Scarlet Fawn and Brocade Sashes: Kimono as Language in the Works of Modern Japanese Women Writers

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Moore Hall 423

For many the kimono has become synonymous with an imagined traditional Japanese culture that is wrapped, layered, and seemingly bound. Orientalist appropriation has kept us from appreciating the dynamic individualism implicit to the wearing of kimono, from the selection of fabrics to the knotting of the sash. In my recent research, I look at the ways women wear kimono and the ways writers employ kimono imagery in their texts. I contend that more than just beautiful surface detail, the kimono can also function at the level of language—adding significantly to the orthodox language of the text. Women writers particularly rely on kimono imagery as a Japanese style of “écriture féminine”—a writing that speaks of female experience through subtle but nevertheless somatic terms. In my talk I will focus on works by Tamura Toshiko (1884-1945) and Enchi Fumiko (1905-1986).


The talk is open to the public, and light refreshments will be served. For further information, please contact DongKwan Kong (dongkwan@hawaii.edu) or L. Julie Jiang (lijiang@hawaii.edu).