



Origins of Modern Japanese Literature (Post-contemporary interventions)

By Kōjin Karatani

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Since its publication in Japan ten years ago, the *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* has become a landmark book, playing a pivotal role in defining discussions of modernity in that country. Against a history of relative inattention on the part of Western translators to modern Asian critical theory, this first English publication is sure to have a profound effect on current cultural criticism in the West. It is both the boldest critique of modern Japanese literary history to appear in the post-war era and a major theoretical intervention, which calls into question the idea of modernity that informs Western consciousness.

In a sweeping reinterpretation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Japanese literature, Karatani Kōjin forces a reconsideration of the very assumptions underlying our concepts of modernity. In his analysis, such familiar terms as *origin*, *modern*, *literature*, and *the state* reveal themselves to be ideological constructs. Karatani weaves many separate strands into an argument that exposes what has been hidden in both Japanese and Western accounts of the development of modern culture. Among these strands are: the "discovery" of landscape in painting and literature and its relation to the inwardness of individual consciousness; the similar "discovery" in Japanese drama of the naked face as another kind of landscape produced by interiority; the challenge to the dominance of Chinese characters in writing; the emergence of confessional literature as an outgrowth of the repression of sexuality and the body; the conversion of the samurai class to Christianity; the mythologizing of tuberculosis, cancer, and illness in general as a producer of meaning; and the "discovery" of "the child" as an independent category of human being.

A work that will be important beyond the confines of literary studies, Karatani's analysis challenges basic Western presumptions of theoretical centrality and originality and disturbs the binary opposition of the "West" to its so-called "other." *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* should be read by all those with an interest in the development of cultural concepts and in the interrelating factors that have determined modernity.

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

While this work of literary theory, which first appeared in Japanese in 1980, concentrates on the literature and thought of the 1980s, it challenges readers to reinterpret the literature of the entire Meiji Period (1868-1926) in six discrete essays plus a forward by Frederick Jameson and materials added for the English and paperback editions. Karatani (literature, Hosei Univ.) is at his most provocative when discussing the "discovery" of landscape in painting and literature as well as of the child as a human being. In his examinations of such important Meiji writers as Soseki, Kunikida Doppo, Tayama Katai, and Tsubouchi Shoyo, he offers insightful cultural criticism of subjects such as ethnography, religion, language, and modernity in the West and East. This far-reaching and bold reconsideration of Japanese literary history can be appreciated by scholars of modern thought and literature, above all those versed in Japanese studies.

- D.E. Perushek, *Univ. of Tennessee, Knoxville*

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Review

"I have hopes that Karatani's book--one of those infrequent moments in which a rare philosophical intelligence rises to the occasion of full national and historical statement--will also have a fundamental impact on literary criticism in the West. . . . For *Origins* has some lessons for us about critical pluralism, in addition to its principal message, which turns on that old and new topic of modernity itself."—Fredric Jameson, from the Preface

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brenda Lee:

This Origins of Modern Japanese Literature (Post-contemporary interventions) book is not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book will be information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get facts which is getting deeper you actually read a lot of information you will get. This kind of Origins of Modern Japanese Literature (Post-contemporary interventions) without we comprehend teach the one who looking at it become critical in contemplating and analyzing. Don't be worry Origins of Modern Japanese Literature (Post-contemporary interventions) can bring once you are and not make your bag space or bookshelves' turn out to be full because you can have it with your lovely laptop even cell phone. This Origins of Modern Japanese Literature (Post-contemporary interventions) having great arrangement in word and also layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

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