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Edification and the Reader of John Donne's *Divine Poems*

Sean McDowell
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In the preface to his *Sundry Christian Passions Contained in two hundred Sonnets* (1593), Henry Lok takes pains to justify the composition and publication of his religious verse. He wrote his poems, he claims, for himself and for the public: because life is a pilgrimage fraught with perils, he decided to record his spiritual afflictions so he might remember them when faced with future ones. He wishes to publish his "witnesses of the impediments" he faced because as "testimonies of the meanes" of his escape, his "presidents" may "not be altogether vnprofitable for others to imitate" (Lok preface). Throughout the seventeenth century, English poets and literary critics accepted the idea that the souls of Christian readers could be edified by religious poetry. Repeatedly, they attested to the value of religious poetry in capturing spiritual afflictions, rendering them in vivid terms, and instructing readers in ways of coping with them.

This belief manifests itself in different contexts and in slightly different ways but is remarkably consistent. For instance, William Leighton (1613) reports that he wrote his hymns not to show off his talents, "but onely in an vnfeigned affection & earnest desire that the humbled hearts (together with mine) may reape profit and consolation by singing or reading of them" (Leighton 1). An Collins (1653) believes that religious poetry serves to communicate divine truth and that as part of her duty to God, she must "tell what God still for my soule hath wrought" ("The Preface" st. 14). Similarly, Henry Vaughan (1655) considers the edification of readers the poet's primary function and consequently resolves to lend

his "poor Talent to the Church," as George Herbert did before him (Vaughan 392). Because these and other writers thought verse more efficacious than prose, they believed with Herbert that "A verse may finde him, who a sermon flies," and they wrote and published to "finde" larger audiences of Christians (Herbert 33).

While affirmations of edification abound in the religious lyric tradition, the precise meaning of what should be edified is unclear, and so are the means by which edification was thought to be induced, particularly in the case of Donne, whose opinions about poetry at times appear contradictory, and who during his lifetime avoided publishing his religious verse. The problem of what Donne expected his religious poems to accomplish is complicated and thus easy to oversimplify. The answer to the problem lies in Donne's rhetorical assumptions, which some critics misinterpret. P. M. Oliver, for example, argues that on the "evidence of the poems themselves—witty, individualistic performances which can have appealed only to those who had, or wished to acquire, a taste for this kind of verse—we would have to say that edification did not figure among Donne's aims" (Oliver 9). In contrast to the "presidents" Lok mentions, Oliver claims Donne more likely "wished to shock his readers, as when his persona calls on God to ravish him." Thus, Oliver believes Lok's (and Leighton's, Collins', and Vaughan's) views ultimately do not apply to Donne because of the passionate nature of his verse.

Oliver's argument rests on two suspect assumptions. The first, that Donne is somehow separate from the religious lyric tradition, stems from the same cultish

Musical Offering to Taikoh: European Music in Sixteenth-Century Japan

Hiroyuki Minamino
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On the third of March 1591, the Jesuit priest Alessandro Valignano was granted an appointment with the military dictator Taikoh Toyotomi Hideyoshi at the Juraku-no-tei, Hideyoshi's newly constructed palace in Kyoto. Valignano's procession was spectacular and exotic. Its sumptuous march even became the talk of the Kyoto people who were quite used to extravagant and elaborate displays of wealth and power. Even some noblemen of the Imperial Court recorded the procession in their diaries. Valignano needed such splendor. While Hideyoshi was away for the siege of the Odawara Castle (the seat of the last truculent opponents of his authority, the Hohjoh clan), doubts about Valignano's true identity were rumored among Hideyoshi's chief ministers. Some of the Christian warlords sympathetic to Valignano advised him to bring as large a retinue as possible in order to emphasize the legitimacy of his status as an official ambassador from the West. Valignano mustered four Jesuit missionaries, four Japanese youths, and twenty Portuguese. It was a calculated demonstration of the political and economic strength of Europe and the spiritual power of Christianity, because Hideyoshi, who at first had been tolerant and even protective of the new religion in Japan, began to change his position.

Hideyoshi's first order to expel all the Jesuits was announced in 1587. Although it was not rigorously enforced, the mission to convert the Japanese and to expand the Christian Church suffered a significant setback. As the Papal Visitor of all Eastern Missions and a deputy Indian ambassador of Portugal, Valignano was carrying an official state paper from the King of Portugal. But his real mission was to persuade Hideyoshi to reverse his decision on the expulsion of the Jesuits, and to revitalize the missionary activities in Japan.¹

The official protocol in the morning was formal. The letter of the Indian viceroy, written on a decorated parchment, was presented together with its Japanese translation. This was followed by the exchange of gifts, a toast, and a luncheon. The afternoon meeting was informal. Valignano's retinue included the Tensho-Shonen-Shisetsu, the four Japanese young noblemen who had been sent to Europe several years earlier. His plan was to introduce European culture through these four youths, who were educated in various Western disciplines. They were especially well-versed in music, and it was in this capacity that Valignano wanted them to impress Hideyoshi. The four youths performed a song, accompanying themselves on a harp, a lute, a rebec, and an instrument called "*grave cimballo*." When the musicians stopped after playing a little, fearing that Hideyoshi might not have been

interested, the dictator commanded them to continue and repeat the song three more times. According to the Jesuit and translator Luis Frois, who later reported this event to his superiors in Rome, the youths sang and played elegantly and produced a harmonious sound.

After the performance, Hideyoshi took each instrument in his own hands and asked about its structure and playing techniques. Sensing that Hideyoshi was enormously interested in European musical instruments, Valignano also showed him a *viola d'arco* and a portative organ. It was probably the physical beauty and mechanical peculiarity of the instruments that aroused Hideyoshi's curiosity. He must particularly have been fascinated by the *grave cimballo*. This instrument was likely the one Ascanio Colonna had presented to the Tensho-Shonen-Shisetsu in Alcalá, a "precious *clavicembalo* all encrusted with mother-of-pearl" that Colonna had specifically ordered from Rome. Hideyoshi was proud of the Japanese for mastering these foreign instruments, which were so different from their own. He was so impressed by the youths' skill in music that he even hinted at taking them into his service.²

When Valignano met Hideyoshi, almost forty years had passed since the Japanese had first encountered the Western world. The missionaries had brought a religion, and the merchants the arquebus. The Jesuit Francis Xavier came to Japan with the intention of spreading Christianity, and the Portuguese merchants planned to open a lucrative trade with "the Land of Gold." At the time of their arrival, Japan was in the middle of "Sengoku Jidai," the "Age of the Country at War." The declining political and military powers of the Ashikaga shogunate afforded the feudal warlords ample opportunities to gain control of the central government and become dictators of the entire country. The traditional tactics of war were decisively changed after the warlords discovered the destructive power of the arquebus. Immediate access to this weapon and other European technologies became a crucial task for any who had the desire to advance his status or who strove for mere survival. Therefore, it was politically and militarily a necessary strategy for the warlords to court both the Jesuits and the Portuguese merchants. The Europeans unquestionably took advantage of the situation according to their own particular interests. For the Jesuits, the safety of the missionaries and permission to propagate Christianity were at stake.

In principle, the Jesuits prohibited the excessive use of music in the liturgy and were reluctant to use music as a means of attracting converts. But the missionaries were in competition with the Buddhists, who used elaborate rituals that made great use of chanting and accompanying instruments, and the

Jesuits soon realized the effectiveness of European music and musical instruments when spreading Christianity in Japan. Indeed, after having been persuaded by his predecessors, it was Valignano, during his first stay in Japan between 1579 and 1582, who shifted his position to support the use of musical instruments in both liturgical and non-liturgical situations. This change of policy prompted the importation of European music (such as Gregorian chants and secular vocal and instrumental music) in a steady flow for the next fifty years, until all the foreign missions and most of the merchants were expelled for security reasons.

In addition to Gregorian chant and musical instruments, the Jesuits also imported religious paintings, not only to adorn the altars of newly built churches and the walls of the seminaries, but also to show them to new and prospective Christian converts. The paintings served as a rudimentary way of explaining the Christian doctrines that had met with some



Detail from "Kari-no-arue" ("The Hunting Scene").
From Osaka Numbum Bunka-Kan, by permission of the owner.

difficulty in comprehension among the less educated classes because of the language barrier. The demand for such paintings increased after successful attempts at converting a substantial number of the populace and the opening of more churches and seminaries. To help fill this demand, the Jesuits trained converts in the European style of painting, so that they themselves could produce the much-needed religious paintings. Around 1600, there were about twenty Japanese artists who contributed to the production of watercolor paintings, oil paintings, and copperplate prints.

The demand for paintings of secular subjects also increased, as the Jesuit missionaries realized the usefulness of paintings as gifts to the non-Christian warlords who showed enormous interest in all aspects of European culture—political systems, landscapes, everyday customs, and, most important of all, the tactics of warfare and the newest technologies.

Particularly popular among the warlords were depictions of European scenery and towns, war scenes, world maps, and portraits of princes and soldiers in armor.³

Several paintings made around 1600 by Japanese painters depict various kinds of European musical instruments. Most of them appear in the "Byobu-e," the panel-screen painting. The subjects were usually pastoral, depicting European landscape and everyday life in panoramic view. The instruments depicted are mostly stringed instruments popular in the sixteenth century, such as viols, lutes, harps, and *viuelas de mano*. Although various kinds of European musical instruments had been imported and played by the time Japanese artists were learning the European style of painting, there is no evidence that the musical instruments they depicted were based on those actually present in Japan. In fact, the inaccuracies and discrepancies found in the Japanese paintings suggest that the Japanese painters had no first-hand experience of the structures and performance practices of the instruments they depicted.⁴ The lute, for instance, is depicted with a rectangular peg-box which bends slightly backward, with the pegs inserted from the back of the peg-box. But the European lute had a triangular peg-box set back almost 90 degrees, with the pegs inserted from the sides. These structural peculiarities are also found in the *viuela de mano* depicted in the Japanese paintings, and it is likely that the Japanese artists created a hybrid instrument by transferring some of the structural features of the *viuela de mano* to the lute.

When the members of the Tensho-Shonen-Shiesetsu performed for Hideyoshi, they had had many years of training and education in music. At schools attached to the seminaries, the Jesuits taught the children of converts how to assist at mass in both Latin and Japanese (often with organ accompaniment), and how to play bowed stringed instruments and keyboard instruments, perhaps supplemented with rudimentary instructions on theory and notation. The members of the Tensho-Shonen-Shiesetsu were further trained in music during their two-and-a-half-year stay in Europe. Their journey through Portugal, Spain, and Italy for a year and nine months gave them ample opportunities to encounter the composers and instrumentalists of the late Renaissance, among them perhaps Victoria and Guerrero in Spain; Palestrina and Cavalieri in Rome; Gabrielis, Merulo, and Diruta in Venice; Gastoldi in Mantua; Ingegneri in Cremona; and Christofano Malvezzi in Florence.⁵

Valignano well knew that Hideyoshi was not the only non-Christian warlord who would have been fascinated by European music and musical instruments. Their attractiveness had been proven as early as 1551 when Francis Xavier made a gift of a keyboard instrument to Ohuchi Yoshitaka, the warlord of Yamaguchi, in exchange for permission to propagate Christianity in his feudal territory. Valignano himself had first-hand knowledge of how useful exotic music and musical instruments could be in demonstrating the cultural

wealth of Europe. In 1581, he supervised the importation of two organs, a *viola*, and an instrument called *cravo*, and transported them to Azuchi, the seat of the then military dictator Oda Nobunaga. Nobunaga had previously permitted the Jesuits to build a church and protected their safety from the opposing militaristic Buddhist sects. He is reported to have enjoyed hearing the pupils of the seminary playing on the organ and viola. At a later date, while delayed in the town of Muratsu on the way to Kyoto, Valignano and his retinue became the target of curiosity of a number of neighboring feudal lords. Luis Frois was amazed by their enthusiastic reception of European music, which they had never heard before.

"I feel as though I am in Paradise." These were the words Tanaka Yoshimasa, the feudal lord of Ynagawa, uttered to express his first impression of the sound of a portative organ. Yoshimasa, along with Hideyoshi and many other warlords, was enthusiastic in his reception of this foreign music. The Jesuit missionaries' reports, however, spoke primarily of the Japanese's rejection and dislike of European music. Father Lorenzo Mexia was of the opinion that polyphonic music sounded strange to the Japanese. Valignano commented that European music "hurt" Japanese ears. Luis Frois said that it sounded clamorous ("caxi maxi") and unenjoyable to the Japanese, while European musical instruments sounded "sweet" to Europeans because "our polyphonic music is melodious and gentle."⁶

What might explain these conflicting Japanese reactions toward European music? We may find some clues in the fictitious dialogue between Miguel Chijiwa, one of the Tensho-Shonen-Shisetsu, and Lino, his Japanese relative, in the book titled *Dialogue on the Mission of the Japanese Legates*, a work largely instigated by Valignano. The Jesuits may have come to realize that the Japanese embrace of European music was a mere curiosity that arose from encountering a new sound on exotic instruments, rather than a genuine interest based on an understanding of its aesthetic value. Lino confesses that he is "exceedingly pleased" to listen to Miguel's playing European musical instruments, but he admits his difficulty in appreciating the subtleties they produce. He is reluctant to agree with Miguel who finds "great sweetness" in European music. In its defense, Miguel points out two major obstacles that hamper one's understanding of foreign music: "the strength of an inveterate habit" and "the effect of unfamiliarity and strangeness." Miguel says, "You, who are not yet accustomed to European song and polyphony, cannot experience its full sweetness and suavity. We, however, whose ears have become accustomed to it, believe that nothing could be more agreeable."⁷

What differentiates European music from Japanese, says Miguel, are the form, compositional process, harmony, and voice production. "European vocal music is composed in a definite form and with admirable skill," he explains. A musical

(See *Taikoh*, page 13)

Married Love

Donn Taylor

The Woodlands, TX

Outside the house a steely rain falls cold
On frigid myrtles; rooted in shale and sand,
In burgeoning bramble's fierce embrace.
On slate, the pelting raindrops tick like clocks,
Dissolve in sand and dissipate in streams
To merge in many a torpid pool. Cold rain
Holds all dominion here, though there are times
When geysers flaunt and fade, or tremors tell
Of dull volcanic muttering under earth.
Rain-glazed, the windows of the house reflect
A glittering horizontal leaden light,
Mirror mirages, mystify, perplex
Perspectives so that all beyond the glass
Seems insubstantial shadow. Dwellers here
Ponder upon this prospect—but with minds
Unpenetrating, pensively bemused
In bent reflections, wander once again
Their land of rain and sand and shale and rain.

Inside the house, frescoed above the hearth
With cherubim to bless his sacrament,
Triumphant Hymenaeus wields his torch
Radiant with warmth and light; within his kerchief
Borders of blue surround a crimson field—
Crimson contained in blue. Behind him rest
Three children sheltered beneath green olive trees.
Facing the heart, but well within its warmth,
A fountain's waters fed from a freshening spring
Scatter in pattering eddies, endlessly varied
Crystalline cascades, fusing at last to flow
Deep to a single cistern. Near the hearth
Hang tapestries of blue with gold enwoven
Spinning wheels and pomegranates rich with seeds.
In window boxes blossoms burgeon. Light
Through windows many-prismed by the rain—
Light from beyond the clouds, beyond the skies—
Transforms the rain, the house and all within,
Transfigures whitened walls to blossoming gems
In infinite combination, shimmering tones
Of sardius, sapphire, emerald, beryl, topaz,
Amethyst, amber and onyx—laved in light,
The house becomes a jewel. Pondering here
On mystery's meaning, questing couples claim,
Secure, their sacramental diamond,
Height of this life, earnest of that beyond.

Taikoh (from page 5)

composition is a creation, and the essence of music is harmony: "some notes are high, others low, others in the middle range, and they sound simultaneously and produce an admirable concord." For an unusual technique which produces notes higher than the normal range, there is "the so-called falsetto voice." Miguel says in summary that "such variety of notes and such manifold modulations represent a perfected form of art created by men of genius with a particular gift for selecting component sounds in well-tuned harmony." Also important are the Europeans' ability to formulate the theory of counterpoint, to manufacture a variety of instruments by skillful master craftsmen, to train a great number of musicians, and to apply an abundant amount of ornaments with admirable skill. The Japanese music, Miguel laments, lacks all these.

"Sounds like roars and screams from Hell" — thus Brother Luis Almeida commented on the performance of chanting and instrumental playing for the kagura to which he listened at the Kasuga-Taisha Shrine in Nara. This sentiment about Japanese music was consensual among the Jesuits. Lorenzo Mexia reported that he did not have enough patience to listen to Japanese music for more than fifteen minutes, because it sounded so "dissonant." Shrillness and monotony were the factors that Luis Frois disliked in Japanese music. Miguel criticized the "deficiency" in Japanese music thus: "There is no variety of tone but always the same way of producing the voice, there is no art nor any theory of art containing the rules of polyphony." As a person who was acting as a defender of European music, Miguel felt that Japanese music did not make use of the concepts of harmony and form to make a coherent musical composition, the two most important compositional ingredients in late sixteenth-century European music. But these compositional techniques were foreign to Japanese music, and to use them as criteria in judging that music was to engage in a circular argument.⁸

All these questions of aesthetics and accuracy, however, were soon to become immaterial. Hideyoshi grew suspicious of the Europeans' intentions after the Jesuits and Portuguese began imposing their rules in the territories where they had established power. Moreover, the usefulness of the Christians as a counterbalance to the powerful Buddhist sects waned when Hideyoshi succeeded in controlling the country. By then, the Japanese had sufficient knowledge and experience in producing the arquebus, the single most important European importation as far as the majority of warlords were concerned. Consequently, all the foreign missionaries were expelled, and the Japanese converts were persecuted. Japan closed its gates, except for a depot in Nagasaki, for the next two hundred years. As the "Christian Century" ended, so did the first cultivation of European music, musical instruments, and paintings in Japan. ✎

Notes

¹ For the Jesuit mission in Japan, see C. R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P; and London: Cambridge UP, 1951); and George Elison, *Deus Destroyed: Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge and London: Harvard UP, 1988).

² For the early cultivation of Western music in Japan, see Arimichi Ebisawa, *Yogaku Denrai-Ki [History of the Importation of European Music]* (Tokyo: Nihon Kiristo Kyodan Shuppan-kyoku, 1983); and David Waterhouse, "Southern Barbarian Music in Japan," *Portugal and the World: The Encounter of Cultures in Music* (Lisbon: Publicacoes Dom Quixote, 1997), 351-77.

³ For a survey of sixteenth-century Japanese arts, see Money L. Hickman, ed., *Japan's Golden Age: Momoyama* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996). For the European influence in Japanese paintings, see Mitsuru Sakamoto, *Shoki Uofu-Ga [Early European-Style Paintings]* in *Nihon-no-Bijutsu [Japanese Arts]* 80 (1973): whole volume.

⁴ For the European musical instruments depicted in Japanese paintings, see Sumio Omata, "Plucked Instruments in the Iconographical Sources in 16th Century Japan," *Gendai Guitar* 124 (1977): 40-45. The structural discrepancies in the instruments depicted in the Japanese paintings are discussed in detail in Hiroyuki Minamino, "European Musical Instruments in Sixteenth-Century Japanese Paintings," *RldIM Newsletter* (forthcoming).

⁵ For the European trip of the Tensho-Shonen-Shisetsu, see Eta Harish Schneider, "Renaissance Europe Through Japanese Eyes," *Early Music* 1 (1973): 19-25; and Judith C. Brown, "Courtiers and Christians: The First Japanese Emissaries to Europe," *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994): 872-906.

⁶ Lorenzo Mexia's remarks are translated in Michael Cooper, *They Came to Japan: An Anthology of European Reports on Japan, 1543-1640* (Ann Arbor: The Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1965), 256-57. Louis Frois' remarks are translated in Japanese in Kiichi Mastuda and Engelbert Jorissen, eds., *Frois no Nihon Oboegaki: Nihon to Yoroppa no Hushu no Chigai [Frois' Memoir of Japan: Cultural Differences Between Japan and Europe]* (Tokyo: Chu-O Koron-Sha, 1994), 131-33.

⁷ The translations from the *Dialogue on the Mission of the Japanese Legates* are taken from Schneider, "Renaissance Europe," 23-24. All other translations are mine.

⁸ For Japanese music in the sixteenth century, see Frank Hoff, "City and Country: Song and the Performing Arts in Sixteenth-Century Japan," in *Warlords, Artists & Commoners: Japan in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. George Elison and Bardwell L. Smith (Honolulu: UP of Hawaii, 1981), 133-62; and William P. Malm, "Music Culture of Momoyama Japan," *ibid.*, 163-85. For a summary of the history of music in Japan, see "Japan" in *New Grove Dictionary* (London: Grove's Dictionary of Music, 1980). ✎