

# “The Invisible Japanese Gentlemen:” Graham Greene’s Literary Influence in Japan

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## Introduction

*May We Borrow Your Husband? And Other Comedies of the Sexual Life*<sup>1</sup> is a collection of short stories by Greene published in 1967. Contained within this collection, the first edition of which boasted a “swinging” dustjacket, is a short story entitled “The Invisible Japanese Gentlemen,” which begins as follows:

There were eight Japanese gentlemen having a fish dinner at Bentley’s. They spoke to each other rarely in their incomprehensible tongue, but always with a courteous smile and often with a small bow. All but one of them wore glasses. Sometimes the pretty girl who sat in the window beyond gave them a passing glance, but her own problem seemed too serious for her to pay real attention to anyone in the world except herself and her companion.<sup>2</sup>

This is a charming example of the “mass-observation” of Japanese travelers, whose manners must have looked curiously foreign to the English eye. Significantly, however, the narrator’s attention focuses more on “the pretty girl,” who is a budding novelist, and her fiancé than on the Japanese gentlemen; indeed, the story revolves around the couple’s discussion of their future, punctuated by short descriptions of the foreign group. Despite the fact that their seats are close to each other, the Japanese gentlemen remain “invisible” to the eye of the young female writer.

This short story is suggestive of prevailing attitudes toward race. On the one hand, the imagination of the female protagonist does not stretch beyond Europe, her first novel having been entitled *The Chelsea Set*, while her second is to be set in St. Tropez. On the other hand, the male narrator is not just a mass-observer, but also a novelist whose attention focuses on the English couple and the Japanese group alike. In a nutshell, the Japanese gentlemen are at least *visible* to the eye of the narrator and Greene, while they are invisible to the eye of the protagonist. This ambiguity is perhaps the hallmark of Greene’s literature.

The question I would like to pose here is simply this: *Are we (i.e. the Japanese) invisible to your eyes?* If we are not, then I think I can end my discussion here. If you can see us, you can observe us and, moreover, this act of observation will lead you to acknowledge a foreign culture. If, however, the answer is in the affirmative, it will be necessary to press on with this paper since the aim of my discussion is to introduce to the reader certain links that connect Greene and his Japanese readership, and

1 Greene, Graham. *Comedies of the Sexual Life*. London: Bodley Head, 1967. 137-141.

2 Greene, Graham. “The Invisible Japanese Gentlemen.” *May We Borrow Your Husband? And Other Stories*, 137.

to make Japanese gentlemen appear less invisible to your eyes. In the pages that follow I will focus on two writers whose works constitute precisely such links: Saiichi Maruya and Shusaku Endo.

## Saiichi Maruya

Maruya is a writer perhaps not well-known in English-speaking countries, but who has been one of the most important and influential in Japan since his debut in the 1960s. He studied English literature at Tokyo University in the postwar years and taught at Kokugakuin University in the 1950s and the early 1960s when he turned full-time writer, producing a dozen well-crafted novels. He was most productive, however, as a critic and essayist, writing about almost all aspects of human life. As a critic he was as somber and serious as T. S. Eliot, writing unashamedly about the great tradition of Japanese literature; as an essayist he was more relaxed, discussing humorously our daily lives, relations between men and women, drinking, and fashion. He was also a translator of English literature, and in particular of James Joyce, translating *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in the 1960s, and subsequently revising these translations in the later stages of his life. After his death in 2012, the complete works of Maruya were published (and the time has perhaps now come to discuss seriously his literary contribution).

Maruya was an academic-turned-writer, and his academic work consisted of writing essays and translations. The academic essays he wrote in the 1950s and the early 1960s demonstrate his shrewd understanding of modernist literature. For example, in “The

Gentlemen from the Western Country,” he claims that the essence of modernist writers such as Joyce, Eliot, and Pound lies in their experience of exile:

Because they did not have their mother language, they could discover and present a new function of language; because they did not have tradition, they were able to gain an acute awareness of tradition; because they came from outside of Europe (or at least from the peripheral parts of Europe), they could capture the grandeur of Europe with such an extraordinary vividness. Namely, because of these positions, they could prove the thesis that the true avant-garde stems from classicism. Thus, their work became the most precise and beautiful expression of all the anxiety and aspirations of a Europe which was aware of its own decline in the wake of the *fin de siècle* and the First World War.<sup>3</sup>

What he learned from his study of English modernism was the thesis that the avant-garde and classicism are not mutually exclusive, but that they are two sides of the same coin. This is a point that he repeatedly emphasized in both his literary criticism and his literary creation.

Recently there have been plenty of independent translators of English literature in Japan, but the task has been chiefly assigned to those specialists whose choice of works to translate has determined the course of their academic careers. Maruya is now remembered as a translator of Joyce partly because of his commitment to modernism, and partly because of his definitive translations of *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a*

<sup>3</sup> Maruya, Saiichi. “The Gentlemen from the Western Country.” *Nashinotsubute*. Tokyo: Shobunsha. 1966, 218-242. 238; translation my own.

*Young Man*. However, in the 1950s when he started his career as an academic, the first writer that Maruya opted to translate was Graham Greene. He translated three novels consecutively: *Brighton Rock* in 1952, *Loser Takes All* in 1956, and *It's a Battlefield* in 1959. In addition, Maruya revised his translation of *Brighton Rock* in 1959 when it was included in the Selected Works of Graham Greene.<sup>4</sup> In short, the 1950s was the decade when the translation of Greene into Japanese took flight, and Maruya was part of the driving force behind this movement.

Interestingly, in the afterword to his revised translation of *Brighton Rock*, Maruya went so far as to suggest that this work was the best among all of Greene's novels:

For it includes all the aspects of Greene: the plot of detective fiction, Joycean technique, Catholicism, his boyhood interests, feminism, the Persecutor and the Persecuted, exciting and poetic urban landscapes, cinematic influences, obsession with Evil . . . . This novel offers an archetype of "Greeneland."

Maruya's comment on *Brighton Rock* demonstrates his rigorous understanding of the novel and his keen attachment to "Greeneland." In fact, during his translation, he wrote three essays on Greene: "What is Entertainment?" (1953), "The Style of Graham Greene" (1959), and "Fatherless Family" (1958). His ideas appear somewhat half-baked; however, his passion is apparent here as in the afterword. It seems as if he were

immersed in the world of Graham Greene, being at a loss as to what to say. Such a tendency is perhaps inherent in the nature of translation, with Maruya passing through an English landscape unknown to himself while trying to find his own voice as a novelist.

His translation of Greene, I would urge, served as an apprenticeship for Maruya the novelist. He made his debut in 1960 with *Fleeing from the Face of Jehovah*, and turned full-time writer with *Grass for My Pillow* in 1966. He also published *Singular Rebellion* in 1972, *Rain in the Wind* in 1975, *Tree Shadows* in 1988, and *A Mature Woman* in 1993. Moreover, Maruya would receive most of the most prestigious literary awards with these novels and, poignantly, proved fortunate enough to find a collaborator who was willing to translate his novels for an English audience. This accomplice was Dennis Keene,<sup>5</sup> a poet, academic, and translator who taught English literature at the Japan Women's University.<sup>6</sup>

The first Maruya novel that Keene translated into English was *Singular Rebellion*, which was published in 1986 to huge acclaim (Greene's comment was brief: "I liked it very much."); the second comprised a collection of four stories entitled *Rain in the Wind*, which was published in 1990 and awarded a special prize for the Independent Foreign Fiction Award in 1991; the third, *A Mature Woman*, was published in 1995; and the fourth and last, *Grass for My Pillow*, was published in 2002. The author's and translator's collaboration ended when Keene died in 2007.

4 Maruya's translation of *Brighton Rock* constituted the sixth volume in a fifteen-volume edition of *The Selected Works of Graham Greene*. Hayakawa-shobo was to update this edition with a twenty-five volume, definitive edition of the complete works of Graham Greene. For a bibliography of Graham Greene in Japan, see Iwasaki. Iwasaki, Masaya. *A Bibliography of Graham Greene in Japan*. Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2010.

5 For Dennis Keene's academic career, see Powell. Powell, Brian. "Dennis Keene: Poet and Translator." *The Independent* (London) February 26, 2008. 34.

6 Maruya, Saiichi. "The Independent Foreign Fiction Award: In the Middle of the Rainy Season." *The Independent* (London) June 22, 1991, 28.

## *Grass for My Pillow*

Translations are destined to be overdue. It took fourteen years for Greene's *Brighton Rock* to cross the Oceans and reach the Japanese shore.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, it took exactly the same number of years for Maruya's *Singular Rebellion* to reach the English shore. It is perhaps ironic therefore that Maruya's last work to cross the sea was *Grass for My Pillow*, his first novel to be published subsequent to his becoming a full-time writer, a gap spanning some thirty-seven years.

I will discuss the novel in some detail later, since this work is to Maruya what *Brighton Rock* is to Greene, i.e. it includes all of his aspects and more importantly was written under the direct influence of Greene. Before doing so, however, I would like to argue that Greene's influence on Maruya is as huge and enduring as that of modernism. Let us begin by briefly examining *Rain in the Wind*. On receiving a special prize for the Independent Foreign Fiction Award in 1991, Maruya contributed an article to *The Independent*, speculating on the reason for his winning this award:

I assume the prize has been awarded mainly to the title story, and that in itself gives me particular pleasure since the real hero of that work . . . is Japanese literature itself. As a Japanese writer, it is part of my fate to write under the influence of European literature, a fate that I have always embraced with pleasure. But a much larger aspect of that fate is to be aware that one is still writing in the great tradition of the literature of my own country, a destiny which, I regret to say, few of

our writers in this century, particularly nowadays, truly acknowledge.<sup>8</sup>

Maruya's philosophy, put simply, appears to be this: the key to successful writing is writing under the influence of European literature while being aware that one is still writing in the great tradition of the literature of one's own country.

At first glance, Maruya's ideas look conservative and anachronistic, especially when he mentions "the great tradition of the literature of my own country." However, his statement is corroborated by his insight into modernism, and the thesis that the true avant-garde stems from classicism. Through this, he obliges a new generation of writers to become modernists—this is a point to which I will return later during my treatment of *Grass for My Pillow*.

What traces then, one may ask, of the influence of European literature can one detect in *Rain in the Wind*? Certainly, Maruya is indebted to Nabokov's last novel, *The Gift*, for its metafictional framework. However, in the afterword to his own novel, Maruya reveals that a direct source of inspiration was an episode concerning Oscar Wilde that appeared in Greene's autobiography *A Sort of Life*. This is how an encounter between Greene's father and his friend George on the one hand, and the disgraced writer on the other, is narrated.

Once—it was in Naples—they had a curious encounter. A stranger hearing them speak in English asked whether he might join them over their coffee. There was something familiar and to them vaguely disagreeable about his face, but he kept them charmed by his wit for more than an

<sup>7</sup> "Translator's Afterword." *Brighton Rock*. Trans. Saiichi Maruya. 1959. Tokyo: Hayakawa-shobo, 1979. 283-284.

<sup>8</sup> Maruya. "The Independent Foreign Fiction Award: In the Middle of the Rainy Season," 28.

hour before he said goodbye. They didn't exchange names even at parting and he let them pay for his drink which was certainly not coffee. It was some while before they realized in whose company they had been. The stranger was Oscar Wilde, who not very long before had been released from prison. "Think," my father would always conclude his story, "how lonely he must have been to have expended so much time and wit on a couple of schoolmasters on holiday." It never occurred to him that Wilde was paying for his drink in the only currency he had.<sup>9</sup>

Maruya incorporated this episode into his own narrative, working in a substitute for Wilde. According to a reviewer from *The Independent*, *Rain in the Wind* is "an extended literary adventure in which an academic tries to research and reconstruct an encounter, many years earlier, between his father and a celebrated poet."<sup>10</sup> Maruya chose Santoka Taneda, a Japanese poet famous for his free verse, as a substitute for Wilde, but let him pay for his drink, too, in the only currency he had. This episode set the tone and theme of the novella. On receiving the special award for this novella, Maruya must have been thankful to Greene for his influence: it was only a shame that the Japanese writer could not deliver an address of thanks to Greene who had died a couple of months before the award was announced.

Let us now turn to discuss in greater detail *Grass for My Pillow*. In his translator's introduction to the novel, Dennis Keene presents a summary of the story:

*Sasamakura (Grass for My Pillow)*, first published in 1966, is a novel about a man who successfully evades military conscription from October 1940 until the end of the Pacific War in August 1945, and the delayed consequences of this refusal to conform as he experiences them twenty years later, in 1965.<sup>11</sup>

The man in question, as a consequence, has a dual identity: In postwar Japanese society Shokichi Hamada is a middle-aged university administrator, living in peace with his wife in a small flat; during the war period Kenji Sugiura is a young sand artist, traveling all over Japan in order to escape punishment for the most serious of offenses. The novel alternates so seamlessly between the story of Hamada and the story of Sugiura that the readers are often lost in the vertiginous development of the plot.

As one can see from this brief introduction, Maruya is heavily indebted to Greene for his literary creation. As witnessed above, Maruya once enumerated the characteristics of "Greeneland": "the plot of detective fiction, Joycean technique, Catholicism, his boyhood interests, feminism, the Persecutor and the Persecuted, exciting and poetic urban landscapes, cinematic influences, obsession with Evil."<sup>12</sup> If one discounts Catholicism and replaces it with ethics, these characteristics all apply to Maruya's modernist thriller. In particular, Green's empathy with the Persecuted furnishes the basic tone and theme of the novel via a characterization of Sugiura, a fugitive on the verge of paranoia. To my mind, Sugiura

9 Greene, Graham. *A Sort of Life*. London: Bodley Head, 1971, 26.

10 Winder, Robert. "Foreign Fiction / A Far Cry from Kensington: Robert Winder Reflects on the First Annual Shortlist for the Pounds 10,000 Independent Award." *The Independent* (London) June 1, 1991. 29.

11 Keene, Dennis. "Translator's Introduction." *Grass for My Pillow*. Trans. Dennis Keene, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. 1-14, 1.

12 Maruya, Saiichi. "Translator's Afterword," 283; translation my own.

is reminiscent of Conrad Drover, a character from Greene's *It's a Battlefield*, who is deluded into thinking that the Assistant Commissioner is persecuting him. Hamada also suffers from paranoia, with the stigma of being a draft resister, which slowly drives him into a corner.

Of particular poignancy is the way the story of Hamada is smoothly overtaken by that of Sugiura:

Hamada turned over the pages, and read aloud one poem that caught his attention:

Again this fitful  
slumber bamboo  
grass for my pillow  
one night of dreams  
alone to bind us

"Pretty difficult stuff, isn't it?"

Kuwano glanced over his arm at the page, and said: "Not all that difficult, you know. There's a certain amount of word play that perhaps requires elucidation, the bamboo associations, for example . . ." But he paused, looking slightly embarrassed . . .

"What does 'bamboo grass for my pillow' mean?"

"Well, I'm not absolutely sure, but I suppose it's much like the conventional pillow of grass on which the traveler always laid his homeless head, and is thus the same symbol of transience, etc. What's going on in this case is, presumably, a shared pillow; one night of love while traveling around, over as soon as begun . . . It is perhaps conceivable that, in the

Manyoshu period, people really did sleep while they were travelling in places where there was lots of bamboo grass. After all, it's a very tenacious weed. Luxuriates all over the country. Still, it couldn't have been comfortable, prickly stuff like that. Hardly the sort of thing for a pillow."

Hamada interrupted the flow of professional talk:

"That rustling it makes wouldn't let you sleep very well. Almost unbearable, with no place to rest your head. A restless journey."

Kuwano went suddenly silent, looking intensely at Hamada's face. The association he's made between the sound of bamboo grass and restless journeying had obviously been read as a direct reference to Hamada's wartime experience as a draft resister, and Hamada immediately regretted his own words since he didn't want to get back onto that subject again. Kuwano went on looking at him, and Hamada went on being looked at, for the phrase "bamboo grass for my pillow" had certainly meant something to him, but he couldn't think what. Could it be the sprigs of bamboo grass used for the Festival of the Weaver in July? No, surely not that.<sup>13</sup>

The answer to the question of what the phrase "bamboo grass for my pillow" means to Hamada is provided directly after his story has ended. In the case of modernism, including Greene's writing, this would be done by means of a "stream of consciousness," since the agent of remembrance is Hamada, not his alter-ego

<sup>13</sup> Maruya, Saiichi. *Grass for My Pillow*. Trans. Dennis Keene. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002., 154-155.

Sugiura. However, Maruya gives a new twist to this modernist technique; the story of Hamada is to be hijacked by the story of Sugiura without any break occurring between the two narratives. Thus, the next paragraph starts as follows:

The town of Wakayama was full of soldiers, and Sugiura, the sand artist, lived with an oppressive awareness of them, feeling a peculiar shock one morning when he saw a group of them, who'd spent the night in the same lodging house as himself, going off to join their division.<sup>14</sup>

This sudden change in the time scale is what makes *Grass for My Pillow* distinctively modernist. David Lodge describes the modernist handling of temporality as follows:

[M]odern fiction eschews the straight chronological ordering of its material, and the use of a reliable, omniscient and intrusive narrator. It employs, instead, either a single, limited point of view, or multiple viewpoints, all more or less limited and fallible; and it tends toward a complex or fluid handling of time, involving much cross-reference back and forward across the temporal span of the action.<sup>15</sup>

Maruya's fluid handling of time is, however, double-edged. On the one hand, the smooth transition from one narrative to another embodies the continuity between wartime and postwar Japanese society in which the nationalist mindset remains intact. On the other hand, the shuttling back and forth that takes place between the two narratives is not as smooth as is typically

exhibited in the stream-of-consciousness technique. In fact, the transition is rather abrupt and disjunctive, which serves to make his readers pause and think about the links between past and present. This effect acts as a challenge that Maruya invites his readers to take up. Indeed, it is ironic that the only point concerning the English-language edition with which I would take issue concerns the handling of precisely this transition: either Dennis Keene, or the editor of the Columbia University Press dared to put the image of the mushroom cloud produced by the explosion of an atomic bomb on the front cover, which ruined Maruya's brilliant avant-garde strategy by regularly separating the two narratives using a double spacing.

To conclude, Maruya's *Grass for My Pillow* is a modernist novel whose narrative is peopled with the Persecutor and the Persecuted, the villains and heroes of "Greenland". Furthermore, the novel also employs and updates a modernist handling of time through a simultaneous attempt to maintain and disrupt the natural flow of the narrative; the readers are compelled to pause and consider the relationship between past and present, wartime and postwar societies and mindsets. The final element I would like to add to these modernist techniques concerns a dimension of paradoxical modernist heritage. As a critic, Maruya had been adamant that the true avant-garde stems from classicism. This belief he set out to put into practice by embedding a medieval poem about "grass for my pillow" into the text and encouraging his disgraced anti-hero to embrace it. Thus, Maruya embodies an ideal author,

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>15</sup> Lodge, David. "The Language of Modernist Fiction: Metaphor and Metonymy." *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*. Ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane. 1976. London: Penguin Books, 1991. 481-496. 481.

writing under the influence of European literature while being aware that he is still writing in the great tradition of the literature of his own country.

## Shusaku Endo

Shusaku Endo is perhaps one of the most popular and accessible Japanese writers for an English-language readership. Since having been baptized a Christian at the age of twelve, he immersed himself in Christian writing. In the postwar years he studied French literature at Keio University, and in the early 1950s he went to France to study French Catholic literature. On returning to Japan in 1953, he began to establish himself as a novelist, while regularly contributing literary criticism pieces to journals. In spite of his ill health, Endo was a prolific writer. To name only his most ambitious, successful novels, he published *Umi to Dokuyaku* in 1958 (*The Sea and Poison* in 1972), *Chinmoku* in 1966 (*Silence* in 1969), *Samurai* in 1980 (*The Samurai* in 1982), *Sukyandaru* in 1986 (*Scandal* in 1988), and *Fukai Kawa* in 1993 (*Deep River* in 1995). He was able to find collaborators who were keen to translate his major novels into English before they became long overdue. Moreover, the short interval between the Japanese and English publications is evidence of his global popularity.

Thanks to his translators' enthusiasm, Greene was able to read Endo's novels in English; in fact, Greene was to send his comments on *Silence* to Endo, the two men being mutual admirers. In his essays, Endo mentioned Greene as often as François Mauriac, almost as if Greene were his friend.

Interestingly, the following encounter between these two men is said to have taken place. In 1985, when Endo visited London, he came across an old English gentleman in a three-piece suit in the elevator of the hotel he was staying in. The gentleman asked him "Which floor?" When Endo replied, he pushed the third floor for Endo and the fifth floor for himself. As soon as they parted, Endo called the reception and made sure that the gentleman was Graham Greene. Endo left a message and Greene called him back and asked him out for a drink in the bar. One can only imagine what their encounter was like: the English gentleman was 81-years-old, the Japanese gentleman 62. It was an encounter between two of the greatest writers of the twentieth century. This is, in fact, Endo's favorite story, and there are several variations on it. Endo tailored his story, depending on his mood. My favorite version is a comical one in which Endo reveals an awkward situation in the bar where he talked to Greene in French and could not make himself understood.<sup>16</sup> Imagine the silence which must have fallen upon the two old gentlemen, shaking hands yet incapable of understanding each other. Endo was quick to call the interpreter who was accompanying him, and ended this embarrassingly awkward situation. In this essay, Endo confesses that after they started to exchange letters about their works, he started to read Greene's novels seriously either in Japanese or in French.<sup>17</sup> My guess, however, is that he always read Greene in Japanese.

Perhaps Endo could neither speak nor read English, in which case he was trying to fathom the depth of "Greeneland" through translations. However, this does not mean

16 Endo, Shusaku. "An Encounter." 1985. *The Collected Works of Shusaku Endo. Vol. 13*. Tokyo: Sinchosa, 2000. 381-383, 382.

17 Ibid.

that his reading experience was impoverished for having done so. In 1954, when he turned novelist, Endo published a collection of essays entitled *The Problems of Catholic Writers*, and devoted one chapter to Greene, in which he demonstrated his serious commitment to Catholicism and his sympathetic understanding of Greene's religious writing.

## Silence

This chapter on Greene bears the curious title "The Sin of Pity," and is a piece of writing that shows brilliantly what Endo, a budding novelist, had learned from reading the elder Catholic writer. This essay provides a context in which to discuss Endo's masterpiece *Silence*, and in the remainder of this paper I would like to furnish a summary of this as yet untranslated essay and link it with the major theme of the novel in question.

Endo's point is crystal clear: in the novels of Greene, pity is the cause of a chain of sins:

It is intriguing to ask why Greene started to explore seriously the theme that an excess of pity would not still a sadness in others, nor help alleviate their agony, but [would] lead his protagonist to [commit] horrible sins. *The Heart of the Matter* is a further exploration of this theme, a world of the hell of pity.<sup>18</sup>

Endo claims that *The Heart of the Matter* is a case in point and quotes Scobie's bitter observation on life and love to support his insight:

When he was young, he had thought love had something to do with understanding,

but with age he knew that no human being understood another. Love was the wish to understand, and presently with constant failure the wish died, and love died too perhaps or changed into this painful affection, loyalty, pity . . .<sup>19</sup>

Endo thus points out five sins that Scobie has committed because of an excess of pity: borrowing money for Louise's journey to South Africa, adultery with Helen, receiving Communion without making a Confession, Ali's death, and the worst of all: Scobie's suicide.

However, Endo here is not criticizing Scobie for his sins, but is describing Scobie's sins with compassion. What is intriguing about his argument is the way he is torn between his devotion to Catholicism and his commitment as a writer of humanity. On the one hand, Endo explains to his Japanese readers what Scobie's pity means in terms of Catholicism:

The Church orders a human being to do his best for the happiness and salvation of others. But it does not mean that he should put his own eternal salvation at risk to do so. Charles Péguy let Jeanne d'Arc cry out "Oh my Lord, if there is any human being condemned to Hell, condemn me instead to burn in Hell for eternity." Catholicism would criticize this aspiration while regarding it as a sublime prayer. That is, it means that it disregards the grace of God working on the destiny of each individual.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Endo "The Sin of Pity," 42; translation my own.

<sup>19</sup> Greene, Graham. *The Heart of the Matter*. 1948. London: Vintage, 2004, 236.

<sup>20</sup> Endo, "The Sin of Pity," 46; translation my own

Scobie's pity leads him to take the place of God and to disregard the grace of God, which is a fatal mistake.

As a Catholic writer Endo is, however, more sympathetic to Scobie. He claims that "a Catholic writer, being a Catholic, will pray furtively that the soul of his own character, in spite of his sins, should be saved in the world of eternity."<sup>21</sup> Endo, while being aware of Catholic viewpoints, sticks to the point that we are human, not divine:

It is God who judges Scobie, not us humans. As Scobie thought, we cherish the last part that neither we nor others can understand. And it is this secret chamber of our souls to which God sends the light of grace.<sup>22</sup>

Endo thus emphasizes the double-edged nature of Scobie's pity. While it results in numerous mistakes and sins, there are moments when it elevates Scobie almost to the height of a saint. Endo gives an example of Scobie praying to God for a dying girl. Endo ends this chapter with a question, which seems to me to be asked of God: "Why can we not think that God wiped the tears from Scobie's eyes and touched his tired face when he departed from the earth?"<sup>23</sup>

As for the plot of *Silence*, I can find no better synopsis than the one given by Martin Scorsese, whose film adaptation of this novel is long overdue.

*Silence* is the story of a man who learns—so painfully—that God's love is more mysterious than he knows, that He

leaves much more to the ways of men than we realize, and that He is always present . . . even in His silence. For me, it is the story of the one who begins on the path of Christ and who ends replaying the role of Christianity's greatest villain, Judas. He almost literally follows in his footsteps. In so doing, he comes to understand the role of Judas. This is one of the most painful dilemmas in all of Christianity.<sup>24</sup>

The man in question, Rodrigues, a Portuguese Jesuit, is betrayed by a Judas figure, Kichijiro, and, being tested in extremely cruel and painful ways, begins to identify himself with Christ only to realize ultimately that he is not a Christ, but a Judas. He ends up finding himself a traitor, stamping on the image of Christ, as Kichijiro does, in order to prove that he has renounced his faith. Briefly stated, this is the main plot of the novel.

Will the soul of Rodrigues be saved in the world of eternity? This is perhaps the question which Endo is asking his readers, for Rodrigues is the Portuguese Scobie, as Endo is the Japanese Greene. In his essay on Greene, Endo once claimed: "It is God who judges Scobie, not us humans . . . [W]e cherish the last part that neither we nor others can understand."<sup>25</sup> We can replace Scobie with Rodrigues, and believe that "it is this secret chamber of our souls to which God sends the light of grace." In the climax of the novel, encouraged by Ferreira, a respected Jesuit who decided to apostatize in order to save some Japanese Christians from suffering, Rodrigues follows in his senior's footsteps.

21 Ibid., 47; translation my own.

22 Endo, "The Sin of Pity," 47; translation my own.

23 Ibid., 48; translation my own.

24 Scorsese, Martin. "Foreword." *Silence*. London: Peter Owen, 2007. 1-3. 2.

25 "The Sin of Pity." *The Collected Works of Shusaku Endo*. Vol. 12. Tokyo: Sinchosha, 2000. 41-48,47; translation my own.

The priest raises his foot. In it he feels a dull, heavy pain. This is no mere formality. He will now trample on what he has considered the most beautiful thing in his life, on what he has believed most pure, on what is filled with the ideals and the dreams of man. How his foot aches! And then the Christ in bronze speaks to the priest:

“Trample! Trample! I more than anyone know of the pain in your foot. Trample! It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world. It was to share men’s pain that I was born into this world. It was to share men’s pain that I carried my cross.”

The priest rested his foot on the fumie. Dawn broke. And far in the distance the cock crew. <sup>26</sup>

God was no longer silent. It does not matter whether the voice was internal or external. What matters is the fact that Rodrigues could bask in “the light of grace”

which God had sent to him. In addition, his soul was saved precisely because of the pity he showed to the suffering Japanese Christians. In fact, it was Rodrigues who found himself shouting “Trample! Trample!” when Kichijiro complained that he would be put to the test of stamping on the image of God.<sup>27</sup> He had acted on instinct, out of “a feeling of pity.”

As we have seen, for Endo, pity is a double-edged emotion. On the one hand, it sets in play a chain of sins. Rodrigues’s pity will bring about his own downfall since Kichijiro, having been released, goes on to betray Rodrigues. On the other hand, this most human feeling elevates Rodrigues to the height of a saint and allows him to hear the internal voice of God when he is most in need of it. I would like to interpret this as a moment of grace and argue that Endo is a Catholic believer as well as a Catholic writer. In *Silence*, Endo shows a benevolent consequence of pity as well as its malicious consequence. And ultimately, it is when Endo embraces its duality that he comes closest to Greene.

<sup>26</sup> *Silence*. Trans. William Johnson. 1969. London: Peter Owen, 2007, 271.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 95.

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