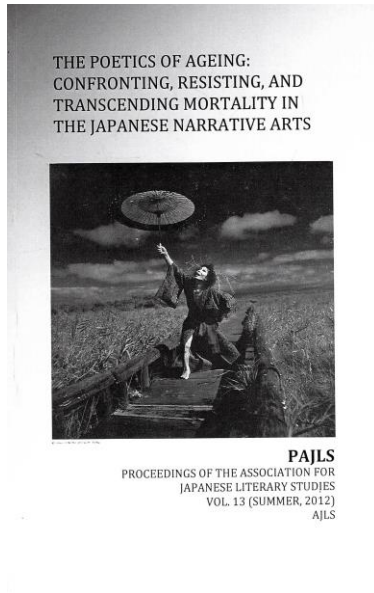


“‘Ripping Apart the Mat at Sixty’: Fantasies of Gerontic Sexuality in *Ukiyozōshi*”

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## “Ripping Apart the Mat at Sixty”: Fantasies of Gerontic Sexuality in *Ukiyozōshi*

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In the celebrated conclusion to Ihara Saikaku’s (1642-1693) *Kōshoku ichidai otoko* 『好色一代男』 (*Life of an Sensual Man*, 1682), the protagonist Yonosuke, aged sixty, boards a ship with a band of seven fellow pleasure seekers and sets sail for the legendary Island of Women, Nyogo-no-shima 女護島. Although the ship, christened the Yoshihiro maru (Good Ship of Desire), hardly seems fit for such an ambitious seafaring journey—resembling as it does the common sort of *choki-bune* 猪牙船 that would have been used to shuttle habitués of the Yoshiwara up and down the Sumida River—any doubts about the seaworthiness of the vessel are overshadowed by doubts about Yonosuke’s own stamina and virility. The thoroughgoing fondness for enumeration in this text, evident early on with the tabulation of Yonosuke’s sexual conquests at 3,742 women and 725 men, reemerges in the description of the ship’s galley, where we learn that there are different types of dildos stocked in the thousands, 200 erotic prints, 900 bales of tissue paper, as well as an immense store of aphrodisiacs—fifty large jars of “Kidney Combustion Pills” and twenty crates of “Woman Pleasing Lozenges.”<sup>1</sup> Clearly, Yonosuke and his compatriots are stocking up in anticipation of great sexual gratification. The only question is whether or not their aged bodies can keep pace with their libidos. Earlier in the text, we learn that by the age of fifty-four, Yonosuke has already exhausted the vital fluids in his kidneys through his relentless love-making, and it is clear that he has become increasingly reliant on aphrodisiacs to maintain his virility. Alas, the question of whether or not Yonosuke is able to continue with his sexual exploits after the age of sixty is one to which readers are never given an answer, for after clearing the southern tip of the phallically suggestive Izu

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<sup>1</sup> Ihara Saikaku, *Kōshoku ichidai otoko*, in *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 38, eds. Teruoka Yasutaka and Higashi Akimasa (Shōgakukan, 1971), 301-02.

Peninsula, the Yoshiro maru and its passengers simply sail off the last page of the text and into an open-ended sea of speculative fantasy.

Like the elusive destination of Yonosuke and his friends, which was represented on maps of the time but for all purposes an imaginary land, the very notion of old age sexuality was an uncharted territory for most writers and producers of erotic literature during the Edo period. The elderly rarely figure as subjects in any of the preponderant genres of printed erotic material of the time—including, for example, *saiken* 細見 and *hyōbanki* 評判記 evaluation guides to the pleasure quarters, *makura-e* 枕絵 erotic prints, and *enpon* 艶本, erotic books and manuals designed for foreplay, masturbation, and sexual self-edification. When they do, as discussed below, it is often in the form of a didactic or connoisseurial authority who guides the uninitiated on the finer points of conduct and discernment in the quarter. In the cases of *saiken* and *hyōbanki*, the absence of the elderly as objects of critique likely reflects a very real absence or exclusion of the elderly from certain regimes of the sexual economy. In other genres, it seems to reflect a collective demand for erotic material featuring the young and nubile, rather than the elderly, in print disseminated sexual fantasy. *Kōshokubon* 好色本 (“sensual books”), which emerged as a distinct genre of popular fiction after the commercial success of Saikaku’s *Kōshoku ichidai otoko*, and flourished until the well-documented crack down of the *bakufu* on the genre in Kyōhō 7 (1722), evince a similar preference for youthful subjects, as do many of the reconstituted genres that followed *kōshokubon*, including *fūryūbon* 風流本 (“dashing books”), *Hachimōjijiyabon* 八文字屋本 (“House of the Figure Eight” books) and *katagimono* 氣質物 (“temperament pieces”). Titles recorded in book registers of the Shōtoku 正徳 (1711.4-1716.6) period even bespeak an interest in the fictional possibilities of sexual longevity through eternal youth and rebirth, *Kōshoku furōmon* 『好色不老門』 (*Gateway to Ageless Lovemaking*, 1716) and *Kōshoku henshō nanshi* 『好色変生男子』 (*A Sensual Man Reborn*).

Yet it is in this very same body of literature (hereafter referred to by the generic term *ukiyoōshi* 浮世草子) that we also

discover some of the richest and most suggestive material for thinking about old age sexuality, or at least how old age sexuality was imagined, in early modern Japan. The shift away from long narratives about a single character, or *ichidaiki* 一代記, in favor of briefer vignettes or sketches about multiple characters—a trend which is clearly in evidence in Saikaku’s early *chōninmono* 町人物 pieces, and comes into full form in the *katagimono* of Ejima Kiseki—gave *ukiyo-zōshi* writers a medium for exploring differences between people of different social classes, genders, temperaments, and ages. In the hands of many *ukiyo-zōshi* writers, these brief character pieces came to emphasize eccentric and outlandish behavior. Here we find stories about old men who, like Saikaku’s Yonosuke, indulge in relentless sexual promiscuity into their golden years, or else have a sudden sexual “reawakening” after the age of sixty. Following a popular catchphrase of the time, *roku-jū no mushiro yaburi* 六十の筵破り (literally, “tearing up one’s mat at sixty”), which refers to the notion of casting off all sexual inhibitions after the sextagenarian milestone of *kanreki* 還暦, and indulging in one’s desires without fear of social consequence, these stories present sexually active old men as objects of ridicule, moral excoriation and fascination—sometimes all at once.

This paper examines several representative examples of narratives about old men who risk fortune and honor in the pursuit of sensual pleasures in the licensed quarter, all from *ukiyo-zōshi* produced during the Genroku 元禄 (1688.9-1704.3), Hōei 宝永 (1704.3-1711.4), and Shōtoku periods. The period under examination is significant because it was a time that witnessed the emergence of divergent views on old age sexuality. Accordingly, this study will situate *ukiyo-zōshi* within its informing discursive contexts, while also demonstrating how *ukiyo-zōshi* became a site for projecting and playing out social, economic, and moral consequences of old age sexuality in situational contexts. Rather than viewing these texts as a mirror, reflective of imminent social realities, this study will consider how *ukiyo-zōshi* identified lacunae in prevailing discourses on sexuality and imagined certain problems and possibilities of old age sexuality. A more comprehensive study on this topic would include similar treatment

of two other, similarly significant types of stories—those featuring old men in homosexual and pederastic relationships, and those featuring women in heterosexual relationships, often with younger men—however the limited scope of the present study allows for little more than passing references and recommendations for future study in these areas.

### Sexual Connoisseurship and Old Age

Within early modern *saiken* and *hyōbanki* guides to the pleasure quarters, old age is conventionally associated with positive qualities such as experience, restraint, and connoisseurial authority. In these works, the presentation of material is commonly presided over by the prefatorial presence of an old man, and in some cases even structured as a series of interrogative exchanges between a young initiate into the world of pleasure and his older mentor, a sagacious habitué of the quarter with lots of things to say. This invocation of old age and experience, which takes various forms, is deployed to establish the authority of the text in all matters of practical information, be it about the names and ranks of courtesans or the relative price ranges for different establishments. However, it can also be seen as a device for establishing textual authority on more connoisseurial matters, such as recommendations for tea houses 茶屋 and boat houses 船宿, and even didactic matters, such as warnings about the deleterious effects of unbridled passion or excessive ejaculation. Thus we find prefatorial invocations of old age in works as early as *Azuma monogatari* 『あづま物語』 (*Tales of the East*, 1642), the first recognized *saiken* guide to the old Yoshiwara (before its destruction during the Great Meireki Fire of 1657), and appearances of elderly characters in connoisseurial narratives, beginning at least as early as the figure of the “Virtuous Old Man” 徳老人 in Hatakeyama Kizan’s 畠山箕山 (1626-1704) *Shikidō okagami* 『色道大鏡』 (*Great Mirror on the Way of Love*, 1678-1688). In many ways, the constructions of old men in these genres of literature hew to the ideals of *Shikidō-ron* 色道論 (“The Way of Sensual Love”), an emerging trend of thought in the mid-seventeenth century whose basic tenet, as articulated by Kizan and

others, was that enlightenment could be achieved through discretionary, humane, and culturally informed pursuits of sensual pleasure.<sup>2</sup> Within the *hiden*-like transmission of knowledge re-enacted in *saiken* and *hyōbanki*, old men occupy the positions of enlightened masters who have attained the ideal of *sui* 粹, schooling the uninitiated and uncouth (and usually much younger) *yabo* 野暮 on what to do and how to behave.

For writers holding forth on the topic of sensual love, and its corollary, respectable conduct in the pursuit of love, deploying the authorial stance of an aged, former habitué of the licensed quarter was an expedient strategy for establishing connoisseurial and even didactic authority. Not every prefatorial ruse comes off as disingenuous rhetorical artifice, however, and in some cases, it seems that readers are being given a peek into the candid concerns of writers writing as old men. In his postscript to *Nurehotoke* 『ぬれほとけ』 (*The Wet Buddha*, 1671), for example, Hatakeyama Kizan initiates his closing statements by referring to his own physical decline and the seemingly libidinous motivations behind his writing.

My appearance may be that of an old man, senescent and white-haired, yet my heart is that of a nineteen- or twenty-year old. Feelings for courtesans and love affairs of long ago remain with me even now, and try though I might to keep them hidden away, they manifest themselves through my passions and emerge in my words. That is why writing this book has been so enjoyable for me. It is not the offering of a wise man, but rather intended for other philanderers like myself, with deep feelings of passion, who also hear the call to death, imitative of beckoning doves, that goes, “Here, old man! Here!” For me, a white-haired old fogey who has forgotten about dying, I write

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<sup>2</sup> Noma Kōshin, *kaisetsu* to Noma Kōshin, ed., *Kinsei shikidōron, Nihon shishō taiki* vol. 60 (Iwanami shoten, 1976), 373-77.

because it gives consolation to my vital energies (C. *qi*).<sup>3</sup>

Implicit within this address is the suggestion that libidinous drives of the author, who professes to have the heart and passions of a much younger man, can only be appeased through writing, through coaching younger readers on how to realize their own desires with courtesans of the quarter. The onset of bodily decrepitude, signified by repeated references to his elderly appearance and white hair, seems to foreclose the possibility of ever engaging in sensual pleasures the way he did in his youth, and so he must consign himself to the vicarious pleasures of writing. Yet for the author, writing also seems to constitute a strategy for staving off apprehensions about death, so that he can find consolation in memories of the sexual exploits of his youth. These dual motivations appear to inform Kizan's entire body of *shikidō* writings, for he consistently invokes his old age and memories of his youth in prefaces and postfaces to his works. In the preface to *Shikidō ōkagami*, for example, Kizan reflects on his long career as a habitué of the pleasure quarters, writing of visiting Shinmachi for the first time at the age of thirteen, and of spending the next thirty years of his life travelling throughout different regions of the country, visiting the licensed districts of Kyoto, Osaka, and Edo, and acquiring extensive knowledge about courtesans and experience in the ways of sensual love.<sup>4</sup>

It might strike readers as amusing or strange that Kizan, in many ways the epitome of *sui* sensibility, writes about entering a period of physical decline and diminished sexual activity at age forty-five in *Nurehotoke*, and about reaching the end of his career, and presumably the end of his sexual activity, at age fifty-two in *Shikidō ōkagami*. After all, Saikaku's Yonosuke, conjectured to be based on Hatakeyama Kizan, continues to be sexually active at least until the age of sixty in *Kōshoku ichidai otoko*. At very least, the comparison raises issues about age and sexual virility in early

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<sup>3</sup> Hatakeyama Kizan, *Nurehotoke*, *Kinsei shikidōron*, in *Nihon shisō taikai* vol. 60, ed. Noma Kōshin (Iwanami shoten, 1976), 91.

<sup>4</sup> Noma Kōshin, ed., *Kanbon Shikidō ōkagami* (Kyoto: Yusan bunko, 1961), 3-4.

modern Japan, and about what the prevailing perceptions were regarding acceptable ages for being sexually active. One seminal text for thinking about this aspect of sexuality in early modern Japan is *Yōjōkun* 養生訓 (*Practices for Nourishing Life*, 1712), a compendium of essays on health and longevity composed by one of the leading Confucian scholars of the early eighteenth century, Kaibara Ekiken 貝原益軒 (1630-1714). In the section entitled “Sexual Desire with Discretion” 慎色欲, Ekiken cites multiple Chinese classical sources—both traditional medical texts and Confucian classics—to formulate an ethics of sexual health.

One of the central tenets of Ekiken’s argument is that men should be increasingly cautious about sexual activity as they age, lest they deplete vital *qi* 氣 energies through excessive ejaculation and cause damage to their kidneys and spleen. Men over the age of forty, according to precise prescriptions of the *Qian Jin Fang* 千金方 (*Thousand Pieces of Gold Formulae*, c. 652), should refrain from ejaculating more than once every sixteen days, men over fifty once every twenty days, and men over sixty—with the rare exceptions of those with extraordinary sexual vitality—not at all.<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding the exception of elderly men of extraordinary libidinous drive, the prescriptions of the *Qian Jin Fang*, incorporated directly into Ekiken’s ethics of sexuality, all but foreclose the possibility of sex after the age of sixty.<sup>6</sup> With its focus on vital energy, or *qi*, this excerpt of Ekiken’s text gives us an interesting context for reconsidering Kizan’s claims of old age in *Nurehotoke* (at the age of forty-five) as well as his statement about writing erotic literature to console or appease his *qi*.

When situated within a larger historical discursive context, however, Ekiken and Kizan seem to be charting out different possibilities for old age sexuality. If Ekiken’s text, as Henry Smith and others have suggested, is prototypical of a long-term shift in early eighteenth century Japanese discourse away from *shikidō* thought, and towards an ethics of marital sexuality, or *fūfu no*

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<sup>5</sup> Kaibara Ekiken, *Yōjōkun*, in *Ekiken zenshū* vol. 3 (Kokusho kankōkai, 1973), 532-36.

<sup>6</sup> It is noted, for example, that elderly men of extraordinary energy and vitality would be in danger of suffering from boils and tumors if they did not release *qi* energy through occasional ejaculation.



*michi* 夫婦の道 (“the connubial way”), then the implication is that sex after sixty had no legitimate place within the prevailing domestic sexual economy, based on family reproduction and related social and economic values.<sup>7</sup> If anything, sex after sixty would lead to physical deterioration for the individual, and potentially deleterious moral consequences for the family—consequences that are barely recognized or explored in *saiken* and *hyōbanki*. On the other hand, *shikidō* thought of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, perhaps because it privileges *sui* qualities like experience, cultural refinement, and respectable conduct in a non-reproductive sexual economy (the pleasure quarters), foregrounds some of the merits of old age and clearly places less emphasis on youth and virility. Moreover, Kizan’s writings, at least, acknowledge the existence old age libidinous desire, acknowledge the existence of a community of elderly readers motivated by libidinous desires, and create a space for vicarious re-enactments and imaginings of desire.

### Literary Constructions of Old Age Sexuality

By no means is the preceding sketching out of ideas meant to be comprehensive in its representation of early modern discourses on sexuality, but merely to stress the point that *ukiyozōshi* flourished during an important period of transition in views on sexuality. We might think of *ukiyozōshi* as being subtended and informed by these competing discourses, but also as being engaged with them on various levels—responding to, resisting, and even satirizing them. With its close filiations to *saiken* and *hyōbanki*, which in the cases of works like Ejima Kiseki’s 江島其磧 (1666-1735) *Keisei iro jamisen* 『傾城色三味線』 (*A Courtesan’s Sultry Shamisen*, 1701) can be very difficult to distinguish, it might be expected that *ukiyozōshi* makes few significant departures from these genres, depicting old men in line with the ideals of *shikidō*, as suave and sagacious old hands who

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<sup>7</sup> Henry Smith, “Overcoming the Modern History of Edo ‘Shunga,’” in *Imagining Reading Eros: Proceedings for the Conference, Sexuality and Edo Culture, 1750-1850*, ed. Sumie Jones, (Bloomington: The East Asian Center, Indiana University), 30.

work the quarter. Rarely is this the case, however, as it is more common to encounter characters who are held up for ridicule for moral criticism because of their eccentric and age-inappropriate enthusiasm for nights in the quarter. Another type are those who, having reached a certain plane of enlightenment after growing weary of carnal pleasures, criticize everything that the Yoshiwara or Shinmachi stands for. Moral criticism, however ironic, works into the equation in both cases, whether the old man is the object of criticism or the mouthpiece for delivering it.

In a tale from Yashoku Jibun’s 夜食時分 (fl. 1694-1702) *Kōshoku haidokusan* 『好色敗毒散』 (*Antidotes to Mishaps of Passion*, 1702), we find a good example of the latter. An old trawler of corbiculae becomes the focus of the story when he is approached by a boat full of entertainers, courtesans, and revelers, and asked to give an account of his youth. Much to their disbelief, the humble old man tells of cavorting with actors, participating in lavish junketings in tea houses and having a passionate affair with a courtesan. In a sense, his account is also a condemnation of the life that his younger interlocutors are currently leading, since he claims to have grown disillusioned with the artificiality and insincerity of relationships with courtesans, and found meaning in the simple life of harvesting shellfish. The story ends with yet another twist as the old man reveals himself to be the patron god of travelers, Dōsojin 道祖人, and he and his catch are transformed into the paper and text of a love letter.<sup>8</sup> Whether human or divine, the old man’s enlightenment is very different than that formulated by Kizan—he has not come to see the spiritual value of sensual pleasure; he has totally rejected it and encouraged others to do the same.

Excoriation of the evils of sexual desire, especially when those desires are allowed to play out with disastrous financial consequences in the economy of the pleasure quarter, forms an important element in the narrative rhetoric of *ukiyozōshi*. One of the most common narrative motifs of *ukiyozōshi* is that of the wealthy young man, usually from the merchant class, who squanders his family fortune in the licensed quarter and ends up

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<sup>8</sup> Yashoku Jibun, *Kōshoku haidokusan*, in *Shin Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 65, ed. Hasegawa Tsuyoshi (Shōgakukan, 2000), 64-71.

being disinherited and disowned by his indignant father. In many ways, Saikaku can be credited with creating the template for this type of character piece in *Honchō nijū fukō* 『本朝二十不孝』 (*Twenty Tales of Filial Impiety in Our Realm*, 1686), *Nihon eitaigura* 『日本永代蔵』 (*Eternal Storehouses of Japan*, 1688) and other early *chōnin-mono* collections that foreground clashes between newly emergent modes of conspicuous consumption and older, more traditional economic and social values—all neatly allegorized within antagonistic intergenerational relationships between son and father. While imminent social and economic realities appear to have warranted retellings of the same basic narrative twenty and even thirty years after Saikaku's posthumously published works, familiarity must have attenuated their satirical edge with later readers. This may be why several writers after Saikaku explore the comic possibilities of repositioning the pieces on the board, as it were, and of making the elderly father the perpetrator—rather than the victim—of profligacy. While some of these departures appear to veer so far from social reality as to approach the realm of the absurd, the problems they pose, albeit *ad absurdum*, are far more complex and provocative than they might first appear.

By way of introducing some scenarios of social, economic and moral disorder brought on by old men asserting their sexuality, we can examine a tale from the third volume of the posthumously published *Saikaku okimiyage* 『西鶴置土産』 (*Saikaku's Parting Gift*, 1693), *A Son Who Swims Against the Current of Paternal Influence and Disowns His Father* 『子が親の勘当逆川をおよぐ』.<sup>9</sup> The title of the story itself is a signal of the role reversal that will take place between two common character types—the profligate son and his industrious, thrifty and rightfully indignant father. In this case, it is the responsibly minded son who is concerned about the family finances, and who finds himself at wit's end trying to convince his father, the suggestively nicknamed Ōsakazuki 大盃 (“whopping wine cup”), to abandon his luxurious orgies in the licensed quarter. This seemingly simple comic scenario is bound up in multiple problems and concerns, however,

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<sup>9</sup> A similar version of this story appears in a slightly reworked reissue of Saikaku's work, *Fūryū monde kazō kura* 『風流門出加増蔵』 (1708).

as the son, beholden by social responsibility to uphold filial piety, is in no position of authority to tell his father what to do, even if his actions endanger the welfare of the household. Eventually he seeks the counsel of village elders, who, in light of the extraordinary circumstances, give him permission to disown his own father. Following a countersuit, a settlement is reached whereby Ōsakazuki is paid retribution of 1,500 *ryō* in return for being disowned. Ōsakazuki is delighted by the agreement, but in his excitement quickly spends every last coin of this windfall at the Manjiya brothel in the Yoshiwara. Reduced to poverty, Ōsakazuki is forced to ply a trade as a carp monger, hoping to outlive his son so that he can re-inherit the family fortune and lavish it on famous courtesans.<sup>10</sup>

A few basic elements of this story, including the figures of the prodigal father and his thrifty, responsible son, carry over to similar narratives in other works of *ukiyozōshi*. Perhaps the most salient carryover, however, is the emphasis on the prodigality inherent in old age sexuality, as the elderly man jeopardizes the finances of his household by engaging in contests of symbolic sexual virulence (conspicuous displays of wealth, social status, and consumption) in the pleasure quarters. While Ōsakazuki’s love for drink and propensity to throw around a lot of money in pursuit of a good time might seem like associative references to his sexual prowess, in fact readers are never given an explicit reassurance that he has the stamina or virility to match. In other stories, the sexual shortcomings of old men are brought into bolder relief. One particularly unforgiving caricature, which surprisingly offers little in the way of token moralizing, comes from the third volume of *Kōshoku toshi otoko* 『好色とし男』 (*Sensual Old Men*, 1675), a collection of comic stories about the sexual exploits of old men. In the second tale of the volume, a wealthy old merchant, who is described as having a face like a wrinkly pickled plum, decides to spend a small fortune on one night of pleasure in the company of seven hired courtesans. Despite best laid plans, however, all sorts of complications arise, including jealous

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<sup>10</sup> Ihara Saikaku, *Saikaku okimiyage*, in *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 40, eds. Taniwaki Masachika et al, (Shōgakukan, 1973), 572-75.

squabbles between some of the women. The biggest complication, however, is the old man's inability to get into the mood for such an ambitious night of lovemaking. As he gets up to make one trip to the outhouse after the next, the old man's failed attempts at having an erection become the fodder for jokes among his would-be "conquests." While not explicitly critical of the old man, the narrative clearly presents his sexual misadventure as a folly, whose comedic value lies in the stark discrepancy between his impressive wealth and underwhelming virility.

Other stories depart from stocks depictions of promiscuous old men to present a sexual "re-awakening," whereby an old man, who has spent the first sixty years of his life in thrifty and sober dedication to his business and family life, suddenly discovers the pleasures of wine and women, and throws himself into a new life as a rake. In every respect, these characters rip up the mat at sixty. A tale from the third volume of Ejima Kiseki's *Ukiyo oyaji katagi* 『浮世親仁形気』 (*Characters of Old Men in the Floating World*, 1720) is a good example of this. In the tale, the third in the volume, the two main characters, Itami and Tonda, are wealthy merchants and life-long friends, who after having achieved the pinnacle of worldly success, decide to retire from secular life. They become forest ascetics, aspiring to the ideal of the seven wise men of the bamboo grove, and it is not long before these two men, both lifelong teetotalers and frugal merchants, turn to drink, and acquire a coterie of freeloading friends. While the eccentricities of these two retired men become the talk of the town, they do not become the objects of moral judgment at this point in the story. It is only after their love for drink develops into a love for the carnal pleasures of the pleasure quarters, and they start squandering all sorts of money on lavish parties with courtesans and entertainers, do they open themselves up to criticism—both from other characters in the narrative and the narrator. By the end of the story, when it is revealed that both men have disowned their wives so that they can command the family fortunes for their newly prodigal lifestyle, they have all but ceased to be sympathetic characters.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ejima Kiseki, *Ukiyo oyaji katagi*, in *Shin Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 65, ed. Hasegawa Tsuyoshi (Shōgakukan, 2000), 503-10.

Kiseki's *Ukiyo oyaji katagi*, as its title suggests, it is rife with tales of old men who assert their eccentric preoccupations, including pretensions of sexual rejuvenation. In an interesting departure from other tales of old men who rediscover their youth and vitality in the pleasure quarters, the second tale from the second volume, entitled “A Sanguine Old Man Who Enjoys Sensual Pleasures” 「色を楽しむ血気の親父」, features an old man who makes trouble not through his squandering of fortune in the pleasure quarters, but through indiscriminate promiscuity with women who work in his family shop. As in the preceding stories discussed above, however, there are financial repercussions to these affairs, repercussions which threaten not only the fortune, but also the reputation, of the household. The story centers on the proprietor of a linen shop named Jingobee, who after nearly running his business into the ground through bad management, entrusts it with his much more fiscally responsible son Jinnosuke. Jinnosuke arranges to reimburse his father's creditors through regular payments, and in less than ten years' time, manages to rescue the business from bankruptcy and turn enough profit to expand the operation, putting up three new shops in Kyoto and a fourth in Edo. While he is relieved to have been saved from financial disaster by his son's shrewd management, Jingobee quickly finds that there is little to occupy him in his retirement. He takes up his shears and returns to the main shop, where he initially applies himself to small work. It is not long, however, before he is lording over his son and pressing him with unwelcome advice on business affairs. To make matters worse, Jingobee begins to have affairs with some of the young women in the shops, affairs which come to light when one woman after the next requests time off because of morning sickness and other symptoms of pregnancy. Remarkably, Jingobee has managed to impregnate six women, once again putting the business on the brink of ruin. Jinnosuke, at a loss about how to manage this complex set of issues, consults with his relatives, who in turn call for Jingobee. After a stern reprimand, Jingobee vows to keep his hands off the shop girls, on the condition that he may be allowed to take in a woman of twenty-four or twenty-five as his wife. All parties agree to the

arrangement, albeit with some bemusement over the old man's (at this stage, over seventy years old) insatiable desires.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were witness to profound shifts in discourses on sexuality, and while evidence of divergent views on old age sexuality can be gleaned from some literature of the time, by and large the elderly were absent from most erotic material printed for public consumption. Important exceptions were *saiken* and *hyōbanki*, in which figures of old men are deployed to establish the commentarial and connoisseurial authority of the text, and *ukiyozōshi*, which became a site for projecting and playing out social, economic, and moral consequences of old age sexuality in situational contexts. In the latter body of literature, sexually active old men are often depicted simultaneously as objects of ridicule, moral excoriation and fascination. What seems to be at issue in these narratives is the moral right of the elderly to participate in the licensed sexual economy of the pleasure quarters, and in particular to spend family fortune on symbolic displays of sexual virulence that have no productive or reproductive ends, and are likely made to compensate for diminished libido. This behavior, while depicted as eccentric and comical in many cases, is also treated as a threat to the sanctioned domestic sexual economy, based on family reproduction and related social and economic values. In the most common narrative iteration, it must be resolved through an intervention by outsiders (relatives, village elders, etc.) who endow the son with the moral authority to put an end to his father's behavior or else cut him off from the family. In cases where there is no son to take over as head of the household, as in the third tale of the third volume of Kiseki's *Ukiyo oyaji katagi*, the possibilities for this sort of resolution are limited, and old men are potentially in a position to disown their families and reallocate wealth according to demands of non-reproductive economy, and their own desires. While there are inherent problems with claiming that these narratives somehow allegorize issues treated in the

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<sup>12</sup> Ejima Kiseki, *Ukiyo oyaji katagi*, in *Shin Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* vol. 65, ed. Hasegawa Tsuyoshi (Shōgakukan, 2000), 477-81.

discourses of *shikidō* and *fūfu no michi*, we might think of them as being engaged with these discourses in a variety of ways—responding to, resisting, and even satirizing them. Of course, to view these narratives only through the lens of sexuality is to lose sight of their responses to other imminent social and economic realities of the time. As the examples discussed in this study demonstrate, sexuality is depicted as being embedded within multiple concerns, and old age sexuality as created multiple, far-reaching consequences that extend well beyond the scope of a single liaison. **References**

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