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FABLES AND IMITATIONS

Kirishitan Literature in the Forest of Simple Letters

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The great and floribund forest of traditional Japanese literature is occupied among other creatures large and small by the profuse but amorphous species designated *kanazôshi*, a name that almost literally means *feuilletons* in simple letters—or, if I may try to be more precise and Portuguese, *folhinhas com letras simples japonesas*.¹ It is a taxonomic category that appears in histories of Japanese literature as the pre-eminent prose form of the first eight decades of the seventeenth century. Indeed, almost all of Japanese prose written between 1600, the beginning of the Tokugawa epoch, and 1682, when Ihara Saikaku's *Kôshoku ichidai otoko* (The Man Who Spent His Life in Lovemaking), a new kind of novel, was published, is ordinarily entered wholesale under the label *kanazôshi*. In some chronologies the origin of this species is associated directly with the emergence of a print culture in the 1590s and is therefore set a few years before 1600, the epochal date of political history. At bottom, however, its classification lacks a rationale.

Kanazôshi are of various sizes, take many forms, and are divided in sundry ways. They include but are by no means limited to fiction. The didactic element is a conspicuous ingredient of *kanazôshi*, and pieces with a

1 The authoritative Japanese-Portuguese dictionary published by the Jesuit mission press in Nagasaki in 1603-1604 defines *kana* as “a kind of Japanese letter” and explains the associated meaning by referring to the phrase *kana ni iu*, “To speak plainly, in a way that everyone understands.” *Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam com declaração em Portugues*, feito por algvns Padres, e Irmaõs da Companhia de Iesv. Com licença do Ordinário, & Superiores em Nangaiaqui no Collegio de Iapam da Companhia de Iesvs. Anno M.D.C.III. *Supplemento deste vocabulario* imprelho no mesmo Collegio da Cõpanhia de Iesv com a Jobedita licença, & aprovação. Anno. 1604. (Bodleian Library, Oxford, shelfmark Arch.B.d.13), f. 35: “Cana. Certa letra de Iapão. ¶ Cananiyù. Falar chãamente de maneira q todos entedão.”

Sôshi, the second element of the term *kanazôshi*, now is most commonly written with Chinese characters that stand for “grass” and “child.” This is a compound historically written with various other sets of characters, all of them roughly meaning “copybook” or “quire of paper,” that is, collection of leaves making up a manuscript or book. The *Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam* gives the meaning, “Books of poems or tales written in a gentle Japanese style;” see f. 227v: “Sôxi. ... *Liuros de verjos, ou histórias elcritos em lingua branda de Iapão.*”

Cf. the *Vocabulario* in Japanese translation, *Hôyaku Nippo jisho*, tr. and ed. Doi Tadao et al. (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1980), p. 86 and p. 578 respectively.

highly developed intellectual content are found on scholarly lists of works called by that name. So are collections of anecdotes on “things heard and seen,” guidebooks to “famous places,” depictions of the genre scene, historical tales, and a motley of other kinds of prose. Pornocritiques—that is, evaluations of prostitutes’ performance—are as prominent among works labelled *kanazôshi* as pious tractates. The species is accommodating enough to embrace the odd adaptation of a foreign work (that means, for all practical purposes, of a Chinese work) into Japanese. In effect, there are as many arrangements in classes and categories as there are analysts of this miscellaneous species. No firm and universally accepted rules regarding the inclusion of a work in the canon of *kanazôshi* or its exclusion from that canon are apparent. In short, what is or is not a *feuilleton* in “simple Japanese letters” is a decision rendered not according to any objective standard but according to what appears proper in the eyes of the perceiver, such as the editor of an anthology or the bibliographer of an academic society. As a result, some works that might be included in the species remain nondescript. Some of the titles that have been classified in it, however, would seem to stretch the utterly flexible meaning of the term *kanazôshi* to the point of doing violence to it.

Tenshōki, for example, is entered in a comprehensive bibliographical list of *kanazôshi* that may be consulted on the Internet site of the Kinsei Shoki Bungei Kenkyūkai (Society for the Study of the Literary Arts of the Incipient Early Modern Period).² This “Record of the Tenshō Era” is a contemporary account of the exploits of the hegemon Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598). With this work the priest, poet, and polyhistor Ômura Yûko succeeded in producing not only an effective panegyric but also a valuable historical source. Far from depending in the main on *kana*, “simple Japanese letters,” however, Ômura wrote in Chinese (what the Japanese call *kanbun*). To be exact, seven of the eight extant parts of *Tenshōki* were originally written in that language and only later transcribed according to the rules developed for *kanbun*, which involve rearranging the Chinese text to fit the radically different Japanese phonetic and grammatical pattern—a Procrustean exercise.

This is not a simple matter of transliteration, of rewriting *kanji*, “complex Chinese characters,” in the *kana* script. Adapting a text from one writing system into another within the same language may bear grave political

2 Internet <<http://koudan.com/shoki/kanabun/kanabun.html>>; click on: *kanazôshi sakubin*; click on: *te*. Listed is the version of *Tenshōki* included in *Taikō shiryō shū*, ed. Kuwata Tadachika, Sengoku Shiryō Sôsho 1 (Tokyo, *Jinbutsu Ôrai-sha*, 1965), pp. 9-145. Each of the several parts of *Tenshōki*, composed between 1580 and 1590, is devoted to a particular triumph of Hideyoshi. Twelve of these discrete narratives, written immediately after the events they describe, are known by title, but only eight survive.

implications but poses no undue linguistic difficulties. For example, a Turkish text can be converted from Arabic letters to Roman (or, for that matter, a Japanese text from *kana* to Roman letters or vice versa) with little or no harm done to sound, sense, or style. But that is not what happened to Ômura Yûko's original. In the case of *Tenshōki* and, indeed, of all *kanbun* texts, the original is subjected to what is in the precise sense a distortion, a change in the form of the signal, before it can be read as Japanese. So it is a work translated from one language into another—from Chinese into Japanese—in this cumbersome way that is listed in the Internet bibliography of *kanazōshi*.

Not listed, astonishingly, are the two other accounts of Hideyoshi's career that appear together with *Tenshōki* in the volume specified in the bibliographical reference on the Internet site. These two works are *Taikōsama gunki no uchi* (From the Military Record of His Lordship the Taikō) by Ôta Gyūichi, the premier chronicler of the age, and *Kawazumi Taikōki*, attributed to a certain Kawazumi Saburōemon. Both of them surely qualify as *kanazōshi*, if the use of *kana* is a criterion. Ôta, in particular, relied on "simple Japanese letters" to such an extent that the original of his "Military Record" is hard to read; modern editors judiciously substitute *kanji* for some of the running *kana* to make that text less difficult to follow. Although his history of Hideyoshi's part in the unification of Japan was not included in the bibliography of the Kinsei Shoki Bungei Kenkyūkai, however, Ôta is represented on that list with *Shinchō Kō ki* (Chronicle of Lord Nobunaga), the annals of Hideyoshi's precursor in that enterprise.³ This chronicle is anything but abstemious in its use of "complex Chinese characters." Evidently, arbitrariness if not capriciousness at times dictates what makes or does not make a *kanazōshi*.

The literary product comprehended under that label is as protean as it is voluminous; its definition is elastic and therefore elusive. In other words, the category is so all-inclusive as to make the designation meaningless.

3 *Taikōsama gunki no uchi* is found in *Taikō shiryō shū*, pp. 147-224, and *Kawazumi Taikōki ibid.*, pp. 225-445. An autograph of Ôta Gyūichi's work on Hideyoshi is available in facsimile, accompanied by a transcription: *Taikōsama gunki no uchi*, ed. Keiō Gijuku Daigaku Fuzoku Kenkyūjo Shidō Bunko, Shidō Bunko Koten Sōkan 3 (Tokyo, *Kyūko Sho'in*, 1975). The best edition of Ôta's chronicle of Nobunaga is *Shinchō Kō ki*, ed. Okuno Takahiro and Iwasawa Yoshihiko, Kadokawa Bunko 2541 (Tokyo, *Kadokawa Shoten*, 1969).

To be included in the definitive collection being published under the editorship of Asakura Haruhiko and others since 1980, *Kanazōshi shūsei* (Tokyo, *Tōkyōdō*), must surely be the ultimate attestation of *kanazōshi* status. As of July 2001, this collection numbers 29 volumes. The contents are generally arranged by title in the order of the *kana* syllabary, and the most recent volume includes works with titles starting with *ko*. In other words, the compilation has not quite reached one fourth of the way down the set of *kana*, and it is too early to say whether *Shinchō Kō ki*, *Taikōsama gunki no uchi* and *Tenshōki* will be included in it. *Kawazumi Taikōki*, however, is not.

Apparently even the doyen of *kanazôshi* studies, Noda Hisao, did not find it easy to establish the signification of the term. As an anecdote circulated among specialists would have it, when Noda was asked about the organising principle behind the species, he answered, “Chaos.” If so, then surely the task of arranging the formless mass within a sensible framework is beyond the finite powers of scholars. Nonetheless, a great deal of effort continues to be expended on this task, as it has been for a century, since the term *kanazôshi* first entered the vocabulary of literary studies.⁴

Since membership in the species is apparently open to all comers, it is surprising that only one text which has its provenance in the literature produced in Japanese by the Christian mission of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries should be firmly established on the lists of literary works generally defined as *kanazôshi*. (The sole exception is an adaptation of the *Tales of Aesop*.) This unexpected exclusivism on the part of cataloguers otherwise known to be generous if haphazard in allotting places in their bibliographies is particularly astonishing if the genesis of *kanazôshi* is indeed to be tied to the emergence of commercial publishing and the rise of a popular print culture in Japan.

Print as such was nothing new in that country. Indeed, Buddhist prayer texts reproduced either from bronze plates or from woodblocks in the year 770 on orders from the Nara court (the so-called million-pagoda dharani, *hyakumantô darani*) are among the world’s oldest extant printed documents, if they are not the very oldest. Sutras and other Buddhist books were the main objects printed—from woodblocks—under the sponsorship of aristocrats or of temples in the Heian era (794-1185) and the subsequent mediaeval period, although secular titles were published, notably in the merchant city of Sakai, from the fourteenth century onward. But the reach of those publications was limited. It was the introduction of the movable type press that opened up the possibilities of disseminating the printed word among the populace. And it is fact that the first movable type press was brought to Japan by a Portuguese trading vessel which arrived at Nagasaki on or about 21 July 1590.

Aboard this ship were four Kyushu lads who had left that port eight and a half years previously as obscure country boys; had travelled by way of Macao, Malacca, and Goa to Europe, where they were represented as the ambassadors of Japanese “kings;” had been lionised by that paragon of

⁴ The term was established in scholarly usage by Mizutani Futô, *Kinsei retsudentai shôsetsu shi* (Tokyo, *Shun’yôdô*, 1897). I am grateful to Professor Watanabe Kenji, my colleague at Rikkyô University, for telling me the anecdote about Noda Hisao.

European kingship, Philip of Spain (and alas of Portugal), by two popes (Gregory XIII and his successor Sixtus V), and by the high and mighty everywhere they went in Portugal, Spain, and Italy; and were now returning to Japan to tell their tales—not all of them to the credit of the fathers of the Society of Jesus, who had fussed over them throughout their journey.⁵ Their names were Mancio Itô, Miguel Chijiwa, Martinho Hara, and Julião Nakaura. They were accompanied by their chaperone Padre Diogo de Mesquita SJ and the other members of their suite. Also aboard was Padre Alexandro Valignano SJ, the mastermind who had devised the publicity stunt of the “embassy”—a triumph for the Jesuits, though made of tinsel—but had been prevented from escorting his model youths to Europe by the weight of his duties in Asia. Mesquita had obtained the movable type press in Lisbon on his orders.

It is advisable to keep in mind the date of its arrival in Nagasaki, because Japanese reference works persistently state that the new printing technology was introduced to Japan “at about the same time” from Europe and from Korea “on Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s orders.” The latter phrase is a delicate reference to the six-year war of aggression fought by Hideyoshi in Korea. It was not until 23 May 1592, however, that Hideyoshi’s invasion fleet began landing troops in Pusan. In the meantime, the equipment imported from Portugal was being put to good use for letterpress printing by the Jesuits in Japan. Before the first Japanese soldier set foot in Korea, the Jesuit press had already produced at least two books—a two-volume selection of acts of the saints, printed in Roman letters, and a catechism in *kana* type. All in all, in twenty-three and a half years of activity the Jesuit press and commercial printers commissioned by the Jesuits are estimated to have published about fifty different titles in Japan. This activity was brought to a halt when the Tokugawa shogunate proscribed Christianity in early 1614. Twenty-nine of those titles remain in existence, most of them preserved outside the country where they were printed.

The texts generated by the Christian mission have been of far more interest to Japanese linguists and philologists than to litterateurs, that is, students of what they themselves call *kokubungaku*, “the national literature.” Insofar as they have been recognised as literature at all, these texts have been pigeonholed. Isolated as some sort of exotic, minor subfamily in a compartment labelled *Kirishitan bungaku* (the primary connotation is not “Christian

5 For more detail on this farce—not a “Japanese embassy,” as it is still unquestioningly called sometimes, but rather a Jesuit mission to Europe—see Jurgis S.A. Elisonas, “Acts, Legends, and Southern Barbarous Japanese,” in *Portugal e a China: Conferências nos Encontros de História Luso-Chinesa*, ed. Jorge M. dos Santos Alves (Lisbon, *Fundação Oriente*, 2001), pp. 15-19.

literature” but “literature of the Kirishitans,” of the sect proscribed and persecuted for two and a half centuries by the early modern Japanese regime), they have been more or less ignored by literary scholars. Their missionary origins make them suspect, their Christian ideology unfamiliar; so they remain “foreign” even when they happen to be models of Japanese written style. They are shunted off as a group to an obscure corner of the forest of letters. Somehow or other, their identity as examples of Japanese prose seems to be deniable. Thus it is made to appear that even those “Kirishitan” works which are indeed nothing other than booklets with the text mainly in *kana*, “simple Japanese letters,” cannot be *kanazôshi* but must be something else.

But if the species *kanazôshi* lacks coherence and its designation, born out of chaos, fosters this type of confusion, then what is its *raison d'être*? In due course, I expect to make the modest proposal that the category be done away with, and one of the reasons I will give is that a species from which a qualified member—*Kirishitan bungaku*—can be excluded is not a species. To be sure, this may be nothing more than a quixotic idea, and it need not concern us further. The topic I wish to broach here is, let us hope, less airy and more down to earth. It is the role played by the literature of the Christian mission in the world of the *kanazôshi*, that is, of Japanese letters at the beginning of the early modern age. To reiterate, of all the European immigrants Aesop alone was adopted and assimilated by the Japanese, being naturalised under the name of Isoho. I want to suggest, however, that while the reasons for including Aesop in the canon of *kanazôshi* are indisputable, other works produced by, for, and even against the mission also deserve consideration, for less compelling, perhaps, but undoubtedly worthy reasons.

Esopono fabulas, a Japanese translation of Aesop printed in Roman letters at Amakusa in 1593, was one of the earliest products of the Jesuit mission press.⁶ It was followed in the seventeenth century by at least nine different impressions of a variant titled *Isoho monogatari* and printed in “simple Japanese letters” on movable type presses by commercial publishers. Except for one, which bears the imprint Kan'ei 16 (1639), these editions are undated. A reasonable postulate is that the earliest of them was published about 1615.⁷ An illustrated woodblock-print version appeared in 1659;⁸ a

⁶ *Esopono fabulas*. Latinuo vaxite Nippon no cuchito nasu mono nari. Ievs [sic] no Companhia no Collegio Amacufani voite Superiores no gomenqiotoxite coreuo fanni qizamu mono nari. Goxuxxe yori M.D.L.XXXXIII. (Bound together with *Feiqe no monogatari*, cited in n. 24 below.)

Amakusa-han Isoho monogatari, ed. Inoue Akira (Tokyo, *Kazama Shobô*, 1964), combines a facsimile with a line-by-line transcription into Japanese letters on facing pages. *Isopo no haburasu*, in *Kirishitan bungaku shû*, ed. Shinmura Izuru and Hiragi Gen'ichi, II, Tôyô Bunko 570 (Tokyo, *Heibonsha*, 1993), pp. 189-343, is an annotated edition of the text transcribed into Japanese letters. The Roman-letter text is available on the Internet under <<http://kuzan.f-edu.fukui-u.ac.jp/esopo.txt>>.

reprint with minor alterations is undated. The texts of the Japanese-letter editions are very similar and clearly belong to the same lineage. They are, however, quite different from that of the romanised version. Both *Esopono fabulas* and *Isoho monogatari* begin with a biographical section on Aesop (that is, a mythographical section; the historicity of this author is highly doubtful) and then go on to the fables proper—seventy in the Roman-letter book, sixty-five in the acknowledged “feuilleton in simple letters.” No more than twenty-six of the stories are found in both variants. Even if their contents overlap only partially, however, there is no doubt that *Esopono fabulas* and *Isoho monogatari* shared a common prototype and that its provenance was the Christian mission. In other words, a close relative of a book put out by the Jesuits was issued and reissued by secular publishers after the outbreak of the Tokugawa shogunate’s anti-Christian persecution in 1614, entered the mainstream of Japanese literature, and is included in collections of *kanazôshi* today.

It is not difficult to see why *Isoho monogatari* weathered the scrutiny of the Japanese inquisition and survived the Edo regime’s efforts to eradicate everything Christian. There was nothing specifically Christian about Aesop’s fables. Aesop was, after all, a “pagan” author; or, to be more precise, the complex of stories associated with his name had its origins in the “pagan” Greek and Roman world. But the Jesuits considered this “pagan” innocuous enough to be introduced to a mission country where preservation of orthodoxy was the watchword. His stories passed censorship because they had something instructive (or, in any event, amusing) to offer everyone while offending no one. Jesuit and Japanese authorities could agree on that. In short, the moral conveyed by Aesop’s fables is universal. Not only do they project truths that have a general application, their manner of doing so is ingenious. Their digestibility is given recognition, in a backhanded way, in the preface to *Esopono fabulas*:⁹ “In general, people readily lend their ears to frivolities without substance but find it tedious to listen to instruction in true doctrine. That is why easily understood materials have been assembled here and these tales put into print. To use an analogy, it is no different from

7 The National Diet Library copy of the earliest impression is the text published in a modern edition by Morita Takeshi: *Isoho monogatari*, in *Kanazôshi shû*, ed. Morita and Maeda Kingorô, Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei 90 (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1965), pp. 355-473.

8 *Isoho monogatari* (n.p.: Itô San’emon, Manji 2 [1659]), three fascicles in one, Kyoto University Library, shelfmark K1 4-40/1/1; the complete text is available on the Internet under <<http://ddb.libnet.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/k01/image/01/k01s0001.html>>. A facsimile of the 1659 illustrated version was published in three fascicles in Kisho Fukuseikai Kankô Sôsho, 4th ser., nos. 6-8 (Tokyo, Yoneyama-dô, 1925).

taking a delight in fruit trees. A tree one plants will have an abundance of branches and leaves that are of no use, but because good fruit is to be found amidst them one does not consider those branches and leaves to be worthless.” So the main thing, from the standpoint of the Jesuit superiors issuing the permission to print, is that the tales have the capacity to beguile. They may not be Christian, but they captivate. Beneath their trivial exterior they bear much of value. They are therefore of use as a teaching aid, an expedient in attracting people to the proper path—*yoqi michiuo fitoni voxixe cataru tayoritomo narubeqi mono nari*.

Their capability to teach a lesson in an entertaining way made the *Tales of Aesop* attractive to Japanese commercial publishers as well. The settings of the fables were exotic but did not alienate. Their denizens could be domesticated or, in any event, made familiar. To be sure, minor difficulties were inescapable, as is evident from the illustrations in the 1659 edition of *Isobo monogatari*. Aesop himself fits right in. He and his staffage are given an entirely up-to-date Japanese appearance—except, of course, when he is portrayed in the presence of foreign (Libyan, Egyptian) potentates, who are accoutred appropriately à la chinoise. The illustrator, however, did not know how to handle certain animals that are ubiquitous in Aesop’s tales but less prevalent in the Japanese countryside. For example, the famous story known as “The Lion’s Share” features a lion, a cow, a goat, and a sheep. In the picture, the King of Beasts appears in his familiar form, as a Chinese fantasy lion; the cow also poses no problems of recognition; but the speckled cervid that is clearly tagged *hitsuji* bears no resemblance to a sheep, and the fourth member of the quartet is mislabelled altogether. That useful shipboard animal called *cabra, ou bode* by the Portuguese had the misfortune of being given the Japanese name *yagyû*, one written with Chinese characters which could also be read *no-ushi*, that is, buffalo; and it is as such that it figures in the 1659 illustrated version of *Isobo monogatari*.¹⁰

Whether accurately identified and depicted or not, the animals acting as surrogates for humans in Aesop’s typology of behaviour could count on a ready reception in Japan, because late mediaeval Japanese literature was suffused with anthropomorphism. Fables such as “The Bat, the Birds, and the

9 *Kirishitan bungaku shû*, II, p. 226; preface unpaginated in original.

10 “Shishiô to hitsuji ushi no-ushi no koto,” *Isobo monogatari* (1659), fasc. 2, no. 14, ff. 17/8v-19r; illustration, f. 22r. Cf. “De leone/ vacca/ capra & oue,” in *E]opi appologi [i]ue mythologi cum quibusdam carminum et fabularum additionibus Sebastiani Brant*, a splendid edition published in Basel by Jacobus de Pfortzheim in 1501; accessible on the Internet under <<http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/desbillons/esop/seite51.html>>. Note that *Esopono fabulas*, p. 446, uses a different version of the fable, in which a lion, a dog, a wolf, and a panther are the four hunting companions; cf. *Kirishitan bungaku shû*, II, pp. 266-267.

The goat is defined in *Vocabulario*, f. 316v, s.v. “Yagüü. Nono vxi. *Cabra, ou bode*.” Cf. *Nippo jisho*, p. 807.

Beasts” would have had an instant resonance among an audience familiar with the ornithomachies and other so-called tales of alien species (*irui-mono*) prominent among the narratives that typify the prose of the Muromachi period (1392-1573).¹¹ (Those narratives are now known as *Muromachi monogatari*. Their previous name, *otogizôshi*—“companion tales,” a term as meaningless as *kanazôshi* but less tenacious—has fallen out of favour among literary scholars.) And yet, for all the timeliness, amusing nature, and literary merit of his little stories with a moral, Aesop would never have entered Japan, survived under the Tokugawa regime, and found a place among the *kanazôshi* in the forest of Japanese letters, had he not been considered ideologically harmless.

“Harmless” is not an adjective that one would want to apply to Fabian Fucan, a man known for his incisive wit, sharp tongue, and dull conscience. Raised in a Zen temple until his late teens, the recipient of an excellent education, he abandoned his Buddhist monastic calling, entered the Society of Jesus as an *Irmão* in 1586, and put his impressive talents at the disposal of the Christian mission. In 1605 he wrote the scintillating Christian apologetic treatise *Myôtei mondô* (*Myôtei Dialogue*), a work displaying an extraordinary range of knowledge of East Asian systems of thought. Frustrated by the Jesuits’ refusal to promote him to the priesthood, and disgusted at their arrogance, greed, and hypocrisy (if his own testimony may be trusted), he had by 1608 left their company. Jesuit sources say that he decamped for a more banal reason—that he jumped over the wall together with a woman from a religious community next door. In the event, Fabian was co-opted by the enemies of his former confrères and turned informant. In 1620 he published the corrosive anti-Christian tract *Ha Daiusu* (*Deus Destroyed*).¹²

These two books by Fabian Fucan are equally brilliant. That the diametrically opposite controversialist positions occupied by them should have been defended with flawless rhetoric by one and the same author performing an intellectual somersault makes them all the more fascinating as

11 See “Tori kedamono to tatakai no koto,” *Isobo monogatari* (1659), fasc. 2, no. 33, f. 30rv. Cf. *Esopono fabulas*, pp. 460-462; *Kirishitan bungaku shû*, II, pp. 283-285. Also cf. “De quadrupedibus et auiibus,” in *Esopi appologi* < ... esop/seite96.html>.

Four of the twelve items selected for inclusion in *Muromachi monogatari shû*, Vol. I, ed. Ichiko Teiji et al., Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikai 54 (Tokyo, *Iwanami Shoten*, 1995 second printing) are *irui-mono*, including the ornithomachy *Aro monogatari*.

Anthropomorphic themes are the topics of no less than 25 of the 124 items included in the catalogue of an exhibition of “Muromachi-period narratives” (*Muromachi monogatari*) held at the Kyoto University Library in November 1999. See *Otogizôshi: monogatari no tamatebako*, edited and published by *Kyôto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan* (Kyoto, 1999), and its supplementary list of exhibited items; available on the Internet under <<http://ddb.libnet.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/otogi/index.html>>.

12 Fabian Fucan’s *Ha Daiusu* is translated under the title “Deus Destroyed” in George Elison, *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 141

documents of the history of Japanese thought. How else can they be categorised, however?

Explicitly, the phrase “feuilletons in simple Japanese letters” means texts that are not written in “complex Chinese characters.” Implicitly, it suggests “popular” texts; “serious” texts were written in Chinese, in *kanbun*. When the Neo-Confucian scholar Hayashi Razan vilified Fabian’s *Myôtei mondô* as a booklet “patched together in the most plebeian Japanese,” he was expressing the ire of an academic monopolist in Chinese letters—that is, “philosophy”—at an interloper’s destruction of the conventional fabric of discourse. “And if the book is used to delude the foolish and the common, the gravity of the offence increases all the more.”¹³ Just so. Though the intended audience identified by Fabian in the epilogue of his tractate—“ladies of quality and widows” who “have no proper way of giving easy interview to men, even to monks, and even to inquire about true doctrine”—would surely not have relished being described in the words used by Razan, it is patent that the author’s purpose was to popularise his doctrinal message. That is, Fabian sought to make his complex, intellectually challenging argument accessible and interesting, if not to the “common” plebs, then to the more cultivated portion of the general public. His method, if I may cite the seventeenth-century definition of a common phrase, was “to speak plainly, in a way that everyone understands”—*kana ni*, in simple Japanese letters.

The design of *Myôtei mondô* is that of a popular treatise. It has a fine fictional frame: Myôshû, a young woman widowed at the Battle of Sekigahara, seeks but fails to find solace in Buddhism. Hearing of another woman who has fled the world out of similar motives, has become a Christian, and is living the life of a nun, Myôshû visits her in her proverbial “hermitage within the bustle of the marketplace” in Kyoto. This other woman’s name is Yûtei, and she agrees to guide Myôshû “from the shallows to the depths” toward an appreciation of the Way. What follows is a colloquy in three parts—a derogation of Buddhism, a refutation of Neo-Confucianism and Shinto, and an exposition of Christianity. The names of the two partners in the conversation are contracted and combined in the title—the “Myôtei” Dialogue.¹⁴

Myôtei mondô, then, is a piece of prose written in the early seventeenth century, in Japanese letters, with a fictional frame, in the form of a dialogue, with a didactic content. These factors are all commonly identified in the

(Cambridge, Massachusetts, *Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University*, 1991 third printing), pp. 257-291; Fabian’s comments on the Jesuits are especially caustic on pp. 286-287. His motley career is discussed and his rhetoric analysed, *ibid.*, ch. vi, pp. 142-184.

¹³ See the translation of Hayashi Razan, *Hai Yaso* (The Anti-Jesuit), *ibid.*, p. 151.

genetic make-up of the species *kanazôshi*. But specialists in Japanese literature do not characterise the “Myôtei Dialogue” as such. What could be the reason? Is it because this dialogue was not printed and only survives in manuscript? No one questions the classification of *Tsuyu-dono monogatari*, a work composed about 1624 and considered to be a prototypical pornocritique, as a *kanazôshi*. Yet this tale of the *amours* of its eponymous hero not only was not printed until the twentieth century, the original is not even a *sôshi*, a quire of leaves making up a manuscript. Rather, it is a picture scroll, an *emakimono*.¹⁵ Or is *Myôtei mondô* scorned by cataloguers of the popular literary species because the contents are intellectually too demanding? But works of intellectual substance are indeed to be found on their lists—for example, *Kiyomizu monogatari* (Tale of Kiyomizu; 1638), a model *kanazôshi* attributed to the Confucian scholar Asayama Irin’an or his circle.¹⁶ Fabian, it is true, was a notch above Irin’an as far as the faculties of reasoning and argumentation are concerned, but why should that disqualify him from being considered a writer of *kanazôshi*? The inference is that Fabian is consigned to collections of sources of Japanese tradition rather than be recognised as an author of literary works because he is tarred with the brush of Christianity. Even if he turned his back on the Christians and savaged their religion in *Ha Daiusu*, he retains a quasi-Kirishitan identity in the eyes of specialists in “the national literature”—if, that is, they look at him at all.

Naturally, Fabian’s *Ha Daiusu* is not included among the *kanazôshi* by Japanese literary scholars. A place in the definitive collection is, however, allotted to *Ha Kirishitan* (Christians Countered; first published 1662) by the combative Zen priest and publicist Suzuki Shôsan. This is a densely argued Buddhist work that in some ways—the form, not so much the closely

14 The long-lost Part One of the “Myôtei Dialogue,” including the prologue and the anti-Buddhist polemic, was published with an introduction by Nishida Nagao in *Tenri Toshokanpô: Biburia / Biblia: Bulletin of Tenri Central Library*, 57:13-84 (June 1974): “Tenri Toshokan-zô Yoshida Bunko-bon *Myôtei mondô*.” The framework is set up in the prologue, pp. 26-28.

Part Two and Part Three (including the epilogue) are the contents of *Myôtei mondô*, ed. Ebisawa Arimichi, *Kirishitan sho Hai-Ya sho*, ed. Ebisawa et al., Nihon Shisô Taikai 25 (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1970), pp. 113-180.

The original Portuguese definition of *kana ni* may be found in n.1 above.

15 To be exact, *Tsuyu-dono monogatari* is made up of three illustrated scrolls. A facsimile, with all twenty-nine illustrations reproduced in full colour, has been published as a special volume (*bekkan*) in the Kinsei Bungaku Shiryô Ruijû series: *Itsuô Bijutsukan shozô jûyô bijutsuhin Tsuyu-dono monogatari*, ed. Kinsei Bungaku Shoshi Kenkyûkai, with expository essay by Okada Rihei and Yasuda Fukiko (Tokyo, Benseisha, 1974). More accessible is the edition prepared by Jinbô Kazuya and Aoyama Tadakazu, in *Kanazôshi shû Ukiyozôshi shû*, ed. Jinbô, Aoyama et al., Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshû 37 (Tokyo, Shôgakkai, 1989 fifteenth printing), pp. 43-116.

16 *Kiyomizu monogatari*, in *Kanazôshi shû*, ed. Watanabe Morikuni and Watanabe Kenji, Shin Nihon Bungaku Taikai 74 (1991), pp. 139-192.

compacted substance—resembles Fabian’s anti-Christian treatise and may be materially indebted to it.¹⁷ Shôsan’s critique of the “Southern Barbarian” religion was taken up by the prolific author Asai Ryôï, another Buddhist priest, who incorporated it with detailed commentaries in his own *kanazôshi* on the Christian peril, *Kirishitan hakyakuron den* (Christians Demolished: Tract and Glosses; before 1665).¹⁸ Shôsan and Ryôï are both known as representative *kanazôshi* authors, and that reputation, according to a certain type of reasoning, may justify considering everything they wrote to be representative of the dominant seventeenth-century prose species. But if “Christians Countered” is an exemplar of early Tokugawa-period literature—let us keep “Christians Demolished” *hors concours*—then why not “Deus Destroyed,” especially in view of Fabian’s greater stylistic dexterity?

These tracts by Fabian Fucan, Suzuki Shôsan, and Asai Ryôï are serious polemical works, but they share the same ground with a vulgar literature which portrays the Kirishitan Bateren—bugbear Christian Padres—as malevolent and monstrous creatures who nourish plots for the conquest of Japan. The best known of the popular anti-Christian narratives, *Kirishitan monogatari* (1639), is included in the definitive collection of *kanazôshi*.¹⁹ The mother of all such tales, however, is not.

That prototypal piece bears the provisional title *Kirishitan kanagaki*—“Christians in Simple Letters” or “Christians in Plain Text.”²⁰ It was compiled possibly as early as 1606, that is, before the Tokugawa regime’s general persecution of Christianity began. Elsewhere, I have described *Kirishitan kanagaki* as “the earliest, longest, most complex and best informed though also most scurrilous” of the vulgar accounts of the aliens. Putting on display a rich if perverse imagination on the narrator’s part, it “outlines the

17 Suzuki Shôsan’s *Ha Kirishitan* is translated under the title “Christians Countered” in Elison, *Deus Destroyed*, pp. 375-389. The text published by Tsutsumi Rokuzaemon in Kanbun 2 (1662) is included in *Kanazôshi shûsei*, XXV, ed. Asakura Haruhiko and Kashikawa Shûichi (1999), pp. 81-90.

18 *Kirishitan hakyakuron den* (originally published by Yamada Ichirobei, n.d.), *ibid.*, pp. 35-80. Asai Ryôï, writing under the pseudonym Hyôsuishi, concludes Part Two of this work with an introduction of Suzuki Shôsan; see pp. 59-61. Part Three, pp. 61-80, consists of Shôsan’s text interspersed with commentaries by Hyôsuishi.

19 *Kirishitan monogatari* is translated in Elison, *Deus Destroyed*, pp. 319-374. The text published by an unknown printer in Kan’ei 16 (1639) is included under its external title, *Kirishitan gotaiji monogatari* (Tale of the Christians’ Suppression by the Government), in *Kanazôshi shûsei*, XXV, pp. 1-33.

20 *Kirishitan kanagaki*, in *Shiryô kenkyû Sessô Sôsai: Zen to kokka to Kirishitan*, ed. Ôkuwa Hitoshi (Kyoto, *Dôhōsha*, 1984), pp. 175-259. I have discussed this work at an academic conference convened by the Fundação Oriente in Arrábida in April 2000, a public symposium sponsored by the Nihongaku Kenkyûjo (Institute for Japanese Studies) of Rikkyô University in July 2000, the annual meeting of the Nederlands Genootschap van Japanse Studiën held in Leiden in December 2000, and a seminar on translation organized by the Institute for Advanced Study, Indiana University, in April 2001.

sinister designs for world domination fomented by the Kirishitans since the days of Jesus Christ, tracing the antecedents of those intrigues back to Adam and Eve, and detailing the anti-Japanese machinations pursued of old by Rome and its minions.”²¹ It transpires that huge Christian armadas twice tried to invade Japan but were sent to the bottom by sudden and violent storms. Eventually, the Bateren did manage to insinuate themselves into Japan, and they have been poisoning the populace ever since.

The story of their iniquity is brought up to date and made a part of contemporary, early seventeenth-century history with an exposé of Jesuit intrigues directed against the Christian daimyo of Ômura. The final paragraph contains a remarkable revelation:²²

“In the Ômura domain ... there was a samurai called Chijiwa Seizaemon. Long ago, he had gone to Rome in the company of some Bateren, but after ten years of studies had returned to Japan, where he was [an Irmão] of the *ecclesia*. Something happened, however, that embittered him against the Bateren; so he left their temple and entered Lord Ômura’s service. Chijiwa knew very well that the Kirishitans had been usurping countries since ancient times. He therefore gave an extremely detailed account of the scheme of Jesu Christo, ... the armed forces that the Kirishitans had again and again sent to invade Japan, and other facts. At that time Lord Ômura was heard to say, ‘What a great surprise! How mortifying! To think that I actually had faith in a band pursuing such evil designs!’ Immediately he expelled all the Bateren ... and ripped down their many *ecclesias*. As for himself, he invited a holy priest of the Lotus sect ... and entered the Direct Way of Truth.”

So the narrator’s identity is disclosed at length, in the peroration of his long tale. It does come as a bit of a shock to learn that he was none other than the sometime boy wonder Miguel Chijiwa, the “ambassador” who—it is apparent—had not been chaperoned closely enough on his grand tour of Europe.

It may be that Chijiwa’s amazing excursions into the realm of fantasy are simply too obscure because the background of his stories of magic and adventure is European. It is also possible that the Latin and Portuguese terms with which his witches’ brew is peppered make “Christians in Plain Text”

21 Elisonas, “Acts, Legends, and Southern Barbarous Japanese”, p. 35.

22 *Kirishitan kanagaki*, p. 259.

too difficult to decipher. Or is it that the manga-like character of this work makes it a text too far ahead of its times? In any event, *Kirishitan kanagaki* is not recognised as a *kanazôshi*. In fact, it has drawn no attention from specialists in “the national literature” at all.

Is it not high time to tidy up the forest?

Works published in romanised Japanese are a special case, and I will not advocate their inclusion on lists of *kanazôshi*, lest I be judged guilty of a contradiction in terms. After all, although the gripping presentation of European legendary materials, *Sanctos no gosageveono vchinuqigaqi* (Excerpts from the Acts of the Saints; Kazusa, 1591)²³—not to speak of *Feiqe no monogatari* (Amakusa, 1592), Fabian Fucan’s colloquial version of the mediaeval Japanese classic, the *Tale of the Heike*²⁴—must surely be considered among the chefs-d’oeuvre of late sixteenth-century Japanese literature, the fact is that these works did not appear in the form of “simple Japanese letters” but rather in romanisation. Nor will I argue for the inclusion of catechisms or collections of prayers and other rudimentary Christian formulas, such as *Orashiyo no hon’yaku* (also titled *Doctrinæ Christianæ rudimenta, cum alijs pijs orationibus*; Nagasaki, 1600), even if this work is an excellent illustration of *kana* script printed in movable type.²⁵ First a case would have to be built pre-empting the objection that catechetical booklets are nothing more than formularies lacking discursive content, and are therefore without literary value; the format of this lecture does not permit indulgence in such vanities.

But what could possibly be the reason for excluding *Gvia do pecedor* (The Sinner’s Guide; published in Nagasaki in 1599), Luis de Granada’s justly famous masterpiece rendered in elegant Japanese style and script?²⁶

23 *Sanctos no gosageveono vchinuqigaqi quan dai ichi*. Fiianno cvni Tacacvnogvn Iesvs no Companhia no Collegio Cazzuſa ni voite Superiores no von yuruxi uo cômuri core uo fan to naſu mono nari. Gouxuxe irai MDLXXXI. *Sanctos no go sagvio no vchi nuqigaqi*. [Quan daini.] Fiiën no cvni Tacacvno gvn Iesvs no Companhia no Collegio Cazzuſani voite Superiores no von yuruxito xite core uo fan to naſu mono nari. Gouxuxe irai 1591.

This is most probably (but not incontrovertibly) the first book published by the Jesuit mission press on Japanese soil. Facsimile: *Santosu no gosagyô*, with explicatory essays by H. Cieslik, Fukushima Kunimichi, and Mitsunashi Tsuyoshi, *Kirishitan Shiryô Shûsei* (Tokyo, *Benseisha*, 1976); the text is transcribed into Japanese letters in a companion volume by Fukushima, *Santosu no gosagyô: Honji-kenkyû hen* (1979).

24 *Nifon no cotoba to hiſtoria uo narai xiran to fossrvv fito no tameni xeua ni yava ragvetaru Feiqe no monogatari*. Iesvs no Companhia no Collegio Amacuſa ni voite Superiores no go menqio to xite core uo fan ni qizamu mono nari. Go xuxxe yori M.D.L.XXXXII.

Facsimile: *Kirishitan-ban Amakusa-bon Heike monogatari*, ed. Kamei Takanori (Tokyo, *Yoshikawa Kôbunkan*, 1969). Transcription into Japanese letters: *Habiyān-shô Kirishitan-ban Heike monogatari*, ed. Kamei and Sakada Yukiko, rev. ed. (Tokyo, *Yoshikawa Kôbunkan*, 1966). Internet: <<http://kuzan.f-edu.fukui-u.ac.jp/bun/feiqe>>.

25 *Doctrinæ Christianæ rudimenta, cum alijs pijs Orationibus*—*Keichô gonen sangatsu jôjun Orashiyo no hon’yaku tsuketari Kirishitan oshie no jôjô*. Nagasaqvi ex officina Gotô Thome Sôin typographi Societatis Iesv. Cum facultate Ordinarij, & Superiorum. Anno. 1600.

Facsimile: *Orashiyo no hon’yaku*, ed. Tenri Toshokan, Tenri Toshokan-zô *Kirishitan-han Shûsei 4* (Tenri, *Tenri Daigaku Shuppanbu* & Tokyo, *Yagi Shoten* and *Yûshôdô Shoten*, 1976).

Perhaps an excess of “complex Chinese characters” militates against its acceptance among the *kanazôshi*? If so, then what is the justification for shunning *Contemptus mundi* (Kyoto, 1610), the ingenious Japanese adaptation of an even more famous masterpiece of devotional literature, the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis?²⁷ At least as far as the typeface is concerned, it is the very model of simplicity.

Two Japanese-language versions of the *Imitation of Christ* published for the mission are extant—one in romanisation, the other chiefly in *kana*. The first, which bears the title *Contemptus mundi jenbu* (Contempt of the World; complete), was published in 1596 at the Japanese college of the Society of Jesus in Amakusa.²⁸ Painstaking care was taken, according to the preface, to ensure that the book’s profound message was transmitted accurately because the Jesuit superiors who initiated the project knew what an important task it was to guide the seekers of salvation along the ways of God without stumbling. The draft was subjected to repeated collations to make sure that the text (which was translated from a Latin original) was made easily accessible to Jesuits and laymen alike. It would appear, however, that the former—religious professionals and aspirants; foreign missionaries and their Japanese associates—rather than the latter constituted this translation’s primary intended audience. *The Imitation of Christ* is, after all, in its own way a highly technical book. It may be simple in form, but it is difficult in content, and it is presented here in its full complexity. True to the title, this translation is virtually complete; true to the preface, it is highly accurate. Very few liberties have been taken with the text. Some judicious pruning is evident, but the cuts are not intrusive. The format of Book Three has been changed slightly: four of the original’s fifty-nine chapters have been subdivided in such a way that there are

26 *Gvia do peçador*. In Collegio Iaponico Societatis Iesv Cum facultate Ordinarij, & Superiorum. Anno M.D.XCIX. *Gvia do peçador* [II]—*Giya do peçadoru: zainin o zen ni michibiku no gi nari*. Goshusse irai 1599-nen Keichô yonen uruu sangatsu chûjun shi ni chiribamuru nari. In Collegio Iaponico Societatis Iesv. Cum Facultate Ordinarij, & Superiorum. Anno 1599.

Facsimile: Tenri Toshokan-zô Kirishitan-han Shûsei 3 (Volume I) and *furoku* (Volume II). There is a modern edition by Toyoshima Masayuki: *Kirishitan-han Giya do peçadoru: honbun-sakuin* (Osaka, Seibundô, 1987).

27 *The Imitation of Christ* has been translated into various languages countless times. The English version published in Penguin Classics may be recommended: Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, tr. Leo Sherley-Price (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1952); cited as *Imitation*.

28 *Contemptus mundi jenbu*. *Core yovo itoi, Iesv Christono gocôxeqiuo manabi tatematçuru michiuo voxiyuru qiô*. Nippon Iesvsno Companhia no Collegio nite Superiores no goguegiuo motte coreuo fanni firaqu mono nari. Toqini goxuxxeno nenqi. 1596.

Facsimile: *Kontemutsusu-munji: Contemptus mundi jenbu.*, ed. Matsuoka Kôji and Mitsuhashi Takeshi, Kirishitan Shiryô Shûsei (Tokyo, Benseisha, 1979); cited as *CMJ*.

Transcription into Japanese letters: in Anesaki Masaharu, *Anesaki Masaharu chosakushû*, V: *Kirishitan shûkyô bungaku* (Tokyo, Kokusho Kankôkai, 1976; first published 1933), pp. 55-260; cited as *AMC*.

sixty-four in this edition. (The contents were not changed. The purpose was to give a separate identity to certain prayers embedded in the text.) In other words, the departures from the original are insubstantial. All in all, this is an expert, sensitive, and thoroughly admirable translation. *Contemptus mundi jenbu* is a beautiful example of Japanese literary style, even if it is printed in Roman letters (or rather, to be precise, in italic type).

The second extant Japanese-language version, a book bearing both the Latin title *Contemptus mundi* and the transliterated Japanese title *Kontemutsusu munji*, appeared in 1610 “ex officina Farada Antonii,” a Christian layman who ran a printer’s shop in Kyoto.²⁹ It is printed in *kana*, “simple Japanese letters,” with a minimal admixture of *kanji*, “complex Chinese characters.” As is usual with Japanese-letter texts associated with the Christian mission, key terms such as “Deus” and “Jesus Christ” are isolated and emphasised by writing them in the form of elaborate monograms—reproduced in this essay as *D^s* and *Jx^o*—based on Roman or Greek letters. The 1610 variant is much shorter than the *Contemptus mundi jenbu* of 1596. Relatively speaking, Book One and Book Two have been spared major cuts; Book Three has been halved; the eighteen chapters of Book Four have been contracted into five.³⁰ It should be stressed that *Kontemutsusu munji* is a new adaptation of Thomas à Kempis’ book. It represents a fundamental revision rather than a mere abbreviation of the 1596 version. It, too, is a tour de force of the translator’s art, but it is evidently addressed to a different, wider audience.

Both versions are examined in an M.A. thesis submitted by William J. Farge SJ to Indiana University a few years ago. This thorough work, which is otherwise free of surprises, presents one utterly startling conclusion: Farge shows that “direct references to the meaning of the Eucharist are almost always glossed over” in the 1610 variant.³¹ His main exhibit is Book Four of Thomas à Kempis’ devotional work and what happened to it under the auspices of the Jesuits—translated in full in 1596, it was cropped, trimmed, and truncated in 1610. Revealing as it does a good deal about the Christian missionaries’ appreciation of their audience in Japan, not to speak of their approach to Japanese letters, Farge’s exhibit is well worth another look and

29 *Contemptus mundi*. Miaci ex officina Farada Antonii. Cum facultate ordinarij, et superiorum. Anno 1610.; reverse title page: *Kontemutsusu munji: yo o itoi Jx^o o manabitatematsuru no kyô*. Goshusse irai sen roppyaku jûnen. Keichô jûgonen shigatsu chûjun.

Facsimile: *Kontemutsusu munji*, Tenri Toshokan-zô Kirishitan-han Shûsei 5; cited as *KM*. Annotated modern edition: in *Kirishitan bungaku shû*, I, Tôyô Bunko 567, pp. 161-384; cited as *KBS*.

30 A comparison of the contents of the Latin original and the two Japanese versions is set out in Matsuoka Kôji, *Kontemutsusu-munji kenkyû: hon’yaku ni okeru goi no kôsatsu*, Kokugogaku Kenkyû 2 (Tokyo, *Yumani Shobô*, 1993), pp. 55-20 [(1)-(36)].

his surprising discovery another reading.

Book Four of the *Imitation of Christ* bears the title “On the Blessed Sacrament.” Its subject is arguably the most profound and important mystery of the Christian faith, and Thomas à Kempis approached it as he counselled his readers to approach the sacrament—humbly, devotedly, with care, and with ardent love and desire for the body of Christ. At the head of the main text of Book Four, Thomas invokes “The Voice of Christ” in an epigraph containing five biblical citations:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [Matthew 11:28]

The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. [John 6:51]

Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. [1 Corinthians 11:24; Luke 22:19]

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. [John 6:56]

The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. [John 6:63]”

Contemptus mundi jenbu, the Roman-letter Japanese translation of 1596, contains the entire epigraph. *Kontemutsusu munji*, the Japanese-letter version of 1610, not only fails to set the invocation off from the body of Book Four but in effect eliminates it, retaining only the first of the five citations in the text of the book’s first chapter.³² As Farge points out, the citation that is retained is the one that is least related to the topic of the Eucharist.³³ At the start, one is puzzled. But then, as one proceeds with the reading of a text that has been sliced to pieces, it gradually becomes evident that practically all references to the body and blood of Jesus Christ have been methodically eliminated from it—that the core has been cut out of the discourse.

Why did the translator of the 1610 version exclude the body of Christ from this disquisition on the Eucharist? Without a doubt, the purpose of the deletions was to make the *Imitation of Christ* more palatable to a lay audience of neophytes and potential neophytes. This was, after all, a Japanese audi-

31 William J. Farge SJ, “Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Literary Translation – *Kontemutsusu munji* and *Giya do pekadoru*: The Japanese Versions of *De Imitatione Christi* and *Guia de Pecadores*” (M.A. Thesis, Indiana University, 1994), p. 58.

32 See CMJ, p. 349, and cf. KM, f. 71v. AMC, p. 221; KBS, p. 365; cf. *Imitation*, p. 183.

33 Farge, p. 57.

ence—that is, one consisting of people to whom theophagy was an alien concept and blood the most horrid agent of ritual pollution.

At issue, then, was the body—the flesh and blood—of Jesus Christ, which according to Catholic doctrine is contained in the transubstantiated bread and wine of the Eucharist.³⁴ How to represent that real presence? The term used in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Japanese for “body” in the sense of the physical structure of a person, including the bones, the flesh, and the organs, was *kotsuniku* or, as it is found in the *Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam* published by the Jesuit mission press in 1603-1604: “Cotnicu. Fone, xiximura. *Oſſos, & carne.*”³⁵ Literally translated, it is “bones and flesh” in English. It conveys not merely a physical but a raw, carnal image of the body.³⁶

Kotsuniku is the word regularly applied to the body of Christ in Book Four of the Roman-letter *Contemptvs mundi jenbu* of 1596. It is true that the translator of this version does use a different term in a few instances where Thomas à Kempis says “body,” *corpus*, but that happens no more than four or five times in the eighteen chapters, and there is no consistency or method in it. This type of paraphrasing may accordingly be considered part of interpretational license. The “simple Japanese-letter” edition of 1610, however, is a different case. There a pattern is apparent. *Kotsuniku* is avoided at all costs in that edition. In other words, Christ’s body is stripped of its carnal constituents.

That the rhetorical manipulation was conscious is evident from a comparative reading of the two texts. Even if deep cuts were made in the 1610 version, enough parallel passages remain available for comparison. (*Contemptvs mundi jenbu* is cited below in its original, Portuguese-based romanisation, and *Kontemutsusu munji* transliterated according to the Hepburn system; the emphasis within the citations has been added by JSAE.)

(1)

[CMJ, p. 351] “Vonmi von aruji Deus cotjiqi, finniuato tattoqiga vyeno tattoqi *gocotnicuno* Eucharistiani xōji tamō fodono catabiqenaqi coto aranya?”

“O Lord my God! Can anything be as gracious as Your inviting the beggars and the poor to the most holy

34 “Q. What is the Holy Eucharist? A. The Holy Eucharist is the Sacrament which contains the body and blood, soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine.” *The Baltimore Catechism*, Part Two, Lesson Twenty-Second, p. 238; Internet <<http://www.catholic.net/RCC/Catechism/Doit.html>>.

35 *Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam*, f. 59v; *Nippo jisho*, p. 152.

Eucharist of Your bones and flesh?”

[KM, f. 71v] “*Onmi on-aruji D^s, tattoki ga ue no tattoki Eukarisuchiya ni kotsujiki hinin o shôjitamau hodo no katajikenaki koto aran ya.*”

“O Lord my God! Can anything be as gracious as Your inviting the beggars and the poor to the most holy Eucharist?”

Two phrases are inverted in the Japanese, but the text of the 1610 version is otherwise the same as that of the 1596 edition—except for the absence of the words for “of Your bones and flesh.”³⁷

(2)

[CMJ, p. 354] “*Tattoqi cotouo vosame vocaretaru fitçuto, gongoni voyobanu xojenno jüman xitamö vonmino go cotnicutoua macotoni vôqinaru xabet aru coto nari. Miraino cotone xëreô narixi inixiye no yorozzuno Sacrificioto yû tamuqemonoto Joreuo jöju xitamö gocotnicuno Sacrificiotoua vôqinaru fedate ari.*”

“There is truly a great difference between the chest [sc. Ark of the Covenant], in which were deposited holy relics, and Your most holy bones and flesh, replete with ineffable virtues. There is a great distance between all the offerings of old, called sacrifices, which foreshadowed the future, and the sacrifice of your bones and flesh, which is their fulfilment.”

[KM, f. 72v] “*Makoto ni kokoro kotoba mo oyobarenu shozen nichimichitamau onmi to, migi no Aruka to iu iremono to wa, ika bakari no shabetsu aru zo ya.*”

“How great a difference there is between You, truly replete with inconceivable and ineffable virtues, and the aforementioned container called the Ark!”

The 1596 text translates the original faithfully, even if not flawlessly. The 1610 version abbreviates it drastically. It was no accident that as the state-

36 That is, an image of flesh as flesh (or, *in casu*, flesh and bones), one best represented in pictorial art by Expressionists such as Chaim Soutine (e.g., “Skinned Rabbit;” Barnes Foundation; Internet <<http://perso.wanadoo.fr/herve.monteils/museum.htm>>) or Oskar Kokoschka (e.g., “Still Life with Dead Lamb;” Österreichische Galerie Belvedere; <<http://www.belvedere.at/english/jahr/jahr/kokosch.html>>).

37 AMC, p. 222; KBS, p. 365; cf. *Imitation*, iv: 1, p. 184.

ment was contracted, both the mentions of “bones and flesh” were deleted.³⁸

(3)

[CMJ, p. 408] “... tada voľore, vyamai, taixetuo motte nangiga cataye qitaru vaga *cotnicuuo* vqeyo.”

“But with awe and reverent love receive my bones and flesh, which come to you.”

[KM, f. 76v] “*Tada osoreuyamai, taisetsu o motte nanji ni kitaritamau on-aruji o mōshi- uketatematsure.*”

“But with awe and reverent love humbly receive the Lord, who comes to you.”

A different kind of adjustment—substitution rather than deletion—is observed here, but the object and the result are the same. The carnal image disappears.³⁹

(4)

[CMJ, p. 378] “Anjoni yuruxi tamauazaru cotouo cono Sacerdoteniua yuruxi tamō nari. Sonoyuyeuā xiqixiqini Eccleſianite Ordenuo vqerararetaru Sacerdoteni bacari Ieſu Chriſtono *gocotnicuuo* Conſagrar itaxi, torivoconauaruru curaiua ari.”
“To the priest He grants what is not granted to the angels; for only a priest solemnly ordained by the Church has the power to celebrate [the Eucharist] and consecrate the bones and flesh of Jesus Christ.”

[KM, ff. 74v-75] “*D^s yori anjo ni mo yurushitamawazaru koto o, saserudōte ni nomi yurushitamai, Jx^o no gosontai o te ni fure, toriokonaitamau kurai o atækudasaruru nari.*”

“To the priest alone Deus grants what is not granted even to the angels; he is given the power to consecrate [the Eucharist] and handle the holy substance of Jesus Christ.”

At best, *gosontai*, the key term in the second translation, is an

38 AMC, p. 223; KBS, p. 368; cf. *Imitation*, iv: 1, p. 185. The first words of the 1596 text, *tattoqi cotouo*, “holy matter,” do not make good sense, as *coto* does not denote physical matter. This may be a misprint for *tattoqi cotuo*—the same word *cot* as in *cotnicu*, “bones”—which would be a more literal rendering of the original’s *cum suis reliquiis*.

39 AMC, p. 248; KBS, p. 378; cf. *Imitation*, iv: 12, p. 207.

ambiguous word. That much is apparent from its definition in *Vocabulario da lingua de Iapam*, where it is found without the honorific prefix *go*: “Sontai. Tattoqi tai. *Sancta [u]ltancia, ou corpo de peſoa real, nobre, &c.*”⁴⁰ Certainly, to say “holy substance” is good theology, as Catholic doctrine teaches that it is the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ which is present under the appearances of bread and wine in the consecrated Eucharist. But the kind of depersonalisation that occurs here has the effect of defusing theology.⁴¹ To be sure, that was precisely the objective, as foursquare adherence to the letter was recognised to be an intimidation and a threat to the new believer or the potential convert.

(5)

[CMJ, p. 360] “Icani vareraga vō aruji Ieſu Christo vōmini tçuxxinde vonreiuo mōxiague tatematçuru: runin naru mazzuxiqi varerani tattoqi *vonchi to, gocotnicuuo xocubutto xite cudaſare, Animano chicarauo yeſaxetaqu voboximeſare...*”
 “Our Lord Jesus Christ, we humbly thank You that You have given us poor exiles your holy blood, and your bones and flesh, as our food with the intention of fortifying our souls.”

[KM, f. 74v] “*Ika ni waga on-aruji Jx^o, tsutsushinde onrei o mōshiage-tatematsuru. Runin to naru mazushiki warera ni, tattoki Eukarisuchiya o anima no shokubutsu to shite kudasare, chikara o esasetaku oboshimeshi...*”
 “Our Lord Jesus Christ, we humbly thank You that You have given us poor exiles the holy Eucharist as food for our souls with the intention of fortifying us.”

Here the manipulation of the text is particularly apparent. The translator of the 1610 version had to deal not only with the body but also with the blood of Christ. He solved the problem handily with the perfect paraphrase, “the holy Eucharist” —unexceptionable theologically while being unobtrusive rhetorically (in other words, less unpalatable to his Japanese audience).⁴²

In the end, the mention of the blood of Christ could not be kept out of *Kontemutsusu munji* altogether, but it only occurs once. That one occurrence is in the following sentence:⁴³ *Atai takaki onchi o motte kaiuketa-*

40 *Vocabulario*, f. 225v; *Nippo jisho*, p. 574.

41 AMC, p. 234; KBS, p. 373; cf. *Imitation*, iv: 5, p. 194.

maishi waga anima o tasuketamae.— “Save my soul, which You have redeemed by Your precious blood.” There is no hint that the blood shed by Christ on the cross to redeem the sinner is also the blood consumed by the communicant at the altar.

Moreover, there is one spot in Book Four of the Japanese-letter edition of 1610 where the word *kotsuniku* appears, as it does in the 1596 romanised version:

[*CMJ*, p. 383] “... imada *cotnicuno* fijiquo xi, xecaino ctoni nabiqi, imada midari naru cocorono nozomiuo xe]]uru coto naqu, xiqixĩno nozomini cocorono ficaruru ...”

[*KM*, f. 75rv] “... imada *kotsuniku no hiiki o shi, sekai no koto ni nabikite, midari naru kokoro no nozomi o kirisutsuru koto naku shite, shikishin no nozomi ni hikare ...”*

The first version counsels one who would approach the altar to grieve that he has yet to discipline (*xe]]uru*, viz. *sessuru*) his heart’s desires, the second urges him to lament his failure to discard (*kirisutsuru*) them. Apart from that, the two texts are practically identical. One rendition into English, in the elegant translation by Leo Sherley-Price, will therefore suffice for both: “still so carnal and worldly; so undisciplined in your passions, and so full of bodily cravings.”⁴⁴

Indeed, “carnal” in this sense perfectly expresses the nuance of the word *kotsuniku* as it is used in *Kontemutsusu munji*. In addition to the example just cited from Book Four, the term occurs sixteen times in the other parts of the volume.⁴⁵ In all of these instances, *kotsuniku* conveys the extended meaning of “flesh” that is familiar from biblical expressions such as “the lust of the flesh” (*concupiscentia carnis*), “the things of the flesh” (*quae carnis sunt*), and Isaiah’s famous cry in the wilderness, echoed by Peter, “all flesh is grass” (*omnis caro faenum*).⁴⁶ So the sense of a body made up of bones and flesh is distant from *kotsuniku* in the 1610 *kana* version of the *Imitation of Christ*. Here, in the actual presence of the word *kotsuniku*, the

42 *AMC*, p. 226; *KBS*, p. 372; cf. *Imitation*, iv: 1, p. 187.

43 *KM*, f. 77v; identical wording in *CMJ*, p. 390; *AMC*, p. 240; *KBS*, pp. 380-381; cf. *Imitation*, iv: 9, p. 200.

44 *AMC*, p. 237; *KBS*, p. 375; cf. *Imitation*, iv: 7, p. 196. Both Japanese versions use *shikishin no nozomi* to reproduce what is rendered as “bodily cravings” in the English translation. Here the word for “body” has a physical but not necessarily a carnal connotation, *shiki* (a character also read as *iro*) being a Buddhist term for “form.” See *Vocabulario*, f. 305: “Xiqixin. Iro, mi. *Corpo*.” *Nippo jisho*, p. 777.

45 See Kondō Masami, *Kontemutsusu munji sōsakuin*, Kasama Sakuin Sōkan 60 (Tokyo, Kasama

body dematerialises; it is a body in the abstract. This is metaphor, not metaphorise, and the translator knew exactly what he was doing.

Could it be possible that in a book published *cum facultate ordinarij, et superiorum* with the emblem of the Society of Jesus on its title page, the contents of the Blessed Sacrament—the body and blood of Christ—had been, if not denied, then disguised? A sober and balanced judgement is found in Farge's thesis: "The translator equivocated, made expedient cuts, and resorted to circumlocutions in the hope of capturing, or perhaps because of the fear of losing, a potentially sympathetic audience."⁴⁷ Put another way, he was bringing his message down to a popular level. To stretch a point, he was writing a *kanazôshi*.

Whereas the 1596 translation, printed in Roman letters, was primarily a devotional work for accomplished religionists (and incidentally a language learning tool), the 1610 adaptation, printed in "simple Japanese letters," retained the meditative aspect but could also serve as an expository work for potential enthusiasts. The latter version could of course be read with profit by indoctrinated Christians, but it was not meant for them alone. Rather, it was designed to appeal also to people who were testing the waters of Christianity without necessarily intending to be baptised—of consumers of books, made readily available by the new medium of print, who (it was hoped by the disseminators of the printed message) might become adherents of the religion. Hence it was necessary to delete all that was confusing, unedifying, or even repellent from *Kontemutsusu munji*. References to such topics as the susceptibility of members of religious orders to temptation were dropped. Such images as that of God the spouse and lover of the Christian soul were eliminated. In the event, even the bones and flesh of Christ were hidden from view.

How successful was the effort? In view of the general persecution of Christianity which began with the nation-wide promulgation of the Tokugawa shogunate's statement "On the Expulsion of the Padres" in the early part of the year 1614 and in the course of the next decade managed to suppress the religion as a public faith, that may be considered a moot question.⁴⁸ It is impossible to say. However, it is tempting to speculate.

What kind of audience did the *Imitation of Christ* reach? On 6 October 1613, Padre Diogo de Mesquita SJ (the man who had acquired the Japanese mission's first printing press in Lisbon) wrote to the general superior of the

46 *Kotsuniku no akubeki*: see KM, f. 54, and KBS, p. 321 (1 John 2:16). *Kotsuniku no koto*: see KM, f. 20v, and KBS, p. 236 (Romans 8:5). *Moromoro no kotsuniku wa shibakusa nari*: see KM, f. 35, and KBS, p. 273 (Isaiah 40:6 and 1 Peter 1:24).

47 Farge, p. 61.

Society of Jesus in Rome that Martinho Hara (one of the sometime “ambassadors” who had travelled to Europe under Mesquita’s tutelage, now a Jesuit priest), was “once more busy revising the translation that was made of *Contemptus Mundi* into the language and script of Japan.” According to Mesquita, Hara was “the best interpreter we have in Japan,” and the work he was revising—the *Imitation of Christ* in “the language and script of Japan,” that is, in *kana*—was “the book which most pleases the Japanese although it is so exacting and difficult to follow.” Of greatest interest is the following sentence of Mesquita’s report: “One thousand three hundred copies are now being printed, and each day our press turns out one thousand three hundred pages.”⁴⁹

These look like astonishingly large figures, but there is no reason to doubt their accuracy. Why would Mesquita exaggerate in writing to the general on such a topic? Why, assuming for argument’s sake that he did exaggerate, would he pick such a number as one thousand three hundred rather than a round figure? He had no reason. Surely, the reliability of his statement must be accounted very high. But if that is the case, then the question naturally arises: How does this project of the Jesuit mission press rank in the history of the book in Japan?

Kiyomizu monogatari, an exemplary *kanazôshi* that has been mentioned before, may be presented in comparison. This work was first published in late 1638, and its theme is a critique of society on the basis of Neo-Confucian rationalism. This orientation attracted polemics from the Buddhist camp. In *Gion monogatari* (Tale of Gion), a *kanazôshi* that defended the Buddhist position, is found the complaint that the secularist adversary’s *Kiyomizu monogatari* had sold as many as two or three thousand copies “in Kyoto and the countryside.”⁵⁰ This figure, too, appears quite large. To be sure, compared with Mesquita’s, the reliability of this witness must be considered low, because the anonymous author of *Gion monogatari* had an axe to grind. In the event, however, his statement earned *Kiyomizu monogatari* the reputation of having been the “first best-seller in the history of [Japanese] literature.”⁵¹ If so, then the one thousand three hundred copies being printed of yet another translation of the *Imitation of Christ*—“the book which most pleases the Japanese”—would at the very least seem to show confidence on the part

48 “Bateren tsuihō no fumi,” dated Keichō 18. XII.– (drafted by Konchiin Sūden the night of Keichō 18. XII.22-23, sc. 31 January – 1 February 1614), in *Eiinbon Ikoku nikki: Konchiin Sūden gaikō monjo shūsei*, ed. Ikoku Nikki Kankōkai (Tokyo, *Tōkyō Bijutsu*, 1989), pp. 33-34.

49 Diego Pacheco SJ, “Diogo de Mesquita, S.J. and the Jesuit Mission Press,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 26:441 (1971).

50 *Gion monogatari* (c. 1640), in *Kanazōshi shūsei*, XXII, ed. Asakura Haruhiko, Fukazawa Akio, and Yanagisawa Masaki (Tokyo, *Tōkyōdō*, 1998), p. 3.

of the Jesuit missionaries that they had a highly popular product rolling off their presses. This number appears all the more impressive when one considers that a quarter century was still to pass in the development of the print culture in Japan before *Kiyomizu monogatari* made its appearance and—perhaps—established its high record in 1638.

Padre Mesquita's letter to his general, however, was written less than four months before Tokugawa Ieyasu ordered the Buddhist monk Konchiin Sûden to draft the notorious statement on expelling all the Christian padres from Japan. The persecution that followed put an end to the activities of the Jesuit press in that country. Whether the large press run reported by Mesquita was completed is unknown. Of Padre Martinho Hara's revised *Imitation of Christ* in the "script of Japan" no copies survive.⁵²

51 See, for instance, Watanabe Kenji's introduction to *Kiyomizu monogatari*, Shin Nihon Bungaku Taikai 74, p. 140.

52 This essay was written as part of a research project on *kanazôshi* that I pursued under a fellowship from the Japan Foundation as a Visiting Professor in the Faculty of Education of Kyoto University and a Research Associate in the Faculty of Letters of Rikkyô Daigaku – St. Paul's University in Tokyo. I should like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the generous support that I enjoyed from these institutions.

Abstract

Japanese prose produced in the period between the 1590s and the 1680s is dominated by the amorphous but seemingly omnivorous species classified by Japanese scholars – the keepers of what they themselves call *kokubungaku*, the “national literature” – under the label *kanazôshi*, “feuilletons in simple [Japanese] letters”. During the first two and a half decades of that period, that is, until they were banned from the country in 1614, Jesuit missionaries engaged in lively literary and publishing activities in Japan. Their press, equipped with a moveable-type apparatus imported from Portugal in 1590 (the first machinery of this type seen in Japan), printed as many as fifty titles, twenty-nine of which are extant. Other literary works generated by the mission survive in manuscript. The bibliography of texts associated with the Christian endeavour, whether published or unpublished at the time, includes some masterpieces of Japanese prose, such as *Myôtei mondô* (The Myôtei Dialogue, 1605) by Fabian Funcan, a brilliant piece of Christian apologetics. It is therefore remarkable that Japanese specialists in the “national literature” ignore its early-modern Christian heritage with practically no exceptions. (The exception that proves the rule is an adaptation of the Fables of Aesop.) They appear to be happy to relegate that heritage into the hands of linguists, philologists, or cultural and intellectual historians. In any event, they keep it out of the reserve of the species *kanazôshi*. So this ill-defined species is at the same time indiscriminate in taking in whatever is available and exclusivist in regard to fully qualified candidates for incorporation – leading to questions as the utility of the term.

After making the modest proposal that the species be eliminated because it lacks taxonomical coherence, this essay surveys the Christian contribution to Japanese letters in the last years of the sixteenth and the first few decades of the seventeenth century. It then gives a more detailed look at what might, stretching a point, be called the Christian *kanazôshi* par excellence. The book under review is an adaptation of that chef-d’œuvre of European devotional literature, the Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis, into Japanese. Published in Kyoto in 1610 under the Latin title *Contemptus mundi* and the transliterated Japanese title *Kontemutsusu munji*, it is printed in kana, “simple Japanese letters”, with a minimal admixture of kanji, complex Chinese letters”. Without a doubt, this book is a model of contemporary Japanese prose. It is, however, by no means an exemplary metaphrastic text. On the contrary, *Kontemutsusu munji*, is a

showcase of rhetorical manipulation, demonstrating to what extraordinary lengths the Jesuits were willing to go in order to popularise their message. The case tests the very limits of their famous “method of accommodation” in Japan. So intent were their designated translator or translators on avoiding the risk of confusing Japanese readers by a full rendition of Thomas à Kempis’ discourse “On the Blessed Sacrament” in Book Four that they systematically eliminated all references to the true presence of the body – the flesh and the blood – of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

Resumo

A prosa japonesa produzida entre os anos de 1590 e 1680 foi dominada por uma espécie amorfa, mas aparentemente omnívoras classificada pelos especialistas japoneses – os guardiães do que eles próprios chamam *kokubungaku*, a “literatura nacional” – sob o rótulo de *kanazôshi*, “folhetos em letras [japonesas] simples”. Os jesuítas mantiveram uma intensa actividade literária e editorial no Japão durante os primeiros vinte e cinco anos deste período, isto é, até serem expulsos do país. A sua imprensa, equipada com caracteres móveis importados de Portugal, em 1590, (a primeira máquina deste tipo vista no Japão), imprimiu cerca de 50 títulos, de que perduram exemplares de 29 obras. Outros trabalhos literários produzidos pela missão sobreviveram em manuscritos. A lista dos textos associados ao proselitismo cristão, independentemente de terem sido publicados na época ou não, incluem algumas das obras-primas da prosa japonesa dos séculos XVI e XVII, nomeadamente *Myôtei mondô* (The Myôtei Dialogue, 1605) do irmão japonês Fukan Fabião, uma peça brilhante de apologia cristã. É notável, porém, que os especialistas japoneses da “literatura nacional”, praticamente sem excepções, ignorem a sua herança cristã do período pré-moderno. (A excepção que confirma a regra é uma adaptação das Fábulas de Esopo). Esses especialistas parecem satisfazer-se remetendo essa herança para o domínio dos linguistas, dos filologistas ou dos historiadores da cultura. De qualquer modo, eles mantêm estes textos, sem reserva, fora da tipologia *kanazôshi*. Assim, esta tipologia mal definida toma, ao mesmo tempo, toma uns candidatos à incorporação de modo indiscriminado e exclui outros mesmo que sejam perfeitamente qualificados – levando-nos a questionar a utilidade do termo.

Além de apresentar uma modesta proposta para que a espécie seja eliminada devido à sua falta de coerência taxonómica, este artigo passa em

revista a contribuição cristã para a literatura japonesa nos últimos anos do século XVI e nas primeiras décadas do XVII. Apresenta, depois, uma análise mais detalhada ao que pode ser considerado como o *kanazôshi* cristão por excelência. O livro analisado é uma adaptação para japonês da obra-prima cristã da literatura devocionista – a Imitação de Cristo de Tomás Kempis. Publicada em Kyoto, em 1610, sob o título latino *Contemptus mundi* e o título japonês transliterado *Kontemutsusu munji*, foi impresso em kana, “letras japonesas simples”, com uma mistura mínima de kanji, “caracteres chineses complexos”. Este livro é, sem dúvida, um modelo da prosa japonesa coeva. Não é, no entanto, um exemplo de um texto metafrástico. Pelo contrário, *Kontemutsusu munji* é um exemplo de manipulação retórica demonstrando quão longe os Jesuítas tentavam ir na sua vontade de popularizar a sua mensagem. Este caso testa os limites do seu famoso “método de acomodação” no Japão. Assim, o seu tradutor ou tradutores tiveram o cuidado de evitar confundir os leitores japoneses através de um respeito total pelo texto de Tomás Kempis sobre o “Sagrado Sacramento” no Livro 4, pelo que eliminaram sistematicamente todas as referências à presença real do corpo (carne e sangue) de Jesus Cristo na Eucaristia.