



AET1

Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Tripos, Part IB

Friday 27 May 2016 09.00 to 12.00

Paper J8

Japanese Literary Modernity

Answer **three** questions. All questions carry **equal** marks.

Write your number **not** your name on the cover sheet of **each** answer booklet.

STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS

20 page answer booklet

Rough Work Pad

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS TO BE SUPPLIED FOR THIS EXAMINATION

None

You may not start to read the questions printed on the subsequent pages of this question paper until instructed to do so.

- 1 In his essay “Literature of the Lost Home” (*Kokyō o ushinatta bungaku*, 1933), Kobayashi Hideo wrote, “In short, we might say that as society has assumed a youthful character, it has cheapened the value of a mature spirit. It is then perfectly natural that the *bundan* [literary establishment], too, should become increasingly a special world of youth... .” Why would someone call Japan and its literature young (or immature) at the time this essay was written? Do you agree with such an assessment? Why or why not?
- 2 Natsume Sōseki and Dazai Osamu are two of Japan’s all-time best-selling authors. Why do you think this is? Why do you think Sōseki is pictured on Japan’s currency and Dazai is not?
- 3 Two Japanese authors have been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, one in 1968 the other in 1994. Identify the two authors and discuss whether or not they were deserving of such an honour?
- 4 Tanizaki Jun’ichirō (1886-1965) wrote in an era that saw literary “orthodoxy” pass from Japanese Naturalism to *watakushi shōsetsu* and *junbungaku* (‘pure’ literature), which were all united by their commitment to the exposition of quotidian life, usually that of the author. Would you consider Tanizaki to be an orthodox Japanese writer? Why or why not?
- 5 In late nineteenth century Japan there was much debate surrounding the creation of a modern mode of literary expression. How did Japanese writers and intellectuals go about creating a language that could triumph over traditional styles and still be aesthetically pleasing?

- 6 What is the *Burai-ha*? Name two authors associated with this and discuss their work in the contexts of history and society.
- 7 Modern Japanese literature has been criticized in the West as being melancholy and fatalist. Is this a fair assessment? Why or why not? Give consideration to the aesthetic concept *mono no aware* (“the pathos of things”) in your answer.
- 8 There has arguably been a male monopoly on Japanese literature and literary criticism throughout the modern era. Consequently, many women writers have chosen to write on ‘female’ subjects, such as psychology, the mysterious female psyche, motherhood, and female eroticism. Discuss this and give consideration to at least one female writer.
- 9 The term “Japanese literature” implies that it is something exclusively created in Japan and by Japanese people. Should literature written during the colonial era—that written by Japanese authors overseas, and that by colonial subjects (and their descendants)—be treated as Japanese literature? Make reference to at least two authors/works in your answer.
- 10 Japanese literary movements in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century were based on similar movements in the West, such as Realism, Romanticism, Naturalism, and Modernism. Chose one of these to define in the Japanese context and discuss two representative works.

END OF PAPER