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Salem Press Announces a New Addition to the Critical Insights Series: *Modern Japanese Literature*

Edited by Frank Jacob of Queensborough Community College, New York, this volume examines the developments of Japanese history, including its economic and military rise in the early 20th century and its bitter defeat after World War II. Essays in this volume explore the search for national identity and examine the work of Murakami Haruki, Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Futabatei Shimei, and more.

Critical Insights: Modern Japanese Literature consists of three parts. The first deals with the Critical Contexts of modern Japanese literature. When and why was it established? To answer these important questions, two authors who are part of the first generation of Japanese writers after the country's opening in 1853 and usually identified as the first modern writers in Japan will be discussed. Mori Ōgai (Jacob) and Futabatei Shimei (Müller and Zemp) and their works, which are considered to be the first modern novels, are introduced. It was their interest in Western literature and their experience abroad after the opening of Japan in 1853 and the Meiji Restoration in 1868 that would stimulate the genesis of a new form of Japanese literature, a modern one. This literature was the expression of Japanese and Western traditions alike and must be considered a blend of both literary traditions.

The second part will provide "A Critical Lens and Comparative Analysis on the Geography" of Japan's modern literature. While Tōkyō (Follaco) was definitely an important environment and the center for the changes since 1868, Okinawa (Kühne) provides another example for a specific geographical literature of modern Japan at the country's periphery. The two chapters will highlight the role of the urban center and the peripheral space of the Japanese islands for the creation of two specific forms of literature within the modern era of the island country.

The final part provides "Critical Readings" of some of the major authors in the canon of modern Japanese literature. Natsume Sōseki, Nagai Kafū, Yamamura Bochō, Shiga Naoya, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, Ōba Minako, Murakami Haruki, Kirino Natsuo, and Medoruma Shun as well as their works will be discussed in detail to show which major discourses Japan's modern literature dealt with between 1868 and today.

The aim of this volume is not to provide a comprehensive survey of modern Japanese literature, but to offer a broad critical insight into relevant topics and the works of important authors of this particular time period. Most of the authors' works discussed in this volume have been translated into English and can provide the interested student or reader with a more detailed perspective on their writing. To facilitate such access, a bibliography of Japanese works in English translation for the authors discussed as well as a list with English-language books on Japanese literature have been added at the conclusion of the volume. The chapters themselves can be understood and treated as a first critical insight into the relevant material, which is much more fascinating when studied in detail. However, since many authors in modern Japanese history—besides Murakami Haruki, who is probably the most well-known Japanese writer of his time—remain unknown to a broad Western audience, this volume also hopes to stimulate interest in their writings for a further study of their works and impact on the course of modern Japan in general and modern Japanese literature in particular.

This volume then closes with some valuable resources for learning more about this theme, including a list of works of modern Japanese literature in English translation, a bibliography, a brief article about the Editor, a list of contributors to this volume, and a general index.

The *Critical Insights* Series distills the best of both classic and current literary criticism of the world's most studied literature. Edited and written by some of academia's most distinguished literary scholars, *Critical Insights: Modern Japanese Literature* provides authoritative, in-depth scholarship that students and researchers will rely on for years. This volume is destined to become a valuable purchase for all.

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