on a spectrum with excitement, and that has a distinctive role to play in (for instance) organizing perception as well as motivating exploration’ as Sedgwick puts it. She particularly valued his insight that ‘affect and cognition – feeling and thinking’, or ‘motivation and thinking’ are ‘essentially inextricable’ (2011, 146).

Many cognitive scientists since Tomkins have elaborated on the tight coupling between affect and cognition. The neuroscientist Lisa Feldman Barrett discusses intriguing findings related to what she calls ‘core affect’ (a basic feeling about something being good/pleasurable or bad/unpleasurable): core affect can, among other things, filter information to be encoded or not encoded in our memory and can influence our perception of the world itself. ‘What people literally see in the world around them may in part be determined by their core affective state’ (2007, 11 and 6). Affect is, thus, an intrinsic property in all psychological phenomena that results from cognitive process, much of which unfolds in the unconscious. Most crucially, she notes that when core affect is backgrounded, the affect tends to be perceived as a property of the world outside, thereby influencing our perception of the world ‘in stealth’ (2007, 13).

These new insights into the operation of affect, which is only very partially transparent, have decisive implications for our understanding of history. Our

perception of history does not escape the complex feedback mechanisms in our mental processes, involving sensory impressions, affect, emotion, imagination, memories and thought, with the concomitant possibility for error making – most of which happens without us being aware. I hope to demonstrate how these complex mental processes play out between the rival brothers of the Nedokoro family in what is to follow. I also believe that the brothers' mutual acknowledgement of their own affective partiality that comes into focus in the final *denouement* gives us an opportunity to rethink the terms of ethicality based on Judith Butler's notion of 'partial blindness' in her post-9/11 writings.

Observing America in the grip of fear, grief, and aggression in the aftermath of the 9.11. attack, Butler launches her project to sketch out an ethics based on 'our shared, invariable, and partial blindness about ourselves' (2001, 27) – partial blindness that becomes especially evident when we are impassioned. Even though Butler is not considered an affect theorist,<sup>7</sup> her argument about our impassioned blindness resonates remarkably well with the insight into the affective unconscious which both Tomkins and cognitive scientists have explicated. In relation to the 9.11. attack, Butler gives special attention to grief over loss of life, which reveals our partiality in a way that makes poignantly clear our emotional vulnerability and dependence on others. We grieve because we love, making us realize we are never completely self-sufficient. Grief has a powerfully affective component, and Butler seems to suggest that strong feelings and affects of all kinds similarly illuminate 'the thrall in which our relations with others holds us', 'in ways that challenge the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control' (2004, 23). '[S]exual passion, or emotional grief, or political rage' expose us at our 'ec-static' moments, in which we are shown to be 'beside ourselves', out of control (2004, 24). This articulation of our vulnerability in affective moments is extremely illuminating, and facilitates a re-reading of *The Silent Cry*, which is driven by rich undercurrents of passion, grief, and rage. Through the novel's affectively charged character interactions, we are reminded of ways in which these passions 'tear us from ourselves, bind us to others, transport us, undo us, implicate us in lives that are not our own' to borrow Butler's words (2004, 25). Following her lead, my analysis will try to see these moments of dispossession as opportunities to acknowledge our 'sociality', as that which *connects us* rather than *divides us*. In so doing, I gesture toward a less judgmental ethics which is humbler and more generous in the hope it will perhaps guide us to a less moralizing view of history as well.

### **Close reading the affective dynamics in *the Silent Cry***

#### *Ideo-affective investment in ideology*

Love, hate, excitement, apathy, distress, and joy – affects are triggered in our numerous encounters with outside forces, coloring our relationship with them.

Affect puts us in connection on a corporeal level with other humans, objects and the rest of the world out there, as it were. It is like a 'glue' that keeps us attached to the world and people around us. Without it, we lose interest in life itself and cease to function as humans.<sup>8</sup> Often considering it irrational and undesirable, we tend to forget how it energizes not only our actions, but also our ideas/ideologies and thoughts as well as knowledge. To illustrate the necessary presence of affect in ideas, thoughts, knowledge and actions, Silvan Tomkins (1995a, 111–117) elaborates on the notion of 'ideo-affective' investment in ideology by outlining three concepts, 'ideo-affective posture', 'ideo-logical posture', and 'ideo-affective resonance'. The 'ideo-affective posture' refers loosely to a 'set of feelings (or ideas about feelings)', or disposition, such as a 'generally tolerant or permissive attitude'. The 'ideo-logical posture' is any 'highly organized and articulate set of ideas', such as a 'progressive or democratic political position'. Finally, when these first two components resonate, they achieve the 'ideo-affective resonance', engaging and reinforcing each other as a result. Calling it a 'love affair' between a 'loosely organized set of feelings' and a 'highly organized and articulate set of ideas', Tomkins argues that an 'affair' can start if there is sufficient 'similarity' between them, which can later develop into a more intense relationship. 'Once a critical degree of similarity has been reached', 'a way will be found to heighten the communality', he continues, and suggests that the 'love affair' within the same person's life *can* take different forms, since there are subtly variable combinations of the ideo-affective and the ideo-logical postures, and different degrees of resonance between them that are possible.

This analogy of a 'love affair' brings into relief the ebb and flow of affect pulsating in ideas and ideology, and helps us understand what may otherwise appear as an erratic pattern of behavior in Taka throughout the novel. Taka's overtly romantic 'ideo-affective' posture with heroism, which we get the first glimpse of in his glorification of S-Niisan's homecoming after the war, pairs up with 'ideo-logical' partners of widely different ideological orientation whenever and as long as the affective component gets enough encouragement to start a 'love affair.' Being part of the student demonstration in June 1960 provided one such occasion to ignite 'love'; suddenly switching his allegiance to join the right-wing gang one day, only to return to the student group the next, gave him another opportunity; acting out the role of a repentant ex-student-activist to go on a tour of the US brought him yet another. And finally, instigating a riot among the frustrated village youth furnished him with another golden opportunity. His ideological affiliation oscillates from left to right and right to left, but that does not interfere with his 'love affairs', as long as there is emotional resonance.

Taka's 'conversion' in the heat of the moment in the noted June demonstration of 1960, from the side of the students to the side of the right-wing mob,



which has puzzled some critics in the past, resonates with Taka's ideo-affective need to consolidate his charisma as a man of action in the eyes of his young and impressionable followers, such as Hoshio.<sup>9</sup> Through his meticulously researched historical approach, Komori (2002, 134) tries to make sense of Taka's sudden shift of loyalty by arguing that it is consistent with what actually happened in the demonstration among Emperor-worshipping nationalists. They initially joined the Anti-Security demonstration because they were against the Treaty, which they considered humiliating for the Emperor. As they realized that the riot, which was getting out of control, could jeopardize the security of the Emperor, who was expected to meet President Eisenhower at the airport, they changed their strategy and switched sides (most likely secretly requested by Prime Minister Kishi) to help the police force fight against the demonstrators.

Komori's argument makes sense, but only if we hypothesize with him that Taka was ideologically pro-Emperor—a hypothesis which I do not find plausible. After all, Taka does go back to his left-wing activist friends the day after. He converts once again much later to join the theater group of repentant students led by a member of a progressive party (*kakushin seitô*) to offer Americans an apology for 'having obstructed their President's visit to Japan.' His conversations with Mitsu on capitalism, Koreans, justice, the future vision of the village, and violence reveal his complete indifference to which side, or which part of the ideological spectrum his heroic action ends up supporting.<sup>10</sup> This makes one wonder if politics/ideology is only a pretext for him for experiencing something else – and that something else being anything that adds to the feeling of 'concentrated life' (Napier 1989, 73) which necessarily draws him into proximity of violence. In other words, he switches sides depending on what happens to give an adrenalin kick to his ideo-affective energy. In Taka's ideological 'love affair', the ideo-affective component always seems to lead the ideo-logical one.

Back in his native village in Shikoku, the passionate and romantic Taka finds an opportunity to finally enact the role that his hero, the great grandfather's younger brother, played in the 1860 peasant uprising. The ancestral Nedokoro family's younger brother sympathized with the poverty-stricken peasants, and helped them revolt against the village authority, represented by his own elder brother. In the aftermath of the riot, all rebels were executed except for the younger brother, who, Mitsu believes, fled to Kôchi through the clandestine help of his elder brother. In Taka's version of the story, their great grandfather mercilessly killed his younger brother to prove that he was not part of the riot. The heroic and tragic image of his great grandfather's younger brother looms large in Taka's mind. Similarly, Taka wants to help the farmers of the village in their struggle against the supermarket chain, a large capitalistic enterprise, which is stealing ground from small traditional shop-owners. Taka organizes the village youth into an activist group (under the pretense of organizing a football team) in preparing them for an uprising.



As the story progresses, however, this seemingly idealistic, leftist project is shown to be fueled by different ‘ideo-affective’ undercurrents. Driven by his desire to copy his great-grandfather’s younger brother, Taka’s first priority is re-enacting a similar ‘scene of heroic resistance’ (66) under his own leadership, whatever the cost.<sup>11</sup> Mitsu soon learns that the owner of the supermarket chain is Korean, and used to be a forced laborer felling timber in the nearby forest. After the war, he and other fellow Koreans received compensation, invested it and successfully established their own business. Not everyone coped with this abrupt transition to democracy when Koreans became their equals, and the Emperor became human. Old feelings die hard, and the ideo-affective posture among the villagers had remained more or less the same, creating dissonance with a democratic ideal of postwar Japan. The nickname, the ‘Korean Emperor’, which the villagers gave the owner of the supermarket, perhaps attests to their twisted sentiment, symbolizing their rather cynical take on the Koreans’ sudden rise to power.

Tomkins identifies this gap between a new ideology and people’s feelings as a common problem in times of great social change and points out that a society tends to create new “myth” to compensate in seeking an alternative ideology that fits better with the lingering sentiment (1995a, 114–115). Ressentiment against Koreans finds resonance in a new myth that the Koreans are to blame for their trouble and an ideology emerges under the epithet of ‘revolting against Korean capitalism’. Taka succeeds in staging a large scale ‘riot’ by exploiting this psychological mechanism. Even if the hostility toward the Koreans is not much more than a vague feeling that the ‘valley folk have had nothing but trouble ever since the Koreans came here’ to borrow Jin’s words (188), Taka finds a way to magnify that sentiment and to ‘heighten the communality’.

Another example of the gap in ideo-affective investment is seen when Mitsu discovers that his closest ally and friend in the village, the priest, seems to welcome Taka’s riot, despite criticising it earlier. He is disappointed ‘to the point of real sadness’, as he finds the priest beaming with excitement at the news of the riot gaining momentum (199). He soon realizes that even as their ideological postures in general have much in common, their affective investments in them are different, because while Mitsu, as an outsider, was ‘concerned solely with the fate of [his] brother’, the priest was ‘preoccupied with the joint destiny of the young men of the valley’ (200). The priest cares about the village youths, for all their obvious shortcomings. For the first time since his arrival in the valley, Mitsu experiences the unfathomable rift separating him from the priest, the only ally he has had in the village.

### *Differential repetitions of affective scenes that magnify*

As we have seen, Taka finds a way to bridge the gap in ideological differences by evoking affective resonance across them to consolidate the communality among

members of his own group. He does this mostly by staging a repetition of similar scenes of passion from the past. This is reminiscent of what Tomkins refers to as ‘the script theory’. Scripts are ‘sets of ordering rules’ (Tomkins 1995b, 181) that provide one with a basic posture or guidelines in life, some of which are innate, but most of which are learned and subject to constant revision through socialization (1995b, 179–195). The script theory’s ‘basic unit of analysis’ is ‘the scene, a happening with a perceived beginning and end’ with at least one affect and one object of that affect. As life unfolds with many scenes in it, the script develops by way of what he calls ‘psychological magnification’, a ‘phenomenon of connecting one affect-laden scene with another affect-laden scene’. Affective experience is inherently short-lived, and therefore requires magnification for it to connect with other affective movements, to last longer, cohere and continue. And this process of magnification often takes place by analogical constructions of affective scenes from the past. Tomkins emphasizes, however, that the script is a fluid concept, and argues that its effect is indeterminate and plural. Given that experiences and consequences are never singular, always plural, the effect of any set of scenes is indeterminate. There is ‘no single effect but rather there are many effects which change in time.’ Scenes are thus magnified by ‘repetition with a difference’, which can reinforce or redirect the earlier affective moments into a new direction (Tomkins 1995a, 325).

Taka tries to reinforce the fighting spirit which he has managed to inspire in the members of his football team through a few consciously crafted strategies of magnification, by way of ‘repetition with a difference’ evoked from history. First of all, he reconstructs the heroic image of the village youths from the 1860s riot by telling them entertaining stories about their bravado. In the words of Natsumi, Mitsu’s wife, who by then had become an ardent follower of Taka:

He told them how the overseers and local officials in the villages on the way to the castle town were made to kneel by the roadside, so that each of the peasants could deal them a single blow on the head with his bare fist as he went past. That really had them laughing (150).

Mitsu hastens to add what Taka has left out, that the ‘men who had been [thus] hit’ ‘had died, their brains reduced to broken bean curd in their skulls.’ Taka, however, makes sure that his followers identify with the young rebels of a hundred years earlier by convincing them that it is thanks to *them* that the uprising succeeded. A clever strategist, Taka is aware that it is precisely because of their reckless brutality that the village people could count on them ‘whenever it became necessary to injure or kill the enemy of the moment’, thereby getting things done ‘without dirtying their own hands’ (150). Taka knows a rebellion needs help from a ruthless mob to succeed.

Thus, evoked throughout the novel are scenes of repetition ‘with a difference’ which magnify the impact of the affective posture connecting them—the

scenes in which mob mentality and powerful energy in rioters ignite and quickly spread, without which neither the 1860 peasant uprising, the 1945 raid on the Korean settlement, nor the 1960 Anti-Security demonstration would have been possible. The same goes for the ‘future’ riot, which is yet to take place in the village. There is no doubt that Taka is an ingenious affect theorist—he knows how to stage affect-laden scenes to inspire and awe his followers into identifying with him as a charismatic leader of the gang. He finds another opportune moment when he spots a child drowning in a river nearby. He jumps into the water to rescue him at considerable risk, which wins him the ecstatic admiration of his spectators (128–129). He later consolidates his virile image by running around stark naked in the snowy garden at dusk, which Mitsu observes as follows:

The essence of that moment would be drawn out indefinitely; direction in time was swallowed up and lost amid the steadily falling flakes, just as sound was absorbed by the layer of snow. All-pervasive time: Takashi as he ran stark naked was great-grandfather’s brother, and my own; every moment of those hundred years was crowded into this one instant in time. ...

Suddenly, Takashi gave a series of sharp grunts and rolled over and over in the snow. He stood up with snow clinging to his naked body and walked slowly back toward the area where the lamp shed more light, his disproportionately long arms dangling disconsolately like a gorilla’s. I saw that he had an erection. His penis had the same air of power stoically controlled and the same odd pathos as the swelling muscles of an athlete’s upper arms (146).

In this scene, it is Mitsu, more than anyone else, who is smitten by Taka’s manly charisma, which connects him with his great-grandfather’s brother, condensing ‘every moment of those hundred years’ into ‘this one instant in time’. As Mitsu sees Taka being received by a young woman spreading a bath towel, he notes his heart ‘contract[ing] with pain’, no doubt, mistakenly thinking it might be his own wife. This scene beautifully throws into relief how their affective postures ambivalently play out, as they collide and resonate only to disjoin again.

Another repetition from the past that Taka effectively utilizes to ‘keep the pot boiling’ is the *nembutsu* dance in the valley. Taka makes sure that the music for the *nembutsu* dance is heard loudly all over the village on the day of the riot to whip up the fighting spirit. The *nembutsu* procession is headed by ‘two spirits’ dressed to look like the Korean Emperor and his wife in Korean dress – representing ‘the evildoers’ from outside who need to be expelled, followed by a company of musicians and other spectators, walking to the beat of the hand drums with gongs, ‘rekindling a new excitement’ (216). As Taka puts it, thanks to a ‘good laugh at the two spirits’, the villagers have ‘got the guts again to see that the man they call the Emperor of the Supermarket is only an ex-lumberjack,

a Korean who happened to amass a certain amount of wealth', and regained the 'emotional strength to despise him' (220). Mitsu is disgusted to see how this so-called 'emotional strength' has quickly penetrated the atmosphere among the valley people, including his own Jin, a long-time servant of the Nedokoro family (in whose care he spent most of his childhood after the death of his mother).

### *Affect on autopilot*

Jin defends the villagers, saying they are only trying to get even by retrieving some of the valley's land and money and complains that 'the valley folk have had nothing but trouble ever since the Koreans came here'. Mitsu counters this by pointing out that they were 'slave labor brought from their own country against their will', and have 'never gone out of their way to make trouble for the people here.' Jin adamantly insists, however, that 'everybody feels things have gone to pieces since the Koreans came', and that 'they should kill them all off', as 'her eyes' go 'dark with hatred' (188). Mitsu then asks her, to no avail; 'why do you deliberately remember things all wrong?' On a macro-level, this question echoes the voices of Japanese people on both ends of the political spectrum, asking the same unanswerable question to each other, over and over, in the postwar era.

Going outside, Mitsu observes a group of children (among whom he spots Jin's son) throwing snowballs at the Korean manager, and is horrified at what he sees as an 'unreasonable hostility toward Koreans in a kid born since the war' (192). As he watches them showing more aggression as they see the victim 'being toppled', Mitsu remembers an earlier scene, in which he himself was a victim, reliving, as it were, 'the raw, spontaneous fear of that day when [his] eye was split open in an assault by unknown children and felt that [he]d found a clue to the long-standing riddle of why they'd thrown that stone' – the stone which blinded his right eye (192). It gives him an insight into the nature of random violence that simply happens without anyone intentionally aiming at someone specific.

Why is it that 'innocent' children, without any good reason to hold a grudge against anyone in particular, go on 'throwing snowballs more gleefully than ever' at seeing their victim being toppled? This question seems to speak to typical moments in which individuals become unhinged and 'drawn out' of themselves. The contagious and spontaneous nature of affect gives a partial explanation. Brian Massumi (2002) provides us with further insight here by using the analogy of a soccer game. He insists that individuals are not only 'empirically inseparable' from societies, but are also 'strictly simultaneous' with them, and prefers to see them as 'differential emergences from a shared realm of relationality' (2002, 71). In the case of a soccer game, these 'differential emergences' arise from the player's relationality to other players as well as the

ball and the goals. Arguing that it is the ball, conditioned by the field, that moves the players, he calls the player the ball's 'part object' (the ball does not address the player as a whole).

The kick is indeed an expression, but not of the player. It is an 'ex-expression' of the ball... since the ball's attractive catalysis 'draws out' the kick from the player's body and defines its expressive effect on the globality of the game. The player's body is a node of expression, not a subject of the play but a material channel for the catalysis of an event affecting the global state of the game (Massumi 2002, 75).

Since the player is in constant motion, his perception is in flux and is a 'composite of impressions', 'studded with shards of intentions and conscious memories', 'shimmers of reflection and language' which are remixed into a unity of action; the 'multiplicity' underneath this action becomes opaque to both himself and to the outside observer (2002, 75). The player becomes first *individualized* when he is stopped by the referee, who 'isolates a move in a way that pins responsibility for its sensible effects on a single playing body' (2002, 78). Without the intervention of a referee, the game must continue.<sup>12</sup>

It is noteworthy that Ishihara Shintarô comments on the nature of random violence by comparing it to what happens in a 'rugby maul', resorting to a similar line of thought. Referring to the June demonstration of 1960, Ishihara writes (quoted by Komori Yôichi):

... either that night or the next, a female student, Kaba Michiko, who was in a crowd of excited demonstrators, tripped and was trampled to death, dragged into a formation that reminds us of a *rugby maul*. (Komori 2002, 134).

Komori Yôichi responds by condemning Ishihara as 'shamefully disrespectful of the victim', and as symbolic of his nihilistic 'ideo-affective posture' which does not hesitate to disgrace the death of a female political activist through a crude metaphor that unites rugby, an entertaining sport, with a serious political struggle (2002, 134–5). Even as I agree that Ishihara's statement may have been inappropriate in the context of its time and place, I would argue that the analogy does not completely miss its mark – it also gives a clue about Mitsu's friend's injury under the same demonstration, or why Taka cannot stop hitting a young defenseless boy, even after a punishment was sufficiently meted out (177). There must certainly be a complex, multiple feedback mechanism of affect and cognition behind any action, as Massumi suggests, and much that cannot be captured by the subject's conscious self. This is especially the case when actions are conditioned by urgency of a 'field' that requires spontaneous reactions whether it is a 'soccer field', or a 'battleground' in a broad sense. In that sense, one might even argue that Taka's choice of the method of training, 'football', is not a coincidence, and neither is the title of Ōe's novel, *Football in 1860* (*Man'en gan'nen no futto bôru*). By using this metaphor in the title,

Ōe throws into relief the fact that there is a point at which serious political struggle turns into a ‘battlefield’, with its own mechanism of regulation.<sup>13</sup>

As can only be expected, the uprising turns into hardly more than a looting of the store, albeit a triumphant one, as the villagers get drunk and ecstatic, all according to Taka’s plan. To Mitsu’s dismay, he hears that even ‘rich and important people are disgracing themselves by looting’. It does not take long before their ‘ideo-affective posture’ deteriorates into a half-crazed ‘mob mentality’ and spreads like a disease, infecting the entire village, including children. Hearing the children cheerfully shouting at each other, ‘another round of looting tomorrow’, Mitsu concludes that they have ‘already adapted to the new style of life’ and are ‘now rioters to the manner born’ (194). It is the awareness of having ‘looted’ and ‘disgraced’ (*hajiokaku*) together that has created a certain communal feeling of euphoria in the village, as Jin gleefully reports to Mitsu (188). Even the priest, as noted above, is filled with the excitement.

The Korean Emperor, however, turns out to be an affect theorist even more ingenious than Taka. Contrary to what is expected, he responds by not pursuing any settlement with them, or by reporting them to the police, but rather, by letting the looters keep their bounty. It is interesting to observe the changes in the affective mood among the valley people in the course of these events. Immediately after the looting, the defiant spirit in the village is upheld through a lingering euphoria from having ‘disgraced themselves together’ mixed with contempt for Koreans. As the excitement subsides, this changes into a fear for punishment and an alert preparedness in anticipation of a tough negotiation with the Emperor. As Tomkins (1995b, 57) point out, one does not fear while one is excited. The anticipation of problems ahead builds up as a tension mixed with fear; being unexpectedly released from it produces ‘joy’. When the fear of punishment unexpectedly disappears, so does the defiance. And the joy of their relief is then subsumed by shame, as it dawns on the villagers that they cannot but accept that the Korean Emperor is now their equal. One has contempt for someone who is beneath him, whereas one feels shame for his equal (Tomkins 1995b, 139–140). It is noteworthy that Ōe inserts an episode in which Mitsu and his wife discuss Jin’s favorite dumpling recipe with garlic in it; an invention that caught on soon after the Koreans came to the settlement. This further highlights that although material customs may change quickly (they all soon take to capitalism!), it takes longer and requires more effort for people to alter their mental, affective habits.

*The showdown between the brothers in the family’s storehouse: terms of ethicality turned on its head*

We might consider...an ethics based on our shared, and invariable, partial blindness about ourselves. The recognition that one is, at every turn, not quite the same as what one thinks that one is, might imply, in turn, a certain patience for others that suspends

the demand that they be selfsame at every moment. Suspending the demand for self-identity or ... for complete coherence, seems to me to counter a certain ethical violence that demands that we manifest and maintain self-identity at all times and require that others do the same. (Butler 2005, 41–42).

The final showdown between the brothers takes place after Taka tells Mitsu about his rape and murder of a local village girl, for which he expects to be lynched by the villagers. In preparation, Taka fences himself in at the family's storehouse with a hunting rifle. Finding inconsistency in Taka's story, however, Mitsu believes it was an accident that he has willfully embellished to turn into a horrific story of violence. While wondering what it is about violence that fascinates Taka so much, Mitsu insists that Taka is only feigning to be a man of violence, insinuating that it is just a fanciful pretense. In response to this, Taka finally brings himself to telling the 'truth' about his secret trauma – the truth about his incestuous relationship with his 'retarded' sister, with whom the teen-age Taka lived alone in an annex of their uncle's house. Taka gives a detailed account of their lonely life together (while Mitsu went to school in Tokyo), and how their illegitimate relationship met its tragic end; how she got pregnant and had an abortion, and how she kept quiet and stayed loyal to Taka throughout the ordeal only to sense that there was something wrong with what they did after all. Confused and scared himself, the young Taka rejected her sexual advancement and hit her, the day after which she took her own life by poisoning herself. This trauma, no doubt, is what Taka has earlier referred to as 'the kind of experience I can never talk about so long as I intend to go on living', which is, in turn, tied up with his attraction to violence (212).

The neuroscience inspired French philosopher, Catherine Malabou writes about the plasticity of our brain, neurons, to adapt in accordance with our life experiences (Malabou 2009). In the face of a trauma or an accident, our brain can plastically but destructively respond in a way that profoundly affects our identity. Most importantly, a trauma adversely influences the entire affective capacity in a person, making his brain suffer, as it were. The suffering manifests itself variably as apathy, indifference, a flat emotional life. And because affect plays such a fundamental role within the 'conatus', 'the tendency of all living things to preserve their being' (21), a reduced capacity for affect brings about a radical metamorphosis, often accompanied by an 'inscription of a death drive in the brain as an emotional coldness' (38). It can lead the patients 'beyond sorrow' into a 'state of apathy that is no longer either joyful or despairing', but is 'indifferent to their own survival and to the survival of others' (27). One can perhaps argue that this is not far from what happens to Taka after experiencing his sister's suicide.

Taka has displayed indifference to his 'own survival and to the survival of others' in his nihilistic disregard for life in general. Swaying, however, under the shadow of a death drive and the fear of death, he seems to be torn between



fascination over violence and an urge for punishment, which is no doubt related to the ‘split’ in himself that he acknowledges.<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that there is a paradox which an apathetic victim of trauma needs to overcome, if he were to put his death wish into practice. Because reason and cognition cannot function properly if they are not supported by affects, a traumatized person cannot think or plan things like a normal person does (Malabou 2009, 23). To compensate for the reduced capacity for affect, and therefore action, he needs an extra rush of adrenalin to move forward, regardless of the goal. Taka’s life after his sister’s death can perhaps be seen as a perpetual struggle to find opportunities to revitalize his enthusiasm for life by holding his death wish and the fear of death at bay. He only partly succeeds in this struggle. Whatever the occasions, be it the Anti-Security demonstration, or the looting of the Korean supermarket, what he seeks is a dangerous proximity to violence to make him feel alive again, and to break loose from the apathy which has taken up residence in his injured brain.

Even though Taka comes across as a man of action in the novel, there is a sense that he must always egg himself on and keep at it lest he lose interest in life itself. As he himself puts it: ‘Whenever life’s calm for a while, I get an urge to stir myself up deliberately just to confirm the split [between violence and punishment]. And it’s like drug addiction – the stimulus has to be progressively stronger’ (212). Once he decides to take his own life, which the course of events toward the end of the novel seems to indicate that he does, he has an even greater need to whip up his spirit to build enough momentum to force himself into action. If an appropriate affective occasion arises, he must seize it to carry out the plan. The death of the young girl (the question of whether it was an accident, or a deliberate killing put aside) was perhaps meant to provide that occasion.

Taka’s heartfelt confession about the traumatic ‘truth’ does in the end change Mitsu’s perspective on him, but it only comes much later, too late to prevent Taka’s suicide. When Taka offers his eye to Mitsu because he is destined to die anyway (by being lynched by the angry villagers), Mitsu only repeats what he has always claimed about his ‘personality’:

You won’t be lynched tomorrow morning, nor is any court going to sentence you to death. It’s just your sense of guilt.... Taka—though you’re always playing at putting yourself in peril, *you’re the type who invariably has a way out at the last moment*. You acquired the habit on the day that sister’s suicide allowed you to go on living without either being punished or put to shame. I’m sure this time, too, you’ll work some nasty little dodge to go on living (240-241; emphasis added).

Mitsu rambles on to elaborate on how Taka, despite the ostensible willingness to die, is ‘expecting somehow to survive’ this time, too, and says: ‘Don’t lie to me about giving me your eyes after you’re killed, as though you believed you only had a while to live!’ (241). Mitsu’s speech here is a typical speech act;

it works as a negative moral injunction to make things happen. The only way out for Taka is to fulfill his prophecy about his impending death. Shortly after Mitsu goes from the storehouse, Taka shoots himself with a hunting gun, leaving a message on the wall that he has told the truth.<sup>15</sup>

In this affect-laden exchange between the two brothers, different perspectives come to the fore, which can be examined in relation to Butlerian ethics (Butler, 2001, 2004 and 2005). As already noted, whether in ‘sexual passion, or emotional grief, or political rage’, affect exposes us at our ‘ec-static’ moments, in which we are shown to be ‘beside ourselves’, vulnerable, and out of control (2004, 24). In the heated moments at the final showdown, both Taka and Mitsu are impassioned, but their affects and emotions play out differently, pushing them into opposite directions: Taka uses the occasion to appeal for a recognition of their mutual dependence, whereas Mitsu uses it to judge and condemn. As incomplete as it may be, Taka does his very best at ‘giving an account of himself’ in confiding in Mitsu. By exposing his vulnerability, Taka demonstrates his willingness to acknowledge his dependence on Mitsu and others. In Butler’s vocabulary, such is a sign of ‘sociality’ which should be thought of as an ethical resource, because it promotes us to respond more generously to the other’s address by heightening our awareness of our mutual impressionability.

Mitsu, however, responds by rashly ‘summarizing’ Taka’s life to judge and condemn. Pointing out that our propensity to judge works against ‘self-knowledge’, ‘inasmuch as it moralizes a self by disavowing commonality with the judged’ (2005, 46), Butler warns against our inclination to ‘too quickly summarize another’s life, and think that the ethical posture is, and must be, the one that judges’ (2005, 30). This is exactly what Mitsu does, thereby preventing a reciprocal recognition of their mutual ‘opacity’ and dependence to emerge between the brothers – the only surviving members of the Nedokoros, ‘all that’s left of’ us as Taka puts it (243). In a sense, it is Mitsu, rather than Taka, who reveals himself to be most at odds with himself, and out of control. The level-headed, and reasonable Mitsu who, in contrast to Taka, thinks ‘justice’ matters, loses his usual composure at this critical moment, refusing to take his brother’s emotional appeal seriously. In his defense, however, we can argue that Mitsu, despite appearance, has had his share of smaller traumas that must have colored his emotional life, which should not be taken lightly; growing up ‘ugly’ as the less favored son of the mother (2 and 19); having recently lost his closest friend in a bizarre suicide; burdened with guilt and shame for having left his brain-damaged son at an institution; being made a ‘cuckold’ and cheated out of some of his inheritance by his own ‘handsome’ and charismatic brother. Jealousy (218), resentment and anger must have been very much a part of his life as he observed Taka’s rise to power and the escalating riot—even though we only get hints of these emotions between the lines since the

whole novel is narrated by the supposedly calm Mitsu. Just as Mitsu was ignorant of Taka's internal turmoil, Taka was oblivious to Mitsu's jealous resentment, as it is evidenced by Taka's incredulous question thrown at Mitsu, 'why do you hate me so much', at his categorical refusal of the offer of his eye (241). The emotional showdown brings to light the gap in their perception, their 'opaqueness' to each other, which, in turn, highlights their own limited self-knowledge.

Besides the impact of Taka's suicide which slowly sinks in, Mitsu makes two discoveries, forcing him to reconsider Taka's position in a new, favorable light. One is a discovery that their great-grandfather's brother did not cowardly flee the valley as everyone (except Taka) thought. Coming to inspect the storehouse that he has bought from the Nedokoro family, Paek, the Korean Emperor, takes up some of the floorboards with architect students and reveals a stone cellar with books and documents that neither Mitsu nor Taka knew about. This is a cellar where their great-grandfather's younger brother must have spent the rest of his life to '[maintain] his integrity as leader of the rising' (257). Mitsu deeply regrets that this revelation that Taka was right about the impeccable integrity of his ancestral hero comes too late to make any difference for him (258). The other is a realization that something positive did come out of the uprising after all. The priest tells Mitsu that it helped 'reestablish vertical communication within the valley community, and to firm up horizontal communication among the younger people' (266), and that both S-Niisan and Taka played their respective part.

Ruminating on the death of Taka and their ancestors in the newly discovered cellar of the store house where Taka committed a suicide, Mitsu utters the words that Taka did not live to hear, 'Yes, you told the truth', and concludes:

Almost certainly, [Taka had] heard the voices of great-grandfather's brother and all the other family spirits that filled the storehouse, heard them calling to him, recognizing him, and accepting him into their midst. With their aid, he'd been able to face up to his own agonizing fear of death for the sake of rising above his private hell.

(270)

Through the new lens of trauma, Taka's obsession with the 'men of action' in the Nedokoro family too takes on a different meaning. Just like Taka, his great grandfather's younger brother and S-Niisan were survivors. Burdened with their share of guilt and shame for having outlived their fellow compatriots, they chose to confront it in their own idiosyncratic manner,<sup>16</sup> with whom Taka had every reason to identify. Put another way, Mitsu realizes in the end that he was not only wrong about Taka, but also about their great grandfather's younger brother, and about S-Niisan. If we go back to Ōe's prototypes, the sober 'political human' and the emotional 'sexual human', we can perhaps

argue that *The Silent Cry* thus manages to problematize the implicit hierarchy in them, highlighting how we oscillate between the two affective modes at all times. I believe that the ambivalence that many scholars have detected in Ōe's literature has its roots in this process of oscillation.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, rereading the novel through the lens of affect gives us an added advantage of reaping the fruit of Ōe's insight also in the context of the present. A focus on the rich phenomenology of affect in the novel can put it in a productive conversation with the affective ethos dominating parts of our world today. Affect and feelings have enormous relevance in the current order of things in which the convergence between the political and the affective is becoming increasingly visible.

### **Conclusion: affect and history**

To sum up, there are a couple of points about the operation of affect that I want to draw attention to. One is that affective bias as we have seen fictionally simulated examples of, are symptomatically human, as evidence from cognitive science seems to suggest. This has obvious implications for our perception of the world at large. Returning to Butler, she has an extended discussion on how an affective 'interpretative framework' influences our reactions to the loss of lives depending on who they are, dividing the world into the 'grievable and 'non-grievable' humans (2015). She makes her case by comparing vehement emotional responses in the US to the loss of American lives in the 9.11 attack with their indifference to numerous anonymous war victims elsewhere. The tension between these distinct impulses is equally relevant in thinking about the past, helping us reflect on how we respond, remember, and evaluate our history, and someone else's history. It touches on the fundamental difficulty we all seem to have in engaging with someone else's past with equal enthusiasm as with our own. To borrow the historian David Lowenthal's expressions, history for us, thick relations, can easily turn into 'affect-laden' heritage, whereas history for others, thin relations, often fades into distance and is easily forgotten (Lowenthal 1998, 29; Auestad 2014). The memory of the Holocaust, the Nanking massacre, or of Hiroshima continues to evoke strong emotions respectively for the Jews, the Chinese and the Japanese, but for others it can quickly diminish.

Coming to my second point about affect, however, this does not mean that we do not have any influence on our affective life. As the cognitive scientist Lisa Barrett reminds us, 'concepts' (similar to Tomkins' 'scripts' and Butler's 'framework') are shaped by our experiences, over which we have some control as adults. You can make 'deliberate choices to change your concepts' (Barrett 2018, 154) and influence your brain's future predictions. Regarding affect, it means it is continuous with our life and the way we choose to live—its

trajectory is not written in our genes. As we have seen in my analysis, even what seems to be spontaneous affect turns out to have been at least partly conditioned or magnified through a series of repetitions (Tomkins' scripts).<sup>18</sup> By the same token, affect can also be 'manipulated' to circulate widely, influencing the mind of a large group of people both negatively (Taka's strategy) and positively (the Korean Emperor's strategy). Similarly, Judith Butler's 'interpretative framework' has been nurtured largely through social conventions and 'public censorship', conditioning our affective responses by stealth. All this means that there is room for strategic adjustment or resistance—to use a more old-fashioned expression, there is a way for us to resist 'interpellation'. We can make deliberate choices to unlearn our old affective habits and acquire new ones. This of course takes time and effort—most crucially and paradoxically, we need affect to energize and mobilize our will to do it.

By criticizing the parochial bias in heritage, and yet acknowledging that heritage cannot just be dismissed, Lowenthal emphasizes the complementarity of heritage and history, suggesting that history, too, should borrow the engaging affective impulse of heritage to enliven it. The question is then, how we can make history 'alive and kicking' for all of us (Lowenthal 1998, 168). Can a certain way of evoking collective memory, a certain way of telling stories, disrupt the distinction between 'us' and 'them', and create an opportunity to 'thicken' all relations? Does Ōe accomplish this? Ōe's charismatic antiheroes, such as Taka, perhaps represent his efforts at answering this question. His antiheroes shock, or even scandalize us, but move us in a way that wakes us up from inertia and intellectual ennui, and thereby become an affective conduit that puts us in touch with emotional energy that animates our life. Rationality and judgment alone do not get us far. Rather than dismissing affect and aiming for complete objectivity, we should perhaps try to befriend affect to mobilize our better impulses. It is through affective engagement that we learn to connect with others whose experiences we do not share. This is perhaps a gift that good literature or a heartfelt 'account of oneself' can sometimes give us—a lesson Mitsu learned from Taka in the end, inviting readers to do the same.

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## Notes

1. In the words of the Swedish Academy's press release announcing Ōe's Nobel prize, he wrote novels as a 'way of exorcising demons' implicated in the humiliation of the Japanese

- defeat. Accessed 31 January 2022. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1994/press-release/>
2. Examples in English include Wilson (1986); Napier (1989) and Claremont (2009).
  3. I use the term ‘affect’ to mean a valence-based feeling or intensity that affects one’s body and mind but is not yet necessarily connected to anything meaningful, distinguishing it from emotion, which suggests something that has been interpreted and given a content (see Flatley 2008, 12–27). The definition of affect and emotion varies depending on the discipline and the critic. Silvan Tomkins’s affect is somewhat broader and includes ‘jealousy’ and ‘shame’ which some might consider closer to emotions.
  4. See Barrett (Barrett and Duncan 2007; Barrett 2018) and Tomkins (1995a) among others.
  5. Ōe elaborates on these prototypes, the ‘political human’ and the ‘sexual human’, who are opposed to one another in his often-cited essay, ‘Genshuku na tsuna watari’ (cited in Komori 2002, 89–90). The former is sober and self-confident equipped with internalized moral ethics of his own (reminiscent of Mitsu) and can confront the world full of foreign others, some of whom are opponents. In contrast, the latter, the ‘sexual human’, without his own moral foundation, tries to seek the absolute power outside himself into which he can be emotionally assimilated (reminiscent of Taka).
  6. In contradistinction to the traditional view of cognition, the so-called ‘second-generation cognitivists’ have promoted a capacious definition of cognition that includes not only thought, but also sensory impressions, affect, emotion, imagination and memory, which are always embodied and embedded in the world outside (Kukkonen and Caracciolo 2014, 261–262).
  7. That said, there is no single definition of affect theory and there are many manifestations of it in different disciplines. As Zembylas points out, Butler’s ‘insights on the entanglement of emotion, ethics and politics – particularly her theorizing of the subject as ‘vulnerable’ – have important methodological implications for how to research emotion and affect’ (2016, 1–2).
  8. In reformulating the body and mind dyad in terms of affect, many critics have referred back to Spinoza’s theory of affect that recognizes its role in modulating the effects of ‘conatus’, the tendency of all living things to preserve its own being (Malabou 2009, 22).
  9. In indignant response to Mitsu’s characterization of Taka as ‘always scared,’ Hoshi uses this incident as an example that proves Taka’s unwavering and admirable courage (Ōe (1967) 1988, 28). All citations from *The Silent Cry* are from John Bestor’s 1967 (1988) translation.
  10. “‘Fair’? Do you still talk of justice?’, [Taka] asked with an expression so despondent that even I felt chilled as I watched (99).
  11. As is often the case in Ōe’s literature, what first appears to be motivated by idealism is never simply just that.
  12. Massumi’s argument about the continuity of the individual and collectivity is only applicable to game-like situations, which I believe can include ‘throwing snowballs at your enemy’ such as this case.
  13. This is probably comparable to how S-Niisan got himself killed in the Korean village. Paek Sun-Gi, the Korean Emperor, tells Mitsu, describing the chaotic mix-up that took place upon the Japanese raid: About the death of your brother ... no one can say for sure, you know, whether it was we or the Japanese who killed him’ (258).
  14. ‘I’ve been torn apart all along between the desire to justify myself as a creature of violence and the urge to punish myself for it.’
  15. By rejecting Taka’s desperate call, Mitsu pushes him along the road to suicide in the way that reminds us of the protagonist’s father in ‘Judgment’ by Franz Kafka, the father who



- condemns his son to death, which Butler cites as an exemplary case of ethical violence (2005, 46).
16. The former by remaining in the cellar, and the latter by sacrificing himself in the Japanese Korean conflict in the village, as Paek's account of S-Niisan's death seems to suggest.
  17. Various calling it the effect of the 'textual sublime' (Hirata 1994), 'that which is unfathomable and violent' in modern Japanese history (Karatani 1995), 'the ideological heart of Ōe's work' (Napier 1989), many critics have examined ambivalence in Ōe's texts from this period, especially 'Seventeen'.
  18. Tomkins' script is comparable to Lisa Barrett's 'concept' that our brain habitually constructs from our past experiences to simulate the world. She adds that this implies you are 'not a passive receiver of sensory input but an active constructor of your emotions' (Barrett 2018, 31), which is worth noting in this context.

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