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# Ōe Kenzaburō's Early Works And The Postwar Democracy In Japan

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ŌE KENZABURŌ'S EARLY WORKS  
AND THE POSTWAR DEMOCRACY IN JAPAN

A Thesis Presented  
by  
ASAYO ONO

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Asian Languages and Literatures

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AND THE POSTWAR DEMOCRACY IN JAPAN

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## ABSTRACT

### ŌE KENZABURŌ'S EARLY WORKS AND THE POSTWAR DEMOCRACY IN JAPAN

SEPTEMBER 2012

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The end of the Second World War and Japan's surrender are the established paradigm for understanding postwar Japanese society. The formulation of the new Constitution and the establishment of the postwar democracy mark a major historical turnaround for Japan. Since he debuted as a writer in 1958, Ōe Kenzaburō's (1935 - ) published literary works are closely related to the postwar history of Japan. Ōe has been an outspoken supporter of the pacifist Constitution and "postwar democracy." Ōe's stories about the war are characterized by a realistic depiction at the same time as always narrating his stories in an imaginary world. In his works the past history and the future are intricately combined in the depiction of contemporary society. By doing so, Ōe creates an ambiguous image of contemporary Japan. Ōe's main question in his early works is the achievement of *shutaisei* both in postwar Japanese society and Japanese literature. The main protagonists as well as the author protest against the emperor-centered history. They attempt to illustrate another history from their own viewpoint.

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## INTRODUCTION

In my thesis, I discuss the first fruits of Ōe Kenzaburō's literature, along with an analysis of the five early works in which he successfully created an entirely new type of narrator with a strong self, or *shutaisei*. It is said that young Ōe illustrated the adolescent crisis through the bleak picture of a defeated nation as his self-portrait. Therefore, his early works are often recognized as the reflection of his personal setbacks in the postwar period. However, Ōe could not be identified with the frustrated, young protagonists because his strong self exists in a nontraditional relationship between the main characters and the author. In this manner, Ōe expressed his firm assertion of being a modern writer in his early works. I elucidate Ōe's particular narrative in which the author takes responsibility for himself as an independent-minded person both in literature and real world. Ōe, talking about the relationship between a writer and his readers, explains that a writer should publish his works for people who live in the same country and in the same age.<sup>1</sup> His literature is closely related to modern Japanese society, especially to the memories of war and postwar history. I analyze the process in which Ōe establishes his position as a representative of postwar Japanese literature and develops a concrete image of “postwar democracy 戦後民主主義<sup>2</sup>.”

One of the most relevant motifs of Ōe's early works is to explain that

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<sup>1</sup> Sanroku Yoshida, “An Interview with Kenzaburō Ōe,” in *World Literature Today*, Vol 62, No 3 (Oklahoma: University of Okulahoma, 1988), 373.

<sup>2</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō 2001, *Sakokushitewa naranai* 鎖国してはならない, 186. Ōe says that for him “postwar democracy” is not just a thought from a certain period in postwar history but a cultural universality. However, as I discuss in my thesis, the term “postwar democracy” was originally used by people with diverse values and it means a number of things.

Japan's defeat in the Second World War holds a great promise for the development of each individual's *shutaisei*. It also left a great potential to establish democracy in Japanese society. In the first chapter of my thesis, I illustrate Ōe's view on postwar Japanese history in light of the discussion on *shutaisei*. I reduce my argument to three points: the new constitution's enforcement, the occupation period, and the debate on Japan's responsibility for its war crimes. First, I explain Maruyama Masao's impact on Ōe's literature. They share a strong belief in the spirit of postwar constitution; that is, for democracy to succeed, each individual must enter into it. Second, I analyze the controversial debate between Ōe and Etō Jun about the occupation period in terms of Japan's national identity. Unlike Etō, Ōe argues that Japan's defeat and the occupation laid the groundwork for a new period of Japanese literature. Furthermore, I illustrate Ōe's view on Japan's ambiguous *shutaisei* in modern international society in terms of war responsibility. Ōe claims that Japan should atone for its act of aggression in the Second World War to establish a strong *shutaisei*.

In the second chapter, I examine how Ōe contradicts the traditional or stereotyped images of "Japanese literature." Ōe's question on Japan's national identity in postwar history is associated with the problematic presentation of *shutaisei* in his writings. Ōe tries to describe images of a contemporary society in a nontraditional narrative. He attempts to create new prose in which the author intellectually discusses the social problems of the modern world. In other words, Ōe illustrates a totally new narrator, giving his own interpretation of "postwar Japanese democracy." First, I depict Ōe's biographical background, because his own growing process is one of the most important motifs in his works. His childhood memories in

Shikoku and the study of Western literature at Tokyo University strongly influenced both his writing style and thematic subject. Second, I describe the way in which Ōe adopts a confrontational approach toward the representatives of modern Japanese literature. He argues that their literature has nothing to do with the description of “contemporary Japan.” I examine how Ōe reinterprets Kawabata Yasunari’s literary contribution, in which Kawabata depicts his favor for Japanese classics and medieval Zen philosophy. I also analyze Ōe’s critical view on Mishima Yukio’s artistic project to express an eccentric image of “Japanese” to international readers. In contrast, Ōe discusses the contemporaneousness of Japanese society in order to integrate his writing into the larger body of world literature.

In the section on literary criticism, I analyze Ōe’s five works that were published in the 1950s and 1960s. I discuss a consistent thematic subject of Ōe’s four biographical stories and his first nonfiction *Hiroshima Notes*. Ōe’s critical narrative does not request any political reform or revolution. Nevertheless, he tries to illustrate something different from the current reality. Therefore, his writing relies more on a social analysis through self-criticism. In other words, Ōe’s early biographical writing is a criticism of the contemporary society through his soul-searching.

Ōe critically describes the images of the postwar period in the form of a conversation between the author and his other selves, the young protagonists. Most of them are shunted aside in society and feel a sense of alienation. I will explain that Ōe’s primary concern is not to depict their loneliness. From the beginning, Ōe describes the youth who independently discuss their current situation as being outcasts in society. The reason why they feel loneliness is that they reject adoption by

the in-group. Because of their particular position in society, they make critical observations of Japanese society and the narrator responds to them. In other words, Ōe focuses on their singular trait to distance themselves from groupthink and group behavior on the basis of a conventional sense of values. These young protagonists are only eager to build up intimate relationships with those who also have firm *shutaisei*. They want to connect their sense of self with the existence of others, so that they can interpret the real world and history in their own way. In doing so, Ōe recreates an image of the real world in the protagonists' questions and narrator's answers, which lies on the boundary of reality and imagination.

In *Lavish Are the Dead*, Ōe describes a university student who can communicate with the dead in his visions through breaking the conventional taboo. He revives the dead through imagination in order to attempt to understand wartime experiences from the viewpoint of the dead. In *Sheep*, a lonely university student meets the docile Japanese who are meekly contended with humiliation in the occupation period. Being chased by an elementary school teacher, he realizes that it is not the foreigners' rudeness but the Japanese' submission that causes their sense of humiliation. In *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*, the narrator allegorizes the former emperor-centered society from the viewpoint of a boy who acts as the main character. In this allegory, the narrator criticizes the adults' grave responsibility in the old educational system before and during the war, in which the children's *shutaisei* was completely destroyed. In *Seventeen*, Ōe discusses the anachronistic group behavior of nationalists in postwar Japanese society. The main protagonist's strong sense of alienation enables him to ironically describe his participation in the rightist's

movement. It is said that Ōe changes his thematic subject following the birth of his handicapped son and his encounters with the A-bomb survivors in Hiroshima. However, Ōe's first nonfiction, *Hiroshima Notes*, is also his way of soul-searching in the form of conversation with others. The narrative of Ōe's first nonfiction is a variant of his early biographical works in which Ōe talks with his other self. In *Hiroshima Notes*, the narrator communicates with "others" who live in the real world and deal with the problems of postwar society.

Ōe narrates his stories from various perspectives. They are composite narratives where history is not an accomplished fact but a multilayered image. As a writer, Ōe appeals for the need to rely on imagination. For him the word "imagination" means to redefine and recreate a physical world. Ōe shows his readers in a realistic way a future vision of Japan. Ōe actively interacts with the writers and scholars of different regions of the world transforming the boundaries of conventional "Japanese literature."<sup>3</sup> He repeatedly questions the meaning of Japan's surrender in 1945. Ōe strongly takes up a pacific standpoint against any kind of violence which undermines human dignity.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Ōe talks of Japanese studies as a part of cultural studies. Ōe hopes that the researchers of Japanese studies analyze his works so that they examine not only Japan and Japanese but also their own countries and their own people. In doing so, Japanese can enrich their understanding of their home country. Ōe expects foreign readers and researchers to see a universal problem about humankind in his literature.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND JAPAN'S SURRENDER. THE NEW CONSTITUTION AND THE POSTWAR DEMOCRACY

#### *The Individual and the Nation – The Problem of Shutaisei*

##### 1.1 Introduction: Ōe and Maruyama

I start with an analysis of Ōe Kenzaburō's earlier works along with the problem of “*shutaisei* 主体性” because it is one of the most important subjects for this study. First, I discuss the relationship between Ōe and the political scientist Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男 (1914-1996). Ōe borrows from Maruyama some ideas about Japanese democracy and works through them in his literature. Maruyama attempted to establish the groundwork for democracy. The concept of *shutaisei* is the cornerstone of Maruyama's political thought. According to Maruyama, independent-minded individuals could bring true democracy to Japan. In his research Maruyama sought a new model of subjectivity for an independent individual in a democratic system.

Maruyama's ideas played a central role in Ōe's essays in which he often refers to Maruyama's research achievements in the history of Japanese thought. In particular, Ōe pays close attention to Maruyama's firm belief in “postwar democracy 戦後民主主義.” Maruyama's criticism of the Emperor system and his hope for a democratic society strongly influenced Ōe's choice of thematic subjects. Throughout his career, Ōe has been influenced by Maruyama's point of view, developing his own argument for postwar democracy and the personal independence of each person in

society.<sup>4</sup> The underlying idea of Ōe's new image of a man is embodied in Maruyama's discussion about *shutaisei*. As a writer Ōe creates a new type of protagonist in his works who illustrates the difficulties in establishing personal independence. The regard that Ōe had for Maruyama was mutual: Ōe held Maruyama in high esteem even though he was not personally acquainted with him and Maruyama regarded Ōe as his important junior contemporary.<sup>5</sup> In other words, both Maruyama and Ōe attempt to create a nontraditional relationship between the individual and society.

## 1.2 Maruyama's Beliefs

Maruyama researched the correlation between the modernization of a nation and the independence of individuals in the development of successful democratic societies. He then compared those societies with Japan to figure out the characteristics of the traditional style of Japanese politics. Maruyama was originally a specialist in the history of Japanese political thought. He is now acknowledged as a representative of "postwar democracy." Oguma argues that this accepted view of Maruyama emerged in the 1960s<sup>6</sup>. Throughout his career, Maruyama maintained a

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<sup>4</sup> Uno Shigeki, "Maruyama Masao niokeru mittsuno syutaizō 丸山眞男における三つの主体像," in *Maruyama Masao ron* 丸山眞男論, ed. Kobayashi Masaya (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 2003), 40-74. Maruyama developed his own model of *shutaisei* influenced by his studies of Hegelian philosophy and Marxian economics. On the basis of this he developed a concept of subjectivity in postwar society. For Maruyama "subjectivity" means a behavioral attitude of individuals who change the world by their own initiative.

<sup>5</sup> (Ōe Kenzaburō 2001, *Sakokushitewa naranai*, 42-43): Ōe's mentor Watanabe Kazuo 渡辺一夫 (1901-1975) established a friendship with Maruyama. It seems that Maruyama took note of Ōe's literary activity and his opinion on current topics. Ōe found an article of Maruyama written in 1969 on the question of postwar democracy. In this article Ōe is described as a rare breed of person who champions postwar democracy.

<sup>6</sup> Oguma Eiji, *Minshuto aikoku. Sengo nihon no nashonarizumuto kōkyōsei* 民主と愛国—戦後日

basic stance critical of the Emperor system and supportive of the Constitution of Japan. After Japan was defeated in the Second World War he began to study Japanese totalitarianism to explain the causes of the defeat. Maruyama considered the causality of the defeat as an abortion of modernization. For this reason, Maruyama attempted to determine the singular pattern of the Japanese modernization in order to overcome the question how Japan could now realize the principle that sovereignty resides in the people.

## 1.2 The Authority and Individual

In his study Maruyama substantiated that no man was aware of his own individual responsibility as a subject in Japanese political system. The first chapter of Maruyama's research about the Japanese nationalism is entitled *Chōkokkashugino ronritoshinri* 超国家主義の論理と心理 [The Logic and the Mentality of Ultra-Nationalism.]<sup>7</sup> From the start, Maruyama argues that it is hard to paint a precise picture of Japanese nationalism even though one could easily find some catchwords that stand for this political regime. Maruyama realized that here was no concrete organizational concept that authorized a political framework for the regime. Secondly, he said the concrete backbone of the political system in Japan is the Emperor.<sup>8</sup>

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本のナショナリズムと公共性 (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 2002),103: In the student revolution era Maruyama was accused for two reasons. First, the students criticized the principle of “postwar democracy” as an optimistic idea. Secondly, the activists impeached Maruyama's modernism as based on an idealized model of Western thought.

<sup>7</sup> Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男. *Gendaiseijino shisōtokōdō* 現代政治の思想と行動 (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1958), 7-24.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 22.

Although one could determine the ultimate authority of the Japanese political regime, the Emperor is neither an independent inventor of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan enacted in the Meiji era nor the governor of the nation. The Emperor merely represents a model of gods from Japanese mythology.<sup>9</sup> More specifically, Maruyama explained the distinction of the process of the foundation of Japan's ensuring development into a modern nation. He said that the close relationship between an individual and the Emperor, namely an absolute deity, served as a locomotive for the entire state apparatus. Maruyama concluded that Japanese nationalism was not based on public power with independent-minded individuals, but on a particular relationship between those in authority and the public. There is no word in the Japanese language that is an exact translation of "bourgeois," which stands for the independent-minded citizens in a parliamentary system. In conclusion, Maruyama thought that faithfulness to the Emperor governed the entire value system of Japan. The sense of intimacy to the Emperor was a primary legitimacy that contributed to the establishment of the Japanese hierarchy.

Although Imperial Japan was an ideologically-charged country, the study of the mechanism of this ideology had been unsuccessful in terms of the study of the thought and the mentality of the Japanese.<sup>10</sup> So, Maruyama emphasized that he had to survey the essence of the Japanese mind because it was still strongly reflected in postwar Japanese society and was still active as a coercive power both in the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 7.

machinery of the government and in the public at large.<sup>11</sup> Maruyama concluded that the Japanese political system did not legitimate the freedom of an individual personable to act according to his own conscience.<sup>12</sup> Maruyama urged that one could be hardly aware of one's responsibility as an independent person in this social and political system.<sup>13</sup> Maruyama said that his mission was to develop a Western-type democracy in the civic society of Japan.<sup>14</sup> Finally, Maruyama inquired into Japanese singular familism, which prevents the establishment of a modern political system.

### 1.3.1 The Emperor and Japanese' Familism

Maruyama thought that it was difficult to realize the idea of democracy in the familistic society in Japan because of its particular tradition. There is a particular configuration in the process of the modernization of Japan in term of the relationship between an unquestioned authority and the public. The Japanese system of government was based on the particular family system in which the Japanese tended to bow to authority as a child obeyed his father in a family.<sup>15</sup> Seen from this standpoint, democracy based on the independence of each citizen could hardly be established in the Japanese society.

### 1.3.2 Hitler as Fuhrer

Maruyama repeatedly argued that there is no equivalent to the Japanese

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 138.

Emperor's great father figure in other fascisms. Moreover, the Japanese public had not experienced revolution caused by a class conflict that had occurred in modern Western countries. In other words, the German and Italian fascisms were established by the public that experienced the revolution by the people in the modern period. In contrast, the Japanese had not experienced any kind of people's revolution.<sup>16</sup> So, Maruyama compares Japanese fascism to the Axis (Germany and Italy) in order to indicate the specific characteristic of the Japanese totalitarianism in terms of a familistic society.<sup>17</sup> Nazism also utilized the symbol of a living organism in the totalitarian regime. However Adolf Hitler merely played a role of an official Fuhrer, and he did not delegate the plenary powers as a father of the people. In contrast, the Emperor of Japan was not only an official Fuhrer but also a head of a huge family with an orthodox view of the Japanese mythology.

According to Maruyama, this familism of Japanese society strengthened the political drive to establish an unusual brand of nationalism in the process of the modernization.<sup>18</sup> Since the dawn of history the Emperor stood for the highest authority in this familistic society. Maruyama regarded Japan as a nation of families, with the Japanese state as a living organism representing an ancient consanguineous society. Japan was composed of a father, namely the Emperor, and of the people who

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>17</sup> Maruyama Masao, "Nihonfashizumuno shisōtoundō 日本ファシズムの思想と運動," in *Gendaiseijino shisōtokōdō* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1958), 25-82.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 38.

represented the children of the Emperor.<sup>19</sup> Gods of Japanese mythology legitimated the loyal family. The creation of this myth legitimated the status of the Emperor. In this way, the national structure of Imperial Japan represented a huge family in which the Emperor functioned as a great father. The people, the children of the Emperor, were forced to be faithful family members in the paternalistic society. In this sense, the loyal family represented a flower for the Japanese. The Showa Emperor was generally manifested by the image of a good father who takes care of his loving wife. The Emperor and Empress signified conjugal fidelity, and had two sons and five daughters. Imitating this family model, the Japanese people should have contributed to building up a large, uniform family within the nation.

#### 1.4 Public's Role

Under the Meiji Constitution based on the old hierarchy, the public did not have its independence. Maruyama argued that the Japanese people were not truly civic-minded citizens because the old Meiji-era Constitution did not guarantee the independence of the individual. Therefore, Maruyama explained the difference between Japanese fascism and the German fascisms in terms of the role of the common people. There was also an idea of a community comprised of a mono-ethnic group in the Third Reich of Germany. However, Japanese fascism and German fascism were different from one another in terms of the political decision-making process in the electoral constituency. Maruyama addressed the problem of public principles in the Japanese political system under the old constitution. In the process of Japan's modernization, the Meiji government established a modern type of monarchy

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

comprising independent legislative, as well as executive and judiciary branches. However, the Emperor had the reins of this constitutional monarchy, and his legal status was practically specified in a way that was unrelated to public opinion. According to Maruyama, this Japanese constitutional modernization in the Meiji era was imperfect in terms of the sovereign power involved in political decision making.

In 1956 Maruyama published a book about the Japanese political system during and after the Second World War called *Gendaiseijino shisōtokōdō* 現代政治の思想と行動 [Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics]. In this well-known work, Maruyama compared the structure of the Japanese government past and present to figure out that pre-modern and pre-war Japan did not legislate or function according to public principles, but rather according to relationships. His primary concern was to determine the uniquely represented framework of the Japanese political system in term of executive decision-making. Maruyama suggested that it was difficult to acknowledge the existence of *shutaisei*, the knowledge of one's self as a legal subject, in the prewar Japanese political system. Maruyama argued that no man was aware of his own individual responsibility as a subject when the Emperor system exercised absolute control and power over the whole nation. He labeled the political regime of Imperial Japan as a system in which no one took responsibility for any kind of executive decision.<sup>20</sup> Maruyama concluded that he could not recognize any creative or subjective ability to think and act independently even among the people at the center of power.<sup>21</sup> In other words, Maruyama pointed to the fact that a

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<sup>20</sup> (Maruyama 1958, 123)

<sup>21</sup> Maruyama Masao, "Gunkokushihaihaishano seishinkeitai 軍国支配者の精神体系," in

person with solid independence did not exist in the legislative system of Japan.

Consequently, Maruyama explained the mentality of the Japanese in light of the usage of the term “realism.”

### 1.5 Japanese Realism

Maruyama emphasized that the Japanese were inclined to ignore the fluid character of “reality.” He argued that one should precisely analyze the structure of “reality” about which the Japanese talk in everyday life.<sup>22</sup> The term “reality” was a *fait accompli* however it was an abstract concept that could always be supplied a physical meaning. In other words, “reality” was originally not a static concept.

However, “realism” is for Japanese something static that one must accept, rather than something fluid that one can change by the civil rights in political system. Therefore, Maruyama warned against the understanding of “reality” of the Japanese people. The Japanese tended to follow a one-dimensional sense of values based on the governing classes. In other words, they were basically authoritarian conformists.<sup>23</sup> Maruyama analyzed that the Japanese regarded “reality” as an accomplished fact. Thus they tended to bow to authority because they believed that they were not able to fix their real life. Therefore, Maruyama argued that this particular mentality of the Japanese

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*Gendaiseijino shisōtokōdō* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1958), 83-124. Maruyama mentions the clarification of the A-class war criminals in the Tokyo war crimes tribunal. The accused were not able to answer the question about who actually took the crucial decisions in the military operations during the war. Maruyama argued that this was a result of a system where responsibility could not be apportioned. There was no sense of individual liability. The awareness of self-responsibility was ambiguous in the Japanese political regime from beginning to end. The armed services participated in the war under the empty symbolism related to the emperor system.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 177.

built up a system of irresponsibility and plunged Japan into war.<sup>24</sup> In conclusion, he argued that the Japanese should independently assert their civil rights for themselves under the principles of the postwar constitution. He thought that the Japanese should actively improve their current situation, instead of relying on a conventional authority, the Emperor.

#### 1.6 the Postwar Democracy

The status of the Emperor changed after the war; the Constitution of Japan took effect on May 3<sup>rd</sup> in 1947, and it is different from the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (1890-1945). The new Constitution declares the sovereignty of the people and guarantees basic human rights. Note that Maruyama was against the Emperor system, and emphasized the importance of the establishment of *shutaisei* with other intellectuals who were mostly nonpartisan. From the beginning of his career as a university professor, Maruyama stood apart from communism.<sup>25</sup> He was dissatisfied with Marxist or Communist because it could also become one more authority.

After Japan was defeated in the Second World War in August 1945, the movement for freedom and democracy was developed by people with diverse values. As Oguma Eiji explains, the term “postwar democracy” originally did not mean a particular political movement but was a collective term for the surge towards

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 174-175.

<sup>25</sup> (Oguma 2002, 70-74) In fact, Maruyama was influenced by the perspective of the world of Marxism during the Second World War. Maruyama also criticized modern civil society and capitalism. However Maruyama changed his opinion about the civil society in the postwar years. Oguma argues that Japan’s defeat gave high impact to Maruyama’s study.

democracy.<sup>26</sup> One of the most influential political parties among various democratic movements was the Japanese Communist Party (JCP). The JCP had been politically repressed in Japan long before the war started. When the Second World War came to an end, the JCP also supported democracy. It is important to emphasize, however, that Maruyama drew a sharp distinction between his own opinion about democracy and the model of democracy of the JCP, despite the fact that they were both critical of the Emperor system. For Maruyama a communist government would have been an affront to genuine democracy because it was authoritarian like the Emperor system. For these reasons, Maruyama looked for a democratic model in Japanese politics that was neither based on the Emperor system nor on communism.

#### 1.7 the Independence of Individual

Maruyama argued that the individual independence of Japanese citizens was an indispensable element for the establishment of democracy in Japan.

Maruyama researched the correlation between the modernization of the nation and the independence of individuals as being crucial to the development of a democratic society. He studied comparative government to figure out the characteristics of the traditional style of Japanese politics. Oguma argues that one of the major achievements of Maruyama's study was to make an archetype of "modern man 近代人."<sup>27</sup> Maruyama formulated a concept of this hypothetical character using the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 100: Oguma states that *shutaisei* was an important keyword for people who tried to overcome the humiliation and defeat after the Second World War. First, *Shutaisei* means an establishment of a sense of self for self-driven individuals. Secondly, *shutaisei* means the sovereign status of Japan.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 90-97: The economist Ōtsuka Hisao 大塚久雄 (1907-1996) ranks with Maruyama because Ōtsuka also developed a concept of "modern man" in economics. Maruyama and Ōtsuka had a strong sense of aversion toward the multitude. Their concept of "modern man" was closely

technical vocabulary that he learnt from Western political philosophers. In his thought, Maruyama theorized the existence of independent-minded individuals who would be proactive in participating in a political system. If these people could reject blind acceptance of absolute authority, they could build democracy in Japan.<sup>28</sup> Maruyama expected that this fictional character could come into existence in the future.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.8 the new Constitution and the Emperor

The new constitution deprives Emperor of power, so Maruyama is supportive of constitution. Maruyama agreed with the principles of the current Constitution, and he made an effort to establish genuine democracy in Japan. Maruyama argued that Japan should go through a phase of a modernization through a democratic revolution. After the end of the Second World War, the new Constitution defined the principle that sovereignty resided in the people. In the new Constitution the status of the Emperor was defined as a symbol of the nation whereas the citizens were given legal status. In addition, the Constitution protected the independence of each person.

At the end of the first volume of *Gendaiseijino shisōto kōdō* Maruyama

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related to the intellectuals. However activists from the student movements accused Maruyama and Ōtsuka of bourgeois hypocrisy.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 100: Maruyama and Ōtsuka did not analyze modern Western politics per se. They attempted to illustrate an ideal model of man using the technical vocabulary of modern Western thought.

<sup>29</sup> Fukuda Kan'ichi, *Maruyama Masaoto sonojidai* 丸山眞男とその時代 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, Iwanami booklet No. 522, 2000) Maruyama originally studied Japanese history of thought in the Edo and Meiji periods. At the time, his mentor advised Maruyama that he should critically discuss the national policy of Imperial Japan. During the Second World War, freedom of speech was banned and many socialists and communists were incarcerated. In the middle of difficulty, Maruyama kept a critical eye on the Emperor system and formulated the prototype of his idea.

mentioned the issue of the amending of the Constitution. Maruyama discussed the term “realism” concerning current affairs. In an essay he stated that he was against any military resurgence and to the revision of the Constitution.<sup>30</sup> He was clearly against the remilitarization of Japan because a democratic revolution had not yet been realized in Japan.<sup>31</sup> Maruyama criticized the politicians and the scholars who argued that the principles of the current Constitution were detached from reality in the cold war era. Maruyama explained that the Constitution was already established in the beginning of the cold war. For this reason, he claimed that the spirit of the current Constitution was rooted in the reality of international affairs.<sup>32</sup> Maruyama referred to the possibility of revising the Constitution’s Article 9 by public referendum. However Maruyama argued that the citizens, namely the sovereign, independent people, should be informed well in order to make a serious judgment on the Constitution.<sup>33</sup>

### 1.9.1 Ōe’s Literature

Ōe takes these ideas and puts them into his own literature. As mentioned, Ōe’s early works are closely related to the major transformation of the Japanese society that is ascribable to the revision of the Constitution. Maruyama and Ōe thought that the new postwar Constitution brought about a historic transformation of Japanese society. It abolished the old political system and it changed the definition of *shutaisei* in the government system because sovereignty, resting with the people, was

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<sup>30</sup> (Maruyama 1958, 173)

<sup>31</sup> Maruyama Masao, “Genjitsushugino kansei 現実主義の完成,” in *Gendaiseijino shisōtokōdō* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1958), 173-187.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 184-186.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

defined. Ōe depicts the breakdown of a value system based on emperor's mythology. Ōe tries to figure out the radical change of Japan focusing on the unchangeable foundation of Japanese society in which the Emperor has no political power but still holds fast to a strong presence. In addition, Ōe found that the Japanese had a strong tendency to operate in groups within a traditional hierarchy. So, he attempted to determine the specific characteristics of the Japanese mentality and the absence of *shutaisei* under the Emperor system from a young protagonist's viewpoint. In this way, Ōe addresses the question how one should take personal responsibility as an independent-minded citizen in postwar Japanese society.

#### 1.9.2 the Loss of Father Figure

Ōe engages in the problem of an essentially unchanged disposition of national sentiment. Ōe also focuses attention on the symbolic role of the Emperor both in Japanese society and Japanese culture in terms of the introduction of the new Constitution. From the standpoint of the independent spirit of Japanese, the father figure of the Emperor has important implications for Ōe's literary motif. Ōe also rejects an absolute authority in society because it prevents the progress of democracy, and has a keen interest in the Emperor system because the Emperor stood for an unquestioned authority until the end of the Second World War. The new Constitution defined the Emperor as the symbol of the state. With the abolition of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan, the Japanese public lost a father figure and a symbol of a huge family. Ōe illustrates the young protagonists who live in a big city in which they are not restricted by traditional family customs. Ōe depicts the youth who do not need to obey their father's orders, both in their family and society. In other words, Ōe

describes those who have a great opportunity to develop *shutaisei* on the basis of their own will, although it is not an easy task for them.

### 1.9.3 the Youth

Seen from this standpoint, it is very important that the characters of Ōe's early works are young people, particularly younger men. One of the most important themes of Ōe's earlier works is that of adolescence. He describes overwhelmed adolescents whose sense of stagnation reflects Ōe's personal sentiment. The people in Ōe's works feel embarrassed by profoundly changing values. Ōe questions the reason why it is so difficult for adolescents to live as independent individuals in Japanese society. Ōe depicts young protagonists still embarrassed by the fact that they had lost a great father figure. At the same time they feel impotent in participating in the establishment of a democratic society. They seek what it means to be an individual in Japanese society. Ōe experienced the wartime when he was a child and he remembered that the Emperor was the divine sovereign ruler of the Imperial system. On one hand, Ōe identifies their bent lives with the ashes of defeat. The characters of Ōe's early works are frustrated by the repeated setbacks in life and while they lose direction and independence, they go through growing pains.

### 1.9.4 Frustration and Isolation

On the other hand, it is also relevant that Ōe regards their loneliness not as their weak point but rather as a strong point in terms of developing one's self. These young protagonists are completely free from the conventional rules of a small community. In other words, they feel alienation in a big city because they have the ability to act independently, while the others do everything in groups. In this way, Ōe

makes the most of their characteristics that they are still developing as they start to lead their lives in postwar society, in which both their *shutaisei* and Japan's national identity are still developing. Ōe illustrates the young protagonists who try to imagine a different type of reality without being swayed by preconceived ideas. Therefore, most of them are illustrated as daydreamers who freely connect the real world to illusion.

#### 1.9.5 Reality and Imagination

Ōe's main motif is to address the use of imagination to try to imagine something different from the current reality. Like Maruyama Ōe also questioned the problem of "reality" in his literary works. Ōe's psychological characterization analyzed a distinction between reality and unreality in contemporary society. At all times Ōe tried to blur boundaries between "reality" and imagination. Ōe's narrative recreates the conventional ideas of the current situation in order to illustrate a future vision of Japanese democracy. In other words, Ōe attempts to embody Maruyama's "modern man" in his literature, who independently thinks and acts to change the existing world.

#### 1.9.6 the postwar Constitution and Imagination

Ōe's literary project is to address the question of how we can always attempt to associate our real life and the principles of the Constitution by the imaginative power. Ōe often mentions the term "imaginative power" when he talks about the constitutional problem.<sup>34</sup> The constitution is Japan's good fortune, but must

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<sup>34</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "Kenpōnitsuiteno kojintekinataiken 憲法についての個人的な体験," in *Jizokusuru kokorozashi 持続する志* (Tokyo: Bungeishunjūsha, 1969),150-151.

choose it anew at each moment. Ōe understood well that the real situation of the postwar society was far from the ideal of the new Constitution. Although Ōe accepted the disconnection between the ideal and the reality in the principle of the Constitution, he was an unalterably supporter of the spirit of the Constitution. According to Ōe, one should improve one's own capacity for imagination so that the spirit of the current Constitution becomes something of value for our real lives.<sup>35</sup>

## *The Occupation and the Sovereign Nation*

### *The National Identity of Japan*

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this section I discuss the difference between Ōe and the literary critic Etō Jun 江藤淳 (1932-1999) in terms of the national identity and the postwar Constitution. Ōe and Etō had different opinions on the interpretation of the defeat of Japan in terms of the origin of postwar history. Unlike Ōe, Etō was conservative; they differed with one another on some essential points of the defeat, the occupation, and the postwar democracy. Despite their differences, Ōe believed that Etō was one of the most significant intellectuals of his generation.<sup>36</sup> Etō also recognized that one

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 150., Ōe Kenzaburō, “Hazukashimerareta kenpōto sonoshinsei 辱められた憲法とその神聖,” in *Jizokusuru kokorozashi* (Tokyo: Bungeishunjūsha, 1969), 76-77. Ōe repeatedly talks of the spirit of the current Constitution in his other essays. Readers have to look for meaning in the ink-stained paper of this Constitution, he says. Ōe criticizes people who deny the principles of the current Constitution. They do not carefully examine the Constitution to check in which manner it is associated with their real life. The Constitution becomes a dead letter for such people. Ōe emphasizes the importance of imaginative power in understanding the spirit of the Constitution so it takes on a major significance.

<sup>36</sup> (*Ōe Kenzaburō Shōsetsu* 1996, 474)

generation could bring forth only one genius like Ōe.<sup>37</sup> I analyze why they disagree with each other over the interpretation of postwar history, especially postwar Japanese literature. Their conflicting perspectives about postwar history centered on their understanding of *shutaisei*.

Etō is just two years older than Ōe, and at the same that Ōe started writing, Etō also embarked on his career as literary critic.<sup>38</sup> Etō established an impressive reputation as a specialist in modern and pre-modern Japanese literature. As children they both experienced the end of Second World War and shared common political experience in the postwar era. Additionally, they both questioned Japan's defeat and national identity in their literary and essay. Due to the fact they both opposed the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and participated in a study group to voice their opposition to this they have often been compared.<sup>39</sup> Yet after this point, they diverged on their views of postwar history, especially in the interpretation of article 9 of the Constitution. Unlike Ōe, Etō recognized the end of the Second World War as a cause of humiliation. Etō thought that the Occupation policy completely trampled on the interpretation of history. In particular, Etō argued that the essence of Japanese culture was completely destroyed at the end of the Second World War by the occupational policies, especially by the implementation of censorship. According to Etō, this leads to the problem of the national identity of Japan. In conclusion, Etō

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<sup>37</sup> Jun Etō, “Ōe Kenzaburō,” in Etō Jun chosakushū zoku Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1977), 196.

<sup>38</sup> (Ōe Kenzaburō *Shōsetsu* 1996, 473)

<sup>39</sup> Ōe, Etō and other young cultural figures formed a group called “Wakainihon’nokai” 若い日本の会 in 1958. They were critical of the drafting of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty in 1960.

argued that the Japanese public does not correctly interpret the postwar history of their country even after the withdrawal of the occupation policies.

## 2.2 Etō's Interpretation of Ōe's Literature

I will briefly examine Etō's literary review on Ōe's early works in terms of their understanding of *shutaisei*. Right after Ōe debuted, Etō accurately pointed out that "Contemporaneity" is a keyword for describing Ōe's literature.<sup>40</sup> Etō explains that Ōe's biographical novels reflect the experiences of his generation in postwar Japanese society. Etō states that Ōe's main theme is the depiction of the hidden feelings of today's Japanese. Ōe said Etō was at first very understanding towards him. In fact, Etō acclaimed Ōe when he made a debut as a writer. However after several months Etō suddenly became a critic of Ōe.<sup>41</sup> More specifically, Etō highly appreciated Ōe's earlier works until *Memushiri kouchi* 芽むしり仔撃ち [*Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*] (1958). Etō offered a positive assessment of Ōe's early works in which Ōe clearly described the "situation of confinement 監禁状態" of Japanese society during the occupation.<sup>42</sup> However, Etō criticized Ōe when he started to embark on his career as an essayist and as a political voice. At the time, Ōe

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<sup>40</sup> Kenzaburō Ōe, *Sakokushitewa naranai* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2001), 36. Ōe says that he writes his books for Japanese, especially for his contemporaries. His purpose is to bring about social and cultural change in Japan.

<sup>41</sup> (Ōe *Kenzaburō Shōsetsu* 1996, 474)

<sup>42</sup> Etō Jun, "Ōe Kenzaburō. Jikokaifukuto Jikoshobatsu 大江健三郎 自己回復と自己処罰," in *Etō Jun chosakushū zoku vol. 2*. (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1977), 205. (Etō Jun 1981, 48-51) Etō commented on one of Ōe's early works *Sheep* (1958) in which Japanese were humiliated by the foreign soldiers. Etō said Ōe also recognized appropriately the importance of the effects of the occupation on the Japanese literature. Etō made favorable remarks about Ōe's early works that reflected the humiliation of Japanese during the occupation. However Etō criticized Ōe's essays in which he declared that he was a supporter of the postwar democracy. Etō regarded the gap between the author and the main protagonist shows Ōe's fabrication.

published a lot of essays to make clear the fact that he upheld the current Constitution. In other words, Etō expected Ōe to illustrate the loss of Japanese identity as his main literary motif. However Ōe's main theme was not to remain focused on Japan's lost identity after the Second World War, even though Ōe retained his keen interest in the Occupation period. As mentioned previously, Ōe thought that Japan's defeat held great promise for each individual's *shutaisei*, while Etō regarded it as Japan's humiliation. Therefore, Etō was at odds with Ōe over the origin of Japanese postwar history.

Furthermore, Etō criticized a discrepancy between the author and the main characters in Ōe's literature. Etō argued that the author should be identifiable with the main characters of his work. Initially, Etō appreciated the scenes of the agricultural community which Ōe brought to life by his memories of his hometown. Etō believed that Ōe, as well as the main protagonists of his works, suffered from the lost of identity. However, Etō criticized Ōe because he slightly changed the relationship between the author and the main characters in his early works.<sup>43</sup> Etō indicated his dissatisfaction that Ōe started to set to his stories not in the countryside but in a big city. Etō manifested his dissatisfaction that Ōe now focused on characters who demonstrates the loneliness of a youth in a big city whereas the author began to secure his position as a supporter of postwar democracy.<sup>44</sup> Etō stated that it was

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<sup>43</sup> Ō Shinshin, *Saikeimōkara bunkahihyōe*. Ōe Kenzaburōno 1957-1967. (Sendai: Tōhokudaigaku shuppankai, 2007), 164. Ō pointed out that Etō's criticism of Ōe is not focused on the main theme of his early works, because Ōe's literary concern is not to merely depict the problems of the younger generation but to critically analyze Japanese society.

<sup>44</sup> (Etō Jun zoku vol.2, 1977, 195)

strange that Ōe published the political essays as a representative of postwar democracy while the main characters of his literary works suffered from the loss of identity.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, Etō concluded that Ōe as a writer began to overcome the problem of identity changing his writing style and the main theme in his works.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, Etō criticized Ōe's activity calling it self-deception. Finally, Etō concluded that Ōe was deep in his heart strongly willing to recover the old social system and authority, namely fidelity toward the Emperor.<sup>47</sup> However, Etō made a crucial mistake in his interpretation of Ōe's early works in terms of the main protagonists' loneliness. As explained previously, Ōe, as well as the main characters, independently think and act as outsiders so that they can critically analyze Japanese society. Therefore, it is reasonable that Ōe depicts their feeling of loneliness in Japanese society, while making it public that he supports the postwar constitution.

### 2.3 Ōe's Belief in the postwar Constitution

As explained, Ōe thought that the defeat of Japan opened up a new historical chapter, because the old national structure fell apart and the new Constitution of Japan affirmed that sovereignty rested with the people. The respect for the dignity of the individual was of decisive importance for Ōe. Each individual was granted his or her own *shutaisei* so that the Japanese consolidated democracy. Ōe was only ten years old when Japan surrendered and the Occupation of Japan started. The external forces occupied the whole country. Furthermore, the citizens still

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 193-194.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 205.

suffered from poverty at that time. Nevertheless, Ōe thought that the defeat of Japan opened up a new historical chapter and that the Constitution of Japan affirmed that sovereignty rested with the people. At this time, GHQ introduced a new political system based on the principles of democracy. For Ōe “the postwar democracy” was the foundation of postwar Japanese culture and of postwar Japanese literature.

#### 2.4.1 Etō’s View on the Defeat - Deprive of Japan’s *shutaisei*

On the contrary, however, Etō argued that the defeat and occupation deprived the Japanese of *shutaisei*. According to Etō, Japan’s renunciation of right of belligerency meant a losing of national identity, namely the forfeiture of *shutaisei*. Etō argued that the United States occupied Japan and imposed a constitution forbidding it ever to go to war again. For Etō this was the crucial point of Article 9 of the Constitution, because the US expansionism laid the groundwork for this war-renouncing section. Consequently, Etō regarded the end of the Second World War as forcible seizure of the national polity by an external pressure. For Etō, the current Constitution did not represent the national identity of Japan and so he did not agree to the idea of postwar democracy. For this reason, he criticized the advocates of postwar democracy like Maruyama or Ōe.<sup>48</sup> Etō voiced deep misgivings about the idea of the postwar democracy because it was closely connected with the Occupation policies. Additionally, Etō believed that postwar Japanese literature that was against the occupational policy had been heavily-censored by the Occupation authorities. Moreover, he believed that the policies put in place by the Occupation had long-term

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<sup>48</sup> Etō Jun, “‘Sengo’ chishikijin’no hasan 戦後知識人の破産,” in in *Etō Jun chosakushū* Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1977), 7-16.

consequences for the Japanese. In conclusion, he said that Ōe's interpretation of postwar Japanese literature is self-deceiving and self-complacent.<sup>49</sup>

Etō thinks that Japanese literature was ruined as a result of the occupation policy. Unlike Ōe, Etō thought that the Japanese had lost their freedom of expression after the end of the Second World War. Etō indicated that the occupational policy of the GHQ limited true freedom of expression.<sup>50</sup> Etō said the main reasons for inability to mourn were the Occupational policies of the GHQ. He published books on the postwar Constitution, as well as many articles relating to postwar democracy.<sup>51</sup> In these he showed his increasing skepticism toward the establishment of the new Constitution. Etō persisted in his opinion that the GHQ's censorship trampled on the right to freedom of expression, especially when Japanese writers were not allowed to mourn the war dead. Etō argued that the Japanese had lost the opportunity to mourn appropriately the dead who had rendered service to their country. He then explored the fact that the memories of the dead and the eulogy of Japanese were censored and deleted by the censorship board. In his study on the GHQ censorship, Etō pointed out that the GHQ was strictly limiting the right of the Japanese to mourn their departed souls. He argued that Japanese writers had been bound by self-censorship even though the GHQ abolished censorship by the end of

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<sup>49</sup> Etō Jun, "Shishatono kizuna 死者との絆," in *Ochibano hakiyose. Haisen / senryō / kenetsu to bungaku* 落葉の掃き寄せ 敗戦・占領・検閲と文学 (Tokyo: Bungei shunjūsha, 1981), 237.

<sup>50</sup> (Etō, 1981, 109-110)

<sup>51</sup> Etō Jun, *1946nenkenpōto sonokōsoku* 一九四六年憲法とその拘束 (Tokyo: Bungei shunjūsha, 1980); Etō Jun, *Tozasareta gengokūkan* 閉ざされた言語空間 (Tokyo: Bungei shunjūsha, 1989)

the Occupation. Consequently the Japanese public had lost its *shutaisei* due to their wartime experiences and their experiences of the occupied period. For this reason, he argued that one should reproduce the original texts that shut down by the censorship.

Etō published ten articles between 1979 and 1981 in the literary journal 文學界 *Bungakkai*, which were republished in book form in 1981.<sup>52</sup> As he stated in the book's afterword, Etō attempted to explore the potent influence of GHQ censorship on Japanese literature after the wake of Japan's defeat.<sup>53</sup> While publishing this series of essays, Etō visited Washington D.C. to investigate the primary documents relating to the censorship problem.<sup>54</sup> Etō stayed in Washington D.C. from September 1979 to July 1980 as a visiting scholar of the Japan Foundation and studied at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.<sup>55</sup> Etō's studied of postwar Japanese history centered the problems of the Occupational policies of the Allied Forces, and he focused on the censorship problem. Etō found several important documents banned by the GHQ. Etō also surveyed the materials in the Gordon W. Prange Collection at the University of Maryland where he studied government-inspected materials, concluding that Japan's defeat resulted in restraints

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<sup>52</sup> Etō Jun, *Ochibano hakiyose. Haisen / senryō / kenetsu to bungaku* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjūsha, 1981)

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 264-265. Etō visited the National Archives Branch in Maryland in order to research the materials related to the record of the Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters. He also went to the Prange Collection of the University of Maryland where there are a lot of materials related to the Civil Censorship Detachment.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

on freedom of thought and expression.<sup>56</sup> Etō's opinion was shared by other conservative intellectuals.<sup>57</sup>

#### 2.4.2 Yoshida Mitsuru

Etō focused on the problem of expression of condolences for the war dead because it was of great consequence for the interpretation of postwar Japanese history. The mourning and ceremony for the war dead led to the problem of interpretation of history and to the matter of official visits to Yasukuni Shrine. In the U.S. Etō surveyed primary documents. During his research in the United States Etō found an original verse written by Yoshida Mitsuru 吉田満 (1923-1979) in which he lamented the fate of his fallen comrades who were in the same battleship.<sup>58</sup> The

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 93. The Gordon Prange Collection is a special library of University of Maryland. It has print publications issued in Japan during 1945-1949. The Collection comprises virtually everything published on all subjects during this period - books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, news agency photographs, posters, maps and related archival materials. In the immediate aftermath of arrival of General MacArthur in Japan, the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) issued a ten-point Press Code for the Japanese news media, including newspapers, magazines, books, broadcastings, dramas, private letters and magazines. Many Japanese censors were also engaged in this commission of the Allied Occupation. The Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD), an operating unit overseen by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G-2), was transferred from the Philippines to Japan at the beginning of the Occupation. Gordon W. Prange was a professor of history at the University of Maryland and he landed in Japan in 1945 as a member of the American Occupation Forces. When censorship of the Japanese media by Allied Forces was lifted in 1949, the CCD was disestablished. Professor Prange, recognizing the historical significance of the CCD material, arranged for its shipment to the University of Maryland, <http://www.lib.umd.edu/prange/index.jsp> [accessed January 31, 2010]. The microform versions of the Prange magazine and newspaper collections are also available by using the search engine of the National Diet Library in Japan, [http://rnavi.ndl.go.jp/research\\_guide/entry/theme-honbun-302016.php](http://rnavi.ndl.go.jp/research_guide/entry/theme-honbun-302016.php) [accessed January 31, 2010]. Furthermore, Professor Yamamoto Taketoshi established the Institute of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Media at Waseda University in 2002. He also collected and organized the confiscated materials of the CCD and compiled a database. <http://www.waseda.jp/prj-m20th/index.html> [accessed January 31, 2010].

<sup>57</sup> Etō Jun, Kobori Keiichirō 江藤淳 小堀桂一郎 *Yasukunironshū. Nihon'nochinkon'no dentōnotameni* 靖國論集 日本の鎮魂の傳統のために (Tokyo: Kindaishuppansha, 2005)

<sup>58</sup> Yoshida was a senior surviving officer of the battleship *Yamato* when it was sunk on 7 April

office of censorship altered Yoshida's text because it thought his eulogy was a sign of the rebirth of militarism.<sup>59</sup> Etō compared the original version and the censored version of Yoshida's epic *Senkanyamatono saigo* 戦艦大和ノ最期 [*The Battleship Yamato*]. It is obvious that the literary style of the original text was completely altered to a colloquial style. The content was also radically revised. The author wrote this epic poem for the dead brothers-in-arms who fell in the battlefield in the Second World War. Yoshida wrote this epic as a requiem for these dead. The Occupation policy put restrictions on the veneration of the war dead.<sup>60</sup> In conclusion, Etō criticized the censorship of the GHQ and lamented the effect of this improper measure on Japanese war literature after the Occupation. Consequently, Etō questioned how the Japanese could regain their national identity in order to mourn their war dead appropriately. As I mention below, in the 1990s Katō Norihiro 加藤典

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1945. His best known work *Senkanyamatono saigo* is based on his personal experiences as a junior officer on *Yamato*'s final voyage, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitsuru\\_Yoshida](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitsuru_Yoshida) [accessed August 16, 2010]. (Etō, 1981, 74) Etō and Yoshida got to know one another in 1973. Yoshida realized a successful career as an officer of the Bank of Japan. Yoshida sent a letter to Etō because he was looking for an opportunity to publish his literary works based on his war story. Etō was an editor of a quarterly magazine and he kindly agreed to Yoshida's request to publish these.

<sup>59</sup> Etō Jun, "Shishatonokizuna 死者との絆," in *Ochibano hakiyose. Haisen / senryō / kenetsu to bungaku* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjūsha, 1981), 230-263. Etō found Yoshida's original text of *Senkanyamatono saigo* and the reference materials in the Prange collection. This was originally to be published in the November issue of *Sōgen 創元* in 1946 but it was prohibited. The censor wrote the word "suppress" on each page and an officer left his statement concerning the publishing of Yoshida's work. According to this statement the officer was touched by Yoshida's requiem for the war dead. However he decided to ban the publication whereas the censor had only requested the deletion of only a pertinent section. The officer noted that Yoshida's *Senkanyamatono saigo* was militaristic.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 245-263. Etō found a fat file labeled "Yamato case" in the National Record Center. There are important documents. Even after the decision on the suspension of publishing, Yoshida attempted to publish *Senkanyamatono saigo* in the original form. Some Japanese politicians encouraged the officers of the GHQ to call for the lifting of the ban. For this reason, Yoshida and the publisher were given a summons to appear at the CCD in July 5<sup>th</sup> 1949.

洋 (1948-) discussed this issue of the mourning of the dead again in terms of Japanese *shutaisei*.

#### 2.4.3 Yanagita Kunio

Etō gave another example of the problems of mourning in his discussion of a text of Yanagita Kunio 柳田国男 (1875-1962). Yanagita explained how the Japanese had mourned their dead in each local shrine since ancient times, and he specifically mentioned the Occupation policy regarding to the Shinto Shrine.<sup>61</sup>

Yanagita's text was also severely cut because the office of censorship thought that the author advocated the rebirth of the state-sanctioned Shinto. The GHQ enacted approximately thirty censorship clauses including a clause related to the State Shinto.<sup>62</sup> Etō traced the original version of Yanagita's article *Ujikamito ujiko* 氏神と氏子 [*The Guardian God and the Shrine Parishioner*] in the Prange Collection.

Yanagita's original text was not published and his concern about Occupation reforms was not brought to light. His article was significantly edited by the office of censorship and his original text was not reproduced in his complete works. Etō thought that Yanagita criticized the Occupation policy because the Allied Forces

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<sup>61</sup> Sasagawa Norikatsu and Honma Nobunaga, trans., *History of the Non-military Activities of the Occupation of Japan vol. 21. Religion* (Tokyo: Nihon toshosentā, 2000) The GHQ stipulated the separation of state and religion. Until the end of the Second World War State Shinto revealed its privileged status compared to other religious organizations. The freedom of worship was provided in the Meiji Constitution. However under the Imperial system the Emperor conducted the rites of State Shinto and the Japanese public was required to participate in the religious rites in the Shinto shrine. The new Constitution guaranteed freedom of belief and negated the divinity of the Emperor. The GHQ reformed the Shinto so that it was separated from Japanese militarism and ultra-nationalism. On the one hand, Yanagita anticipated that the occupational policy might cause disruptions in each local shrine. On the other hand, he argued that the Japanese public did not want to abandon the worship.

<sup>62</sup> (Etō, 1981, 284-286)

disregarded local shrines and the veneration of nature spirit of Japanese.<sup>63</sup>

The original text of Yanagita clearly pointed out that the GHQ was not capable of understanding properly traditional Japanese customs. Japanese had developed a feeling of awe for the nature spirits and ancestors since ancient time. Because the GHQ placed great restrictions on the state Shinto based on nationalism, Yanagita thought that it could lead to confusion about Japanese' religious devotion based on their connection to their ancestors. Yanagita worried that the Japanese worship of their ancestors in the local shrines could be hampered by the Occupation policies. Etō concluded that Japanese were weighed down by censorship and are unable to mourn their dead and to narrate the memories of the dead.

## 2.5 Place of modern Japanese Literature

Etō stuck to his own view that foreign pressure damaged Japanese writers' *shutaisei*. However, it is important that Etō never considered the historical fact that the Japanese government also censored publishing before and during the Second World War. Unlike Etō, for Ōe, it is a crucial point that Japanese writers were severely punished by the Japanese government when they published their critical

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<sup>63</sup> Etō Jun, "Ujikamitoujikono genkei. Senryōgun'no kenetsuto Tanagita Kunio 『氏神と氏子』の原型 占領軍の検閲と柳田国男" in *Ochibano hakiyose. Haisen / senryō / kenetsu to bungaku* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjūsha, 1981), 264-296. Etō explained seven pertinent sections of Yanagita's text that were edited by the censor board. Yanagita's critical comment on the occupational policy was not as sharp as Etō argued in his essay. Yanagita explained the reason why non-Japanese were not capable of understanding Japanese's veneration of nature spirits and ancestors. Yanagita said that Japanese scholars also found it was difficult to explain the concept of Shinto gods. Thus it caused a misunderstanding between Japanese and non-Japanese concerning the Shinto Shrine. According to Yanagita Japanese's ancient heritage and the dedication to a shrine would continue into the future and it would be impossible to Christianize Japan even though the GHQ reformed the militaristic character of Shinto Shrine. Yanagita wanted to leave the reform of Shinto Shrine to take its own course because he believed that the change of the essence of Japanese' religious sense did not happen immediately.

comments on the authorities. Therefore, Ōe emphasizes that the postwar constitution vests in people the right of free speech. It is, therefore, only natural that their difference of opinion over the origin of postwar Japanese history was reflected in their interpretation of modern Japanese literature.

In a conversation Ōe and Etō discussed the issue of legitimacy of modern Japanese literature.<sup>64</sup> Etō regarded the tradition of the Chinese classics and of the Confucianism in the Edo period as the legitimate tradition of the Japanese literature. In other words, Etō emphasized the continuous tradition of Edo literature and modern Japanese literature. Etō stated that modern Japanese literature, namely the Japanese literature before the Meiji restoration, was strongly influenced by the study of Chinese classics and of Confucianism of the Edo period. On this point, Etō highly valued the achievements of the pre-modern Japanese literature that was strongly associated with the traditional knowledge of the Chinese classics.<sup>65</sup> Etō concluded that the modern Japanese writers were keepers of the flame of legitimate Japanese literature.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, Etō did not think that postwar Japanese literature was worth much. In particular, Etō criticized postwar Japanese writers because they merely engaged in the trivial issue of “literature and politics.”<sup>67</sup> In conclusion, he argued that the postwar Japanese writers were epigones of legitimate Japanese

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<sup>64</sup> (Etō Jun vol. 6, 1977, 214-231)

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 214-215.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 219.

literature because they deviated from the traditions of the Japanese literature.<sup>68</sup>

On the contrary, however, Ōe thought that the end of the Second World War and Japan's defeat represented a significant event of modern Japanese literature because the Japanese writers earnestly began to engage in literature and politics. Ōe emphasized this as the starting point for a new line of Japanese literature rather than placing importance on the traditional knowledge of Chinese classics and Confucianism.<sup>69</sup> Ōe argued that this considerable disagreement was reflected in their different evaluation of postwar Japanese writers.<sup>70</sup> In particular, Ōe said the essence of modern Japanese literature was influenced by foreign literature, especially European literature. In addition, Ōe said he was also supposed to study foreign literature so that he could contribute to the evaluation a new legitimate writing style in Japanese literature.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, Ōe criticized Etō's understanding of modern Japanese literature because the critical point was not tradition but the encounter with Western literature in terms of the establishment of *shutaisei*.<sup>72</sup> In other words, Ōe recognized the legitimacy of the postwar literature in the light of the study of foreign literature because he focused on the problem of *shutaisei* in literature.

Moreover, Ōe explained the reason why they had different interpretations of modern Japanese literature, especially the place of Japanese

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 216.

literature after the Meiji restoration. Ōe values postwar literature, but thinks that Meiji literature was already highly influenced by foreign literatures. So, Ōe compared the postwar Japanese writers to the pre-modern writers and he highly estimated their achievements in light of their political engagement. Ōe explained why the Meiji restoration was one of the most significant events in Japanese literature because the writers of the modern Japanese literature struggled with the theme of *shutaisei* for the first time in Japanese literature. They vividly experienced a drastic reform of the social structure during the Meiji Restoration.<sup>73</sup> They also started to discuss national issues in their literary works.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, Ōe highly valued their achievements because they seriously engaged in national problems and personal independence, namely *shutaisei*. In conclusion, Ōe argued that both the pre-modern writers and the modern writers sincerely attempted to describe social problems in their works.<sup>75</sup>

Unlike Etō, Ōe attempted to redefine the relationship between literature and politics in terms of postwar Japanese democracy. For Ōe the defeat of Japan

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<sup>73</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, “Ishin’nimukatteno kansatsu 維新にむかっの観察,” in *Jizokusuru kokorozashi*, 466-489. Ōe often referred to the achievement of Futabatei Shimei 二葉亭四迷 as a highly-regarded pre-modern Japanese work. Ōe explained the reasons why he respected the representatives of the pre-modern writers. First, they kept their outsider status in society. Secondly, they squarely addressed the question what made Japan as well as Japanese. Ōe emphasized that the pre-modern writers experienced a great transformation of society in the rapid changes of the Meiji Restoration. Furthermore, he noticed the similarity between the pre-modern writers and the postwar writers because the latter were also outsiders who struggled with the problem of nation and people. Ōe labeled their achievement as serious Japanese literature.

<sup>74</sup> (Etō Jun vol. 6, 1977, 215)

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 105-108. In 1968 Etō wrote about the one-hundred anniversary of the Meiji restoration and the twentieth anniversary of the end of Second World War. He agreed neither with the reactionary praise of the old social system nor with the supporters of the postwar Japanese democracy which was established after the defeat of Japan. He strongly criticized the supporters of the current Constitution. Etō criticized those who want to celebrate the establishment of the democracy because it was merely a result of the occupation policy and stood for the lost of the national identity of Japan.

functions as a starting point for postwar writers. Ōe saw the positive meaning of Japan's defeat because the postwar constitution guarantees freedom of speech so that writers can defend the dignity of individuals. This dispute between Etō and Ōe over the meaning of Japan's defeat has remained unsolved. I will explain below Ōe's view on Japan's *shutaisei*, along with a discussion on Japan's modern history in the 1990s.

## *The War Dead and the Wartime Responsibility*

### *The Constitutional Amendment*

#### 3.1 Introduction: the End of Showa Period

In this section I explain the debate in the 1990s on *shutaisei* in light of the wartime responsibility. The conservatives and supporters of postwar democracy discussed the constitutional amendment. This political question was closely related to the dispute between Etō and Ōe about Japanese postwar history in terms of the meaning of Japan's defeat. Ōe argues that Japan should take responsibility for its acts of aggression in the Second World War in order to establish *shutaisei* in modern international society. My research does not go into a detailed analysis of the social and economic changes in the 1990s; however, I focus on some relevant topics that are related to my study of Ōe's early works. At the background to the argument about the *shutaisei* of the Japanese public was the fact that Japan had reached a milestone in its postwar history in 1990.<sup>76</sup> Japan underwent a change of imperial reign at the end of

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<sup>76</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Fuon'na bohyō. Itaminoseijigakuto taikōkinenhi 不穏な墓標 悼みの政治学と対抗記念碑," in *Hihanteki sōzōryokunotameni 批判的想像力のために* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2002), 102. Morris-Suzuki says there are reasons for Katō's argument being widely shared by the public. First, a conventionalized left-wing ideal disappeared as the economy steadily grew as a modern society developed. Secondly, the governmental response to the Gulf

the 1980s. Emperor Hirohito passed away in 1989 and with him the Showa Era ended. The Second World War was one of the most crucial events of the Showa Period. The death of the Emperor Hirohito played a symbolic role in the reinterpretation of Japan's postwar history.<sup>77</sup> At that time critics and writers started to reexamine Japanese postwar history in terms of the new international circumstances after the Cold War. This caused a turnaround in U.S. defense strategies in the northeast Asian countries.

### 3.2 the Sending of SDF and the War-Renouncing Section

In the 1990s, critics and scholars were engaged in a wide-ranging discussion of reinterpreting Japan's postwar history. This debate was closely related to the movement to try to change the Constitution.<sup>78</sup> A significant political event, namely the 1991 Gulf Conflict and the sending of SDF (Self Defense Forces) troops overseas, started a controversy in the Diet. The pros and cons of dispatching the SDF overseas were necessarily led to a redefinition of Japan-American relations in terms

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conflict reminded many intellectuals of the fact that Japan had lost its long-range goal thus they attempted to seek a solid subjectivity for Japan both in modern history and in today's global society.

<sup>77</sup> The debate included not only the Showa era but also the entire Japanese history and Japanese culture. A social movement "A New History Textbook Association 新しい歴史教科書をつくる会" was established in 1996 and relations between Japan and China and Korea were under pressure due to the controversy over the interpretation of history. This association aimed to explain the superior specific nature of Japanese people and defined the existing history textbooks as masochistic because they defined Japan's entry into the Second World War as an incursion into Asian countries. The description about the Second World War was a debatable topic in the discussion about the history textbook because the members of this association did not regard the past as a war of invasion and they do not agree that Japan should take on responsibility for the war victims in Asian countries. <http://www.tsukurukai.com> (accessed January 25, 2010)

<sup>78</sup> Takahashi Tetsuya, *Sengo sekininron* 戦後責任論 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1999), 131.

of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.<sup>79</sup> The political left and right were split over Japan's sovereign state system and how to deploy Japan's military power. This discussion, spurred by the international Gulf conflict, led to a re-evaluation of Japan's participation in the Second World War.

On the one hand, supporters of the Constitution as it stands condemned Japan's participation in the past war as an act of aggression against Asian countries. They argued that the "no-war" principle of the post-war democratic Constitution was the foundation of Japan's peaceful and secure postwar society. On the other hand, the conservatives who were pushing to amend the Constitution counter-argued that Japan entered the war for a good cause. Doing so, they argue would allow Japan to regain its "real" independence as a nation. Accordingly, they wanted to repeal Article Nine so that Japan could once again have the right to go to war. Therefore, the political climate of constitutional reform prompted an active discussion about the perception of contemporary Japanese history. As a consequence, the image of Japan and the people of Japan were redefined in this discussion.

### 3.3 the Wartime Memories

In keeping with the changes in the international situation, the generations born in the postwar era actively developed their argument about the historical mnemonic system.<sup>80</sup> The important point was that the generations without a memory of war attempted to establish a new type of Japanese national identity. This

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<sup>79</sup> Katō Norihiro, *Haisengoron* 敗戦後論 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1997), 14-17.

<sup>80</sup> Some key figures have no experience of the Second World War. For example, Professor Katō Norihiro was born in 1948 and Professor Takahashi Tetsuya in 1956. They discussed the history of Second World War not as their experienced history. For this reason, they mainly talked about the way they should process the memories of the war.

resulted in deep concern about history. The question of the prime minister's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine was one of the most relevant problems of memories of the war, both private and public.<sup>81</sup> The textbook-adoption controversy and the question of Prime Minister's planned visit to Yasukuni Shrine became a diplomatic problem. China and Korea strongly criticized visits to the shrine by Japanese politicians. It was important for the dispute on Japan's *shutaisei* in the 1990s that other Asian countries were closely associated with the discussion about Japanese modern history.

#### 3.4 Japan's national History and the war Victims in Asian Countries

It is notable that the 1990s discussion about the national identity was related to the question of how one could reconstruct a national history structured by a huge variety of facts and memories. One of the most relevant points of this debate was to determine by whom and from which standpoint the historical events should be narrated for compiling a huge national history. Most important in this debate was the fact that there were a lot of Japanese people who did not have firsthand knowledge of the Second World War; however, there were also people who actually endured the miseries of war. This meant that there were generational differences in understanding the significance of the Second World War. It was a difficult problem to establish the truthfulness of history that could be approved by all sides.

Additionally, the different ethnic groups who were brought to Japan against their will from occupied territories also related publicly their wartime

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<sup>81</sup> John Breen, "Yasukuni and the Loss of Historical Memory," in *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, ed. John Breen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 143. "Yasukuni like all memorial sites engages actively in the construction of more public memory that always seeks to accommodate, but sometimes conflicts with, the private. This vital mnemonic function of the shrine merits more attention than it has so far been accorded."

experiences. Experiences and memories of each group differed from one another and so resulted in differing interpretations of the postwar history of Japan. In particular, in the 1990s Japan's postwar history had to be reinterpreted with relationship to other Asian countries that were damaged during the Asia-Pacific war by Japanese troops. Some scholars such as Takahashi Tetsuya 高橋哲哉 (1956-) wrote of the problem of the wounded, especially the female victims in Asian countries. Feminist scholars also actively participated in discussions of female sex slaves known as "wartime comfort women 従軍慰安婦." They explored the sex-related crimes by the Japanese Imperial army soldiers.<sup>82</sup> In other words, not only the Japanese people but also the peoples of Japan's former colonies engaged in the debate about the national history of Japan.

### 3.5 the Debate on the History Textbook

In addition, there was a discussion about the methods of analysis of history in the academic world. The descriptive method of history was the principle problem in this discussion. Along with larger discussions of historiography in general, there was controversy over the content of high school history textbook.<sup>83</sup> There was a political movement to publish a history textbook that could give the Japanese pride in their own country, which meant removing larger discussions of Japan's responsibilities and action in Asia during World War II. For the conservatives, their concept of historical revision was based on the Emperor System that had fallen out of favor after the postwar. They utilized Japan's birth-myth of the nation as the

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<sup>82</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Higashijaniokeru rekishiwomeguru tatakai 東アジアにおける歴史をめぐる戦い," in *Hihanteki sōzōryokunotameni* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2002), 69.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-79.

canonical origin of the history of Japan. Their ideologically charged descriptions stressed the homogeneous nature of Japanese society.<sup>84</sup> By contrast, the supporters of the postwar Constitution tried to reinterpret Japanese history from the viewpoint of minorities and foreigners at home and abroad. They asserted that modern Japanese history before and during the Second World War should be reexamined from diverse perspectives.

### 3.6 the Definition of “Japanese”

Japan’s *shutaisei* in the national history was one of the relevant keywords of the discussion in 1990s. It was striking that the problem of ethnic homogeneity of the Japanese was vigorously discussed in order to reexamine the historical subjectivity of the people of Japan. In the 1990s well-documented studies were published that attempted to explain a traditional model of Japan’s national history in terms of Japan’s folk character. The detailed studies strongly suggested that Japan had not been a country with a single ethnic group. In other words, “Japanese” as a historical subject had become a research object in historical study. The definition of the “people of Japan” had to be analyzed academically. According to the study results, it was difficult to define the boundaries between “Japanese” and “others” in a contemporary history because these boundaries had changed in modern history on many occasions.<sup>85</sup> The researchers explained the origin of the Japanese race. They said there were in fact many ethnic groups in Japan. Therefore it was evident that

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>85</sup> Sakai Naoki, *Shizansareru nihongo nihonjin* 死産される日本語・日本人 (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1996); Oguma Eiji, *Nihonjin’no kyōkai* 日本人の境界 (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1998)

Japan's *shutaisei* in national history was in fact wrapped in obscurity.

### 3.7.1 *Haisengoron*

In this context the question of wartime responsibility became a problem in terms of the relationship between the Japanese public and the war victims in foreign countries. There was a tremendous controversy over who exactly should pay for the war crimes during the Second World War. It was discussed whether the postwar generation of Japan was also responsible for the war despite its lack of direct involvement in war crimes. The question was about Japan's *shutaisei* for its wartime responsibility.

An intense debate about postwar history and wartime memories in the 1990s was stirred up by an article by the literary critic and university professor Katō Norihiro 加藤典洋 (1948- ). Katō published the article "*Haisengoron* 敗戦後論" [*After the Defeat*] in the January 1995 issue of a literary arts journal "*Gunzō* 群像." Later he revised it and republished it in the form of a book. The year 1995 was marked as the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War.<sup>86</sup> In this year,

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<sup>86</sup> On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the victims of the Asian countries issued a declaration to the Japanese government about its responsibility for war. The issue known as "wartime comfort women" became a hot political topic. Critics demanded from the Japanese government compensation for health problems and the emotional trauma. An international conference on the victims of sexual crimes by the Imperial Army developed into an international association and an international tribunal in 1998. [http://www1.jca.apc.org/vaww-net-japan/womens\\_tribunal\\_2000/index.html](http://www1.jca.apc.org/vaww-net-japan/womens_tribunal_2000/index.html) (accessed January 24, 2010). In his article Katō raised the question of subjectivity of the Japanese public which could be capable of taking responsibility for the war crimes of the Imperial Japanese Army. Katō claimed that the Japanese government had never issued an official apology to the Asian countries after the war. He argued that it was impossible for the Japanese government to take responsibility for the war crimes because the Japanese politicians as well as the public had not reconciled their conflicting viewpoints concerning the end of the war. Katō argued that Japan had to gain a national subjective self so that the Japanese government could accept liability for damages to the victims in the foreign countries. (Katō1994, 74-76)

Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi 村山富市 (1924- ) spoke of his deep sense of remorse and expressed his heartfelt regret for Japan having adopted a mistaken policy in the past. Japan had caused through its colonial rule and invasion extreme distress and suffering, especially to the peoples of neighboring countries in Asia.<sup>87</sup> The anniversary was not an opportunity for reconciliation between Japan, China and both Korea. It led to some fierce arguments about the responsibility for the war and the mourning of the war dead.<sup>88</sup> Katō attempted to form a concept of “collective” mourning in order to resolve the complexities of postwar history. Katō’s view of a unified people of Japan generated tremendous controversy and his statement about the responsibility for the war raised a substantial discussion about *shutaisei* in contemporary Japan.<sup>89</sup>

### 3.7.2 the Defeat and war Criminals

Katō said that the “postwar era” was still continuing in the Japanese society even though fifty years had passed since Japan offered its surrender. Katō explained that the end of the Second World War had created a paradoxical public

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<sup>87</sup> Statement by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama “On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war’s end (15 August 1995),” <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html> (accessed August 29, 2010)

<sup>88</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Fuon’na bohyō. Itaminoseijigakuto taikōkinenhi 不穏な墓標 悼みの政治学と対抗記念碑,” in *Hihanteki sōzōryokunotameni* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2002), 89-90. Morris-Suzuki states that Katō’s question about history and memory was closely associated with the disputes that were discussed in various regions around the world at that time. There were still unresolved matters concerning an atoning for the misdeeds of the war and colonization, such as the historic facts, wartime responsibility, and the negative heritage of colonialism.

<sup>89</sup> Katō published “*Haisengoron*” in book form in 1997 including two articles “*Sengogoron* 戦後後論” and “*Katarikuchino mondai* 語り口の問題.” In these articles, as a common thread throughout, he dealt with the problem of national identity of Japan in terms of wartime responsibility. Katō presented counterarguments to Takahashi Tetsuya and other critics who refuted Katō’s concept of the establishment of a collective for national mourning.

sentiment in the defeated nations, namely Germany, Japan and Italy. Katō repeatedly emphasized his point that this division about historical intension should be resolved by establishing a collective with self-consciousness among the public. It was different in the victorious nations because they could celebrate proudly their victory over the totalitarian regimes, namely the Third Reich of Germany and the Japanese empire.<sup>90</sup> The victor countries could simply welcome the victory of democracy over militarism and could be proud of participating in the Second World War. The defeated countries, on the other hand, encountered difficulties in understanding the true meaning of their defeat.

First of all, they had to acknowledge the bitter truth that they had taken part in an aggressive war. The convicted war criminals were found guilty by the International Military Tribunal. The defeated countries participated in the Second World War in the name of Nazism or the Emperor. The military tribunal made a ruling against their war crimes and at the Tokyo Tribunal of War Criminals the men in uniform were found guilty of war crimes. However many Japanese thought that it was indeed an unfair judgment since the court had ruled against the defeated nation. It had also made a lasting impact on public sentiment that the Showa Emperor was not held to account for his wartime responsibilities due to the discretion of the GHQ. The adjudication resulted in a confusion of responsibility for the tragedy.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Katō mentioned the problem of Germany in terms of its militarist past and the establishment of democracy after the Second World War. The Third Reich was completely destroyed by the allied powers and the past war took a heavy toll on lives. The former West Germany also could not deny the fact that the Allied Forces were responsible for the postwar prosperity of West Germany after the war because they had defeated totalitarianism based on racism. Katō was receptive to the feelings of the German public concerning the end of war. (Katō 1997, 11-13)

<sup>91</sup> Ishii Shinpei, trans., *The Wages of Guilt of Ian Buruma* (Tokyo: TBS Britanicca, 1994),

### 3.7.3 the Origin of postwar Democracy

According to Katō, the defeat caused a profound change in the sense of values of the peoples in Japan. One of the most significant reasons that caused this radical change was the introduction of democracy by the Allied Forces.<sup>92</sup> The origin of democracy of the defeated countries derived from their surrender to the allied powers. At the end of the Second World War their order of society based on totalitarianism was completely destroyed, and they accepted a democratic system by external force. Japan, as well as Germany, was indebted to the victorious nations because they established freedom and democracy.

According to Katō this paradoxical origin of Japan's postwar history divided public opinion about the history. Katō argued that the Japanese public would hardly be grateful to victor countries because many Japanese, including civilians were killed by the Allied Forces during the war. Although the Allied Forces destroyed the

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168-196. As Buruma suggested, the German people also had to deal with the problem of war crimes after the Second World War. They also argued that the victorious nations invaded and killed several German citizens. However, Germany seemed to cope with it better than Japan. First, the Soviet Union focused on Nazis' war crimes at the Nuremberg Trials to gain exemption from its own war responsibilities. Second, the German people put forward the case of concentration camps over 20 years after the Nuremberg Trials. In other words, they really faced up to the reality of the mass murders at Auschwitz Concentration Camp. In addition, the German, especially the young people, objectively judged the war criminals of their own country. Unlike Japanese younger generation, they had an opportunity to study the most significant tragic incident of the Second World War, namely the holocaust, on the basis of racial discrimination.

<sup>92</sup> Katō said that the Japanese public should not forget that Japan was conquered by brute force. Although the Constitution of Japan was based on the principle of peace, it was a part of the occupation policy at that time. Katō cited the constitutional scholar Minobe Tatsukichi 美濃部達吉 (1873-1948) who was opposed to the adoption of a draft of the Constitution of Japan. According to Katō, Minobe attempted to clarify the fact that the draft of the Constitution was debated under command of the GHQ. Minobe said it was without doubt impossible for a defeated country to create a new Constitution for itself because Japan as a defeated country had no right to draft the Constitution right after the GHQ began to control the whole of Japan. The policy of the victor countries should be necessarily reflected in the new Constitution. Thus Minobe rejected the draft of the GHQ. (Katō 1997, 25-31)

old order of Imperial Japan and attempted to establish a democratized nation after the war, many Japanese still remembered that their countrymen died for the sake of their own nation. It was difficult for the Japanese public to welcome the end of war with the victor countries even though the Allied Forces contributed to the establishment of a democratic society. The Japanese public believed that the sacrifice of a tremendous number of dead Japanese soldiers also enabled them to create a free and prosperous society after the war. They thought that their dead countrymen helped to establish a cornerstone of peace and stability in a modern Japanese society. For this reason, many Japanese denied the fact that the Japanese soldiers were criminals and Japan was the victimizer.<sup>93</sup> In this sense, the mourning of the dead Japanese soldiers contradicted the celebration of the victory of the Allied powers.

In his article Katō devised a solution to the problem of this paradox of the postwar history of Japan so that the Japanese public could eliminate differences in interpretation of a shared history. Katō explained that in Japan public opinion had been split in two over the defeat half-century before. Nevertheless, many Japanese were not able to explain exactly the reason why they had maintained contradictory emotions concerning the defeat. Katō said that Japanese had lost their national

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<sup>93</sup> The reactionary conservatives were disgusted by the issue known as “wartime comfort women” or the Nanjing Massacre. Every year the “Japan War-Bereaved Association 日本遺族会” participates in a ceremony dedicated to the souls of the war dead on the anniversary of the end of the war. Yasukuni 靖国神社 is a shrine which is dedicated to the war dead including the dead of previous wars. Some politicians visit Yasukuni Shrine on the anniversary commemorating the end of the war to pay their respects to the war dead. As the dead include Class-A Japanese war criminals, their visits have been controversial both in Japan and in Asian countries. Katō disagreed fundamentally with the statement that all spirits of war dead were pure and innocent. He said that the Japanese public should face the fact that the spirits of war dead were at fault and the Japanese public should offer its heartfelt condolences during the period of mourning.

identity in the half-century since the war ended in 1945.<sup>94</sup> This event amounted to a historical turnaround because Japan was required to establish a new Constitution. This new Constitution was totally different from the Constitution of the Empire of Japan. The Japanese government had to pursue a transformation of values from the Imperial system to popular sovereignty. Katō explained that the problem of this sudden alteration was still open so that the Japanese public could not find their national identity.<sup>95</sup> As Etō and Ōe discussed, Katō also related the problem of Japan's national identity to the question of postwar constitution.

#### 3.7.4 the postwar Constitution and Japan's national Identity

Katō advanced a concrete discussion on the Constitution of Japan that was promulgated on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1946. Prior to the enforcement of the Constitution on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1947, the Showa Emperor declared himself as a human being on the New Year's Day of 1946. Katō thought that the major cause of the loss of national identity of Japan was the different interpretation of the current Constitution. Katō also made the assertion that the present Constitution was an imposed constitution, just as Etō Jun had done before. Katō pointed out a fatal flaw in the Constitution of Japan: it was not the Japanese but the GHQ staff who prepared the draft. Katō argued that the national identity and Japan's independence had been taken away after the termination

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<sup>94</sup> (Katō 1997, 9-10)

<sup>95</sup> Katō gives an example of a split between a movement to change the Constitution and the pro-Constitution elements sparked off by the sending of SDF personnel overseas in the 1991 Gulf War. Article Nine stated that the right to belligerency by the state should not be recognized. Katō criticized the supporters of the Constitution saying they were not aware that this Constitution meant merely the usurpation of the right to belligerency by the external forces. He said that Article Nine did not reflect the desire for peace by the Japanese public. It only stood for the occupation policy at that time. (Katō 1997, 18-21)

of the war because the Japanese had not created their own constitution.<sup>96</sup> External forces had introduced the idea of democracy and created the base for a democratic society in Japan. According to Katō, the Japanese had not accepted the idea of democracy in the strict sense. As a result, the principle of democracy had also become a dead letter in the fifty years after the end of the war.<sup>97</sup> He questioned the lingering disputes over the interpretation of history by explaining the personality disturbance that existed in the Japanese public.<sup>98</sup>

Katō's primary concern was to illustrate the reason for this endless discussion about the Constitution of Japan and the interpretation of postwar history. He suggested that the Japanese should now conclude this non-ending argument about the origin of modern Japanese society. He argued that the conservatives and the supporters of the postwar democracy were inextricably linked to each other so that they formed one national identity.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, he attempted to establish a single unit

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<sup>96</sup> Katō disagreed with the movement to change the Constitution. Katō said the conservatives ignored the benefits of the current Constitution and the democratic society. The conservatives simply wanted to recover the right to belligerency without planning a concrete national strategy in the current international situation. Katō criticized them for their reactionary views because they were not contrite about Japan's military past. (Katō 1997, 23)

<sup>97</sup> Katō personally agreed that the principle of peace and sovereignty rested with the people as stated in the Constitution. Katō advocated a national referendum on the change of the Constitution. The Japanese public should choose the principles of peace independently so that the Constitution did not lose its substance. Katō said that a newly chosen Constitution could be an ideal Constitution for contemporary Japan. (Katō 1997, 73-74)

<sup>98</sup> Katō likens the division in public opinion in the nation with a person with a personality disorder giving the example of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He thought that the disagreement between the conservatives and the reformists over the postwar Constitution could be resolved by the personality integration. Katō believed that the establishment of a collective for national mourning could make a unified personality in the Japanese public. His article left many questions unanswered because it remained in doubt whether one could compare the achievements of a national consensus about history. (Katō 1997, 46-53, 102-104, 230-234)

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 46-52.

in Japanese society to heal this disorder of personality. The essence of Katō's discourse was a belief that the Japanese could overcome the paradoxical problem of the origin of postwar history in the way that they established an independent subjectivity, *shutaisei* in the Japanese society which could reconcile divided public opinion over the current Constitution and the problem of wartime responsibility.

### 3.7.5 the Rearmament

Katō explained that the division in public opinion concerning the Japanese Constitution was a natural consequence, classifying public opinion into two general groups. He argued that both groups had ignored the essential point of the origin of postwar democracy in Japan. First, the conservatives supported amending the Constitution that they believed would attempt to reassert Japan's sovereignty. For them the right to war headed the bill. They believed that the present Constitution was written and promulgated by the Allied Forces and Japan's independence had been denied completely in terms of its military capability since the end of the Second World War.

Article Nine explicitly renounced the state's right to wage war.<sup>100</sup> The conservatives affirmed that Article Nine should be abolished so that Japan could press forward with its military resurgence. For the conservatives in particular, remilitarization meant winning back Japan's sovereignty and national identity, namely *shutaisei* of the nation. As a consequence, the conservative group wanted a

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<sup>100</sup> The representatives of the supporters of the Constitution established the "Article 9 Association 九条の会" in 2004. Ōe Kenzaburō is one of the significant promoters and this pro-Constitution group appealing to uphold pacifist principles of the current Constitution. They hold symposiums and publish some booklets.

reevaluation of the war history.<sup>101</sup> They attempted to interpret the past war as a self-defensive war. They believed that the Greater East Asia War established the Asian liberation from Western rule. Moreover, they argued that there should be a sense of respect to the spirits of the war dead because they died in the battlefield for the sake of the Japanese public.<sup>102</sup> Katō explained that the conservatives represented the Japanese people's real feeling about Japan's surrender and the occupation. The Japanese public had remembered the war damage, especially the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Furthermore, many bereaved people did not think their relatives were war criminals because all Japanese were victims during the war. The conservatives spoke for what the Japanese public really thought about their personal experiences as war victims.

Katō opposed the conservatives because he argued that they had slipped into a victim mentality. Although the Allied Forces introduced the principles of democracy, Japan was practically put down by the allied powers. He also said that the past war by Japan was without doubt a war of invasion. In this respect Katō disagreed

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<sup>101</sup> The conservatives established an association which aimed to publish a junior high school textbook on history. The first version was published in 1996, and became a bestseller. A substantially-modified version cleared the review process by the Education Ministry and was chosen as a school textbook. The description of modern East Asian history became a topic of debate because this association negated the war of aggression of Imperial Japan. Thus they were criticized by the supporters of the left for the reason that they attempted to revise and whitewash the historical truth.

<sup>102</sup> John Breen, *Yasukuni, the war Dead and the Struggle for Japan's past* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2008), 1-2. The discussion about the Constitution was closely related to the problem of official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by cabinet ministers and the prime minister. About 2.1 million dead from the Pacific War are enshrined there. Some war criminals are also enshrined. Therefore China and Korea have strongly criticized the official visits to Yasukuni. There are different interpretations about the war dead. The conservatives authorize the justice of the war-dead-turned-gods. On the other hand, the supporters of the current Constitution see the Yasukuni Shrine as a symbol of the justification of the war of aggression.

with the conservatives who attempted to justify the Greater East Asian War. At the same time Katō was in direct opposition to the conservatives who revised drastically the history in terms of the acts of aggression of the Imperial Japanese Army. Furthermore, Katō claimed that Japan had never adequately apologized for its wartime aggression to its neighbors.<sup>103</sup> He also clearly claimed that the Emperor was responsible for war crimes.<sup>104</sup> Katō argued that both camps closed their eyes to the facts of history. For this reason, they stalled talks on the defeat.

Moreover, Katō also criticized the supporters of Japanese postwar democracy. He claimed that they simply believed that Japan accomplished the policy of democracy through its own resources, even though the GHQ in fact created the draft of the Constitution of Japan. Katō thought that it was wrong to state that Japan had voluntarily renounced forever war as a sovereign right. The supporters of the Constitution willingly expressed deep remorse for the aggression of the Imperial Japanese Army, and they attempted to explain that the present constitution represented a symbol of Japan's national identity in the international community. Katō claimed that a belief in the purity of the principles of peace that were expressly provided by the Article Nine was doubtful. Katō criticized their interpretation of history as shallow. He explained that the Japanese public had failed to discuss the issue of their own Constitution and they had forgotten the principles of the Constitution that was created by foreigners.

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<sup>103</sup> (Katō 1997, 10)

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 72.

### 3.7.6 a collective Unit for Mourning

In conclusion, he argued that the Japanese should now reinterpret postwar history from their own perspective. For this, Katō brought up the problem of the mourning of the dead Japanese, as Etō had. Katō concluded that an appropriate national mourning for Japanese by the Japanese public could bring together a divided public opinion about postwar history. In this way Katō criticized both the conservatives and the supporters of the postwar democracy. His primary concern was to solve this paradoxical emotion of the Japanese public. He aimed to formulate a concept of a single subject of the Japanese public without a splintered personality.<sup>105</sup> According to Katō, this single personality without any defect could take responsibility for the war crimes and foreign victims and mourn the dead Japanese appropriately.<sup>106</sup> For this reason, Katō believed that nothing was more important than the national memorial mourning of the dead Japanese. He concluded that the Japanese public should mourn those who died in military service during the war. Katō claimed

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<sup>105</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Hihantekisōzōryokunokiki 批判的想像力の危機,” in *Hihanteki sōzōryokunotameni* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2002), 53. Morris-Suzuki criticized Katō’s concept that the Japanese people should establish a single personality in modern society despite Japan not being a mono-racial society. She argued that Katō ignored the fact that the colonials could not be simply counted as “Japanese.”

<sup>106</sup> Takahashi Tetsuya, “Legacies of Empire: The Yasukuni Shrine Controversy,” in *Yasukuni, the war Dead and the Struggle for Japan’s past*, ed. John Breen (New York, Columbia University Press, 2008), 117-118. Takahashi pointed out the fact that it was also difficult to pay homage to war dead as one collective. For example, close to 50,000 former colonial subjects who died in battle are enshrined at Yasukuni, of whom some 20,000 were Koreans mobilized for the Japanese war effort and around 20,000 were Taiwanese. In addition, the majority of Okinawan civilians who perished in the Battle of Okinawa are also enshrined at Yasukuni. There are strong doubts about whether one could simply mourn these colonials as “the Japanese war dead”. Katō argued that the Japanese should mourn the native deaths as a matter of first priority. After this they could mourn the foreigners. However it is difficult to put a clear definition on “the Japanese war death” as a subject matter of national mourning because a lot of colonists also died during the Second World War whose nationalities are not Japanese.

that the Japanese public should remember the dead Japanese before anything in order to gain true independence. After that the Japanese public could be capable of taking responsibility for their acts of aggression toward other Asian countries.

Katō claimed that the Japanese public should mourn anew the dead Japanese soldiers even though they actually did not fight for justice, the past war being truly a war of aggression. If the Japanese public could mourn the dead Japanese soldiers appropriately then they could establish their *shutaisei* as a historical subjectivity in postwar national history. Then, too, the Japanese could share a common understanding of postwar history with their neighbors. Katō also said that the Constitution of Japan should be chosen by popular vote because the principle of Article Nine had been a mere façade. Katō supported a national referendum for the amendment of the Constitution so that Japan could establish its national identity in the current international circumstances. Japan could recover its national sovereignty if it mourned its culpable countrymen before making a proper apology to the millions of victims in other countries.

### 3.8.1 Takahashi's Counterargument: a collective Unit for Apology

Right after Katō published his article, a Tokyo University professor Takahashi Tetsuya 高橋哲哉 (1956-) published his counterargument in the March issue of the same journal. Although Takahashi illustrated the differences between Katō and other revisionists and nationalists he defined Katō's statement as a certain kind of nationalism.<sup>107</sup> Takahashi analyzed the problems of nationalism in the

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<sup>107</sup> (Takahashi 1999, 158)

context of responsibility to the Asian victims.<sup>108</sup> His main argument was concerned with the legal consequence and the political responsibility of the Imperial Army whereas Katō mainly spoke of the moral responsibility of the emperor. Although Takahashi's opinion was different from Katō's, there was a common point in terms of a concept of unified subject in the Japanese public. Takahashi raised his counterargument that the Japanese public should establish a collective for apologizing for the war victims in Asian countries. In doing so, Takahashi also attempted to establish a historical subject in the Japanese public that always showed its shame for the barbarous acts in the war and expressed its regret for the war victims in Asian countries.<sup>109</sup> Katō questioned the problem of the mourning for the dead Japanese soldiers. Takahashi disagreed with Katō's argument that Japan should develop a single personality in order to overcome the split between the outward-looking and inward-looking self.<sup>110</sup>

Takahashi, on the other hand, focused on the problem of the Asian wartime victims. Takahashi stated that the Japanese public had to adequately apologize for its wartime aggression before expressing sincere condolences to its countrymen. Takahashi doubted the legitimacy of the establishment of a unified subject as Katō had suggested in his article. According to Takahashi, a recovering of

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>109</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Hihantekisōzōryokunokiki," in *Hihanteki sōzōryokunotameni* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2002), 52-53. Morris-Suzuki argued that Takahashi also does not question "the Japanese" as a homogenous community because Takahashi also requested the establishment of a national collective for apologizing for the international crimes conducted in the name of the Japanese nation.

<sup>110</sup> (Takahashi 1999, 132)

Japan's *shutaisei* without disassociated personality would lead to a concept of nationalism. In fact, Takahashi and Katō reached common agreement that the peace Constitution was a good one.<sup>111</sup> However Takahashi did not regard the present Constitution as an imposed one. Takahashi argued that Katō overemphasizes the purity of the establishment of the Constitution. He concluded this thought could form a fundamentalism.<sup>112</sup> Takahashi rejected the need to revise the Constitution.<sup>113</sup>

### 3.8.2 Japan's *shutaisei* in modern World

In fact, Katō also had mentioned the foreign victims in his article. Then Takahashi discussed, as did Katō, the discharge of the Showa Emperor.<sup>114</sup> However Takahashi and Katō used the term “responsibility” in different ways and they disagreed on the order of preference of the mourning of the war dead. Katō emphasized moral responsibility whereas Takahashi discussed the legal consequences. Takahashi refuted Katō's idea that the Showa Emperor should have taken responsibility first and foremost for the Japanese soldiers who died in his name. Takahashi criticized Katō's silence toward the Asian victims.<sup>115</sup> Katō claimed that the Japanese should mourn the native dead properly and after that they could apologize to the Asian victims. On this point Takahashi expressed his strong dissatisfaction.<sup>116</sup> In

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 142.

other words, Takahashi criticized Kato's use of the term "responsibility" because he mainly talked about the wartime responsibilities of Emperor Hirohito and his moral responsibility for the dead Japanese. Takahashi wrote of the responsibility of the emperor in the light of responsibility for war crimes for the Asian victims. In other words, Takahashi urged Katō to discuss the mourning of the Japanese because Katō had left the victims in Asian countries out of consideration.<sup>117</sup>

### 3.9.1 Ōe's Position in Postwar Japanese Society

Katō's article explained a schematic interpretation of the discussion about *shutaisei* of Japan in postwar history. Katō's primary concern was to explain the necessity of the establishment a collective of the Japanese public for the national mourning for the native dead. He illustrated the conflicting views of the conservatives and the supporters of the current Constitution giving an example of a personality disorder. Katō claimed that both sides produced a division of a unified national identity of Japan and the Japanese public should establish a *shutaisei* that could shape a national history.<sup>118</sup> According to Katō, it is impossible to resolve the confrontation between the advocacy for the home country and restitution for other countries as long as one discusses the morality of the war within the framework of nationalism.

It is worth examining how Ōe was associated with this debate in 1990s and analyzing Ōe's works in the light of the war and wartime responsibility because Ōe's literary activity was closely related to this debate. The subjectivity of the

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>118</sup> (Katō 1997, 230-231)

historical description was a relevant point of discussion.<sup>119</sup> Ōe's questions about the place of narrative subjectivity in history were part and parcel with the larger debates on *shutaisei* of the Japanese public in modern society. For a better understanding of Ōe's early works one should explain why he was interested in the problem of wartime responsibility in modern Japanese society. Ōe was also involved in this dispute concerning narrative subjectivity, or *shutaisei*, of Japan's history. The conservatives were mostly interested in reacquiring a historical *shutaisei* of Japan in order to establish a new national identity in the contemporary world. Ōe's interpretation of history contradicted a history based on exclusionist nationalism. In contrast, Ōe attempted to interpret postwar history from the view point of Japan's minority groups.<sup>120</sup> For example, he compared the history of Okinawa with that of Japan's mainland.

### 3.9.2 Ōe and the postwar Constitution

The advocates of the current Constitution, including Ōe, were against the constitutional amendment that meant the abandonment of the potential of war. They believed that the present constitution was the essential foundation of Japanese democracy. They thought that the Allied Forces created the draft of the Constitution of Japan. However the Japanese public had embraced the idea of democracy willingly. Although the external forces contributed to the establishment of a democratized society, the Japanese public had embraced the principles of peace rather than war. In

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<sup>119</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Hihantekisōzōryokunokiki," in *Hihanteki sōzōryokunotameni* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2002), 54. A series of disputes over the historical interpretation was later labeled as "*rekishishutai ronsō* 歴史主体論争" [debate on historical subjectivity].

<sup>120</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, *Okinawa nōto* 沖縄ノート (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970)

other words, they believed the current Constitution could represent the national identity of Japan. Consequently the supporters of the current Constitution regarded the past war as a war of aggression. They believed that the present Constitution reflected truly the national sovereignty and identity of Japan.

In Katō's schematic argument Ōe was classified as a supporter of the current Constitution. Katō claimed that Ōe completely ignored the fact that the current Constitution was created by external pressure though Ōe was well aware of this historical fact.<sup>121</sup> Katō explained the acute difference of opinion between Etō and Ōe because they both ignored the paradoxical origin of postwar Japanese history.<sup>122</sup> They believed without a doubt that their opinion was based on a certain kind of pure principle even though they had expressed opposite perspectives.<sup>123</sup> According to

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<sup>121</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō “Sengosedaino imēji 戦後世代のイメージ,” in *Genshukuna Tsunawatari* 31-32.

<sup>122</sup> (Katō 1997, 51)

<sup>123</sup> Katō thought that Ōe and Etō did not discuss directly an embarrassing problem concerning the war and the Occupation thus never coming to a compromise on the interpretation of the defeat of Japan. Etō studied the influence of the censorship by the Allied Occupation on modern Japanese literature. He concluded that the occupation policy violated the right to freedom of expression concerning the experiences of war. As a result, the value judgment of the Allied Forces had strongly influenced postwar Japanese society. For this reason, Etō regarded the current Constitution as a symbol of this constraint. Ōe, on the other hand, basically thought that the Constitution represented an ideal foundation for the state. Ōe quite often referred to the excellent property of the Constitution; however, Katō thought that Ōe did not mention the commanding role of the Allied Forces in the establishment of postwar democracy although Ōe actually mentioned that the GHQ wrote the draft of the Constitution. Katō criticized both Etō and Ōe for their strong confidence in the interpretation of Japan's defeat. Katō gave an example of one of the generation who lived through the war, Ōoka Shōhei 大岡昇平 (1909-1988). Katō highly appreciated Ōoka's approach to the description of the war problems because he never admired the emperor. At the same time he rejected the predominance of the Allied Forces on Japanese society. He coldly observed the Imperial Army as well as the Allied Forces. Ōoka never glamorized the past war. He illustrated the cruel reality of the battlefield in Philippines and he personally experienced prison life. At the same time he showed annoyance for the democracy brought by the U.S. He never classified the war dead into victimizers and victims. Ōoka was ready to come to terms with the stigma of Japan. He realized that the Imperial Army participated in a senseless war and that

Katō, his concept of “Japanese” as a collective for the national mourning could abandon the conflicting perspectives between Ōe’s strong belief in the current Constitution and Etō’s call for an amending of the Constitution.

The important point is that Katō does not explain how specifically Ōe has been involved in the problem of the Constitution, wartime responsibility and of the postwar Japanese history both in his daily life and in his literary works. In this context, Katō does not bring out his personal confrontational stance toward the problems that he expressed in his article. Katō never gives a detailed account how he concretely makes an effort for the amending the Constitution by a public referendum so that the Japanese public can establish its *shutaisei* in modern society. It is impossible to know about Katō’s personal involvement in political activity through his articles about the postwar history of Japan.

The main difference between Katō’s statement and Ōe’s description about postwar history is the correlation between the individual and the nation. Katō explains the postwar history of Japan as a nation’s history. In this sense, Katō and the conservative critics interpret Japan and the Japanese from the same perspective because they discuss the *shutaisei* of Japan as a national problem. In contrast however, Ōe illustrates the images of Japan and the Japanese by focusing on the way people live who struggle against the nation’s political problems in daily life. Ōe always analyzes the *shutaisei* of each human being so that he describes the image of a nation. Ōe begins with the realization that a nation is an incomplete system for each citizen

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postwar history of Japan started with its surrender. His coldly objective observation powers enabled him to offer heartfelt condolences to both the Japanese dead soldiers and the victims from Asian countries. (Katō 1997, 85-87)

therefore the public should solve the national problems.

### 3.9.3 *Shutaisei*. the Individual and Nation

Note that Ōe officially addressed the problem of *shutaisei* in terms of wartime responsibilities 24 years before Katō published “*Haisengoron*” in 1995. Ōe’s essay *Haisenkeikento jokyō 71 敗戦経験と状況七一* [*The Experience of Defeat in War and the Situation of 1971*] clarified how he identified the topic of the relationship between an individual and a nation.<sup>124</sup> In this short essay Ōe summarized the reason why he visited Hiroshima and Okinawa—that is, so he can interpret the postwar history of Japan. Ōe had been strongly concerned about *shutaisei* of a human being who struggled with the national problems throughout life. They were citizens who tried to improve their situation. They adopted a confrontational approach to state power that did accept responsibility for the war. Ōe as well as Katō began with the realization that the Japanese government had neglected the problems of its wartime responsibilities.<sup>125</sup>

Ōe questioned who should face and resolve the unsettled problems on behalf of the nation. Ōe argued that it was not a nation but the individual efforts of each human being that gave new shape to a nation.<sup>126</sup> He criticized the feeling of the Japanese public toward the national image because they passively accepted the

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<sup>124</sup> Ōe kenaburō, “Haisenkeikento jokyō 71 敗戦経験と状況七一,” in *Kujirano shimetsusuruhi 鯨の死滅する日* (Tokyo: Bungeishunjūsha, 1972), 85-112.

<sup>125</sup> Ōe kenzaburō, “Haisenkeikento jōkyō 71,” 98-101.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

national image of Japan.<sup>127</sup> Ōe illustrated those who actively attempted to resolve the unsettled national problems at any moment so that they contributed to the establishment of a new image of Japan. Ōe showed his deep concern for *shutaisei* of each individual instead of a floating national image of Japan made by the policymakers.<sup>128</sup> Ōe tried to remake the essential quality of Japan in the way that he focused on the humanity of those who indicated their *shutaisei* in the harsh realities of life. Ōe stated that he wanted to identify the spirit of the current Constitution and his personal question about life and death so that he could actively recreate the soul of Japan that was not related to parochial nationalism.<sup>129</sup>

In the debate on Japan's national identity in modern history, Ōe argued that Japan should first take responsibility for its wartime crimes in order to establish its *shutaisei*. In the next chapter, I explain the way in which Ōe discusses the question of *shutaisei* in literature as being representative of modern Japanese writers.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 101-105.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 86, 106-109, 111-112.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 89-90, 109-110.

## CHAPTER 2

### ŌE KENZABURŌ'S LITERATURE

#### *Ōe Kenzaburō's Biography and the Postwar Generation*

In the previous chapter I discussed Ōe's participation in the debate about postwar Japanese society. As we can tell from the previous chapter Ōe focuses his attention on the change in Japanese society after the Second World War. This is in relation to the establishment of democracy. Ōe discusses the problem of *shutaisei* of the Japanese public in order to illustrate its contemporaneity for his generation in modern Japanese society. For instance, "Postwar society" is the first key phrase relevant to Ōe's literature. There is another significant motif of his creative literary activity: his efforts to explain the characteristics of Japanese literature also serve as a driving force of his entire career. As a modern Japanese writer, Ōe is concerned with analyzing the meaning of Japanese culture in modern international society. He often exchanges views about the cultural differences with famous literary figures from various nationalities.<sup>130</sup> I will explain below in which way these two central motifs, namely Ōe's deep concern about postwar society and his analysis of Japanese literature, are manifested in his creative activity. Ōe repeatedly explains his literary project in the context of Japanese literary history in order to question the problem of

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<sup>130</sup> Ōe actively visits foreign countries and gives lectures as a visiting professor. Therefore, he has many acquaintances in academic institutions as well as in the literary world. He published a fruitful discussion with his foreign intellectuals about the function of literature in the modern world: Ōe Kenzaburō, "*Ōe Kenzaburō ōfuku shokan, Bōryokuni sakaratte kaku* 大江健三郎往復書簡 暴力に逆らって書く" (Tokyo: Asahishinbunsha, 2003)

*shutaisei* in Japanese literature. I also refer to Ōe's biography because he often talks about his background and early experiences when he describes the wellspring of his creative works. Connecting with his early experiences, Ōe sets out to reform the stereotypical image of Japanese literature and explore its new possibilities in the postwar international society.<sup>131</sup>

Shinohara Shigeru stated that Ōe publishes his literature to realize his aesthetic goal as an artist. At the same time he uses literature as an instrument to deal with social problems. From an early stage Ōe has been concerned with the difficulty in combining social and artistic activities.<sup>132</sup> For Ōe these two different activities are inextricably linked to each other. Therefore, Ōe reflects his keen interest into the social situation in his imaginative works. As I mentioned above, Ōe's first central motivation is to discuss the topic of the "postwar generation."<sup>133</sup> As a representative of the postwar generation Ōe discusses the social phenomenon and political circumstances both in his novels and in his essays. The wartime experience and the crucial social changes that followed are very important for his writing. In his early

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<sup>131</sup> Harry Harootunian and Naoki Sakai, "Nihonkenkyūto bunkakenkyū 日本研究と文化研究," in *Shisō 思想* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1997), 4-53. Ōe mentions his friendship with the scholars of Japanese studies who criticize the traditional research approach to Japanese literature and culture. Harootunian and Sakai argue that many researchers of Japanese studies consciously try to create a stereotype of Japan, contributing to the building of an image of a master-servant relationship between the U.S. and Japan. Harootunian and Sakai call for a reform to this research approach. Ōe approves their objectives. He also tries to redefine Japan's image.

<sup>132</sup> Shinohara Shigeru, "Ōe Kenzaburō no bungaku," in *Ōe Kenzaburō bungaku jiten 大江健三郎文学事典* (Tokyo: Sutajio VCI, 1984), 298.

<sup>133</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "Sengosedaino imēji 戦後世代のイメージ," in *Genshukuna tsunawatari* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjūsha, 1970), 39. Ōe wrote an essay about his wartime memories. It is important that he depicts his generation in terms of the change in the political system. Ōe always discusses his social and political concerns in the light of the change of the status of the emperor after the defeat of Japan.

works, Ōe writes stories in which the young protagonists experience radical social change after the Second World War. In his novels the young protagonists experience identity crises because they cannot be optimistic about the future. He argues that the adolescents who grew up in the postwar Japanese society are a particular kind of Japanese.<sup>134</sup> In other words, the postwar generation had a singular experience in that they were born into a militaristic society and later educated in a democratic educational system. Ōe's primary concern is to describe in which manner the postwar generation struggles with social problems in postwar society.

Ōe developed a unique writing style to analyze the real world in an imaginary form. Ōe acquired his skill of narrating stories in a tiny village in the mountains. Ōe repeatedly mentions the relevant meaning of his memories of his hometown for his creative activity. Looking back on his literary career, the setting of his literature has been his native village in a small valley deep in the forest of Shikoku.<sup>135</sup> In this small village, Ōe experienced some popular legends from his ancestors and neighbors. In fact, his best known works are related to the folklore and landscape of his hometown. He says that his Akutagawa winning novel *Shiiku* 飼育 (Prize Stock) had a pivotal significance for his literary career. This is due to the fact that it is one of his thematic works which deals with his childhood experiences in an ultra-nationalistic society during the Pacific War. The fact that he was born and grew up in a peripheral place in Japan has important implications for an understanding of his entire career as a writer because he was keenly interested in social and political

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 38-39.

<sup>135</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "In the Mythic Universe of the Novel," *World Literature Today* (2002): 7.

problems since his childhood.<sup>136</sup> The resistance to established authority is one of the main themes of Ōe's literature. Among the popular legends of his hometown there were stories about two uprisings that occurred around the time of the Meiji Restoration. Ōe talked about a peasant uprising in his hometown that occurred at the end of the Edo period. Ōe published *Man'en gannen no futtōbōru* 万延元年のフットボール [The Silent Cry] in 1967 inspired by these incidents. He said that he paid particular attention to the accounts of and references to the two peasant revolts in his hometown, which, in the story, occurred approximately one hundred years before.<sup>137</sup> There is a place where dozens of people were killed in a riot, but no one still remembers this. Ōe's family, and especially his grandmother, however, remembered these things very well, and told him about them.<sup>138</sup> Ōe was strongly interested in the historic incidents of his hometown, so he illustrates the protest demonstration against the US–Japan Security Treaty that occurred a hundred years after these revolts.<sup>139</sup>

Ōe's family had lived immersed in the village tradition for several hundred years. No one from his clan had ever left their village in the valley. Even after the Meiji Restoration, the Ōes remained in this small place and his early

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<sup>136</sup> Kenzaburo Ōe and Kazuo Ishiguro, "From Wave Patterns: A Dialogue," *Grand Street* 51 (1995): 211. Ishiguro pointed out that Ōe's sense of humor is something unique to his writing. Ōe explained that the problem of humor is one of the points in which he differs from Mishima Yukio. Unlike Mishima, Ōe comes from a very provincial corner of Shikoku, beyond the reach of the culture of the center of Japan. Ōe thinks his humor is the humor of the people who live in that place. He said Mishima also had a great deal of confidence in his own humor. It is accurate to say, however, that his was the humor of the center, whereas Ōe's is the humor of the periphery.

<sup>137</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "In the Mythic Universe of the Novel," 11.

<sup>138</sup> (Ōe and Ishiguro 210)

<sup>139</sup> Ōe kenzaburō, "Jikononewo motomete 自己の根を求めて," in *Jizokusuru kokorozashi* (Tokyo: Bungeishunjūsha, 1969), 409-411.

development is closely related to his way of observing things.<sup>140</sup> The women of his clan had long assumed the role of storytellers and had related the historical events of the region, including the two uprisings that occurred there before and after the Meiji Restoration.<sup>141</sup> In his childhood, Ōe listened to the stories that his mother and his grandmother related. These stories, of a unique cosmology and of the human condition therein, left an indelible mark on him.<sup>142</sup>

In an interview with Kazuo Ishiguro (1954- ) Ōe depicted the relationship between his writing style and his early experiences in the small village. Ōe explains that now the only person who remembers the core of the myths of his hometown is him.<sup>143</sup> In this interview, Ōe says that he received specific training from his grandmother in embellishing and deducing a folkloric, mythical significance from the forest, the river, and other features of the village. This training led him to create new folklore based on various aspects of the village, even each tall tree. According to Ōe, his grandmother was also able to create new folklore and to recreate the folklore of the past. Her tales about the village places gave objective reality to her narrative and a mythical significance to each place in the village topography.<sup>144</sup> At the age of nineteen, Ōe left the small village in order to study French literature at Tokyo

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<sup>140</sup> Kenzaburo Ōe. The Nobel Prize in Literature 1994, [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1994/oe-bio.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1994/oe-bio.html) (accessed October 21, 2010)

<sup>141</sup> (The Nobel Prize in Literature 1994)

<sup>142</sup> (The Nobel Prize in Literature 1994)

<sup>143</sup> (Ōe and Ishiguro, 210)

<sup>144</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, “In the Mythic Universe of the Novel,” 11.

University. According to Ōe, he had already acquired the basic skills of storytelling in his family before he moved to Tokyo to enroll at university. When Ōe made his debut as a writer he attempted to amalgamate the narrative style of popular legends and the writing style of European literature that he studied at university. Ōe explained that when he was a French literature major student he tried to remember the stories that he learnt in his childhood. He then started writing; the act of trying to recall these and the act of creating began to overlap.<sup>145</sup>

Starting from his childhood, Ōe was already familiar with the European literature that his mother bought him. In his award lecture for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1994, Ōe mentioned two novels that fascinated him during the catastrophic events of the Second World War, namely *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) and *The Strange Adventures of Nils Holgersson* (1906).<sup>146</sup> When he was a high school student, Ōe was deeply impressed by the study on the French Renaissance of Professor Watanabe. Ōe read Watanabe's books on the French humanism of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and hoped that he could study the idea of tolerance under Watanabe's guidance at Tokyo University.<sup>147</sup> There was another reason Ōe left his hometown and went to the Japanese capital: the end of Second World War and the establishment of democracy were of considerable significance for him. After the end of the Second World War, the Americans introduced a new school system in Japan.

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<sup>145</sup> (Ōe and Ishiguro, 209)

<sup>146</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself: Nobel Lecture 1994," *World Literature Today* 69 (1995): 5.

<sup>147</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, *Ōe Kenzaburō sakkajishinwokataru* 大江健三郎 作家自身を語る (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2007), 26-30.

Schools now taught democratic principles, replacing those of the absolutist Emperor system. Ōe warmly embraced this. Ōe's desire for democracy was so strong that he decided to leave home for Tokyo to go to college.<sup>148</sup>

He also sought an appropriate writing technique with which he could express his strong political concerns, especially about postwar democracy in Japan. While he was a student in Tokyo, Ōe learned how to write by studying European literature. At Tokyo University he received instruction under the tutelage of Professor Kazuo Watanabe, a specialist on Francois Rabelais (1483-1553). Ōe declared that in his life as well as in his study of literature he had been a pupil of Professor Watanabe and he was profoundly influenced by his teacher. In Professor Watanabe's lectures, Ōe came across the works of a Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975). Through these he was to learn various ways to enrich his writing.<sup>149</sup> It seems that Ōe learned a singular narrative structure from Bakhtin's literary criticism of the multilayered relationship between the author and the protagonists. By studying European Literature, Ōe improved his narrative technique that he had already acquired from his grandmother. Rabelais' image system of grotesque realism provided Ōe with a methodology to positively and thoroughly reassess the myths and history of his native village in the valley.<sup>150</sup>

In addition, Watanabe's thoughts on humanism were to help shape Ōe's

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<sup>148</sup> (The Nobel Prize in Literature 1994)

<sup>149</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "In the Mythic Universe of the Novel," 9.

<sup>150</sup> (The Nobel Prize in Literature 1994)

fundamental view of society and the human condition.<sup>151</sup> In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize in Literature, Ōe called Professor Watanabe a pioneer who made painstaking efforts to build up a Japanese identity that was “decent” or “humanist.”<sup>152</sup> Ōe acclaimed Watanabe’s distinguished and rewarding scholarly achievements in the Japanese intellectual world. Ōe appreciated the remarkable contributions of Professor Watanabe in light of his antiwar stance. In the middle of the Second World War, Watanabe had the dream of grafting a humanist view of man onto the traditional Japanese sense of beauty and sensitivity to nature. Watanabe also did his best to transplant into the confused and disoriented Japan of that time the life and thought of those French humanists who were the forerunners, contemporaries, and followers of Rabelais.<sup>153</sup> Ōe said that it was his task as a novelist to enable both those who express themselves with words and their readers to recover from their own sufferings and the sufferings of their time, and to cure their souls of the wounds.<sup>154</sup> In this way, Ōe’s study at Tokyo University under the guidance of Professor Watanabe strongly influenced his works both in narrative style and literary motif.

Ōe necessarily needed to study European literature in order to depict the stories in which he could discuss the critical issues in the actual society. Ōe said that it was unusual in the tradition of Japanese literature to write novels in a similar way to that of philosophers or historians. After the end of the Second World War postwar

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, “Japan the Ambiguous and Myself,” *World Literature Today* 69 (1995): 8.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 9.

Japanese writers published works influenced by Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Georg Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). This was a new trend in Japanese literary history. Ōe was also strongly influenced by these writers. He learnt a specific writing style from European literature in order to discuss social problems in his literary works. When he started writing, Ōe tried to give specific expression to his thoughts using the form of the novel. Ōe also read French philosophers such as Sartre and Albert Camus (1913-1960), and as a consequence his writing was affected by these as well.<sup>155</sup>

Influenced by European literature and philosophy Ōe has engaged in human rights questions as his main motif in his works and essays. In an interview Ōe explained his motivation, saying that literature should deal with those who are ostracized by the family or society. His question is how we can change the current situation so that nobody is banished in our society. Ōe stated that literature should create an ideal model of a human being and nobody should be discriminated against in this model. This is the basis of his literature. In an interview with Ōe Sanroku Yoshida said to Ōe that recently Japanese society had created a peculiar mood in which it was rather difficult to discuss anti- nuclear matters. One might be considered childish or immature if one was antinuclear. Yoshida asked Ōe about being an author of stories in which he actively discusses the issues of nuclear weapon. Ōe answered that twenty four or twenty five years before he was not supported by the majority of Japanese intellectuals concerning this topic. According to Ōe, Japanese scholars,

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<sup>155</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō and Sanroku Yoshida, "An Interview with Ōe Kenzaburō," *World Literature Today* 62 (1988): 370.

whether they were scholars of English literature, sociologists, physicists, or well-known writers, seldom paid serious attention to the nuclear problem and human rights. The exception was a handful of fine scholars such as his mentor Watanabe Kazuo, Maruyama Masao, and Katō Shūichi 加藤周一 (1919-2008). In this sense, Ōe thought that the situation was still about the same.<sup>156</sup>

Ōe explained that those who discussed social problems both in their writings and in practical life did not belong to mainstream Japanese literature.<sup>157</sup> Ōe was strongly aware of being on the left in Japanese literature when he began his career as a writer. From this position, he critically analyzes the characteristics of Japanese literature. For example, Ōe quite often mentioned Kawabata Yasunari and Mishima Yukio who belonged to main stream of Japanese literature. In this way, Ōe clarified his particular status in the tradition of Japanese literature in terms of his relationship to postwar writers. I discuss below in which manner Ōe compares himself to his senior associates Kawabata and Mishima to explain the differences in their interpretation of Japanese literature and culture.

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<sup>156</sup> (Ōe and Yoshida, 369)

<sup>157</sup> Etō Jun “Bungakuto shisō 文学と思想,” in *Etō Jun chosakushū vol. 6* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1977), 247-252. Etō Jun and Yoshimoto Takaaki 吉本隆明 sharply criticised Ōe’s *Hiroshima Notes* and his participation in the antinuclear movements. Etō argued that a writer should not go deeply into social and political matters. He thought that Ōe’s great concern about the problems of war and human rights damaged his literary works. Yoshimoto also criticized Ōe because he thought that Ōe’s resistance to the system was questionable; Ōe still was on the side of the establishment. Etō had strongly questioned the direct relationship between the individual and society. For this reason, Etō criticized Ōe because he tried to illustrate in his work what the A-bomb victims experienced and what they had to suffer in modern Japanese society. Etō concluded critically that Ōe had depicted the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki although he personally did not experienced the atomic bomb as they had done. Etō and Yoshimoto both argued that there was no relationship between Ōe and the victims. They stated that Ōe was not capable of describing the miseries of war. Also, it was not the task of a writer to discuss problems created by war.

*Ōe Kenzaburō and Kawabata Yasunari*

*The Tradition of Japanese Literature*

Ōe won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1994, the second Japanese writer to do so. The first Japanese writer to win this prize was Kawabata. It is very important, for understanding his position as a modern Japanese writer, that Ōe emphasized the difference between his and Kawabata's creative activities in terms of their relationship to the tradition of Japanese literature. In their award lectures Ōe and Kawabata explained Japanese literature and culture from different perspectives. Kawabata talked about his art in the context of Zen philosophy and classical Japanese. On the other hand, Ōe explained his literary activity in the context of the radical social change in Japan that occurred after the Second World War. In his lecture Ōe emphasized that the postwar Japanese writers had created a new era in Japanese literary history. Ōe said that he had won this most treasured prize as a representative of this "postwar" Japanese literature.

In "*Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself* 美しい日本の私" Kawabata had tried to explain the aesthetic values of traditional Japanese art. He illustrated the highest aesthetic traditional Japanese art that is unique to Japan. Kawabata began his lecture with an introduction to the essence of Japanese poems written by the Zen Buddhist monks in the medieval period. Moreover, he made general observations about classical Japanese literature. As a twentieth century writer and a representative of Japanese writers, Kawabata had compared his literary activity to that of the medieval Zen monks. Kawabata argued that the Buddhist concepts "emptiness" and wordless expressions are not the nothingness or the emptiness of the West. It is rather

the reverse: the universe of the spirit in which everything communicates freely with everything, transcending bounds, limitlessly.<sup>158</sup> He said that most of the monks' poems were concerned with the linguistic impossibility of telling the truth. Words of the poems were confined within their closed shells of meaning. Therefore, Western readers could not expect that they would ever be able to wrest the meaning of these words from the shells of these poems and get through to them.

At the end of his lecture Kawabata again linked his literature with Zen Buddhism. He intended to clarify the distinction between Japanese literature and European literature. Kawabata said that Japanese arts often expressed the feeling of emptiness or nothingness. Although many critics have pointed out that the emptiness characterizes his works, Kawabata concluded that this emptiness should not be taken for the nihilism of the West. Its spiritual foundation would seem to be quite different. Kawabata implied that his literature was not based on nihilism. He argued that his works were not related to this but to Zen philosophy. Kawabata explained that in the Zen sitting meditation the Zen disciple enters a state of impassivity, free from all ideas and all thoughts. He departs from the self and enters the realm of nothingness.

Moreover, Kawabata explained the essence of classical Japanese literature in order to explain in which manner one could approach his artistic world. For Kawabata, his home country Japan represented a land with many native fine arts that influenced his sense of beauty. Kawabata said he wanted to carry on this tradition.

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<sup>158</sup> Edward Seidensticker, trans., *Japan, the Beautiful and Myself of Kawabata Yasunari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha International Ltd., 1981), 56

At the beginning of his award lecture Kawabata introduced the delicate sensibility of the Japanese *waka* poets who described the beautiful changes in the seasons. By doing so, he emphasized the sensibility of the Japanese enjoying the changing seasons and the beauty in nature. Furthermore, Kawabata defined the sensibility toward the beauty in nature as the essence of Japanese literature. He also acknowledged himself as an heir to this aesthetic tradition. Classical Japanese literature, especially the masterpieces of the Heian period, is strongly reflected in Kawabata's literary works. He said that although his grasp of classical Japanese was uncertain, the Heian classics were his principal boyhood reading. *The Tale of Genji* meant the most to him. Kawabata argued that *Genji* was a wide and deep source of nourishment for Japanese poetry and also for Japanese fine arts and handicrafts, and even for landscape gardening.<sup>159</sup>

Kawabata, speaking on the international stage, introduced the audience to the essence of Japanese literature, so that the audience could realize that Japanese literature is quite different from European literature. However Kawabata did not explain how one could approach his literary world as well as the essence of Japanese literature if one comes from another culture. Kawabata even mentioned the problem of suicide. He clearly said that he neither admired nor was in sympathy with suicide. However he was to commit suicide in 1972. Kawabata said that a phrase written in

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<sup>159</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō “Nihon’no chishilijin 日本の知識人,” in *Jinseino shūkan* 人生の習慣 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1992),82 . Ōe gave a commemorative lecture for the founding of the department of Japanese Studies at the University of Rouen. Here he briefly mentioned *The Tale of Genji*. According to Ōe, the critics said that Mishima belonged to the tradition of *The Tale of Genji* in Japanese literary history. On the contrary however, they said Ōe was not part of the group that represented this. This group regarded him as a traitor with respect to the tradition of Japanese literature.

the suicide note of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 (1892-1927) spoke to him with the greatest strength. Kawabata introduced the audience not only to Zen philosophy but also to his view of life and death. Kawabata explained that the concept of death in Zen philosophy is very different from that in the West.<sup>160</sup> However Kawabata did not explain this difference in detail or the way one could understand a universal value of Japanese literature based on Zen philosophy or mysticism.

I explain below how Ōe reinterpreted Kawabata's lecture of 1968 in order to clarify why Kawabata faced problems in educating the world about Japanese literature and thoughts, while Ōe did not face many problems. In his award lecture "*Japan the Ambiguous and Myself* あいまいな日本の私" Ōe spoke of his predecessor Kawabata. He used a title for his lecture that was very similar to that of Kawabata's Nobel Prize acceptance speech. Ōe argued that Kawabata regarded his creative activity as belonging essentially to the tradition of Zen philosophy. Ōe concluded that one could never understand or feel sympathetic towards these Zen poems except by giving oneself up and willingly penetrating into the closed shells of those words.<sup>161</sup> In other words, Ōe thinks that Kawabata's writing is also based on this exoticism, which he could not share as a universal value with foreign writers and readers.

In contrast, Ōe's literary activity has nothing to do with the Japanese mysticism, which is essential for Kawabata's literature. Kawabata's lecture was not an illustration of contemporary Japanese society. He talked solely about the relationship between his literature and traditional Japanese culture. He believed this

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<sup>160</sup> (Seidensticker 1981, 61-62)

<sup>161</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "Japan the Ambiguous and Myself," 6.

approach represented mainstream postwar Japanese literature. In his speech, Ōe stated that he not only disagreed with Kawabata's interpretation of Japanese literature, but also with the lines from "*Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself*," in which he says that he was as someone living in such a world as the present one and sharing bitter memories of the past imprinted on his mind.<sup>162</sup> Ōe stated that his college mentor, Professor Watanabe, had a conception of beauty and nature different from that of Kawabata in his "*Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself*."<sup>163</sup> He argued that his teacher Professor Watanabe also had the sensibility of the Japanese but it differed from that of Kawabata. Surrounded by the insane ardor of patriotism on the eve and in the middle of the Second World War, Watanabe dreamed of grafting a humanist view of man onto the traditional Japanese sense of beauty and sensitivity to nature, which fortunately had not been entirely eradicated, despite the horrors of the war. In this way, Ōe appealed to the audience that there is another type of sensibility in Japanese literary history in terms of humanism.

Ōe brought into sharp focus his differences with Kawabata over the understanding of Japanese literature and culture. He explained the roots of his literary activity not in terms of the classical Japanese tradition but in terms of postwar Japanese literature. Ōe said that in the history of modern Japanese literature the writers most sincere and most aware of their mission were those "postwar writers" who came onto the literary scene immediately after the Second World War. Ōe pointed out that in contrast to writers like Kawabata, the postwar writers struggled

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 8.

with social problems. Although they had been deeply wounded by the catastrophe, they were full of hope for a rebirth. He said it had always been his aspiration to cling to the very end to the literary tradition inherited from these writers.<sup>164</sup>

Furthermore, Ōe said that he felt more spiritual affinity with the Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) than with Kawabata. Ōe said that he was merely a humble follower of Yates who was living in a country far removed from where Yeats had lived.<sup>165</sup> Ōe notes that his thinking about the established writers in the Japan has been influenced by the work of Kathleen Raine, a British literary critic and poet, who said the following about William Blake: “Blake’s thoughts are full of ambiguities, but they are not vague.” From this viewpoint, Ōe thought Tanizaki Jun’ichirō 谷崎潤一郎 (1886-1965), Kawabata, and other established writers were not ambiguous but vague.<sup>166</sup> He said that he had an antipathy towards such people as Kawabata and Tanizaki, and established Japanese authors in general. He thought that they did not think logically and their thoughts were almost always vague and simplistic.<sup>167</sup> He attempted to think logically about serious problems and he also tried to create an appropriate writing style with which he could express his ideas on the complicated problems of modern society.

As one can see from the Nobel Prize Acceptance Speeches, Ōe pays special attention to postwar Japanese society, while Kawabata was strongly aware that his sense of beauty is closely related to classical Japanese literature. Another

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>166</sup> (Ōe and Yoshida, 370)

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

difference is their approach to Western thoughts, Kawabata learnt much from the Zen priests who described the beauty in nature in the form of the *waka* poem, Ōe, on the contrary, candidly declared that he was influenced by European and postwar Japanese writers. Moreover, Ōe's view of life and death substantially differs from Kawabata's. This was apparent because in 1972 Kawabata committed suicide.

*Ōe Kenzaburō and Mishima Yukio*

*The Emperor System and Patriotism*

In addition to Ōe's critique of Kawabata, he also repeatedly criticized the stereotypical image of Japan created by Mishima Yukio. Mishima is also an international figure both for his literary works and his political activity. His belief in the tradition of the imperial household and his view of life and death are best reflected in his representative work *Yūkoku* 憂国 [Patriotism] (1961). Like the central character in this novel, Mishima committed seppuku in 1970. In the next chapter, I will explore the parameters of Mishima's political thought in his novella, *Yūkoku*. The biggest point of departure between the two authors is their discussion of the place of the emperor system in postwar society. I mention in which manner Ōe critically discusses Mishima's interpretation of Japanese literature and culture.<sup>168</sup>

Susan J. Napier pointed out how the emperor system still strongly

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<sup>168</sup> (Harootunian and Sakai 1996, 13-17) Harootunian and Sakai responded with sharp criticism to the researchers of Japanese studies in the U.S. in relation to their interpretation of the emperor and the royal household. Harootunian and Sakai argued that the Emperor system was a mandatory component of Japanese history and culture. According to Harootunian and Sakai, researchers of Japanese studies repeatedly ideologically legitimated the Emperor system since the end of the Second World War. They gave theoretical support to the Emperor system in postwar Japanese society. As a result, they give a false picture of the continuity in Japanese history and culture from ancient to modern times, there is also discontinuity and social imbalance in Japanese society.

influences post Second World War society. For those who were born and grew up before or during the war the figure of the Showa Emperor stood as a symbol of Imperial Japan. Napier argued that the problematic existence of a symbol of imperialism within a democratic society engages the political writing of many postwar writers. On one hand, Left-wing intellectuals suggest that the continued existence of the emperor system symbolizes the continuance of such negative prewar values as the suppression of the individual to authoritarian rule. On the other hand, those on the right look to the emperor system to represent the best of traditional Japanese culture, now degraded owing to the American occupation and modernization in general.<sup>169</sup>

Napier said that for Ōe and Mishima the imperial house became a political obsession that struck a chord with Japanese society as a whole.<sup>170</sup> Napier argued that nowhere is the problematic function of the emperor more apparent than in the fiction and essays of Mishima and Ōe. They both have written extensively, even perhaps obsessively, on the Showa Emperor and his relation to Japanese society and history.<sup>171</sup> In particular, they discuss the paradox in the postwar Japanese society that the Emperor as an established authority still plays a great role in the democratic society. Ōe's and Mishima's concerns with the emperor and the lost world that the emperor signifies, are extreme and highly personal. But at the same time these

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<sup>169</sup> Susan J. Napier, *Escape from the Wasteland: Romanticism and Realism in the Fiction of Mishima Yukio and Oe Kenzaburo* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 146.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

personal concerns are deeply embedded in the actual realities of postwar Japanese history, although the emperor has no governmental power in modern Japanese society.<sup>172</sup>

As previously explained, Ōe supports the spirit of the peace Constitution and postwar democracy and he thinks that the emperor system is a major impediment to democracy in modern Japanese society. On the contrary however, Mishima criticized the destabilization of the imperial household. He glamorized the emperor system. Even though Ōe and Mishima hold different political positions they share a common view that there is certainly a paradox in the postwar Japanese society in terms of the relationship between democracy and the emperor system. Their difference in opinion about democracy and the emperor system is strongly reflected in their differing interpretations of Japanese culture. Mishima honored the traditional values of Japanese culture as Kawabata highly appreciated the traditional aesthetic feeling of the Japanese. Ōe, on the other hand, rejects Kawabata's and Mishima's understandings of Japanese culture. Mishima developed a belief in patriotism that was closely related to his aestheticism. He clearly saw himself as a representative of Japanese culture.<sup>173</sup>

In his essays Ōe mentioned the achievement of Mishima in the context

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>173</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki and Yoshimi Shun'ya, *Ten'noto Amerika* 天皇とアメリカ (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2010, 153-155) Unlike Kawabata, Maishima was politically outspoken and publicly expressed his anti-American ideology. At the same time he highly appreciated European culture. Morris-Suzuki pointed out that Mishima excessively emphasized the value of the Japanese way of looking at things. He interpreted Japanese culture through Western eyes. His sense of beauty was related to Orientalism.

of the emperor system and Japanese culture.<sup>174</sup> Ōe interpreted the manner in which Mishima attempted to develop Japan's image on the international stage. According to Ōe, Mishima tried to create a specific image of Japan both in his literary works and in his practical life. He argued that Mishima's entire life, certainly including his death by seppuku, was a kind of performance designed to present the image of an archetypal Japanese man. Moreover, this image was not the kind that arises spontaneously from the Japanese mentality. Ōe concluded that it was a superficial image of a Japanese man as seen from a European point of view. It was a fantasy. According to Ōe, Mishima acted out that image just as it was. Mishima created himself exactly in accordance with it. That was the way he lived, and that was the way he died. In his explanation Ōe cited Professor Edward Said who used the word "Orientalism" to refer to the impression that Europeans have of the Orient. Said insisted that "Orientalism" is a view held by Europeans and has nothing to do with the people who actually live in the Orient. But Mishima thought the opposite. He appealed to a foreign audience, in effect that their image of the Japanese is Mishima. That was the kind of man he was and that was why he gained literary glory in Europe and the world. Therefore, Ōe thought Mishima wanted to show something by living and dying in exact accordance with the image he created. Ōe concluded that what in fact happened was that Mishima presented a false image.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "Haisenkeikento jokyō 71," 90, 104. Ōe was stung on hearing the news of Mishima's seppuku. Ōe worried that Mishima's sensational seppuku could have harmful effects on the Japanese public. Ōe was angry at the fact that there were a lot of people who appreciated the political message Mishima sent by this. According to Ōe, Mishima fanatically fanned up a false image of an absolutist emperor. He associated this image with the national image of Japan.

<sup>175</sup> (Ōe and Ishiguro, 212)

Furthermore, Ōe considered the narrative differences between him and Mishima. As I explained above, staying far from the center point is very relevant to Ōe's narrative. He always illustrates his stories from the viewpoint of an outsider. Ōe explained that he highly valued the peripheral nature of Japanese literature. Ōe argued that Japanese authors should clearly realize that Japanese literature is not at the center of world literature. With this in mind, Ōe argued that when a peripheral literature attempts to become a central literature, one of the things that could happen is that it tries to become exotic. Ōe thought Mishima tried to create a literature of the exotic. Ōe argued that Mishima's attempt was mistaken, and it may be possible for Japanese writers to play a certain role in world literature if they express Japanese concerns as a literature of the periphery.<sup>176</sup> In conclusion, Ōe said that insofar as he is writing in Japanese, he is writing for a Japanese audience.<sup>177</sup>

Ōe always questions what it means to be a Japanese writer in the modern international community. Ōe analyzed the manner of suicide chosen by Mishima in order to interpret the image of Japan created by Mishima, and suggests that even though Mishima was very popular and was actually the head of the Japanese literary establishment, he had no faith in Japanese criticism and turned to his foreign readers. According to Ōe, Mishima's death was a performance for a foreign audience, and it was a very spectacular performance at that. Moreover, Ōe said that the relationship between Mishima and the emperor system was rather questionable. But from the foreigners' point of view, for example an American reader's point of

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>177</sup> (Ōe and Yoshida, 374)

view, the Japanese emperor system was something inexplicable. Therefore, that final act by Mishima, tied in with the emperor system, appeared to be a kind of mystical thing. Mishima emphasized the exotic and eccentric Japanese characters through his activities. In contrast, Ōe shares his main motif, namely the problem of *shutaisei*, with people from various nations. In other words, Ōe addresses the problem of human rights with foreign intellectuals as a universal question.

Unlike Kawabata and Mishima, Ōe talks openly about the postwar Constitution and the role of Japan in the international society. Ōe says that the spirit of the current Constitution represents the national identity of Japan. Moreover, Ōe thinks that to obliterate from the Constitution the principle of eternal peace would be nothing less than an act of betrayal of the peoples of Asia and the victims of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is not difficult for him as modern Japanese writer to imagine what would be the outcome of that betrayal.<sup>178</sup> In conclusion, Ōe believes that the image system made it possible to seek literary methods for attaining the universal for someone like him, born and brought up in a peripheral, marginal, off center region of Japan.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, “Japan the Ambiguous and Myself,” 7.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

## CHAPTER 3

### ANALYSIS OF ŌE KENZABURŌ'S EARLY WORKS

#### *Ōe's Literary Genealogy from the 1950s to the 1960s*

In this chapter I analyze the motifs and narrative structure in Ōe's five early works that were published between 1957 and 1965. I discuss his writing and narrative style in four fictional stories and his reportage on Hiroshima. As mentioned previously, Ōe establishes his *shutaisei* as a postwar Japanese writer connecting his self-portrait to an analysis of the social conditions in society. Ōe depicts the everyday lives of his central characters and extraordinary events, together with the historical ones, including also his own personal memories. Ōe weaves in some aspects of his own life into the sufferings of his main protagonists who are unable to develop into adults. In this way, Ōe analyzes the distinctive characteristics of the postwar generation and projects these characteristics onto his main protagonists.<sup>180</sup> It is often said that these young protagonists are tortured by their inability to develop into mature people in postwar Japanese society. According to Etō, they are members of a postwar generation in a “state of imprisonment,” frustrated and immature.<sup>181</sup> In most

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<sup>180</sup> Translator's note of John Nathan: Johan Nathan, trans., *Lavish Are the Dead of Ōe Kenzaburō* (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1965), 211. Ōe's theme is the dignity of man, or rather the indignity to which society exposes him. Ōe's characters are young people like himself and most of them are in flight, seeking in sex and violence and the most insidious brands of self-deceit an escape from the humiliations of living in a depraved world.

<sup>181</sup> Frank T. Motofuji, trans., *Sheep of Ōe Kenzaburō* in *Japan Quarterly* vol. 17 No. 2 (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1970), 177. *A Note About the Author*: Etō Jun defined the main motive motif of Ōe's early works as the “state of imprisonment” of the Japanese after the Second World War. He always tried to identify the author with his main characters. He thus harshly criticized Ōe's works as well as his essays on the modern society.

settings they suffer from problems during adolescence and the author focuses on the painful predicament of these people.

First, it is relevant for my study to explain that Ōe does not write his early works strictly autobiographically or chronologically. Despite the connections between Ōe and his protagonists, Ōe simply cannot be identified with his central characters who seem to be almost always immature. As explained, he takes the viewpoint of immature adolescents as he develops his narrative technique. I, therefore, analyze the way in which the author narrates the stories through his protagonists, using their stories as ironic allegories to explain postwar Japanese society. In particular, I argue that they are not in a “state of imprisonment,” but independently adopt a confrontational approach to the majority. They refuse to be mature in society in order to protect their self-sustainability. Finally, I discuss a common point of Ōe’s early biographical writing and his first nonfiction, *Hiroshima Notes*, in terms of the narrator’s *shutaisei*.

### *Lavish Are the Dead*

#### *The Postwar Generation. The Problem of Adolescence*

While he was still a university student, Ōe started writing and publishing literature. In 1957 Ōe submitted his first work *Kimyōna shigoto* 奇妙な仕事 [An Odd Job] to the student newspaper of Tokyo University. This story was awarded a prize by the newspaper. Ōe’s second story *Shishano ogori* 死者の奢り [Lavish Are the Dead]<sup>182</sup> was also published in the same year.<sup>183</sup> In these two stories

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<sup>182</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, “Shishano ogori,” in *Ōe Kenzaburō shōsetsu 1* 大江健三郎小説 1 (Tokyo:

Ōe paints a scene from Japan's largest national university. The following year he won the Akutagawa Prize for Literature for his fourth published work *Shiiku* 飼育 [Prize Stock]. The success of this story made Ōe's name famous when he was only 23 years old.

*An Odd Job* is quite short and the author does not directly mention topics related to the postwar Japanese generation. In its sequel, *Lavish Are the Dead*, Ōe expressly illustrates his generation's problem of growing up. The main character directly addresses the problem of adolescents growing up in postwar Japanese society. It a university student protagonist feels that his life lacks concrete targets, and as such, he realizes that he only lives with a feeling of helplessness. In this novel the author can be identified with the main character to some extent because narration is from the first-person point of view. Therefore, in a previous study, critics have suggested that in these novels Ōe sets out to illustrate his generation's sense of helplessness.<sup>184</sup> In other words, they thought that Ōe's focus in *Lavish Are the Dead* is the loss of independence and adolescent crises. To portray this subject, Ōe uses a university student downtrodden by the deep lethargy caused by the lack of *shutaisei*. In this way, they argued that Ōe was suffering from postwar ennui and lack of a strong postwar subjectivity and so felt helpless and the author superimposes his own suffering onto

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Shinchōsha, 1996), 21-45. Johan Nathan, trans., *Lavish Are the Dead of Ōe Kenzaburō* (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1965), 193-211.

<sup>183</sup> Translator's note of John Nathan: Johan Nathan, trans., *Lavish Are the Dead of Ōe Kenzaburō* in *Japan Quarterly* vol. 12. No. 2 (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1965), 211. In 1957, twenty-two years old and a sophomore in French Literature at Tokyo University, Ōe Kenzaburō published *Lavish Are the Dead* and won acclaim as a promising new voice in postwar Japanese literature.

<sup>184</sup> Shibata Katsuji, *Ōe Kenzaburōron* 大江健三郎論 (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1992), 11-13.

the main protagonists. He is unwilling to improve his life by taking concrete measures; he passively accepts to live in what, for him, is a hopeless situation, offering no resistance to his predicament.<sup>185</sup> It seems that he struggles with the problem of adolescence because he has never really learnt to grow up as a mature adult. The dead humans in the tank of water are superior to him in terms of their physical maturity and a sense of realism about life and death. In conclusion, the main characters are alive but their lives are ambiguous.

In terms of plot, *Lavish Are the Dead* can be regarded as a sequel to *An Odd Job*. In *An Odd Job* the university students throw away the dead bodies of animals. In *Lavish Are the Dead* it is the dead bodies of human beings. He uses various body images. In each of these two bizarre situations the author describes the problems of life and death. Both in *An Odd Job* and *Lavish Are the Dead* the author narrates the entire story from the first-person point of view. The main character in both novels clearly resembles the author who was studying French literature at the time. The main motif of *Lavish Are the Dead* is to recreate wartime memories through communication between the dead and a youth in a realm of imagination. In *Lavish Are the Dead*, Ōe narrates a story in which past memories and experiences construct one's existence in the real world. Despite some similarities between the main characters and Ōe, one should recognize a clear-cut difference between them. Note that Ōe was never engaged in putting the dead in order. The story should, therefore, be regarded as fiction, even though the author illustrates the scenes with realistic

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.,10-11. The critics argued that this passive character of the university student reflected Ōe's personal disposition that he would rather stay in a hopeless situation than actively attempt to escape from it. Etō Jun, Shinoda Kazushi and Shibusawa Tatsuhiko saw Ōe's immature character as the person reflected in his description of the main character of *Lavish Are the Dead*.

descriptions. Ōe writes about university students who get part time jobs that require them to dispose of the dead. As the title *Lavish Are the Dead* suggests, the dead human bodies are rich and varied substances in a tank of water. It is only relevant that these dead are vivid and voluminous to the main character. In other words, he is the other self of the narrator who illustrates a conversation between the main protagonist and the dead in an imaginary world.

Ōe still makes the dead exist in historical continuity.<sup>186</sup> In an interview, Ōe said that he has been interested in creating literature in which the dead vividly set off into a tale.<sup>187</sup> Therefore, the dead tell the living person the truth of history that only the dead know. From the beginning, the university student's real and imaginary world converges in this strange scene. In the tank of water the dead bodies also let off an unusual, captivating odor only perceptible to the main protagonist, who is partially identified with the narrator. The pile of dead bodies overwhelms the main protagonist, the university student, the "I." These dead bodies are so attractive that the main character tries to listen to their voices and make out what they are saying. He imagines that he can talk to them as if they were still alive.

The dead are whispering; their mingling voices, heavy and thick, are hard to understand. At times they all stop talking and a hush falls over the room, but soon the murmur resumes, sluggishly mounts, subsides and fades to silence. (193)

In *Lavish Are the Dead*, the main character tries to make sense of the

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<sup>186</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō 大江健三郎, „Kotobawo kachitoru 言葉をかち取る,“ in *Chūkōseino kimitachie. Nōberushōjushōshatono taiwa* 中高生の君たちへ ノーベル賞受賞者との対話 (Tokyo: Yomiurishinbunsha, 2005)

<sup>187</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, Subaru henshūbu *Ōe Kenzaburō saihakken* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2001), 72.

whisperings of the dead. As noted, he is so attracted by the dead bodies that he attempts to continue talking to them in his imaginary world. Watching the expressive dead bodies he realizes the fragility of his own mind and body even though he really exists as a living human being. He strongly feels his immaturity compared to that of the vivid dead. Their bodies are superior to the entire corpus of university students in terms of their physical vitality. Even dead, they still have a sense of presence. While the main character relives the experiences of the dead, they need a living existence that can reproduce their life time. In this way, Ōe illustrates another world in which a living person and the dead mutually produce something different from the existing world. This university student, Ōe's other self, is fascinated by the individual characters of the dead. For him, they are more attractive than the living persons who live in the actual world without possessing a singular personality.

A scene is depicted in which the main protagonist is incapable of talking to others about himself. But when he speaks to the dead bodies he can communicate with them in order to search for a reality to life. Here Ōe develops the main motif of this story. The main character begins to talk to the dead about the wartime and even politics. The university student only experienced wartime as a little boy. He feels that his body is immature because it does not bare any mark of wartime wounds. Compared to the dead body of a soldier, the protagonist has an unsullied, undamaged body. This purity is a mark of its immaturity. In this way, Ōe attempts to characterize the postwar generation as immature.

The main character talks to the dead soldier who is confident because he died during the war. The dead soldier really did experience war as a reality on the

battlefield. His wounded body is superior to the pure body of the main character who does not have any concrete experience of the reality of life or death. As mentioned, the main characters of Ōe's early works are mostly immature, but have a strong will to overcome it. Therefore, the narrator allows the university student to talk with a dead soldier who has first-hand wartime experience. In the conversation, the author occasionally narrates the story from the viewpoint of the dead who still vividly retain their individuality.

Nobody can be convincing as I am, no matter how clear his thoughts on war are. Because I soak here without moving, just the way I was when they killed me. I saw the bullet wound in the soldier's side; it was shaped like a withered flower petal, darker than the skin around it, thickly discolored. (199)

At first, the main character concludes that these bodies merely exist as material objects. He observes them as perfect material. They have a compactness and independence. However, he gradually realizes that the dead bodies can proudly talk to him about their positive attributes. In this way, they reject having their corpses piled up as material objects. Consequently, the main character does not regard them as a mass.

Of course we're objects. And pretty ingeniously put together at that. A man who's cremated as soon as he dies never knows the sense of volume and weight, or the feeling of solidity you get when you're an object. (197)

The main character has a special ability to understand that these bodies retain their own personalities even after their death. Moreover, they have memories of

the times when they were still alive. The dead bodies are not uniform but have a rich diversity. Among them, the main character finds a dead corpse of a middle-aged woman. She evokes the feminine physicality she had when she was alive. Her manner of talking also has a womanly humor and charm.

I had very shapely things when I was alive but I suppose they look a little drawn-out now. Like sturdy oars, I thought, trying to imagine what she had looked like walking down the street in a cotton dress. I had a feeling she must have stooped a little. I did if I'd been walking a long time, but usually I kept my head up and my shoulders back. (197)

The main character talks to the female dead body about her past. By allowing her to speak to him in this way, she is brought back to life again from the dead. Her dead body is attractive to humans. The main character finds out that talking to the dead is really amusing. What is more, she is so sensual that the university student feels sexual desire.

When he straightened up with the syringe in his hand I got my first look at the corpse, which the back of his white gown had hidden: directly in front of me was the girl's gaping sex. It was taut and fresh, replete with life, vitally healthy. I stared enchanted; it was like being in love. (202)

In *Lavish Are the Dead*, the alternation of generations over the course of history is focused. The dead seductively whisper to a living person so that she can rise from the dead. From this standpoint, sex is one of the main topics in Ōe's early works. Sex is usually discussed in relation to the immaturity of adolescents. Ōe uses the sexual images to discuss the problem of life and death. In *Lavish Are the Dead* the

main character is shamed when a dead body points out that he is seized by sexual desire when he looks at a dead naked girl (That's some erection you've got there (202)) The dead seem more sexually desirable than the living university students. The dead openly show their lust as their life force to the university student. The dead girl has retained her vitality because she has not lost her sexual allure, which is also a part of her individuality. She still has a strong desire to produce children, who will belong to her next generation. In contrast, the main character no longer finds the female university student sexually attractive. The living people, the university students, are inferior to the dead because of their bodily vitality. A female university student realizes that she is pregnant. The pregnancy is also related to the problem of life and death. She suddenly loses completely her allure as a woman because the pregnancy is fraught.

I noticed that the thick skin of her broad face had a sallow look. She seemed exhausted and terribly run down, her face was slack as though paralyzed. She must have been two years older than me. (201)

This female university student is not capable of taking responsibility for another living organism in her body. She is totally overwhelmed by the fact that she is pregnant, although a pregnancy represents the birth of a new life. She is too immature, both mentally and physically, to become the mother of a child. She makes a macabre analogy about her situation: to give birth would be tantamount to being responsible for murder of her fetus.

I'd be assuming a terrible responsibility, just by doing nothing for nine months. My

feelings about my own life are uncertain enough as it is, yet I'd be giving birth to another new uncertainty. It would be just as serious as murdering somebody. (201)

She confesses that she has only ambiguous feelings about her own life, just like the main character. This is a reason she wants to get an abortion. After she decides to terminate her pregnancy, she becomes deeply impressed by the strong presence of the dead bodies. However, she also recovers a sense of reality after initiating contact with the dead. Their corpses so strongly effect her that she wavers about having the abortion.

You know, I've just about decided to have the baby after all. Looking at those people in the tank, I had a feeling that if the baby was going to die, it would have to be after he was born into the world and had real skin of his own or things wouldn't right. (207)

The superintendent, who processes dead bodies every day, is confused by the fact that he is a father. He is also a grandfather. He also has an ambiguous attitude towards the birth of human beings. However, while talking with these students about the dead's presence, he also reconsiders the meaning of his life:

I felt weird when my first child was born. I mean walking around inspecting dead people, seeing dozens of them every day and receiving new corpses is my job. And for me to be bringing a new life into the world seemed weird, as if I was doing something useless ... And then when my son had a child of his own, another new life – sometimes I don't know whether I'm coming or going. (205-206)

As mentioned previously, Ōe discusses the problem of the postwar generation in terms of the adolescent crisis. The main protagonist then begins to

question to what end he is studying at a university. He realizes that he hardly feels alive because he is uncertain about his role in society and his future. As a consequence, he does not have a feeling of self-respect. This is the reason he is able to take on such a humiliating job as disposing of the dead. At the same time, this university student observes things in his own unique way as he boldly breaks old taboos. In doing so, he critically analyzes the real world in which he lives. He ignores the conventional rules of Japanese society that only those who were discriminated dealt with disposing of the dead. For this reason, a professor is overwhelmed by the main character's audacity. This university professor is bound by tradition and thinks that the old taboos are broken by the younger generation. The main character is not capable of explaining to him why he has taken on the job of disposing of the dead. When he has to talk to a living person he is not able to make a persuasive case. He cannot express his opinion adequately to the professor who criticizes him and the shamelessness of the younger generation.

“And you're not ashamed to be doing work like this? Don't you young people have any pride?” I wondered why talking with the living was so difficult? Why did the conversation have to develop along unexpected lines, and why did it always seem like wasted effort? (203-204)

Looking at the world from the viewpoint of the dead, this university student objectively interprets his growing-up process during and after the Second World War. The main character and the female university student discuss the questions of life or death of a human being. However life and death are just abstract concepts for them because they are still not able to understand war as a reality.

I was growing up, I said to myself – all during that long war. I grew up at a time when the only hope from day to unhappy day was that the war would end. And the air was so thick with signs that hope remained that I was suffocated and felt that I was dying. The war ended, the adults digested its corpse in minds like stomachs, the indigestible solids and the mucus were excreted – but I had nothing to do with all that. And before we even realized what had happened, our hopes had faded away like mist. (199-200)

The younger generation knew only about the war from fiction. They could never understand it as a reality. The younger generation survived the Second World War because they were not inducted into the army. The main protagonist grew up with a single hope that the war would soon end. For him the war was a terrible event. But at the same time he was spared war's tribulations. At the same time they were not able to be greatly optimistic about postwar society. They had a feeling of hollowness of life after the end of the war. They also had to take responsibility for the next war. The dead soldier talks to the main protagonist about this coming war.

What it amounts to is that I was carrying your hopes on my shoulders. I guess you'll be the ones that dominate the next war. (200)

The dead soldier leaves judgment about the next war to the younger generation. However the main character feels that this task is too much for him because of his lack of experience. The only hope for this university student is the end of the Second World War. After the war is over it becomes difficult to continue to live out his life with great hope.

You're the ones that are going to start the next war. We're qualified to evaluate and

judge. I have a feeling those same qualifications are going to be forced on me. But while I'm busy evaluating, I'll be killed. (200)

The end of war achieved peace and security in Japan. However, a rearmament plan emerged because of the Korean conflict that broke out in 1950. Ōe said that as he grew up in the postwar society he gravely worried that he might have to take his place on the battle lines as a young soldier.<sup>188</sup> In *Lavish Are the Dead*, the novel's main character is also lacks confidence about the future. He lives out his university life with busy routine but without a sense of hope.

It's just that there's no need to have hope. I want to live a well-ordered life and study hard. And I manage to fill up every day with one thing or another. I'm not lazy, and keeping up with school work properly takes a lot of time. I'm dizzy every day from lack of sleep but I get my studying done. And leading a life like that, you don't need hope. I've never lived with hope except maybe when I was a child, I've never needed it. (206)

It is relevant that only this university student, the narrator's another self, is able to understand the dead soldier's words. He is an independent-minded person who attempts to understand the postwar period from the viewpoint of the dead. In other words, the main protagonist is not a feckless youth but is strongly interested in the questions on the past and coming war. In the last scene, the author closes the story with the main character's monologue.

It looked like I was going to have to work all night! Difficult, irritating, back-breaking work ... I descended the stairs two at a time, I had plenty of energy

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<sup>188</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō “Heiwato sensōno imēji, 平和と戦争のイメージ,” in *Jizokusuru kokorozashi* (Tokyo: Bungeishunjūsha, 1973), 51-52.

left, but a thick, swollen feeling rose persistently into my throat no matter how often I swallowed it down. (210-211)

With a somber voice the main character narrates the remaining part of this story. In the next story, *Sheep*, Ōe again describes a university student who has suffered humiliation with other Japanese. His narrative self again analyzes Japanese society during the occupation period from a university student's standpoint. I discuss this novel focusing on a change in Ōe's narrative style, showing how the second story differs from *Lavish Are the Dead*.

### *Sheep*

#### *The Trauma and the Humiliation*

Ōe's short story, *Sheep*, was published in 1958.<sup>189</sup> This story is set in the immediate postwar period when Japan was still being occupied by the foreign soldiers of SCAP. It is said that in this story, Ōe discusses the main topic of his early works, that is, the main protagonists wrestle with the problem of their *shutaisei*. In *Sheep* Ōe analyzes this same problem by associating it with the social maladies during the occupation, although he changes narrative perspectives as a means of considering the problem of *shutaisei* more objectively than he does in *Lavish Are the Dead*. In *Sheep* Ōe developed as an author even though he was very young.<sup>190</sup> In particular, Ōe created a caricature of the occupational age and ironically depicted Japan's occupation. On the whole, the author keeps objective viewpoint in his

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<sup>189</sup> Frank T. Motofuji, trans., *Sheep of Ōe Kenzaburō* in *Japan Quarterly* vol. 17 No. 2 (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1970), 167–177.

<sup>190</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, *Ōe Kenzaburō sakkajishinwokataru* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2007), 60.

narrative so that the readers appreciate the allegory about the occupation. Through this, Ōe illustrates the incomplete development of his personal *shutaisei* and makes about the complicity of the Japanese people.

In *Sheep*, Ōe depicts the humiliation experienced by many Japanese at the time and uses allegory to describe the Japan's occupation, just as Etō Jun interpreted.<sup>191</sup> Etō argued that Ōe expressed his hostility against the occupation army, which most Japanese viewed as demolishing the country's *shutaisei*. Etō's interpretation, however, does not concern the central question of *Sheep*. The author does not support the university student more than necessary. Moreover, he partly identifies himself with the elementary school teacher who stubbornly insists on going to the authorities. I explain that Ōe critically analyzes the "sense of humiliation" present in the Japanese who do not defend their pride and *shutaisei* against foreigners during the occupation period.

In light of a narrative structure, *Sheep* consists of two parts. In the first part, a university student subjectively illustrates an odd situation. Here the story is narrated from the first-person viewpoint. In the latter part, however, the author objectively depicts the details, as though from an outsider's viewpoint. Ōe ironically visualizes the disharmony of Japanese society during the occupation. The main

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<sup>191</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, *Shisyano ogori / Shiiku 死者の奢り・飼育* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1996), 266–270. Etō Jun argued that the main topic of *Sheep* is the "state of imprisonment." Etō's interpretation of *Sheep* is strongly influenced by his political belief that the national identity of Japan was spoiled by the occupational policies of the U.S. and that Japanese should recoup Japan's *shutaisei*: This "state of imprisonment" is, if viewed in historical terms, the frustration experienced by modern man. Yet, in a more abstract sense, it is that sense of discontinuity experienced by those who view "social justice" through a fictional structure. The originality of Ōe Kenzaburō's work lies in the double image formed by his superimposition of these two views of "imprisonment." *Sheep* is a work that treats this contrast clearly and directly.

protagonist has strong *shutaisei* among the other passengers, who are merely swayed by a sense of victimhood and resign themselves to the contemptuous treatment. He is also alienated as an individual among those who have a strong sense of justice.

The keyword of *Sheep* is “humiliation” and the entire story is laced with melancholy. *Sheep* means a sacrificial and docile animal. First, the title is a metaphor of the defeated, occupied nation. Ōe illustrates the social situation of Japan in terms of a loss of national identity. After the Second World War ended, Japanese had to accept that occupation forces, especially those of the U.S., possessed more wealth and military power than they did, and that they were completely defeated by the U.S.<sup>192</sup> Second, sheep are also a metaphor for people who do not think independently and often move in one mindless group. Furthermore, it also represents the protagonist’s situation of being weighed down by his sense of humiliation in postwar society. In the first scene of *Sheep*, Ōe again projected his misery onto his central character. Ōe describes the solitary life of a university student in a gloomy picture of postwar Japanese society. Ōe apparently describes his daily life during the occupation, when Japanese citizens, as well as the main protagonist, encountered the occupation army in everyday life:

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<sup>192</sup> Dower, John, *Embracing Defeat. Japan in the Wake of World War* □. Japanese edition with new photographs vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanamishoten, 2004), 137–158. A famous photo of the Emperor Hirohito and an Allied Commander, MacArthur, displayed a power gap between two nations. It showed a difference of as much as a head in height between Hirohito and McArthur. This picture indicated to the Japanese public that the U.S is a mighty nation compared to the defeated country, Japan. According to the national character trait, there is an episode that rubbed the Japanese the wrong way. After coming back to his home country, MacArthur said in a public hearing that Japanese were like “a boy of twelve” for him while the Germans were “mature race.” His intent was to explain that Japan needed the support and aid of the U.S. for establishing a democratized country. He recognized that the Japanese people showed him its yielding disposition during the occupation.

The soldiers who had squeezed me into my corner were drunk and in high spirits. They were all young, and most of them had low brows and the large, moist eyes of cows. One soldier, his thick fleshy red neck choked by the collar of his khaki shirt, had a short, moon-faced Japanese woman on his knees. He was whispering ardently in her ear—the ear was as dry and lusterless as a piece of wood—while the other soldiers cheered them on. (167)

During the occupation, Japanese citizens saw “Pan-Pan girls” who prostituted themselves to the American soldiers in the streets. These girls became one of the most important symbols of the humiliation faced by the Japanese, especially for Japanese men, in the occupational age. It is said that many of them were driven into prostitution by poverty. There are photographs of Japanese prostitute snuggled up to the American soldiers, just as described in the first scene of *Sheep*. The Japanese men had to live with the humiliation that the American soldiers were much tougher than were the undernourished returned soldiers who suffered from lack of food during and after the War.<sup>193</sup> In terms of sex appeal, this prostitute is quite different from the female student protagonist of *Lavish Are the Dead*. This prostitute escapes from the old social system and acts independently. She is clearly contrasted to other Japanese who passively do everything as a group. In particular, she has a unique personality among other passengers who do not have any individuality. From this standpoint, the university student and the prostitute share a similarity in light of *shutaisei*.

Here, in contrast to *Lavish Are the Dead*, which blurs the boundary between reality and fantasy, the author illustrates postwar society with graphic depictions. As an example, a university student gets on a bus and becomes involved

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 137–158.

in trouble with American soldiers who terrify him by their bulk and foreign language:

The soldier shouted something, but I could not comprehend the threat in those terrifying words that were so full of sibilants. He suddenly fell silent, peered into my face, and then began shouting more violently than before. (168)

Ōe illustrates the fear of the foreigners in terms of their masculine bodies and foreign language. The university student develops a sense of dread because he does not understand what the American soldiers say:

I was panic-stricken and watched with fascination at the way he twisted his bull neck and at the sudden swellings in the skin along his throat. I did not catch a single word he uttered. (168)

Suddenly he is stripped to the skin by the American soldiers and becomes completely helpless because of his physical vulnerability. The only thing he can do is yield to the foreigners. The author describes the poor physique of the main character as a symbol of humiliation:

With my head pushed down, I saw, just in front of my forehead, my penis shrivel with the cold. Consternation gave way to a burning shame that washed over me... But each time that I struggled and tried to free myself from the soldiers, all that happened was that my buttocks quivered. (169)

His pinched penis and naked hip represent his physical impotence. To make matters worse, the Japanese passengers begin to laugh at him, emphasizing that he is experiencing his fear and humiliation in public. Note that the Japanese do not retaliate to the foreigners' insults as a united body. The main protagonist objectively

tells that nobody is ready to help him, and in this way, Japanese also play a part in this crime of the foreign soldiers:

All at once, the soldiers began to sing, and then I suddenly heard, through the uproar, the Japanese passengers tittering. I felt as though I had been crushed and beaten to a pulp. When the pressure against my arms and head relaxed, I found I had lost the strength even to stand up straight. Thin streams of gummy tears worked their way down the side of my nose. (169)

Furthermore, the American soldiers attack other Japanese passengers at random. The author focuses on a huge contrast between the triumphant American and the stricken Japanese from the viewpoint of the university student. Again, the author critically describes the Japanese who think and act following the principle of peace-at-any-price, which encourages the foreigner's shamelessness:

Then the soldier shouted. Like a policeman controlling a parade, he shouted with authority for a long time. Even with my head down, I could see what they were up to. When I was grabbed again by the scruff of my neck and turned toward the front, I saw, lined up in the middle of the bus, the sheep, their legs spread to brace themselves against the lurching of the bus and bent over with their bottoms exposed. (169–170)

This passage discusses the sudden eruption of violence during the occupation. After the foreign soldiers exit the bus, a silence settles over the Japanese passengers. They start to pretend as if nothing has happened. In *Sheep*, the author connects the loss of the main character's self to the loss of the national identity of a defeated country. However, the motif of *Sheep* is not a description of "Japanese as victim," as Etō suggested. *Sheep* is a metaphor for those who do not take the

foreigners head on in order to defend their pride. In other words, the author discloses Japanese people's responsibility for their nonresistant behavior. The author critically depicts the mute passengers who cowardly accept the foreigners' insults. He also criticizes the Japanese who secretly laughed at the victims. Therefore, the Japanese citizens should not be lumped together as "victims."

The main protagonist is the only person who does not belong to any group among the passengers. The author shifts to the subject of the Japanese passengers attempting to erase this disgraceful event from their embarrassing memory. In contrast, the witness demands a full accounting of the trouble in the bus. Ōe focuses on the fact that not all Japanese were humiliated by the occupation and, therefore, were divided into two groups. The author objectively describes the conflict between these different groups. Some of them were dishonored by the American soldiers, but others were not. The humiliated Japanese are completely exhausted, and they want to leave the scene of crime as quickly as possible. In contrast, however, many witnesses are agitated and willing to scrutinize the event with a strong sense of justice.<sup>194</sup>

The sheep look dejected and they shivered, biting down on pale lips. The others, who had not been made sheep, pressed their fingers against their flushed cheeks and

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<sup>194</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, *Shisyano ogori / Shiiku* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1996), 266–270. Etō Jun wrote an expository writing of *Sheep*. He inferred that Ōe wrote an allegory in *Sheep*. According to Etō's explanation, Ōe criticized the members of the peace movement, especially the young students; however, he partially sympathized with the elementary school teacher. The hero, a student living on part-time work, stands in direct opposition to the teacher who urges him to hide behind the shield of social justice and reveal publicly the insults to which he was subjected by the American soldiers on the bus. This clear-cut confrontation gives an allegorical quality to the story; this could just as well be victims of atomic attacks and members of the anti-atomic-weapons movement.

stared. Nobody said a word. The office worker, who sat next to me, flicked the mud from the cuffs of his trousers. Then, with fingers trembling with nervousness, he wiped his glasses. Almost all of the sheep were clustered in the back of the bus. The teacher and the others who had been spared were sitting in the front where, to a man, they turned excited faces to observe us. (170)

The humiliated victims keep their mouth shut and lower their heads. In contrast, the elementary school teacher is so excited that he is willing to officially announce the occurrence of the incident. This is due to the fact that he has a strong sense of justice and is eager to publically disclose the incident. He goes so far as to demand that the victims appeal to the power of state. The author clearly highlights the contrast between the teacher who strongly advocates submitting the damage report and the student who remains silent on the incident. This distinction is made once again when the university student is humiliated by the police. This elementary school teacher has a reasonable argument: even though he was not injured, he acts as a witness who does not comprehend the victims' feelings. It is, thus, impossible for them to understand each other.

“You must report what happened to the police,” said the teacher in an increasingly strident voice, appealing to us. “I’m sure there will be no trouble locating the camp where the soldiers are stationed. If the police don’t take action, I feel the victims can band together and appeal to public opinion. I am sure that nothing has been made public up to now only because the victims remained silent and knuckled under to them. I know—I’ve seen it happen.” (171)

The teacher insists that the humiliated passengers should file a report with the police; however, his argument is less than successful for two main reasons: first, the victims are at a loss for words because of a strong sense of humiliation and,

second, the defeated nation of Japan has no power against the occupation forces.

Nevertheless, the teacher insists that keeping silent is an untenable idea.

But the sheep made no attempt to respond to their encouragement. We looked down in silence, as though their voices had been deflected by a transparent wall and lost on us. (172)

The insulted sheep merely hope that they could hide from the incident and leave. In this scene, Ōe equally depicts the groups that disagree about the way to deal with the situation. The university student speaks in the same narrative level as other protagonists and tries to hide his humiliated body from the inquisitive eyes of the witnesses, but he is unable to erase the event:

In order to set off for home to face my mother and sister who I was sure were waiting for me in our warm family room, I had to pull myself together, I thought. I must not let them sense the humiliation deep inside me. I decided that, like a happy child, I would start running for no earthly reason, and I wrapped my overcoat tightly around me. (172–173)

As explained previously, during the latter part of *Sheep*, the author cannot be identified with the main character. The author focuses on the student's independent action after leaving the bus. The university student is chased by an elementary school teacher who also represents the author's other self. Ōe objectively describes the altercation between the university student and an elementary school teacher and is committed to neither.

The look in the policeman's eyes tightened as they rapidly passed over my body. I

knew he was trying to locate bruises or cuts on my skin, but they throbbed and festered not on my skin but underneath it, and I had no desire that anyone should poke around on them... “No, it wasn’t *fatal*,” said the teacher vehemently. “But he was made to expose his buttocks in a crowded bus and to get down on all fours like a dog.” Even I, looking down and burning with shame, could feel the policemen becoming intimidated by the force in the teacher’s voice. (173–174)

This passage discusses the humiliation of a Japanese citizen insulted not by the foreigners but other Japanese persons. Rather than sympathizing, the policemen begin snickering. The author criticizes Japanese authorities that failed to guard the people by putting their blinders on toward the foreigners’ violence:

I felt myself once again being stripped of my pants and drawers, sticking out my bare buttocks sprinkled with grainy pores like a chicken’s, and bending forward. “That’s a terrible thing,” said the middle-aged policeman, not even bothering now to suppress a lewd laugh that revealed his yellow gums. (174)

As mentioned previously, in *Sheep*, Ōe is partly identified with the university student who languishes because of his loss of *shutaisei* in the occupied country. To some extent, the author sympathizes with the university student; however, he cannot completely identify with the student, seemingly because of the boy’s cowardly behavior. The author inserts the protagonists’ words without putting them in parentheses, whereas he presents the elementary school teacher’s words in the third person. At the same time, the author partially projects the trait of his generation onto the elementary school teacher who is not personally involved in the incident.

“Don’t worry—I’ll find out who you are,” he said, his voice quivering with emotion. Suddenly tears welled up in his furious eyes. “Don’t worry—I’ll tell the whole world your name and about your shame. And I’ll heap shame on both you and the soldiers

so that you'll want to die. Until I learn your name you'll never get away from me.”  
(177)

On one hand, this university student is as weak and frustrated as the main protagonist of *Lavish Are the Dead*. On the other hand, he is also an outsider who can analyze the situation independently. First, he differs from the mindless sheep that are compelled to accept the foreigners' rudeness and try to forget it as soon as possible. Second, he does not overlook the fact that there were Japanese who secretly participated in the crime. Moreover, he does not agree with those who loudly protest the foreigners with a sense of justice. In conclusion, Ōe criticizes the Japanese who hurt *shutaisei* on the basis of their self-responsibility.

Ōe argues that the occupation is a necessary result of Japan's reckless participation in the postwar period. He also criticizes the Japanese who irresponsibly develop a feeling of victimization at the time, instead of carrying out their responsibility for their defeat in the Second World War. I will explain below the way in which Ōe questions the motif “Japanese' responsibility” in his childhood memories.

### *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*

#### *The Wartime Memories*

Ōe's first long novel *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids* was published in 1958.<sup>195</sup> After its publication, Ōe stated that *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids* was the

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<sup>195</sup> Paul St. John Mackintosh and Maki Sugiyama, trans., *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids* of Ōe Kenzaburō (London: Picador, 1996)

novel in which he could most successfully recreate his early memories, both painful and sweet, into wartime images.<sup>196</sup> By creating an allegory about the Japanese social system during the War, Ōe describes his personal memories.<sup>197</sup> Acclaimed by critics, the novel illustrates the ordeal of a boy who gets taken in a tiny village deep in the mountains, during the Second World War. Critics say that *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids* is a turning point of Ōe's literary activity and he began to direct his attention to reality after reminiscing about early memories.<sup>198</sup>

In *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids* Ōe creates an allegory to analyze the problem of *shutaisei* of the postwar generation. He illustrates the immaturity of the postwar generation in terms of the enormous power of the emperor system in their early memories. In this allegorical work, he critically illustrates his early memories and the social system of Japan during the War. The story has two different narrative perspectives: a child's and the author's. Ōe describes the absurdity of the war period from the viewpoint of a child. This boy, however, cannot be identified with the author, who occasionally depicts a harrowing tale from the third person point of view. I explain that Ōe's primary concern is to criticize Japanese society, in which the children's *shutaisei* was completely spoiled. One should focus not on the main

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<sup>196</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "Wagashōsetsu 'memushirikouchi' わが小説 - 『芽むしり仔撃ち』," in *Genshukuna tsunawatari* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjūsha, 1970), 439–440.

<sup>197</sup> Ichijō Takao *Ōe Kenzaburō sonobungakusekaitohaikei* 大江健三郎 その文学世界と背景 (Osaka: Izumishoin, 1997), 19–20. Ōe held the literary contributions of the postwar Japanese writers in high esteem. He decided to become their successor. Ōe intended to publish the postwar literature written by a writer who indirectly experienced the Second World War. In this way, he attempted to undertake the works of his respectable seniors who directly participated in the War.

<sup>198</sup> Iwata Eisaku, "Memushirikouchiron. Bokuzōno shūseiwomezashite 『芽むしり仔撃ち』論 : 「僕」像の修正をめざして," in *Kindaibungakushiron* 近代文学試論 Nr. 27 (Hiroshima: University of Hiroshima, 1989), 51.

character's immaturity but on his strong self, because the author criticizes the mindless adults from the viewpoint of a boy's character.

In *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*, Ōe analyzes the social system during the War by flashing back to his childhood. Ōe strengthens his allegoric writing that he introduced in *Sheep*. In doing so, Ōe indicates to his readers the problem of the incomplete development of *shutaisei* in light of wartime memories. As mentioned in his early works, the young protagonist suffers from a lack of self. In this story, Ōe interprets the “situation of imprisonment” of the postwar generation in light of their early memories. In *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*, he addresses the question of whether a writer could create war literature despite not having participated in the War.<sup>199</sup> In particular, Ōe illustrates a concrete reason why the postwar generation's *shutaisei* is so vulnerable. Furthermore, the central motif of this story is the education based on the emperor ideology. In other words, Ōe argues that Japanese children received a particular education in the militaristic society. In this novel, Ōe exposes the fact that the adults destroyed the younger generation's *shutaisei* through specific training before and during the Second World War. At the time, corporal punishment was generally adopted as an effective educational tool. Thus, children became victims of thought control and were subjected to a specific growth process, in which they were forced by the adults to abandon the rights to develop their *shutaisei*. This retrospective story critically depicts how the emperor system destroyed the *shutaisei*

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<sup>199</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, “Bokunosensōbungaku ぼくの戦争文学,” in *Genshukuna tsunawatari* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjūsha, 1970), 446–448. Ōe said that the writers who joined the army during the Second World War should publish war literature even in postwar society. He also said that a new generation of writers, which did not directly participate in the War, should also contribute to publishing war literature.

of both adults and children in Japanese society, to establish totalitarianism in the country.

In *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*, Ōe creates war literature that could be interpreted as both fiction and nonfiction. He writes war literature authored by a representative of the postwar generation by narrating the whole story on two different levels. First, Ōe takes the role of an author who dispassionately observes the imminent dangers of his protagonists. Ōe uses irony to describe the social system during the War from the viewpoint of an imprudent child.<sup>200</sup> At the same time, the adult narrator describes things that children do not know or understand. In this way the author critically analyzes the correlation between the wartime situation and development of *shutaisei*. Ōe describes the children's mental growth process as brainwashing. The author psychologically analyzes the social situation of Imperial Japan, in which everyone was forced to participate in an all-out war. Moreover, in this controlled society those who did not abide by the rules of the emperor system were severely punished without exception.

As explained previously, for Ōe the belief in the new constitution means

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<sup>200</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, Subaru henshūbu *Ōe Kenzaburō saihakken* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2001), 62–63. In an interview with Inoue Hisashi and Komori Yōichi, Ōe talks about his ironical perspective in his writing. He said that ever since he debuted as a writer, he always wrote his works with an ironical narrative. It means that Ōe interprets things from various perspectives. *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids* is narrated by a boy who is persecuted by villagers. Ōe said that he could imagine that his grandmother could be angry at this central character because this boy selfishly breaks into the village. Additionally, Ōe said that this central character is different from him. This boy comes from outside the village and is discriminated by the villagers. Ōe himself had grown up in a small village and he was later discriminated by people of the town. In this story, he reverses the stands and perspectives.

the origin of his *shutaisei*.<sup>201</sup> In *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*, Ōe clarified his literary motive related to the current Constitution. Here Ōe discusses *shutaisei* in light of education. Ōe regarded education as serious because a proper education can rouse an imaginative power that can change the reality of a society.<sup>202</sup> For him the spirit of the Constitution and humane education were inseparable. Therefore, Ōe illustrated the specific character of his generation in terms of the introduction of the principles of democracy. Japan's defeat in the Second World War marks a great turning point for children's education, and Ōe experienced an educational reform at the time. A new educational system was established and the schools ran on guidelines that came into effect after 1948. When Ōe went to junior high school he took a class on the new Constitution. Ōe says that the textbook of the Constitution, entitled "Democracy," was a well-bound book among other humble textbooks. He remembered that he really got excited by the change of the social system caused by the enforcement of the new Constitution. Additionally, he commented that this mood in the country lasted only for a couple of years. The younger generation was not deeply impressed by this historical event.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "Sengosedaito kenpō," 132.

<sup>202</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "Aratameteno kyūkyōyori aratamete no kenpō yori," "Kyōikukihonhō Kenpōnobuntai 教育基本法と憲法の文体" in *Hanashitekangaeruto kaitekangaeru* 「話して考える」と「書いて考える」 (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2004), 242-269. Ōe says that the Constitution of Japan and the Fundamental Law of Education were of great importance during his entire career. The Fundamental Law of Education came into effect in March 1947. Ōe says he memorized its preceding sentence because it clearly declares that the basic philosophy of this law is to assert individual dignity. The principle of postwar education is to respect the autonomy of the individual.

<sup>203</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "Kenpōnitsuiteno kojintekinataiken," 137-138.

In *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*, Ōe explained why he expressed a critical attitude toward the Emperor system. He regarded the principle that “sovereignty resides in the people” as his fundamental attitude. For Ōe the Emperor system and the principle of “sovereignty rests with the people” were incompatible political principles in terms of the independence of the legal system.<sup>204</sup> Ōe strongly supports the new educational system because it guarantees basic human rights. Therefore, Ōe clearly countered the argument of the conservatives that the current Constitution was “forced” on Japan by the Allied Forces.<sup>205</sup> According to Ōe, his generation had a valid reason for choosing the current Constitution as their ideology, although it was established under special circumstances after the defeat of Japan.<sup>206</sup> Ōe also knew the historical fact that not the Japanese Cabinet but the GHQ wrote the current Constitution. However Ōe clearly said that he viewed the principles of the Constitution as his own good fortune. Furthermore, Ōe said that he chose the current Constitution as his ideology at every moment.<sup>207</sup> Ōe opposed any constitutional revision as a representative of “postwar democracy.”<sup>208</sup>

In *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*, Ōe depicts a hierarchic society in which he uses each protagonist as a symbolic icon to allegorize the former emperor-centric Japanese society. The author occasionally narrates the story in third person,

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 139-140.

<sup>205</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, “Sengosedaito kenpō,” 135.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>208</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, “Kenpōnitsuiteno kojintekinataiken,” 137-151.

particularly, when he indicates to his readers the constellation of each person. The author depicts a hierarchical society by charting icons. The readers can visualize who is furthest from the center point, the emperor, and who is the closest. This schematization is used to measure the strength of the protagonists' *shutaisei*. The author puts the protagonists in extraordinary circumstances. They are incarcerated in a reformatory that is evacuated to the small mountain village during the height of the War and thus experience the War in a doubly-confined area. The author describes a clear-cut difference between the children—the reformatory boys—and the adults—the villagers. In the beginning of the story, the author describes the physical immaturity of the protagonists:

To them, we were completely aliens. Some of us went up to the hedge, flaunting immature penises like reddish apricots at the villagers. Elbowing her way through the children's giggling agitation, a middle-aged woman pressed forward to stare with tightly pursed lips and laughed red-faced as she relayed lewd details to her friends carrying babies. (21–22)

The villagers are the main characters' guardians and trainers. The purpose of reformatory training is to produce children willing to live and die for the emperor. Ōe explains the helplessness of the protagonists against the violence and fearfulness of the War and the reformatory in which they live. These children are always exposed to hazards and are constantly under the threat of punishment. The author illustrates the lacerated bodies of children to relate the children's bodily immaturity with violence, danger, and death:

We had really grown used to a lot of things. We could only beat our way forward, forced one after another. (23)

Ōe creates a “state of imprisonment” in which the children are exposed to excessive violence. Looking back at his childhood during the Second World War, Ōe’s allegory illustrates an experimental field where the children are trained to become sheep. Because of the children’s mental immaturity, the adults were able to easily assimilate them to the social rules of totalitarianism, an ideology of Imperial Japan. The emperor was the absolute authority and great father figure for all Japanese children. The villagers were strictly forbidden to publically express their thoughts or develop their *shutaisei*. Similar to the Japanese society during the Second World War, the villagers of this story fanatically controlled the children’s behavior and there was no escape. Because the reformatory boys have been abandoned by their parents and society, they cannot find any parental care. Moreover, the story is set at the height of the War, and they are not allowed to leave the village. The villagers completed their task of brainwashing the children by confining them to a small area. The main protagonists stand back from society to objectively observe the war. The main character remarks on the fanaticism of former Japanese society where everyone participated in a losing battle:

It was a time of killing. Like a long deluge, the war sent its mass insanity flooding into the convolutions of people’s feelings, into every last recess of their bodies, into the forests, the streets and into the sky. An airman had even frantically strafed the courtyard of the old brick building where we were housed, descending suddenly from the sky, a young blond airman rudely sticking out his bum inside the partially transparent fuselage of his warplane. Early next morning, when we field out for our detail, a woman who had just died of starvation, and whose body was still leaning just outside the gate’s spiteful barbed-wire entanglements, collapsed right in front of our commanding warden’s nose. (26)<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> (Iwata 1989, 42–52, 43) In this paragraph one could explicitly see that this novel has two

The main character “I” and other reformatory boys observe and interpret the ongoing events in the village. The village was a microcosm of Japanese society during the war. The reformatory represents the former national elementary school before and during the Second World War; the boy narrator critically describes these microcosmic societies in third person. As an outsider, he analytically describes the fanatic group behavior of the villagers. The villagers never express their feelings or opinions regarding the war. The villagers formed an anonymous mass, while the reformatory boys maintained a unique individual character. Ōe describes these villagers as inept and meek who abide by the social rules, doing everything as a group similar to the passengers of *Sheep*. The villagers blindly obey the rules without critically examining them. They are also trapped in a cage. To make matters worse, they carefully monitor each other so that they do not deviate from the social rules. However, the main characters break these rules and thus are confined to a reformatory in a small village. Ōe illustrates an atypical growth process of children, in which the establishment of pupils’ *shutaisei* is completely destroyed in imprisonment. The main characters are confined to the village because of their asocial behaviors. In this way, Ōe critically discusses the mass psychology of the Japanese during the Second World War. Those who were not willing to obey the emperor system were regarded as traitors. The children should have been educated the same way as they were made to participate in an all-out war as a loyal member of the Imperial Japan.

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narrative perspectives. On the one hand, the author narrates the story, looking back at the past event. On the other hand, the central character “I,” who gets involved in the catastrophic event, views the episodes from the present stand point.

In this story in the village, including the boys from the reformatory, is gripped by fears of war. Among the villagers, there is also a mania for locking up the criminals (26). The adults project their fears and suspicions through excessive violence. The villagers force the reformatory pupils to obey the social rules and participate in the war without establishing each individual's *shutaisei*. Moreover, the villagers focus on subordinating the boys who exhibit antisocial behavior. The adults sadistically treat the boys like dirt. For these reasons, the main protagonists face a double danger; the war and the sadistic villagers. Violence is rampant in their sphere.

‘Anyone caught stealing, starting fires or making a row will be beaten to death by the villagers. Don’t forget that you’re vermin here. Even so, we’ll shelter and feed you. Always remember that in this village you’re only useless vermin.’ (45)

In this story Ōe never associates the concept of “immaturity” with “purity.” The immature boys are locked up in an unprotected, hazardous situation and are forced to perform the dangerous work of disposing of dead, infected animals. The villagers let these children engage in a dangerous task.<sup>210</sup> Inside the village both animals and humans were suspected of being infected by the plague. In this story the plague is a metaphor for an unseen evil. Ōe describes an absurd situation in which the fanatic ideology of Imperial Japan spreads into the entire society. The reformatory boys are afraid of this invisible danger:

Dogs, cats, fieldmice, goats, even foals; scores of animal carcasses were piled up forming a small hill, quietly and patiently decomposing. The beasts’ teeth were

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 42–52, 42–43. The author illustrates the conflict between adults and children as a main topic. They are opposed to each other. The central character “I” criticizes the villagers’ illicit behavior. The author does not put too much of himself into the main characters. He also describes their juvenile behaviors so that the main character does not come across as a hero.

clenched, their pupils melting, their legs stiff. Their dead flesh and blood had turned into thick mucus making the yellow withered grass and mud around sticky, and—strangely full of life and holding out against the fierce onslaught of decay—there were countless ears. (52)

Unlike the dead bodies in *Lavish Are the Dead*, here, the author describes the dead animals in a grotesque manner. The stench of decomposing corpses induces nausea. The author depicts the death of living nature with a bloody reality. The protagonists are overwhelmed by feelings of dread.<sup>211</sup>

Most of the animals were rotting, and when the skin on their hindquarters came off in my hands I felt the germs from the beasts attack me in a swarm with horrible force, and a cold sweat ran down my back. (57)

The death evokes a great fear in the protagonists. They also have a high chance of infection because they are forced to dispose of the dead near the spot where plague has been found. They realize that the villagers die one after another because of uncontrolled infection. Ōe allegorically depicts the situation of the villagers as being unconsciously infected with the plague, the ideology of Imperial Japan. The author illustrates the plague as a metaphor for the destruction of *shutaisei* through a form of fearful death. The immature protagonists could be easily brainwashed because their sense of self is essentially vulnerable. In terms of ideology, the village where the main characters were forced to live was heavily polluted. The contamination rapidly diffuses the people inside the village:

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<sup>211</sup> Ōe Kezaburō, “bokujishin’ nonakano sensō 僕自身の中の戦争,” in *Genshukuna tsunawatari*, 122–131. Ōe explained the image of war for the postwar generation. He said that his image of the coming war was certainly distorted because of his excessive fear about it. Those who were active in the battlefield as soldiers, knew about death as a fact. Ōe said that he was excessively afraid of the war because he could not understand the war as a reality. He becomes hysteric when he develops his abstract image of the war.

Then they bent over, holding the flash light, and examined the body. In the circle of wan yellow light, there was a pale, scruffy, tiny head, the stiffened skin like a fruit rind, and under the nose a smear of dried blood. (64)

In this story Ōe describes a wartime situation from the viewpoint of people at the bottom of heap. No one protects these children, and so they constantly sense misery and great fear. Moreover, they never feel loved. The children suffer from the lack of affection essential for their proper growth. When the main character becomes attached to a girl whose mother died from the plague:

We went straight into the completely dark interior, and I silently dropped my trousers and lifted her skirt: I threw myself down on the girl's body. I groaned as my erect penis, like an asparagus stalk, caught in my underpants and was almost bent double. Then contact with the cold, dry, papery surface of her sex, and withdrawal with little shivers. I sighed deeply. (122)

The main character relates to his brother and the girl due to his strong affection toward them. In this story those who have a sense of self are able to feel love for another. The villagers trample on human emotion, such as family love or love between a man and woman. Moreover, they try to dehumanize the boys so that they are willing to massacre the enemies in the battlefield and colonies. The adult characters are unfeeling machines that mercilessly kill traitors. The adults never encourage the children to develop their *shutaisei*. They hammer the idea into the children that they should obey the moral precepts of the emperor system. As mentioned, the author depicts the people as symbolic icons of *shutaisei*. Certain characters live in a group without having their own identity, while the others show their individuality through negative attitudes against the absurdity of the fanatic

ideology. Ōe obviously feels sympathy for those who try to resist the village rules and defend themselves to the end.

The villagers prey on the weakness of children who are hungry for affection. The main character refuses to surrender to the villagers while other boys are ready to give in to authority. He is humiliated because he did not give up his identity. Only the central character is undefeated in the end. The hungry children throw aside their sense of justice to ease their hunger.<sup>212</sup> Ōe describes how their weakness stems from ignorance and inexperience. At the same time, he sharply criticizes the fact that the adults took advantage of their immaturity:

The village women brought in rice balls piled up on big plates and soup in an iron cooking pot. Then my comrades were given rice balls and bowlfuls of hot soup and started eating. It was certainly real food, the wholesome humane meal which we were never able to get during our long spell in the reformatory, during our time as children on our own. It was rice rolled by the hands of village women who lived free in the fields, meadows and streets, and soup which had been tasted by the tongues of ordinary housewives, not the cold mechanical meals cut off from affection and ordinary life. My comrades mulishly turned their backs on me as they devoured it, clearly feeling shame towards me. But I myself was ashamed of the saliva flowing in my mouth, my contracting stomach and the hunger which made my blood run dry through my whole body. (185)

As explained previously, Ōe puts the protagonists in a chart in which the main character relates to others in response to the strength of *shutaisei*. The headman, namely the emperor, is at the center of the chart. The characters that are close to the center do not have *shutaisei*. Those who do not give up their *shutaisei*, such as the main character, stand apart from the center. One can analyze how everyone relates to

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 42–52. Some critics identified the heroic image of the main character with Ōe's personal character. Iwata argues that Ōe does not identify himself into a genuine hero. The author does not indulge in reminiscences, illustrating a story of a child hero with a strong sense of equity. In this novel, Ōe objectively analyzes the immature protagonists in order to adapt himself to the harsh reality as an adult.

one another. For example, Minami is a facetious person who stands half way between the main character and the headman. He always smiles away his failures and plays the fool among the reformatory boys. He partially understands the truth of the war, however, his sense of self is very vulnerable. Minami gradually abandons his *shutaisei* and finally gets closer to the fanatic mass, guarding the absolute authority. Minami is intelligent and realizes that it is safer to live among the masses instead of keeping his *shutaisei*. He is an example of someone who never feels the humiliation when he has to sell out. This is only natural because Minami is an immature boy.

The main character distantly describes the foolishness of the adults who completely lost their sense of selves. In this sense, he always keeps his distance from the villagers who live like sheep. Ōe then contrasts an adult character to the fanatic mass. The deserter, unlike the other adults, expresses his own thoughts; Japan has no chance in the war. Among the reformatory boys there are those who feel an affinity toward him and those who do not want to understand his ideas. The imprudent boys still dream of becoming soldiers in the battlefield. The main character gradually understands the absurdity of participating in a losing battle. Furthermore, he raises a question whether he could kill without hesitation. Other boys, however, believe that according to the ideology they should bravely kill the enemy:

‘I wanted to join the cadets,’ the boy said, and there was a brief hush. A pensiveness charged with the desire for a cadet’s uniform had seized us all. ‘I didn’t want to go to war,’ the soldier suddenly said broodingly, ‘I didn’t want to kill people.’ This time a longer silence, a sense of intolerably uncomfortable discord, filled us. We had to hold back uncertain giggles that made our stomachs and backsides itch. ‘I want to go to war and kill people,’ said Minami. ‘At your age you don’t understand,’ the soldier said, ‘but then suddenly you do understand.’ (112)

During the War, many Japanese knew that their country would lose. However, it was a very dangerous to say it out loud. Those who disagreed with the operating principles of Imperial Japan were either imprisoned or executed. The author describes a deserter who was drafted against his will and depicts the foolery of the boys in his introduction of the deserter and their reaction to his statements. Certain protagonists show their immaturity through their inability to understand the truth of the battlefield. Most of them believe that the deserter's description about the war situation is unreliable:

'The war'll surely be over soon,' the soldier said, 'and it'll be the enemy's victory.' We were silent. It was all the same to us. But the soldier, nettled by our indifference, stuck to his views. 'I ought to hide for just a short while, until the war's over.' The deserter's voice was hot and feverish, like a prayer. 'Once the country surrenders, I'll be free.' ... 'We're certain to be defeated in the war,' the soldier repeated after a short while, then suddenly lifted his head, and looking round at us, he asked: 'Well? You're silent, but don't you feel disgraced by defeat?' (144–145)

The deserter is a unique protagonist among the adult characters. He is the only person who gently talks to the reformatory boys. Ōe depicts this conversation from the viewpoint of an outsider. Thus, he describes the situation near the end of the War. The author implies that he was only a child and, therefore, unable to understand the deteriorated War situation in which he lived. Additionally, Ōe describes the boy who is unable to analyze the social structure based on the emperor system. He uses this as an ironic means of illustrating the incomplete development of self during the War. These children were abandoned by society and by the villagers' constant infliction of corporal punishment. During the Second World War teachers took for granted that they could hit children when they misbehaved. They were not

only educators but also guardians in the emperor system. Like the villagers of this story, the teachers did not mind resorting to violence. Ōe critically describes the former Japanese educational system as that in which children's *shutaisei* was completely overrun by the adults' violence.

Although they both did everything in a group, the villagers were brutal unlike the gentle passengers of *Sheep*. The deserter broke the rules and thus the villagers wanted to kill him. The deserter does not tolerate violence. In addition, he is a person of *shutaisei* and hates the mass hysteria of Imperial Japan. He openly hopes Japan will lose the war and calmly explains the real situation to the boys. Only two boys understand him while the others remain in disbelief. A Korean boy and "T" realize that the deserter tells the truth of the war, and not the villagers. "T" gradually realizes that he and the Korean boy have a lot in common, particularly, in sense of self. The author relates these two icons to each other because of their strong *shutaisei*. This Korean boy is an independent person and a foreign element in the emperor system. Moreover, he is a symbolic icon of the Korean people, who were excluded from Japanese society and were at the bottom of hierarchical society.

Ōe contrasts two symbolic characters: a village headman and a Korean boy. The headman represents the emperor. This dominant character is an icon of absolute authority in a class-structured society. At the top of this hierarchy, the headman rules the whole village. In contrast, the author places foreign labors at the bottom. In doing so, Ōe refers to the fact that many Koreans were forced into labor during Japan's colonization of the Korean Peninsula. Additionally, Koreans were discriminated against in Japanese society even after the War. At points in the novel,

the author narrates from a Korean boy's perspective. Among the child protagonists is a brainy Korean boy, named Li, who always makes prudent decisions. The main character feels strongly attracted to him. The author contrasts the intelligent Korean boy and the other child protagonists in terms of their understanding the War. Unlike others, Li is wise and strong. When the main protagonist encounters Li, he wrestles this Korean boy. This hand-in-hand combat is the only one scene of this novel in which the author illustrates the beauty of powerful bodies.

The Korean boy's body had a strong smell and was incredibly heavy. ... But while he did that he couldn't move his body either, and he was breathing heavily. I stuck out my left arm, extended my fingers and scratched at the ground. I heard my brother's threatening groans; ... The Korean boy groaned, sagged, and slid off my body. Covering my nostrils with my hand, I stood up. Lying there, my enemy, with his round plump childish face, thick fleshy lips and narrow gentle eyes, looked up at me. (84)

Li is the wisest protagonist among the boys. The author objectively describes horrifying situations from his point of view. Li is able to describe the absurdity of lynching. Li was shocked that the villagers wanted to kill the deserter, and thus tried to hide him. The villagers panic because the outsider tries to escape from their closed society. They are obedient to the absolute authority and brutal toward foreign elements. Ōe makes Li give his opinion about the mass hysteria among the Japanese when the villagers try to kill the army deserter, a fellow Japanese.

'They kill each other,' Li said, filled with hatred. 'We hid him, but the Japanese kill each other. The MPs, the constables and the peasants with their bamboo spears; a load of people hunt down those who've got away into the mountains and stab them to death. I don't understand what they do.' (174)

As explained previously, the opposite character of the Korean boy is the village headman, who represents authority and wealth. Ōe projects the image of the emperor into this character. He controls the villager and has no direct hand in punishments and murder, but always wields supreme power over punishment. He lives in a hidden, secure place within the village:

The headman's house was surrounded by a black-and-white checkered wall which darkly blocked out the moonlight. Li and I hesitated before the low gate and looked each other in the eye. The only proper house in the village, it flaunted moral order before us. ... 'Every month me and my brother would sit on that earth floor for hours plaiting straw sandals. It was forced labour,' Li said as we ran. 'If we slacked, the old master would spit on me and my mother.' (147–148)

The headman establishes the village rules, severely monitoring the class-society for the sake of his own safety. The headman, as well as the villagers, exploits the underclass, the Korean people, gaining an advantage through forced labor. They are the committed racists and establish ranks among the people. They regarded the foreign laborers as dangerous elements in hierarchical society. However, they strongly feared a rebellion by the exploited foreigners. The villagers, particularly the headman, severely oppress the Korean people and treat them like animals. In the very last scene, the headman tells Li in a threatening tone that he should keep the village's secret, or other Koreans will die:

'If you disobey me,' the headman said callously, without listening to him, 'have you thought what'll happen to your settlement? We can kick you out any time, even tomorrow.' Li stuck it out. I saw the smooth pale faces among those piled up in the dark doorway grow agitated and disturbed. But they said nothing. (184)

In this way, Ōe ironically describes the emperor-centered society. Before being forced by the villagers, the children prepare to celebrate their own festival. This

festival, however, has nothing to do with the emperor. The Korean boy sings a folk song in his native language. The main character has great esteem for Li's leadership. Li is a prudent leader who encourages the boys through friendship, not violence. His actions are just the opposite of the headman's, nullifying any hierarchical relationship among them. This small isolated community celebrates its own festival:

'Do you know how to do it?' I asked Li. 'How to do the festival?' 'We'll cook the birds here and eat them,' he said. 'We'll sing and dance, and the festival'll go fine like that. It's always been that way.' 'Let's do it,' I said, and the comrades cheered. 'Let's have our festival.' 'Everyone, go and get firewood and food,' said Li. 'I'll get a big cooking pot.' ... 'I'll teach you the festival song,' Li was shouting, swinging his arms. 'We'll sing until morning.' ... Li began to sing in his mother tongue and, quickly picking up that simple refrain which stuck firmly in our minds, we chorused his song. (141–143)

The festival lasts only until the violence of the villagers and the plague overpowers them. The plague that is the ideology of imperial Japan spreads throughout the village and weakens *shutaisei*. The headman forces the children to keep the secret that a villager caught the plague. The protagonist shudders with humiliation:

We were going to be duped. And nothing could be more humiliating, more dumb and ignoble, than being 'duped'. That would make even the most miserable shabby faggot blush all over with shame. (180–181)

These children, except the central character, yield to the villagers because of their strong hunger. They all feel a sense of humiliation; however, only the main character attempts resisting the violence and humiliation and rejects selling his soul:

'We were abandoned by your village. Then we lived in the village where there might

have been an outbreak of plague. Then you came back and locked us up. I'm not going to keep quiet about it. I'll tell everything that was done to us and everything that we saw. You stabbed the soldier to death. I'll tell his family about it. You sent me back when I went to beg you to come and examine us. I'm going to tell all of it. I'm not going to keep quiet.' (182)

Nevertheless, his sense of justice is unhelpful. All he can do is to abscond from the village; nobody helps him or protects him during escape.

I was only a child, tired, insanely angry, tearful, shivering with cold and hunger (188–189)

After the Second World War, the GHQ introduced a new educational system in Japan with principles based on the new constitution. In 1948 the Fundamental Act of Education went to effect. The Japanese welcomed this democratic education in which children have the right to develop their *shutaisei*. They tried to forget the militaristic ideology and opportunistic teachings. The adults, particularly the teachers, wanted their immoral acts of brainwashing and corporal punishment to be nullified; the teachers were found not guilty by a war-crime Tribunal. No one was held responsible for the brutal mistreatment. However, the postwar generation maintains those teachers' crime in its memory because the incomplete establishment of *shutaisei* is strongly reflected in their growth process. Even today, Ōe actively continues to discuss the problem of education. He argues that education is at the core of establishing *shutaisei*, and that the development of children's *shutaisei* contributes to the foundation of true democracy.

### *Seventeen*

#### *The Emperor and Patriotism*

Ōe published the novella *Seventeen* in 1961. In this work he discusses

the problem of *shutaisei* in the younger generation in light of nationalism among other topics.<sup>213</sup> In particular, Ōe addresses the patriotic spirit of the postwar generation and the emperor system in modern Japanese society as seen from the perspective of a high school student. Ōe illustrates a youth who establishes his self as a man through his reliance on the old system of authority. He perceives the immature protagonist's nationalism as the drawback of the postwar generation. As a supporter of the postwar constitution, Ōe uses this character as a caricature to illustrate the problem of *shutaisei* of the younger generation. In *Seventeen*, Ōe illustrates Japan's political climate in the 1960s. This young nationalist radically lived and died for himself and the Emperor. As a supporter of the current constitution, Ōe illustrates this protagonist in a critical tone. At the same time, Ōe is strongly interested in the main protagonist, whose zeal for the Emperor overwhelms the adults. In other words, the author and the main protagonist have something in common in terms of their independent spirit. Ōe argues that he attempts to establish his *shutaisei*, but in a misguided way.

First, the author critically analyzes the main character's political immaturity. Moreover, the author focuses on his self. In particular, he plunges him to commit suicide in a cell for accomplishing his will independently. Ōe illustrates a caricature of postwar Japanese society in which an immature nationalist cannot encounter others who have as strong a *shutaisei* as he does. From this standpoint, it is also important that this main character eventually places distance toward the members

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<sup>213</sup> Luk van Haute, trans., *Two Novels. Seventeen and J* of Ōe Kenzaburō (New York: Blue Moon Books, 1996)

and the leader of the nationalistic group. He later prefers solitary activities because he cannot share his will with anyone, even in the right-wing group. In other words, he has such a strong desire to be independent that he decides to act alone. Therefore, Ōe's *Seventeen* should not merely be regarded as his sharp criticism of Japanese nationalists.

In this story the author connects the political question with the sexual problem and analyzes the psyche of a high school boy who, through his weakness, which is exploited by a right-wing gang. The author focuses on the process of physical maturation and mental immaturity of a teenager about to approach puberty. Additionally, Ōe illustrates the way in which the central character develops a sense of himself as a man by participating in political activities. The protagonist decides to become a patriot to overcome his sexual development problems. In doing so, Ōe questions the vulnerable *shutaisei* of the younger postwar generation and the fascistic character of right-wing groups whose male members unite as one.

Ōe's *Seventeen* is based on an actual incident that happened in October 1960. Yamaguchi Otoyā, a seventeen-year-old boy stabbed Asanuma Inejirō, the chairman of the Japan Socialist Party, at Hibiya Public Hall. Three weeks later, while in prison, Otoyā committed suicide. In his suicide note, Otoyā pledged his fidelity to the emperor: "Service for my country seven lives over. Long Live His Majesty the Emperor."<sup>214</sup> Otoyā increased his loyalty to the previous absolute authority instead of developing his own independent selfhood in postwar society. This incident motivated

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<sup>214</sup> Masao Miyoshi. Introduction to *Two Novels. Seventeen and J* of Ōe Kenzaburō (New York: Blue Moon Books, 1996), 7.

Ōe to write and publish *Seventeen*. Ōe was greatly shocked by the fact that a young boy murdered someone because of his allegiance to the emperor. He thought that Otoyō's act contradicted the spirit of the postwar Japanese constitution that declares each individual's sovereignty as a fundamental human right. The principle of the postwar Japanese constitution is the complete opposite of the old constitution that defines the Japanese people as the emperor's subjects. He believed that Otoyō was too immature to develop an independent self, known as *shutaisei*. As a consequence, he invoked the authority of the emperor to be independent.<sup>215</sup> Specifically, Otoyō was initially satisfied with his participation in a nationalistic group. To understand *Seventeen*, we must realize that the isolated boy comes to devote himself to the group's political activities. In this novella, Ōe clearly demonstrated the main character's homoerotic fascination with the right-wing gang, Sakakibara, and his conflation of brutish right-wing politics with the glorification of sex and violence. Their official intention is to defend the emperor system in postwar society. However, their real intention is to revive a fascistic regime such as Japanese militarism during the Second World War.

The emperor system has been a politically sensitive issue in modern Japanese society.<sup>216</sup> As mentioned previously, *Seventeen* directly reflects the

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<sup>215</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō "Sengosedaito kenpō," 132–136.

<sup>216</sup> Introduction of *Seventeen* by Masao Miyoshi, Luk van Haute, trans., *Two Novels. Seventeen and J* of Ōe Kenzaburō (New York: Blue Moon Books, 1996), 5–17, 7. In December of 1960, a writer named Fukazawa Shichirō wrote a bizarre dream-tale about Emperor Hirohito's family, describing their public decapitation in a revolution. Another right-wing youth—he too happened to be seventeen years old—was enraged by what in his eyes amounted to a blasphemy and found his way into the home of Shichirō's publisher. Failing to find the publisher, he attacked his wife with a knife and killed her maid.

problems in the political climate at the time when it was published. In 1961, Ōe's sequel to *Seventeen*, *Seijishōnen shisu* 政治少年死す (*The Political Youth Dies*), went unpublished because of a right wing group's threat to the publisher and author. It is obvious that in these two works Ōe clearly demonstrates that the main character's loyalty to the emperor is supported only by a groundless ideology masking his homosexual lust for the charismatic group leader. Consequently, the right-wing reaction was so instantaneous and persistent that the publisher issued an apology in a literary magazine. However, this cessation contradicted Ōe's principles.<sup>217</sup> Additionally, *Seventeen* clearly reflects the political circumstances of the security affairs that triggered the firestorm during that time.<sup>218</sup> In that period, the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, which concerned Japan's national identity in terms of the stationing of the U.S. military forces, was a highly-charged political question. The extreme right-wingers regarded this opportunity as an opportunity to turn Japan's own possible re-militarization into the former Japanese militarism. Ōe addressed this

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 7–8. Ōe received threatening letters from ultra-nationalistic gangsters who were infuriated by his insults to the emperor and his depiction of their young hero as a compulsive masturbator. Someone hurled rocks at his study; a dozen right-wing thugs screeched menacing in front of his house; and midnight phone calls never stopped. Ōe's thoroughly frightened publisher offered apologies to his readers in the March issue of the journal, alienating Ōe this time from the readers on the left. In the face of threats from the right and contempt from the left, Ōe was suicidally depressed for two years between 1961 and 1963.

<sup>218</sup> (Napier 1991, 148–149) “The events of 1960 make Mishima's and Ōe's publication date very natural. These events can all be subsumed under the heading of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty Disturbances. Relatively unnoticed in the United States, the renewal of the security treaty between the two countries was a time of great political conflict in Japan between the left, which saw nonrenewal as an opportunity to expel the humiliating presence of the American military, and the right, which believed that for reasons of security, the treaty must be renewed, and the even further right, which saw it as a chance to reopen discussion about Japan's own possible militarization. In other words, the security treaty became an opportunity for national self-examination of what it was to be Japanese in the postwar world.”

anachronism through the character of a young boy fascinated by the violent group's behavior in postwar Japanese society.

It is significant that, Mishima Yukio and Ōe published well-known works that represented their different political views in the same year.<sup>219</sup> Mishima published his novella *Yūkoku* 憂国 (*Patriotism*) in 1961, which means that both authors shared an interest in *shutaisei* in terms of the responsibility for one's life and death. In *Seventeen*, Ōe addresses the patriotic spirit in light of the immaturity of the postwar generation. Mishima, on the other hand, discusses patriotism in terms of the pride of being a Japanese in postwar Japanese society despite the fact that the story was set nearly thirty years ago. In *Yūkoku*, Mishima writes about the February 26, 1936 incident when a group of nationalistic officers of the Japanese military conducted a coup and assassinated the premier. In this novel, Mishima depicts the double suicide of a lieutenant and his wife, who killed themselves because of their loyalty to the emperor. The lieutenant, Takayama, commits *seppuku* as an honorable *samurai*, and his wife, who had devoted her life to her husband, kills herself to remain true to him. In this work, Mishima illustrated the relationship of marital love and loyalty to the emperor. In his real life, Mishima devoted himself to training his body and formed a private patriotic group. In 1970, Mishima also committed a *samurai* style suicide after addressing the SDF personnel at an army post in Ichigaya.

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 148. "The stories make a kind of matched but obverse pair, from the timing of their publication through similarity of their subjects, to their strikingly different treatments of sexuality, death, and the emperor—or rather death for the emperor, since both protagonists end up giving their lives for him. "Patriotism" seems to glorify right-wing emperor worship and the beauties of self-sacrifice for the imperial house; "Seventeen" seems to attack the right wing, since its protagonist's suicide is depicted grotesquely."

The relationship between the author and the main protagonist in Ōe's *Seventeen* and Mishima's *Patriotism* differ.<sup>220</sup> Mishima narrated his story from the viewpoint of an outsider. In *Patriotism*, Mishima describes the physical beauty of the protagonists. The lieutenant and his young wife are physically beautiful and mature enough to love each other. In *Yūkoku*, a married couple has sex before they commit suicide, which is related to their loyal sentiments toward the imperial household. Mishima depicted a man and woman who have great sex because they know that they are going to die. In *Yūkoku*, the intercourse is heterosexual. In married life, Takayama's wife feels a great sense of satisfaction in being dominated by her husband who in turn loves his wife as her trainer. These two protagonists want to experience sexual ecstasy immediately before they die and, they believe, consummate their love not in life but in death. Mishima grotesquely demonstrated that Takayama and his wife experience their best moment in death, glorifying and conflating sex and violence.

The voice in Ōe's *Seventeen* stands in direct contrast to that of Mishima. Ōe narrates the story from the first-person perspective, but still distances himself from the high school student who devotes himself to right-wing, political activity.<sup>221</sup> There is great difference between the author and main character in their

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid. "In style, "Patriotism" and "Seventeen" differ greatly. Indeed, in literary terms they belong to two different worlds. As will be recalled from Chapter Three, "Patriotism," the story of a young couple's ritual suicide arising out of the rebellion of February 26, 1936, is a modern version of romance and is written in a florid, ornate style. In contrast, the style of "Seventeen," the account of a young man's conversion to right-wing assassin and his final suicide, might be called grotesque realism with its pathetic, all-too-realistic protagonist, and its grim, quotidian imagery."

<sup>221</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, *Ōe Kenzaburō sakkajishinwokatari* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2007), 75–76. Ōe said that he received a book report from Mishima Yukio who read Ōe's *Seventeen*. Mishima

understanding of one's self in postwar society. Ōe openly supported postwar Japanese democracy and criticized narrow-minded nationalism; hence he cannot be identified with his protagonist.<sup>222</sup> Unlike other early works, in *Seventeen*, Ōe does not base his narrative subject in the relationship between the main character and others in which the relationship between the author and protagonist is established. The narrative structure of *Seventeen* is not wide-ranging; instead, it is quite simple. Ōe created the protagonist in *Seventeen* as a caricature through which he critically analyzed patriotic ardor. In particular, Mishima never offers a comparative perspective in *Yūkoku*. In contrast, the main character of *Seventeen* raises intelligent questions about social circumstances. In other words, Ōe relates the main character's thinking process with the author's criticism of Japanese society. Ōe's *Seventeen*, therefore, should be interpreted as a caricature of Japanese postwar society, even though it is written from a first-person perspective.

First, in *Seventeen*, Ōe discusses the problem of sex and violence in terms of the mental weakness and physical immaturity of the younger Japanese generation. Specifically, a lonely high school student suffers from an inferiority complex, but he has great eagerness to be a strong man. He depicted the patriotic spirit of the high school student in light of his extreme anxiety about his physical maturation as a man. He develops himself as a man through the glorification of sex

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pointed out that Ōe secretly expressed his sympathy to the ultra-nationalism. Ōe now thinks that Mishima's view was much to the point. He understood the idea of Yamaguchi to some extent. However, he has attempted to overcome his sympathy to the nationalism and undertake the spirit of the current constitution.

<sup>222</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, *Subaru henshūbu Ōe Kenzaburō saihakken* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2001), 63. In an interview with Inoue Hisashi and Komori Yōichi, Ōe said that he ironically illustrated an anti-democrat as he earnestly supported the spirit of democracy.

and violence that represents the aesthetics of *Yūkoku*. Ōe critically analyzed the sexual desire of the naïve protagonist who attempts to gain his self merely by training his muscled body and enhancing his lust.

For a moment I stare in amazement at my muscles. They're like new rubber straps. My muscles. I grab my own muscular flesh, like my sister said. Joy wells up inside me. I smile. I'm a Seventeen, with no love for anybody but myself. My triceps, my biceps, my thigh muscles, they're all still young and immature, but with training they'll grow unfettered into thick sinewy muscle. (3)

The boy realizes his physical maturation in terms of his muscle development and ejaculatory force. He is aware that he will be a strong man if he can strengthen his physique. However, he also suffers from emotional insecurity and is disgusted with himself because he is strongly concerned about his appearance. His physical maturation and frustrated mind cause an imbalance:

It's not that it's ugly or swarthy; it is simply a disgusting face. For starters, the skin is too thick. It's white and thick like the skin of a pig. I like a face with thin, tanned skin stretched tight over good clean cheekbones, like a runner's face, but under my skin there's a mass of flesh and fat. It gives the impression that the one fat part is my face. Then there's my narrow forehead. With my coarse hair pressing in on it, it looks even smaller than it is. My cheeks are swollen, but my lips are small and red, and look like a girl's. My eyebrows are heavy and short, growing without life, and have no clear shape, and my eyes are narrow and tend to roll back in my head, showing too much white around the bottoms, which gives me a nasty look. And my ears. My ears are those fleshy "lucky Buddha ears" that stick straight out from the sides of my head. (5-6)

The author describes the disconnection between the ideal and the reality of the main protagonist. This gap creates a strong sense of isolation and delusion that increase his violence. This high school student differs from the main characters of Ōe's early works who are not aggressive and never intend to use violence toward

others. The author focuses on the protagonist's sense of alienation about belonging neither at home nor at school. He overreacts to others' behaviors because he has not developed his self:

Ah, that! people probably say. That guy's a full-time masturbator. Look at the color of his face. Look at those cloudy eyes. They probably look at me and spit, like they're seeing something disgusting. I'd like to kill them. I'd like to machine-gun them to death, every last one of them. I say it out loud. "I want to kill them. With a machine gun, every last one of them. I want to kill them all. If only I had a machine gun!" ... What a liberating feeling of freedom it would be, I think spitefully, if my face could disappear this same way from the eyes of all the others who look at me and laugh. (7)

Ōe emphasizes the main protagonist's self-conscious personality. His sense of self is still so vulnerable that he always feels slighted. In other words, he cannot establish his *shutaisei* because he thinks that his presence is unappreciated by others. One day, the protagonist involuntarily urinates and becomes an object of scorn in his class. Ōe illustrates the sense of humiliation of the main character regarding his immature body. In *Seventeen*, the author depicts the body as an icon of a physical affliction:

I'm dizzy and mawkish, awkwardly frightened, puffy fat, and reeking of sweat like I'm rotting away even as I run this miserable race. The others slobber on themselves like dogs, they puff out their bellies as they watch me, but I know that what they really see is the naked me, the me that's red-faced and trembling with fear, me addicted to obscene fantasies, me masturbating, me anxious, the me who's coward and liar. ... I think I'm not going to smile, but I look back, wearing a vague little grin, and discover the long black trail I've made by pissing in my pants. (44–45)

As the story is based on an actual incident, Ōe analyzes Otoyā's motives and determines that it was mainly his awkward age that induced him to do what he

did. The central character gradually becomes aggressive toward others because of his sexual frustration and shame about his physical and mental immaturity. Moreover, it is important that Ōe contrasts the main character with his classmates, who are mostly boring people. They mock his peculiar behavior, so he feels a sense of rejection. On the other hand, the main protagonist is never interested in what they speak of in the classroom. In other words, he is isolated because he hates their stupid, herd behavior. In his school life, he has no chance to get to know someone who also has uniqueness or a particular personality. From this standpoint, the main character of *Seventeen* shares similarity with Ōe's other main characters in terms of high levels of self-reliance.

He, therefore, gradually takes an interest in politics, despite being incapable of understanding world politics. His extreme grudge against society is triggered by the deficiency of logical thinking.

I'm stuck. I go to the most progressive high school in Tokyo. We even have demonstrations. When one of my class friends starts badmouthing the SDF I come to their defense, thinking about my sister working as a nurse in an SDF hospital, but still I think I want to be in the left wing. And when it comes to feelings I fit right in with the Left. I've been in marches, and once I got myself called in by the social studies teacher, who's advisor to the school paper, because I wrote a letter to the editor saying high school students ought to participate in the movement against the American bases. (10)

The crucial point in this paragraph is that he argues with his sister over politics. Ōe describes the protagonist's sister as her own woman. She is financially independent and has a healthy self-confidence. Seemingly, the main character has a sense of inferiority toward this female protagonist. In the debate with his sister, he is

frustrated by the irresolvable discrepancy and, as a result, suffers from unfocused anger:

But where is this enemy of mine? My enemy, is he my father? Is my enemy my sister? Or the American soldiers from the base? The men in the SDF? The Conservative politicians? Wherever my enemies are, I'll kill them. I'll kill them, I say with the same low cries. (18)

The female characters serve an important purpose in *Seventeen*. Ōe interprets the main character's self-development from the standpoint of both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. The protagonist completely rejects the relationship with them. His classmates' eyes, especially those of the female students, irritate him, and he hates them. He never wants to attract female students' attention. In fact, he is not interested in establishing a relationship with women despite his strong libido because his ideal love object is not a woman. Gradually, he realizes that he has a strong desire for a homosexual relationship with a great man.

In this respect, it is important that in *Seventeen* Ōe addresses the father-son relationship, one of the most important themes in all of his works.<sup>223</sup> The father of the main character, a vice-principle of a school, does not communicate with family members. His father and brother have little presence at home. Here Ōe describes the diminished authority of fathers, who are less represented in the postwar generation. In particular, Ōe depicts one of the most significant social changes in postwar society in light of family. Before and during the Second World War, the male

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 96-100. Ōe explained that he has tried to picture of a father figure in his works. For Ōe, the father figure is necessarily associated with the emperor. Ōe mentioned about the central character of *Seventeen* that he could understand the feeling of Yamaguchi partly. He has repeatedly discussed this important motif in his later works as well.

head was an absolute authority to other family members, as the Emperor was to the people. The introduction of the postwar constitution revolutionized the feudalistic family system in Japanese society. The protagonist has a strong grievance against his father and his brother who builds a wall around himself as a dropout from society. As noted, his sister is depicted in contrast to these two men.

The main character longs for a strong father figure, which is also his ideal object in a homosexual relationship. Ōe focuses on the frustration of this main character seeking a father figure in his growth. One day, the protagonist encounters an ideal person, a rightist leader named Sakakibara, who is looking for a youth willing to devote himself to right-wing activity in a political organization.

Before long, like it's a dream, my ears start to pick up the words of malice and hate which I myself am slinging at the others of the real world. In fact, it is Sakakibara who's speaking these words, but his expressions of malice and hate are exactly the same as those in my own heart. Sakakibara is my soul screaming. The sensation makes me shiver. Then, with all the strength in my body, I start to listen and take in his cries. ... The leader on stage is reflected in my hysterical eyes as a radiant golden being appearing from the darkness. I keep on clapping and cheering. Such is Justice! For the cruelly treated, for the wounded weak soul. Such is Justice! (53–55)

When Sakakibara affronts the communist parties on the street, his thoughts are so simple and clear-cut that the central character believes his statements to be valid. The protagonist believes that he finally has found an absolute authority justifying his unfocused anger. In this moment, the immature boy feels that he is capable of entering the adult world:

Adults now look at me the way they look at other adults who possess an independent personality. I feel like I've wrapped my weak, petty self inside strong armor, forever

to be hidden from the eyes of others. It's the armor of the Right. (55–56)

The patriotic spirit and loyalty toward the emperor give the main character a strong sense of justice and *shutaisei*. Sakakibara also satisfies the main character's homoerotic fascination with a great man.

“Thank you,” he says. “I've been waiting for a pure and brave patriotic youngster like you. You are the son of Japan who can fulfill the Heart of His Majesty the Emperor. It is you, the chosen boy with the true Japanese soul.” (56)

Sakakibara uses his charisma and takes advantage of the main protagonist's immaturity. This high school student protagonist is now filled with feelings of superiority, even though he is only mediocre. Sakakibara declares that the emperor has chosen him as a genuine Japanese patriot. More importantly, Sakakibara gives him an opportunity to build self confidence as a man. Sakakibara asks him whether he is bothered by sexual needs and recommends a brothel. The main character does not sleep with a young girl but he allows her only to fellate him. He calls her a “female slave” and leaves her immediately after he ejaculates on her cheeks.<sup>224</sup> He plainly scorns women because they are mere objects of his masturbation. This exactly reflects the values of old Japanese militarism. It is Sakakibara, an ideal man, who is his ideal partner in homosexual love.

I'm convinced that Kunihiro Sakakibara gives me preferential treatment. And I think I respond sufficiently to the passion he pours into me. This is how he puts it: “The way we pound our ideology into you is like pouring sake into a ready bottle.

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<sup>224</sup> (Miyoshi and van Haute 1996, 66-69)

Your bottle doesn't break as we pour. This pure, beautiful wine doesn't spill. You are the chosen young man, and the Right is a chosen existence. By now this must be as clear as the sun, even to the blind of this world. Such is Justice." (62)

Sakakibara warmly welcomes this high school student to initiate him to the right-wing group. Ōe focuses on the main character's fascination with a symbolic character. Note that the main protagonist is initially not interested in the rightist consciousness. At first, he just wants to develop his strong independent-mindedness so that he can establish *shutaisei* as an adult. In order to do so, he unconsciously longs for a concrete figure as a model. He cannot find it in the left-wing group because there is no idol worship in it. However, he finally encounters a great symbol, the Emperor in the right-wing group. In this respect, the student has the illusion that he gains independence:

The uniform of the Imperial Way is modeled on the Nazi SS uniform<sup>225</sup>. It gives me strength when I walk the streets, and an intense, memorable joy. I feel like I've gone to heaven, and my body is covered with an unyielding armor, like the carapace of a beetle. The tender, weak, vulnerable, unshapely creature inside is invisible to others. ... But now, instead of seeing what's inside me, others see the uniform of the Right. More than that, it instills them with fear. Behind the impenetrable curtain of the right-wing uniform I can hide forever the soul of an easily wounded young man. (66)

Here, Ōe slightly changes the topic in that the central character realizes a huge difference between the postwar generation and the generation that lived through the Second World War. In this paragraph, Ōe implies that the postwar generation lost the will to live or die on behalf of the emperor. He certainly criticizes

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 10 "The casual remarks on the Nazi uniform and the Imperial Way Party discipline serve as a prophetic blueprint for Yukio Mishima's last novels as well as his life as it draws closer to his suicide ten years later."

the historical fact that in the Japanese Imperial army, countless young people were persuaded to die by the glamorization of death for the homeland. According to Ōe, the postwar constitution nullifies such nationalistic ideology because it guarantees the people their own rights and responsibilities. In this respect, Otoyama and the main protagonists of *Seventeen* are a complete anachronism. The main character's reverence for the emperor enhances his self-confidence, but what he thereby establishes is not his *shutaisei* but his violent nature. He also irresponsibly begins to study Japanese history seriously regarding the imperial household without acknowledging the fact that he is growing up in a postwar Japanese society as a member of a democratic society. In *Seventeen*, Ōe analyzes the contemporaneity of postwar Japanese society from the viewpoint of a young nationalist who represents both Ōe's other self and his opposite. Here in *Seventeen*, the author turns the main protagonist's loneliness to his advantage so that he can relate his soul-searching through social criticism. As explained previously, we can compare him to other Ōe's protagonists who are isolated in society because of their strong self:

I am driven by a passionate desire to learn more about His Majesty. Until now, I had always thought that the only people who have any relationship with the Emperor are those who were determined to die for him during the war, like my brother's and older generations. Whenever I heard people from the war generation talk about the Emperor, I felt jealousy and antipathy. But that was wrong. For I am a child of the Right. I am a child of His Majesty the Emperor. (69)

Ōe's early works dealt with two main characteristics. First, Ōe used the adolescent protagonists to address the trait of the postwar generation in terms of immaturity. Second, Ōe perfected his writing technique to publish outstanding war

literature written by a representative of the postwar generation who did not experience the tragedy of the War first-hand. In *Lavish Are the Dead* and the first part of *Sheep*, Ōe uses a first-person viewpoint and superimposes his sufferings onto his protagonists. Later, he slightly changes his narrative perspective that enables him to more objectively analyze his contemporaries in postwar society. In *Nip the Buds*, *Shoot the Kids*, Ōe writes his wartime memories in the form of an allegory. Furthermore, in *Seventeen*, he describes a patriotic boy who sharply contrasts with the author, who advocates the spirit of the postwar constitution. Thus, Ōe discusses the defective *shutaisei* of the postwar generation in the form of a caricature.

In *Hiroshima Notes*, Ōe experiences a turning point in terms of the relationship between the author and the narrative subject. I discuss the way in which the narrative of *Hiroshima Notes* differs from other stories. I explain that Ōe changes the narrative, but his literary motif remains basically unchanged.

### *Hiroshima Notes*

#### *The Reality and the Images of the War*

*Hiroshima Notes* (1965)<sup>226</sup>, the first major nonfiction writing of Ōe, marks a turning point of the author's literary career. In this work, Ōe questions how, as a representative of the postwar generation, he can develop *shutaisei*, or his sense of self. Through his experiences in Hiroshima, Ōe addresses the problem of *shutaisei* commonly encountered by members of Japanese postwar society. Most survivors considered the tragedy not to be a past event and carried the pain and fear throughout

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<sup>226</sup> David L. Swain and Toshi Yonezawa, trans., *Hiroshima Notes of Ōe Kenzaburō* (New York: Grove Press, 1996)

their lives. The author focuses on those who attempted to improve their situation and worked hard to solve the problem of nuclear weapons in postwar society. While in the bombed out areas of Hiroshima, Ōe expresses his misgivings that the Japanese public would gradually forget Hiroshima when the economy grew and became stable. In this documentary, Ōe attempts to describe the truth of ground zero from the viewpoint of A-bomb survivors. He discusses the ongoing difficulties of postwar society with “others” who actually survived the tragedy of the atomic bomb. In *Hiroshima Notes*, Ōe argues that each citizen should make an independent effort to establish democracy.

As previously mentioned, Ōe’s prior works were written from the perspective of an author who did not experience the War. The main characters in these works are still young and lonely, and Ōe projected his self-portrait onto them. In particular, Ōe tried to create his early works by showing that he observed the postwar society from the viewpoint of an inexperienced man. As the title of one of his famous novels *Okuretekita seinen* 遅れてきた青年 (*The Youth Who Came Late*, 1962) suggests, Ōe was only too aware that he was not directly involved in the serious conditions of the War, even though its memories cast a shadow on his psyche. When Ōe began writing in the 1950s, he had a strong sense that he must not seem to contradict his predecessors who actually experienced the War’s horrors.<sup>227</sup> Ōe knew

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<sup>227</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, Subaru henshūbu *Ōe Kenzaburō saihakken* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2001), 73. In an interview with Komori Yōichi and Inoue Hisashi, Ōe named the Japanese writers he respects. Noma Hiroshi 野間宏 (1915–1991) took antiwar stance and, therefore, was subject to punishment. Shiina Rinzō 椎名麟三 (1911–1973) and Haniya Yutaka 埴谷 雄高 (1909–1997) joined the Japanese Communist Party and were imprisoned. Hotta Yoshie 堀田善衛 (1918–1998) and Takeda Taijun 武田泰淳 (1912–1976) stayed on the battle line in China at the end of the

well the great distinction between him and his predecessors and respected their contributions. Ōe said that his predecessors' strength was a strong logical basis to analyze politics and society, and they had a wealth of experiences during the War. In comparison, Ōe was only ten when the war ended.<sup>228</sup> He further stated that his personal, depressive feelings were projected onto his early works, and he attempted to overcome his immaturity by improving his writing skills.<sup>229</sup> He hoped that his writing would add to his predecessors' works, Noma Hiroshi 野間宏 or Shiina Rinzō 椎名麟三 for example, through his understanding of the history of postwar Japan in literature.

When his early work was published, critics praised his outstanding talent and writing technique. Ōe stated that his initial literary projects were successful, until his son Hikari was born in 1963.<sup>230</sup> At that time, Ōe began visiting Hiroshima. Hikari's birth in 1963 strongly influenced Ōe's report about Hiroshima. This event drove him to despair, and he had to reconsider his literary motif and narrative structure. He tried to extricate himself from this critical situation by publishing a fictional work, *Kojintekina taiken* 個人的な体験 (*A Personal Matter*, 1964) and a

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Second World War. Ōoka Shōhei 大岡昇平 (1909–1988) was held captive from the front line in Philippines.

<sup>228</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, *Ōe Kenzaburō sakkajishinwokatari* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2007), 61–62. Ōe said that the primary concern of his predecessors was how to live in a democratized society after undergoing the hardship during the War. They were all intellectual persons and commanded attention to the socialist realism. Ōe said that his starting point as a writer was essentially different from their literary contribution; however, he remembered that they adopted a kind attitude toward him.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 60. He also said that he was supposed to deal with reality after he was driven to the depths of despair when Hikari was born in 1963.

nonfiction work, *Hiroshima Notes*. After publishing these monumental works, Ōe could no longer tell a story from the perspective of a frustrated, young protagonist. Having a handicapped son, Ōe had to make decisions about the questions of life and death. This experience made him write about the variations in the way people live and die. In this way, the author asked himself how he could relate his personal experience of having a disabled child to the nuclear disaster. Through his self-questioning, Ōe established that he was a thinking individual and in this way demonstrated his *shutaisei* as a postwar Japanese writer.

In *Hiroshima Notes* Ōe's primary concerns were determining whether each Japanese individual established *shutaisei* and defining the true democratic process in the modern world.<sup>231</sup> He realized that he should dig through the history of Japan's modernization and defeat in the War for the central themes of his literary works. He considered Japan's defeat in 1945 to have resulted from inappropriate nationalism and militarism that arose with the beginning of the Meiji Restoration. Since then, Japan rapidly developed a capitalistic structure in the name of modernization. However, Ōe believed that the Japanese government did not implement the democratic system, particularly in terms of the *shutaisei* of the individual, even though democracy is one of the most relevant components of the modernization of a country.<sup>232</sup>

As previously mentioned, Ōe consistently looked upon the problem of

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<sup>231</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "Kōdōshano sōzōryoku 行動者の想像力," in *Kakujidaino sōzōryoku 核時代の想像力* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2007), 247–267.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

*shutaisei* in relation to the imagination. In *Hiroshima Notes*, Ōe relies on his imagination in the way that he builds up an intimate relationship with “others,” the A-bomb survivors, even though he does not have the ability to identify with them. Moreover, Ōe tries to establish himself in relationship to them. In doing so, he attempts to analyze the contemporary society from his own perspective. Finally, Ōe relates the past tragedy to the potential future threat. In 1968, he gave a series of lectures titled *Kakujidaino sōzōryoku* 核時代の想像力 (*The Power of Imagination in the Nuclear Age*) at Tokyo’s Kinokuniya hall. These lectures interpreted the function of literature in the contemporary world. Ōe explained the way in which a storywriter should employ the term “imagination” with reference to the nuclear disaster in the real world.<sup>233</sup> He stressed that an author could best recreate the real world with the power of imagination and added that the term “imagination” is not a fantasy but the proper way to rebuild society. Furthermore, Ōe explained the correlation between each person’s imagination and *shutaisei*. He identified the power of imagination along with the power of words, both of which connect individuals to one another.<sup>234</sup> He explained that each individual should understand the image of the whole society in order to establish his/her self as well as communicate with others. Only then could the individual relate his *shutaisei* with the real world by enhancing the power of

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<sup>233</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, “Sōzōryokunosekaitowananka 想像力の世界とはなにか?,” in *Kakujidaino sōzōryoku* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2007), 299–321.

<sup>234</sup> John Whitter Treat, *Writing ground zero: Japanese literature and the atomic bomb* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1995), 241 “Each of Ōe’s subsequent trips to Hiroshima was an attempt to continue such encounters with the very special kind of men and women that the atrocity had ironically produced. Moreover, each trip was an attempt to understand more of himself, both what he is and what he is not, by comparing his own life with theirs. The discovery of Hiroshima Man is Ōe’s discovery of Other.”

imagination.<sup>235</sup>

*Hiroshima Notes* appeared in book form in 1965. Originally Ōe had contributed these articles about Hiroshima to a monthly magazine *SEKAI* 世界, a publication for liberal scholars and writers. Ōe had covered the then situation of the A-bomb survivors, between August 1963 and December 1964. When Ōe first visited Hiroshima, almost twenty years had passed since the bombing and, as the author noticed, the former bombsite was being steadily reconstructed.<sup>236</sup> Despite the construction he witnessed the harsh conditions of the survivors. Many still suffered from the effects of the bomb's radiation. Moreover, the bombing was embedded so deeply in people's memory that it resulted in serious psychological damage among victims. The author realized that he also suffered from mental damage caused by the atomic bomb, namely through his disillusionment about the negotiations on the nuclear strategy during the Cold War. With the conflicting interests of various nations involved, banning of nuclear testing was difficult to institute. This deeply hurt the author, who heard the noises made by political parties at the bomb's memorial park.

In this nonfiction writing, Ōe's narrative self comes to the fore. The protagonist, in this case, Ōe himself, of *Hiroshima Notes* is a mature adult who investigates the lives of A-bomb survivors.<sup>237</sup> This first-person, adult narrator seems

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<sup>235</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, "Sōzōryokunosekaitowananka," in *Kakujidaino sōzōryoku* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2007), 311–319.

<sup>236</sup> Ōe visited Hiroshima in the summer of 1960 for the first time and attended the annual ceremony. He published an essay in a local newspaper, calling his first trip to Hiroshima a valuable experience. In the epilogue of *Hiroshima Notes*, Ōe stated that he was not capable of understanding what Hiroshima was for him.

<sup>237</sup> (Treat 1995, 230) „He is not, then, a victim-writer who has sought to convey a lived

to differ from the other frustrated, young protagonists of Ōe's biographical works in light of their age, for instance. However, they have certain similarities. As explained previously, in his prior works, Ōe attempted to establish his singular *shutaisei* in the relationship between the author and the solitary protagonists who attempt to build human relationships with "others." On this point, the central character of *Hiroshima Notes* also reinforces a sense of isolation with his arrival in Hiroshima. It is another sign of the main protagonist's strong thirst for relationship-building with others who also have a firm *shutaisei*. In particular, in *Hiroshima Notes*, Ōe re-examines his position as a postwar Japanese writer through his encounters with the A-bomb victims. Through this process, Ōe reconnects his soul-searching to an analysis of postwar Japanese society. In *Hiroshima Notes*, Ōe manifests that he is deeply involved in the problems of the coming nuclear war as a representative of modern Japanese writers.

As mentioned previously, in *Hiroshima Notes*, the author seems to be completely identified as the main protagonist, specifically since he narrates the story from a first person point of view. In 1963, Ōe covered the international anti-atomic and hydrogen bomb meeting in Hiroshima as a correspondent.<sup>238</sup> In the prologue of *Hiroshima Notes*, he confesses that the important motif of his trips to Hiroshima was his personal experience:

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experience to a non-victim audience, but is rather himself a reader of history inversely attempting to comprehend a situation directly accessible only to its immediate victims."

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. "Ōe's position appears to be that at least some part of what is significant about Hiroshima can be reported in the clear and orderly language of the essay, and it was ostensibly as a journalist-and not as novelist-that he traveled to that city."

Perhaps it is improper to begin a book with a reference to one's personal experience. But for myself and Mr Ryosuke Yasue, an editor, fellow worker, and companion, all the essays about Hiroshima in this book touch the innermost depth of each of our hearts. Hence, our personal experiences when we first went to Hiroshima in the summer of 1963 are pertinent. For myself, there was no hope of recovery for my first son, who was on the verge of death and lying in an incubator. Mr Yasue had just lost his first daughter. A mutual friend had hung himself in Paris, overwhelmed by the specter of a final world war and of impending nuclear doom—an image that daily flooded his consciousness. (17)

Ōe explains that *Hiroshima Notes* is not just a report of the former bombed area. In this work he writes about the process of his recovery from his personal crisis through his experiences in Hiroshima.<sup>239</sup> When Ōe started his coverage of Hiroshima, he struggled with a personal moral and ethical problem, that of having been forced to take responsibility for the life and death of Hikari. Ōe said that, during his stay in Hiroshima, he attempted to seek out the meaning of the birth of Hikari.<sup>240</sup> Although Ōe was given the right to kill Hikari by a doctor, he made a decision to accept the responsibility of raising his handicapped son instead. Unlike the protagonists of his early fictional works, the central character of *Hiroshima Notes* grapples with the personal questions of life and death. Through this, the author deepens his consideration of human nature.<sup>241</sup> The author looks back on his

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<sup>239</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, *Hiroshimano seimeinoki* ヒロシマの「生命の木」 (Tokyo: Nihonhōsōshuppankyōkai, 1994), 20–21, 198–199. In 1989, a group of NHK and Ōe started to make a special program titled “Does the World Still Remember Hiroshima?” They spent two years on it. Ōe visited famous persons to talk about the nuclear war and the postwar history. Ōe's son, Hikari, was deeply impressed by the close reporting and gathered material about Hiroshima. As a result, Hikari wrote a requiem and contributed it to this special TV program.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>241</sup> (Treat 1995, 230-231) “*Notes* thus qualifies, though not without ironic difficulties, as a humanist manifesto to be read as a work which, like most atomic-bomb literature, seeks to (re-)define our character and place in a century dominated not only by our past, but also potentially by our future crimes of atrocity against ‘human’ selves.”

upbringing in the postwar society when he met the wounded survivors in Hiroshima.

Ōe addresses the meaning of his task as a writer in postwar Japanese society:

I was deeply impressed by their genuinely human way of life and thought; indeed, I felt greatly encouraged by them. On the other hand, I felt only pain when tried to root out the seeds of neurosis and decadence that stemmed from the suffering caused by thoughts of my own son in the incubator. I felt impelled to examine my inner condition and to measure it by the yardstick of Hiroshima and its people. I had received my high school education in the democratic postwar era. In university I had studied language and literature, focusing on modern French literature. When I began to write novels, I was influenced by postwar Japanese and American literature. I had such a short inner history. I simply wanted to reexamine my own thoughts and moral sense—which I assumed I possessed—by looking at them through the eyes of the people of Hiroshima. (18)

Ōe's visit to Hiroshima was directly connected to his questions about the role of literature and the function of words. He tried to illustrate the truth of the bombed area, which seemingly resisted explicit expression. Nevertheless, the work contains much more beyond a description of the reality of the bomb. *Hiroshima Notes* is illustrated with pictures by Maruki Iri 丸木位里 and Akamatsu Toshiko 赤松俊子, who had survived the disaster. The first picture contains a short comment: "Not a soul remained to tell us what happened at the center of the bombed area."<sup>242</sup> Ōe humbly affirms that no linguistic representation can do justice to the horrific reality of the atomic bomb and the subsequent suffering it caused. When Ōe published his articles in the monthly magazine, he frequently received letters from survivors. He cites one critical comment on *Hiroshima Notes*, written by a physician named Matsusaka who lived in Hiroshima. Matsusaka emphasized the rights of the survivors who were

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<sup>242</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, *Hiroshima Notes* ヒロシマノート (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965)

unwilling to talk about their experiences:

People in Hiroshima prefer to remain silent until they face death. They want to have their own life and death. They do not like to display their misery for use as 'data' in the movement against atomic bombs or in other political struggles. Nor do they like to be regarded as beggars, even though they were in fact victimized by the atomic bomb. ... Almost all thinkers and writers have said that it is not good for the A-bomb victims to remain silent; they encourage us to speak out. I detest those who fail to appreciate our feelings about silence. ... This letter came in response to my essay about people who have the right to remain silent about Hiroshima. Although encouraged by the letter, I noted that its harshest criticism was reserved for passages written by me, an outsider to Hiroshima. (19–20)

Ōe respected the right of people in Hiroshima to remain silent. In the first chapter of *Hiroshima Notes*, the author describes the politically organized antinuclear movements at the commemorative ceremony. He notices the contrasting attitudes between the official representatives of different countries and A-bomb survivors. Tumultuous demonstrations, meetings, and even street fights took place concerning the treaty to ban the use of nuclear weapons. In contrast, however, the A-bomb victims remained calm and quietly offered prayers for the dead. Therefore, Ōe left a crowd of people in order to gain insight into the physical and mental damages of the people in Hiroshima. Similar to the university student in *Lavish Are the Dead*, the isolated author of *Hiroshima Notes* listens to the silent voices of "others." Furthermore, they share a common interest in wanting to focus on the individuation of many nameless persons:

Many meetings are planned in Hiroshima today. Since last night's opening ceremony, however, I sense that my interest in Hiroshima has changed. I feel that I am an unknown traveler who just happens to be at these political gatherings. But once I get

out of the meetings, I am able to see Hiroshima afresh; and I try to perceive things as deeply and clearly as I can. This is the first trip on which I feel that I have encountered the real Hiroshima; and I sense that I will be coming back many times to work at gaining an understanding of the true Hiroshima people. (54)

The author observes what the A-bomb survivors represent in their silence. He notes the words of the A-bomb survivors who were unwilling to publically speak about their experiences. Furthermore, Ōe tries to communicate with the dead victims in his imaginary world. In this way, he stays aware of the pain of A-bomb survivors.<sup>243</sup> Ōe cites the essay of Mr. Matsusaka to nail down the profound wish of survivors to become once again in control of their lives and even their deaths. For Ōe, it is relevant that each A-bomb victim requires his own individuality in order to establish his self. As a writer, Ōe thinks he should recover their dignity in a way that he reproduces their personal memories that are absent from the historical records:

Why are there no stories, for example, of families who endured hard times but recovered their health and now live as normal human beings? Must all surviving A-bomb victims eventually meet a tragic death caused by radiation after-effects? Is it possible for the victims to overcome their illness, and their psychological anxiety and inferiority complexes, and thus die a natural death like other people? Must we, instead, all face tragic deaths cursed by radiation after-effects; and must our deaths then be used as data for opposing atomic bombs? ... Although exposed to the atomic bomb, I wanted body and soul to recover so that I could live my life and die as naturally as people not bombed by nuclear weapon. (21–22)

In *Hiroshima Notes*, Ōe attempted to portray the respective stories of the

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<sup>243</sup> (Treat 1995, 258) “That men such as Miyamoto and Shigetō in *Notes* should loom so large – larger than ‘life’ - is a telling indication that Ōe’s existentialist reading of Hiroshima requires such distinct Others; and the fact that they are required for Ōe to understand himself hardly leaves those Others very free.”

victims of a mass death. Ōe agrees with Matsusaka's statement that the deaths in Hiroshima were each different, even though the A-bomb destroyed the whole city simultaneously. It is a fact that all the survivors suffered from the effects of the atomic bomb; however, they each lived their respective lives. Ōe opposes the generalization of A-bomb victims and sees the survivors as individuals who wanted to recover their lives.<sup>244</sup>

The other day I was shocked to learn that Mr Kikuya Haraguchi, an A-bomb victim and a poet, had hung himself in Nagasaki after being told that he possibly had myeloid leukemia. . . . I presume that he preferred to die by his own will rather than from a disease caused by the atomic bomb. He wanted his life to end as one, like others, who had nothing to do with the atomic bomb. He sought, that is, to avoid being counted among the A-bomb victims who are grouped together impersonally and inhumanly. (22)

Ōe understands Haraguchi's cry for help, who wanted to die with his own *shutaisei*.

The author also addresses the problem of his *shutaisei* and calls it "the Hiroshima within me" in the same prologue. Although he acknowledges being an outsider to the disaster, he has a common concern with the people of Hiroshima in terms of their seeking an individual life:

These essays of mine, which have been produced with the direct and indirect cooperation and criticism of Hiroshima people, are now to be published in a single volume with the title *Hiroshima Notes*. But the Hiroshima within me does not come

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<sup>244</sup> (Treat 1995, 256) Treat criticized Ōe's description of some people in Hiroshima because he selected some survivors for writing on the topic of "human dignity" in the bomb out areas. Treat stated that Ōe's claims in *Notes* for the heroism of his *hibakusha* sound hollow and even cruelly hypocritical. As he manifested in *Hiroshima Notes*, Ōe's primary concern is to nail down his *shutaisei* in the postwar society. Hence, Treat's criticism on Ōe is persuasive in that he intentionally depicts some survivors who function as a consciousness that illuminates Ōe's own.

to an end with this publication. On the contrary, I have barely scratched the surface of Hiroshima. The realities of Hiroshima can be forgotten only by those who dare to be deaf, dumb, and blind to them. (23)

Ōe appeals to his readers to find the Hiroshima within them, specifically requesting them to reconsider their *shutaisei* in postwar Japanese society. In this respect, Ōe condemns the governments that made the people of Hiroshima remain silent about the disaster:

For ten years after the atomic bomb was dropped there was so little public discussion of the bomb or of radioactivity that even the *Chugoku Shinbun*, the major newspaper of the city where the atomic bomb was dropped, did not have the movable type for 'atomic bomb' or 'radioactivity'. The silence continued so long because the U.S. Army Surgeons Investigation team in the fall of 1945 had issued a mistaken statement: all people expected to die from the radiation effects of the atomic bomb had by then already died; accordingly, no further cases of physiological effects due to residual radiation would be acknowledged. As a newspaper man, he had endured the long silence. (66–67)

The author sharply criticizes the political powers that will erase the A-bomb victims' existence from history. As a representative of modern Japanese writers, Ōe expresses his opposition to the authorities. The U.S. covered up the truth of Hiroshima by censoring all A-bomb related publications. The Allied Forces stopped some illustrated books from being published during the occupation because of their faithful representation of the disaster:

In the same summer, however, another book was scheduled for publication in Hiroshima; though printed and bound, it was suppressed by the Occupation forces because it depicted too vividly the A-bomb realities, and it was anti American as well. (173)

Even the Japanese society covered up the reality of Hiroshima. The author criticized the states' powers that sacrificed the survivors for reconstruction projects. Owing to the Korean War in 1950, Japan entered an age of extensive economic growth. Not a few A-bomb victims were forced to hide in the hard labor of coal mines. The author makes the strong accusation that even Japanese society tried to forget the tragedy:

The other story comes from the Chikuho coal fields in northern Kyushu. Economically depressed, the Chikuho district represents the low point of our prosperous consumer society, the dark side of all social and political distortions. It is said that many people migrated to this district from Hiroshima, as tough driven away. Among them were women who lost their families in the atomic bombing and who are now engaged in the lowest occupations. (156–157)

Ōe describes the people who stood up against the difficult situation in Hiroshima despite the harsh environment in postwar society. Most of the physicians of Hiroshima, who were on a mission to save the A-bomb victims right after it was dropped, were also exposed to the radiation. They proved that the unidentified disease that was widely spread after the bomb's dropping was related to the radiation. On the other hand, some physicians in Tokyo denied that there was a relationship between the bomb and disease (leukemia). As a result, U.S. and Japanese medical researchers removed bomb victims' names from the list of those with the disease:

Medical scholars in Tokyo from time to time have questioned why a given symptom should be pathologically connected with the atomic bomb, and the Hiroshima doctors have not always had a satisfactory answer. Moreover, medical research may in time prove that in some cases there is no such connection. Nevertheless, what has most helped so many A-bomb patients in Hiroshima was precisely the steady efforts of doctors who had the imagination to see that almost any symptom could be related to the A-bomb effects and after-effects. (142–143)

Ōe said that the power of imagination enabled the physicians of Hiroshima to find the connection between the disease and the atomic bomb. The author often mentions that imagination enabled him to understand the reality of Hiroshima:

The atomic destruction of Hiroshima was the worst ‘deluge’ of the twentieth century. The people of Hiroshima went to work at once to restore human society in the aftermath of this great atomic ‘flood’. They were concerned to salvage the souls of the people who had brought the atomic bomb. This Great Flood of the present age is a kind of Universal Deluge which, instead of receding, has become frozen; and we cannot foretell when it will thaw and flow away. To change the metaphor, the twentieth century has become afflicted with a cancer—the possession of nuclear weapons by various nations—for which there is no known cure. And the souls salvaged by the people of Hiroshima are the souls of all human beings alive today. (118)

The author addresses his own *shutaisei* and literary career while analyzing the former bomb site. He considers the dropping of the atomic bomb a human disaster that completely destroyed human dignity.<sup>245</sup> Ōe decides to foster social activities that aim to recover the survivors’ *shutaisei*. Some survivors wanted to express their experiences in their own words:

The compilation of data and memories is an undertaking that stems from the A-bomb victims’ stoic self-affirmation and determination to shape their own destinies; it also offers us non-victims an opportunity for self-understanding today and for reflecting on what lies ahead tomorrow. It is my feeling, therefore, that concerned people not exposed to the atomic bomb should, out of admiration and

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<sup>245</sup> (Treat 1995, 254) “For Ōe it is a disquietingly stubborn obstacle to his attempt to make grand saviors out of the *hibakusha*. Quite contrary to its author’s stated intent, *Notes* thus read not as a simple ode to heroic, if tragic, martyrs, but rather as a commentary on the impossibility of such sentimental ideals after a nuclear atrocity.”

respect for the victims, assume some cooperative role in this undertaking. (169)

Ōe realized that his mission as a contemporary Japanese writer was to connect the survivors and the “non-victims” in his works. In this work, he asks himself whether he could contribute to the rehabilitation of the dignity of the survivors through his creative activities:

For the advertising blurb for my novel ‘A personal Matter,’ published last year, I wrote: ‘I tried anew to achieve some basic refinement in my thinking on several topics of importance to me.’ I have written this series of essays on Hiroshima with the same intent; though ‘Hiroshima’ is, I dare say, the most difficult matter to handle at the fundamental focus of my thought, I want to confirm that I am, above all, a Japanese writer. (180)

Ōe attempts to listen to the silent words of humankind and illustrated the truth of Hiroshima with an imaginative freedom, thus involving himself in the tragic incident.<sup>246</sup> He recreates the existing image of modern Japanese society with the people in Hiroshima who overcame their difficulties by enhancing their *shutaisei*:

And if we would also be authentic human beings, then we already have impressive models in the Hiroshima people, such as Dr. Shigeto, who have neither too little nor too much hope, who never surrender to any situation but courageously carry on with their day-to-day tasks. (183)

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<sup>246</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, *Ōe Kenzaburō sakkajishinwokataru* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2007), 34. Ōe has been strongly interested in the various functions of imagination since he began to study French literature. He chose the topic “On the imagination of Jan Paul Sartre” for his graduation thesis at Tokyo University. Ōe believed that “imagination” works in three different ways and two of them rely on the existing reality. First, the human being uses the imagination to appropriately recognize things. Second, humans could know about God’s existence through imagination; however Ōe regarded the third function of imagination the most important, that is, the human being could recreate the existing world.

Through his relations with the people in Hiroshima, Ōe creates his *shutaisei* that interpreted the world and its history from various angles. Until then, he has been constantly trying to recreate his narrative subjectivity in a multilayer structure.<sup>247</sup> In this way, he attempted to rebuild Japanese society in terms of the establishment of *shutaisei* for each individual and for true democracy.

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<sup>247</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, “Narrative. Tshumari ikanikatarukanomondai ナラティブ、つまりいかに語るかの問題,” in *Watashitoiu shōsetsukanotsukurikata 私という小説家の作り方* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1998), 50–51. Ōe said that he had antipathy toward the new works of “I-novel” when he was young. Later, however, he realized that there are certainly some masterpieces of “I-novel” written in Taishō and early Shōwa period. He believed that one of the most important factors of those masterpieces is a narrative subject that possesses the vivid and multiple personalities. Ōe adopted the fictional stories even in the works that seem to be his biography because he would maintain the many-sided narrative subject in each work.

## *Afterword*

Four months have passed since the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami hit eastern Japan on March 11, 2011. The Great East Japan Earthquake was a devastating earthquake that killed more than 15,000 people. This great earthquake is entirely different from the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995 because of the serious nuclear accident accompanying the 2011 quake. The Japanese people are now conscious of the serious impact of the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima No.1 nuclear power plant. In *The New Yorker's* March 28 issue, Ōe Kenzaburō published an article about the nightmarish result of the nuclear accident in Fukushima<sup>248</sup>. He argues that this man-made catastrophe is the worst possible betrayal of the memory of Hiroshima's victims. He also mentions the “ambiguity” of contemporary Japan. On July 3, 2011, a special program was broadcast in which Ōe had an interview with Ōishi Matashichi 大石又七. In 1954, Ōishi was exposed to the “Bikini Tests” with other ships' crew, and he is the only survivor of the bombed fish boat Daigo Fukuryu Maru<sup>249</sup>. At the end of the talk with Ōishi, Ōe again explains Japan's ambiguity. Ōe

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<sup>248</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō “History Repeats,” in *The New Yorker* of March 28, 2011: [http://www.newyorker.com/talk/2011/03/28/110328ta\\_talk\\_oe](http://www.newyorker.com/talk/2011/03/28/110328ta_talk_oe) [accessed August 15, 2011]

<sup>249</sup> NHK ETV special program “Ōe Kenzaburō and Ōishi Matashichi kakuwomeguru taiwa 大江健三郎 大石又七 核をめぐる対話”: <http://vimeo.com/26002586> [accessed August 15, 2011]

claims that the Japanese have not yet taken responsibility for the historical results of the Second World War, and so their historical *shutaisei* remains ambiguous. Japan entered the war on its own responsibility. Japan's participation in the war produced a large number of victims in Asian countries as well as within Japan, and the imperial Japanese army wasted troops' lives. However, Japan has not taken responsibility for its guilt in these results. Ōe argues that Japan should presently end the ambiguity in its postwar history and establish *shutaisei* in a new phase of Japanese history.

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