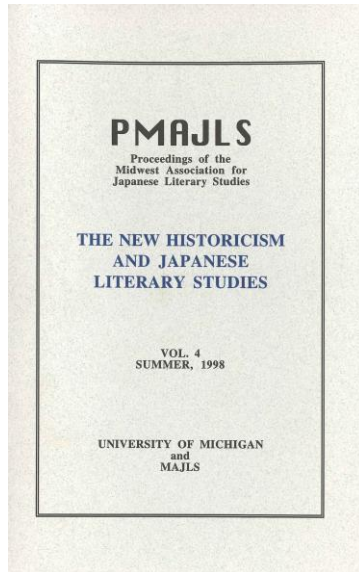


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## The Politics of Loss: On Etō Jun

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Etō Jun's writings are nothing if not controversial. Etō (b. 1932) drew fire especially during the mid-sixties when, not long after his return from a two year stint at Princeton University, he produced a series of essays that seemed to indicate a shift toward conservatism and ultranationalism.

Before he left for New Jersey in 1962, Etō had made a stunning debut as a literary critic with his book on Natsume Sōseki, published in 1956. The essays indeed constitute an astonishingly mature and intelligent critical performance for a twenty-three year old. In his book Natsume Sōseki, Etō succeeded brilliantly in challenging established notions of Sōseki's conception of individualism and in relating Sōseki's works to the Meiji world. Etō's writings were concrete, yet highly conceptual, and he insisted on maintaining a broad view of the world, the text, and the critical act. Not one to waste time on anyone but the biggest and the best, Etō also produced a provocative assessment of the criticism of Kobayashi Hideo in 1961.

Back from his encounter with Otherness in New Jersey, Etō found Tokyo in 1964 in the midst of tremendous flux and growth. Etō turned his attention from Meiji texts to contemporary fiction and politics, and asserted his views on the worth of postwar Japanese society and literature. While continuing with his literary criticism, Etō also made a scathing critique of the postwar constitution; he questioned the ban on mourning the souls of Japan's war dead.<sup>1</sup> Some critics felt betrayed and accused Etō of "tenkō," or

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<sup>1</sup>. See Ochiba no hakiyose/1946-nen kenpō--sono sokubaku (Bungei Shunjū, 1988);

ideological conversion, a term most usually reserved for describing prewar writers and intellectuals who changed their political stances and collaborated with the mission of the imperial state.

In the sixties essays, such as "Sengo to watashi" (The Postwar Era and Myself), "Bungaku to watashi" (Literature and Myself) and "Amerika to watashi," one can sense Etō's defensiveness, and also surmise the nature of the charges leveled against him by critics who accuse him of having transformed into a political conservative. While aspects of Etō's thought undeniably earn him the label of "New Right," in other ways, Etō is hardly so easy to pigeonhole ideologically. Yet, I do not agree that Etō committed "tenkō," but, rather, find that his activities as a public intellectual are a logical extension of his conceptual beginnings and leanings.

It is hardly surprising that Etō's detractors expected something different from the mild mannered college professor and humanist literary critic who had written so perceptively about Sōseki, the possibilities of nationalism, and the hazards of individualism. How could a man who wrote so persuasively, and in utterly lucid, graceful prose, about great writers and great novels, become mired in the mud of the blind nationalistic fervor of the past?

This paper has come about as a result of my effort to understand the complexities of a central rhetorical and conceptual figure prominent in Etō's narrative and intellectual career, that of LOSS, and the politics of this loss. I find this figure interesting and telling because, I argue, it works as part of a logical narrative, one that allows us to make sense of the reasons that Etō insisted on working as a cultural critic--or, more accurately, as a public intellectual.

What claim on politics could Etō, formerly the delicate

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Wasureta koto to wasuresaserareta koto (Bungei Shunjū, 1996); and Etō and Kobori Keichirō, eds., Yasukuni ronshū: Nihon no chinkon no dentō no tame ni (Nihon Kyōbunsha, 1986), among Eto's numerous publications on the topics of the postwar constitution, the Occupation, and Yasukuni Shrine.

consumptive youth whose passions and training centered on belles lettres, have, in any case? What would lead him to devote so much of his career to writing about the state of military affairs, and the postwar constitution? Useful is Edward Said's description of the intellectual, the public intellectual as an "amateur," who stands in stark contrast to the professional, or specialist, the latter who "claims detachment on the basis of a profession and pretends to objectivity." The public intellectual, Said writes, is driven "by a committed engagement with ideas and values in the public sphere. The intellectual over time naturally turns towards the political world partly because, unlike the academy or the laboratory, that world is animated by considerations of power and interest writ large that drive a whole society or nation, that, as Marx so fatefully said, take the intellectual from relatively discrete questions of interpretation to much more significant ones of social change and transformation."<sup>2</sup> In the US, many public intellectuals--Said among them--are compelled to extend themselves beyond their specialized fields because of their ethnic or national origin, gender, or sexual orientation. It took a trip far out of Japan to occasion in Etō a similar sense of keen concern about Japanese national identity and nationhood.

In "Sengo to watashi," Etō writes bluntly of his sense of personal loss:

I regarded "postwar" as an age of loss. I cannot deny that such views are based on my personal sentiments. Nor can I deny the oppressive nature of the Meiji state, though my grandfather help to construct and to protect that world. I cannot deny people's claims that at the very same moment when my grandfather was riding around on a horse, wearing a fancy imported necktie, there

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<sup>2</sup>.Said, Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures. New York: Vintage Books, 1996, 109-110

were other people being interrogated and tortured by the secret police. I am unable to defend myself against people who confront me and say, "Etō, what you claim you lost is of little consequence, because most people have gained so much in the postwar period." I accept the fact that many people would like to scream at me in frustration, "Stop with the abstractions, already. We don't give a damn about the 'nation' (*kokka*)."

However, even as I accept what they say, I cannot rid myself of my feeling of profound sorrow, nor will the salve of justice make it go away. In any case, is there anything more powerful than personal feelings? Didn't Marx regard class animosity, which is undeniably based in the emotions, as reality?"

Certainly, loss, or (*sōshitsu*) was significant to Etō on a personal, affective level, as is evident in "Sengo to watashi." The son of an elite family and grandson of officers in the Imperial Navy, Etō viewed his family past as an ideal realm that represented a stable and superior social and cultural order, not only for himself as an individual, but for Japan as a whole. It is tempting to regard his feelings of loss as purely personal, but, in Etō's narrative, nothing can exist in a purely personal realm. From Etō's perspective, the writer should be politically engaged and active in the public realm; literature itself constitutes an essential activity in national life.<sup>3</sup>

Loss, for Etō, comes about as a result of collapse. Even in his very earliest writings, Etō viewed Sōseki as someone who had "experienced totally the collapse of cultural order."<sup>4</sup> And the price paid by the individual for such paradigmatic shifts was high: for example, Sōseki recognized, according to Etō, that only madness and death awaits one who searches for the self. Etō explains the

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<sup>3</sup>. Yoshida, "Sengo to bungaku no mondai: 'Etō Jun/Honda Shūgo ronso' ni yosete," *Yoshimoto Takaaki/Etō Jun*, *Nihon bungaku kenkyū shiryō sōsho* series, (Yuseidō, 1980), 285.

<sup>4</sup>. *Shimpen Etō Jun bungaku shūsei* I, Kawade Shobō, 1984, 176.

popularity of Sōseki in the postwar period as indicative of “how many precious things we have lost.” Because “barren isolation is the cost of liberation of the self,” he claims, “the more we lose” the more popular Sōseki’s fiction will become.<sup>5</sup>

During the early postwar decades, Etō’s project differed from those whose conceptual basis rested on construction of a sense of subjectivity (*shutaisei*) and participation in the postwar “democratic revolution”, as J. Victor Koschmann has written. For Etō, it was erroneous to regard the postwar period as a “history of democratization.” Consistent with earlier personal metaphors, postwar becomes the “history of a defeated nation.”<sup>6</sup> Etō’s rival Honda Shugo viewed Etō as constructing the postwar era as an “Age of Loss” (*sōshitsu no jidai*) and indeed, Etō himself, in his *Mō hitotsu no sengoshi*, states precisely that he sees the age as a “history of loss, not of gain, of collapse and not of reconstruction.” It is the *image* of the world of the Meiji Constitution that is collapsing (“*Meiji kenpōka no sekaizō no hōkai*”), not a more generalized “Japan.” By extension, any entity or process instrumental in facilitating this collapse—even as it seeks to reconstruct the physical, phenomenonal world—deserves condemnation, from Etō’s point of view. Far from finding fault with democratization per se, Etō perceives the process in negative terms primarily because it functions as an Occupation-imposed effort to disrupt the continuity of his Japan. Etō, while constantly asserting the primacy of history, establishes a narrative realm predicated on an ahistorical symbolic order.

This is not to suggest that Etō operated in a purely symbolic realm. In fact, he took his role as critic of the Allied Occupation so

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<sup>5</sup> *Shimpen*, 178.

<sup>6</sup> Yoshida Masatoshi, 279

seriously that, in 1979, he undertook archival research in Washington D.C. with the aim of discovering the workings of the Occupation Forces' censorship policies. Etō's well-known debate with Honda Shugo about the conditions of Japan's surrender similarly centered on the "historical facts" of the Potsdam Declaration.<sup>7</sup> In both cases, however, Etō seems primarily driven by his desire to prove what he sees as the evils of SCAP, and to construct an alternative utopian narrative that ends in a surrender without an Occupation.

While many of Etō's critics are furious with his adherence to the Meiji state, to the world of his grandfathers, Etō has maintained his status as mainstream public intellectual partly because of the performative aspects of his public career--the "personal inflection and the private sensibility," as well as the "sense of an important personal stake, the sheer effort, risk... and willingness to say things ...that infuriated his opponents and galvanized his friends."<sup>8</sup> His writings frequently display a familiar sense of longing, or *akogare*, for an idealized past.

Public reception of Etō in the sixties and seventies varied tremendously. Many critics took him to task for his perceived alignment with Japan's powerful elites and leaders (*shidōsha*). Mikami Osamu, in fact deemed it appropriate to include Etō in a single volume dedicated to the "anatomy of conservative thought" and in the company of no less than Mishima Yukio and Tanaka Kakue.<sup>9</sup> He also groups Etō with Mishima Yukio, another writer

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<sup>7</sup>. See Jay Rubin, "From Wholesomeness to Decadence: The Censorship of Literature Under the Allied Occupation," Journal of Japanese Studies 11, no. 1 (1985), 71-103; and Isoda Kōichi, Sengoshi no kūkan.

<sup>8</sup>. Said writing about Sartre, 12, 13

<sup>9</sup>. Mikami, 18.

who was deeply involved in politics, because of their shared sense of urgency concerning the relationship between the individual and politics and their shared anxiety over the fruitless search for a viable source of ethics, resulting from a perceived loss of values.<sup>10</sup> As with Mishima, Eto does not always fit neatly into any one slot on the political continuum. At one turn, Eto seems firmly aligned with the conservative establishment and the LDP, but then he will assert his steadfast support of an unorthodox novelist such as Nakagami Kenji or a Marxist scholar of literature.<sup>11</sup>

Other critics, such as Oketani Hideaki, recognizing the complexity of Etō's stances, placed Etō in other company. Oketani harshly criticized the standard categorization of Etō as strictly an ideological conservative and Ōe Kenzaburo, who is roughly of the same generation, as politically progressive.<sup>12</sup>

Yoshida Masatoshi takes Etō to task for disparaging the postwar "pursuit of material satisfaction," the "peace and freedom on which that is predicated," and for the narrowness of Etō's emotional response to postwar, a single-minded recitation of the intensity of feelings of loss.<sup>13</sup> Yoshida and other detractors comment scathingly on Etō's proximity with Japan's leaders (*shidōsha/shihaisha*). Indeed, Etō has literally had personal contact with LDP politicians since he was in his twenties and is intimately familiar with the complex power structure of the political elite. It was not until the

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<sup>10</sup> Mikami, Osamu, *Mishima, Kakuei, Etō Jun: Hoshū shisō no kōzu*, Sairyūsha, 1984, 9.

<sup>11</sup> I am grateful to Alan Tansman for pointing out the complexity of Eto's alignments.

<sup>12</sup> Oketani Hideaki, "Etō, Ōe ni okeru seiiji ishiki," in *Gyōshi to hōkō*, vol. 2 (Gentōsha, 1971), 159.

<sup>13</sup> Yoshida, 283.



1990s that he embraced the title of conservative--or perhaps more accurately, offered a definition of a brand of conservatism to which he could subscribe.<sup>14</sup>

The figure of loss plays a central role in what is perhaps Etō's best-known piece of criticism on postwar literature Maturity and Loss: The Collapse of the "Mother" (Seijuku to sōshitsu: "haha" no hōkai, 1966). During the sixties, Etō's Maturity and Loss helped to define the literature of the "Third Generation of New Writers" (*Daisan no shinjin*) such as Yasuoka Shotarō, Endō Shusaku, Shimao Toshio, and Kojima Nobuo, thus marking an important stage in the struggle to define directions for literature in the rapidly changing postwar age.

Even now in the nineties, this text Maturity, ostensibly devoted to literary criticism, remains controversial, and interestingly, has drawn an audience broader than just devotees of fiction and students of literature. Sociologist and feminist Ueno Chizuko, for example, cites Etō's Maturity and Loss as one of the extremely few books written during the past several decades that she finds tremendously compelling (*namida nashi ni yomenakatta hon*) and true to postwar reality.<sup>15</sup>

With Maturity and Loss, ostensibly a critique of the contemporary Japanese fiction, Etō captured the attention of a broad audience with his far-reaching discussion of the family, gender, psychology, and politics in Japan after the war. Etō employed the approach of psychologist Erik H. Erikson to look at Japanese fiction written during the two decades after the end of the war. He considers in this book the possibility of maturity and psychological

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<sup>14</sup>. Etō, Hoshū to wa nani ka (Bungei Shunjū, 1996).

<sup>15</sup>. Etō Jun and Ueno Chizuko. "Taidan: Nihon no kazoku," Gunzō, February, 1995, 73.

integrity in the aftermath of such trauma, and also the notion of the Symbolic Order.

It is not difficult to see why Etō would be drawn to psychoanalytic method and to Erikson's work in particular during the sixties. In the first place, Erikson's approach provided Etō with an methodological alternative to the Marxism and socialism so prevelant in critical and academic circles. The psychoanalytic framework also offered a means for understanding individual psychology and the family by defining a logical progression toward personal maturity and cohesive individual identity.<sup>16</sup> In his work, Erikson attempts to explain "the process of American identity formation" and the role of the American Mother ("Mom") in postwar America, as well as the "legend of Hitler's childhood."<sup>17</sup> For Etō, a well-travelled, cosmopolitan, and erudite scholar, Erikson's impressively fair and insightful dissertation on Hitler and Germany, yet another country whose recent past haunted her and whose postwar identity was in flux, must have been compelling. Erikson notes, "For nations, as well as individuals, are not only defined by their highest point of civilized achievement, but also by the weakest one in their collective identity: they are, in fact, defined by the distance, and the quality of the distance, between these

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<sup>16</sup>. Julia Kristeva has written of the force of psychoanalysis in similar terms: "I see psychoanalysis as the lay version, the only one, of the speaking being's quest for truth that religion symbolizes for certain of my contemporaries and friends," Kristeva conceives of psychoanalysis as "the locus of extreme abjection, the refuge of private horror that can be lifted only by an infinite-indefinite displacement of speech and its effects." "My Memory's Hyperbole," in Domna Stanton, ed., The Female Autograph: Theory and Practice of Autobiography from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 225.

<sup>17</sup>. Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1950) (revised edition 1963), 286, 326 ff.

points."<sup>18</sup>

Despite the subtitle of the work (the collapse of the Mother), Etō's thesis hinges on the loss of authority on the part of the Father in postwar Japan. Such attenuation of power on a personal level is suggested in the 60's novels that Etō studies (by Kojima, Yasuoka, and Endō) by "the husbands and fathers" who "exhausted from the war and dazed by the recovery, have without realizing it relinquished their roles as helmsman of the home."<sup>19</sup> This also suggests the familiar metaphoric connections made between the paternal figure and male figures of authority, such as the emperor, (and between the home and nation). Although Etō displaces his anxiety about the emasculating effects of the war by shifting the focus/blame, both in his title and his essays, onto the Mother/female, he--and Erikson--ultimately offer a restorative alternative for these broken men--the men of a generation older than Etō: "For this son to attain true maturity, Etō claims, he...must break away from her influence and thereby assert his independence. . . . This 'loss' of Mother is a painful but necessary prelude to 'maturity.'"<sup>20</sup> Such separation on the part of the son results in disintegration of the family and home as well, rendering them gatherings of lonely, isolated individuals.<sup>21</sup> Alan Tansman has suggested that Etō focuses on such male characters not because he despises them, but rather because he feels a high degree of empathy for them.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>.Erikson, 327.

<sup>19</sup>.Gessel, *The Sting of Life*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 69-70. My discussion Etō's book draws heavily on Gessel's lucid comments on the work.

<sup>20</sup>.Gessel, 70.

<sup>21</sup>. Gessel, 221.

<sup>22</sup>. Personal conversation, 10 October, 1997. Some critics might also claim that

Critics commonly acknowledge the symbolic potential particularly of Kojima Nobuo's Embracing Family (Hōyō kazoku, 1965), with the character Miwa Shunsuke as the wounded Japanese Father, and his wife Tokiko and her lover George, an American GI, suggestive respectively of changes in women's attitudes and the presence of the U.S. military. One American critic, Van Gessel, asserts that this novel is "most moving if read as a personal chronicle of one man's home."<sup>23</sup> While not taking issue with Gessel's claim, the significance of Embracing Family and, in particular, Etō's compelling reading of the novel has had broader implications in postwar Japan.

Etō wrote Maturity and Loss in an era when memories of the Occupation still remained fresh and great controversy surrounded Japan's relations with the U.S. and the global community, as was demonstrated by the outspoken student and citizen protests. A critic deeply enmeshed in politics and debates on Japanese nationalism and identity, Etō, for his part, did not advance Embracing Family solely as a personal chronicle.

In Embracing Family, the protagonist Shunsuke's world hurtles into chaos and confusion as the house he is building starts to deteriorate underfoot, but especially after he learns that his formerly highly dependable wife Tokiko has had sex with a GI named George. The unity of Shunsuke's world is threatened constantly by intruders--such as the soldier, and a maid, whose presence ironically contributes to making their house feel dirtier, rather than cleaner, and who acts as the bearer of bad news, such as that of Tokiko's infidelity. In a confrontation between Shunsuke, Tokiko, and

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Etō's loss of his mother as a small child might contribute to his conceptualization of the mother figure.

<sup>23</sup> Gessel, 229.

George, Shunsuke takes the ironic role of translator for his wife, because she doesn't speak English and her ex-lover doesn't speak Japanese. Tokiko has him ask George whether he feels responsible for his actions. When George responds that his sole responsibility is to his parents and his country (kokka), Shunsuke becomes furious. In katakana English, Shunsuke tells George to "Gō bakku hōmu Yankii (Go back home Yankee). Etō's response to this passage in Kojima's novel is noteworthy:

This is the only point in the novel where the word nation ( kokka) appears, and it is significant also as the sole suggestion of the public sphere. Notably, it is George, the American, who uses this word. Despite the fact that "nation" is only used once, I can't help but feel that it bears great significance in the work as a whole . . . Shunsuke and Tokiko flinch in the face of George's logic precisely because they have been living in a culture that goes to extreme lengths in order to erase the image of the shameful Father. (この論理に対して俊介夫婦がたじろぐのは、彼らが「恥ずかしい」父のイメージを極力消去しようとする近代日本の文化のなかで生きてきたからにはかならない。"hazukashii chichi no imeeji"). Although Japan's defeat in the war undeniably contributed to this, the weakening of the Father image cannot be said to have come solely from the defeat....<sup>24</sup>

This part of Etō's argument hangs on a very small detail of the text, but he uses it to point to precisely what he finds most significant in the novel, and in his own political thinking as well, that is, the problematic literal and symbolic relationship between country and individual, the public and private spheres, particularly in the aftermath of the defeat. He follows Erikson's assertion of the conflict of shame and autonomy in the development of the self (or ego).<sup>25</sup> Again, Etō angrily asserts the figure of loss: the Japanese in

<sup>24</sup>.Etō Jun, Seijuku to sōshitsu: "haha" no hōkai, 69-71.

<sup>25</sup>.Erikson, 85. Erikson here is discussing infant development.

Kojima's novel have lost the ability to utter the word "nation" with pride, or at all.

Sociologist Ueno Chizuko found great significance in Etō's commentary on Embracing Family. In the controversial book On Men's Literature (Danryū bungakuron, 1989), Ueno astonishingly professes that Etō's reading of the Kojima novel Embracing Family "moved her to tears." Such praise for someone considered a conservative male thinker is striking in the context of this book, which takes the form of a discussion (zadankai) among three feminists about novels by male authors. Subsequently, Ueno remained so impressed with Etō's book that she appeared in public interviews with him, and also wrote the afterword to the 1993 edition of Etō's Maturity and Loss. But, like Etō's earlier detractors, Ueno confesses that her admiration for Etō the intellectual only goes so far--in fact, only up to the time of Maturity and Loss--a good thirty years ago. After that, Ueno writes, he turns too far to the right, becomes too nationalist for her taste.

Ueno responds positively to Etō's desire to forge a connection between the individual and politics, but she reacts particularly to Etō's view of the character Tokiko in Kojima's novel. Although Ueno professes that her reaction was partly an emotional one, she also seems to have been struck by her own methodological proximity to Etō at the time ("I too was employing Eriksonian methods then"). This social science methodology, Ueno claims, leads Etō to the insight that, in Embracing Family, the wife Tokiko exposes the self loathing of women under the capitalist system. "And he wrote this in the days before feminist discourse was common in postwar Japan," Ueno states.<sup>26</sup> Ueno is particularly

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<sup>26</sup> Hihyō kūkan, 35. Etō's claim about the role of industrial capitalism and women can be found in Seijuku to sōshitsu, 64. Notably, Ueno also wrote the Afterword to the 1993 Kodansha paperback edition of Seijuku to sōshitsu.

struck by Etō's assertion that it is not only men who lose their connection with the Mother/Nature, but that this process also entails self-destruction of the "Mother" on the part of women as well, partly by means of woman's own negation of nature and also because of woman's desire not to be left behind in the quest for modernity in industrial society.<sup>27</sup> When Ogura Chikako challenges Ueno and Etō's notion that a "Mother" existed to be destroyed in the first place, Ueno counters that the concept existed textually, in theory and ideology. As proof, Ueno notes the shift in the use of the related "ie" from the time of Sōseki's Meian through postwar writers such as critic Honda Shugo and Kojima himself, and the strong affective responses to and symbolic resonance of the family/home and Mother.<sup>28</sup>

Ueno furthermore seemed to regard Etō as a kindred spirit because of his grasp of gender as a social category, rather than as essential. More recently, she also reads his Maturity and Loss as presaging Post Colonial discourse. It's no coincidence, Ueno claims, that the character Tokiko chooses an American as her partner in infidelity--"Indeed, we are living in the age of intellectual and cultural colonialism."<sup>29</sup>

As Lawrence Olson has pointed out, books such as Etō's Maturity and Loss raised "questions about the ultimate direction of [Etō's] work." Horrified by the "hedonism" of postwar prosperity, Etō "insisted that he was not advocating an exclusively nationalistic literature, but simply that continuity with the past was as essential in literature as is life."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Danryū bungakuron, 207,210, 248-49, n. 8-9.

<sup>28</sup> Danryū bungakuron, 210-212.

<sup>29</sup> Tokyo Shimbun, 11 July 1995, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Olson, Intellectuals and the Search for National Identity in Postwar

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Another point of loss for Etō lies in the structures of narrative itself. In "Ochiba no hakiyose," he writes, "Just how long can a people continue to live inside a narrative written by someone else? いったい人が、他人が書いた物語のなかで、いつまで 更々と 生き続けられるものだろうか。Once a group of people have lost the facility to continue to discover their own sense of narrative, and begin instead to replicate the story of another people, they putrefy into living corpses, and become unable to create anything at all."<sup>31</sup> Etō's own insistent production of narrative would seem to constitute his battle to resist the "loss of narrative (*monogatari*)" or specially to assert a specific type of Japanese identity.

In a 1998 interview, Eto attributes his breadth of interests to his father: when, as a college student, he proposed switching from a literature major to economics, his father objected strenuously, claiming that no bank would hire such a bookish young man. In

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<sup>29</sup> Tokyo Shimbun, 11 July 1995, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Olson, Intellectuals and the Search for National Identity in Postwar Japan, Washington, D.C.: The Wilson Center, 1983, 24.

<sup>31</sup> *Ochiba no hakiyose: 1946 kempō sono sokubaku*, (Bungei Shunjū). Notably, this passage is part of an article concerning DeGaulle's memoirs and the Vichy regime in WWII France, and not a piece of literary criticism.



coincidence that the very same day in 1996 that Eto published his opinion that then Prime Minister Murayama should resign his office, Murayama in fact publically announced his resignation. Eto insisted that the leader owed an apology to the Japanese public because of his lack of leadership and decisiveness in the wake of the Kobe earthquake and the Salin gas subway tragedy, some of the most trying times in recent history.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, Eto maintains his stature as a literary critic. He belongs to the small number of people who can be counted as a "true critic" who "aspires, not simply to pass judgment on individual works of art, but, by virtue of the way he or she conceptualizes them, to affect the course of artistic history."<sup>34</sup>

In conclusion, Eto Jun's activities as a "cultural critic" (*bungei hyōronka*) illuminate the broad and vital role of the public intellectual in late-twentieth century Japan, and highlight the parameters of the intellectual in a vigorous public sphere. It is simple enough to pigeonhole Eto as a former humanist turned right-wing toady of the establishment, but vastly more interesting to attempt to understand the aspects of his thinking that allow him to function effectively as an active voice in both cultural and political realms, and the nature of a public sphere that encourages such broad participation by its members.

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<sup>33</sup>. "Bunshi no kan de seijika o kiru," 192. Eto had frequently criticized Murayama for offering apologies to the citizens and governments of Asian countries which Japan had colonized and brutalized earlier in the century, and insisted that the Prime Minister should bow his head to the Japanese public in apology for his lack of domestic leadership and for allowing them to suffer in the more recent past.

<sup>34</sup>. David Goodman, in a review of *The Voyage of Contemporary Japanese Theatre* by Senda Akihiko, *Journal of Asian Studies*, forthcoming.