

# Theological «Burning Points» In The Novel *Chinmoku* [*Silence*]

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Shūsaku Endō 遠藤周作 (1923-1996) was one of the outstanding authors of the twentieth century, belonging to a generation of Japanese post-war Christian writers whose foundations had been shaped by writers, such as Sōseki Natsume 夏目漱石 (1867-1916), Takeo Arishima 有島武郎 (1878-1923), Ryūnosuke Akutagawa 芥川龍之介 (1892-1927), Tatsuo Hori 堀辰雄 (1904-1953), and Osamu Dazai 太宰治 (1909-1948). In a similar way to Akutagawa, Arishima and Dazai, Endō struggled during his life with questions concerning his faith. His struggle is recognisable in the publication of more than two hundred titles, including short stories, plays, dramas, reviews, critical biographies, essays, diaries and novels. He lived and worked in his home country Japan, but his fiction bears universal meaning because of the profoundly anthropological nature of the theological themes that he treated in his fictional works.

Scholars divide the literary works of Shūsaku Endō into two groups: serious literature (*junbungaku* 純文学) and light novels (*keishōsetsu* 軽小説), or popular literature (*tsūzokuteki sakuhin* 通俗的作品)<sup>1</sup>. Usually, the first

<sup>1</sup> To the first group, we can enumerate *Shiroi hito* 白い人 — *Kiroi hito* 黄色い人 [*White Man* — *Yellow Man*] (1955; 2005), *Umi to Dokuyaku* 海と毒薬 [*The Sea and Poison*] (1958; 1972), *Chinmoku* 沈黙 [*Silence*] (1966;

group presents in the story Christian characters and there is through the pages a Christian stamp<sup>2</sup>, but the second group does not have explicitly Christian protagonists. The explicit or implicit themes have, however, in all novels the taste of Christianity and reflect the struggle of the author: first to describe the sense of distance between a Christian monotheistic world and Japanese pantheistic climate; then, in a second period, to adapt the former to the latter.

In 1967, Francis Mathy wrote about the threefold insensitivity of the Japanese—insensitivity to God, insensitivity to sin and insensitivity to death—and considered that this threefold insensitivity «springs from Oriental pantheism»<sup>3</sup>. As Japanese, Shūsaku Endō had in his blood the influence of these typical Japanese attributes<sup>4</sup>. Hence, his sense of distance from the western Christian way of thinking, even though he was baptised. This gap between East and West, as well as the questions of evil and sin are themes in the first novels (*Shiroyi hito*, *Kiroyi hito* and *Umi to Dokuyaku*). With *O-baka-san* and *Watashi ga · suteta · onna*, the author began to delineate his Christology, more accurately structured in *Chinmoku*. This Chris-

1969), *Samurai* 侍 [*The Samurai*] (1980; 1982) and *Fukai kawa* 深い河 [*Deep River*] (1993; 1994); to the second group, *O-baka-san* おバカさん [*Wonderful Fool*] (1959; 1974), *Hechima kun* ヘチマくん [*The Young Hechima*] (1961), *Watashi ga · suteta · onna* わたしが · 棄てた · 女 [*The Girl I Left Behind*] (1964; 1994), *Saraba natsu no hikari* さらば、夏の光よ [*Farewell, Light of Summer*] (1966), *Sukyandaru* スキャンダル [*Scandal*] (1986; 1988). The first date is the year of the earliest publication in Japanese and the second one is the year of the first translation into English, both dates separated by semicolon. In the case of only one date, it means the year of the earliest publication of the original Japanese text, and that such work has not yet been translated into English.

<sup>2</sup> *Umi to Dokuyaku* can be considered an exception, because the only Christian protagonist is the German lady Hilda, who has a secondary role in the story and cannot be considered as model for Shūsaku Endō's theology, because of Hilda's conception of God as a judging and punishing God.

<sup>3</sup> «With regard to the first, it is not so much that the Japanese are positive atheists, but rather that they are indifferent toward the very problem of God's existence. In other words, it seems to the Japanese irrelevant whether God exists or not. [...] The Japanese have a desire to be absorbed, not in God, but in nature, in the universe. [...] To the Japanese, therefore, everything is seen as an extension of the individual—even God. [...] The Christian must always fight—against himself, against sin, against the devil. [...] Not so with the Japanese. Since man is part of the gods and since there is no recognition of an essential difference between their existence and his, man can return with no difficulty to nature and the universe. Passive though he be, he will pass into the eternal with no difficulty. For Endō's three friends who committed suicide, death was a return to the eternal sleep and peace, nothing to be feared. [...] The threefold insensitivity to God, sin, and death, therefore, springs from Oriental pantheism». F. МАТНУ, «Shūsaku Endō: Japanese Catholic Novelist», *Thought* XLII (1967) 585-614. At 593-594.

<sup>4</sup> Shūsaku Endō himself had already delineated in various essays the traditional three insensitivities in Japanese culture, the three primary characteristics of the Japanese pantheistic world. See, for instance, S. ENDŌ, «Watakushi to kirisutokyō» 私とキリスト教 [Christianity and I] (1963), in Endō Shūsaku Bungaku Zenshū 遠藤周作文学全集 [Complete Works of Shūsaku Endō], XII: *hyōron – essei I* 評論・エッセイ I [*Critics – Essays I*], Shinchōsha 新潮社, Tokyo 2000, 304-309. At 306. This collection consists in 15 volumes and has been published in 1999-2000 (1999: vol. 1-8; 2000: vol. 9-15). From now on, it will be referred as ESBZ, followed by the number and title of the volume and pages.

tology would gain consistency in the «autobiographical» novel *Shikai no hotori*, in the critical biography *Iesu no shōgai* and in the «journey novel» *Samurai*. They bear the sense of Jesus as *dōhansha* 同伴者 («companion») and with maternal compassionate feelings. *Fukai kawa* opens his theology to a universal dimension.

In this article we study the novel *Chinmoku*. We make a synopsis of the novel and select, analyse and evaluate the theological themes in it.

## Chinmoku 沈黙 [Silence]

God, do not remain silent,  
do not stay quiet or unmoved, God! (Ps 83:1)

Lord, why are you silent?  
Why are you always silent?<sup>5</sup>

In *Shiroi hito*, *Kiroyi hito* and *Umi to Dokuyaku*, Shūsaku Endō addressed the sense of distance (*kyorikan* 距離感) between Christianity and the Japanese. With *Aika* 哀歌 [*Elegy*] (1965) and *Chinmoku* 沈黙 [*Silence*] (1966; Engl. trans. 1969), the author began a new phase, where he made an effort to find a way to link Christianity and Japanese culture, that is, to make Christianity suitable to the Japanese. It is true that he had already initiated this second period with *O-baka-san* and *Watashi ga · suteta · onna* in the sense that he began to delineate a new image of Christ, a Christ who is both companion and icon of selfless love. In these two novels, this new image appeared in a more popular feature; now, only two years after the emergence of Mitsu of *Watashi ga · suteta · onna* as the image of pure love, the author gives birth to what would be considered his most intense and most widely discussed and criticised novel.

Endō had three questions in mind as he wrote *Chinmoku*. First, he asked himself if having lived in that period of history (first decades of the

<sup>5</sup>「主よ、あなたは何故、黙っておられるのです。あなたは何故いつも黙っておられるのですか。」S. ENDŌ, *Chinmoku* 沈黙 [*Silence*] (1966; 1969), ESBZ, II, 181-330. At 253; Id., *Silence*, tr. W. Johnston, Sophia University Press, Tokyo, 1969; Peter Owen, London 1996, 153. We take the references from these two editions: the Japanese original text published in 1999 and the English translation of William Johnston. When referred in the *corpus* of the text, it will appear both as *Cb*, followed by the page number (original Japanese text) and *Sil*, followed by the page number (English translation).

sixteenth century) he might also have stepped on the *fumie*<sup>6</sup>. The second and third questions were about the apostates themselves: What were their feelings when they have trampled on the *fumie*? What kind of people were they?<sup>7</sup> These questions emerged as a theological debate and as mental anguish<sup>8</sup>. He knew that beside the theological «silence» of God there was also the silence of history and that of the Church concerning those that had apostatised during the persecutions<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, the author decided to produce this work as the voice of those apostates without a voice<sup>10</sup>. It would secure his reputation as a writer and incite many controversial discussions, mainly in Christian circles<sup>11</sup>.

In fact, the essence of *Chinmoku* is not the group of the martyrs but rather the expression of the spiritual conflict of the apostates, and specially Rodrigo's inner anguish<sup>12</sup>. It is one of the examples of literature as a privileged place for theological elaboration. As Yōsuke Kojima puts it, by making an analysis of the novel *Chinmoku* from the viewpoint of Vatican II, it is no exaggeration to say that Rodrigo is a symbol of the progressive movement of theologians in the Church at the beginning of the sixties that were preparing the reforms of Vatican II<sup>13</sup>. These reforms arose from the necessity of the Church to respond to challenges of the rapidly changing society by assuming an attitude of dialogue with different cultures and religions.

<sup>6</sup> *Fumie* 踏み絵 is a copperplate (or wood plate) with a crucifix or other Christian symbol, used by the authorities during the persecution of the Christians in the Edo period (*Edo jidai* 江戸時代, 1600-1867), to be trodden on it in order to prove oneself a non-Christian.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. S. ENDŌ, «Ihōjin no kunō» 異邦人の苦悩 [The Suffering of the Alien] (1973), in ESBZ, XIII: *hyōron – essei II* 評論・エッセイ II [Critics – Essays II], 171-183. At 174; ID., *Wasuregatai basho ga aru* 忘れかたい場所がある [There is an Unforgettable Place], Kōbunsha 光文社, Tokyo 2006, 37-38.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M.B. WILLIAMS, *Endō Shūsaku, A Literature of Reconciliation*, Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series, London – New York 1999, 106-107.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. S. KAWASHIMA, «“Chinmoku” no kōzō (ichi)» 『沈黙』の構造 [Structure of “Chinmoku” (1)], *Nihon bungeironshū* 日本文芸論集, 23-24 (1991) 145-161. At 147.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. M. WATANABE 渡辺政司, «Endō Shūsaku “Chinmoku” — kikyōsha no kanashimi» 遠藤周作『沈黙』 — 棄教者の哀しみ [Shūsaku Endō's «Silence» — The Sorrow of the Renegade], *Kokugo Tenbō* 国語展望 103 (1998) 24-26. At 26.

<sup>11</sup> At the time of publication of *Chinmoku* there were many reactions against the author, accusing him of praising apostasy. In some dioceses, his book was banned from the Catholic circles. This was the result of a superficial reading of the novel and the consequent misunderstanding of his message.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. K. TAMAKI 玉置邦雄 «Endō Shūsaku no “Chinmoku” no sekai» 遠藤周作の『沈黙』の世界 [The World of Shūsaku Endō's «Silence»], *Nihon bungei kenkyū* 日本文芸研究 21 (1969) 49-72. At 54.

<sup>13</sup> Y. KOJIMA 小嶋洋輔, «“Chinmoku” to jidai — dai ni bachikan kōkaigi wo shiza toshite» 『沈黙』と時代 — 第二バチカン公会議を視座として [The Time of «Silence» — From the View Point of Vatican II], *Nihon kindai bungaku* 日本近代文学 70 (2004) 125-140. At 135.

## 1.1 Synopsis

The story of *Chinmoku*<sup>14</sup> is set in the early seventeenth century during the persecutions of Christianity under the Tokugawa shogunate. The Jesuit mission in Europe heard that Fr. Cristóvão Ferreira, one of the Jesuits in Japan, had apostatised<sup>15</sup>. The Church at Rome cannot believe that such steadfast and experienced missionary had renounced his faith (cf. *Ch*, 185; *Sil*, 25) and a group of priests begins to organise and volunteer to make the crossing to Japan in order to carry on the underground missionary apostolate and to verify if such rumours around Ferreira are true or not. Two of them—Rodrigo<sup>16</sup> and Garrpe—manage to arrive in Japan, accompanied by a Japanese Christian named Kichijirō, whom they had been acquainted with in Macao (cf. *Ch*, 193; *Sil*, 38). They are forced into hiding because of the persecutions. Initially, the local Christians care for them even under the danger of death if captured (cf. *Ch*, 203; *Sil*, 56), and they minister to believers in great secrecy.

By observing the expressionless faces of believers and imagining their suffering, Rodrigo asks himself why God gives such a burden to Christians (cf. *Ch*, 207; *Sil*, 64). This is the same question that Kichijirō puts later (cf. *Ch*, 222; *Sil*, 95) and which will be repeated throughout the pages. Rodrigo believes that there must be some purpose to such suffering, but through the words of Kichijirō he expresses an oppressive weight in his heart (cf. *Ch*, 223; *Sil*, 96). In Kichijirō's complaint is implicit the problem of the silence of God in face of the terrible and merciless sacrifices in his name. This oppressive weight and anxious enquiry are the *Leitmotiv* throughout the novel.

The shogunate persecution becomes more severe and they—Rodrigo and Garrpe—decide to separate, believing that it will be easier for them to avoid being captured.

<sup>14</sup> Structure of *Chinmoku*: 1) Prologue (*maegaki* 前書き); 2) Chapters I-IV: Letter of Sebastian Rodrigo (*Rodorigo no shokan* ロドリゴの書簡); 3) Chapters V-IX, including the Extracts from the Diary of Jonassen, a Clerk at the Dutch Firm, Dejima, Nagasaki (*Nagasaki dejima oranda shōkan ionasen no nikki yori* 長崎出島オランダ商館ヨナセンの日記より) (in the English translation, this extract builds Chapter X); 4) Diary of an Officer at the Christian Residence (*Kirishitan yashiki yakunin nikki* 切支丹屋敷役人日記) (in the English translation this part appears as Appendix); 5) Afterword (*atogaki* あとがき) (only in the original Japanese text).

<sup>15</sup> S. ENDŌ, *Chinmoku*, 183; ID., *Silence*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> When translated into English, the name of the main character appears as «Rodrigues». However, since the own author had written, in Japanese, the name *Rodorigo* ロドリゴ and considering that «Rodrigues» is derived from «Rodrigo», meaning «son of Rodrigo», we use the name in its original transliteration: «Rodrigo».

During his wandering, Rodrigo begins to suffer under psychological pressure and wonders again why God remains silent, «with folded arms» (*ude wo komanuitamama* 腕をこまぬいたまま) in face of such anguish and such pain in his name (cf. *Ch*, 228; *Sil*, 105). His torment in the face of the silence of God brings him to the question about the existence of God: «Supposing God does not exist?» (*man ichi kami ga inakattanaraba* 万一神がいなかったならば) (*Ch*, 233; *Sil*, 117). With these reflections, Rodrigo enters into the heart of the classical problem of theodicy: how is it possible to reconcile the existence of an omnipotent and absolutely benevolent God with the presence of evil in the world<sup>17</sup>? The impossibility of a rational solution to this dilemma can lead to doubt about the existence of God, which makes the theme of atheism a theological problem that confronts the believer's own faith: as unbelief of the believer, unbelief *intra nos*, as Johann Baptist Metz stated in 1965<sup>18</sup>.

Rodrigo meets Kichijirō again, the one who had betrayed the villagers and who had trampled on the *fumie* (cf. *Ch*, 236; *Sil*, 122), and the latter follows Rodrigo «like a wild dog» (*norainu* 野良犬) (*Ch*, 237; *Sil*, 124). Rodrigo learns that the magistrate has established an award of 300 pieces of silver for the capture of any priest and reflects on the words Jesus had said to Judas at the Last Supper: «what thou doest, do quickly», imagining himself as a double image of Christ being betrayed by Kichijirō. He believes that Jesus wanted to save even Judas and that therefore Judas was a necessary puppet for the glory of the drama (cf. *Ch*, 240; *Sil*, 128). In some way, he begins to feel pity for this poor Kichijirō who is much like Judas and who has nowhere to go. He is presented as a man that does not belong to the strong (*tsuyoi mono* 強い者), but rather to the weak (*jakusha* 弱者) apostates (cf. *Ch*, 241-242; *Sil*, 131)<sup>19</sup>. Kichijirō asks forgiveness for his sin of having trampled on the *fumie*. During the confession, a group of men come and arrest Rodrigo. One of the men throws over the face of the still kneeling Kichijirō a number of silver coins (cf. *Ch*, 242; *Sil*, 132). The lat-

<sup>17</sup> Cf. B. GROTH, «Atheism, Modern», in R. LATOURELLE – R. FISICHELLA, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, St. Pauls, New York 1994, 55-59. At 57.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. J.B. METZ, «Der Unglaube als theologisches Problem», *Concilium* 6 (1965) 484-492. At 485. See, also, M.P. GALLAGHER, *What Are They Saying About Unbelief?*, Paulist Press, New York – Mahwah NJ 1995, 39-40.

<sup>19</sup> Here is a clear allusion to the dichotomy between strong and weak, being the first symbolised by the martyr and the latter by the one who had stepped on the *fumie* and had been forgotten by the Church and history. In *Chinmoku Shūsaku Endō* is trying to rehabilitate these «weaklings», and this is in the line of his thought about the salvation of the weak.

ter cries in despair for having betrayed the priest and begs for forgiveness, his voice choked with tears. The parallel between Rodrigo and Jesus is powerfully established.

From now onwards, the novel focuses on the mental torment Rodrigo has to endure. The authorities want Rodrigo to apostatise, telling him that it depends on him whether or not the peasants are to be set free (cf. *Ch*, 247; *Sil*, 141). In doing so, the Japanese authorities touch on the argument of the responsibility for the other and push this responsibility onto Rodrigo.

In a dialogue with the Japanese interpreter, Rodrigo hears for the first time that Ferreira has in fact apostatised and taken a Japanese name (cf. *Ch*, 252; *Sil*, 151). This is for him a deep concern: if even Ferreira had apostatised, would he himself endure the sufferings that would be inflicted to him? The guards take Rodrigo by boat and through villages to another prison and Kichijirō follows after them.

Rodrigo feels «a strange tranquillity and peace» (*fushigina hodo heiwa to seihitsu* ふしぎなほど平和と静謐) in the new prison. He is even allowed to meet the other Christian prisoners who are forced to work in the fields under heavy guard. He tries to console them assuring them that the Lord would not forget them and that the Lord would not be silent forever (cf. *Ch*, 263; *Sil*, 173). The image of the Christ he sees at night is a beautiful face with peaceful features and clear blue eyes<sup>20</sup>; a Christ who assures him that he will not abandon Rodrigo (cf. *Ch*, 263; *Sil*, 174).

One day he is brought to the presence of Inoue, the Lord of Chikugo, to be interrogated. The samurai who is conducting the cross-examination begins saying that they found Christianity unsuitable for Japan. Rodrigo replies with the doctrine of the universality of the Christian message: if the doctrine were not as true in Japan as in Portugal, it could not be called «true» (*tadashii* 正しい). The samurai asks the priest to think not only about the tree, but to consider the suitability or not of the soil and of the water in the same tree (cf. *Ch*, 266; *Sil*, 179). A few pages later, in a new encounter with Inoue, the samurai speaks about missionary work using the metaphor of an ugly woman, whose persistent affection becomes an intolerable burden for a man, that is, Japan (cf. *Ch*, 277; *Sil*, 201).

<sup>20</sup> At this point, the image of Christ that Rodrigo carries is the one he brought from Europe: beautiful, majestic, powerful.



The *fumie* procedure begins. What the authorities want from Rodrigo is a «pro forma» (*tada katachi no ue de* ただ形の上で), a visible act of apostasy (cf. *Ch*, 273; *Sil*, 193). He is told that if he would place his foot on the *fumie* his life and the lives of the other Japanese Christians would be saved. The drama builds up in the territory of such psychological pressure.

Rodrigo sees himself as a double image of Christ: he has been sold by Kichijirō and he is now being judged by the powerful Inoue. However, what is strange is the fact that he did not yet undergo any physical sufferings similar to the pain Jesus had gone through. He is confused because he is even permitted to pray in prison and to talk to Christians. He is given food and the officials and the magistrate content themselves with formalities during the visits. What could they be aiming at (cf. *Ch*, 278; *Sil*, 204)? His conscience tells him that his courage begins to crumble because of that pleasant life. Formerly tense, his feelings begin to relax. He understands that the officials and the magistrate are waiting for his spirit to weaken (*ki no yurumi* 気のゆるみ) (cf. *Ch*, 279; *Sil*, 205), and for him to become fragile in his resistance to pain. Rodrigo's progression from strength to weakness begins.

The guards bring his friend Garrpe, who has been captured as well. Rodrigo sees the procession with Garrpe and other prisoners being led to the seaside. They roll mats around the bodies of three of the prisoners, leaving Garrpe untied. The prisoners are put in a boat and they will be rowed into the water if Garrpe does not apostatise. Rodrigo desires that Garrpe apostatise, but he knows that this would mean betraying his whole life (cf. *Ch*, 279; *Sil*, 205). Rodrigo is profoundly distressed and confused about God's silence even in a situation like this. Garrpe rushes forward, jumps into the water in a desperate attempt to save the believers, shouting «Lord, hear our prayer» (*warera no inori wo kikitamae* 我等の祈りを聞きたまえ), and sinks down in the dark waters (cf. *Ch*, 285; *Sil*, 217).

The translator reproaches Rodrigo for the suffering he is inflicting on the peasants because of his dream to impose Christianity upon Japan (cf. *Ch*, 285; *Sil*, 218). Rodrigo reflects that as a true Christian, possessed by Christian mercy, Rodrigo should have pity of these three believers wrapped with straw coats. It is true that he felt pity for them, but pity (*renbin* 憐憫) is not action (*kōi* 行為), is not love (*ai* 愛)<sup>21</sup>. He was not able to save them

<sup>21</sup> We can see a similarity with the «weak» Suguro in *Umi to Dokuyaku*, always there, but not doing anything at all. Cf. S. ENDŌ, *Umi to Dokuyaku* 海と毒薬 [*The Sea and Poison*] (1957; 1972), in ESBZ, I: *chōben shōsetsu* I



or at least to try to save them as Garrpe did (cf. *Ch*, 286; *Sil*, 223). Incapable of assuming the responsibility for the death of the victims, Rodrigo attributes the responsibility to God and to his silence. But the dreadful and serious doubt comes through his mind again: does God exist? If not, how ridiculous would everything be (cf. *Ch*, 287; *Sil*, 223).

It is at the height of that pressure that Fr. Ferreira appears (cf. *Ch*, 290; *Sil*, 228). He confirms the rumours about his apostasy and tries to convince Rodrigo that Christianity cannot take root in the «swamp» (*numachi* 沼地) of Japan (cf. *Ch*, 295; *Sil*, 237)<sup>22</sup>. Ferreira asserts that after twenty years of missionary activity in Japan he came to the conclusion that the God the Japanese Christians adore is not the Christian God, but one rather like a butterfly caught in the spider's web (*kumo no su* 蜘蛛の巣), retaining only the exterior form of God but being already transformed into a corpse (*shigai* 死骸) (cf. *Ch*, 296; *Sil*, 240); a skeleton without blood or flesh (cf. *Ch*, 298; *Sil*, 244). He adds that the Japanese are not capable of thinking of a God divorced from man or of an existence transcending the human (cf. *Ch*, 297; *Sil*, 241)<sup>23</sup>.

Rodrigo is put in prison again. He imagines that he will be killed on the next day. Ferreira comes in and tries to persuade Rodrigo to apostatise, even if it is only to save the life of the Japanese converts whose groans from the pit<sup>24</sup> where they are being tortured come to Rodrigo's ears (cf. *Ch*, 308; *Sil*, 263), reminding him of the price they are being forced to pay for his continued affiliation to the forbidden religion. Ferreira confesses that he has apostatised because he had seen the suffering of the peasants and that God did not do anything to help them (cf. *Ch*, 310; *Sil*, 266). He believes that if Jesus were here he would himself apostatise for love in order to save the Japanese believers (cf. *Ch*, 308; *Sil*, 268). Rodrigo hesitates and Ferreira takes him gently by the shoulder, telling him that he

長篇小説 I [*Long Novels I*], 89-181, at 170; ID., *The Sea and Poison*, tr. M. Gallagher, New Directions Books, New York 1972, Peter Owen, London 1992, 150. His reflection begins to delineate the need of action. This «action» could be illuminated by practical theologians, such as Johann Baptist Metz, Dorothee Sölle and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

<sup>22</sup> The idea of Japan as a «swamp» or «mud-swamp», implicit in *Umi to Dokuyaku* and *O-baka-san* is here explicitly introduced.

<sup>23</sup> This kind of assertion will be more explicitly exposed by Fr. Valente in *Samurai*, where the contrast between West-centred Christianity and Japanese traditional thought is depicted.

<sup>24</sup> The torture of the pit (*anazuri* 穴吊り) consisted in binding the prisoner and suspending him the way down in a hole with excrements. In order to avoid a fast death for agglomeration of blood in the head, the prisoner had an incision at the ear, so that the blood could drop slowly. The torment could last for interminable days.

will be going to perform «the most painful act of love that has ever been performed»<sup>25</sup>.

The desperate Rodrigo decides to apostatise and drags his feet, step by step, guided by Ferreira along the corridor into the gentle morning light. He stands before the *fumie* and looks at the ugly face of Christ in the copper medal at his feet<sup>26</sup>. He will perform the action that will render all his life meaningless. His feeling is of absolute anguish, of absolute darkness. In this very moment, however, «the first rays of the dawn appear» (*shinonome no honokana hikari* 黎明のほのかな光) (*Ch*, 312; *Sil*, 271)<sup>27</sup>. Rodrigo raises his foot and feels heavy pain. Then the Christ in the medal speaks to him, telling him that he may trample (*fumu ga ii* 踏むがいい)<sup>28</sup>, that it was to be trampled by men and to share men's pain that he was born into the world and carried his cross<sup>29</sup>. Rodrigo places his foot on the *fumie*, then dawn breaks and a cock crows in the distance (cf. *Ch*, 312; *Sil*, 271), suggesting a parallel with the scene of Peter's denial (Mt 26:75).

After having apostatised, Rodrigo is respected by the Japanese authorities. They provide him with housing and give him a Japanese name and a Japanese wife. He knows that the Church will judge him, but he feels in his heart that he did not renounce his faith (*kikyō shita no dewanai*

<sup>25</sup> 「今まで誰もしなかった一番辛い愛の行為をするのだ。」 S. ENDŌ, *Chinmoku*, 311; ID., *Silence*, 269.

<sup>26</sup> The image is not the one of a beautiful, majestic, powerful Christ anymore; it is not the image brought from Europe anymore. It is the ugly image of a suffering Jesus, the trustful and innocent Jesus of *O-baka-san* and *Watashi ga suteta onna*; it is the image of the powerless, all-compassionate maternal Jesus, the *dōhansha* of humanity. From now on, Endō's Christology will attain a more consistent structure, as we can see in his subsequent literary works *Shikai no hitori* 死海のほとり [*On the Shore of the Dead Sea*] (1973), *Iesu no shōgai* イエスの生涯 [*A Life of Jesus*] (1973; 1978), *Samurai* (1980; 1982) and *Fukai kawa* (1993; 1994).

<sup>27</sup> It is during this image of victory of light over darkness that he sees the transformed image of Christ: not the triumphalist Christ, but a man with the desire to share men's pain. This is the «moment of catharsis». Cf. M.B. WILLIAMS, *Endō Shūsaku*, 115.

<sup>28</sup> W. Johnston translates *fumu ga ii* 踏むがいい by the imperative «trample!». M. Williams suggests the translation «you should trample». Cf. M.B. WILLIAMS, *Shūsaku Endō*, 115, footnote 15. Emi Mase-Hasegawa translates it as «you may trample», considering that this more passive form is «more motherly». Cf. E. MASE-HASEGAWA, *Christ in Japanese Culture. Theological Themes in Shūsaku Endō's Literary Works*, Brill's Japanese Studies Library, vol. 28, Leiden-Boston 2008, 99, footnote 6. We agree with Mase-Hasegawa because the translation as «you may trample» shows maternal tenderness and forgiveness and turns over the responsibility of the act from the Christ of the plaque to Rodrigo's freedom of decision. Some persons criticized the «You may trample» 「踏むがいい」 of *Chinmoku* as a kind of approval from the side of Jesus. Others said also that this phrase should appear after Rodrigo had trampled, because, by putting this phrase before, it would appear as a kind of self-justification. The author affirms that he did not think about such subtleties. He emphasized always the fact that he was not a theologian, but rather a writer, a novelist. Cf. S. ENDŌ—Q SATŌ 佐藤泰正, *Jinsei no dōhansha* 人生の同伴者 [*Life Companion*], Kōdansha 講談社, Tokyo 2006, 133-134.

<sup>29</sup> 「私はお前たちに踏まれるため、この世に生まれ、お前たちの痛さを分かたため十字架を背負ったのだ。」 S. ENDŌ, *Chinmoku*, 311; Engl. trans.: «I more than anyone know of the pain in your foot. Trample! [You may trample!] It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world. It was to share men's pain that I carried my cross». ID., *Silence*, 271.

棄教したのではない) (cf. *Ch*, 312; *Sil*, 275). Gradually, Rodrigo became conscious that his fight was against his own faith (cf. *Ch*, 321; *Sil*, 290), his struggle was with Christianity in his heart (*jibun no kokoro ni aru kirishitan no oshie* 自分の心にある切支丹の教え) (cf. *Ch*, 322; *Sil*, 292). He realises that only God can judge (cf. *Ch*, 324; *Sil*, 296) and feels that he is still the last priest in Japan (cf. *Ch*, 325; *Sil*, 298). He recalls the compassionate eyes of Christ on the *fumie* and hears his voice telling him that he was not silent and that he suffered beside him (cf. *Ch*, 325; *Sil*, 297)<sup>30</sup>. Rodrigo has trampled on the *fumie* but he feels now a «tremendous onrush of joy» (*hageshii yorokobi to kanjō* 烈しい悦びと感情). He knows that he loves Christ now in a different way from before and that everything was necessary to bring him to this kind of love (cf. *Ch*, 325; *Sil*, 298).

## 1.2 Theological Themes

There were many essays and critical comments on *Chinmoku*. Normally, the critics and essayists single out themes such as: problems of a Catholic writer; literature and religion; the human being and God; the question of love and the doctrine of forgiveness; the strict distinction between pantheism (*hanshinron* 汎神論) and monotheism (*isschinron* 一神論) and their fusion; the opposition (*tairitsu* 対立) and assimilation (*dōka* 同化) of East and West<sup>31</sup>. It is like an orchestra within man, where the themes resonate with each other<sup>32</sup>. Within this orchestra, we can recognise main themes such as the «silence» of God and the rediscovery of Christianity as a doctrine of love and forgiveness, in close relation with one of the most polemic points, namely, the act of apostasy on the parts of the Portuguese missionaries, Ferreira and Rodrigo.

We would like to emphasise five of the themes in the novel that can be considered most significant for the theological journey of the author: 1) The «Silence» of God; 2) Christology; 3) The Strong and The Weak; 4) Apostasy; 5) Salvation of The Apostate.

<sup>30</sup> The theme of Jesus as *dō hansha* of humanity is expressed with all its strength in these words of Jesus to Rodrigo. This theme would be later developed in *Shikai no hotori* (1973) and in *Samurai* (1980; 1982).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. H. SHINODA 篠田治美, «Higekiteki hīrō toshite Rodorigo — Endō Shūsaku “Chinmoku” no gekiteki keishiki» 悲劇的ヒーロー路としてのロドリゴ — 遠藤周作「沈黙」の劇的形式 [Rodrigo as a Tragic Hero — The Tragic Form of Shūsaku Endō's «Silence»], *Kaishaku* 解釈 35 (1989) 38–44. At 38.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. N. KURIHARA 栗原浪絵, «Endō Shūsaku “Chinmoku” ni takusareta mono — “Chinmoku” no ōkesu-tora» 遠藤周作『沈黙』に託されたもの — 「沈黙」のオーケストラ [The Things Expressed in Shūsaku Endō's «Silence» — The Orchestra of «Silence»], *Hikaku bungaku — Bunkaronsb* 比較文学・文化論集 15 (1998) 13–24. At 21–22.

### 1.2.1. *The «Silence» of God*

Our Lord was not silent. Even if he had been silent,  
my life until this day would have spoken of him.<sup>33</sup>

One of the theological problems explored in the novel *Chinmoku* from the outset through to the end is the silence of God, which is related to the problem of evil and suffering in the world. At the beginning, Rodrigo has a naive trust in God. Therefore, he believes that God will not remain silent. His appeal is the desire to see a miracle and to prove the existence of God through that miracle. However, since God keeps silent, doubts about his existence come to Rodrigo: how to believe in the existence of an omnipotent God of love, in the face of such silence and apparent forsaking<sup>34</sup>?

Rodrigo knows that to despair about God is the greatest sin (*saidai no tsumi* 最大の罪). He doubts God (*kami ni ginen* 神に疑念), but he is not able to separate from God (*kami kara hanareru* 神から離れ). In this point, he has an existence very similar to the one of Kichijirō, who is timid (*okubyō* 臆病) and coward (*hikyō* 卑怯)<sup>35</sup>, stepping on the *fumie* in order to save himself from the pain of torture, but remaining a believer in his heart. Rodrigo believes in God, but doubts at the same time<sup>36</sup>.

But was God really silent? No, God was not silent. He was speaking through the life of Ferreira and Rodrigo, Inoue and Kichijirō, through the missionaries and the Christians. The intension of Shūsaku Endō is not to stress the silence of God<sup>37</sup>, but rather to tell us that God is speaking through

<sup>33</sup> 「あの人は沈黙していたのではなかった。たとえあの人は沈黙していたとしても、私の今日までの人生があの人について語っていた。」 S. ENDŌ, *Chinmoku*, 325; ID., *Silence*, 298.

<sup>34</sup> In that sense, Rodrigo came close to the Japanese way of thinking. It was, for the author, a means to prepare the way for the non-Christian Japanese and for the atheist readers.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. M. SHIMIZU 清水正, *Endō Shūsaku to Dosutoefusukī — «Chinmoku» to «Mahiru no akuma» wo yomu* 遠藤周作とドストエフスキー — 『沈黙』と『真昼の悪魔』を読む [*Shūsaku Endō and Dostoyevsky — Reading «Silence» and «Midday's Devil»*], D Bungaku Kenkyūkai D 文学研究会, Abiko-shi 2004, 34.

<sup>36</sup> The doubt about God's existence (if God exists, why does He keep silent?) appeared as theme in many works of Shūsaku Endō, even before *Chinmoku*. We can see this question in the protagonists of *Aoi chiisana budō* 青い小さな葡萄 [*The Small Blue Grape*] (1956), *Kazan* 火山 [*Volcano*] (1959; 1978), *Saigo no junkyōsha* 最後の殉教者 [*The Final Martyrs*] (1959; 1993), *Jūgun shisai* 従軍司祭 [*The Army Chaplain*] (1959), «Kyūkanchō no hanashi» 九官鳥の話 [*The Story of the Myna Bird*] (1961), «Shoshinwasurubekarazu» 初心忘るべからず [*Never Loosing the Initial Enthusiasm*] (1962), *Ōbeya* 大部屋 [*The Big Room*] (1965), under others. Cf. A. KASAI, «Endō Shūsaku «Chinmoku» sairon — fumie no bamen wo chūshin ni» 遠藤周作『沈黙』再論 — 踏絵の場面を中心に [New Essay about Shūsaku Endō's «Silence» — About the Scene of the Fumie], *Kirisutokyō bungei* キリスト教文芸1 (1983) 53-69. At 56-57.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. S. ENDŌ, *Chinmoku no koe* 沈黙の声 [*The Voice of Silence*], Purejidentosha プレジデント社, Tokyo 1992, 64-65.

our lives and through the world around us<sup>38</sup>. God's power works invisibly through the trivial events of daily life, an idea that Endō had already presented in the novel *Watashi ga · suteta · onna*.

In the novel *Chinmoku*, Rodrigo's image of God changes gradually, according to the rhythm of the questions he puts to him. Progressively, doubt is implanted in his heart and it penetrates his whole being. Doubt was a necessary means to purge and purify his faith, which had been formed according to dogmatic convictions, without space for vacillations. Deep in his heart was the certainty that almighty God would protect his elected children from suffering. Realising that God did not fulfil his expectations, the revolt and despair aroused. But God was suffering with the believers *in silence*, just as the «Servant of the Lord» (Isa 53:7-9), because, as Kazoh Kitamori 北森嘉蔵 (1916-1998) wrote, in 1946, in his significant theological work about the pain of God, «the redemptive suffering is borne only in silence»<sup>39</sup>, that silence — as stated by Bruno Forte — of the human finitude (*finitudine umana*), which God assumes in an act of pure love<sup>40</sup>. The root (*kontei* 根底) of the meaning of God's silence lies not only in the fact that God was suffering with the believer, but also that God's action (force) (*kami no hataraki* 神の働き) had already begun inside of Rodrigo, speaking through his entire life (cf. *Ch*, 325; *Sil*, 298) and working secretly in his heart<sup>41</sup>. Therefore, he could say, in chapter IX, as if in a sudden awakening,

<sup>38</sup> Cf. A. KASAI, «Endō Shūsaku to kirisutokyō — 'Ōgon no kuni' 'Chinmoku' wo chūshin ni» 遠藤周作とキリスト教 — 『黄金の国』『沈黙』を中心に [Shūsaku Endō and Christianity — “The Golden Country” and “Silence”], in *Nihon Bungei kenkyū* 日本文芸研究, 20 (1968) 56-68. At 68.

<sup>39</sup> K. KITAMORI 北森嘉蔵, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, Foreword by A. Morimoto, Wipf & Stock Publishers, Oregon 2005, 69. This book is a translation of the original Japanese title *Kami no itami no shingaku* 神の痛みの神学, published in 1958, and has been previously published in English in 1965. The work has been first published in 1946 (in the original Japanese) and had a broad international readership and motivated the debate about the theology of suffering. Kitamori was Professor of Systematic Theology at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary and is considered the theologian that has developed the first original theology from the East. In *The Theology of the Pain of God*, the author makes a synthesis of both the wrath of God and the love of God and identifies this synthesis as the pain of God, being the «theology of love rooted in the pain of God».

<sup>40</sup> «La Croce è dunque il luogo in cui Dio parla nel silenzio: quel silenzio della finitudine umana, che è diventata per amore la sua finitudine! Il mistero nascosto nelle tenebre della Croce è il mistero del dolore di Dio e del suo amore per gli uomini». B. FORTE, «Il Vangelo della sofferenza di Dio», *Camillianum* 21 (2007) 589-604. At 599.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. M. AOYAMA 青山めぐみ, «Endō Shūsaku “Chinmoku” ron — rodorigo no shinkō no henka ni takusareta atarashii iesu zō» 遠藤周作『沈黙』論 — ロドリゴの信仰の変化に託された新しいイエス像 [Essay about Shūsaku Endō's “Silence” — The Change of Rodrigo's Faith and the New Image of Jesus], *Kirisutokyō bungaku* キリスト教文学 21 (2002) 25-36. At 28-29. In this essay, the author analyses the change of Rodrigo's faith and considers the conscience of the own Shūsaku Endō. Finally, he examines Rodrigo's acquisition of Jesus' image, referring to the «look» of Jesus (*iesu no manazashi* イエスの眼差し).

that he was not betraying the Lord: he realised that he loved him now in a different way. To what extent was the transformation of God—the image of Christ—in the mind of Rodrigo? This is what we shall see by exploring the Christology implicit in the author's work.

### 1.2.2. *Christology*

Nearly thirty years ago, Douglas Hall said that Dietrich Bonhoeffer had asked about how Christ was indispensable for the people of his time, since the potential for aesthetic and imaginative representation had been put apart by a «painful academic» Christology<sup>42</sup>. In his paper, D. Hall considers that to find out who Christ is for us today means that we have to try to find a new image of Christ: a Christ not depicted in triumphal, Constantinian terms, because «a triumphant Christ no longer speaks to a species that has seen too many theoretical triumphs come and go»<sup>43</sup>. These words were poignant in the time of Bonhoeffer as well as in the time of Shūsaku Endō. The author had already begun to outline an answer to this question in the former novels *O-baka-san* and *Watashi ga · suteta · onna*. But it is in *Chinmoku* that he almost systematically depicts a gradually transforming Christ through the questions and anguish of the protagonist.

The main characteristics of Christ that Rodrigo sees from the beginning in his meditations are serenity, majesty, beauty and strength (cf. *Ch*, 198; *Sil*, 47). However, Rodrigo experiences recurrent sadness at the fact that this glorious face is always silent<sup>44</sup>. It would be the distorted, sorrowful, ugly face of Christ «no longer manifesting any worldly glory»<sup>45</sup> that spoke to him. Jesus became real in the life of Rodrigo only after he had concluded that a beautiful, idealised, conquering Christ did not harmonise with the daily experience of the «swamp» of Japan<sup>46</sup>. The contrast is enormous. Returning to the theologian K. Kitamori, the Japanese are deeply

<sup>42</sup> Cf. D.J. HALL, «Rethinking Christ. Theological Reflections on Shusaku Endo's *Silence*», *Interpretation* 33 (1979) 254-267. At 255.

<sup>43</sup> D.J. HALL, «Rethinking Christ», 257.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. D.J. HALL, «Rethinking Christ», 261.

<sup>45</sup> D.J. HALL, «Rethinking Christ», 263.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. D.J. HALL, «Rethinking Christ», 267. In the same paper, Hall affirms that the new image of Christ must be borne by the artists, the dreamers, rather than by the theologians. Cf. *Ibid.*, 263. It was around that time—the seventies of the twentieth century—that literature began to be studied in its relation with theology. See what has been said about this subject in Chapter II.



moved by the tragedy of the one who «suffers and dies [...] for the sake of loving and making others live»<sup>47</sup>. Such a mentality does not accept a beautiful and heroic Christ that would be rather viewed as a magician; a Christ who would be too transcendental to be touched in daily life.

Endō shows that we have to think of a Christ who becomes alive with us, who is both all-compassionate and our companion in the swamps of life. We would like to stress three dimensions of this Christ: the image of Christ and its transformation in the spiritual itinerary of Rodrigo, the characteristic of motherly religion and the one of *dōhansha* («companion»).

### a) Image of Christ

Our author affirms that there are several interpretations of the novel *Chinmoku*, but he considers the most important theme the fact that the foreigner Rodrigo embraced the transformed face of Christ<sup>48</sup>. This change in the appearance (*henyō* 変容) of the image of Christ (*kirisuto zō* 基督像) does not come from an excess of pity and compassion (*kado no renbin ya dōjō* 過度の憐憫や同情). Rather, Masaki Ōta stresses that it was born from the strenuous effort of crossing the barriers between East and West and the wall between the clergy and the common believer<sup>49</sup>. These were the two barriers Rodrigo had to cross.

The transformation (*henbō* 変貌) of the face of Jesus in Rodrigo's imagination happens slowly and gradually as part of a conversion process. When departing from Macao, the image he sees is the unchanged one he brought from Europe, «a face filled with vigour and strength» (*ooshii chikarazuyoi kao* 雄々しい力強い顔) (*Ch*, 198; *Sil*, 47); in the Nagasaki prison, the Christ that Rodrigo imagines is a «suffering Christ» (*kurushinde iru kirisuto* 苦しんでいる基督) (*Ch*, 303; *Sil*, 253); finally, in chapter IX, the face that Rodrigo sees has a «sad look» (*kanashisōna me* 哀しそうな眼) (*Ch*,

<sup>47</sup> K. KITAMORI, *Theology of the Pain of God*, 135-136. The author refers the Japanese word *tsurasa* 辛さ, the basic principle in Japanese tragedy. It means roughly «pain», but its meaning is particularly profound: «*Tsurasa* [...] is realized when one suffers and dies, or makes his beloved son suffer and die, for the sake of loving and making others live. Even though he tries hard to conceal and endure his agony, his cries filtering through his efforts are heard. When the Japanese playgoers hear these cries, they shed tears speechlessly». *Ibid.*, 135. Emphasis in the original text.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. S. ENDŌ, «Ihōjin no kunō», 175.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. M. ŌTA 大田正紀, «Endō Shūsaku “Chinmoku” ron (ni) — nihon kirishitanshi to no kakawari ni oite» 遠藤周作『沈黙』論 (二) — 日本キリシタン史との係わりにおいて [Essay about «Silence» of Shūsaku Endō — The Relation with the Japanese Christian History], *Baika tandai kokugo kokubun* 梅花短大外国語国文 4 (1991) 65-81. At 67.



325; *Sil*, 297). The image of the second and third stages is the one he contemplates after he had fallen in the abyss of despair, which once more shows us that the crisis is needed in order to sprout again spiritually. As Michael Paul Gallagher puts it, «either one goes towards a costly conversion or one remains struck with inherited responses before the challenges of life»<sup>50</sup>. In the face of the terrible challenges put to him, Rodrigo made the choice of the «costly conversion».

Thus, we understand the great transformation in Rodrigo himself throughout his long spiritual journey. He came to Japan with the image of Christ he had held from the time of his training at the seminary: a radiant Christ, strong and overflowing in glory but too distant due to his transcendence. After being arrested, he began to juxtapose his own destiny with the destiny of Jesus. In doing so, the symbol of authority began to be felt far away and Christ became closer to humanity. Depicting the transformation as a Christ becoming close to humanity, Shūsaku Endō had in mind the passage from the severe father-like religion (*chichi naru shūkyō* 父なる宗教) to the compassionate mother-religion (*haha naru shūkyō* 母なる宗教)<sup>51</sup>. As Mishihiro Yamane asserts, the change of Rodrigo after he had trampled on the *fumie* is to be seen in the deepening of the faith experience in his encounter with the compassionate maternal Christ<sup>52</sup>.

### b) *Motherly Religion*

Motherly religion—compassionate rather than heroic—was the new image of Christ that Rodrigo embraced in his heart. This is the new image of Jesus that the author Shūsaku Endō could embrace. Such a change was a means of making contact with the sense of distance (*kyorikan* 距離感) that he had experienced from the beginning of his career and that appears in his first novels, from *Aden made* アデンまで [*To Aden*] (1954) to *Umi to Doku-yaku*<sup>53</sup>. Finally, after the elements displayed in *O-baka-san* and *Watashi ga suteta onna*, it was in *Chinmoku* that the author was successful in presenting this maternal characteristic of Christ.

<sup>50</sup> M.P. GALLAGHER, *The Human Poetry of Faith. A Spiritual Guide to Life*, Paulist Press, New York — Mahwah NJ 2003, 52.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. S. ENDŌ, «Ihōjin no kunō», 176.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. M. YAMANE, *Endō Shūsaku — sono jinsei to «Chinmoku» no shinjitsu* 遠藤周作 — その人生と『沈黙』の真実 [*Shūsaku Endō — His Life and the Truth of «Silence»*], Chōbunsha 朝文社, Tokyo 2005, 407.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. A. KASAI, «Shūkyō to bungaku — “Chinmoku” wo chūshin ni」宗教と文学 — 『沈黙』を中心に [Religion and Literature — About «Silence»], *Kirisutokyo bungaku* キリスト教文学 9 (1990) 35-38. At 35-36.

Motherly religion has the affection of the mother and grants salvation. The heart of the Japanese is marked by the Buddhist root concept of mercy (*jibi* 慈悲). This *jibi* does not have any coldness (*tsumetasa* 冷たさ) or strictness (*kibishisa* 厳しさ) and forgives everything. The strict image of the father has always been perceived as dreadful (*osoroshii* 恐ろしい) by the Japanese<sup>54</sup>. Many apostates were afraid of God as a father who knew their dark past. They feared his judgement and punishment and yearned for the gentleness (*yasashisa* 優しさ) of a compassionate mother. What they needed was a maternal being that could forgive them and heal their wounds<sup>55</sup>. What they needed was a companion that would never abandon them, a trustful *dōhansha*.

c) *Jesus as Dōhansha* 同伴者 («Companion») of Humanity

The Jesus image of the author Shūsaku Endō is the same that Rodrigo embraces: the one of a Jesus eternally beside man, who never abandons him during his life's journey. Yōko Suzuki claims that this Jesus image is not always easily understood by the Western Church, even though for the Japanese author it is the image he can understand and accept<sup>56</sup>.

As a Westerner, grown up in the traditional Europe-centred Christian world, the transformation of Rodrigo was painful. But the inculturation of faith is always a challenging process. Rodrigo had to pass through such sacrifice in order to arrive at the sill of the heart of the Japanese and feel the tenderness of the suffering Jesus as *dōhansha*. This is a theme which Endō frequently returns to<sup>57</sup>. The particularity of Jesus as *dōhansha* of humanity

<sup>54</sup> Richard A. Schuchert remarks that there is a traditional Japanese saying considering the fathers one of the four most dreadful things on earth (the others are fires, earthquakes, and thunderbolts). See R.A. SCHUCHERT, «Translator's Preface», in S. ENDŌ, *A Life of Jesus*, tr. R. A. Schuchert, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ 1978, 3-5. At 4.

<sup>55</sup> The boom of Christianity in the so-called Christian Century (second half of the sixteenth century) was in great part due to the fact that Christianity appealed to the tenderness the peasants thirsted for, being for this reason that «they tended to honour Mary more than Christ himself». K. TŌYAMA 遠山清子, «The Search for Japanese Christianity — Silence by Endo Shusaku», *Tōkyō joshidaigaku kiyōronshū* 東京女子大学紀要論集 43 (1993) 55-67. At 59.

<sup>56</sup> Y. SUZUKI 鈴木陽子, «Endō Shūsaku to kirisutokyō — “Chinmoku” ni egakareta kakure kirishitan no shinkō» 遠藤周作とキリスト教 — 『沈黙』に描かれたかくれ切支丹の信仰 [Shūsaku Endō and Christianity — The Faith of the Hidden Christian Depicted in «Silence»], *Shōwa joshi daigaku daigakuin nihon bungaku kiyō* 昭和女子大学大学院日本文学紀要 7 (1996) 58-70. At 62.

<sup>57</sup> Jesus as *dōhansha* and the maternal dimension of Christ: beginning by *Seisho no naka no joseitachi* 聖書の中の女性たち [*The Women in the Bible*] (1960), throughout *Chinmoku* (1966; 1969) and *Shikai no hotori* (1973). In *O-baka-san* (1959; 1974), the main protagonist Gaston embodies Jesus as the *dōhansha* of the criminal Endō; in *Watashi ga suteta oma* (1964; 1994), it is Mitsuru Morita the protagonist that embodies the *dōhansha* when she decides to remain by the patients in the leprosy.

will be more profoundly explored in the novel *Samurai*, but it is already very powerfully depicted here.

### 1.2.3. *The Strong and The Weak*

In *O-baka-san*, Gaston embodies the strength of the weak through his self-sacrificing love and purity of heart. In *Chinmoku*, the weak is depicted in contrast to the strong, that is, the apostate in contrast to the martyr.

Kichijirō appears as the right of existence of the feeble and coward, and represents those who have been born weak and who therefore cannot be strong and embrace martyrdom, those who are poor in faith and weak in spirit, as Emi Mase-Hasegawa suggests<sup>58</sup>. He has repeatedly trampled on the *fumie* and has betrayed Rodrigo. Then, after the latter had been confined to the Christian residence (*kirishitan yashiki* 切支丹屋敷), the same Kichijirō became his companion and was engaged in his mission. It is after Rodrigo's conversion to the new image of Jesus that he feels the «maternal» compassion of Christ's forgiveness. It is then, that «he acknowledges there is not any difference between Kichijirō and himself»<sup>59</sup> and is therefore able to forgive his betrayer and live with him in peace.

Toyoko Sugahara argues that it is possible to read *Chinmoku* as a peaceful requiem (*seihitsuna chinkon* 静謐な鎮魂) for the strong (the martyrs) as well as for the weak (the fallen). The central protagonists of the novel are the *Kakure Kirishitan* 隠れ切支丹 [«Hidden Christians»]<sup>60</sup> and the fallen priest Rodrigo, but the story is about Christ's love and reflects the result of Endō's faith<sup>61</sup>. The author of *Chinmoku* wanted to empathise with the feelings of those who, having publicly apostatised, were obliged to carry the sense of guilt and to live in loneliness as a consequence of their act<sup>62</sup>. It

<sup>58</sup> Cf. E. MASE-HASEGAWA, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 95.

<sup>59</sup> K. TÖYAMA, «The Search for Japanese Christianity», 65-66.

<sup>60</sup> *Kakure Kirishitan* is the name given to the Japanese Christians who kept their faith secretly during the persecutions in the Edo period (*Edo jidai* 江戸時代, 1600-1867). As Emi Mase-Hasegawa asserts, Shūsaku Endō «was passionately concerned for *Kakure Kirishitan*s because they lacked the courage to die as martyrs, they stepped on the *fumie* and went through this form of recantation, but after the cowardly act they went back to their miserable hovels and begged for forgiveness». E. MASE-HASEGAWA, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 112.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. T. SUGAHARA 菅原とよ子, «Endō Shūsaku "Chinmoku" ron — sakuhin kōzu to chinkon no inori wo hashira toshite» 遠藤周作『沈黙』論 — 作品構図と鎮魂の祈りを柱として [Essay about «Silence» of Shūsaku Endō — The Composition of the Work and the Requiem Prayer as Column], *Kokugo kokubungaku kenkyū* 国語国文学研究 40 (2005) 80-94. At 88.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. M.B. WILLIAMS, *Endō Shūsaku*, 106. Cf. V.C. GESSEL, *The Sting of Life. Four Contemporary Japanese Novelists*, Columbia University Press, New York 1989, 281: «Endō has sought to atone for all the loss and separation and weakness in his life and to bring a message of healing compassion to his readers. In the finest sense of moral fiction, he has been successful».

is Shūsaku Endō himself who says that in a different age half of the apostates surely would be good Christians<sup>63</sup>. He says, through the mouth of the protagonist of the novel, at the end, that it is only God who can judge and know his weakness. Arrived at this point in his spiritual transformation, Rodrigo (where we recognise the author) can say, with Kichijirō that «there are neither the strong nor the weak» (*Ch*, 325; *Sil*, 297-298).

As seen above, the silence of God is one of the most discussed themes in *Chinmoku*. God's «silence» is broken «in a fashion that poses a further theological problem»<sup>64</sup>, as Francis Mathy suggested in 1967, a short time after the publication of the novel. This «further theological problem»—Mathy concludes—is connected with the motif of the *felix culpa* and exposes the fact that sin seems necessary for a more profound faith<sup>65</sup>, and in this case, the sin of apostasy<sup>66</sup>.

#### 1.2.4. Apostasy

The apostasy of Rodrigo and his relation with Kichijirō was the cause of most of the criticism of this literary work. In a superficial analysis, we could trace a parallel line between Kichijirō-Judas and Rodrigo-Peter, with many moments of double image Rodrigo-Jesus. But the author went deeper into the problem, associated as it is also with the Japanese cultural and religious background.

After listening to the words of Ferreira reproaching Rodrigo and telling him that he does not want to trample on the *fumie* because he is being egoistic, trying to defend himself and his conscience (cf. *Ch*, 311; *Sil*, 268), Rodrigo understands that, in fact, he is protecting himself and doing nothing to save the peasants who are suffering the torture of the pit. This is not faith (*shinkō* 信仰), but rather the Church as authority (*keni toshite no kyōkai* 権威としての教会). Rodrigo understands his own falsehood (*jibun no gimansei* 自分の欺瞞性). In fact, to leave the believers suffering in the pit

<sup>63</sup> Cf. S. ENDŌ, *Wasuregatai basho*, 39.

<sup>64</sup> F. MATHY, «Shusaku Endo: Japanese Catholic Novelist», 605.

<sup>65</sup> In *Kiirōi hito* 黄色い人 [*The Yellow Man*] (1955; 2005), the author had already suggested that sin is needed to understand the Japanese. In *Chinmoku*, Rodrigo's apostasy brings him closer to the Japanese and, simultaneously, as he says, he begins to love Christ in a different form, which is a sign of the transformation of his faith.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. F. MATHY, «Shusaku Endo: Japanese Catholic Novelist», 605.

in order to be saved is not to show the love of Jesus<sup>67</sup>. The great act of love (*idai naru ai no kōi* 偉大なる愛の行為) is to save the others, even if it means sacrificing himself and becoming a traitor<sup>68</sup>. Rodrigo is struggling with the dilemma of betraying the Church or letting Christians die. But is it not the mission of the Church to save mankind<sup>69</sup>? He wants to follow the institution where he had been accustomed to imagining Jesus. But is Jesus Christ not greater than the institution<sup>70</sup>? Is real love not wider than the institution? These are also key questions implied in the novel. He decides to trample because of the love for the peasants, because of the solidarity with the «weaklings» and cowards that could not bear the pain. Going against orthodox Christianity, he encounters *real* Christianity and enters into the universal world of real faith, the faith in Christ that cares for the strong and the weak alike.

Rodrigo decides to trample, but not to apostatise<sup>71</sup>. He cannot cut off from his heart his love for believers as well as for God (faith)<sup>72</sup>. He decides to trample because he is aware that what he had considered fidelity to God (*kami e no seijitsu* 神への誠実) is in reality no more than self-centred love (*jikoai* 自己愛). This self-discovery (*jiko hakken* 自己発見) is in relation to the new faith discovery (*aratana shinkō no hakken* 新たな信仰の発見), which is symbolised—we saw it before—by the transformation of the face of Christ: from the beautiful and noble to the ugly and suffering one<sup>73</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. H. SHINODA, «Higekiteki hīrō toshite Rodorigo», 41.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. K. YAMAZAKI 山崎一穎, «Chinmoku» 沈黙 [Silence], *Kaishaku to kanshō* 解釈と鑑賞 40 (1975) 148-151. At p.151.

<sup>69</sup> Which kind of salvation? Is it meant salvation from physical pain? The questions would lead us to a great amount of other questions. Of course, salvation cannot signify *only* a simple liberation from physical pain, because Jesus showed us that the one who wants to follow him must «take up his cross» (Mk 8:34). Rodrigo tramples because of the feeling of solidarity with the ones who had already apostatised, like Kichijirō, those who were totally abandoned and considered traitors by the Church.

<sup>70</sup> «[...] The church does not possess Christ; his presence is not confined to the church. Rather, it is in the church that we learn to recognise Christ's presence outside the church». S. HAUERWAS, «The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics (1983)», in J. BERKMAN-M. CARTWRIGHT, ed., *The Hauerwas Reader*, Duke University Press, Durham-London 2001, 371-391. At 372.

<sup>71</sup> A recent critic asserts that there is a subtle difference between the reasons for trampling in Ferreira and in Rodrigo. The former trampled as an act of despair due to the silence of God. He was penetrated by the self-centred love (*jikoai* 自己愛). By Rodrigo, instead, there is the hesitation (*tamerai* ためらい) in betraying God; he drags in an act of love for the believers (*shintotachi e no ai* 信徒たちへの愛). Cf. T. Irō 伊東孝子, «“Chinmoku” ni okeru itansei — marāno wo megutte» 『沈黙』における異端性 — マラーノをめぐる [The Heresy in «Silence» — Around the Marranos], *Komparatio* 8 (2004) 45-54. At 51.

<sup>72</sup> Rodrigo tramples as an act of love (*ai no kōi* 愛の行為), the act of love that is always a way of struggle against oneself (*jiko ni taisuru tataakai* 自己に対する闘い), a brave battle against evil. An act in whose process there is always the pain of strict restraint and self-sacrifice. Cf. H. SHINODA, «Higekiteki hīrō toshite Rodorigo», 43.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. H. SHINODA, «Higekiteki hīrō toshite Rodorigo», 42. See, also K. TōYAMA, «The Search for Japanese Christianity», 65.

In *Ōgon no kuni*<sup>74</sup>, it is suggested that Inoue apostatised but did not abandon Christianity. It is for that reason that Akifu Kasai, in an old essay, considers that this apostasy of Inoue is closely related to Shūsaku Endō's faith and that through Inoue he would make an attempt to confess his own faith<sup>75</sup>. The same author asserts that the situation of Rodrigo in *Chinmoku* before the act of trampling and Ferreira in *Ōgon no kuni* are both very similar in that they did not apostatise: instead, they experienced in their interior (*naimen ni* 内面に) a new faith acquisition (*shinkō no kakutoku* 信仰の獲得)<sup>76</sup>. After the trampling of the *fumie*, Shūsaku Endō saw in their faith a possible solution for the question concerning Japanese native Christianity<sup>77</sup>. The fact that Ferreira and Rodrigo stepped on the *fumie* paradoxically gave them the opportunity of a new encounter with Christ and, at the same time, it represents a new encounter of the author of the novel with Christ<sup>78</sup>.

We can say, therefore, that the act of the *fumie* in *Chinmoku* was, paradoxically, an encounter of Rodrigo with God. Rodrigo apostatised because of a judgemental God (*sabaki no kami* 裁きの神) and gave himself as a martyr of the God of forgiveness (*yurushi no kami* 赦しの神). It is a powerful protest against the missionary propagation of the God who punishes, the same God of Hilda in *Umi to Dokuyaku*. It is not a protest against the doctrine (*kyōgi* 教義) in itself, but rather against the method of missionary work.

### 1.2.5. *Salvation of the Apostate*

«Can anyone say that the weak do not suffer more than the strong» (*Ch*, 325; *Sil*, 297-298)? This rhetorical question of Rodrigo expresses the author's reflection about the salvation of the weak and the importance of the redemptive effect of suffering. In fact, while a martyr suffers the death

<sup>74</sup> S. ENDŌ, *Ōgon no kuni* 黄金の国 [*The Golden Country*] (1969; 1970), ESBZ, IX, 69-144. *Ōgon no kuni* is a play and it is centred upon the tension between Christianity and Japan. The story has place during the persecutions and has Inoue and Ferreira as main protagonists, the same characters who had already been introduced in *Chinmoku*. The time of the story is shortly before the time of *Chinmoku*.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. A. KASAI, «Endō Shūsaku to kirisutokyō», 60.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. A. KASAI, «Endō Shūsaku to kirisutokyō», 64.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. A. KASAI, «Endō Shūsaku to kirisutokyō», 65.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. A. KASAI, «Endō Shūsaku to kirisutokyō», 67-68. See, also, A. KASAI, «“Chinmoku” kara “Shikai no hotori” e — Endō Shūsaku no kiseki” 『沈黙』から『死海のほとり』へ — 遠藤周作の軌跡 [From “Silence” to “At The Dead Sea” — The Locus of Shūsaku Endō], *Baika tanki daigaku* 梅花短期大学 25 (1976) 1-12. At 2.



of the body (*nikutai no shi* 肉体の死), the apostate suffers the death of the soul (*tamashii no shi* 魂の死). To continue living after the death of the soul is probably a more severe trial than the classical death of a martyr.

Is there salvation for the apostate? This is one of the most important problems presented in *Chinmoku*, an issue that is related to the question of the salvation of Judas<sup>79</sup>.

Rodrigo felt pain (*itami* 痛み) and joy (*yorokobi* 悦び) when trampling the *fumie*. Why this contradiction? Masato Okuno appeals to the fact that in *Chinmoku* this fusion of pain and joy does not appear in Chapter VIII, at the moment when Rodrigo trampled on the *fumie*. It is in Chapter IX that the author refers to the «tremendous onrush of joy» (*hageshii yorokobi* 烈しい悦び) (*Ch*, 325; *Sil*, 297), when Rodrigo, now with a Japanese name, is talking to Kichijirō, and examines this contradiction considering it in relation with the dichotomy of sin (*tsumi* 罪) and grace (*onchō* 恩寵). He concludes that the absoluteness (*zettaisei* 絶対性) of grace is stronger than the absoluteness of sin<sup>80</sup>. Megumi Aoyama suggests that even if at that moment the voice of God (Jesus) is not yet clear to Rodrigo, the gaze of Jesus (*iesu no manazashi* イエスの眼差し) speaks salvation (*sukui* 救い) to him and that this gaze lives inside of him, provoking the joy (*yorokobi* 悦び<sup>81</sup>) of a form of spiritual union (*seishin no gattai* 精神の合体)<sup>82</sup>.

On the other hand, almost thirty years ago Mamiko Takaguchi considered the pain in the foot (*ashi no itami* 足の痛み) more important than the expression «you may trample» (*fumu ga ii* 踏む方がいい). She claimed that the pain felt by the trampling foot and understood by the own Christ represented the assurance of salvation<sup>83</sup>. Furthermore, a few years later, Nanayo Tsuchiga maintained that it was through this pain (*itami* 痛み) that

<sup>79</sup> And it is also related to the salvation of Peter, because Peter was the one who apostatised with the three-fold denial. (Cf. Mt 26:69-75; Mk 14:66-72; Lk 22:55-62; Jn 18:17.25-27).

<sup>80</sup> M. OKUNO 奥野政元, «Chinmoku» ron 『沈黙』論 [Essay about «Silence»], in A. KASAI – K. TAMAKI, ed., *Sakuhinron — Endō Shūsaku*, 作品論 — 遠藤周作 [Essays about Works of Shūsaku Endō], Sōbunsha shuppan 双文社出版, Tokyo 2000, 150-151. Cf. Rm 5:20: «[...] where sin increased, grace abounded all the more».

<sup>81</sup> There are four characters in Japanese language with the transliteration of *yorokobi* and with the meaning of «joy», with different nuances: 1) 喜 = common meaning of «joy», «pleasure»; 2) 慶 = «joy», «happiness», used in auspicious occasions; 3) 歓 = lively expression of «joy»; 4) 悦 = «joy», «satisfaction», «pleasure» of profound union. Shūsaku Endō uses this last character to define the «joy» and «tremendous onrush of joy» Rodrigo felt. It may express the profound, integral union of Rodrigo with Jesus.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. M. AOYAMA, «Endō Shūsaku “Chinmoku” ron», 34.

<sup>83</sup> M. TAKAGUCHI 高口真美子, «Chinmoku» ron — mittsu no meidai ni tsuite 『沈黙』論 — 三つの命題について [Essay about «Silence» — About Three Propositions], *Kashiikata* 香椎潟 24 (1978) 43-53. At 48.



God answered the pleas of Rodrigo, telling him «you may trample». Through the words of Christ, we have the suggestion of the pain of Rodrigo, Ferreira, Kichijirō and Judas<sup>84</sup>. In the turmoil of faith and the «ravine of doubt» (*kaigi no hazama* 懷疑の狭間), Rodrigo decides to trample and so feels the pain, making possible the encounter with God (*Kami to no kaikō wo kanō ni shita* 神との邂逅を可能にした)<sup>85</sup>. These Japanese critics help us to realise that salvation is attained through suffering. The pain Rodrigo feels is redemptive<sup>86</sup>.

«What you are going to do, do quickly» (Jn 13:27). These piercing words represent the *Leitmotiv* of the doubt of the protagonist (or the author himself) throughout the novel: it is the question concerning Judas' salvation. Shūsaku Endō claims that these words of Jesus to Judas in the Last Supper are meant with love<sup>87</sup>, the same as Rodrigo at last says to Kichijirō. It is after Rodrigo tramples that he understands the meaning of these sharp words of Jesus to Judas<sup>88</sup>. Here is the new intuition: Jesus saves even Judas. Otherwise, it would be difficult to forgive the disciples, since all of them had betrayed the Lord. Therefore, Rodrigo feels himself saved.

## Conclusion

*Chinmoku* condenses the great questions of humanity by way of a tremendous drama. It is here that the theodicy problem gains form and the challenges of conversion to a new Christ image are most demanding and distressing. It is in this novel that Shūsaku Endō organises his process of a presentation of a kind of Christianity that would be understandable by Japanese; it is also here that he gives form to the rehabilitation of the weak, the one that had been forgotten and buried in history, related to the apostate and his salvation.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. N. TSUCHIGA 梶賀七代, «“Chinmoku” no sekai» 『沈黙』の世界 [The World of «Silence»], *Nihon bungeigaku* 日本文芸学 19 (1982) 50-59. At 56.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. N. TSUCHIGA, «“Chinmoku” no sekai», 58.

<sup>86</sup> We could affirm that conversion without pain is no real conversion.

<sup>87</sup> Shūsaku Endō studied the matter of the salvation of Judas with more detail in his critical biography *Iesu no shōgai*.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. M. MURAKAMI 村上麻紀, «Endō Shūsaku no kirisutokyō seishin ni tsuite — “Chinmoku” wo chūshin ni» 遠藤周作のキリスト教精神について — 『沈黙』を中心に [About Shūsaku Endō's Christian Mind — On «Silence»], *Tamayura* たまゆら 16 (1984) 36-43. At 41.

The author appeals to the reader to consider the interrelation between religion and literature as Siamese twins (*shamu sōseiji* シャム双生児) sitting opposite each other (*senaka awase* 背中合わせ). The judgment of the literary work according to a theological point of view is quite embarrassing to the writers<sup>89</sup>. In fact, religion and literature are not antonymic (*niritsuhaihan* 二律背反), but correlative (*niritsusōkan* 二律相関). They put questions mutually, and the literature expresses skilfully such investigations about man and soul<sup>90</sup>, being a means to express the unutterable.

Further, for Shūsaku Endō, the «silence» in his novel *Chinmoku* is not the absence of words or lack of message of God in face of the suffering. The meaning is, rather, that inside of that «silence» there is a hidden voice we have to learn to listen to, hidden signs we have to learn to decipher in order to perceive the whisper of God *beyond* the silence.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. S. ENDŌ – Y. SATŌ, *Jinsei no dōhansha*, 136-137.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. S. ENDŌ – Y. SATŌ, *Jinsei no dōhansha*, 232.