

SOME DISTINCTIVE FEATURES
OF THE LITERARY HISTORY
OF THE EAST

In the course of the last few centuries the evolution of literature has been marked by the entry of Eastern countries into the system of social and spiritual relationships which came into being in the West at the beginning of the 17th century. This evolution is linked with the changes which have been grouped together as "modernization." The content of this modernization coincides, more or less, with what Marx and Engels described, in the first chapter of the Communist Manifesto, as the expansion of the bourgeoisie. However, in the 20th century, the possibility of a non-capitalist path has become apparent, and therefore the theory of modernization gives a wider sense to the character of the ruling class (which, in the 19th century, was the European bourgeoisie), and emphasizes changes of a general nature: the differentiation of the social structure, the birth of new institutions and new roles, economic differentiation, industrialization, urbanization, increased vertical and horizontal mobility, cultural

Translated by Nicolas Slater

differentiation, the birth of a science independent of religion, the substitution of a businesslike, rational attitude to life for a religious one,¹ the development of civic awareness and of civil rights². The cradle of modernization (England, Holland, France) is conventionally called "the West." Other countries, including those situated to the west of France (e.g. Spain, Portugal) are considered as "the non-West."

The theorists of modernization often put forward the notion of intermediary zones. From this point of view, one may note that Germany belongs partly to the West and partly to the East (Marx, for instance, writes: "The further one goes into Eastern Europe, the more repulsive one finds the bourgeoisie"); that "Russia is a two-faced Janus," and that Spain and Portugal played a leading role in the first wave of European colonization, but the way of life they brought with them was semi-feudal and did not modernize the Philippines or Macao. One can also emphasize the differences between the modernization of countries which had a highly developed culture of long standing, such as Asia, and that of tribal regions such as Africa. However a simple dichotomy suffices for an initial approach to the problem of spiritual modernization: the West (the cradle of modernization) versus the non-West (the periphery of modernization).³ A classical country of the non-West is Russia, the first nation to be Europeanized, drawn into the European cultural field in spite of her dominant spiritual traditions, and which underwent because of them a series of deformations which were later echoed in the development of Asian and African countries. Therefore we draw a systematic comparison between Russian culture in the 18th and 19th centuries and Japanese and Chinese culture in the 19th and 20th. The individual differences between Russia and Japan or China and the Western World are reduced to a common model, to a non-Western norm, which has its

¹ To use Bazarov's words: "nature is not a temple but a workshop."

² See S.N. Eisenstadt, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Change*, Boston, 1968; J.W. Hall, *Changing Conceptions of the Modernization of Japan*, "Changing Japanese Attitudes toward Modernization," Princeton, 1965; G. Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, Vol. 3, New York, 1968; *Studies on Modernization of Japan by Western Scholars*, Tokyo, 1962.

³ There is a certain analogy with the equally simple dichotomy of the paths of development taken by Prussian and by American capitalism.

roots in a break with local beliefs, in the organic link of modernization with Westernism and in the conflict between Westernism and "ethnophilism" (a term coined by analogy with Russian Slavophilism).

Such a way of looking at things represents an alternative to the widespread concepts of the "Renaissance of the East" and also in part to those of the "Enlightenment of the East," which apply the categories of European cultural history to the East, considering them as universally valid and ignoring Russia's experience, where the Renaissance did not occur and where Peter the Great's reforms, his rejection of Russian dress and his shaving of the boyars' beards, were obviously inspired from abroad.⁴ Therefore we would like to draw some conclusions from the research undertaken by the advocates of the Eastern Renaissance, and ask some questions which the defenders of this theory will have to answer if they wish to develop it further.

1. In the works of N. Konrad one can easily distinguish two tendencies formally linked together by a common theme, that of the Eastern Renaissance.⁵ First, the rehabilitation of the Middle Ages as a whole (as a period which had perhaps given humanity not less but perhaps even more than any other), and secondly the removal of certain facts in medieval Asiatic cultures from their general context and their identification with the European Renaissance. The first tendency seems to us to be fertile, but the second seems sterile and logically incompatible with the first. The facts gathered under the heading of "Eastern Renaissance" prove that we had a wrong impression of the Middle Ages, and the Tang poets or the "Khamsé" of Nezami cannot fit in with this impression. However, Gothic cathedrals, the lyricism of the Minnesingers, the sermons of Meister Eckhart do not fit in any better with the cliché of the medieval Dark Ages; and the father of scholasticism, Thomas Aquinas, is not scholastic in the stereotyped sense of the term. One can point out that certain schools of scholasticism went very far in the direction of rationalism and

⁴ A.N. Tolstoy calls on us to reject the assertion of bourgeois science that the East did not have its own Renaissance; at the same time he convincingly demonstrates the part played by foreign settlements (the German suburbs) in the formation of Peter the Great's ideas. In our opinion, this is irrational.

⁵ N.I. Konrad, *West and East*, Moscow, 1966.

humanism and that the school of Chartres and the work of Alain de Lille (12th century) are sometimes given the name of "proto-Renaissance" and sometimes just tagged onto the Renaissance; but most scholars refuse to allow that the history of the Renaissance stretches as far back as 12th century France, and this would lead to excessively difficult logical problems.

The theory of the "Eastern Renaissance" has the methodological fault of confusing analogy with identity and the secondary with the primary. One can agree that, in the China of the Tang and Sung dynasties, there were elements that looked not only towards the Renaissance but also towards the modern world (e.g. the present popularity of Tchang Buddhism). However, the Confucianism of the Tangs and the Sung finally led to the system of Tchu Hsi and this synthesis of medieval Chinese philosophy is more consistent with the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas than with the Renaissance thought which opened the path to modern times. It is a conclusion and not a beginning.

2. One can also agree with N. Konrad and acknowledge the existence of certain highly interesting analogies between the literary output of the East and the West. These analogies, however, allow not one interpretation but several, including some that deny the concept of an Eastern Renaissance. For instance, one can suppose that there are many common factors between periods of great historical upheaval or periods of intensive dialogue between two or three cultural systems which come into collision with one another. There are also elements in common between periods which are characterized by the progress of rationalism and humanism. One such period is the Renaissance. Another is that of the fight for spiritual supremacy between Confucianism and Tchang Buddhism. A third was that of the dialogue between the Koranic Arab culture and the culture of Byzantium, Syria and Iran. A fourth is the period of scholasticism. These highly different periods have a number of similar features, they are alike in certain ways, but if one is to give them the general name of Renaissance then the actual Renaissance itself must be given a different name.

Then, the analogies between the Tang poets and the Italian lyric poets, or between Nezami and Ariosto, can be interpreted in a completely opposite sense to the one chosen by N. Konrad and his school. One can conclude that certain aspects of the

European Renaissance still belong in part to the Middle Ages.⁶ But where is the Hamlet of the East? Where is the Don Quixote of the East? That sort of Renaissance did not occur in the Eastern world.

Finally, it is possible for creative people to meet beyond the similarity and dissimilarity of certain periods (one such case is analysed in the article "Bassio and Mandelstam").⁷

3. The real Renaissance is not only a literary period but also an historical one. And here the term "Eastern Renaissance" becomes decidedly out of place. The Renaissance was the time when the Europeans discovered the world, a time when an old regional civilization became within a third of a century (between the expeditions of Vasco da Gama and those of Magellan) a universal civilization, whose means of communication, trade and colonization enlarged the whole world. This historical upheaval of world-wide amplitude had one center (the West) and there is no question here of a temporary technical superiority (the Chinese had the compass, gunpowder, good ships and very good individual navigators of great determination), but of the social dynamism of the bourgeoisie which established itself in the free cities of Europe⁸ and which was inconceivable in despotic China.

4. The broad definition of the Renaissance suggested by N. Konrad has turned out to be too broad: it is easy to include in it even the European Middle Ages (from the 12th or 13th century onwards).

5. In the search for an oriental Renaissance, N. Konrad and his school have resurrected the studies of comparative literature and comparative culture, but have shifted the center of gravity away from the study of influences (in the spirit of the old com-

⁶ J. Huizinga, *Herbst des Mittelalters*, Munich, 1931.

⁷ If there is a period when, as with Salinger (see E.V. Zavadskaya and A.M. Pyatigorsky, *Echoes of Eastern Culture in Salinger*, "The Peoples of Asia and Africa," Moscow, 1966, no. 3), the Upanishands, Zen, Russian "starchestvo" and R.M. Rilke, or (for me) Bassio and Mandelstam all come together, it is, in my eyes, the present—a time when a single world culture is in the process of coming into being. See my article, "Bassio and Mandelstam," in *Theoretical Problems of the Study of the Literature of the Far East, Proceedings of the Fourth Scientific Conference, Leningrad 1970, Moscow, 1970*.

⁸ As described in Chapter 1 of the Communist Manifesto.

parativism) towards the establishment of typological analogies. This has opened the way to comparisons between all the main civilizations (and not only between certain trends of borrowing), validated the theme of "East and West," and made possible various publications devoted to comparative typology, in which the term "Eastern Renaissance" may not appear. But to pursue the comparative typological study of Eastern and Western civilizations requires one to give specific theoretical patterns, and in our opinion the category of "Eastern Renaissance" does not stand up to the test.

The term "Eastern Enlightenment" is closer to the facts it stands for. One can refer to Marx, who called Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov "two socialist Lessings." However, Marx's epithet illuminates both their similarity and their dissimilarity. The real Lessing was not a Socialist, and the European Socialists were not philosophers of the Enlightenment. The development of non-Western ideology is "muddled," "condensed," "inaccurate." The tendencies requiring radical modernization correspond to the Western Enlightenment, and may be termed simply "Enlightenment," but in fact we always have a fusion between the Enlightenment and something else: Feuerbach's theories and Chernyshevsky's utopian Socialism, and Fukuzawa Yukichi's positivism, and the Marxism of the Chinese intelligentsia centered around Lu Shin. Therefore it is rational to use the term "Eastern Enlightenment," together with a few others such as "the ideology of modernization" or "Westernism."

When used carelessly, the term "Eastern Enlightenment" goes together with the term (and concept) of "Eastern Renaissance", conjuring up the illusion that this Enlightenment of the East grew out of the Renaissance of the East just as organically as the English and French Enlightenment grew out of the traditions of the European Renaissance and of Classicism. But in the process one completely loses sight of the difficulties inherent in the development of Eurasia, the abrupt turn which history imposed upon the countries of the East, the cultural chaos which was the outcome of the sudden change in the historical process. And these are facts which must be faced even today.

⁹ N.I. Feldman, Preface to "Akutagawa Riunosuke," *Rashomon*, Leningrad, 1936; G.D. Gachev, *The Formation of Artistic Consciousness under Conditions of Accelerated Literary Evolution*, Moscow, 1958.

The first feature to strike one, as one casts a sweeping glance over the modernization of non-Western countries, is the deformation of all the usual Western categories.¹⁰ The zig-zag line of the history of civilization (the Renaissance, the Baroque period, Classicism, the Enlightenment, the Sentimental school, positivist realism) is compressed, in the non-West, like a closed accordion; typologically related phenomena fuse together (the baroque turns out to be inseparable from Romanticism, the Renaissance from positivism or socialism, and so forth). Finally, one is faced by two alternative amalgams: Enlightenment-Westernism or Romanticism-“Back-to-the-Soil.”

In Germany the Renaissance had already been curtailed, and in Russia it entirely failed to appear. Goethe and Pushkin were faced with problems which had already been solved in the West in the 16th and 17th centuries: to create a literary language, to find a way of expressing social and spiritual progress in a theatrical form specific to the 16th and 17th centuries. Therefore they seem to be living in two or three literary periods at once. As the author of “*Werther*,” Goethe fits in with the sentimentality of the 18th century. As the author of “*The Prisoner of the Caucasus*,” Pushkin fits in with the history of the Byronic poem. But as the author of “*Faust*,” Goethe puts himself somewhat out of time and corresponds to moments in history long gone by in England and in France. As with Pushkin in his short tragedies, he is closer to the tragedy of the 16th and 17th centuries than to Hugo or Byron (though all these poets were equally inspired by the examples of Shakespeare). Pushkin’s lyrical poetry also steps outside the Romantic framework. The simplest thing to say is that, just like Goethe’s lyric poetry, it “stands alone.” But in this originality one feels an analogy with the “discovery of the world and of man” which took place in the West in the 16th and 17th centuries.

This abundance of levels is characteristic of all 19th-century Russian literature. Its superficial layers coincide with European literature, while its deepest ones develop according to an inner logic which reproduces, in a more condensed form, the logic of the European evolution over several centuries, in a way specific to all the non-West, “modified and condensed.” “*Taras Bulba*”

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

is a romantic tale inspired by Walter Scott, but one cannot ascribe "The Nose" or "The Overcoat" to Hoffmann's influence alone. Hoffmann's hero has been through Classicism and the Enlightenment and has rejected them, whilst Gogol's Major Kovalev has simply not heard of them. Konstantin Aksakov went too far when he compared Gogol to Homer, but one can actually find in Gogol something primordial, pre-rationalistic, pre-Enlightenment. When Dostoyevsky wrote "Poor Folk" and made Makar Devushkin feel sorry for Akaky Akakievich, and criticize the author of "The Overcoat," this at least showed us one thing, namely that in Gogol's World no-one thought of human and civil rights. From the point of view of the European rhythm of evolution of the third estate, Makar Devushkin represents a leap of almost a century, from Molière's ridiculous bourgeois to Goldsmith's and Richardson's dignified "little man" and their like. Hence Belinsky's delight on reading "Poor Folk," and hence also his surprise and then indignation when Dostoyevsky refused to pursue what he had begun, and instead devoted himself to "weird experiments."¹¹

As we can see, the categories of Western literary development are not always applicable, save with very fundamental corrections, even to Russian literature as it developed along European lines from the early eighteenth century. The familiar terms take on an even more unexpected meaning in Japan. In the early 20th century the best Japanese writers belonged to the Naturalist movement. But the Japanese understood by the term "naturalism" a very broad and varied spectrum of tendencies: "Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Wordsworth, Balzac and Zola, Flaubert and the Goncourts, Gogol and Huysmans, Turgenev and Hauptmann, Ibsen and Maupassant, starting with those who called for a "return to Nature" and ending with those who proposed to 'fix impressions'."¹² Apparently, in the eyes of the Japanese, all that was European and "true to nature" fused together, like the spokes of a wheel turning at full speed. It is not surprising that Japanese Naturalism was something completely different from European Naturalism, that it was an attempt to achieve a vast synthesis which in fact went beyond

¹¹ V.G. Belinsky, *A Survey of Russian Literature in 1847*, Moscow, 1960.

¹² T.P. Grigoryeva, *The Lone Traveller*, Moscow, 1967.

the framework of European experience. This synthesis took time, and it seems that it was only in the middle of the 20th century (and not so much in literature as in the cinema), that the new Japanese culture reached its classical forms, capable of exerting an influence on the West in their turn.

The evolution of Chinese literature in modern times is quite "irregular." Literary and ideological modernization reached China very late and somewhat suddenly. Europe opened up all of a sudden to Chinese consciousness.¹³ The spiritual chaos which ensued was so unbearable that the simplicity of Mao Tse-Tung's "Thoughts" could appear to bring salvation. This path is not in any way reminiscent of the classical European transitions from the Enlightenment to Romanticism, from Romanticism to Realism, etc., each "style" having the time to become a life-style and evolving over at least a generation, if not two or three.

The second common feature of the spiritual modernization of non-Western countries is that it has introduced elements of modernity into a medieval system. European countries have become modernized as a whole, while preserving medieval enclaves (the Vendée, Brittany, the Scottish Highlands), but overall they have become modernized and there has therefore been no need to repeat the process. And as a matter of fact France did not have a second Renaissance. The very idea of such a repetition seems absurd: there is no room for Voltaire by Hugo's side. In Russia, on the other hand, there was an Enlightenment of the nobility (Radishchev and the Decembrists), then an Enlightenment of the third estate (the two "socialist Lessings"), and on the eve of the 20th century, a sort of third Enlightenment encompassing ethnic minorities and the urban lower classes.¹⁴ On each occasion, the new Enlightenment collided with the old intelligentsia, which had had time to abandon its rectilinear ideology of modernization for more complex constructions; and conflicts which the West had never known now loomed up, for instance Dostoyevsky's quarrel with Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky, the "Vekhi" controversy, etc.

¹³ V.I. Semanov, "The Works of Tsen Pu and the Formation of Artistic Methods in Chinese Literature," in *Theoretical Problems of the Study of the Literature of the Far East, Proceedings of the Fourth Scientific Conference, Leningrad 1970, Moscow, 1970.*

¹⁴ In Bulgakov's novel, *The Master and Margarita*, they are represented by the characters Berlioz and Bezdomny.

In a modernized enclave the process of evolution is parallel to that of Europe; however, it not only comes up against an ancient backward society, but also in a way against its own past, against the ripples of movements that have arisen at the periphery of society and which reproduce anew what has already taken place at the center. This situation, incredible to the West, is a reality in Russia. Dostoyevsky's romanticism angered Belinsky, as if Banquo's ghost had turned up at the editorial offices of "Otechestvennye Zapiski" (Annals of the Fatherland); and the Nihilists of the 60's were for Dostoyevsky a "diabolical nightmare," precisely because he himself had been through something of the same kind.

Japan in this respect seems to be more of a Western country than Russia. After the Mǎidzi revolution, modernization here did not stop at a single level (as Peter the Great's reforms did): it took over society as a whole, and spread with great success. It would appear that this can be explained by the very peculiarity of Japanese traditions, by the gradual accumulation of the elements of social dynamics ever since feudal times. However, one can speak of the "enclavelike nature" of the Japanese pre-Enlightenment of the 18th century. During that period limited outside influence helped the growth of new elements, but spontaneous movements and outside influences were still very weak and isolated, and did not disturb society as a whole. The new elements tried to express themselves in the old language, and remained incomprehensible.¹⁵

It seems that one can also speak of a pre-Enlightenment in Tsing China.¹⁶ Two autochthonous processes revealed themselves

¹⁵ Outside influence and spontaneity must not be considered as alternatives. Where there is no spontaneous aspiration towards novelty, outside influence, however strong, remains powerless. On the other hand, the most powerful spontaneous movement can seldom win over without the support of examples from outside. See P.F. Tolkayev, *Saiki-monogatari*, Moscow, 1970; *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 1, New York-London, 1964.

¹⁶ However, one must not relate practically the whole of satirical literature to it. The choice of documents made by those in favor of the concept of a Chinese Enlightenment gives the impression, for the moment, of being preliminary, and requires that the criteria be rendered more precise; cf. the works of Fishman (*The Chinese Satirical Novel of the Enlightenment*, Moscow, 1966) and M.I. Nikitina ("The Medieval Korean Concept of the Personal and the Due Reflected in Literature," in *Theoretical Problems of the Study of the Literature of the Far East*).

there. The first was the return of Confucianism to its own sources after the medieval surge towards Buddhism and the assimilation of certain elements of Buddhist metaphysics and mysticism, and this meant that rationalist ideas came to the fore. The second was discontent with the foreign “barbarian” dynasty which offended Chinese national pride; this emotion permeated everywhere, and led to a flowering of satire. Rationalistic and satirical opposition to the régime were sometimes very spirited and very talented, but to speak of an Enlightenment in the full sense of the word requires a modicum of positive ideas (progress, evolution, human and civil rights). And these ideas did not exist in the East,¹⁷ and therefore there were no new forms to represent a person. Western influence served to convey them, but it remained weak and superficial. Even in the 20th century, the notion of the inalienable rights of man remains doubtful and questionable.¹⁸

The third feature of the process of modernization is the “ethnophilic” or “back to the soil” aspect of the romantic, non-Western reaction to the Enlightenment. In England and in France the Romantic movement preserved the universality of the Enlightenment. It delves into the Middle Ages, but not necessarily its own. The Romantic ideal can be found abroad, in the East. For the English and the French the Enlightenment was not something foreign, from which one fled in search of something one felt close to. The opposite was true. The Western Romantics tended to run away from the “enlightened” fatherland. It is only east of the Rhine that the situation changes. For most Germans, the Enlightenment came from abroad; it invaded Germany with Napoleon’s armies and with the Code Napoléon, which was contrary to Germanic law; it forcibly cleaned out the Augean stables of German feudalism. And the outcome was a particular brand of German romanticism, with its own particular “back to

¹⁷ H. Nakamura, *A History of the Development of Japanese Thought*, Tokyo, 1967.

¹⁸ The problem of the stages of the Enlightenment has already been posed more than once by N. Konrad (*op. cit.*), V.I. Semanov (*The Evolution of the Chinese Novel from the Late 18th Century to the Beginning of the 20th Century*, Moscow, 1968) and others. I would tend to distinguish the Enlightenment (professed Westernism) from the pre-Enlightenment (the beginnings of the changes towards modernity from a predominantly traditional background).

the soil" flavor.¹⁹ The word "pochvennichestvo" (which means a movement "back to the soil," back to one's ethnic origins) was invented in Russia,²⁰ but it is precisely in Germany that this acute feeling of rootlessness, of the destruction of national foundations, appeared for the first time, and the search for a national tradition became all-important for Romanticism and supplanted both the East, and the exotic, and the Romantics' "distant haze."

Heine once said that French patriotism broadened the heart, while German patriotism constricted it. The same can be said of their Romanticism. Western Romantics were Hellenophiles; non-Western Romantics became Germanophiles, Slavophiles and so forth. Instead of the banner of the struggle for the freedom of a foreign nation, under which Byron fell, each raised his own banner, and this banner easily became a symbol of xenophobia. The Francophobe stereotype created by the Germans was taken up again, or reinvented, with minor variations, by the various ethnophilic movements of the East.

The range of accusations initially levelled against France is particularly monotonous. They are then levelled against Western Europe as a whole (Germany included), then against the white races as a whole (including the Russians), and so on.²¹ The glorification of one's own merits is slightly less monotonous, but here too the clichés of the "back to the soil" ideology can be discerned.

The West is always immoral, vicious, rotten, corrupt. The "back to the soil" movement sometimes allows the borrowing of Western technology, but in such a way that it does not corrupt national mores. Hence the Chinese (and Japanese) slogan: "Eastern ethics, Western technology."

If ethical superiority is doubtful, religious superiority backs it up. This tendency is apparent from the earliest Slavophiles, through Dostoyevsky, to the contemporary apologists of

¹⁹ We leave aside Italy, whose romanticism was intermediate in character. It is not possible to go into this question here.

²⁰ In the early 1860's; cf. Dostoyevsky's and Strakhov's argument in the journals "Vremya" (Time) and "Epokha" (Epoch).

²¹ A few years ago in South Africa, those taking part in a religious procession carried a banner bearing the slogan "The White man crucified Jesus").

Hinduism and Islam (cf. the journals "Vedanta Kessari," "Islamic Review," and others).

Sometimes the individual ethical superiority of non-Western man is supplemented by the superiority of non-Western social systems based on the collective, the obligations of all men towards the emperor, or the rural community. Julius Nyerere has probably never read Bakunin or Herzen, but his African socialism is based on roughly the same premises as their Russian variety.²²

Finally, the dry common sense of the West is contrasted with the emotional richness of the non-West: German sensibility, the special Japanese attitude to tea,²³ or the way "Negroes think with their feet" in the dance.

In the crudest and most vulgar forms of the "back to the soil" philosophy, the Western world appears as a spiritual vacuum in which only science and technology prosper. Enlightened ethnophilism, on the contrary, understands the qualities of Western civilization and the limitations of its own "soil." The idea of a "struggle against the West"²⁴ is then superseded (as Senghor believes) by the idea of a synthesis of European (French) rationalism and non-Western (African) emotionalism.²⁵

The rational seed of ethnophilism lies in a protest against the alienation of modern times and against the inhuman aspects of capitalist progress. The strength of ethnophilism lies, in the first place, in a critique of modern civilization as an accomplished and absolute ideal. Dostoyevsky levelled this criticism in exceptional depth because he was looking at Europe both from the inside, as a European, and from without, as a non-European. This dual view penetrated reality much more effectively than a purely European outlook could.

The strength of ethnophilism lies in its critique of the methods of diffusion of modern civilization. The Westernizers spread progressive ideas, principles, institutions, convinced that they are bound to take root; whereas the ethnophiles wonder what is

²² J.K. Nyerere, *Socialism and Rural Development*, Dar es Salaam, 1967.

²³ A difficult phrase to translate, as it is associated with the tea ceremony, Zen Buddhism, and the love of nature and of art. See Okakuro Kakuzo, *Das Buch vom Tee*, Leipzig (undated).

²⁴ N.I. Strakhov, *The Struggle against the West in Russian Literature*, St. Petersburg, 1882.

²⁵ L.S. Senghor, "On Negritude," *Diogenes* No. 37, 1962.

capable of taking root in the conditions before them. Experience with parliamentary institutions in Pakistan, Nigeria or Ghana proves that the question is far from being futile.²⁶

Ethnophiles have convincingly shown the internal logic of a civilization which does not change easily, but when it does change, does so for other reasons than government decrees. Thus man's inner world, his semi-conscious and unconscious values and attachments, become the ethnophile's kingdom. The Westernizers' point of view is apparently richer for the statesman who has to solve the urgent problems of his country's development; for the writer, however, the most important thing is precisely that which the statesman can disregard. Hence the inclination towards a "back to the soil" approach, shown by a number of great writers from Dostoyevsky to Kawabata Yasunari. The strength of their artistic talent pushes them towards the one of two possible views of the world which would lead them more directly towards their mission as writers, which is to discover "the secrets of the human soul" (Dostoyevsky).

However, ideas which are partly fruitful in the realm of art (where Romanticism usually reveals its strong sides while the Enlightenment shows its weaknesses) may be sterile or even dangerous when tried out in a social context. Flights and plunges beyond the reach of common sense certainly have their attraction, indeed fascination, in spiritual life (and in the literature that follows in its train), but in social practice, careful and sober rationalism holds its own.

The paradox of ethnophilism is that it contains elements of contemporary universal history which appear in a local and archaic form, and in order to resist the "devil of universal progress" each ethnophile invokes his own local god. In this sort of dispute the devil will always win. Something similar had already existed in the ancient Roman empire. A soulless political and administrative unity was superimposed on local cultures, around which a warm human world of values was fashioned. The Roman Empire wiped them out, eradicated them one by one, offering men nothing in return except an even more barren cult of petty princelings. The local gods seemed doomed. At most they could inspire a desperate revolt, like those of the Jews in the 1st and 2nd centuries.

²⁶ Myrdal, *op. cit.*.

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But the soulless unity was also doomed: it could not maintain itself without spiritual support. And the solution was found in Christianity. Judaism, tied to the life of the tribe, gave birth to a religion which united everyone and gave everyone the image of a shared and fervent cult. In Christianity, the Jewish link with the soil became "abstract," universal, and it was victorious in this abstract and universal form.

One cannot say what form of synthesis of the cultures of the West and the Middle East, India, China, Europe and Africa, lies before the modern world. But it is obvious that deep mutual understanding and attention is essential, and that we are still very far from achieving it.

As long as the average European remains a barbarian in relation to the thoughts of the Upanishads or the Sung landscape, the Eastern intelligentsia cannot give up its role as defender of its traditions (utterly obsolete in many cases), without committing an unforgivable act of treason. As long as the values of the East have not become the values of a nascent universal culture, the writers of the East have to defend their "soil" against erosion by featureless cosmopolitanism. Thus, to overcome the absurdity of the romantic reaction, one has to understand its authentic side, by coming to a broader and deeper understanding of the very notion of progress.