



# Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams (Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics, and Society)

*Karen Kelsky*

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Over the past few decades, many young Japanese women have emerged as Japan's most enthusiastic "internationalists," investing in study or work abroad, or in romance with Western men as opportunities to circumvent what they consider their country's oppressive corporate and family structures. Drawing on a rich supply of autobiographical narratives, as well as literary and cultural texts, Karen Kelsky situates this phenomenon against a backdrop of profound social change in Japan and within an intricate network of larger global forces.

In exploring the promises, limitations, and contradictions of these "occidental longings," *Women on the Verge* exposes the racial and erotic politics of transnational mobility. Kelsky shows how female cosmopolitanism recontextualizes the well-known Western male romance with the Orient: Japanese women are now the agents, narrating their own desires for the "modern" West in ways that seem to defy Japanese nationalism as well as long-standing relations of power not only between men and women but between Japan and the West. While transnational movement is not available to all Japanese women, Kelsky shows that the desire for the foreign permeates many Japanese women's lives. She also reveals how this feminine allegiance to the West—and particularly to white men—can impose its own unanticipated hegemonies of race, sexuality, and capital.

Combining ethnography and literary analysis, and bridging anthropology and cultural studies, *Women on the Verge* will also appeal to students and scholars of Japan studies, feminism, and global culture.

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