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Dangerous Pleasure : The Discourse of Drink in Early Modern Japan

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Dangerous Pleasure: The Discourse of Drink in Early Modern Japan

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1. *Saké Debates in the Edo Period: Yodarekake*
2. *Are Saké and Tea Compatible?: Yodarekake and Shucha ron*
3. *Dangers in Male Love and Female Love: Ominaeshi Monogatari and The Great Mirror of Male Love*

1. SAKÉ DEBATES IN THE EDO PERIOD: YODAREKAKE

For the urban classes (*chōnin*; *machi-shū*) of the Edo period, drinking *saké* was both a danger and a pleasure. The townsman's ambivalence toward wine is apparent everywhere in the vernacular prose, with his love of drink tempered by his awareness of its potential, if over-indulged, to endanger his social standing and that of his household. *Kana-zōshi* and *ukiyo-zōshi* of the 17th century reflect the bipolar discourse of *saké* as a "dangerous pleasure" in various ways. In particular, the way the relationship between prostitute-entertainer and patron is conceptualized in the pleasure quarters and theater districts of the Edo period seems to rely heavily on the discourse of *saké*.

Debates on the dangers and pleasures of drink appeared beginning in about the 16th century and were called *shū-ron* ("saké debates"). The debates were no doubt inspired to some extent by the Buddhist sectarian debates (*shū-ron*) that flourished at the time. In the debates on *saké*, the bipolar discourse was structured around arguments for and against drinking *saké* on the basis of its supposed merits (*toku*; *eki*) or demerits (*son*; *mueki*). One of the most interesting such debates appears in *Yodarekake* (1665), a text addressing three topics and divided into six volumes: tea (vols. 1 and 2), *saké* (vols. 3 and 4) and male love [*nanshoku*] (vols. 5 and 6). The debate in vols. 3 and 4 (dated 1649 [Keian 2]) constitutes a discussion among a heavy drinker (*jōko*), a light drinker (*geko*), and the shopkeeper of a drinking establishment (*aruji no otoko*), who is described as a "medium" drinker (*chūko*). As the debate unfolds, it is the light drinker who emphasizes the dangers of drinking *saké*, while the shopkeeper and the heavy drinker emphasize its pleasures. The introduction to the debate begins with this statement:

Wine brings pleasure in each of the four seasons. Spring would hardly be spring if we could not enjoy it together with cherry blossoms, wine, and verse.... The cherry blossoms and autumn leaves of Yoshino and Hatsuse bring no pleasure unless accompanied by wine; the sensitive of heart are inspired to compose verses, whether in Japanese or Chinese, and if there is wine, they are all masterpieces.... Winter, too, may

blanket the grasses and trees with ice and snow and buffet us with bitterly cold winds, but wine transports us to a balmy day in spring.... Truly, without wine we would have no means of dispelling bad energies, for wine alone has the power to defeat the numerous spirits of depression.... Suffice it to say, no respectable man or woman should abstain from drinking wine. [HAYAKAWA ed. 1916: 24-25]

The introduction is an unequivocal statement in favor of wine-drinking. It argues its case by listing the pleasures associated with drink, and even suggests that the light drinker is lacking in cultural sophistication and emotional depth. The ability to drink is equated with the ability to experience the nobler human emotions.

The debate itself begins with the story of two amusing (or “interesting”) travelers (*okashiki tabibito*) who visit a wine shop where a great number of fine wines are served. Once the two travelers have had a few drinks, they begin to quarrel with each other. The shopkeeper encourages them to pursue their argument in the form of a reasoned debate (*tagai ni riron ni sesase tamae kashi*). The light drinker begins the debate with a complaint: “I cannot comprehend what pleasure there is in forcing wine on a man. Kenkō’s *Tsurezuregusa* states how unpleasant it is to be pressed to have a drink of wine. And the idea of serving wine cold I find even more difficult to comprehend” [HAYAKAWA ed. 1916: 26]. The shopkeeper responds to the light drinker’s questions by stating that serving fine wine to a visitor is simply an act of hospitality. Without wine, no guest would feel he had been entertained properly by his host. As for serving it cold, he says, “Cold wine has three virtues (*san no toku ari*). First, it does not go to the head; second, it does not show in the drinker’s face and, by reversing the flow of energies (*ki*), it leads to an extended sense of well-being; and third, it mellows a man’s character. In China, wine is counted among the three friends of man: music, verse, and wine. Even Kenkō says that drinking wine is a good way to spend a long winter night. I cannot comprehend your objection” [HAYAKAWA ed. 1916: 26].

From these modest beginnings, the debate touches on numerous aspects of both the pleasures and dangers associated with drinking wine. For our purposes, the most interesting aspect is the discussion of the virtues (*toku*) and detriments (*son*) attributed to drinking wine. This part of the debate begins with the heavy drinker demanding to know the natural principle (*dōri*) behind the other man’s belief that wine serves no benefit (*mueki naru koto*) for mankind [HAYAKAWA ed. 1916: 30]. The light drinker responds by listing fifteen detriments associated with drinking wine: (1) it leads to sexual misconduct, (2) it clouds the mind, (3) it leads to vulgarity, (4) it gives rise to mental confusion, (5) it leads to foolish behavior, (6) it gives rise to gossip, (7) it violates the health of the body, (8) it leads to breaking laws, (9) it causes fatal illness, (10) it shortens a man’s lifespan, (11) it leads to financial ruin, (12) it gives rise to greed, (13) it leads to a bad reputation, (14) it violates a man’s birthright, and (15) it is the source of poverty.

The heavy drinker responds with a list of his own, detailing wine’s 15 virtues: (1) it brings a glow of health to the face, (2) it dissipates bad energies, (3) it prevents illness, (4) it increases manly bravery, (5) it brings one close to the upper classes, (6) it helps a man forgive the faults of others, (7) it encourages excellence in artistic attainments, (8) it dissipates poisons in the body, (9) it aids in digestion, (10) it helps a man forget the thinness of his robes [i.e., how cold

it is], (11) it quells a man's desire for wealth and fame, (12) it prevents debt, (13) it drives away depression, (14) it helps a man sleep soundly, and (15) it makes a man able to recognize foxes and badgers (i.e., dishonest people) in his midst.

An analysis of these lists suggests that the benefits and detriments of drinking wine are described in terms of three categories of experience: namely, a man's social standing, his physical health, and finally his financial well-being. Social life (*shakai seikatsu*), biological life (*seimei*), and economic life (*keizai seikatsu*) are thus the three areas around which the merits of drinking wine is debated.

Regarding the effects on a man's social life, the detriments of drinking wine include a tendency toward sexual misconduct, vulgarity, foolish behavior, gossip, breaking laws, and a bad reputation; its benefits include manly bravery, bringing a man close to the upper classes, generosity in forgiving the faults of others, excellence in artistic attainments (such as versifying), and making a man aware of dishonest persons in his midst. The six detriments outnumber the five virtues by one.

How drinking affects biological life is addressed in terms of detriments such as clouding of the mind, mental confusion, poor health, fatal illness, and a shortened lifespan; its virtues are that it brings a glow of health to the face, dissipates bad energies, prevents illness, dissipates poisons in the body, aids in digestion, keeps out the cold in winter, drives away depression, and aids in sound sleep. Five detriments are in this case outnumbered by eight benefits.

Finally, regarding the effects of drinking wine on a man's economic well-being, the detriments are financial ruin, greed, abandonment of his birthrights, and poverty; the economic virtues of drinking are that it quells the desire for wealth and thus prevents debt. In this case, the four detriments outweigh the two virtues.

As can be seen by the relative weight given to each category, the positive and negative effects on a man's social life attributable to drinking wine are almost equally divided, whereas the positive effects on a man's health and the negative effects on his economic well-being are lopsided. The conclusion that may be drawn from this discussion of the virtues and detriments of wine-drinking is that the debate emphasizes the social and physical advantages of drinking wine, while simultaneously stressing the particularly economic dangers of drink. In the discourse of drink structured around danger and pleasure, physical and social pleasures of drinking are weighed against the primarily economic costs. To the heavy drinker, who is a confirmed lover of wine, the physical and social benefits of drinking outweigh its dangers, whereas the light drinker is motivated to abstain particularly by its economic and social detriments.

At the end of the text, the sometimes heated debate between the heavy drinker and the light drinker is ended with remarks by the shopkeeper advocating "moderation" in the consumption of wine:

"If you resort to extremes to argue that drinking wine is not a sin (*tsumi*), then that in itself is a sin. Not just in wine, but in all paths (*michi*), it must be remembered that the governing natural principle is moderation, the 'middle way' (*chūyō*). The heavy drinker errs on the side of excess, the light drinker errs on the side of lack. When it comes to wine, the 'middle way' means observing the two rules of not imbibing to excess and at the same time not abandoning wine altogether."

With those words, the heavy, middle, and light drinkers were together enlightened to the principle of the 'middle way.' Each let out a laugh and was on his way. Truly, this was a most amicable debate on the merits of wine. [HAYAKAWA ed. 1916: 44]

The above debate on the pleasures and dangers of *saké* is at first glance self-contained, in the sense that the argument begins and ends as a discrete narrative and reflects little engagement with other topics. But, in fact, consideration of the text within *Yodarekake* as a whole reveals that the debate is situated in relation to another beverage: namely, tea. Immediately preceding the debate in vols. 3 and 4 on wine is another discrete text made up of vols. 1 and 2 (dated 1648 [Keian 1]) that discusses tea drinking, along with the puppet theater (*jōruri*) and the board game "go" (*igo*). Most interesting for our purposes is the portion of the text in which a puppeteer (*kugutsu-shi*), a street entertainer (*manzai*), and a comic monk (*hōka-shi*) debate the merits of tea: the puppeteer is a drinker of tea, for which he is mocked by the others. The two debates are inter-related, and their juxtaposition in *Yodarekake* reveals the extent to which the discourses of tea and *saké* overlap.

2. ARE SAKÉ AND TEA COMPATIBLE?: YODAREKAKE AND SHUCHA RON

Tea's introduction to Japan can be traced back at least as far as the Nara period (710-794), when records show that it was served at the dedication of the Great Buddha (*Daibutsu*) at Tōdaiji in Nara in 752. The cultivation of tea in Japan, however, is usually traced only to the beginning of the Kamakura period (1185-1333), to the year 1191, when the Zen Buddhist monk Eisai (1141-1215) planted seeds he brought from China on temple lands. Eisai made two visits to Song Dynasty China in his lifetime and there learned the benefits of tea drinking, which he seems to have promulgated assiduously in Zen temples throughout Japan, largely as an aid in keeping monks from falling asleep during their practice of meditation (*zazen*). Eisai's famous treatise *Kissa yōjōki* (1211) records in kambun the mostly medicinal benefits of tea, ignoring those aspects of tea as a spiritual practice that were the central concern of later Zen-inspired discourses about tea [SEN et al. eds. 1977: 124-25]. Until the Edo period, tea was used only in powdered form (*matcha*), not steeped, and it was consumed primarily by members of the political and religious elite. Not until new methods for processing tea leaves were discovered in the mid-18th century was tea enjoyed as a steeped beverage (*sencha*), and only since the late-19th century have methods of mass production and nationwide distribution of tea made it one of Japan's national beverages.

The manufacture of *saké* from rice, by contrast, has a much longer history in Japan, dating to the period shortly after the introduction of wet rice cultivation in the 3rd century B.C.E. *Saké* consumption figures in ancient myth, but the first written records of *saké* in Japan date from the 3rd century. Discussions of its manufacture first appear in written records of the Nara period. Because its use was closely associated with religious agricultural ceremonies, *saké* was originally manufactured primarily by the imperial court or by large temples and shrines. From the end of the 12th century, or about the time Eisai was introducing the cultivation of tea to Japan, the manufacture and consumption of *saké* became accessible to the broader populace as a commercial commodity. The importance of *saké* increased dramatically during the Muromachi

period (1333-1568), when the military government (*bakufu*) first recognized its potential as a source of revenue and began taxing it. Present-day methods of *saké* production were largely perfected by the 16th century. Also in the 16th century, methods for making *shōchū* from grains other than rice, for example barley, buckwheat, and corn, or from sweet potatoes, were introduced to Kyūshū from the Ryūkyū Islands.

Consistent with the increased availability of tea and *saké* during the Muromachi period, the first records of *saké* in association with tea date from the beginning of this period. It was not uncommon at that time for the aristocracy to hold tea-tasting tournaments (*tōcha*), at which they competed to identify the origins and grades of various teas. Such tournaments were followed by award banquets where the *saké* flowed freely. The excesses caused by post-tournament drunken revelry led to tea tournaments being banned by the government. The treatise known as *Kissa ōrai*, an exchange of letters in kambun about tea dating from early in the Muromachi period [SEN et al. eds. 1977: 192], contains a few lines about one such drunken banquet that followed a tea ceremony (*chareï*).

In the evening, when the tea ceremony was finished, the utensils were put away and *saké* was served with all sorts of splendid side dishes. The *saké* cups were flying, and everyone drank his fill. Our faces turned the color of autumn leaves, and our robes were in disarray like trees blown in the wind. Some sang, others danced, bringing the revelry to a fever pitch. The sounds of the reed flute (*shō*) and flute (*fué*) echoed to the four corners of the earth. When the sun had set and darkness settled on the house, lamps were hung from the eaves and fragrant incense wafted from outside the curtains. I cannot begin to describe here the extraordinary pleasures of the banquet, so I shall have to save the details for when we next meet. [SEN et al. eds. 1977: 167-168, 178-179]

Tea and wine are juxtaposed in the text, as they would have been at the tea ceremony and the subsequent banquet, but they are not yet established within a discourse in which they were set up in opposition to each other.

The first text to exhibit such a bipolar discourse was *Shucha ron* (1576), written by the Zen priest Ranjuku, wherein the enjoyment of tea and wine are conceptualized for the first time in terms of two antagonistic “paths.” The debate opens in this way:

It was a quiet spring day, and no sound of human voices could be heard. My eyes took in the beauty of the cherry blossoms, and my ears were comforted by the sound of birds singing. Suddenly I heard voices, and two noisy travelers appeared on the scene. One spread a mat under the blossoms and drank *saké*; he drank no tea. The other spread a cushion by a pine tree and drank tea; he drank no *saké*. They sat facing each other and passed the day in the pleasures of the springtime. When I asked their names, the one who had spread his mat under the blossoms responded, “I have no name; I call myself Bōyū-kun (He who forgets sorrows).” The man who had spread his cushion by a pine tree responded, “I am Dekihan-shi (He who washes away worries).” Bōyū-kun then turned to Dekihan-shi and said, “Vulgar conversation is out of the question. Why don’t you argue the virtues of tea, and I shall argue the virtues of *saké*.” Dekihan-shi replied, “No,

no, let us refrain from debate; for your wine could never begin to compare to my tea..."
[SEN et al. eds. 1977: 218, 226-227]

The debate in *Shucha ron* gives conceptual shape to the discussion of tea in *Yodarekake*. In fact, the *Yodarekake* text quotes freely (in vernacular Japanese) from the kambun *Shucha ron*. What is of interest to us here, more than the *Yodarekake* author's familiarity with *Shucha ron*, is the way in which the discourse of tea and wine is structured. When the tea-drinking puppeteer is criticized for his distaste for wine in vols. 1 and 2, the antagonism between the proponents of the two drinks is apparent, even though tea and wine are not explicitly contrasted. For example, the following exchange between the entertainer and the puppeteer makes no mention of wine, but the nature of the discussion suggests just such a context:

The entertainer stepped forward and said, "Wait just a moment, there is something I need to ask you. What are the ten virtues of tea that you claim are mentioned in the sutras? It seems to me that, on the contrary, there are numerous detriments (*shisson*) associated with drinking tea. First, for a poor man accustomed to a humble diet, tea is poison. If taken when thirsty or after a drink of wine, tea causes pain in the back, legs, and small intestine. If drunk in large quantities, it causes dehydration. They say that numbness in the fingers and aches in the shoulders are also caused by tea. For a man who drinks tea habitually, the result is utter debilitation; he cannot even sleep at night. What possible benefits could drinking tea have for a man?" To this the puppeteer responded, "The ten virtues of tea are these: (1) it relieves drowsiness in the springtime, (2) the fragrance of smoke from preparing tea is pleasant on the robes, (3) it cools the body in summer, (4) it cleanses the body's systems, (5) it refreshes the mouth, (6) it is used as a medicine to induce sweat, (7) it enhances appreciation of the autumn moon, (8) it enhances appreciation of blossoms, (9) in the winter, it is a special sort of pleasure to break through the ice and boil water for tea, and (10) its greatest virtue is its ability to drive away the gloom on a quiet evening. Are these not ten virtues? In fact, the virtues of tea are beyond counting." [HAYAKAWA 1916: 14]

The entertainer counters this most disparagingly: "To me, the superficial matters you refer to hardly qualify as virtues" [HAYAKAWA ed. 1916: 15]. Throughout the argument, the insipidness and blandness of tea is constantly conjured in relation to the more robust pleasures of wine.

As the term *shūshoku* ("wine and women") in Japanese might suggest, the final section in *Yodarekake* might logically be expected to treat men's love of women in the pleasure quarters. After all, women were commonly discussed, like *saké*, as representing both pleasure and danger to men. But, in a haikaiesque twist, we are presented instead with a discussion of male love (*nanshoku*) in vols. 5 and 6 (dated 1653 [Jō-ō 2]). The text begins with an introduction that states: "As long as youths are male, they will ask you to cut your thigh or arm to prove your love for them. But beware of losing your life as a result. I say this for the sake of the boy you love" [HAYAKAWA ed. 1916: 45]. It was well known that love between a man and a youth sometimes led to fights with an interloper in defense of the man's and youth's manly honor (*otoko no ikiji*). In the text, the pleasure of loving a youth is tempered by the dangers of

losing one's life for the sake of the youth, not unlike the manner in which the pleasures and dangers of drinking wine are juxtaposed in the *saké* debates.

The way the discussion of *saké* is sandwiched between “tea” and “male love” in *Yodarekake* indicates that all three are involved in an overlapping discourse of pleasure and danger in which the male is subject. That is to say, male experience is the focus of each of the three sections of the text. The virtues or gains (*toku*) and detriments or loss (*son*) of *saké* are defined in a manner that make them relevant primarily to adult male experience. The pleasures of *saké* (or of tea, or of loving youths) are ultimately men's pleasures. The dangers related to *saké* (to tea, or to loving youths) are likewise relevant to men's lives alone. Only rarely do we find a text that constructs a framework of “danger” and “pleasure” that includes women.

3. DANGERS IN MALE LOVE AND FEMALE LOVE: *OMINAESHI MONOGATARI* AND *THE GREAT MIRROR OF MALE LOVE*

Kitamura Kigin's *Ominaeshi Monogatari* (1661) is one such text. It addresses women's production of poetry over the centuries, situating poems by women within short homilies on proper feminine behavior. Chapter 53 addresses women's consumption of *saké*. It begins with the statement that “For a woman to drink *saké* is an undesirable thing (*omowashiku mo naki koto*),” and then lists several ways in which a woman's drunken display is thought to be especially unseemly. The text then elaborates on the earlier prohibition with the statement that “Women should drink in moderation (*yoki hodo ni*).” The idea of moderation here resonates with the conclusion of the debate on wine in vol. 4 in *Yodarekake* where the text advocates the ‘middle way’ (*chūyō*). *Ominaeshi Monogatari* elaborates the point further, however, by stating that there are actually times when it is inappropriate for a woman not to drink. “It is not acceptable [for a woman] to avoid drinking *saké* completely and shirk social interaction just because drunkenness is bad; when drinking, do so in moderation so as to avoid intoxication.” Thus, a woman's ability to drink in a manner that is appropriate to the situation, and in moderation, is the ideal for women established in the homily. The lesson concludes with a familiar refrain regarding the benefits of drink: “Taken in moderation, *saké* is medicinal. But it loses its effect if you drink until you are sobbing drunk (*shikushiku to yoinaki suru hodo*). Women ought therefore to make allowances and drink only in moderation” [SATO et al. 1970: 113-15].

Modern literary historians place *Ominaeshi Monogatari* into a subcategory within *kana-zōshi* of vernacular prose works known as instructional books (*kyōkun sho*), and specifically into a specialized subset of such books designed for the instruction of women (*jokun sho*). Instructional books are generally described as giving the general reader practical knowledge on behavior and manners, and supported the development of the sorts of sound relations among members of society that were considered essential in Confucian ideology as a means to establish and maintain social order. Instructional books thus satisfied the desire of urban men and women to acquire the moral and cultural attainments that would help them improve their lives. *Ominaeshi Monogatari* served to instruct women in building good character through the guided reading of examples of women's poetry from Japan (and a few examples from China, though the poems themselves are in Japanese).

What is most interesting for our purposes here is that this instructional text draws women into the rhetoric of *saké* as a dangerous pleasure for possibly the first time in history. Previously, the possibility of virtue and detriment, or of gain and loss, accrued only to men, but here the dangers and pleasures of drink are shown to apply to women as well. The text targets merchant-class women, who are involved in the maintenance of an economic order that demands their disciplined cooperation, just as it does men's. At the same time that this text addresses women of the merchant class, it serves in effect to create that class of women. The recommended behavior is produced by the text, as much as the text is a product of an emerging class of women capable of that behavior. In *Ominaeshi Monogatari*, the rhetoric of *saké*'s "dangerous pleasure" crosses the gender barrier and is made relevant to women's drinking for perhaps the first time.

As merchant-class women were being subsumed and reconstructed within the discourse of *saké* as a dangerous pleasure in *Ominaeshi Monogatari*, there simultaneously was emerging a social space in which women and male youths became central to the discourse of *saké* as a dangerous pleasure. This social space was the pleasure quarters (*irozato*; *kuruwa*) and theater districts (*shibai machi*) in Japan's emerging urban centers of Kyoto, Osaka, and (later) Edo. In the role of prostitute-entertainers, women and male youths became the subjects of a discourse of *saké* in which the terms of gain and loss were redefined. One aspect of this redefinition meant that what was a detriment or "loss" (*son*) in the earlier male-centered discourse of *saké* became, at least potentially, a "gain" (*toku*) for the women or male youths who were the drinking partners of adult men. For women in the pleasure quarters and for youths in the kabuki theaters, knowing how to entertain men by serving *saké* represented an art which, if handled with skill, was the key to success in their trade.

In vernacular prose texts we find numerous examples of adult male heroes who enjoy the extremes of pleasure but ultimately suffer financial ruin in the pleasure quarters and theaters, while the women and youths who are their partners and who "master" the etiquette of serving of wine enjoy great success and popularity. In the discourse of drink as a "dangerous pleasure" that was extended and formulated in the pleasure quarters and theater districts, women and male youths became antagonists in a contest with men. The social space in which this contest was enacted was called the *zashiki*, or "room." The *zashiki* is repeatedly depicted as the space in which a fragile pleasure (*kyō*) was carefully created for paying customers by a group of professionals including inn-keepers, sychophants (*taiko-mochi*), and male or female prostitute-entertainers, along with lesser help of serving staff, cooks, and servants; and *saké* was always integral to the success of the efforts by this extended network of people. On occasion, the *zashiki* would be moved outdoors, but it remained a metaphorical "room" where an atmosphere of pleasure was created and maintained. Let us look at two examples of youths who entertained with *saké*, one with great success and another with less success.

The first is Matsushima Han'ya, a kabuki actor of female roles and boy prostitute who is featured in story 7: 2 "An Onnagata's Tosa Diary," from Ihara Saikaku's *Nanshoku Ōkagami* [1687; *The Great Mirror of Male Love*, trans. by Paul G. SCHALOW, 1990]. Han'ya was numbered among Saikaku's students of *haikai* and contributed verses to the *haikai* collection *Dōtombori Hanamichi* (1679) under the name Matsumoto Chisen. Saikaku wrote the story in 1686 as a way of remembering Han'ya after the young actor's retirement earlier that year at the age of twenty. Han'ya's decision to retire was motivated by the love of a man, and the story of

that love makes up the bulk of Saikaku's story. The opening section of the story, however, is most relevant to our discussion. The text ascribes the handsome youth's success as a prostitute to his skills in two arts, love-making and serving *saké*. Saikaku contrasts the youth's success with the fate of the patrons he serves, who are driven into poverty by their relentless desire for the youth. In earlier centuries, as we have seen, the discourse of drink identified physical, social, and psychological benefits and detriments to the drinker himself that derived from the enjoyment of *saké*, but the rhetoric of "gain" and "loss" is restructured in Saikaku's *ukiyo-zōshi* within a purely economic dynamic that functions to bring financial benefit to the youth (and to the theater owners who were his proprietors) through the financial support ("loss") of his fans and patrons.

The opening line of the story begins by announcing that Han'ya has retired from the stage and taken the merchant name of Shichizaemon. He is now owner of the Izutsuya, a flourishing fan shop, we are told, located on a prime spot of real estate on the northwest corner of Tatamiya-chō in Dōtombori (Osaka), not far from the theater district itself. The opening lines state that "When just a bud in the way of boy love, this youth was already as beautiful as the diving girls of Matsushima and Ōjima islands. Moreover, he was deeply affectionate and sophisticated at entertaining his patrons; he excelled in the serving of *saké*. Even those who met him but infrequently found it impossible to forget those rare occasions. Great numbers of men, driven by relentless desire, visited him over and over again until, finally, they fell into a moat of debt" [SCHALOW trans. 1990: 254]. The narrative then proceeds to illustrate, first, his sophistication in entertaining patrons and, next, his deeply affectionate nature.

One day, Han'ya was to entertain a gentleman named Doko and so requested that they go to Mt. Chausu in Naniwa, one of his favorite places. When the group arrived, they found that it had changed since their visit last spring to view cherry blossoms. Autumn had its own special flavor, and the voices of myriad insects made them poignantly aware of life's transience. Near a pond to the south they set up their curtains and soon their drunken faces vied with the color of the sunset over the Sea of Nago. Full of *saké*, they argued about this and that and soon found that they had eaten all the food brought to accompany their drink. [SCHALOW trans. 1990: 255-256].

The story then recounts how the revelers gathered mushrooms and roasted them as an accompaniment to their wine. Through the example of the mushroom-hunting excursion, Saikaku proves how Han'ya's skills at entertaining with *saké* translate into extraordinary success for him as an actor-prostitute (*tsutome-go*). In addition to his sophisticated manipulation of drink, Han'ya is further shown in the remainder of the story to benefit financially from his deeply affectionate nature. These two qualities, affection and skilled entertaining, combine to make Han'ya worthy of being included as a model youth in Saikaku's "great mirror" of youths who had proven themselves to be paragons of male love. Han'ya's skills as an actor-prostitute allow him to flourish financially even as his patrons go bankrupt for the sake of his love.

Han'ya's narrative follows immediately upon a narrative that raises many complex social and ethical issues surrounding the financial benefits and losses associated with the *zashiki* system. These issues are explored through the figures of the actor-prostitute Fujimura Handayū and the drum-holder (*taiko-mochi*) Muraoka Tannyū in story 7: 1 "Fireflies also Work Their

Asses at Night.” The two figures are linked by a common theme, namely, the difficulty of making a living in the pleasure quarter and theater district. First, Saikaku describes the life of the drum-holder:

One of the drum-holders at this party was Muraoka Tannyū, once the respected son of a certain man of importance. He was talented, lived well, and was liked for his generous nature, but as so often happens in this floating world he squandered the family fortune and was reduced to selling calligraphy manuals in the Ohashi style near the intersection of Shita-tachi-uri and Horikawa. The business failed to prosper, however. Next he put out a sign advertising himself as an acupuncturist, but no one called for his services. In dire straits and desperate for money, he took to entertaining wealthy patrons in the pleasure quarter. On that day, he had been summoned to this party. [SCHALOW trans. 1990: 248-249]

Muraoka’s background illustrates the dangers of the pleasure quarter, where he squandered his family fortune, but also its possibilities for helping him recoup his loss as an entertainer there. The dangers and possibilities of the pleasure quarter are directly equated with the gains and losses associated with *saké*, to the extent that there is a virtual conflation of the two: the pleasure quarter *equals* the activity of drinking. Conceptually and structurally, drinking is inseparable from the central activity of the pleasure quarter, namely, the enjoyment of sexual pleasure. When Muraoka assists wealthy patrons in their pursuit of this pleasure, he reverses his previous role as a paying patron who loses financially, and opens himself up to the financial gain in the transaction of the *zashiki* system. But financial gain comes at a cost. Muraoka is forced to endure various humiliations to entertain the host, and is overwhelmed with a desire to murder him. But when the man rewards him with a few gold coins, his anger dissipates instantly.

“Really sir, you are too generous!” he said shamelessly, his greed making him forget the humiliation he had just experienced. From that moment he hid his talent and intelligence and simply played the idiot, slavishly pandering to the foolish gentleman’s every whim. He exhausted every word of flattery in the language until he himself could hardly bear it anymore. Even the young actor who had been bought to be Tannyū’s bed-fellow for the night made his contempt for him obvious. No one knew it, but later poor Tannyū had to all but worship the boy before he was allowed to untie the youngster’s sash. [SCHALOW trans. 1990: 249]

This passage makes it clear that the *zashiki* transaction involves several levels of loss and gain. The patron’s pleasure costs him his gold, and the entertainer’s fee costs him his pride. Both sides of the transaction benefit, but at a cost to themselves.

Saikaku’s narrative goes on to show that the kabuki actor, just like the drum-holder in the pleasure quarter, also receives rewards in the *zashiki* system, however meager. As Saikaku expresses it, “Though the wares he sold were different, a working boy like Handayū was in an equally painful occupation” [SCHALOW trans. 1990: 250]. The actor is subjected to a night of

love-making with a man he finds repulsive, an act that requires great sacrifice and self-control. His suffering brings him little financial gain, however, since most of the proceeds of the transaction go straight into his proprietor's coffers. "What made it possible for him to forget the agony of the job were those moments when he saw the love-lorn faces of men and women gazing after him on his way home and could hear their countless cries of admiration. It filled him with a sense of pleasure and pride in his own beauty. This alone made him willing to bear his bone-grinding regimen." [SCHALOW trans. 1990: 251-252].

The pleasure created in the room of the *zashiki* system could be a fragile thing, however. Unlike the case of Han'ya, who mastered the *zashiki* transaction and went on to become proprietor of a fan shop, Handayū's mastery of the transaction was less than perfect and his gains proved to be fleeting. This becomes most obvious in a passage in Saikaku's narrative where a rupture occurs in the mood of pleasure (*kyōzame*). When the mood of pleasure is broken by something Handayū says, then the scale of gain and loss in the transaction becomes unbalanced and the pleasure of the transaction collapses. One such collapse occurs in the title-scene from "Fireflies Also Work Their Asses at Night."

One night, the faint sound of an early summer rain echoed on the shingled roof overhead where Handayū was entertaining a familiar group of patrons until dawn. They downed a vast quantity of chilled *saké* in their second-floor room at the Otsuruya and were soon arguing among themselves whether the bell had tolled eight times or seven.

"Well, shall we make an attempt to leave?" someone finally suggested.

Just then, two or three fireflies entered through a lattice-work window, rekindling excitement in the room. They seemed accustomed to people and flew around the room, their glow rivaling the lamplight. One of them came to rest on Handayū's sleeve.

"I am just like the firefly," Handayū said, quoting from the *michiyuki* scene in the play "Heianjō." The roomful of patrons was somewhat taken aback and laughed awkwardly.

"You may be right. The firefly's work also involves using its ass," someone said rudely.

"But it glows only at night and rests during daylight hours. I am envious. Here I work until dawn, and yet I must also be on stage all day. It is unfair." Handayū was blunt with his complaint. [SCHALOW trans. 1990: 252]

This scene is an enactment of *kyōzame*, whereby the actor-prostitute's comments destroy the mood of pleasure that had been created in the room with the aid of "vast quantities of chilled *saké*." When an actor, who is hired to entertain and create the mood of pleasure, complains in this way, the *zashiki* transaction becomes insupportable. Handayū subsequently learns that the fireflies were released by a monk who was in love with him, and when that monk dies he abandons the life of actor-prostitute and devotes himself to prayer for the repose of the man's soul. But Handayū's abandonment of his profession began the moment he instigated *kyōzame* in this scene, for it was in that moment that we recognize his inability to sustain his part in the dynamic loss and gain of the *zashiki* system. His subsequent love for the monk, and retirement from the stage, follow directly from the trajectory established by that moment.

Saikaku's writings attest in numerous other ways to the centrality of the discourse of *saké* as a dangerous pleasure in his depiction of the transaction between patron and prostitute in the pleasure quarters and theater districts. Within the multi-dimensional *zashiki* system, the benefits and detriments originally associated with drinking *saké* came to be generalized to the entire range of complex sexual and non-sexual interactions that occurred within the pleased space of the "room." That space was permeated by the aroma and rhetoric of drink. Subjects in the room moved according to the rhythm and flow of wine as it was poured into cups, imbibed, and exchanged. Time was measured by the clock of the pleasure (*kyō*) that was reached with the aid of *saké* and through the attentions of courtesans or actor-prostitutes and the camaraderie of friends and entertainers. The financial gain was unevenly distributed, accruing mostly to the proprietors of houses of entertainment and the caretakers of the women or youths who served as prostitute-entertainers in them. But the patron enjoyed his pleasures, the entertainers and drum-holders earned their tips, and male and female prostitutes alike gradually paid off their contracts while taking some pleasure in the fact of their sexual desirability. In Saikaku's literature of the floating world, the discourse of the "dangerous pleasure" of drink that emerged from medieval debates came to be embodied in a *zashiki* system which itself was based on drink.

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