In 1925 Pearl Buck wrote a short story which was published in *Asia Magazine* under the title "A Chinese Woman Speaks." After this story appeared, she received an unsolicited offer from an American publisher to issue this story provided it was enlarged into a full-length novel. Pearl Buck wrote another short story as a sequel to the first narrative, but she felt the framework of "A Chinese Woman Speaks" was too slight and delicate to bear further narrative development. She suggested that the two short stories could perhaps be issued in one volume, but the publishers refused to accept this arrangement. Pearl Buck had circulated the two short stories under the title *Winds Of Heaven*. Since the publishers did not favour that heading, the subtitle of the manuscript, *East Wind: West Wind*, was used. When she revised her manuscript she omitted the borrowed phrases and put the ideas in her own style. After the revised text was submitted, the book was accepted for publication. On April 10, 1930, *East Wind: West Wind* was issued, the first of Pearl Buck's many books of fiction.

For a few years, Pearl Buck had pondered the changes in her beloved China as ancient society gave way to modern ways. Each phase took shape in one of the novels. *East Wind: West Wind* depicted life bounded by century old rules, and Pearl Buck, identifying with its tradition -- bound heroine, had written it as a sort of catharsis. *East Wind: West Wind* deals with fifteen percent of the population consisting of upper class Chinese.²
Pearl Buck gave a talk called "East and West and the Novel," a historical survey that compares the development and structure of Asian and Western fiction. Pearl Buck explains that the Chinese novel differs at almost every point from the fiction of Europe and America. Typically, Chinese novels are collections of old folk tales, gathered together over time rather than written in Western sense. As one consequence, the Chinese are indifferent to Western notions of originality.

Pearl Buck was an author and humanitarian also. In *East Wind: West Wind* she tells the story of a young Chinese maid, disappointed in love and marriage, finding it not what she had been led to believe it to be. Thus a woman confesses her disappointment in her own marriage and gives hope to other women that this is something with which one can live if one makes the adjustments necessary in order to lead a healthy, reasonable, happy life. Pearl Buck describes *East Wind: West Wind* as an attempt, "to help ordinary people on one side of the world to know and understand ordinary people on the other side."4

As Edwin Seaver says, *East Wind: West Wind* is, "A novel off the beaten path and a very good novel too. Mrs. Buck has written with a fine simplicity and delicacy and charm. One would say *East Wind: West Wind* was an exquisite book, did not the word, in this connection, so often connote precocity?"5
Theodore F. Harris, focusing the importance of the *East Wind: West Wind*, says,

Only one who, like the author, has lived all her life in China, yet being American still holds to western concepts of romantic love, marriage and the scope of filial duty—only a lover of China, but no convert to her code of family and clan supremacy over the individual, could have written. This beautiful novel . . . This is Mrs. Buck's first novel, a striking piece of work; indeed it does not suffer in comparison with the best of Lafcadio Heaven.⁶

*East Wind: West Wind* received a fair amount of comment for a first novel, much of it favourable. Several reviewers praised the book's authenticity, though the compliment was gratuitous since few American readers knew enough about China to have any basis for judgement. *East Wind: West Wind* is usually spoken of as a novel, but in fact, as already mentioned, it consists of two definite short stories with a decided break between them. The first narrative is more poetic and romantic; and the second, more sparse and moralistic. The first story reprints, more or less verbatim, the story "A Chinese Woman Speaks," in which the sheltered young woman, Kwei-lan, describes her confusing encounter with the
modern world in the figure of her progressive husband. In the novel’s second part, Kwei-lan tells of her older brother’s return from study in the United States, accompanied by his American wife. The plot may have its basis in Pearl Buck’s relationship with Hsu Chih-mo, but the issues at stake in the tales are those that she would always be drawn to, the contest between tradition and modernity and the risks and possibilities of human connection across racial and cultural lines. In *East Wind: West Wind* Pearl Buck must have experienced the same frustration and dismay at facing a lifetime within the context of her marriage.

In particular, the novel questions the traditional status of woman in Chinese society. In her own way, Pearl Buck was anticipating a central issue that philosophers have only formally addressed recently: the relation of gender and family structure to the definition of justice. Kwei-lan’s husband notes that “Our old customs have held women lightly,” and Kwei-lan herself recalls that she learned “in the Sacred Edicts” of Confucius when she was just child: “a man must not love his life more than his parents. It is a sin before the ancestral tablets and the gods.”

-By giving Kwei-lan a voice, Pearl Buck was attempting to destabilize the received notion of woman’s place in the Chinese family. Since the family, in turn, has been at the very centre of China’s ethical world for centuries, the issues Pearl Buck raised also spoke to the
organization of society itself. As mentioned earlier, *East Wind: West Wind*, which was popular enough to go through three printings in less than a year, concerns a young Chinese married couple, Kwei-lan and her husband, a physician. Following the old Chinese custom, Kwei-lan’s family had betrothed her to her future husband even before she was born. Kwei-lan and her family believe in the ancient traditions and ways, but her husband, who has been educated abroad for twelve years, believes in equality and in the modern trends and democratic practices of the West. From this division of allegiance comes the basic conflict of the story. This conflict was a vital problem in twentieth century China and was especially perplexing in the 1920’s and 1930’s.

Kwei-lan writes her story in the form of a long epistolary monologue to a woman friend who came from a foreign land but who has lived in China for a long time. Kwei-lan chooses this unnamed woman as a listener because the woman knows both the ways of the West and the practices of the East, and Kwei-lan addresses her as “Sister”. The narrative is initiated because Kwei-lan is unhappy in her marriage and she needs to relate her unfortunate plight to a sympathetic ear.

Kwei-lan’s husband does not find her fair because he has crossed the four seas to the other and outer countries, and has learned in those remote places to love new things and new ways. But at the age of ten when
Kwei-lan became a maiden, her mother said, “A woman before men should maintain a flowerlike silence and should withdraw herself at the earliest moment that is possible without confusion” (4-5). Kwei-lan remembers what her mother said and she bows her head and places two hands before her when she stands before her husband. On her bridal night Kwei-lan’s husband tells her that he regards her as an equal, as a companion, and not as a slave or as a piece of property. He explains that he wants to follow the new modes of Western life, and he agrees to give her time to adjust to this situation.

Kwei-lan is astounded, for in the ancient manner, she regards herself as a mere subordinate to her husband, and she cannot understand his wishes. Kwei-lan runs to the door, thinking in her wildness that she may escape and return to her mother’s home. Her mother will be there waiting to send her back to her duty. Kwei-lan can see her, inexorable, sorrowful, commanding her instant return to her husband’s house.

Kwei-lan rises hastily and dresses herself. She has learned the dignity of her mother. At least no one should know that she has not pleased her husband. Kwei-lan says, “Take the water to your master. He robes himself in the inner chamber” (40). A “moon of days” has passed since they met. Her life is confused with strange events. She is further bewildered when her husband refuses to allow her to perform the standard duties and
services to his mother. Although it was customary for a married couple to live with the husband’s parents. Kwei-lan’s husband says that his honoured mother is autocratic and that he will not have his wife as a servant in the home and he insists that they live in a Western-style house. His parents even command him to remain, according to the ancient custom, within the ancestral home. His father is a scholar, small and slight and stooped with learning. Sitting at the right of the table in the living hall, under the ancestral tablets, he strokes his spare, white beard three times and says:

“My son, remain in my house. What is mine is yours. Here is plenty of food and space. You need never waste your body in physical labour. Spend your days in dignified leisure and in study that suits your pleasure. Allow that one, the daughter-in-law of your honoured mother, to produce sons. Three generations of men under one roof is a slight pleasing to Heaven.”

But my husband is quick and impatient. Without stopping to bow to his father he cried,

“But I wish to work, my father! I am trained in a scientific profession—the noblest in the western world. As for sons, they are not my first desire. I wish to produce the fruit of my brain for my country’s good. A
mere dog may fill the earth with the fruit of his body!" (43)

When Kwei-lan meets some of her husband's occidental friends, she appears uncomfortable, finds western ways strange, and worries about the aloofness of her husband, who absorbs himself completely in his medical interests. Although his family is extremely wealthy, and he can choose to live a life of idleness and ease, he does not wish to do so. He develops an active practice as a doctor. Kwei-lan can only sit and think and dream how to seize hold of his heart. Kwei-lan's husband cares for nothing except his books. There is nothing that her husband desires of her. He has no need of anything she can give him. She has pondered everything that her mother taught her concerning her husband's pleasure.

Her husband becomes persistently very insistent that she unbind her feet. This custom of tightly wrapping a young girl's foot in cloth so that her feet will be small and dainty and her walk very graceful is one of the most ancient and widely practised Chinese customs. But Kwei-lan's physician husband realizes that it is an unhealthy practice that leads to broken bones and deformed limbs. Kwei-lan is shocked by her husband's suggestion. She has always regarded dainty feet as an important feature of beauty. When she was younger and had suffered the continual soaking in warm water and the tight bandaging, she had been consoled by her mother's conviction that her
future husband would admire the beauty of her tiny feet. She now learns that her husband is vehemently opposed to this practice.

Two weeks later Kwei-lan leaves for her first visit to her mother's home, according to Chinese custom. Now, although she has come back a married woman, with her braid wrapped into a coil and her forehead bare of its girlhood fringe, still she knows that, after all, she is the same girl, only more afraid and more lonely and far less hopeful.

Kwei-lan's brother is determined to go abroad, to America, for further study. Her father laughs at his son's new ideas but in the end gives his consent to his going because it has become fashionable to send one's sons abroad for study, and his friends are doing it. When Kwei-lan's mother sees that her (Kwei-lan's) brother is really going she refuses food for three days and speaks to no one. At last seeing that he will go at any cost across the peaceful sea, she begs him to be married first to his betrothed, so that she may bear a son. But her brother replies obstinately, "I have no desire for marriage. I wish only to study more science and learn all concerning it. Nothing will happen to me, my mother. When I return--but not now--not now!" (63).

Kwei-lan does not want anyone to know that her husband did not care for her. And yet she cannot deceive her mother. Kwei-lan carries this problem to her own mother, who is astounded by her daughter's story,
although she has reared Kwei-lan properly in the old ways. Her mother tells Kwei-lan that she must obey her husband. Kwei-lan is told that, because she has married, she is no longer a member of her parents’ family; she belongs now to her husband. Therefore she must do what her husband wants her to do. Kwei-lan’s mother says wearily, “Unbind your feet” (71). The times are changed. Thus Kwei-lan returns to her husband. Still Kwei-lan cannot bring herself easily to the unbinding of her feet. It is really Mrs.Liu who helps her. Mrs. Liu is the wife of a teacher in a new foreign school. Kwei-lan makes great preparations for she is her first caller. Till then Kwei-lan was alone. As she had no friends, she could only ponder and grieve within herself and wonder what she lacked to please her husband.

Kwei-lan and Mrs.Liu speak of things of which she has never heard. Foreign words fly back and forth between them. Kwei-lan understands nothing except the pleasure on her husband’s face. “Tell me about the lady who called to-day” (80), Kwei-lan asked. She is a graduate of a big western college for woman called Vassar. She is clever and interesting, as one likes a woman to be. Besides, she is rearing three magnificent boys--intelligent, clean, well cared for. It does her heart good to see them, Kwei-lan thinks desperately for a few minutes. There is only one way for women. Yet her mother’s words were, “You must please your husband” (81). Her husband sits staring thoughtfully across the room and she does not know what is in
his mind. Finally, Kwei-lan renounces her past and says, “If you will tell me how, I will unbind my feet” (81).

Kwei-lan realizes that her husband’s interest in her began that evening. It seems as though before this they had nothing to talk about. Their thoughts never met. Kwei-lan could only watch him wondering and not understanding, and he never looks at her at all. As for Kwei-lan, the love that has been trembling in her heart for him steadies into adoration that she has never dreamed that a man can stoop so tenderly to a woman. When Kwei-lan asks him how she can unbind her feet, she thinks, of course, that he will merely give her directions from his medical knowledge. She is ashamed and she cannot endure having him see her feet. No one has seen them since she was old enough to care for them herself. When he understands that she is willing to try to follow Western customs, Kwei-lan’s husband ceases to be aloof, begins to teach her some basic science, and educates her in modern ideas. It makes Kwei-lan think of her brother. For the sake of science he is still in foreign countries, eating their food and drinking their water to which his body is not accustomed by birth. No wonder her brother became enchanted of it so that he would not heed even his mother’s desires, but would go across the peaceful sea in search of it. She is enchanted of it herself and begins to feel herself growing marvelously wise. But her husband is wiser and he speaks only what is true.
On the last day of the eleventh moon she knows that when the rice harvest comes, in the fullness of the year, her child will be born. When she tells her husband that she has fulfilled her duty towards him in conception, he feels very happy. He gives formal notice to his parents first and then to his brothers. Her mother-in-law gives her advice. Among other things she tells her not to prepare any clothes before the child’s birth. This was the custom in her girlhood home in Anhwei, where people believed that it served to keep the cruel gods unaware of the approaching birth lest, seeing a man born into the world, they would seek to destroy him. Her Sister-in-law also bids her do many things, and each one talks about the customs of her home in these matters.

When she returns, she tells her husband of these things they have bidden her do for the child. To her horrified surprise Kwei-lan’s husband suddenly becomes violently angry and says firmly, “that you will be guided wholly by me. Mind you, you must obey! Kwei-lan, promise me, or I swear there will never be another child!” (100). When she gives her word he becomes calm and says, “To-morrow I will take you to a western home, to see the family of my old teacher who is an American. I want you to see how westerners care for their children, not that you may them slavishly, but that you may enlarge your ideas” (100). The next day Kwei-lan’s husband takes her to visit the home of his foreign friends. She has never been in a foreign
house. But the most interesting part of the visit comes when her husband asks the foreign woman to let Kwei-lan see her children and their clothes because they are expecting a child of their own and he wishes her to see western ways. One of the surprising things she discovers is that the foreign woman nurses her own child at the breast. Kwei-lan has not thought of herself nursing the baby; it is not customary among women of any wealth or position, since slaves are abundant for this task: "It is good to nurse the child," said her husband, "You shall nurse yours, too" (108). She has three more moons to wait. For her husband's parents have sent them a letter telling them that the child must return to his ancestral home. He is the only grandson, and his life is too precious to be away from the sight of his grandparents, night and day. Kwei-lan longs to keep him to herself. But she knows the proper traditions of their people. It is not to be supposed that she may have her first-born for her own. He belongs to all the family. Her husband is most unhappy about it. He frowns and mutters that the child will be ruined by foolish slave-girls and by over-feeding and harmful luxury. He has told his parents that, even as he claimed his wife for himself alone, so now he requires that his son shall belong to his own parents only.

When they first moved away from his father's house Kwei-lan reproached him for breaking the honoured customs of the past. But now she does not care that the tradition is broken. She thinks only of her son. He will
be hers. She need not share him with twenty others—his grandparents, his aunts. Now has her husband recompensed her for everything. She thanks the gods that she is married to a modern man. All her life is not enough to repay her gratitude. She takes her son, and places him in his father's arms and presents him with these words, "My dear lord, behold thy firstborn son. Take him. Thy wife gives him to thee" (116). Kwei-lan is delighted with her husband's attention and interest, and her marriage is now successful.

Kwei-lan is in a triumphant mood and is sure that nothing can come near to make her sorrowful again and she is thinking of her brother who is the only son of her mother, who has been these three years in America, and it adds the problem of interracial marriage to the basic conflict between the ways of the East and those of the West. Again Kwei-lan narrates the events through another letter to the same person. He writes to his parents for permission to marry an American girl, called only Mary in the story, and to break his childhood betrothal to the daughter of Li, which has always made him unhappy. He wishes to say clearly that he cannot marry the one to whom he has been betrothed according to Chinese custom, because the times have changed. He is a modern man, and he has decided to adopt the modern, independent, free method of marriage. His parents refuse to grant his request; they order him to return and to perform his proper family duty. Kwei-lan cannot decide what her brother will do. It is shameful that he does
not remember his duty. Her brother has been taught since his first youth the wisdom of the Great Master which says, "The first duty of a man is to pay careful heed to every desire of his parents" (146). Kwei-lan’s parents are furious, her brother has written to Kwei-lan and to her husband, pleading their help. He beseeches her to intercede with their parents for him. He says that he has already married her according to the law of her country. He is bringing her home, now that he has received his mother’s letter demanding his presence.

Kwei-lan prepares herself to enter her mother’s presence with humbleness. She speaks delicately beseeching her. But her mother will hear nothing of Kwei-lan’s explanations and refuses to speak further. Kwei-lan comes away sad. It is interesting to know the reasons for their separation so far. They cry aloud, but they do not hear each other. They speak, but they do not understand each other. Kwei-lan feels she is changed, and she knows she was changed by love. She is like a frail bridge, spanning the infinity between past and present. She clasps her mother’s hand; she cannot let it go, for without her she is alone. But her husband’s hand holds her fast. She can never let love go. How else can her brother be happy in what he has done? There is no place for him now in his home under his father’s roof. But her feeble hands can stop nothing, she only dreams, and she can think of nothing clearly. What will it be like when her brother comes, with his wife? She
fears such strangeness. She is dumb in this time of waiting. She knows neither good nor ill, only waiting.

Yet Kwei-lan cannot forget either her brother and that one whom he loves. She is torn hither and thither like a frail plum-tree in a wind too passionate for its resistance. They both come. Her brother is dressed in western clothes, and he is foreign to her in many ways. He is altogether changed and her son does not understand them, as they are the only Chinese among them. They are to stay at their house until his parents receive them. The foreigner knows nothing and she does not speak to Kwei-lan, as they do not understand each other. Kwei-lan’s husband and her brother spend hours together in troubled talk in the foreign tongue. This foreign one has no fear of anything in her, although she is not beautiful. Kwei-lan thinks the foreigner is very proud. At least she seems strangely indifferent to the difficulties she has brought into their family.

Kwei-lan does not understand this freedom of the foreigner and there is nothing hidden or subtle in her. It appears very strange. She is not like their women. She is like the blossom of the wild orange tree, pure and pungent, but without fragrance. They have agreed together at last what they will do. Eventually, Kwei-lan’s brother dresses his wife in Chinese garb and manages to present her and teaches her the proper way to bow in their presence. Kwei-lan cannot sleep at night thinking of the hour.
First they send the messenger to present themselves and Kwei-lan's mother fixes the hour of noon when she will receive Kwei-lan and her brother and of the foreigner no mention is made, but her brother cries, "If I go, my wife will go, also" (184). Kwei-lan goes into her mother with the gifts that her brother had chosen them in foreign countries. Her acceptance of them encouraged Kwei-lan, somewhat. She says, "My honoured mother, your son is here and awaits your pleasure" (187). "He has brought the foreigner," she ventures faintly, thinking it best to tell the worst at once, and yet having at her heart a sinking of spirit. The foreigner enters erect and haughty, her head thrown back. Her eyes meet Kwei-lan's mother's eyes without fear or smiling. She enters as the reigning queen enters the presence of the imperial dowager. Her mother fixes her eyes upon the foreigner. Their eyes meet, and instantly they declare themselves enemies. Her brother begins to speak:

"Most Ancient and Honourable, I am returned from foreign countries at your command, to the kind presence of my parents, I your unworthy son. I rejoice that our mother has seen fit to accept our useless gifts.

I say 'our,' because I have brought with me my wife, of whom I wrote in a letter through the hand of my friend. She comes as the daughter-in-law of my mother.
Although in her veins is foreign blood, she wishes me to tell our honourable mother that since she is married to me, her heart has became Chinese. She takes upon herself voluntarily the race and customs of our family. She renounces her own. Her sons will be altogether of our celestial nation, citizens of the British Republic, and heirs of the Middle Empire. She gives her homage." (189-190)

He turns to the foreign one, who has been waiting quietly as he spoke, and gives her a signal. With surpassing dignity she bows until her forehead touches the floor at his mother's feet. The two wait before her. The silence in the hall becomes heavy with their waiting. Then Kwei-lan's mother says with a horrified faintness, "My son--my son--you are always welcome--to your home. Later I will talk--now you are dismissed" (191). Kwei-lan's brother is restless under this idle passing of days which brings no decision.

Kwei-lan's brother has learned the impatience of the West, and he demands that his wishes come immediately to pass. He has forgotten that in their country time is nothing, and fates may remain unknown even when death has come. There is no haste which can hurry time here. The foreigner is calm, far calmer than Kwei-lan's brother and more confident of the future.
At last when no message comes from her mother, she seems to cease to think of the matter and turns her mind to other things. But there comes a day at last--Kwei-lan thinks it is the twenty-second after the presentation, when her mother sends for her brother, desiring him to come alone to her. He goes immediately, and Kwei-lan waits with the foreigner for his return. In an hour he is back. He is angry and his face is sullen, and he keeps saying over and over that he will separate himself from his parents for ever. It seems he had gone before his mother full of tenderness and conciliation. She began by stressing her ill health. She said, "It is not long before the gods will remove me to another circle of existence" (200), and he was touched. Then without further polite speech she spoke plainly and urged him to marry his betrothed and give her a grandson before she died. He said that he was already married. She said in anger to this that she would never accept the foreigner as his wife.

After a few days, a messenger comes with a letter from her mother addressed to Kwei-lan's brother with the command to come home and she says that she will take no further responsibility about the foreigner. It must be decided by his father and by the male heads of the clan. But meanwhile, she says, he can bring the foreigner home with him and she can live in the outer court. They were all astonished at the change in her mother's mind. Her brother was at once altogether hopeful. He exclaimed over and over
again with smiles, “I knew she could give up her determination in the end! After all, I am her only son!” (209).

When Kwei-lan reminds him that in no sense has her mother accepted the foreigner he replies, “Once she is within the gates everyone will love her” (209). Kwei-lan says nothing then, since she does not wish to discourage him. But in her heart she knows that the Chinese women do not love others so easily. It is more likely that the women will remember the daughter of Li who waits for the consummation of her marriage. Seeing death approach her, Kwei-lan’s mother feared that her son would never return to his home and his duty, and at that moment she vowed that she would summon him if the gods would spare her life.

If Kwei-lan could talk to foreigner freely in their own language, she would say, “Remember that she is aged and suffering, and that you have taken away from her all that she had” (210). Her brother and his wife move to his ancestral home. They will live in the old apartments where her brother spent his youth. His wife will not be allowed to sleep or eat or linger in the women’s apartments. Thus Kwei-lan’s mother still refuses to recognize her. At last Kwei-lan’s brother comes to see her. He wears Chinese dress, and he looks more as he did in his youth than at any time since his return. Only his face is grave. He sits down and begins talking without greeting, “Will you not come, Kwei-lan? My mother is very feeble, and I think she is ill. Her
will alone remains as strong as ever. She has made a decree that for a year my wife must follow the life of a Chinese woman in the courts. Since my whole inheritance depends on her obedience, we are trying to follow my mother's wishes. But it is like caging a golden oriole! Come and bring the child” (214-215). Kwei-lan urges him to have patience, before he decides to break away. It is great that their mother has allowed the foreigner to come into the court, and a year is not long. But he shakes his head, and says, “My wife herself has begun to despair.” He adds,

"Until we came here she did not lose heart. But now she droops from day to day. Our food is distasteful to her--and I cannot procure foreign food for her. She eats nothing. In her own land she has been accustomed to freedom and homage. She is accounted beautiful, and many men have loved her. I was proud to win her from them all. I thought it proved the superiority of our race.

“But now she is like a flower plucked and placed in a silver vase, but without water. Day after day she sits silent, and her eyes burn in her white and whiter face.” (219)

But as he speaks, a new thought comes into Kwei-lan’s mind. She asks eagerly, “Does she desire to return to her own people?” (220). Here she
sees a solution. If she will go away and the seas stretch again between them, her brother who is, after all, but a man, will cease to think of her, and he will return to his duty. When she suggests it to her brother, his eyes seem to fly at her with anger: “If she goes, I will go with her,” he says with sudden violence. “If she dies in this my home. I am no more the son of my parents, forever!” (220). Kwei-lan’s father returns home. Strangely enough, he takes a great interest in her brother’s wife and finds a liking for her. The foreigner is like a child. She understands nothing at all. To add to the confusion, the foreigner becomes pregnant. My Sister, what we have not desired has come to pass—she has conceived:

“It is not a thing to make us rejoice, and my mother, hearing of it, has taken to her bed, and she cannot rise for sorrow. It is what she has feared and dreaded, and her fragile body cannot stand against the strength of her disappointment. You know how she has desired the first—fruits of my brother’s flesh for the family. And now since that can never be, she thinks that virtue has gone out of him for nothing, since this child can never stand before her as a grandson” (233).

Kwei-lan’s father is pleased that the foreign one is to bear a child. He cries when he heard of it, “Ah ha! Now we will have a little foreigner to
play with! Hai-ya! A new toy, indeed! We will call him Little Clown, and he shall amuse us!” (236). Kwei-lan’s heart is anxious to see this foreign child. He cannot be as beautiful as her son. It may even be a girl, and perhaps she will have the fire-yellow hair of her mother. Kwei-lan sympathises with her brother, who is more than ever anxious to establish his wife’s legal position. He hints of the matter daily to his father, but his father puts him off with smiling, talking leisurely of other things. At the next feast day her brother says he will present the matter before the clan, even in the ancestral hall before the sacred tablets of ancestors, so that the child may be born legally as his eldest son. Of course if it is a girl, it will not matter. But they can discern nothing of the future. When the hour before dawn appears, Kwei-lan sees with sudden fear that there is a change in her mother. She strikes her hands together and sends the waiting slave for her brother. When he comes in, he looks at her and whispers half-afraid, “The last change has come. Let someone go for our father” (245).

Kwei-lan’s father comes in and stands before her mother, staring and afraid. In his heart he has always feared her. Now he begins to weep like a child, and cries loudly, “A good wife—a good wife!” (246). In the matter of the other concubines nothing can be decided until her brother’s wife has been recognized, since his legal wife will be the natural one to take his mother’s place as First Lady. The affair now becomes the more pressing
because the house of Li, to whose daughter her brother is still betrothed, begins to send messages almost daily through the go-between, urging that the marriage be consummated at once.

Kwei-lan’s brother is not wholly happy though his foreign wife is happy. It is nothing to her now that she is not a member of Kwei-lan’s brother’s family. With the passing away of his mother, inspite of her sympathy, a sort of bondage drops from her. With the knowledge of her child living within her, she is relieved of some fear she had before. She thinks of nothing now except her husband and herself and their child. Kwei-lan’s brother is not satisfied with this law of the spirit. When the time for the child’s birth draws near, Kwei-lan’s brother goes once more to his father to ask his formal recognition of his wife. He says, “My honoured Father, now that the First Lady, my honoured mother, has departed to dwell beside the Yellow Springs, I, your unworthy son, beg you to deign to hear me” (257). His father says, “The foreign flower is beautiful. How beautiful are her eyes like purple jewels! How white, like almond meats, is her flesh! She has amused us well, has she not? I congratulate you that she is about to present you with a little toy!” (258).

The request of legal recognition of the marriage is refused. The son is again informed that he must marry the daughter of Li and, thereby, uphold the family pledge. The marriage can no longer be postponed. Their father
gives a heavy bag of silver to her brother and he throws it upon the ground and shouts, "Bid him take back his silver! From this day I have no father. I have no clan—I repudiate the name of Yang! Remove my name from the books! I and my wife, we will go forth. In this day we shall be free as the young of other countries are free. We will start a new race--free from these ancient and wicked bondages over our souls!" (264).

Kwei-lan's brother has nothing now of the family estates. With his share they will placate the house of Li for the outrage done them. Kwei-lan exclaims, "With what a sacrifice of love has my brother loved this foreigner!" (265). But he tells his wife nothing of the sacrifice and says only, "Let us leave this place now, my heart. There can never be a home for us within these walls" (265). He leaves his ancestral home. There is not even one to bid him farewell. He starts living in a little two-story house in the Street of the Bridges. He grows older and more quiet. For the first time in his life he has to think where food and clothes must come from. He goes every day early in the morning to teach in the government school, "he who never rose in the morning until the sun was swinging high in the heavens" (266). He who has lived in ease all his life on his father's wealth has now become poor. But he has learned how to make his wife happy. As for him, now that he has done what he decided to do, he is quiet and grave and content. He is a man.
When Kwei-lan thinks that these two have left, each of them, a world for the other’s sake, she feels humbled before such love. As for their child, Kwei-lan is moved in two ways. He will have his own world to make. Being of neither East nor West purely, he will be rejected of each, for none will understand him. But Kwei-lan thinks, if he has the strength of both his parents, he will understand both worlds.

He will belong to both sides of the world. He has the great bones and the lusty vigour of the West. Kwei-lan sees it with a mingling of pain and gladness and says to her sister-in-law, “See what thou hast done, my sister! Into this tiny knot hast thou tied two worlds!” (275). The child’s mother has been separated from her country and her people, and his father has broken ancestral ties. Yet, at the same time, the child has brought about a union of the old and new, of the East and the West. She concludes that the newly born child will come to understand both worlds and become much stronger and wiser on that account. Kwei-lan thinks of the little new-born child, and how already he looks like her mother, whose life went out as his began. She says softly with a faint sadness,

“With what pain of separation has the child of our brother and our sister taken on his life! The separation of his mother from her land and her race; the pain of his father’s mother, giving up her only son; the pain of his
father, giving up his home and his ancestors and the sacred past!” But her husband said gravely, “Think only of this—with what joy of union he came into the world! He has tied together the two hearts of his parents into one. Those two hearts, with all their difference in birth and rearing—differences existing centuries ago! What union!” (277)

East Wind: West Wind contains several effective passages and the theme is meaningful. The characters are caught in a modern dilemma, and the happy resolution in Kwei-lan’s case and semi-tragic resolution in her brother’s are convincingly rendered. The objections of the Chinese mother and father to a foreign daughter-in-law strike a common chord, and the tensions produced from their prejudices and instinctive attitudes bring forces to the problem. Truth is at the core of East Wind: West Wind, but at times the veneer of romanticism and sentimentalism blurs and softens this truth. In an overall view, East Wind: West Wind points up the fact that Pearl Buck has a thorough knowledge of her subject and possesses a fundamental narrative sense. Her first book of fiction also demonstrates that she is a novelist who is in the happy position of understanding both sides in various conflicts between two different worlds, and between the old and the new customs.
REFERENCES:


