

TWISTED SISTERS: THE PROGRESSION OF WHITE WOMEN FROM HOME-  
WRECKERS TO FRIENDS IN ONOTO WATANNA'S *MISS NUMÈ OF JAPAN* AND SUI  
SIN FAR'S "THE WISDOM OF THE NEW"

A Thesis by

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in English.

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## DEDICATION

To my family, friends, and teachers.

Thank you for your continuous support and proofreading.

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At the turn of the twentieth century, immigration to the United States increased dramatically and so did concerns about the newcomers' place in American society. At the same time that immigration was on the rise, white women were experimenting with and claiming new roles for themselves in public spaces, sometimes interacting with immigrants—especially female immigrants—on an unprecedented level as social workers, missionaries, and friendly visitors. The women's suffrage movement refers to these activities as one branch of “civilization-work,” which included “all activities intended to ‘elevate’ a ‘lower race’” through Americanizing the immigrant population (Newman 7-8). White women were helping, sort of, but also granted themselves unprecedented authority over immigrants. White women believed their work “rescued” immigrants from themselves or the immoral practices plaguing their cultural and personal existence. Such prejudiced reasoning allowed “white women to overlook the ways in which white culture was implicated within the systems of oppression that governed the lives of nonwhite women [and men]” (8). These interactions, as depicted in writing by immigrant and non-Anglo groups, are portrayed in highly ambivalent ways, showing how white women could help new immigrants but, at the same time, how they threatened and hurt their origin or cultures.

While all immigrant groups endured some form of discrimination, Chinese and Japanese immigrants suffered a uniquely gendered form of oppression under laws that prevented women from immigrating with their husbands. Asian immigration laws were enacted in the mid-nineteenth century and lasted into the mid-twentieth century, though Asian women were directly targeted from the 1870s to the early 1900s. The depression of the 1870s increased anti-Asian sentiment, as Chinese immigrants were competing for—and often receiving—labor jobs over white Americans. Such tension in part led to the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which from 1882 to 1943 banned the “immigration of Chinese laborers” and prohibited the

Chinese from becoming naturalized citizens (*Making Waves* 424). The Chinese Exclusion Act was initially enacted to deal with the flood of male immigrants, but the legislation added numerous amendments with stricter regulations as labor competition and tensions increased. The legislation eventually encouraged gendered discrimination and restriction against Asian women, who were often seen as prostitutes. While prostitution involving women of all ethnicities was rampant throughout the United States during this time, Asians, particularly the Chinese, were most commonly associated with it. Many Americans justified exclusion of Asian immigrants by arguing that Asian women immigrated for the sole purpose of “working as prostitutes (*Making Waves* 3). Further supporting this argument, the Page Law of 1875 “bars prostitutes and coolie labor entry to the United States”; more specifically, the law’s sweeping generalizations concerning the morality of Asian women labeled them as sexual deviants and thus as threats to white America (424). Publicized hearings, such as “An Act to Prevent the Kidnapping and Importation of Mongolian, Chinese, and Japanese Females for Criminal and Demoralizing Purposes” of 1870, encouraged the association between prostitution and Asians, especially in the state of California, where the majority of Asian immigrants lived during this time. This specific hearing gave the immigration commissioner in California the right to determine if an immigrant woman was “a person of correct habits and good character” before granting her request to enter the U.S. (3). The broad terms of discrimination allowed American lawmakers and civilians to show extreme prejudice toward Asian women and negative feelings concerning Asian immigrants were considered normal. The popular term “erotic Oriental” perpetually urged white Americans to see all Asian women as sexually enticing to white men and thus a threat to the American lifestyle and family (1-4).

Although Chinese women faced long-term exclusion under the Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese women found temporary exceptions to the immigration rules with the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-08, which barred Japanese men and women from immigrating but allowed a limited number of Japanese picture brides to enter the United States and unite with single Asian men over a period of ten years. The picture bride was a Japanese woman matched to a Japanese man living in the United States. Family members and village matchmakers from Japan found potential matches, and the position was highly competitive because the picture bride was granted immigration to the U.S. during a time of extreme exclusion. The picture bride marriages simply required couples to exchange photographs and write the young woman's name into the family register to legalize the union (*Making Waves* 6-8). The Japanese picture bride provision was one of the few legal exceptions to the gendered discrimination toward Asian women. Japanese families were granted this small privilege because the group wasn't widely considered an economic or moral rival to the middle-class like Chinese immigrants were. Despite 40,000 Japanese women immigrating over the next decade [1907-1920], "less than 10,000 picture brides entered the United States (Daniels 135-45). White Americans became increasingly resistant of such practices, especially considering Americans thought the Gentlemen's Agreement ended all Japanese immigration. The laws were portrayed to the public as wholly exclusionary but often contained loopholes allowing immigration, especially for rich Asian merchants and their wives (*Making Waves* 6-7). White Americans were critical of what they considered to be the 'immoral' practice of allowing Japanese couples to marry without a courtship. The picture brides were meant to help settle Japanese families, but ended up re-vitalizing an exclusionist movement toward the entire race (*Making Waves* 6-9).



These laws shaped the ways Asian immigrant writers, especially female immigrant writers, depicted cross-cultural encounters between white Americans and Asian immigrants. Because they barred women from joining their husbands in America, these laws could be seen to compromise the Asian family. The fact that, on the one hand, Asian women were barred from immigration and, on the other, white women were interacting more and more with Asian and other immigrant groups made depictions of white women in fiction by Asian immigrants especially complex. Onoto Watanna's *Miss Numè of Japan: A Japanese American Romance* and Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Stories*, specifically "The Wisdom of the New," depict white women as home-wreckers who destroy the immigrant family and its ethnic culture by inhibiting the ability of Chinese and Japanese women to perform maternal and marital duties such as child bearing and rearing<sup>1</sup>. But Watanna and Far's Asian women characters eventually find friendship with some white women characters because these women punish or remove the Asian men who consider assimilation a male privilege but encourage white women to enjoy the freedoms they deny their wives. The male characters show intense attraction toward white women who embody personal freedom, yet reject the same ideals in their wives who attempt to assimilate. Both authors explore the triangle of white women, Asian women, and Asian men to reform Asian manhood as a means to solidify a cross-cultural relationship between the women. In the end, the argument for a cross-cultural alliance between white women and Asian women becomes muddled because both sets of characters remain biased toward one another. And, although the characters are flawed, Watanna and Far write realistically complex representations

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars and critics continuously debate and use different names for these authors. Although their proper names are Winnifred Eaton and Edith Eaton, I will refer to them by their literary pseudonyms for the purposes the academic and literary discussion.

of the alliances—some successful and others not—between white women and Asian women as they transition separately, and together, into modern America.

Sui Sin Far and Onoto Watanna write from different Asian perspectives—Far portrays her Chinese roots, while Watanna depicts Japanese characters and writes under what readers are supposed to assume is a Japanese name. Both authors found literary success at the time of publication and continue to find their work discussed within the current cannon of Asian American literature and immigration literature, though Watanna was not often included in the first anthologies of Asian American literature. S.E. Solberg and Amy Ling contend that Sui Sin Far was “the first Asian American fictionist,” citing her mass publication and popularity throughout the United States (Ling 11-12). Similarly, Eve Oishi presents Onoto Watanna as the author of “the first known novel by an Asian American,” maintaining that Asian American writers should be defined as writers of Asian descent whose literary careers primarily occurred in U.S. context (Oishi xi-xxxi). Modern scholars like Solberg and Ling resurrected the Eaton sister’s stories in the 1980s, and both critics formed their discussion around the idea of Far as the “authentic” sister who stuck to her roots by listening to stories from her mother and engaging with the Chinese community Watanna, by contrast, was seen as the “phony” sister who masquerades as someone else (Ferens1-4). The variation of literary identities demonstrates that the sisters “faced lifelong pressure to disown their mother’s race,” and despite their different means of dealing with personal identity, both authors take up the relationships between Asian and Anglo American women within Asian American literature (Chu 102-03).

Despite the differing cultural representations of their Asian characters, both authors initially present the white women characters as home-wreckers. The authors divide their white women into groups: the older white women and the younger white women. The older white women’s

long-term goals rest on complete assimilation of Asian families, an ideal Louise Michelle Newman explores in *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States*. The younger white women reject "melting-pot" assimilation in favor of a cultural pluralism similar to that espoused by Randolph Bourne in his 1916 article "Trans-national America." The younger white women "emphatically do not want...these distinctive qualities [to] be washed out into a tasteless, colorless fluid of uniformity," as Bourne states; instead, the young white women encourage Asian immigrants to embrace Asian and American culture to foster a blended existence and family (Bourne). The Oxford English Dictionary dates the phrase "home-wrecker" or "home-wrecking" around the turn of the century and defines the term as "designating a person who or thing which ruins or breaks up a family, home, or relationship" ("home-wrecking"). While the later usage centers on women, the early etymology appears gender neutral so the authors' depiction of white women could be considered an early, unique representation of the idea. Watanna nor Far specifically use the term in their writing, Mrs. Jenny Davis and Cleo Ballard in Watanna's novel *Miss Numè of Japan: A Japanese-American Romance* and Mrs. Dean and Adah Charlton in Far's short story "The Wisdom of the New" personify the characteristics of home-wreckers.

Both authors' older white women characters successfully infiltrate the Asian family in order to convert or assimilate the home to American norms. The older white women gain entrance into the Asian immigrant home by acting as surrogate mothers in the absence of Asian mothers. Mrs. Jenny Davis mothers Numè Omi, who lost her mother during childbirth, while Mrs. Dean mothers Wou and Pau Lin Sankwei whose mothers passed away in China. These women take advantage of the familial separation between Asian immigrants and their families in order to further their control over Asian assimilation. The white women find power by embracing their

role as mother, a position that white women embodied in their “civilian work.” In Watanna’s story, neither Orito Takashima nor Numè Omi has a mother, so both individuals live under the domestic and public control of their fathers. Quite separate from Watanna’s story, Far writes Sankwei’s mother as a widow with complete control over her son. She chooses his education, his profession and his wife, vowing, “I must find you a wife” before Sankwei leaves for America and securing his marriage to Pau Lin (Far 42-43). In America, Mrs. Dean assumes the role of Sankwei’s mother. In both texts, then, white women can take up the mother role in the absence of Asian mothers, which gives older white women the opportunity to enter the Asian homes.

In *Miss Numè*, Mrs. Davis enters the Asian home as an invited guest, meeting Numè’s betrothed—Orito Takashima—in America and insisting that “he [Orito] would like Numè and me to be good friends” (Watanna 67). The story doesn’t mention Mrs. Davis’s age, but Watanna makes it clear that Mrs. Davis is only slightly older than Numè Omi. However, Mrs. Davis is more established than her young Asian friend because she is a married. So established in society is she that despite Watanabe Omi’s desire “to keep his daughter [Numè] in seclusion until her marriage,” Mrs. Davis “had taken the two old men [Watanabe Omi and Takashima Sachi] by storm, so that she could have twisted them round her own shrewd little finger” (67). This position allows Mrs. Davis to provide Numè “knowledge of the outside world,” which is a powerful education she’d never learned from her dead mother or her sheltering father(s) (66). And through the white woman’s successful negotiations with the Japanese fathers, Numè often “crossed the rice fields” to Mrs. Davis’s home for advice about her family as well as her love life (68). Mrs. Davis opens her home to the young girl, which allows her to provide advice concerning American language as well as proper marital interactions, specifically concerning romance.

Unlike Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Dean invites herself into Wou Sankwei's home in "The Wisdom of the New" without facing any protest. Sankwei looks to make "self-improvement...his object and ambition" as he leaves China for America to receive a proper education (Far 43). Sankwei lives alone and hasn't spoken to his wife for seven years "because his wife can neither read nor write" (44). The marital separation allows Sankwei to control his home as well as his relationships himself, without the influence of his wife. He describes Mrs. Dean as "a motherly looking woman" who had "taken him under her wing shortly after his arrival" (44). Mrs. Dean visits Sankwei at his home as well as his workplace, and since she cares, as she says, "almost as much of Sankwei as I do my own boy," Mrs. Dean feels entitled to give him unlimited advice. Mrs. Dean's motherly behavior slowly transfers from husband to wife when Pau Lin comes to America. The older woman continues to give Sankwei advice concerning the arrival of his wife despite Pau Lin's personal and cultural reservations. And although Pau Lin "never had any one to guide or direct her," the presence of Mrs. Dean does not provide her with the comfort of a true mother, especially considering Pau Lin's desire to observe "the rule laid down for her by her late mother-in-law (7). In her own mind, Mrs. Dean is a permanent fixture in the Sankwei home, and she is unwilling to relinquish her position, which allows her to provide advice concerning American language as well as proper marital interactions, specifically concerning child rearing.

Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Dean easily secure their position in the home through their self-proclaimed expert knowledge of Asian cultures. To begin, both women present themselves as affluent members of their communities who are openly sympathetic toward Asians; Mrs. Davis is married to "a large silk merchant in Tokyo" (Watanna 64), while Mrs. Dean has crusaded for "the uplifting of the young workingman of Chinese race" since the death of her husband years ago (Far 52). The women also educate their young white women counterparts, Cleo Ballard and

Adah Charlton, concerning the rules of traditional Asian cultures; their lessons center on transitioning Asian immigrants to American lifestyles. Mrs. Davis lives in America and Japan, extending great effort to make her house in Japan “popular and always the centre of gay parties of foreigners” (Watanna 64). The stories’ focus on social engagement suggests Mrs. Davis is less official with her desire for assimilation; she is more interested in making outsiders feel comfortable in their relationships with white Americans. Her interactions are considered friendly rather than formal. This diverse lifestyle allows Mrs. Davis to examine the lives of betrothed husbands and wives, and she privately meets with Orito to share “the girl’s [Numè’s] agitation” in their reunion (73).

In contrast, Mrs. Dean states that her interest in Asian Americans is motivated by a desire to teach “these Chinese boys—to become Americans” (Far 54). Although Mrs. Dean’s background shows less detail than Mrs. Davis’s, the reader can interpret her position in the short story; Mrs. Dean is a “teacher and benefactress of the youthful laundryman” as well as other Chinese immigrants in the community (50). She moves “fearlessly” through the “Chinese people and the mazes of Chinatown” with her young niece (54). Her understanding of the culture and her ability to explain the meaning of Chinese objects to other whites bestows her with great power. Despite the different approaches, both women take their positions seriously and continually share their guidance and advice with Asian immigrants.

Language proves important for immigrants around the turn of the century, especially women and children coming from Japan or China. Mary Roberts Smith Coolidge wrote *Chinese Immigration* in 1909, which directly argued for a more favorable treatment of Chinese populations. The argument made a special case for Chinese immigrants rather than Japanese immigrants, who were already perceived as more Western and therefore civilized. Unlike the

white women performing “civilization-work,” Coolidge believed Asian immigrants shouldn’t be considered “primitive,” because the race showed an aptitude for quick assimilation through the conversion of religion and language (Coolidge 75). During the turn of the century, men and male children were often the only Asian individuals receiving an American education. And although Asian men could seek an education, their opportunities and disciplines were limited. For example, California law in the late 1890s allowed school boards to “separate schools for children of Chinese or Mongolian descent”; however, such schools didn’t exist which made education difficult or non-existent for long periods of time (Daniels 111-12). With similar intentions, Sui Sin Far published politically motivated short stories in the *Los Angeles Express*. She wrote “Chinatown Needs a School” in 1903, which specifically deals with Asian education. The story explores the idea that although assimilation should be a choice, the decision is often made based on pressure from white America (White-Parks 126). The story specifically discusses the positive and negative aspects of Chinese children attending mission schools. She parallels how white Americans could “kidnap” children from China, yet other Chinese children could find “good people” in America to help them receive “a liberal education” (Far 202-03). Far further addresses the “hardship(s)” placed on Chinese families who had to deal with the inability “to make their children’s clothes in American style and occasionally are too poor to afford the change” in order to send their children to the mission schools. The positive and negative discussion about white Americans throughout the story allows Far to speak to white and Asian readers during the early 1900s without attacking one specific group. And since there was limited opportunity for the education of men and children, there was even less hope for women to receive a formal American education. Without an education, Asian women had a more difficult time learning

English and such language barriers caused communication problems between Asians and their newly united families as well as non-Asian acquaintances.

Mrs. Davis shows interest in teaching Numè English in social settings and takes great pride in acting as her teacher. Wou Sankwei's descriptions establish Mrs. Dean as substantially older than Mrs. Davis, and the age gap between the two women eventually grants Mrs. Davis an escape from being solely branded as home-wrecking white woman. Although she shows glimpses of home-wrecking behaviors, Watanna shows greater compassion for Mrs. Davis than Far shows Mrs. Dean. The younger white women characters eventually find more complex exploration and even redemption because they don't share the intense focus and desire for complete immigration and assimilation of immigrants like their older white women counterparts. More specifically, Mrs. Dean continues to embody the older white woman home-wrecker ideals by attempting to completely assimilate Asians to Americans through language. Mrs. Davis, on the other hand, shows a social interest in assimilation through language, something that involves a less aggressive interference and closer alignment with the young white women characters within both stories. At the beginning of the novel, Mrs. Davis observes Numè's "pretty broken English," and she asks questions in order for the pair to practice and improve Numè's English (Watanna 68). Mrs. Davis continually emphasizes her words in order for the young girl to pick up on important ideas or phrases, which appear in italics to show the emphasis she places on them. The discussion eventually focuses on Numè's love life, and Mrs. Davis believes Numè's English comprehension is essential for Numè to communicate with her betrothed Orito as well as other potential male acquaintances or suitors. But Numè's understanding of the word "love" unsettles the white woman; Mrs. Davis doesn't understand how Numè can love—and be willing to marry—someone she has not seen for eight years (68). Mrs. Davis's American definition of



love doesn't match up with Numè's Japanese tradition of love. She wants to take Numè away from her home because Numè has hardly "had a chance to see anything or any one"; Mrs. Davis believes Numè is incapable of feeling such emotions without a more informed perspective, and she shows a clear disregard for Numè's emotions by pushing her own values and beliefs on the young girl. This elitist position loosely aligns Mrs. Davis with the white women's civilization-work movement of the 1900s. She feels an intense desire to "civilize" Numè and her "primitive" understanding of love and romance (Newman 8). The quote above further insinuates that the Asian lifestyle, or specifically the Japanese lifestyle, isolates and controls women, placing the blame on the Japanese fathers as well as the immigration restrictions that white America enacted.

The close friendship between Mrs. Davis and Cleo Ballard also complicates Mrs. Davis's actions. She struggles between acting as a friend to Numè or to Cleo. Mrs. Davis and Cleo Ballard have a more established relationship that make the two women appear to be sisters. Despite Mrs. Davis coddling Numè, Numè shows control and power over her own speech. Numè is full of knowledge, and she argues with Mrs. Davis and her husband as the couple attempts to alter her ideas. Numè "ris[es] to her feet, her face flushed and troubled" as she defends her understanding of American language, especially in the context of love and romance; Numè is unwilling to give Mrs. Davis ownership of her language (Watanna 69). These examples illustrate that Mrs. Davis is torn between informing or controlling Numè's understanding of romance and love, perhaps feeling slightly more inclined to align them with a more American version of such relationships. Mrs. Davis's fluctuation concerning language—to be supportive or controlling—represents the larger issue of her transition from the ideals of an older white woman to the ideals of a younger white woman.

Unlike Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Dean shows little interest in teaching the young Asian woman of her acquaintance English. Prior to Pau Lin's arrival, she matter-of-factly informs Adah Charlton that Sankwei hasn't written letters to his wife "because his wife can neither read nor write" (Far 45). Unlike her niece, Mrs. Dean sees little problem with Pau Lin's lack of American education; she focuses on Sankwei's needs, rather than his newly immigrated wife, and she declares "It is the Chinese custom to educate only the boys...It is dreadful in our minds, but not to theirs" (45). According to Far's representation of Chinese tradition, men control the household as well as the family, and Sankwei declares Pau Lin's "time for learning" is over (47). Mrs. Dean may positively embrace traditional Chinese customs, but she relishes in Pau Lin's lack of education because it supports her ambitions to Americanize the family without further interference. Pau Lin won't hold control within the home if she is unable to communicate on the same level as her husband, son, and outside individuals. The complacent tone Mrs. Dean uses throughout the exchange suggests the word "dreadful" more closely describes Adah Charlton's feelings rather than her own. The older woman has spent seven years helping Sankwei "appreciate the advantages of becoming westernized," and she continues to spend all of her time and resources fostering their singular relationship (47).

Mrs. Dean furthers her destruction of the home by using language to alienate Pau Lin from her husband. Pau Lin has waited to look into "the face of the husband whom she had not seen for seven long years," yet within seconds of greeting him for the first time, "her countenance assumed an almost sullen expression" when Mrs. Dean and Adah Charlton run over and interrupt the couple's reunion (Far 46). The English language is problematic for Pau Lin because she cannot understand or speak it herself. The white women greet Pau Lin in a language she doesn't know, which immediately alienates her from the conversation with her husband. The white

women create an alien in their othering of Pau Lin, which establishes their superiority and power over the immigrants. Wou Sankwei patiently reminds the white women Pau Lin cannot understand them, and his affectionate tone “arouse[s] a suspicion” in Pau Lin’s mind (46). The interruption ruins one of the most highly anticipated moments in Pau Lin’s life by making her feel excluded rather than comforted after crossing a sea of adversity to get to America. Mrs. Dean even declares “Ah, poor Sankwei” during the exchange, rather than showing concern for the overwhelmed young mother, unlike Adah Charlton, who quietly murmurs “Poor wife” in the same exchange (46). Her unsympathetic presence at the immigration center also implies that Mrs. Dean is one of the individuals wishing to control Asians as they enter the country, and perhaps, Mrs. Dean considers herself, rather than Pau Lin, the trusted companion of Wou Sankwei. As the story progresses, Mrs. Dean continually shows jealousy over the couples reuniting by lamenting “before the coming of Pau Lin, he would confide in me every little thing that worried him...now he maintains absolute silence as to his private affairs” (53). And although Mrs. Dean still calls him “son,” her selfish behavior excludes Pau Lin; she doesn’t mention her desire to call Pau Lin daughter. The older white woman shows no interest in being Sankwei’s wife—especially in a romantic or sexual nature—but she shows a great deal of unrest toward the idea of Pau Lin as wife seemingly because the Asian woman lessens her own influence on the family.

Yet, while portraying Pau Lin’s negative perception of the white women, Far encourages the reader to doubt Pau Lin’s reactions. Far’s white women appear to be professionally or casually performing “civilian work” (Newman 7). The women take time out of their lives to greet and interact with the new Chinese immigrants. The women familiar or immersed in civilian work may even assume Far’s white women have used their “power and influence with government

officials, church leaders, and social reformers” to impact the immigration process or the actions happening soon after (Newman 7-9). Though the white women’s motives are not entirely clear, Sui Sin Far writes Pau Lin as an overly paranoid and even psychologically unstable woman. The negative language like “sullen” and “suspicion” used to describe her hints at an exaggerated and baseless paranoia. By representing Pau Lin as unable to understand what the other women are saying, Far leaves her without a clear motive for such intense anger. Despite the white women’s physical presence in her life, they haven’t given Pau Lin a tangible reason to feel such intense anger. Such mixed characterization appears throughout Far’s stories, and White-Parks contends Far’s “ambiguity of language allows her to keep a foot on both sides of the issue, a reflection of the plurality of her personal position that maintains the Eurasian middle ground” within her stories (158). White-Parks’s discussion comments on the doubleness of characters like Pau Lin; the readers are forced to see her as sympathetic and unlikable simultaneously. Pau Lin’s accusations become more dramatic as the short story continues; she focuses all of her attention on the white women rather than dealing with her own family or accommodating herself to her new home. Far’s heavy handed portrayal of Pau Lin and even the minor Chinese characters emphasizes the Asian women’s inability to function as “proper” women in American society.

Mrs. Dean continues to wreck the home by using English to control Yen, the couple’s young son. Sankwei appreciates American education and promises to send Yen to school and eventually an “American college,” and Sankwei appears especially excited about the opportunity (Far 47). Pau Lin initially attempts to derail her husband’s plans for giving their son a Western education by forbidding Yen “to speak the language of the white women” (47) and physically lashes out against what she perceives as his linguistic betrayal of the Chinese language, speaking only Chinese and forcing him to do the same. As the quote above suggests, Pau Lin aligns English

with white women and considers their influence on her husband and son to be poisonous. The idea of her husband and son communicating or relating to Mrs. Dean and Adah Charlton instead of her alienates Pau Lin within the household; Sankwei and Yen easily—and happily—speak English, which furthers Pau Lin’s turmoil. The young mother believes she is slowly being pushed out of her own home by the white women; she cannot sort between fiction and reality, and when you are an outsider, clueless to the ways of a new world, fiction and reality are often blurred. The loss of Yen’s native language creates further degradation of Pau Lin’s motherhood; Yen will slowly transform from his mother’s Chinese son into his father’s Chinese-American son at the apparent behest of Mrs. Dean and her desire for the assimilation of the entire household.

Although the turbulent relationship between the older white women and Asian women characters develop over time, the younger white women characters cause immediate tension. The two groups of women may share a skin color and similar class standing, but each group speaks and behaves in a different manner. Cleo Ballard in Watanna’s novel *Miss Numè of Japan: A Japanese-American Romance* and Adah Charlton in Far’s short story “The Wisdom of the New” are also characterized as home-wreckers, but unlike the older women who intimidate through their desire for assimilation, these young women intimidate with their sensual behaviors toward the Asian men characters. Despite the sensual threat, these young white women also form friendships with the Asian women characters. These friendships are successful because the young white women remove or punish the Asian men for their gendered treatment of assimilation. However, in order to help redefine Asian manhood, the young white women must pay retribution for their initial destruction to the Asian woman and her home.

Both women in Watanna and Far’s stories have a solid relationship with their older, female counterparts; Cleo Ballard and Mrs. Davis are close friends who occupy the same class-standing,

and Adah Charlton and Mrs. Dean are niece and aunt. These relationships give the younger white women access to the Asian home; it is the younger white woman's physical and verbal presence that allows her to affect the Asian mother's ability to act as wife. Cleo Ballard's salacious behavior toward Orito Takashima initially threatens Numè Omi's relationship with her betrothed in Watanna's work. Cleo gains access to Orito through her cousin, Tom Ballard, who introduces them on the ship from America to Japan. Tom declares Cleo "a flirt" from the beginning of the novel, and she embraces the term by showing little restraint in her behavior with Orito; she declares, "I can't help myself. You haven't the slightest idea how it feels to have any one—any one like that—on the verge of being in love with you" (Watanna 13&17). The statement speaks to Cleo's self-absorption as well as her twisted fascination with Japanese men; the phrase "any one like that" emphasizes Cleo's eroticized excitement about forming a romantic relationship with a foreign man. Such intoxication with forbidden "love" takes over Cleo's mind and actions. Cleo seemingly embraces her role as home-wrecker as her actions prevent Numè and Orito from getting married. Both Numè and Orito speak of the close relationship in their youth as a means to understanding their commitment, yet their fathers' appear more interested in the romantic relationship than the young couple is. Despite the betrothal, neither Orito nor Numè intend to go through with their fathers' plans. However, regardless of their intent, Cleo selfishly disregards Japanese tradition by inciting Orito to fall in love with her—and break his betrothal—without the slightest intention of marrying him. These actions make it hard to imagine Cleo's ability to seek redemption by the end of the novel; the young woman's selfishness overwhelms her ability to change.

Cleo also spends a great deal of time with Orito since their trip passes slowly. The role of the ship presents an interesting intersection between Watanna and Far's stories because Cleo Ballard

and Pau Lin travel by sea to reunite with a fiancé or husband, respectively. Both women have been separated from their intended love interests for the majority of their relationship; Cleo Ballard is engaged to Arthur Sinclair in Japan, and Pau Lin is married to Wou Sankwei in America. Globalization affects intimate relationships—a possible connection between the women in both Watanna and Far’s stories. The emphasis and understanding of globalization is something Cleo fails to recognize. Cleo and Orito also make others feel out of place with their intimate interactions, and the two do not speak or act like they are in committed relationships with other people (Watanna 23). Far and Watanna represent young white women as willing participants in the destruction of Asian families. Despite the initial portrayal, both sets of women eventually embrace the opportunity for change.

The flirtation in Watanna’s novel quickly turns destructive as the ship nears Japan. The exchanges between Cleo and Orito turn into a concrete proposal as Orito declares, “...your words gave me courage. Will you marry *me*?” (Watanna 50). Here we see that Cleo has encouraged him throughout their exchanges despite Tom’s warning to “be careful” with the young Japanese man because he is likely to take her advances seriously (53). Cleo Ballard verbally condemns Orito and Numè’s betrothal by calling Japanese customs “barbarous” (35). She vows “I would never marry a man I did not love” and “half-pettishly—almost scornfully” encourages Orito to abandon his marriage promise, even claiming that she “is doing both a kindness in preventing his marrying her [Numè]” (36; 43). Cleo calls her own action a “kindness” because she allows herself to remain clueless concerning the importance of marriage in Japanese culture. Although white America valued marriage during this time, Watanna portrays the great emphasis the Japanese place on duty to family; the Sachi and Omi families would not

consider her interference a “kindness” to their cultural traditions. Cleo destroys the potential for a family and refuses to acknowledge the severity of her actions.

Cleo Ballard makes Orito Takashima wait for weeks for an answer to his proposal; Orito forces a meeting, as he tells her, to get “the answer you promised me,” and Cleo awkwardly tells him she cannot accept his marriage offer (Watanna 185). Orito does not take the rejection well, and quickly returns to his home to tell his father as well as Numè’s father of his broken proposal and broken heart. He tells the men he is “unworthy” to marry Numè and vows “’tis better to die an honorable death than to live a dishonorable life; for it is even so in this country, that my death would atone for all the suffering I have caused you”; Orito embodies his words as he cuts his father’s throat—at his father’s request—as well as his own with a Japanese sword (193).

Watanabe Omi observes the horrific scene only to declare, “never, since her [Numè’s] birth, had he ceased to regret that she had not been a son,” and upon Orito’s death and the broken betrothal, Watanabe slits his own throat (193). Orito’s reference to Cleo as a “false” woman before his suicide places direct blame on Cleo Ballard by aligning the proposal rejection with his death; Orito leaves the meeting with Cleo and immediately kills himself. The author even narrates the horrific murder-suicide rather than allowing outside characters to report the scene. The reader is forced to live out the brutal ending, watching each man slowly fall to the floor. The negative ending marks Numè a permanent victim of the white women characters; however, Numè will eventually find her own revenge in the form of a happy marriage.

These complex interactions and relationships eventually focus the reader on the cross-cultural relationships between the two women. Although the women have been interacting throughout Watanna’s novel, Mrs. Davis finds herself torn between her two friends Cleo Ballard and Numè Omi. She attempts to help both women with their love lives by instructing them to act



properly around men; the trouble occurs because Numè has affections for Cleo's fiancé and vice versa. Despite both women's impropriety, Mrs. Davis spends the majority of her time attempting to correct Numè's behavior. Cleo Ballard forms her relationship with Orito on the boat, out of Mrs. Davis's control; therefore, Mrs. Davis does not attempt to discuss or examine their relationship because Cleo successfully keeps her liaison a secret. Within this limited understanding, Mrs. Davis strains herself to maintain the existing romantic relationships of these women. She devotes herself to providing support and advice to her friends, tirelessly interacting with the two women in order to provide the best advice to sustain or encourage their eventual marriage and family. In his light, Mrs. Davis is portrayed as a savior of the home rather than a wrecker of the home, and thus some progress being made in the relationships between white women and Asian women.

Although her support cannot be ignored, Mrs. Davis's words and actions become confused as Numè and Arthur Sinclair make their romantic intentions clear. Mrs. Davis fosters the home as long as the romantic pairings support traditional race relations; Mrs. Davis supports Numè's Asian home and she supports Cleo's white home as long as the two remain separate entities. Although part of Mrs. Davis wants to keep the couple apart for her friend's sake, Watanna cites Mrs. Davis's reaction to the interracial relationship as "bitter," "wild," and "showing signs of hysteria" (Watanna 200-01). Numè goes behind Mrs. Davis's back to forge her own friendships and romantic relationships. Feeling betrayed, Mrs. Davis treats Numè as if she is the "erotic Oriental" so many Americans feared during this time; Mrs. Davis calls Numè "sly" and wants to know "just how far things had gone between Sinclair and Numè" (157). Watanna borrows the language of racial stereotyping when Mrs. Davis questions Numè's chastity or purity. Mrs. Davis switches her position from friend to foe by describing Numè with

explicitly racist undertones. Mrs. Davis apologizes after the interrogation, but finds herself disgusted with the interaction between Numè and Sinclair. This dramatic shift in behavior forces the reader to consider Mrs. Davis's inability to accept interracial relationships and marriages. She appears willing to secure a very specific type of home, one that, perhaps, adheres to traditional American standards, rather than modern desires. Dominika Ferens argues *Watanna* "inherited" and wrote for an audience interested in exotic characters and stories (44). Her readers demanded "a pleasurable reading experience," and therefore *Watanna*'s literary efforts often read as touristic rather than wholly realized (Ferens 44). Mrs. Davis might enrage Asian readers and placate white readers or vice versa with the contradictory layers of her personality and actions; some readers would embrace *Watanna*'s forward-looking discussion of "miscegenation and racial 'hybridity,'" while others would feel strongly opposed to it (Ferens 44). Mrs. Davis feels a deep loyalty to her own kind, to the other white woman in the story. She appears to fall back on racist views in order to further exercise her preference or comfort level. The interracial bonds between Mrs. Davis and Numè are not as strong as the bonds between her and Cleo, and this fact further complicates Mrs. Davis's genuine ability to maintain a friendship with Numè as the story comes to a close.

Unlike Mrs. Davis's troubled transformation, Cleo Ballard begins to transform into a friend—instead of a home-wrecker—through her fall from grace. Despite Cleo's vow that she would "never marry a man [she] didn't love," it is obvious, as the novel progresses, that Cleo and Arthur are planning to marry despite not being in love (*Watanna* 35). Arthur shows little romantic affection for Cleo, unlike the feelings Orito has for her. Cleo ignores reality, convincing herself that she loves Arthur and is merely fascinated with Orito throughout the novel. Despite the personal delusion, Cleo shows true sadness as she speaks "scarcely above a

whisper” to finally turn down Orito’s proposal (184). She appears uncomfortable with her decision, and “a sudden vague terror of she knew not what” seizes Cleo as Orito walks out. Cleo is seized by the realization that she’s wrecking her own home by rejecting Orito, a true, romantic companion. The rejection also forces her to enter a loveless marriage with Sinclair, something she rebukes throughout the novel. She continues to fret over her answer as well as Orito’s “[un]reproachful” reaction to the rejected proposal, and the indecision insinuates Cleo is unable to reject her own racial prejudice for true love. Cleo’s love for Orito proves to be genuine, but too late, as she finally declares, “I loved him” after she hears of his death (188; 212).

Cleo continues to redeem her character when she laments about Orito’s suicide by declaring “I *killed* him” (Watanna 209). Although characters like Mrs. Davis attempt to keep the suicide a secret from the young woman, Cleo forces herself into seclusion to seek redemption. The young woman confesses to Mrs. Davis “at first with a hard, metallic ring to her voice, and then wildly and passionately” as she admits to her selfish, inappropriate behavior (209). Cleo appears to have a near psychological collapse during her confession, but she honesty appears to “improve” her character enough to deserve Numè’s forgiveness and eventual friendship. And perhaps, the reader can take Cleo’s admission of “murder” to be her ultimate rejection of traditional Asian masculinity. Cleo inadvertently frees Numè from the overbearing father figures and fiancé by pushing the men to commit suicide. These traditional men are unwilling and unable to change their gendered treatment of assimilation, so Cleo removes them from the story. The novel omits all of the Asian men from the conclusion, suggesting Watanna envisions a cross-cultural bond between female characters, not male ones. The exclusion of men argues that long-standing friendships and a new world order will come from female oriented relationships. The removal grants Numè the status of a Japanese-American citizen. The omission of Asian men finally

allows Cleo and Numè to form a genuine cross-cultural relationship. Despite the devastation to her family, Numè appears relatively “apath[etic]” concerning the death of her father, father-in-law, and fiancé. And although she felt “so stunned by the deaths,” her friends declare her greatest pain comes from the relationship she ended with Sinclair (202). Sinclair learns Mrs. Davis told Numè a “vaery sad story” about Cleo Ballard and Arthur Sinclair being soul mates that only broke up because of Numè’s interference (196). After correcting the lies, Numè accepts Arthur Sinclair’s marriage proposal—without the control or conditions of the Asian men. Numè also invites Cleo to speak with her, and the two women cheerfully exchange pleasantries and kisses. Numè declares herself victorious with a romantic marriage to Arthur Sinclair while Cleo Ballard is left to marry her cousin Tom. And, at the novel’s conclusion, Numè has the power to invite the young white woman “to visit [her] again” in her own home, a blending of American and Japanese lifestyles in Japan.

Not unlike Cleo Ballard, Adah Charlton forms a relationship with Wou Sankwei prior to Pau Lin’s arrival in “The Wisdom of the New.” As mentioned above, the long voyage from China to America should grant Pau Lin a fresh start; however, Mrs. Dean and Adah Charlton’s physical presence on the boat deck interrupts the reunion between the couple and highlights Pau Lin’s specific reaction to Adah. Adah Charlton extends her “white hand” to touch Pau Lin before her own husband attempts to connect with his wife and son. The physical gesture insinuates the young white woman’s cultural confidence and dominance over the Asian, something that doesn’t beg sympathy for Adah. Pau Lin easily contrasts Adah’s white skin and shows a clear aversion to the young woman. She continues to notice the young white woman, and focuses on Adah Charlton’s “bright face” in comparison to her own. The comment eventually leads Pau Lin to question if there is a sexual relationship between Sankwei and Adah Charlton. Pau Lin’s reaction

to white women may seem strictly personal, but Far could be making an oblique reference to the way the Chinese Exclusion Act, in separating married Chinese men from their wives, led to the unintended consequence of these men engaging in sexual liaisons with white prostitutes.

Although Pau Lin may not know of this sexual phenomenon, she becomes immediately suspicious and jealous of the young white woman and her husband because they appear to be in an intimate relationship. Asian women knew men lived as bachelors, and the term bachelor insinuated complete freedom. Scholars contend the bachelor societies propagated these prostitution stereotypes because of the “extremely unbalanced sex ratio” between men and women; the sex ratio in 1900 between Chinese men and women was 12:1 in California, 36:1 in Boston, and even more drastic, 50:1 in New York (Yin 30-31). The phenomenon of Asian men hiring white prostitutes (or so-called “white slaves”) was often publically discussed in America and affected China in the form of discriminatory laws and legislation. The white women’s unnecessary presence at the immigration center forces Pau Lin’s first experience with white America—especially white, female America—to be negative. She represents the women who spent years resenting the Chinese Exclusion Act and Chinese discrimination in general, leaving this encounter to further taint her perceptions.

Although Wou Sankwei does not have a physical relationship with his white female companions, he becomes emotionally connected to Adah Charlton because he spends time alone with her discussing his personal life. The young woman spends time with Yen and “sketched him in many different poses for a book on Chinese children” (Far 47). She engages with the father and son in a domestic atmosphere, which speaks to her cultural superiority as she confidently blurs the boundaries of visitor and wife or mother. Sankwei calmly de-sexualizes Mrs. Dean by calling her “mother,” but he is unable to portray Adah Charlton the same way. Pau Lin “gently”

says, “And the young woman—the one with eyes the color of blue china—is she also a mother?” (50). And despite “all of her gentleness” in the question, Wou Sankwei “flush[es] angrily” when Pau Lin attempts to criticize Adah Charlton’s behavior toward her husband. The focus on beauty further establishes the perceived threat the young white woman seems to pose to Pau Lin’s marriage. Pau Lin associates a beautiful physical feature of Adah Charlton with China. Her use of the word “China” holds an interesting importance considering that China is the strongest bond holding Wou and Pau Lin together, yet Pau Lin draws Adah into the mix through the comparison. This is the second time Pau Lin has focused on Adah Charlton’s physical beauty. She shows a flash of female jealousy for the attraction she believes her husband feels for another woman. This begrudging acknowledgement would further intimidate Pau Lin concerning her husband’s attraction toward Adah, and might even cause her to internally question if her husband is interested in taking Adah as another wife.

Far’s story suggests polygamy was a common practice in China at the time, and even Pau Lin says, “a man should take to himself two wives, or even three, if he thought proper” (Far 51). She may condone her husband taking two more Chinese wives, but the invitation does not extend to the young white woman. Pau Lin laments about “the humiliation and shame of bearing children to a man that looked up to another woman—and a woman of another race”; the relationship between Sankwei and Adah Charlton is completely unacceptable in Pau Lin’s eyes (Far 51). Despite the fact that Adah does interfere in her relationship with her husband to some extent, Pau Lin’s aggression toward Adah Charlton, like her response to Mrs. Dean, seems too vehement. Wou Sankwei has never made a sexual insinuation or physical pass toward Adah in private or in the presence of his wife. Pau Lin slowly begins to unravel under what appears to be an unsuccessful assimilation attempt; she cannot become an American because of her negative

feelings toward her husband's white friends and because her husband prevents her transition. The argument over Adah and Mrs. Dean continues as Sankwei becomes verbally irate and begins chanting, "Never speak of her. Never speak of her!" (Far 50). Instead of defending his wife, Wou Sankwei defends his white female friends, which causes Pau Lin to laugh at him in a way that "sounded almost sacrilegious" (Far 50). Sankwei's words create a misplaced allegiance between Adah Charlton and himself, and the anger and confusion continues to cause an extreme rift between the couple. The words also place the white women on a proverbial pedestal, as he accepts that the white women embrace freedoms, yet he refuses to grant his wife the same pleasures. Although these white women initially create a barrier to Pau Lin's wifehood, she is able to confidently and verbally confront her husband; however, Pau Lin will not react as rationally when confronted by the white woman's barrier to her motherhood, a barrier that is perpetuated by her husband's verbal and physical actions against her wishes. Literally and repeatedly, Sankwei allows the white women into the home, insists upon informal and formal education for Yen, and openly embraces Americanizing himself and Yen. These actions will eventually break Pau Lin's spirit and drive her to take extreme action to protect her offspring from what she takes to be the perversion of the white women.

Despite her attempts to dissuade her husband out of Americanizing their son, Pau Lin believes herself to be beaten at the end of the story. Wou Sankwei successfully impregnates his wife after their reunion, and the couple gives birth to an apparently healthy baby. It is obvious that throughout the transition to America, Mrs. Dean and Adah Charlton continued to visit the young Chinese couple because they "called to see the little one" when the child was two weeks old. After the women leave, Pau Lin cries out, "She [Adah Charlton] has taken your heart, but she has not given you a son. It is I who have had that task" (Far 51). Wou Sankwei makes an

initially feeble attempt to prove his loyalty to his wife as he declares, “You are my wife” (51). Yet, in the same breath, Sankwei says “how can you speak of her so...she [Adah], who is as a pure water-flower—a lily” (51). He finds himself unable to comfort his wife without speaking about Adah Charlton, even complementing the young white women in a heated argument with his wife. Although there is no sign of romantic love between Sankwei and Adah, Sankwei seems unwilling to grant Pau Lin the same freedom he finds so attractive in white women. Pau Lin proceeds to check on the newborn child, finding their baby dead in the crib. Nearly simultaneously, the young wife finds a picture Adah Charlton had painted of the baby boy as it “had fallen out of her husband’s pocket when he lifted the tiny form in his arms and declared it lifeless” (Far 52). Just as her husband chanted of Adah Charlton’s innocence, Pau Lin chants, “She would cast a spell! She would cast a spell!” These words further implicate Adah Charlton’s role in the child’s mysterious death, despite the fact that she is not literally responsible (Far 52). Pau Lin gave birth to another child, an act that should reconnect a husband and wife; however, Adah Charlton manages to insert herself in every monumental moment of Pau Lin’s life, moments that always manage to fall apart. Pau Lin’s paranoia about the white women isn’t without merit; they continue to talk about and visit the young couple. One small incident might be a coincidence, but Pau Lin can’t ignore the white women’s continual negative impact on her life forever; however, Pau Lin has completely had a break with reality as the story ends. She is speaking in more rapid and drastic terms, which casts doubt on her ability to remain sane. Pau Lin has faced a culturally-constricted-isolation throughout the novel, and the control has actually driven her mad. Pau Lin’s inability to assimilate causes tension for the family, and Far argues that Sankwei, the white women, and Pau Lin should share the blame.



Sui Sin Far uses Pau Lin's personal isolation to introduce her own cross-cultural examination. Wou Sankwei only chooses to fully correct his poor behavior when he receives a lecture about valuing his wife and marriage by the white woman his wife so vehemently hates; Adah Charlton warns the Chinese man, "you are thinking far too much of other women," and even blames her aunt, Mrs. Dean, for her role in the breakdown of Wou Sankwei and Pau Lin's family when she says, "it is a mistake to try and make a Chinese man into an American—if he has a wife who is to remain as she always has been" (Far 57). Adah attempts to redeem her character by implicating herself alongside Sankwei in regards to Pau Lin's physical and emotional breakdown; the admittance grants Adah a fresh start, perhaps even an unrealized friendship with the young Asian woman. Adah Charlton convinces Wou Sankwei to finally concede: "should she [Pau Lin] offer any further opposition to the boy's attending the American school, he would not insist upon it," and although Sankwei "would no longer insist upon" an American education, Pau Lin is not privy to the coincidental content of their conversation, and therefore, she remains clueless to her reinstated spousal and maternal influence by the white woman (59).

Despite his surrendering to her wishes, Adah focuses the blame on Sankwei and his traditional treatment of women. She highlights the hypocrisy surrounding Sankwei's treatment of his wife's assimilation, and her harsh words directly reject traditional Asian masculinity. Ferens argues Far rejected her sister's "entertainer" method of storytelling, choosing to write "didactic, politically engaged stories" instead (45). Far examines Asian assimilation through an ethnographic and political lens, furthering her fight for non-gendered assimilation through Adah Charlton. The white woman can "read, play, paint, attend concerts, entertainments, lectures, [and] absorbs herself in what she likes" because she has freedom and power to assimilate or learn

(Far 58). Wou Sankwei continues to show resistance to allowing his wife to act as a Chinese-American woman, and Adah Charlton continues to encourage Sankwei to give Pau Lin more than her “husband,” “housework,” and “boy”; she wants Pau Lin to find personal freedom outside of the domestic sphere, something unlikely to happen unless her husband changes his behaviors (58).

Although the white women irritated many situations, the novel’s conclusion—with no mention or presence of the white women—aligns the blame with the Asian men and the troubles of traditional male dominance or patriarchy. Sankwei’s concession toward Yen’s education fails to represent a step toward equalizing Pau Lin within the household; he “came very close to expressing” the change to Pau Lin, but he remained silent. Wou continues to equate his wife’s value with the domestic sphere as she spends time making their home appear complete by acting as wife and mother. Sankwei ends the exchange by declaring, “the boy and he were great chums,” a statement that clearly suggests his wife’s continued alienation within her own home. The robbery of Pau Lin’s wifeness and motherhood leads her to save her son by poisoning him, which saves the young child from enduring the same abuse Pau Lin believed she was experiencing at the hands of the white women and American lifestyles. The act forever commits Yen to his mother’s Chinese god and afterlife alongside his brother who died of unknown causes; the idyllic eternity was only possible before the young boy was further immersed in the “the Wisdom of the New” and all of the poisonous perversions Pau Lin believes the white women’s America brings along with it (60).

Onoto Watanna and Sui Sin Far’s stories examine the complex relationships between white women, Asian women, and Asian men, but their endings do not provide a clear solution to the problems that surface in these cross-cultural interactions. In *Miss Numè*, Watanna allows Numè

and Sinclair to enter an interracial relationship, and the marriage is foreshadowed to be happy, despite the clearly controversial foundation. Watanna also alludes to a genuine, yet unrealized, friendship between Numè and Cleo, something that appeared imperfect or even impossible throughout the novel. Watanna places great emphasis on the female characters by highlighting their interaction at the conclusion of the story; she appears foreword thinking in her approach and encouragement of cross-cultural friendships. Far leaves her reader with a darker image in “The Wisdom of the New.” Pau Lin defines a position in her home by violently embodying the role of subservient Chinese wife through the act of infanticide. The young Asian mother wrecks her own home, believing the act will bestow her with knowledge and power; however, Pau Lin faces lifelong punishment through her motherless existence and banishment to China. Far’s ending suggests violence destroys the home of Asian women (and dominate Asian men) who are unable to embrace cross-cultural friendships in modern America. The ambiguous ending leaves the white women to consider the impact of their cultural dominance on the Asian family, and, at the same time, forces the Asian women and men to evaluate their approach to cultural pluralism with white America. The female friendships in Watanna’s and Far’s stories—though fragmented—solidify a discourse between Asian women and white women that hasn’t existed before. The women are discovering and experimenting with ways to interact and communicate as friends rather than strangers. And Watanna and Far leave their modern readers to consider the generational shift toward gender solidarity—all young Asian women and white women can enter modern America as friends rather than foes by embracing cross-cultural, modern womanhood rather than individualized, domestic womanhood. Both groups of young women push personal boundaries to find a new beginning, and, perhaps, their new found relationships can encourage the older generations to embrace cross-cultural friendships in modern America as well.

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