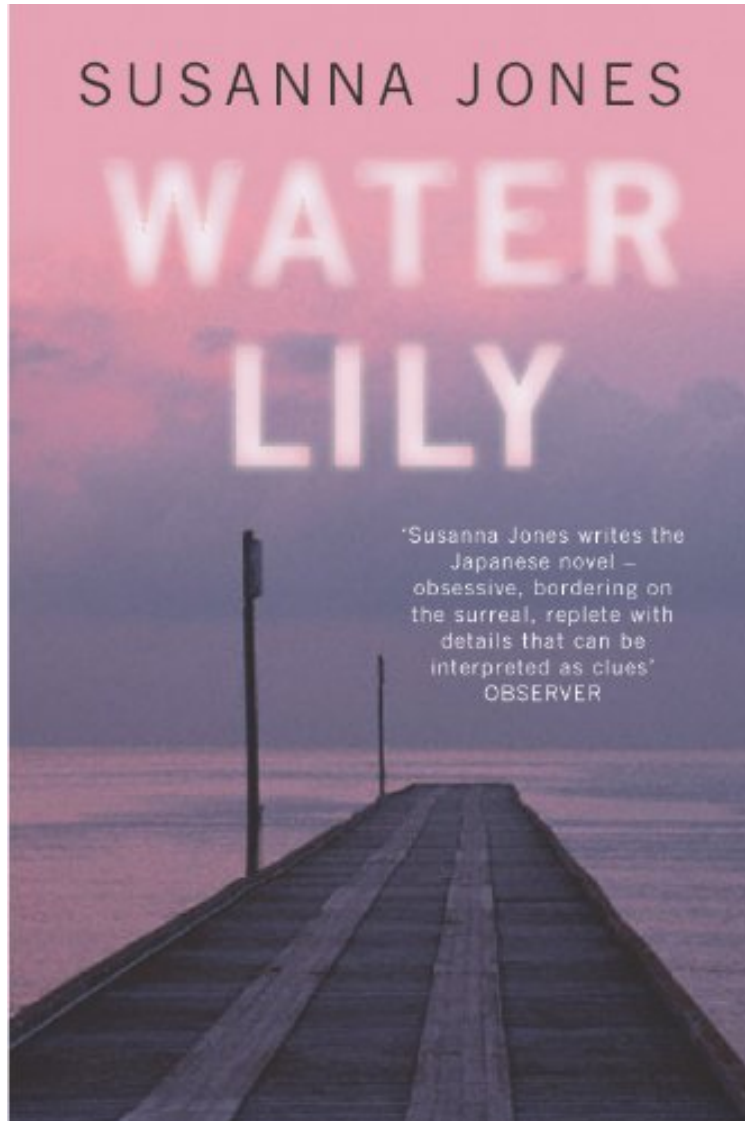


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## Water Lily

*Susanna Jones*

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**Susanna Jones : Water Lily** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Water Lily:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Enjoyable readBy SWAlthough it wasn't my favorite of Susanna Jones it was still an enjoyable read and I would recommend it to others that enjoy her work.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. If you like Patricia Highsmith, this book is for you.By sb-lynnThis book is one of psychological suspense, and the beginning chapters alternate between two characters, named Ralph and Runa.Ralph is an Englishman, who has come to Japan to find a wife. He is an odd fellow (to say the least), and what he is really looking for is a passive, attractive woman who will agree to be his wife in exchange for his taking care of them back in

England. So far, all of the women from the agency he has selected have all turned him down, (he gives everyone the willies, including the reader,) and he is getting despondent, and anxious. He had been previously married to a woman named "Apple" from Thailand, whom he met and married under similar circumstances. We know from Ralph, that this woman is no longer around, and that he felt she became insolent and not the passive doll he met in Bangkok. The circumstances of her disappearance is ominous, to say the least. Runa is a young, attractive Japanese woman who worked as a teacher. She is fleeing Japan because she had an affair with a young student, and that affair had been exposed. She doesn't feel guilty, or feel any remorse, she is more concerned with not getting punished. She is trying to get to China to visit her friend, a woman she only knew for a few months when they were both teenagers. If she can't find this friend, she has no where else to go. And of course, we know Ralph and Runa are going to meet each other... Here's the thing, if you don't like books with disturbing or unlikeable characters, this book is not for you. Like the characters in a Patricia Highsmith novel, Runa and Ralph are arguably sociopaths, and disagreeable at the very least. There are no heroes to root for, and neither of these characters are particularly sympathetic. But I enjoyed the tension, and the writing, and I found this to be a page-turner. Again, highly recommended for those who enjoy Patricia Highsmith, and for those who like books of psychological suspense.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful.  
An Interesting Work By FictionAddiction.NET  
The underlying theme in Susanna Jones's *Waterlily* seems to be that no matter how far you run, you cannot run from your true self. Ralph and Runa, the lead characters in the novel, are both in search of a new life. Ralph has traveled from England to Japan in order to find a bride. He has lost the woman he brought home from Thailand and his loneliness and self-doubt lead to his wish for a new companion. Because of their reputed docility and beauty, Ralph longs for another Eastern Blossom similar to his first bride. At first, his hopes are high, and he feels great affection for the women the Japanese agency introduces to him. Unfortunately, the women do not feel the same affection in return, which leaves Ralph despondent. The saving grace is a picture of a woman he corresponded with in China, so he sets up a meeting with her and boards the boat that will take him to this new country. Runa has ended up on the same boat, for different reasons. She began an illicit, and illegal, affair with one of her students. They are happy for many months, until someone discovers the affair and threatens to make the information known to those in the school and surrounding community. In desperation, Runa devises a plan. She runs to her sister, steals her passport and heads to China. A friend of hers from school days lives there and will be able to get her a new identity. On the boat from Japan to China, the characters of Ralph and Runa come together. They meet while unwittingly drawn into a fight by two other passengers, whom they end up somewhat befriend. Ralph feels that Runa (using her sister's name and attempting to use her identity) could be the woman he is looking for and Runa believes that Ralph is a way out of her current situation. The reader wishes that each is the answer to the other's problems, but knows that in the end, these two characters coming together is not a good thing. Susanna Jones does an excellent job in making these characters real and gets us to feel sympathy for what should be unlikable characters. Despite Ralph's view of women, we want him to overcome his fears and find happiness. With Runa, we want her to realize that she is not trying to escape some unseen enemy, she is escaping herself. If only both characters could see into and beyond themselves, they would not set themselves up for the inevitable disastrous conclusion. Jones is able to bring the reader into the story, and into her characters' minds, with a few well-chosen words. She weaves a spell for the reader, bringing them into the action and the story itself. Jones spent many years in Japan and now lives in Brighton.

Runa is a young Japanese high school teacher leaving the country to avoid the scandal she has created by sleeping with one of her students. She steals her sister's passport and boards the ferry to Shanghai. Then, careful to impersonate her sister, she is quiet, docile and discreet. Meanwhile, on the last stretch of a fraught and tiring mission to find a wife, an Englishman also boards the ferry. Rebuffed in Tokyo, Ralph hopes that on the Chinese mainland he will meet a gentle, beautiful girl to return home with. When these two meet, suppressing at first their secrets and obsessions on this long and claustrophobic journey, we enter a desolate, emotional landscape as Runa's journey begins to turn into a surreal and terrifying nightmare . . .

From Publishers Weekly  
In this taut, Highsmithian tale of psychological suspense, Jones visits physical and emotional landscapes similar to those of her prize-winning debut novel, *The Earthquake Bird*. Young Japanese schoolteacher Runa Wada has an illicit affair with one of her 16-year-old students. After a photo of the two leaving a hotel arrives in her mail, Runa knows that the affair and her career are finished, and she decides to flee to China. Runa, who sees herself as the victim of a repressive, sexist society, is childish, selfish and irresponsible. In a parallel plot, Englishman Ralph Turnpike arrives in Japan to secure a bride from an Asian marriage agency. Ralph is no stranger to this process, having found his first wife, Apple, in Thailand six years before. Though Apple didn't work out, he's willing to give the process another shot until he's rejected by the entire A, B and even C list of eligible ladies at the agency. This is no surprise to anyone except Ralph; he is unhealthy, unattractive and fussy, with bad skin, sinus problems and a dangerously volatile temper. He and Runa end up on the same ferry to Shanghai, and the suspense climbs to knuckle-biting levels. The two are destined to connect, and the reader knows it won't be pleasant when they do. The fun-house

thrill of their inevitable clash is mitigated by neither Runa nor Ralph being appealing characters, but Jones's stately, muted prose moves the action and the reader relentlessly on to the harrowing end. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist In this dark tale of longing, self-deception, and murder, an aimless schoolteacher escapes Japan after someone discovers her affair with a student only to cross paths with a Brit desperately scouring Asia for love. Jones, author of *The Earthquake Bird* (2001), deftly details how the constricting cultures force Runa and Ralph to flee. Runa is a Japanese oddball; left to her own devices when her mother fell ill, she spent more time at the mall than at school, and now she's more interested in dangerous flings than settling down. Ralph, an English shopkeeper too unattractive and awkward to attract a wife, has pinned his hopes on a mail-order bride. It's something he's tried before--his Thai wife, Apple, disappeared rather suddenly--but this time he's sure he'll find the sweetly submissive woman of his dreams. Unfortunately for both of them, he finds Runa instead. Jones is at her best when she puts us inside the heads of unbalanced people who cling to their fantasies even as real life rips them away. Frank Sennett Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved "Your Eastern Blossom will be beside you at all times. Her soft presence will be an asset to everything you do together..." "Gripping and haunting--an unforgettable debut."