

Creating a Public: Love Suicide on the Osaka Stage, 1703-1722

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigates how the representations of love suicide on stage at the dawn of the eighteenth century called forth an urban, commoner public in Osaka. As a result of the repeated bans on publishing print material about current events, the theater acted as one of the few avenues for representing contemporary life. I place the love suicide plays within the specific context of urban Osaka and offer new readings of these plays that challenge the dominant interpretation of these works as domestic tragedies that served as diversions from the realities of life under shogunal rule. I examine how Chikamatsu intervened in the discourse about love suicide with his landmark production of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki shinjū*), which transformed the act of love suicide from scandalous gossip to the purest expression of true love. Then, I analyze the plays in relation to four aspects of public life in the city: the status system (*mibunseido*), the prostitution industry, urban space, and popular religion. Through the analysis of the plays in relation to these larger structures, I investigate how they engendered an urban public through critiques, alternative identity formations, and the creation of new rituals that invited the community's participation. The plays provided a new language, imagery, and sense of pride that knit Osaka commoners together in re-imagining their spaces, their values, and themselves. My study demonstrates why theatre, and the creative arts more generally, are integral to an understanding of social and political life in early modern Japan.

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Names, Dates, and Units Used in the Text

I include a macron over a vowel to indicate it is a long vowel in Japanese (such as a macron over the “u” of *shinjū*, meaning love suicide, to represent the long “u” sound). The only exception to this is for words commonly known in English without macrons, such as shogun and Osaka.

For personal names, I have followed the Japanese convention of listing the family name first, followed by the personal name. So, for Chikamatsu’s biographer, Mori Shū, I list his family name (Mori) first. For scholars with Japanese names who primarily publish in English, I follow English-language convention and list them with personal name followed by family name, such as with kabuki scholar Satoko Shimazaki (whose family name is Shimazaki). For historical figures, I follow the Japanese-language convention of listing the last name first, as with Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun of the Tokugawa line. For artists, I have followed the general usage of Japanese-language scholars and identify them by their stage names. Scholars refer to some artists by their family names, in which case I follow suit. For example, I refer to the playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon as Chikamatsu. Scholars refer to other artists by their given names. For example, the kabuki actor Sakata Tōjūrō is referred to as Tōjūrō and the premier *jōruri* chanter of the period, Takemoto Gidayū, is called Gidayū.

I have used the Western calendar to indicate specific years although the people of the time would have used era names. The shogunal government instituted new eras fairly regularly to correspond to a new reign or to bring to a close a period of inauspicious events. The relevant eras for the time period of this study are:

Genroku (1688-1704)

Hōei	(1704-1711)
Shōtoku	(1711-1716)
Kyōho	(1716-1736)

For instance, period records of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*'s premiere list the year as Genroku 16. In this dissertation, I have converted the year to the Western calendar and list it as 1703.

Regarding the dates given for specific theatrical works, I have indicated the date of the first performance. It is unknown how long in advance of the first performance the playwright had written the text although it was customary for theatres to have a short rehearsal period. For literary works such as books, illustrated books, ballad collections, and other printed materials, I have indicated the publication date when known.

Eighteenth century Japan used gold, silver, and copper currencies. Typically, gold was used in Edo while silver was the predominant currency in Osaka and Kyoto. The general conversion for this period was that one *ryō* of gold bought approximately six silver *ryō* (60 *monme*) or 4,000 *mon* of copper. Large payments such as rent, wages, and payments for placing a woman into prostitution were usually made in gold *ryō* or silver *monme*. Copper *mon* were used for incidentals such as cheap meals and programs at the theatre. Measurements were calculated by weight. Coins of the metals were gathered together into a certain measure, and wrapped with paper. For example, in Chikamatsu's *The Courier for Hell* (*Meido no hikyaku*, 1711), a major plot point occurs when the protagonist, a courier, unwraps a package of three hundred gold *ryō* that belongs to his client and distributes the coins to pay off his debts at the brothel.

A Note on Translation

The first English-language translations of Chikamatsu appeared in 1926. This volume, by Miyamori Asataro and Robert Nichols, contained six plays including *The Love Suicides at Amijima*. Donald Keene published his translation of *The Battles of Coxinga* in 1951. Donald H. Shively's translation of *The Love Suicide at Amijima* appeared shortly thereafter, in 1953. In 1961, Keene published a collection of eleven Chikamatsu plays including *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, *The Love Suicides in the Women's Temple*, and *The Love Suicides at Amijima*. C. Andrew Gerstle added *Love Suicides on the Eve of the Kōshin Festival* to the English-language repertoire in 2001 in his collection *Chikamatsu: Five Late Plays*. In 2006, Michael Brownstein translated the opening scene of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* as part of an essay that appeared in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. Most recently, Paul S. Atkins translated *Hara-kiri of a Woman at Nagamachi* in 2010.

I have drawn on the work of each of these translators for this study. I have also consulted the French-language translations of René Sieffert, who published a four-volume set of all of Chikamatsu's contemporary life plays between 1991 and 1992.

For the plays in classical Japanese, I relied primarily on the *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*. Torigoe Bunzō, Yamane Tameo, Nagatomo Chiyoji, Ōhashi Tadayoshi, and Sakaguchi Hiroyuki edited the texts and provided annotations and modern Japanese translations.

The translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

Introduction: Staging Love Suicide for an Osaka Public

Just before the death scene in Chikamatsu Monzaemon's 1715 love suicide play, *The Love Suicides at Ikudama* (*Ikudama shinjū*), the lovers Kaheiji and Saga stand in the dark in a tiny tea stall while a storm rages around them. Saga has one final request: she wants to see her lover's face one last time. She says,

Since the first day we met, there have been days without the calls of ravens, but there has never been a day in which I didn't see your face. Yet tonight, the night we die, the rainy sky makes it so dark that I can't even see your face.

*aihajimete kyō ga hi made, karasu no nakanu hi wa aredo kao minu hi mo nakatta ni,
shinuru kon'ya ni kagitte, kao sae mienu amazora*¹

In response, Kaheiji picks up a pebble and begins to strike it against the hilt of his dagger. A tiny spark catches the silk cord that ties his dagger to the sash of his robe. For the brief moment that the silk burns, the lovers' faces are illuminated. Then, the light goes out. With a prayer on his lips, Kaheiji stabs Saga. He arranges her corpse and hangs himself with her sash.

I open with this flicker of light that illuminates the lovers' faces ever so briefly as a metaphor for the light the plays cast on the historical events they represented. Without the plays, the love suicide crisis of the early eighteenth century might have passed into obscurity. The phenomenon of love suicide began in the late seventeenth century in the Osaka-Kyoto region. Young couples, who were unable to be together in life for financial or social reasons, chose to die in the hopes of being reborn together in the next life. Typically, the man was a commoner lacking financial resources or social clout. The young woman was most often a prostitute, a merchant's daughter, or a shop girl. Osaka- and Kyoto-based playwrights, balladeers, and writers

¹ Ōhashi Tadayoshi, annot. and trans. in *Chikamatsu Monzaemon shū* 2, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2003) vol. 75, 380.

quickly adapted the stories despite the government's bans on depicting contemporary events. Stories of love suicide captivated audiences in kabuki and puppet theatres, on the street corners where balladeers performed, and at home where readers pored over illustrated books. Love suicide drew scant mention in the official histories. But traces of the suicides remain in the plays, songs, and tales that told their stories.

Although representations of love suicide appeared in the late seventeenth century alongside the first incidents, Chikamatsu transformed the discourse surrounding love suicide in 1703 with the production of his pivotal play *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki shinjū*) at the Takemoto Theatre, a puppet theatre in Osaka.² Whereas earlier portrayals had highlighted the sensational aspects of the love suicides they treated, Chikamatsu's play transformed the act of love suicide from scandalous gossip to the purest expression of true love. His play also established the model for representing love suicide, one that shaped later adaptations on stage, in song, and in print. After *Sonezaki*, incidents of love suicide rose; the years 1704-1716 were the height of the crisis.³ Correspondingly, works about love suicide proliferated after *Sonezaki*.

The second reason I open with this moment of two lovers gazing at each other for the last time before committing suicide is because it captures the narrative that has been the core of the scholarship on love suicide plays: the idea that these plays were domestic tragedies. The scene of the two lovers in *Ikudama* clinging to each other in a dingy tea stall in the midst of a rainstorm seems to depict an intensely private moment. The perception that love suicide plays told private,

² In this dissertation I will be using the term “puppet theatre” as a translation for *ningyō jōruri*. *Ningyō* means “puppet,” and *jōruri* refers to the style of musical recitation used in the puppet theatre. Bunraku, the term commonly used in English, is anachronistic for the early eighteenth century since it derives from “Bunraku-ken,” the stage name of Masai Kahei (1737-1819), a puppeteer from Awaji. Masai founded the Bunraku Theatre in Osaka in 1872, and the term “bunraku” became synonymous with the Japanese puppet theatre. Donald Keene, *Bunraku: The Art of the Japanese Puppet Theatre* (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1965), 33.

³ Kōsaka Jirō, *Genroku otatami bugyō no nikki* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 1999), 131.

domestic stories has been solidified through genre divisions that contrast large-scale stories set in the distant past with the shorter, intimate plays set in the early modern period; a critical approach that describes the central conflict in the plays as an internal one; and a scholarly assumption that separates the world of the theatres, brothels, and other arenas of play from a more “serious” world of work, marriage, politics, and public engagement.

As far back as the early eighteenth century, commentators drew a genre distinction between plays set in the past, “period plays” or “history plays” (*jidaimono*),⁴ and those set in the present, “contemporary life plays” or “domestic plays” (*sewamono*).⁵ The major difference between these two types is that the period plays tell the stories of heroes from the past while contemporary life plays tell the stories of ordinary people at the time.⁶ Most period plays are in five acts.⁷ They take place across wide swaths of time and place and integrate spectacular, fantastical elements along with the mundane. In contrast, contemporary life plays unfold in just one act, exhibit a general unity of time and place, often taking place in one area over a span of a few days, and remain rooted in everyday life.⁸ Love suicide plays are a sub-genre of the

⁴ The term *jidaimono* is translated as “period plays” or “history plays.” I prefer the term “period play” because it indicates that the play is set in a specific past without implying that the events and personages portrayed bear any resemblance to their historical counterparts.

⁵ *Sewamono* is alternately translated as “contemporary life plays” or “domestic plays.” The term “domestic play” implies that the plays take place in a private, domestic sphere. I prefer the term “contemporary life plays” because it emphasizes the subject matter of the plays, which drew directly from recent events and thus represented a large shift in theatrical practice. Donald Keene and Donald Shively have used “domestic plays,” while C. Andrew Gerstle has used “contemporary life plays.”

⁶ Donald Keene, introduction to *Major Plays of Chikamatsu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 5.

⁷ In the mid-eighteenth century, period plays expanded to ten or more acts.

⁸ As the genre developed, playwrights wrote longer contemporary life plays, such as *The Love Suicides at Amijima*, which has three acts. Still, contemporary life plays remain substantially shorter than the period plays.

contemporary life play. The entrenched distinction between these two genres has meant that critics have not incorporated new insights from research on one genre to the other. Although the contemporary life plays have been praised for their realism and tight dramaturgical construction, critical works confine their interpretations to the domestic realm. Period plays are given more rigorous treatment for their political commentary.

Early criticism of Chikamatsu's plays in the late nineteenth century by Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935) has had a lasting impact on critical studies of the love suicide plays. Shōyō's pioneering work positioned Chikamatsu's plays as dramatic literature worthy of textual study as part of a broader project to develop a canon of classical Japanese literature. This marked a shift from earlier perceptions that had considered Chikamatsu's plays primarily as the blueprints for live performance.⁹ Shōyō emphasized the study of contemporary life plays over period plays because of what he saw as their more distinguished literary quality. He penned the now famous distillation of Chikamatsu's contemporary life plays as dramatizations of the conflict between "duty" or "obligation" (*giri*) and "personal feeling" (*ninjō*).¹⁰ Donald Keene has explained these terms in depth for English language readers in the introduction to his *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, originally published in 1961. He has written that the morality of the plays is based in *giri* and *ninjō*, two concepts "generally depicted as warring with each other." He has elaborated, "The meanings of *giri* varied considerably according to the circumstances. It might mean obligation to members of one's own family, to fellow townsmen, to one's class, or to

⁹ William Lee, "Chikamatsu and Dramatic Literature in the Meiji Period," in *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature*, ed. Haruo Shirane et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 183-184.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

society at large, or refer to something closer to the abstract concept of honor. *Ninjō* represented the human sentiments balancing the austere ideals of *giri*.”¹¹

Shōyō’s formulation of the conflict between *giri* and *ninjō* became the reigning paradigm for most interpretations of Chikamatsu in Japanese- and English-language scholarship. It has proven a useful concept in untangling the web of relationships in the plays. In *The Love Suicides at Amijima* (*Shinjū ten no Amijima*, 1720), for instance, the tension between *giri* and *ninjō* helps explain why the characters behave as they do because it reveals the social obligations that frustrate their abilities to pursue their desires. In *Amijima*, the hero, Jihei, feels a sense of obligation to his family. The heroine, the prostitute Koharu also feels obligated toward Jihei’s wife, Osan. Osan fears her husband will kill himself in a love suicide, and so she sends Koharu a letter requesting that she end the relationship. Osan feels duty-bound to save her husband’s life and reputation. Once she realizes that Koharu did try to break ties with Jihei after receiving her letter, Osan feels obligated to save Koharu. She tries to pawn her clothing to raise the money to ransom Koharu since she suspects Koharu will commit suicide if ransomed by a customer she does not love.¹² As the example of *Amijima* illustrates, the conflict between *giri* and *ninjō* provides an interpretive tool to explain aspects of the characters’ motivations and behaviors.

At the same time, this approach has obscured some elements of the plays. Framing the core conflict of the plays as that between *giri* and *ninjō* gives the impression that the central conflict of the play is internal, thereby rendering the plays primarily stories of characters pulled between conflicting desires. This ignores Chikamatsu’s careful construction of the social forces

¹¹ Keene, introduction, 33.

¹² These relationships are explained in detail in Donald H. Shively’s *The Love Suicide at Amijima* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 33-35.

that lead to suicide, a trend that becomes more pronounced in his later plays.¹³ In the case of *Amijima*, the characters' fates are determined as much by their social circumstances as by their obligations and feelings. Chikamatsu devotes considerable time to developing and explaining Jihei's personal and business finances. Jihei initially appears to have a stronger social position than the male heroes of many of the love suicide plays, since he owns a small family business rather than being an apprentice or clerk, as in many of the other love suicide stories. However, his father-in-law retains tight control over the business, so in actuality Jihei has as little control over his life as is also the case with other love suicide male protagonists.¹⁴ The female characters, too, are restrained by their circumstances. Koharu, as a prostitute, lacks any choice as to whom she will be given if a customer has the money to buy out her contract. Osan, though married, remains under the watchful eye of her father. She is unable to pawn her clothes in time to rescue Koharu because her father intervenes. In this way, *Amijima* is a story of money, status, family dynamics, and the prostitution industry.

Combined with genre divisions that place the love suicide plays in a category of private, domestic stories, the critical approach that reduces the plays to a dramatization of an internal conflict has concealed the social and political themes in the plays. This compartmentalizing of the love suicide plays as small-scale, private stories has been compounded by the scholarly assumption found across multiple disciplines that separates early modern Japanese urban life into two spheres: an ordered world of politics, business, family life, and hierarchical relations and a world of entertainment and sex, the "floating world" (*ukiyo*). As a result of this separation, scholars have often concluded that performance and the arts in general were relegated to the floating world and thus did not participate in public life. In her discussion of the narratives of

¹³ Yokoyama Tadashi, "Chikamatsu shinjū jōruri no tenkai," *Kokubungaku* 35, no. 5 (1958): 55.

¹⁴ Mori Shū, *Chikamatsu Monzaemon* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1959), 200.

popular performance, particularly kabuki in Edo, Satoko Shimazaki has termed this approach a “top-down perspective” that privileges the authorities’ view of popular entertainment as “unworthy of serious consideration” (despite their attempts to regulate it through censorship).¹⁵ The love suicide plays are a compelling case study for a “bottom-up” approach because they told stories of people on the margins that were addressed to the wider public of Osaka. As this dissertation will demonstrate, the politics of the love suicide plays extended beyond the floating world and offered critiques of multiple aspects of social, economic, and political life.

The authority of the shogunal government depended on maintaining the separation between these two worlds; the centers of the cities were filled with merchant districts, magistrates’ offices, and the residential areas for samurai and commoners, while theatres and brothels were confined to specific peripheral areas of the cities. Officially, the entertainment districts were off-limits to samurai, but many flouted the restrictions making the floating world an area in which men from different levels of the status system socialized together. The spatial delineation corresponded to a perceived difference in values. In the world of the everyday, social status determined the most important aspects of life such as employment and residence. Economic prosperity brought comforts and opportunities but remained closely regulated by sumptuary laws tethered to status. In the entertainment districts of theatres, brothels, and teahouses that comprised the floating world, money and sophistication (*iki*), rather than social status, reigned.

This spatial separation and marked difference in values has led some scholars to view the floating world as an arena of play that operated apart from but alongside the realm of everyday

¹⁵ *Edo Kabuki in Transition: From the Worlds of the Samurai to the Vengeful Female Ghost* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 19.

life. This framework elides the important legal and economic relationships between these two spaces. The pleasure quarters were legally designated areas for prostitution and supported by the legal apparatus of the state. These areas also financially benefitted the various city governments.¹⁶ Organized religion, too, crossed between the two realms. On the one hand, temples performed an administrative role by registering key life events, such as births, marriages, and deaths. At the same time, temple grounds were the sites of leisure activities, including professional and amateur performances, sporting matches, side shows (*misemono*), and commerce.¹⁷ Popular, commercial theatre also straddled the everyday and the floating world. Though the theatres were placed on the peripheries and participated in the cultural life of the floating world, they did not operate outside the purview of the authorities. The state endeavored to control the theatres by controlling their license to run, designating who could attend, regulating the material performed, and stipulating salaries, costumes, and construction codes through a series of official edicts.

The conceptual structure that separates the realms of the everyday and the floating world has encouraged scholars to examine connections between the arts within the floating world, while ignoring the connections between the floating world and the everyday.¹⁸ This has been

¹⁶ Amy Stanley, *Selling Women: Prostitution, Markets, and the Household in Early Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

¹⁷ Nam-lin Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan: Asakusa Sensōji and Edo Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000).

¹⁸ Examples of this type of approach include works such as Adam Lewis Kern, *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006); Mark Oshima, “The Keisei as a Meeting Point of Different Worlds: Courtesans and the Kabuki Onnagata,” in *The Women of the Pleasure Quarter: Japanese Painting and Prints of the Floating World*, ed. Elizabeth de Sabato Swinton (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1996), 87-105; and David Pollack, “Designed for Pleasure: Ukiyo-e as Material Culture,” in *Designed for Pleasure: The World of Edo Japan in Prints and Paintings, 1680-1860*, ed. Julia Meech et al. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 169-89.

compounded by studies on censorship that have argued, as Donald H. Shively has written, that “censorship eliminated any possibility of writing plays of real social or political significance.”¹⁹

Although the authorities issued a steady stream of edicts aimed at regulating the theatre, these tended to be honored in the breach. Further, Osaka, though a city directly under the control of the shogunate, was far enough away that it was monitored less assiduously than the shogun’s capital in Edo (modern-day Tokyo).²⁰

The publication, in 1989, of Uchiyama Mikiko’s study of the puppet theatre throughout the eighteenth century, *Jōrurishi no jūhasseiki*, marked a major paradigm shift in the study of Chikamatsu’s plays.²¹ In the most thorough study of the Japanese puppet theatre to date, Uchiyama argues that the puppet theatre consistently criticized social and political systems. In her chapters on Chikamatsu, she provides detailed readings of primary sources to describe the specific historical context of some of Chikamatsu’s period plays. In the process, she offers readings of the plays that demonstrate how Chikamatsu embedded critiques of contemporary policies within stories that ostensibly focused on a distant past. For example, she examines Chikamatsu’s plays written in the Shōtoku era (1711-1716) in terms of the specific policies being enacted by the shogunal government under the advice of the counselor Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725). These plays, despite their historical setting, contain veiled allusions to Arai’s policies. Although her analysis of Chikamatsu’s plays focuses on his period plays, she does include an analysis of the only love suicide play Chikamatsu wrote during this period, *The Love Suicides at*

¹⁹ “*Bakufu Versus Kabuki*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 18, no. 3/4 (1955): 355.

²⁰ Shively acknowledges this but does not explore its ramifications. “Tokugawa Plays on Forbidden Topics,” in *Chūshingura: Studies in Kabuki and the Puppet Theatre*, ed. James R. Brandon (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1982), 26.

²¹ Translated into English the title would be *A History of the Puppet Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*. Published by Bensei Shuppan in Tokyo, reprinted in 1999.

Ikudama. Here too, Uchiyama reveals a commentary on Hakuseki's policies. In addition to highlighting the incisive political critiques embedded in the period plays, Uchiyama points out that the particular reforms that Chikamatsu criticizes were not just the general policies of the shogunal government but were specific policies that affected the people of Osaka.²² In other words, Chikamatsu's commentary within the plays can only be uncovered through a specifically local reading.

C. Andrew Gerstle has spearheaded the incorporation of Uchiyama's insights into English-language scholarship regarding Chikamatsu's period plays.²³ Despite the reappraisal of the meaning of Chikamatsu's works presented these scholars, the love suicide plays and other works depicting contemporary life have yet to receive the same rigorous reexamination. This dissertation applies Uchiyama's methodology of a local reading to demonstrate how the love suicide plays engaged with an emerging public in urban Osaka.

The question of whether we can even talk about the "public sphere" in regard to the early modern period in Japan has become a much-debated topic in recent scholarship. The term "public sphere" came into usage with Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, which described the formation of a bourgeois public sphere, a discursive space between the state and society, in late seventeenth-century England and eighteenth-century France.²⁴ In his study, Habermas analyzed the specific cultural-historical circumstances of those

²² Uchiyama, *Jōrurishi no jūhasseiki*, 77.

²³ See Gerstle's essays "Hero as Murderer in Chikamatsu," *Monumenta Nipponica* 51, no. 3 (1996): 317-356 and "Heroic Honor: Chikamatsu and The Samurai Ideal," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57, no. 2 (1997): 307-381.

²⁴ Thomas Burger, trans. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989). Originally published as *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* in 1962.

societies, the power relationships expressed in the tension between state authority and public opinion, and the spaces—physical and discursive—in which the bourgeois public debated political and judicial systems. For Habermas, the public sphere was characterized by rational-critical debate about political topics in public spaces, particularly in London coffee houses and in newspapers. He defines the public sphere as “a network for communicating ideas and points of view, which filters and synthesizes diverse ‘streams of communication’...in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions.”²⁵ A key aspect of Habermas’ “public sphere,” especially for this study, is its emphasis on the public sphere as a discursive space in which public opinion and criticism mediated between society and state control. The teleological framework in which Habermas articulates his theory, however, has little relevance to the study of early modern Japan, where the development of the public sphere clearly cannot be fit within a narrative of a progression toward a political democracy.

Christopher Balme, in his recent book *The Theatrical Public Sphere*, has outlined the history of the theatrical public sphere from ancient Athens to the present. By “theatrical public sphere” Balme has pointed to the performances at theatrical events and how they contributed to political and social discourse. His study has focused more narrowly on the physical spaces of the theatres than Habermas’ larger focus on a discursive sphere. Balme has identified elements of the theatrical public sphere in ancient Athens and seventeenth century England. For Balme, the height of the theatrical public sphere was mid-eighteenth-century England. He has written, “The theatrical public sphere was located both inside and outside the auditorium. Next to newspapers the theatre was probably the most important genuine public sphere where not just universal

²⁵ *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 360.

human foibles but also issues of the day found expression on the stage.”²⁶ Within the theatres, the lighting of the entire theatre space rather than only the performance space made theatres into spaces of “social communication and display.”²⁷

One of the major contributions of Balme’s study is that he highlights the role of emotion and affect in addition to rational-critical debate in the formation of the theatrical public sphere. The role of affect is especially important for an examination of love suicide plays, which developed and thrived in the puppet theatre, a medium known for the affective responses of its audience members. Balme has drawn from the theoretical work of Chantal Mouffe, who has contended that passions and affect are as important to the democratic process as rational consensus.²⁸ Balme has argued, “We need to see the rational-critical and the agonistic as complementary rather than mutually-exclusive forms of expression.”²⁹ Balme included case studies that incorporate the West’s relationship with Turkey and the Middle East, but his study centered on the West. The theatrical public sphere in his analysis, as in that of Habermas, has remained shackled to a progression toward a Greek-model democracy.

This link between the idea of the public sphere and the development of democracy has been one of the hurdles in applying the concept of the public sphere to Japan. Japan’s path to modernity and democracy did not follow the same path as the West. New scholarship, which draws on Habermas’ concept of the public sphere, while modifying it to fit the specific historical conditions of Japan, has located an emergent public sphere in the Edo period (1603-1868) before Japan’s opening to the West and rapid modernization. For example, historian Kyu Hyun Kim has

²⁶ Christopher Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 22.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

identified the public sphere as beginning in the 1830s when the combination of domestic instability and the threat of foreign powers produced biting political satire in popular media.³⁰ Sociologist Eiko Ikegami has placed it even earlier at the start of the Edo period. She locates the emerging public sphere in “aesthetic publics”—the networks that extended across social boundaries in the seated arts traditions, such as tea ceremony, calligraphy, and collective poetic composition.³¹ Mary Elizabeth Berry has argued that unlike the processes seen in early modern Europe, the public sphere in early modern Japan was not “the space where popular sovereignty was claimed but where leadership was scrutinized and disciplined by criticism.”³² Berry enumerates four major types of activity that defined Japan’s early modern public sphere: non-officials claiming a role in the political arena, peasant public action (including uprisings, petitions, and suits), samurai academies, and the spread of information and instruction in commercial print.³³ The first three types of activity in Berry’s list have little connection to the theatrical public sphere of the love suicide plays. The rise of commercial print, however, dovetails directly with the love suicide plays. The plays were printed and circulated, as were the ballads and illustrated books depicting love suicide.

In Berry’s analysis of the public sphere in early modern Japan, two main differences with Habermas’ bourgeois public sphere emerge. First, she has uncoupled the formation of the public sphere from the progression toward democracy.³⁴ Second, Berry has distinguished between four

³⁰ *The Age of Visions and Arguments: Parliamentarianism and the National Public Sphere in Early Meiji Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 35.

³¹ *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 138-39.

³² “Public Life in Authoritarian Japan,” *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998): 139.

³³ *Ibid.*, 144-151.

³⁴ A similar separation between the development of the public sphere and an idealized goal of democratic government can be found in recent scholarship on China’s early modern public

parallel but separate overlapping spheres of activity. These distinct spheres include a range of status groups and indicate the possibility for participation across multiple status categories.

In this way, Berry's work engages with recent investigations of the development of the public sphere in the West, which have emphasized the plurality of publics and the many groups excluded from the Habermas' "bourgeois public sphere." This approach shifts the conversation from an attempt to pinpoint *the* public sphere toward a preference for a locating and understanding of various publics and the interactions between them. Recent studies that have made apt use of the concept of a public to illuminate the activity of groups who have been overlooked by strict adherence to the Habermasian model include Nancy Fraser's work on feminist publics, Michael Warner's study of queer communities in the United States, Joanna Brooks' analysis of African American writing and social organizations in the early American Republic, and Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's descriptions of working class publics.³⁵

How does the idea of a public connect to the world of the puppet theatre and love suicide? Rather than being organized by pre-existing communities, such as the members of a religious or ethnic group, Warner has emphasized that publics are formed when a group of people is drawn together by shared stories and ideas.³⁶ He has defined the key processes in public formation as self-organization, addressing itself through texts, active participation, circulation, and the proposal of an alternative way of being. I argue that the love suicide plays

sphere. See Andrea S. Goldman, *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770-1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

³⁵ Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80; Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005); Brooks, "The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2005): 67-92; and Negt and Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

³⁶ *Publics and Counterpublics*, 75.

contributed to these processes of public formation. First, in ignoring the state's censorship edits, the plays exhibit self-organization. Second, through the representations of the events, space, people, and values of the urban Osaka commoner, the plays address themselves to an Osaka audience, and, I suggest, an Osaka public. The plays engendered participation through attendance, fandom, and, most poignantly, the continued crisis of double suicides. The texts and images of the plays circulated through librettos, woodblock prints, ballads, and the practice of suicide. Additionally, in celebrating the merchant values and elevating commoners to heroes, the plays proposed an alternative value system at odds with the ideology of the status system, which provided the justification for samurai rule.

Osaka entered a new phase of rapid urbanization in the seventeenth century under the direct rule of the Tokugawa shogunal government. As a result of the shogunal government's investment in Osaka's infrastructure and active recruitment of skilled commoners, Osaka quickly assumed a critical role in the domestic economy. Osaka markets controlled the price of many commercial goods, including rice—the most important commodity in the national economy—and the exchange rate between gold, silver, and copper coins. Over the course of the Edo period, “economic information flowing out of Osaka came to control the commerce of the entire country.”³⁷ Osaka, as a nexus of trade and commerce, developed into a commoner city with powerful merchant houses. The commoners filled Osaka and worked as the heads of the major merchant houses, apprentices, couriers, day laborers, small shopkeepers, and artisans. By 1700, Osaka had a population of over 400,000 of which commoners composed the majority.³⁸

³⁷ Moriya Katsuhisa and Ronald P. Toby, trans. “Urban Networks and Information Networks,” in *Tokugawa Japan: The Social and Economic Antecedents of Modern Japan*, ed. Chie Nakane et al. (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1990), 101.

³⁸ Gary P. Leupp, *Servants, Shophands, and Laborers in the Cities of Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 11.

The economic prosperity of domestic trade and urban growth gave Osaka commoners the spending power to support the development of commercial publishing, commercial theatres, and brothels—all of which contributed to the consumption of works about love suicide.³⁹ Publishers produced some classical works, but the vast majority of printed works concerned the contemporary world. In particular, consumers bought works that described and categorized information about urban life. In *Japan in Print*, Berry has provided a catalogue of the range of publishing ventures during the Edo period, including “maps, atlases, encyclopedias, dictionaries, calendars, almanacs, rural gazetteers, urban dictionaries, travel accounts, personnel rosters, biographical compendia, manuals of work, manuals of play, guides to shopping and local products, and school primers.”⁴⁰ Berry’s catalogue could be expanded to include publications on scandals and recent events. It might also contain ballads, gossip reports, illustrated pamphlets of recent events (such as suicides), guides to the brothel districts, summaries of kabuki plays, and libretti of puppet plays.

Ballads, including the printed sheets that balladeers sold on the street as they sang, were one mechanism for circulating news of recent events. Referring to the cheapest type of printed material, “tile prints” (*kawaraban*), a poem from 1697 satirizes the popularity of love suicide as the subject for these prints: “What a noise! The double love suicide produced with clay printing plates.”⁴¹ Vendors generally sold news about fires and earthquakes during the day and news

³⁹ The surge in commercial publishing was also made possible by the high rates of literacy among men and women particularly in urban areas. Susanne Formanek and Sepp Linhart, introduction to *Written Texts – Visual Texts: Woodblock-printed Media in Early Modern Japan* (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2005), 12.

⁴⁰ Berry, *Japan in Print: Information and Nation in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 15.

⁴¹ This poem appears in the collection *Poem-painted Straw Hat (Haikai nurigasa)*. Tile prints were usually only one to six pages long and printed using clay tiles than by the more expensive cherry wood used for most woodblock prints. Tile prints were cheap enough to produce that they

about double suicides in the late afternoon and early evening.⁴² Street singers specializing in singing the news (*yomiuri*) appeared at the end of the seventeenth century in urban centers and then roamed throughout Japan spreading the news across the country. These performers were effective in making the people they sang about household names. Koyama Issei has argued persuasively that between 1688 and 1711 particularly well-known songs, such those about the famed Osaka courtesan Yūgiri's love affairs, the love suicide of Oshun and Denbei, and the crimes of Umegawa and Chūbei, were common knowledge amongst townspeople.⁴³ These are the same stories that became popular topics for contemporary life plays in the kabuki and puppet theatres in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁴⁴

Theatre, particularly the puppet theatre, also became a major vehicle for spreading the news. Kabuki had incorporated contemporary locales, especially the brothel districts, since its beginnings in the early seventeenth century. By the end of the century, kabuki and the puppet theatre were experimenting with plays based on recent events. This shift toward a new subject matter coincided with the growth of the market for printed play texts. Scripts for the puppet theatre were printed more often and were more widely available than kabuki scripts.⁴⁵

could be printed and hawked by amateurs. Linhart, "Quenching the Thirst for Information: Kawaraban – Enjoying the News when News was Forbidden" in *Written Texts – Visual Texts*, 232.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 234.

⁴³ *Chikamatsu jōruri no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha Shuppan, 2000), 126.

⁴⁴ Yūgiri stories were one of the most popular topics for early examples of contemporary life plays in the kabuki theatre. The story of Oshun and Denbei was first adapted into kabuki in 1702. The most famous adaptation of their story is the play *Recent Extracts from the Tabloids* (*Chikagoro kawara no tatehiki*), which premiered in 1782 as a puppet play and was adapted into the kabuki in 1785. Chikamatsu's version of Umegawa and Chūbei's story, entitled *Courier for Hell* (*Meido no hiyaku*), premiered at the Takemoto Theatre in 1711.

⁴⁵ There are two possible reasons for the fact that puppet theatre scripts were printed more than kabuki scripts. First of all, kabuki scripts were supposed to remain secret and therefore not allowed out of the theatres. See Kimbrough and Shimazaki, introduction to *Publishing the Stage*:

Commoners constituted the main consumers of the plays in performance and in print. In his biography of Chikamatsu, Mori Shū characterizes the audience for kabuki and the puppet theatre as closely resembling the demographics of the city: primarily commoners with a mix of men and women.⁴⁶ The puppet theatre in particular was often identified in seventeenth and eighteenth century sources as being a performance form for commoners. For example, the 1679 book *The Crane of Naniwa (Naniwa Tsuru)* identified *jōruri*, the recitation style that was performed as storytelling and to accompany the puppet theatre, as the art of the townspeople.⁴⁷

The expansion of Osaka's economy brought prosperity and spending power to many urban commoners. However, commoner life was unstable. A sudden change in the value of a product or a bad harvest of a particular crop could bring financial devastation. Some urban commoners were ruined by their participation in the new industries that catered to them. For example, a young man who became enamored of a prostitute could quickly rack up debts he was unable to repay. Extreme financial circumstances such as these led, in some cases, to double suicides.

Puppet theatre became the primary mode for telling the stories of these suicides. Since puppet theatre was a popular form of entertainment geared to commoners and commoners were the main demographic committing the love suicides, the pairing makes sense. Furthermore,

Print and Performance in Early Modern Japan, ed. Keller Kimbrough et al. (Boulder: Center for Asian Studies, 2011), 5. Second, the texts for puppet plays were more stable than those for the kabuki. Kabuki actors often improvised in performance based on the lines provided by the playwright. In contrast, the highlights of the puppet plays were the songs, which had set lyrics. See Nagatomo Chiyoji, *Kinsei Kamigata jōruribon shuppan no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1999), 80. Further, since the puppet theatre required the precise coordination between the chanter, who voiced the character's words, and the puppeteer, who manipulated the puppet's body, the form required a fixed text and did not leave room for improvisation.

⁴⁶ *Chikamatsu Monzaemon*, 209.

⁴⁷ Naniwa is the old name for the Osaka region. *The Crane of Naniwa* is cited in Nagatomo, *Kinsei Kamigata jōruribon shuppan no kenkyū*, 81.

puppets were a more apt medium for these stories than a theatrical form based on actors, such as kabuki. Love suicide plays served a dual purpose: they told the story of the characters in the play and they conjured the spirits of the recently dead to act as a requiem.⁴⁸ Puppets were better suited to embodying the character and the spirit of the dead since, unlike an actor, they are objects without an identity of their own, and historically, they have been used as ritual objects. Jane Marie Law, whose has written in English the most extensively on the ritual origins of Japanese puppetry, has explained that puppets, as part of the larger category of dolls (*ningyō*), can mediate between the human and divine worlds since they do not belong to either.⁴⁹ She has explained, “The puppet can stand between the puppeteer and the sacred forces and serve as a receptacle for the summoned deity. The puppet then is the physical object that enables (*yosasu*) the manifestation of the sacred force.”⁵⁰

Chikamatsu emphasized the unique capability of puppets in *Souvenirs of Naniwa* (*Naniwa miyage*, 1738), the record of Chikamatsu’s reflections as transcribed by his close friend Hozumi Ikan. Chikamatsu remarked, “Art is something that lies in the slender margin between the real and the unreal.”⁵¹ In his analysis of this passage, Christopher A. Bolton has observed that “the pathos of the puppets depends on his ability to oscillate between real and unreal,

⁴⁸ Most scholars agree that the plays performed a key function to pacify the spirits of those they commemorated. For a review of the position of major scholars on the issue see Koyama, *Chikamatsu jōruri no kenkyū*, 41-46.

⁴⁹ Japanese uses the same word to indicate “puppet” and “doll,” *ningyō*. In her book, Law discusses a number of different *ningyō* employed in rituals in Japan including *haniwa* figurines, Nara period *hitogata*, effigies for fetuses, infants, and children such as *kokeshi*, stone and paper representations of Kannon Bodhisattva, and the sexual puppets of Sado. *Puppets of Nostalgia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 33-44.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

⁵¹ Keene, trans., “Chikamatsu on the Art of the Puppet Stage,” in *Anthology of Japanese Literature*, ed. Donald Keene (New York: Grove Press, 1955), 389.

simultaneously more and less than human.”⁵² The connection between the puppet as a stand in for the sacred spirit is made directly at the end of *Amijima* in which the narrator describes Jihei (who would have been represented on stage by a puppet) in his final moments of life, “For a few moments he writhes like a gourd swinging in the wind” (*narihisago, kaze ni yuraruru gotoku*).⁵³ Suwa Haruo has pointed out that a gourd, like a mirror or a puppet, is a sacred object in traditional Japanese culture with the association of serving as a vessel for the sacred spirit (*shinrei*).⁵⁴ The object-ness of the puppet was thus an advantage in representing stories of love suicide on stage.

The current study is set within Osaka, the heart of both the love suicide crisis and the puppet theatre, which pioneered the dramatization of these stories: it seeks to examine the role of these plays in public, city life. Osaka residents attended performances, purchased librettos and souvenirs, circulated the stories in print, song, and gossip, and, most poignantly, committed the double suicides that inspired—and were perhaps inspired by—the plays. As a result of the repeated bans on publishing print material about current events, the theater acted as one of the few avenues for representing contemporary life.⁵⁵ I argue that the love suicide plays, with their focus on Osaka and recent events, played an important role in local identity formation. The playhouses gathered commoners together. The circulation of the plays, pamphlets, and woodblock prints served as a forum for commoner culture. The plays provided a new language,

⁵² “From Wooden Cyborgs to Celluloid Souls: Mechanical Bodies in Anime and Japanese Puppet Theater,” *positions: east asia cultures critique* 10, no. 3 (2002): 745.

⁵³ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 424. Yamane Tameo, annot. and trans. in *Chikamatsu Monzaemon shū* 2, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakusan, 2003) vol. 75, 431.

⁵⁴ *Shinjū—sono shi to shinjitsu* (Tokyo: Mainichi shinbun sha, 1977), 191.

⁵⁵ Beginning in 1644, the shogunal government issued repeated bans on representing contemporary events in literature and theatre.

imagery, and sense of pride that knit Osaka commoners together in re-imagining their spaces, their values, and themselves. In other words, these plays created an urban public, a discursive space that offered an identity for its participants that differed from the identity imposed by the state.

This project is the first in-depth study of the love suicide plays that places them in the context of urban, commoner life in Osaka. First, I examine how Chikamatsu intervened in the discourse about love suicide with his landmark production of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*. Then, I analyze the plays in relation to four aspects of public life in the city: the status system (*mibunseido*), the prostitution industry, urban space, and popular religion. Through the analysis of the plays in relation to these larger structures, I investigate how they engendered an urban public through critiques, alternative identity formations, and the creation of new rituals and traditions. I place the love suicide plays within the specific context of urban Osaka and offer new readings of these plays that demonstrate the implicit political and social commentary. At the same time, I endeavor to remove the false divide of “real” Osaka life and the “floating world.” While the relationship of love suicide to prostitution and to the theatres cannot be overstated, confining the analysis of love suicide to these two realms has divorced it from the social and economic factors that catalyzed it. Love suicide and its theatrical representations had close ties to the state, the economy, and the life of the city beyond the theatres and brothels. Therefore, each chapter is an opening to investigate love suicide within the floating world and in the greater city of Osaka.

In chapter one, “Modeling Love Suicide,” I examine how Chikamatsu shifted the discourse on love suicide with *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* in 1703 from something that was

condemned by society as an unfilial way out of a financial crisis to the highest expression of love. I trace the evolution of the concept of “sincerity of heart” (*shinjū*) from its origins in the pleasure quarters to its application to double suicide. Chikamatsu adeptly constructed *Sonezaki* out of existing kabuki models for depicting contemporary events and new experiments in realist performance. He also made critical alterations to the existing kabuki models: he did not change the names of the characters from the names of the couple who recently committed suicide upon which the play was based; he took full advantage of the medium of puppet theatre known for fostering an emotional connection with its audience; he shifted story elements and mobilized theatrical devices to encourage the audience to respond empathetically to the lovers; and, in his greatest departure from previous representations, he rendered the act of love suicide sacred. With these innovations, Chikamatsu set the model for subsequent depictions of love suicide across the varied media of early modern Japan.

Chapter two, “Censoring Love Suicide,” interrogates why these plays were the target of draconian censorship, arguing that the danger the authorities saw in the act and representation of love suicide lay in its assault on the status system. The status system categorized and ordered the people of early modern Japan into a strict hierarchy that regulated all aspects of daily life. It also lent legitimacy to samurai dominance. Love suicide plays portrayed status as fluid and performed rather than innate. Further, they offered critiques of the status quo and challenged the authorities’ narrative of prosperity and stability. Most critically, they proposed an alternative value system that valorized love suicide as an expression of commoner honor.

To follow the trajectory of the love suicide plays, the story shifts from the merchant quarters to the brothel districts. Chapter three, “Exposing the Price of Prostitution,” examines love suicide plays in relationship to the prostitution industry, a growing segment of the Osaka

economy. I focus on Chikamatsu's treatment of the prostitute-heroine in his plays *The Love Suicide of the Two Illustrated Books* (*Shinjū nimai ezōshi*, 1706) and *The Love Suicide at the Sunken Well* (*Shinjū kasane iztusu*, 1707) to uncover his critique of the prostitution industry. Chikamatsu did not limit his critique of prostitution to the brothel districts. In his 1710 play *The Love Suicides at the Women's Temple* (*Shinjū mannensō*), Chikamatsu demonstrates how the customs and attitudes toward women cultivated in the brothels had begun to shape marriage rituals in merchant homes.

Chapter four, "Mapping Osaka," journeys through urban Osaka along the routes depicted in the lyrical journey scenes (*michiyuki*) of the plays. Through the plays, Chikamatsu gave his audience members tours of the changing topography of the city as it swiftly developed and grew at the start of the eighteenth century. In addition to representing new spaces within Osaka, Chikamatsu represented the city as flush with performance and constantly in motion. In contrast, maps and guides created by the shogunate represented a static, immobile city. By representing the spaces associated with love suicide in his plays, Chikamatsu created a cartography of love suicide for the city of Osaka. Audience members could thus re-enact the journeys from the plays after they left the theatre and moved through the city as part of their daily lives. In this way, Chikamatsu developed a kind of urban pilgrimage route for love suicides.

In the final chapter, "Ritualizing Love Suicide," I focus on the death scenes that conclude each of the plays. Chikamatsu and other writers memorialized love suicide in line with religious practices by commemorating death anniversaries in anniversary performances and thus constructed a tradition of love suicide. In Chikamatsu's plays after *Sonezaki*, particularly *The Love Suicides of the Two Illustrated Books*, *The Love Suicides in Midsummer with an Icy Blade* (*Shinjū yaiba wa kōri no tsuitachi*, 1709), and *The Love Suicides at Ikudama*, Chikamatsu

alluded to *Sonezaki* to establish a love suicide lineage and elevate the *Sonezaki* lovers from humans to saints. I investigate how the plays become a way for the audience and performers to dedicate spiritual merit to the recently deceased to help them on their journey to enlightenment through Chikamatsu's use of *ekō*, dedicatory prayers. In addition to mobilizing the affective and expressive language of theatre, Chikamatsu draws upon popular religion to give the audience members a participatory role in the performances. This chapter illustrates how the plays transformed the performance of love suicide plays into rituals, which positioned the spectators as key participants.

Let us return to the death scene in *Ikudama* that I narrated at the opening of this introduction. While at first glance the lovers might appear isolated in their own private moment, in fact the outside world of Osaka permeates the scene. The lovers have found themselves at this juncture due to the difficulties of low status commoners in the new cash economy: Kaheiji does not have the money to buy out Saga's contract. Without the financial resources of a lover, Saga cannot escape the binds of the prostitution industry. So, they have made their way to the grounds of Ikudama Shrine, a bustling religious complex on the outskirts of Osaka and the site of the earliest recorded love suicide in 1683. The setting of the scene reminds the audience of the actual place and its history of love suicide. Additionally, Kaheiji and Saga are doubles for another pair of lovers, Ohatsu and Tokubei, who committed suicide in 1703 and were immortalized in Chikamatsu's *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*. *Ikudama*, performed for the thirteenth anniversary of Ohatsu and Tokubei's deaths, was a vehicle for remembering and honoring the dead.

We now turn to the play that made it possible for audiences to see the figures of Kaheiji and Saga as heroes, *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*.

Chapter One: Modeling Love Suicide

At the conclusion of Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki shinjū*), which premiered at the Takemoto Theatre in 1703, the lovers tie themselves to a tree in Sonezaki woods with the heroine's sash so they can die "immaculately" (*isagiyō*) side by side.⁵⁶ The lovers are aware that their suicide will become the topic of the songs sung in the teahouses, so they take the time to ensure that their deaths will be judged favorably. Tokubei, the hero, declares, "We will become an unparalleled model of a love suicide" (*yo ni taguinaki shiniyō no tehon to naran*).⁵⁷ After their deaths, the narrator returns to this idea of the lovers as a model (*tehon*). He chants, "They have become models of true love" (*koi no tehon to narinikeri*).⁵⁸ The play celebrates the lovers as models for other lovers and suggests that double suicide is the purest expression of romantic love. This representation of love suicide as an act worthy of admiration was an entirely new perspective.

The profound shift in the perspective on love suicide can be difficult for contemporary readers to grasp since Chikamatsu was so effective in shifting the discourse about love suicide. The idea that love suicide was the pinnacle of expressions of love spread through his plays to other theatrical adaptations, ballads, and illustrated books. It also eventually spread from the

⁵⁶ Keene, *The Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 55. Yamane Tameo, annot. and trans. in *Chikamatsu Monzaemon shū* 2, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2003) vol. 75, 40.

⁵⁷ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 40. Adapted from Keene's translation, "We will become an unparalleled example of a lover's suicide." *The Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 55.

⁵⁸ Keene, *The Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 56. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 43. The original text does not clearly indicate whether it is Ohatsu, Tokubei, or the lovers who are the "model" of true love. Keene supplies the subject "they" in his translation. While there are multiple possible readings of this final sentence, most likely the lovers as a couple are the "model." Koyama, *Chikamatsu jōruri no kenkyū*, 58-59.

Osaka-Kyoto region to Edo. However, as Hara Michio has pointed out, popular opinion of the time regarded love suicide negatively. Most people considered such suicides to have been motivated by financial desperation and not as an expression of love at all. Further, love suicides were a phenomenon associated with low-ranking prostitutes and the men who frequented them.⁵⁹

Sonezaki drew on current theatrical practice as it innovated. Chikamatsu built upon ideas already in circulation within the pleasure quarters and on kabuki models for depicting contemporary life with realism. In dramatizing the incident for the puppet theatre, Chikamatsu and his collaborator, the chanter Takemoto Gidayū, took full advantage of the puppet theatre's reputation for eliciting tears to represent Ohatsu and Tokubei's love suicide tragically. Chikamatsu also used characterization, embellishment, theatrical techniques, and his language to foster empathy for the lovers. Most radically, he rendered the suicide sacred. The view of love suicide that Chikamatsu celebrated in *Sonezaki*, a sacred, tragic act audience members could connect with intimately, captivated the city. This shift in the discourse was the critical event that made it possible for an Osaka public to emerge.

***Shinjū*: A Model for Expressing Love**

Shinjū, the practice that later developed into love suicide, began in the pleasure quarters as a series of codified behaviors for a prostitute to express the sincerity of her feelings. *Shinjū*, a compound composed of “heart” 心 and “inside” 中, literally means “within one's heart.” When the term first came into usage in the seventeenth century, it referred to the tokens of love a prostitute gave to her client. Over the course of a liaison, a prostitute would prove the sincerity of her feelings for a client through a conventionalized series of tokens. Chronicler Fujimoto Kizan

⁵⁹ Hara Michio, *Chikamatsu jōruri no sakugekihō* (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 2013), 561.

articulated these steps in his 1678 book, *The Great Mirror of Love (Shikidō ōkagami)*, which described the etiquette of the pleasure quarters in detail.⁶⁰ According to Kizan, the courtesan would first send a fragment torn from her fingernail. Next, she would send a written vow of love followed by a lock of hair. As the affair deepened, she would then tattoo her lover's name somewhere on her body. The next stage was the gift of one of her fingers. In the most extreme case, the courtesan would pierce her flesh with a sharp blade. Kizan acknowledged that most couples would stop at the gift of a finger, but stated that he felt impelled to include this more extreme case of self-mutilation in his account since it happened on "rare occasions."⁶¹ Usually the woman would stab herself in the fleshy part of the arm or in the thigh. Kizan instructed the reader that although stabbing one's flesh may be the highest form of *shinjū* due to its severity, visitors to the pleasure quarters should "neither speak of it nor engage in it."⁶²

In actual practice, these gestures were often symbolic. Hair and fingernails could grow back. As for the tattoos, while the exact techniques are unknown, contemporary sources imply that it was possible to remove them.⁶³ The pleasure district's common location near execution grounds enabled a painless solution to the cutting of the fingers and nails: beggars sold prostitutes the fingernails and fingers procured from corpses.⁶⁴ Some prostitutes sent their clients fingers made from rice flour dough.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Lawrence Rogers, "She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not. *Shinjū* and *Shikido Okagami*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 49:1 (Spring 1994): 40-60.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶³ Cecilia Segawa Seigel, *Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), 193.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Whether real or symbolic, Kizan made clear in his writing that love suicide was not at all a type of *shinjū*, acknowledging in his very denial that this term had already begun to take on the meaning that would come to predominate by the beginning of the eighteenth century. The most common term for love suicide during this time was *shinjūshi* (a *shinjū* death).⁶⁶ Kizan insisted, “Death is not the ultimate *shinjū*... to end one’s life with a lover is an act of baseness and stupidity. For the most part we cannot but call such people lunatics.”⁶⁷

Shinjū became increasingly synonymous with “love suicide” by the end of the seventeenth century. Illustrated books telling stories of double suicides (*shinjū ezōshi*) flourished during the Jōkyō and Genroku eras (1684-1704).⁶⁸ Two illustrated books at either end of this period provide a measure of the shift in meaning of the term. In a illustrated book from 1686, *Women of True Feeling from the Various Provinces (Shokoku shinjū onna)*, the *shinjū* in the title retained the meaning it had in Kizan’s writing: as sincerity of feeling. Only three of the thirty-eight stories included ended in a love suicide.⁶⁹ By 1704, a year after the Takemoto Theatre premiered Chikamatsu’s *Sonezaki*, all twenty-one episodes in the illustrated book *The Mirror of Love Suicides (Shinjū ōkagami)* end in love suicide. *Shinjū* in the sense of love suicide was also a popular subject for ballads. Ascertaining the exact dates for popular ballads is impossible since many of the ballads were cheaply printed and lack dates, and even those with dates might be printings of songs that had been performed much earlier. Still, in his analysis of the types of ballads appearing in the eight volume of the *Collected Songs of Japan (Nihon kayō shūsei)*, Suwa

⁶⁶ Rogers, “She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not,” 39.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Linhart, “Quenching the Thirst for Information,” 236.

⁶⁹ Rodgers, “She Love Me, She Loves Me Not,” 39.

Haruo has demonstrated that ballads about love suicide constitute the largest category of songs.⁷⁰ A full twenty-two of the fifty-five songs in the volume tell stories of love suicide.⁷¹

The first love suicide incident took place in the pleasure quarters as an extension of the practice of *shinjū*. The earliest known example is the double suicide of Yamatoya Ichinojō, a prostitute, and Chōemon, a street performer, at Ikudama Shrine in Osaka in 1683.⁷² In *The Great Mirror of Love*, Kizan specified that the practice of *shinjū* was limited to the pleasure quarters: “The use of this symbolic act has been the deed of courtesans, but not of other women.”⁷³ However, as the practice became better known through its representations on stage and in print, it spread beyond the confines of the brothel districts into merchant districts and surrounding towns. In the early eighteenth century, there are many examples of shop girls and merchant daughters choosing *shinjū*. This shift in demographics spurred a shift in the representation of love suicide on stage as writers, including Chikamatsu, began to tell *shinjū* stories with heroines far removed from the pleasure quarters.

Structural Models for the Love Suicide Play

⁷⁰ The full chart of Suwa’s analysis is reproduced in Koyama, *Chikamatsu jōruri no kenkyū*, 126-128.

⁷¹ Ibid., 126-127. Additional categories are love stories (11 songs), crime stories (8), masses for the dead (*tsuizenmono*) (5), *sekkyō* (4), and miscellany (5).

⁷² This is also the incident Chikamatsu cites as the “first” love suicide in *The Love Suicides in Midsummer with an Icy Blade* (*Shinjū yaiba wa kōri no tsuitachi*, 1709) when the lovers trace the history of love suicide. The earliest known case of a lover committing suicide in order to join a lover in death was an incident involving two men in 1640. The earliest known such story with a heterosexual couple took place in 1679. In both cases, one lover followed the other in death after some amount of time had passed. The earliest known case of the lovers attempting to die simultaneously, a key feature in Chikamatsu’s love suicide plays, was the Ikudama incident in 1683. See Kobayashi Kyōji, *Shinjū e no shōtaijō* (Tokyo: Bunshunshinsho, 2005), 16-17.

⁷³ Rogers, “She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not,” 40.

Love suicide plays developed in the late seventeenth century out of the genre of plays that depicted contemporary events.⁷⁴ The first of these plays that drew from recent events grew out of short pieces (*kiri-kyōgen*) performed after the main play, which was usually a lengthy historical epic.⁷⁵ The earliest known “after-piece” to focus on a contemporary event was *Yūgiri’s Last New Year* (*Yūgiri nagori no shōgatsu*), performed in Kyoto in 1678.⁷⁶ The play was conceived by kabuki actor Sakata Tōjūrō (1647-1709), who pioneered a new, more realistic style of acting to accompany this type of play. Tōjūrō based the play on the recent death of Yūgiri, a prostitute from the Shinmachi district in Osaka known for her beauty and charm who died from illness in the first few days of 1678.⁷⁷ Tōjūrō’s production, which premiered only a month after her death, featured him in the role of Fujiya Izaemon, Yūgiri’s fictional lover. This role was Tōjūrō’s first massive success. Tōjūrō reprised the play four times in 1678. Traveling kabuki troupes staged adaptations of Tōjūrō’s play by the fall of the same year. In the first month of 1679, an Osaka kabuki theatre presented a memorial play commemorating the one-year anniversary of Yūgiri’s death.⁷⁸ Tōjūrō’s success in *Yūgiri’s Last New Year* prompted other theatres to present stories taken from contemporary life, including stories about recent love suicides.

⁷⁴ The genre of “contemporary life plays” (*sewamono*) comprised plays depicting contemporary events such as crime dramas, adultery plays, and love suicide plays.

⁷⁵ *Sonezaki*, too, was first performed as an after-piece.

⁷⁶ Megumi Inoue, “Oshichi, the Greengrocer’s Daughter: A Cultural History of *Sewamono*, 1686-1821” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2004) 44. The playwright and exact theatre where it was performed remain unknown. See Laurence R. Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki: Their Lives, Loves and Legacy* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1997), 112.

⁷⁷ Kominz likens the death of Yūgiri in Osaka to the death of Marilyn Monroe in the United States. *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 112.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Love suicide plays (or *shinjūmono*, as they later came to be known) were a subset of contemporary life plays. The first of these plays, *The Love Suicides at Ikudama* (*Ikudama shinjū*), premiered in 1683 in Osaka. The play told the story of the recent double suicide of Yamatoya Ichinojō and Chōemon at Osaka's Ikudama Shrine.⁷⁹ Three kabuki theatres in Osaka—the Arashi Theatre, the Araki Theatre, and the Yamatoya Theatre—all produced rival dramatizations of this event with the same title, *The Love Suicides at Ikudama*.⁸⁰ Osaka kabuki theatres produced three more love suicide plays in the last years of the seventeenth century: *The Love Suicides at Toribeyama* (*Toribeyama shinjū*) at the Araki Theatre in 1684, *The Red Dye of the Mountain Rose* (*Akane no iroage*) at the Iwai Theatre in 1695, and *The Love Suicides at Ishikakechō* (*Ishikakechō shinjū*) at the Arashi Theatre in 1699.⁸¹

The Red Dye of the Mountain Rose was the first love suicide play to be a major hit and ran for one hundred and fifty days.⁸² It told the story of the prostitute Sankatsu and her lover Hanshichi, who committed suicide together in the graveyard of Sennichi Temple in Osaka. This success probably led to the increasing frequency on love suicide as a subject for kabuki plays. Between 1699 and 1703 kabuki theatres in Osaka and Kyoto staged ten productions of love suicide plays. Generally, these plays dramatized particularly shocking recent incidents that had already been popularized through songs, illustrated prints (*ezōshi*), or the ballads and *kawaraban* of the *yomiuri*.⁸³ In 1700, the story of the prostitute Seki and her lover Saburōbei captivated audiences. Three kabuki theatres staged dramatizations: the Araki Theatre and Iwai Theatre, both

⁷⁹ Inoue, “Oshichi, the Greengrocer’s Daughter,” 56.

⁸⁰ Suwa Haruo, *Genroku kabuki no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1983), 173.

⁸¹ Suwa, *Genroku kabuki no kenkyū*, 173.

⁸² Shively, *The Love Suicide at Amijima*, 25.

⁸³ Suwa, *Genroku kabuki no kenkyū*, 175.

in Osaka, titled theirs *The Love Suicides at Sennichi Temple* (*Sennichidera shinjū*), and the Yamashita Theatre in Kyoto titled its production *A Teahouse Tale of Love Suicide* (*Shinjū chaya banashi*).⁸⁴

The popular story of Seki and Saburōbei also inspired the first puppet theatre adaptation of a love suicide story in 1700. The chanter Takemoto Takumi Ridayū performed a one-act play, *The Tale of the Love Suicides at Sennichi Temple in Osaka* (*Ōsaka sennichi-dera shinjū monogatari*), at the Takemoto Theatre. The puppet theatre production did not match the commercial success of the kabuki plays on the same topic.⁸⁵ It did not vary much from previous kabuki models and was mostly an amalgam of the kabuki genre of the Yūgiri plays and the kabuki play *The Courtesan on the Buddha Plain* (*Keisei hotoke no hara*, 1699) by Chikamatsu and Kaneko.⁸⁶

Sonezaki landed on the Takemoto stage in the midst of the growing fervor for plays about love suicide. In 1700, the Otowa Theatre in Osaka produced *The Love Suicides at Obase* (*Obase shinjū*). In 1702, the story of Oshun and Denbei, also made famous by ballads, appeared at Kyoto's Mandayū Theatre as *The Rice Shop Love Suicide* (*Komeya shinjū*). In 1703, Kyoto's Sōun Theatre presented the same story as *The Love Suicides at the Riverside with the Three-Branched Tree* (*Sanbongi kawara shinjū*). 1703 was a big year for love suicide plays. Two Osaka theatres staged versions of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*: Chikamatsu's puppet theatre version at the Takemoto Theatre and a kabuki version at the Takeshima Theatre. In the Kyoto kabuki scene, the Otowa Theatre staged *The Love Suicides at Karasaki* (*Karasaki shinjū*) and the

⁸⁴ Suwa, *Genroku kabuki no kenkyū*, 173-174.

⁸⁵ Michael Brownstein, "The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage and Chikamatsu's 'The Love Suicides at Sonezaki'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 66, no. 1 (2006): 19-20.

⁸⁶ Iguchi Hiroshi, "Sewa jōruri no seiritsu to tenkai," in *Chikamatsu no jidai*, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998), 119.

Mandayū Theatre staged *The Love Suicide at the Riverside* (*Kawara shinjū*), which combined the Sonezaki story with that of Oshun and Denbei.⁸⁷ One of Kyoto's puppet theatres, the Uji Theatre, staged a production of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, which followed the plot of Chikamatsu's play closely with only minor alterations to the wording of the lines and songs.⁸⁸

As the genre of contemporary life plays developed, the status of the plays also increased. Actor critiques (*yakusha hyōbanki*) afford a valuable window through which to view the increasing status of contemporary life plays, which rose during the transition to the early eighteenth century, as Suwa Haruo has demonstrated through his analysis of this literature. Actor critiques, which began to be published in the 1660's usually in an annual edition, rated actors with descriptions of their strengths and weaknesses in that year's performances. Actors were graded into basic categories of "high" (*jō*), "average" (*chū*), and "low" (*ge*) quality. Each of these categories were then divided again into high, medium, and low and then subdivided further.⁸⁹ Actor critiques were published and read throughout the Edo period making them "one of the most enduring genres of the entire Tokugawa period."⁹⁰ Well-known writers and poets often wrote the actor critiques, so their evaluations may not wholly coincide with those of the average audience member.⁹¹ Suwa observed a key change in the casting of contemporary life plays. Lower rank actors appeared in the early plays. The first actor of the highest rank (*jō-jō-kichi*) to appear in a contemporary life play was Sakata Tōjūrō in *On the Ninth Day of the Fourth Month: The Teahouse of the Morning Star* (*Uzuki kokonoka sono akatsuki no myōjō ga chaya*) in

⁸⁷ Suwa, *Genroku kabuki no kenkyū*, 173-176.

⁸⁸ Fujino Yoshio, *Sonezaki shinjū kaishaku to kenkyū* (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1971), 31.

⁸⁹ Jacob Raz, *Audience and Actors: A Study of their Interaction in the Japanese Traditional Theatre* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983), 155-156.

⁹⁰ Kimbrough and Shimazaki, introduction to *Publishing the Stage*, 6.

⁹¹ Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 156.

1697.⁹² After this production other high-rank actors began to appear in contemporary life plays.⁹³ Suwa concludes that this shift in the casting to higher rank actors indicates a general shift regarding perceptions of contemporary life plays.

Specifically regarding love suicide plays, Suwa has observed that the early love suicide plays were primarily vehicles for heroic male roles actors (*tachiyaku*) rather than for female role actors (*onnagata*). In many cases, the critiques listed the male role actors' names while omitting the female role actor's name.⁹⁴ Suwa has noted that Chikamatsu's choice to emphasize the female character, Ohatsu, in *Sonezaki* was therefore a singular departure from the norm.⁹⁵ Through Chikamatsu's brush, Ohatsu became a figure for identification and a vehicle for transcendence.

The trajectory of the fifteen kabuki productions of love suicide plays listed above demonstrates several aspects of the love suicide play genre as Chikamatsu encountered it for his adaptation of the Sonezaki incident. First, love suicide became an increasingly frequent subject for the plays. After the initial three productions in 1683 and one production in 1684, there are no subsequent productions until the box office hit *The Red Dye of the Mountain Rose* in 1695. In the following eight years, kabuki theatres mounted ten productions. Thus, Chikamatsu was joining in a genre that was already somewhat familiar to audiences. Second, the production of love suicide plays concentrated in Osaka. Of the fifteen early kabuki love suicide plays, ten were produced at Osaka theatres. Kyoto did not produce its first love suicide play until 1700. Likewise, the majority of the events narrated in the love suicide plays had taken place in Osaka, regardless of

⁹² Suwa considers plays about Yūgiri to be a separate genre than the contemporary life play. Tōjūrō appeared in the first Yūgiri play in 1678.

⁹³ Suwa, *Genroku kabuki no kenkyū*, 183.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

where they were produced. These fifteen plays dramatized nine separate stories. Six of the plays were based on incidents that had taken place in Osaka, including the two most frequently dramatized, the Ikudama Shrine suicide from 1683 and the Sennichi Temple incident from 1700.⁹⁶ As a side note on the puppet theatre, the first puppet theatre dramatization of a love suicide play, which was staged at an Osaka theatre, also told a story set in Osaka. The confluence of actual events, their sensationalization in popular media and on stage, and the reverberations between them conspired to make Osaka the love suicide capital of Japan.

Beyond the topic and setting for the plays, some structural features of the genre had already emerged in these early works. Chikamatsu drew on these aspects of previous love suicide plays in writing *Sonezaki*. Only two of the early fifteen kabuki love suicide scripts are extant, *A Teahouse Tale of Love Suicide* and *The Love Suicide at the Riverside*, but both reveal similarities to Chikamatsu's work.⁹⁷ One key point of resemblance is the important role of the lovers' financial problems in the events leading to the suicides. In *Teahouse*, debts plague both protagonists: the hero owes money to a friend, and creditors threaten to sell the heroine to a distant brothel to raise the money to clear her father's debts. In *Riverside*, the financial difficulties revolve around arrangements out of the control of the protagonists: the hero's uncle has accepted a dowry on his behalf and the heroine's father has accepted money for her to be sent to serve in a provincial lord's household. The exploration of the harsh financial realities of

⁹⁶ The Osaka-set plays are *The Love Suicides at Ikudama* (three versions), *The Love Suicides at Toribeyama*, *The Love Suicides at Sennichi Temple* (two versions), *A Teahouse Tale of Love Suicide*, which dramatized the Sennichi Temple incident, *The Love Suicides at Obase*, and *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*. *The Love Suicide at the Riverside* combines the Osaka-set *Sonezaki* story and the Kyoto-set Oshun and Denbei story. Basic plot descriptions are in Suwa, *Genroku kabuki no kenkyū*, 176.

⁹⁷ Summaries of both plays are in William James Lee, *Genroku Kabuki: Cultural Production and Ideology in Early Modern Japan* vol. 2 (PhD dissertation, McGill University, 1996), 100-102 and 107-108.

the heroes and heroines remains a consistent element in Chikamatsu's *Sonezaki* and later love suicide plays. Additionally, Chikamatsu's *Sonezaki* closely adheres to the basic plot structure of *Teahouse*, which opens with the obstacles the couple faces, adds complexity to the possibility of their overcoming these obstacles, takes the couple on a journey (*michiyuki*) after their decision to die together, and ends in death.⁹⁸ Chikamatsu repeated some of the family relationships from *Riverside*, particularly the young man who foregoes a marriage despite the dowry already having been received by a family member. The plot similarities make sense; *Riverside* was performed just weeks before *Sonezaki* and was based on a mixture of elements from the *Sonezaki* incident with the story of Oshun and Denbei's suicide.⁹⁹

During the end of the seventeenth century and the first few years of the eighteenth century love suicide plays developed from minor afterpieces into their own genre with greater star power. They drew on scandalous recent events to heighten box office draw. They also developed some of the thematic foci, such as the financial difficulties of the protagonists, and the basic plot structure that Chikamatsu incorporated into his love suicide plays. Chikamatsu's *Sonezaki* built off earlier efforts in the kabuki and puppet theatres. As we shall see, he also made some critical departures from previous models and truly launched the contemporary life play as a major theatrical genre of the early eighteenth century.¹⁰⁰

Sakata Tōjūrō: A Model for Realism

⁹⁸ Michael Brownstein points out the structural similarities in "The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage and Chikamatsu's 'Love Suicides at Sonezaki,'" 19-26. However, he ignores that these early plays featured a *michiyuki* prior to the lovers' deaths and considers this structural motif to be one of Chikamatsu's innovations.

⁹⁹ Lee, *Genroku Kabuki*, 242.

¹⁰⁰ Torigoe Bunzō, "Shinjū ten no Amijima" in *Chikamatsu no jidai*, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988), 188.

The second major innovation in kabuki at the end of the seventeenth century that laid the groundwork for Chikamatsu's later success was the development of a realistic acting style and an accompanying writing style by Sakata Tōjūrō, a Kyoto-based male role actor. Tōjūrō took a strong role in shaping the plays he appeared in, often introducing the main idea to his collaborators and making final changes to the scripts. In this way, he was able to pioneer a dramaturgy wherein the comedy or tragedy of a moment sprang from the situation depicted in the story rather than through the histrionics of the actors.¹⁰¹ Tōjūrō developed many of these plays with Chikamatsu and Kaneko Kichizaemon (d. 1728), a playwright and comedic actor. An example of this situation-based dramaturgy can be seen in Kaneko and Chikamatsu's *The Festive Display of Statuary at the Temple of Maya, Mother of the Buddha* (*Butsumo Mayasan kaichō*), Chikamatsu's first surviving kabuki play. *The Festive Display* premiered in 1693 at the Mandayū Theatre in Kyoto with Tōjūrō in the lead role.¹⁰² Overall the play is "fanciful and utterly implausible," but there is a scene in Act Two that "stands out for its verisimilitude; it involves a very down-to-earth negotiation between Kamon, the protagonist of the play and the heir of a provincial lord, and a brothel owner over the terms of the ransom of Kamon's current love."¹⁰³ This scene, with its realistic portrayal of a slice of Edo life, shows the beginning of the development of Tōjūrō's realistic style. Another example in the development of situation-based dramaturgy is the box office triumph of *The Courtesan on the Buddha Plain*, which premiered in 1699 at the Mandayū Theatre in Kyoto. In this play, a comedy, the playwrights wrote a number

¹⁰¹ Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 125.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 119.

of comedic scenes that required Tōjūrō to play them “straight” in order to achieve the comedic effect.¹⁰⁴

As a complement to the realism in the writing, Tōjūrō developed an acting style called “stationary acting” (*i-kyōgen*), which emphasized the delivery of monologues and lines of dialogue rather than dance, the original core of kabuki performance.¹⁰⁵ In Tōjūrō’s case it was said he “poured out the pent-up feelings with a flood of words.”¹⁰⁶ Tōjūrō described his process on opening night,

I listen on the stage to what the other actors say to me, and then I remember my lines and speak them. The reason why I do this is that when one encounters people in the ordinary course of events, or fights or disputes with them, one has not the advantage of having lines prepared in advance. One hears what the other has to say, and then, and not before, one’s reply comes to one’s lips. In acting, I think that everyday life should be the model, and that is why I commit the words properly to memory and forget them when I appear on the first day.¹⁰⁷

This passage echoes contemporary approaches to realist acting, particularly the importance of listening to one’s acting partner before responding.

To better understand Tōjūrō’s style, it is helpful to contrast his method to that of his rival in male role acting in the Kyoto and Osaka region, Yamashita Hanzaemon (1650?-1717). Whereas Tōjūrō was acclaimed for his portrayal of young men patronizing the pleasure quarters, Hanzaemon was known for his portrayal of samurai characters, especially in martial roles. In terms of his acting, Hanzaemon was particularly known for improvisation and breaking character in order to deliver off-color jokes to his fans.¹⁰⁸ This is a marked difference from Tōjūrō, who

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 142.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 147.

¹⁰⁶ Torigoe Bunzō quoted in Inoue, “Oshichi, the Greengrocer’s Daughter,” 55.

¹⁰⁷ Kaneko Kichizaemon, “Dust in the Ears” in *The Actors’ Analects*, ed. and trans. Charles J. Dunn and Bunzō Torigoe (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1969), 76.

¹⁰⁸ Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 128-129.

said, “If you wish to be praised, the best way to set about this is to forget the audience and concentrate upon playing the play as if it was really happening.”¹⁰⁹

Chikamatsu’s collaboration with Tōjūrō on many of these innovative plays would have given him the opportunity to observe and participate in Tōjūrō emphasis on situation-based dramaturgy and realist acting. Tōjūrō collaborated with Chikamatsu and Kaneko between 1693 and 1703 on approximately ten plays.¹¹⁰ Their collaborative process is illustrated in an excerpt from Kaneko’s diary, which chronicles his collaboration with Chikamatsu, whom he refers to by his given name Nobumori.¹¹¹ In one excerpt Kaneko writes, “Nobumori came. We finished the main play in the evening. Then Nobumori went to discuss it with Tōjūrō, and I went to discuss it with [the actors] Yamatoya Jinbei and Mizuki Tatsunosuke.”¹¹² This passage does not provide much of a view into the collaborative process shared by the playwrights and the actors, but it does indicate that scripts were fine-tuned with input from the actors and that Chikamatsu was in close conversation with Tōjūrō in this period.

Tōjūrō pioneered shifts toward realism in the plays’ dramaturgy and in the acting. However, as Mori Shū has noted, whatever movement toward realism kabuki may have made, these advances were limited to certain roles and certain scenes. They did not yet represent a consistent approach over an entire play. The first plays consistently to apply Tōjūrō’s realism

¹⁰⁹ Kaneko, “Dust in the Ears,” 79.

¹¹⁰ Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 128.

¹¹¹ Katherine Saltzman-Li, *Creating Kabuki Plays: Context for Kezairoku*, “Valuable Notes on Playwrighting” (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 30.

¹¹² Yamatoya Jinbei was another male role actor in Tōjūrō’s company while Mizuki Tatsunosuke was a female role actor. Quoted in Saltzman-Li, *Creating Kabuki Plays*, 31.

were Chikamatsu's love suicide plays and murder plays.¹¹³ The first of these was his epoch-making *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*.

The Love Suicides at Sonezaki

I have established that Chikamatsu drew on existing models for representing love suicide. From the culture of the pleasure quarters, he drew on the associations of the practice of sincerely expressing love, *shinjū*, with love suicide. From kabuki, Chikamatsu had witnessed the shift toward realist, situation-based plays that dramatized contemporary events, and the corresponding development of realist acting techniques that emphasized conveying the dramatic situation through the delivery of the text. In order to prepare for the analysis of the play, I will begin with a brief plot summary.

The play opens with the beautiful prostitute Ohatsu visiting all thirty-three sites on Osaka's Kannon Pilgrimage, an urban pilgrimage route in which pilgrims prayed to the bodhisattva Kannon.¹¹⁴ At Ikudama Shrine, the last stop on her pilgrimage, she encounters her lover, Tokubei, a clerk for a soy-sauce shop. They steal a moment to speak in secret since Ohatsu's client, who has been participating in the pilgrimage with her, has left Ohatsu alone for a moment while he has gone to watch street performers impersonate popular kabuki actors on the shrine grounds. Tokubei explains that he has not written or visited because he has been busy with personal affairs, principally lending a large sum of money to his good friend Kuheiji. At that moment, Kuheiji appears with some of his friends. Tokubei asks for the repayment and produces a promissory note with Kuheiji's seal. Kuheiji, however, accuses him of fraud. Kuheiji's friends

¹¹³ Mori, *Chikamatsu Monzaemon*, 149.

¹¹⁴ Kannon or Kanzeon (Sk. Avalokiteśvara) is the bodhisattva of compassion. Kannon can manifest in male or female form. "Avalokiteśvara," in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr. et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 82-83.

confirm that the seal on Tokubei's promissory note had been stolen a few days before the note was stamped. Although Tokubei is the victim of Kuheiji's swindle, he is unable to provide proof. Kuheiji heaps insults upon Tokubei, and he and his men kick and beat him in front of Ohatsu. Ohatsu's client forces her into a palanquin to return to the brothel. Left alone, the beaten Tokubei is humiliated that his reputation and honor have been tarnished by Kuheiji's scheme. Later, at Ohatsu's brothel, Ohatsu is consumed by sadness when she overhears malicious rumors about Tokubei. Chief among the rumormongers is Kuheiji, who has come to the brothel to smear Tokubei's name so that the brothel will cease to do business with him. Tokubei appears dejectedly at the gate. Ohatsu sneaks him into the brothel and conceals him by draping the outer robe of her kimono over the edge of the veranda under which he is hiding. As Kuheiji tells the other prostitutes how Tokubei tried to swindle him, Ohatsu and Tokubei resolve to die together. That night, Ohatsu and Tokubei escape the brothel. They journey to the Sonezaki woods where they commit their suicide.

Sonezaki was not the first version of a love suicide play to be performed in the puppet theatre. However, this production was the first to take full advantage of the puppet theatre form. Chikamatsu capitalized on the puppet theatre's emphasis on establishing an empathetic relationship between the spectators and the characters. He also created strong connections with Buddhism and drew from the form's religious roots to render the heroine and the act of love suicide sacred. Thus, two of his major innovations in this play were the sympathetic treatment of the lovers and the sacralization of love suicide and the heroine, Ohatsu.

With this production, Chikamatsu took advantage of a recent story that was already popular in the theatre. The exact date and circumstances of the historical incident remain hazy. Scholars have generally agreed that Chikamatsu's *Sonezaki* premiered on the seventh day of the

fifth month in 1703.¹¹⁵ The original incident was noted in two contemporary sources: one that placed it on the seventh day of the fourth month and one that dated it to the twenty-third day of the fourth month. Since the prologue mentioned the passage of a month, the earlier date has become the accepted date.¹¹⁶ Moreover, the kabuki dramatization appeared first on the fifteenth day of the fourth month, just weeks after the incident. According to the *Kabuki Chronology* (*Kabuki nenpyō*) for 1703, the Takeshima Theatre premiered the kabuki production and “subsequently, every theatre in Kyoto and Osaka competed in performances [of *Sonezaki*] (*tsuide keihan no kakuza kore o kyōensu*).”¹¹⁷ This source indicated that Chikamatsu drew on popular subject material.

The play offered three distinct but interrelated models: a model for the act of love suicide, a model for the dramatization of love suicide, and a model for the discourse about love suicide. Chikamatsu created a model for the act of love suicide by laying out a ritualized, repeatable series of steps for the act in the death scene. These same ritualized deaths repeat throughout Chikamatsu’s plays and in many other representations of the act written by others. At around the same time as *Sonezaki*, some commentators were suggesting that theatre performances of love suicides were inspiring some among the public to carry out love suicides themselves.¹¹⁸ The play also became a generic model. It set the structure, characterization, tone, and style for later plays. This is why the play is often considered the first contemporary life play (*sewamono*) even though, as I have shown, artists in kabuki and the puppet theatre had already been experimenting

¹¹⁵ Torigoe Bunzō et al., “Kaisetsu” in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 657.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 657.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 657.

¹¹⁸ For example, in the account of an incident at Karasaki in *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides*, the author relates that death had been on the lovers’ minds since they saw a performance of *The Rice Shop Love Suicide*. “Shinjū ōkagami,” in *Shōsetsu chūkan*. (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1910), 200.

with representing contemporary life.¹¹⁹ Most interesting to this discussion of the role of the love suicide plays in fostering an urban, commoner public is the way Chikamatsu and the other artists modeled the response to the act of love suicide. The play fostered a feeling of empathetic connection with the characters and represented the act as admirable. *Sonezaki* transformed the discourse around love suicide, reinventing it as a sacred act of love. The production was highly influential. It dramatized a story already popular among the theatre-going public in a production that showcased the premier chanter and puppeteer of the time. The production's tremendous success meant that its innovations transformed depictions of love suicide in theatre, ballads, and print.

The Prologue: Announcing a New Direction

Even before the play began, the prologue signaled a departure from earlier love suicide plays. Tatsumatsu delivered the curtain speech (*kōjō*):

The play we are about to perform, *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, came about when Chikamatsu Monzaemon of Kyoto happened to be in Osaka last month and heard about this incident. Thinking it would make an entertaining play, he quickly wrote the *jōruri* we now offer you. It has been done as a kabuki play here and there, and our version is not very different. This, however, is the first time it will be done as a puppet play. For the opening we have a *michiyuki* [travel scene] of the Thirty-Three Station Pilgrimage. The puppets are nothing out of the ordinary, and as you can see, I will be operating them. At any rate, since you came to hear Chikugonōjō, we hope you enjoy the show. And now for the opening of the love-suicide play – please get ready.¹²⁰

Kondo shirimasu Sonezaki no shinjū no gi wa miyako Chikamatsu Monzaemon ato tsuki futto gotōchi e kudariawasemashite kyō no koto gozarimashita o uketamawari nan to zo onagusami ni mo narimasuru sama ni to zonjimashite soku jōruri ni torikumi ome ni

¹¹⁹ Torigoe Bunzō has noted that while the term “*sewa*” was sometimes used to refer to early kabuki plays about recent events, the term *sewamono*, which became the designation for these types of plays, arose in response to *Sonezaki* and only started being used with frequency in 1705. “Shinjū ten no Amijima,” 188.

¹²⁰ Brownstein, “The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage,” 22.

*kakemasuru yō ni gozarimasu. Hōbō no kabuki ni mo shirimashite sanomi kawarimashita gi mo gozarimasene domo jōruri ni shirimasu wa hajime ni te gozarimasuru. Jo ni sanjūsansho no kannon meguri no michiyuki ga gozarimasu. Ningyō no gi wa mezurashikaranu tomo omedoorinite watashi ga tsukaimasuru sama ni gozarimasu to kaku gohiiki no Chikugo-no-jō-sama de gozarimasuru ma nanigoto mo yoshina ni gokenbutsu kudasaremashō. Kore yori shinjū no hajimarishō ni okokoro e nasaremasei.*¹²¹

The prologue set up a number of key points about the production. First, it accentuated the contemporaneity of the piece by specifying that the incident took place only the month before. Second, Chikamatsu was mentioned by name, a sign of the growing importance of playwrights, but Chikugo-no-jō, the chanter most commonly known as Takemoto Gidayū, was identified clearly as the star performer. The prologue hinted at the kabuki production of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* performed at Takeshima Theatre in Osaka in the same year. The text implied that the placement of this play in the puppet theatre was one of its innovations. It designated the pilgrimage entrance as a highlight. Tatsumatsu was being modest when he said that “the puppets are nothing out of the ordinary” since actually he employed an impressive trick puppet in which the Ohatsu puppet transformed into the bodhisattva Kannon at the end of the pilgrimage scene.

This prologue pointed to some of the elements from earlier love suicide plays: the dramatization of a recent Osaka story that has already been treated in kabuki. Even the use of the pilgrimage entrance derived from the popularity of pilgrimage entrances at the time in kabuki.¹²² The prologue presents as new the fact that this adaptation of the Sonezaki story was done as a puppet play. This is important because the puppet theatre, and Takemoto Gidayū’s lineage in particular, already had a reputation of emphasizing the emotion in the story and eliciting tears from the audience.

¹²¹ Quoted in *Gidayū nenpyō* vol. 1, ed. Gidayū nenpyō kinseihen kankōkai (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1979), 27.

¹²² Brownstein, “The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage,” 20.

Chikamatsu's decision to write for the puppet theatre, which had already established a rich tradition of connecting with the audience on an emotional level, likely contributed to *Sonezaki*'s innovative treatment of love suicide as a tragic act by sympathetic characters. The puppet theatre's roots are in the chanted narrative form *jōruri*. From early *jōruri*, the chanters were esteemed for their ability to coax tears from the audience. For example, *Funny Tales of the Tenna Era, 1681-1684 (Tenna shōishū)* from the 1680s described the powerful effect the famous chanter Osaka Shichidayū had on spectators: "Whatever kind of rapaciously cruel diamond deva king or wicked fiend a man might be, he will listen until his legs go stiff and his arms fall numb, shedding torrents of tears from his goggly eyes, oblivious to the shadows of the setting sun."¹²³ A description from the same period of an eyewitness account by Confucian scholar Dazai Shundai (1680-1747) of *sekkyō-bushi* also reflects the same ability to move the audience.¹²⁴ Dazai wrote, "The voice is so profoundly sorrowful that it moves women to copious tears."¹²⁵ The *jōruri* chanting of Chikamatsu's time grew out of old *jōruri* and *sekkyō-bushi*. Like these older forms, it emphasized the chanter's performance. It is possible that links between the melodies of the old and the new forms created expectations for the audience. Audience members may have come to the puppet theatre expecting to have the visceral response to the story that they would have had at an old-style *jōruri* or *sekkyō-bushi* performance.

Takemoto Gidayū, Chikamatsu's close collaborator and the chanter for *Sonezaki*, was trained in a particular *jōruri* lineage that developed the expression of human emotion over spectacle. He initially trained under Shimizu Ribei, who included more scenes of human emotion

¹²³ Quoted in R. Keller Kimbrough, *Wondrous Brutal Fictions: Eight Buddhist Tales from the Early Japanese Puppet Theater* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 4.

¹²⁴ *Sekkyō-bushi* was the other form of narrative storytelling that combined with old *jōruri* (*kojōruri*) to create the *jōruri* that accompanied the puppet theatre.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Nobuko Ishii, "Sekkyō-bushi," *Monumenta Nipponica* 44, no. 3 (1989): 283.

in his pieces and performed with puppeteers who focused on realistic stage activity rather than “monsters and marvels.”¹²⁶ Gidayū then apprenticed under the great chanter of Kyoto, Uji Kaga-no-jō. Kaga-no-jō had studied noh chanting before immersing himself in the study of *jōruri* and this influenced several aspects of his art. He recorded the musical notation for his performances in detail as was customary in libretti published for noh chanters, integrated whole texts of noh plays into his performance repertoire, and increased the symbolic and allusive aspect of his performances.¹²⁷ Later, Gidayū also made references to noh in his treatises on *jōruri* chanting. In Gidayū’s work for the production of *Sonezaki*, he augmented the pathos that may have been associated with the narrative storytelling forms by changing the musical accompaniment to make the melodies sadder and more heart wrenching.¹²⁸

Gidayū was considered the greatest chanter of his time. Nagatomo Chiyoji has noted that Chikamatsu’s writing became more beautiful once he started collaborating with Gidayū.¹²⁹ Gidayū innovated within the music just as Chikamatsu innovated in the writing. He integrated contemporary musical elements into the traditional foundations. In his preface to *The 1687 Gidayū Collection of Jōruri Scenes (Jōkyō yonen gidayū danmonoshū)*, he wrote, “Our teaching is to listen to many kinds of music, drama, and storytelling, and to discard that which is not pleasing to one’s heart; that which remains will most likely be effective as art. One should adhere to the golden writings of the sages, while gathering familiar childhood songs and any

¹²⁶ Charles James Dunn, *The Early Japanese Puppet Drama* (London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1966), 98-99.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 100-103.

¹²⁸ Tanaka Kei, “Chikamatsu Shinjūmono ni okeru shūtan hyōgen ni tsuite,” 40.

¹²⁹ *Kinsei Kamigata jōruribon shuppan no kenkyū*, 12.

melodies that one finds particularly pleasing, and use them to refresh and expand one's art."¹³⁰

This passage demonstrates how Gidayū incorporated a variety of different kinds of music including the traditional, the “elevated” (such as songs from *noh*), popular songs, and even children's songs. This approach contrasted with that of his famous contemporary and teacher, Uji Kaga-no-jō, who wrote in *A Collection of Bamboo Shoots (Takenoko shū)* in 1678, “Being unable to keep to the classical standard, I mix other music, such as popular songs and ballads into *Jōruri*, which makes the musical product the same as a sickly bamboo or an artificially fashioned tree. Those who have discerning tastes will naturally find this music strange.”¹³¹ Kaga-no-jō acknowledged the need to include some more contemporary music to suit the audience's demands, but to him this was distasteful. Both Gidayū and Kaga-no-jō acknowledged that although the “parent” art of *jōruri* was *noh*, some incorporation of newer musical elements was necessary to appeal to audience taste. For Gidayū, the mixing in of a variety of music forms helped keep his chanting fresh and his art in a process of development whereas for Kaga-no-jō, they compromised its artistic quality as a concession to popular taste.

Beyond the general praise reported in 1704 in *Jōruri's Intertwined Branches (Jōruri renri maru)* that *Sonezaki* was “exceptional in music, writing, and puppetry” (*fushizuke monku ayatsuri jōjōkichi*), no contemporary accounts attested to the specifics of Gidayū's performance to give a clear sense of what it sounded like and how his vocal inflections added to the story.¹³² The performance traditions for the music were lost as the puppet theatre developed more complex puppets and as the older plays were performed in new adaptations. However, a few

¹³⁰ Translated in C. Andrew Gerstle, *Circles of Fantasy: Convention in the Plays of Chikamatsu* (Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1986), 192.

¹³¹ Translated in *ibid.*, 185.

¹³² Quoted in *Gidayū nenpyō* vol. 1, 27.

records describe the popularity of Gidayū's rendition of the two travel scenes from *Sonezaki*. He included these two scenes in his 1711 collection of his best musical scenes with performance notation, *Parrot Mountain (Ōmu ga soma)*.¹³³ The *Sonezaki* travel scenes were also reprinted and sold in Osaka and Kyoto in a book intended for rehearsal use for amateur performers.¹³⁴ These records attest to the popularity of the musical sections of Gidayū's performance. The travel scene is a section of the play that showcased the lyrical abilities of the playwright and the chanter. In the case of *Sonezaki*, the travel scene features both sung poetic passages and melodies from popular ballads. That the *Sonezaki* travel scene was one of Gidayū's more popular musical sections indicates that combination of emotional expression, which Gidayū had developed through training, and popular songs, which Gidayū integrated as one of his innovations, was a signature element of Gidayū's performance and likely contributed to the emotional resonance the play had with audiences.

A Model for Audience Response: Empathy for the Lovers

One of Chikamatsu's major innovations in his dramatization of the *Sonezaki* story was the way in which he orchestrated an empathetic view of the lovers. To this end, he embellished the story, made full use of theatricality, provided clues in the text to cue the audience about the appropriate emotional responses, and provided opportunities for the audience to view the story from the characters' perspectives. Overall, Chikamatsu fostered an intimate view of the lovers rather than one of detached distance.

¹³³ The prologue and list of scenes is in Geinōshi kenkyūkai, ed. *Nihon shomin bunka shiryō shūsei* vol. 7 (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1975), 148-152.

¹³⁴ Nishizawa Ippū, "Imamukashi ayatsuri nendaiki," in *Nihon shomin bunka shiryō shūsei* vol. 7, 11.

Koyama Issei has argued that this shift in perspective would have been important since the majority of the audience was composed of merchants. Most likely, merchants would not have been predisposed to sympathize with the lovers' actions, especially the character of Tokubei, who abandons his apprenticeship when he commits suicide.¹³⁵ Chikamatsu's addition of the villain, Kuheiji, who makes Tokubei a victim of a swindle, was likely in order to garner audience sympathy for Tokubei.¹³⁶ Scholars have noted a number of ways in which Chikamatsu constructed the play to encourage the audience members to empathize with the characters. One method, for example, was characterization. Michael Brownstein has observed that Chikamatsu incorporated moments in which he developed Ohatsu's subjective perspective during the Kannon Pilgrimage scene.¹³⁷ In Tokubei's case, the Ikudama Shrine scene ends with him losing his honor. Alone, beaten and humiliated, "He strikes the ground and gnashes his teeth, clenches his fists and moans, a sight to stir compassion" (*daichi o tataki, hagami o nashi kobushi o nigiri, nagekishi wa dōri to mo shōshi to mo, omoi yararete aware nari*).¹³⁸ Here, the text indicated to the audience that this image of Tokubei gnashing his teeth in anger and humiliation should evoke a feeling of compassion.

A comparison between Chikamatsu's depiction of the Sonezaki incident with other roughly contemporaneous depictions of the same story illustrates how Chikamatsu embellished the story to render the lovers more sympathetically. The details of the actual love suicide incident remain unknown, so we can only speculate as to what extent Chikamatsu fictionalized the story.

¹³⁵ Chikamatsu *jōruri no kenkyū*, 50.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ For instance, Ohatsu pauses at the fifth stop on the pilgrimage, Hōkaiji, to wonder if the other young women present are also praying for a happy future with their lovers. Brownstein, "The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage," 14.

¹³⁸ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 47. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 28.

The kabuki version, also titled *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, is no longer extant. Two printed accounts of the incident remain, however, *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides* (*Shinjū ōkagami*, 1704) and *The Elegance of the Courtesan in a Cedar Sake Cup* (*Keisei fūryū sugi sakazuki*, date unknown).

The Great Mirror of Love Suicides tells the stories of recent suicides and treats them as scandalous *faits divers*. The illustrated pamphlet summarizes the stories of twenty-one recent suicides, including that of Ohatsu and Tokubei. The account of the Sonezaki incident in *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides* resembles the broad outlines of the story as told by Chikamatsu in terms of the basic characters and setting.¹³⁹ The main differences lie in the obstacles facing the couple. In Chikamatsu's *Sonezaki*, Kuheiji, the villain, is the principal obstacle: he swindles and humiliates Tokubei and leaves him with a debt he cannot repay and a tarnished reputation. Since Tokubei is resolved to die, Ohatsu decides to die with him. In contrast, *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides* does not have a single villain to create the obstacle for the couple. In this work, the lovers are divided due to circumstances: Tokubei's master intends to marry him to his foster daughter and send him to the Edo branch of the soy sauce shop, and Ohatsu's contract has been bought by a client, so she will be leaving the quarter and Osaka. This version, while unfortunate for the lovers, lacks the tragic stakes of Chikamatsu's play. The two tellings also differ in tone, especially at their conclusions. Chikamatsu developed a journey scene rich with imagery and classical allusions. This journey is followed by a moment in which the lovers name the regrets they have for those they will leave behind. Then, they commit an aestheticized, ritualized suicide

¹³⁹ Since *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides* was published the year following the kabuki and puppet theatre dramatizations of the Sonezaki incident, it is impossible to know to what extent the account in *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides* was influenced by the plays.

in which they become the “models of true love.”¹⁴⁰ *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides* lacks any particular commentary or embellishment. The entire journey and death scene is described in one simple phrase, “[the couple] defiled the Sonezaki forest on the other side of Umeda Bridge (*Umeda no hashi no mukōnaru, Sone no mori o kegashikeru*).”¹⁴¹ This ending to the story does not offer the tragic, adulterous tone that was offered by Chikamatsu’s dramatization.

The Elegance of the Courtesan tells a story different from both Chikamatsu’s *Sonezaki* and *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides*. In this pamphlet, Ohatsu and Tokubei are both the children of peasants from the same village and fall in love there. Tokubei follows Ohatsu to Osaka when she gets sold into service to pay off her father’s debts. Although they have vowed to spend their future together, Tokubei, a mere apprentice, runs into financial problems from all the money he spends at Ohatsu’s brothel. Due to Tokubei’s inextricable financial difficulties, the lovers decide to commit suicide at Tenjin Shrine in Sonezaki woods.¹⁴² In this case, money is the central obstacle rather than a cunning villain or the wishes of a master or a wealthy client. This version most resembled the early representations of love suicide before *Sonezaki*. *The Elegance of the Courtesan*, like late seventeenth-century dramatizations of love suicide, depicts the motive for the suicide as the protagonists’ dire financial circumstances.

The comparison between Chikamatsu’s *Sonezaki*, *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides*, and *The Elegance of the Courtesan*, regardless of the chronological order of the publications, demonstrates how Chikamatsu adjusted the story to portray the lovers more sympathetically. He accomplished this mainly through the use of a villain, Kuheiji, as the main obstacle facing the couple. After all, a character’s suffering of an injustice at the hand of a villain is a surefire way

¹⁴⁰ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 56.

¹⁴¹ “Shinjū ōkagami,” 212.

¹⁴² Summarized in Koyama, *Chikamatsu jōruri no kenkyū*, 39.

of arousing the audience's sympathy for the victim. Chikamatsu did not entirely remove the financial component from the suicide, but he augmented it with Tokubei's sense of honor and subsequent humiliation. This change, along with the inclusion of Ohatsu's perspective during the opening travel scene and the heightened theatricality of moments such as the escape from the brothel, contributed to Chikamatsu's success in capturing the hearts of his audience.

Chikamatsu structured certain key theatrical moments to encourage the audience to identify with the characters. One such example is the scene at the brothel that culminates in Ohatsu and Tokubei's escape. Ohatsu extinguishes the light and flees in the darkness. The lovers can hear the maid trying to relight the lamp. At the brothel entrance, "They unfasten the latch, but the hinges creak, and frightened by the noise, they hesitate. Just then the maid begins to strike the flints; they time their actions to the rasping sound, and with each rasp open the door further until, huddled together and their sleeves twisted round them, they pass through the door one after the other, feeling as though they tread on a tiger's tail."¹⁴³ The original text emphasized the repetition of the sounds and gestures of the maid striking the flint and the lovers opening the gate. A more literal translation of this passage illustrates the use of onomatopoeic sounds, "The maid strikes the flint with a *futt futt* and the lovers use the sound to cover the sound of the door. When she strikes the flint hard—*kwap*, they open it slightly *sssht*. When she strikes the flint with a *kuchh kuchh* the lovers open the gate *sssht ssssst* (*gejo wa hiuchi o hatahata to utsu oto ni magirakashi, chōdo uteba, sotto ake kachikachi uteba, sorosoro ake*)."¹⁴⁴ The puppets' movements in performance likely underscored the aural repetition through the timed visual repetition of the two actions, the maid striking the flint and the lovers opening the door. Hara Michio has pointed out that the theatrical device of using the opening of a door as a climatic

¹⁴³ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 51.

¹⁴⁴ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 35-36.

moment would have been familiar to the audience through its use in kabuki, but in this case Chikamatsu changed the motif so that those escaping were the protagonists of the story not the villains of the story. Hara has interpreted this to suggest that the audience would have hoped along with the characters for their success.¹⁴⁵ If this moment had elicited this effect in the audience, it would have invested the audience members deeper in the story and rendered the play a tragedy rather than the mere presentation of a sensational event (*ryōkitekina jiken*).¹⁴⁶ This episode is also another example of how Chikamatsu put an innovative spin on a kabuki trope in order to use a popular theatrical device to different ends.

Chikamatsu's script gave the audience clues about how to interpret the plays emotionally. At times, he explicitly commented on the sadness of the lovers' fate. For example, in the final scene of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, the narrator describes how the lovers "Embrace, skin to skin, then fall to the ground and weep—how pitiful they are! Their strings of tears unite like entwining branches, or the pine and palm that grow from a single trunk, a symbol of eternal love" (*Idakiyose, hada o yose, kappa to fushite nakiitaru futari no kokoro zo fubin naru. Namida no ito no musubi matsu, shuro no hitoki no aoi o renri no chigiri ni nazorae*).¹⁴⁷ In this passage, the narrator comments that the couple should be regarded with pity (*fubin*). This phrase directly informs the audience members how they should interpret the spectacle of the two lovers embracing before death. The narrator also tells the audience that the characters themselves cry over their fates.

¹⁴⁵ Chikamatsu *jōruri no sakugekihō*, 515.

¹⁴⁶ Hara, *Chikamatsu jōruri no sakugekihō*, 515.

¹⁴⁷ Adapted from Keene's translation "Embrace, flesh to flesh, then fall to the ground and weep—how pitiful they are! Their strings of tears unite like entwining branches, or the pine and palm that grow from a single trunk, a symbol of eternal love" in *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 54-55. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 39.

Further, Chikamatsu created dramatic situations that would elicit feelings of identification from the audience with the characters. One example of such a situation is when Tokubei is left alone after having been beaten and humiliated by Kuheiji. Chikamatsu explained the importance of the dramatic situation in *Souvenirs of Naniwa*, the recorded account of Chikamatsu's thoughts on puppet theatre as written down by Chikamatsu's close friend Hozumi Ikan. In *Souvenirs of Naniwa*, he stated that real pathos is brought about through the situation and not through *describing* the emotional impact of the moment. *Souvenirs of Naniwa* relates, "Since the audience will be moved when the logic of the dramatization is convincing, the more restrained the words and the chanting are, the more moving the play will be. Thus, when one says of a moment of pathos 'How sad it is!' the connotations are lost, and in the end, the feeling conveyed is weak. It is essential that the moment be filled with pathos in and of itself, without having to say 'How sad it is!'"¹⁴⁸ This summarizes the rationale behind investing in the specific dramatic situations facing the characters to orchestrate a specific kind of experience for the audience members. This passage also includes a reference to the importance of the music in setting the emotional tone. In Chikamatsu's technique of focusing on development of the dramatic situation, one can hear echoes of the work of pioneering kabuki actor Sakata Tōjūrō, who emphasized playing the situation of a scene in order to have the desired effect.

In *Sonezaki*, Ohatsu and Tokubei have an experience during their journey that members of the theatre audience might also have had: hearing gossip about recent love suicides. As they travel to the Sonezaki woods, they know full well their suicide will likely end up in scandal sheets and ballads. As they cross Umeda Bridge, they look back over their shoulders to the pleasure quarter they are leaving. They notice a flicker of light coming from the second floor

¹⁴⁸ Brownstein, trans. "Souvenirs of Naniwa," in *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, ed. Haruo Shirane (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 350.

window of a teahouse across the river. They hear the voices and conclude they are “No doubt gossiping about the good or bad/Of this year’s crop of lovers’ suicides” (*kotoshi no shinjū yoshi ashi no koto no hagusa ya*).¹⁴⁹ Tokubei remarks, in Donald Keene’s translation, “How strange! But yesterday, even today,/We spoke as if such things did not concern us. Tomorrow we shall figure in their gossip” (*ayana ya, kinō kyō made mo yoso ni iishi ga, ashita yori wa ware mo uwasa no kazu ni iri*).¹⁵⁰ The word Keene has translated as “things that did not concern us” is *yoso*, the affairs of others.¹⁵¹ Tokubei and Ohatsu confront how something that had been *yoso*, something that they thought only happened to others, has become the very heart of their own lives. Chikamatsu repeated this word in a similar usage across a number of subsequent love suicide plays.¹⁵² His use of this term points up an important distinction between Chikamatsu’s play and previous treatments of love suicide: Chikamatsu’s play elicited identification and empathy for the characters. Buoyed by Takemoto Gidayū’s chanting, Chikamatsu transformed a story that appears to be something that could only happen to others into a story with which the audience can identify as something that they could imagine happening to themselves.

Sacralizing Love Suicide

In an even more pronounced departure from previous treatments of love suicide, Chikamatsu sacralized the act of love suicide in *Sonezaki*. He did this chiefly through the opening pilgrimage scene, the lover’s journey, and the closing of the play. Given that popular opinion of the time regarded love suicide negatively, Chikamatsu effectively shifted the

¹⁴⁹ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 52. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 37.

¹⁵⁰ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 52. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 37.

¹⁵¹ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 37.

¹⁵² Other plays that use the word *yoso* include *The Love Suicides of the Two Illustrated Books*, *The Love Suicides at the Sunken Well*, and *The Love Suicides in Midsummer with an Icy Blade*.

discourse about love suicide to the opposite end of the spectrum. By rendering love suicide as a sacred act and associating the heroine with the bodhisattva Kannon, Chikamatsu transformed love suicide into an act to be revered and emulated.

The play opens with Ohatsu on a pilgrimage, a scene rich with connections to religious beliefs and popular lay Buddhist practices. The scene also uses a popular kabuki motif in which the lead actor makes a “dramatic entrance” (*deha*), sometimes as a pilgrim.¹⁵³ The Kannon Pilgrimage (*Kannon-meguri*) scene depicts Ohatsu visiting the thirty-three sites in Osaka on the Kannon Pilgrimage circuit. This pilgrimage route was a smaller-scale version of the Saikoku (or “Western Provinces”) Pilgrimage, which had become a major devotional practice for unprecedented numbers of ordinary pilgrims.¹⁵⁴ Following this pilgrimage circuit and praying at each of the sites brought the pilgrim spiritual merit and formed a karmic affinity with Kannon that catalyzed the intercession of the bodhisattva when the right conditions became manifest.¹⁵⁵ Kannon could help the pilgrim in a variety of ways in this life, including deliverance from various perils and afflictions (being burned by fire, drowning, being attacked by demons, being barren, being ill, etc.) and could also help the pilgrim in the next life by facilitating his or her

¹⁵³ Brownstein, “The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage,” 20.

¹⁵⁴ Mark MacWilliams, “Living Icons: Reizō Myths of the Saikoku Kannon Pilgrimage,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 36. These special powers of Kannon are explicated in chapter 25 of the *Lotus Sutra*.

¹⁵⁵ The accrual of spiritual merit (Sk. *Punya*, J. *fuku*) is a central Buddhist practice. Merit is “the store of wholesome karma created by the performance of virtuous deeds, which fructify in the form of happiness in the future. This merit may be accumulated over many lifetimes and dedicated toward a specific outcome, such as a favorable rebirth for oneself or another, or the achievement of buddhahood.” “Punya,” *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 681. Pilgrimage was a type of virtuous deed that accumulated merit for the practitioner. See also Nakamura Hajime, *Kōsetsu Bukkyō daijiten* (Tokyo: Tōkyō shoseki kabushiki kaisha, 2001), 1425b.

rebirth in Amida's Pure Land.¹⁵⁶ During the Edo period, urban pilgrimage routes became established in the major urban centers of Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka. Of these three urban centers, Osaka had the most urban pilgrimage routes. The oldest of these was the Kannon Pilgrimage, which was first mentioned in print in 1678.¹⁵⁷

This scene took the spectator on a tour of the thirty-three pilgrimage sites. The text names each temple or shrine and includes a pun or embellishment for each. Most importantly, the scene contains passages with explicit religious meaning. For example, at Keiden Temple, in order to take in the expansive view, Ohatsu gazes westward, the direction of Amida's Pure Land, in a gesture that foreshadows her death. Her eyes rest on some seagulls flying in the offshore winds. "You too will choke on the smoke of impermanence" (*nare mo mujō no kemuri ni musebu*), she thinks in reference to the smoke rising from a nearby crematorium.¹⁵⁸ This prompts her to contemplate her own death. She says, "Were I to die consumed by love's fire, I swear by the gods that I would not care what happens to my body" (*iro ni kogarete shinai nara shinzo kono mi wa nari shidai*).¹⁵⁹ This passage associates the fire of love with the crematorium and draws upon the pervasive trope of fire as an agent of spiritual transformation in Buddhist literature. It also foreshadows Ohatsu's discarding of her body at the end of the play when she is indeed

¹⁵⁶ MacWilliams, "Living Icons," 73-75. Kannon's deliverances were first laid out in chapter 25 of the *Lotus Sutra*, which also circulated widely as an independent text known as the *Kannon Sutra*—see Leon Hurvitz's translation, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 287-289. Kannon's role as a guide of souls traces back to the Pure Land sutras. The *Longer Sukhāvativyūha Sutra* designates Kannon as one of the two attendant bodhisattvas to Amida Buddha, and the *Contemplation Sutra* establishes his role as a guide of souls, who greets devotees at the moment of death to guide them to Amida's Western Paradise.

¹⁵⁷ Brownstein, "The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage," 9.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 40. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 16.

¹⁵⁹ Brownstein, "The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage," 40. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 16.

consumed by love's fire. Her willingness to cast off her physical body demonstrates her mental preparation for transcendence and rebirth in paradise. The image of a person casting off the body—including through self-mutilation and self-immolation—would have been familiar to audiences of the time through popular sermons.¹⁶⁰

The final lines of the scene possess particularly deep religious meaning. The narrator recites, “Kannon assumes thirty-three forms to mingle in our world so that she can save all living beings. With our passions does she lead us, and with compassion teach us, using love as a bridge to enlightenment that we may cross and be saved. Kannon's vow is indeed a blessing beyond compare!” (*sashimogusa, kusa no hasuhana yo ni majiri sanjūsan ni onmi o kae, iro de michibiki, nasake de oshie koi o bodai no hashi to nashi watashite sukū Kanzeon, chikai wa tae ni arigatashi*).¹⁶¹ This passage highlights three key lay beliefs that would have been known to the audience of the time. First, these lines attested to Kannon's ability to manifest in whatever physical form is best suited to save living beings according to their need. Second, the statement that Kannon leads humans to enlightenment through the passions expressed a popular idea that Chikamatsu would return to in later plays. Third, this passage integrated the metaphor of a bridge that one must cross in order to be saved.

¹⁶⁰ In one example from the *Accounts of the wondrous powers of the Lotus Sutra* (*Hokke genki*, compiled 1040-1044), a monk self-immolates and vows, “By virtue of my thousand recitations of the [*Lotus*] Sutra, I will surely be born in the land of Utmost Bliss. After my body has burned, there will be marvelous signs.” Then, “Though no wind was blowing, as his body burned, the smoke rapidly drifted toward the west, and though the skies were clear; purple clouds rose in the east. The monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen who had assembled all shed tears of rejoicing.” Quoted in Jacqueline I. Stone, “By the Power of One's Last Nenbutsu,” in *Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitābha* ed. Richard K. Payne et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 102. As in this example, religious suicide was often performed in the presence of an audience. See also Max Moerman, *Localizing Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 92-138.

¹⁶¹ Brownstein, “The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage,” 17. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 18.

Kannon has the ability to manifest in whatever physical form is best suited to save a particular individual. Chapter twenty-five of the *Lotus Sutra* enumerates the thirty-three different forms of Kannon.¹⁶² These forms were the basis for the different images enshrined in each of the thirty-three temples on the pilgrimage route. Kannon is the bodhisattva who embodies compassion, and these manifestations are expressions of Kannon's skill in using whatever means are most effective in realizing her compassionate commitment to deliver living beings from suffering. This image of Kannon delivering living beings from suffering connects with the final journey in which the lovers cross Umeda Bridge from the Dōjima pleasure quarters to the Sonezaki woods as part of their literal and symbolic journey toward death. At the close of this scene, Ohatsu has completed the pilgrimage and accumulated the necessary spiritual merit for Kannon to intercede on her behalf.

Although the idea that Kannon leads human beings to enlightenment through the passions is not actually found in the *Lotus Sutra*, popular understanding often linked the episode of the dragon king's daughter from chapter ten of the *Lotus Sutra*¹⁶³ with the controversial Mahāyāna idea that enlightenment (*bodai*) can be found within the passions (*bonnō*).¹⁶⁴ For example, before the male protagonist commits suicide in Chikamatsu's 1707 play *The Love Suicides at the Sunken Well* (*Shinjū kasane izutsu*), he says, "I take heart that when the dragon king's daughter became a Buddha desire became enlightenment" (*ryūnyo mo jōbutsu suru toki wa bonnō bodai to naru zo tanomoshi*).¹⁶⁵ This idea would have resonated with those whose passions led them to

¹⁶² Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, 289-290.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 182-185.

¹⁶⁴ Nakamura, *Kōsetsu bukkyō daijiten*, 1555a.

¹⁶⁵ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 190. Probably the most oft-cited statement as canonical authority for this idea is found in the Vimalakīrti Sutra; see Robert Thurman, trans.,

suicide. The inclusion of this reference in the text drew a specific connection between this doctrine and love found in the pleasure quarters.

The final moment of this scene may have had even more sacred significance for the spectators in performance than that imagined upon simply reading the text. Shinoda Jun'ichi has argued that Tatsumatsu transformed the Ohatsu puppet into a representation of the bodhisattva Kannon at the end of this scene. Shinoda has cited three main pieces of evidence to support his claim. First, he has referred to the theatrical effects that master puppeteer Tatsumatsu was known to have been able to create with his trick puppets. Second, he has quoted the text of *Sonezaki*, which made reference to Kannon assuming many forms, at the end of the pilgrimage scene (and which is quoted above). Third, he has cited a passage from Chikamatsu's 1706 play *The Love Suicides of the Two Illustrated Books* (*Shinjū nimai ezōshi*) that makes reference to the puppet of Ohatsu transforming into a golden Buddha in the Takemoto Theatre performance of *Sonezaki*.¹⁶⁶ In the context of Kannon worship and the beliefs associated with the Kannon pilgrimage, each of the Kannon icons in each of the thirty-three pilgrimage sites were thought to be direct embodiments of the living Kannon.¹⁶⁷ This moment of transformation from a puppet representing a prostitute to one representing a bodhisattva perhaps dovetailed with older, less commercial, forms of puppetry, in which the puppet served as a sacred vehicle into which the gods could enter.¹⁶⁸

The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: a Mahāyāna Scripture (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 65-66.

¹⁶⁶ "Chikamatsu Monzaemon," in *Shinpojiun Nihon bungaku* 7 (Tokyo: Gakuseisha, 1976), 120-121.

¹⁶⁷ MacWilliams, "Living Icons," 51.

¹⁶⁸ Law, *Puppets of Nostalgia*, 30-32.

Symbolically, in this moment the puppet became a religious icon embodying the bodhisattva. Although the puppet for Ohatsu returned to a puppet representing a woman for the rest of the play, we can imagine that this association between Kannon and Ohatsu persisted in the audience members' minds throughout the rest of the play.¹⁶⁹ Scholars have proposed various interpretations of the meaning that this pilgrimage scene held for early eighteenth century audiences, but most have agreed that the scene summoned the spirits of the recently deceased lovers and performed a religious function for the dead spirits.¹⁷⁰ Suwa Haruo has considered the early love suicide plays memorial prayers (*tomuraiinori*) for the recently deceased even though they did not contain the dense religious references encoded in *Sonezaki* and later plays.¹⁷¹ In the case of *Sonezaki*, the opening pilgrimage scene added a religious dimension to the character of Ohatsu, whom the audience witnessed gain spiritual merit and become associated with the bodhisattva Kannon, and even perhaps transformed into the bodhisattva, as well as to the performance of the play, which evoked the spirits of the dead lovers.

The second scene of the play that sacralized the lovers is the travel scene, in which they journey from Ohatsu's brothel to the Sonezaki woods. The inclusion of a travel scene was nothing new for love suicide plays—or for historical epics, for that matter. Travel scenes had been a standard scene in plays and storytelling forms since the warrior tales in the medieval period.¹⁷² Gunji Masakatsu has speculated that travel scenes extends back to early dance

¹⁶⁹ This association also likely made reference to a subset of stories of Kannon in which she used lust to lead men to enlightenment.

¹⁷⁰ A summary of the positions of various scholars appears in Koyama, *Chikamatsu jōruri no kenkyū*, 41-46. Scholars have debated, for example, whether this scene functioned as an invocation of the dead (*shōkon*) or a pacification of the dead (*chinkon*).

¹⁷¹ Suwa, *Genroku kabuki no kenkyū*, 175.

¹⁷² Tsunoda Ichirō, “Chikamatsu jōruri michiyuki no kenkyū—Genroku izen no bu” *Teikyō daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 20, no. 10 (1988): 155.

performance.¹⁷³ The travel scenes in the old *jōruri* prior to 1673 tended to be full of pathos (*aishō*) in a continuation of the travel scene tradition in medieval warrior tales. Then in the Enpō era (1673-1681), in a change spearheaded by Chikamatsu and the master *jōruri* chanter Uji Kaga-no-jō, the travel scenes took on a more lilting pace and a more lighthearted tone.¹⁷⁴ Chikamatsu's deliberate choice to return to an older form of travel scenes, one full of pathos, established the tone of gravity for the scene, which would have underscored the spiritual aspect.

Tokubei and Ohatsu's journey was also a spiritual one. The physical and metaphysical suffering they endure enables them to attain Buddhahood after death. The journey begins with a reflection on their impending death:

Farewell to this world, and to the night farewell.
 We who walk the road to death, to what should we be likened?
 To the frost by the road that leads to the graveyard,
 Vanishing with each step we take ahead.

*Kono yo no nagori yo mo nagori shini ni iku mi o tatōreba, adashigahara no michi no shimo hitoashizutsu ni kieteyuku*¹⁷⁵

This passage emphasized the transient nature of the protagonists' lives and served as a reminder of their impending death. Later, the lovers see two *hitodama*, disembodied spirits, flying in the sky. At first they think these are the souls of others who have died that night, but, upon reflection, Tokubei concludes they are probably seeing their own spirits. In response, Ohatsu asks, "Then, are we dead already?" (*haya wareware wa shishitaru mi ka*).¹⁷⁶ Gerstle's analysis of this scene has stressed that the couple's confrontation with their own deaths is critical to the way in which Chikamatsu's plays created religious meaning. During the travel scene, Gerstle has

¹⁷³ *Kabuki no bigaku* (Tokyo: Engeki Shuppansha, 1963), 190.

¹⁷⁴ Tsunoda, "Chikamatsu jōruri michiyuki no kenkyū," 180.

¹⁷⁵ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 51. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 36.

¹⁷⁶ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 54. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 39.

written, the couple has “symbolically experienced death and journeyed through the lower realms of the Buddhist Six Paths.”¹⁷⁷ Through their suffering and symbolic death “the pair gain the right to salvation after the death of their physical bodies.”¹⁷⁸

Ohatsu and Tokubei suffer intensely during their deaths. Koyama has noted that despite the many variations in the death scenes, one consistent element is the writhing and bloody figures of the two lovers.¹⁷⁹ It is impossible to know how this writhing was represented on stage and whether there was an attempt to represent the blood. In the text, the narrator describes how Tokubei kills Ohatsu:

When he tries to bring the blade against the skin of the woman he’s loved, and held and slept with so many months and years, his eyes cloud over, his hand shakes. He tries to steady his weakening resolve, but still he trembles, and when he trusts, the point misses. Twice or thrice the flashing blade deflects this way and that until a cry tells it has struck her throat. *Namu Amida. Namu Amida. Namu Amida Butsu.* He twists the blade deeper and deeper, but the strength has left his arm. When he sees her weaken, he stretches forth his hands. The last agonies of death are indescribable.¹⁸⁰

*Sasuga kono toshitsuki, itoshi, kawai to shimete neshi hada ni yaiba ga aterareu ka to manako mo kurami, te mo furui, yowaru kokoro o hikinaoshi torinaoshite mo nao furui, tsuku to wa suredo, kissaki wa anata e hazure, konata e sore ni, sando hirameku tsurugi no yaiba atto bakari ni nodobue ni gutto tooru ga, namu Amida namu Amida namu Amidabutsu to kuritooshi, kuritoosu udesaki mo yowaru wo mireba, ryōte o nobe danmatsuma no shikuhakku aware to iu mo amariari.*¹⁸¹

To analyze the death scenes in love suicide plays, Koyama has compared Chikamatsu’s *Sonezaki* with Kaion’s *The Love Suicide at Nanba Bridge* (*Nanba-bashi shinjū*, 1710) and has found that

¹⁷⁷ *Circles of Fantasy*, 120.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 134-35.

¹⁷⁹ *Chikamatsu jōruri no kenkyū*, 61.

¹⁸⁰ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 56. “*Namu Amida Butsu*” is a prayer to Amida Buddha, “All Homage to Amida Buddha.”

¹⁸¹ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 42.

this description of physical agony appears only in those of Chikamatsu.¹⁸² Koyama has concluded that the suffering is a necessary step toward the lovers' salvation. The couple expiates their sins through their physical suffering (*zaishō shōmetsu*), which then allows them to be reborn as Buddhas. The suffering acts as a ritual ascesis for both the characters as well as the two recently deceased people upon whom the characters were based.¹⁸³ The belief in physical suffering as a gateway to a good rebirth runs through a number of religious practices in Japan, and many Buddhist and folk beliefs purported that the harsher the suffering, the stronger the security of a better rebirth.¹⁸⁴ For example, Nichiren Buddhism, the particular sect of Buddhism with which Chikamatsu was affiliated, emphasizes the necessity of suffering and teaches right conduct through tales of bodhisattva martyrs.¹⁸⁵ These scenes echoed scenes in old *jōruri* and *sekkyō-bushi*, lay Buddhist sermons, in which characters undergo intense physical suffering before they are ultimately miraculously saved.¹⁸⁶

The last line of *Sonezaki* was Chikamatsu's clearest statement of the religious meaning of the couple's suicide. After the lovers die, the narrator chants, "No one is there to tell the tale, but the wind that blows through Sonezaki Wood transmits it, and high and low alike gather to pray for these lovers who beyond a doubt will in the future attain Buddhahood. They have become models of true love" (*dare ga tsuguru to wa, Sonezaki no mori no shitakaze oto ni kokoe toritsutae, kisenkunju no ekō no tane mirai jōbutsu utagainaki, koi no tehon to narinikeri*).¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Chikamatsu *jōruri no kenkyū*, 62.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 65-67.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁸⁵ Tamura Yoshirō, "Ideas of the Lotus Sutra," in *The Lotus Sutra in Japanese Culture*, ed. George J. Tanabe, Jr. et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 49-51.

¹⁸⁶ R. Keller Kimbrough, *Wondrous Brutal Fictions*, 18.

¹⁸⁷ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 56. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 43.

This proclamation assured the audience that the lovers would achieve rebirth in paradise and links this rebirth with the sincerity of their love as expressed through their double suicide. In the opening travel scene Ohatsu earns the spiritual merit that will enable the intervention of Kannon bodhisattva. The two lovers confront their death in the second travel scene and expiate their sins through their physical suffering at the moment of death. The play ends with a passage that declared the couple's future salvation. Through this pairing of popular Buddhist belief with the action of the play, Chikamatsu rendered the act of love suicide sacred. Furthermore, Chikamatsu explicitly holds up the lovers as a model for the expression of true love, which encourages the audience to regard them with admiration.

Conclusion

Sonezaki arrived on the Osaka theatre scene at a moment when audiences increasing sought out dramatizations recent events, especially love suicides. Chikamatsu adeptly incorporated new currents in kabuki dramaturgy and acting that were developed and popularized by Sakata Tōjūrō to add a realism and gravitas to his interpretation of the story. Working for the puppet theatre, his approach meshed well with the talents of his new collaborator, Takemoto Gidayū, who was famed for the emotional depth in his performances. They encouraged audience members to see Ohatsu and Tokubei's story with intimacy rather than distance. Love suicide was transformed into a sacred act reflecting the highest sincerity of heart. With this pivotal production, Chikamatsu created a model for the act of love suicide and the genre.

Contemporary life plays were the theatrical manifestation of the many publications depicting the contemporary world. As Berry has written of these works, "Making society visible

to itself, they conspired in the making of society.”¹⁸⁸ *Sonezaki* not only reflected the fashions, customs, and everyday minutiae of life in early eighteenth century Osaka. The production melded Chikamatsu’s language and dramaturgy with the expressive and affective layers of the chanting and the visual splendor of the puppetry. Through shifting the perspective on the lovers from earlier depictions to one of empathy and by sacralizing the act of love suicide, *Sonezaki* proposed a new way to view the deaths of commoners in double suicide. It rendered these acts tragic and the heroes and heroines as capable of honor and sincerity of the highest order. The glorification of love suicide did not escape the attention of the authorities once love suicide plays began to travel from Osaka, the city of commoners, to Edo, the shogun’s capital.

¹⁸⁸ *Japan in Print*, 17.

Chapter Two: Censoring Love Suicide

The government response to the love suicide crisis and its representations, when it finally came in the 1720s, was harsh. Concern stemmed, it seems, from the genre's spread beyond the Kamigata region, to Edo. The earliest love suicide plays in the seventeenth century did not garner much attention from the authorities, but the genre became more popular with the spectacular success of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki shinjū*) in 1703. In the early eighteenth century, the authorities issued general edicts banning the representation of contemporary events in songs and print, but these edicts were largely ineffective. These early bans applied to love suicide only as it fit in the broader category of—in the words of the 1703 edict—“unusual events of the time.”¹⁸⁹ Another edict, in 1713, basically reiterated the same message.¹⁹⁰ Then, two edicts issued in 1722 and 1723 respectively, singled out love suicide specifically as a target for criticism. These edicts, which explicitly banned love suicide and its representations, were part of a comprehensive platform of reforms called the Kyōhō Reforms.

To highlight the nature and characteristics of the censorship system under the Tokugawa shogunal government, it is helpful to contrast it to a famous and contemporaneous example of theatre censorship, the office of the Lord Chamberlain in London. Beginning with the Licensing Act in 1737, theatre managers had to submit to the Lord Chamberlain any work intended for performance at least two weeks in advance of the performance. The Lord Chamberlain had the

¹⁸⁹ Shively, “Bakufu Versus Kabuki,” 352. Shively speculates that the 1703 ban was a response to the Akō Incident, later dramatized as *Chūshingura*, in which a group of masterless samurai (*rōnin*) took revenge on the man they held responsible for their lord's death.

¹⁹⁰ Peter F. Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 335.

authority to ban any work for whatever reason he chose. The law did not provide any recourse to appeal the Lord Chamberlain's decision. Penalties for violating the Licensing Act were a fine and the loss of the theatre's license. While the Lord Chamberlain could censor the works at his own discretion, the main object of censorship was anti-government sentiment.¹⁹¹

The Kyōhō Reforms likewise stemmed from an anxiety over the need to manage all aspects of the culture that might subvert the power and authority of the Tokugawa and the samurai. However, the specifics of the censorship system in eighteenth-century Japan differed from London's system in a number of ways. First, there was no separate office in charge of censorship. In fact, it is difficult to determine *who* drafted the edicts since the text of the edicts did not indicate the issuing authority.¹⁹² The content of the edicts originated within the shogunal government along with the content of edicts regulating behavior, architecture, clothing, currency, and other matters outside the theatres. Second, unlike London, where theatre managers submitted works for approval in advance of production, bans issued from Edo were directed at the theatre and publishing industries more generally and were often in response to something that had already taken place. Third, in contrast to the London authorities who focused on what was being said on stage, most censorship of theatre in the Edo period did not focus primarily on the explicitly political or the spoken text of the play. Rather, edicts directed at the theatre regulated theatre architecture; costumes and sets; safety issues, particularly fire hazards; the daily lives of actors, and their salaries. The majority of the edicts issued regarded fires and sumptuary codes.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ David Thomas, David Carlton, and Anne Etienne, *Theatre Censorship: From Walpole to Wilson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 40-45.

¹⁹² Shively, "Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Tokugawa Japan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 25 (1964-1965): 159-61n8.

¹⁹³ Shimazaki, *Edo Kabuki in Transition*, 91.

It is easy to understand why a government overseeing large urban areas full of wooden buildings would have strict regulations for fire hazards, but it is less obvious why it would have put such emphasis on the performers' clothing. What was so potent about the performers' clothing on- and off-stage? Further, in a regulatory climate that focused on costumes rather than subject matter, why did the authorities decide to ban depictions of contemporary events, and those of love suicide in particular? Rather than censoring certain lines in the scripts as in London, the government in Japan banned the entire genre of love suicide plays. I argue that the roots of the regulation of costumes and the love suicide genre lay in the challenge they posed to the status system.

The Status System

The hereditary status system regulated political, economic, and social life across Japan in the early modern period. Historian David Howell has argued that “*all* social relations in the Tokugawa period can be understood at some level as an expression of the institutions of the status system.”¹⁹⁴ The status system broadly grouped the population into four categories—samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants—which reflected the hierarchy of status in Neo-Confucian thought. Legally, the government recognized eight status categories, the *daimyō* (at the top), the court nobility, the samurai, the priests (which often included doctors and teachers), peasants, townsmen (which would include artisans and merchants), the “impure” (the *eta*, who were tanners, leatherworkers, or had other occupations in which they touched the bodies of the dead), and “outcasts” (the *hinin*, a category that included prostitutes, actors, beggars, the

¹⁹⁴ *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth Century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 17. Emphasis in the original.

ostracized, and itinerants).¹⁹⁵ In urban contexts, such as Osaka, the distinction between samurai and commoners (which grouped artisans and merchants together) was the most significant in how the government regulated the populace through punishment, sumptuary laws, and other legal measures.

The status system was a crucial component of shogunal justification of samurai rule. The hereditary status system gave samurai the right to govern, bear arms, and wield “cultural superiority.”¹⁹⁶ It reinforced the transition from a culture of warfare in the medieval period to a culture of peace under the Tokugawa. Samurai became the sole group entitled use violence and thus they exercised (or claimed to exercise) their role as the protectors of other status groups.¹⁹⁷ As Berry has observed, “The system had urgent practical purposes: to secure the power of the martial elite as a birthright; and to fix the labor services of peasants and other subjects as a birth obligation.”¹⁹⁸ The emphasis on birthright and fixed status categories enabled the samurai to retain their monopoly on authority. The shogunal government maintained the status system through the regulation of residences, the display of power in rituals and processions, the revaluation of the currency to curtail commoner economic gains, the regulation of rice prices to maintain samurai economic power, taxation, and sumptuary laws.

Regulating the official status system was particularly important because people’s official status in the Edo period often did not correspond to their economic status. In fact, economic conditions varied widely within and across the status categories. In principle, the samurai

¹⁹⁵ Howland, “Samurai Status, Class, and Bureaucracy: A Historiographical Essay,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 2 (2001): 358.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 353.

¹⁹⁷ Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), 156.

¹⁹⁸ *Japan in Print*, 128.

enjoyed relative economic stability because they had guaranteed annual incomes in rice, either through land that generated a specific annual yield or through a stipend. But in practice, their annual incomes ranged from a high of nearly 10,000 *koku* to a low of significantly less than 100 *koku*.¹⁹⁹ For example, among the approximately 60,000 samurai employed by the Tokugawa house, only 2.5% had incomes between 500 and 10,000 *koku*, while 7.5% earned between 100 and 500 *koku*, 27.5% earned less than 100 *koku*, and 62.5%, the rear vassals and marginal attendants, earned still less.²⁰⁰ A rear vassal sometimes made as little as twelve *ryō*, which would mean he would not have been able to afford to maintain both a servant and a wife unless his wife brought a substantial dowry to the marriage.²⁰¹ Further, although samurai received fixed incomes, fluctuations in market prices and the gradual ascendancy of the merchants' economic status meant that samurai economic power eroded over the course of the period. The weakening of samurai economic power was one impetus behind the Kyōhō Reforms.

Commoner incomes also displayed a wide range of variation. Moreover, they were highly unstable since they were dependent on market values, annual employment contracts, and official intervention. It is difficult to arrive at exact figures for the wealth of the merchants at the top of the economic spectrum, but employment records and governmental response attest to their prosperity. For example, in the late seventeenth century, a large urban retail shop employed around forty-five clerks and upwards of twenty servants.²⁰² The Yodoya, a rich Osaka merchant family who ran the rice market, displayed its wealth so with so little restraint that the shogunal

¹⁹⁹ A *koku* was the unit of measurement for rice. One *koku* represented 5.11 bushels of rice and was equivalent to one *ryō* of gold.

²⁰⁰ Berry, *Japan in Print*, 129.

²⁰¹ Leupp, *Servants, Shophands, and Laborers in the Cities of Tokugawa Japan*, 33.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 38-39.

government confiscated all its property in 1705.²⁰³ Wealth, conspicuous wealth in particular, was ever threatened by sumptuary laws, which were issued repeatedly throughout the period and sought to curb commoner displays of material prosperity.²⁰⁴ Clerks and managers-in-training at the wealthy merchant houses made annual salaries ranging between five and fifty *ryō* depending on their rank.²⁰⁵ At the bottom of the spectrum were the day laborers, servants, and maids. Once again, extant data for earnings are rare, but sources suggest that wages were quite low. In Edo in 1657, for instance, the authorities insisted that labor agencies that contracted out day laborers would be compensated at a rate of one *ryō* per day for sixty-five people if the laborers brought their own tools and one *ryō* per day for seventy people if the laborers did not have their own tools. Laborers were mostly likely better compensated than the wages stipulated by the government, but even so, multiple laborers were sharing a single *ryō*.²⁰⁶ Further complicating matters, servants and maids received room and board but very little in actual wages: in the mid-nineteenth century, a merchant household in Wakayama paid its chambermaid just under two *ryō*

²⁰³ Charles D. Sheldon, "Merchants and Society in Tokugawa Japan," *Modern Asian Studies* 17, no. 3 (1983): 483. It is possible the Yodoya family's ostentation was merely a pretext for seizing the family's property and the real reason was to eliminate samurai debts to the Yodoya and provide the government with substantial property. See Donald H. Shively, "Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan," 133-34.

²⁰⁴ Shively, "Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan," 123-64, and Eiko Ikegami, "Categorical Protest from the Floating World: Fashion, State, and Gender," in *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture* (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge, 2005), 245-85.

²⁰⁵ Based on figures for the Kōnoike family employee records. Yōtarō Sakudō, "The Management Practices of Family Business," trans. William B. Hauser in *Tokugawa Japan: The Social and Economic Antecedents of Modern Japan* ed. Chie Nakane et al. (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1990), 162.

²⁰⁶ Leupp, *Servants, Shophands, and Laborers in the Cities of Tokugawa Japan*, 161.

a year.²⁰⁷ Apprentices were paid no salaries but did receive room, board, training, and the possibility of future promotion.²⁰⁸

Wide disparities in income even extended to the *hinin*, the outcaste group that included actors. An actor at the top of the income spectrum earned 500 *ryō* or more, a sum that exceeded the incomes of the majority of the samurai in the shogun's employ and certainly surpassed the income of almost all commoners. At the other end of the spectrum, a low-paid actor earned about thirteen *ryō*, which roughly corresponded to the earnings of a rear vassal, the lowest income level in the shogun's employ. Actors, even those paid at the low rate of thirteen *ryō*, still earned more than low-level shop clerks, day laborers, or maids.

Income variation was only one way in which real social conditions did not align with the status system. Despite the shogunal government's efforts, the populace often ignored the distinctions between status categories. A number of scholars have identified sites, practices, publications, and individual acts that blurred status lines. For example, urban areas presented multiple spaces in which the status categories comingled, including the pleasure quarters, theatres, religious centers, and even the residential districts.²⁰⁹ Ikegami has pointed out that the emergence of the communal practice of the seated (*za*) arts—such as *haikai* poetry, tea ceremony, and flower arranging—led to the creation of associations for their study and practice that crossed status boundaries.²¹⁰ Berry has highlighted how the broad readership for commercial

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 102-103.

²⁰⁸ Sakudō, "The Management Practices of Family Business," 162.

²⁰⁹ See Seigel, *Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan*; Katsuya Hirano, *The Politics of Dialogic Imagination: Power and Popular Culture in Early Modern Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan*; and Tsukada Takeshi, "Introduction, The Urban History of Osaka," *City, Culture and Society* 3 (2012): 1-8.

²¹⁰ *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture*.

print enabled shared knowledge and perspectives across status categories.²¹¹ Furthermore, Howell has demonstrated that in some instances officials sanctioned a temporary crossing of status boundaries. He has given the example of a village scribe who was permitted to use a surname and carry two swords, therefore presenting himself as a samurai, while on an official mission. Howell has termed the scribe's circumscribed, situation-based status movement "status transvestism."²¹²

Since status categories were not as distinct in practice as ideology stipulated, the shogunal government enacted a series of visual markers of difference to externalize and reinforce status. Herman Ooms has characterized the status system as a social order that "relied heavily on the eye" and has argued that in the Edo period "everyone *had* a status that one wore as a social tattoo according to the place one's house and lineage had been assigned by the authorities once and for all."²¹³ The right to wear swords was one particularly obvious marker of status. Only samurai and select elite commoners were permitted to wear two swords; outcasts were not permitted to wear footwear in the presence of commoners or samurai.²¹⁴ Other visible signs of status included hairstyles, clothing, and everyday objects, such as combs, tobacco pouches, purses, and incense containers. Regarding clothing, the edicts dictated which fabrics could be worn and by whom, which kinds of threads or embroidery could be used in making the robes, and which dyes and patterns were permitted. These were tightly regulated within the samurai class to distinguish rank and to create visual difference between samurai and commoners. An example of one such edict from 1683 directed at townspeople read:

²¹¹ *Japan in Print*.

²¹² *Geographies of Identity*, 39.

²¹³ "Forms and Norms in Edo Arts and Society" in *Edo: Art in Japan 1615-1868* ed. Robert T. Singer (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1998), 26-27.

²¹⁴ Howell, *Geographies of Identity*, 136.

Thin silk crepe
Embroidery
Dapple tie-dye
These materials are prohibited hereafter in women's clothing.
Unusual weaving and dyeing must not be done.
One length (*tan*) of outer material for a padded robe may not be bought or sold for a higher price than 200 *me* of silver.²¹⁵

As the above edict indicates, sumptuary laws attempted to regulate what was worn as well as the prices for the goods. Regulation of clothing and its price continued into the nineteenth century.

Sumptuary laws became even more important as the economic status of the townspeople rose at the end of the seventeenth century. As the merchants gained economic power, they, rather than the samurai, became “main arbiters of taste.”²¹⁶ A particularly famous example is the wife of merchant Ichikawa Rokubei of Edo. She was so ostentatiously dressed during a shogunal procession that the shogun Tsunayoshi ordered the couple's house and lands confiscated and banished them from the city.²¹⁷ As Sarah E. Thompson has noted, the authorities concentrated their efforts on the floating world. She has written, “The floating world, where the wealth of the merchants was flaunted, was a natural target whenever the shogunate felt the need to tighten its control.”²¹⁸

Censoring Costumes

Given the general emphasis on external markers of status and the anxiety of townspeople displaying wealth beyond their status level, the regulation of costumes in the theatre clearly fit

²¹⁵ Shively, “Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan,” 126.

²¹⁶ Ikegami, “Protest from the Floating World: Fashion, State, and Category Formation in Early Modern Japan,” 157.

²¹⁷ Shively, “Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan,” 126.

²¹⁸ Sarah E. Thompson, “The Politics of Japanese Prints,” in *Undercurrents in the Floating World: Censorship and Japanese Prints*, ed. Sarah E. Thompson et al. (New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1991), 32.

within the overall system of shogunal control over the populace. In the edicts addressed to the theatre industry, the authorities issued standards that dictated what performers could wear in their everyday lives and what they could wear on stage. The latter of these regulations extended to the costumes of puppets in the puppet theatre.

Off stage, actors were expected to dress in accordance with their status level as outcasts (*hinin*), but on stage there was more flexibility since they were appearing as characters of different statuses. Actors were forbidden from wearing silks off stage, but on stage silks were permitted if they accorded with the characters the actor was portraying. An undated edict directed at kabuki actors read:

Actors' costumes have gradually become more gorgeous. Gold and silver thread have been used in all-over embroidery. Chinese-style weaving has been seen. As samurai costumes, it is improper to use ceremonial kimono, long trousers and tunic, of course, and figured satin, habutae [fine silk], and crests, and to have long and short swords or other articles of intricate work.²¹⁹

This edict attests to the increased opulence of kabuki costumes. It also specifies which elements are inappropriate for a samurai character despite his high status. Kabuki costumes were a particularly fraught issue because the actors supplied their own, which made the costume an expression of both the character and the actor who played the role. One example of an actor getting into trouble for his costume was the case of Ichikawa Danjūrō II (1688-1758), who was reprimanded for wearing silver clogs when he appeared as Watōnai in kabuki adaptation of Chikamatsu's play *The Battles of Coxinga* (*Kokusen 'ya kassen*).²²⁰

The puppet theatre, too, was expected to refrain from displays of luxury. For example, the puppeteer Satsuma Koheita was arrested in Edo in 1636 for using purple silk curtains with the

²¹⁹ Shively, "Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan," 132-33.

²²⁰ Shimazaki, *Edo Kabuki in Transition*, 91.

crest of the lord of Satsuma and dressing his puppets in sumptuous costumes.²²¹ At the same time, the costumes of the puppets were expected to reflect the status categories appropriately. For example, an edict from 1668 instructed, “The costumes of puppets must not be expensive. Gold and silver leaf should not be used on anything. Only puppet generals may wear gold or silver hats.”²²² This edict demonstrates that the puppet costumes were generally not allowed to exhibit wealth or use luxurious materials. However, in the case of characters of high rank, such as a general, the theatre was permitted to use luxury materials in order to reflect the characters’ rank.

As we have seen, the regulation of costumes was yet another way for the authorities to maintain the status hierarchy that undergirded their rule. The prohibitions of love suicide and its representations were also connected to the need to preserve the status system. As we shall see, the timing of the prohibitions of love suicide and its representations places these regulations within the larger project of the Kyōhō Reforms.

The Kyōhō Reforms

The overall goal of the Kyōhō Reforms, which were initiated by the eighth shogun, Yoshimune (1684-1751; r. 1716-45), was to “restore stability to the shogunate and the samurai class as a whole through various financial and agrarian measures.”²²³ The name “Kyōhō” itself, which means “preservation of the inheritance,” was an apt name to accompany Yoshimune’s aims.²²⁴ When Yoshimune became shogun in 1716, the power of the samurai had weakened compared to a century before. The economic rise of the merchants meant that the fixed stipends

²²¹ Shively, “Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan,” 133.

²²² *Ibid.*, 139.

²²³ Thompson, “The Politics of Japanese Prints,” 42.

²²⁴ Kate Wildman Nakai, *Shogunal Politics: Arai Hakuseki and the Premises of Tokugawa Rule* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, 1988), 220.

of the samurai had comparatively less spending power. The samurai also had diminished authority. During his reign Tsunayoshi (1646-1709; r. 1680-1709) had instituted the Laws of Compassion (*Shōrui awaremi no rei*), which were meant to engender benevolence in his subjects by requiring them to treat animals and other people with gentleness.²²⁵ The laws protected horses, birds, fish, wild animals, and dogs.²²⁶ The laws, which were unpopular, were repealed after Tsunayoshi's death. By then, however, they had diminished samurai authority to act violently on the spot, even to kill a dog. In this sense, they were part of a broader transformation of the samurai from warriors to civil servants.²²⁷

An analysis of some of Yoshimune's key reforms illustrates their focus on the samurai. A clear example was his attempt to rectify growing commoner economic power through the restoration of the currency. In addition, reforms that appear to be moralistic actually supported the samurai. For instance, Yoshimune reformed the judiciary system to create better mechanisms for redress. Many of the peasants' complaints were over the increased taxes that had been imposed by local leaders at the behest of the shogunal government. The reforms, although they involved listening to more complaints from the peasants, ultimately reinforced the legitimacy and authority of the ruling class.²²⁸ A similar motive underlay Yoshimune's reforms of the penal system. In 1718, he had reintroduced the punishment of the removal of noses and ears, but then in 1720, he replaced these punishments with flogging and tattooing. Botsman has argued that rather than a sign of a more humane punishment, a more accurate interpretation of this shift is that the shogunal government desired to "reestablish its power to mark permanently the bodies of

²²⁵ Beatrice Bodart Bailey, "The Laws of Compassion," *Monumenta Nipponica* 40, no. 2 (Summer, 1985): 167.

²²⁶ Tsunayoshi's protect of dogs is one reason why he was given the nickname "the dog shogun."

²²⁷ Bailey, "The Laws of Compassion," 188.

²²⁸ Nakai, *Shogunal Politics*, 148-49.

petty criminals.”²²⁹ Later in his reign, Yoshimune assembled a list of crimes and their corresponding punishments, the Rules for Determining Legal Matters (*Kujikata osadamegaki*, 1742), which was designed to enact more uniformity in punishments and remove some of the decision making power that legal clerks had obtained.²³⁰

Yoshimune also used to the Kyōhō Reforms as a way to “shape the mentality of the populace.”²³¹ Censorship of woodblock prints, books, ballads, and plays was one manifestation of this moral focus of the reforms. However, as with the judicial and penal reforms discussed above, censorship of popular culture was also intended to support samurai rule. One example is with erotic prints (*shunga*). Erotic prints were banned as part of the Kyōhō Reforms, but, as with the censorship of other media, the bans were not consistently enforced. One artist who was prosecuted was Kyoto-based woodblock print artist Nishikawa Sukenobu (1671-1715). Known for his erotica, he was prosecuted instead for an illustrated book titled *Evaluations of One Hundred Women* (*Hyakunin jorō shinasadame*, 1723), in which he depicted the empress and ladies of the court alongside women of low status, including streetwalkers.²³² As art historian Sarah E. Thompson has noted, “Impropriety was a far more serious offense than mere obscenity; in fact, there are few if any instances of prosecution for obscenity alone.”²³³ The real issue with Nishikawa was his depiction of women from multiple status categories together. In other words, the authorities’ concerns were the flattening of the social hierarchy.

²²⁹ Daniel V. Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 91 and 27.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

²³¹ Nakai, *Shogunal Politics*, 149.

²³² Since the offending book was published in Kyoto and featured members of the court, is it possible that the impetus for the ban originated with the court rather than the shogunate. Thompson, “The Politics of Japanese Prints,” 47.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 48.

Censoring Love Suicide

The timing of the censorship edicts aimed at love suicide indicates that the bans were part of the Kyōhō Reforms. Prior to the edicts directly concerning love suicide, the Tokugawa Shogunate did have a history of censoring theatre subject matter even if specific topics were generally not the main focus of the authorities' efforts. In 1644, the authorities banned the use of names of existing persons.²³⁴ In 1655, 1658, and 1664, the government repeatedly banned plays that were set in the Shimabara licensed quarter in Kyoto.²³⁵ In 1673, the government forbade printed matter about anything disturbing and “rumors about people.”²³⁶ As for matters that might disturb people, Shively has demonstrated that this chiefly referred to matters concerning upper-ranking samurai. Officials mostly overlooked the incidents represented in the contemporary life plays, despite their direct representation of recent events, because the plays did not portray high-ranking people who might lodge grievances.²³⁷ Furthermore, the edicts were directed primarily at Edo theatres. The government expected Kyoto and Osaka officials to proclaim and enforce the same edicts in their respective cities but allowed for delays in their implementation.²³⁸

The censorship edicts that directly addressed the love suicide genre and the practice were issued in 1722 and 1723 respectively. In the first edict, the shogunal government specifically singled out *shinjū* (love suicide) and explicitly banned it as the subject for ballads, fiction, and drama. In the second, it stipulated punishments for those who committed or attempted love

²³⁴ Shively, “Tokugawa Plays on Forbidden Topics,” 25.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

²³⁸ Shively, “Bakufu Versus Kabuki,” 337.

suicide. If both parties died, their corpses were thrown away (*shigai shusha*), which meant in practice that they were denied Buddhist funerary rites.²³⁹ In an unsuccessful double suicide, the law made a distinction between when both and only one person survived the attempt. If both people survived, the punishment was pillorying (*sarashi*), in which the criminals were tied with ropes and made to sit in a public place next to a signpost that explained their crimes. After three days, they were demoted to outcast status (*hinin teka*), which meant they lost their rights and privileges as commoners and had to live as outcasts under the jurisdiction of the leader of the outcaste group. If only one person survived the attempted double suicide, that person would be considered a murderer and executed.²⁴⁰ One major difference in the text of these two edicts is the word that is used to describe love suicide. The 1722 edict uses *shinjū* for “love suicide.” The 1723 edict uses *aitajini*, or “death by accomplice.”²⁴¹ The distinction in the two terms used for “love suicide” demonstrates the government’s understanding of the symbolic potency of the act.

Two aspects of these edicts reveal the pervasiveness of status markers in the government’s conceptualization of good or bad subjecthood. First, the punishment for when the suicide attempt failed for both parties was status-related since the parties were demoted to outcast status. Status demotion was a form of punishment also used for incest, gambling, and assault.²⁴² The criminal was assigned to a specific outcast group within the city and was required to reside with that group, to participate in begging in designated areas, to clean the area in which they had begging rights (which meant removing unclaimed corpses or the carcasses of animals),

²³⁹ Denial of Buddhist funerary rites meant these individuals were barred from salvation after death. This was an attempt to undo the religious meaning given to love suicide in many of the ballads and plays.

²⁴⁰ In the cases in which there was one survivor, it was almost always the man. Women were disproportionately likelier to die in love suicide than men.

²⁴¹ Yoshida Setsuko, ed., *Edo kabuki hōrei shūsei nenpyō* (Tokyo: Ōfū, 1997), 70.

²⁴² Botsman, *Punishment and Power*, 78.

and to join the group in whatever official duties the group was assigned, which might have included work at the local jailhouse or execution grounds.²⁴³ This form of punishment effectively removed the criminal from the economic opportunities and social circles of his or her previous life.

Second, the form of capital punishment for a sole survivor of an attempted love suicide, unlike other types of capital punishment at the time, did not involve torture or the confiscation of the person's assets. The comparative leniency of the punishment reveals a less severe attitude toward the crime. In the Edo period, the major consideration in how to punish an individual was the social relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. For example, if a master killed a servant, the punishment was light. But when a servant killed a master, the servant would be executed in the harshest possible way, such as "pulling of the saw" or crucifixion.²⁴⁴ In the case of attempted love suicides, when only one person survived the suicide attempt, the survivor was beheaded. There were multiple types of beheadings including *gokumon*, in which the severed head was publicly displayed for a few days following the execution; *shizai*, which was the most common form of beheading; and *geshunin*, the form used for sole survivors of a love suicide attempt.²⁴⁵ Both *geshunin* and *shizai* were capital punishments for murderers. If greed had been the motive then the punishment was the more severe *shizai*, which included the corpse being

²⁴³ Ibid., 78.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 30. "Pulling the saw" (*nokogiri-biki*) the condemned was placed in a box buried in the ground with the head exposed. Bloody bamboo saws were placed near the head in a reference to an older form of punishment in which actual swords were placed by the head for a slow decapitation. Onlookers could use the bamboo saws to saw the condemned's neck, but they generally refrained. After three days, the condemned was taken to the execution grounds and crucified. Ibid., 26.

²⁴⁵ The distinction between *gokumon* and *shizai* is explained in Botsman, *Punishment and Power*, 20.

used for “trial cutting” (*tameshigiri*) and the confiscation of the criminal’s assets by the state.²⁴⁶ The practice of “trial cutting” was when a criminal’s corpse, once beheaded, was dismembered as a way to test the battle-readiness of the shogun’s store of swords.²⁴⁷ In the case of *geshunin*, the corpse was not mutilated following the execution and the criminal’s assets were not confiscated, which lessened the burden on the family members left behind. The specific type of capital punishment in these cases indicates that the authorities considered the crime severe enough to merit death but not severe enough to merit the more extreme forms of capital punishment.

Love Suicide Moves to Edo

In the context of the Kyōhō Reforms, love suicide appears an unlikely candidate for the attention of the shogunal government. What threat did love suicide pose to samurai dominance? Love suicide was primarily committed by commoners and prostitutes in the Kamigata region, particularly Osaka, and represented on Kamigata stages. In terms of status and geography, these were not the populations of the most concern to the Tokugawa shogunate.

The lack of documentary evidence for the love suicide crisis makes it impossible to determine exactly who was committing the love suicides or where, but the representations of love suicide in ballads, illustrated books, and plays did represent love suicide as primarily a Kamigata commoner practice. The earliest productions of love suicide plays on kabuki stages were produced in Osaka and told stories set in Osaka. The illustrated pamphlet *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides* (*Shinjū ōkagami*), published in 1704, also represents a similar demographic as

²⁴⁶ *Nihon dai hyakka zensho*. Accessed March 7, 2016.
<http://japanknowledge.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/lib/display/?lid=1001000080694>

²⁴⁷ Botsman, *Punishment and Power*, 20.

the plays. The majority of the male characters in *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides* are merchants and artisans. The only samurai represented is a masterless samurai (*rōnin*). The female characters are prostitutes and commoners. The stories take place primarily in Kyoto and Osaka with nine and eight set in each, respectively. None of the four stories that are set elsewhere take place in Edo.²⁴⁸

However, as the eighteenth century progressed, the love suicide genre migrated toward Edo. Performance records indicate that the first kabuki adaptation of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* reached Edo in 1706. The Nakamura Theatre, one of the larger kabuki houses, presented the play as a commemoration of the third anniversary of the lovers' deaths. The Nakamura Theatre produced additional pieces based on *Sonezaki* in 1719 and 1722.²⁴⁹ The 1719 production starred Edo's leading male actor, Ichikawa Danjūrō II as Tokubei and female role actor Sanogawa Mangiku as Ohatsu.²⁵⁰ The high-caliber cast suggests the theatres anticipated strong box office returns from the production. There are also records that ballads of love suicide reached Edo. An internal shogunal government memo in 1720 revealed that love suicide ballads were being sung and sold in the streets by this point.²⁵¹

The shogunate's prohibition of the representation of love suicide in 1722 and, in the following year, of the act of love suicide, came after the peak of the love suicide crisis in Osaka and Kyoto, in 1704-1716.²⁵² By then, the vogue for plays about love suicide had also mostly passed. Fewer plays on the subject were produced after 1716 than during the height of the

²⁴⁸ *Shinjū ōkagami*, 181-233.

²⁴⁹ Tsuchida Mamoru, *Kōshō Genroku kabuki: yōshiki to tenkai* (Tokyo: Yagi shoten, 1996), 140.

²⁵⁰ Fujino, *Sonezaki shinjū kaishaku to kenkyū*, 34.

²⁵¹ Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*, 335.

²⁵² Kōsaka, *Genroku otatami bugyō no nikki*, 131.

crisis.²⁵³ Although love suicide was waning in the Kamigata region, evidence suggests that it had been making its way to Edo, the shogun's capital.

The official history of the Tokugawa shogunate, *True Tokugawa Records* (*Tokugawa jikki*, early 1800s), also points to this geographic progression. A historian must consider material recorded in the *True Tokugawa Records* with a grain of salt since it was compiled in the first decades of the nineteenth century and reflects the political concerns of the shogunal government in the early 1800s as much as those of the years it depicts.²⁵⁴ The multi-volume work makes only one mention of love suicide; this appears when the act was censored along with its depiction. The fact that it is mentioned only here indicates that this is around the time it became of serious concern to the authorities. The *True Tokugawa Record* explains the love suicide phenomenon as follows:

It is a dreadfully brazen immoral sexual relationship between a man and a woman of low status who drown themselves together or die by hanging. Popularly called “*shinjū*,” it started during the Genroku era, and was only in Kyoto and Osaka. This trend has come to Edo. It involves young women and men, and there are many who are inclined to die for love.

*Hisen no danjo kan'in shi, sono arawaren koto o osore, sorotomo ni mizu ni mi o nage, mata wa kubire shi suru tagui o. Zoku ni shinjū to iinarawashitari, mukashi wa Keihan ni nomi yū shi ga, Genroku no koro yori. Edo ni mo sono fū utsuri. Toshi wakaki danjo, yaya mo sureba jōshi suru mono ōkarishi.*²⁵⁵

This description echoes a number of elements of love suicide as it is represented by the plays.

First of all, these were men and women of low status. Those choosing love suicide, which, the

²⁵³ The majority of works by Chikamatsu and Kaion were produced before 1716 as were both of Bunryū's love suicide plays. The later love suicide plays are Chikamatsu's *The Love Suicides at Amijima* (1720) and Chikamatsu and Kaion's rival version of the same 1722 incident: *The Love Suicides on the Eve of the Kōshin Festival* (*Shinjū yoigōshin*) and *Love Suicides and a Double-Maternal Sash* (*Shinjū futatsu hara-obi*), respectively.

²⁵⁴ Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570-1680* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 287.

²⁵⁵ Vol. 9 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Bunkan), 171.

chronicle notes, is called “*shinjū*,” were in some kind of sexual relationship that was not legally sanctioned, and the phenomenon was centered in the Kamigata region. A few elements differ, such as the timeline and method of death. There were certainly cases of love suicide prior to the Genroku era (which began in 1688). The methods of death, which in Chikamatsu’s plays are often by razor, here are drowning and hanging.²⁵⁶ As can be expected, the chronicle condemns the act and the relationships that can lead to the act. By using the term *kan’in* 姦淫, which can also mean adultery, to describe the relationship between the lovers, the text frames the act as one that grows from an illicit or immoral relationship. The passage also highlights that love suicide had arrived in Edo.

Love suicide likely garnered attention from the authorities at this moment in time because its arrival in Edo coincided with the larger effort of the Kyōhō Reforms to re-assert samurai authority and to “shape the mentality of the populace.” So what was it about love suicide that challenged the dominant social structure? I propose three explanations: it subverted the status system, it offered a critique of the social structure by demonstrating its instability, and it put forth a new set of values based on honor that transcended status.

Love Suicide and the Status System

I have established that the ban on love suicide and plays about love suicide were contingent on time and place. The move of love suicide plays from Kamigata to Edo

²⁵⁶ Hanging is a method of suicide in two Chikamatsu love suicide plays, *The Love Suicides at Ikudama* and *The Love Suicides at Amijima*. Death by accidental drowning occurs in *The Love Suicides at the Sunken Well* and Kaion’s *The Love Suicides in the Well of Tears*. With the exception of *The Love Suicides in the Well of Tears* in which both protagonists drown, the female characters die by razor in these plays.

corresponded to the reign of a new shogun, Yoshimune, who was embarking on a campaign to restore samurai authority and strengthen the moral fiber of society with the Kyōhō Reforms.

Given that the goals of the reforms were to restore samurai dominance, why were love suicide plays a target since they told the stories of commoners? The eighteenth-century love suicide plays from the puppet theatre by Chikamatsu, Kaion, and Bunryū portrayed predominantly commoner characters. A few represent characters who were originally of samurai status but have become commoner either through entering prostitution, such as the women in *The Love Suicides in Midsummer with an Icy Blade* (*Shinjū yaiba wa kōri no tsuitachi*, 1709) and *The Love Suicides at Nanba Bridge* (*Nanba-bashi shinjū*, 1710); through punishment, such as the young man in *The Love Suicides at the Women's Temple* (*Shinjū mannensō*, 1710) who lost his samurai status when he killed another child when he was twelve; or through adoption, such as *The Love Suicides on the Eve of the Kōshin Festival* (*Shinjū yoigōshin*, 1722), in which a young man originally of samurai stock is adopted into a greengrocers' family in Osaka.²⁵⁷ Of the twenty plays produced in the puppet theatre, nineteen took place in Osaka while one took place on and around Mount Kōya, a mountain in the Kamigata region. This is the same demographic that appears in the *Great Mirror of Love Suicides* and other contemporary sources.

Not only were the characters represented in the plays commoners, but Chikamatsu specified in his plays that love suicide was an act committed by commoners. Two plays that insist that love suicide is a commoner act are contemporary life plays in which the plots initial unfold as typical love suicide plays but do not end in a double suicide: *Yosaku from Tanba*

²⁵⁷ The young man in *Kōshin Festival* honors his samurai roots in his suicide by slicing his abdomen, the traditional form of ritual suicide (*seppuku*) for samurai. Most of the male characters in the other plays die by slicing their windpipes or hanging themselves.

(*Tanba yosaku matsuyo no komurobushi*, 1708) and *Hara-kiri of a Woman at Nagamachi* (*Nagamachi onna Hara-kiri*, 1712). These two examples reinforce the status hierarchy.

Yosaku from Tanba recounts the story of Yosaku, a former samurai who, due to infractions he committed while in service to a samurai lord, now drives horses at a provincial post station. His lover Koman is a prostitute at the post station. They decide to commit love suicide together and undertake the ritual journey to the place where they will die. However, before they can complete their vow, they are interrupted by a group of soldiers. Yosaku pleads with them to let him go through with his suicide, “If you men are samurai, show mercy. I was formerly Date no Yosaku. The supreme moment of my life has come—will you please let me die without blemish?” (*yare samurai naraba nasake o shire, moto wa Date no Yosaku zo issshokenmei no jisetsu tōrai, shi ni zokonawasetekureru ka*).²⁵⁸ Yosaku’s appeal to them as samurai does not have the desired effect. Instead, a former friend from Yosaku’s days in service to the *daimyō* responds:

Remember, death for a samurai should mean that he was first in storming a castle, or first to aim his lance in open fighting, or that he was slain after taking the head of a worthy enemy. It is not easy to die like a samurai. Nowhere in the whole body of sacred literature will you find it written that a lovers’ suicide with Koman will bring you glory.²⁵⁹

*kyūba no ie no shi to iu wa shiro seme no ichiban nori, noawase ikusa no ichiban yari yoki kataki no kubi totte, uchijini suru o samurai no shi ni nikui shi ni to wa iu zo. Oboete oke seki no Koman to shinjū no uchijini o tegara to wa issai kyō ni mo nai.*²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Ōhashi Tadayoshi, annot. and trans. in *Chikamatsu Monzaemon shū I*, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2003) vol. 74, 389. Adapted from Keene’s translation, “If you men are samurai, show your sympathy. I was formerly a samurai, Date no Yosaku by name. The supreme moment of my life has come—will you make me botch my suicide?” in *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 128.

²⁵⁹ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 129.

²⁶⁰ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 74, 391.

Yosaku's friend does not disagree that death is the supreme moment of a samurai's life; he argues instead that love suicide is not a fitting death for a samurai. His argument is successful, and the lovers do not commit suicide. Further, Yosaku is restored to his samurai rank. The play ends with a light-hearted, celebratory dance in which the narrator sings the story of Ofusa and Tokubei's love suicide, the incident Chikamatsu treated in his play *The Love Suicides at Sunken Well*. In a way, the play does end with a love suicide. However, the play confirms what Yosaku's friend stated: love suicide is not a samurai's death; rather, it is reserved for a commoners and his prostitute lover.

The other play, *Nagamachi* also begins and develops as a typical love suicide play before taking a turn at the end. Hanshichi, whose father was a samurai, works in Kyoto as a craftsman at a shop that makes fittings for swords. His aunt comes to visit from Osaka and entrusts a precious sword to him and requests that he fit the sword for a *daimyō* client in Osaka. Hanshichi needs money to redeem his lover, the prostitute Ohana, before her stepfather extends her prostitution contract, so he sells the sword and buys a cheap one, which he embellishes and attempts to pass off for the real thing. In anticipation of his fraud being discovered, the two lovers journey to Osaka, where they plan to confess and endure the consequences. When the *daimyō* discovers that the sword is a fake, he blames Hanshichi's uncle. Hanshichi's aunt decides to take responsibility for Hanshichi's actions and commits *seppuku*, or *hara-kiri*, a ritual suicide in which she first pierces then pulls the blade across her abdomen. Hanshichi's uncle pushes the two lovers out of the house and spares their lives. Hanshichi's uncle praises his wife, "Even though you are a woman, you performed *seppuku* like a samurai" (*onna naredomo bushi no seppuku*).²⁶¹ When

²⁶¹ The status category of samurai included men and women, but this passage points out that there were different gender expectations for male and female members of the samurai class. Trans. by Paul S. Atkins, accessed April 19, 2016,

she insists on slitting her throat herself to complete the ritual suicide, the narrator chants, “At the sight of her outdoing a man in taking her own life, the husband falls into a daze” (*otokomasari no jigai no tei otto wa iyoiyo kokoro kure*).²⁶² In this instance, the aunt demonstrates how a samurai commits suicide and, with her suicide, the potential love suicide is averted.

The examples of *Yosaku from Tanba* and *Nagamachi* reveal an underlying support of the status system hierarchy since they reinforce the idea that there is a fundamental difference between samurai and commoner. In *Yosaku from Tanba*, a samurai love suicide is averted on the grounds that it is an inappropriate way for a samurai to die. The play concludes instead with a song about a commoner love suicide. *Nagamachi* similarly stresses *seppuku* as the method of suicide for a samurai, male or female. Berry has argued that the Tokugawa shogunal government’s policies were “predicated on differences—on making them and enforcing them.”²⁶³ With respect to the method of dying, the contemporary life plays supported the ideology of the status system.

In contrast, other love suicide plays argue that there is not a fundamental difference between samurai and commoner. For example, in *The Love Suicides at Ikudama* (*Ikudama shinjū*, 1715), the protagonist’s father asserts that the difference between himself and a samurai is merely a prop; a samurai wears an extra sword but that difference is only external. He admonishes his son, “Do you think the only difference between a samurai and a townsman is that the samurai wears two swords and a townsman wears one? You idiot! I carry the spirit of two

<https://ceas.uchicago.edu/sites/ceas.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/Sibley/Harakiri.pdf>. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 74, 484.

²⁶² Atkins. Yamane Tameo, annot, and trans. in *Chikamatsu Monzaemon shū 1*, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2003) vol. 74, 484.

²⁶³ “Was Early Modern Japan Culturally Integrated?” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (July 1997): 571.

swords in my breast. I, Gohei, am not inferior to a samurai” (*nihon sasu o saburai, ippon saseba chōnin to bakari omou ka, utsukemono daishō wa kono mune ni aru bushi ni otoranu Gohei*).²⁶⁴

In this passage, Gohei argues that despite the regulation that differentiates between a samurai, who carried two swords, and a commoner, who carried only one, he, though a townsman, has the same courage and strength of character as a samurai. The subversion of difference in this passage points to the value system I elaborate later in this chapter that posits an honor that transcends status.

Another play, *The Love Suicides at the Women’s Temple*, at first appears to support the ideology of a fundamental difference between the status categories and then later subverts the same idea. Oume, the heroine, loves Kumenosuke, a man of samurai stock who now serves as a temple page on Mt. Kōya. Her father has arranged for her to marry a merchant rather than the man she loves. He says, “A horse goes with a horse, an ox with an ox” (*uma wa uma tsure, ushi wa ushi tsure*) to the porter trying to intercede on Kumenosuke’s behalf.²⁶⁵ Oume’s father will marry her to a merchant since that is the natural order of things. However, shortly after this exchange, the father reveals that he has already accepted the dowry and other money from the groom. The match is based more on financial gain for the father than on an ideology of keeping like with like. Moreover, later in the play, Oume chooses to die with Kumenosuke rather than marry the merchant. The narrator confirms the match by chanting at the end, “This is the tale of the love suicide of a pious man and woman in the Women’s Temple” (*zennanshi zennyonindō*

²⁶⁴ The pronunciation of “*saburai*” for the character more commonly pronounced “*samurai*” is noted by the editor. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 365.

²⁶⁵ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 146. Sakaguchi Hiroyuki, annot, and trans. in *Chikamatsu Monzaemon shū 2*, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2003) vol. 75, 217.

shinjū kaku to zo kikoekeru).²⁶⁶ The narrator raises the couple up as pious individuals who are united in love with no comment that they should not be together. Kumenosuke's story offers a contrast to that of Yosaku. Both were originally samurai, but Kumenosuke was sent to be a temple page as punishment for murder whereas Yosaku was demoted. The plays imply that Kumenosuke's shift in status was complete since he commits love suicide, whereas Yosaku's demotion was only temporary. Indeed, Yosaku is restored to his samurai rank at the conclusion of the play.

Chikamatsu demonstrated the porous nature of the status system in *The Love Suicides at Amijima*, when a commoner impersonates a samurai. The play recounts the love suicide of Jihei, who runs a paper shop, and his lover, the prostitute Koharu. In the impersonation scene, Magoemon, a flour merchant and Jihei's brother, visits Koharu so he can persuade her to end the relationship, which he sees as threatening his brother's marriage and business. He disguises himself as a samurai by wearing two swords and succeeds in fooling his brother's rival for Koharu's affections, the staff at the brothel, and even Jihei. Early in the scene, Tahei, his brother's rival, accosts Magoemon. Magoemon is wearing the wicker hat most men wore to the pleasure quarters to preserve their anonymity. Since Koharu no longer sees many clients apart from Jihei, Tahei assumes this client must be Jihei. Tahei is fully taken aback when he discovers the client is not Jihei but a samurai. The narrator describes his reaction, "He drags the man in and examines him: it is the genuine article, a two-sworded samurai, somber in dress and expression; who glares at Tahei through his woven hat, his eyeballs round as gongs" (*hikizuriiretaru sugata o mireba daishō kusunda bushi no shōjin amigasagoshi ni gutto nemetaru manmaru medama wa*

²⁶⁶ Adapted from Keene's translation, "This is the tale told of the suicides of a good man and a good woman in the Women's Temple," in *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 393. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 235.

tatakigane).²⁶⁷ Tahei finds Magoemon's disguise thoroughly convincing. Magoemon is able to pass as a samurai because he has the right appearance since he wears two swords and he affects the right behavior by adopting a hard, stern demeanor. This is an example of Howell's "status transvestism," in which someone from one status category temporarily masquerades as a member of a different status category.

This element of performance as a quality of status is emphasized later in the scene. Magoemon confronts his brother and expresses distaste for his samurai disguise. He says, "And here I am, Magoemon the Miller, known far and wide for my paragon of a brother, dressed up like a masquerader at a festival or maybe a lunatic! I put on swords for the first time in my life, and announced myself, like a bit player in a costume piece, as an officer at a residence" (*kekko na ototo o mochi hito ni mo shirareshi Ko-ya no Magoemon matsuri no nerishu ka kichigai ka tsuini sasanu daisho botsukomi kurayashiki no yakunin to kozume yakusha no mane o shite*).²⁶⁸ Magoemon likens himself to someone appearing in costume in a parade in Osaka's summer festival (*matsuri no nerishu*) or to someone appearing in a minor role in a play (*kozume yakusha*). Magoemon's choice of words and clear antipathy for his disguise make it clear he would rather appear in a manner consistent with his identity as a merchant. However, the fact that Magoemon's disguise fools each person he encounters in the scene suggests that status identities could be assumed with some props, a costume, and the right gestures and attitude. In other words, status was not an innate identity but something that could be performed.

Chikamatsu was not the originator of this plot device. Another instance of "status transvestism" occurs in Kaion's *The Love Suicides at Umeda* (*Umeda shinjū*), which predated

²⁶⁷ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 393. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 390.

²⁶⁸ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 401. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 400.

Amijima.²⁶⁹ In Kaion's play, the prostitute heroine disguises a client from the countryside as a samurai as a ruse to arrange a meeting with her lover.²⁷⁰ Suwa Haruo, who has noted a number of similarities between *Umeda* and *Amijima*, has argued that Chikamatsu borrowed the plot device of the disguise that he used in *Amijima* from Kaion's play.²⁷¹ The repetition of this plot device in Chikamatsu's play suggests that he expected it would find favor with his audience.

The above examples illustrate that Chikamatsu offered a complex view of status in his plays. On one hand, the contemporary life plays that do not end in love suicide, such as *Yosaku from Tanba* and *Nagamachi*, make the distinction that love suicide is an appropriate form of death for commoners but inappropriate for samurai. As the samurai in *Yosaku from Tanba* suggests, a samurai should die heroically in battle. Or, as the aunt in *Nagamachi* demonstrates, if a samurai commits suicide, the suicide should follow the *seppuku* ritual. These examples support the ideology of difference that was embedded in the status system. On the other hand, there are moments in the plays that blur the differences between the status categories. In particular, the scene with Mageomon in *Amijima* displays a merchant who successfully impersonates a samurai. These examples undermine the rigidity of the status system.

If love suicide was predominantly a practice of commoners in the Kamigata region and the plays that represented it mostly supported the ideology of the status system, why were the practice and its representations considered dangerous and so harshly censured?

²⁶⁹ The exact date of this play's premiere is unknown although most likely it was staged between 1711 and 1716. The editors of Kaion's collected works has estimated it was in 1713. Kaion kenkyūkai, ed., *Ki Kaion zenshū* vol. 7 (Osaka: Seibundō, 1980), 258. *Gidayū nenpyō* has placed it in 1715. See 55.

²⁷⁰ Suwa Haruo, "Shi mo mata sei no dōtei," in *Edo no shinjū* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1995), 13.

²⁷¹ "Shi mo mata sei no dōtei," 13.

Only two scholars writing in English have attempted to answer the question of why the authorities considered love suicide subversive. Religious Studies scholar Steven Heine has developed the idea that love suicide was a form of protest by a group of people who lacked the money and social status to have power over their lives. Heine has argued that love suicide became a mechanism to claim power in the next life. He has cited the characters' inability to succeed in either the merchant world of everyday life or its inverse, the floating world of pleasure, entertainment, and sex, as the reason these individuals turn to a religious practice tied to Amida Buddha.²⁷² Further, he has noted the preponderance of Buddhist imagery in the plays and in their dramatic structure. He has written, "By stressing the importance of Pure Land redemption inspiring the characters' intentions to sacrifice their lives, it is possible to see how *shinjū* often functions as a form of protest by a marginalized faction against the mainstream samurai values of hierarchical loyalty and duty that underlie *seppuku*."²⁷³ In Heine's formulation, love suicide was able to "transmute the roots of social alienation into a spiritual advantage by redefining power in one's own terms so as to overturn mainstream values."²⁷⁴

Although Heine does not distinguish between the act of love suicide and its representations, he has made a strong contribution by highlighting the social circumstances that led to love suicide. He has pushed his interpretation a bit too far perhaps when he claims that the motivation of the individuals who committed love suicide was to protest since there is little documentation to support this assertion beyond the plays. In so doing, he has blurred the lines between the historical agents and their fictional representations. In the plays, the characters do

²⁷² "Tragedy and Salvation in the Floating World: Chikamatsu's Double Suicide Drama as Millenarian Discourse," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 2 (May 1994): 370.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 369.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 381.

not explicitly say that their motivation for committing suicide is to protest the social order. Instead, the lovers are motivated by an inability to overcome the obstacles that prevent them from being together. Heine rightly notes that the representations of love suicide, particularly Chikamatsu's plays, reveal the social structures that create the intractable circumstances that lead to love suicide. In this way, the plays and other representations can be seen as a protest even if the motivation behind the act was not a protest.

Cultural historian Katsuya Hirano has argued the Tokugawa regime relied on each member of society actively contributing to producing goods, food, and wealth for the realm. For Hirano, love suicide promoted an “unproductive body,” meaning a person who did not participate in working towards the prosperity of the state. He has written that “love suicide valorized a violation of social norms—love between those unequal—as an enactment of honesty or sincerity. It also meant that only the self-destruction of one’s existence could lead one to truthfulness in Tokugawa society. These implications clearly pointed to transgressive claims regarding the invalidity of the social order.”²⁷⁵ Some of the assumptions underlying Hirano’s argument could be more shifted to hold more historical precision. For example, his first point, that love suicide valorized love between unequals, is predicated on the assumptions that the majority of love suicides were between men who were merchants and women who were prostitutes and that women who were prostitutes were considered unequal to their male partners. In fact, it is worth remembering that nearly half of the love suicide plays written for the puppet theatre told stories in which both members of the couple were merchants.²⁷⁶ Regarding the

²⁷⁵ *The Politics of Dialogic Imagination*, 63.

²⁷⁶ Female protagonists who do not work as prostitutes are found in Chikamatsu’s *Colored Leaves in the Fourth Month* (*Uzuki no momiji*) and its sequel *Re-dyeing the Fourth Month* (*Uzuki no iroage*), *The Love Suicides at the Women’s Temple* (*Shinjū mannensō*), *The Love Suicides at Imamiya* (*Imamiya shinjū*), and *The Love Suicides on the Eve of the Kōshin Festival* (*Shinjū*

prejudice against prostitution, Amy Stanley has shown that these biases were not nearly as acute as scholars sometimes assume based on present-day perspectives.²⁷⁷ In actuality, prostitution was often depicted in popular culture as a transitional “step” between girlhood and marriage. After completing their contracts, women who had worked as prostitutes were often reincorporated into the social world through marriage.²⁷⁸ Hirano’s second point, that truthfulness could only be expressed in self-destruction, might be more substantively argued. To be sure, love suicide and other forms of *shinjū* were seen as expressions of sincerity. However, they were practiced predominately by a minority in Osaka and did not represent the sole methods for displaying one’s sincerity of heart.

For our purposes here, the most important contribution of Heine and Hirano’s work is that they both point out that love suicide put forth a value system at odds with that of the authorities. Heine has described this phenomenon as “overturning mainstream values.” Hirano has used the phrase “violation of social norms” and has observed that the plays demonstrate the “invalidity of the social order.” Both scholars have honed in on the crucial point that love suicide came to symbolize something dangerous. As we have seen, the initial ban in 1722 focused on the representation of love suicide. The second ban in 1723, outlawed the act while also using the more clinical “death by accomplice” (*ataijini*) rather than the romantic “love suicide” (*shinjū*). The order of the bans and the word choice indicate the symbolic meaning of love suicide was a key consideration for the authorities. In the following section, I expand on Heine and Hirano’s

yoigōshin) and Kaion’s *The Love Suicides in the Well of Tears (Shinjū namida no tamanoi)*, *The White-dyed Sleeve (Tamoto no shirashibori)*, *The Love Suicides at Imamiya near the Double Pine (Imamiya shinjū marugoshi renri no matsu)*, and *Love Suicides and a Double Maternal-Sash (Shinjū futatsu hara-obi)*.

²⁷⁷ *Selling Women*, 4.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

studies and draw a more precise picture of the threat posed by love suicide. I argue that love suicide was subversive in two main ways. First, it exposed the fragility of commoner lives, an implied critique of the status quo. Second, it put forth a value system that diverged from the values promoted by the authorities. Both the critiques offered in the plays and the value system promulgated by the plays attacked the ideological cornerstone of samurai rule: the status system.

Love Suicide as a Critique of the Status Quo

Stories of love suicide, which almost always included some kind of financial crisis that precipitated the suicide, drew attention to a key aspect of commoner lives during the Edo period: economic instability. The first two decades of the eighteenth century were hard on commoners. The financial circumstances of those featured in love suicide stories, prostitutes and low-ranking commoners, were especially fragile. Commoners' economic lives were completely unstable since they did not have fixed incomes and were subject to vagaries in the market, the whims of the high-ranking samurai who borrowed their money, capricious rulings by the shogunate, the devaluation of the currency by the shogunate, and natural disasters. Some of the events in the early eighteenth century that had a particularly negative impact on commoners in Osaka included a large earthquake in 1707, Mt. Fuji's eruption in the same year, and massive city fires in 1708, 1711, 1716, and 1724.²⁷⁹ Such events could bring precipitous ruin to a commoner.

The merchants were aware of the unpredictability of their incomes. For example, when Mitsui Takafusa became the head of the Mitsu House in 1716, he wrote an essay that reflected on a number of prominent merchant houses that went bankrupt between 1650 and the early 1700s. In his analysis of these bankruptcies, he noted that some houses failed due to the fault of the

²⁷⁹ Nagatomo, *Kinsei Kamigata jōrurihon shuppan no kenkyū*, 55-59.

house head's indulgences in luxuries or diversions. However, he wrote, the cause of the insolvency for the majority of the houses was that they had made loans to high-ranking samurai who did not honor them. High-ranking samurai received their annual incomes regardless of whether they honored their debts. A merchant house, in contrast, depended on business being conducted honestly.²⁸⁰ This particular predicament for merchant houses was worsened by the status inequalities in the period: sometimes, an indebted samurai simply did not repay his debt; other times, the shogunal government, wary of the merchant houses' growing economic power vis-à-vis the samurai, ordered the forgiveness of samurai debts.

The situation was even more tenuous for the demographic most closely associated with love suicide, which occupied the lower rungs of the merchant class or worked in the brothels. For example, the plays introduce characters employed in a soy sauce shop, a dye shop, a paper shop, a tailoring shop, a wholesale dealer, a forge, a greengrocer, a lumber dealer, and a porcelain dealer, among others.²⁸¹ Female characters are sometimes the daughters of merchants and sometimes shop employees, such as the young woman who works for a tailor in *The Love Suicides at Imamiya* (*Imamiya shinjū*, 1711). In each of Chikamatsu's plays, the sum at stake in the crisis that catalyzes the suicide is explicitly stated for the audience. These figures serve as a reminder of how quickly a debt or the desire to redeem a contract can turn into a fatal crisis.

The representation of the instability of commoner life was an implicit critique of the status quo. Yokoyama Tadashi, in his analysis of Chikamatsu's love suicide plays, has demonstrated a shift in the conflicts at the heart of the plays. Beginning with *The Love Suicides*

²⁸⁰ Tetsuo Najita, *Visions of Virtue in Tokugawa Japan: The Kaitokudō Merchant Academy of Osaka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 20-21.

²⁸¹ These characters appear in *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, *The Love Suicides at the Sunken Well*, *The Love Suicides at Amijima*, *The Love Suicides at Imamiya*, *Colored Leaves in the Fourth Month*, *The Love Suicides with an Icy Blade*, *The Love Suicides at the Kōshin Festival*, *The Love Suicides at Nanba Bridge*, and *The Love Suicides at Ikudama*, respectively.

at *Sonezaki* and continuing through *Colored Leaves in the Fourth Month* in 1706, the obstacle to the lovers' happiness arises from a villain who commits a crime. However, beginning with *The Love Suicides at Imamiya* in 1711, the stories continue to have characters who work at cross-purposes to the couple, but the plays no longer feature a clear villain. Instead, Yokoyama has argued, the root of the tragedy shifts from being the evil of a specific individual to the evil of society.²⁸² For example, in *Amijima*, the necessity for suicide arises out of a complex web of interlocking circumstances rather than the actions of a villain such as Kuheiji, the swindler, in *Sonezaki*.

Chikamatsu's 1709 play *The Love Suicides in Midsummer with an Icy Blade*, offers a critique of the status system by making it the root of the tragedy. As in many of the love suicide plays, the male protagonist, Heibei, urgently needs money. His lover, Kokan, has come to Osaka to live with her aunt after her samurai father became a masterless samurai (*rōnin*). When her aunt falls ill, Kokan secretly sells herself into prostitution to pay for her aunt's medical treatments. Meanwhile, in her home province, her father is reinstated as a samurai and sends for Kokan in order to have her married. Therefore, Heibei, a blacksmith, must find the money to redeem Kokan's contract before her father's messenger does, since the messenger will take her home to be married when he redeems the contract. The total amount of money needed is seven *ryō*. The aunt is able to contribute two *ryō* and two *bu*, so Heibei needs to raise four *ryō* and two *bu*. In order to raise the money, Heibei enters into a business deal with two men from the countryside. His fixation on the money is clearly expressed when he asks them right away if they can pay today and "do you have about four *ryō*? (*yonryō ashi mo gozaru ka*)."²⁸³ As he haggles over the

²⁸² "Chikamatsu shinjū jōruri no tenkai," *Kokugo to kokubungaku* 35, no. 5 (1958): 55.

²⁸³ Nagatomo Chiyoji, annot. and trans. in *Chikamatsu Monzaemon shū* 2, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2003) vol. 75, 249.

price, the narrator tells us, he is calculating in his head if the amount will be enough to cover Kokan's contract.

Heibei's master, Riemon, oversees the finalization of the deal. In accordance with business etiquette, Riemon's wife comes in to offer refreshments. First she offers tea. The guests politely refuse. So she offers them hot water, which they also refuse. Then she sends for someone to bring tobacco. A servant lights the tobacco, but no one touches it. The behavior of the guests makes the master suspicious, so he inquires more thoroughly about the clients' background. The fact that they have refused these tea, hot water, and tobacco goes along with customs for the outcast *eta* group at the time. Not drinking tea marked them as different from other categories of people. Similarly, they were not supposed to use fire, which meant they could not partake in hot water or tobacco.²⁸⁴ Riemon inquires more specifically as to where the clients live, but they evade the questions. Then, fully understanding the situation, Riemon flatly refuses to conduct the deal. He does not identify them specifically as *eta*, but he makes it clear that he cannot do the deal because it would be a disgrace to his profession (*kashoku ni kizu o tsuku*).²⁸⁵

Heibei tries to convince him to go forward with the deal saying that would be no professional disgrace because they followed the usual steps of receiving money, signing the contract, and exchanging goods. Rather, it would a disgrace for him personally to have initiated a deal and then not be able to follow through. This only enrages Reimon. He references the *eta*'s work with dead animals, since in the play these characters make leather-soled sandals, and calls their money "rotten money" (*kusari kane*).²⁸⁶ This is Reimon's final word on the matter, and the deal is dead. Although the *eta* characters are revealed as outcastes over the course of the scene,

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 250n11.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 251.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 252.

their identity was communicated through a series of behaviors rather than being immediately recognizable. In this way, this scene, like the scene with Magoemon in *Amijima* discussed earlier, demonstrates that status is a performance. If they had not behaved in accordance with the social codes for status, they would have been able to pass as merchants.

Karita Toshio has noted that *Icy Blade* did not have much influence on later kabuki and puppet plays. He has speculated about the reasons for this and has argued that the scene with the *eta* might be one reason why.²⁸⁷ Certainly, the presence of two *eta* characters in the play is notable. It is thought to be the only representation of *eta* in any of Chikamatsu's works.²⁸⁸ On the one hand, this is surprising given the focus on contemporary life in the love suicide plays. The *eta* village just outside Osaka, Watanabe Village, was composed of *eta* along with a number of merchants who participated in the sale of leather goods.²⁸⁹

This scene, in which Heibei is unable to secure the funds to ransom Kokan and ends up being cast out from the forge, catalyzes the action of the rest of the play. Because Heibei does not have the required sum and no longer has a job, the lovers must choose suicide to stay together. Here there is no particular villain who operates with evil intent. Instead, the social circumstances create a web from which Heibei and Kokan are unable to escape. This is an example of what Yokoyama identified as suicide rooted in the "evil of society." In this case, the "evil" here is the status system that necessitated the *eta* perform their status and that, in turn, the master refuse their business. *Icy Blade* demonstrates how tenuous the stability of a commoner's life was and implicates the status system in the deaths of the lovers.

²⁸⁷ Chikamatsu *sewamono no sekai*, 104.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁸⁹ Tsukada, "Introduction, The Urban History of Osaka," 6.

The Values of Love Suicide

As Heine and Hirano have indicated, love suicide challenged the value system of Edo period society. Commoner values were meant to center on ideas of thrift, diligence, and honesty. A merchant worked for the prosperity of his house just as a samurai loyally served his master. However, the love suicide plays advance an idea of individual honor. This honor reaches the pinnacle of expression through the act of love suicide.

Early depictions of commoners tend to portray commoner values as being essentially about thrift, diligence, and honesty, which supports the authorities' conception of the proper place of commoners in the realm. One example of the commoner values of thrift and hard work can be found in the work of Enomoto Yazaemon (1625-86), a merchant in Kawagoe. Enomoto wrote an autobiography, which he first completed in 1680 and added to until 1684. The document was intended as instructions to his descendants, who would inherit the helm of the family's merchant house. In it, he enthusiastically quotes another merchant who said,

Townsperson should not give up the desire for profit. That is their family occupation. They should not succumb to pride and luxury. No matter how wealthy, they should not depart from being townspeople. You should hang these two principles around your neck and never forget them.²⁹⁰

He then follows this quote with the comment "Yes, this is the enlightened way of the merchant."²⁹¹ These values, as Tetsuo Najita has observed, were also "practical strategies by which merchants would struggle from one generation to the next and acquire a continuity

²⁹⁰ Luke Roberts, "Name and Honor: A Merchant's Seventeenth-Century Memoir," in *Recreating Japanese Men* ed. Sabine Fruhstick et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 63.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

directly paralleling what had been *guaranteed* to the aristocracy.”²⁹² Thus, these values were one way to combat the instability of commoner lives, especially across generations.

There are a number of characters who promote similar values of thrift and frugality in the love suicide plays. However, these characters are often unsympathetic characters rather than the protagonists. For example, in *The Love Suicides of the Sunken Well*, the protagonist’s father-in-law explains his frugality with an anecdote:

When I go hear a sermon at a temple, I throw fortune stones to decide if I should give even one *mon* as an offering. Even if the stones come up favorable, three times out of five, I still don’t give. Where the faithful are around dropping their money in the offering box, I take my one *mon* of silver, bring my hand up to my shoulder, act like I’m throwing it like Shio no Chōjirō, but keep the coin in my hand. That’s how quick witted I am.

*orera ga dangi mairi shite, ichimon nageru saisen sae shinzō ka, shinzemai ka to tatamizan oite mite tatoe san ga atte mo, godo ni sando wa nagezuni shimau soba ni iru dōgyōshu ga, guwara guwara nageru toku ni wa zeni o ichimon tsumande, kata e te o kō furiage nageru kao de shio no chōjirō, zeni w ate ni tomatta kō kitten o kikaseneba suginikui shindai.*²⁹³

This passage demonstrates the extremes the father-in-law will go to in order to save all his money. His thrift is depicted comically. In the play, it is possible to see his character as justifiably horrified to see how his son-in-law has squandered the family business he has worked so hard to maintain. However, Chikamatsu gives his character a comedic treatment rather than calling for the audience’s sympathy. The father-in-law is merely an obstacle to the protagonist’s happiness.

In contrast, the characters who invite the audience’s sympathy and are held up as models are the characters who embody honor through their suicide. Gerstle has argued that by representing even low-ranking commoners and prostitutes as capable of exhibiting the highest

²⁹² *Visions of Virtue in Tokugawa Japan*, 21.

²⁹³ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* v. 75, 164-65.

level of honor places this honor as something that transcends status categories. He has written, “Chikamatsu offers the potential of honor and virtue to any and all, young and old, male and female, upright and fallen, samurai and outcast—a radical idea for his time. His is a distinctly humanist view with individual integrity as its essence, and the tragic consequences of absolute honor as its focus.”²⁹⁴ However, as Shirakata Masaru has pointed out, Chikamatsu is not simply borrowing the ideal of samurai honor and applying it to characters from other stations. Samurai ideals of honor are generally tied to the family or house (*na* 名), whereas the commoner characters exhibit an honor more aptly termed “individualized honor” (*ichibun* 一分).²⁹⁵ Shirakata has noted that some characters tie their honor specifically to their status category, as is the case with characters who discuss their “honor as a samurai” (*samurai no ichibun*) or “honor as a courtesan” (*keisei no ichibun*). In these cases, the honor here is having met the ideal expression for the particular category, whether samurai or courtesan.²⁹⁶ The idea of individualized honor, *ichibun*, is not circumscribed by a particular status category but is a form of honor that transcends any one particular place in society.

Let us return to *Icy Blade* to examine the idea of honor more closely. Kaneda Fumie has argued that Heibei is without honor. Since Heibei’s real motive is to use the money to buy out his lover’s contract, it is not really an issue of honor for him. Instead, Kaneda has contended, Heibei uses the idea of honor as a pretext to try to get the business deal to move forward.²⁹⁷

Shirakata, however, has demonstrated that there are two different forms of honor discussed in *Icy*

²⁹⁴ “Heroic Honor: Chikamatsu and The Samurai Ideal,” 344.

²⁹⁵ Shirakata Masaru, “Chikamatsu sewa jōruri ni okeru ichibun no hōhō—‘Shinjū yaiba wa kōri no tsuitachi’ to ‘Imamiya no shinjū,’” *Nihon bungaku* 14, no. 5 (1965): 360.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ “Shinjū yaiba wa kōri no tsuitachi ron,” *Hiroshima jogakuin daigaku kokugo bungakushi* 33 (2003): 20.

Blade. When Heibei first protests sending the *eta* clients away, he explains that since he had made a deal with them, to go back on the deal would violate his “honor as a craftsman” (*shokunin no ichibun*).²⁹⁸ In this case, the meaning of the phrase is that once there is a promise, even from an apprentice, this commitment should be honored. Here, the honor in question is one that represents the ideal of a particular category, the craftsman. Yet, Shirakata has reasoned, the underlying reason for Heibei’s desire to do business with the *eta* and receive their money is Heibei’s love for Kokan and desire to redeem her. Therefore, the honor at stake is not his “honor as a craftsman” but a personal honor.²⁹⁹

This idea of personal honor offered Osaka commoners a new way to imagine their social identity that was distinct from the shogunal government’s official ideology. The values of thrift, diligence, and honesty helped maintain commoner wealth in the face of the economic instability of the era and also helped keep commoners squarely in their place within the social hierarchy. Other forms of honor, such as “samurai honor” and “craftsman honor” reinforced the status categories even as they celebrated an ideal. In contrast, the value of personal honor transcended the status categories upon which the authorities depended to justify their rule. In the plays, the highest expression of this form of honor was love suicide.

Conclusion

I have argued that the ban on love suicides was part of the effort made by the eighth shogun, Yoshimune, with the Kyōhō Reforms to restore samurai dominance. Censoring subject matter in the theatre was unusual at the time. When the authorities did censor subject matter they focused on restricting stories of high-ranking samurai houses or the historical trajectory that led

²⁹⁸ Shirakata, “Chikamatsu sewa jōruri ni okeru ichibun no hōhō,” 19.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

to Tokugawa rule. Most of the edicts issued regarding theatre were directed at safety regulations, such as preventing fires, and the clothing of the characters and actors. However, as I have demonstrated, regulating clothing was a way to reinforce the status system, the ideology that was the cornerstone of samurai rule. When seen as a method of strengthening status hierarchies, the examinations of the regulation of performers' costumes and clothing opens up a useful avenue of analysis for the censorship of love suicide by calling into question how the love suicide stories challenged the status system.

Chikamatsu's love suicide plays engaged with the status system in a complex way. He did uphold the essential difference between status categories in some works, particularly his contemporary life plays that do not end in love suicide, *Yosaku from Tanba* and *The Hara-kiri of a Woman from Nagamachi*. These plays make it clear that samurai should die in battle or through *seppuku*, whereas love suicide is a method for commoners. At the same time, other plays demonstrate the lack of difference between status categories and through disguise, the porous nature of the status system.

The main threat to the status system lay in the critique these plays leveled at the status quo and in the honor they granted to those who committed love suicide that transcended status. I have illustrated this through an analysis of *The Love Suicides in Midsummer with an Icy Blade*, in which the catalyst for the love suicide arises out of the rigidity of the status system. The male protagonist depends on a business deal going through to be able to ransom his lover's contract, but his master refuses to honor the deal since it would involve doing business with members of one of the outcaste groups. The obstacle to the lovers, in this play, is not a particular person but a larger social system. As the play develops, the protagonist demonstrates that what is at stake for him is a personal honor, not a form of honor bound to his status category or profession. In this

way, love suicide promoted an honor system that transcended, and therefore transgressed, the status system.

Chapter Three: Exposing the Price of Prostitution

A prominent moment in each of the love suicide plays is a moment of escape. In *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki shinjū*, 1703), for example, Ohatsu, the female protagonist, and her lover, Tokubei, have to break out of the brothel before they can begin their journey to their deaths. In the scene leading up to the escape, Chikamatsu created an atmosphere of confinement. In this scene, which is set at the brothel, Ohatsu is under surveillance by the brothel owners and employees. The narrator describes all the eyes that watch her when she catches a glimpse of Tokubei outside: “Her heart leaps, and she wants to run to him, but in the sitting room are the master and his wife, and by the entrance stands the cook, while in the kitchen a maid is hovering: with so many sharp eyes watching, she cannot do as she pleases” (*chira to miru yori tobitatsu bakari hashiriiden to omoedomo, oue ni wa teishu fūfu agariguchi ni ryōrinin niwa de wa gejo ga yakutai no me ga shigekereba, sa mo narazu*).³⁰⁰ She secrets Tokubei into the garden and conceals him under her trailing robe beneath the veranda. No longer a paying customer, Tokubei is no longer welcome at the brothel. Unable to speak for fear of detection, the two communicate their resolve to die together only in gestures. At the end of the scene, the lovers escape the brothel. Ohatsu sneaks downstairs and extinguishes the light. In the darkness, she and Tokubei cautiously open the gate, timing each push to the sound of the servant indoors striking flint to relight the lamp. Finally, they are free. Hara Michio has pointed out that this “threshold crossing moment” (*toguchi no tsūka*) became a motif Chikamatsu repeated in almost all his later

³⁰⁰ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 48. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 30.

plays.³⁰¹ The fact that a moment of escape was a central motif in the plays highlights the confinement that characterized the prostitutes' lives in the brothels.

The escape scenes in the plays illustrate the physical confinement of prostitutes within the brothels. The prostitution industry contained the women it employed in ideological and emotional ways in addition to the physical barriers in the brothels and around some brothel districts. Brothel owners and the state marshaled the ideology of filial piety to encourage prostitutes to transfer their allegiance to the brothel when they entered prostitution. Prostitutes therefore had a moral obligation to not to disobey the brothel owners. The business of prostitution also made it difficult for prostitutes to fully express their emotions and be believed as sincere since part of their work involved feigning emotions. The desire to be able to express real emotions was one reason the practice of *shinjū*, and later, love suicide, came into being.

Chikamatsu's love suicide plays demonstrate the toll prostitution took on the women who worked within the industry. His plays present women wrestling with the physical, ideological, and emotional confinement of prostitution and with the cruelty they endured in the brothels. Chikamatsu also extended his critique of prostitution to the larger impact of the sex industry on women outside the brothel districts. At a time when prostitution was fueling the economy of the city, supporting many families, and patronized by men from multiple rungs of the social ladder, the love suicide plays shifted the perspective on prostitution by inviting the audience members to see the industry from the prostitute's point of view and connect emotionally with her experience.

The Prostitution Industry in Early Modern Osaka

³⁰¹ *Chikamatsu jōruri no sakugekihō*, 513-516.

The years of the greatest production of love suicide plays in Osaka corresponded to years of unprecedented growth in the city's prostitution industry. Prostitution expanded along with the city's economy and topography.³⁰² Many of the love suicide plays demonstrate the interconnectedness of the brothels and everyday life in the merchant quarters. One fiction of the early modern period perpetuated by the concept of the "floating world" is that the brothels were cut off from the rest of daily life—by physical walls, by customs, and by laws.³⁰³ However, this perceived separation belies the economic links between the two sectors of the city and the sheer number of people involved in prostitution in the early modern period. Historian Amy Stanley has written, "The sex trade was ubiquitous and deeply embedded in everyday life. By the end of the Tokugawa period, it is unlikely that there were many adults on the archipelago, whether they were male or female, rich or poor, urban or rural, who had never encountered a woman who worked, had worked, or would someday work in the sex trade."³⁰⁴ Prostitution had not expanded to quite this extent in the early eighteenth century, but its rapid expansion in Osaka certainly meant that the city was feeling the repercussions of the sex trade.

Legal prostitution began in Osaka around 1610 with the creation of Shinmachi, the only officially sanctioned pleasure district in the city.³⁰⁵ In the same fashion as the official district in Kyoto, the Shimabara (originally established at Nijō Yanagimachi in 1589), and, later, the famous Yoshiwara of Edo (established in 1617), the district was set apart from the rest of the

³⁰² Many newly developed land areas were first developed as brothel districts before becoming business districts.

³⁰³ The concept of the "floating world" (*ukiyo*), the world of entertainment, pleasure, and sex in contrast to the world of politics and everyday life is discussed in the introduction.

³⁰⁴ Stanley, *Selling Women*, 2.

³⁰⁵ Sone Hiromi "Prostitution and Public Authority in Early Modern Japan" trans. Akiko Terashima and Anne Walthall in *Women and Class in Japanese History*, ed. Hitomi Tonomura et al. (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 1999), 170.

city.³⁰⁶ At first, authorities surrounded it with a bamboo fence, which was later replaced with a wooden fence and a moat.³⁰⁷ The moat was meant to isolate the district from ordinary citizens.³⁰⁸ Accounts indicate that 1,752 prostitutes, including girls and young women who would become prostitutes upon maturity, resided in Shinmachi in the early and mid-seventeenth century.³⁰⁹

Shinmachi was the only licensed brothel district in Osaka, but it was far from the only brothel district in the city. Unlicensed brothel districts were booming business at the turn of the eighteenth century as the city was rapidly expanding. It is difficult to ascertain how many unlicensed districts were in operation, but many of the major ones appeared in Chikamatsu's love suicide plays: Shimanouchi, also called Minami ("South Quarter"), the largest unlicensed quarter located just north of Dōtonbori, the theatre district; Fushimi Sakamachi, founded in 1698 and just south of Dōtonbori; and Kita-Shinchi, the northern districts, which included the Dōjima-Shinchi and the Sonezaki-Shinchi.³¹⁰

The rapid development of the northern districts illustrates the high rate of growth in the prostitution industry at this time. Dōjima was founded on reclaimed land in 1688. It began as a commercial area that included merchant shops participating in the rice exchange, brothels, and other businesses. In the 1690s, there were in Dōjima a range of businesses connected to the prostitution industry: fifty brothels (*chaya*, literally "teahouses") and twenty-one small shops that sold light meals including boiled fish, vegetables, and tofu that were often meeting places for

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 170.

³⁰⁷ Matsumoto Nozomu, "Kinsei Ōsaka Shinmachi yūkaku to yūjo nayose," *Shisen* 1 (2004): 1.

³⁰⁸ Sone, "Prostitution and Public Authority," 171.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 170.

³¹⁰ Shively, *The Love Suicide at Amijima*, 22. Ofusa in *Sunken Well* is from Shimanouchi. Saga in *Ikudama* is from Fushimi Sakamachi. Ohatsu in *Sonezaki*, Oshima in *Two Illustrated Books*, and Kokan in *Icy Blade* are from the Dōjima-Shinchi. Koharu in *Amijima* is from the Sonezaki-Shinchi.

prostitutes and their clients (*niuriya*). By the end of the Hōei era in 1711, Dōjima's prostitution industry and the businesses that supported it had grown. Prostitution-related businesses included seventy-four brothels and fifty *niuriya*. Additionally, a bathhouse (*furo*, which would likely have employed unlicensed prostitutes), three public bathhouses, and two small theatres (*shibai*) added to the entertainment possibilities in the district.³¹¹ As the rice exchange businesses in the area prospered, the brothels moved across the Shijimi River to the new Sonezaki Quarter, which was divided into streets in 1708.³¹² In Chikamatsu's *Sonezaki*, which premiered in 1703, the lovers escape to the Sonezaki woods, an area that was on the outskirts of the city. Less than twenty years later, the lovers in *Amijima* begin their journey in the Sonezaki-Shinchi, a bustling brothel district where the Sonezaki woods once were.

A hierarchy of prostitutes existed, which mapped onto the locations of the brothels. The highest rank prostitutes worked in the licensed district of Shinmachi. They were accomplished entertainers trained in various performing arts, etiquette, and self-presentation.³¹³ In contrast, working in the unlicensed districts was far from glamorous. These were the brothels that employed the women who appeared in the plays about love suicide. The unlicensed brothels were not the bottom rung, however. The lowest level prostitutes, sold cheaply for ten minutes at a time, were called "slice-at-a-time whores" (*kiri mise jorō*).³¹⁴ As with other kinds of merchandise, the price for time with a prostitute varied by the prostitute's rank. In rare instances, some women sold their bodies individually on their own without working for an employer.³¹⁵

³¹¹ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 241n9.

³¹² Shively, *The Love Suicide at Amijima*, 22.

³¹³ The only heroine from a licensed brothel district among Chikamatsu's contemporary life plays is Umegawa in *The Courier for Hell* (*Meido no hikyaku*, 1711).

³¹⁴ Sone, "Prostitution and Public Authority," 172.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 176.

Prostitutes in the brothel districts worked under indenture contracts, usually of around eight to ten years. The women generally came from the nearby countryside. The woman being indentured did not sign the contract herself. Instead, her father or another male relative signed the contract that bound her to employment in the brothel for a fixed term in return for a lump sum, which he kept for his own use.³¹⁶ This process was called “selling the body” (*miuri*). If the woman was young, she served as an attendant to a more senior prostitute until she began to service clients sexually at around the age of fifteen or sixteen. The woman was required to work the term of the contract. During this time she would often go into debt to the brothel, which provided her with clothes, hair ornaments, and other accoutrements of the trade. If she formed a strong bond with a client of financial means and this client desired to buy out her contract, the client would have needed to pay for the time remaining on the contract as well as any of her unpaid debts. The brothel held the power to sell the contract to another brothel without the woman’s consent just as they could allow a client to buy out her contract without her consent.³¹⁷ The contract did offer some legal recourse unavailable in previous centuries, when prostitution had been illegal, but the prostitute required the support of her family to effectively bring suit against the brothel, a process that was difficult for most women who worked in a large city like Osaka, since they came from remote rural areas.³¹⁸

The women who worked as prostitutes supported their families financially. While they were at the brothel, they were one less mouth to feed. The signing of the contract also brought an influx of cash that was much needed for poor families. The stories of the women in Chikmatsu’s plays tell of women who entered prostitution to cover family medical bills and to support their

³¹⁶ An example of this type of contract appears in Stanley, *Selling Women*, 57-58.

³¹⁷ Siegel, *Yoshiwara*, 182.

³¹⁸ Stanley, *Selling Women*, 10.

mothers who lived alone.³¹⁹ Chikamatsu also provided examples of women who were sold into prostitution for financial gain rather than financial need. For instance, in Chikamatsu's contemporary life play *Hara-kiri of a Woman at Nagamachi* (*Nagamachi Onna Hara-kiri*, 1712), a stepfather tries to extend his stepdaughter's contract. He does not have his stepdaughter's consent as she wishes to marry her lover, Hanshichi. The stepfather tells her, "Your mother is worthless but I married her so I could sell you and live off the proceeds" (*onore ga haha ni, nan no mikomi wa nakeredomo onore o utte kuō tame, meoto ni natta*).³²⁰ The stepfather is simply exploiting his stepdaughter. A similar example appears in *The Love Suicides at the Sunken Well*, which is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

In addition to the economic benefit to individual families, the city of Osaka also benefitted from the prostitution industry. The brothel districts had strong ties with the city's businesses. The Sonezaki-Shinchi, in particular, thrived in part due to its proximity to the Dōjima district. According to Shively, "Directly to the south [of Sonezaki], on the islands Dōjima and Naka-no-shima were located many of the commercial offices of the feudal lords. The Quarter served as a convenient location where the representatives of the lords and the merchants with whom they dealt could entertain one another—scenes of business and political transactions."³²¹ The city magistrates used prostitution to help spur economic development. Although Shinmachi was the only officially licensed brothel district, the city's numerous unlicensed districts operated

³¹⁹ These examples are from *The Love Suicides in Midsummer with an Icy Blade*, *The Love Suicide of the Two Illustrated Books*, and *The Love Suicides at Amijima*.

³²⁰ Trans. by Paul S. Atkins, accessed April 19, 2016, <https://ceas.uchicago.edu/sites/ceas.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/Sibley/Harakiri.pdf>. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 74, 465.

³²¹ Shively, *The Love Suicides at Amijima*, 22.

with the sanction of the city government, which even issued legislation to regulate them.³²²

Furthermore, the city government actively participated in developing these districts. For example, as Stanley has demonstrated, at the turn of the eighteenth century when a series of new landfills were created along the Yodo River, “the authorities encouraged teahouses, brothels, and bathhouses to begin operations there, reasoning that they would jump-start economic development in formerly uninhabited zones.”³²³ Thus, both on the level of individual deals negotiated among business partners and on the larger level of the economic development of the city, the prostitution industry was tightly bound to Osaka’s economy.

Filial Piety

Filial piety was employed to exact female compliance in both marriage and prostitution. William Lindsey has explained how this single ideology was used to support two completely different life tracks for women: “Whether acted on freely or as a result of parental coercion, duty to parents and to the household were viewed as expressions of returning the benefits one had received as a daughter, which in part enabled opposing forms of sexual practices and relationships to exist on the same moral grounds.”³²⁴ If a young woman’s family chose a bridegroom, the young woman was expected to shift her obedience to her husband and his family, engage in sexual intercourse only with her husband, and bear children. Prostitution operated through a similar transfer of obedience. If a young woman’s family chose to sell her into prostitution, the young woman was expected to transfer her obedience to the brothel owners,

³²² Stanley, *Selling Women*, 62.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ *Fertility and Pleasure: Ritual and Sexual Values in Tokugawa Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 66.

engage in sexual intercourse with many partners, and not bear children. Whether working as a high-ranking prostitute or a serving girl in a teahouse, these young women worked to support their families. Stanley has written, “As girls who sacrificed their chastity to benefit their parents, they fulfilled the shogunate’s conception of the appropriate place of women in the realm.”³²⁵ In other words, entering into prostitution was a filial act.

The shogunal government and the broader culture promoted filial piety. Filial piety was emphasized in early rules for the samurai. For example, loyalty and filial piety were included in the first rule of *Regulations for Retainers* (*Shoshihatto*, 1635).³²⁶ Later in the period, the regime sought exemplars of filial piety from among commoners for cash rewards.³²⁷ Educational books aimed at young women extolled models of filial devotion. Publishers who sold books aimed at women readers included conduct books, etiquette manuals, and biographies of filial women among their collections.³²⁸ Early puppet plays, too, celebrated filial piety. One example is *Amida’s Riven Breast* (*Amida no munewari*), a 17th century early puppet play.³²⁹ In this story, a young girl sells herself into slavery.³³⁰ She knows full well that her liver will be harvested to

³²⁵ *Selling Women*, 62.

³²⁶ Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideolog*, 56.

³²⁷ Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan*, 179.

³²⁸ P. F. Kornicki, “Women, Education, and Literacy” in *The Female as Subject: Reading and Writing in Early Modern Japan*, ed. P. F. Kornicki et al. (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 2010), 25-29.

³²⁹ Kimbrough, trans. “Amida’s Riven Breast,” in *Wondrous Brutal Fictions*, 216-231. “Amida no munewari” in *Ko-jōruri, sekkyō shū*, ed. Shinoda Jun’ichi et al., *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 90 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999), 387-411.

³³⁰ Slavery in the medieval period differed from early modern prostitution in key ways. Slaves were bought, sold, and bequeathed, slavery was often hereditary, and masters had the right to put slaves to death at their discretion. In contrast to slavery in the West, slaves could own property and marry. Thomas Nelson, “Slavery in Medieval Japan,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 59, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 463-492. Prostitution in the early modern period, unlike medieval slavery, was governed by term contracts and prostitutes did have the ability to see recourse from the law.

save the son of the family purchasing her, in order to pay for memorial prayers for her parents.³³¹ While the story in *Amida's Riven Breast* is extreme and likely hyperbolic, the moral of the story was that a good daughter would sacrifice anything, even her life, for her parents.³³²

Filial piety was also the foundation of arguments against love suicide. In a Chikamatsu contemporary life play, *Hara-kiri of a Woman at Nagamachi*, an aunt tries to dissuade two lovers from committing a love suicide by arguing, “There are many couples who kill themselves together, but they are remembered only for acting like bad sons and daughters in pursuit of money; no one dies for love. For a courtesan, without a home, life is especially sad and cruel. So not dying—that is a sign of true devotion” (*seken ooi shinjū mo, kane to fukō ni na o nagashi koi de shinuru wa hitori mo nai nagare no mi ni wa toriwakete kanashii koto mugoi koto soko o shinanu ga shinjū zo ya*).³³³ In other words, love suicide carried the negative connotations of being unfilial and being motivated by financial hardship rather than love. Love suicide is the opposite of the “true devotion,” which a child owed to his or her parents, not to his or her lover.

Shifts in the Representation of Prostitutes

Images of the prostitute proliferated in popular culture during this period in plays, short stories, guidebooks, and woodblock prints (*ukiyo-e*). The majority of these works, regardless of

³³¹ Similar stories of daughters sacrificing themselves as acts of fealty can be found in Confucian tales of filial piety from China. For example, in the 12th century story of the Princess Miaoshin, the young woman gives her eyes and arms to save her father from disease. See Wilt L. Idema *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin and Her Acolytes* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 9-10. Filial piety was used as a justification for prostitution in China, also. See Paola Zamperini, *Lost Bodies: Prostitution and Masculinity in Chinese Fiction* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 88.

³³² Nelson's study of medieval slavery references a similar story of a young boy who voluntarily sells himself into slavery to provide for his starving mother. “Slavery in Medieval Japan,” 477.

³³³ Atkins. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 74, 455.

medium, focused on the perspective of the male client. One famous example of the depiction of a prostitute from the male client's point of view is the characterization of the prostitute Yoshino in Ihara Saikaku's *Life of a Sensuous Man* (*Kōshoku ichidai otoko*, 1682). Yoshino, who is based on an actual person, was a celebrated prostitute in Kyoto of the highest rank (*tayū*). In Saikaku's story, she hears that a young apprentice has fallen in love with her. He has saved enough money to buy a night with her but has not been granted an appointment because of his low social standing. She takes pity on him and defies brothel rules to give him the opportunity to sleep with her. She has to coax him through the encounter because he is so nervous and distraught. When she tells her client Yonosuke, the titular "sensuous man," what she has done, he praises her, "You acted like a perfect *tayū*. Now I'll never let you go."³³⁴ He redeems her contract and marries her. After their marriage, she "thought of his feelings in everything she did and even gave up smoking her pipe for him."³³⁵ In Saikaku's portrayal, Yoshino is an ideal woman because she always thinks of her client or husband's feelings and needs. This story does not reveal any of Yoshino's thoughts or feelings about her life in prostitution or any particular reaction to having her contract redeemed and suddenly marrying Yonosuke.

Other works did represent a less idealized view of prostitution. For example, Kizan's *The Great Mirror of Love* included stories of prostitutes that take the idea of *shinjū* a step too far. In one such story, a client teases the prostitute he is with that there is another woman who is more skilled at *shinjū* than she. The story describes the man as merely "jesting at her expense," but the prostitute takes him seriously, grabs his short sword, and severs her windpipe.³³⁶ Due to the rapid

³³⁴ Trans. by Chris Drake in *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, 52.

³³⁵ Drake, "Life of a Sensuous Man," 52.

³³⁶ Rogers, "She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not," 60. Although officially customers were required to surrender their swords upon entering a brothel, there are other examples of stories with Kizan's work in which prostitutes gain access to a short sword inside the brothel. For a

intervention of the proprietor, her life is saved. Kizan's final remark on her story is, "Such foolishness is scarcely credible!"³³⁷ The representation here is significantly less idealized than Saikaku's representation of Yoshino. However, Kizan does not interrogate how the circumstances of her life in prostitution might have prompted the woman in the story to behave so rashly and desperately. Instead, Kizan presents the story in a humorous manner that adopts the attitude of the male client.

Jennifer Preston has argued that there was a shift in erotic literature at the start of the eighteenth century away from the depictions of prostitutes by Saikaku and Kizan. In her examination of a number of prose works, including illustrated books, she has demonstrated that the increasing commodification of sex due to the expanding prostitution industry led to an increase in erotic literature that explored stories of desire not linked to monetary transactions. Unlike earlier works, in which female sexual dissatisfaction was caused by a partner who could not satisfy her physically, Preston has argued that in the early eighteenth-century erotic narratives, "the trope of female sexual dissatisfaction was not represented uniquely as a consequence of the paucity of sexual opportunity: it implied a lack of affectivity and consensuality."³³⁸

In the theatre of the same period, we can see a similar shift toward erotic desire uncoupled from financial necessity in the popularity of the story of Oshichi. Oshichi, a young townswoman in Edo starts a fire in order to be reunited with her lover and is executed at the end after having been convicted of arson. The story was first narrated by Saikaku in *Five Women*

townsman, purchasing a short sword was one step in the preparing to visit the pleasure quarters for the first time. Seigel, *Yoshiwara*, 138.

³³⁷ Ibid., 60.

³³⁸ "Allegories of Love," *Japan Review* 26 (2013): 124.

Who Loved Love (*Kōshoku Gonin Onna*, 1686), which suggests there was already an audience for stories of consenting female desire.³³⁹ At the start of the eighteenth century, Oshichi's story became hugely popular on kabuki and puppet theatre stages.³⁴⁰ The story was so popular that the years 1706-1710 have been dubbed the "Oshichi boom."³⁴¹ The story emphasized the erotic desire of a young woman for a young man to whom she had no commercial obligation.

The shift in erotic narratives in prose works and the popularity of the Oshichi story suggest that, in response to the commodification of sex, consumers may have yearned for stories that focused on the female experience of desire. Each of the three plays by Chikamatsu examined in this chapter depicts a woman whose love causes her to act against her obligation to her brothel or her family. These works add depth to the femal protagonist by representing her in ways that encourage the spectator to see her experience from her perspective. The lack of documentation of audience reactions to these plays makes it impossible to argue definitively for how they were received. However, in light of Preston's work that has demonstrated a new interest in female desire, I offer readings of each play that presented a markedly different view of prostitution.

I also suggest that the significance of the plays extended beyond just the three plays discussed here. In both *Two Illustrated Books* and *Sunken Well*, Chikamatsu linked the prostitute characters who choose suicide to previous suicides. He thus underscored the hardships of prostitution as a condition of the industry rather than the unique experience of the two women depicted in these two plays. Through such links, Chikamatsu demonstrated that these women are part of a larger pattern of prostitutes who choose suicide.

³³⁹ Wm. Theodore de Bary, trans., *Five Women Who Loved Love* (Rutland: Tuttle, 1956).

³⁴⁰ Inoue, Megumi, *Oshichi, the Greengrocer's Daughter: A Cultural History of Sewamono, 1686-1821*, Dissertation (University of Washington, 2004), 62.

³⁴¹ Inoue, *Oshichi, the Greengrocer's Daughter*, 107.

In the next section, I analyze three plays that deal explicitly with the toll the prostitution industry exacted from the women it employed and from those ostensibly beyond the reaches of the pleasure quarters. An analysis of these plays illustrates the cruelty of the industry and shows how prostitution created a situation in which love suicide was one of the few options available to women. This analysis further demonstrates that prostitution was not isolated from the rest of society. The view of women perpetuated by the sex industry shaped the circumstances and choices for young women even in merchant families.

The Love Suicides of the Two Illustrated Books

In his second love suicide play, *The Love Suicide of the Two Illustrated Books* (*Shinjū nimai ezōshi*, 1706), Chikamatsu revisits some of the key aspects of prostitution that he developed in *Sonezaki*, particularly the sense of confinement and the sincerity of the prostitute's love for the man with whom she commits suicide. He extends this imagery of confinement to elaborate the reasons a woman might choose love suicide and the ramifications of her choice.

Two Illustrated Books dramatized a love suicide that took place in 1705 in Osaka and once again captured the city's imagination. The full details of the event are unclear, but the various accounts generally agree on a few key points: that a prostitute from the Tenma House committed suicide in her room in what was suspected to be a love suicide with her lover, who had been accused of theft. However, the male lover's body was never found, so two conflicting accounts emerged: one in which he committed suicide and completed the love suicide pact and another in which he ran away.

The incident gave rise to multiple depictions. These adaptations included plays for the puppet theatre, such as Chikamatsu's *Two Illustrated Books* for the Takemoto Theatre and

Bunryū's *The Love Suicides at the River of Embraces* (*Shinjū dakiagawa*, 1705 or 1706) for the Dewa Theatre; a kabuki play, *The Love Suicide at the Tenma House* (*Tenma-ya shinjū*, 1706); and at least two different illustrated books. The exact dates for the theatrical premieres and publications are unclear, but most likely Chikamatsu's play appeared after the two illustrated books and Bunryū's play and before the kabuki version since Chikamatsu's play makes references to the illustrated books and Bunryū's play but not the kabuki adaptation.³⁴²

Chikamatsu clearly indicates in the text that *Two Illustrated Books* was a follow-up to *Sonezaki*, which enabled the spectators to use Oshima's choices to further understand Ohatsu. Chikamatsu makes the connections between the two heroines for his audience from the start by employing the subtitle "On the occasion of the third anniversary of *Sonezaki*, another dream at the Tenma Teahouse" (*Sonezaki sannenki, Tenma-ya ni mata miru yume*).³⁴³ Chikamatsu draws direct parallels between the female protagonist, Oshima, and *Sonezaki*'s Ohatsu at the opening of the play. Oshima stands in front of the Takemoto Theatre, the theatre that originally premiered *Sonezaki*. The narrator sets the scene by chanting, "Among the guests is Oshima from the Tenma Teahouse, known throughout the world by those of high birth and prostitutes alike. In this red-light district, Oshima has succeeded to the fame of Ohatsu." (*naka ni, iena mo kimi ga na mo, sejō ni takaki Tenma-ya no Oshima to iite kano sato ni, Ohatsu ga atotsugi kakurenashi*).³⁴⁴

Chikamatsu frames Oshima as Ohatsu's successor. This connection between the two women

³⁴² For an analysis of the probable dates for the Chikamatsu and Bunryū productions see Kawaguchi Keiko, "Nishiki Bunryū to Chikamatsu no dōdaizai no sakuhin ni tsuite" in *Nishiki Bunryū zenshū*, ed. Nagatomo Chiyoji (Tokyo: Koten bunko, 1991), 389. For the influence of Chikamatsu on the kabuki, see Torigoe et al., "Kaisetsu" in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 658.

³⁴³ Mori, *Chikamatsu Monzaemon*, 187.

³⁴⁴ Nagatomo Chiyoji, annot. and trans. in *Chikamatsu Monzaemon shū 2*, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakusan, 2003) vol. 75, 48.

played out in the plot because Oshima follows Ohatsu's precedent by choosing to die in a love suicide rather than be separated from her lover. This connection also played out thematically. Ohatsu's salvation through love suicide, as underscored by a reference a few lines later that describes her transformation into a "golden Buddha" (*hotoke konjiki*) in the performance of *Sonezaki*, foreshadowed Oshima's later salvation through love suicide in *Two Illustrated Books*. Most importantly for the present discussion, the connection between the two women, as highlighted in each major scene that offered a critique of prostitution, demonstrates the particular circumstances in a prostitute's life that prompted love suicide as a choice and the consequences of that decision.

The opening scene of the play depicts the double-bind facing prostitutes who had to feign emotions for their livelihood and thus had the sincerity of their feelings questioned. In this scene, the protagonist, Oshima, tries to appease her lover, Ichi, and her client, Sada, who vie for her affections. Oshima has attended the theatre in the company of Sada, a customer from the countryside. After the performance, they ride in a pleasure boat on the river in Osaka near Dōtonbori.³⁴⁵ Oshima and one of the attendants perform for Sada the travel scene from one of Chikamatsu's recent hits, the period play *Models of the Craftsmen of Emperor Yōmei* (*Yōmei tennō shokunin kagami*, 1705). Oshima and the attendant sing from a book of travel scenes (*michiyuki-bon*), a publication that included the most musical and most affecting travel scenes from recent productions.³⁴⁶

The performance captures the attention of Ichi, a young man on the shore, who is also Oshima's lover. Sada catches Ichi eyeing the pleasure boat and adjusting his progress on shore by quickening or slowing his steps so that he can keep the boat within his sights. When Sada

³⁴⁵ Dōtonbori was the theatre district.

³⁴⁶ Kōzu Takeo, "Jōruribon no besutoseraa," *Bungaku* 12 (2011): 91.

confronts Ichi about his intense interest in the activities on the boat, Ichi hides his feelings for Oshima by criticizing her performance. Ichi claims that love is woven into the melodies and phrases of the scene Oshima just recited but was absent in her rendition. He tells Sada, “Not a thing was out of place, but whether it’s because she’s never known love or because her heart is insincere, the performance lacked conviction and felt frivolous” (*jōruri no fushi wa sukoshimo kawaranedomo, nasake o gozonjinai yue ka makoto no kokoro sukunōte, goshinjitsu no nai yue ka ika ni shitemo michiyuki ga uwaki ni kokoete*).³⁴⁷ Sada then challenges Ichi to sing and demonstrate how he can do it better. After Ichi’s performance, Sada criticizes it as “strained with an excess of love” (*koi no ikuji no jōruri da*).³⁴⁸ Although unstated by the three characters, each knows the discussion of the performances is a metaphor for a discussion of Oshima and Ichi’s love.

The debate over these two performances comes down to whether each performer conveys the appropriate amount of emotion for the scene, and if not, why there is a deficit or excess. Sada, who guesses Ichi’s true feelings, criticizes his love as excessive. The idea that love should be expressed in moderation was consistent with Edo period ideals for male behavior in relation to prostitutes. For example, Fujimoto Kizan had warned, “If there are those who feel that in the end they will not prevail over their passions, I would say that they should to some extent acquaint themselves with the Way, and only then make their visit.”³⁴⁹ The ideal male visitor to the pleasure quarters should have understood the conventions of the client/prostitute interactions as a game from which he should maintain a certain amount of emotional distance. Sada criticizes Ichi as a performer and as a lover for his emotional excess.

³⁴⁷ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 53.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁴⁹ Rogers, “She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not,” 34.

Ichi's criticism of Oshima attacks both her performance and her love for him. He criticizes her performance by arguing that she sang the correct notes and rhythm but that her performance lacked the feeling of love due to her own lack of experience with true love. By attributing her inability to communicate the appropriate feeling in the passage to her lack of experience in real love, Ichi points to a classic criticism of the prostitute: that she feigns affection only to advance her business interests. This point of view was summarized in an oft-repeated maxim from the Edo period:

A prostitute's / love is not / true love—
Getting her hands on money / is her true love

*keisei no koi wa makoto no koi narade kane mottekoi ga hon no koi nari*³⁵⁰

Shinjū, the ritualized tokens of affection from prostitutes, arose to combat this belief. However, even a prostitute who engaged in the steps of *shinjū* to assure her client of her sincerity might still be feigning. Kizan had warned his readers, “We may well ask whether in performing *shinjū* a courtesan makes this symbolic demonstration with an insincere heart. The answer is that there are true and false *shinjū*. The instance of a courtesan sincerely giving her heart to a man and performing *shinjū* is one out of ten.”³⁵¹ In his criticism of her performance, Ichi questions whether Oshima's love for him is real.

In this opening scene, Chikamatsu dramatizes how Oshima is caught between her obligation to feign affection for her client and her desire to demonstrate to Ichi the depth of her love for him. At the first moment she notices him on shore, the narrator informs the audience that

³⁵⁰ Quoted and translated in David Pollack, “The Love Suicides at Shinagawa: A Sort of Love Story,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 57, no. 1 (2002): 73.

³⁵¹ Rogers, “She Loves Me. She Loves Me Not,” 40.

the man is her lover (*mabu*).³⁵² In the next instant, Oshima is already trying to communicate to both men without the other catching on. She restrains herself from calling out to Ichi and winks at him instead. Then she turns to her client, says the man on shore must just be someone from the countryside, and asks him not to escalate the conflict. Chikamatsu emphasizes Oshima's position of being caught between the two men. As the men trade verbal barbs for blows, the narrator describes the changes that overcome Oshima. At first she starts to sweat and wring her hands; by the end of the scene, through her tears she is imploring the boatman to get the boat moving. In this way, Chikamatsu invites the audience to see the scene not through the eyes of the male rivals but through the eyes of the woman at the center of the conflict. Although Ichi doubts her love, it is possible for the audience to see her true feelings and the emotional anguish caused by being caught between the obligation to feign affection for one man and the desire to show affection for another.

Later in *Two Illustrated Books*, Chikamatsu shifts from depicting the general dilemma facing prostitutes to the specifics of the hardships of life in the brothels. At the beginning of act three in a scene at the brothel, Chikamatsu illustrates how multiple characters at Oshima's brothel, the Tenma House, remember Ohatsu, the protagonist of *Sonezaki* who also worked at the Tenma House, and her suicide three years earlier. This act of remembering once again highlights the connections between the two heroines at the same time as it casts a particularly harsh light on the conditions at the Tenma House. Chikamatsu shows how the proprietors, Oshima, and a female servant remember Ohatsu and her suicide and how these memories shape their actions. Each of these characters' responses to the previous suicide contributes to creating a picture of life at the brothel for a prostitute.

³⁵² *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 52.

The proprietors' chief concern is the potential impact of another suicide on their reputation and profits. The owners grow suspicious when they hear that Ichi, Oshima's lover, has been disinherited. They worry that Oshima, who has gone to meet Ichi at a teahouse, will end up embroiling the brothel in a scandal. The proprietor laments, "We had a bitter learning experience with Ohatsu. It's a nuisance that our house's name has been bandied about. We don't want to be known for our client's downfalls. It doesn't matter that it's just business" (*Mae no Ohatsu ni korihateta. Iena no deru mo meiwaku kyaku o taosu ga mime dewa nai. Akinai sei demo daijinai*).³⁵³ His wife echoes his sentiments, "It won't do to be the subject of another puppet play" (*mata jōruri ni noshiyan naya*).³⁵⁴ For the brothel owners, their concern lies primarily with their business interests. They want to avoid another love suicide because it would be bad for business. The meta-theatrical reference also may have reminded the audience members at the performance that Oshima's story did in fact become the subject for another puppet play, the play they were currently viewing when they heard those lines. The callous attitude of the brothel owners demonstrates the purely economic interest proprietors took in their employees.

Oshima's recollection of Ohatsu suggests the hardships of prostitute life that explain why a prostitute would choose suicide. When she returns to the brothel, Oshima expresses her pity for Ohatsu. Oshima hastens to explain to the proprietors that she does not plan to commit a love suicide, she simply wishes for others to understand the kind of hardships a prostitute must have endured before choosing to end her life. She recognizes that a prostitute's suicide causes problems for the brothel owner. She concludes that a prostitute would only make such a choice after "being completely cornered" (*iu ni iwarenu tsumatta koto*).³⁵⁵ Because suicide only comes

³⁵³ Ibid., 70.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 73.

after an experience of compounded hardships, she concludes that suicide is “not something to be detested” (*nikumō mono demo gozansenu*).³⁵⁶ Chikamatsu does not go into greater detail here about the particular hardships that the prostitute must have endured to consider suicide. The others in the scene interpret Oshima’s words as the ramblings of some someone who has had too much to drink. But since audience members would have been aware of Oshima’s resolve to die, they would have known to give her words greater credence. The proprietor sends Oshima upstairs to sleep. In a moment reminiscent of *Sonezaki*, Oshima climbs the stairs to the second floor as a female servant closes down the brothel for the night, just as Ohatsu did on her final night. Oshima ends up “completely cornered” in her room and unable to escape to commit suicide at her lover’s side. She dies in this room at the end of the play.

As the female servant closes down the brothel, she reveals that she still has physical and psychological wounds from Ohatsu’s suicide. The servant recalls Ohatsu’s death three years earlier and notices the similarities in the circumstances. Earlier in the scene, the same servant had gone to retrieve Oshima from the teahouse where she met with Ichi. Her rush to find Oshima was due to her desire to avoid an additional suicide. When Ohatsu snuck out of the brothel, she had walked across the sleeping body of the servant and injured her. “I’m not going to be trampled on again,” (*mata fumarenaranu zo*) she had said as she ran to find Oshima.³⁵⁷ This servant carries with her an enduring physical pain that stems from the night of Ohatsu’s suicide. The tone of Oshima’s voice as she heads upstairs makes the servant grow even more uneasy. She wants to ensure that there will not be a repetition of the night of Ohatsu’s death. She has a male servant check the locks on the doors and the oil in the lamp. The night Ohatsu escaped from the brothel the light had gone out, and Ohatsu masked the sound of prying open the door with the sound of a

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 71.

servant striking the flint to relight the lantern. Owing to this bitter memory, the old servant no longer touches flint anymore. She says, “Even just hearing the sound of flint being struck makes me shiver” (*utsu oto kiitemo zotto suru*).³⁵⁸ The haunting of Ohatsu’s suicide for this servant, who is not even a close friend or family member, illustrates painful consequences of love suicide beyond the loss of life for the couple.

In this section in which the characters react to their memories of Ohatsu’s suicide, Chikamatsu represents several aspects of life in the brothels. First, he categorizes the brothel owners as not caring so much for the wellbeing of their employees but rather as concerned with potential damage to their profits. Second, although he does not provide specific details, he has Oshima express the feeling of “being completely cornered” that could cause a prostitute to choose suicide. This feeling of confinement corresponds to the physical confinement of the prostitutes living in the brothel quarters. The imagery here also recalls Oshima’s position in the opening scene in which she is caught between lover and client and her true feelings and feigned feelings. Third, Chikamatsu conveys that love suicide, in addition to the financial hardship created for the brothels, left a wake of trauma in the prostitute community even among those who were not close to the prostitute who died.

The final travel scene and death scene illustrate a further truth about love suicide: that the victims were predominately female. At the close of the previous scene, Oshima finds herself locked in the brothel while her lover, Ichi, waits for her outside. This moment echoes the moment in *Sonezaki* in which Ohatsu must escape from the brothel to commit suicide with her lover, Tokubei. In the three years since Ohatsu’s death, the brothel owners have learned from Ohatsu’s escape and suicide, and lock Oshima in her room. Since she cannot escape the brothel,

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 74.

Oshima and Ichi are unable to die side by side. They decided to ensure at least that they die simultaneously. They form a plan to recite the *nenbutsu*, “Hail Amida Buddha,” 10,000 times and then kill themselves.³⁵⁹ As they part, they each pledge that their hearts will remain with the other. Ichi journeys through the Sonezaki woods to find a place to die. Oshima counts her *nenbutsu* recitations on her rosary alone in her room. At the 10,000th recitation, they slash their windpipes with razors.

The lovers’ deaths, however, do not end the play. As Oshima lies dead on the second floor of the brothel, Ichi’s brother, Zenji, finds his body on the banks of the Nakatsu River in Nagara. Zenji wraps the body in a discarded robe and carries it away to protect his brother from the shame of dying in a love suicide. The narrator explains, “Two different illustrated books were written: in one, Ichi dies and, in one, he lives. Reading these books is a prayer for those who died on the road to love” (*sate koso sejō ni, kono otoko, shinda fūzetsu, shinanu sata shōji nimai no ezōshi ni, koi no ekō o ukenikeru*).³⁶⁰ This alludes to the existence of two different accounts of this incident circulating at the time. Since the male lover’s body was never found, some believed he had died. Others believed he lived. In Chikamatsu’s telling, Ichi dies. But, rather than claiming that this was the definitive version of events, Chikamatsu indicates that it is only one iteration, which leaves open the possibility that the other account was correct. The narrator describes how Zenji removes Ichi’s corpse. While it is impossible to know how this moment was staged, the narration implies that the play ended with only one body left on stage, that of Oshima.

³⁵⁹ The recitation of the *nenbutsu*, “Hail Amida Buddha” (*namu Amidabutsu*) was a common practice of Pure Land Buddhism, whose various schools believed that recitation of the *nenbutsu* would ensure rebirth in the Pure Land Paradise. See the entry “Naifu” in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 580.

³⁶⁰ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 81.

Oshima's suicide on the second floor of a brothel captures what is difficult about reconstructing the female experience of love suicide. In most cases when there was a survivor in a love suicide incident, the survivor was the man, who had survived after killing the woman but not fulfilling the pact with his suicide.³⁶¹ In *Two Illustrated Books*, Oshima's death is unambiguous. However, Ichi's fate is ambiguous. Chikamatsu's reference to the two competing versions of the story in the illustrated books and the indication that Zenji would remove Ichi's body at the conclusion of the play leave open the possibility for an alternative ending in which Ichi lives.

Compared to *Sonezaki*, *Two Illustrated Books* provided spectators at a love suicide play with a much more in-depth vision of a prostitute's life. *Two Illustrated Books* dramatizes the difficulties a prostitute faces in business—that she must feign her affection for her clients—and in life—that others will doubt her sincerity because she is a prostitute. The play also demonstrates the hard economic realities that fueled the greed of the proprietors; it alludes to the pain that would drive a prostitute to suicide as well as the lasting trauma that the suicide had on others in the brothel. Finally, the play's open-ended conclusion, which acknowledges a different possible ending, invites audiences to consider that, in this case, the man might have failed to fulfill his side of the love suicide pact as some men did. Chikamatsu's title, by referring to two different accounts of the fate of the male lover, also called attention to this ambiguity.

The Love Suicides at the Sunken Well

³⁶¹ Sone, "Prostitution and Public Authority in Early Modern Japan," 179-180.

Chikamatsu's fifth love suicide play, *The Love Suicide at the Sunken Well* (*Shinjū kasane izutsu*, 1707), presents additional perspectives on the prostitution industry.³⁶² This play has three main points of interest for the present discussion. Firstly, in this play Chikamatsu offers a deeper look at life in the brothel in order to reveal the cruel treatment of prostitutes. Secondly, Chikamatsu brings in the outside world to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the prostitution industry with the economic and social life of the city. Thirdly, Chikamatsu constructs the travel scene to emphasize how contemporary audiences connected with the feelings of the main characters.

Sunken Well tells the story of the star-crossed love affair of Tokubei, a young merchant, and Ofusa, a prostitute. The story takes place in Osaka. Tokubei runs a dye shop with his wife, Otatsu. When they married, he became the adopted heir to the dye shop, which was originally owned by his father-in-law. However, Tokubei loves the prostitute Ofusa of the Well House, the brothel where Tokubei grew up. As with many of the love suicide plays, a financial crisis precipitates the action: Ofusa's father used her body as collateral on a loan so Ofusa must raise 400 *monme* of silver or go to a brothel in Kyoto. Ofusa anxiously awaits Tokubei, who has promised to bring the money, at the Well House. Tokubei finally arrives just as Ofusa is called away to meet a client at another teahouse. The proprietors of the brothel, worried that Tokubei and Ofusa might be plotting a love suicide, make excuses to keep Tokubei at the brothel so the

³⁶² The exact date of the first performance is unknown. Scholars date the play to 1707 because of textual references to the rebuilding of Osaka's Naka Bridge, which took place in 1707 and to specific actors employed in Osaka's kabuki theatres in the 1707 season. See Nagatomo, *Kinsei Kamigata jōruribon shuppan no kenkyū*, 55 and Torigoe et al., "Kaisetsu," in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 659. The production premiered at the Takemoto Theatre sometime toward the end of 1707. Most likely it premiered before Chikamatsu's other treatment of the same story, *Yosaku from Tanba* (*Tanba Yosaku Matsuya no komurobushi*, 1707). Details of the actual incident upon which the play was based are unknown. See Torigoe et al., "Kaisetsu," in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 659.

two will be separated.³⁶³ However, Ofusa finds her way back to the brothel and into Tokubei's room. They vow to die together. Tokubei's brother, who is also the proprietor of the brothel, hears their voices and enters the room. Ofusa hides under a *kotatsu*, a table frame covered by a *futon* and heated underneath with coals. Tokubei's brother, angry with Ofusa and surmising she is under the *kotatsu*, asks for more and more embers to be added to the brazier under the *kotatsu*, which causes Ofusa extreme pain. After he leaves, she and Tokubei sneak out a window. As they near the temple where they hope to die, they hear the voices of Otatsu and members of Tokubei's household. Tokubei kills Ofusa in a field. Before he can kill himself, he hears the voices again and runs away. Once the voices die out in the distance, Tokubei, confused and unable to find his way back to Ofusa, trips into a well and drowns.

The suicide in *Sunken Well* echoes an earlier suicide from the previous year by another prostitute who had worked at the Well House (*Izutsu-ya*).³⁶⁴ Chikamatsu did not dramatize the earlier suicide, but he does reference this suicide in the travel scene when the narrator chants, "Last year, there was Oshima's suicide, which was called *The Love Suicide of the Well House*. If we add our suicide to the previous one, it will be called *Another Love Suicide of the Well House*" (*kozo no Oshima no shinjū no sono Izutsu-ya ni ware ga ima kasane izutsu to*).³⁶⁵ The literal translation of Chikamatsu's title would be *Another Love Suicide of the Well House (Shinjū*

³⁶³ This is a gender-reversal of the standard plot device in Chikamatsu's love suicide plays in which the heroine is confined to the brothel and must escape.

³⁶⁴ This incident involved the prostitute Oshima from the Well Teahouse and a young commoner named Shinhachi. A reference to this suicide is made in a 1707 publication. See *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 190n20.

³⁶⁵ Ōhashi Tadayoshi, annot. and trans. in *Chikamatsu Monzaemon shū 2*, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2003) vol. 75, 189.

kasane izutsu).³⁶⁶ While not as heavily underscored in the text as the link between *Two Illustrated Books* and *Sonezaki*, the connection between the love suicide represented in *Sunken Well* and an earlier love suicide involving a prostitute from the same brothel serves as a reminder that the represented suicide is part of a larger pattern.

This play, like *Two Illustrated Books*, provides a view of life in the brothel. Unlike *Two Illustrated Books*, in which the proprietors of the brothel primarily express concern for their business interests, *Sunken Well* distinguishes between the proprietor's and the proprietress' reactions to their worries about Ofusa and Tokubei. Both the proprietor and the proprietress suspect that the lovers are planning a love suicide, but the proprietress treats Ofusa gently and offers her advice whereas the proprietor sears Ofusa's flesh in a torture scene.

The proprietress repeatedly emphasizes to Ofusa that her concern stems from feelings of affection rather than her business interests. When she catches Ofusa with a razor, she gently takes it away and offers Ofusa advice. The proprietress begins by pointing out that she, too, had been a prostitute before becoming a madam. Therefore, she continues, her counsel comes from experience. She observes that it is fine for a prostitute to form an attachment with a client, but that the prostitute must be strategic and be sure to avoid married men with children. Even if Tokubei were to leave his wife, she says, Ofusa would be condemned by his family and neighbors for breaking up the marriage, which would be a situation that would only cause her hardship. She reiterates that she would be happy to send Ofusa off with a maid if she were to marry because they have been close since Ofusa was little and first entered the brothel. She explains that her willingness to part with Ofusa should a good match come along stems from her

³⁶⁶ I use C. Andrew Gerstle's translation of the title for consistency. The "sunken well" in the translated title refers to the well into which Tokubei falls and drowns at the conclusion of the play. Gerstle's discussion of the play appears in *Circles of Fantasy*, 121-122.

parental feelings. “All parents feel the same” (*mina oyakata wa onaji koto*), she says.³⁶⁷ She cautions Ofusa not to do anything foolish, and adds that such an act would be cruel. She reiterates her hope that things will turn out well for Ofusa, “If something good comes your way, please ask to be released from your contract right away. This is proof that what I’m saying isn’t about greed” (*tame no yoi koto aru naraba, ima demo itoma o kure to iya yoku o hanareta kore shōko*).³⁶⁸ In case there is any confusion for the spectator of the play, the narrator tells the audience, “There is no greater benevolence” (*nokoru kata naki on no hodo*).³⁶⁹ In this scene, the proprietress demonstrates that she sees Ofusa as a person and not a commodity. The proprietress treats Ofusa as her own child, someone whom she has raised since Ofusa was just a girl. As she gives Ofusa advice, she emphasizes her hope for a happy future for Ofusa. Her kind treatment of Ofusa, however, does not extend to encouraging her to follow her own desires; she still encourages Ofusa to follow social norms and find someone other than Tokubei to love.

The proprietress’ humane treatment of Ofusa starkly contrasts with the harsh treatment of her by the proprietor. Whereas the proprietress was a prostitute when she was a young woman and feels warmth for Ofusa, the proprietor is Tokubei’s older brother and sees Ofusa as the impediment to his brother’s well-being. He has arranged for Tokubei to stay at the brothel that night and put him in a room to sleep. He grows suspicious and comes to check on his younger brother. In a hurry, Tokubei hides Ofusa under the *kotatsu*. Tokubei’s brother calls to his wife for

³⁶⁷ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 177. The term *oyakata* could refer to a number of different relationships including that of a parent or a master. I have chosen to translate it as “parents” here to best represent the relationship between Ofusa and the proprietress. *Oyakata*, (n.d.) in *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, accessed May 5, 2017, <http://japanknowledge.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/lib/display/?lid=200200ad34ea27uXP6Wh>

³⁶⁸ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 177.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

more coals to heat the *kotatsu*. Tokubei protests that excessive heat would be bad for his brother's ill health. But the proprietor will not be deterred. As in the scene with the proprietress discussed above, the narrator clarifies the character's intentions for the spectators. The chanter introduces the proprietor's motivations and immediately segues into speaking in the proprietor's voice: "The older brother plans to punish Ofusa. Maliciously he urges, 'Bring the fire quickly!'" (*ani wa korashime to omoi, ijiwarū hi o hayō motte ojiya to zo segamikeru*).³⁷⁰ Most likely, the proprietor blames Ofusa for ruining his brother's marriage and thus his business by not ending the affair, but Chikamatsu did not develop this aspect of the scene. As it progresses, the text emphasizes the potential pain of the hot embers on Ofusa under the *kotatsu*. When they arrive, the embers are so hot they look like fall leaves. The narrator describes that "Just by looking at them from the side, Tokubei has the feeling that his own body is burning" (*soba de miru sae, Tokubei mi mo mogewataru kokochi ni te*).³⁷¹ The narrator also describes Ofusa's pain. He says:

Ofusa is submerged in tears. The anguish of her body being burned by the embers causes her to reach her hand out from under the futon and grab the hem of Tokubei's robe in order to endure. But the pain is difficult to withstand. Is this what the heat of hell is like? It is truly pitiful.

*Fusa wa namida no uzumibi ni, yakitsukeraruru mi no kurushimi futon no kage yori te o idashi, suso ni toritsuki kotaen to suru ni, taegataki jigoku mo kaku ya to fubin nari.*³⁷²

This passage underscores Ofusa's suffering at the hands of the proprietor. It also demonstrates the connection between the lovers: earlier in the scene the narrator has described how Tokubei feels that he is also burning like Ofusa just by looking at the embers. Now Ofusa reaches out to her lover for support as she tries to endure the unendurable.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 185.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid., 185-186.

Eventually the proprietor relents and leaves, but the scene continues to underscore Ofusa's suffering and the proprietor's cruelty. As soon as his brother leaves, Tokubei rips the futon and wooden frame off the *kotatsu* to reveal Ofusa. She appears dazed. She lies amid the smoke that wafts upward gasping for breath with her face, arms, and legs completely red. Tokubei comments that now he has seen the malice in his brother despite his brother's fine reputation. The suffering Ofusa undergoes in this scene is acute enough that Koyama Issei has argued that it stands in for the agony at death usually depicted in the plays.³⁷³ Koyama, who has described the characters' physical suffering as a means of expiating their sins to prepare for their salvation after death, has argued that Chikamatsu dramatized Ofusa's suffering in this scene to demonstrate to the audience that she has expiated her sins and can achieve a good future rebirth.³⁷⁴ The purposeful cruelty of the brothel proprietor here elucidates what Oshima refers to as "being completely cornered" in *Two Illustrated Books*, discussed earlier.³⁷⁵

The depiction of intentional cruelty toward the prostitute in *Sunken Well* offers a critique of the treatment of brothel employees in the prostitution industry. In this scene Chikamatsu makes the proprietor's intentions clear through the use of the narrator and creates sympathy for Ofusa's suffering by including multiple images to convey the heat of the embers, her agony and struggle to endure, and Tokubei's vicarious experience of her suffering. The scene lays bare the abuse prostitutes suffered, to which other works only allude.

The second notable aspect of *Sunken Well* germane to the discussion of prostitution in early eighteenth-century Osaka is that the play demonstrates the interconnectedness of the brothels and everyday life in the merchant quarters. As previously mentioned, despite the

³⁷³ Chikamatsu *jōruri no kenkyū*, 71.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 73.

shogunal government's attempts to limit prostitution to specific areas separated from the rest of the city with moats and gated entrances, the brothels were thoroughly connected to Osaka's economic and social life. In *Sunken Well*, this becomes most apparent in an analysis of the central characters of the play: Tokubei, his wife Otatsu, and his lover, Ofusa.

Tokubei began life in the brothel and only transitioned to life outside the quarter upon marriage. His elder brother, who married a former prostitute, took over the management of the brothel in which the two grew up, the Well House. Tokubei, thus, had to be adopted into another family to have a livelihood of his own. New to the business of running a dye shop and in love with Ofusa, Tokubei does a terrible job managing his new family business. As one servant complains to another, "He's never home. He leaves all the work to the mistress and us" (*uchi ni iyansu naigisama, kochi to bakari ni uchi makase*).³⁷⁶ The servant goes on to speculate that Tokubei's childhood spent in the brothel is what makes him so shameless about neglecting his family and business in order to pass all his time at the brothel. It may well be that life in the quarter was more familiar to Tokubei than life outside. Chikamatsu dramatizes Tokubei's competing desires—to be a good husband to Otatsu and to be with his lover—at the end of the first act when Tokubei stands in the street trying to decide whether to visit his father-in-law, as his wife requested, or to go to Ofusa. In the final moment, he chooses Ofusa. This choice indicates that Tokubei's attachments to his life in the quarter linger with intensity despite the new marriage and business, which should command the primary allegiance of a young Osaka commoner.

Otatsu, Tokubei's wife, is also directly affected by her husband's inability to let go of his attachment to Ofusa. The family fortune and family business, which are completely interwoven,

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.

are in dire straits due to Tokubei's neglect and his prodigal spending. The servants mention this right away at the opening of the play. The predicament Tokubei has created for Otatsu becomes more apparent in the scene with her father, in which the father investigates why he's heard rumors that she and Tokubei took out a loan. The narrator relates that the dye shop has been in the family for generations and that the retired master of the shop is a model of thrift. He accuses Otatsu of not being able to manage her husband and threatens to replace him in the new year. Otatsu has lied on his behalf. She faces financial ruin and a possible forced new marriage, a parallel to Ofusa's circumstances. In addition, Otatsu's life itself is at stake at the end of the play when she, searching for her husband and fearful he is about to commit suicide, almost commits suicide herself. She views herself as the main obstacle coming between Tokubei and Ofusa and thus the reason for the love suicide.³⁷⁷ A servant and the pleas of her child hold her back, but her story of financial ruin, an unhappy marriage, and a narrowly averted suicide make clear that her husband's affair in the pleasure quarters has left its mark on her and her family.

Ofusa's need to raise 400 *monme*, the crisis that catalyzes the suicide, stems from the messy financial connections between the brothel and the outside world. Ofusa's father indentured her to the Well House when she was ten.³⁷⁸ As I have already explained, indenturing a daughter into prostitution was a fairly common way of raising money for a poor family, and a daughter's compliance was expected as her filial duty. The sum received from a daughter

³⁷⁷ While Otatsu sees herself as the main obstacle, Ofusa's father's debts would still have been an impediment to Ofusa and Tokubei's union even if Tokubei had been unmarried.

³⁷⁸ She would have begun her life in the brothel as a child attendant (*kamuro*). She would likely have received training in the language and etiquette of the pleasure quarters, music, and calligraphy. She would also have had time to play with other children. Generally, child attendants were not sold for sex until around fourteen or fifteen, whereupon they would be promoted to the rank of teenage attendant (*shinzō*). For more on the typical trajectory for a young girl sold to a brothel see Seigle, *Yoshiwara*, 81-86.

entering prostitution could greatly assist with a family's living expenses, but families sometimes simply took advantage of their daughters.

The sale of Ofusa would have included a legally binding contract, the general boundaries of which were set by the shogunal government.³⁷⁹ Despite the fact that his daughter was under contract in Osaka, Ofusa's father used her body as collateral on a loan. If he does not pay the 400 *monme* he owes, he will have to hand over Ofusa instead. There are high stakes involved for both Ofusa and her father. For Ofusa, if she doesn't raise the money she will be sent to a brothel in Kyoto, and away from Osaka, which would greatly limit her chances to see Tokubei. For her father, the consequences are more dire. He has violated the law against "double-selling" (*nijū-uri*), the crime of selling something to someone when one has already received money for the item from someone else. In this case, the item being sold is Ofusa's body. Double-selling was considered a serious crime: if the amount of the sale were over ten *ryō*, the punishment would be death. In Ofusa's father's case, the amount is 400 *monme*, which is roughly equivalent to six or seven *ryō*, which would result in jail time.³⁸⁰

This critical 400 *monme*, which causes Tokubei to commit fraud in the first act, underscores the economic connections between the merchant and pleasure districts. In his analysis of the development of Chikamatsu's dramaturgy in his love suicide plays, Yokoyama Tadashi has criticized this plot device in *Sunken Well* by calling it a sign of Chikamatsu's immaturity as a dramatist. Yokoyama has argued that Chikamatsu's early writing, including *Sunken Well*, uses exogenous crises instead of developing them from within the plot.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ For example, terms of longer than ten years, terms of indefinite length, and lifelong service were forbidden. Stanley, *Selling Women*, 53.

³⁸⁰ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 182n5.

³⁸¹ "Chikamatsu shinjū jōruri no tenkai," 51.

However, Chikamatsu makes a strong statement in *Sunken Well* with this particular plot device. The fact that Ofusa's life is upended by her father's debts supports the overall theme of the connection between merchant and brothel life. The prostitute does not exist in a world shut off from the outside, as the shogun might have wished. Instead, old family ties, which were supposedly severed by Ofusa's sale to the brothel, still influence the action.

While these 400 *monme* (or six or seven *ryō*) determine the action of the play, they are not a large sum of money in the context of prostitution. In fact, even in comparison to the other financial obstacles faced by characters in Chikamatsu's contemporary life plays, this is a small sum. It is less than the seven *ryō* needed to ransom Kokan in *The Love Suicides in Midsummer with an Icy Blade*. It is also less than the seven or eight *ryō* that Ohana, the heroine in *Hara-kiri of the Woman at Nagamachi*, owes at the completion of her nine-year contract to cover accessories, tobacco, fabric, and other items purchased for her by the brothel during her tenure. The proprietor of the brothel that employs Ohana in *Nagamachi* offers her stepfather twenty *ryō* to employ her for another year. Other sums that are critical to the plots of the plays include the thirty-three *ryō* of dowry money Tokubei needs to repay for refusing the marriage in *Sonezaki*, the twenty-five *ryō* needed to buy out Koharu's contract with the brothel in *Amijima*, and the sixty-six *ryō* the groom pays to the heroine's family to cover the wedding costs in *Women's Temple*. Ofusa is employed by a brothel in an unlicensed district. Predictably, the price would increase with a higher-status establishment. For example, in *The Courier for Hell*, the hero pays 160 *ryō* to ransom Umegawa plus an additional 83 *ryō* to pay off his account and provide tips for various brothel employees.³⁸² In comparison, the sum at stake in *Sunken Well* is tiny. As the

³⁸² Umegawa works in Shinmachi, the only licensed prostitution district in Osaka. Prices would have been even higher in the prestigious Yoshiwara, the licensed district in Edo. For instance, in 1700 a great *tayū*, a highly ranked prostitute, was ransomed for 350 *ryō*. Seigel, *Yoshiwara*, 183.

above makes clear, whether for marriage or prostitution, the amounts are significantly higher than the six or seven *ryō* at stake for Ofusa in *Sunken Well*.

The frank discussion of money, down to specific sums would have been immediately translatable to everyday life for the audience of commoners at the Takemoto Theatre. To give the contemporary reader a point of comparison, we can look to the prices of theatre tickets, a price point of which every audience member in the theatre would have been aware. The 400 *monme* is a large sum of money compared to the cheap seats priced at as little as eight *monme* that were bought by maids, day laborers, and other less affluent commoners. However, the box seats in the gallery where the affluent commoners sat went for 300 *monme* per seat but were usually hired together in sets of four for 1,200 *monme* (which would be equivalent to approximately twenty *ryō*). Chikamatsu reminded the spectators of the exact amount of money at stake multiple times in the first two acts of the play. For those in the pit, 400 *monme* likely seemed like a large sum although still not out of reach. For those in the gallery, 400 *monme* was the price of a day at the theatre in the company of friends. That Ofusa would end up having to commit suicide over such a comparatively small sum highlights the desperation and lack of alternatives in her life as a prostitute. Furthermore, the discussions of money in *Sunken Well*, as in other plays in the love suicide genre, directly linked the monetary amounts to the price of a woman's body. The framing of the women's bodies in terms of their price is another example of the commoditization of women's bodies during the early eighteenth century, a theme I will return to in the discussion of *The Love Suicides in the Women's Temple*.

I have shown how the audience is encouraged to see Oshima's dilemma from her point of view in *Two Illustrated Books* and how Tokubei and the audience feel the pain of Ofusa's torture along with her in the kotatsu scene in *Sunken Well*. The most poignant example of how

Chikamatsu fosters affective connections between the audience and the protagonists, especially the female protagonists, is the travel scene in *Sunken Well*.

In the travel scene in *Sunken Well*, the lovers imagine their story performed on Osaka's stages and fantasize about how audiences will consistently be moved to tears. In this scene, the characters run through Dōtonbori on their way to commit suicide. As they pass the major theatres, they imagine how their story will be represented in each. The theatres represented in the scene represent the seven theatres operating in Osaka in 1707: four kabuki theatres and three puppet theatres. The lovers pass them in order from East to West beginning with the Takeda Theatre, a puppet theatre specializing in trick puppetry, and ending with the Takemoto Theatre, Chikamatsu's theatre and the theatre that premiered *Sunken Well*.³⁸³ Ofusa and Tokubei's story would eventually be adapted into comedic and tragic versions.³⁸⁴ The lovers, however, envision their story as tragic.

The scene opens with the image of the surrounding environment and the lovers in tears. The narrator chants, "The water inside the well, inside the well, once so crystal clear. But now it grows cloudy with tears. Cloudy, too, is the moon reflected in the tears on the lovers' sleeves" (*tsutsuizutsu izutsu no mizu wa nigoranedo ima wa namida ni kakinigosu tsuki mo tamoto ni kakikumoru*).³⁸⁵ The image of the well makes reference to Ofusa's brothel and the well where

³⁸³ The directionality of this journey has religious significance since the West is associated with Amida Buddha and the Pure Land in Buddhist cosmology.

³⁸⁴ Chikamatsu's treatment in *Sunken Well* is tragic, but his treatment of the same story in the finale to *Yosaku from Tanba* and in a street ballad in *Amijima* are lighthearted.

³⁸⁵ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 188.

Tokubei would soon die. It also draws a link between the emotions experienced by the couple and the external world: both grow cloudy with tears.³⁸⁶

Likewise, the couple imagines, future audiences who come to see their story performed will shed tears in response. In the lovers' vision of three of the future performances, they imagine the reaction of the audience, and in each instance, the performances elicit tears. For example, in the imagined performance of actor Yoshizawa Ayame (1673-1729) at the Iwai Theatre, the narrator describes how Ayame "will move the audience to tears with melancholy lines" (*urei serifu no Ayame gusa*).³⁸⁷ Ayame, a female role actor, was famous and well-compensated; his salary in the 1710s was approximately 1,000 *ryō*.³⁸⁸ The couple's choice of Ayame to appear in their imagined production can likely be attributed to the fact that Ayame, normally a Kyoto-based actor, was performing in Osaka in 1707. It also indicates that they are imagining their roles being interpreted by actors of the highest level. Moreover, Ayame was particularly known for his ability to coax tears from audiences. In 1704 a critic evaluating Ayame's skill for a book of actor critiques wrote, "He never weeps alone but always with a crowd of one hundred or two hundred. The tissue sellers love him—their sales go up whenever his name is on the boards to appear in a play. My, how the tears fall. They cry 'boo hoo!' and blow their noses. This is Ayame's chief

³⁸⁶ In an additional reference, the opening phrase "The water inside the well, inside the well, once so crystal clear" (*tsutsuizutsu izutsu no mizu wa nigoranedo*) directly quotes lines from *The Courtesan's Rope of Benevolence* (*Keisei zen no tsuna*), a kabuki play performed at Kyoto's Hayakumo Theatre (Hayakumo-za) in 1700. See *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 188n2.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.

³⁸⁸ Gunji Masakatsu, "Kabuki and Its Social Background," trans. Andrew L. Markus in *Tokugawa Japan: The Social and Economic Antecedents of Modern Japan*, ed. Chie Nakane et al. (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1990), 194.

and most remarkable skill.”³⁸⁹ Similarly, the couple imagines how kabuki actor Somegawa and the famous puppeteer Hidanojō will draw tears from audiences.

Chikamatsu augments the tragic feeling in the scene by indicating that, no matter the skill of the performers, there would be a gap between an audience member’s experience of the couple’s story in the theatre and the grief experienced by the couple. Directly following his description of how Hidanojō will have the audience crying into their sleeves, the narrator continues, “No matter how deftly Hidanojō manipulates the trick puppets to express their figures and gestures, the audience will not truly understand (*futatsu tsugai no tezuma ni mo kakaru arifuri utsusu tomo kono omoi o ba yo mo shiraji*).”³⁹⁰ The true grief experienced by the historical couple cannot be completely expressed through performance.

As the couple runs past the Takemoto Theatre, the theatre that premiered *Sunken Well*, they reflect on the future performance that those in the audience would be watching. They consider that, for the audience, “One can escape into the melodies sung at the Takemoto Theater, comforted by the fact that they sing of someone else’s woes” (*itodo omoi ni kuretake no fushi o naraishi jōruri mo yoso no koto yo to nagusamishi ga*).³⁹¹ They imagine that a future audience might view a play about their deaths as escapist entertainment and that it might even be comforting to listen to someone else’s problems for a while. This phrase repeats the term *yoso* (“the affairs of others”) which I discussed in chapter one as one mechanism by which Chikamatsu had the characters confront something that they thought only happened to others and which now has become the very heart of their own lives. I argued that this is a method for

³⁸⁹ From *Yakusha Mai Ōgi*. Quoted in Kominz, *The Stars Who Created Kabuki*, 197-198.

³⁹⁰ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 189. Hidanojō specialized in manipulating trick puppets that could transform from between two characters, including switching from a male character to female character.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

generating empathy for the characters. It serves the same function here. The spectators witnessed a representation of the dead run across the stage at the same time as they were invited to imagine that gap between the historical figures who died and the theatrical representation of those events. This likely encouraged the spectator to place herself in the story and imagine herself not as the spectator on the outside who was comforted by stories of others, but rather as the protagonist for whom the complexity of the experience did not get fully communicated.

At the conclusion of this section, the couple sees themselves as objects with no further purpose in this world. They liken their bodies to dry leaves. Ofusa says, “Tonight we become one and our bodies are like oak leaves—the cast offs of the floating world” (*koyoi hitotsu ni nara no ha no kage wa ukiyo no jinkai*).³⁹² Tokubei continues, “This is the place where we will throw away our lives together. At the offering area of the Great Buddha Hall, we will cast off our bodies, becoming a heap of dry leaves” (*tomo ni inochi no suteba zo to daibutsuden no kanjinsho mi o suteru yabu to narinikeri*).³⁹³ The image of “cast offs of the floating world,” with the specific reference to the “floating world” of the brothel districts, highlights their expendability in the harsh world of prostitution and financial instability. *Sunken Well* reveals the cruelty prostitutes experienced at the brothels and how the prostitution industry affected many beyond the women sold into prostitution. The travel scene invites the audience members to feel the sadness of the two lovers along with them. The members are encouraged to cry at the sight of these lovers casting away their bodies over a trifling sum.

The Love Suicides at the Women’s Temple

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

Chikamatsu's *The Love Suicides at the Women's Temple* (*Shinjū mannensō*, 1710) goes further than either *Two Illustrated Books* or *Sunken Well* in illustrating the far-reaching consequences of a society with a rapidly expanding prostitution industry. Unlike the two plays previously discussed, *Women's Temple* appears to break the pattern established in Chikamatsu's love suicide plays; it does not feature a prostitute as the heroine or take place in the pleasure quarters. Oume, the protagonist, is instead the daughter of a merchant who seeks to give her away into marriage with a merchant from Kyoto. So unlike the prostitute heroines, Oume is bound to no contract. Moreover, she has been able to pursue a sexual relationship with the man of her choice, a young page at a nearby temple on Mount Kōya. Her sexual experience makes her tarnished as a future bride but sexually more desirable to her bridegroom. Despite having allowed her the freedom to choose a lover, her parents expect her to comply with their choice for her husband. In dramatizing the conflict between Oume's desires and her parents' pressure to comply with their wishes, the play exposes the similarities in the discourses of marriage and prostitution.

The play premiered in Osaka at the Takemoto Theatre in 1710. The play was likely based on an actual incident although the details are unknown.³⁹⁴ *The Love Suicides in the Women's Temple* tells the story of two lovers, Oume, a merchant's daughter, and Kumenosuke, a temple-page at Mount Kōya. Oume's father, Yojiemon, has arranged a match between Oume and Sakuemon, a wealthy merchant from Kyoto. Oume tries to postpone the wedding and sends for Kumenosuke. Sakuemon has heard the rumors of Oume's affair with Kumenosuke and attempts to call off the marriage and get back the money he gave to Yojiemon to pay off debts. Oume's mother convinces Sakuemon to go through with the wedding and Oume, who is opposed to the

³⁹⁴ Torigoe et al., "Kaisetsu" in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 660.

marriage, to consent. Oume's mother then sneaks Kumenosuke out of the house, and Oume uses the cover of darkness to follow him and escape. The lovers travel to the Women's Temple at Mount Kōya where they commit suicide.

Oume's story highlights the ideology of filial piety, which was used to ensure female compliance with both marriage and prostitution, as mentioned earlier. In *Women's Temple*, filial piety informs Oume's parents' expectations and Oume's actions. Likewise, the use of filial piety to justify other fathers' selling of their daughters into prostitution parallels Oume's circumstances in which filial piety is used to coerce her consent for marriage. Oume's father has chosen Sakuemon as the groom for clearly economic reasons. Sakuemon, in an action that recalls a brothel client buying a prostitute's contract and paying off her debts, has given approximately twenty-eight *kanme*, the equivalent of 464 *ryō*, to Oume's father in the form of forgiven debts, new business, wedding expenses, and Oume's bridal clothes. In a more conventional marriage, the bride's family would have provided her with a trousseau, which would have included clothing; bedroom furniture; supplies for grooming, sewing, and birthing supplies; and even musical instruments and games.³⁹⁵ When Yojiemon justifies his choice to the messenger, who is trying to plead Kumenosuke's cause, he enumerates the various payments Sakuemon has made to him for permission to marry Oume. In summary, he says that not many men would be willing to accept a girl "naked" (*hadaka*).³⁹⁶

Already with this exchange between Yojiemon and the messenger we can see two key differences between Oume's match and conventional marriage customs. First, the groom is providing bedding and other material goods for the wedding in addition to substantial cash

³⁹⁵ Lindsey, *Fertility and Pleasure*, 181-182.

³⁹⁶ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 146 and *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 217.

payments to the father. This means that Oume will enter her marriage “naked.” She will not have the customary trousseau from her natal family. When the bride brought her trousseau with her to her in-laws upon marriage, the clothing and other items in the trousseau legally remained the wife’s property.³⁹⁷ Therefore, were Oume to go into her marriage without a trousseau, she would be entering a marriage without any property of her own and devoid of support from her family, which is how a prostitute enters a brothel. The sexual overtones in Yojiemon’s choice of the word “naked” are also not lost on the messenger. He replies to Yojiemon that, “Mr. Kumenosuke can’t promise any gold pieces, but if he can have Oume naked, what more could he want?” (*iya Kumenosuke-sama mo koban no koto wa ukeawarenu Oume-sama o hadaka de nara, oni ni kanabō de gozarimasho*).³⁹⁸ The financial arrangements resemble more closely a daughter being sold into prostitution, which would give her parents a sum of money upon their signing of the contract. The language also emphasizes the eroticism of Oume’s naked body.

The rituals in the scene also conform more closely to those of prostitution than of marriage. Traditional marriage customs dictated that a bride would leave her parents’ house with the wedding trousseau and engage in the ceremonial sharing of *sake* and other rituals before the consummation of the marriage. When a bride left home, the family would have burnt torches at the door, a traditional funeral rite, to represent her symbolic death in her natal family as she traveled to be reborn in her new family.³⁹⁹ After arriving at her in-laws, she would have presented her trousseau, including a shell box, a hexagonal container that was a symbol of the

³⁹⁷ Lindsey, *Fertility and Pleasure*, 79.

³⁹⁸ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 146 and *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 217.

³⁹⁹ Lindsey, *Fertility and Pleasure*, 85.

bride's "untapped fertility and the promise of being a harmonious match for her new home."⁴⁰⁰ She would have shared *sake* with the groom, changed her clothing from white to red, and then engaged in sexual intercourse with her new husband, sometimes after a second ceremonial sharing of *sake*.⁴⁰¹

In Oume and Sakuemon's marriage, the rituals resemble more closely those of a prostitute sealing a ceremonial bond with a new client. First of all, Sakuemon journeys to the bride's house rather than the inverse. Second, Sakuemon provides material gifts, such as clothing and bedding, while Oume's father does not provide a trousseau. The gift of expensive bedding was a customary gift from a new client to a courtesan. This bedding was referred to as "exclusive," meaning that the client intended it for his exclusive use on his visits to the prostitute. However, in actuality, the bedding would have been used by a number of clients. Chikamatsu represented Oume's potential multiple sexual partners when the bridegroom sits on the new bedding to exchange *sake* cups with Oume while Oume's lover hides beneath the covers.

One might expect that Oume's merchant status would have given her greater agency and perhaps have enabled her to refuse this match. Oume, however, feels bound by filial piety to initially consent to the marriage. Oume's feelings reflect the social expectations for women in the Edo period. For example, books aimed at instructing women emphasize the same basic tenets of serving one's family and then one's in-laws, regardless of the social status of the women. In contrast, manuals aimed at men tended to provide different instructions depending on the specific social status of the man.⁴⁰² Oume, moved by her feelings of obligation to her parents, first

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 81-85.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 85.

⁴⁰² Yabuta Yutaka, "Shōka to josei," in *Mibun no naka no josei*, ed. Yabuta Yutaka et al. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan 2010) 9.

attempts to postpone the marriage, hoping that something can be arranged in the meantime with Kumenosuke. Then when pressured to marry, she agrees. She tells her father that she agreed out of deference to his “parental authority” (*oya no kōken*).⁴⁰³ Oume’s mother, in her speech at the culmination of act two, appeals to ideals of filial piety to get her daughter to consent to the marriage and not commit a love suicide. The speech, a *kudoki*, or an “impassioned display of love and grief,” takes place at a critical moment in the play and is the musical climax of the scene.⁴⁰⁴ The mother acknowledges the grief that she and her husband would experience if Oume committed suicide, “You’d make your parents unhappy” (*oya ni nageki o kakeru*).⁴⁰⁵ She also reminds Oume that because of filial piety she mustn’t die, “Consider it your duty to your parents. Please don’t kill yourselves” (*oyakōkō to omowaba, kanarazu shindekureru na*).⁴⁰⁶ She urges Oume to come downstairs to be married and says that if she refuses she is an “unfilial child” (*fukōmono*).⁴⁰⁷ The mother’s repeated emphasis on the Oume’s filial duty not to commit suicide is enough to convince Oume to come downstairs.

In this moment, Chikamatsu reveals that Sakuemon is looking at Oume through the lens of prostitution. When she appears, Sakuemon, who has been resolved to be angry with her, instead decides that he forgives everything. Oume defiantly tells Sakuemon that her previous sexual relationships are none of his business. In Keene’s translation the narrator says, “Her gestures also betray her annoyance. The would-be groom, overcome by Oume’s charms,

⁴⁰³ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 143 and *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 212.

⁴⁰⁴ Gerstle, *Circles of Fantasy*, 132.

⁴⁰⁵ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 150 and *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 221.

⁴⁰⁶ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 150 and *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 221.

⁴⁰⁷ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 222.

smiles.”⁴⁰⁸ Sakuemon tells Oume’s parents he has no more hesitations and calls out, “to bed, to bed” (*sā nedokoro e*).⁴⁰⁹ But what is really happening in this moment when Oume gestures in annoyance and Sakuemon responds by being charmed? In the original text, the description of Sakuemon’s reaction is “the groom, under Oume’s sultry scowl, smiles” (*muko wa Oume ni yusurare, nikko to warai*).⁴¹⁰ The verb Keene translates as “to be charmed” is *yusuru*, which, in most contexts, means, “to tremble.” But within the specific context of the Edo period pleasure quarters, it meant “coquettish scowling.”⁴¹¹ This second meaning is how the word is being deployed here. This demonstrates that the particular kind of charm Oume has over Sakuemon is (in his mind) the coy behaviors associated with the pleasure quarters, behaviors that he finds attractive.

Perhaps precisely because of the mother’s contention that love suicide violated the codes of filial piety, Oume and Kumenosuke go to surprising lengths to commit suicide in a way that will demonstrate their love and respect for their parents. In the love suicide ritual, as conventionalized in Chikamatsu’s first love suicide play, *Sonezaki*, the lovers journey to where they will die, remember those they will leave behind, choose a specific site for the suicide, recite a Buddhist prayer, and die simultaneously. As described earlier, after Oume and Kumenosuke journey to the Women’s Temple, they die with keepsakes of their parents. Kumenosuke gives Oume a *sake* cup from her mother because Oume worries she will be called an “unfilial

⁴⁰⁸ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 151.

⁴⁰⁹ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 151. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 223.

⁴¹⁰ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 223.

⁴¹¹ *Yusuru* [Def. 2.2], (n.d.) in *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://japanknowledge.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/lib/display/?lid=20020448a7cd11sH7zvj>.

daughter” (*fukōmono*).⁴¹² Before Kumenosuke kills Oume, he exclaims, “You have your mother’s keepsake, and I will die by my father’s ashes. We shall be reborn on one lotus with our parents” (*sonata wa haha no katami o mochi ware wa chichi no kotsu no soba, fūfu oyako ichiren*).⁴¹³ In this way, the lovers commit a filial suicide.

The basic pattern of this suicide conforms to the customs of love suicide in the works of Chikamatsu. The aspect unique to this play is the repeated expressions of filial piety. The lovers express their love for their parents, die with keepsakes of their parents by their sides, and pray to be reborn on a lotus together with them. In the customary love suicide, the lovers would not interrupt the suicide to remember their parents and would die praying to be reborn together, the two of them on one lotus.⁴¹⁴ This ending, with the exceptional filial piety displayed by the lovers, challenges the mother’s earlier claims that love suicide was inherently unfilial. The final image Chikamatsu left his audience with is one of tender, loving children who long to be reunited with their parents in the next life.

Conclusion

The three plays analyzed above, *The Love Suicide of the Two Illustrated Books*, *The Love Suicide at the Sunken Well*, and *The Love Suicides at the Women’s Temple*, provide complex views of life inside the brothels and the spillover of prostitution-based attitudes toward women into the merchant sphere. In *Two Illustrated Books*, Chikamatsu portrayed the difficulties facing

⁴¹² *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 233.

⁴¹³ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 159 and *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 234.

⁴¹⁴ One other Chikamatsu love suicide play also demonstrates this level of filial piety. In *Icy Blade*, Kokan dies with a letter from her mother inserted in her mouth. She asks that her lover reinsert the letter if it falls out during her death agony. Her lover dutifully does so before he kills himself.

a prostitute who wishes to express her true feelings, the way her employers view a potential suicide as simply a loss of profit while the practice of love suicide left scars on other brothel inhabitants, and how women were often the victims in love suicide pacts. In *Sunken Well*, he further dramatized the cruelty of brothel life in the scene in which the proprietor tortures Ofusa under the *kotatsu*. In addition, the play delivers great detail about the small amount of money that could prompt a suicide in the fragile existence of a prostitute. The emphasis on the price of Ofusa's body develops the theme of the commoditization of women's bodies. Chikamatsu returned to this theme in *Women's Temple*, which was set outside the pleasure quarters. Even in a merchant home in a village near Mount Kōya the ideology of filial piety, which coerced women to acquiesce to entering marriage and prostitution, sends a young woman into a marriage that is closer to single-client prostitution. Chikamatsu's treatment of the prostitution industry and its influence in these plays offered a critique of this rapidly growing sector of the city's economy.

Chapter Four: Mapping Osaka

Imagine it is 1720, and you are sitting in the audience for *The Love Suicides at Amijima* at the Takemoto Theatre in Osaka. You watch as the puppeteers manipulate the puppets representing Jihei, the owner of a paper shop, his wife, Osan, and his prostitute lover Koharu. You see Osan and Koharu conspire to alter the course of events and save Jihei's life. But, despite their efforts, you witness the unfolding of the path to tragedy. Then, your ears perk up. The lovers escape Koharu's brothel to the sound of the night watchman's clappers. The chanter, seated on the stage alongside the musician and the puppeteers, is now about to begin the most richly lyrical and musical section of the play: the travel scene (*michiyuki*).

You listen as the chanter recounts their departure from Sonezaki-Shinchi and their progression on foot along the shores of the Shijimi and Ō Rivers, and finally their arrival at Daichō Temple in Amijima. In the process, you hear the chanter name twelve bridges the lovers either pass or cross.⁴¹⁵ Perhaps you listen to chanter name the bridges with a feeling of familiarity since each bridge in the scene corresponds to an actual bridge in Osaka. Perhaps you feel a connection to a distant, literary past as you hear the chanter name the first bridges—Plum, Green, and Cherry—and remind you of the famous poems Sugawara no Michizane composed to

⁴¹⁵ These bridges in order are: Plum Bridge, Green Bridge, Cherry Bridge, Shijimi Bridge, Ōe Bridge, Little Naniwa Bridge, Funeiri Bridge, the Horikawa Bridge(s), Tenjin Bridge, Tenma Bridge, Kyō Bridge, and Onari Bridge. Shively speculates that while the specific bridge over the Horikawa is not named in the text, the lovers cross Taihei Bridge. *The Love Suicide at Amijima*, 128 note 233. Conversely, Yūda Yoshio conjectures that Chikamatsu refers to all six bridges over the Hori River here. *Zenkō shinjū ten no Amijima* (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1975), 417.

his plum, pine, and cherry trees.⁴¹⁶ Or, perhaps the names of the bridges evoke a feeling of novelty and excitement since many of these bridges were new (keep in mind, it is 1720) and represent the city's rapid expansion. The most recent publication to celebrate all the bridges in Osaka with short poems, which made them easy to remember, was published in 1678.⁴¹⁷ The bridges that begin the list in *Amijima* were all reconstructed or built between 1684 and 1708.⁴¹⁸ You may have heard the names of some of these bridges if you had attended earlier love suicide plays, but this is the first time you have gotten a tour of each of the new bridges. As you listen to the chanter name them, you may feel familiarity, a tie to the literary past, or the frisson of the new. Chikamatsu's text evokes the topographic and literary contexts of Osaka through the bridges.

You also hear the names of these bridges in the context of the play. As the travel scene moves the characters through the urban space of Osaka, it takes the lovers on a parallel spiritual journey that prepares them for death. Against the backdrop of the lovers' story, the bridge names take on new resonances. One such example is Kyō Bridge (*kyō-bashi* 京橋), which the lovers cross near the end of their journey. When the lovers arrive at the bridge, Koharu relates that she

⁴¹⁶ Sugawara no Michizane (845-903) was the Minister of the Right, a prestigious political position in the government. The powerful Fujiwara family became nervous about his clout and had him exiled to Dazaifu in Kyūshū. There, he longed for the capital and the trees that surrounded his home. The poem to his plum tree reads, "When the east wind blows/send some fragrance [to me]/plum blossoms./Not having your master,/do not forget spring (*Kochi fukaba/nioi okose yo/ume no hana/Aruji nashi to te/haru na wasure so*). It is said that the plum tree, moved by the poem, flew to him in Dazaifu. His cherry tree withered and died in despair of missing its master. Only the pine tree remained, which prompted Sugawara to write a second poem: The plum tree flew./the cherry tree withered/in this world/Only the pine tree/has not accompanied [me] (*Ume wa tobi/sakura wa karuru/yo no naka ni/Matsu bakari kos/tsurenakarikere*). See Shively, *The Love Suicide at Amijima*, 126-127n222-223.

⁴¹⁷ This publication, *The Boats Parting the Reeds of Naniwa* (*Naniwa ashi wake bune*), contained poems for each of the bridges then in existence in Osaka. Nagatomo, *Kinsei Kamigata jōruribon shuppan no kenkyū*, 73.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

has copied the All Compassionate and Merciful One chapter of the Lotus Sutra (*renge* “lotus” *kyō* 經 “sutra”) in the hopes they will be reborn together on one lotus in the Pure Land.⁴¹⁹ The text pivots on the syllable *kyō* to transition from the sutra (經) to the bridge (橋), Kyō Bridge. This is an example of the poetic technique of the pivot word (*kakekotoba*) in which one word assumes two different meanings: one based on the preceding words and one on the words that follow. In this case, *renge* (lotus) precedes *kyō* to make the compound *renge kyō* 蓮華經, Lotus Sutra. *Kyō* is followed by *bashi* (bridge) to create *kyō bashi* 京橋, Kyō Bridge, which is written with the character for “capital.” Thus, as the text flows across the words “*renge kyō bashi*,” the syllable *kyō* resonates as both “sutra” and the name of the bridge.

After the pivot, the narrator continues, “They cross over Kyō Bridge and reach the other shore” (*kyō bashi o koyureba itaru kanokishi*).⁴²⁰ The “other shore” (*kanokishi* 彼の岸) indicates the physical arrival of the lovers at the other side of the bridge. It also puns on another pronunciation of the same characters, *higan* (彼岸), which means the realm of liberation in Buddhism (*gedatsu no kyōchi*).⁴²¹ Perhaps after leaving the play, if you heard someone mention Kyō Bridge, you might think “Sutra Bridge” rather than Capital Bridge as you recall Koharu and Jihei crossing to the “other shore” on their journey to salvation through love suicide.

Amijima’s travel scene over the twelve new bridges of Osaka is just one example of the many travel scenes that fill Chikamatsu’s love suicide plays. Travel scenes were such a critical

⁴¹⁹ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 426.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.* Adapted from Keene’s translation, “They cross over Kyō Bridge and reach the opposite shore,” *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 420. “Other” shore more aptly captures the Buddhist resonances.

⁴²¹ The “other shore” is a “common metaphor for the state of liberation, or nirvāṇa.” “Pāra,” *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 621a. See also Nakamura, *Kōsetsu Bukkyō daijiten*, 1380d-1381a.

element in the plays that each features one (placed before the death scene) and many feature a second (at the play's opening). These scenes are the most densely lyrical and musical sections of the plays and thus were the most likely to be published and sold in compilations. The travel scenes showcase many of the sites featured in the popular travel guides of the time: bridges and canals, temples and shrines, and the entertainment districts. They depict a city filled with performance and mapped performance onto the city. As in the *Amijima* scene, they conjure a city in motion. Characters circumnavigate the city to visit temples, traverse the theatre district, and clamor over the banks of Osaka's many rivers. Despite the proliferation of travel guides, Chikamatsu was often the first to represent new Osaka spaces. How might the lens of the love suicide plays have shaped how Osaka commoners experienced their city after leaving the theatre?

To understand how Chikamatsu represents the city, we will follow him on an urban pilgrimage to the twenty-two shrines of Osaka, visit the bustling streets of Dōtonbori, and take a riverboat down the Tenma River. Along the way, we will see a range of urban sites and witness a city full of movement and awash with performance. Before we begin our journey through the Osaka of the love suicide plays, we will first investigate the ways of seeing the city that informed urban audiences in the early modern period.

Geographic Imaginations

It comes as no surprise that travel scenes were such a prominent structural, literary, and musical device in the love suicide plays given their longstanding importance in Japanese performance. Moreover, travel, maps, and the categorization of space were items of tremendous interest in early modern Japan. The shogun commissioned maps and cadastral surveys.

Commercial publishers produced maps, guidebooks, and travel board games. In addition to presenting information about places, these materials also created a way of seeing these places. As Marcia Yonemoto has argued, “For the shogunate as well as for the many commercial mapmakers and publishers, maps envisioned, created, and ultimately enshrined a new geographical, political, and social order.”⁴²² Laura Nenzi, whose work has built off Yonemoto’s, has distinguished different ways of imagining space produced by the authorities, religious institutions, and literary culture.⁴²³

Maps and other publications commissioned by the government imagined an ordered, hierarchical, static world. Early modern cities, Berry has written, were “the space of dominant ruling communities supported by subject commoners.”⁴²⁴ The cities appear as fixed, immobile spaces separated into areas controlled by those in power, the samurai ruling class and the city magistrates, and denser areas for the business and personal lives of the commoners. This is especially apparent in depictions of Edo, the shogunal capital. Images produced under the orders of the authorities represented Edo as

clean and neat, without oppression from above or insolence from below, and with total dedication to productivity.... These works are usually in handscroll format, here of city blocks. The effect is to keep Edo closed and for private viewing only; this is shogunal space, and it would be presumptuous to subject it to open gazing, as on screens.⁴²⁵

Nenzi has noted, “Through the cartographers, for instance, political discourse mapped space with symbols that facilitated the Tokugawa’s penchant for control and their quest for constant

⁴²² *Mapping Early Modern Japan: Space, Place, and Culture in the Tokugawa Period (1603-1868)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 8.

⁴²³ *Excursions in Identity* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008).

⁴²⁴ *Japan in Print*, 140.

⁴²⁵ Timon Screech, *Obtaining Images: Art, Production and Display in Edo Japan* (Honolulu, University of Hawai’I Press, 2012), 265.

stability.”⁴²⁶ Shogunal maps primarily boxed space into discrete units related to status. They rarely showed inhabitants of the spaces moving within them.

Religious institutions had a different way of representing space, one that focused on foregrounding sacred spaces to accentuate their religious meaning rather than the overall accuracy of the image. They appealed to a religious hierarchy outside that of the government. Unlike the static images produce for the shogun, images of religious space revealed humans interacting with the landscape and the structures within it. Nenzi has written that “Circuit pilgrimages and the climbing of sacred peaks, in particular, are examples of how religious discourse saw certain landscapes as earthly projections of heavenly realms and associated travel through geographical settings with progress across various levels of spiritual knowledge.”⁴²⁷ In religious maps, mandalas, and paintings, spaces are often organized into circular routes and filled with people.

In addition to the shogunal and religious landscapes, a third major way of mapping space, which came from arts and literature, celebrated famous places (*meisho*). There had been a strong interest in treating famous sites in literature from classical times. Topographical descriptions can be traced back to the eighth century.⁴²⁸ These literary representations celebrated the best-known landscapes of the classical period, which gathered around Kyoto. Through the use of famous places in poetry, there developed tight associations between particular places and natural features, such as the cherry blossoms of Mount Yoshino or the irises at the Eight Bridges in

⁴²⁶ *Excursions in Identity*, 13-14.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴²⁸ Evelyn Schulz, “Narratives of Counter-Modernity: Urban Spaces and Mnemonic sites in the ‘Tokyō Hanjōki’” *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 2.1 (2003) 117-151. 125.

Mikawa Province.⁴²⁹ Even in classical poetic practice, the deployment of famous places connected past with present. Edward Kamens has written, “To a great extent, the work of the poet in this tradition, it was understood, was the ingenious rearrangement of materials into new poems that transparently displayed their points of contact with, as well as departures from, earlier poems.”⁴³⁰ The associations between places and nature evolved over time based on new poems as well as the first hand accounts of travelers.⁴³¹ Nenzi has further argued that in addition to the links between past and present that the famous places provide, they were also imbued with an emotional resonance: “A journey through poetic space occurred along a series of lyrically induced emotional pinnacles.”⁴³² Literary representations of space integrated nature with place and often corresponded to particular emotions.

In response, the early modern period created new famous places for its new urban centers. Shirahata Yōzaburō has described how the term *meisho* (famous place) shifted its meaning in the early modern period from a term closely tied to the Japanese poetic tradition to a more general catch-all term that circulated in popular culture to designate “places that attracted mass interest.”⁴³³ The process of bringing new famous places into circulation was often deliberate on the part of local writers. In the case of Edo, W. Puck Brecher has argued that Edoites were dissatisfied with the fact that their city had political capital but could not compete

⁴²⁹ Mount Yoshino’s cherry blossoms figure in many classical poems. The irises at the Eight Bridges were made famous in *The Tales of Ise* (*Ise monogatari*, ca. 947).

⁴³⁰ *Utamakura, Allusion, and Intertextuality in Traditional Japanese Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 2.

⁴³¹ Naito Mariko has presented an excellent case study of this transformation in “The Journey of an Utamakura Through the Past: ‘Shiga Mountain Pass’ and ‘Shiga Flower Garden’” *Review of Classical Japanese Culture and Society* 19 (2007): 57-70.

⁴³² *Excursions in Identity*, 37.

⁴³³ “The Printing of Illustrated Travelogues in 18th-century Japan,” in *Written Texts—Visual Texts*, 200.

with Kyoto as a cultural capital. Therefore, according to Brecher, the people of Edo deliberately sought to reinvent their city through creating famous places. Brecher has explained that the process of identifying and celebrating famous places in Edo was “a direct attempt by Edoites to vie for aesthetic currency by going head to head with the sites, flora, and fauna in Kyoto that had stood for centuries as unchallenged exemplars of taste.”⁴³⁴ Brecher has explained that the process consisted of identifying something specific to a locale and then using the associative rhetoric of poetry to situate the place and its association into the discourse.⁴³⁵

Osaka, like Edo, was participating in this process of creating famous places. As is befitting of a city laced with rivers, Osaka guidebooks emphasized sites connected to water: rivers, canals, and bridges. Yoshimura Kazufumi’s analysis of late eighteenth-century guidebooks reveals that a full 29% of sites listed are connected to water. The second largest category, temples and shrines, amounted to 23% of sites. The representation of other categories of sites is much smaller: merchant houses and shops (8%), nature (7%), mountains (6%), samurai residences (4%), theatres and variety shows (*misemono*) (4%), and miscellaneous (19%).⁴³⁶ Famous sites in Osaka originated in both legends and contemporary events, however, as Inoue Tomokatsu has demonstrated. In either case the creation and dissemination of famous Osaka places had two characteristics in common: the role of publishing (such as maps and guides) and the role of city events (such as the unveilings of sacred Buddhist images, or *kaichō*).⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ “Down and out in Negishi: Reclusion and Struggle in an Edo Suburb” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 35.1 (2009): 12-13.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴³⁶ Yoshimura Kazufumi, “Kinsei Ōsaka no toshi kankō,” *Jūtaku kaigi* 88.6 (2013): 26.

⁴³⁷ “Kinsei Ōsaka ni okeru meisho no sōshutsu to densetsu,” *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kanshō*, 70 (2005): 87-88.

The creation of famous places thus went hand-in-hand with the other major development in this period: the rise of commercial printing. Maps, guidebooks, and other materials depicting urban landscapes proliferated especially in urban areas. These types of materials, which grew out of the maps produced for the shogunate, took the cartographic language of the shogunal maps and “vernacularized” it for a commercial public.⁴³⁸ Berry has analyzed the maps and city compendia of the major urban areas. These large-scale surveys, printed and available for purchase, included street and commercial directories, sightseeing guides, lists of historical landmarks, festival calendars, and more.⁴³⁹ In these compilations, unlike the shogunal maps, each chapter begins a “new walk with a new itinerary,” so that the reader takes on a range of identities and relations.⁴⁴⁰ In other words, they depict the city from ground level as a space to be experienced on foot.

The puppet theatre was an additional mechanism for the creation and dissemination of famous places in Osaka. Nagatomo has acknowledged the educational role played by Chikamatsu’s plays in transmitting practical knowledge of the city.⁴⁴¹ The plays transmitted this information in performance and in print. Travel scenes, in particular, circulated widely in print since they were included in published editions of the plays and were also collected and published separately in compilation books that published the travel scenes from a variety of different plays together in one volume.⁴⁴² The popularity of these books of travel scenes meant that of the various scenes in the plays, the travel scenes had the greatest circulation outside the theatre. Even

⁴³⁸ Yonemoto, *Mapping Early Modern Japan*, 14.

⁴³⁹ Berry, *Japan in Print*, 142.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*.

⁴⁴¹ He also has noted the plays taught conduct. *Kinsei Kamigata jōruribon shuppan no kenkyū*, 74.

⁴⁴² Kōzu, “Jōruri no bestoseraa,” 91.

before Chikamatsu's popularity exploded, there were bookstores in Osaka specializing in books about the puppet theatre.⁴⁴³ Printed puppet theatre scripts were bought and circulated for a number of reasons. Amateur chanters used them as practice books.⁴⁴⁴ They were used as reading material for pleasure.⁴⁴⁵ Puppet theatre-related books were sold for profit and commonly available through lending libraries.⁴⁴⁶ Thus, the travel scenes could be viewed in the theatre, performed by amateurs at private residences and local shrines, or read at home. The puppet theatre-related books printed with the chanters' permission as the "true text" (*shōhon*) of the performance "constituted one of the most widely read genres during the Tokugawa era: printed and circulated for both reading and chanting purposes, they offered general readers outside the theatre textual access to the plot and language of the plays."⁴⁴⁷ In the case of the love suicide plays, they offered readers a guide to Osaka through the travel scenes.

So, how did these travel scenes, performed in the theatres and circulated in print, imagine the geography of the city? As an analysis of the travel scene over the bridges from *Amijima* demonstrates, Chikamatsu's depictions of Osaka were in conversation with the various possible lenses for viewing space that circulated at the time. Chikamatsu interlaced religious views of

⁴⁴³ By 1686, there were already two booksellers who sold nothing but *jōruri* libretti. Nagatomo, *Kinsei Kamigata jōruribon shuppan no kenkyū*, 18.

⁴⁴⁴ Introduction to *Nihon shomin bunka shiryōshūsei* vol. 7, 1.

⁴⁴⁵ Nagatomo, *Kinsei Kamigata jōruribon shuppan no kenkyū*, 13. Commercial lending libraries (*kashihon'ya*) and book peddlers expanded the reach of printed materials to new readers who might have previously faced geographic, social, or economic obstacles to accessing books. Commercial lending libraries operated on credit and made books available to readers for a nominal fee. The peddlers traveled through neighborhoods with large packs of books strapped to their backs. Peddlers selling and renting books were in existence by 1650, and many illustrations from the late seventeenth century depict them walking through urban districts. Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*, 391.

⁴⁴⁶ Nagatomo, *Kinsei Kamigata jōruribon shuppan no kenkyū*, 19.

⁴⁴⁷ Kimbrough and Shimazaki, introduction to *Publishing the Stage: Print and Performance in Early Modern Japan*, 5.

place through the text with the references to specific religious locales, such as the journey's endpoint at Daichō Temple in Amijima. Further, Chikamatsu deployed the religious language of place by linking the couple's literal travel over the bridges to Buddhist metaphors of crossing to the "other shore." Chikamatsu also infuses the travel scene with references to a classical past in an early modern present. In his word play surrounding the Plum, Green, and Cherry Bridges, he evokes Sugawara and the poems he wrote to his three beloved trees. Similarly to the compendia, and in direct contrast to the stable, fixed geography represented in the shogunal maps, Chikamatsu represented a city on the move. The sense of motion is especially pronounced since the lovers have just escaped the confines of Koharu's brothel and fled the pleasure quarter. Theirs is a journey that defies the spatial laws of the shogun's city and follows their own trajectory towards a goal with religious meaning that they have chosen for themselves.

We can see the process of creating a new famous place for Osaka in the final lines of the play. Chikamatsu weaves religious associations into the text and also merges the place, Amijima, with the love suicide incident that took place there.⁴⁴⁸ As the closing lines, the narrator recites, "The tale is spread from mouth to mouth. People say that they who were caught in the net of Buddha's vow immediately gained salvation and deliverance, and all who hear the tale of the Love Suicides at Amijima are moved to tears" (*ihirometaru monogatari sugu ni jōbutsu tokudatsu no, chikai no amijima shinjū to, megoto ni namida o kakenikeru*).⁴⁴⁹ In the original, the syllable *ami* in "Amijima" is used as a pivot. In following the Buddhist context of salvation, the combination of "vow" (*chikai no*) followed by "net" (*ami*) signifies the net of the Buddha's vow

⁴⁴⁸ The factual basis for this incident cannot be verified. It is possible it is based on an actual incident that did not leave other records. The play's similarities to plot elements of Chikamatsu's *The Love Suicides at the Sunken Well* and Kaion's *The Love Suicides at Umeda* have led to speculations that it is a work of pure fiction.

⁴⁴⁹ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 425. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 431.

that promises to bring salvation to all it catches. At the same time, the combination of *ami* followed by “island” (*jima*) indicates the place, Amijima, in northeastern Osaka. As the text continues, *amijima* is followed by “love suicide” (*shinjū*), which solidifies the association between the place and the suicide. Thus, with *ami* as the pivot, Chikamatsu links a religious understanding of place with the specific place and the love suicide.⁴⁵⁰ The text that follows, how all who hear the story are moved to tears, offers a further association with Amijima: the feeling of pathos that can move one to tears.

Circumnavigating Osaka and Creating Famous Places

To get a closer view of Chikamatsu’s Osaka, let us turn to the opening of *Colored Leaves in the Fourth Month* (*Uzuki no momiji*), which premiered at the Takemoto Theater in 1706. This is an example of a play with two travel scenes, an opening pilgrimage and a lovers’ journey. The play opened with a travel scene to twenty-two shrines in Osaka, a new urban pilgrimage route that first appeared sometime after 1688.⁴⁵¹ Chikamatsu’s representation of this new pilgrimage is the first known depiction of the pilgrimage on stage or in print.⁴⁵² Thus, in representing the pilgrimage, Chikamatsu legitimized a recently developed lay Buddhist practice and traced a route that could be followed by others. He rendered the urban space of Osaka as a site for sightseeing and a spiritual landscape that held the possibility for religious transformation. The depiction of an urban pilgrimage may also have been an affront to the shogun’s authority. The

⁴⁵⁰ It is possible to also imagine a fourth association, between the “net” (*ami*) and the fishermen who find the bodies, bear witness to the scene, and transmit the tale. Perhaps audiences might further have heard associations with Amida Buddha, whose vows form the net that catches human beings.

⁴⁵¹ Nagatomo, *Kinsei Kamigata jōruribon shuppan no kenkyū*, 67.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

government issued an edict forbidding urban pilgrimages in 1704, just two years before Chikamatsu wrote *Colored Leaves*.⁴⁵³ By dramatizing this new urban pilgrimage, Chikamatsu not only created a landscape of fluid movement in contrast to the static shogunal vision of urban space, he also staged a banned practice popular with commoners.

The opening pilgrimage scene in *Colored Leaves* provides a tour of most of the city since it begins in the north and then circumnavigates Osaka. En route, Okame visits twenty-two shrines, crosses multiple rivers and canals, passes through the main merchant districts in the center of the city, traverses the theatre district, ventures into the periphery of the city to an area that is more rural than urban, and even takes in the sights of the samurai residences near Osaka castle. The circular structure of the journey, which recalls the many circuit pilgrimages popular in Japan, marks it as religious as do the numerous temples visited along the way. In this way, a religious view of the city is a cornerstone of the route and provides the main structure. However, as an urban pilgrimage, the journey is full of spaces of everyday life, an aspect of the scene that is accentuated with verses from popular songs.

While the idea of “mapping” a city conjures a visual vocabulary, the puppet theatre was primarily an aural medium. The extant visual evidence suggests that the stage space was filled with performers, there was no scenery and few props. For example, in an artist’s rendering of the pilgrimage scene for an illustrated edition of the play published in the early 1700s, the puppeteer, the main puppet (Okame), and a palanquin prop are at the center.⁴⁵⁴ Performers occupy the rest of the stage: the two chanters, Gidayū and Wakadayū, kneel upstage left in front of a libretto; the shamisen player, Takezawa Gon’emon, sits directly downstage of the chanters with his

⁴⁵³ The ban on urban pilgrimages was re-issued in 1709 and again in 1710. Brownstein, “*The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage and Chikamatsu’s ‘Love Suicides at Sonezaki,’*” 9-10.

⁴⁵⁴ This image is held at the University of Tokyo Library. It is reproduced in Brownstein, “*The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage and Chikamatsu’s ‘Love Suicides at Sonezaki,’*” 24.

instrument; and at stage right sit Takeda Izumo and Chikamatsu.⁴⁵⁵ The stage setting is simple. The backstage wall is covered in a white curtain that bears artists' crests. Downstage is a low knee-wall to conceal the movements of the puppeteer. The basic layout of the stage and the performers in the *Colored Leaves* illustration generally accords with the other evidence for early puppet theatre performance from visual and textual sources.⁴⁵⁶ Given the simplicity of the stage space, apart from the manipulation of the puppets and a few properties, the audience would have primarily experienced the performance by listening. Most likely, the travel scenes were an especially aural experience since they were considered the musical highlights of the plays.

The aurality did not detract from the ability of these scenes to engage in a complex cultural dialogue about urban space. Nenzi has observed that in the early modern period, "Language (in the strict verbal sense) appropriated spaces and affirmed authority just as pervasively, effectively, and decisively as images."⁴⁵⁷ In Chikamatsu's case, rather than supporting the authority of the shogunate, he put the language to use to create famous places the celebrated love suicide and performance.

One of the key famous places that *Colored Leaves* helps define and disseminate is Sonezaki Tenjin, the location of Ohatsu and Tokubei's love suicide that Chikamatsu immortalized in *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*. While the pilgrimage to twenty-two shrines was the stated backdrop for the scene, audiences were also encouraged to see the scene against the

⁴⁵⁵ Takeda Izumo, the theatre manager, and Chikamatsu may have been included by the artist due to their important role in the production. They may not have actually appeared on stage.

⁴⁵⁶ An illustration that accompanies a short story by Saikaku suggests that there were sometimes multiple knee-walls arranged across the stage from downstage to upstage to create various planes for stage action and stage pictures. Other than possible variations with the kneel walls, the visual depiction of the puppet stage in this illustration appears to be typical of puppet theatre in the early eighteenth century. Dunn, *The Early Japanese Puppet Drama*, 55.

⁴⁵⁷ *Excursions in Identity*, 8-9.

landscape of Ohatsu's opening pilgrimage to Osaka's thirty-three temples dedicated to Kannon in *Sonezaki*. The two plays employ the same theatrical device of opening with a pilgrimage. The two pilgrimages also have substantial overlap; four sites in *Colored Leaves* correspond to sites in *Sonezaki*, and both pilgrimages visit multiple sites at Tennō Temple in southeastern Osaka.⁴⁵⁸ In some respects, the *Colored Leaves* pilgrimage is a mirror image of the *Kannon* pilgrimage in *Sonezaki*. They each begin in northern Osaka and circumnavigate mostly the same sections of the city.⁴⁵⁹ *Sonezaki*'s pilgrimage moves to the east before moving south. *Colored Leaves*'s pilgrimage begins with a westward motion before heading south. The prologue for the opening performance of *Colored Leaves* acknowledged explicitly that the pilgrimage scene was inspired by that of *Sonezaki*.⁴⁶⁰

The treatment of Sonezaki Tenjin as a famous place is accentuated when it appears as the sixth stop on Okame's route. The narrator recounts, "Now, she arrives at the sixth stop on the pilgrimage, Sonezaki Tenjin Shrine. The shrine's grove of trees, too, which have been famous since sometime long ago are renowned like the love suicide of Ohatsu of the Tenma Teashop. Her story that had only been the affair of someone else now soaks into Okame's body" (*sate rokuban wa Sonezaki no miya kodachi mo, itsugoro yori ka, na tate gamashiki Tenma-ya Ohatsu,*

⁴⁵⁸ The four sites that appear in both pilgrimages are Kitano Shinmeigū (number three in *Sonezaki* and five in *Colored Leaves*), Tamatsukuri no Inarigū (number ten in *Sonezaki* and twenty in *Colored Leaves*), Mitsu Temple Hachimangū (number thirty in *Sonezaki* and ten in *Colored Leaves*), and (number thirty-two in *Sonezaki* and nine in *Colored Leaves*).

⁴⁵⁹ *Sonezaki*'s pilgrimage extends to one temple west of the Western Canal (Nishiyokobori) that bisects the merchant section of Osaka whereas *Colored Leaves*'s pilgrimage remains east of the Western Canal.

⁴⁶⁰ Brownstein, "*The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage and Chikamatsu's 'Love Suicides at Sonezaki,'*" 23.

yoso ni kiku sae mi ni shijimi).⁴⁶¹ These lines link the place, Sonezaki Tenjin, with nature, through the trees, and the recent event of Ohatsu and Tokubei's suicide. Further, as Nenzi has noted about famous places in the literary landscape, these lines depict an emotional experience that springs from the character's associations of the event with the place. Okame, thinking of Ohatsu, empathetically undergoes the same emotional journey that Ohatsu underwent during *Sonezaki*'s second travel scene. In the journey before her death, Ohatsu hears people singing in the teahouses about other love suicides and reflects on how those songs once seemed removed from her as "the affairs of others" (*yoso*). She realizes that through her suicide, she will become the subject of such gossip.⁴⁶² In *Colored Leaves*, Okame contemplates how Ohatsu's story once felt distant from her, the affairs of someone else (*yoso*), but now Ohatsu's story penetrates her bones. Thus these lines, like the final lines of *Amijima*, tie together a place, nature, an event, and a feeling. Moments later, Okame continues on her journey, but she continues to think about love suicide until she arrives at the next station.

Dōtonbori emerges as a second famous place in the *Colored Leaves* pilgrimage despite being an entertainment center unconnected with religious practice. When Okame approaches the tenth station, Mitsu Temple Hachimangū, her body subconsciously synchs with the sounds of the theatre district: "The heart and feet are gracefully captivated by the shamisen, flute, and drums, which are the sounds of Dōtonbori" (*Dōtonbori no itotake ya taiko no koe ni hikasarete kokoro mo ashi mo shana shana shanari*).⁴⁶³ The upbeat feeling of this moment is highlight by the use of an onomatopoeic word *shanarishanari*, which can mean "gracefully" or "mincingly" and

⁴⁶¹ Sakaguchi Hiroyuki, annot. and trans. in *Chikamatsu Monzaemon shū* 2, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2003) vol. 75, 86.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 87.

conjures a buoyant state. Drawn by the sounds, Okame stops to watch a street performance. When she continues on, the presence of the performance lingers. The narrator sings popular songs about Ebisu Bridge and Nanba Bridge. Similarly to how contact with a place associated with love suicide prompted Okame to think about love suicide after leaving the site, the sounds of Dōtonbori cue a series of songs.

The text implies that the exposure to certain lenses through which to view the site, whether love suicide or performance, opens a perspective in the mind of the traveler. In the *Colored Leaves* pilgrimage, he introduced his audience to the new urban pilgrimage of twenty-two shrines in Osaka. In addition to describing the religious sites at the core of the pilgrimage, he took the audience on a tour through the city. In the process, Chikamatsu highlighted two key sites: Sonezaki Tenjin and Dōtonbori. The associations at these two sites were so strong, Chikamatsu suggested, that people who visited those places would be shaped by those associations and have a new perspective on the city around them.

City of Performance

In *Colored Leaves*, Dōtonbori was one site among many. In other plays, Chikamatsu thoroughly mapped the theatre district—its seasonal openings, the topography of the district, and its imaginative hold on the rest of the city. The predominance of the theatre district in the plays diverged from other popular cultural representations of Osaka, which favored representations of the rivers, canals, and religious sites over the entertainment districts. In the love suicide plays, Dōtonbori is represented as a key site in the city, a mechanism for transmitting information about the city, and a lens through which to see the city. Chikamatsu contributed to creating Dōtonbori as a famous place in Osaka through conveying the excitement of the opening of a new season in

The Love Suicides of the Two Illustrated Books (*Shinjū nimai ezōshi*, 1706) and by mapping out the district in *The Love Suicides at the Sunken Well* (*Shinjū kasane izutsu*, 1707).

Chikamatsu depicted the bustle of excitement and activity outside the Takemoto Theatre in his play *Two Illustrated Books*, whose characters are attending Chikamatsu's *Models of the Craftsmen of Emperor Yōmei* (*Yōmei tennō shokunin kagami*), which had opened the Takemoto Theatre season in 1705. Each year in the eleventh month, the theatre showcased that season's roster of performers in new and signature roles in a performance called the "face-showing performance" (*kaomise*). The narrator describes:

When the doors to the theatre open, it is still the dead of night. Lanterns decorated with the lead performers' crests sparkle on the year's first frost. Old and young alike are pulled into the theatre without a second thought by a charming voice coming from the smiling puppet of Okina, a venerable old man. The voice has a friendly and solicitous tone as it calls, "Step right up! Step right up!" ... Vendors are calling out, "Soft steamed buns!" "Sweets!" "Matches!" "Programs!" At the puppet theatre, even the voices of the vendors have a lilt. They cry, "Buy! Buy!" while holding books of collected travel scenes that bear the Takemoto Theatre's official stamp... Although it's still winter in Naniwa, the *kaomise* recalls the height of spring.⁴⁶⁴

*asa kido o akebono no fukaku, chōchin no kage kirakira to hatsushimo no Okina
no men no nikoyaka ni hajimari yobō koe ni hikarete, oi mo wakai mo miru hito
wa, yonen najimi ni gohiiki ni yō odayatta... yawaraka manjū ya kashi ni, hinawa
ni, banzuke to uru koe ni made fushi komoru take no mon tsuku michiyuki no hon
o... sono Naniwazu no fuyugomori, kyō o harube no kaomise ni*⁴⁶⁵

This passage captures a very contemporary Dōtonbori. The neighborhood, which was first developed between 1612-1615, was transformed into the theatre district in 1665.⁴⁶⁶ When the above scene takes place, approximately forty years after Dōtonbori's founding, it has become the

⁴⁶⁴ Naniwa was the old name for Osaka.

⁴⁶⁵ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 47.

⁴⁶⁶ Tsukada Takashi, "Kinsei Ōsaka no shibaichi," in *Sugawara denju tenarai kagami*, ed. Ōsaka shiritsu daigaku kenkyūka "Kamigata bunka kōza" kikaku iinkai (Osaka: Izumi shoin, 2009), 179.

center of the theatre community, swarming with related commercial activity. The vendors sell snacks for audience members as well as products of the new commercial printing market: programs and books of collected travel scenes. The narrator’s description vividly captures Dōtonbori in the early eighteenth century with a combination of seasonal flavor of early winter and the sights and sounds that mark the place unmistakably as Dōtonbori: the lanterns bearing the performers’ crests and the lilting voices of the barker and the vendors.

In addition to the myriad details that place the scene in 1705, Chikamatsu also evokes a classical past. As Robert Goree has described, the creation of famous places stemmed from the “impulse to preserve the past as a living component of a perennial present.”⁴⁶⁷ Chikamatsu conjures the past in the final lines of the above passage, “Although it’s still winter in Naniwa, the *kaomise* recalls the height of spring.” These lines reference a poem from the preface to the *Collection of Ancient and Modern Japanese Poems (Kokin wakashū, ca. 905)*. The original poem reads

Flowers on the trees	<i>naniwazu ni</i>
in bloom at Naniwazu	<i>saku ya ko no hana</i>
say, ‘Now the winter	<i>fuyugomori</i>
yields its place to the springtime!’	<i>ima wa harube to</i>
Flowers blooming on the trees	<i>saku ya ko no hana.</i> ⁴⁶⁸

In Chikamatsu’s alteration of the poem, the flowers that bloom are no longer actual flowers. Instead, they have become the faces of the kabuki actors for the face-showing performance. Chikamatsu thus links eighteenth-century Osaka with its literary past. This opening scene of *Illustrated Books* depicts the bustling, urban present alongside the natural beauty of the past.

⁴⁶⁷ “Fantasies of the Real: *Meisho zue* in Early Modern Japan” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2010) 2.

⁴⁶⁸ Helen Craig McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poems with Tosa Nikki and Shinsen waka* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 4.

In the travel scene of *Sunken Well*, Chikamatsu takes the audience on a tour of Dōtonbori in 1707, the year of the play's premiere, and in doing so, maps the district for the audience. In the play, the theatre district lies between the heroine's brothel and the location where the couple hope to commit their suicide, so the travel scene shows the lovers running past each of the kabuki and puppet theatres. As they pass the theatres, they imagine how these theatres will later stage their story. The theatres represented in the scene are the seven theatres operating in Osaka in 1707: four kabuki theatres and three puppet theatres. The lovers pass them in order from East to West beginning with the Takeda Theatre, a puppet theatre specializing in trick puppetry, and ending with the Takemoto Theatre, Chikamatsu's theatre and the theatre that premiered *Sunken Well*. As the characters run past the various theatres they sing of the highlights of each. For example, they praise the impressive acting of Somegawa at the Kyu Theatre, the dexterous puppeteer Hidanojō at the Dewa Theatre, and the talented female-role actor Yoshizawa Ayame at the Shioya Theatre. These details of the specific performers engaged by each theatre place the scene squarely in 1707, since the custom at the time was to book performers by the season so that performers appeared at different venues depending on the year.⁴⁶⁹ The scene culminates with the Takemoto Theatre. The order of the theatres is consistent with other records from the time. Chikamatsu places his theatre as the premiere theatre of Osaka's theatre district by having it come last. Within this scene, in which Chikamatsu constructs Dōtonbori as a famous place within Osaka, he gives the Takemoto Theatre the most important position.

Since the tour is specific to 1707, there is one theatre conspicuously missing from the list, the Toyotake Theatre. According to period maps, the Toyotake Theatre should have been

⁴⁶⁹ One of the key methods for dating the play has been the analysis of the specific performers and the comparison with other sources as to which theatre employed them in which year. See Torigoe et al., "Kaisetsu," *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 659.

mentioned second, after the Takeda Theatre. But the Toyotake Theatre had burned down when *Sunken Well* was written and did not reopen until 1708. The Toyotake Theatre featured two key members of the early Takemoto Theatre, the chanter Wakadayū and the puppeteer Hachirōbei. Wakadayū had been the head student of the Takemoto Theatre's lead chanter, Takemoto Gidayū, and became his greatest competitor. Hachirōbei, the most famous puppeteer of his time, originated the puppetry for Ohatsu in *Sonezaki*, which helped lead the production to unprecedented box office success. Further, the staff playwright for the Toyotake Theatre, Ki no Kaion, was Chikamatsu's chief rival. These two theatres were in such close competition that their geography was often used as shorthand. The Toyotake Theatre was simply called the "East Theatre" and the Takemoto Theatre the "West Theatre."⁴⁷⁰ While a faithful representation of Dōtonbori in 1707, this travel scene builds the legend of the Takemoto Theatre by leaving out its main rival and strengthens the associations between love suicide stories and Chikamatsu.

In *Two Illustrated Books* and *Sunken Well*, Chikamatsu described the Dōtonbori at the height of the theatre season and mapped the district with each theatre linked to a particularly adept performer or house style. He places the Takemoto Theatre at the center of both scenes. Puppetry was indeed the most prominent theatrical form in Osaka at the time. For instance, Nishikawa reported in *Chronology of the Puppet Theatre*, "Kabuki is out. One hears gossip about *jōruri* on every corner. It's so noisy!" (*kabuki wa soto ni natte. Jōruri no hyōban wa shibashiba tsujitsuji. Mimi kashimashiku*).⁴⁷¹ Kabuki theatres used the popularity of the puppet theatre to lure audiences. After the success of Chikamatsu's *Yosaku from Tanba* (*Tanba yosaku matsuyo no komurobushi*, 1708) at the Takemoto Theatre, Osaka's Iwai Theatre, a kabuki theatre, advertized

⁴⁷⁰ Introduction to *Nihon shomin bunka shiryōshūsei* vol. 7, 3.

⁴⁷¹ *Nihon shomin bunka shiryōshūsei* vol. 7, 12. The unusual character for the *ki* of *kabuki* in the original.

their performance of the same play with the slogan, “According to the authorized text by Takemoto Gidayū.”⁴⁷² Chikamatsu’s privileging of the Takemoto Theatre reflected the status of the puppet theatre in Osaka at the time, even if it simultaneously promoted the institution whose box office success directly correlated with his income.

Chikamatsu did not limit his representation of performance in Osaka to the commercial theatre district. The love suicide plays also represent trick puppetry (*karakuri*), balladeers, and amateur performance.⁴⁷³ One example of the extent to which the city appears saturated with performance can be found in *Amijima*: “Men roam the streets in high spirits, humming snatches of puppet plays, mimicking the actors, or singing bawdy ballads as they pass; others are drawn into the houses by samisens played in upstairs rooms” (*ukarezomekino, ada jōruri yakusha monomane, naya wa uta, nikai zashiki no shamisen ni hikarete tachiyori kyaku mo ari*).⁴⁷⁴ As in the pilgrimage scene of *Colored Leaves*, Chikamatsu represents performance—humming, singing, play-acting— as an essential component of the city, one that would be encountered in any district or as the part of any journey.

Performance not only permeated the city but became the means by which Osaka natives mapped their city. A century later, the link between theatre and geography became even more pronounced. As Jonathan Zwicker has observed, “The idiom of geography became a way of comprehending the theatre in the nineteenth century, but turned around, the theatre also became a way of mapping social reality—giving it a form, and thus making it intelligible.”⁴⁷⁵ The theatre

⁴⁷² Mori, *Chikamatsu Monzaemon*, 93.

⁴⁷³ These examples appear in *Colored Leaves*, *Amijima*, and *Two Illustrated Books*, respectively.

⁴⁷⁴ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 388. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 385.

⁴⁷⁵ “Stage and Spectacle in an Age of Maps: Kabuki and the Cartographic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Japan,” in *Publishing the Stage: Print and Performance in Early Modern Japan* Ed. Keller Kimbrough et al. (Boulder: Center for Asian Studies, 2011) 216-17.

became a lens—akin to the shogunal, religious, and literary landscapes discussed earlier in the chapter—through which the urban space of Osaka could be understood.

Chikamatsu demonstrated the construction of the theatre as a means to view the cityscape in the opening travel scene of *The Love Suicides at Imamiya* (*Imamiya shinjū*, 1711). The opening scene takes place on a pleasure boat traveling over the rivers in Osaka. The first lines of the play establish the pleasure boat itself as one of the quintessential Osaka sights. The narrator recites, “Moon viewing and flower viewing are the same everywhere. The sight that is unparalleled among the sights of all the provinces is the pleasure boats of Naniwa” (*tsukimi, hanami wa izuku mo onaji shokoku meisho no sono nakanaka ni tagui naniwa no funa asobi*).⁴⁷⁶ Having established that the scene is a uniquely Osaka scene, Chikamatsu adds more local detail to the landscape through the association of each bridge with a kabuki actor appearing in Osaka. He uses the conceit of having the passengers buy a guidebook that likens the city’s bridges and other famous places to actors. For example, the neighborhood called Shin’utsubo is likened to the young female-role actor Sodeshima Genji. Punning on “salt,” which can also mean “charm” or “attractiveness,” the guidebook explains that this is because Shin’utsubo is known for selling salted items (*shiomono*).⁴⁷⁷ Although the linkages between place and actor may seem obscure to the contemporary outsider, they speak to the level of familiarity with local places, their key features or products, and the reputations of the actors Chikamatsu expected from his audience. In all, the scene names sixteen actors to correspond to sixteen famous places. When the scene ends, the narrator tells the audience that another section of the guidebook equal in length remains.

⁴⁷⁶ Yamane Tameo, annt. and trans. in *Chikamatsu Monzaemon shū* 2, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2003) vol. 75, 289. In this period, pleasure boats were an Osaka entertainment not found in Kyoto. See *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 289n2.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 290.

This elaborate scene at the opening of *Imamiya* maps the famous places of Osaka through performance. Looking across the travel scenes that focus on performance in the plays, we can see that Chikamatsu celebrates Dōtonbori as an important famous place of Osaka that is linked to a classical past but has a vibrant present. Chikamatsu maps the neighborhood with the location and specialties of each theatre. He designates the Takemoto Theatre Dōtonbori's crown jewel. By dramatizing moments of performance throughout the plays, Chikamatsu characterizes Osaka as a city of performance. He takes this portrayal a step further in *Imamiya* when he depicts performance as the means to understand and know the city. Performance becomes the means by which the culture and identity of the city are produced.

City of Motion

Whether on foot, in a palanquin or by boat, and whether traveling on the water, through city streets, or over bridges, one aspect of the travel scenes that is consistent is their depiction of people moving fluidly through the cityscape. The portrayal of a city full of movement is a vision of the city that contrasts with the orderly, static representations of the city found in the maps, handscrolls, and other objects commissioned by the shogunate. Although the plays are full of moving bodies in the city, the movement is not without restriction. The scenes further demonstrate ways in which elements unbound by bodies, such as human souls and stories, can move unimpeded through the landscape of the city.

Many of the journeys in the plays transgress physical and social boundaries. In the pilgrimage scene that opens *Colored Leaves*, Okame violates the shogunal edict against urban pilgrimages but remains well within the confines of acceptable behavior from a social standpoint. Her father, in his love for her and hope for her long life, encourages her to undertake the

pilgrimage three times a year. In contrast, Okame's second travel scene in the play, her journey to the suicide, transgresses physical and social boundaries. Okame is a merchant's daughter unbound by the contracts and rules that confine the prostitute-heroines to the brothel districts. Yet in the final moments of the second act, Okame escapes out of her family home by lowering herself out of the second floor window on a rope she has created by tying together the sashes of her kimono. Her journey to commit suicide transgresses social norms because her choice to die with her lover contravenes the strictures of filial piety.

Okame is able to escape and embark on her journey, but in some cases the obstacles that need to be overcome in the city are too great. Such is the case of Oshima in *Two Illustrated Books*. In fear that she will commit a love suicide, the brothel owners lock her in a room on the second floor. Unable to break free, she and her lover, Ichirōemon, decide to ensure they die at the same time even if they cannot die together. Ichirōemon leaves the brothel district and travels to a riverbed to commit suicide. Oshima's soul longs for him so intensely that it leaves her body and flies to his side. Her spirit appears to him and seems to guide him on his journey. Likewise, the soul of Oshima's lover, Ichi, leaves his body to go to her in the brothel. In this play, the spirit of the lovers transcends their physical bodies so that they can be united in their journey to death.

During the final travel scenes, the lovers often reflect upon something that can travel much farther than their bodies ever could: their story. In *Sunken Well*, for instance, the lovers muse, "Our story will spread to the far reaches of the East" (*azumi no hate ni na wo nagasu*).⁴⁷⁸ In *Colored Leaves*, the couple imagines their story reaching the country: "My life's end shall be told by the balladeers. Who will set it to music and sing it all the way to the countryside?" (*kono*

⁴⁷⁸ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 190.

mi no hate o yomiuri ni ta ga fushi tsukete inaka made utainagasan).⁴⁷⁹ The lovers in *Amijima*, too, are cognizant that their act will become a story that will live on beyond them. The narrator chants, “Tomorrow the gossip of the world will scatter like blossoms the scandal of Kamiya Jihei’s love suicide, and, carved in cherry wood, his story to the last detail will be printed in illustrated sheets” (*asu wa sejō no kotogusa ni Kamiya Jihei ga shinjū to ada na chiriyuku sakuragi ni nehorihahori o ezōshi*).⁴⁸⁰ These examples demonstrate how the stories traveled: as gossip along the road, as ballads, as illustrated books. *Sunken Well*’s travel scene through Dōtōbori underscores theatre as another means of transmission. The plays send the message that even after the lovers have perished, their stories will continue to travel through the city and beyond.

Conclusion

Chikamatsu’s representation of urban space was in conversation with other existing perspectives on space in circulation at the time that included the fixed, ordered, static space of the shogunal landscapes, the religious landscape that opened to a spiritual realm, and the literary landscape that associated natural features with places and evoked a classical past. New in the early modern period was the production of books, maps, board games, and other commercially printed materials for ordinary people that represented space. These materials grew out of the spatial templates established by the shogunate but envisioned a world of movement and multiple trajectories.

⁴⁷⁹ Gerald Groemer’s translation, “My life’s end shall be told by yomiuri—who shall sing the melody, all the way to the countryside?” in “Singing the News: Yomiuri in Japan during the Edo and Meiji Periods,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54, no. 1 (June 1994): 251. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 116.

⁴⁸⁰ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 418. Cherry wood is a reference to the material most often used in making woodblock prints. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 423.

The travel scenes in the love suicide plays, in contrast to the shogunal perspective, present the motion of people throughout the cityscape. Chikamatsu integrates religious and literary landscapes with contemporary places to create new famous places that infuse certain Osaka sites with love suicide incidents and the feelings evoked by these incidents. This is likely why so many of the love suicide plays are titled with the location of the suicide. By locating the stories in specific places in Osaka and detailing the route, Chikamatsu's plays offered a guide to audience members who could re-create the characters' journeys themselves. His plays suggest that the people who undertake the journey will be able to capture certain emotional experiences that are embedded in the route, such as a feeling of closeness to the lovers when visiting the site of a suicide, or the buoying lightness of the theatre district.

The plays present performance as a critical component of urban Osaka. They depict Dōtonbori as a famous place, and performance as an integral part of the urban landscape outside the commercial theater district. Further, theatre offers a means of understanding and remembering the places within the city.

In marked contrast to the shogunal representations of space, Chikamatsu's Osaka is full of movement. Characters circulate through the city for leisure on the pleasure boats, for religious reasons on urban pilgrimages, and, in the face of social norms, for love suicide. Even when physically trapped, Oshima in *Two Illustrated Books* finds a way to participate in the journey by separating her soul from her body. The love suicide plays make clear that the stories of the lovers will continue to move through the city even after the lovers themselves are dead.

Few sources attest to how Chikamatsu's audience members received the vision of the city put forth in the love suicide plays. Did they re-create the routes portrayed in the plays in a kind of pilgrimage after the performances? Did they integrate the associations of places and the

incidents into their own mental maps of the city? Did they begin to see the space around them through the lens of performance? One diary entry provides a hint of how one theater-goer might have associated Osaka places with love suicide. In 1713, a visitor to Osaka recorded, “I went to the Sonezaki Shrine with Hachi. The building, which measured thirty *ken* square, was surrounded by a fence and inside the fence were a few large trees. It is said that Tokubei and his partner died there. At Shijimigawa Shinchi we saw the performance of Toyotake Wakadayū.”⁴⁸¹ One wishes he had embellished further to tell us how many other tourists were at Sonezaki, what he felt while he was there, and how these feelings were shaped by the performances he saw. Yet, the fact of his visit to the shrine, viewed through the perspective of love suicide, suggests that Chikamatsu was successful in mapping love suicides onto Osaka.

The travel scenes—with their dense associations of place, incident, and emotion—offered new mental maps of the city for audience members. As the diarist quoted above demonstrates, these scenes encouraged audience members to physically travel to specific sites. The routes traced in the plays could be retraced later in the city. Travel scenes were guides to a new sort of urban pilgrimage, one that captured the sites and emotions of love suicide. Walking the lovers’ route was a way for audience members to participate in the excitement, transgression, and sacrality that were knit up in love suicide.

In the next chapter, we will see how Chikamatsu invited audience members to participate during the performances by giving them the role of a community in prayer for the departed.

⁴⁸¹ Yūda Yoshio, “The Formation of Early Modern *Jōruri*,” *Acta Asiatica: Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture* 28 (1975): 38-39. Shijimigawa Shinchi is near Sonezaki.

Chapter Five: Ritualizing Love Suicide

In Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki shinjū*, 1703), his first play in the love suicide genre, the lovers Ohatsu and Tokubei journey to the Sonezaki woods to die. Their travel scene, or *michiyuki*, opens with the lines:

Farewell to this world, and to the night farewell.
We who walk the road to death, to what should we be likened?
To the frost by the road that leads to the graveyard,
Vanishing with each step we take ahead.⁴⁸²

*Kono yo no nagori yo mo nagori shini ni iku mi o tatōreba, adashigahara no michi no shimo hitoashizutsu ni kieteyuku*⁴⁸³

Though the characters see their lives as melting into nothing, Ohatsu and Tokubei's suicides threaded through Chikamatsu's subsequent love suicide plays through adaptations, images, snippets of text, and anniversary performances. The journey that started with these footsteps in the frost began a ritual of love suicide that would be repeated in later plays. Their deaths, witnessed only by the wind in the play, came to be witnessed by audiences sitting in puppet and kabuki theatres, passers-by who stopped to listen to ballads, and readers who paged through the printed versions of their story. In Chikamatsu's dramatizations, the act of witnessing performed by the spectators took on a religious meaning as the audience and performer alike prayed for the lovers' future rebirth in paradise through *ekō*, Buddhist dedicatory prayers.

The fact that Chikamatsu laced his later plays with references to this seminal work is no surprise given that tradition across the arts of layered allusions to previous works.⁴⁸⁴ Chikamatsu

⁴⁸² Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 51.

⁴⁸³ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 36.

began his career as a poet. Within the Japanese context, the allusions deployed in poetry need not only be made to earlier poetic texts; they could refer to religious texts as well. William R. LaFleur has observed of Bashō, a contemporary of Chikamatsu, that “Aesthetic vision is virtually the same thing as religious vision. In the cultural context of Japan the weight of tradition invites the two into synthesis; it is not a matter of the religious and artistic being conceptually indivisible for the medieval Japanese mind but of the two being *consciously* and *deliberately* joined. And this is the tradition into which Bashō fits as well.”⁴⁸⁵ Chikamatsu, like Bashō, was working within a centuries-long tradition when he filled his play with poetic and Buddhist references. Given the popularity of *Sonezaki*, it makes sense that the plays’ story, characters, and phrases filtered into later Chikamatsu plays, plays by other writers, ballads, and illustrated books.

The dense layers of repetition in character, image, gesture, and plot found across the love suicide plays are also not exceptional in theatre history outside Japan. Theatre scholar Marvin Carlson coined the term “ghosting” to describe this phenomenon. Ghosting refers to “the external associations that the continually recycled material of theatre brings in from the external world as well as from previous performances.”⁴⁸⁶ Carlson has argued that ghosting, while not unique to theatre, is particularly potent in theatre and present in all forms of theatre across time periods and

⁴⁸⁴ For more on allusions in poetry see Kamens, *Utamakura, Allusion, and Intertextuality in Traditional Japanese Poetry*. For the references between the literary arts and theatre, see Paul S. Atkins, *Revealed Identity: The Noh Plays of Komparu Zenchiku* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 2006).

⁴⁸⁵ Emphasis in the original. *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 161.

⁴⁸⁶ Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996), 48.

cultures.⁴⁸⁷ As Carlson stated in his definition, ghosting can refer to associations from outside the theatre or to memories and associations from previous performances. In the case of the love suicide plays, the associations from outside the theatre most strongly evoked in the text were the recent events upon which the plays were based and specific details of time and place that tethered the plays to early eighteenth-century Osaka. In *Sonezaki*, for example, the prologue reminded the audience that the play dramatized the recent deaths of Ohatsu and Tokubei. The text included many specific details of time, such as a reference to the incident having taken place “one month before” in the prologue; and place, such as the references to the thirty-three sites of the Kannon pilgrimage circuit in the opening travel scene. In this way, the external world of Osaka was layered onto the theatrical world of the play.

The plays also repeated elements of earlier performances. In the lovers’ journey in *Sonezaki*, for instance, the couple overhears a fragment of a song. The lines were from a popular ballad that recounted a love suicide story.⁴⁸⁸ In performance, the chanter would have sung the melody that accompanied the song. Elements from *Sonezaki*, too, repeated in later Chikamatsu plays. The closing lines of the travel scene in *The Love Suicides of the Sunken Well* (*Shinjū kasane izutsu*, 1707) evoked the opening of *Sonezaki*’s travel scene quoted above. The narrator says,

As each footstep melts the frost on the road, their bodies, which wind their way toward death, are desolate.

⁴⁸⁷ *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 6-8.

⁴⁸⁸ The fragments of song are from a ballad later published in the ballad collection *Collection of Fallen Leaves* (*Ochibashū*, n.d.). *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 37n21. The same song was published in 1710 in the ballad collection *Fallen Pine Needles* (*Matsu no ochiba*). Fujita Tokutarō, “Matsu no ochiba kaisetsu” in *Matsu no ochiba* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1939), 183-185.

*kono mi no ue ni furu shimo no, hitoashizutsu ni kieusete shini ni yuku mi no ajikinaya*⁴⁸⁹

The comparison between the frost vanishing beneath the lovers' feet and the transience of the lovers' lives recalled the death journey of Ohatsu and Tokubei. This image alluded to the famous passage at the beginning of *Sonezaki*'s travel scene quoted at the chapter's opening. The passage was well-known enough that, in *A Chronology of the Puppet Theatre (Imamukashi ayatsuri nendaiki, 1727)*, genre chronicler Nishizawa Ippū compared the popularity of the travel scene in *The Love Suicides in the Well of Tears (Shinjū namida no tamanoi, 1703)* to *Sonezaki*'s travel scene in order to illustrate the success of *Well of Tears*. He wrote, "It pleased the young in Naniwa. Just like the travel scene in *Sonezaki* previously" (*Naniwa no wakaishū ni yorokobase. Sonezaki michiyuki dōzen ni*).⁴⁹⁰ These lines about the vanishing frost were also borrowed almost verbatim for a love suicide ballad about a different couple, who died in Karasaki in Kyoto.⁴⁹¹ Drawing on the idea of ghosting, I suggest that the repetition of this image of the vanishing frost would have enabled audience members to hear echoes of Ohatsu and Tokubei's journey as they watched the new couple's journey unfold on stage or as they heard the lines of the ballad.

In addition to the interlocking web of associations that is one component of ghosting, the love suicide plays also served as what Carlson has called a "memory machine." He wrote that theatre "is the repository of cultural memory."⁴⁹² These plays are the most well-known and detailed records, however fictionalized and imperfect, of historical incidents. They have become embedded enough in the cultural memory that, in many cases, the plays exist where the historical

⁴⁸⁹ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 190.

⁴⁹⁰ Quoted in *Nihon shomin bunka shiryōshūsei* vol. 7, ed. Geinōshi kenkyūkai (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1975), 11. Naniwa is the former name of the Osaka region.

⁴⁹¹ Hirata Sumiko, *Chikamatsu jōruri no seiritsu to tenkai* (Tokyo: Shintensha, 2010), 250-252. Hirata's analysis of Chikamatsu's *Sonezaki* and the ballad demonstrates that Chikamatsu was the originator of the image.

⁴⁹² Carlson, *Haunted Stage*, 2.

record is lost. In addition to their function as a repository of cultural memory, the plays also performed another role: they ritualized the suicide, rendered the performances rituals, and incorporated the audience into a collective memorial prayer for the dead.⁴⁹³

Popular Religion and Popular Entertainment

The cultural spheres of popular religion and popular entertainment were embedded within one another. Theatre scholar Willmar Sauter has written, “The meaning of a performance is created by the performers and the spectators together, in a joint act of understanding.”⁴⁹⁴ In the case of the love suicide plays, the lack of any detailed documentation of their reception makes it particularly hard to parse how audiences of the time understood the plays. Nishizawa’s *Chronology of the Puppet Theatre*, as valuable a source as it is, does not provide the level of detail a historian trying to understand the reception of specific moments in particular plays might desire. The few extant sources have offered a measure of the plays’ popularity but little concrete detail. However, as we shall see, the tight relationship between popular religion and popular entertainment throughout the Edo period suggests that the plays did have religious meaning for early modern spectators.

As described in chapter one, *Sonezaki* incorporated a number of religious elements that coalesced to sacralize the love suicide: the Kannon pilgrimage, the Buddhist imagery in the travel scene before the suicide, and the religious aspects of the death scene. One aspect of the death scene in particular that sacralized the suicide is the chanting of the *nenbutsu*. The *nenbutsu*,

⁴⁹³ In this way, the love suicide plays are similar to the recitations of the *Tales of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari*, 13th century) which most scholars agree had a votive function to pacify the spirits of the Heike clan members who died in the Genpei Wars.

⁴⁹⁴ *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 2.

“Hail Amida Buddha” (*namu Amidabutsu*), was an integral part of the love suicide as it invoked the power of Amida Buddha’s compassionate vow to allow the lovers to gain rebirth in his Pure Land.⁴⁹⁵ The chanting of the *nenbutsu* immediately before death, for example, echoed both old and new religious practices. The practice of chanting the *nenbutsu* on one’s deathbed to ensure salvation dates back to the Heian period (794-1185).⁴⁹⁶ *Nenbutsu* chanting was also a core practice among the medieval *nenbutsu-hijiri*, wandering monks who integrated Pure Land thought with ascetic practices of the *yamabushi* (mountain) priests and shamanistic rites.⁴⁹⁷ *The Love Suicides on the Eve of the Kōshin Festival* (*Shinjū yoigōshin*, 1722) has presented a more recent example. The lovers choose to die at a site on the grounds of Ikudama Shrine where the Pure Land priest Ryōkai (d. 1719) had preached.⁴⁹⁸ The chanting of the *nenbutsu* (or some other functionally equivalent sacred formula), which had long been a crucial element of deathbed rituals and suicides, was incorporated into the love suicide plays a critical step in the death rituals.

The blending of religious practice and entertainment was a common feature of commoner culture in the Edo period. Scholars have recorded the flourishing of popular religion and popular culture at a range of sites across Japan. Laura Nenzi has discussed the vast literature that views prayer and pleasure as thoroughly integrated rather than separate.⁴⁹⁹ Shinno Toshikazu has observed that, in the Edo period, participation in lay religious practices, such as pilgrimages or neighborhood religious associations, “was not only an expression of faith, but one of the great

⁴⁹⁵ This belief stems from Amida’s vow that any who called his name would be reborn in the Pure Land Paradise.

⁴⁹⁶ Jacqueline I. Stone, “By the Power of One’s Last *Nenbutsu*,” 89.

⁴⁹⁷ Steven Heine, “Tragedy and Salvation in the Floating World,” 383-84.

⁴⁹⁸ C. Andrew Gerstle, *Chikamatsu: Five Late Plays* (New York: Columbia, 2001), 491n1.

⁴⁹⁹ *Excursions in Identity*, 7-8.

pleasures of life.”⁵⁰⁰ These arguments have been given support by studies of particular sites. For example, Sarah Thal has demonstrated that the pilgrimage to Konpira was popular in part due to the “excitement of adventure” that was part of the process.⁵⁰¹ One visitor recounted passing through an entertainment district on his trip to Konpira thus: “The sounds of shamisen, drums, and flutes seem to float over both the eaves of the brothels and the great earth as a whole. The hearts and minds of even traveling saints, or the most devoted of people, would be captivated.”⁵⁰² At Sensōji, a temple in Edo, a wide variety of performances took place right on the temple grounds, including freak shows (*misemono*), sumo matches, storytellers’ recitations of the epic *The Chronicle of Grand Pacification (Taiheiki, fourteenth century)*, circuses, street-art performances, and vaudeville theatre (*yose*).⁵⁰³ Chikamatsu depicted a similar scene in Osaka in his *The Love Suicides at Ikudama (Ikudama shinjū, 1715)*:

Ikudama Shrine is famous as an excursion spot in the afternoons. People, decked out to the nines, gather here from all walks of life. There are countless entertainments to amuse people, and the straw roofs of the tea stalls line up one next to the other. Like the joints (*fushi*) in the bamboo pillars holding up the stalls, one can hear the notes (*fushi*) of amateurs rehearsing songs from the puppet theatre, lecturers reading the *Taiheiki*, and musicians playing the koto and singing folk songs.

*hiru wa na ni ou yusansho no kisen kunju no datezukushi, hito o isame no
gei zukushi chaya ga waraya no nokitsuzuki take no hashira ni fushi komeshi
keiko jōruri, taiheiki koto no tsure uta hikikaete*⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰⁰ Laura Nenzi, trans. “Journeys, Pilgrimages, Excursions: Religious Travel in the Early Modern Period,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 57.4 (2002): 469.

⁵⁰¹ *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: The Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 1573-1912* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 20.

⁵⁰² Quoted in Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods*, 19-20.

⁵⁰³ Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan*, 60-63.

⁵⁰⁴ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 374. The passage puns on *fushi*, which can mean a node of bamboo or a melody.

Entertainment and religious practice among urban commoners shared spaces, audiences, and economies. Visitors contributed financially to temples and shrines by buying talismans or making donations. Their participation in the popular entertainments also played a key role in the temple or shrine's prosperity.⁵⁰⁵

The dissemination of popular religion often differed little from popular entertainment. Commoners did not learn about religion through sophisticated Buddhist texts or the sermons of eminent priests. Rather, they encountered religion through contact with traveling monks, shrine maidens (*miko*), and nuns whose methods of transmission were closer to entertainment.⁵⁰⁶ An example of the kind of entertainers from whom commoners may have learned about religion can be found at the opening of *The Love Suicides at Amijima* (*Shinjū ten no Amijima*, 1720). A *namaida bōzu*, a kind of street musician dressed in priestly attire, travels through the Sonezaki-Shinchi, an entertainment district. He strikes a chime and chants “*namaida*,” an abbreviated *nenbutsu*. In between the *nenbutsu* recitations, he sings sections of popular puppet plays and songs.⁵⁰⁷ Entertainment and the arts were also integral parts of religious festivals, such as *himachi no yoru*, the traditional all-night event of worship and neighborhood fellowship.⁵⁰⁸ Hirata Sumiko has suggested that just as shrines, temples, and theatres were places of fun for commoners, they could also have equally been spaces for spiritual salvation.⁵⁰⁹

The puppet theatre shared roots with religious performance. Puppet theatre grew out of two competing styles of chanted storytelling accompanied by puppets, *sekkyō*, (“sutra

⁵⁰⁵ Hur, *Prayer and Play*, 69.

⁵⁰⁶ Hirata, *Chikamatsu jōruri no seiritsu to tenkai*, 59.

⁵⁰⁷ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 387-88, note 27.

⁵⁰⁸ Hirata, *Chikamatsu jōruri no seiritsu to tenkai*, 61.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

recitation”), and old-style *jōruri* (*kojōruri*, chanted storytelling). During the Edo period, *sekkyō* integrated more contemporary stories and became more secular. A Confucian scholar, Dazai Shundai (1680-1747), described the itinerant preachers who performed the antecedent of puppet theatre:

They chanted sacred Buddhist sutras, combined with tales of olden times, which were filled with the pathos of the evanescence of worldly things and which told of retribution, good and evil, and the ways of the world, all with a sorrowful melody. Metal bells were used to mark the rhythm of the chant, which was designed to condemn evil and encourage virtue, so that a devotional spirit might be awakened among women and children.⁵¹⁰

Puppet performances in the commercial theatre integrated ritual elements. Each day the performance opened with a performance of the short, auspicious play *Sanbasō*. Uji Kaga-no-jō wrote in 1678 in his collection of *jōruri* scenes, *A Collection of Bamboo Shoots (Takenoko shū)*, “At the beginning of a day’s performance of *jōruri*, the puppets perform the Nō dances Okina, Senzai, and Sanbasō. Then, when this ritual has ended, an opening melody from Nō is played as the puppets make their entrances.”⁵¹¹ The travel sequences, found prominently in Noh and *sekkyō*, had ritual origins. Little documentation of early performance survives, but references to travel scenes can be found in early records of religious festivals, such as an account dating from 1312 of the festival to appease the deceased spirit of the Crown Prince Shōtoku in Osaka, and most scholars have agreed that dance and other performing arts likely arose out of the performance of travel scenes.⁵¹² Gunji Masakatsu has suggested that the travel scenes of early performance were a key element in these performances’ function of pacifying the spirits.⁵¹³

⁵¹⁰ Quoted in Nobuko Ishii, “Sekkyō-bushi,” 285.

⁵¹¹ Brownstein, “The Osaka Kannon Pilgrimage,” 33.

⁵¹² Quoted in Koyama, *Chikamatsu jōruri no kenkyū*, 42.

⁵¹³ Gunji, *Kabuki no bigaku*, 190.

The love suicide plays drew primarily on beliefs in the salvific powers of Amida Buddha, Kannon Bodhisattva, and the *Lotus Sutra*. *Sekkyō*, similarly, combined multiple beliefs. Kimbrough has described the blend of Confucian ideals of filial piety with an approach to Buddhism that combined belief that the *Lotus Sutra* and the chanting of the *nenbutsu*. The *sekkyō* works “suggest the composite nature of late medieval Japanese religious culture, which tended to constitute an amalgam of diverse and occasionally incompatible ingredients rather than an organized or internally consistent universe of practice and belief.”⁵¹⁴ Chikamatsu created a similar amalgam. In addition to the variety of Buddhist beliefs espoused in the plays, Chikamatsu included folk beliefs and engaged with filial piety, an ideal that love suicide appears to undermine.

Chikamatsu included religion as a backdrop of the daily life of the characters and fully accepted popular beliefs and practices. Some commentators have argued that Chikamatsu portrayed religion negatively. However, often in these cases it is more accurate to note that this Chikamatsu portrayed institutional religion negatively but not popular religion. In *The Love Suicides on the Eve of the Kōshin Festival*, for example, the stepmother, whose jealousy ultimately drives the couple to suicide, is an ardent follower of a particular Pure Land priest, Ryōkai. Gerstle has written, “Chikamatsu seems to lead the audience to view religion antagonistically as they watch the mother set off for her parish meeting, singing happily while sending the pair to their death.”⁵¹⁵ An analysis of the rest of the play, however, does not bear out this antagonistic reading. The lovers themselves do not judge the stepmother and later choose to die at the site where that same priest preached since they already have a connection to the place. The lovers say prayers for their rebirth and the salvation for their unborn baby before dying.

⁵¹⁴ Kimbrough, *Wondrous Brutal Fictions*, 16.

⁵¹⁵ Gerstle, *Chikamatsu: Five Late Plays*, 281-82.

Rather than suggesting an antagonistic approach to religion, the stepmother's religious practice suggests the extent to which the belief in the salvic powers of Amida Buddha permeated the lives of Chikamatsu's commoner characters.

The Love Suicides at the Women's Temple (Shinjū mannensō, 1710) also initially appears to present a negative view of religion. The play was set on and around Mount Kōya, the holy seat of the Shingon sect of Buddhism. The first act, which takes place at a temple, depicts the institution as corrupt. The head priest pursues his romantic liaison with a young page, Kumenosuke, with more vigor than he brings to his pursuit of enlightenment. Later in the play, however, Chikamatsu validates folk religious and Buddhist practice. As the lovers, Kumenosuke and Oume, make their way to commit suicide, they encounter Kumenosuke's blind sister, Satsu, who has come to Mount Kōya in search of her brother. She fears for his life because upon her arrival at the Women's Temple on Mount Kōya, she performed a divination using stonecrop (also known as sedum or *mannengusa*), which grows on the mountain. Not knowing she is speaking to her brother, she says:

People say that if you soak stonecrop picked on this holy mountain the leaves will tell whether a person lives or is dead. The reports I heard about Kumenosuke frightened me, and I thought I would steep in water from that stream in the valley some dried stonecrop I keep in my charm bag. I concentrated my thoughts on Kumenosuke. But even after I'd soaked the plant for half an hour, it was still withered, and gradually it shriveled up. Was this a sign from the Great Teacher that my brother was dead?⁵¹⁶

*Kono oyama no mannensō wa hito no inochi no iki shini o shimeshitamau to mōsu yue amari no koto no ibukashisa mamori ni ireshi mannensō o, ano tanigawa no mizu ni tsuke Kumenosuke to kokorozashi, hantoki bakari hitashitemo shidai ni karete shibomishi ga, otōto ga inochi arumai to no daishi-sama no otsuge ka*⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁶ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 157-58.

⁵¹⁷ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 232.

Although Kumenosuke still lives, he has completed the symbolic journey of the travel scene and has already prepared himself for death. During the suicide, Kumenosuke chants a Shingon spell, “May we bathe in the light of the Buddha and be delivered from all our sins!” (*on abokya beirosha no maka modara mani handoma jinbara haraharitaya un*).⁵¹⁸ The ending of the play gives validity to the folk practice of using stonecrop and to the Shingon spells chanted by Kumenosuke. The play may demonstrate contempt for institutional religion as practiced by wealthy and powerful clerics, yet it respects the religious beliefs and rituals practiced by commoners.

Chikamatsu integrated popular religious practice, particularly pilgrimages, into his plays as a way to give them topical appeal. *Sonezaki* and *Ikudama* begin with the Kannon Pilgrimage. *Colored Leaves in the Fourth Month* (*Uzuki no momiji*, 1706) begins with a pilgrimage to twenty-two shrines. In addition to the growth of these urban pilgrimage routes, the Edo period saw a tremendous expansion in pilgrimage to Ise Shrine. Ise pilgrimages took place annually, but swelled in certain years. Scholars have estimated that the average number of yearly pilgrims was between 300,000 and 400,00 throughout the Edo period, but during the large-scale pilgrimage to Ise in 1705, the number of pilgrims reached 3,620,000.⁵¹⁹ In a pattern similar to the shift toward entertainment in *sekkyō* and the range of activities held on shrine and temple grounds, the Ise pilgrimage transformed over the course of the period. Religious historian Winston Davis has written, “In earlier *okage-mairi* (through 1650), participants usually dressed in white and had the pious manner of medieval pilgrims. As time went on, these pilgrims, like Shinto festivals in

⁵¹⁸ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 159. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 234.

⁵¹⁹ Winston Davis, “Pilgrimage and World Renewal: A Study of Religion and Social Values in Tokugawa Japan, Part 1,” *History of Religions* 23, no. 2 (Nov. 1983): 100-101.

general, fell under the spell of the gaudy and lavish culture of Japan's few burgeoning cities."⁵²⁰ Osaka and Kyoto were particularly popular starting points for the pilgrimage.⁵²¹ Chikamatsu made reference to the Ise pilgrimage in two early love suicide plays, *Sonezaki* and *The Love Suicides of the Two Illustrated Books* (*Shinjū nimai ezōshi*, 1706). In *Sonezaki*, Kuheiji, the villain, attends a meeting with some friends to raise money for a pilgrimage to Ise before publicly shaming Tokubei at Ikudama Shrine. In *Two Illustrated Books*, which premiered in the second month of 1706, the year following the grand pilgrimage of 1705, the love suicide becomes necessary as the hero is falsely accused of stealing money from a neighborhood association that offers tea to pilgrims bound for Ise. These references to Ise contributed to creating the atmosphere of contemporary Osaka life in the plays.

Two other new trends in religious practice in the second half of the seventeenth century made their way into the plays: unveilings of Buddhist images at temples and shrines and memorial services on the death anniversaries of celebrated figures in order to raise funds to support the temples. These events became touristic pleasure trips for townspeople. Kabuki theatres staged plays for death anniversaries and the unveiling of images to appeal to urban commoner audience members.⁵²² Chikamatsu, too, timed his plays to coincide with specific unveilings or anniversaries.⁵²³ Most important in the study of the love suicide phenomenon, the plays came to celebrate not only the death anniversaries of famous religious figures but also those of famous commoners and prostitutes. As mentioned in chapter one, Yūgiri, the famed Osaka prostitute, was celebrated in a play a month after her death in the first play to be based on

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 102.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Hirata, *Chikamatsu jōruri no seiritsu to tenkai*, 59.

⁵²³ Ibid., 65.

recent events. A year later, an Osaka kabuki theatre staged a memorial play to commemorate the anniversary of her death. The death anniversaries of famous lovers who had died in suicide also came to be celebrated in commemorative performances. Thus, the mantle of sanctity was extended to what had formerly been profane.

Commemorating Death Anniversaries

In the love suicide plays after *Sonezaki* Chikamatsu continued to portray love suicide as sacred by linking the plays with the custom of honoring death anniversaries and by representing the suicides as part of a tradition with its own ritual protocol. As with other elements of the love suicide genre, Chikamatsu did not begin the custom of honoring the death anniversaries of those who died in love suicide. The 1703 kabuki *The Love Suicide at the Riverside* (*Kawara shinjū*) bore the subtitle “Fiftieth Anniversary of the Death of Seijūrō and Onatsu,” and celebrated this familiar story, made famous by Ihara Saikaku’s *Five Women Who Loved Love* (*Kōshoku gonin onna*, 1686) and by kabuki and puppet plays. At the same time, it integrated two recent suicides, including those of Ohatsu and Tokubei.⁵²⁴ Following the huge success of *Sonezaki*, Chikamatsu and writers for the puppet and kabuki theatres marked the death anniversary of Ohatsu and Tokubei. The tradition of commemorating their deaths lifted the lovers out of the realm of the scandal sheet and elevated them to figures remembered and mourned by Osaka audiences.

New plays drew on new suicides, but the deaths of Ohatsu and Tokubei persisted in the collective memory of the Osaka theatre world. Thus, with continual anniversary performances to commemorate their deaths, Ohatsu and Tokubei continued to be potent associations in

⁵²⁴ Lee, “Genroku Kabuki,” 236-37. The Saikaku story is in *Five Women Who Loved Love*, trans. Wm. Theodore de Bary (Rutland: Tuttle, 1956), 41-72. In Saikaku, the lovers’ love is forbidden, but it does not end in love suicide.

performances in the puppet and kabuki theatres. Performances commemorating their deaths were held on the first, third, and thirteenth anniversaries of their deaths. The Toyotake Theatre commemorated the one-year anniversary with a puppet play.⁵²⁵ Chikamatsu memorialized the lovers on the third anniversary of their deaths with his play *The Love Suicides of the Two Illustrated Books*, which he subtitled “The Third Anniversary of Sonezaki: Another Dream at the Tenma House” (*Sonezaki sannnenki tenma-ya ni mata miru yume*).⁵²⁶ In the same year, a kabuki adaptation of the same events, *The Love Suicide at the Tenma Teahouse* (*Tenma-ya shinjū*), included a similar subtitle, “For the Third Anniversary of Sonezaki: the Famous Two Illustrated Books” (*Sonezaki sannnenki hyōban nimai ezōshi*).⁵²⁷ These two plays were based on a recent suicide, that of Oshima and Ichi. The plays’ subtitles—which directly reference *Sonezaki*—and the timing of the performances ensured that these plays recalled two sets of lovers: the recently deceased couple and the couple who had died three years earlier. The thirteenth anniversary in 1715 saw commemorations in at least four productions, three puppet plays and one kabuki play. The puppet theatre productions were *The Thirteenth Anniversary of the Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki shinjū jūsannnenki*) at the Toyotake Theatre, Bunryū’s *The Love Suicides of the Middle Road* (*Shinjū koi no nakamichi*) at the Toyotake Theatre, and Chikamatsu’s *The Love Suicides at Ikudama* at the Takemoto Theatre.⁵²⁸ The kabuki was an adaptation of Chikamatsu’s *Sonezaki* at the Arashi Theatre.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁵ This production was most likely an adaptation of a kabuki version of *Sonezaki* since the head puppeteer delivered the prologue in an imitation of a kabuki actor. See Iguchi Hiroshi, “Sewa jōruri no seiritsu to tenkai” in *Chikamatsu no jidai*, ed. Torigoe Bunzō et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998), 121.

⁵²⁶ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 17. Iguchi, “Sewa jōruri no seiritsu to tenkai,” 123.

⁵²⁷ Torigoe et al., “Kaisetsu” in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 658.

⁵²⁸ Iguchi, “Sewa jōruri no seiritsu to tenkai,” 138-39.

⁵²⁹ Karita, *Chikamatsu sewamono no sekai*, 141.

Ritualizing Love Suicide in *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*

The anniversary performances knit the performances of love suicide plays into a pre-existing popular religious practice of celebrating death anniversaries. Chikamatsu, in his pioneering production of *Sonezaki*, ritualized the act of love suicide itself. Beginning with the travel scene, in which the lovers escape Ohatsu's brothel and travel to Sonezaki to commit their love suicide, the couple commences a pattern that will repeat throughout Chikamatsu's subsequent love suicide plays. They create the archetype of love suicide. First, the couple vows to commit the suicide together. Then they take a journey, which is followed by ritualized preparations: the chanting of a sacred formula (usually the *nenbutsu*, but, depending on context, sometimes the title of the *Lotus Sutra* or a Shingon spell), the expression of the couple's belief in a future rebirth together in paradise through their act, and the suicide, which the couple attempts to accomplish as cleanly as possible.

Ohatsu and Tokubei's death scene enacted many of the elements that were repeated in later love suicide plays, thus establishing the ritual protocol that couples follow in later plays. The repetition of this progression is one way in which these lovers maintain a presence in later plays through "ghosting". The ritual begins with the vow. Subsequent steps are the lovers choosing where to die and how to arrange their bodies, their recitation of the *nenbutsu* or other sacred formula, and their simultaneous death. Ohatsu and Tokubei choose to die in Tenjin Shrine in the Sonezaki woods. They choose a famous tree within the shrine, said to have existed historically, in which the branches of a pine and palm intertwine in a symbol of love. The lovers tie themselves to the tree with Ohatsu's undersash so that their bodies will be united in death. Tokubei says, "Let us secure our bodies to this twin-trunked tree and die immaculately! We will

become an unparalleled example of a lover's suicide" (*kono futamoto no renri no ki ni karada o kitto yuwaitsuke isagiyō shinumai ka. Yo ni taguinaki shiniyō no tehon to naran*).⁵³⁰ Tokubei's lines here underscore the importance of purity in the ritual, which is also reflected in Ohatsu's dress since she changes into white robes before escaping the brothel. The lines also reflect Tokubei's profound sense that their actions will set the precedent for future lovers. The two then join their hands in prayer and remember their parents and those who have cared for them. When they are ready to die, Tokubei takes his dagger and chants the *nenbutsu*. He has difficulty killing the woman he loves, so he has to cut her flesh a few times. He chants the *nenbutsu* with each thrust. To ensure they die as simultaneously as possible he then says, "Let's draw out last breaths together" (*iki wa ichido ni hikitoran*), and stabs the dagger into his throat.⁵³¹

The play ends with the final step in the ritual: the witnesses of the suicides and the dedicatory prayers for the dead. In *Sonezaki*, the narrator recites, "No one is there to tell the tale, but the wind that blows through Sonezaki Wood transmits it, and high and low alike gather to pray for these lovers who beyond a doubt will in the future attain Buddhahood. They have become models of true love" (*ta ga tsuguru to wa, Sonezaki no mori no shita kazeoto ni kokoe toritsutae, kisenkunju no ekō no tane mirai jōbutsu utagainaki, koi no tehon to narinikeri*).⁵³² The story of Ohatsu and Tokubei is transmitted first on the wind. Then, by Chikamatsu's brush, the story was transmitted in a theatre, where spectators of high and low status prayed together for the couple's rebirth. The word Keene here has translated as "pray" is *ekō*, a dedicatory Buddhist prayer. In the *ekō*, practitioners dedicate the merit earned in a preceding practice. In Buddhism, all religiously meritorious practices are followed by an *ekō*, in which the merit of the recitation

⁵³⁰ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 55. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 40.

⁵³¹ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 56. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 42.

⁵³² Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 56. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 43.

of the sutra or other religious ritual is dedicated to a particular aim.⁵³³ Ending the plays with *ekō* underscored the fact that what preceded it constituted a ritualized sequence of actions that produced spiritual merit sufficient to bring about the religiously desired goal of rebirth in paradise together, which, in these plays, was tantamount to salvation.

Repetition of Ritual

The death ritual established in *Sonezaki* repeated through Chikamatsu's later plays. The suicide scenes typically open with the lovers choosing a location to die, arranging their bodies in a symbolic manner, reciting the *nenbutsu*, and dying simultaneously. The repetition of this sequence of actions ritualized the suicides and heightened the sacredness of the act. Since the ritual repeated so closely in each play, in this section, I focus on the variations. On the one hand, these variations can be thought of as *shukō*, an original twist within a standard plot; they bring a sense of freshness to yet another love suicide play. More importantly, on the other hand, the variations reveal how entrenched these plot elements were since the characters go to great lengths to accomplish each step in the ritual even when the specific circumstances of their stories compel them to alter the ritual.

After the travel scene, the lovers choose a place to die. There is no specifically prescribed place. In *Amijima*, for example, the lovers comment that they need to stop searching since no

⁵³³ *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* has stated, "Merit may be dedicated to the benefit of all sentient beings or to the benefit of a specific person or persons (such as a family member), but the term is used especially to refer to the dedication of the merit accumulated by a bodhisattva to the greater goal of achieving buddhahood so that one may be able to liberate all beings from suffering. Merit may also be dedicated toward the goal of rebirth in a specific realm (such as a pure land or the heavens) in the next lifetime. The dedication of merit is a standard element of Mahāyāna ritual (*pūjā*) and meditative practices and is often praised as a means of protecting virtuous faculties (*kuśalamūla*) from being destroyed by unwholesome states of mind," 628.

place will be labeled “for dying” (*hito no shiniba*).⁵³⁴ Most often the couple chooses a sacred space, such as the grounds of a temple or shrine. In *Sonezaki*, Ohatsu and Tokubei die at Tenjin Shrine. Other examples of sacred spaces chosen by the lovers in the plays include the women’s temple on Mt. Kōya in *Women’s Temple* and the place where the priest Ryōkai preached at the edge of Ikudama Shrine in *Kōshin Festival*.

In *The Love Suicides at Ikudama*, the lovers are unable to die where they intend. Initially, Kaheiji, the male protagonist, hopes to die in a pine grove near Ikudama Shrine. Saga, the female protagonist visits Ikudama Shrine as part of her pilgrimage at the opening of the play. The shrine holds personal significance for them. During the travel scene, they tenderly remember drinking a toast together during the flower festival a few months before. Severe weather conditions make it impossible for them to die outdoors. Kaheiji laments,

Even if we die cleanly, our bloody bodies will be battered by the rain,
and they will laugh at our dirty, dead faces. How regrettable!

*tatoi kireini shindari tomo, chishio no karada o ame ni utaremu sai kitanai shinigao
warawaruru mo kuchioshii*⁵³⁵

The lovers do not want to take the risk of having their bodies become sullied, so they decide to die in a nearby tea stall instead. This variation conveyed that the site for the love suicide was important, but that a space could enable a clean death was more important. After Kaheiji kills Saga, he arranges her body then kills himself.

As with the example of *Ikudama* above, after selecting a location, the lovers choose how to arrange their bodies. They aspire to die in the same space. In *Sonezaki*, they tie themselves to a tree to be united even in death. In *The Love Suicides in Midsummer with an Icy Blade (Shinjū*

⁵³⁴ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 427. Keene translates this phrase as “for suicides” in *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 421.

⁵³⁵ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 376.

yaiba wa kōri no tsuitachi, 1709), the narrator emphasizes that the two lovers die on the same pillow. In *Two Illustrated Books*, when the characters realize they will be unable to die together because the brothel owners have locked Oshima in her room, Oshima laments not being able to share the same pillow in death. Conversely, in *Amijima*, the lovers choose to die in separate locations. Jihei and Koharu make this decision so as not to cause undue pain to Jihei's wife. Koharu does not wish for their love suicide to appear as a love suicide even though their goal to be reunited after death. She makes this clear by her line, "We may die in different places, our bodies may be pecked by kites and crows, but what does it matter as long as our souls are together?" (*tokorodokoro no shini o shite, tatoe kono karada wa, tobi, karasu ni tsutsukaretemo futari no tamashii tsukimatsuwari*).⁵³⁶ Gerstle has noted that this is the only instance in any of the love suicide plays by Chikamatsu or Kaion in which the lovers voluntarily die in separate locations, which underscores how crucial this step was in the love suicide ritual.⁵³⁷ After he kills Koharu, Jihei takes care to arrange her body before he kills himself. Jihei positions Koharu on her right side with her head to the north and her face to the west. He then covers her body with his cloak. This positioning recreated the position Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha, was said to have chosen for his death. The west is also the direction of Amida Buddha's Pure Land. In this example, the couple intends for spatial arrangement of the bodies to mitigate the grief of the survivors while their observance of the other elements of the love suicide ritual and the positioning of Koharu's body ensure their future rebirth together.

As a final step before dying, the lovers chant the *nenbutsu*, the phrase "Hail Amida Buddha," which invokes the power of Amida Buddha's vow to ensure rebirth in his Pure Land.

⁵³⁶ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 422. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 427.

⁵³⁷ *Circles of Fantasy*, 152.

In most cases, the protagonists chant the *nenbutsu* directly before death.⁵³⁸ Chikamatsu's love suicide plays show some variation in the practice. In *Ikudama*, the travel scene opens with eleven recitations of the *nenbutsu*. In *Two Illustrated Books*, the *nenbutsu* becomes an even more critical component of the suicide. The lovers, barred from dying together, use their recitation of the *nenbutsu* as a sign for timing their deaths so they can be sure to die simultaneously. The recitation of the *nenbutsu* begins during the travel scene Chikamatsu returns to the *nenbutsu* periodically throughout the journey scene to remind the audience of the couple's progress toward their ever-quickenings deaths and their goal of rebirth in the Pure Land. Just before dying, Oshima, the female protagonist, again recites the *nenbutsu*.

Two plays, *Women's Temple* and *Sunken Well*, did not include the *nenbutsu*. In both cases, the characters practice a different strain of Buddhism and use a sacred chant in the place of the *nenbutsu*. In *Women's Temple*, which takes place on Mt. Kōya, the seat of Shingon Buddhism, Kumenosuke chants a Shingon spell directly before killing Oume. However, the lovers see no contradiction between the Shingon spell and their desire for being reborn in Pure Land. Before chanting the spell, Kumenosuke prays, "We shall be reborn on one lotus with our parents" (*fūfu, oyako ichiren no*).⁵³⁹ Similarly, in *Sunken Well*, in which the lovers invoke the sacred title of the *Lotus Sutra*, the authoritative text in Nichiren Buddhism, the lovers see no contradiction between reciting a Nichiren prayer and belief in the love suicide ritual. Before dying, Ofusa chants the Nichiren *daimoku*, "*namu myōhō renga kyō*" ("Homage to the Sutra of the Lotus Blossom of the Marvellous Dharma"). Tokubei follows this with "Homage to the

⁵³⁸ The practice of chanting a *nenbutsu* before dying dates back to early Pure Land practice. Chanting the *nenbutsu* enabled the practitioner to exhibit "right mindfulness at the last moment" (*rinjū shōnen*), the essential prerequisite for release from the cycle of rebirth and the guarantee of eventual buddhahood. See Jacqueline I. Stone "By the Power of One's Last *Nenbutsu*," 77-78.

⁵³⁹ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 159. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 234.

Lotus Blossom of the Marvellous Dharma. May we be reborn together on one lotus blossom” (*namu myōhō renga o hitotsu no renga ni*).⁵⁴⁰ These two variations demonstrate that regardless of the particular school of Buddhism, the belief in the act of love suicide and the couple’s rebirth together in the next world remained consistent throughout the plays. These variations also show that, however conceived by different Buddhist groups, love suicide was an effective vehicle for rebirth in paradise. The important thing in the couple’s mind is that they pray to the same Buddha, so, in *Sunken Well*, Tokubei converts to Nichiren Buddhism from Pure Land Buddhism at the end of the previous act.⁵⁴¹

Finally, there is the ritual of the death itself. The lovers aim to die at the same time, even if physically apart. In *Two Illustrated Books*, the lovers, who are separated, count their recitations of the *nenbutsu* so that they can simultaneously take their lives when they reach the agreed upon number. The variation on this step in the ritual appears in the linked plays *Colored Leaves in the Fourth Month* and *Re-dyeing the Fourth Month (Uzuki no iroage)*. The two plays, premiered one year apart in 1706 and 1707 respectively, tell the story of lovers unable to die together. The female lover, Okame, dies in the first play, but the male protagonist is saved and unable to die until the following year. His death, at the end of the second play, completes the love suicide. Before he dies, he laments that a year prior they hoped to die together, yet only Okame died. He thinks of how he now follows after his wife, and they will be able to be reunited in paradise.⁵⁴² The play ends with dedicatory prayers for both the man, who recently died, and his beloved, who died the year before. It is worth noting that the *ekō* can only be said after the hero’s death since

⁵⁴⁰ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 193.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 151-52.

the lovers made the vow together and, thus, the vow is not complete until after he commits suicide.

The steps of the ritual were the vow, the journey, the concern with purity in the care taken with the choice of location and the arrangement of the bodies, the recitation of a salvifically efficacious sacred formula (whether the *nenbutsu*, *daimoku*, or Shingon *dhāranī*), and the simultaneous deaths. Each suicide repeated the pattern of the suicides that came before. This ritual progression also appeared in the works of other playwrights, in illustrated books, and in songs.

A comparison of the illustrated book *The Great Mirror of Love Suicide* (*Shinjū ōkagami*, 1704) and the ballad collection *Fallen Pine Needles* (*Matsu no ochiba*, 1710), respectively published one year and seven years after *Sonezaki* premiered, provides some measure by which to assess the increasing influence that *Sonezaki* came to exert on the changing representation of love suicide in popular culture during the first decade of the eighteenth century.

The Great Mirror of Love Suicide, published the year after *Sonezaki*, focuses its telling of the stories on descriptions of the lovers' backgrounds, such as the details of where they were born and worked. This work also develops the events leading up to the suicide, such as how the lovers met and what the obstacles to their union were. The book pays scant attention to how the lovers died. In relating the *Sonezaki* incident, for instance, the author writes, "[the couple] defiled the *Sonezaki* forest on the other side of Umeda Bridge (*Umeda no hashi no mukōnaru, Sone no mori o kegashikeru*)."⁵⁴³ There is no mention of any of the ritual elements of the death

⁵⁴³ "Shinjū ōkagami," 212.

or any commentary on the suicide. Three of the stories in the book end with no embellishment at all with the phrase, “another love suicide” (*mata shinjū*).⁵⁴⁴

Although many stories in the collection exhibit none of the dramatic details of the suicide elaborated in *Sonezaki*, others do include a few of the ritual elements introduced by Chikamatsu. One of the stories that develops the ending more fully is the story of the prostitute Oshun and her lover, Denbei. Their story was a popular one and appeared in ballads and kabuki but not in puppet theatre. The first dramatization was *The Love Suicide of the Rice Shop* (*Komeya shinjū*) in 1703 in Kyoto. In the version in *The Great Mirror of Love Suicide*, the lovers pledge to be united for two lifetimes.⁵⁴⁵ Then, Denbei “draws a dagger and a sake cup from his bosom. He scoops some river water with the scabbard” (*futokoro yori aikuchi sakazuki toridashi, saya ni kawamizu o sukui*).⁵⁴⁶ Rinsing the blade in water was a ritual form of purification.⁵⁴⁷ The two pray to be reborn on the same lotus in the Pure Land (*ichirentakushō*). The story concludes, “They tie together the hems of their robes. This becomes the model of a level of purity not seen since Sankatsu’s love suicide” (*suso to suso o musubiawase, sankatsu irai no shinjū, isagiyoki tehon to wa nareri*).⁵⁴⁸ The tying together of the hems of the robes was a motif present in many death preparations in the representations of love suicide. While the story does not end with a *nenbutsu* or *ekō*, it does praise the expression of purity in this couple’s suicide.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 214, 218, and 221.

⁵⁴⁵ Two lifetimes are the traditional number of lifetimes that a husband and wife are reborn together.

⁵⁴⁶ “Shinjū ōkagami,” 198.

⁵⁴⁷ There are moments of purification in some of Chikamatsu’s dramatizations of love suicides, but concern with purity figures in each love suicide even if not stated explicitly. The most famous example from Chikamatsu is Ohatsu changing into a white kimono before escaping the brothel to begin the *michiyuki* in *Sonezaki*.

⁵⁴⁸ “Shinjū ōkagami,” 98. Sankatsu and her lover, Hanshichi, committed suicide at Sennichi Temple in Osaka in 1695. Their story was adapted into kabuki and puppet theatre plays.

The four ballads of love suicide in *Fallen Pine Needles* differ from the representation of love suicide in *The Great Mirror of Love Suicide* by emphasizing the journey and suicide and by including more religious elements. While these ballads were published in 1710, many were most certainly in oral circulation earlier. For instance, Chikamatsu quotes a line from the ballad “The Love Suicides in Edo, Past, Present, and Future” (*Shinjū Edo sangai*) in *Sonezaki*.⁵⁴⁹ Chikamatsu had, in turn, influenced the ballads. The ballad “The Love Suicides at Karasaki” (*Karasaki shinjū*) is mostly lifted word for word from Ohatsu and Tokubei’s travel scene in *Sonezaki*. The only major change is the ending, which uses a phrase to connect the story to Karasaki instead of *Sonezaki*.⁵⁵⁰ Another ballad ends with the ritual arrangement of the lovers’ bodies and uses the motif of the lovers’ robes tied together. This song concludes, “The hems of their robes tied together, they look like they are dreaming during a nap” (*tsuma to tsuma o hikimusubi, tomo ni karine no yume sugata*).⁵⁵¹ This image recalls the image in the Oshun and Denbei story in *The Great Mirror of Love Suicide* quoted above.

Oshun and Denbei’s story also appears in *Fallen Pine Needles* and illustrates how different the ballad treatment is from the treatment in *The Great Mirror of Love Suicide*. Oshun and Denbei’s story ends as they decide that they have taken enough time. “[Denbei says] ‘Now, let’s drink our farewell cup of water.’ One, two, the sound of early morning. To the bell that rings prayers they chant, ‘Hail Amida Buddha, Hail Amida Buddha,’ and are extinguished. Tomorrow, the fifth day of the fourth month, their names are carried on the Kamo River. All tell of their depth of feeling and love” (*izaya saigo no mizusakazuki o, hitotsu futatsu ni hayō shi*

⁵⁴⁹ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 37n21.

⁵⁵⁰ Hirata, *Chikamatsu jōruri no seiritsu to tenkai*, 252. This story was first represented on stage as a kabuki play titled *The Love Suicides at Karasaki* (*Karasaki shinjū*) in 1702 in Kyoto.

⁵⁵¹ *Matsu no ochiba*, 125.

*goya no, ekō no kane ni namu Amida, namu Amida to kiete asa wa uzuki no itsuka, semi no ogawa ni na o nagasu, omoi to koi to e).*⁵⁵² In this passage, the approach to the suicide is ritualized. The lovers drink a farewell cup of water and chant the *nenbutsu*. As in Chikamatsu, the ballad ends with the witnessing and retelling by the cicadas and with the dedicatory prayers, *ekō*, sounded by the bell.

The puppet theatre representations of love suicide by Bunryū and Kaion were written after Chikamatsu's *Sonezaki* and bore his influence. In Bunryū's first love suicide play, *The Love Suicides of the River of Embracing* (*Shinjū dakiai kawa*, 1704), which dramatizes the same event as Chikamatsu's *The Love Suicides of the Two Illustrated Books* and was likely written just before, Bunryū takes a critical attitude toward the lovers, in contrast to Chikamatsu's sympathetic treatment.⁵⁵³ Still, this play and Bunryū's other play on love suicide, *The Love Suicide of Love's Middle Road*, an adaptation of *Sonezaki*, both conclude with the lovers chanting the *nenbutsu* before dying. Kaion's plays, too, end with the lovers chanting the *nenbutsu*. In his *The Love Suicides at Imamiya near the Double Pine* (*Imamiya shinjū marugoshi renrimatsu*, 1711), the lovers count their recitations of the *nenbutsu* on the "rosaries of their hearts" (*kokoro no juzu ni kazu torase namu amida butsu*).⁵⁵⁴ This image renders the lovers' physical bodies the site of Buddhist practice.

Chikamatsu's love suicide rituals end differently than the majority of other representations of love suicide due to the emphasis on the witnessing of the suicide and the inclusion of the *ekō*, or the dedication of merit. The religious services after death were an important rite in Edo Japan. The harsh censorship edict of 1723 included the prohibition of

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 126.

⁵⁵³ Kawaguchi, "Nishiki Bunryū to Chikamatsu no dōdaizai no sakuhin ni tsuite," 384-385.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ki no Kaion zenshū* vol. 1, ed. Kaion kenkyūkai (Osaka: Seibundō shuppan, 1977), 180.

Buddhist funerary services, which would have included *ekō*, for those who died in love suicides along with the prohibition of works of fiction depicting love suicide, including plays, and the act of love suicide itself. For those in power, halting the production of books and plays about the love suicide was not enough. They also felt the need to divest it of its religious meaning because they were well aware that it was such sanctification that gave legitimacy to the act they were trying to proscribe.

Spirit Guides

Ohatsu and Tokubei, the couple from *Sonezaki* whose death anniversary was celebrated so often on kabuki and puppet theatre stages, became a model for the heroes and heroines in later plays. Many of the protagonists in the plays invoke Ohatsu and Tokubei by name.⁵⁵⁵ These two lovers, particularly Ohatsu, transformed into spritual guides for couples planning to commit love suicide. For example, in *Colored Leaves in the Fourth Month*, the heroine, Okame, opens the play on a pilgrimage to twenty-two shrines in Osaka. This pilgrimage circuit had only come into being sometime after 1688, so Chikamatsu's description of the route was the first to appear on stage or in print.⁵⁵⁶ The sixth stop on the pigrimage was Tenjin Shrine in Sonezaki, the site where Ohatsu and Tokubei committed suicide. As Okame passes through the shrine, the story of Ohatsu's love suicide, which she had once heard as someone else's story, "soaks into her body" (*mi ni shijimigawa*).⁵⁵⁷ By including a reference to Ohatsu in his description of Tenjin Shrine,

⁵⁵⁵ These plays include *The Love Suicides of the Two Illustrated Books* and *The Love Suicides at the Sunken Well*.

⁵⁵⁶ Nagatomo, *Kinsei Kamigata jōrurihon shuppan no kenkyū*, 67.

⁵⁵⁷ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 86. "Shijimigawa" in this phrase is a pivot word that means "to penetrate" (*shimiru*) and Shijimi River, the river in Osaka that borders the northern edge of the Dōjima-Shinchi. Shijimi River is the river Ohatsu and Tokubei cross via Umeda Bridge on their way to commit suicide.

Chikmatsu incorporated Ohatsu into the religious landscape of the city.⁵⁵⁸ In *The Love Suicides with an Icy Blade* and *The Love Suicides at Ikudama* the specters of Ohatsu and Tokubei played a larger role in the action.

In an extended example of ghosting, the travel scene of *The Love Suicides with an Icy Blade* describes the tradition of love suicide by reaching back further than Ohatsu and Tokubei to what the lovers claim was the first love suicide. As the lovers walk, they trace the history of love suicide through a series of word associations using the same rhetorical devices as the associative linking of imagery in the usual travel scene. The lovers begin by reflecting on the meaning of *shinjū*, love suicide: “If this world were without love suicide” (*yo no naka ni taete shinjū nakariseba*), they muse, “would there also be no prayers for a couple to be united for two lifetimes?” (*nise no tanomi mo nakaramashi*).⁵⁵⁹ In retelling this suicide, the narrator sings, “they pull the hems of their robes together” (*tsuma to tsuma to hikiyosete*), a phrase that recalled the ballad version of this story in *Collection of Fallen Leaves*, which had the lyrics “They silently bind their robes together, hem to hem” (*tsuma to tsuma to o shizuka to kukuru*).⁵⁶⁰ The lovers attribute the invention of love suicide to Ichijō, a prostitute from the Shinmachi pleasure quarters in Osaka who committed suicide with her lover in 1683 at Ikudama Shrine.⁵⁶¹ Next, they recall the suicide of the prostitute Sankatsu and her lover Hanshichi at Osaka’s Sennichi Temple in

⁵⁵⁸ This shrine would later come to be known colloquially as “Ohatsu Tenjin.”

⁵⁵⁹ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 280. This poem also alludes to a poem in *The Tales of Ise*, a tenth century literary classic purported to tell the stories of the romantic adventures of a noble, Ariwara no Narihira. *The Tales of Ise* was a popular text for reading, illustration, and parody in the Edo period.

⁵⁶⁰ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 280n9. It also closely resembles the lyrics “they tie the hems of their robes together” (*tsuma to tsuma o hikimusubi*) from yet another love suicide, this one in *Fallen Pine Needles*, which I quote earlier in this chapter.

⁵⁶¹ This event was dramatized in three kabuki versions in the same year in Osaka. While probably not the first love suicide, it was the first love suicide to be represented on stage.

1695, which was adapted into multiple kabuki versions and a puppet play.⁵⁶² The lovers recount that the prostitute's body is buried at Sonezaki where she has become part of one of the thirty-three sites of the Kannon Pilgrimage. This, like the example of *Colored Leaves* above, is another instance of Chikamatsu integrating love suicide into the religious landscape of the city.

Thinking of the bodhisattva Kannon, the lovers sing “Fudaraku,” the name of Kannon's mythical paradise,⁵⁶³ and a line of a pilgrimage song Ohatsu sings in her travel scene through the thirty-three sites of the Kannon pilgrimage at the opening of *Sonezaki*.⁵⁶⁴ For members of the audience, the association between Ohatsu and Kannon may have been a reminder of Ohatsu's transformation into Kannon at the end of the pilgrimage scene, which was made famous by puppeteer Tatsumatsu Hachirōbei. As the text continues, the invocation of Kannon reminds the lovers of Kannon's vow to save all sentient beings. The lovers ask, “Is Ohatsu of the Tenma Teahouse now among the Buddhas in the Tuṣita heaven? (*tosotsu Tenma-ya no Ohatsu mo hotoke nakama ka ya*).”⁵⁶⁵ In these lines that reference Ohatsu, Ohatsu is associated with two Buddhist paradises, Fudaraku and Tuṣita.

The lovers continue to trace the lineage of love suicide through three other plays. They recall the lovers memorialized in Chikamatsu's *Colored Leaves in the Fourth Month* and pun on

⁵⁶² The most famous adaptation was the kabuki play *The Red Dye of the Mountain Rose* (*Akane no iroage*) which ran for one hundred and fifty performances at the Iwai Theatre in Osaka in 1695. This was the first love suicide story to be adapted into a puppet play.

⁵⁶³ For a description of Fudaraku, see English translation by Thomas Clearly, *The Flower Ornament Scripture* vol. 3 (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1987), 151-153.

⁵⁶⁴ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 15 (*Sonezaki*) and 280 (*Icy Blade*).

⁵⁶⁵ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 280. Regarding Tuṣita, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* has stated, “The heaven is of particular importance because it is understood that bodhisattvas are born there before taking their final birth in the human world and attaining buddhahood...the bodhisattva Maitreya currently resides in the tusita heaven awaiting his own final rebirth when he will in turn achieve buddhahood. Consequently, many Buddhists throughout history have aspired for rebirth in tusita heaven so that they may learn from Maitreya and accompany him when he takes his final birth as a Buddha.” 930.

the title of Kaion's *The Love Suicides at Nanba Bridge* (*Nanba-bashi shinjū*, 1710).⁵⁶⁶ They sing a section of a popular song about two lovers who, “together, through a double-edged blade, end on the same pillow” (*tomo ni yaiba no moroha butae no onaji makura ni*).⁵⁶⁷ This image foreshadows how the narrator will describe their own bodies at the end of the play, “dead on the same pillow” (*onaji makura no shide*).⁵⁶⁸ This couple, too, will die by a blade, the “icy blade” of the title. Next, the lovers tell the story dramatized by Chikamatsu's *Sunken Well*. The male lover worked in a dye shop, so as they tell the couple's story, they riff on the dye shop and evoke a color of dye for each key emotion or setting.⁵⁶⁹ This imagery also returns at the end of the play when the lovers commit suicide in a field of indigo flowers and dye the fields with their love (*ai ni someta*).⁵⁷⁰

Through recounting these stories of love suicide from 1683 through the more recent *Sunken Well* suicides of 1707, the lovers position themselves as part of a tradition of love suicides.⁵⁷¹ Chikamatsu underscored this by returning to two of the images, dying on the “same pillow” and dyeing the indigo fields in the final scene of the play. The travel scene takes the stories one step further. Chikamatsu treats the first couple as the inventors of love suicide. Regarding Ofusa, the heroine from *Sunken Well*, he wrote that she “refined love suicide” (*shinjū*

⁵⁶⁶ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 280.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 280-281.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 280-281.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 285. The text puns on *ai* 愛 meaning love and *ai* 藍 meaning indigo.

⁵⁷¹ The chronology of the love suicides stories in this travel scene follows that of the major dramatizations of these plays in the theatres. The incident upon which *Sunken Well* was based probably took place in 1704. Torigoe et al., “Kaisetsu” in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 659.

o migaku).⁵⁷² As part of the travel scene, the lovers in *Icy Blade* call forth the spirits of those who died in love suicide to guide them. They acknowledge their need for guidance: “Aside from asking those who went before us to be our guiding spirits, we will not be able to find Buddhahood” (*itari sakidatsu kono hitobito o, ima mi no ue no chishiki zo to, tanomu hoka ni wa bodai o mo*).⁵⁷³ They look to those who died in love suicides as their spirit guides to help them find the path to the shrine where they will commit their suicide. Thus, in this travel scene, Chikamatsu creates a history of love suicide, demonstrates the connections between love suicides through the repetition of images in the travel scene with those in the death scene, and positions those who previously died in love suicide as the spirit guides of those who hope to commit love suicide.

Chikamatsu’s *The Love Suicides at Ikudama* added another dimension to the love suicide plays by suggesting that the plays engender new suicides. Though there is no reliable body of evidence that would enable us to gauge the extent to which this phenomenon actually occurred, references to the influence of the plays within the plays themselves and the harsh censorship edicts indicate it did occur. *Ikudama* is one example of a play referencing the power of the love suicide plays in influencing the lives of people outside the theatre. *Ikudama* follows the plot of *Sonezaki* closely and was performed in 1715 for the thirteenth anniversary of Ohatsu and Tokubei’s deaths. There is no known historical incident upon which the play is based.⁵⁷⁴ Like *Sonezaki*, the play opens with a pilgrimage scene. In *Ikudama*, however, the tone is light and the scene makes little mention of the religious significance of the pilgrimage.⁵⁷⁵ The story plays out

⁵⁷² *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 281.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁴ Torigoe et al., “Kaisetsu” in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 661.

⁵⁷⁵ Karita, *Chikamatsu sewamono no sekai*, 194.

similarly to *Sonezaki*: the male protagonist is swindled, and his humiliation and financial distress precipitate the love suicide. Furthermore, the play unfolds through a number of meta-theatrical references to *Sonezaki*.⁵⁷⁶ The basic plotline is the same, and the simplicity of the plot represents a backward shift in Chikamatsu's dramaturgy, which had become more complex since his first love suicide play.⁵⁷⁷

Within the play, the characters themselves are aware of the similarities. Kaheiji, the male protagonist, has recently been to see a kabuki production of *Sonezaki* at the Arashi Theatre.⁵⁷⁸ In the scene with Saga, his lover, Kaheiji relates that when he went to see the production *Sonezaki*, he felt a kinship between himself and Tokubei, which saddened him.⁵⁷⁹ In an effort to alleviate this feeling, he wrote to Saga. Saga replies that it was his letter that inspired her pilgrimage from the opening of the play in imitation of Ohatsu's pilgrimage.⁵⁸⁰ Kaheiji then recounts that he saw Chōsaku at the performance. He tells Saga about the deal he made with Chōsaku, but assures her he can trust him. Through this dialogue Chikamatsu establishes clear links between the characters in *Ikudama* and those in *Sonezaki*. Ohatsu and Saga are linked through the pilgrimage, the naïve, trusting Tokubei of *Sonezaki* is linked to Kaheiji, and the calculating villain Kuheiji is linked with *Ikudama*'s villain, Chōsaku.

Chōsaku has also been to see *Sonezaki*. When he appears, it is to the sounds of the drums that signal the end of the day's performance of *Sonezaki* at the Arashi Theatre, a foreboding

⁵⁷⁶ As mentioned earlier, *Ikudama* was most likely intended as a rewrite of *Sonezaki* to commemorate the thirteenth anniversary of Ohatus and Tokubei's deaths.

⁵⁷⁷ Yokoyama, "Chikamatsu shinjū jōruri no tenkai," 52.

⁵⁷⁸ A kabuki version of *Sonezaki* ran at the Arashi Theatre in 1715 to celebrate the thirteenth death anniversary of Tokubei and Ohatsu. The mention of this production in the text is part of what helps scholars date Chikamatsu's play. Fujino, *Sonezaki shinjū kaishaku to kenkyū*, 33.

⁵⁷⁹ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 338.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

entrance.⁵⁸¹ When Chōsaku swindles Kaheiji in a manner reminiscent of the *Sonezaki* swindle, Kaheiji speculates that Chōsaku's swindle of him was inspired by the swindle in *Sonezaki*.⁵⁸² Kaheiji attempts to change the story by challenging Chōsaku to a fistfight. However, the act ends with the male protagonist getting a beating and the female protagonist being whisked off in a palanquin just as in *Sonezaki*. The one small grace note is that Saga is able to throw Kaheiji the cover from her palanquin so that he can shelter himself from the downpour.

In the case of *Ikudama*, the characters' knowledge of the story of *Sonezaki* determines their actions and shapes their fates. Even though Kaheiji tries to alter the narrative, he ends up repeating Tokubei's naïve trust, humiliation, and death in suicide. In *Ikudama*, Ohatsu and Tokuebei's story echoes upon the play's characters, particularly through the characters having watched or heard about the kabuki adaptation of *Sonezaki*. This suggests that the stories performed in the theatres scripted the actions of regular people and, further, that love suicides outside the theatre were the heirs to the love suicides on the stage, just as the stage versions reenacted actual suicides.

Authors, including Chikamatsu, did not always treat love suicides as tragedies, but even the more light-hearted treatments held a capacity for danger. This can be seen in Chikamatsu's use of the Ofusa and Tokubei story, which he dramatized first in a tragic treatment in *Sunken Well*.⁵⁸³ This couple, like that of *Sonezaki*, became part of the custom of celebrating death anniversaries. The seventeenth anniversary of their deaths was commemorated in three kabuki

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 348.

⁵⁸² Ibid., 353.

⁵⁸³ Although the male heroes in *Sonezaki* and *Sunken Well* share the same name, they are not otherwise connected.

theatres in Edo.⁵⁸⁴ However, the most striking appearances they made were marginal: they appear as comedic material in *Yosaku from Taba* (*Tanba Yosaku matsuyo no komurobushi*, 1707) and *The Love Suicides at Amijima*.

Chikamatsu's *Yosaku from Tanba*, a contemporary life play that ends happily with the love suicide attempt averted, premiered sometime toward the end of 1707. The exact date is unknown, but scholars have hypothesized that it was performed after *Sunken Well*.⁵⁸⁵ The play ends with an upbeat song and dance that portray the story of Ofusa and Tokubei's tragic love. A few moments incorporates some of the elements of the love suicide genre. The story takes a generally sympathetic view of the lovers' plight. It shows Tokubei as torn between committing the love suicide with the woman he loves and honoring his marriage vows, touched as he is by the kindness of his wife. The ending integrates the chanting of "*namu myōhō renga kyō*"—the so-called *daimoku* or title of the *Lotus Sutra*, whose invocation for Nichiren Buddhists functions like the *nenbutsu* for Pure Land devotees—and acknowledges the couple's wish to be reborn on one lotus.

But more overwhelming than any similarities are the differences. The song and dance function as a festive ending to the play. For this reason, Keene did not include it in his translation, instead ending the translation of the play with the lines immediately preceding the dance, "When flutes and drums summon the dancers, the horses will stamp their hooves in content, and the lovely dancing costumes, matched above and below, will lend joyous color to this scene of merriment" (*odoriko yosesuru fue tsuzumi uma mo taiko o utsukushiki odori yukata no ue kara shita made, iromeki yorokobi nigawaeri*).⁵⁸⁶ This text implies that the scene will be

⁵⁸⁴ Torigoe et al., "Kaisetsu" in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 659.

⁵⁸⁵ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 568.

⁵⁸⁶ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 130.

buoyant and colorful. Additionally, the Ofusa and Tokubei love story concludes, “We dance forever the festive dances that bring joy to the imperial reign” (*senzairaku, manzairaku, odoriyorokobu miyo zo tanoshiki*).⁵⁸⁷ Despite the content of the song, the lovers’ story appears to have been presented in a light-hearted way.

The lovers are also evoked at the opening of *Amijima* through the ballad of a *namaida bōzu*. The street musician sings:

Tokubei of the dyer’s shop,
Since he first fell in love with Fusa,
Has yielded to passion that absorbs his fortune,
A love stained so deep dye itself cannot cleanse it.
*Namamida. Namamida.*⁵⁸⁸

*Kon-ya no Tokubei Fusa ni motoyori koi somekomi no uchi no shindai aku demo hagezu namamida namamida*⁵⁸⁹

The melody for the song used the one from the closing song in *Tanba Yosaku*.⁵⁹⁰ The villain of the story, Tahei, respins the song adapting the melody to the love affair between Jihei and Koharu. To imitate the minstrel, who beats a chime while he sings, Tahei beats an ashtray with his pipe and sings:

Jihei the paper dealer –
Too much love for Koharu
Has made him a foolscap,
He wastepapers sheets of gold
Till his fortune’s shredded to confetti
And Jihei himself is like scrap paper
You can’t even blow your nose on!
Hail, Hail Amida Buddha!⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁷ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 74, 396.

⁵⁸⁸ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 390.

⁵⁸⁹ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 388.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 389n2.

⁵⁹¹ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 392-393.

*Kami-ya no Jihei Koharu kurui ga sugi harakami de ichibu kohanshi chirichiri kami de uchi no shindai sukiyare kami no hana mo kamarenu kamikuzu Jihei e namamidabutsu*⁵⁹²

He reworks the ballad of the minstrel in the same way that Chikamatsu reworked *Sunken Well*—a story of a love triangle between a merchant, his wife, and his lover—into *The Love Suicides at Amijima*, also a love triangle between a merchant, his wife, and his lover.

Why would Chikamatsu, who sacralized love suicide in *Sonezaki* and developed love suicide as a somber ritual throughout so many of his plays, have treated the Ofusa Tokubei story so lightly in these two instances? In *Amijima*, Koharu's maid reprimands the minstrel after he sings about Tokubei and Ofusa, "It's bad luck to sing those songs, just when stories about love suicides in the Quarter have at last quieted down" (*imaimashii yōyō konogoro, kono sato no shinjūzata ga shizumatsutani*).⁵⁹³ Although light-hearted, this song still had the power to potentially inspire a love suicide. In *Yosaku from Tanba*, the festive dance that told of love suicide might have been a reminder of how close this play came to a similar ending. These moments also reminded the spectator of the tradition of love suicides—on stage, in song, and in practice. Their inclusion in a non-love suicide play and in song demonstrates the extent to which stories of love suicide had become part of Osaka popular culture.

Echoing Prayers

The endings of the plays included two elements that extended the plays beyond the lovers: the act of witnessing and the dedicatory prayers for the dead. Sometimes the witness is nature, like the wind in *Sonezaki* or the cuckoo (*hototogisu*) in *Icy Blade*. In *Icy Blade*, the narrator recites, "The people who came to the fields of Kitano after hearing the cry of the cuckoo

⁵⁹² *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 390.

⁵⁹³ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 391. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 388.

chant prayers for the repose of the souls of the two who dyed the indigo fields” (*shide no taosa ga hototogisu, kiki ni Kitano no aibatake, ai ni sometaru konpaku to, ekō ni iro o zo, agenikeru*).⁵⁹⁴ More commonly the corpses are discovered by locals—people from the neighborhood in *Sunken Well*, fisherman in *Amijima*, a guard at the temple in *Kōshin Festival*. Regardless of whether people find the bodies or nature bears witness, the story is then passed on through word of mouth, illustrated pamphlets, or theatre performances. The people of Osaka listen to the story and, as described in many of the plays, respond with tears. The ending lines of *Amijima* demonstrate this, “The tale is spread from mouth to mouth. People say that they who are caught in the net of Buddha’s vow immediately gained salvation and deliverance, and all those who hear the tale of the Love Suicides at Amijima are moved to tears” (*ihirometaru monogatari sugu ni jōbutsu tokudatsu no, chikai no amijima shinjū to, megoto ni namida o kakenikeru*).⁵⁹⁵

Chikamatsu couples this act of witnessing with prayers for the dead, *ekō*. Although Chikamatsu sacralizes the act of love suicide in *Sonezaki*, the final lines of the play imply the need for prayers on behalf of the couple by the wider community. The last line, “High and low alike gather to pray for these lovers who beyond a doubt will in the future attain buddhahood” (*kisenkunju no ekō no tane mirai jōbutsu utagainaki*), seems to hold a contradiction between the certainty of the lovers’ future buddhahood and the need for prayers on their behalf.⁵⁹⁶

The surviving community’s prayers (*ekō*) were central to the couple’s salvation. The apparent tension between the act of love suicide leading to salvation and the necessity of the prayers of others harkened back to other Buddhist tales. For example, in his analysis of the tales of *sekkyō bushi*, a recited form of Buddhist stories for lay people that was one of the roots of the

⁵⁹⁴ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 285.

⁵⁹⁵ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 425. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 431.

⁵⁹⁶ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 56. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 43.

style of recitation in the puppet theatre, Kimbrough has observed that some of the characters are “eventually saved by their Buddhist devotion, but the religious meaning of their tales are mixed. While the stories propound the salvific powers of Amida Buddha and the *Lotus Sutra*, they simultaneously undermine those lessons by emphasizing the necessity of *dan haramitsu* practices of engaging religious professionals.”⁵⁹⁷ Similar ambivalences have been noted by Max Moerman in his study of medieval religious suicide and by Jacqueline Stone in her analysis of death rituals that developed to accompany the recitation of the *nenbutsu* at the moment of death.⁵⁹⁸ Stone has demonstrated that anxiety over the deceased’s state of mind at the moment of death—over whether, for example, the deceased was able to recite the *nenbutsu* in the a state of right mindfulness directly before dying—led to a new emphasis on funeral rituals.⁵⁹⁹

Just as the audience in the performances became an additional witness to the story beyond those named in the text, the performances of the plays themselves became a requiem for the dead. For instance, *Two Illustrated Books* ended with an underscoring of the importance of the survivors remembering and praying for the dead. The play concluded, “Two different illustrated books were written: in one, Ichi dies and, in one, he lives. Reading these books is a prayer for those who died on the road to love” (*sate koso sejō ni, kono otoko, shinda fūzetsu, shinanu sata shōji nimai no ezōshi ni, koiji no ekō o ukenikeru*).⁶⁰⁰ In this line, Chikamatsu uses the same term, *ekō*, to refer to the prayers of those left behind. Through the repetition of this word, the prayers for the dead from *Sonezaki* echo in *Two Illustrated Books*. In these plays, the act of reading books about the deceased, watching plays about the deceased, or engaging in

⁵⁹⁷ Introduction to *Wondrous Brutal Fictions*, 15.

⁵⁹⁸ Moerman, *Localizing Paradise* and Stone, “By the Power of One’s Last *Nenbutsu*.”

⁵⁹⁹ Stone, “By the Power of One’s Last *Nenbutsu*,” 108.

⁶⁰⁰ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 81.

Buddhist dedicatory prayers were all ways to ensure the salvation of the dead couple. By extension, the performances of the plays themselves are a kind of religious act similar to the reading of sutras: they became a requiem for the dead.⁶⁰¹

Seven of Chikamatsu's eleven love suicide plays end with these dedicatory prayers.⁶⁰² *Colored Leaves in the Fourth Month*, which leaves the male lover alive at the end, did not end with *ekō*. Its sequel, *Re-dyeing the Fourth Month*, in which the male lover dies and completes the love suicide pact, did end with *ekō*, so this can be seen as the prayers for the couple upon completion of their suicide vow.⁶⁰³ *Ikudama* also does not end in *ekō*, although it features the most recitations of the *nenbutsu* of any of the plays. The two remaining plays that do not end in *ekō* are the plays in which the characters adhere to a different sect of Buddhism than Pure Land Buddhism, *Sunken Well* and *Women's Temple*. Each still employs a sacred image as the final image of the play. *Sunken Well* concludes with: "When people come to draw water from the well, they call this the Love Suicide of the Sunken Well. The well brims with the sacred water of a life sacrificed for love" (*mizu no aware ya kumiagete kasane izutsu no shinjū to, minori no mizu o zo tatakeru*).⁶⁰⁴ The final lines of *The Love Suicides in the Women's Temple* evokes Shingon Buddhist funerary rituals: "Now they return to earth, water, fire, and wind: wind is in the mountains, water in the valley stream, and earth in the sand sprinkled on their bodies in the Shingon rite that brings salvation" (*chisuikafū no, kaze wa yama, mizu wa tanimizu, tsuchi wa*

⁶⁰¹ Koyama, *Chikamatsu Jōruri no kenkyū*, 41.

⁶⁰² These seven are *Sonezaki*, *Two Illustrated Books*, *Re-dyeing the Fourth Month*, *Icy Blade*, *Imamiya*, *Amijima*, and *Kōshin Festival*.

⁶⁰³ In his analysis of opening *michiyuki* scenes in love suicide plays, Torigoe Bunzō has pointed out that only the first of these two plays, *Colored Leaves in the Fourth Month*, has an opening *michiyuki*. Since the second is a sequel, he views the opening *michiyuki* on *Colored Leaves* to extend over both plays. Quoted in Koyama, *Chikamatsu jōruri no kenkyū*, 42.

⁶⁰⁴ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 193.

mata dosha no kudoku no Shingon himitsu).⁶⁰⁵ These lines bring a serene close to the love suicide that came just before and reinforce the spiritual possibilities of salvation through religious faith and love suicide.

The wider community's role in praying for those who die in love suicide becomes especially apparent in the ending of *Amijima*. *Amijima* takes place during the *jōyahōyō*, the ten days and ten nights festival in the tenth month. It was believed that anyone who died during this festival, which was celebrated by the Pure Land sect, would achieve Buddhahood. In act one, Koharu refers to this belief when she asks her samurai customer, "Tell me, samurai, they say that, if you're going to kill yourself anyway, people who die during the Ten Nights are sure to become Buddhas. Is that really true?" (*ano, osamurai onaji shiruru michi nimo jūya no uchi ni shinda mono wa hotoke ni naru to iimasu ga, jōkai na*).⁶⁰⁶ While the play is ambiguous about the exact dates of its action, which may or may not precisely fit the dates of the festival, Chikamatsu clearly draws on the festival as a way to establish the idea that the couple will achieve Buddhahood after death.⁶⁰⁷

The last act takes place on the final day of the festivities, which end at dawn. The suicides, too, take place right at dawn. As the lovers prepare to die, they do so against a soundscape of bells and chanting voices. These would have been the bells and the voices of the practitioners at the nearby Pure Land temples. According to Koyama's analysis of the geography of Osaka in 1720, the year *Amijima* premiered, there were thirty temples near the suicide site on Amijima, and seven of those were Pure Land temples. So, on the final night of the festival, there

⁶⁰⁵ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 160. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 235.

⁶⁰⁶ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 395. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 393.

⁶⁰⁷ Koyama, *Chikamatsu jōruri no kenkyū*, 36.

would have been bells ringing and people chanting at each of these temples simultaneously.⁶⁰⁸ In later adaptations of *Amijima*, the lovers attend these services before committing suicide, further solidifying their future salvation. In Chikamatsu's version the lovers do not attend the services but attain salvation thanks to the timing of their deaths. Since popular belief at the time stipulated that anyone who died during this time would become a Buddha, the couple's attendance at the services would not have mattered.⁶⁰⁹ In confirmation of this interpretation, the last lines chanted by the practitioners in the Pure Land service before Jihei jumps to his death are, "Believers and unbelievers will equally share in the divine grace" (*uen muen naishi hōkai byōdō*).⁶¹⁰ Jihei then calls out "May we be reborn on one lotus! Hail Amida Buddha!" (*ichiren takushō, namu Amidabutsu*).⁶¹¹ His last words are this chanted *nenbutsu*.

These dedicatory prayers at the conclusion of the Pure Land service were another way of invoking the role of the community in helping these lovers to be reborn in paradise. In Chikamatsu's other love suicide plays, the narrator tells the audience that there are people who hear the story, transmit the story, and pray for the lovers. Here, the voices of the community praying on behalf of all beings, sinners and believers alike, accompany the lovers as they die. These prayers encompass them in their final moments and ease their path to salvation.

Conclusion

Chikamatsu developed the love suicide genre within a culture in which religious and popular entertainment were linked intricately. He borrowed elements from lay religious practice,

⁶⁰⁸ Chikamatsu *jōruri no kenkyū*, 15.

⁶⁰⁹ Koyama, *Chikamatsu jōruri no kenkyū*, 31-33.

⁶¹⁰ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 424. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 431.

⁶¹¹ Keene, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, 424. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 75, 431.

such as the interest in pilgrimages, to add topicality and appeal to his plays. He and other playwrights incorporated the new tradition of celebrating death anniversaries, so that the performances were timed to memorialize the deaths of those who died in love suicide. Beginning with *Sonezaki*, Chikamatsu ritualized love suicide: each couple took vows, undertook a journey, prepared for their death with chanting and an expression of their belief in their future rebirth before dying in a ritualized suicide. This ritual became a touchstone in the representation of love suicide in Chikamatsu's play, the plays of other writers, and ballads about love suicide. Ohatsu and Tokubei took on a special importance and were held up as spirit guides for love suicide. Even as love suicide was touted as a route to salvation, the plays also called for the prayers of the community to help the lovers find their way to rebirth in paradise.

Rather than interpreting the belief in the salvation of the lovers through love suicide and the necessity of the prayers and rituals performed by the survivors as contradictory, we can see that them as complementary paths to salvation. Additionally, since the plays were intended for live performance, the prayers opened up a role for the audience and a link between the dead and the living. The plays became a way to honor the memory of the dead and pacify their spirits. The death rituals of the couple contributed to their salvation, but the performance and appreciation of these plays, too, ensured the couple's rebirth in paradise. Beginning with the sacralization of love suicide in *Sonezaki* and following through each subsequent love suicide play through the references to Ohatsu and Tokubei and the repetition of the death rituals and final prayer, each performance became a critical element in the salvation of those who died in love suicides. Chikamatsu, in *Two Illustrated Books*, extended this sacrality to other representations of love suicide, including the illustrated books of the title.

To frame this process of witnessing and praying within the concept of a public, the performances become a way in which the audience members, through their attendance, take on a participatory role. Most scholars of the public sphere point identify the participation of members of the community members as a critical to a functioning public. Early eighteenth-century Osaka audiences attended the theatre in a fully lit auditorium, so the reactions and responses of individual spectators would have been visible, and likely audible, to other members of the audience. But more than just an opportunity to engage publicly with other urban commoners, love suicide plays by Chikamatsu gave the audience a specific role: to bear witness and pray. This role placed the audience members in a sympathetic position toward the dead, which was the exact position the shogunal government sought to eliminate when it forbid Buddhist burials and services for those who die in love suicide in 1723.

Conclusion

“Yesterday there was a love suicide, today there was also a love suicide, tomorrow with the vicissitudes of fortune, [such] strange things will again occur.”⁶¹²

Publics are created when a community is drawn together by shared stories and ideas. In Osaka at the start of the eighteenth century, stories of love suicide took hold of the city’s imagination. The promise of seeing the most recent incident on stage called people to the theatres. Stories printed on cherry wood or on cheaper clay tiles pulled Osaka residents to part with their cash. Songs of love suicide beckoned people walking by to stop and listen especially as night fell.

These were Osaka stories. They recounted events that took place in Osaka by its inhabitants. Audiences could experience their contemporary world through these stories, its people, places, and expressions. But more than mere stories of local individuals, the plays, especially those of Chikamatsu, cast light on the larger structures that shaped Osaka residents’ lives, particularly the status system and the prostitution industry. They were potent in their ideas. Love suicide, the plays claimed, was the truest expression of sincerity and honor.

Chikamatsu’s 1703 production of *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki shinjū*) catalyzed the formation of a public around love suicide by causing a dramatic shift in the discourse about love suicide. While love suicide had already become a topic of growing interest to Osaka audiences, the early plays were in line with public opinion of the time and presented the stories for their sensational value. In *Sonezaki*, however, Chikamatsu incorporated the realist

⁶¹² This was the sentence that opened *The Great Mirror of Love Suicides* (*Shinjū ōkagami*, 1704). Quoted and translated in Shively, *The Love Suicide at Amijima*, 25.

playwrighting techniques pioneered by kabuki actor Sakata Tōjūrō, with whom he had collaborated, to appeal to audience's tastes and accentuate the circumstances of the characters that lead to their choice to die together. By working with chanter Takemoto Gidayū for the puppet theatre, Chikamatsu had an audience who expected to be moved by the performance and a lead chanter who could deliver. Chikamatsu used the text to encourage audience members to empathize with the characters. Most radically, Chikamatsu rendered the act of love suicide sacred. With *Sonezaki*, love suicide became both a pure expression of love and a path to salvation. Chikamatsu created a model for the act of love suicide and for its representations. The term *shinjū*, which originally had been used in the pleasure quarters to refer to the tokens a prostitute gave her client, became thereafter intertwined with love suicide and the values it represented.

When the authorities banned love suicide and its representations, they acknowledged the symbolic importance of the *shinjū* by insisting on a new term: “death by accomplice” (*aitajini*). As I argued in chapter two, “Censoring Love Suicide,” the authorities’ concern over love suicide lay in the challenge it posed to the status system. The strict social hierarchy that placed commoners below samurai gave the samurai license to rule and a cultural superiority based in honor. Love suicide upset the balance, however, by questioning the fixity of the status categories. The plays are peppered with examples of characters, notably Magoemon from *The Love Suicides at Amijima* (*Shinjū ten no Amijima*, 1720) who are able to slip between status categories. The plays also critique the status quo, which calls the status system into question. The plays uphold the difference between commoners and samurai by only representing commoners in love suicide. But rather than valorizing samurai death over love suicide, the plays vault love suicide as the pinnacle of honor.

Chikamatsu's critique of the status quo is especially pronounced in his representations of the prostitution industry. While there was only one licensed brothel district in Osaka, unlicensed brothel districts thrived with the tacit sanction of the local government. Their development was encouraged by the city in order to spur growth in new sectors of the city. Despite the shogunate's desire to have the prostitution industry cleanly separated from city life, brothels were an integral part of the city's economy and the personal economies of the many families who sold their daughters into prostitution. I have argued that *The Love Suicide of the Two Illustrated Books* (*Shinjū nimai ezōshi*, 1706) and *The Love Suicide at the Sunken Well* (*Shinjū kasane iztusu*, 1707) offer key insights into brothel life by taking the perspective of the prostitutes, a shift in representations of brothels. These plays lay bare the cruel treatment of the prostitutes at the hands of their employers. In the highly commoditized world of the sex industry, even young merchant's daughters were traded for money in marriage, as in Chikamatsu's 1710 play *The Love Suicides at the Women's Temple* (*Shinjū mannensō*).

Chikamatsu's treatment of the status system and the prostitution industry offer critiques of the structures that shaped the social and economic world of early modern Osaka. They also invited audience to see commoners, including prostitutes, as capable of the highest forms of love and honor. While some Osaka commoners followed the examples of the plays by committing suicides (and perhaps becoming the model for later plays), they were the outliers. More audience members returned to their daily lives. But perhaps they carried with them a more critical view of their society and a more expansive vision for who they could be.

The love suicide plays invited audiences to participate in the love suicide stories within and beyond the theatres. Osaka residents took part in circulating the stories and supporting the ventures that sold the stories, whether through the commercial theatre or publishing industries.

The prominent travel scenes in the plays, which moved through the cityscape, provided a new lens through which to see the city and new routes that could be traveled in the city. In chapter four, I argued that Chikamatsu created new famous places (*meisho*) for Osaka, such as Sonezaki and Amijima, by forming tight associations between specific locales, incidents, and emotions. He also celebrated Dōtonbori, the theatre district, as a famous site and proposed theatre as a way to view and understand the city. By tracing new routes through Osaka over its bridges, to its shrines and theatres, and to the sites of the suicides, Chikamatsu wrote new urban pilgrimages that mapped love suicide onto the city and invited audiences to move through that new landscape on their own after the performances.

Chikamatsu further welcomed the audience into an active role with the death scenes of the plays. On one hand, the plays present love suicide as a guaranteed path to salvation. Chikamatsu incorporated new traditions in lay Buddhist practice, particularly the celebration of death anniversaries, developed a ritualized series of steps for the suicide that are undertaken in each other plays, and held up the pair of lovers from *Sonezaki*, Ohatsu and Tokubei, as guides for later lovers who wish to follow their path. At the same time, Chikamatsu incorporated the audience members into the ritual of the plays. The lovers say their vows, journey to the chosen place where they will die, prepare themselves, recite a sacred formula, such as the *nenbutsu*, and commit the suicide. But then the ritual continues. The deaths are witnessed and the surviving community prays. The performance of the plays was thus an important step in the love suicide as they completed the ritual trajectory that began with the lovers' vow and ended with their memorialization.

Through representing contemporary events, the plays represented the contemporary social world. The plays take place in merchant shops and homes, in brothels, on the streets of the

theatre district and the merchant quarters, on the bridges and rivers that thread through the city, and in the shrines and temples along the city's periphery. These scenes offered an opportunity for the playwrights to represent and in some cases, offer critiques of aspects of early modern Osaka, principally the status system, the prostitution industry, the changing urban landscape, and popular religion. I argue that through these representations and critiques, the plays proposed new identities for urban commoners and thus contributed to the formation of an urban, common public.

This new public, which grew out of the love suicide plays and the values of love and honor they expressed, co-existed with other efforts of Osaka commoners to define themselves. During the same period, the Osaka Merchant Academy (Kaitokudō) took shape. Founded in 1726 out of a group of merchants who started meeting in the 1710's to read Confucian texts together, the Osaka Merchant Academy focused on the education of merchants with a focus on the developing virtue. The academy received official sanction from the government, but, as Tetsuo Najita has explained, "within the walls that provided legal protection from outside interference, merchants could draw on universalistic ideas stripped of practical considerations as to existing political and social hierarchies and address the moral claims that merchants wished to make."⁶¹³ The vision here differed from that of Chikamatsu and the other playwrights of the love suicide genre since the love suicide plays emphasized a particular commoner identify over a more universal ideal. Still, founding of the Osaka Merchant Academy is another indication of the commoners of Osaka coming into their own as a collective.

The most salient example of political action from the commoners took place in 1736. Thirty-one city elders, who were commoners, banded together to send a letter to the city

⁶¹³ *Visions of Virtue in Tokugawa Japan*, 71.

magistrates, who were the shogun's representatives in Osaka and samurai, on behalf of their neighborhoods to protest compulsory rice purchases, a new economic policy which unfavorably impacted commoners to the advantage of samurai.⁶¹⁴ When their appeals went unheeded, the merchants organized a coordinated mass action in which, according to a source at the time, "representatives from all the residential quarters within the city converged on the offices of the city magistrates, beginning in the Fifth Hour of the morning and continuing until the Fourth Hour, and presented to the authorities a mass of petitions."⁶¹⁵ The conflict resolved peacefully, but this first mass action was the impetus for similar protests by Osaka commoners throughout the early modern period.

Commoners in Edo were also beginning to coalesce as a community, which is perhaps why the authorities felt so threatened when the love suicide plays and ballads made their way to Edo. James McClain has termed this the "chōninization" of Edo in reference to the Japanese term *chōnin*, or townspeople. McClain has described this process as "the appropriation of the space, institutions, and cultural motifs of the city by its merchants and artisans at the expense of the government and ruling samurai status group."⁶¹⁶

In Osaka, through the love suicide plays, Chikamatsu did not appropriate from the samurai but instead defined the commoner. He offered critiques of the social and economic structures that led to financial hardship and ruin especially for low-ranking commoners and prostitutes. In contrast to the harsh realities of urban life, he offered a vision of love, honor, and

⁶¹⁴ Uchida Kusuo, "Protest and the Tactics of Direct Remonstrance: Osaka Merchants Make Their Voices Heard," trans. James L. McClain in *Osaka: The Merchant's Capital of Early Modern Japan*, ed. James L. McClain et al. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 88-92.

⁶¹⁵ The time period is between 8:00 and 10:00 am. Quoted in Uchida, "Protest and the Tactics of Direct Remonstrance," 93-94.

⁶¹⁶ "Edobashi," in *Edo and Paris: Urban Life and the State in the Early Modern Era*, ed. James L. McClain et al. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 127

sanctification through love suicide. Though he wrote specifically for Osaka audiences and emphasized the particularities of life in Osaka, his plays resonated with audiences in Edo and later, across Japan as a national culture emerged.⁶¹⁷ Chikamatsu became celebrated as a playwright representing Japan's national literature. He so effectively rewrote the discourse around love suicide that his radical approach to the subject was forgotten. As Chikamatsu's love suicide plays were recast as domestic tragedies by Shōyō and others, awareness of the plays' social function receded. Placing the plays back in the context of early eighteenth century Osaka reveals the potent critiques, celebrations of locals and locales, and new values within the plays that spoke to their city and called into consciousness its people.

⁶¹⁷ For recent scholarship on the emergence of a national culture in the early modern period see Berry, *Japan in Print*; Yonemoto, *Mapping Early Modern Japan*; and Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

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