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Catherine Russell

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**New Women of the Silent Screen:  
China, Japan, Hollywood**

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**Catherine Russell : New Women of the Silent Screen: China, Japan, Hollywood (Camera Obscura Book)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised New Women of the Silent Screen: China, Japan, Hollywood (Camera Obscura Book):

Examining constructions of gender, nationalism, and modernity in films produced in China and Japan in the 1920s and early 1930s, this special issue of *Camera Obscura* is the first collection of feminist research on Asian cinema of the silent period. Actresses emerged for the first time in the Asian public sphere in the late 1910s, making the convention of the female impersonator obsolete and giving human faces to the many social transformations of urban modernity. During this period, filmmaking started to establish itself as a product of mass culture that circulated globally, creating conduits of cultural exchange in which the modern New Woman became a principal figure of currency. In the silent cinemas of China, Japan, and Hollywood, where Asian women appeared as key representations of nativist and orientalist ideology, early women stars became the focus for competing discourses of gender and modernity and played a key role in the construction of modern Asian identity. The collection includes an essay on the actress Pearl White and how the emergence of the New Woman on Asian screens provoked extensive discussions in the media about the norms of gender and femininity. Hollywood orientalism and Asian nationalism converged in the images of Asian American stars Anna May Wong and Tsuru Aoki, who were criticized by both American and Asian constituencies for transgressing cultural norms. Other essays offer a feminist critique of films by the Japanese directors Yasujiro Ozu, Heinosuke Gosho, Kenji Mizoguchi, and Mikio Naruse, whose work often captured the position of women in a patriarchal system. Trapped between the progressive paradigms of the New Woman and traditional expectations of appropriate gender roles, and between competing notions of Asian modernity, Asian women stars of the silent cinema constitute a dynamic site for feminist film research. Contributors: Weihong Bao, Chika Kinoshita, Sara Ross, Catherine Russell, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, Yiman Wang