Title – Persecutor’s Remorse: Mimetic Desire, the Scapegoat Mechanism, and the
Compassionate Gaze in the Works of Shusaku Endo

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Textual/Investigative

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Abstract

Building on Mark Williams’ thesis that Endo’s characters often reconcile with an
unconscious Other within themselves, I will argue that Endo’s persecutor characters are trapped
by mimetic desire; their status as a persecutor depends on their relationships—whom they wish
to imitate or whom they imitated in their past. While Williams and other Endo scholars often
focus on the psychology and existentialism of Endo’s characters, I point out how contextualizing
Endo within the postwar Daisan no shinjin group reveals Endo’s criticism of institutional
powers, especially because institutions are “centers of desire,” a place where individuals are
bound together by a common longing. Drawing on Girard’s theory in *The Scapegoat*, I show
how “centers of desire” function in peer pressuring others to conform. These “centers of desire”
often manipulate outsiders either by enticing them with the hope that they could belong or with
the threat of banishing them. Thus, these characters are forced to perform acts of persecution,
usually in the form of scapegoating. However, Endo also capitalizes on the guilt of these
persecutors, and his narrative structure allows his readers to look upon these persecutors with a
compassionate gaze. Along with Endo’s criticism of these “centers of desire” is his solution to
collective persecution—this loving gaze, coupled with repeated acts of sacrificial love, which maximize the guilt of these persecutors, are Endo’s hope of reversing the institutional manipulation of desire.