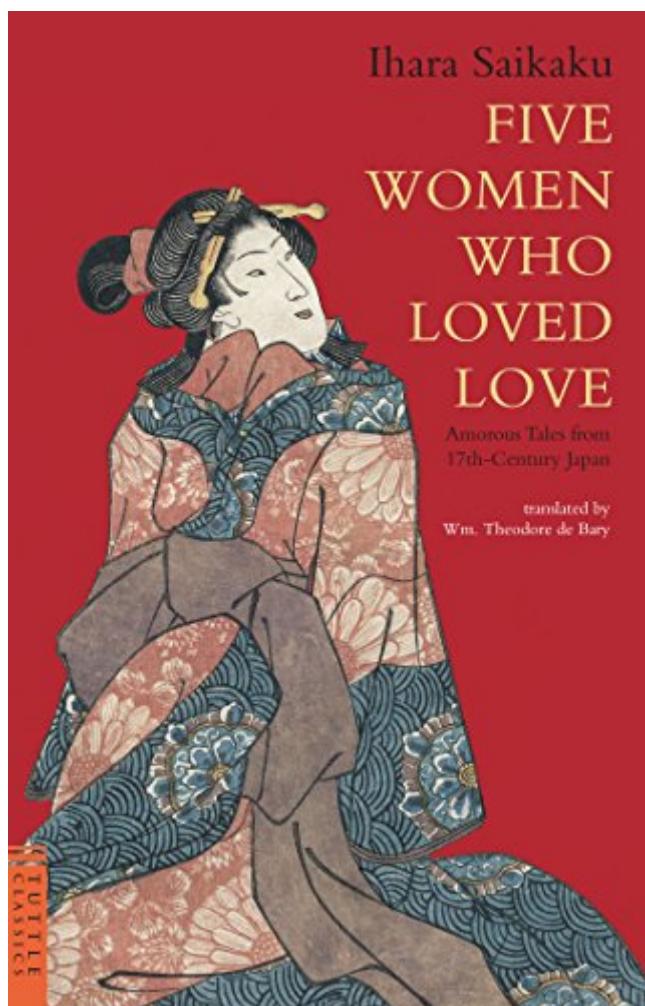


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Five Women Who Loved Love: Amorous Tales From 17th-Century Japan



Synopsis

"Five charming novellas which have astonishing freshness, color, and warmth." The New Yorker First published in 1686, this collection of five novellas was an immediate bestseller in the bawdy world that was Genroku Japan, and the book's popularity has increased with age, making it today a literary classic like Boccaccio's Decameron, or the works of Rabelais. The book follows five determined women in their always amorous, erotic and usually illicit adventures. The five heroines are Onatsu, already wise in the ways of love the tender age of sixteen; Osen, a faithful wife until unjustly accused of adultery; Osan, a Kyoto beauty who falls asleep in the wrong bed; Oshichi, willing to burn down a city to meet her samurai lover; and Oman, who has to compete with handsome boys to win her lover's affections. But the book is more than a collection of skillfully told erotic tales, for "Saikaku" could not delve into the inmost secrets of human life only to expose them to ridicule or snickering prurience. Obviously fascinated by the variety and complexity of human love, but retaining always a sense of its intrinsic dignity; he is both a discriminating and compassionate judge of his fellow man." Saikaku's style, as allusive as it is witty, as abbreviated as it is penetrating, is a challenge that few translators have dared to face, and certainly never before with the success here achieved in a translation that recaptures the heady flavor of the original.

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Customer Reviews

Ihara Saikaku understood his modern world. A writer of the Genroku Period, considered the golden age of the Edo era, he lived in the perfect flicker of a moment when peace was reigning, arts and leisure were refined, and the flower of the modern era was slowly starting to unfold into what would be the strife that would follow. Ihara knew that the time of the martial masters, the samurai and the daimyo, were over, and the merchant and the golden coin were the true rulers of Japan. Instead of the aristocracy, with their strict Confucian codes of honor and filial piety, he wrote of the townspeople, the rascals and pleasure seekers, the ones who did most of the real living and dying in Japan. Like in his *The Life of an Amorous Man and This Scheming World* (Tuttle Classics of Japanese Literature), "Five Women who Loved Love" is about these average folks, specifically of the lives of five women who were so bold as to seek love and pleasure, in spite of social attitudes about such things. They are not always admirable women, and their loves are not always beautiful. These are not role models for romanticists, and some of them are little more than aggressive pleasure seekers. But their stories are real. Saikaku often based these stories off of real accounts, writing up semi-fictional versions of them, in order to flesh out the tale and make sure that a nice little moral lesson was included.

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