

This document receives new comments on method as the class progresses. The session in which the comments were initially made is noted.

Session 07 09/11/09 Screening "Chunhyang" (scenes 17-21) & lecture "Method 01: Ground rules"

METHOD 01: Introduction

Some class ground rules:

REBUILD!!! (project the below as ppt ["Method_01_Intro"], but not in full screen mode, so you can get to the DVD bookmark quickly; of course have DVD open and ready to go)

ONE

EVERYTHING in this class has to do with understanding romance. There are a lot of comparisons to be made between East and West, and between East Asian countries, and between premodern and modern times. This class takes as its boundary that these comparisons must be clearly related to romance in some way.

TWO

This class maintains a hierarchy of priorities in terms of comparison. We look at differences between premodern and modern times, we look at differences between Eastern and Western notions, and no doubt most of you will be privately evaluating differences between your personal views and the views we will be considering. HOWEVER, our primary interest is in the comparison of two East Asian countries to one another. This can be difficult when all the other comparisons at hand are the more obvious, easier to explore, easier to argue and perhaps even most exciting.

THREE

Through your analysis you generate knowledge. You might call this your opinion, but if a considered, well-grounded opinion is interesting and reliable enough to become a critical element in another's chain of thoughts, knowledge is a better term. This ups the game. (We don't say, for example, "I had to study Heidigger's opinions." We say, "I had to know something about Heidigger." Faculty are paid to generate knowledge, not opinions.)

Commentary to flesh this out

This class asks you to make meaningful comparisons between things that are interesting but very difficult to compare. This class therefore is challenging both in terms of achieving analysis and controlling the method of analysis. The two are tightly related: without control in method the analysis will fail at the level of logic, clarity or be cobbled to the point that it will not reach an interesting level of comparison.

This is, therefore, an exercise in thinking (and, to some extent, writing) in mature, rigorous, disciplined, interesting lines of inquiry.

So, when very young we write on our summer vacation, etc. This is because the emphasis is on just mastering basic modes of expression and on exploring, nurturing one's identity through writing.

One of the mistakes that college students sometimes fall into is to think that the written product is still about this mastering of expression and projection of personality or unique point of view.

But actually we want information—reliable, interesting, stimulating information. We don't really care if it helps your personal growth, though we don't mind if it does. Readers are selfish; we read to expand our mind, not to watch you expand yours.

So there is this huge transition that needs to be made from style (and all about me) to reliable, substantive content (delivering something the reader needs).

And generating content in this class is difficult. It is the product of *your* analysis. I try to help you not fall into a dark hole through advice on the type of disciplined approach that is needed, but I am just positioning you in front of something. You are still the sole observer.

Why this is a good thing to do

Good for sharpening analytic skills, comparative skills, needs a huge amount of discipline to not sound dumb

Learn about differences between East Asian countries and between them and the west

Learn about your own values having to do with love, romance and sexuality

Just one example from last time (screening of Chunhyang) of what we are up against

DVD bookmark "Mother's Advice"

When she tells Chunhyang to be good to the new governor, should we take that as ...

a) just a way to entertain the public, that is, we can't put much analytic weight on this, the director just wants to entertain

b) a serious comment / criticism that Chunhyang rises above old oppressive teachings of undervaluing women, relying on the power of her love, a love that is given expression through Confucian loyalty

c) a serious criticism of modern, mercenary values and a call to stand by good, old traditions.

Session 08 09/14/09 Trial comparative analysis (Part C): an 18th c. Korean story and 21st c. Korean film: Method 02: Knowing your project & diversity of views

METHOD 02: Know the what & why of your project; diversity of view

Latter I will make available on our web site instructions on how to write your analytic comments for this class

However, here is the single most important rule in controlling your method (comparative analysis method):

When comparing, should always be able to answer these questions

What, exactly, are you comparing?

This class will ask you to very tightly define and limit what you are comparing and generate thinking that only speaks directly and relevantly to that. This is maintain discipline when confronts with extremely complex and ill-defined things. If you don't now what you are comparing, you cannot meet this requirement.

This is not easy for some who think and write creatively but intuitively; but it is good discipline and is a definite must for this class.

Why are you comparing?

Your analysis should illuminate something about two East Asian languages, under the topic of romance. You should be able to say exactly why what you are doing does this, otherwise your thoughts will lack direction and drift hopeless on the wide sea of possible topics and arguments.

Example based on film "Chunhyang"

Student X (locate someone in the room) is an avowed romantic; Student Y (ditto) is an avowed cynic

Student X concludes that the film version of Chunhyang shows how love can overcome obstacles, the power and beauty of love

Student Y concludes that the film doesn't honor love, just status, that love is a means to a higher goal, status (her in the palanquin at the end, and various status comments throughout, such as the mother when Master Yi is poor)

Our comparison is their two essays (if they existed) that interpret the film "Chunhyang" or, if the essays are very long, we might limit ourselves to just a certain aspect of that essay (that's how tightly we want to define our topic).

Why are we doing this?

NOT to show the differences between these two students. Who cares?

Rather, we want to argue that predispositions have a huge impact on how they view a romantic narrative, even to the point of concluding the content of that narrative.

Small group, dialogue practice

The important of connecting with others

If you can't understand what is on others' minds you can't do interesting research or valuable comparisons

Break the room into four units

pair the students

each discusses one of the topic questions (see schedule)

this is also done to help them in their own thinking on these topics

Have them NOW, as individuals, not a group, ask someone behind him/her his/her idea

Have show of hands on ...

Was the other idea that you heard as interesting or more interesting than the one you developed? (EACH PERSON DOES THIS, to see how their partner might have different position)

More interesting?

Interestingly different?

Session 09 09/16/09 Method 03: Comparative analysis example: Premodern/modern and Opera/Cinema divides in the telling of the climax of "Tristan and Isold"

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Purpose

This session practices comparison within a Western context, to practice method and to highlight some concepts behind Western views of love, to make them a little more explicit

This lecture includes these hints

METHOD HINT 1: Don't treat a film as if it were a book, that is, just a story, a plot.

METHOD HINT 2: Look at what happens when you switch venues from the HIGH ART of opera and its specific audience to the OTHER ART (low art? components that are low art?) of cinema with its emphasis on VISUAL story-telling and its diverse, paying AUDIENCE.

(three changes in context: level of art, media emphasis on the visual, an elite aristocratic audience, to a socially diverse, including diverse social classes, audience that pays to be entertained)

METHOD HINT 3: the intensity of love and putting something between you and that. Very important. You can't just take the surface read since the emotions we discuss are so powerful and so private that indirect expression and communication is very common.

10 09/18/09 Discussion continues: METHOD 04: The special case of film, body & culture, audience, and some warnings

METHOD 04: The special case of film, body & culture, audience, and some warnings

This was delivered Fall 09 as just a list of warnings, since it is done on the same day as pairings and so had only about 15 minutes. That worked OK.

Review of goals

Using romance as our way of thinking about these things we are

Primarily looking at differences between two East Asian countries

In order to think about that look at their relationship to their traditions and the Western world, including among each other

Practicing disciplined comparative analysis on a difficult and messy topic

Special issues when considering romantic views and the telling of romantic stories with the medium of film

The commercial environment

Separate out things film have that probably don't have enormous impact on romance

Pageantry, more action scenes, more skin, more eroticism perhaps, simplified stories, comic relief (such as the servant, and when she collapses after seeing him)

The impact of image

Filming of a face, the voice, body movement and such give a person character beyond the flatness of, intended flatness of in some cases, the premodern figures

The impact of sound / music

The affective environment critical to perception

Film as a collaborative enterprise, and these things bear messages

Use of music both to create a mood and carry a specific message

Cinematography

Writers

Actors

Funders (producers)

Audience demand

Body and culture

this is something we consider because in the case of romance a great deal of what we think about is rooted in very old biological structures and social structures, and this class wants to work at the level of more recent cultural effects, things that cause differences and misunderstandings, not what is common among us

we are not looking to claim "that there is desire" "that there is beauty"—these are hard-wired things and no one is surprised to find they exist across times and cultures

no are we looking to claim "there are power relationships" in love, "there is a desire to own another" sometimes, etc—these are ancient social, structures that are even shared with animals

Rather, we are looking for world views relevant to romance that become the basis of our judgments (is that immoral? is he loyal?), expectations (this love will/will not last, etc.) and explanations of romantic interaction (they get along because ...), and so on. These things can be substantially different among cultures and are the product of culture, but have a powerful grip on our interpretations, even emotional reactions and directions we choose to walk in life.

Your comparative analysis is not about your opinion, it is about the "audience" opinion

Audience is our focus; not what you think but what you think they think (though ultimately your values are questioned in the process)

this "they" is intentionally generic: it is the unnamed value system within which we think we should be operating (whether we agree or not), such as "most people think it is a good idea to know the name of the person you sleep with" or "most people, I think, feel it is alright to divorce when the two people no longer love each other". These notions might be well defined by society ("it is illegal to sleep with an 8-year-old girl") to unevenly accepted by society ("a woman should pay her own way on a first date") and might have strong or relatively weak importance associated with them. A film audience, in the abstract, is a segment of society that represents a certain norm. Or so we will proceed. The "audience" is our representative of what seem like widely held values.

This, then, becomes an exercise in trying to understand two others: the set of values that a film seems to embrace (and it might be inconsistent in this), the can be cautiously personified by talking about the "director's" views, and a film's "audience"

This requires listening/viewing intently, which requires identifying your blinds spots in order to notice something different points of view, even differences so great that you didn't even imagine them to be a possible way of thought.

an exercise in bringing texture to the notion of romantic love, of looking how cultural context influences that

Some warnings, things that confuse or degrade analysis of romance

Forgetting the topic

Most of what we study is part of a web of ideas, and it is easy to slip off topic to pursue another interesting part of the web. Avoid temptation.

For example, don't start out talking about representations of women's jealousy and end up talking about how men are fundamentally not loyal in their romantic relationships

Superficial focus

Skimming our material, whether print or film, cannot catch cultural nuances. Skimming almost by definition moves forward at its rapid pace by, in part, ignoring the unfamiliar or altering the somewhat unfamiliar into a more familiar concept, in order to retain it easily. that is new information

Rather, read/view with an inquiring, inquisitive, alert mind

Lack of background work

Everyone thinks they are an expert on love and tends to want to just work from their own ideas. It is your job to try to become informed, at least in some basic way, of thought-systems and practices different from your own. These are only briefly touched upon in class. You have to carry the ball yourself after that.

Reminder: Separating “chemistry” and such issues rooted deep in the body from views that result from religious systems, other cultural teachings, etc. It is not that they are not related; but we look at the culturally-produced end of things in this class.

Confusion of artistic expression and empirical reality

We are looking at artistic expressions of love, not reportage of events of real love. NEVER forget this. One does not equal the other. BUT, I would strongly suggest that when we are in love or when we are reading/viewing a couple in love, we are looking at a phenomenon that is entangled in both internal narrative and reality. (“This is the love of my life”—a narrative. “I am married”—a social reality, legal and with real consequences.)

As sort of a subset of this:

Lack of clarity over the ideal and real

What love *should* be against *what it is* (expectation against event).

Lack of clarity over what is a substantive difference and what is a superficial difference

The reality that nearly all expressions of love are disorderly, multifaceted, ambiguous, are connected with or lead to an additional topic, so on

We work within limit; we recognize this complexity but do not try to solve it. We do not ignore it however. There should be some humility in our conclusions, so expression of the own limits of our analysis.

Bonnie and Clyde

Two criminals dramatically steal together, die together

Story of committed love (an ideal) but also the exuberance of overturning social norm

Exercise: add an element: What if they betrayed each other? A Different story, not love lost or simply a parallel: love both each other and money, or betrayal is par of loving

Preeminence of linguistic environments (Derrida, etc.) and thinking processes

And that is why we pick up several from China

Spectrum of words that refer to stable objects (hair) and culturally defined objects (handsome) ... words both report cultural terrain and participate in it.

Example: love in Heian Japan, if directly translated, would mean “to think” but a better translation would be: “to be preoccupied with ...” so love is where that person is on one’s mind and, if passionately, all the time, which can be reversed as obsessive, not love (discussion here)

Imagine a non-native speaker telling you during a date “I am obsessed with you” you can put it off as wrong language but can you really?

Some more evident than others

The essence of academic prose as declarative and bound by logic; the fluid, open and less logically responsible essence of artistic expression

Always a tension between these when trying to discuss love (Lacan)

when thinking of Chunhyang (work in newly paired groups)

not looking for smart answers but range of ideas for ways of thinking about paper
so, listen to each other

and speak clearly, effectively, very briefly

1-9: biggest effect on values of media,

10-19: big or not

20-29: biggest effect of audience change,

30-39: big or not

40-44: premodern/modern divide

Here for me, not usually introduced in class

Assumptions

Standing in between modern and traditional OR dropping traditional BUT

Unconsciousness horizon of expectation

When the setting is not contemporary ...

Difficult because

Making the old native to one's mind (moralizing it along expectations)

And "old" story format

If you had to make this beloved story would you ...

Can challenge the old

Can retell in updated form the old (Romeo and Juliet)

Importance of culturally systematic positions on love

The vigor of the system on this topic

The status of the story

Inside or outside the moral system

A moral tale, complicit with or promoting a teaching

"Just entertainment" (carnival)

Positioned vis-avis authoritative discourse

Centered: Bible, philosophy (Confucius, St Thomas Aquinas, etc.)

Marginal: can ignore, challenge, demand normative positions

Challenges in writing arguments

Uncritical switching back and forth between description of practice and construction of theory

In the Hojoki parents and spouses die because they have lovingly refused to eat the last of the food themselves

Love is the unselfish act of placing another person ahead of oneself.

Look the same but are early steps on roads that lead to different possible analysis.

Future trouble for claim #1: Maybe if was duty, not love, behind the action; maybe they actually hate doing that but the force of society leaves them no choice (not easy to

describe with certainty all the content of the motive of a person's action – Freud **overdetermination** brilliant and relevant)

Future trouble for claim #2: is loyalty to one's leader the same as devotion to one's spouse? (not easy to settle the issue of love in the closed system of a theory)

12 09/23/09 East Asian traditional views of love and desire (3 of 3): Buddhism, METHOD 05: Blurred interpretive environments

METHOD 05: A blurred interpretive and ethical environment due to multiple systems and the nature of those systems

Introduce the below, then show the PDF: East West Thought System Dominance (on bSpace)

The basic points here:

One of the common effects in the romantic elements of the movies we view is a blurred sense of values.

One reason for this is that multiple systems are in play.

Another is that the systems themselves are not centralized, homogenous positions.

Further, their content values the mix of elements with blurred lines between them.

Also, romantic narratives in Asian generally are deeply embedded in the emotional experience of romance rather than taking romance as an opportunity to discuss morality.

This emotional world is, in itself, one with indistinct boundaries and content.

This is not an argument that East Asian countries are immoral. That would be absurd.

Rather, that in various situations, depending on the individual, there are multiple teachings to guide decisions and interpretations and, further, that the very content of these systems do not necessarily draw bright lines.

Example of chess and go (defeat vs balance = two ways of winning)

17 10/05/09 Romance & Daoism in an 18th c. Chinese narrative: The Story of the Stone (chpts 1-4). METHOD 06: Triangles & Some Misc Comments

METHOD 06: Old social structures and history; triangles, when to rely on assumptions, and misc. comments

Ancient, as in *really* ancient, social structures

Bipedalism a result of a society that did not gather females through physical dominance (like apes) but rather offered "food for sex" as an example of very old structures that might underlie modern structures of romance

Some possible topics for analytic comparison

Sickness: what does it represent in terms of romantic context?

Tale of Genji sickness as debilitating love loss, or unhealthy anger; *Story of Stone* sickness as imbalance of forces (traditional Chinese medicine)

The Lacanian (Jacques Lacan, French psychoanalyst) loop: love & identity

One's identity is determined through another; one does not stand independent of others

Love triangles

Triangles are not just a random number.

The Freudian oedipal complex looked at relationships as ultimately selfish and competitive, with the greatest prize the affection of one's mother

Lacan reformulated this to view the relationship with the mother as essential to identity and the third position as society

either way, the geometry is NOT an equilateral triangle; it is a pair being affected by a third

I think this is probably close to the absolute minimal formulation of the human self (we are not one or even two, we are at least three)

Love triangles do not have to always mean the same thing. Observe them but be careful not to fall into the trap of the stereotyped definition of a love triangle.

They represent in part how a pair is defined but that can be various. Examples:

You are mine because you are not his (how to define possession of something);

I want you because you are his (mimetic desire or competitive desire);

I want your attention on me, I know it is on me because it is not elsewhere;

We want to be a pair but an outside force is challenging that (illicit love);

We are a pair because an outside force validate us (marriage)

Comments on Genji based on exam

It is obvious that you should read Kokin for the exam since it was presented as the structure for Genji

Wanted to see anxiety in Kokin, students tended to oversimplify the structure as "chase, then leave or be left" but there is anxiety always

mentioned as an example of turning into the familiar something not that familiar

Buddhism

some students presented this as wanting/loving too much, or loving the wrong things and this isn't radical enough

First Truth: ALL life is suffering; there is not good choice. ALL love is suffering; there is not way to manage desire to reduce suffering.

Buddhism is a complete and radical critique of the romantic, and that has had its impact

Is Murasaki a standin for Fujitsubo?

love as a PROCESS: Genji might start out with seeing M as a stand in for F but develops his own relationship with her. Romances drift over many situations, so when writing a paper control this: either stick with a specific situation or move with the flow but be aware that there IS a flow to narrative.

If you can't feel Genji's affection for Murasaki, you are probably over-deploying your own definition of what love is; it is good to have a definition but we are trying to understand *their* definition, not just determine whether it meets our criteria

General comments

Guys: spend some time thinking of the women. This class looks at *relationships*, not just men or just women, but the thing the exists between them.

Getting past one's assumption is the whole challenge; one needs interpretive templates to move through the world ("green" = "go") but when over-used, one doesn't encounter something new. The need to strike a balance between reevaluating assumptions and relying on assumptions. Very tough.

Relationship of ideas and body

Fossil Skeleton From Africa Predates Lucy (Ardi):

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/02/science/02fossil.html? r=1&ref=science>

