

Katarzyna Sonnenberg

Tragedies Retold with Humour.

The Narrative Voice in Saikaku's *Kōshoku gonin onna*

It is commonly acknowledged that the stories narrated in *Kōshoku gonin onna* ("Five Amorous Women," 1686) refer to the historical events widely recognized in Ihara Saikaku's times and evoked among others in *kyōgen* 狂言 performances and popular ballads.¹ Undoubtedly, Saikaku was very proficient in exploring these references in order to make his work more attractive for his contemporaries.² The immediacy of the stories must have appealed to his readers, more and more accustomed to reading news and gossip rubrics in papers, a medium gaining popularity at the time.³ In fact, most critics believe that the whole collection was inspired directly by the rumours about Osen, one of Saikaku's protagonists, who was said to have committed suicide in 1685, shortly before Saikaku's work was published.⁴ The protagonists of four remaining stories, i.e. Onatsu, Osan, Oshichi and Oman, are also considered to be all historical figures.⁵

What is characteristic for all the women - as they are captured by Saikaku - is that none of them managed to live a calm and peaceful life. Onatsu had to seek seclusion in cloister and madness after having lost her lover, Osan and Oshichi were executed and the last one, Ohatsu, about whom records say the least, despite her wholehearted devotion for her lover ended with a lover who was far more interested in men than women.

Although the events depicted in *Five Amorous Women* by Ihara Saikaku can hardly be referred to as droll or laughable, the prevailing mood of the narratives is not that of gloom and despair but rather that of lightheartedness and conviviality. Teruoka Yasutaka rightly notices – with

¹ Inoue Kazuhito indicated that according to *Matsudaira Yamato no kami nikki*, a ballad about Seijūrō entitled *Seijūrō bushi* was popular even before Saikaku's work was published. See: Inoue 2001: 61. Hasegawa Tsuyoshi claims that a number of events might have merged into one song about Onatsu and Seijūrō. The sad lot of the lovers was also rendered in the works written after Saikaku's *Kōshoku gonin onna*, i.e. *Gyokuteki inken* (1760) and *Shoki shishūki*. See: Hasegawa 1978: 93.

² Taniwaki Masachika argues that Saikaku assumed that his readers knew about the events while writing *Kōshoku gonin onna*. See: Taniwaki 1980: 109-114.

³ See: Taniwaki 1978: 156. Teroka Yasutaka also focuses on the journalistic tendencies in Saikaku's work. See: Teruoka 1949: 87.

⁴ Taniwaki 1991: 50-61.

⁵ In *Kenkyū shiryō nihon kotenbungku* the following dates are given in references to the historical background of *Kōshoku gonin onna*: the history of Onatsu and Seijūrō – 1662, the history of Osen – 1685, the history of Osan – 1683, the history of Oshichi – 1682, the history of Gengobei and Oman – 1663. See: Ōsone 1983: 84. Kurakazu Masae places the events of the first and last story around the year 1661. See: Kurakazu 1993: 121-126.

reference to *Kōshoku ichidai otoko* – that while not being the ultimate goal for Saikaku, humour and comedy are crucial for his storytelling.⁶ I believe this is also true in the case of *Kōshoku gonin onna*. A closer reading of the novellas reveals immediately that the comic effect is born due to the manner in which the stories are narrated. Narrative voice is by no means perfunctory here but plays an important role in setting the mood. Therefore, it seems only natural that I should focus on the role of Saikaku’s narration in introducing humour and detachment into the stories.

Before I proceed, however, let me focus on the theoretical frame I consider useful while reading Saikaku’s novellas. The narrative voice of *Kōshoku gonin onna* could be classified by using Gerard Genette’s terms as heterodiegetic (not involved in the story) and extradiegetic (constituting the primary narrative).⁷ The narrator might be also called intrusive due to his comments signalling his presence throughout the narrative. In fact, he might even be considered an “authorial voice” if we accept Richard Walsh’s argument that the narrator is either a character who tells the story or the author who creates what he calls “discursive idiom.”⁸ Walsh’s approach may be particularly fruitful in the case of *Kōshoku gonin onna* where the narrative voice is outside of the events and is not a character in the story but appears to have access to the characters’ thoughts and is in charge of the discourse, making himself apparent in intrusive comments. Moreover, this voice is continually drawing on Saikaku’s poetic experience as a *haikai* 俳諧 writer.

The leniency with which I accept both the “heterodiegetic, extradiegetic narrator” and simply the “author” stems from my goals in this paper. It is not my aim here to argue whether and what agents in narratology are justified or unnecessary. I would rather like to focus on the narrative discourse of Saikaku’s novellas to see how it influences the mood. Of course, in order to do that, I will need to analyse the perspective of the storyteller (and I will try to use this unpopular term throughout my paper to avoid the uninvited confusion of the narratologist terms) who, I agree, may also be considered as the author (if understood as contriver of a particular discourse outside the story).

Undoubtedly, the presence of the storyteller is made noticeable in *Kōshoku gonin onna* almost as much as it is in, for example, Henry Fielding’s novels.⁹ It is frequently highlighted by means of emphatic particles, such

⁶ See: Teruoka 1981: 119-134.

⁷ Genette 1980: 248.

⁸ Walsh 1997: 505.

⁹ I found very useful and illuminating the book by Jeffrey Williams on the narrative strategies in

as *zokashi* ぞかし or *haya* はや, as well as by emotionally-loaded adjectives (such as *okashi* おかし) situated at the end of the sentences. Moreover, the storyteller does not refrain from evaluation and judgments expressed in particular words, such as *itazura* いたずら (“mischief,” “roguery”), or in longer commentaries which I would like to elaborate on later in this paper.

One of the reasons why the tragic life-stories of five amorous women are so amusing lies in the storyteller’s language. Interestingly, Saikaku was prudent and efficient enough to use many of the Danrin *haikai* tropes with great success in his narratives.¹⁰ Among others, the frequent plays with word contexts more than once result in hilarious dialogues. In Book Three “What the Seasons Brought to the Almanac Maler” (“Chūdan ni miru koyomi monogatari”) Osan is trying to escape the unwanted marriage with squat necked, blood-shot eyed and quick-tempered Zetarō by saying that she was born in the year of the Fiery Horse (*hinoe uma* 丙午). It was commonly believed in Saikaku’s times (and this belief has not disappeared altogether) that women born in this year of the Chinese zodiac were moody and irritable and they could even kill their husbands while in a fit of anger. However, Zetarō, whose crudeness is vividly depicted in the passage preceding the conversation, takes this expression literally and replies as follows:

I wouldn’t care if you were a Fiery Cat or a Fiery Wolf. I even like blue lizards—eat’em in fact. And you see I’m not dead yet. Twenty-seven years old, and I haven’t had one case of worms. Mister Moemon should take after me! As for you—a soft creature brought up in the capital isn’t what I’d like for a wife, but I’ll tolerate you since you’re my relative.¹¹

In this manner, due to the shift in the contexts of “Fiery Horse” – from the cultural and conventional to the literal one – the conversation gains a comic edge. The storyteller observes the scene and summarizes it in a typical manner: “Amidst all their unhappiness Osan and Moemon found the brute somewhat amusing.”¹² Indeed, the storyteller never fails to notice

British novels. See: William 1998.

¹⁰ See also: Hibbett 1959: 42.

¹¹ Bary 149, Emoto 273. If not stated otherwise all English translations of *Kōshoku gonin onna* are by William Theodore De Bary from Ihara (1973). The page number is given in footnote after Bary’s name. For reference I also include the page number of the original text published in Emoto (1984).

¹² Bary 149, Emoto 273.

and take advantage of the amusing aspects of the otherwise sorrowful world.

Similarly, the storyteller captures the comic potential hidden in the act of word-playing in Book One “The Story of Seijurō in Himeji” (“Himeji Seijurō monogatari”) when he observes the passengers of the ship on which two lovers want to escape from doom. He already knows (and suggests it to his audience) that the lovers’ attempt will be unsuccessful. Their doom is sealed when a messenger on a ship admits that he must have left his package on the shore. The ship will return to the port and the lovers will be caught and punished. Before that, however, the storyteller reports what is happening on board. The courier exclaims with great emotion: “Damn it! I forgot something! I tied my mailbag to my sword and then left it at the inn.”¹³ The irritation of all other passengers (not to mention the paralyzing fear of the two lovers) is only natural: “No matter how loud you wail, they can’t hear you from here. What kind of man are you, wailing that way? Are you a sissy without any goldballs?” This is a moment when the storyteller excels in his observing skills: he narrates that the courier carefully “examined himself” (ostentatiously examined the area of his trousers) and then replied cheerfully: “I certainly do have--two!”¹⁴ The wittiness of this scene stems from the play with the word “goldballs” (*kinkyoku* or *kintama* 金玉), which may refer either to the gold and gems or to man’s genitals. The chapter finishes with incarceration of Seijurō and his consequential execution which leads in due course to Osen’s madness. Nonetheless, the preceding conversation on board releases the tension arising from the anticipated tragedy.

The above-mentioned examples of word-plays mirror the important tendency in Saikaku’s work, namely the tendency to combine the refined and the vulgar (*gazoku setchū* 雅俗折衷) which is also associated the Danrin 談林 school of *haikai*.¹⁵ The comical effect may be said to stem from the innovative transgression of decorum. The previously quoted examples of Zetarō’s remark and mail carrier’s action and words exemplify the vulgar and are juxtaposed with the refined, i.e. the subtlety of Osan’s behaviour and the tragedy of Onatsu and Seijurō that is to follow.

On the other hand, the storyteller tends to bring the images drawn from poetry and philosophy into the context of the carousal and commonplace entertainment. In the “Story of Seijurō in Himeji” the well-established

¹³ Bary 63, Emoto 72.

¹⁴ Bary 63, Emoto 72.

¹⁵ Teruoka Yasutaka focuses on Saikaku’s eclectic use of poetic tradition in a commonplace context. See: Teruoka 1953: 285-286. See also: Asanuma 2003: 36-47, and Inui 1979: 69-74.

poetical image of sakura flowers in Onoe is used to highlight the crudeness of the love-making scene. Onatsu and Seijurō use the opportunity presented to them by the arrival of the dancing troupe in order to make love behind the curtain dividing them from the others. It is only after they have finished their intercourse that they notice the woodcutter observing them from behind and “moving his underpants” with his hand. The summarizing narratorial comment about “hiding one’s head and leaving the tail unguarded”¹⁶ further exposes the coarseness of the scene.

Additionally, shortly before the love-making scene, the colourful picture of the cherry blossoms and their viewers is unfolded. The storyteller notices with amusement that they “fell into a drunken sleep, snoring deeply and dreaming blissfully of themselves as butterflies fluttering at will over the broad fields.”¹⁷ Of course, the expression *yume o kochō* 夢を胡蝶 (“butterflies as their dream”) refers to the philosophical treaty by Chuang Tzu (Zhuangzi) who described his dreaming about a butterfly and waking up in confusion as to whether he saw the butterfly in a dream or he himself was being dreamt about.¹⁸ This shift in contexts adds up to the narration of the merry-making.

Not only does Saikaku bring the images from poetry or philosophy into the vulgar context but he also adopts the poetic techniques, such as *kakekotoba* 掛詞 (“pivot words”) or *engo* 縁語 (“associative word”), which are used to comical ends. In “The Barrelnaker Brimful of Love” (“Nasake o ireshi taruya monogatari”) the male character whose feelings are hurt by the lack of response from the woman he desperately loves reveals his distress to an elderly lady: “The one I love does not live far away. I love Osen, the maid of the house here. I have sent her a hundred letters without getting a word in reply.”¹⁹ The pivot on which the trope revolves is *o-sen* お千 bringing the meanings of both “one thousand” (or “a great number” – in Bary’s translation it is “hundred”) and the name of the protagonist.

Engo is used a number of times in *Kōshoku gonin onna*, too, although it does not always have to bring comical innuendoes. The example I am going to analyse, however, is a good illustration of the storyteller’s

¹⁶ Bary 60, Emoto 57.

¹⁷ Bary 57, Emoto 57.

¹⁸ “Once Chuang Chou dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn’t know he was Chuang Chou. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Chuang Chou. But he didn’t know if he was Chuang Chou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Chou. Between Chuang Chou and a butterfly there must be some distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things.” See: Zhuangzi and Watson 1968: 49.

¹⁹ Bary 79, Emoto 105.

humorous strategy. In “What the Season Brought To the Almanac Maker” the readers encounter such a description of the main protagonist’s future lover:

This Moemon was honest and extremely frugal, so much so that he completely neglected his personal appearance, even economizing on his coat sleeves, which measured only two and one-half inches at the wrist. His forehead was narrow, and when upon his reaching manhood his hair was allowed to grow, Moemon never bothered to buy a hat to cover it. Moreover, he went about without the protection of a short sword and slept with his abacus under his head, the better perhaps to reckon how great a fortune he could amass in a night spent dreaming of money-making.²⁰

The very opening sentence includes the expression “honest, good head” (*shōjiki kōbe* 正直かうべ), which refers to the saying “gods dwell in the honest man’s head” (*shōjiki no kōbe ni kami yadoru* 正直の頭に神宿る). However, the storyteller knows already that Moemon will seduce (or let himself be seduced) by a married woman, hence his honesty may be questioned in this opening passage, too. The sequence of words “head,” “hair,” “narrow forehead” (a symbol of care taken about one’s looks in Edo period), “narrow sleeves” (obviously violating the Edo fashion trend according to which men’s sleeves should be about 7 *sun* 寸 or more than 21 centimetres long), “hat” (*amigasa* 編笠 or “braided hat” was typically used by the red-light quarters goers), “sword” (*wakizashi* 脇差 or short sword worn also by the merchants in Edo period) are juxtaposed in an associative manner.²¹ The all signal – be it in an ironic manner – something crucial about Moemon, build up the audience’s expectations that may later be either confirmed or ridiculed.

Another interesting feature of the narration in *Kōshoku gonin onna* is the frequent use of enumeration and parallels that tend to combine most surprising images, the technique not too dissimilar with what the Danrin school of *haikai* postulated.²² As a consequence, the narrated situations are

²⁰ Bary 129, Emoto 229.

²¹ See: Maeda 1993: 294.

²² Asanuma Haku believes that enumeration (*raretsu* 羅列) is one of the most important characteristics of Saikaku’s narrative. See: Asanuma 2003: 83-87.

enriched and amplified. Moreover, the enrichment and amplification is connected with humorous undertones.²³

In Book Four: “The Greengrocer’s Daughter and the Bundle of Love” (“Koigusa karakeshi yaoya monogatari”) the opening chapter focuses on the fire in the Hongō district that leaves many people homeless and miserable. They find their shelter in a nearby Buddhist temple. Although the events described in this chapter are tragic indeed, the mood rendered by the narrative voice is far from gloomy. By means of enumeration, the extraordinary situation of the victims is brought to the forefront as if the storyteller wanted the reader to forget about the calamity and to enjoy the vividness of the scene. The description starts at night:

The superior’s rooms were filled by the cries of a newborn babe, and a woman had spread her underclothing before the image of Buddha. Wives were stepping over their husbands, sleepers made pillows of their relatives, and everyone slept in careless disorder.²⁴

And finishes in the morning:

In the morning a bowl-shaped container for the temple gong was converted into a washbasin, and big teacups were used as makeshift rice bowls. Yet Buddha himself could not but look indulgently upon all this, knowing how it had come to pass.²⁵

The description exposes the chaos that is born in the temple with the arrival of the fire victims. The syntactic parallel “in the superior’s room” (*chōrōsama no nema ni* 長老様の寐間に), or “before the image of Buddha” (*butsuzen ni* 仏前に) situates the scene inside the temple, i.e. in the area of quietness and solemnity. However, the behaviour depicted in this chapter is far from dignified. Both throwing underclothes in front of Buddha’s image and stepping over one’s husband are examples of uttermost disrespect not only of the rules in the temple but of the Buddha’s

²³ Donald Keene: “One of Saikaku’s most successful employed comic techniques is enumeration, and we find it prominently in Osen’s story. The miscellaneous objects dredged up when the cooper cleans the well are enumerated with marvelous precision. Each facet suggests some facet of contemporary city life, recorded with realism and wit. Again, the objects in Osen’s dowry are so tellingly enumerated that we understand without further explanation what her life was like as a lady’s maid” (Keene 1975: 554-555).

²⁴ Bary 161, Emoto 308.

²⁵ Bary 161, Emoto 308.

teachings.²⁶ The morning scene also highlights the unconventional behaviour in the temple. The story teller from the position of a diligent observer enumerates items commonly associated with religious rituals, e.g. gong and sacrificial bowls, which are used as washing and eating utensils. The scene is closed with the storyteller's remark that Buddha will be lenient in judging such misuses, in the manner reflecting the speaker's leniency.

Another example illustrating the comic use of enumeration in *Kōshoku gonin onna* may be found in Book Two: "The Barrelmaker Brimful Of Love." In the second chapter, the storyteller evokes the image of the waking city:

Nearby she could hear the sound of flint on steel, as a neighbor started up his fire. Somewhere an infant began to cry. Sleepily the tenants of that squalid quarter chased out the mosquitoes which had slipped through the breaks in their paper nets and plagued them throughout the night. One minute the women's fingers were pinching at the fleas in their underclothes, the next pinching for some odd coins on the sanctuary shelf with which to buy a few green vegetables. Still, amidst the bitter struggle for existence, pleasure could yet be found by those who, through wedlock, had won partners for their beds. In what delights may they not have indulged, with pillows to the south and mattresses in utter disarray, violating the vigil of *Kinoe-ne*?²⁷

The passage is abundant in realistic details which listed together become even more evocative of a newly arising day - brisk and lively.²⁸ It might have been inspired by "Yūgao" of *Genji monogatari* where the habits and customs of the common people are brought to light.²⁹

In Saikaku's passage the anonymous personae are captured as if in a film frame. The storyteller begins with enumerating sounds related to particular actions, such as starting a fire or chasing mosquitoes away from one's bedroom. In this manner, he assumes the perspective of Kosan, a character

²⁶ See: Moriyama 1981: 114.

²⁷ Bary 85, Emoto 122.

²⁸ The attention to detail (*gushōsei* 具象性) in Saikaku's fiction is emphasised by Nakamura (1957: 287).

²⁹ See: Emoto 1984: 137.

in the novella, who is awake and hears the usual noises of the waking households preparing for a new day.

The storyteller, however, does not confine himself to Kosan's perspective only. With his omniscient eye he enters the houses and notices a woman from the neighbourhood who is getting ready to go shopping. He uses metonymy here: "women's fingers" (or "one hand" – *katate* 片手 – as stands in the original text) evoke the actions of chasing the fleas away at night, of praying in the morning and handling copper coins. The enumeration of both lowly and sacred activities has a comic effect, similar to that achieved in the previously discussed depiction of the fire victims in the Buddhist temple. In the description of the morning city, too, the narrative commentary is added to sharply summarise the whole dynamic scene. Since the pillow changed its place in one of the bedrooms, its users must have neglected the festive character of *kinoene* and indulged in lovemaking instead rather than in pious prayers to Daikokuten.

The elaborate enumerations and parallels are not the only way of exposing the amusing and laughable aspects of otherwise commonplace or even tragic scenes. A comparable effect is established by means of contrasting and opposing characters' behaviour. The first novella "The Story of Seijūrō in Himeji" provides us with a good example here. The storyteller begins with a lengthy description of Seijūrō's idle and prodigal lifestyle. We learn that: "One day he burned lanterns, more wastefully than on a moonlit night, in the house of assignation he frequented. Shutting the doors and blinds to cut out the light, he created a place for constant entertainment, a kingdom of eternal night."³⁰ "Burning lanterns on a moonlit night" (*tsukiyo ni chōchin o* 月夜に灯燈を) is a saying exemplifying one's wastefulness. Seijūrō's excess is further demonstrated by the expression "eternal night" (*hiru no nai kuni* 晝のない國 – "country with no daytime") which simultaneously refers to the red-light districts and indicates the reversal of natural laws.³¹

The prodigal life style of Seijūrō in the first part of the chapter is sharply contrasted with the extreme inconveniences he has to face in the latter part:

When the guests clapped for service there was no answer. Nor was there any soup when the time for it came. Tea was brought in by hand, two cups at a time, instead of on the usual

³⁰ Bary 43, Emoto 19.

³¹ See: Moriyama 1981: 93.

tray. And the servants, as they left, turned down the lampwicks to dim the room.³²

The motif of lamp burning is used to illustrate the rapid change in the landlord's attitude to Seijūrō and the juxtaposition is suitably summarized by the storyteller: "Alas, fickleness is the rule in pleasure houses, and human kindness is measured out in small change."³³ The narratorial comment is once again used to highlight the amusing aspect of a dire situation.

Apart from the enumeration and contrast I would also like to emphasise the hyperbole as an important storyteller's comical technique used in *Kōshoku gonin onna*. Hyperbole is mostly used here to highlight an amusing feature, behaviour or scene. In many cases it exposes and ridicules the *kōshoku* 好色 or "amorousness," the feature considered crucial in Saikaku's "human comedy."³⁴ In "The Story of Seijūrō in Himeji" the love letters Seijūrō receives from the courtesans "might have been bound into a thousand packets," the fingernails sent as the pledge of love "were more than a ditty box could hold." Moreover, he also possesses "enough black locks to make a heavy rope of hair, entwining even the most jealous of women," silk garments numerous "enough to appease forever the greed of the old woman at the River of Three Crossings," as well as "garments of such quality as to prove too precious for all the second-hand dealers at the Korean Bridge."³⁵

The hyperbolic emphasis on Seijūrō's "amorousness" is so efficient also because of the references to the popular knowledge of Saikaku's contemporaries. For example, the old woman at the Sanzu River refers to the traditional Buddhist beliefs that after their death people should pass the "River of Three Crossings (*sanzu* 三途)" guarded by the old man and woman who would weigh their deeds. Furthermore, "the Korean bridge" (Koraibashi 高麗橋) was a place in Osaka well known for its shops and stalls with second-hand clothes.

In fact, it is not only passion and amorousness that is highlighted by the use of hyperbole. It seems that any feature dominant in a character is prone to exaggeration. Zetarō, the crude admirer of Osan's charms, is depicted as follows:

³² Bary 45, Emoto 21.

³³ Bary 44, Emoto 21.

³⁴ Moriyama 1957: 299.

³⁵ Bary 42, Emoto 19.

He was frightful to behold, taller than anyone she had ever seen, and his head sat like a Chinese-lion gargoyle on his squat neck. A fierce light gleamed in his big, blood-shot eyes. His beard was like a bear's, his arms and legs were as thick as pine trees, and a wisteria vine held together the rag-woven clothes he wore. In one hand he carried an old matchlock, in the other a tinder-rope. His hunting basket was full of rabbits and badgers, as much as to say: 'This is how I make a living.' He was called Zetaro the Rock-jumper.³⁶

One could hardly think of more imaginative and powerful manner to introduce a man who is to become the protagonist's husband. The storyteller obviously focuses on Osen's reaction towards Zetarō. She is frightfully looking at him and his mother occupied with the preparations for the wedding ceremony due to take place on the very same night Osen first sees the "the Rock-jumper."

Another example of how hyperbole can be applied to comical ends may be found in the very same novella. When the storyteller highlights Seijurō's popularity with women, he introduces a seamstress who writes with her own blood her love message to Seijurō, and then goes on to depict a maidservant who – being illiterate herself – is desperate to find someone who would write a message to Seijurō in her name. Subsequently, he renders the passion of a chambermaid – rushing with tea to Seijurō's place without even being asked for it – and finally he focuses on a middle-aged nurse who is brazen enough to advertise her lips and curly hair, token of passionate temperament, in front of Seijurō. Indeed, the whole scene demonstrates in a most comical manner how love and passion spreads from one woman in a household to another as if it were a contagious disease.³⁷

The final aspect of the storytelling in *Kōshoku gonin onna* I will consider in this paper is that of parody. I will not be analysing the paraphrases and the parodic usage of earlier literary texts by Saikaku, since I believe it is too broad a topic for this paper and I have started to analyse it elsewhere.³⁸ I will, however, focus on the parodic plays with cultural and social conventions.

³⁶ Bary 147-148, Emoto 272.

³⁷ Moriyama speaks about the art of "infecting with passion" (*koi no kansen jutsu*). See: Moriyama 1981: 95.

³⁸ I included the analysis of the use of parody and intertextual plays in *Kōshoku gonin onna* in the article "Narihira, Kenkō i pięć kobiet namiętnych" (Narihira, Kenkō and Five Amorous Woman) due for publishing in "Przegląd Orientalistyczny."

Let me start with two examples illustrating the use of religious concepts. In Book One: “The Story of Seijurō in Himeji” the merry-making in Seijurō’s room is depicted with great precision. At some point, the bored company decides to organise a fake funeral – chanting Buddhist prayers, making offerings and burning toothpicks – all this for Kyūgorō, a servant who was “very much alive.”³⁹ In Book Five: “Gengobei, the Mountain of Love,” on the other hand, a female protagonist dresses up as a young boy in order to seduce Gengobei who is far more interested in men than women. According to Saikaku’s critics, this may be an attempt at a parody of the Buddhist concept of *henjōnanshi* 変成男子.⁴⁰ However, if *henjōnanshi* postulated woman’s rebirth in man’s body necessary for her to attain Buddhahood, Oman dresses up with the intention to deceive Gengobei and tempt him into leaving the way of Buddha. The storyteller seems to be aware of the irony involved when he comments on Gengobei’s fall: “Traps they may be, yet few can refuse the invitation to fall in. Even one of the Buddha’s feet may have slipped in.”⁴¹

It is also not infrequent to find the storyteller playing in *Kōshoku gonin onna* with conventional genres in order to bring humour into narration. Both in “The Story of Seijurō in Himeji” and in “What the Seasons Brought to the Almanac Maker” the *makuragami* 枕神 (literally “deity by one’s pillow”) or prophetic dream is used in which deities come to protagonists to communicate their message. It is difficult, however, not to feel the parodic edge in the passage where the deity speaks to Onatsu in a following manner:

During the last festival there were eighteen thousand and sixteen people who came to worship me. There wasn’t one of that number who didn’t pray greedily for some personal profit. I find their requests very amusing, but since they throw money at my feet I am glad to listen, as a god should.⁴²

The deity of Murotsu exposes and ridicules people’s attitude to worship since all of their prayers are highly egoistic and meaningless. In this respect, the *makuragami* scene may be regarded as a satire on Edo period society.⁴³ At the same time, however, the deity’s own hypocrisy and

³⁹ Bary 43, Emoto 19.

⁴⁰ See: Ōsone 1983: 87.

⁴¹ Bary 222, Emoto 442.

⁴² Bary 67-68, Emoto 73-74.

⁴³ See: Mori 1971: 157.

helplessness is revealed. The god of Murotsu gladly accepts the offerings while being utterly unable to answer people's prayers. Not only Onatsu's wish is not granted but she is told that, contrary to what she is asking for, her lover will die and she will live on a loveless and unfruitful life. The storyteller includes the deity's prophetic words to demonstrate that the deity is not to dissimilar from the weak and helpless mortals he ridicules so eagerly.

The second and last example of play with *makuragami* convention occurs in "What the Seasons Brought to the Almanac Maker" and is far more serious in tone. Manjusri (Japanese: Monju 文殊) speaks to Osan in a dream to warn her against the consequences of adultery. The very setting is grave and sombre – a desolate temple in Kiredo. Nonetheless, Osan's response to the divine message questions the omniscience and benevolence of the bodhisattva. She replies bluntly: "Monju may understand the love of men for men, but he knows nothing about the love of women."⁴⁴ By means of Osan's frivolous reference to Monju's interest in manly love, the storyteller manages to brighten the atmosphere of the looming death.

Time and again the storyteller in *Kōshoku gonin onna* manages to bring smile on the readers' faces. He plays with words and viewpoints while narrating the histories of five women who were driven by passion. He does not shun from using the poetic devices and the cultural or religious concepts purely for entertainment. Of course, he can be sad and pensive. However, with all the knowledge he possesses of human nature and of the outer world, he realizes that life, fickle and ephemeral as it is, should be enjoyed as much as the circumstances allow.⁴⁵ He knows that it is upon circumstance that the development of the events is very much dependent and does not allow his audience to brood on the sorrowful world for too long. His detachment from what he tells and retells enables him to highlight the amusing aspects of the stories, as well as to make the readers forget about the tragedy of death and suffering.

References

Asanuma, Haku 2003. *Saikaku to iu hōhō*. Tōkyō: Torikagesha (浅沼璞『西鶴という方法』 鳥影社).

⁴⁴ Bary 150, Emoto 274.

⁴⁵ Ivan Morris in his beautiful and precise translation of three of Saikaku's novellas devises a title "Five Women Who Chose Love" which, I believe, slightly misrepresents the circumstance-driven character of narration. See: Ihara 1963: 53-118.

Emoto, Hiroshi [ed.] 1984. *Kōshoku gonin onna zen'yakuchū*. Tōkyō: Kodansha.

Genette, Gerard 1980. *Narrative Discourse* (transl. Jane E. Lewin). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Hasegawa, Tsuyoshi 1978. “Kōshoku gonin onna no jissetsu”. [in:] Asano Akira [ed.]. *Saikaku monogatari*. Tōkyō: Yūhikaku (長谷川強 「好色五人女の実説」 浅野晃編 『西鶴物語』 有斐閣).

Hibbett, Howard 1959. *The Floating World in Japanese Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ihara, Saikaku 1963. *Five Women Who Chose Love*. [in:] Ivan Morris. *The Life of an Amorous Woman And other Writings*, Norfolk, CT: New Directions.

Ihara, Saikaku 1973. *Five Women Who Loved Love* (transl. William Theodore De Bary). Rutland VT: C.E. Tuttle Co.

Ihara, Saikaku 1984. *Kōshoku gonin onna*. [in:] Emoto Hiroshi [ed.]. *Kōshoku gonin onna zen'yakuchū*. Tōkyō: Kodansha (井原西鶴 「好色五人女」 江本裕編 『好色五人女全訳注』 講談社).

Inoue, Kazuhito 2001. “Kōshoku gonin onna”. [in:] Taniwaki Masachika [ed.]. *Saikaku no sekai I*. Tōkyō: Shintensha (井上和人 「好色五人女」 谷脇理史編 『西鶴の世界 I』 新典社).

Inui, Hiroyuki 1979. “Saikaku ni okeru shi to sanbun”. [in:] Tsutsumi Seiji [ed.]. *Nihonbungaku kōza: Ihara Saikaku*. Vol. 2. Tōkyō: Shibundō (乾裕幸 「西鶴における詩と散文」 堤精二編 『日本文学講座・井原西鶴下』 至文堂).

Kurakazu, Masae 1993. “Kōshoku gonin onna to Kōshoku ichidai onna”. [in:] Asano Akira [ed.]. *Genroku bungaku no kaika: Saikaku to genroku no shōsetsu*. Tōkyō: Benseisha (倉員正江 「『好色五人女』と『好色一代女』」 浅野晃編 『元禄文学の開花：西鶴と元禄小説』 勉誠社).

Keene, Donald 1975. “The Humor of Ihara Saikaku”. [in:] Noma Kōshin [ed.]. *Saikaku ronsō*. Tōkyō: Chūōkōronsha (野間光辰編 『西鶴論叢』 中央公論社).

Maeda, Kingorō 1993. *Kōshoku gonin onna zenchūshaku*. Tōkyō: Benseisha (前田金五郎 『好色五人女全注釈』 勉誠社).

Mori, Senzō 1971. *Saikaku hon sōkō*. Tōkyō: Tōkyō bijutsu (森銚三『西鶴本叢考』東京美術).

Moriyama, Shigeo 1957. “Ningen kigeki”. [in:] Teruoka Yasutaka [ed.]. *Saikaku*. Tōkyō: Kadogawa shoten (森山重雄「人間喜劇」暉峻康隆編『西鶴』角川書店).

Moriyama, Shigeo 1981. *Saikaku no kenkyū*. Tōkyō: Shindokushosha (森山重雄『西鶴の研究』新読書写).

Nakamura, Yukihiko 1957. “Saikaku ga kudareru sugata”. [in:] Teruoka Yasutaka [ed.]. *Saikaku*, Tōkyō: Kadogawa shoten (中村彦彦「西鶴がくだれる姿」暉峻康隆編『西鶴』角川書店).

Ōsone, Shōsuke 1983. *Kenkyū shiryō Nihon koten bungaku 4. Kinsei shōsetsu*. Tōkyō: Meiji shoin (大曾根章介『研究資料 日本古典文学第4巻 近世小説』明治書院).

Taniwaki, Masachika 1978. *Shuppan jānarizumu to Saikaku: shoshi to dokusha*. [in:] Asano Akira [ed.]. *Saikaku monogatari*. Tōkyō: Yūhikaku (谷脇理史「出版ジャーナリズムと西鶴」松田修編『日本文学講座・井原西鶴』上 至文堂).

Taniwaki, Masachika 1991. *Shinchō koten bungaku arubamu 17*. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha (谷脇理史『新潮古典文学アルバム 17』新潮社).

Taniwaki, Masachika 1995. *Saikaku: kenkyū to hiyō*. Tōkyō: Wakakusa shobō (谷脇理史『西鶴：研究と批評』若草書房).

Teruoka, Yasutaka 1949. *Saikaku no sekai*. Tōkyō: Kimizusha (暉峻康隆『西鶴の世界』木水社).

Teruoka, Yasutaka 1953. *Saikaku: hyōron to kenkyū*. Vol. 2. Tōkyō: Chūōkōronsha (暉峻康隆『西鶴評論と研究(上)』中央公論社).

Teruoka, Yasutaka 1981. “Saikaku bungaku ni okeru warai”. [in:] Teruoka Yasutaka [ed.]. *Saikaku shinron*. Tōkyō: Chūōkōronsha (暉峻康隆『西鶴の文学における笑い』暉峻康隆編「西鶴試論」中公論社).

Walsh, Richard 1997. “Who Is the Narrator?”. *Poetics Today* 18/4.

William, Jeffrey 1998. *Theory and the Novel: Narrative Reflexivity in the British Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zhuangzi, and Burton Watson 1968. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (transl. by Burton Watson). New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.