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This “exquisite, exuberant, X-rated” novel (Mirabella), set in feudal Japan, tells the story of a concubine who hires a stable boy to whisper erotic stories from behind a screen while she entertains her master, a samurai general.

The Pillow Boy of the Lady Onogoro Details

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From Reader Review *The Pillow Boy of the Lady Onogoro* for online ebook

Kelsey says

This is a sexy book. It mixes romance and erotic storytelling with high-court machinations. It took me a while to get into and to finish because I was only reading it at night, but it lends itself well to episodic reading.

livdui says

Roman? okumadan evvel beklentim fazla yoktu ama daha birkaç sayfa geçmi?ti ki iyi bir kitap oldu?unu ve i?in do?rusu beklentisiz okuman?n o ?ansl? taraf?na denk geldi?imi fark ettim, haliyle de okuma keyfim artt?. 10-11 yüzy?l aras?nda yaz?ld??? dü?ünülen Ba?ucu O?lan?, yazar? ve elyazmalar? kayboldu?u için Alison Fell ve Arye Blower taraf?ndan kalan alt? bölümün uyarlanmasıyla bu masala can verilip kitap haline getirilmi?. Edebi yönü çok kuvvetli ve bana göre Japon edebiyat?n?n tüm ifadelerini tek ba??na sunmakta. Erotik yönü bask?n ama bunu ?iirsel üslupla süsledi?i için ?ehvetli cinsel fantezilerin yetenekli taraf?n? da göstermekten geri kalm?yor. Kitab?n dili çok ba?ka, kesinlikle keyifli bir kitapt?. Ayr?nt? Yay?nlar? muazzam bir çeviri yapm??, onu da belirtmeden geçmemem gerekir.

Tiffany says

There used to be an extraordinary book store in DC that had a plush calendar of visiting authors who would read their books. It went out of business thanks to Borders. Oh those many many pleasurable hours I spent there in the company of Susan Sontag, Paul Auster, Gunter Grass, China Achebe, et. al. This marvelous writer read from this book in one of the most memorable of the readings I attended. Her thick Scottish accent charmed the socks off me. I would've bought the book merely for the joy of hearing her voice, but it was a marvelous story as well.

During the post reading Q&A, Alison Fell claimed that when she set out to write this she wanted to write a book about a woman living in a deeply constrictive society. I don't know how she got to Japan during the 10th century, but that's where she set this sweet, cunning piece of erotic fluff. Heian Japan more precisely, an epoch that birthed the stunning voices of Sei Shonagon and Murasaki Shikibu. Ms. Fell chose this time because she wondered if it wasn't a particularly cruel time in history. She didn't say "cruel" though. In her delightful accent what she said actually sounded more like "krill" (with a delightful little roll at the "r", just the sort of thing to tickle an American's ear. Just why is a rolled *r* so exciting? Its superfluosness?)

This book is sensual and sexy and full of imagery and words that send blood rushing to every cranny of your body. I defy you to read it without eventually excusing yourself from company to go, er, lie down.

There was one chapter in which our beleaguered heroine has a lover so severe and demanding that he ritually washes her body--including cleaning under her finger nails--each time he sees her. Unfortunately you just know all that attention to her body was not done as sensual preparation but rather as preemptive hygiene. Still it is a bit shiver-inducing to those of us with occult daddy complexes. Even now it makes me giddy that

Ms. Fell admitted this was the only part of the novel that was autobiographical.

Whew, I made the **colossal** mistake of reading several reviews. I realize that some people have reviewed it without understanding what they were getting into. If you are neither haptic nor sensually inclined, if you don't know the difference between pornography and erotica, or if you find female sexuality and body functions disturbing you probably should stay clear of this book.

Merve says

Çin imparatorluğunda bir sarayda bir kumandanın metresi olarak yaşanan bir öykü anlatıcısı kadının cinsel olarak ancak öylü anlatırken rahatlaması üzerine kör bir uyarı anlatıcısı olarak tutması ve uyarının ona ağırlık olması, anlatıcısının kadına ağırlık olması ve kadının anlatıcısıyla ilişkisinin yanlış anlaşılması üzerine acı bir sonla biten kitap.

Arzu Altınanıt says

Japonya'daki Heyan çağıyla ilgili bir kitap. Hiç tanımadığım bir dönem ve bir kültür bu. Çok severek büyük bir ilgiyle okudum. 'Kitap bana bir şeyler öğretmeli,' söylemine tam anlamıyla cevap verdi. Çeviri genel olarak oldukça başarılıydü ama gereksiz virgül kullanımları gerçekten çok yorucu. "ve" den önce dahi virgül kullanılmıştı. Konu olarak Türkçesiyle yazılmış Türkçesini karıştıranın kötü bir sonucu bu. Konu olarak her es verdiğimiz yerde yazarken virgül kullanıyoruz ve ne yazık ki son dönemde çok kitaplarda bu sorun çok sık karşımıza çıkıyor. Bir eleştirim de Japonca bırakılan (ki sanırım orijinali öyleydi ve bu durumda doğrusu yapılmıştı) kelimeler için çevirmen notu konsaydı çok daha anlaşılır olurdu. Bu aksaklıklarına rağmen kaliteli bir kitap okumak isteyen herkese tavsiye ederim.

Joselito Honestly and Brilliantly says

Supposedly there was a real "The Pillow Boy of the Lady Onogoro" written by a renowned Japanese poet during the Heian era. I don't know when that era was, but I am sure it was a long time ago because the original manuscript of the book had disappeared and only some "fragmentary variants" have been found. As is usual with whatever is lost, or does not exist, the imagination took over. This was the fruit of Alison Fell's imaginative musings about this lost masterpiece of ancient Japan--stories within stories like the Arabian Nights with lots of sex that "will steam your dumplings" and, in my case, which made me laugh.

The main plot is simple yet I've never seen anything like it before: Onogoro, a poet and concubine of a general, couldn't get an orgasm while being humped by her lover. So what she did was to get the services of the blind Oyu, a humble stable boy, and made him hide behind a screen at the head of her bed. Oyu then narrates to her wild, erotic stories while the general is at it. These stories never fail to bring her home.

So you have here the main plot which is about sex, then Oyu's stories which are also about sex, but the fun does not stop there. Onogoro, like a typical female, also likes to meet her female friends (whenever the general is at home with his family) and during these socials where men are not around they also tell each

other sexy stories. And what stories! I had been a connoisseur of porn when I was younger and still single and I had never seen many of the scenes depicted in these stories like that guy fucking a tree; another one, caught with his infidelity, drowned in a bathtub of menstrual blood patiently collected by his irate partner from her own monthly secretions and those of her female friends; and another one fucked by his lover while drowning in a rising sea tide, the woman unable to save him because a big clam won't let go of his foot despite his and his lover's valiant efforts to free it. The guy had his orgasm at the precise point of his drowning to death--a unique experience of both the little death and the big death made possible by a big clam and a small one!

A must read to those who aspire to direct pornographic films.

Molly says

I loved *The Pillow Book* of Sei Shonagon, and I adore literary plays, adaptations, and the like, though I'm too often disappointed. This one had some nice moments--women empowered by their bodies, storytelling and poetry having magical roles--but ultimately, it was difficult to feel grounded in the text.

Westley says

Okay

scarlettraces says

in the style of the great works of heian literature with a sense of mischief. exquisite but also robust. and a lot, lot shorter than genji.

Renaë says

Lady Onogoro, a self-made woman in the 11th century Japanese imperial court, has a problem: her lover and patron doesn't excite her. Not wanting to hurt his feelings or lose his protection, Onogoro enlists the services of a blind stableboy. He whispers erotic stories in her ear during coitus, and Onogoro's wealthy patron leaves happy, convinced that he's pleased his concubine. Except...things happen. Scandal! Drama! Spies! Unlikely love!

I do love when random, uneducated book purchases go right! *The Pillow Boy of Lady Onogoro* is hardly a popular or well-known novel in any circle I'm in, so purchasing it at first sight was rather a chance. I was attracted mostly by the 11th century Japanese setting, though Alison Fell is focused mostly on characters and stories, not the intricacies of court life. Regardless, I found this book to be strange and different from my usual fare, but ultimately quite satisfying.

The way Fell wrote and structured this story was very satisfying. Lady Onogoro's life is full of poetry and storytelling; as a lady attached to the imperial court, hers is a life of ease and luxury, and the women of the

court often have only their own minds for entertainment. Close friends of Onogoro's include Sei Shōnagon, author of *The Pillow Book*, a real-life book that 21st century readers still celebrate. Onogoro and her contemporaries are women of wit and creativity, and throughout *The Pillow Boy of Lady Onogoro*, Fell inserts stories and poems these women have "written".

And, yes, a great many of these stories are about sex. Bizarre sex. If they're not about sex, they're still bizarre. But I feel that this book isn't gratuitous erotica so much as an exploration of culture, folklore, and gender dynamics. There is purpose in the stories-within-stories format, and though the "main" plot has to do with the triangle between Onogoro, her wealthy lover, and her blind stableboy, I feel like this book touches on culture and psychology in meaningful ways as well. If we must call *The Pillow Boy of Lady Onogoro* erotica, it must also have the additional tag of literary fiction.

However, the novel isn't merely a collection of bizarre stories and internal musings: there is a plot—and what a plot! The pseudo-love triangle is certainly the driving force. Onogoro likes her wealthy lover and enjoys his patronage, but the stories the stableboy tells stimulate her mentally in ways she's never experienced before. Throw in some busybody princes and some spies, and Fell's novel turns out to be rather exciting and intrigue-filled. There was a nice mix, I thought, between the insightful/literary moments and the plot-driven sequences. It all worked quite well.

It might take a certain kind of reader to enjoy *The Pillow Boy of Lady Onogoro*, but I think once one grows accustomed to vaguely disquieting and quite explicit sex, the book has a lot of qualities (and perhaps the weird sex is one of them). I think Alison Fell did a very good job incorporating culture and society into this historical-set novel, and the overarching romance was satisfying as well.

Antje says

Die ästhetische Aufmachung des Buches verdient fünf Sterne. Die satten dunklen Farben, erhellt von silbernen Lettern und erotischen Illustrationen, sind wunderschön. Entfernt man den Umschlag hält man ein Buch aus tiefroten Samt in den Händen. Herrlich!

Weniger wusste mich der Inhalt zu überzeugen, der hier und da zwar eine ansprechende Geschichte des blinden Stalljungen Oyu hervorzauberte, aber die Rahmenhandlung mich zunehmend langweilte und ich einige Erzählungen zu absonderlich fand.

Melynda Yesenia says

for something i picked up in broad daylight in a mormon-esque bookstore, this *just* escapes being porn.

PJ Who Once Was Peejay says

Really beautiful writing and a captivating, fanciful story. It's set in 11th century Japan and centers around a young woman poet at the Imperial court. She's befriended by the great woman poet Izumi Shikibu and many lovely translations of the short Japanese poetry of Izumi are scattered throughout, as well as the poems of our heroine, the Lady Onogoro.

Back in the day, there were many respected women poets in the Japanese court. But the heart of the story revolves around the fact that Lady O can't have orgasms with her current lover, General Motosuke, who has taken her on as his official mistress (a respectable position in this society). In polite Japanese society of the day, it was considered improper for a man to take his gratification before he'd seen to the gratification of his partner. Hurray for propriety! But this does present a problem for Lady O and makes the general wonder if she really likes him. So the stable boy, Oyu, renowned for his storytelling, hides behind the bed screen near Lady O's head and secretly whispers erotic tales to her while the general is occupied lower down on her body.

There isn't anything turgid and throbbing going on, but the story is sexy. There's some court intrigue and meditations not only on love but on happiness and the meaning of life and etc., etc. And plenty of fabulist elements, too, incorporating many Japanese folk tales and the like. Just a lovely book.

Marsha says

This novel takes place in a time and place of the Heian royal court. The royal women are steeped in a world of privilege, confinement, superstition, masculine constraint and protocol; all this in spite of the fact that they have little in the way of actual duties.

This is a royal court like any other: filled with intrigue, suspicion, gossip, treachery and machination. Their lives as concubines and mistresses are shown as perilously short; a woman who didn't manage to finagle her way into a better life might be tossed onto the scrap heap, alone, impoverished and forgotten.

Onogoro is a concubine of a married general. She's young and impetuous and she wavers between stifling her jealousy over her lover's wife and bursting out with peevish arguments with her lover. The General's wife is no more secure in her position than Lady Onogoro; jealousy being one of the seven reasons a husband may divorce his wife. Both mistress and wife are envious of each other, even if they never meet in the flesh. So all is set up for complications of epic proportions. But the supposed love triangle isn't where you would expect.

This novel is based on the fragments of a novel by the Lady Onogoro, a woman who lived at about the same time as the famous Sei Shonagon, she who wrote her own pillow book. Onogoro was a poet but her poetry was forgotten and largely lost to history. Ms. Fell does her best to convey the lyrical tone of the time, when royalty and nobles communicated in careful poetry that the reader had to work to decipher. (It's not indicated whether this was done to thwart busybodies who might pry into the paper's contents. Given that we're talking about lovers exchanging secret notes to each other, that might be one interpretation.)

Lady Onogoro prized herself on her poetry and the novel makes it obvious that it was a source of comfort and torment to her as well as the way she distinguished herself at court. It lends the words a rapturous tone as we too sift through the meanings of the deceptively simple lines. Winding their way through the story, through poetry, dreams, visions and stories, Onogoro gains a measure of wisdom and inner peace as she learns what and who it is she truly wants and desires.

The prose is beautiful, eloquent, passionate and throbs with passion, erotic desire and moments of humor, subtle, sly or coarse. It's unusual fare yet, if you like poetry, give it a try. Linger over the pages; they are something to savor.

Martha says

This book came to me while I perused my favorite used book store. As I've recently been on a Japanese literature kick (though this is the first I've read not by a Japanese author), it seemed intriguing. Besides, I've always been a sucker for literary erotica. However, while the blurbs and reviews all praised the erotic aspects of the novel, I most loved the humorous narrator and perspective shifts that included not just the courtiers but also the animals that inhabited the palace where the novel was set. The narrator would describe two poets conversing then shift to the lizard who sat in the beams above them. Such whimsical, skillful shifts were a welcome and unexpected surprise. Beyond the delight of Fell's narrational skill was the feminist slant of the novel. The climax of the novel had more to do with Lady Onogoro's sense of self and agency than anything else. The romantic climax seemed almost secondary to me. Other than Onogoro, the women who populated these pages wrote acclaimed poetry, shared strong bonds with one another, and took numerous lovers as they saw fit. It's puzzling that I've never come across Alison Fell before. When I looked up what else she has written, my confusion increased that so few seem to be reading her. The delight I found with her was explained somewhat when I learned she is also a poet. I have a true preference for prose written by novelists who are also poets. Her talent shone through in this novel, and I recommend it and her entirely.
