

Lecture 16

Recap of the characteristics of the Tokugawa Period:

- hierarchy
- culture
- urbanization

Why do modern films, animations, and books often return to this era?

Discussion of the readings:

Why was the love between Seijuro and Onatsu forbidden?

- it was mostly a status thing – he’s just an employee of someone else, not self-employed, or an employer
- it was possibly also because of Seijuro’s bad habits (i.e. he squanders his money)

What did you think of the stories? How do they compare to the McCollough?

- they were melodramatic (kind of like Shakespeare)

Quick list of tales: Seijuro; Almanac; Gengobei; Utamaro

What can you say about merchant/pleasure quarters life and morality?

- there are *some* rules of conduct (not quite moral rules)
- people are much less concerned about preserving their honor as samurai; there’s less death involved, usually
- there is a sense of class and even some sense of “honor”
- there’s still a sense of “the impermanence of things”
- they may talk about Buddhist ideals, but they tend to stray from those
- characters in the McCollough are more concerned with honor and morality; people in these tales are more vulgar and hedonistic
- these characters are consumerist; they’re somewhat flamboyant in the way they spend their money
- there is some sense of moderation, in Osan’s story (Almanac)
- characters aren’t as morally black and white in these stories; they often have good intentions and thoughts, as well as failings
- love is often valued more so than class, and sometimes even more so than the general sentiment of “impermanence” (or perhaps it’s just that it’s often “everything’s impermanent, but we may as well enjoy ourselves while we can”)
- acceptance of homosexuality; more fluid boundaries on sexuality and sexual orientation

Let’s look at some of the class dynamics –

What is the “way of the merchant”?

- ambition in business and making money
- their view on the pleasure quarters is that it’s a place to spend money
- in the pleasure quarters, status is based more on money than on class; for instance, merchants have more power than samurai here

- merchants aren't *consumed* by greed or material things – they are *aware* of spirituality and some take it somewhat seriously.

How are women portrayed?

- they're possessive, jealous, and definitely not passive; they can even be uppity, sometimes
- samurai women are more passive, restrained, and proper; courtesan/merchant women can be impulsive and informal

Women's status is changing at this point; also, they're writing more.

[finished *Utamaro*]