

Vietnam and India. *Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age* thus appears at an important moment, reminding us of the achievements of one remarkable generation, and providing perspective on a generation of Hanoi intellectuals to come.

Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature 1868–1937.

By Mark Silver. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008. Pp. xiii + 217.

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Murder Most Modern: Detective Fiction and Japanese Culture.

By Sari Kawana. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. Pp. x + 271.

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A sudden noise in the *genkan*. Tearing *shōji*. The scream of a *moga*. Such is the grist for the world's first truly global genre of literature, but, as the above Japanese words suggest, the generic form is always colored by a local twist of content and reference. If the situations and plot devices are familiar by now to readerships around the world, do details like the proper names of suspects, the shapes of weapons, and the varieties of crime scenes continue to justify histories of detective fiction through national perspectives? If we understand the universals, should we still care about the particulars? Two recent critical books on Japanese murder mysteries provide compelling arguments both for transnational approaches and for attention to local details. Along the way, Mark Silver's *Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature 1868–1937* and Sari Kawana's *Murder Most Modern: Detective Fiction and Japanese Culture* also establish what may well be a new paradigm for the melding of Area Studies and Cultural Studies.

At the outset, the question is do we need two books about the same specialized topic published in the same year? The simple answer is that these are not two books about the same topic. While both examine Japanese detective fiction, their very different approaches give us two clearly distinct views of this genre. However, quickly resolving the question of "why more than one book?" still leaves the question of "why now?" looming. Both books appear to be responding to a longstanding problem with the study of literary cultures – the search for, and identification, fetishization, and concomitant canonization of high literature. All too often this scholarly pursuit (particularly in the realm of the modern period) ends in a forgetting of the popular roots and contexts of much high culture. Criticism of Japanese literature in English-language studies has long been a victim of this sort of practice and these two books are clearly launched against this trend. As such, they are representative of what may be the long-awaited third wave of scholarship on Japanese literature in English.

The two books represent a remarkable new foray into English-language studies about modern Japanese literature, a gambit into the realm of the popular. Safe as this venture may seem in retrospect, focused as it is on the wildly successful international genre of detective fiction, it is not without its dangers, mysteries, and newfound back alleys for masquerading, detecting, and recounting new narratives of Japanese literary history. As counterpoints to the by now well-trodden narratives focused on the rise of naturalism, realism, and the I-novel, these new studies destabilize notions of a linear or unified modern Japanese literary tradition as set forth in major first-wave works from Aston to Keene and continued in even the radical breaks of second-wave English-language criticism from Fowler and Fujii to Suzuki. If the earlier two paradigms focused attention on prioritizing or dismissing formal concepts like the West, modernity, and the self, the new paradigm evident

in the work of both Silver and Kawana gestures towards something less structural and more modal, something that brings a new object of inquiry to bear. Here the middlebrow at long last has become the object of literary study. This new wave that seems to be swelling here and elsewhere in work by Christine Marran and Jonathan Zwicker brings the notion that if literary historians and critics can say anything about Japanese literature, it is that there is nothing inherently Japanese about it, that it is merely the result of contentious, haphazard decisions and choices that are the stuff of history everywhere, and yet that those decisions, adaptations, and versions in Japan are interesting, peculiar, and worthy of study on their own terms. It is a cautious and convincing new spin on humanism that above all is keenly sensitive to the frailty of human experience and historical causality in contradistinction to solid transhistorical, universal truisms.

In bucking prior trends, Silver and Kawana have much in common. In addition to covering some of the same timeframe and material, both books are keenly aware of Japan in the larger modern world and how popular fiction itself is a by-product of that moment and place. Both share considerable interest in the Taishō period, though Silver emphasizes the earlier Meiji period and only straggles into the latter Shōwa period (in contrast, Kawana's work draws significantly from the wartime and postwar eras). They share interest in stories about the poison woman Takahashi Oden (though Silver is interested in early accounts and Kawana the aftermath of those early accounts), and the icon of Japanese detective fiction Edogawa Ranpō (which Silver takes as an example of failed appropriations and Kawana as a prime illustration of the connections between detective fiction and broader sociological trends).

Where Silver's research is a veritable genealogy of historical influence and literary reference tracking lines, branches, and trees within careers, works, and subfields, Kawana's study is archeological, uncovering layers of discourse (such as the fascination with the technology of tailing, the curiosity manifesting itself in bizarre sexology, or a nearly religious reverence for scientific inquiry) that produce and are produced by detective fiction. And while much of this difference between Silver and Kawana may, in fact, stem from a subtle difference in topics identified in the titles (Silver's focus is "crime fiction" and Kawana's is "detective fiction"), the real difference lies in their varying points of attention. Silver is concerned with what the textual borrowings of particular tales can tell us about broad issues such as Japan's national inferiority complex over the modern period. Kawana is interested in placing texts in their immediate discursive contexts, reading intertexts of stories and then using those local connections to think about questions pervading the universal narratives of modernity.

Silver's titular "borrowings" is a keyword for his book, though it is not overtly theorized or interrogated; he launches the positive term against what he considers to be the less nuanced, old hierarchical standards of imitation, influence, and derivation that presume a sacred original. For Silver it may be true that crime fiction in Japan is indeed derivative of Western originals, but he consistently argues that merely thinking about it in those frames will not suffice, for derivation fails to account for all the creative borrowing that is going on within the borrowed form. And yet, in order to account for the remainder (namely every innovation that exceeds the "derivative" paradigm), Silver's close readings largely track what is and is not derivative of something else: how Kanagaki Robun twists the facts of the Takahashi Oden case to create a bestseller; how Kuroiwa Ruiko twists his adaptations of Western tales to meet contemporary Japanese political concerns with reform of the legal system; how likewise Okamoto Kidō appropriates Edo culture for his own contemporary ends; how Edogawa Ranpō borrows from Poe and others but sees himself as unequal to their tradition and how this self-perception is reflected in his narratives. In the end, the successive borrowings he elaborates are shown to be pivotal in understanding Japanese crime fiction. And Silver's sheer depth of research from the notebooks of Edogawa Ranpō to catalogues of American mail order books available in Japan in the 1880s makes his case with overwhelming proof.

However, Silver does not question his categories of the original, genuine, real, or true facts (be they biographical, historical, or literary), despite the fact that the narratives he analyzes themselves accomplish precisely a questioning of narrative authenticity, the veracity of historical event, and the very notion of factuality. At the level of genre, there is no other form of prose fiction that is so formulaic as the detective fiction – this has been the continual lament of critics of the form almost since its inception. Yet, the form continues to be interesting, successful, and appealing. Detective fiction as a global form should be the genre that proves the point that originality can be achieved within strict formal constraints. The point is not so much what is borrowed, but what is filled into the borrowed that creates the phenomena of crime fiction. Japanese crime stories, by Silver's own account, are nothing if not creative, innovative, fascinating twists on their sources. Further, they consciously engage in casting doubt on the veracity of the sources and often, as a result, on their own accounts. But this lack of assuredness, particularly in the later group of detective fiction writers, symbolized for Silver in Edogawa Ranpō, is something the book laments rather than celebrates. If Western detective fiction is characterized by the authority of the detective, facts, and narrative, Ranpō masters the form and then destabilizes it by casting these authorities in doubt. This, according to Silver, is a weakness rather than a strength. What Silver categorizes as a lack is precisely Ranpō's innovation, a quality that Silver lauds in his other objects of inquiry.

Silver's most surprising conclusion is that the contemporary essays on detective fiction in Japan were indeed correct in their analysis of the form, that it was an inferior, attenuated form of the Western original. How much should we actually believe of the literary contemporaries who by Silver's own admission were caught in an inferiority complex? How much of those essays were really just disclaimers about advertising or were casting the books in the terms of the day? And why study Japanese crime fiction if it is so inferior? Though Silver does well to show the connections between real and perceived inequalities among the Japanese and Euro-American nations at the time and their impact on authors, he tends to agree with the essayists of the time that their versions of murder mysteries as a result were also unequal. Yet as forms of rhetoric and posturing, the opinion pieces he cites need not have been based on the reality of the detective fiction they discuss, but rather part of the very feelings about inequality Silver smartly identifies. It is certainly a possibility that there is a dissonance between the content of the material and the discourse about it – the discourse through which the literature was introduced and sold. What is striking about discourse on the commodity claiming that the new, recent, local are just more derivative stories about murderous scandals is that these were the same claims Euro-American critics of murder mysteries made after the successes of Poe, Doyle, and Christie. So there is something transnational in character to the form of criticism that is transported along with the form of fiction. This does not mean the form of criticism is itself borrowed, but inherent to the rigid structural confines of the genre.

Where Silver's close readings have the benefit of giving his readers a sense of what it is like to navigate the murky tales of detection, Kawana's broader readings immerse us in multiple contexts in which the texts were steeped and, thereby, add rich layers of meaning to the stories. By dismissing the issue of Western origins rather quickly in the introduction, and drawing a parallel between the staleness of the genre and its continual rebirth through new twists and substance, Kawana reminds us that what may seem like issues of influence could in fact be "mere coincidences made possible by cultural globalization". While Silver seems not to fall into any of these traps, convincingly documenting, for instance, the importance of the architecture of the modern department store for the dispensing with of a body in a Ranpō story, he does favor the issue of the origins of such stores (the department store layouts on the Ginza, we are told, mimicked Wannamakers in Philadelphia) over how those almost contemporaneous structures affected the psyches of modern readers. For Kawana, this latter issue is the crux.

Murder Most Modern lays out the very real connections between detective fiction and the reality in which those stories circulated. If discussions on the modern and modernity have become somewhat

passé in Japanese Studies, Kawana's readings of detective fiction against that backdrop are surprisingly exciting, fresh, and provocative. Rather than holding strictly to a one-dimensional thesis that detective fiction is a modern product, *Murder Most Modern* uses the contexts it finds as a method of filling in what all too often gets left out, namely accounts of the modern. Kawana writes, "Modernity does not invent detective fiction . . . it would be more accurate to say that detective fiction and modernity create each other. . . ." (p. 9). Here modernity colors and is colored by detective fiction; Kawana shows us how.

Kawana opens and closes with the notion that modernity is a kind of "pox" for which there is no known cause. In a shift from the Meiji period nation-building and establishing of self and identity, the modernity Kawana describes is at once familiar and defamiliarizing, pervaded by a general sense of unease, melancholy, and deracination, a fall from those late nineteenth-century goals, or at least a rethinking of their importance. Silver too recognizes this sort of modernity, but sees it as an inevitable failure in Ranpō and his contemporaries; in contrast Kawana identifies it as the very source of the flow and overflow of murder narratives that were produced in that period. For Kawana the detective fiction genre is both symptomatic of modernity and a salve for it, though never achieving the certainty of a cure. What else explains its wild popularity over the period? If Silver is interested in the specific sources that create the form, Kawana is more attuned to the multi-faceted cycle of production and reception of the narratives, focused on what the form contains.

This leads down some at once commonsensical and yet surprising avenues. Why the fascination with murder and crime? Kawana gives us many answers. According to Kawana, boredom, restlessness, escapism, murder, and crime are products of modernity in its multitude of guises. Boredom begets murder within the stories and Kawana hints it also begets interest in murder outside them, at the readerly level. While Silver is mainly concerned with the issue of time (who did what first), Kawana's themes are more spatial; early on she organizes her topics via the spaces of modernity, defined as city, colony, and body. The modern city Kawana describes is one in which the binaries of known/unknown, tired/exciting, boredom/adventure lead to a pervasive fascination with and anxiety about anonymity afforded by the sprawling metropole and the teeming masses. Kawana recounts the exploits of some new anthropologists of the city, the so-called modernologists, who observed, catalogued, and reported the movements, purchasing habits, and styles worn by random denizens of the city. This tendency toward tailing, indeed the very ability to tail, is a practice Kawana links directly to the modern city and to the stalking habits of detectives and murderers alike in the fiction of the day. The city is also a place where everyone seems to know they are on some big stage, a place where identities are being performed for anyone who might possibly be watching around the corner. So the city dweller is both oblivious to those who are watching specifically and all too aware of being watched generally. *Murder Most Modern* does not really show us how the reader of detective fiction follows the tail through the tail's tale of tailing and how the commodity of murder fiction is therefore a repetition of the dynamics of desire told by the story. But Kawana provides us with all the tools necessary for solving these mysteries.

Her chapter on bioethics in modern Japan and the scientists featured in the stories may well be the most important source in English for linking the wild imaginary of the erotic and grotesque boom to the scientific and pseudoscientific discourse. While Sabine Fruhstuck links these developments to the project of nation and empire building and Miriam Silverberg has used the very notion of *ero guro* as the occasion for reinventing Japanese modernity to her vision, Kawana gives a grass-roots narrative explaining how and what parts of science were digestible to a vast group of readers. Kawana's understanding of the challenge to faith in science (through scientism) that detective fiction presented parallels Silver's highlighting of period claims that the Japanese were not rational enough to have a strong detective fiction writer or novel. Just as Japanese representations of scientists in the contemporary press may have cultivated a mysticism surrounding science, Japanese detective fiction outdoes the mysticism surrounding absurd solutions cast as "rational" that were already latent in even the most purportedly reason-minded detective of all – Sherlock Holmes.

Both books trace the presence of real-world objects, anxieties, and desires into the world of the fictions, but to different ends. For Silver it is important at times to see the transformation of the word Paris into kanji and the names of French characters into Japanese names, in order to show how the foreign crops up again in different hybrid ways in the novels and how this is proof of the uneasy and ultimate failure of the genre. For Kawana, the occurrence of the “pox” of modernity is only really knowable with reference to the pervasive murder mystery.

For those of us who prefer linear narratives of history, literary biography, and close readings, Silver’s text will be the one that stands firm against the slippery notions evoked in much Japanese crime fiction – that murders are not always so clearly identifiable, that the facts of the case are never enough to prove guilt beyond a shadow of a doubt, and that the very conveyors of the facts may themselves share as much guilt as the suspects. For those more inclined to be frustrated than comforted by notions of stable truths and pat solutions, Kawana’s discursive readings, though occasionally more pliant, may ultimately prove more persuasive. But the pleasure of having both of these books is that we don’t have to choose. Each offers delights, insights, and frights.

What neither book seems seriously to acknowledge, but appears to this reviewer to be present on every page of both, is the critic’s or scholar’s own deep parallel with the detective. What is fascinating about detective fiction and criticism for the readers remains ultimately at somewhat of a remove from the detective and the scholar. While the tales themselves (literary-fictive or scholarly) spin webs that catch their readerly prey in the mysticism of largely unverifiable facts, what the scholar, detective, or detective fiction writer says goes – is true – at least for the confines of the narrative. If faith is shaken in the detective or scholar, it is generally the reader’s doing and not the narrative itself. However, the myriad cases of Japanese murder mysteries and curiosities presented to us by Kawana and Silver themselves break the faith, and cast into doubt the veracity of the tales. What is interesting here is that the scholar and detective are working outside the realm of the mysticism that must suffice for the inexpert reader who often lacks access to the realities (linguistic or experiential) of the scholar/detective; the scholar/detective presents the case, in particular shedding as much light on some facts as they obscure in the shadows of others. The scholar/detective must speak with authority of their own command of the facts in order to construct their tales of what has transpired. And because those tales may be multiple and at cross-purposes, ultimately the thrill and pleasure is in the process of reading, of coming out of the dark toward the climactic solution. And this is true with reading both Silver’s and Kawana’s book. Like two brilliantly differing detectives seeing a mysterious corpse in a strange position and awkward circumstances, Silver and Kawana each use differing methods to arrive at differing conclusions about the body of Japanese works strewn before them. For both, the answer to whodunnit (or what caused it) of Japanese murder mysteries might well be modernity. For Silver, modernity is that moment of encounter with the West that posits Japan in an inferior role; for Kawana it is when progress toward truth itself is brought up for questioning.

Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan.

By Constantine Nomikos Vaporis. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008. Pp. xii + 318.

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This book is the first full-scale study in English on *sankin kōtai* 参勤交代, or “alternate attendance”, an institutional cornerstone of Japan’s Edo period that had profound influence on politics, culture, and the economy. The system of alternate attendance mandated that daimyo and their entourages