



The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature: From Restoration to Occupation, 1868-1945 (Modern Asian Literature Series) (Volume 1)

By J Rimer and Gessel

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This comprehensive anthology collects works of fiction, poetry, drama, and essay-writing from a pivotal time in Japanese history. In addition to their literary achievements, the texts reflect the political, social, and intellectual changes that occurred in Japanese society during this period, including exposure to Western ideas and literature, the rise of nationalism, and the complex interaction of traditional and modern forces. The volume offers outstanding, often new translations of classic texts by such celebrated writers as Nagai Kafu, Shimazaki Toson, Natsume Soseki, Kawabata Yasunari, and Yosano Akiko. The editors have also unearthed works from lesser-known women writers, many of which have never been available in English.

Organized chronologically and by genre within each period, the volume reveals the major influences in the development of modern Japanese literature: the Japanese classics themselves, the example of Chinese poetry, and the encounter with Western literature and culture. Modern Japanese writers reread the classics of Japanese literature, infused them with contemporary language, and refashioned them with an increased emphasis on psychological elements. They also reinterpreted older aesthetic concepts in light of twentieth-century mentalities. While modern ideas captured the imagination of some Japanese writers, the example of classical Chinese poetry remained important for others. Meiji writers continued to compose poetry in classical Chinese and adhere to a Confucian system of thought. Another factor in shaping modern Japanese literature was the example of foreign works, which offered new literary inspiration and opportunities for Japanese readers and writers.

Divided into four chapters, the anthology begins with the early modern texts of the 1870s, continues with works written during the years of social change preceding World War I and the innovative writing of the interwar period, and concludes with texts from World War II. Each chapter includes a helpful critical

introduction, situating the works within their literary, political, and cultural contexts. Additionally, there are biographical introductions for each writer.

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Editorial Review

Review

A timely and needed addition to the scholarship on Japanese literature... Highly recommended.

(*Choice*)

The most comprehensive overview of modern Japanese literature available in translation.

(Terry Hong *Bloomsbury Review*)

Review

This is an extremely ambitious anthology that fills a serious gap in resources for teaching modern Japanese literature. The translations represent sensitive and highly intelligent responses to some of the key texts of the period and constitute an enormous contribution to the field.

(Stephen Snyder, University of California, coeditor of *Oe and Beyond: Fiction in Contemporary Japan*)

This is a rich and comprehensive anthology of modern Japanese literature that includes not only the finest samples of poetry, drama and prose fiction but what are often considered marginal such as political accounts and detective stories. Almost completely isolated from the rest of the world at its beginning, poets and writers in Japan since the late 1860s have swung back and forth between the indigenous tradition and the newly imported forms and styles in every type of writing. From Soseki, Tanizaki, and Kawabata to authors translated here for the first time, they have each in his or her own way attempted to transmit to the readers degrees of their enthusiasm or reservations concerning imports from the West. They have created a kind of experimental laboratory that tests the universal validity of romanticism and naturalism, the idea of the individual and society, the rhetoric of autobiographical confession, the debate over socialist realism, the role of art as memory, the poetics of gender and feminism, and so forth. This anthology provides the results of those experiments, showing an immense variety of literary scenes that illustrate stages of modernization in Japan.

(Makoto Ueda, editor of *Far Beyond the Field: Haiku by Japanese Women*)

About the Author

J. Thomas Rimer is emeritus professor of East Asian languages and literatures at the University of Pittsburgh. He is the author of several works, including *Traditions in Modern Japanese Fiction: An Introduction* and *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*. Van C. Gessel is professor of Japanese literature at Brigham Young University. He is the author of *Three Modern Novelists: Soseki, Tanizaki, Kawabata* and coeditor of *The Showa Anthology: Modern Japanese Short Stories*.

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