

Teaching Merchant-Class Virtues with Chushingura and The London Merchant

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**David S. Escoffery,**

**"Teaching Merchant-Class Virtues with *Chushingura* and *The London Merchant*"**

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**Abstract:** In his paper, "Teaching Merchant-Class Virtues with *Chushingura* and *The London Merchant*," David S. Escoffery examines the different styles of teaching merchant-class virtues in eighteenth-century Japan and England through an analysis of the classical Japanese play *Chushingura* and the didactic British play *The London Merchant*. He holds that in both Europe and Japan, the eighteenth century saw the rise of a whole new class, the middle class, to either economic or social power or both. That century was also a didactic age for the theatre. For the first time, the audience could see characters from the new merchant class on stage, and they were expected to learn proper behavior from what they saw there. It is interesting to note, however, that the teaching methods used in Japan were vastly different from those used in Europe. In Japan the teaching was done in a positive way, with representations of virtuous merchants dominating the stage. The merchant class in Japan was not allowed to move up the strict social hierarchy, so they often focused their attention on art as a substitute form of social advancement, which could explain the use of positive teaching methods. In England, on the other hand, the teaching usually came through negative examples with characters showing the audience what not to do. At that point, the middle class in Europe was attempting to naturalize its new value system, teaching those at the bottom of the middle class as if they were children.

**David S. Escoffery**

### **Teaching Merchant-Class Virtues with *Chushingura* and *The London Merchant***

"The spectator is able to escape from the influence of a play much less easily, when he sees his own class portrayed on the stage, which he must acknowledge to be his class if he is logical, than when he merely sees his own personal character portrayed, which he is free to disown if he wants to" (Hauser 90). Arnold Hauser states here the philosophy behind the didactic bourgeois drama of eighteenth-century Europe. As the merchant class was consolidating both economic and political power in the early to mid-eighteenth century, it also became the primary producer and consumer of theatre. Plays thus became an ideal way to teach bourgeois values. In Japan at that time the merchant class was also establishing its economic power. Unlike its European counterpart, however, the Japanese merchant class had almost no political or social power. Under the Tokugawa regime, in fact, merchants were the lowest officially recognized social class. As in Europe, however, theatre was extremely popular with members of the merchant class. Thus, characters from the merchant class began to appear on the stages of Osaka and Edo, showing their merchant-class audiences examples of virtuous lives. So both Japanese and European drama of the early to mid-eighteenth century used representations of merchant-class characters to teach the values the merchants of either culture were espousing. It is interesting to note, however, that the teaching strategies employed in each culture were dramatically different. European plays would often use negative examples, whereas the Japanese tended to put virtuous merchants on the stage, teaching through positive examples. We can see this distinction in an analysis of the British play *The London Merchant* and the Japanese play *Chushingura*.

I should begin, however, with a brief discussion of the social and economic conditions in England and Japan at the time. During the first hundred years of the Tokugawa regime (the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries), peace and the policies of the Tokugawa shogunate led to the development of larger towns and cities. By 1723 the population of the new capital Edo had grown to over 500,000 (Sansom, *Japan* 467), not including the samurai who had to spend half of the year there in service of the shogun, or military ruler of Japan. The growth of cities, especially Edo, led directly to the growth of the merchant class. G.B. Sansom writes that "to meet the needs of this community there grew up a class of merchants, artisans and labourers, which in the larger cities reached important dimensions" (*Japan* 467). The rise of the merchant class in the new cities was even encouraged by the government, which granted tax exemptions to townspeople. Wakita Osamu notes that, even before the Tokugawa government took control, previous regimes would "place heavy tax obligations on the peasantry, while granting special privileges to the city. This practice apparently did induce large numbers to migrate to the cities" (123). The cities only grew larger, then, under the Tokugawa regime, which brought peace to the country and required large numbers of the samurai class to live in the new capital city of Edo. As Benito Ortolani puts it, "The Tokugawa peace favored an enormous increase in trade and the development of ... cities that ranged among the world's most populous of the time" (168). As their numbers grew, of course, the economic power of the merchant class grew as well. Slowly but surely the merchant class took control of the economy from the samurai, whose wealth in rice was transformed into currency that passed into the hands of the new class, the merchants: "The *daimyo* and their retainers spent their money on luxuries produced by the artisans and sold by the tradesmen, so that by about the year 1700, it is said, nearly all their gold and silver had passed into the hands of the townspeople. They then began to buy goods on credit. Before long they were deeply indebted to the merchant class, and were obliged to pledge or to make forced sales of their tax-rice" (Sansom, *Japan* 469). Although the Tokugawa shogunate closed Japan off from the rest of the world, then, there was a great deal of trading done within the country. Also, there was still some trading possible with the Dutch at the port of Nagasaki, in spite of the many regulations that restricted it (see Takekoshi 149-53). All that trade allowed "some merchants, especially those who secured monopolies of vital products, [to] compete in wealth with the most powerful *daimyo*" (Ortolani 168). This disparity was

often a result of the Tokugawa regime's policy of alternate attendance, which required regional leaders, the *daimyo*, to spend alternate years (or half years) in the new capital. When they returned to their home territories, however, they were required to leave their wives and children in Edo, basically as hostages insuring their allegiance to the Tokugawa regime. Thus, the *daimyo* were forced to keep two households and move frequently from one to the other, which could cost "a third or more of their annual income, and as a result many were in serious debt to merchant financiers" (Hall 158). Clearly, then, there was a shift in economic power in Japan going into the eighteenth century, from the samurai to the townspeople, who were known as *chonin*.

Socially and politically, however, the *chonin* were virtually powerless. The feudal class system was still in place. Based on Confucian teachings, it involved "a strict division of society into four classes: soldiers, farmers, artisans, and traders" (Sansom, *The Western World* 189). Thus, even though the merchants controlled most of the money, they were still the lowest class on the social scale. And although there were merchants who had enough money for expensive clothes and luxurious homes, there was really no way for them to move up the social ladder. Under feudal rules, in fact, merchants "in theory might be killed with impunity by any samurai for mere disrespectful language" (Sansom, *Japan* 470). Of course, the situation of the *chonin* was not particularly dangerous or difficult (see Shively 706-15). They were not, for example, taxed as heavily as the farmers, even though the farmers were technically above them on the social hierarchy. Many of the *chonin* were even better off than the lowest (and some of the more powerful) members of the samurai class. Donald Shively notes, "*Chonin* were not subject to as much regimentation as were the shogun's samurai vassals, nor were they in constant jeopardy of the demotion or expropriation suffered by many of the *daimyo*" (710). Although their situation was not precarious, the middle class was still technically trapped at the bottom of the social hierarchy. They were forced to live in particular areas of the cities, and they were subject to laws ordering them "not to dress in expensive silks (ordinary silk was allowed), to decorate their rooms with gold and silver leaf, or to furnish them with objects of gold lacquer" (Shively 711). In spite of their wealth, then, the merchants especially were looked down upon by the government because they were "a non-productive class making profits on already finished products without producing any themselves" (Ortolani 166). Because the *chonin* did not have much political or social power, they channeled much of their energy into their artistic life. While the aristocracy maintained its interest in classical poetry and painting (and to a lesser extent in Noh Theatre), the merchants used their growing wealth to fund an interest in new art forms, especially the *kabuki* and *bunraku* (puppet) theatres. Ortolani claims that "the large theatres supplied the townspeople with the only places for regular gatherings where 'their' world could be collectively celebrated -- a showplace for their economic success... [and] their masked aspirations for social recognition" (162). Denied access to the heights of official society, the *chonin* created a new culture of their own and invested their growing wealth in this "floating world," where they set the standards. As Ortolani puts it, "Socially inferior in the official society, the merchants found in the 'floating world' of the red light districts -- littering with tea houses, *kabuki* theatres, and every type of entertainment -- an island where social distinction did not count and only cash decided the issues. No wonder then that rich merchants spent enormous amounts of money as generous patrons of that world" (168-69).

Economically, the situation in England was remarkably similar to that in Japan, especially taking into consideration the very different situations the two countries were in: Japan had just isolated itself from the outside world, whereas England had recently emerged as the major European and colonial power. In both countries it was the merchant class and not the aristocracy who controlled the vast majority of the nation's wealth. In 1694 the Bank of England was founded, enabling "the government to borrow money at the reasonable rate of 8% interest and to postpone the repayment of principal without losing its credit" (Wellwarth 78). So just as in Japan, the merchant class held the purse strings and the government's debt. English merchants, in fact, had even more power because of the extent of the British empire, which gave them access to raw materials and expanding markets. With the Treaty

of Utrecht in 1714, British traders consolidated their control of mercantile power. The treaty "gave English businessmen the exclusive rights to the Spanish-American slave trade, abolished all French preference in Spanish trade, and gave England Nova Scotia and the Hudson Bay Territory" (Wellwarth 79). The merchant class, centered especially in the city of London, was clearly the dominant economic force in eighteenth-century England, with control not only over the laborers and peasants, but also over the aristocracy. The aristocrats still had the names and bloodlines, but the merchants had the money, which in England meant that their sons and daughters could marry into aristocratic families (as seen through Maria's aristocratic suitors in *The London Merchant*). In addition to economic power, the merchants in England also had political power. Parliament had long been an important factor in the British government, especially during the Commonwealth (1649-1660), when Charles I was beheaded and the monarchy abandoned. Even after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, Parliament maintained much of its power. With the Glorious Revolution in 1688, however, Parliament really consolidated its place by inviting William and Mary to rule in place of James II. At that point, the "principle of the superiority of Parliament over King" (Wellwarth 78) was truly affirmed. By the middle of the eighteenth century, then, the middle class had firmly established its economic and political power, and art was beginning to reflect middle class values, like social mobility based on money rather than birth. Art, especially theatre, also began to reflect a new set of virtues supported by the new class, like the equality of all men under the law. As middle class audiences started to attend the theatre in greater numbers, drama began to include bourgeois characters and teach bourgeois values, George Lillo's *The London Merchant* (1731) being perhaps the prime example.

In both England and Japan, as the middle class began to rise, it became important to teach the values of this new class to the people in the audience, the new members of this class. Thus, representations on stage of members of the merchant class were became a popular means of teaching merchant class values to merchant class audiences. In Japan that teaching was primarily conducted in a positive way. Merchant class characters on stage were almost always shown as virtuous, honorable people, worthy of representation and worthy of being examples for audience members to follow. The earliest portrayals of merchant class characters (in Japan and perhaps in the world) come in the "domestic tragedies" or *sewa-mono* of Chikamatsu Monzaemon. Although he did write primarily for the puppet theatre (*bunraku*), none of Chikamatsu's characterizations have the negative connotations of childishness or ridiculousness that puppets would have in the West. Chikamatsu's heroes, whether samurai or soy sauce merchants, are true heroes, and the fact that puppet plays were easily translated to the *kabuki* stage demonstrates that their characters were treated as representations of people just as characters on any stage might be. When Chikamatsu brings a merchant on stage, he is always honest, honorable, and virtuous.

Interestingly, the virtues that Japanese merchant characters espouse are basically those of the aristocracy, virtues like honor or "saving face." For example, in Chikamatsu's *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, the character Tokubei, who works for his uncle selling soy sauce, eventually commits suicide because his honor has been taken from him by an unscrupulous friend. From his first lines in the play, Tokubei identifies himself as a merchant, and his troubles throughout the play have to do with the money that he needs to repay his uncle, money stolen from him by Kuheiji. He only has to resort to suicide, however, when this lack of money is translated into public shame. When Tokubei confronts Kuheiji, asking his supposed friend to return the money he borrowed, Kuheiji denies ever borrowing a penny. And when Kuheiji manages to convince everyone that it is actually Tokubei who is trying to steal from him, Tokubei's honor is stained. Unable to kill Kuheiji and publicly beaten by his former friend, Tokubei's only recourse is suicide, an act in which he is joined by his lover Ohatsu. Chikamatsu makes it clear, however, that this suicide is an honorable act (although Tokubei the merchant is not allowed to commit ritual *seppuku*). The final lines of the play proclaim that "high and low alike gather to pray for these lovers who beyond a doubt will in the future attain Buddhahood. They have become models of true love" (56). *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*, written in 1703, offers one of the earliest

examples of a virtuous merchant who is put on stage to show merchant class audiences how to behave with honor. Perhaps the best example of the virtuous merchant, however, is the character Gihei in *Chushingura*, written in 1748. One of the most popular plays in the Japanese repertory, *Chushingura*, or *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, tells the story of the forty-three servants of Enya Hangan, a samurai forced to commit ritual suicide after being disgraced by the evil Kono Moronao. The *ronin* (masterless samurai) bide their time, waiting several years before finally taking their revenge on the man who caused their master's death. Originally written for *bunraku* puppets by three major playwrights (Takeda Izumo, Miyoshi Shoraku, and Namiki Senryu), *Chushingura* became one of the leading plays in the *kabuki* repertory and is still performed at least once a year. Yuranosuke, the leader of the forty-three retainers, is considered one of the greatest roles for a *kabuki* actor. Nearly as popular, however, is the role of the virtuous merchant, Gihei.

Although he only appears in Act 10, Gihei is an important character in *Chushingura*, both in terms of its plot (without his help the vendetta would not have been possible) and its themes (like the *ronin*, he must make sacrifices for the cause, showing his duty and honor). Act 10 centers entirely on Gihei, his actions to further the plot and Yuranosuke's testing of his loyalty. So what exactly does Gihei do to show his virtue, or what does the audience see and hopefully learn from him? His first appearance on stage comes at the beginning of Act 10, as he packs supplies for shipment to the *ronin*, "tying heavy boxes with his own hands" (*Chushingura* 150). As a merchant it is Gihei who can obtain all of the equipment -- "chain-mail vests and jointed ladders," "lances and spears" (153) -- necessary for the attack on Moronao's castle. So he is vital to the success of their mission. He does more, however, than simply supply the arms and equipment. He must also make sure that no word of his activity gets out, to ensure the safety of the conspirators and the success of the attack. So Gihei, to keep this vital secret, has fired all of his employees, finding small faults with them all so no one will suspect the true reason for their being fired. He even goes so far as to divorce his wife, whom he loves dearly, so that she will have no knowledge of his dealings.

The most dramatic moments in Act 10 are those in which Gihei is being tested. Because some of the *ronin* are not sure if Gihei would hold up under police interrogation and torture, Yuranosuke devises a test of his loyalty. Pretending to be police officers, several of the conspirators force their way into his home, claiming to have proof that he provided weapons for an attack on Moronao's estate. Gihei, however, does not betray the *ronin*. At one point he dramatically throws himself on top of a box that he believes contains arms, willing to sacrifice himself for the cause. Even when they threaten to kill his only son, Gihei holds firm, saying, "Ha-ha. I see you expect to extort a confession from me, the way you might from a woman or a child, by taking a hostage. But Gihei of the Amakawaya is a man" (158). Interestingly, it is this very distinction between being treated like a man or like a child that will inform the way Thorowgood and Lillo deal with George Barnwell in *The London Merchant* (Barnwell is treated like a child). Here, however, Gihei proves his manliness by refusing to crack even under the most intense pressure -- his wife is about to be forced to marry another man, he could be tortured, and his only son could be killed before his very eyes. This extreme loyalty earns Gihei high praise from Yuranosuke and his companions and from the narrator as well. Thus, not only does the audience see what Gihei does, but they also hear him praised by samurai, members of the highest social class. When Gihei has passed his test, Yuranosuke says, "They say there are no 'men among men,' but we have found one for certain among the merchants" (160). Gihei has shown a virtue and loyalty that lift him beyond his social class. Yuranosuke says, "There's a saying 'among flowers the cherry blossom, and among men the samurai,' but no samurai could match your determination" (160). So the virtues being taught to the audience do not solely apply to the merchant class. In fact, they are samurai virtues, which merchants should follow in order to earn the respect and admiration of their social superiors. Even before Gihei passes his test, he is highly praised. The narrator calls him "a man of unblemished reputation" (150), and Goemon, one of the *ronin*, says that he "has a chivalrous spirit not even a samurai could match" (153). As it was not possible for merchants to actually improve their

position in the social hierarchy, they had to find other ways to improve their station. In the world of the play, Gihei manages to become more than a mere merchant by exemplifying samurai virtues. In this character, audiences see what they should aspire to, and through his positive example they can learn how to live better lives and ensure the only type of upward mobility possible for them.

This same goal of teaching the bourgeois audience members how to lead virtuous lives can be seen in George Lillo's *The London Merchant*. In fact, in his dedication to this middle class tragedy, Lillo says, "Plays founded on moral tales in private life may be of admirable use by carrying conviction to the mind with such irresistible force as to engage all the faculties and powers of the soul in the cause of virtue by stifling vice in its first principles" (513). Lillo is arguing for the power of tragedy to teach moral lessons, but he also reveals the way this teaching will work in the West, namely negatively. Unlike the teaching through depictions of positive examples that we saw in Japanese drama, bourgeois drama in the West at this time tended to teach its audiences by showing the consequences of *not* leading a virtuous life. According to George E. Wellwarth, "The basic impulse behind all [middle class] drama was to show the virtues of the hard-working bourgeois. It assumed implicitly, and often explicitly, that sin resulted directly from -- indeed, consisted in -- a deviation from the prescribed path of behaviour. Evil, in other words, was nonconformity to the norms of behaviour set up by society" (84). It is just such a "deviation" that Lillo shows in the character George Barnwell, an apprentice to a wealthy merchant who is led away from the true path by an evil woman named Millwood. The didactic nature of the drama is clear even from the names of the characters. The name of the main character, George Barnwell, is obviously meant to evoke a central notion of eighteenth-century thought, the idea that people are "born well" or naturally good, but can be led astray by evil influences. The evil influence here, as is often the case, comes in the form of a woman, Millwood, whose name calls to mind Biblical notions of evil as well as depicting decay. On the other hand, Barnwell's master, the honest merchant, is named Thorowgood, a name that truly speaks to his character. Similarly named is Barnwell's best friend, another apprentice studying under Thorowgood. He is called Trueman, and he lives up to his name by sticking by Barnwell even when his friend has gone astray. In fact, when Barnwell steals from their master, Trueman does what he can to replace the money, showing how true he is to his friend.

Perhaps the play, then, inevitably becomes "schoolmasterish" (Wellwarth 86). Those who are to be taught by a negative example are usually children; it is the approach associated with grammar schools, "drilling the material to be learned into the pupil's head. If a thing is repeated often enough, it will eventually be believed, either because it really is true, or because the subject's brain has softened under the incessant assaults" (Wellwarth 86). Lillo clearly establishes this pattern of repetition in the plot of the play. Barnwell commits a series of offenses, each one worse than the one before. He lies to his master, Thorowgood, then steals money from him. Finally, he murders his uncle. Each time he sins, he goes through the same process of repentance and makes the same promises to himself that he will never be bad again. Like a schoolboy, he does not entirely get the lesson the first time. It takes several iterations for him to really learn the lesson. This play, then, really sets the standard for dramas that teach moral lessons. As Arnold Hauser more generally puts it, "Only an age which believed as firmly as this one in the educable and improvable nature of man could commit itself to purely tendentious art" (84). Unlike Gihei, then, George Barnwell is not a positive example for audiences to follow. He is, instead, a negative example, showing what apprentices should not do. It is clear from the beginning that he has a good heart and knows the rules he is supposed to follow. When Barnwell first meets with Millwood (his first appearance in the play), she asks him what he thinks of love, and he replies, as he should, "If you mean the love of women, I have not thought of it at all. My youth and circumstances make such thoughts improper in me yet" (517). But his attraction to Millwood is so powerful that she is easily able to lead him astray. He spends that first night with Millwood, which is a violation not only of rules for proper sexual conduct, but also of his contract with his master, which set strict rules on when and how he was allowed to leave the household. At the time,

apprentices were "legally forbidden" even to "frequent taverns or playhouses without permission of their masters" (DeRitter 378), let alone stay out all night.

This first act of disobedience makes it easier for Barnwell to commit his more serious offenses. Although he swears, after receiving his master's forgiveness for that first offense, that he will never sin again, Millwood convinces him to stray without too much trouble. Thus, he steals money from Thorowgood, and when he finds that he cannot reason out how he went wrong, he commits an even greater sin (to the bourgeois mind), abandoning reason. He says, "But why should I attempt to reason? All is confusion, horror, and remorse. I find I am lost... plunged again in guilt, yet scarce know how or why" (522). Since he abandons reason, the merchant's chief tool, and does not know "how or why" he strayed, he feels that he cannot stop his downward course. So he does not even refuse when Millwood prompts him to murder his uncle and beloved benefactor for money. Thus he reaches the bottom of his downward path and commits the ultimate bourgeois sin, murdering the father-figure who provided for his up-bringing. An important aspect of this sort of teaching is that it is much more effective if the person serving as the negative example finally sees the error of his ways and repents. Here again Barnwell is a perfect example. In fact, as I have mentioned, he repents whole-heartedly several times, culminating in his final repentance and preparation for death. After his first transgression, spending the night with Millwood, Barnwell seemingly repents sincerely. Just by looking at him, Thorowgood can see the guilt he is feeling. And Thorowgood's forgiveness overwhelms Barnwell, who exclaims, "Villain, villain, villain! basely to wrong so excellent a man. Should I again return to folly? -- detested thought! -- But what of Millwood then? Why, I renounce her! I give her up; the struggle's over, and virtue has prevailed. Reason may convince, but gratitude compels. This unlooked for generosity has saved me from destruction" (520). Actually, this "generosity" and forgiveness on the part of the master is an integral part of the teaching process. In order to fulfill his role as teacher, a master must take on the role of a "surrogate parent" and "take upon himself responsibility for correcting and forgiving minor transgressions" (Cole 60-61). Thorowgood is there again at the end of the play when Barnwell is in prison and repents for the final time. In this scene, Thorowgood clearly plays the teacher, leading his pupil with words like, "Proceed!" (530) through a recitation of the bourgeois Christian doctrine of salvation. And Barnwell truly is repentant. He has learned his lesson, a lesson Lillo wants the audience to learn. He has learned that it is wrong to deviate from bourgeois rules of behavior, and that if you do you will surely be punished. He speaks of "future penitents [receiving] the profit of my example" (530). Later he goes even further, saying, "Thus justice in compassion to mankind cuts off a wretch like me, by one such example to secure thousands from future ruin" (532). He admits that he can serve as an example for others, which is precisely what Lillo expects him to be, but only after he has come back into line and admitted that he was wrong. Thorowgood's teaching has been effective within the play, as Lillo hopes his teaching will be for the bourgeois audiences who saw the earliest productions of the play.

These plays, then, take drastically different approaches to the teaching of merchant class virtues, but what are the reasons for the choices the playwrights have made? Why would a playwright (or the three playwrights of *Chushingura*) in Japan choose to use a positive example to teach its audience, whereas George Lillo in England chose a negative example for his play? Let us start with *Chushingura*. The merchant class in Japan in the eighteenth century controlled the economy, but still ranked lowest on the social hierarchy. Thus, the Japanese bourgeoisie spent its money on the arts, on the "floating world" of the gay quarters and the theatre, for diversion. Because of their "ambiguous position of energetic economic leadership in the face of socio-political oppression" (Ortolani 162), the merchants were stuck with plenty of money, but no way to move up in the world. Thus, they developed their artistic sensibility as much as they possibly could. By 1700 the townspeople "had very definite and very strict ideas of their own as to a good book, a good play, [or] a good picture" (Sansom, *Japan* 473). They appreciated skillful manipulation of *bunraku* puppets or excellence in *kabuki* acting. Art and the cultivation of culture, then, was the only way for merchants to escape from the restrictions of the



social hierarchy. They were still the lowest-ranking class in the society, but their artistic endeavors could give them some degree of respectability, a theoretical, if not actual, upward mobility. G. B. Sansom notes, "The townspeople, for all their growing prosperity, were still subject to the disabilities of their class and not free from oppression at the hands of their feudal masters. It was in the world of entertainment... that they found escape from social restraints" (*Western* 193-94). There was no chance for a merchant to become a member of the samurai class, as someone could move up the ladder in Western society, either by marrying a member of the aristocracy or even by purchasing a title. In Japan, the best a member of the middle class could do would be to demonstrate skill and appreciation of the arts, earning the respect of their social superiors. Donald Shively notes that the "commoners aspired to the education, ethical values, and cultural pastimes of their betters" (712). Some even managed to be accepted into samurai society. Shively claims, "A few merchant houses... associated in social circles or salons with court nobles, high clergy, cultivated [samurai officials], and poets and artists. Some amassed important collections of tea bowls and utensils, paintings, and rare Chinese books. The skill of some merchants in cultural accomplishments such as ... poetry and tea, painting, and noh, also speaks to the social position of these individuals" (712).

With this argument in mind, it is easy to see why representations of merchant class characters on the *kabuki* and *bunraku* stages would be positive. If the only way to move up in the world is to attain culture, then your culture should teach people who want to move up by showing them what it means to be worthy of such upward mobility. Thus you get characters, like Gihei, who are honorable and are deemed worthy of recognition and honor by the samurai. Hopefully, then, members of the audience will see what sorts of lives they need to lead in order to get the kind of recognition that Gihei gets. There is a direct link between the way in which Gihei advances himself socially in the play and the way that merchants were able to advance themselves by attaining culture. In both cases the social advancement is metaphorical, not actual, but important nonetheless. Gihei is not allowed to join the attack party, not even "to dip water for [their] tea when [they] stop for a rest" (*Chushingura* 161). But he is honored by the *ronin*, who use the name of his shop, Amakawaya, to create the passwords used during the attack. In that respect, he gets to be there metaphorically, which is a great honor. In the same way, although merchants in general could not actually move up in the social hierarchy, they could do so metaphorically through the arts. That metaphorical social advancement meant as much to the merchants as the use of his store's name did to Gihei.

In England, as we have seen, the teaching of middle class values was often done in a negative way. George Barnwell was put on stage to show the apprentices in the audience what not to do (and what the consequences might be if they do break the rules). It is interesting to note how effective this technique was. Lucinda Cole recounts the story of "the apprentice of a capital merchant who had embezzled some 200 pounds of his master's money but, having seen *The London Merchant*, now wished to die" (62). In fact, someone or some group thought so highly of the educative value of the play that "well into the nineteenth century the apprentices of London were sent each year during the Christmas season to see this play as a warning against going astray" (Brockett 241). It was indeed a fact that *The London Merchant* was produced every year on the days that apprentices had off, namely "Boxer Day and Shrove Tuesday" (Cole 74). Apprentices could not go to see plays on any other days because starting times were earlier than they are now, during business hours. Theatrical producers clearly thought there would be some benefit to showing apprentices, the lowest members of the merchant class, "what would inevitably happen to them if they did not behave themselves" (Wellwarth 91). The bourgeois drama of eighteenth-century Europe probably took this "finger wagging" (Wellwarth 86) approach to teaching in an attempt to naturalize the new social hierarchy that was being created during the middle part of the century. Obviously, with the rise of middle class economic and political power the hierarchies of feudalism or absolute monarchy could not apply to this new society. It was the bourgeoisie who established the new hierarchy (although perhaps many of them believed they had eliminated hierarchies altogether), with apprentices at the bottom of the middle

class. A possible problem with this new hierarchy, however, was that apprentices, especially after they had learned most of their masters' skills, might start to wonder why they were at the bottom of the middle class. Of course, the system was supposed to train apprentices to become masters someday; it told them that someday they would "occupy the economic and cultural position from which [their masters] now judge and assess" (Cole 68). In order to make sure that, while they were still apprentices, they did not forget their place, however, they were treated like children. Often these were "skilled workmen in their early twenties" (DeRitter 378), but they were still being lectured at. In order to make their hierarchy seem natural, it was important for masters to be like teachers or parents and apprentices like students or children. According to Lucinda Cole, "In order to press upon the master his seemingly 'natural' obligations, reformers often contended that the master should regard himself not merely as an economic facilitator, but as a surrogate parent" (60). Thorowgood is the teaching and forgiving father to his two apprentices, a fact which is evident from the very first scene of the play, in which he teaches Trueman what it means to be a merchant. When Trueman asks how merchants can help the country, Thorowgood replies, "[Y]ou may learn how honest merchants, as such, may sometimes contribute to the safety of their country as they do at all times to its happiness" (515). Most discussions of the play emphasize the teaching element I have been discussing. George E. Wellwarth calls it "more a dramatized 'Youth's Companion' than a play" (91) and a "dramatized sermon" (95). Jones DeRitter claims that "Lillo seeks to educate and reform [his] audience" (376). By treating apprentices like children, bourgeois writers like Lillo attempted to naturalize the new middle class hierarchy. For that process, he used negative examples in his teaching. Children are often taught in this way, by showing what not to do and telling them the bad things that will happen if they do not follow the rules (of course, that is not the only way to teach children, but even today it is still the most common method used).

Although both British and Japanese playwrights used representations of merchant class characters to teach their audiences how to behave, then, the teaching methods were very different in the two countries, and they were motivated by very different goals. For the Japanese merchants, art was the only way to escape the strict feudal hierarchy of the Tokugawa regime. In England, on the other hand, the merchant class was establishing and seeking to naturalize a hierarchy of its own. In Europe and Japan the eighteenth century was the time that saw the rise of an entirely new class, the middle class, with new needs and ambitions, new ways of thinking and new artistic forms. The shift in power from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie sometimes came about peacefully (the Glorious Revolution), sometimes through violence (the French Revolution), and in Japan, amazingly, both cultures were able to exist simultaneously for over a hundred years before the tensions were enough to break apart the Tokugawa shogunate. In every case, however, these tensions can be seen very clearly in the art of the period. To end as I began, then, I will quote Arnold Hauser, who says, "[bourgeois drama of the eighteenth century] was by no means the first and only form of the drama to have its source in a social conflict, but it was the first example of a drama which made this conflict its very theme and which placed itself openly in the service of a class struggle. The theatre had always propagated the ideology of the classes by which it had been financed, but class differences had never before formed more than the latent, never the manifest and explicit content of its productions" (84).

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