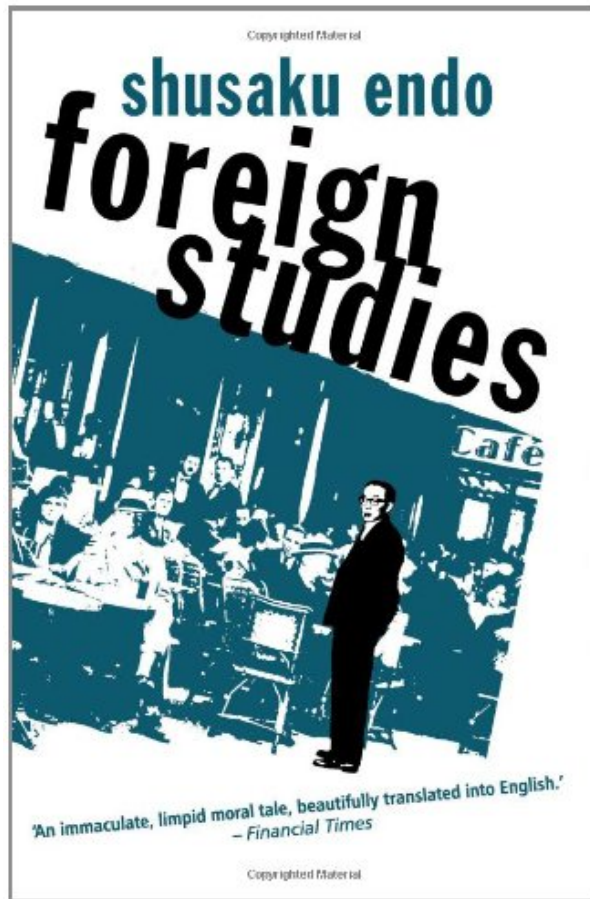
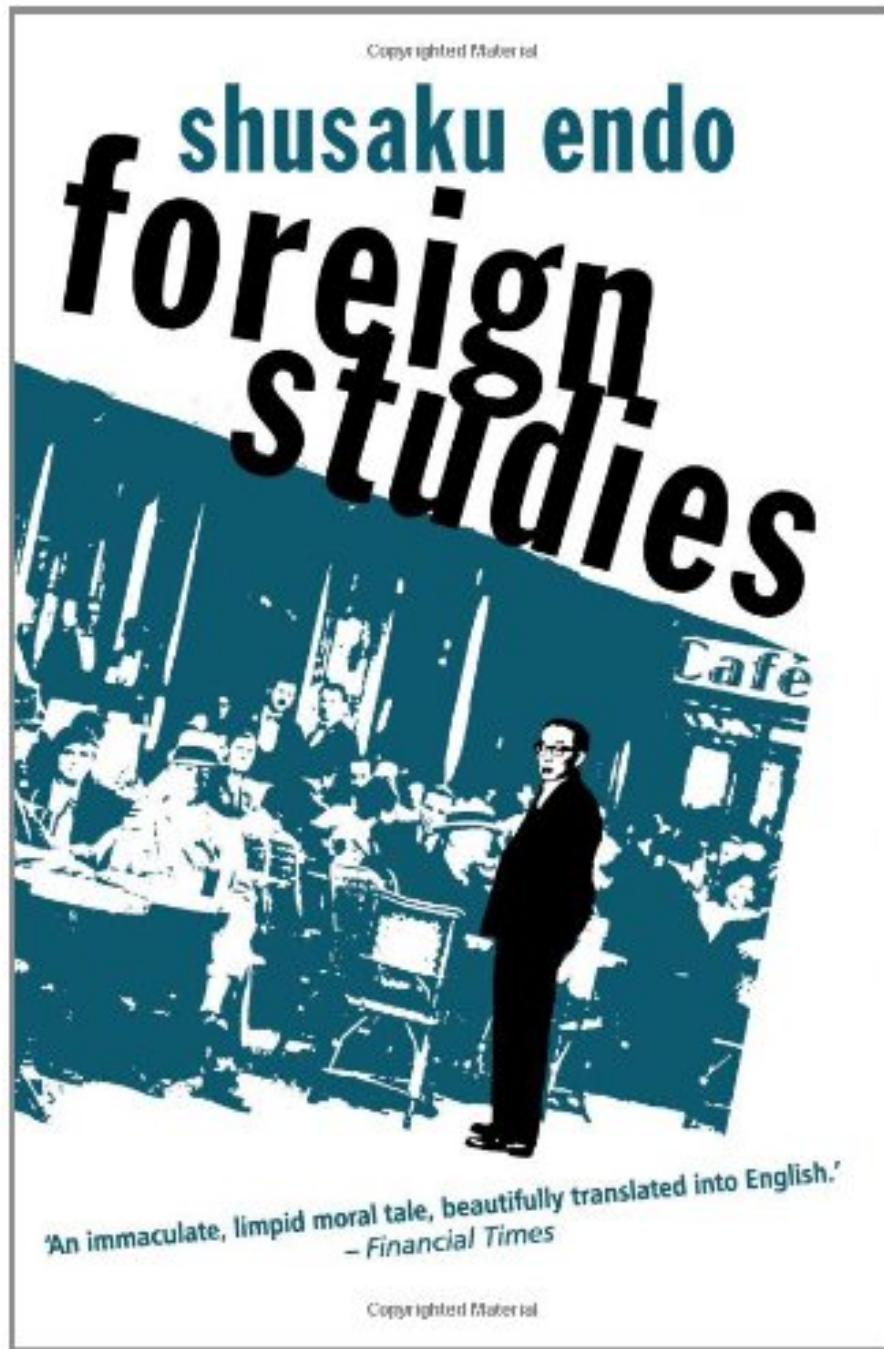


# FOREIGN STUDIES (PETER OWEN MODERN CLASSICS) BY SHUSAKU ENDO



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From Publishers Weekly

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Review

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Language Notes

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## Most helpful customer reviews

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Stranger in a Strange Land

By Randy Keehn

I am impressed with what Shusaku Endo has accomplished in "Foreign Studies". I have read 4 or 5 other books by this author and have been impressed with them as well although on varying levels. I, frankly, did not expect this book to rate as one of his best. However, in his ability to create an image of what it is like to live and function in a very different culture, Endo touched me with a message that may be easier to experience than to explain.

This is a book of three stories very properly woven into one theme. The initial two are very brief but help set the table. The first, "A Summer in Rouen" gives an excellent snapshot of a foreign student's trials and tribulations of dealing with different cultural standards. I, as a Westerner, sense the over-reaction that the student makes. Presumably someone from an Eastern culture would be more sensitive to the "saving face" that the Japanese student has to contend with. As someone who was a foreign student and has worked with foreign students, I wouldn't mind making this short story mandatory to all traveling abroad as a foreign student. For the record, tourists cannot understand the experience that a foreign student goes through. A tourist is sightseeing; a student becomes a part of the community. The essential challenge for the foreign student is how deeply are they able to integrate into a different culture.

The second and briefest of the three stories is "Araki Thomas" which is a biography of a 16th Century Japanese Christian priest who journeyed to Rome. He returned to a Japan that had banned the Christian faith and persecuted those who continued to practice and preach it. The common ground with the other stories lies with a man's struggle to accept a faith that has been molded into a European interpretation. His acceptance of the faith defined by another culture alienated him from his own culture and his fall from grace was a tragic comment on the pitfalls he faced in doing so.

The final story comprises over 3/4's of the book and is titled "And You, Too". It is the story of a Japanese professor who goes abroad to research in France in the 1960's. He experiences, on a grander scale, the problems of the character in the first book. The story of Tanaka is in more detail and includes many examples of fellow Japanese living in France. All of them seem to experience their own complications in being who they are in a world that seems to have neither the time nor interest to understand things on their level. Adding to the impact of the book is the subject that Tanaka is researching; the Marquie de Sade. While I struggled somewhat with this analogy, I understood that the author was comparing a man nearly 2 centuries earlier who was alien to his own culture and surroundings.

It is difficult to always empathize with Tanaka's problems as he seems to become his own worst enemy. However, Endo has created an image in "Foreign Studies" that I felt was profound. I will not try to explain the gist of Endo's theories as portrayed in "Foreign Studies" because that is the whole point of reading "Foreign Studies". If any of this seems the least bit interesting you really should read the book. If not, read "Deep River" instead with its' compelling analogy of the commonality of world faith.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

A window into the solitary Japanese traveling abroad

By Govindan Nair

Although this is one of Shusaku Endo's earliest novels (published in 1965, with this English translation completed in 1989), I only stumbled upon it in January 2003 in a Tokyo bookstore. Many of the themes that pervade Endo's later novels in modern settings (see for example, *Deep River*, which I have also reviewed on this website) are found here in more historical settings. The book comprises three separate narratives, all of which speak poignantly of the plight of the solitary Japanese man caught in cross-cultural currents abroad and at home. Any student who has studied in another country will be able to partly relate to sense of displacement and alienation in the first story of a young Japanese exchange student who finds a host French Christian family in Rouen shortly after Japan's defeat in World War Two. The second narrative is based on a seventeenth century Japanese character who found himself studying theology in Rome with the prospect of returning to his homeland when the Japanese persecution of Christianity began in 1614. In the third narrative, the protagonist is a Japanese man who finds himself in a more accommodating setting of Paris in 1965. You will recognize in these three characters some of the same anguish which confronts one of the main characters in Endo's more recent novel *Deep River* whose situation I also describe in my review of this other book as he converses with a fellow Japanese in Paris. Both these novels have strong autobiographical antecedents. Endo himself converted to Catholicism at the age of eleven, studied French literature in Japan, before going to Lyon on a French government scholarship, and then becoming one of the rare Christian Japanese writers. While it is not always easy to sympathize with Endo's characters, they do bring out the best in this genre which speaks to issues of identity and displacement of individuals whose lives are swept by different cultural currents.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Even better than expected

By Roadrunner

I have read about 90% of Endo's works, both in English translation and in the original, and this one rates high. A thoughtful, moving work, reflecting his own experiences as a young student abroad.



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