



Sirens of the Western Shore: Westernesque Women and Translation in Modern Japanese Literature

Indra Levy

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Indra Levy introduces a new archetype in the study of modern Japanese literature: the "Westernesque femme fatale," an alluring figure who is ethnically Japanese but evokes the West in her physical appearance, lifestyle, behavior, and, most important, her use of language. She played conspicuous roles in landmark works of modern Japanese fiction and theater.

Levy traces the lineage of the Westernesque femme fatale from her first appearance in the vernacularist fiction of the late 1880s to her development in Naturalist fiction of the mid-1900s and, finally, to her spectacular embodiment by the modern Japanese actress in the early 1910s with the advent of Naturalist theater. In all cases the Westernesque femme fatale both attracts and confounds the self-consciously modern male intellectual through a convention-defying use of language.

What does this sirenlike figure reveal about the central concerns of modern Japanese literature? Levy proposes that the Westernesque femme fatale be viewed as the hallmark of an *intertextual* exoticism that prizes the strange beauty of modern Western writing.

By illuminating the exoticist impulses that gave rise to this archetype, Levy offers a new understanding of the relationships between vernacular style and translation, original and imitation, and writing and performance within a cross-cultural context. A seamless blend of narrative, performance, translation, and gender studies, this work will have a profound impact on the critical discourse on this formative period of modern Japanese literature.

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