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Even seventy years after his death Edogawa Rampo remains a ubiquitous force in Japanese (pop) culture. New editions of his novels are reissued regularly by major publishing houses and are readily available in every bookstore, while numerous adaptations, homages, pastiches and references to his work appear steadily in various media. The latest examples are a TV series produced by NHK to commemorate the centenary of Rampo's literary debut, *Tantei romansu – Dear Detective from RAMPO with Love* (Detective romance), and a theatre reading of *Kotō no oni* (*The Demon of the Lonely Isle*, 1929–1930) staged by Kenta Fukasaku in Tokyo. However, one does not need to look to adaptations of Rampo's work into other media, in order to witness the influence of his iconography on the popcultural landscape of Japan, as his idiosyncratic take on crime fiction has left its mark on numerous aspects of Japanese post-war popular culture, with his influence acknowledged by such important creators as Masaki Tsuji and Hayao Miyazaki.

Despite the impact of Rampo, his work has rarely been the focus of academic research. The situation has changed somewhat in the 21st century, with more willingness in Japanese academia to conduct proper studies of popular literature, but up until now almost all analyses of the work of “the father of Japanese crime fiction” had been conducted by essayists specializing in the genre rather than researchers. As such, a vast number of texts devoted to Rampo and his literature have been addressed to the general reader. What is more, these writings are usually deeply indebted to Rampo himself, as there is no doubt that his essays on *tantei shōsetsu* (detective novel) collected in such volumes as *Tantei shōsetsu yonjūnen* (Forty Years of Crime Fiction, 1954–1961) or *Gen'eijō* (The Castle of Illusion, 1951–1954) remain the most widely-read and influential works dealing with the history and evolution of crime fiction in Japan. Therefore, as Morio Yoshida has noted in his discussion of the latter collection, the most trusted account

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on the *tantei shōsetsu* had been written by one of the genre's main creators, making his version of its history the canonized one. One can hardly argue that a new academical approach, that would largely eschew the established conventions of the popular view on Japanese crime fiction has been long overdue.

Edogawa Rampo Daijiten (hereafter the ERD) is an expansive 900-page volume that had been long in the making. Its origin dates back to the exhibition *Edogawa Rampo to taishū no 20-seiki* (Edogawa Rampo and the 'Mass' 20th Century), which opened in Tōbu Department Store in Ikebukuro in 2004. Organized by Rikkyō University to commemorate the acquisition of the Edogawa Rampo Ikebukuro residence (where he had lived from 1934) along with the writer's vast library and archive, the exhibition's planning proved difficult, as a similarly themed event had been on display in the same place only a year before. That earlier exhibition covered Rampo's life and work through his personal belongings, which left the organizers no alternative, but to look for a novel way to talk about the author. They decided to avoid the standard biographical approach, and placed Rampo in the context of his times and the mass culture (*taishū bunka*) that had seen rapid growth in early Shōwa Japan. This proved fruitful and a decision was made to expand the scope of the exhibition and create a Rampo encyclopedia that would follow the same principles.

This is, of course, not the first publication of this type. Lexicons devoted to Rampo include *Edogawa Rampo shōsetsu kiiwādo jiten* (Keyword Dictionary of Edogawa Rampo's Fiction, 2007) and *Edogawa Rampo-go jiten* (Edogawa Rampo Dictionary, 2020). The first of these is a thorough breakdown of Rampo's "keywords" i.e. the names of characters, places and motifs, which is a helpful resource for the most dedicated Rampo aficionados, while the second one is a smaller, richly illustrated character and motif compendium aimed at more casual readers. The ERD differs from them in many aspects, being an academic reframing of Rampo through the context of his epoch and not the other way round.

The ERD is divided into four parts. Part One, *Ningen Rampo*, focuses on the author's biography. It includes entries on places connected to Rampo, important events that formed his literary persona, as well as his interests, quirks and hobbies. The second part, *Shakai* (Society) is concerned with the socioeconomical backdrop and cultural phenomena of Taishō and early-Shōwa Japan. *Misuterii* (Mystery) is the name of the third part which is devoted to Western and Japanese authors of crime fiction and their relation to Rampo. The final part, *Media*, contains mainly entries on various

printed media associated with Ranpo and early 20th century mass culture. The appendices include chronological tables and a list of first publications and book editions of Ranpo's works.

All in all, the volume contains 219 entries written by seventy scholars, among whom we encounter not only specialists from the field of contemporary literary studies but also media theorists, sociologists and historians. This allows for a much broader view of pre-war mass culture than found in previous works on Ranpo. In the explanatory notes, the editors state that their goal was: "to break away from the usual disconnected perceptions of Ranpo as the pioneer of Japanese crime fiction, the author of children's literature, or the lord of the castle of illusions² and to bring about an all-encompassing and academic reappraisal of Ranpo by placing him and his work in the broader context of mass culture." Have they achieved this goal? In the opinion of this reviewer the answer can only be a resounding yes. All entries take the form of deeply thought-out articles, and no items feel like afterthoughts. There is no doubt that the final lineup of entries is the result of careful selection. Unnecessary filler such as lengthy plot summaries, which is the usual bane of similar publications, is nowhere to be found.

One of the most important achievements of the encyclopedia may be the lack of overreliance on the words of its main subject. Of course, no scholar of *tantei shōsetsu* needs to be reminded that Ranpo's autobiographical writings, while reliable for the most part, contain a considerate amount of autocreation, as well as many inaccuracies, which are a natural result of being compiled often many years after the described events had taken place. On the other hand, the sheer number of texts in which Ranpo discusses his life and career makes them an invaluable source for every researcher. However, the editors and authors of this encyclopedia, in accordance with their goal of academic accuracy, decided on a critical approach, evident especially in the first part of the volume. Thus, the biographical entries never feel like a retread of the same facts known to every Ranpo fan, and contain a vast amount of new or corrected information. The same goes for the articles detailing Ranpo's relationship with other writers of crime fiction. For example, entries on Jun'ichirō Tanizaki or Kōji Uno are remarkable attempts to straighten out inaccuracies found in oft-repeated anecdotes. Equally, if not more impressive, are the parts of the encyclopedia devoted to the mass culture of pre-war Japan. The

² This is a reference to the aforementioned *Gen'eijō*.

entry “Ero-guro-nansensu” (erotic-grotesque-absurd) is an especially valuable example of a largely misinterpreted cultural phenomenon being reexamined.

While the publication is not without some minor flaws (like the slightly redundant biographical information on writers discussed in Part Three, or the scant number of illustrations), it is an indispensable volume for every researcher of Edogawa Rampo, *tantei shōsetsu*, or *taishū bunka*, and will surely usher in a new era of Rampo studies and an imminent academic reappraisal of not only the author of *Nisen dōka* (*The Two-Sen Copper Coin*, 1923), but also the whole of Japanese crime fiction.

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