

## Summary of Doctoral Dissertation

A Study on Pear S. Buck's Cultural Identity

From the Perspective of Homi Bhabha's Postcolonial Theory

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## **Introduction**

This part includes a comprehensive review of Pearl Buck's life and creative experience, combing the studies of Pearl S. Buck at home and abroad, asking the study questions and research concept in the dissertation. The main contents of the part is composed by the below four questions:

1. A Brief Account of Pearl S. Buck and Major Works
2. Review of Chinese Scholarship of Pearl S. Buck
3. Review of Foreign Scholarship of Pearl S. Buck
4. The Possibility, Innovation and Structure of the Study.

### **1. A Brief Account of Pearl S. Buck and Major Works**

Pearl Sydenstricker Buck(1892-1973) is a feminine novelist from America. She was born in America and was brought up in China. She was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1938. She is also a philanthropist, humanitarian, and a warrior fighting for women's rights.

Pearl Buck began to write in the twenties. Her first novel, *East Wind· West Wind*, appeared in 1930. Her second novel *The Good Earth* in 1931 is considered as one of her excellent work, and finally made Pearl Buck win the Pulitzer Prize and the William Dean Howells Medal in 1935. Compared with it, the two biographies of her parents, *The Exile* (1936) and *Fighting Angel* (1936), have aroused less attention but also the important causes of her Nobel Prize award. Pearl Buck won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Pearl Buck is a prolific author. By the time of her death in 1973, Pearl

Buck had published more than one hundred books including novels, poetry, drama, autobiography, biography, collections of stories, children's literatures(Huang 56-58). One of the consistent themes of her book is the conflict and confluence between the East and the west (Liao 1).

Pearl Buck is not only a writer, but also a philanthropist, humanitarian, and a warrior fighting for women's rights. One of Buck's masterpieces, *The Good Earth*, is a classic novel which reflects her humanism. Pearl Buck and her second husband Richard Walsh founded the East and West Association in 1942 which employs itself in cultural exchanging and understanding between the East and the West. Welcome House was established by Buck in 1949 which was the first international, interracial adoption agency. In 1964, Buck also established the Pearl S. Buck Foundation aimed to provide support for American children who didn't catch the attention for adoption. This foundation has provided sponsorship funding for thousands of children in several Asian countries.

## **2. Review of Chinese Scholars of Pearl S. Buck**

*Pearl S. Buck Research* (edited by Liu Long in 1998), *Pearl S. Buck: Chinese Criticisms* (edited by Guo Yingjian in 1999), *Collected Papers in Memory of Pearl S. Buck* ( Vol I , II,III,IV, edited by Xu Xiaoxia et al respectively in 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2013) are the required readings to study Pearl Buck in China. Based on the above three informative compilations, the study on Pearl S. Buck is developing in-depth in China, and constantly new theoretical ideas are introduced in this area, but there are still a few deficiencies: First, researchers are too focused on the field of literary

studies, lack of the introduction of subject knowledge and methodology of religion, sociology, and historiography, etc..Second is Works studied are less narrow, often limited in *Selected Works of Pearl Buck* (Chinese translation, Five Volumes,1998) , *Pearl S. Buck: Chinese Criticisms* edited by Guo Yingjian(1999) , and Peter Conn' s *Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography* (Chinese translation,1998). Third is researchers are weak on theory and superficially decorate research in academic vocabulary.

### **3. Review of Foreign Scholarship of Pearl S. Buck**

The study on Pearl S. Buck emerged in the United States in the 1990s. the researchers focused on "American Studies" areas, common concerned Pearl S. Buck's cultural significance and ignored Pearl Buck's literary achievements. The status of misreading Pearl Buck has not been changed in the history of American literature. In the little literary study of Pearl Buck, more influential studies as the followings: "The Art of Pearl S. Buck" written by Phyllis Bentley in 1935 , "Pearl S. Buck's Short Stories: A Survey" written by American scholar Paul A. Doyle in 1966.

Among nine books on biography and biography study of Pearl S. Buck till now, Peter Conn's monograph is a model of personal history study. in addition, Paul A. Doyle's *Pearl S. Buck* , Liao Kang's *Pearl S. Buck: A cultural bridge across the Pacific* are also worth mentioning.

Chinese history expert Michael Hunt is the first scholar to discuss the cultural significance of Pearl S. Buck. He published "Pearl Buck---Popular Expert on China,1931-1949" to mainly discusses Pearl Buck's Chinese concept based in Chinese agriculture society and culture.

#### **4. The Possibility, Innovation and Structure of the Study**

Three reasons why I choose the postcolonialism as the theoretical background for the study as follows: First is the powers and objects of postcolonial speech. In today's comparative literature and cultural studies domain, postcolonialism is one of the most influential theoretical discourse. Postcolonialism is usually explained closely related to postcolonial theory and postcolonial literature, which the former mentions category theory and discourse foothold for literary criticism; the latter provides the analysis vision and reading strategies for the study of Pearl Buck's works. Second is Pearl Buck's cultural identity and sense of postcolonialism. Pearl Buck is a typical postcolonial literary writer, her exhibiting postcolonial consciousness makes up the blank of postcolonial theorists concerned about China, as well as it helps Pearl Buck complete a great practice to pursue cultural ideal. Third is that the domestic study of Pearl Buck from postcolonial perspective remains to be further. Compared to the deep cultural values and positive constructive significance of postcolonial theory, domestic research in this field has many deficiencies in quantity and theoretical depth.

Compared to the current status of research in the domestic field, the innovation of the thesis mainly embodies in three aspects: First is the expansion of text analysis. In addition to the typical works, the dissertation tries to analyze her works scarcely ever mentioned and brackets them with postcolonial theory. Second is that the dissertation aims to rethink the study of Pearl Buck in order to return Pearl Buck deserving status, meanwhile emphasizes the practice signification that Pearl Buck pursued her cultural identity in contemporary era. Third is that the dissertation on Pearl S. Buck from

postcolonial theory has important theoretical value and practical significance while today postcolonialism has been a hot point in the world.

The research falls into six parts. The first part is the introduction. Chapter 1 is about Homi Bhabha' s postcolonial theory. The chapter describes the powers and objects of speech in postcolonial text, including Homi Bhabha' s theoretical perspective issues, identity issues, and strategy issues. Chapter 2 to chapter 4 analyze Pearl Buck's postcolonial consciousness and expression respectively using "Other", "Hybridity", "the Third Space" as key words in order to reveal that Pearl. Buck living in the cracks of two cultures gradually adapted herself to the alienation of the two cultures and began to seek for a way to achieve cultural integration, and try to establish the unique cultural identity of her own. The last part is conclusions. This part summarizes the above analysis, clarifies the innovation, defects and signification of the dissertation, as well as shows my respect for Pearl Buck's contribution of promoting the communication between the East and the West.

### **Chapter 1: Homi Bhabha' s Postcolonial Theory**

The chapter describes the powers and objects of speech in postcolonial text, including Homi Bhabha' s theoretical perspective issues, identity issues, and strategy issues. The chapter is composed by the below four questions:

- 1.1. A Brief Account of Homi Bhaha and his theories
- 1.2. "The Other" Theory Outlined

1.3. "Hybridity" Theory Outlined

1.4. "The Third Space" Theory Outlined

### **1.1. A Brief Account of Homi Bhabha and his theories**

Homi K. Bhabha (1949---) born into a Zoroastrianism family from Mumbai, India, Persian descent, fathers are business. In the Indian, Homi Bhabha is the "minorities". Homi Bhabha's schooling and academic course, is a typical experience in middle-class intellectuals for color people. Complex experience broadens Homi Bhabha's academic perspective, especially his life and school experience in the former colonial metropolis Mumbai. His later strongly advocating "ambivalence", "cultural differences", "consultation" and other concepts, close attention to the fate of the "minorities", is a direct association with this experience.

Homi Bhabha's academic consideration began from questioning Edward Said and deconstructing Fanon. Derrida and Lacan's influence clearly emerge out of Bhabha's thought.

Now, Homi Bhabha's academic activities are in very active period, Not only in Western academia but also in China academia, Homi Bhabha's theory has become a hot topic.

### **1.2. "The Other" Theory Outlined**

"The other" is a postcolonial criticism indispensable concept. Homi Bhabha's "the other" is beginning to question the theory of "dualist system" in the Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*. In the article "Interrogating Identity", Homi Bhabha thinks "the other" is the key of identification, is "the moving border" of identity. In Bhabha's theory on

the Other, the essence of Self asks the being of Other, Self and Other aren't sharply split. As Bhabha wants to express while he quotes Fanon's words "What is often called the black soul is a white man's artifact": the Negro's existence includes the White's presence; in return, the White becomes the White because of the Negro's presence. So colonial subject(colonizer/ colonized) couldn't always occupy a certain point---Self or Other; White or Black---but always in the "beyond" and "in-between": Black, but like White; White, but not enough.

### **1.3."Hybridity" Theory Outlined**

In the article "Sign Taken for Wonders", Homi Bhabha clearly defines the meaning of "Hybridity". Hybridity refers to the mixing process of different races, population, ideology, culture and language with each other. "Hybridity" is a multicultural exchange process, but also reflects the dissatisfaction subversion of the colonial and colonial culture to hegemony. "Hybridity" demonstrates how cultures come to be represented by processes of iteration and translation through which their meanings are vicariously addressed to—through—an Other. "Hybridity" eliminates the pure and original between colonizers and colonized, ambiguity the boundaries between language identity and psychological mechanism.

### **1.4. "The Third Space" Theory Outlined**

Homi Bhabha's "The Third Space" is a negotiation space presented in the "In-between" among the cultural space. The Third Space is not an entity but a communication space where the colonizers and the colonized exchange, dialogue and reach the state converged in the negotiation. In other words, The Third Space called



by Homi Bhabha is a consultation space between cultures.

**Chapter 2: Chinese significance as "the Other" for Pearl Buck---A Comparative Study on Missionary Image in *Fighting Angel* and *Pavilion of Women***

This chapter analyzes Pearl's postcolonial consciousness revolved around the core concept of "the other", then tries to carry on the discussion of Pearl Buck's cultural identity, and aims at reviewing her Self image in relation with the Chinese Other. This part is composed by the below four questions:

2.1. The Woman caught between Self and the Other

2.2. Self-image in Relation with the Other: A Comparative Analysis of Two Missionary Images

2.3. The Image of the Other as Mirror of Self

2.4. Summing Up: The observer being Observed: A Dialectical Approach towards Pearl Buck's Idea of the Other

In 2.1., an analysis of Pearl Buck's cultural identity comes first and foremost. Pearl Buck's experience qualifies her as the very observer of western Self. The prerequisite is the detachment from Self by shifting into Other's cultural context; the process is the discovery of "Who I am" in relation with the Other, and the purpose is the quest for "Who I am Supposed to be". This part is expounded through three aspects: 1, A Cultural Marginalizer: Pearl Buck's Cultural Identity; 2, China the Present Other versus American the Absent Self; 3, The Observer of Self by way of the Other.

2.2. and 2.3. are the main body of Chapter 2, in which, Pearl Buck's two books will be taken as the cases, that is, the biography for her missionary father Andrew in China --- *Fighting Angel*, and the other is a typical novel about West-China confluence--- *Pavilion of Women*. In 2.2., the argument focuses on the following two aspects: 1, Self Images of the two missionaries: Pearl Buck's father is summarized as a fighter of God, "singleness" to the Only One True Lord is the driving force of his life meanwhile his exclusiveness to the Other civilizations and religions is explained, whereas Andre in the novel is idealized as a fighter of humankind whose inclusiveness to different religions and universal love to different peoples contribute to his effective communication with Chinese. 2, The significance of the two missionaries: to understand Pearl Buck's father as the very epitome of the then American Self---assured role of the Savior of the Orient, and to interpret Andre as Pearl Buck's spokesperson of mutual tolerance and cultural confluence. Based on the contrasting Self images in relation with the Other, 2.3., in a further step, probes into the image of the Other as mirror of Self. In this part, the argument centers around four aspects: image of China, image of Chinese, image of Chinese religions, approach to the Other. A comparative study will be made around the four aspects, that is, one's image of China as religious frontier to expand versus one's image of China as part of the world to understand; one's image of the Chinese as heathen to convert versus one's image as brotherhood to communicate; one's image of Chinese religions as imitation of Christianity versus one's belief in the co-existence of religious difference; one's monologue approach towards the Chinese versus one's dialogue with the Chinese.

In 2.4., Pearl Buck the observer of Self would be observed in a possibly all-round way, and a safe conclusion will be made that, as the ultimate value of Pearl Buck is Self-oriented, China is the forever Other providing the way to observe Self. In other words, the two contrasting images of western missionaries, from opposite ways, prove Pearl Buck's quest for Self by way of the Other. While this shows Homi Bhabha's theory on the Other, which the essence of Self asks the being of Other, Self and Other aren't sharply split(Bhabha *The Location of Culture* 73).

### **Chapter 3: A Cultural Hybrid----An Image Study of Wang Yuan in *A House***

#### ***Divided***

Around the core concept of "Hybridity", this chapter analyzes cultural Hybrid image of Wang Yuan in Pearl Buck's work *A House Divided* impacted by multicultural values. In fact, Wang Yuan experienced the similar dual life and education as Pearl Buck did. In this sense, Wang Yuan was the spokesman of Pearl Buck. He was no longer a traditional Chinese but a new one, a hybrid of Chinese culture and Western culture as the author Pearl Buck was. This chapter falls into the below four parts:

3.1. Wang Yuan: A Bewildered Marginal Stranger

3.2. A Penetrating Bifocal observer

3.3. A Hybrid Cultural Identity Constructor

3.4. Summing Up: The Hybridity of Wang Yuan shows Pearl Buck's Contribution of Prompting the communication between the East and the West

3.1. mainly discusses Wang Yuan's identity of being a marginal stranger. As a patriotic Chinese in America and a strange foreigner in China, Wang Yuan was actually a stranger in two cultures. In 3.2., the emphasis will be placed on Wang Yuan's bifocal insight. From three aspects--- Wang Yuan's critical view towards filial piety, ambivalent sympathy for Chinese farmers and unconventional attitude towards women, this part analyzes Wang Yuan's bifocal vision as a double cultural man. 3.3. centers on Wang Yuan's construction of his hybrid cultural identity from three aspects--- loyal member of the family, deep lover of country land, an advocator of the advanced western technology. In 3.4., Wang Yuan's hybridity is reconfirmed. The analysis of the hybridity of the ideal Chinese image also shed new light on the understanding of the author Pearl Buck. Taking into consideration of Pearl's double cultural identity, we should give her a more impartial and comprehensive reading. Pearl Buck should be respected for her contribution of promoting the communication between the East and the West.

#### **CHAPTER 4: Prompt from Two Cultures for Pearl Buck--- "The Third Space"**

##### **in *East Wind· West Wind***

This chapter analyzes "the third space" formed through the process of cultural collision and mutual integration based on Homi Bhabha's "the third space" theory, as well as the reconstruction of hybrid cultural identity in this space. *East Wind· West Wind* is Pearl Buck's first novel that reflects her ideal about the cultural integration of

the East and West. As "a human bridge" between Eastern and Western civilizations, Pearl devotes her life to promoting cultural exchanges between the East and West, and pursues the harmonious integration between different cultures. Living in the cracks of two cultures Pearl S. Buck gradually adapts herself to the alienation of the two cultures and begins to seek for a way to achieve cultural integration, and try to establish the unique cultural identity of her own. This chapter is composed by five aspects:

4.1.A Marginalized Person's Pursuit of the Third Space: Pearl Buck Living between Cultures

4.2. The Third Space under Cultural Conflict and Integration

4.3. A Hybrid Narrative Strategy: Pearl Buck's Practices on the Pursuit of the Third Space

4.4. Reconstruction of Cultural Identity in the Third Space

4.5.Summing Up: A Cultural Third Space---Seeking for Cross-cultural Understanding

Through reviewing the life experience of Pearl Buck, 4.1. tries to prove that as a person living between two different cultures, Pearl S. Buck wants to find the place where she really belongs to. Therefore, it is such an important thing for Pearl to seek for the cultural identity. According to Homi Bhabha's "the third space" theory, 4.2. analyzes the processes of the third space forming in *East Wind· West Wind*, which is expounded through two aspects: 1. Binary Opposition and Integration between

Different Cultures; 2. Construction of the Third Space. 4.3.emphasizes Pearl Buck's practices on the pursuit of the third space through three aspects: 1. Chinese Narrative Strategy in *East Wind· West Wind*; 2. Western Cultural View in *East Wind· West Wind*; 3. Bifocal Perspective. Based on the above analysis, 4.4 sums up that Pearl S. Buck is an example of hybrid cultural identity from two aspects--- hybrid cultural identity and reconstruction of Cultural Identity. Pearl S. Buck belongs to nowhere but a "Third Space" which neither belongs to East nor to West. It is a space of her own. Pearl makes efforts to search for her own cultural position in a bi-cultural situation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Pearl S. Buck went through the various identity drift and identity anxiety, and made effort for the construction of identity. So it will be proper to incorporate into the scope of cultural criticism from postcolonialism perspective. In the relatively closed early 20th century, it is commendable that Pearl S. Buck recognized the various ethnic cultures should be mutual respect and harmony from the perspective of pluralism. Today of the 21st century, the world has got a consensus that cultural exchange and integration is an inevitable trend of historical development. In this context, further studying Pearl S. Buck under postcolonialism perspective deconstructing all cultural hegemony has demonstration significance of literary criticism and guidance.