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**East or West? Representations of 'japaneseness' through book reviews from Kawabata to Dorian Sukegawa**

Stockholm, 1968: the Japanese writer Kawabata Yasunari obtains the prestigious Nobel prize for literature. The motivation: "for his narrative mastery, which with great sensibility expresses the essence of the Japanese mind". Will the expression "the essence of Japanese mind" be the focal point of my intervention or : by what criteria was Kawabata awarded? For his "narrative mastery" or for his ability to express "the essence of Japanese mind"? And what is meant by "Japanese mind", even more if we consider that the award was given by the commission in Stockholm, Sweden, while even according to Donald Keene the Japanese themselves found the writing of Kawabata difficult and obscure? This study aims to investigate this problem by looking for the answer in that imaginary, in that theoretical and practical *corpus* of speeches codified and crystallized in the Euro-American context called "orientalism", as defined by Edward W. Said, which gives those keys to understand the Other, in this case the East, according to a pre-established scheme based on the observation of the extreme diversity of the other, on his distance and unknowability, just as a criterion of discernment from "ourselves".

Thus, often forcibly, we identify those characteristics that we want to fall into an immense category called "Orient", with a generalization and flattening of the diversities that are the sign of those stereotypes that come to form our "Japanese collective imagination", where Japan is "essentially eastern". It is an imaginary geography, which arises from what we want to see rather than what we actually see.

From the first case of award of a prize of such international importance, namely the Nobel Prize to Kawabata, my speech aims to investigate, through a path analysis of reviews on some of the most important Italian newspapers of some of the most representative Japanese novels, how much this Orientalist rhetoric influences the reception and feeds the spread of Japanese literature in the "western world", how it has evolved over time, and how the Nobel Prize to Kawabata is the seal of that body of speeches that outlined the identity itself of Japan.