



Miss Nume of Japan: A Japanese-American Romance (Race in the Americas)

Professor Onoto Watanna

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The first known novel by an Asian-American, *Miss Nume of Japan* charts the romantic adventures of two couples, one Japanese and one American. The Japanese couple, though not really in love, has been betrothed since childhood. The relationship of the second couple, a beautiful American and her fiancee, is equally troubled. Through a series of coincidental encounters, the couples find opportunities to escape these loveless relationships. Although tragic events unfold, the spirit of the title character triumphs as she finds liberation and true happiness with the American man.

Revealing both the tenuousness of racial identity and the resiliency of social boundaries, the book employs typically exotic, inscrutable caricatures of Japanese people. But it also includes coded arguments for the autonomy of the "new woman," a creature living between worlds and between the choices of career and domesticity. The Japanese women in Watanna's fiction are remarkable for their dissatisfaction with the narrow strictures of their culture. Watanna's men generally find these women attractive not only for their Oriental charm and innocence, but also for their outspokenness and difference from more traditional Japanese women. Now available in paperback, *Miss Nume of Japan* is a work of critical importance to the Asian-American canon and a milestone in the complex history of ethnic formation and literary production.



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