
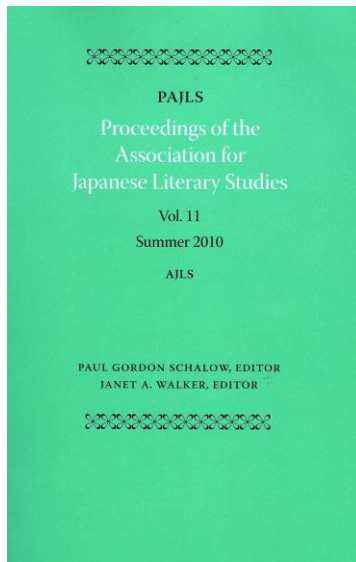


“Treasonous Masculinity: The Osaka Man in Trans-
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Treasonous Masculinity

The Osaka Man in Trans-war Fiction

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A casual visitor to Senba 船場, in Osaka, would find little today to suggest the district's past glory, but in the Tokugawa era it served as the commercial heart of Japan's merchant capital. Two of the best-loved novels of modern Osaka, *Meoto zenzai* 夫婦善哉 (Hooray for Marriage, or, Sweet Beans for Two, 1940), by Oda Sakunosuke 織田作之助 (1913–1947),¹ and *Sasameyuki* 細雪 (Fine Snow, 1943–1948), by Tanizaki Jun'ichirō 谷崎潤一郎 (1886–1965),² concern the culture of Senba in the nineteen-thirties and forties, when Osaka, long since politically subordinated to Tokyo, finally relinquished economic primacy. Each of these novels links the fate of individuals and merchant households to the economic containment of Osaka by the nation. In doing so, they dramatize the continuity between individual morality, household economy, and national politics that supports the system of governmentality through which modern sovereignty operates, and that the government of wartime Japan so effectively institutionalized. These works differ, however, in how they present that link, variously celebrating and eulogizing Osaka's locality, and defying and defending the homogenization and centralization to which it was subjected. Key to these two different presentations is a figure of local masculinity: the *bonbon* 坊々.

The Bonbon

The savvy, adaptable Osaka merchant has long been an archetype in Japanese literature, but authors since Chikamatsu have also embodied aspects of Senba culture in another archetype of local masculinity, the bonbon. The term is a local one, native to Senba. Strictly speaking, “Bon” or “bonbon” is the honorific form

¹A translation by Burton Watson is included in *Stories of Osaka Life*, 1994. In 1999, newspapers reported that a manuscript, written by Oda and titled *Zoku meoto zenzai* 続夫婦善哉, had been discovered among a collection of personal papers donated to the city of Kawanaka. In 2007, the originally story and sequel were published together as *Meoto zenzai kanzenban* 夫婦善哉完全版.

²Published in a translation by Edward Seidensticker as *The Makioka Sisters*, 1957.

used by servants there to address sons in a merchant household.³ More broadly, the word is used to refer to a rich and spoiled, weak-willed young man with a taste for dissipation. In her novel *Noren* 暖簾 (The Shop Curtain, 1957), Yamasaki Toyoko 山崎豊子 (1924–) offers a succinct definition of the species: “He had a shop, he had cash, he was born handsome, and he wanted to try for himself everything interesting, everything fun, everything good” (25).⁴ Tanizaki and Oda enlist the bonbon at a turning point in Japanese history, when centralization and homogenization were being pursued with extreme force.

The proper masculinity of nationalist discourse reflects the values of economic and bodily discipline, productivity and reproductivity, in service to the state.⁵ With mobilization for total war, the Japanese government increasingly imposed these values through direct state interventions and broader social discourses to encourage physical discipline and marriage and childbirth.⁶ At the level of economic activity, Taishō Japan witnessed an expansion of government-sponsored moral suasion campaigns that encouraged citizens to practice frugality and rationalized consumption.⁷ As I examine the bonbon as presented in these two novels, I am asking how he relates to an ideal national masculinity, and how we can view, in that relationship, competing notions of the relation of the local to the national, and of city to nation.

I. *Meoto zenzai*

Oda Sakunosuke produced some of the most popular stories of Osaka in modern times. Born there in 1913, Oda moved to Tokyo in 1936 but returned home three years later. The following year, 1940, he published *Meoto zenzai*, the work that would bring him to the attention of the critical establishment.⁸ But it was not until

³“Bon” or “bonbon” is an honorific form when used to address someone older, but a familiar term of affection for someone younger; see Makimura 1984, p. 655. “Bonchi” is a related term. Kobayashi Yutaka 小林豊 suggests that the two are interchangeable (50), but notes that Yamasaki Toyoko draws a distinction between the more business-minded *bonchi* and the irresponsible *bonbon*; see Kobayashi 1989, p. 52.

⁴*Mise ga atte, zeni ga atte, otokomae ga totonoeteite, omoshinokoto, tanoshii koto, ee koto wa mina jibun ga shite mitai hito datta.* 店があつて、銭があつて、男前が整えていて、面白いこと、楽しいこと、ええことは皆自分がしてみたい人だった。

⁵For an examination of gender in Japanese nationalist discourse, see Morris-Suzuki 1998.

⁶See Ueno 1998 and Frühstück 2003.

⁷On these campaigns, see Garon 1997, 1998.

⁸First published in a local Osaka literary coterie magazine, *Kaifū* 海風, in 1940, the novel was selected for re-publication in the national magazine *Bungei* 文藝. The afterlife of the novel and its protagonists gives some indication of its success in reproducing and manipulating the idea of Osaka and Osakans for a national audience. It was adapted for film in 1955 by the director Toyoda Shirō 豊田四郎. The film won the prestigious Blue Ribbon awards for best director, best actor (Morishige Hisaya 森繁久彌) and best actress (Awashima Chikage 淡島千景), and the Mainichi Concours award for best actor and best screenplay (Yasumi Toshio 八住利雄). Oda’s novel also provided the inspiration for a popular program offering advice and humorous commentary on marriage, broadcast first on radio and later on television as well from 1955 to 1975, and hosted by the famous husband-wife manzai team of Nanto Yūji 南都雄二 and Miyako Chōchō ミヤコ蝶々. The two divorced in 1958 but continued to work together, an arrangement that no doubt added piquancy to their marriage advice.

the war ended that he achieved popular success nationally, and by that point, he had only two years more to live. He suffered from tuberculosis, and his health had been further compromised by drug use. He died in 1947 at the age of just thirty-three. Oda lived his entire life in the context of Japan's imperial project and its aftermath. In July 1937, the year after Oda moved to Tokyo to pursue his career as a writer, hostilities with China intensified into full-scale war. The year after *Meoto zenzai* was published, 1941, saw the attack on Pearl Harbor. Militarization and total war, and the subsequent occupation, increased Osaka's subjection to central authorities in Tokyo. It was within such an atmosphere that Oda produced his stories of eccentric locality.

Meoto zenzai describes the relationship between Chōko, an ambitious and hard-working geisha from a humble background, and Ryūkichi, the bonbon son of an Osaka merchant family. After the two meet, Ryūkichi abandons his wife and child to move in with Chōko, risking disinheritance. Together, the couple try their hand at several business enterprises, but Ryūkichi's laziness repeatedly defeats Chōko's ambition, until at last they find success running a café. Chōko's other ambition is to win the acceptance of Ryūkichi's family, and in this success eludes her. But throughout their struggles, the love between Ryūkichi and Chōko is never in serious doubt, and it triumphs in the end.

Unproductivity

At times *Meoto zenzai* reads like the dramatization of an accounts ledger. Paragraph after paragraph records specific amounts of money—credits for the money that Chōko has managed to borrow or save and debits for the money Ryūkichi has begged or stolen from her to pay for his little luxuries and his trips to the geisha quarter. Another set of credits and debits records the history of businesses that the couple buy and sell: a razor shop, a *kanto-daki* shop, a fruit stand. Each time, Chōko's ambition and native business instincts are defeated by Ryūkichi's indolence and his lack of discipline. Chōko attempts to rise to middle-class respectability, but the bonbon drags her down.

Ryūkichi's unproductivity, his lack of restraint, is closely linked to the pursuit of good food. In the novel, there are many scenes of his profligacy, but one in particular captures its effect on Chōko. After a long night's work she takes the last train home. She arrives to find Ryūkichi in the kitchen, still cooking a batch of *sanshō konbu* that he started the day before, and for which he has bought the finest kelp. This is the sort of expenditure—of time and of money—that connoisseurship demands. Chōko should be outraged by the extravagance but when Ryūkichi offers her a taste of the finished product, she melts: "at such moments Chōko would be overwhelmed by a great torrent of affection for Ryūkichi" (19). If his behavior illustrates the incompatibility of the bonbon's connoisseurship with fiscal discipline, then Chōko's thrill of affection represents fiscal discipline's defeat.

As Ryūkichi's indiscipline is linked to his gourmandise, so it is rooted in Osaka, known in the Tokugawa period as the world's kitchen (*tenka no daidokoro*

天下の台所) and famous still for its distinct food culture. In establishing the bonbon's connoisseurship, Oda maps the southern part of the central city by emplotting the shops and food stalls Ryūkichi frequents. These are not fancy or expensive shops, for the most part. Ryūkichi's is a *getemono* 下手物 connoisseurship, preferring low foods and street stalls known only to initiates. In thus choosing places to eat, Ryūkichi enacts a rejection of the massification of everyday life that characterized the economy of interwar urban Japan. At the same time, connoisseurship such as Ryūkichi's depends upon mass consumption because it is defined in contrast to it. The *yatai* that Ryūkichi prefers to more glamorous restaurants, and the *getemono* sold there, have value because they are individual and unknown to the developing mass market. The mass market is essential to connoisseurship in the way that Tokyo, conspicuous by its absence in *Meoto zen'ai*, is essential to Oda's Osaka.⁹

Unreproductive

Paralleling this economic unproductivity is a biological unreproductivity and a rejection of family. As an unmarried and childless couple, Ryūkichi and Chōko share a domesticity that lies outside the economy of intimacy that the government increasingly promoted. Ryūkichi abandons his filial responsibilities in order to share a relationship with Chōko that is unsanctioned by the state and unrecognized by his family. Although his father has been confined to bed by a stroke, and the day-to-day running of the business has been left to Ryūkichi, he treats the business as a personal account from which he makes frequent withdrawals to pay for his amours and excursions. In contrast, Chōko is a model of filiality, sending her parents money and assiduously seeking the respect of Ryūkichi's family. But again, her aspiration to respectability is defeated by his lack of propriety.

As instantiated in the character of Ryūkichi, and as contrasted with Chōko, the bonbon manifests a masculinity in every way inappropriate to the demands that were being made upon men by the Japanese state during the mobilization, which required them to postpone gratification, work hard, and make homes. Oda celebrates this figure of masculinity, setting him within a local order to which the nation—its geography, its history, and its moral demands—is irrelevant.

II. *Sasameyuki*

Oda's study of Osaka from inside, at the moment of its economic containment, can inform a rereading of a more celebrated treatment of the same period and locale by another writer who quite self-consciously viewed Osaka from outside: Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's *Sasameyuki*. This story concerns the obsolescence of the Senba merchant economy and how one Osaka merchant family negotiates with difficulty the

⁹For a discussion of *getemono ryōri* in Oda's story and in Kamitsukasa Shōken's 上司小剣 *Hamo no kawa* 鱧の皮 (Skin of the conger-eel, 1928), a story that prefigures Oda's in several ways, see Shindō 2007.

economic shift brought about by Japan's militarization and the war. The novel dramatizes this economic shift in the daily lives of four sisters, two married and two to be married. As the avatar of Senba masculinity, the bonbon plays a key role in this dramatization.

Unproductivity

The first bonbon mentioned in *Sasameyuki* is already dead when the story opens. We learn in the second chapter that the sisters' father was a lover of luxury, who inherited a Senba business with a long history and ran it into the ground through "the looseness of his lifestyle and management" (1:2:12-13).¹⁰ But where Oda described a profligacy in service to true connoisseurship, Tanizaki characterizes this bonbon as a pretentious dupe, to which the narrator's taste and, by implication, the (national) reader's is superior. Later in the novel, as Sachiko helps Tsuruko pack up family heirlooms for her move to Tokyo, we are told that the father "really was a very bad judge of art, and, since he tended to think that the expensive must be good, he had occasionally made a foolish buy," and we are invited to snicker at one such unwise purchase, a pair of flawed inkstones (101). Connoisseurship here has been replaced by pretension.

The narrative then introduces the two sons-in-law, Tatsuo and Teinosuke. The narrative describes Tatsuo, the dispassionate banker's son who marries Tsuruko as, "Quite the opposite of his ostentatious father-in-law" (9), and it makes a point of Tatsuo's fiscal discipline. Although adopted into the family as heir, Tatsuo never takes up the day-to-day management of the shop, continuing instead to work at the bank, consciously choosing this life over that of a merchant. Teinosuke, an accountant, likewise works with numbers, not goods, in a white-collar job that demands fiscal discipline. In the generational shift, the novel personifies a shift in the economy, a shift in lifestyle from extravagance to discipline, and a shift in the model of masculinity that enacts it.

Soon, the bank transfers Tatsuo to Tokyo. The household that he and Tsuruko set up in Shibuya exemplifies a new economy. Though Tsuruko is initially distressed by the prospect of moving, Tatsuo welcomes the change. Once before, he had been asked by the bank to move, but at that time he had begged off. The different outcome this time reflects the waning influence of one way of life and one model of family: "It had seemed afterwards that the bank would respect his status as head of an old family . . . but the bank had had a change in management and policy" (100). The narrative emphatically ties Tatsuo to a more disciplined, economically productive and biologically reproductive model, and to a rejection of the old system as insufficient to the times. Once they move to the capital, Tsuruko

¹⁰My translation: "seikatsu no ue ni mo eigyō no ue ni mo hōjū de atta chichi no yarikata" 生活の上にも営業の上にも放縦であった父の遣り方. Here I have substituted for Seidensticker's translation a more literal one in support of my arguments and given the book, chapter, and page number of the Japanese publication. Where I use Seidensticker's translation, I have given the page number in *The Makioka Sisters*.

demonstrates a surprising frugality, detailed in her new household economies. Frugality shows too in the slapdash construction of their new house, so different from the solid old Senba home. When the second sister, Sachiko, goes to visit the Shibuya household, the narration emphasizes the incongruity she senses when she sees in a room there several expensive *objets* bought by their father and brought by Tsuruko to Tokyo (218).

Unreproductivity

The novel repeatedly draws a contrast between the Shibuya household and the second sister's home in Ashiya, which is presented as closer to Senba not only geographically, but culturally too. As the Shibuya household becomes more and more frugal, the Ashiya house continues to enjoy small luxuries. The Shibuya household is associated with a frenetic energy, noise, and lack of repose, while Ashiya is quiet and cultured. The main reason for both the lack of repose and the need for economy in Tokyo is the size of the family. As Tanizaki describes it, with rambunctious children running up and down the stairs, quickly outgrowing their clothes, the Shibuya house is an emblem of the fecundity that the state in mobilization encouraged.

By contrast, the Ashiya household bears the stigma of a weak fertility. Sachiko has only one child, a daughter, and suffers a miscarriage during the narrative. The youngest sister, Taeko, still unmarried, also suffers a miscarriage. Even before this miscarriage, when she informs Sachiko that she is pregnant, Sachiko hints at abortion, although obtaining one had become difficult under the military regime.¹¹ Coming amid repeated references to the war and concern over what is appropriate to it, Sachiko's hint is one of the clearest indications of Kansai's betrayal of the reproductivist state. In a perverse twist, the family cat, Suzu, is the only member of the Ashiya household to give birth successfully during the novel—and even she requires Sachiko's assistance.

Ashiya is further associated with the taint of illness, disease, and filthiness, and a concomitant concern with hygiene: the obsession with the spot over Yukiko's eye (brought on by her unmarried and unproductive state); the maid Oharu's habit of borrowing Sachiko's undergarments; Taeko's bout of amoebic dysentery; Sachiko's jaundice, and the "filthy" treatment for it that her guest Mrs. Niu suggests.¹² These associations culminate in a nervous attack suffered by Sachiko's daughter, Etsuko. Possessed by a paranoid fastidiousness, Etsuko is eventually taken to a doctor for treatment—a doctor in Tokyo.

¹¹When Taeko first realizes that she is pregnant, while the sisters are visiting Tokyo for the *miai* with Mimaki, and informs Sachiko that the baby is Miyoshi's, Sachiko responds, "Do you plan to have it? ("Koi-san, umu ki ya non" 「こいさん、生む気やのん」). Koi-san replies, "He says he wants me to have it. . . Unless we do that, Kei-chan will never give up." ("unde hoshii iu nen. . . sonai sēhenandara, Kei-chan ga akiramete kurehen nen wa" 「生んで欲しい云うねん。 . . . そないせえへなん だら、啓ちゃんが諦めてくれへんねんわ」, 3:31:294). These lines are omitted from Seidensticker's otherwise remarkably faithful translation; he does include a subsequent scene in which Sachiko considers the possibility of abortion.

¹²She suggests keeping riceballs under the arms until the rice yellows.

The constant presence of medicine also reflects this obsession. The famous opening scene has the sisters giving one another vitamin B shots against beri-beri. The suitor at the fourth *miai*, Hashidera, works for a pharmaceuticals company and, after Sachiko complains to him about the difficulty of procuring good foreign medicine under the control economy, he offers her anything she needs—an offer Teinosuke quickly takes him up on. At the end of the novel, as Taeko struggles in childbirth, Sachiko brings from the house a cache of hoarded German medicine to trade for drugs to induce birth. Seeing Etsuko play at giving her doll a shot, mimicking her mother and aunts, her father identifies the problem: “What a morbid little game, Teinosuke thought. That too was a result of a dangerous pre-occupation with hygiene” (188).

The inexorable downfall of the youngest daughter, Taeko, is linked to her first boyfriend, the spiritual heir to the sisters’ bonbon father. The son of an old Senba family that deals in precious metals, Okubata Keizaburō, called Kei-bon by the Makiokas, represents a merchant class that is being made anachronistic by Japan’s imperial project. Teinosuke, Sachiko, and Taeko herself all comment on his inappropriateness to Japan’s crisis. Taeko tries twice to break from this bonbon and embrace a more modern, adaptive masculinity, embodied in two men from well outside the merchant class: Itakura, a former servant of Kei-bon’s family, and Miyoshi, a bartender from Kobe. But both the affair with Itakura and the one with Miyoshi end in death. The former dies of an infection, and the child Taeko miscarries is Miyoshi’s. Altogether, Tanizaki presents Ashiya as a world diseased and unproductive, haunted by the bonbon, revenant of an outmoded economic model and a dying provincial culture.

Conclusion

The title of this paper alludes to an essay written by Sakaguchi Ango 坂口安吾 (1906–1955), a friend of Oda Sakunosuke’s. Ango wrote the essay “Osaka no hangyaku” 大阪の反逆 (“Osaka’s Treason,” or “Osaka’s Betrayal,” 1947) to honor his friend after his untimely death. Ango himself took the title from a move used in the game of *go*, which in turn alludes to Osaka’s history of resistance to the Tokugawa leaders who took control from Hideyoshi’s heirs and moved the center of power in the new nation to Edo, now Tokyo. This notion seems to have resonated with scholars, who picked up on Ango’s term.¹³ For me, the phrase has two senses, one with Osaka as subject and another with Osaka as object. The first refers to how Osaka betrays the values of nation, but the phrase can refer as well to how, in service to the ideology of nation, writers betray Osaka.

Both *Meoto zenzai* and *Sasameyuki* detail a *seikatsu*, or daily practice, local to Osaka and rooted in the popular culture of the Senba merchant quarter—a culture

¹³In a collection of essays on Oda and his work, for example, four essays employ the word “*hangyaku*” in the title; see Kawahara 1971.

of which the bonbon is avatar, a culture inappropriate to the demands of the modern imperial nation.¹⁴ That local practice reiterates, in both household and intimate economies, the fate of Senba and Osaka within an industrial economy increasingly managed by the government and centered in Tokyo. In that sense, both novels comment on the process of political and economic centralization and cultural homogenization that produced modern nationhood. But while *Meoto zenzai* celebrates that local *seikatsu* of consumption and play, *Sasameyuki* mourns it and, in mourning, contains it in the nation's past. Tanizaki presents Ashiya as the repository of a Senba culture that, however fondly recalled, is nevertheless fatally associated with an outmoded economic model.

Both these novels are included in the modern canon, but while Tanizaki is a major figure in Japanese and "world" literature, Oda remains minor and local. There are many reasons for this, but certainly one is that Tanizaki reconciles Osaka's locality within the national form. For this reason, his novel is more immediately germane, more interesting than *Meoto zenzai* to a discourse of national literature and, by extension, to the field of area studies, for which the unit of participation is the nation. By understanding the uses to which the local is put in both these novels, we can better historicize the construction of national literature and each novel's place within it. In this way, we may avoid betraying the local in stories of Osaka, or any city, and may succeed in exploiting Osaka's potential to betray the workings of nation.

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¹⁴Here, I am borrowing Miriam Silverberg's translation of "*seikatsu*"; see Silverberg 1982. On local differences between the popular culture of Tokyo and Osaka, see Gonda 1923. See also Hanes 1998 on Ōbayashi Sōshi's survey of popular recreation in Taishō Osaka.

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