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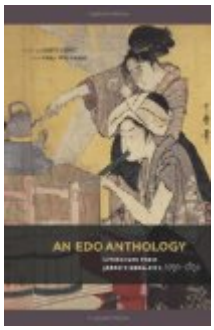

Sumie Jones, ed., with Kenji Watanabe. *An Edo Anthology: Literature from Japan's Mega-city, 1750-1850.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013. Illustrations. xii + 515 pp. $30.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-8248-3740-2.

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Commissioned by Austin C. Parks (Kalamazoo College)

The city of Edo (present-day Tokyo), the world's first mega-city, had a population exceeding one million by the middle of the eighteenth century. Although it was the seat of the Tokugawa shogunate and controlled according to an oppressive political system and a strict class structure, it was also the site of a proto-capitalist economy, and a rapidly expanding and vibrant popular culture that celebrated the life of the city. Popular entertainment came in many forms, both high and low, and included drama (kabuki plays, most notably); performance art (including ***kōdan*** and ***rakugo***, to name just two representative forms); poetry competitions; and a multiplicity of print literary genres, in prose, poetry, and elaborately illustrated storybooks and handbooks that all but promised to make "experts" (in some area) out of their readers. Popular culture—or more precisely, the dynamic arts and entertainment scene—also included the polychrome woodblock prints that praised the celebrities of stage and the Yoshiwara pleasure quarter. ***An Edo Anthology***, compiled by Sumie Jones with Kenji Watanabe, celebrates the distinctive textual forms of the last one hundred years of the Edo period in a way that is accessible, engaging, and informative.

Jones and Watanabe wisely chose to organize the book thematically (chapter titles entice with such names as "Playboys, Prostitutes, and Loves," "Ghosts, Monsters and Deities," "Heroes, Rogues, and Fools," "City and Country Folk," "Artists and Poets," and "Tourists and Onlookers"), rather than chronologically, or even by genre. This organization allows the reader to engage with the themes that were of interest to Tokugawa contemporaries through the multiplicity of forms that emerged during this period. The organization, in other words, helps to communicate a sense of the complexities and tensions of creative production and reception during the era. By choosing to structure their anthology in this way, Jones and Watanabe highlight what I consider to be one of the most important aspects of the Edo period: the remarkable creativity that cut across class, caste, and genre. ***An Edo Anthology*** begins with a rich introduction that puts the culture, society, and publishing prac-

tices of the late Edo period into context for readers, followed by the six thematic chapters (each containing a selection of three to six representative texts), as described above. The translations themselves are preceded by introductions (often written by the translator) specifically intended to contextualize the work that follows.

The anthology contains a very rich array of texts, some undisputed masterpieces of the era and others translated here for the first time. Genres represented include ***sharebon*** (books of wit and fashion), ***ninjōbon*** (sentimental books), ***dangibon*** (sermons), ***kokkeibon*** (funny books), poetry (including ***senryū***, ***waka***, and ***kyōshi***), and scenes from popular kabuki plays. More unusually, the collection also includes ***monokurabe*** (comparisons), which compare the ancient capital of Kyō with Edo, and popular songs of the era. Given the importance of illustration in Edo period works, the text not only contains a large number of images (almost forty), but also presents three complete picture books as graphic novels, thus providing readers without facility in Japanese with a more authentic reading experience than has previously been the case.

Many of the translations are excellent—no mean feat given the predominance of word play and in-jokes that characterize much Edo period literature, not to mention other difficulties (cursive script, a mixture of classical and colloquial speech, regional dialects, and professional jargon) that no doubt challenged the translators as they worked their magic. In past translations, with some notable exceptions, much of the Edo flavor was lost, leaving hollowed-out texts that did not work particularly well either as literature or representative artifacts. It is not the case that every translation in this anthology works effectively, but the majority do, and extremely well. As I read through the volume, I found myself mentally revising my literature survey syllabus in light of these rich offerings. I particularly liked "The Monster Takes a Bride" (translated by Adam Kern), "In the World of Men, Nothing But Lies" (translated by Joel Cohn), and "Playboy, Grilled Eel Style" (translated by Jones), as well as some of the poetry selections and the comparisons (which reveal just as much about the minds of their authors as they do about "quaint" Kyoto).

Inevitably, Jones and Watanabe's anthology will be compared with Haruo Shirane's monumental work, ***Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology 1600-1900*** (2002), which is admittedly more comprehensive (in scope, in quantity, and by virtue of the fact that it covers the entire span of the Edo period, and the first thirty-some years of the Meiji period) and contains extremely useful introductory essays. Both books make important contributions to scholarship on Japan by providing rich and varied translations from the Edo period, something that is long overdue. However, the sheer mass of Shirane's anthology renders it somewhat inaccessible, as does the more traditional way in which the translations are ordered. What Jones and Watanabe do is provide this richness in a much more manageable volume, which will be of interest not only to college professors but also to general readers with a literary interest in the Edo period.

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