Another of Genji’s special talents is his attention to important and intimate details. The way he seduces the object of his desire is to adapt to their moods with tacit details that fill their sights, and sounds while swirling them into a fantasy of delectable scents that will later remind them of the pleasure of his company. This is shown to perfection when Genji is enticed by the beautiful Tamakazura. As Genji shows his regard for the much younger woman, she is made uncomfortable by his attentions. She feels his behavior is inappropriate since she thinks Genji is her father or in the least her protector. In fact her real father is Genji’s former brother-in-law, the Lady Aoi’s brother.

To win Tamakazura, Genji uses his considerable charm, ingenuity and consummate accomplishment on the koto of which he is a master. His majestic playing of the seven-string instrument won her when none of his other tactics did.

The modern reader no doubt sees Hikaru Genji as an incorrigible Don Juan, a shameless rake. Yet Ivan Morris tells us in The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan that for the modern reader who inhabits a monogamous society, The Tale of Genji provides valuable insight into a world where polygamy is the order of the day. The possession of numerous wives and consorts is normal and actually a respectable means of behavior for Heian gentleman.

In the Heian aristocracy, large families have an important advantage, one being that women tend to die young. Also the fact that women are almost completely dependent on men, therefore, a wealthy man who possesses numerous wives and concubines is not labeled a lecher. In fact, it is considered a status symbol.
The type of disapproval our modern-day societies would put on unfaithful husbands is instead directed at the man who has only one or two wives. He is considered anti-social.

The way Genji comports himself during his romantic liaisons falls into the proper ways a courtier is expected to behave. A Reader’s Guide: The Tale of Genji gives us the appropriate guidelines for ladies and gentlemen of the aristocracy. They should “compose delicate poetry,” written in a certain way with just the proper “shade of the ink”. Even “the selection of the paper” is important, the texture, the color. All these nuances are “meticulously scrutinized for evidence of courtly sensibility” (49).

In the Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature we find more valuable information such that the particular way a courtier paints their calligraphy is very important. They should prepare special music that would entice an erotic encounter. In this way, both men and women carry on their romantic affairs around the standing screens posed between them.

The reason for much of this painstaking decorum is that the women of the upper had few options to deal with the mind-numbing monotony of their lives. These were love and literature. They must have something exciting to fill their days.

In regards to Genji, it is not only his astonishing looks, his sensitivity, and his remarkable artistic talents that elevate him as the ideal male. It is the way in which he savors each of his romantic encounters and their various, individual virtues with almost religious devotion. In Heian Japan, an era when a man could walk away at anytime for any reason, leaving the woman destitute if he chose, once Hikaru Genji gives his support to a woman, he never withdraws it, even though he may have lost all interest in her as a mistress. In fact, he builds a magnificent mansion with rooms enough to house all his women.

THE END

Copyright 2008 by Ledia Runnels

Enjoy!


Works Cited


Related articles

- A Saga of Seduction in Japan: Tale of Genji (The first novel ever written) Part One [creativemusingsollediar.com]
- A Saga of Seduction in Japan: Tale of Genji (The first novel ever written) Part Two [creativemusingsollediar.com]
- A Saga of Seduction in Japan: Tale of Genji (The first novel ever written) Part Three [creativemusingsollediar.com]
- “The Tale of Genji” translated into Italian [english.kyodonews.jp]
Despite all this, Genji is not perfect. Impulsive to a fault, he follows his heart, more often than not, though it may lead to disastrous results. Particularly in the case of several wives or consorts to other men that invariably catch his attention. One such infamous encounter results in Genji's banishment from court, though only temporarily it is a sorrowful time in his life.

Still, for many other women, Genji fills the order as Sei Shonagon would say of “Things that make your heart beat fast”— one being a “fine gentleman (who) pulls up in his carriage and sends in some request” (30). One thing for certain, Genji savors each and every one of his conquests with a singular devotion.

The next to succumb to Genji’s charms is his step-mother, Kokiden, mother of the present heir apparent, Genji’s older half-brother. “Admitting the boy to her inner chamber, (Kokiden) was pleased (even)…reluctant to let him go. She had two daughters, but neither could compare with (Genji) in beauty” (13). All this, even though in the recent past Kokiden proves a deadly rival against Genji’s birth mother.

At age 12, Genji is married to the Minister of the Left’s daughter. His boyish charm is enough to win over his father-in-law, though Genji’s wife, Aoi—five years his senior, is less than enthusiastic about the relationship.

As a young man of seventeen, Genji bewitches an even younger boy, Kojimi, age 12 and the boy’s reluctant older sister, Utsusemi, the wife of a government official:

“The two voices, very sleepy, resembled each other. (Utsusemi said,) ‘And where is our guest? (Kojimi’s) voice was low. ‘I saw him. He is every bit as handsome as everyone says’” (41).

Genji searches to find Utsumei alone. “His manner was so gently persuasive that devils and demons could not have gainsaid him” (32). “(Utsumei) was bathed in perspiration and quite beside herself at the thought of what… the others… would be thinking… Yet the sweet words poured forth, (from
As Utsusemi flees Genji’s further advances, she leaves behind her daughter-in-law, Nokiba-no-ogi. Though a bit startled by the unexpected visitor, Nokiba is quite happy to give her time and attention to the charming young man. “The girl beside him had a certain young charm of her own and presently he was deep in vows of love” (54).

On another occasion, Genji finds himself whisked into a passionate search to find a mysterious lady that has given him a “heavily scented white fan” to place a plucked white flower in, “known as ‘evening faces’” (58). Later Evening Faces, as the lady is referred to, is found to be the mother of another young woman who Genji will love, Tamakazura.

Even people who have nothing in common with Genji are drawn to him. On occasion someone may receive a “little poem from him or (having) been treated to some little kindness found him much on their minds. No doubt it distressed them not to be always with him” (63).


Copyright 2008 by Ledia Runnels

Enjoy!

Related articles
- A Saga of Seduction in Japan: Tale of Genji (The first novel ever written) Part One (creativemusingsoflediar.com)
- Tale of Genji: Week 16, Chapter 16 (chazzw.wordpress.com)
- Tale of Genji, Week 12, Chapter 12 (chazzw.wordpress.com)
- Geisha Heiko, Genji’s Lover (fayewong6.wordpress.com)
- Our Summer of Genji (summergenji.wordpress.com)
- Tale of Genji: Week 13, Chapter 13 (chazzw.wordpress.com)
- Tale of Genji: Week 14, Chapter 14 (chazzw.wordpress.com)
- Tale of Genji, Chapter 11 (chazzw.wordpress.com)
- Genji in Midair (summergenji.wordpress.com)
- Wisteria Blossoms (summergenji.wordpress.com)