

Leith Morton

War and Culture: The Debate over Japanese Poetry and World War Two

This paper will discuss the debate over Japanese poetry and World War Two. The relationship between literature and war is complex and controversial: can patriotic poetry have literary merit? Do patriotism and morality coincide, or not, and how can they be evaluated in respect of literary art produced during wartime? These, and other issues, will be addressed by a specific study of the verse written by two or three acclaimed Japanese poets in support of Japan, and its military aims during World War II. The consequences (historical and aesthetic) of wartime poetry for its authors in the postwar era will also be addressed.