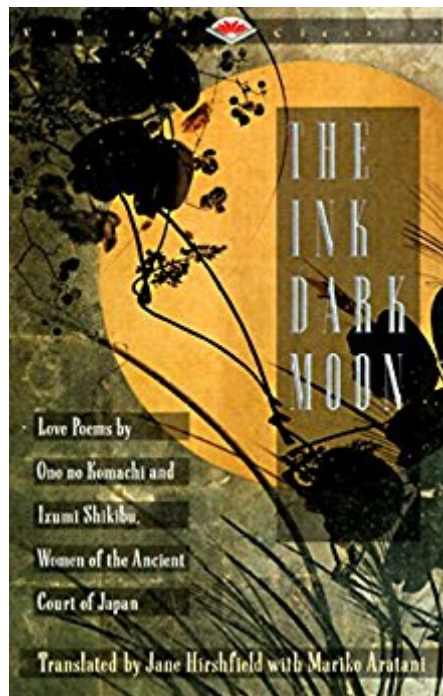


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The Ink Dark Moon: Love Poems By Ono No Komachi And Izumi Shikibu, Women Of The Ancient Court Of Japan (Vintage Classics)



Synopsis

These translated poems were written by 2 ladies of the Heian court of Japan between the ninth and eleventh centuries A.D. The poems speak intimately of their authors' sexual longing, fulfillment and disillusionment.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This collection of poetry blew me away. Most of the poems are quite short (4-5 lines), but they all carry as much meaning as any long poem I have read. This poetry is soulful, intellectually stimulating, and understandable. My favorite thing about this collection is how easily I could identify with the poetry. Most of the poems are about secret love, wanting someone, loving someone, and leaving someone (both in body and spirit). There is also a large portion of the poems that were written about missing someone who has passed away, and I found it to be especially beautiful. If you have ever had a secret lover, or lost someone you will never forget, this is the poetry for you.

Unlike other reviewers, I am not an aficionado of Japanese poetry or culture, nor have I ever studied this period in Japanese history. I found this book entirely by chance buried in an obscure corner in

my college library. I read a couple of random pages and fell in love. I checked it out repeatedly throughout my academic career, then bought it. These women so effectively communicate, in few words, universal feelings of love. While the poems are deceptively simple, they manage to be so beautiful that I am amazed every time I pick it up. Even more impressive than the writing is how easy it is to relate to the emotions behind it. As I have grown older and experienced so much more of life, I am surprised to find my own feelings mirroring one poem after another. What once seemed pretty words are eerily my own thoughts. It's amazing, considering they were written one thousand years ago! If you're thinking about buying this, I suggest using the preview to read the few sample pages. If you like what you see, just get it. You won't be disappointed.

A magnificent translation of two women poets writing between the 9th and 11th centuries. The thoughtful translations convey the feeling-tones of two women poets in a long bygone era in Japan. The layout is aesthetically pleasing and each and every one of these short (4-5) line tanka keeps unfolding with subsequent readings. A must for any poet interested in writing tanka. A well-crafted, magnificent translation.

Jane Hirshfield and Mariko Aratani have done a marvelous job with the translation of these lovely tanka-- manages to capture both their fragility and robust complexity. I had an acquaintance who was a scholar with a focus on Japanese literature. She explained to me a little bit about the complexity of translating waka. I have nothing but admiration for those who can do it well. Hirshfield actually has an essay at the back of this book called "On Japanese Poetry and the Process of Translation". I recommend it highly, even if you do not normally read this kind of essay. I am a little bit afraid that the focus on the love poems and the emphasis on Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu as female writers may give the wrong idea about the strength and importance of the poetry. Shikibu is widely considered the greatest poet of her period and Ono no Komachi was one of the Rokkasen-- the six best waka poets of the early Heian period. The reason that I am not giving this volume five stars is because of this packaging and not because of the poetry itself. These poems are a joy to read aside from any issues of scholarship. They are strong and sad and very affecting. There is actually no stronger recommendation to read this than the poems themselves, so I will close this review with one of the poems by Shikibu: What is the use of cherishing life in spring? Its flowers only shackle us to this world.

Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu would have been able to do credit to the effort to review this

book of their poems. I envy the exquisite beauty of these poems. Across the centuries...a thousand years....the sensitivity and the depth of human feeling still touches deeply. In addition: the introduction, appendix and notes to poems are very informative and helpful in understanding the context of the times in which these poems were written and the complexities of the translation process. All of which makes the enjoyment of these works that much more comprehensive. The poems are beautiful beyond words and the translation superb.Stu

This book is among my most treasured. These women's love and longing is so eloquently worded, and could be the very same heartaches any woman experiences today. A fascinating glimpse into a society I could only imagine. Excellently translated tanka. Extremely good. I would recommend it highly to anyone.

Having devoured numerous Japanese anthologies, I can assure you this is a pure delight. The translations are beautiful. The choice of poems is beautiful. The introduction is wonderful. And the layout is clean. A must for anyone with a heart and soul. A desert island choice.

Many Americans are aware of the Japanese verse form known as Haiku. Fewer know about Tanka, which was used by many classic poets including the two featured in this extraordinary book, both founding figures of Japanese literature. Since I do not read Japanese, I cannot evaluate the translations in comparison to the originals, yet a wonderful essay demonstrates both the challenges the translator faces and the sensitivity brought to these readings. This book opened a new world in literature to me. I recommend it highly.

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