

Reading report of "the tale of genji" or "genji monogatari"

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READING REPORT OF THE TALE OF GENJI AND GENJI MONOGATARI Reading Report of The Tale of Genji and Genji Monogatari The catchy work by Shikibu is one that encompasses numerous themes that deepen the readers' audience understanding of the Japanese culture and society in the times. This essay shall attempt to analyze two themes as postulated by the author- theme of marriage, and the roles of women or rather gender relations in the work.

Theme 1-Gender relations-place of the woman

As seen in the Genji Monogatari, gender relations are evident in the work. The woman in the tale lives in a time and society that is shady and extremely hostile to them. It is evident in the relations that the women entered ended up being extremely miserable and sorrowful for them. A good example is that of Kaoru who had the chance of getting married willingly to Oigimi but the marriage does not take place¹. Oigimi as seen in the tale is the unfortunate one. She laments for lack of position and freedom. She even claims to be deep in sin and hopes to die soonest².

The issue of rape and its relation in to the marriage of Murasaki is evident. Genji is an individual who has a low opinion of women, and if justice is anything to go by, he should be charged with rape and kidnapping. The act of rape relates to the fact that women have always been considered weak and subordinate to the man. In the case of rape, therefore, women have no option, but to surrender to men, as they are weak and are likely to surrender easily. Rape, in my opinion, is forced sex. However, in the context of Genji Monogatari, the act of Genji gives him the name, "hero" as if his act was one that required praise and admiration from the society³. The author quotes "..._The shining Genji_: it was almost too grand a name..." ⁴

Theme 2- Marriage

The theme of marriage is evident in

the tale. As the norm is, marriage ought to be a union between two people who consent to the agreement. However, from the tale, the case is different as women were required to have consent from their fathers prior to getting married. A good example is that of Genji who has his first night with Suetsumuhana (Murasaki), the orphaned princess⁵. The princess remains devoted to her father's memory and considers it a sin to get married without her father's approval⁶. This she relates to the societal expectations. The author quotes, "...You are not to sulk ... and make me unhappy. Young ladies ... do as they are told... so the lessons began..." ⁷ Genji, on the other hand, takes advantage of this fact and proceeds without approval from Suetsumuhana⁸. Despite the relation that matured afterwards, the forceful sexual relation is questionable.

The society also did not expect that women speak of their sexual relations. This explains the kind of marriage that women were supposed to live with. Women were expected to be virgins, as opposed to the men who had the option of speaking openly of their sexual encounters, and show no form of ignorance on sex⁹. Such men were fit to be married. The marriage institution, in this society, is one that can clearly be described as unjust and diminished any form of possibility that would create an equal chance for men and women to air their views regarding the marriage union.

Conclusively, the place of the woman and marriage clearly explain the gender relations in this society. It is warranted to argue that the woman was a lesser being and had to conform to all the demands of the man figure in the society.

Bibliography

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-----Genji Monogatari. Volume 1. Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1975.