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“And Like the Sea God was Silent”:

Multivalent Water Imagery in Endo Shusaku’s *Silence*

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The organic imagery of Shusaku Endo’s *Silence* is dominated by the motif of water, from the rain that drenches the parched earth to the wearisome sea-crossings that mirror the spiritual journey of Rodrigues. In the Christian tradition, and in the New Testament in particular, water is a symbol of faith and grace, from the cleansing of sin in baptism to the quenching of spiritual thirst promised by Christ as the fountain of life. The motif of water in *Silence*, however, is far more ambiguous: not only does it provide relief from the oppressive heat, but it also serves as a site of torture and death. In this way, it echoes the moral and spiritual ambiguities of the novel. This essay will analyze the way in which Endo’s multivalent employment of the motif of water problematizes interpretation and adds a richness of theological nuance to the text. It is not my intention to examine this imagery through an ecocritical lens, but to explore how images of water in *Silence* shape the narrative by drawing on a wealth of theological imagery. This analysis will later consider the motif of tears and the monastic doctrine of compunction to which they relate, evoking a reconsideration of the characters of Rodrigues.

The *Penguin Dictionary of Symbols* lists three main symbolic interpretations of water in ancient traditions: 1) a source of life; 2) a vehicle of cleansing; and 3) a center of regeneration.<sup>i</sup> However, “like all symbols, water can be regarded from two diametrically opposite points of view which are not, despite this, irreconcilable, and this ambivalence occurs at all levels. Water is the source both of life and of death, is

creator and destroyer.”<sup>ii</sup> The duality of the imagery of water as both creator and destroyer is, perhaps, most evident in the Psalms. In Psalm 68,<sup>iii</sup> for example, water is clearly a destructive force from which the psalmist entreats to be saved:

Save me, O God: for the waters are come in even unto my soul.  
I stick fast in the mire of the deep: and there is no sure standing. I am  
come into the depth of the sea: and a tempest hath overwhelmed me....  
Draw me out of the mire, that I may not stick fast: deliver me from  
them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the tempest of  
water drown me, nor the deep swallow me up: and let not the pit shut  
her mouth on me.<sup>iv</sup>

Elsewhere in the Psalms, this destructive force is calmed only by God’s intervention:

If it had not been that the Lord was with us, let Israel now say:  
...perhaps the waters had swallowed us up. Our soul hath passed  
through a torrent: perhaps our soul hath passed through a water  
insupportable.<sup>v</sup>

Water frequently functions as an instrument of God’s judgment: the Flood narrative of Genesis 6–9, and the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea (Exodus 13:17–14:2), for instance, clearly delineate those who are in God’s favor and those who are to be punished. The pericope of Water from the Rock (Exodus 17:1–7), by which God gives sustenance to the Israelites, is repeated throughout the Old Testament,<sup>vi</sup> recalling God’s favor of the Israelites and his covenant with them.

At other points in the Psalms, water is a source of spiritual restoration and refreshment: “As the hart panteth after the fountains of water: so my soul panteth after thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God.... My tears have been my bread day and night....”<sup>vii</sup> Sometimes, too, it is a symbol of spiritual purity: “I will wash my hands among the innocent; and will compass thy altar, O Lord.”<sup>viii</sup> This motif of water of the Spirit is particularly prevalent in the New Testament. In the Gospel of John, for instance, water is equated with life, which is portrayed as a blessing that follows from faith in Christ. In John 4:13–14, Jesus tells the Samaritan

woman that anyone who drinks of him will never thirst: “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever. But the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting.” The Gospel of John is abundant in images of water; Christ turns water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1–10), walks on the troubled sea (John 6:17–19), and washes the feet of his disciples as a sign of humility (John 13:12–17). The symbol of water in this Gospel therefore represents the development of faith, rebirth in Christ, and cleansing of sin.<sup>ix</sup>

Water in the Bible is, therefore, generally a boon to the faithful: it is a reward for their faith; it is a sign of cleansing and renewal; it is a relief from thirst and drought; it is a punishment for the enemy. In Shusaku Endo’s *Silence*, however, water is often an unwelcome element. Although Rodrigues himself employs the theological symbolism of water—“In this desert from which missionaries and priests had been expelled the only one who could give the water of life to this island tonight was myself”<sup>x</sup>—he wavers in his faith in God’s Providence, interpreting God’s silence as abandonment, thereby rejecting those signs traditionally seen as symbols of God’s presence and favor. Christopher Link writes that “Endo’s ‘mudswamp Japan’ [must] be understood as a metaphor for the psyche, especially that part of the soul that in any individual resists the paradoxes of Christianity as unassimilable or, if assimilated, as somehow disingenuous, problematic or suspect.”<sup>xi</sup> As I shall demonstrate below, the metaphor of a mudswamp with its failure to embrace the paradoxes of Christianity, is a metaphor not only for the Japanese, but for Rodrigues himself.

The rainy season of Rodrigues’s Japan brings but little relief from the oppressive heat, and contributes to the sense of futility that the reader suspects will underlie his mission:

Yesterday rain again. Of course this rain is no more than a herald of the heat that follows. But all day long it makes a melancholy sound as it falls in the thicket which surrounds our hut.... Seeing nothing but rain and more rain, a feeling like anger rises up within our breasts. How much longer is this life to continue?<sup>xii</sup>

In fact, while mists and gentle rain are signs of God's beneficence in the Bible,<sup>xiii</sup> a downpour of rain is frequently associated with God's punishment—more specifically, punishment for sin and for lack of faith.<sup>xiv</sup> Rodrigues notes “what a gloomy pest this rain is—a pest that destroys everything both on the surface and at the root.”<sup>xv</sup> Later in the novel, a debate will rage about the failure of Christianity to take hold in Japan; both Inoue and Fr. Ferreira attribute this to Japan being a metaphysical swamp. Ferreira insists that “This country is a more terrible swamp than you can imagine. Whenever you plant a sapling in this swamp the roots being to rot; the leaves grow yellow and wither. And we have planted the sapling of Christianity in this swamp.”<sup>xvi</sup> Endo himself attributed the failure of Christianity to flourish in Japan to a lack of metaphysical concord between the two traditions, writing the following in an undergraduate essay: “there is in the Japanese sensibility something that is incapable of receiving Christianity...a threefold insensitivity: an insensitivity to God, an insensitivity to sin, and an insensitivity to death.”<sup>xvii</sup> Rodrigues, however, asserts that Christianity has “penetrated this territory like water flowing onto dry earth,”<sup>xviii</sup> and insists that the failure of his mission is due to his own struggle with his faith: “My struggle was with Christianity in my own heart.”<sup>xix</sup> Nonetheless, the rain-drenched landscape and the vast black sea are ever present in those parts of the novel narrated by Rodrigues, leading the reader to wonder whether they symbolize an outward projection of that narrator's interior state or whether the reader is meant to interpret them as a lack of awareness and rejection of those gifts of faith that theologians have for so long celebrated.

Water provides mere bodily refreshment in the novel; it does not provide sustenance for the soul. Frequently Rodrigues experiences thirst, and frequently he meditates upon Christ on the cross as he is offered gall (translated by William Johnson in the present edition of the novel as “vinegar”) to quench his thirst. While the Gospels of Matthew (27:34, 48) and John (19:28–30) present this pericope without censure of the soldiers, Luke reads it as a mocking gesture (23:36). Mark states that the wine offered was mixed with myrrh, perhaps as an anesthetic to ease suffering. Rodrigues, however, reads the gesture in terms of his own suffering, and interprets the offering as a sign of scorn and mockery:

Grasping my staff and moving on, I found that the dryness in my throat was even more unbearable, and now I realized only too clearly that the wretch had deliberately made me eat the dried fish. I recalled the words of the Gospel how Christ had said, “I thirst”; and one of the soldiers put a sponge full of vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth.<sup>xx</sup>

In fact, Rodrigues frequently makes a correlation between water and God’s absence, thereby overturning one of the key theological symbols of spiritual fulfillment.

Meditating on the martyrdom of Mokichi and Ichizo, he notes

now there arose up within my heart quite suddenly the sound of the roaring sea.... The sound of those waves that echoed in the dark like a muffled drum; the sound of those waves all night long as they broke meaninglessly, receded and then broke against the shore. This was the sea that relentlessly washed the dead bodies of Mokichi and Ichizo, the sea that swallowed them up, the sea that, after their death, stretched out endlessly with unchanging expressions. And like the sea God was silent. His silence continued.<sup>xxi</sup>

Rodrigues is therefore heedless of the symbolic possibility of grace in the water that surrounds him—and, by implication, in the grace to be found in the trials that are sent his way—and it is this discordance between his desire for glorious martyrdom and his inability to find God among the darkness, the storms, and the pitiful peasant faces that

leads him to reject for so long the possibility of mercy that will, perhaps, be his eventual redemption.

Rodrigues is clearly far from suited to his undertaking; his sacerdotal focus is on sacrament and rite rather than priestly duty..Although, his view of the importance of his mission cannot be underestimated – “I thrilled with joy as I listened to the solemn voice of Garrpe as he recited the baptismal prayers. This is a happiness that only a missionary priest in a foreign land can relish.”<sup>xxii</sup> – his optimism is quickly tempered by the rigors of this mission and by the trials that he faces both from within and from without. Writing on the protagonist’s crisis of faith, William T. Cavanaugh notes that Rodrigues’s lack of empathy for his potential congregation is at the root of his doubts:

Rodrigues’s growing doubts stand against the backdrop of the enduring faith of the peasants. However, rather than soothe his doubts, Rodrigues finds the simple faith of the peasants a further irritant. The more the peasants seem to suffer for their faith, the more Rodrigues seems to recoil from the whole missionary enterprise. Against his will, he begins to struggle with the idea that faith is a mere escape from reality; worse, he is haunted by the dim awareness that the suffering of the peasants is increased because of his own presence. And much worse still, their faith now appears as a cruel burden laid on them by a God who refuses to speak.<sup>xxiii</sup>

This lack of empathy is most evident in those passages in the novel treating baptism:

They come to my house one after another, completely ignoring the ban on Christianity. I baptize the children and hear the confessions of the adults. Even when I keep going all day long I don’t get through them all. They remind me of an army marching through the parched desert and then arriving at an oasis of water—this is the way they come to me, thirsty and longing for refreshment. The crumbling farm house that I use for a chapel is jammed tight with their bodies, and so they confess their sins, their mouths close to my ear and emitting a stench that almost makes me vomit.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Water imagery in the novel therefore often functions as a reminder of Rodrigues’s increasing dissociation from God, from his mission, from his congregation and from himself. Central to this type of imagery is Endo’s depiction of the sea. Whether

echoing Rodrigues's psycho-emotional state, foreshadowing events to come, or being the subject of pathetic fallacy and acquiring human attributes, the sea is a powerful force in *Silence*. Writing on Gabriel García Márquez, Clementina Adams notes: "The special, peculiar flavor of this writer's fictional world results from the unique blending of sociocultural ambiance, personal feelings and recollections, and extreme and powerful climatological factors whose junction is both mimetic and symbolic."<sup>xxv</sup> Likewise, Endo's use of water imagery takes on resonances both mimetic and symbolic: the sea is a reminder of distance, both spiritual and geographical; it is a portent of impending disruption; it is a mirror of psychic states; it is an ever-present theological symbol; it is unfamiliar and precarious.

In the Old Testament, the sea is unknown, and therefore feared. The Hebrew word used in Genesis to refer to the sea is תְּהוֹם (tehom, "the deep," "the abyss"). It was from the Deep that Noah was afflicted by flood, and it was the Deep that Moses parted to allow the Israelites to pass out of Egypt; it is the Deep that God will parch to make a path for his people on Judgment Day: "And the Lord shall lay waste the tongue of the sea of Egypt, and shall lift up his hand over the river in the strength of his spirit: and he shall strike it in the seven streams, so that men may pass through it in their shoes."<sup>xxvi</sup> Similarly, for Rodrigues, the sea is unpredictable, unknowable, foreign: "All around me is the black sea; it is impossible to tell where the blackness of the night begins. I cannot see whether there are islands around me."<sup>xxvii</sup> As the novel progresses and Rodrigues's crisis of faith begins to manifest itself, the unknowability of the sea becomes a vehicle in the metaphor for the priest's doubt in God's presence: "So he prayed. But the sea remained cold, and the darkness maintained its silence. All that could be heard was the monotonous dull sound of the oars again and again."<sup>xxviii</sup> Here, Rodrigues's seemingly unanswered prayer is juxtaposed with the repetitive,



wearisome sound of the oars, and the silence, darkness and coldness of the sea with God's apparent absence.

While water imagery—rain, rivers, fountains, and so on—frequently stands for God's grace in spiritual and theological writings, the sea is far more ambiguous. Frequently, the sea represents God's power and, more specifically, his judgment:

The story of the Flood, the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and the general fear of the sea and deep waters expressed by the psalmist (18:16; 32:6; 46:3; 69:1ff., *etc.*) indicate that water could in Yahweh's hands be an instrument of judgment, although at the same time there was the thought of salvation through danger for the faithful people of God (*cf.* Is. 43:2; 59:19).<sup>xix</sup>

The sea of the Bible is a site of trial and ordeal, something to be vanquished or tamed, but through such ordeal a possible site of redemption. Günther Bornkamm writes on the pericope of the stilling of the storm in Matthew 8:23–7, which reads as follows in the Douay-Rheims version:

And when he entered into the boat the disciples followed him. And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves; but he was asleep. And they came to him, and awaked him, saying: Lord, save us, we perish. And Jesus saith to them: Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up, he commanded the winds, and the sea; and there came a great calm. But the men wondered, saying: What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him?<sup>xxx</sup>

Bornkamm argues that the evangelist's alteration of the story as it appears in the gospels of Mark and Luke is

a description of the dangers against which Jesus warns anyone who overthoughtlessly presses to become a disciple. At the same time it shows him as one who...is able to reward the sacrifice of abandoning earthly ties. The story becomes a kerygmatic paradigm of the danger and glory of discipleship.<sup>xxxi</sup>

This idea of the “danger and glory of discipleship” permeates *Silence*. Storm imagery repeats throughout the novel, and the relentless rain is more a portent of doom than a

relief from the oppressive heat. When the missionaries set out from port at Macao, Garppe and Rodrigues offer thanks to God for the good weather. It is not long, however, before a storm breaks out at sea:

But now it was dead of night and the only thing possible was to abandon our ship to the wind and the waves. Meanwhile in the front of the ship a great rift was opened and the water began to pour in. For almost the whole night long we worked at stuffing cloth into the rift and bailing out the water.<sup>xxxii</sup>

At many points throughout the novel, the vessels in which Rodrigues sails are beset by bad weather. Paul Minear, writing on metaphor of ships and boats in the New Testament, asks:

Is there is an intended analogy between the boat in the storm and the church in the world? Or again, the story of Jesus walking on the waves to a boatload of disciples who were frantically fighting at night against a contrary wind (Ch. 14:22–27). Does this reflect the helplessness and the fears of a church left alone by its master to carry on its difficult mission? And does the boat-church analogy appear again in the postcrucifixion fishing of the disciples (John 21:8)? If this association of church and boat were certain, we might discern allusions elsewhere, as, for example, in those varied occasions when Mark pictures Jesus as teaching the crowds from a boat (Mark 4:1).<sup>xxxiii</sup>

In light of this metaphor, then, the stormy and troubled sea voyages reflect the precariousness not only of Catholicism in Japan but also of Rodrigues's own vocation.

A useful point of access to the sea imagery in *Silence* is the medieval tradition of *peregrinatio pro amore Dei*: a pilgrimage for the love of God.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Dorothy Whitelock provides a wealth of examples from insular sources about various *peregrini* who abandoned themselves in currachs (or coracles: small, rudderless wickerwork boats, propelled by paddles), putting their faith in providence, noting that the drive for voluntary exile is in imitation of Matthew 19:29: "And every one that hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting."

Richard Marsden notes a central paradox in the practice of *peregrinatio*: that the harshness of the journey makes it all the more compelling.

Seafaring is a wretched business—as the speaker has firmly persuaded us with his own “true story”—and *therefore*...he must embrace it all the more. The more uncompromisingly realistic the opening account of seafaring, the more disturbing—and therefore effective—the paradox.<sup>xxxv</sup>

This tradition of *peregrinatio* is, perhaps, hinted at by Endo in *Silence*, when Rodrigues reflects on the saints who had crossed the sea before him, putting their trust in God to lead them safely to shore:

Sometimes he would open his eyes, and always he could hear the sound of the oars in the water.... “Lord, may Thy will be done,” he murmured, as though in his sleep. But even though his halting words seemed to resemble those of so many saints who had entrusted their all to the providence of God, he felt that his were different.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

The theme of exile is clearly present in *Silence*. Rodrigues, too, has forsaken the familiarity and kinship of home to embark on his mission. The concept of exile is starkly drawn when he meditates on the work of St. Francis Xavier and the other Jesuit missionaries who made the arduous journey to attempt to plant the seed of Christianity in Japan. Endo’s Prologue, in fact, depicts this correlation between exile and the vagaries of the sea with the narrative of the expulsion of the missionaries from Japan in 1614:

Reports from the missionaries tell of how on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> October of this same year, seventy priests, both Japanese and foreign, were herded together at Kibachi in Kyushu and forced to board five junks bound for Macao and Manila. Then they sailed into exile. It was rainy that day, and the sea was grey and stormy as the ships drenched by rain made their way out of the harbor, passed beside the promontory and disappeared beyond the horizon.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

In Endo’s terms, though, exile is from the missionary endeavor, rather than towards it: the homeland is where the seeds of faith are to be sown, and the exile of the

missionaries is away from their ministry. Elsewhere, though, Rodrigues depicts the journey *towards* his mission as a sort of exile, and clearly in opposition to the sense of homecoming that awaited the missionaries before him:

How many missionaries had crossed over to this island on a tiny boat just as I had done! And yet how different were their circumstances from mine! When they came to Japan, fortune smiled gaily upon their every venture. Everywhere was safe for them; they found houses in which they could rest at ease and Christians who welcomed them with open arms.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The sea therefore comes to be a reminder of Rodrigues's distance from his native land:

Never again would he cross the leaden sea to return to his native land. When in Portugal he had thought that to become a missionary was to come to belong to that country. He had intended to go to Japan and to lead the same life as the Japanese Christians. Whatever about that, now it was indeed so. He had received the Japanese name Okada San'emon; he had become a Japanese.... Fate had given him everything he could wish for, had given it to him in this cynical way.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Unlike those seafarers in the tradition of the *peregrinatio*, his journey is not driven by penitence, but rather by a desire to discover the truth about the alleged apostasy of Ferreira. Like those *peregrini*, though, the harshness of the journey is a test of faith. At first, Rodrigues's belief in Providence is strong, and the sea is merely an obstacle to be overcome with God's aid:

Until this day there was no sign of land, no trace of an island. The grey sky stretched out endlessly and sometimes the rays of the sun struck to the ship so feebly as to be heavy on the eyelids. Overcome with depression we just kept our eyes fixed on the cold sea where the teeth of the waves flashed like white buds. But God did not abandon us.<sup>xl</sup>

Later in the novel, though, the sea becomes menacing and increasingly dark, and onto it is projected Rodrigues's wavering faith in God's providence:

The sea and the land were silent as death; only the dull sound of the waves lapping against the boat broke the silence of the night. Why have you abandoned us so completely?, he prayed in a weak voice.... Have you just remained silent like the darkness that surrounds me?... There is a limit to our endurance. Give us no more suffering.... So he prayed. But the sea remained cold, and the darkness maintained its stubborn silence. All that could be heard was the monotonous dull sound of the oars again and again.<sup>xli</sup>

The sea itself therefore takes on a wealth of interpretative valences, reflecting the precariousness of the displaced Church, the isolation of missionary work, the tenuousness of Rodrigues's faith in providence, and the terror of God's absence.

Water from God can be a punishment, a blessing, or an ordeal. There is, however, one more motif of water that is central to scripture, as well as to classical and patristic theology—the motif of tears. Affective devotion encouraged meditation on the sufferings of Christ, and was thought to lead to a deeper faith. Stephen Shoemaker writes: “pious reflection turned to contemplate, with increasing fervour, the excruciating pains endured by Christ in the crucifixion, inviting the faithful to share mentally in the torment and sorrow.”<sup>xlii</sup> One particular aspect of this affectivity of religious experience, compunction, was considered to be particularly efficacious in strengthening the individual's relationship with God. Depicted most frequently in the outward manifestation of tears, compunction was seen by Church Fathers as a charism by which, through a pricking of the heart, the individual may come to a more profound experience of faith. As Sandra McEntire, in her book-length study on the topic writes:

compunction is a grace, gratuitously given, with which the beneficiary must cooperate.... tears are the exterior expression of the greater activity, prayer between the individual and God. The grace of tears is never sought for its own sake, but as the abiding sign of the deep interior sorrow one feels before the greatness and mercy of God. The interior attitude is expressed in the outward sign of tears; both tears and compunction are elements of grace being given.<sup>xliii</sup>

The doctrine of compunction has its roots in Scripture, in the New Testament in particular, where a personal and emotive mode of devotion is emphasized in the relationship between the incarnate God and his followers. Central to this tradition is the story of the infamous public sinner who washed Christ's feet with her tears.<sup>xliv</sup> The Scriptures are full of images of people weeping out of regret for their sins, or in humility before the mercy of God and his promise of salvation. In the book of Isaiah, for instance, tears figure prominently as an outward sign of inward devotion. God replies to the weeping of Ezechias with the following words: "I have heard thy prayer, and I have seen thy tears."<sup>xlv</sup> The repeated exhortation that we "harden not our hearts"<sup>xlvi</sup> is central to the doctrine; the softening of the hardened heart is enacted through *gratia lacrymarum*—the grace of tears—and many writers on compunction figure the softened heart that weeps for repentance to be sign of God's grace. Richard of St. Victor, the twelfth-century French mystical theologian, emphasizes that compunctive tears can melt the most hardened of hearts, opening its pores to virtue. Tears, therefore, spring from a hardened heart, and further soften the heart allowing God's grace to enter:

Therefore I think that there is need....for more inner compunction than profound investigation; more for signs than arguments; more for frequent lamentations than an abundance of argumentations. However, we know that nothing so purifies the innermost places of the heart and nothing so renews the purity of the mind; nothing so drives away the clouds of ambiguity; nothing leads better or more quickly to serenity of heart than true contrition of soul, than deep and innermost compunction of soul.<sup>xlvii</sup>

Chromatius distinguishes between tears of compunction and all other forms of weeping: "What mourning must be understood by us as healthy? Surely not that which is born of the loss of things, nor from the loss of dear ones, nor from the loss of earthly dignities, all things which will not hurt a man who has been made poor in

spirit.<sup>xlvi</sup> Tears of compunction are, when in response to loss, directed towards spiritual rather than material deprivation: the fear of salvation lost, or the awareness of the proximity of death and final judgment, for example. Irénée Hausherr asserts, however, that not all compunctive tears are those of sadness. She adds to the prospect of salvation lost and the certainty of death and judgment the individual's daily faults, brotherly love ("mourning for salvation that has been lost, either by oneself or others"), and pure love of God.<sup>xlvi</sup> On this point, Gregory the Great distinguishes between compunction of fear and compunction of love, the former being an inferior precursor to the latter.<sup>1</sup> Among the concepts associated with compunction in the Christian tradition, then, are pity for one's fellow man, a hunger for God's presence, and a sense of grief at the human condition.

The doctrine of compunction underpins so much of the theology of Endo's novel, as Rodrigues's faith shifts from jubilant to affective, and as the image of Christ as king is replaced by images from the Passion. In fact, it seems that Rodrigues's psycho-spiritual turmoil is born from the lack of affectivity in his characterization of Christ:

From childhood the face of Christ had been for him the fulfillment of his every dream and ideal. The face of Christ as it preached to the crowd the Sermon on the Mount. The face of Christ as he passed over the Lake of Galilee at dusk. Even in its moments of terrible torture this face had never lost its beauty. Those soft, clear eyes which pierced to the very core of a man's being were now fixed upon him. The face that could do no wrong, utter no word of insult. When the vision of this face came before him, fear and trembling seemed to vanish like the tiny ripples that are quietly sucked up by the sand of the sea-shore.<sup>li</sup>

The humanity of Christ—his suffering and his sorrow—seems to dawn on Rodrigues only gradually. At last, it is his ability to conceive of the affective image of Christ that allows him to trample the *fumie* and to save the Christians from their death:

Before him is the ugly face of Christ, crowned with thorns and the thin, outstretched arms. Eyes dimmed and confused the priest silently looks down at the face which he now meets for the first time since coming to this country.... With saddened glance he stares intently at the man in the centre of the *fumie*, worn down and hollow with the constant trampling. A tear is about to fall from his eye.<sup>lii</sup>

Writing on what he refers to as the “soteriology of ugliness” in Endo, Christopher

Link asserts that

If [Graham] Greene has been moved, to some degree, simply by the essential degraded human condition itself, then Endo seems rather more emphatically to insist upon the primacy of the image of Christ—that is, on the saving power of the ugly, defeated Christ, the man of sorrows—and therefore, upon the specifically Christological redemption of that same degraded human situation.<sup>liii</sup>

Only upon meditation on the image of the suffering Christ, only through this affective piety, does Rodrigues come to understand the nature of his ordeals, the apparent silence of God, and the true import of his missionary work. One may read Endo’s depiction of the crowing cock at the moment of Rodrigues’s apostasy as an indictment of the priest’s actions—a comparison with Peter’s betrayal of Christ. At this moment of the text, however, Rodrigues acknowledges the centrality of the Passion to theodicy and faith, and the affectivity of his devotion serves as a vindication of his actions.

Although Rodrigues does eventually experience compunction, it does not come easily to him. This is most evident in his attitude to Kichijiro. He alternates between pity<sup>liv</sup> and contempt for the fisherman, perhaps because, as the omniscient narrator notes, his pity has been devoid of love: “His pity for them had been overwhelming; but pity was not action. It was not love. Pity, like passion, was no more than a kind of instinct.”<sup>lv</sup> Whether Rodrigues learns to love his fellow man is never made clear, but his love for Christ leads him to a development of compunction that actualizes his pity and cements it as a powerful force in his redemption. On



looking at Ferreira, Rodrigues “simply felt his breast swell with the pity one feels for a living being that has lost its life and spirit.”<sup>lvi</sup> Even late in the novel, however, but before his trampling of the *fumie*, Rodrigues lacks compunction in his dealings with Kichijiro:

Yes, he had whispered the words of absolution for Kichijiro; but this prayer had not come from the depths of his heart. He had simply recited the words out of a sense of priestly duty. That was why they lay heavy on his tongue like the residue of bitter food.... Even though he no longer entertained emotions of hatred and anger, he could not erase from his memory the feeling of contempt.<sup>lvii</sup>

Kichijiro himself is frequently compunctive, crying out in a tearful voice for absolution,<sup>lviii</sup> and bewailing his betrayal of the priest. Yet Rodrigues himself is conscious of the lack in his own experience of compunction, and this consciousness paradoxically brings compunction to him:

Our Lord had searched out the ragged and the dirty.... Anyone could be attracted by the beautiful and the charming. But could such attraction be called love? True love was to accept humanity when wasted like rags and tatters.... Once again near his face came the face of Christ, wet with tears. When the gentle eyes looked straight into his, the priest was filled with shame.

Water is instrumental in the development of Rodrigues’s compunction, bringing to him images of Christ’s Passion and moving him to affective contemplation of how his own sufferings echo those of Christ:

Resting his head on the hard floor and listening to the sound of the rain, the priest thought of a man who had been put on trial like himself.... The rays of the dawn stretched out beyond the Dead Sea bathing the mountain range in golden white, the brook Cedron babbled on, ever giving forth its fresh sound.... This emaciated man was his perfect ideal. His eyes, like those of every victim, were filled with sorrowful resignation as he looked reproachfully at the crowd that ridiculed and spat at him...this case was just like his own. He had been sold by Kichijiro as Christ had been sold by Judas; and like Christ he was now being judged by the powerful ones of this world. Yes, his fate and that of Christ were quite alike; and at this thought on that rainy night a tingling sensation of joy welled up within his breast.... On the

other hand, he had tasted none of the physical suffering that Christ had known; and this thought made him uneasy.<sup>lix</sup>

It is specifically his meditation upon the image of the suffering Christ—a meditation entered into through his own suffering—that enacts compunction in Rodrigues. This compunction is not grounded in the fear of his own possible torture and death, but in the love that he feels is not present in his epistemological scheme. He experiences the compunction of love that Gregory the Great insists to be a superior form of compunction:

“Women of Jerusalem, weep not for me but for yourselves and for your children. For the day will come....” These words came up in his mind. Many centuries ago, that man tasted with his dried and swollen tongue all the suffering that I now endure, he reflected. And this sense of suffering shared softly eased his mind and heart more than the sweetest water.

“Pange lingua....” He felt the tears streaming down his cheeks. “Bella premunt hostilia, da robur fer auxilium.”<sup>lx</sup>

‘Pange lingua....’ He felt the tears streaming down his cheeks. ‘Bella premunt hostilia, da robur fer auxilium.’<sup>lxi</sup>

Rodrigues vacillates between compunction and lack of compassion, between celebrating the relief provided by the rain to bewailing its relentlessness, between marveling at the vast unknowability of the sea to feeling an acute sense of abandonment in an unfamiliar land, both spiritual and geographical. Like Ferreira, he remains an imperfect model of sacerdotal stoicism and piety—a “bad priest,” as Christopher Link puts it. But as Brett Dewey writes,

There is a place for weakness and forgiveness in the community. Endo shows us that the church is made of redeemed Peters and Judases; it is a broken community whose triumph is in the shared suffering with God. The “Appendix” suggests that Rodrigues has taught Kichijiro, who in turn is teaching others, about the veneration of saints and the order of the Church.<sup>lxii</sup>

Endo presents us with a soteriology of ugliness, “a theological aesthetic of sin and suffering”;<sup>lxiii</sup> he creates a protagonist who should be exemplary, but who misreads

conventional Christian symbols and thereby displays an ambivalent faith; he portrays in Rodrigues a sort-of-Christ who becomes a sort-of-Judas, and allows Kichijiro, the traitor, to become central to the promulgation and continuance of Christianity in the region; he allows Rodrigues to experience compunction through bewailing his lack thereof. But Endo's theodicy insists that Judas "was no more than the unfortunate puppet for the glory of the drama which was the life and death of Christ,"<sup>ix</sup> and his novel, filled as it is with flawed characters, and saturated as it is by ambiguous biblical imagery, testifies to the paradox at the heart of Endo's writing: God speaks loudest in his silence.

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<sup>i</sup> "Water," in *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*, ed. Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, trans. John Buchanan-Brown (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), 1081.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> In citing the Psalms, I have used the numbering of the Septuagint and the Vulgate.

<sup>iv</sup> Psalms 68:2–3; 15–16, *The Holy Bible: Douay Version* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1956). All quotations from the Bible are taken from this edition unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>v</sup> Psalms 123:1–5.

<sup>vi</sup> Numbers 20:1–13; Psalms 78:15–16, 20; 105:41; 114:8; Isaiah 43:20; 48:21.

<sup>vii</sup> Psalms 41:1–4.

<sup>viii</sup> Psalms 25:6.

<sup>ix</sup> See, for example, Myung Kwan Noh and Andy Baek, *Water in the Gospel of John: Finding Christ through Water* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2011); Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn

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(Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003).

<sup>x</sup> Shusaku Endo, *Silence*, trans. William Johnston (London: Peter Owen, 1969; rpt. 2009), 60–1.

<sup>xi</sup> Christopher A. Link, “Bad Priests and the Valor of Pity: Shusaku Endo and Graham Greene on the Paradoxes of Christian Virtue,” in *Logos* 15.4 (Fall, 2012): 77.

<sup>xii</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 118.

<sup>xiii</sup> Leviticus 26:3; Deuteronomy 11:11; 33:13; Psalms 72:6–7.

<sup>xiv</sup> Genesis; Exodus 9:17–35.

<sup>xv</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 99.

<sup>xvi</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>xvii</sup> Endo Shusaku, “The gods and God,” quoted in, and translated by Francis Mathy, “Shusaku Endo: Japanese Catholic Novelist,” in *Thought: A Review of Culture and Idea* 42 (Winter, 1967): 593.

<sup>xviii</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 61.

<sup>xix</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>xx</sup> *Ibid.*, 129–30.

<sup>xxi</sup> *Ibid.*, 116–17.

<sup>xxii</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>xxiii</sup> William T. Cavanaugh, “The God of Silence: Shusaku Endo’s Reading of the Passion,” in *Commonweal* 10 (March, 1998): 10.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 77.

<sup>xxv</sup> Clementina R. Adams, “The Endless Rains of Death and Desolation in García Márquez’s Short Stories,” in *Climate in Literature: Reflections of Environment*, ed. Janet Pérez and Wendell M. Aycock (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1995), 71.

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- <sup>xxvi</sup> Isaiah 11:15.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 106–7.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.
- <sup>xxix</sup> J.B. Taylor, “Water,” in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas, rev. ed., 3 vols (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980, 1994), 1632.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Matthew 8:23–7.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Günther Bornkamm, “The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew,” in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, ed. G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H.J. Held (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 57.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 49–50.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Paul Sevier Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1960), 33.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Dorothy Whitelock, “The Interpretation of *The Seafarer*,” in *Early Cultures of Northwest Europe*, ed. C. Fox and B. Dickens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 261–72.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Richard Marsden, *The Cambridge Old English Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 157.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> *Ibid.*, 108–9.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> *Ibid.*, 294–5.
- <sup>xl</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.
- <sup>xli</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.
- <sup>xlii</sup> Stephen J. Shoemaker, “Mary at the Cross, East and West: Maternal Compassion and Affective Piety in the Earliest *Life of the Virgin* and the High Middle

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Ages,” in *Journal of Theological Studies* 62.2 (2011): 571.

<sup>xliii</sup> Sandra McEntire, *The Doctrine of Compunction in Medieval England: Holy Tears* (NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 55.

<sup>xliv</sup> Luke 7:37–38.

<sup>xl</sup> Isaiah 38:5.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Hebrews 3:7–19 and Psalm 95:8.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Richard of St. Victor, *The Mystical Ark*, in *The Twelve Patriarchs; The Mystical Ark; Book Three of the Trinity*, ed. and trans. Grover Zinn (NY: Paulist Press, 1979), 265.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Chromatius, *Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina* (Turnhout: Brepols), 1953ff. Cited and translated in McEntire, *Holy Tears*, 35.

<sup>xlix</sup> Irénée Hausherr, *Penthos: The Doctrine of Compunction in the Christian East*, trans. Anselm Hufstader (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1982), 26–52; quotation from 41.

<sup>1</sup> Gregory the Great, *Dialogi*, in *Patrologia Cursus Completus: Series Latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64), 3, caput XXXIV; cited in, and translated by, McEntire, *Holy Tears*, 50–51.

<sup>li</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 170.

<sup>lii</sup> *Ibid*, 270–1.

<sup>liii</sup> Christopher Link, “Bad Priests,” 90–91.

<sup>liv</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 131.

<sup>lv</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>lvi</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>lvii</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

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

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<sup>lix</sup> Ibid., 202–3.

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

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

<sup>lxii</sup> Brett Dewey, “Suffering the Patient Victory of God: Shusaku Endo and the Lessons of a Japanese Catholic,” *Quodlibet Journal* 6.1 (Jan.–Mar., 2004), <http://www.quodlibet.net/articles/dewey-endo.shtml> (accessed 3 August, 2013).

<sup>lxiii</sup> Link, “Bad Priests,” 88.

<sup>lxiv</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 128.