

Stanford Ph.D. Tests Boundaries in “Amorous” Novel Set in Japan

By DonnaGeorgeStorey.com

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Donna George Storey, widely published author of erotica and literary fiction, will read from her new novel, AMOROUS WOMAN, at Booksmith, San Francisco on June 17 at 7pm. The novel's nuanced view of Japanese sexual mores challenges stereotypes.

Donna George Storey, a widely published writer of erotica and literary fiction, will read from her debut novel, AMOROUS WOMAN (Orion Publishing, May 2008) at Booksmith, 1644 Haight Street in San Francisco on June 17 at 7 p.m. She will be joined by Liza Dalby, the only American ever to work as a geisha, who will read from her memoir, EAST WIND MELTS THE ICE.

The story of an American woman's love affair with Japan, AMOROUS WOMAN was inspired by Ihara Saikaku's 17th-century classic tale of the pleasure quarters, THE LIFE OF AN AMOROUS WOMAN. Saikaku's work was banned by the Japanese government during World War II as a danger to public morality.

The novel's adventuresome, wise-cracking heroine gives the reader a glimpse inside a Japan few tourists ever see as she takes on various roles as English teacher, wife, bar hostess and mistress. Like its Japanese model, AMOROUS WOMAN is frankly erotic, but also incorporates humor and social critique that challenge Western stereotypes of the exotic East.

“Japanese men especially are still often portrayed as caricatures in the West,” Storey observes. “I try to present complex, sympathetic, and sexy Japanese male characters.” The novel draws on Storey's experiences living in Japan and her doctoral research in Japanese literature at Stanford to give a nuanced view of Japanese culture and sexual mores.

“People are often surprised that a mother of two with a doctoral degree wrote a ‘dirty book,’” the author says. “Erotica has become more mainstream, but it's still seen as a poor cousin of real literature. I believe smart can be sexy, and sex can engage your mind as well as your libido.”

Margaret Lane of the MIDWEST BOOK REVIEW described AMOROUS WOMAN as “a blend of humor, social critique, and literary skill that is impressive from beginning to end,” and erotica critic Lisabet Sarai called it “a believable and moving tale of one woman's journey of sexual self-discovery.” All agree they came away with a new appreciation of Japanese culture. Storey says this has always been her goal since she began her graduate study of Japan. “With AMOROUS WOMAN, I hope to have contributed—if in a rather unconventional way--to inter-cultural understanding.”

Interviews, copies and quotes available upon request.

AMOROUS WOMAN by Donna George Storey

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