

Endo Shusaku in Paris

LOGAN, Richard

遠藤周作とパリ

リチャード・ローガン

遠藤周作は1950年から1953年にかけてフランス留学した。彼の短編小説であるジュールダン病院は1956年に出版されるが、その本はパリで結核のため入院した日本人留学生の記憶について書かれたものである。主人公は日本人とヨーロッパ人の文化的・人種的相違や、同じ日本人留學生仲間との疎外感に対応できないことを悩んでいた。この作品は留学経験を元に筆者が異文化に対応できず海外で暮らすことの問題点を深く洞察している。

Endo Shusaku was one of the first Japanese to study overseas in Europe with the ending of the Second World War. Endo grew up in the Christian faith because his mother had converted to Christianity. Endo studied French Literature at Keio University, and felt that overseas study would help him understand his Christian faith and its European underpinnings. Upon arriving in France, Endo soon realized that there was a gulf between himself and his fellow French Christians, not only in understanding of the Christian, specifically Catholic, faith, but also in cultural attitudes towards people of other racial and ethnic groups.

During his short time in France as a foreign student from 1950 to 1953, Endo had to deal with Japan's image as a defeated enemy from the recent war. Endo also had bouts with tuberculosis and had to spend time in hospital receiving treatment for this disease. Endo used his experiences as both a foreign student and tuberculosis patient in his first short stories. One of these early short stories is entitled *Jourdan Byoin* (*Jourdan Hospital*).

Jourdan Hospital was published in the December 1956 issue of *Bessatsu Bungeishunju* magazine⁽¹⁾. This short story is fictional, but Endo did spend a few weeks in December of 1952 and January of 1953 as a patient in Jourdan Hospital, which was located on the Boulevard Jourdan in the Montparnasse district of Paris.

Endo sets the story in December of 1953, and the narrator's name is only revealed near the end of the story as Ihara. Ihara arrives in Paris from Lyon and goes straight to the apartment of a fellow foreign student named Sugano:

Cold autumn rain fell from morning on that day. I got on a subway to visit Sugano's apartment with the collar of my overcoat turned up tightly, and swallowed the phlegm that came up in my throat. I watched with a dull languid gaze the faces of tired commuters for a long time as I rode on the subway, and knew I would not be able to watch such a scene from tomorrow⁽²⁾.

Ihara had not kept in close contact with Sugano over the previous two years that they had been studying in France, so when Ihara

shows up at Sugano's front door without warning, the two men greet each other rather awkwardly. Sugano mutters in French, "Oh, it's you." Ihara is admitted to the apartment and Sugano breaks open a bottle of French liqueur and pours two glasses and their conversation continues in fits and starts:

"Have you already been to the university?" Sugano asked me in French while looking down. Even in Lyon, he ever hardly used Japanese. He seemed to be totally ashamed of using Japanese.

"I haven't gone to school yet."

I was irritated by his use of French, and I answered mischievously in childish Japanese. Sugano let out a sigh of contempt and pity.

"You know, in Tokyo Monsieur Murano seemed to be saying he had a course waiting for me to teach. But about you, Monsieur Murano was angry in a letter he wrote to me."

"Monsieur Murano?"

I murmured "Monsieur Murano" and realized that he was actually talking about Murano, the chairman of the university department in Japan from which we had come ⁽³⁾.

Sugano quite clearly is a foreign student who wishes to fit in well in his new environment and make the most of the opportunity to soak up the atmosphere of France and its culture before he resumes his academic career in Japan. Sugano also seems to feel embarrassed dealing with a fellow Japanese student who is evidently less eager to

throw himself into French culture and is not aggressively working towards his future career. Ihara seems to realize that Sugano's attitude is more mature than his own, so he tries to appeal to Sugano as an old school friend in a casually mocking way by using childish Japanese. Ihara is also momentarily mystified when Sugano refers to their professor back in Japan with the French title for a man, rather than the Japanese title for a professor. It would appear that Sugano is a well-adjusted student doing well in a foreign environment, whereas Ihara is not adjusting very well to this foreign environment.

Ihara suddenly coughs up some phlegm and when Sugano expresses concern, he tells him that he has been diagnosed with lung disease and he must be hospitalized later that day. As Ihara takes his leave, he asks Sugano to lend him some money and Sugano complies.

He arrives at Jourdan Hospital with a small bag containing a few clothes and one Japanese magazine. The Japanese magazine is a special pictorial edition with photos of the aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. He is given a bed in a room with two other men. Ihara's bed is in the middle, with an older man named Jean in the bed to his right, and a young office worker named Georges in the bed to his left. The men are asleep when Ihara moves in, but after a while the young man wakes up and asks Ihara if he is Vietnamese:

"I'm not a Vietnamese. I'm Japanese."

"Japanese?" The young man had an expression of intense curiosity on his face.

"I slept with a Japanese woman in Marseilles."

I sat on my bed, and showed him a bottle of rum I had taken out of my bag.

“Want some?”

“Hmm,” said the young man with a frown and put the bottle to his mouth and took a drink.

“I really did sleep with a Japanese streetwalker in Marseilles.”

“Really? When was that?”

“Last summer”

He put his blanket to his face and laughed as he remembered back to that time. There cannot be any Japanese streetwalkers now in Marseilles. As for this fellow Georges, he didn't seem to be a person who could distinguish between an Indochinese and a Japanese. This left me feeling slightly relieved but also a little worried.

“A tasty woman. Yes, Japanese women are tasty.”

“Really? That's great.”

When I answered this way, I was ashamed of my servile voice and closed my eyes⁽⁴⁾.

Ihara had already discovered that most French people assumed that Asians in their midst were from the French colonial possessions in Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) and was no doubt quite used to having to explain where he was from. The Second World War had ended less than ten years before and Ihara knew there were not many Japanese people in Europe.

Ihara would also have become aware of the high regard that

Japanese women are held in as exotic creatures, thanks to such European cultural products as the opera *Madame Butterfly* and paintings by such luminaries as Vincent van Gogh painted in the *Japonisme* style, influenced by the introduction of Japanese ukiyo-e prints into Europe in the previous century. Ihara's sense of shame in not knowing how to react to Georges' mention of Japanese women must have left him feeling somewhat conflicted. Were the comments of Georges about Japanese women really to be taken as compliments? Should a Japanese man feel either happy or unhappy about what foreigners think of Japanese women? Georges then mentions that in Marseilles he had seen a demonstration of Judo by a Japanese man. Georges asks Ihara a number of times about Judo, but Ihara tells him that he had never learned the sport and knows nothing about it. Ihara seems to be relieved that Georges' interest in him is only superficial:

As for the office worker Georges, besides the woman he slept with in Marseilles and Judo, he had neither interest nor concern about a Japanese. He did not know about the Japanese atrocities in Nanjing, Manila and Indochina either ⁽⁵⁾.

Ihara is well aware of Japanese war atrocities. The European media gave the subject intense coverage, especially when the war crimes trials were held in Japan and other Asian countries over a period stretching from 1945 through the early 1950s. Ihara seems to feel that these atrocities will be thrown up at him, and it seems that he had brought his magazine about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima to show

people that Japan was not the only country to commit atrocities:

Between the ignorance of Georges and the indifference of the old man I was able to lie snugly in the middle. Here, unlike in Lyon, a yellow man, a Japanese need not be blamed here. It was not necessary to show the photograph of the atom bomb damage from the magazine which had been sent to me from Japan, and hear, “Look, wasn’t it you people who did this? ⁽⁶⁾”

Ihara had found out that the old man sharing the room was a retired maintenance man who was sunk in listless apathy most of the time. From time to time, the old man would look at a photo of a child and cry. Georges tells Ihara that the old man had lost his family during the German occupation of France during the Second World War. This vague reference to Nazi war crimes is expanded later in the story. One night, Ihara is woken from a deep sleep by horrible shrieks coming from somewhere in the hospital. The next morning he asks Georges about it:

“Maybe the Polish man.”

“You heard the voice too, right?”

“Naturally. Everybody in the hospital knows about him. He was at the Dachau concentration camp. Those doctors injected him with bacteria. He was used in place of a marmot for experimentation. He has been around to all the hospitals in the last ten years, but it seems to be of no use ⁽⁷⁾.”

Nothing more is revealed about the Polish man except later when he dies and it is mentioned in passing that he was a Jew. Needless to say, in the early 1950s everyone in Europe knew about the Nazi atrocities, including medical experiments, from photos and film footage shown in the mass media as well as covered extensively in the postwar European war crimes trials. Dachau, located in the suburbs of Munich, was one of the first Nazi concentration camps to be liberated by American troops in 1945, and the photos and newsreels, which were quickly released to the public, shocked the world. The somewhat jaded response of Georges makes Ihara realize that French people are not likely to blame him as a Japanese for what happened during the Second World War. However, Ihara remembers an incident that had happened in Lyon the year before. Ihara had noticed a crippled man on crutches in the neighborhood of his rooming house. One day the man approached Ihara and Ihara invited the man to have a drink with him:

“You’re a Japanese, aren’t you?”

“That’s right. I’m Japanese.”

The lame man breathed a heavy sigh. One leg of his worn out pants flapped in the wind.

“Your leg is bad, isn’t it?” I asked sympathetically. “Did you have an accident?”

“It wasn’t an accident. I was tortured in a prison camp in Indochina by Japanese soldiers.”

When the man mentioned torture clearly, I myself felt nothing

particularly. I was merely troubled and averted my eyes from him.

“But that’s because war is bad,” I answered in an excited voice. “All Japanese are not like that. Now we have peace, old fellow.”

“Now we have peace,” The lame man said with a sad smile. But his eyes held neither a grudge nor anger. Rather he had eyes that only showed pity for me. “Those who are tortured and murdered do not come back to life. As for this leg, it will never return to the way it was before.”

“But what can we do about it now.” I raised my voice loudly. I was not able to endure the fellow’s eyes, which were full of pity.

“There is no need to say anything. The tortured and murdered will never come back to life.” The lame man crossed the road on his crutches ⁽⁸⁾.

Ihara tells himself that the crippled man’s problem is not his fault, but memories of this incident continue to haunt him during the quiet nights in the hospital.

One day, he runs into a young French woman named Bange who is a new patient in the hospital. She shyly greets him in Japanese and tells him that she is a student of Japanese art and has been studying the Japanese language for a year. She asks Ihara if he will help her improve her conversational ability by meeting in the hospital library twice a week. He is happy to agree and the prospect of spending time with a young woman who is interested in Japanese culture cheers him up immensely. When they have their first study session Miss Bange

shows Ihara her treasured items of Japanese culture:

The young woman brought out several Japanese picture postcards yellowed with age from the protective case of an old chocolate box. As I expected, the postcards showed commonplace views of geisha holding parasols in front of the Kamakura Buddha statue.

“Is Japan so clean?” she asked seriously while tapping her chin with a pencil.

“Well, it is a picture postcard. Maybe it’s a little exaggerated, but that is what the scenery looks like.” I answered carefully to help her with her Japanese study ⁽⁹⁾.

Ihara realizes that the young woman’s conception of Japan and the Japanese people is just as stereotyped and hackneyed as Georges’ ideas about Japanese women and Judo. When the young woman asks Ihara if he has any Japanese books or magazines, he immediately remembers his magazine about the Hiroshima atomic bombing, but lies to her and says that he doesn’t have anything Japanese with him in the hospital. He doesn’t say why he lied about this, but it is easy to imagine that he does not want to break the pleasant atmosphere of geisha and the Kamakura Buddha by introducing something as unpleasant and accusing as the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

Sugano finally pays Ihara a visit at the hospital a week before Christmas. Ihara finds him in the visitor’s lounge deep in conversation with a young Frenchman. When Sugano sees Ihara he says that he

had been worried about Ihara and about whether Ihara would repay the money he borrowed. Before Ihara can reply, Sugano turns back to his conversation with the Frenchman:

“That’s right. The Japanese know the real nature of the American occupation policy. On this point, you conscientious young French people have the same anxiety as we do. We Japanese...”

Suddenly, without thinking I let out a low laugh as I thought about him in his cheap flannel pants and the blue and yellow striped travel bags I’d seen in his apartment.

Sugano turned to look at me in my pajamas for a few seconds with critical eyes full of contempt and anger. I felt the shame of this conscientious Japanese in his eyes.

“America does not know the situation of Japan. They are trying to force American style democracy and rearmament on us. Of course we are resisting. We Japanese...”

The ash from Sugano’s American cigarette fell on the floor. The young man agreed with everything. The falling ash piled up. I choked on the smoke and coughed violently ⁽¹⁰⁾.

When visiting hours are over, Ihara shakes hands with Sugano and the Frenchman, promising Sugano that he will repay the borrowed money. Sugano shows obvious relief on his face and then resumes his political conversation with the Frenchman as they take their leave of Ihara. Ihara realizes how much he despises Sugano, not only for

his obvious self-centeredness but also for his success in fitting in so well with French people. While Ihara muses on the fact that Sugano can so easily avoid dwelling on the recent wartime past of Japan and move on to the postwar political issues of the Cold War, he himself is constantly reminded of the crippled man he had encountered in Lyon the previous year. Ihara seems to think of Sugano as a shallow opportunist. At the same time, Ihara betrays the attitude of one who thinks of himself as a deeper and more sensitive person than others around him. Ihara may well be such a person in his own mind, but he doesn't express his thoughts to people around him so he comes across as a man with a rather passive and depressed personality.

In fact, when Ihara has a chance to act in a humane, high-minded way, he fails the test miserably. As Christmas approaches, the patients learn that if they test negative for tuberculosis, they can receive permission to leave the hospital for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to spend time with family or friends. The old man, who had tested positive two weeks before, tells Georges and Ihara that he has tested negative and has received a permission slip to leave the hospital for Christmas. Georges thinks that some sort of mistake must have been made:

“Nonsense! If I am positive, so are you.” Georges spit it out in a voice that was full of jealousy. “Old man. Do you really believe that you are negative? This is no joke. The doctor permitted you to go out simply because he thought you are already incurable.”

“Georges!” I tried to block him in a feeble voice.

But the old man was at his wits end and lay in bed, his eyes full of tears. “No, it’s not like that. Georges, you are lying. It’s not like that at all. The bacteria in my lungs have shrunk to the size of a bean, and I’ll be discharged in another half year.”

“Then let’s see the X-rays.”

I threw on my slippers and was going to leave the room. However, the old man turned around and looked at me with the eyes of a small puppy asking for pity. “Isn’t it true, Ihara? Hasn’t the bacteria in my lungs shrunk to the size of a bean?”

Looking at those small eyes, both sorrow and hatred welled up in my chest. I did not know why I hated the old man then. The image of Sugano’s face as he pontificated to his French companion with a cigarette in his white fingers floated through my mind, while I had been misleading Georges and Miss Bange about Judo and cherry blossoms. My failure to see the truth in front of my eyes was no different than this old man shrinking like a dog from disease and death.

“It is just as Georges says,” I answered in a cold voice and went out into the corridor ⁽¹¹⁾.

The story ends with the death of the Polish Jew on Christmas Day. Ihara goes into the now-vacated room of the Polish man and sees a pair of glasses on the bedside table. He notices that the lenses of the glasses are cracked, and imagines a scene of the Polish man being knocked to the ground by a Nazi soldier. Next to the glasses, Ihara sees a piece of gauze soaked with a yellow tubercular stain. Looking

out the window, Ihara sees the Polish man's coffin being carried out of the hospital and into the courtyard to be loaded into a truck to be transported somewhere away from the hospital. Ihara attends Christmas Mass, which is celebrated that evening in the hospital library, and waits for his turn to have his confession heard. The story ends this way:

My turn came. I smelled wine on the old Catholic priest's breath as he prayed on the other side of the confessional.

"My child, go ahead and speak." Because I remained silent, the priest gently encouraged me. "Have courage..."

"I..." I started to speak but no more words came. It was not because of the yellow stain of the phlegm that squeezed my lungs ⁽¹²⁾.

The ending of the story doesn't really give us a clear idea of Endo's theme, but we can sense that Endo's main character has been grappling with the evils of the Second World War and assigning blame and guilt for them. Although Japan and Nazi Germany were allies during the war, Endo doesn't seem to see the citizens of the two countries as being connected in any way, and neither do the French people that Endo describes. Endo does not seem to see at this time the victorious Americans and British as equally guilty of atrocities, but as a Christian he subscribes to the view that it is human beings who do evil things regardless of nationality or race. Such a view of humanity was also prevalent in European literature as critic Kazusa Hideo

points out:

The willingness to stare at the inner self and one's individual ability to do evil is one of the characteristics of post-war literature. It may be said that the general characteristic of Western European twentieth century literature left such a trail, but not only this. Not only does the consciousness of the evil of war live in the hearts of the people who lived during this period, but also the absolute wrongness of war. Shusaku Endo never takes an attitude of accusation towards others, but puts the blame of evil on the self. His literary work was born entirely from reflecting on such self-contemplation. This strong attitude of self-criticism of the author is felt and seen in "Jourdan Hospital"⁽¹³⁾.

Endo's bout with tuberculosis plays a very important part in Endo's writings. Endo arrived in France in the summer of 1950 and studied French Catholic literature at the University of Lyon from the fall semester. In December of the following year, Endo vomited bloody phlegm and went to a local hospital to be examined. Kato Muneya, a life-long friend of Endo's, quotes from Endo's own diary entries of the time:

"I want to live at least ten years more." (Abbreviation) I want to live. When I walk in the street I say, "If my chest will just hold out." (Abbreviation) However, my chest condition is severe. (December 23)⁽¹⁴⁾

Kato tells us that no sign of tuberculosis was detected at this time, and Endo continued his studies. Kato quotes again from Endo's diary:

“It is painful to breathe. I feel extremely fatigued. I am thinking about going to the hospital for a consultation. The fear of death is never far from me since my time studying abroad in France. However, I cannot die now. I must live at least another 30 years. I have yet to write even one novel.” (April 19 - April 20)

“Vomited bloody phlegm this morning”...“As I watched the crimson blood on a white towel, I considered my death numbly...”
(April 23)⁽¹⁵⁾

Finally, Endo was ordered by his doctor to check into the Combloux International Student Sanatorium for medical treatment. Endo spent the period from June to August of 1952 at this facility located near the Swiss border and the ski resorts of Mont Blanc. The treatment seemed to have been successful at the time. However, the symptoms soon reappeared and Endo travelled to Paris and checked into Jourdan Hospital in December of 1952. In early January, Endo was advised to return to Japan for further treatment. By the middle of the month, he was on a ship from Marseilles on his way home.

Endo's illness certainly had an effect on his way of thinking, but does not entirely explain the inability of his fictional character Ihara to deal with the French people he meets as representatives of humanity, rather than representatives of European culture or the “white race.” Ihara constantly considers his encounters with French people in a

cultural and racial context, even though no one in the story seems guilty of racial prejudice towards Ihara. Ihara seems to expect that he will be seen as a Japanese or “yellow man” rather than as an ordinary human being. The character of Sugano in the story shows that Endo recognizes that a Japanese person can fit in with Europeans, and that Ihara’s self-consciousness is really a personal failing.

Since Ihara is the main character of the story, it is natural to assume that it is Ihara and not Sugano that Endo relates to. In his later writings, Endo would develop the idea that Christianity, although a universal religion, does not fit the Japanese personality and therefore Japan needs a Japanese form of Christianity. This idea was of course very controversial and opposed by the Catholic Church authorities in Rome as well as by Japanese Catholics.

Furuya Kenzo, a Keio University graduate who studied in France like Endo, wrote an article in 1975 about Endo’s experience of studying abroad. Furuya points out the fact that Endo could not reconcile Christianity and his own personality and culture as a Japanese, and that Endo’s attempts to find a Japanese style of Christianity comes from Endo’s overseas study:

For example, even though the West is alien, self-righteous, and close-minded, we cannot get away from it. This is because the West is truly linked to us at the roots. Of course it is because Endo is a believer in Catholicism that accounts for such a way of thinking. Though Endo believed that Catholicism is universal, in fact he discovered through studying abroad that there was

a distance between him and the European way of thinking. Therefore, without rejecting his faith, as a Japanese he could not help being somewhat heretical in his approach to Catholicism.

There is nothing more to the point than this as to the meaning of Endo Shusaku's study abroad. Though "Catholicism" equates with "universality" and should be common to whichever country you go to, the "universality" that Shusaku saw in France was in fact the West itself. That is why a foreign student from Asia cannot just helplessly accept the feeling of a distance from the West and return home. In the case of Shusaku, it is not just his falling ill that contributed to the sadness of his overseas study, but also the unbearableness that he could not but become heretical. The onset of his tuberculosis only throws a veil over the deeper problems ⁽¹⁶⁾.

This short story is one of a number of Endo's writings about his stay of about two years studying in France. Endo is not ashamed to make his characters look weak and conflicted about their identities as Japanese and as Christians. In France, Endo studied the effects of Christianity on European society, but also found that he had to come to grips with his own personal identity and relationship to his faith. His illness, while painful and frightening, played a part in his eventual growth as a novelist and as an original religious thinker.

All translations from Japanese to English are by the author of this article.

- (1) Yamagata Kazumi, *Endo Shusaku: Sono Bungaku Seikai*, Kokken Shupan, 1997, page 369.
- (2) Endo Shusaku, *Jourdan Byoin* (Jourdan Hospital), in *Saigo no Junkyosha* (The Last Martyrs), Kodansha Bunko, 1984, page 53.
- (3) Endo, pages 54-55.
- (4) Endo, pages 60-61.
- (5) Endo, page 62.
- (6) Endo, pages 62-63.
- (7) Endo, page 64.
- (8) Endo, pages 66-67.
- (9) Endo, page 70.
- (10) Endo, pages 71-72.
- (11) Endo, pages 74-75.
- (12) Endo, page 77.
- (13) Kazusa Hideo, *kaisetsu* in *Saigo no Junkyosha* (The Last Martyrs), Kodansha Bunko, 1984, page 217.
- (14) Kato Muneya, *Endo Shusaku*, Keio Gijuku Daigaku Shupan Kai, 2006, page 101.
- (15) Kato, page 103.
- (16) Furuya Kenzo, *The Meaning of Studying Abroad for Shusaku Endo in Endo Shusaku: Gunzo Nihon no Sakka Vol 22*, Shogakukan, 1991, page 267.