

# FAR EASTERN CULTURAL TRANSPLANTATIONS

GEORGE SIORIS

AMBASSADOR OF GREECE IN THAILAND\*

"Every national Literature feels at times the need to turn itself to abroad," Goethe once remarked.

In the European area, cases of mutual transfusion of literary elements would need numerous volumes to be analyzed. Sometimes we see writers inspired by only one foreign country, sometimes a whole literary genre spreading itself all over, drawing from the same source; sometimes writer-travelers succumbing to the new, the exotic or to adventure, who bring the corresponding coloring to the pages of their national literature.

Without straying into the labyrinth of so many intellectual cross influences, we would only like to recall the links of Stendhal with Italy, of Madame de Staël with Germany, of Voltaire with England, of Heine with France or, coming closer to our own times, of Montherland with Spain and Troyat with Russia.

Nevertheless, we should note that the above cases, in their majority, and from the angle of the universality of personal experience, have been more "literary," "intellectual," than deeply "sentimental," more marginal perhaps than complete turns to different ways of life. Even Stendhal, who lived so many years in Italy and who expressed the wish that his real name, Henri Beyle, with the addition "from Milan," be inscribed on his grave — even he remains forever a figure of French *belles lettres*.

Moreover, all the above figures had acted within the same continent — among different national shades, but generally in the same cultural background.

Closer to the Asian continent, an Indian writer has examined the phenomenon of "cultural emigration" as the "transference of a pattern of living, a hierarchy of values and rituals, ceremonies, observances, religion, literature and art." He cites many characteristic examples, each of which could stir lengthy analysis and discussion: the "emigration" of Sanskrit to the West due to William Jones, Max Mueller and so many others; the Greek impact on the British romantic poets; the Ramayana and its radiation into Southeast Asia, etc.

Since the Ramayana has been mentioned, a most interesting complication comes to mind: Indian professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's "Asian Variations in Ramayana," based on papers presented by various scholars at the International Seminar on the Ramayana in Asia which took place in New Delhi some years ago. In this vast panorama of comparative literature, one of the most captivating chapters is on the Ramayana's impact in Southeast Asia, including the famous Ramakien of Thailand's Ayudhya period. There are also in Siam, as else-where in the Far East, "cross cultural frontiers" in reverse, in the sense of the "interpretation" of this fascinating land to the West through the eyes and testimonies of early travellers. Well-known clergymen like Father de Bèze, Abbé de Choisy or Mgr. Pallegoix, diplomats like La Loubère or Chaumont, educationists turned ethnologists like Ernest Young, administrators turned historians like E.W. Hutchinson, adventurers like Carl Bock, naturalists like the Frenchman Henri Mouhot with his vivid description not only of Siam of the mid-nineteenth century but also of Cambodia and Laos, and so many others.

The fact is that in most of these cases we have knowledgeable, well-meaning and penetrating "observers" of good faith whose contribution to learning is undeniable and most valuable, especially when we bear in mind the limitations of those years in exchanges and traveling. But here again we do not witness a fuller and deeper sentimental, personal identification with the land and traditions. The "observation of the scene" remains rather a scholarly exercise "from outside," not a real, spontaneous "descent" to a new cultural world. In order to witness this directly we shall have to proceed still

---

\* Since this article was written, Ambassador Sioris has become Ambassador of Greece in Japan and a Corresponding Member of The Siam Society.

further afield in our literary journey, to Jesuit missionary Valignano's "Another World," to the islands of the Rising Sun. We face here the literary and psychological adventures of people who hesitated between two completely different worlds, worlds with different values, worlds regarding which it is doubtful even today whether they understand each other satisfactorily and completely.

The experiment in the area of Japan is much more complicated as it is note worthy from the point of view of a larger cultural dialogue between the West and the East.

In the following paragraphs we shall look at this delicate trial through the personal literary testimony of four different writers: Pierre Loti, Lafcadio Hearn, Wenceslau de Moraes and Endo Shusaku.

### Loti (1850–1923)

The romantic seaman of French *belles lettres* went to the four corners of the world, bringing along his anxiety and fear in confronting the idea of death, of this "ultimate dust" where we shall all end up without exception. To Morocco, Senegal, Turkey, Palestine, Iran, India, Indochina — everywhere — he brought along with him his talent, his melancholy, his love for the past and his metaphysical anxieties. "I have always felt half Arab in my soul," he confesses in the foreword of *The Story of a Spahi*. But this did not prevent him from proceeding forward, from penetrating even into the empire of the Rising Sun and of presenting some really excellent pictures in *Madame Chrysanthème*, like for instance that unique description of his entering Nagasaki; in that picture, the reader feels that he is standing by Loti on the deck of the same ship and that he too is enjoying the beauty and serenity of the landscape.

But Japan is only a passing page in Loti's life chronicle, a supreme moment in his torturous pursuit of exoticism. The story of the girl of the chrysanthemums, written lightly, with French wit and also with some feeling of racial superiority, does not prove that the writer had penetrated below the surface of the Japanese soul. On the contrary, from time to time, there escape from him nostalgic complaints about the monotonous song of the muezzin which he had left behind him. His Japanese adventure does not appear to be anything more than a familiarization trip into a world that is exotic, full of seemingly human dolls with little faces capable of laughing but also of crying...

"Come on, little girl, let us part like friends," he will write at the end of his story, with sorrow accompanied by indifference. "We can even kiss each other, if you feel like it. I took you to have some fun with you. Maybe you have not really succeeded, but you offered everything you had, your little body, your bows, your delicate music... Who knows, maybe I shall think of you again when I recall this beautiful summer, these beautiful gardens, the concert of cicadas..."

In other words, an exotic parenthesis; a draught of experience with a melancholy aftertaste which quickly disappears as Loti moves on in the endless journey of life. A nice additional experience which takes its turn indifferently in the

gallery of adventures of a talented traveler. In order to find a descent into the depths of the Japanese soul we will have to look somewhere else...

### Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904)

In the case of cosmopolitan Lafcadio Hearn, with that mixture of blood, Greek and Irish, full of life experiences from the New World, who came to the shores of the far-off chrysanthemum islands, we have a characteristic picture of voluntary and profound cultural transplantation.

Hearn loved the Japanese islands; he adored also their inhabitants. He married a Japanese lady and he settled down in a peaceful and genuine provincial city, Matsue. As time went by he even changed his name, and as Yakumo Koizumi he was adopted, according to Japanese custom, by his wife's family. Having retired over there he started writing, writing endlessly, studying the legends and traditions of his new country, portraying the festivals in that unique style of his, concentrating on that Shinto-Buddhist syncretism which has put its indelible seal on the Japanese soul, reviving the songs of birds and cicadas, removing strange visions and ghosts, bringing closer the monotonous moanings of the drowned Heike soldiers of the naval battle at Dannoura, of those wishing to escape the wet embrace of the waves until they achieve salvation through various cycles of reincarnations up to the ultimate enlightenment and union with the eternal...

The work of Hearn, as a whole, does not make any claims to deep academic research. For this we should turn to the brilliant studies of Aston, Chamberlain, Fenollosa, Sansom, Waley, to mention only the older generation of scholars. Yakumo Koizumi is a talented specialist in vulgarization who nevertheless achieves the first complete interpretation of the Japanese soul and culture, someone who thanks to his own real love for this exotic country becomes himself the first cultural bridge between the West and Japan. His contribution to the history of the cross-influence of cultural currents is unique as well as important.

Japan, for the self-exiled man of Matsue, is not a place of exotic scenery which will superficially enrich his production, a simple chapter in a big book, an original note drawing from a simplistic exoticism, as was more or less the case with Loti. Japan is for Hearn his roots, his base, his anchorage; Japan's boundaries represent the beginning and the end of his world. The gold mine of ethnologic, historic, religious and artistic material which he as one of the first Westerners had discovered there has thoroughly and irrevocably conquered him. He draws his inspiration from Japan, he lives Japan, Japan is what he wishes to show to the Western world of his origins; he is fascinated by Japanese women, he appreciates the Japanese as people. "What I love in Japan is the Japanese—the poor simple humanity of the country. It is divine...And I love their gods, their customs, their dress, their bird-like quavering songs, their houses, their superstitions, their faults." You feel these words echo the famous and enthusiastic confession of St. Francis Xavier, three centuries

earlier: "The people we have met so far are the best who have yet been discovered and it seems to me that we shall never find among heathens another race to equal the Japanese. They are people of very good manners, good in general and not malicious; they are men of honour to a marvel, and prize honour above all else in the world."

Nevertheless, despite all his dedication—his offering of himself to a new culture, his identification with it—doubts remain as to whether it all finally flourished as a complete experiment in individual intellectual and sentimental "transplantation." Lafcadio penetrated the secrets of the Far East as did few people, but he did not manage ultimately to rid himself of the memories of his Western origins. "He never became at all Japanese himself," writes his biographer Elisabeth Stevenson, as if he went tragically through various contradictory phases which "obliterated his very self" and made him "neither Occidental nor Oriental." From rejection of Western materialism he projected himself to the expectation of Eastern serenity and from his encounter with the impenetrability of Far Eastern mystery he was shipwrecked on the reefs of the most cruel loneliness. Rejecting his roots, rejected to a certain point from the culture of the land of his exile, he found himself suspended between two worlds, unaccepted, like transplanted flesh which does not fit the new body.

Hearn is not particularly revealing on this his deepest tragedy. Only from time to time a complaint escapes him, some nostalgic note: "How small suddenly my little Japan became! How lonesome! What a joy to feel the West! What a great thing is the West!" Or, elsewhere, he contemplates the seed of disappointment when with the passing of time the East in his soul lost its first splendor, like the unmuddling of logic after the thunderstroke of love. "...I had learned to see the Far East without its glamour."

Hearn kept carefully away from his writings his deeper tragedy of trying to embrace West and East, to reach the vision of universal man. And I do not think that Armando Martins Jeneira, my late Portuguese friend and student of both Hearn and Moraes, is wrong in lamenting this silence of the exiled man of Matsue. His discretion, he writes, is understandable. But on the other hand it is precisely the descriptions of these deep overwhelming experiences which make him a great writer. In this way the reader can only guess fearfully at the ruthless inner moral struggle of someone quivering between two worlds, of someone who pursued, found and lost a new Ithaca...

According to the Buddhist saying, mentioned by Hearn himself in his book *In Ghostly Japan*, "*Au wa wakare no hajime*." In other words, encounter is but the beginning of parting... Maybe, for Yakumo Koizumi, such was his Japanese experience: the fulfillment of desire which at the same time fades and disappears, leaving behind it a bitter-sweet aftertaste and an invisible hint of some mysterious perfume;

## Wenceslau de Moraes (1854–1920)

Among the many people who were fascinated by the beautiful melody of the Japanese Sirens is someone who forgot himself

so much in their singing that at the end he fell in love even with his own drunkenness! Wenceslau de Moraes, a Portuguese nobleman, became, ultimately, the most fanatic lover of Amaterasu's islands. He adored the land and its people without any reservation, thoroughly, when they embraced him and when they rejected him and when they forgot him, in days of joy and sorrow, love and abandonment. In Moraes's face is reflected the most complete picture of cultural transplantation and assimilation, of love which becomes blind passion for a different country, for different people, for different values in which, nevertheless, the writer is relentlessly looking for the seed of universality of the human race, the hopeful mixture of heterogeneous but not necessarily incompatible elements.

Like the true seaman who adores the sea not only in days of serenity but also in days of tempest, like parents who adore their child be it invalid or criminal, Moraes loves his second country even when its people disappoint him or despise him. Mutilation of the objectivity of judgement, someone would object: absolute, integral, all-round sentimentalism, without concessions or analogies—that would be closer to Moraes's idiosyncrasy.

I wonder whether the recluse of Tokushima had ever himself wondered, in his turn, whether he was not the reincarnation of his great compatriot Fernão Mendes Pinto, who was one of the first foreigners to set foot on the island of Tanegashima in 1540s... With that forgotten profanation of the unsullied Japanese land by a Portuguese conquistador "thirteen times a slave and seventeen liberated; pursuer of the most fantastic adventures in India, Arabai, Sumatra, China, Tartary, Thailand," there opened the chapter of the historic encounter of the Mikado's islands with the outside "barbarous" world. In the long self-exile of Moraes in the same islands it was as if the Japanese had become acquainted with the second face of the Portuguese seafarer, this one sweet, calm, friendly, civilized. Moraes and Pinto—two interchangeable figures, as in the supernatural poetry of Rikomyo depicting those persecuted by visions and ghosts, where one face has a real existence whereas the other is ethereal and unseen, where there are reflected strangely in the mirror two idols, the real and the mysterious...

I came to know about Moraes and his sad story through another Portuguese, a friend from the years when life in the Japanese land brought us close together. He was then ambassador of his country to the land of the Mikado and at the same time an untiring servant of *belles lettres*, a student devoted to the parallels between the literatures of the East and the West.

Here are some landmarks from Moraes's life from among the numerous writings of the late Armando Martins Janeira:

Born in 1854 in Lisbon to a well-off family. A naval officer, who has travelled to the ends of the world: Europe, the New World, Africa and Asia. In 1891 he serves as deputy harbour master of the Portuguese colony of Macão. He lives there for a certain time with the title of Consul of Portugal. There he will become united according to full Shinto ritual to a most attractive geisha, twenty-one years younger than he. This is O Yone, of whom he will sing in his later works. His

companion nevertheless dies in 1912. This event shakes him tremendously; he breaks every link with the navy and with the Consulate, he decides to live forever in the land of his beloved, and in order to be closer to her, closer to the ashes into which her beautiful youth inevitably was transformed, he settles down at Tokushima, in the beautiful island of Shikoku. The days pass there quietly but sadly, with a daily pilgrimage to the grave of his beloved.

Later on, a niece of O Yone, Ko Haru, will keep company for a while with the aging Moraes. But she is also doomed to sicken and die prematurely, in 1916. From then on, life for the hermit of Tokushima is nothing but a slow, sad and quiet course to final salvation which comes melancholically in 1929 after thirty-four years spent in the islands of the sun of the East.

Moraes's figure and work represent perhaps the most complete example of cultural transplantation in the Japanese area. This Portuguese romantic thinker has far surpassed his contemporary, Lafcadio Hearn, in his descent into the inner workings of the Japanese soul. There are deeper and more unknown layers of the psychic and intellectual mind which he sets himself out to explore. It is doubtful whether any other foreigner, in his times, had managed to reach such depths, such identification with so different a rhythm and way of life.

After two works of vulgarization of Japanese history and culture which he modestly qualifies as *relance*, i.e. bird's eye view over a city, Moraes's subsequent production quickly assumes another tone and receives his personal seal. *Letters from Japan, Tea Ceremony* and even more his famous *O Bon Odori in Tokushima, O Yone and Ko Haru*—all these are real masterpieces in which the elements of the unknown and exotic Japanese culture go first through the melting-pot of his personal experience.

Moraes does not hesitate nor does he retrace his steps like Lafcadio; each time his pen portrays his deepest feelings. What the Portuguese remarks and describes and what he feels deep in himself become united in the same synthesis of inspiration. As if he does not write for the sake of others or for posterity, he just looks around, utters a monologue and modestly puts on paper his spontaneous composition.

His style is not even autobiographic. That genre presupposes a certain previous planning, a certain systematic preparation. In addition, it sometimes happens that in this genre the same kind of confession emerges only with some effort and difficulty as a result of a ruthless fight with ego's cruel tentacles. In Moraes, on the contrary, the subjective element flows quietly, like a breath in front of a mirror, with its trace spreading over the image and softly covering it... Moraes's style reminds us of the *Nikki*, those classic Japanese "personal notebooks" with stray observations from whatever deep and innermost emotions shake the traveler through life.

In any case, what most interests this self-exiled Portuguese is the authentic experience of his exotic life, without any compromise, ambition or vestiges of old memories. At Takamatsu, Moraes lives without the glory of his past titles, in a poor Japanese wooden house, with a carpenter as his neighbor. "I live poorly, but I do not need anything," he

confesses. To him the "Japaneseness" surrounding him is enough, along with his day dreams of the old days of love for O Yone and of affectionate passion for Ko Haru.

As time goes by he manages to grasp Japanese mysticism, Japanese aesthetics, Japanese inner feelings, with his whole soul—this unique *mono no aware*, a sweet melancholy imbuing the soul and leading it to the serene havens of sentimental peace and harmony, far away from noise, stress and anxiety.

Here we are perhaps at the threshold of a mystic or ascetic view of life. But this is not exactly Moraes's position. Our recluse is still voluntarily full of thousands of worldly memories; he suffers, he laughs, he loves, and he is agitated in the daily reminiscences of his old social life. He is not so much given to religious fear or theological contemplation as to the exquisite nectar of his endless exotic fairy tale and to the safe anchorage of a sentimental world—a world immaterializing him and reidentifying him with God knows which previous Far Eastern incarnation lost in the end of time. We may be facing here a Buddhist view of life, with endless life cycles up to the supreme moment of final enlightenment. But even this is not true regarding Moraes because he was shaken by the influence of Gautama's teaching without ever adhering to the company of his believers.

Moraes represents a case for which I find no other word but to come back to his own name, "Moraes"... He is a man disillusioned by the materialism of the West, escaping from it without hating it, since he is even incapable of hatred; a man adjusting himself to a most different environment, adoring his new compatriots even if at times they make him suffer. For there were many times when he was despised, hated or suspected, disappointed or ignored. He remained up to the end unshakable in his feelings of love towards them, like those rare creatures who, having become attached to something or to someone, adhere to their choice no matter what life brings, completely devoted, thoroughly dedicated, offering their whole soul.

In *O Bon Odori* Moraes portrays the folk frenzy of Tokushima during the heat of August when people in all places remember the dead. It is a strange festivity without sorrow, since the dead are not lost forever, but come and go according to the inevitable cycles of Buddhist reincarnation.

In his other masterpiece, *O Yone and Ko Haru*, this lonesome recluse revives what he most treasured in the world of women, the two Japanese who kept him company—alas, for so short a time. Both of them left him alone too soon, ironically reversing the probabilities that they, as the younger ones, would have to accompany him to his grave.

O Yone's chronicle is a moving love story between two creatures born in worlds so far apart.

Ko Haru's story is even more impressive. What aging Moraes felt for this person, full of life and youth, "was not evidently love, nor friendliness, nor esteem." It was a strange passion shaking and burning him to his inner self. Ko Haru became at his life's twilight a symbol. Moraes caught hold of her as if of life itself.

It is a strange coincidence that we come across this

same theme in modern Japanese literature, in various shades:

In *Diary of a Mad Old Man* of Junichiro Tanizaki. Here the hero, Utsugi, feels at the end of his life's journey an invincible sexual passion for the every wife of his son. In *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* of Yasunari Kawabata. Here, old men with a last drop of life in them are living out a strange experience near some most attractive young girls, all of them asleep, on the only condition that they respect their sleep. Finally, in the stir produced years after Kawabata's suicide by the theory that the Nobel laureate was thunderstruck in his last days by a strange passion for a young girl.

Anyway, Ko Haru's chronicle is a real poem, overwhelming by the passion inspired in a lonely old man, at the threshold of death, in a far-away foreign land. From its pages, as well as from any other pages of Moraes, is reflected the dream of a real man. Of a man who tried through his life and work to harmonize values of two worlds which the cursed muddling of prejudice, fanaticism or ignorance kept on presenting as incompatible and contradictory.

## Endo Shusaku (1923– )

Now comes the moment for us to concentrate on an opposite effort of cultural transplantation: a writer of our times, Endo Shusaku, known as the Graham Green of Japan, incarnates the deeper wish of the people of the island empire to come closer and to understand the values of the Western world.

Like Janeira, I happened to get to know Endo in his own country and for years now have followed his work. In one of our many meetings in Tokyo I found him, as always, alert and interested in cultural worlds different from his, eager to try a spiritual descent into the abyss of Indian thought, but mainly dedicated, as during his whole life, to the effort of grasping the inner meaning of Western Catholicism, like the Japanese Catholic that he is. "I am now working," he told me, "on a new novel called *Samurai* which has as its subject the journey of a Japanese warrior to the Vatican, in the seventeenth century." Now, many years later, I found him overwhelmed by the depth of his spiritual experience at the City of Death, Benares of eternal India.

Endo, born in 1923, happened to become a Catholic. Up to now he has never rejected his Christian faith, but as he grew up, like a thinking person he often asked himself what this strange "suit" could be that he had worn from his childhood but which he never felt "fitted him" and which he never managed to take off since it had already become identified with his skin. Endo combined his agony in the religious field with the problem of uniting the values of Eastern and Western worlds and made this the central axis of his work.

His books, one after another, portray heroes who are suffering from the same questions that torment the writer.

In *Shiroi Hito* (White Man) and *Kiroyi Hito* (Yellow Man) their titles easily denote the subject.

In his novel *Ryugaku* the hero is a Japanese teacher of French literature who goes to France and tries to grasp the meaning of statues in the impressive magic of Chartres cathedral. But the gulf is too deep; the figures of the saints

cannot communicate with his soul: "As he stood there before the statues..., he felt a sense of oppression, as if a heavy lever were pressing down upon his chest. This sense of oppression came from the feeling that he, as a Japanese, was completely unable to comprehend the statues." The message of this work, as it is characteristically pointed out by the Jesuit student and translator of Endo, Francis Mathy, is that blood produced by the world of East and West is different. "We are unable to receive a blood transfusion from a donor of a blood type different from our own," Endo also underlines. The religious, aesthetic and intellectual antitheses between East and West, adds Janeira, are so many that they cannot be overcome in a lifetime.

In his play *The Golden Country* Endo focuses on a dramatic story in Japan in the year 1633, during the climax of the Shogunate's persecutions of the Christians. The subject especially dear to Endo is the apostasy of the Portuguese missionary Ferreira. His persecutor, the cruel Inoue, personifies the three basic insensibilities of the Japanese, as they emerge from an earlier essay by Endo, "Christianity and I," according to Mathy: "insensibility" towards the idea of the existence of God, the notion of sin, and the meaning of death.

It is true that even in the whole huge body of primitive Shinto beliefs, since the beginnings of Japanese history, there are no divinities cut off from the human, whereas "sin" is characteristically represented as simply "dust on a mirror." We have but to remove the dust and the mirror immediately becomes clean. This is the reason why the Japanese are not tormented by metaphysical agonies over the meaning of sin. As to the third "insensibility," to death, this comes out of every page of Japanese history.

In another novel of his, *Volcano*, Endo portrays again two conflicting heroes, the Japanese Suda and the Western apostate missionary Durand, who nevertheless have one thing in common, their tragic loneliness because of advanced age. There are in this work pages rich in dramatic tension, in feelings of pity for these two old people heading toward death, one surrounded by the suffocating self-interest of his family, the other, a horrible solitary shipwreck, a skeleton forgotten in a hospital room at the other end of the world. But behind every scene there is this vague and threatening groan of the volcano, of the volcano which one day will erupt and whose flame will sweep the small Christian community of the area. The main problem, exclaims the apostate to a Japanese Christian priest, is summed up in the question "whether the hearts of the Japanese are the proper material for Christianity."

There is another work by Endo which I could single out not only as his strongest one, but also as one of the most overwhelming books that I have ever read.

The famous *Silence*, written in 1966, is the writer's cry *de profundis*, the most honest, the most true, the most genuine picture of the agony of a Japanese Christian, asking himself why such a faith is incapable of penetrating the Japanese soul, of taking roots, blossoming and yielding fruit.

The scene is again Japan of the period of anti-Christian persecutions of the seventeenth century and the hero another Portuguese missionary, Rodrigues, who will also apostatize in

the end. A constant, tormenting expectation, a deep prayer that Christ's voice be heard, that the heavens be opened, that some pale light be shed over the clouded vault of the suffering country, all these warm prayers of Rodrigues remain vain, doomed, unanswered. Everywhere silence, the silence of death. No consoling whispering from above, no ray of sun on the tortured bodies of the Christian peasants where they are accepting the cruel martyrdom, by the sea, crucified upside down on wooden crosses, with the endless torment of the tide drowning them and leaving them for a while again to drown them, days and hours of indescribable pain, with the torturer opening a small hole near the ear, so that blood comes out drop by drop, up to the last moment where the martyr either tramples on his faith or dies... "Why do they have to suffer so much? Even Christ himself would have apostatized, were it to help them," laments Rodrigues at a certain moment. So he finally takes the terrible decision to reject his faith, to trample on the *fumie*, on that Christian icon which is put under his feet by the torturer; he decides to defile the symbol which even at the moment of betrayal breaks his heart with devotion to God.

With this historico-religious background Endo works on his deeper philosophical myth. He himself suffers in his innermost being as he tries to reconcile his Christian to his Japanese self, as a descendant of a completely different tradition. The image constantly emerging in *Silence* is the terrible, the invincible swamp, the slippery marsh of Japan which does not allow the Christian tree to take root. The transplanting of a tree of the faith with different Greco-Roman branches is rejected in a country with different cultural traditions, to quote another student of Endo, William Johnson.

This novel takes the reader to philosophical heights where everyone's answers do not necessarily converge. Endo's thesis is that for the Christian doctrine to penetrate the Japanese soul it has first to shed the cover of its historic tradition and remould itself in the Japanese melting-pot which during

the centuries has absorbed so many cultural and religious currents, a whole Chinese civilization, a whole Buddhist doctrine.

From another point of view, as Janeira rightly points out, it is not presupposed that the Christian seed has to fall on a Japanese believer who is stripped from his own historico-religious tradition. Rejection of any previous doctrine of faith, offering one's heart and one's mind totally vacant to a new religious beginning, does not constitute a guarantee for the successful graft of Christian doctrine onto the trunk of Japanese tradition. As Endo believes, what is necessary is that the seed fall on the Japanese as he is, with every layer of previous tradition that was bequeathed to him by former generations. His very traditional tolerance, along with his assimilative dynamism, will help him to accept something new, something beautiful and strong, provided this is not offered to him in a spirit of fanaticism.

We find ourselves here in the inaccessible area of the sociology of religion and of research in the cross-influence of civilizations. The answers may be more than one; Endo may even be compelled to face critics. But what is important is his passion to put these crucial questions forward, even if he limits them to the area of religion.

Endo is much deeper than the pleasant exoticism of Loti, indifferent to the idea of the vulgarization of Western traditions in the Japanese sphere—a thing he would have done had he been a Japanese Hearn, incapable of competing with Moraes in an opposite experiment of total immersion in the West. Endo has had not a few years of mainly French experience, but his base is his own country. Nevertheless, the fact that his own country is his starting point does not prevent him from dedicating his creations to the same questions which puzzled all the above writers—to the same searching and conviction in the universality of Man which in the final analysis is the only one reaching Man's deep Menandric meaning.