FOURTH CHAPTER
This chapter is an attempt at analysing Pearl Buck's novels which present interconnected aspects of the social situation with the woman question. Pearl Buck's social consciousness leads to the study of the socio-economic background of her characters. Her female figures are characteristic phenomena of particular time and place. Her women feel the heavy weight of history upon them. They can't evade the social changes. Her women change with the society. The gap between O-lan or Lotus and Ai-lan the revolutionary woman is the gap of a turbulent time. This chapter attempts to define the forces that shape Pearl Buck's women. It also traces other planes of realities as cross-cultural conflicts that influence Pearl Buck's women. "The rebirth of a nation always presents drama of the highest quality and widest possible variety. And this is particularly so of China where the pains have been more excruciating probably because the natal period was so much shorter than in other countries."¹ A narrator of this drama Pearl Buck never shrank from portraying the life of the period in its utmost intensity. She felt the birth pangs of the Chinese nation in her pulses. She viewed the drama not from

outside as a foreigner; her life, her own people felt the weight of the turbulent time. Her hatred of the foreign aggression was as sincere as that of a Chinese, which was reflected in her condemnation of the role of the foreign police in China.

My own sympathies were entirely with the Chinese, for though the police were within their rights as foreign-controlled police, yet it should have been remembered that they were in China and that the traditional Chinese attitude toward law was entirely different from that of the West. In China law was only for criminals, to punish them for their crimes. A person who was not a criminal could not be reached by law. Therefore when the police shot down innocent people even after due warning, and especially young students and intellectuals, who were traditionally recognized as valuable and upper-class persons, it was the police who had committed the crime of murder, the people said, and not the innocent young people who were only trying to be 'patriotic'. The incident was sadly typical of the different points of view of my two worlds.²

The reflection of her complete identification with the Chinese society can be easily seen in her novels. Phyllis Bently questions: "Is it her aim to present China in contact with Western civilization, China in revolution, the transition, in a word from the old China to the new? Yes." Bently writes that Pearl Buck portrayed Chinese life and society admirably, however he feels that Buck's success does not end there, "..... at times I feel that China makes the colors of her design than the pattern." While analysing The Good Earth Nancy Evans observed: "Though I may never see a rice field, I shall always feel that I have lived for a long time in China. The strange power of a Western woman to make an alien civilization seem as casual, as close, as the happenings of the morning is surprising." Tai-Jen commented: "She knows her characters, their business and their lives, there she deals with everything she really loves and hates, there her understanding of the Chinese can fulfil the demand of her sympathy to a great extent." 

Because of this passionate rapport with China,

4. Ibid.
Pearl Buck could understand Chinese women's struggle against the inhuman oppression. With ease and elan she can penetrate into O-lan's existence amidst her stupefying and humiliating subjugation to the bone breaking toil, as well as the revolutionary lady in *Letter from Peking*. A woman in feudal China accepted her life and situation with passivity as O-lan did. Delia Davin writes: "Chinese women fought an oppression blacker and more absolute than that faced by women of the West. The official institutions of traditional China were male dominated to a degree unsurpassed in the world. Chinese women once dealt with this situation with a combination of passivity and covert sabotage. In a few decades they changed their strategy to one of open struggle, and, in alliance with the forces of national and socialist revolution, they have demolished much of the social framework of their oppression." Through her women characters, Pearl Buck captures this stormy period of a changing society. The difference between O-lan and Gerlad's mother, the dedicated revolutionary, is due to the different times they live in. A stormy period of revolutionary changes goes to the making of characters like Gerlad's mother.

The setting behind the characters like O-lan or

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the mother is old China. Famine, floods, wars and pestilence were recurring hazards. Heavy taxation and exploitation ruined the peasants, and poverty was a stark and horrifying reality in their lives. Most of the farmers were landless labourers and were tenant farmers of the rich and land was concentrated in the hands of a few rich families. In the folk song 'Seventh Month' the farmers express their sorrow:

Alas, us farmers

Now that our harvest is done,

We go to perform labor at the palace

.... we go after badgers,

and take foxes and wild-cats,

To make furs for our lord.

We make dark fabrics and yellow;

Our red manufacture is very brilliant,

It is for the lower robes of our lord.8

In the same folk song the life of the farmer is described thus: In the first month the farmer receives agricultural implements. In the second month ploughing begins; his wife sends his meals to the field, his daughter gathers mulberry leaves. In the eighth month the harvest is

The farmer's daughter is busy reeling off silk, which after being reeled is dyed black, yellow or red to provide for the lord's dress. In the tenth month rice is gathered and wine is made in order to pray for the lord's longevity next spring. After the harvesting the peasants go to serve in the lord's home. In the same month everyone goes to present wine to the lord. In the twelfth month peasants receive military training together. In this month pigs are presented to the lord, ice is chopped and stored for the lord's use in the following spring and summer. 9

While the poor suffered, the rich amassed enormous property, enjoyed unlimited powers and tyrannized the villagers. Generation after generation the poor suffered, drifted about, in famine years sold their daughters and starved. The poor became helplessly dependent upon great families. The plight of the peasants worsened with time. In Ts'ui Yin's On Gamblers written during the reign of Emperor Ho (89-106 A.D.), there is a poignant passage describing the gambler's scorn for the farmers.

The gambler came upon a farmer clearing away weeds. He had a straw hat on his head and a hoe in his hand. His face was black, his hands and feet were covered with calluses, his skin was as rough as

mulberry bark, and his feet resembled bear's paws. He crouched in the fields, his sweat mixing with the mud. The gambler said to him, 'you cultivate the fields in oppressive summer heat. Your back is encrusted with salt, your legs look like burnt stumps, your skin is like leather that cannot be pierced by an owl. You hobble along on misshapen feet and painful legs. Shall I call you a plant or a tree? Yet you can move your body and limbs. Shall I call you a bird or a beast? Yet you possess a human face. What a fate to be born with such base qualities!'

Brutal exploitation dehumanized the peasants and at their cost the rich families led a life of luxury. Chung-ch'ang, T'ung [who lived at the end of Eastern Han] described a number of great families in his work Frank Words: "The magnate, without being the head of one platoon, commands the services of a thousand families and entire townships. He lives more lavishly than a prince, and has more power than a district magistrate. The magnate's mansion contains hundreds of rooms. His rich fields extend across the land. His slaves are counted by the thousands, and his dependents by the tens of thousands. He trades by land and by water in all parts of the country. His bulging warehouses

10. Ibid., p.112.
fill the city, his huge dwellings overflow with treasure, his horses, cattle, sheep, and pigs are too numerous to be contained in the mountain valleys." 11

Towards the end of the eighteenth century corruption became rampant. The corrupt officials squandered away public money. Negligence of the dykes and flood control led to the great floods of 1823, 1831 in Chekiang and great Hupei flood in 1832. In the meantime there was a sharp rise in the price of silver. The medium of exchange was usually copper cash and peasants received copper from their farm products but the tax was to be paid in silver. Tseng Kuo-fan (1811-1872) explained the situation clearly in a memorial of 1851: "(Taxes) are paid mostly in money, rarely in kind. Even when the rice tribute is payable in kind, still the transport charges and the land-poll tax must be paid in silver. The common people's income from the fields is rice. When they sell the rice for cash, the price is very low, and they are unhappy; then they exchange the cash for silver, but the price of silver is very high, and again they are unhappy." 12

11. Ibid., p.113.
12. Ibid., p.367.
Thus the burden of taxation upon the farmers was beyond their capacity to pay, the government officials were too corrupt, and lost the faith of the common people, natural calamities created havoc, properties were concentrated in the hands of a group of people -- thus the entire structure deteriorated to the extreme point. The decadent society is well-reflected in Pearl Buck.

In *The Good Earth* the poor peasant Wang Lung is stunned by the lavish expenditure at a nobleman's daughter's marriage. The marriage of the Hwang family's third daughter is an extravaganza: "... and her dowry is a prince's ransom and enough to buy an official seat in a big city. Her clothes she will have of nothing but the finest satins, with special patterns woven in Soochow and Hangchow, and she will have a tailor sent from Shanghai with his retinue of undertailors lest she find her clothes less fashionable than those of the women in foreign parts."^13

The members of the rich families indulge in their sensual pleasures to the extreme point: "This house cannot stand for ever with all the young lords, five of them,

spending money like waste water in foreign parts and sending home woman after woman as they weary of them, and the Old Lord living at home adding a concubine or two each year, and the Old Mistress eating enough opium every day to fill two shoes with gold."14 Contrary to this prosperity, there was widespread starvation and deplorable poverty. Poverty was a stark and horrifying reality among the rural population. In famine years their suffering was beyond comprehension. In The Exile, Pearl Buck’s mother is the witness to such a famine in China:

"She had not believed, even she, that such misery was possible to flesh, such slow torture of swollen shapes of death, such dreary, hopeless-eyed little children, such fierce wild selfishness for food, even sometimes between mother and child, often between husband and wife."15 Carrie did what she could with the limited means:

"But the sound of the moaning and the calling aloud of her name through day and night, the dead that lay there at each dawn to be carried away, drove her nearly mad with helpless pity and angry sorrow."16 In that year Carrie stopped the Christmas celebration and spent the money on

14. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
relief to the hungry refugees: "It was a strange Christmas
day, spent in cooking great vats of rice and distributing it
bowl by bowl through a crack in the gate until none was left
and we had done all we could. It was a long, silent day. She
could not even sing at evening. As a reward there was less
weeping in the night and she slept a little more."17

In the midst of this deadly famine there was
abundance and luxury in the rich houses. The poor farmers
were dependent on the rich families and had to face extreme
exploitation. They were subjected to slavery. The peasants had
to make special contributions to wedding and other festivals
in the nobleman's home: "Moreover, labor corvee was an
endless obligation, and the peasant's spare time was ordi­
narily all spent on jobs for the noblemen. If the later
wanted to build palaces, pleasure gardens, ancestral
shrines, or city walls, the people could be conscripted at
all times for hard labor. If a nobleman wanted to engage in
warfare, the people had to provide him with supplies as well
as with their own lives."18 The rich used the poor as slaves
also. Slaves could be used as payment for debts or
damages.19 Pearl Buck shows her awareness of the deplorable

17. Ibid., p. 171.
18. E. TU-Zen, John De Francis, Chinese Social History-
Translations of selected studies, p. 24.
19. Ibid., p. 61.
status of woman slaves in the great houses. There were widespread discontentment, wars and rebellions. The entire social structure was breaking down.

In such a social situation, the women had to face a blacker oppression than their burdened men-folk. In her women characters Pearl Buck portrays this acute suffering. O-lan and the mother reflect the poor living condition of peasant women. These peasant women bear a large number of children and thus spend a major part of their lives raising babies. The causes of frequent childbearing can be attributed to the high value attached to large families, the love of male child and backward consciousness. Excessive labour, low nutritional level, unhygienic and poor living condition, lack of proper medical care especially in childbirth cause high infant and maternal mortality rates. Frequent childbearing causes many post-natal complications and thus add misery to their already burdened lives. Women use traditional medicines which though useful in some cases are not certainly enough to keep them in good health. In Pavilion of Women Madame Wu cures Madame Kang with her traditional medicines: "Into this broth Madame Wu put the herbs which thicken the blood so that it will not flow, and she put in the dust of certain molds which prevent poisoning. These things she knew from her ancient books, and they were not
common knowledge."20 But the quack cannot cure O-lan of her severe illness. He gives her "... prescription of herbs and a tiger's heart dried in it and the tooth of a dog, and these boil together and let her drink the broth."21 The alarming rate of child mortality, in turn leads to frequent pregnancies, Wang Lung's father passes his wisdom to his newly married son; "I remember well when the first was born to me it was dawn before it was over. Ah, me, to think that out of all the children I begot and your mother bore, one after the other -- a score or so -- I forget only you have lived! You see why a woman must bear and bear."22 These peasant women, as reflected in Pearl Buck's novels suffer from many gynaecological problems. The mother has an abortion, the cousin's wife describes the danger of such abortions: "There are simples to be bought if one has the money, strong stuff that kills woman and child sometimes, and always it is harder than a birth, but if you take enough, it will do."23 The primitive methods of abortion are simply horrible and inhuman torture:

... and the mother drank the brew and she lay upon


22. Ibid., p. 31.

the ground, and waited. Presently in the deep night
the stuff seized on her with such gripes as she never
dreamed of and she gave herself up to die. And as
the agony went on she came at last to forget all
except the agony, and she grew dazed with it. Yet in
the midst of it she remembered not to scream to ease
herself .... No, the mother must suffer on as best
she could. The sweat poured down her body like rain
and she was dead to everything except the fearful
gripping, as though some beast laid hold on her to
tear the very vitals from her, and at last it seemed
a moment came when they were torn from her indeed,
and she gave one cry.24

After this ordeal her stout health deteriorates and finally
breaks down completely. O-lan suffers from 'a rock as large
as a man's head in the womb.'25 Her belly swells like that
of a pregnant woman and while she serves food to the family,
or sweeps the floor her face becomes grey with pains. Very
often she opens her lips and pants slowly or put her hands
to the belly. She grows thin and her skin becomes dry and
yellow. She bears silently unbearable pain in her vitals for
a long period. O-lan has scarcely passed the middle of her

24. Ibid., p. 168.
life, death is not easy for her. Suffering from the tumour in her womb, she lies dying on her bed often forgetting where she is and thus her life comes to an end in a slow painful manner.

In bad times as famine or flood plight of these women are really no better, in fact, worse than beasts. During the famine year, as shown in The Good Earth, Wang Lung decides to move towards South and his wife O-lan is pregnant. She asks her husband to wait for another day as she wants to get rid of her burden. This pregnant woman has to remain without food for months together: "The child in her body hung from her lean loins like a knotty fruit and from her face every particle of flesh was gone, so that the jagged bones stood forth rock-like under her skin." Wang Lung brings some bean seeds for her and these seeds help her to face the labour pain: "The children clambered about at the sight of the food, and even the old man’s eyes glittered, but Wang Lung pushed them away for once and took the food in to his wife as she lay and she ate a little of it, bean by bean, unwillingly, but her hour was upon her and she knew that if she had not any food she would die in the clutches of her pain." Wang Lung feels a deep remorse for his suffering wife in the maternity bed: "Her eyes were

26. Ibid., p. 62.
27. Ibid., p. 63.
closed and the colour of her flesh was the colour of ashes and her bones struck up under the skin -- a poor silent face that lay there, having endured to the utmost, and there was nothing he could say. After all, during these months he had only his own body to drag about. What agony of starvation this woman had endured, with the starved creature gnawing at her from within desperate for its own life!"28 In the famine days mud is the only food they take. In such a situation she does not dare to add another mouth. O-lan kills her new born child. Her motherly instinct is smothered by starvation and hunger. Frequent child-bearing, meal preparations, house work, regular hours of painstaking and strenuous labour in the fields chain these peasant women to unending drudgery. The subjugation to this drudgery binds women to the scaffold of cruel oppression. The description of small details of the peasant mother's strenuous housework in a backward rural setting provides a glimpse into this passive world of drudgery and silent suffering.

In an industrially backward economy their household chores demand time and energy and very often affect their health. Cooking is one of the main duties of these peasant women. A glimpse into their kitchens reveals their poor working condition. "In the kitchen of the small

28. Ibid., p. 64.
thatched farmhouse the mother sat on a low bamboo stool behind the earthen stove and fed grass deftly into the hole where a fire burned beneath the iron cauldron. The blaze was but just caught and she moved a twig here, a handful of leaves there, and thrust in a fresh bit of the dried grass she had cut from the hillsides last autumn. "29 The grass she uses as firewoods is injurious to eyes: "Under the cauldron the flames leaped high and beat against its iron bottom and finding no vent they spread and flew out again, changing into dense smoke that poured into the small room."30 The daughter with sore eyes cannot bear the smoke, the mother pulls back but the acid smoke has already caught her and she begins to scream. The half blind mother-in-law instantly remembers her past days of suffering: "Aye, and I always said that if I had not had to feed the fire for so many years I would not be half blind now. Smoke it was that made me be so blind as I am now and smoke --."31 Thus the heavy burden of household chores ruins the health of the peasant women. Of course, there are other hazards in their lives besides the burden of household drudgery.

In the prime of her youth the mother is deserted by her husband and she has to manage everything alone. The

30. Ibid., p. 13.
31. Ibid.
hard work that the harvesting season demanded is too heavy for a woman: "Then sheaf by sheaf she carried the rice to the threshing-floor and there she thresher it, yoking the buffalo to the rude stone roller they had, and she drove the beast all through the hot still days of autumn, and she drove herself, too. When the grain was thresher, she gathered the empty straw and heaped it and tossed the grain up and winnowed it in the winds that came sometimes." The effect of this hard labour upon the mother is disastrous: "She was bone-thin now with her labor and with being too often weary, and every ounce of flesh was gone from her, and her skin was burnt a dark brown except the red of cheeks and lips." These women are exploited and oppressed by the land-lords. The mother has to give the land-lord's share whom she has never seen: "Now this landlord of the hamlet and the fields about it never came himself to fetch his share. He lived an idle rich man in some far city or other, since the land was from his fathers, and he sent in his place his agent,..." Like all other farmers the mother also has to give her share to the land-lord's agent: "But she saw the grain divided and hard it was too, as it was hard for every farmer, to give to this smooth townsman his

32. Ibid., p. 83.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., p. 84.
own share in what they had labored on. But they gave grimly, and so did she, knowing that if they did not they would suffer, and besides the land-lord's share they gave the agent a fat fowl or two or a measure of rice or some eggs or even silver for his private fee.\textsuperscript{35} Besides these gifts, the village must offer a feast to the agent and every family has to contribute a dish. The mother's share is a chicken dish. She cooks the dish with utmost care: "The savor of that fowl and its smell when it had cooked so many hours were more than the children could endure and they hung about the kitchen and the boy cried, 'I wish it were for us -- I wish we ever could eat a fowl ourselves!' But the mother was bitter with her weariness and she answered, 'Who can eat such meat except a rich man?'\textsuperscript{36} The mother is very sorry to deprive her children of the meat they have so desired to taste. After the feast is over she goes to the deserted table and picks up a piece of bone from her dish with a little skin and a shred of meat in it. This she gives to her son to suck. O-lan and the mother, are representatives of the women of the poor peasant community. What the individual small peasants produced were not enough to meet even his own needs. The land was in the hands of great families. With a huge income, cheap labour and command over helpless farmers

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 85.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
the landlords lived a life of luxury. Contrary to the suffering of small peasants, there was opulence and plenty. In *The Good Earth* a refugee goes to a great house inside the city walls to sell his daughter. The refugee is simply amazed at the luxury of the landlords: "You would not believe it if I told you how money comes and goes in that house. I will tell you this — even the servants eat with chopsticks of ivory bound with silver, and even the slave women hang jade and pearls in their ears and sew pearls upon their shoes, and when the shoes have a bit of mud upon them or a small rent comes such as you and I would not call a rent, they throw them away, pearls and all!" In this world of affluence and luxury, women do not suffer from hunger like O-lan or hard life like the mother; their suffering is of a different nature.

Among the aristocrats men and women were socially segregated. In 506 B.C. a sister of the Duke of Ch'u insisted that she could marry no other man than Chung Chien, because in order to help her to escape from the enemy he had carried her on his back and thereby touched her. In the ninth century a widow was highly praised by the Confucian males for cutting off her arm because a hotel keeper had


38. E. Tzu-Zen, John De Francis, *Chinese Social History—Translations of selected studies*, p. 28.
dragged her and thereby touched her arms. So in case of women the touch of a stranger even by accident was considered to be a disgrace. On the other hand men were allowed to have concubines and there were sophisticated prostitutes known as Sing-Song girls like the Geisha girl in Japan for their pleasure. Polygamy was a common phenomenon in the great houses. A man could have only one legal wife, the concubines were sex objects outside the respect and security of marriage. Pearl Buck describes the rituals of selecting concubines for the king in *Imperial Woman*. Virgin girls are summoned from all over the country to be selected as concubines by the Emperor. The preparation to present the virgins before the Emperor for selection is a pompous business. The serving women rub their bodies with perfumed soap and wash them with soft clothes. "Four hours the virgins waited. The serving women sat with them, scolding if a satin coat were wrinkled, or if a lock of hair were loosened. Now and again a women touched a virgin's face with powder; or painted her lips again." There are separate classes of virgins to be presented before the king. First the F'ei must be presented to the Emperor, than the P'in. When these two groups are reviewed and the king's choice is made, the third class the


Kuei Jen are presented to the throne, than Ch’ang Ts’ai the fourth. These virgins are regarded only as fulfillers of men’s sexual needs, repository of their lewd desires: “The virgins arranged themselves in procession and the tiring women put the last touches on hair and lips and eyebrows. Silence fell upon all and laughter ceased. One girl leaned fainting upon a serving woman, who pinched her arms and the lobes of her ears to restore her. Inside the Audience Hall, the Chief Eunuch was already calling their names and ages, and each must enter at the sound of her name and her age.” Once selected these innocent girls are subjected to sexual slavery.

These concubines do not own their own bodies and in case of wet-nurses the milk that is produced in one’s body for one’s own children is also a commodity. The rich buys the poor women’s milk for their children’s health and their wife’s beauty. Being at the complete mercy of the land-lords the poor peasants can hardly defy them. Pearl Buck portrays pathetic pictures of hired nurse maids in her novels.

An young peasant mother, living happily with her husband and her first born daughter is summoned by the

41. Ibid., p. 12.
42. Ibid.
steward of the great house of the Wu family to become a wet-
nurse. She is reluctant to come, but she must; in her own words: "I did not want to come here, Lady. I have my own little house, my man works on your land, we have our child--a girl, it is true, but our first child. I was so proud of her. I had such a lot of milk. The steward said I must come or he would drive my man away from the land we have rented." Her heavy heart makes her milk curdled. The grandchild of the Wu family cries in hunger for days, they rebuke the nurse but it has no effect on her. Madame Wu's soft words relieve her of her burden, she speaks the truth in her: "I have not seen my own child. I do not know how she does--I have been here nearly a month. Next week is the full month birthday of the child, and I do not know how my own little one does." Madame Wu asks a servant to bring her child to the palace. Her words have magical effects on her: "The tears dried on her cheeks, and she held the little boy to her breast. He snatched the nipple again and began to suck, and milk began to flow." In reply to her angry mistress's accusations, "you held back your

43. Pearl S. Buck, Pavilion of Women, p. 177.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., p. 178.
milk" she says: "I do not know where my milk went nor why now it has come back, except that when our Elder Lady said my little girl could come, I felt loosened inside my heart, and so the milk came down." The grateful woman promises to feed the boy first.

In this nurse-maid's case the rich buys her milk but not her motherhood. In some other cases they are successful in buying the love also. Lien, an young wife of one of the farmers on the Wu lands is hired as a wet nurse in the Wu family. Her own boy has to grow on flour and water and rice gruel and being deprived of mother's milk he is thin and yellow. But her nursling is healthy, fat and rosy. Lien is allowed to go home once a month, "... when she saw her child she wept and put him to her great breast. Her full nipples dripped milk, but the child turned away his head. He had never tasted this milk, and he did not know how to suckle." Her bond with her own child grows weaker by days. At times she seems to forget her child completely. She is shown as a woman with rather crude sensibility, her motherhood is a kind of instinctive love. When she eagerly feeds

46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., p. 17.
her nursling she evokes the picture of a milch cow feeding its calf. In her every visit to her own home she must hasten back to Wu house by midafternoon because of her aching breasts. Her nursling waits for her, shouting with rage and hunger. "At the sight of him she forgot the thin yellow child. She opened her arms, laughing, and the big fat boy screamed for her from his mother's knees. Then Lien ran to him, snatching open her coat as she ran. She knelt beside him at Meng's side, and with both hands the child grasped her breast like a cup and drank in great gulps." Lien gradually ceases to love her own child. "All her rich animal love" is transferred to her healthy nursling. Her only duty in the Wu house is to nurse the charming child. In return she gets good food and a comfortable life. Her young and pleasure loving body gets accustomed to ease, idleness and comfort. Lien loved her own home and in her first days in the Wu house she wept bitterly. Gradually she ceases to love her poor home and the thin, pale child of her own. These hired nurse maids are examples of extreme forms of slavery that women can be subjected to.

In a brutally male-dominated society like that of old China, women had little or no role in the power struc-

50. Ibid., p. 18.
51. Ibid.
The women enjoying the respectable and privileged positions of first wives in the great families, were as helpless as peasant women, only the nature of suffering was different in certain ways. Pearl Buck probes into the life of rich women as well as the peasant women with equal dexterity.

Affluence and respectability can not make the first wife of the Yang house happy. Being made familiar with the male sexual aggression through her husband, she begins to hate men in general: "'Men'! she roused herself suddenly. She curled her lips until her mouth seemed a thing alive of its own scorn. 'Their inner thoughts are always coiled like snakes about the living body of some woman!'"52 She is resigned to her husband's extramarital flirtings. She says to her daughter: "Your father -- is he not accounted an honorable man? Yet have I long resigned myself to this thing; when a woman's beauty seizes him and catches his desire, he is mad for a time and understands nothing reasonable. And he has known a score of singing girls, beside these idle mouths he brings home as concubines -- three of them we have had, and the only reason we have not another is because his lust failed for the Peking girl before the

negotiations were finished.\textsuperscript{53} The Yang lord fails to understand his sad wife. For him her silence is "the caprices of women,"\textsuperscript{54} he finds her "incomprehensible,"\textsuperscript{55} he likes her because "She is wise, and under her hands my gold and silver is not carelessly spent. I do not complain. She never lashes about me with her tongue as some women do."\textsuperscript{56} She hates her lusty husband: "Do not speak of him. In his heart there have been a hundred women. To which one does his spirit speak?"\textsuperscript{57} Her health deteriorates at an early age and the broken health leads her to opium addiction. When her beloved son marries a foreign girl, her last source of solace dries up and she dies. However, her internal death as a woman occurred a long time ago. Her dead body is carried with full respect due to the first lady of the Yang house through the main gate, whereas the concubine's bodies are taken through the side gates. Such show of respect is however, a token of her supremacy over the other wretched women, and not a proof of a fulfilled and happy life. The irony is incisive.

Madame Kang is another example of woman suffering amidst abundance. Madame Kang, the first wife of the Kang

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p.158.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p.166.
family loves her husband blindly: "... I cannot be wise if it means somebody between -- my old man and me." The first wife of the Kang family presents a pathetic picture of a woman crying for male attention. The first wife of the Yang House alienates herself from her man but Madame Kang clings to hers. Mr. Kang leaves his slippers at his wife's apartment as a sign of his visit and when he does not it means that he is at a flower house enjoying the company of sing-song girls. At such nights Madame Kang cries half the night through. Only to please her husband, to keep him beside her, she goes through the risk of pregnancy after her forty. The picture of this middle aged woman with a dead child in her womb, clamouring for husband's love from her near to death suffering in the maternity bed is pathetic and terribly shocking. Between bouts of unconsciousness she asks her husband: "Then you do -- love me?" She tries to prove her value as a woman in her painful maternity bed: "I am glad -- your child."

The married life teaches Madame Wu, the first wife of the Wu family, that "... body is stronger than soul in man." Inspite of her long years of happy married life, 

58. Pearl S. Buck, Pavilion of Women, p. 125.  
59. Ibid., p. 240.  
60. Ibid.  
61. Ibid., p. 127.  

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affluence and well-placed sons, she feels as if she stood on top of a peak, surrounded by ice and cold, lost and solitary.  

Yehonala is not at all happy with her Emperor husband — 'the shell of a man, wrapped in his golden robes of office,' whom she pities as the hatred subsides in her.

The old social order had rotten to its roots and could hardly survive. In The Good Earth Pearl Buck portrays the picture of the Old Lord of the Hwang House in his decayed mansion. In his visit to the great house, Wang Lung is surprised to find filth and garbage around once luxurious palace. There is dead silence and there is none except the Old Lord and the concubine. He has lost everything of what he had, only the fiery temper remains in him. Wang Lung watches the wretched figure of the legendary Old Lord of the Hwang family:

The Old Lord stood there coughing and staring, a dirty grey satin robe wrapped about him, from which hung an edge of bedraggled fur. Once it had been a fine garment, as any one could see, for the satin was still heavy and smooth, although stains and spots covered it, and it was wrinkled as though it

62. Ibid., p. 125.

63. Pearl S. Buck, Imperial Woman, p. 57.
had been used as a bedgown. Wang Lung stared back at the Old Lord, curious, yet half-afraid, because all his life he had half-feared the people in the great house; and it seemed impossible that the Old Lord, of whom he had heard so much, was this old figure, no more dreadful than his old father, and indeed less so, for his father was a cleanly and smiling old man, and the Old Lord, who had been fat, was now lean, and his skin hung in folds about him and he was unwashed and unshaven and his hand was yellow and trembled as he passed it over his chin and pulled at his loose old lips.64

The whole social order was like this helpless Old Lord, tottering under its own burden, battered and doomed to sure extinction.

During the first decade of the 20th century, the traditional Chinese society underwent a traumatic time. With the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty and the establishment of the National Republic in 1911, the Chinese society was forced to change itself. The Opium Wars, The Taiping Rebellion, The Boxer Rebellion, The Japanese War, The Nationalist Movement -- each of these events shook China to its core. Pearl Buck's female characters cannot evade the all pene-

64. Pearl S. Buck, The Good Earth, p. 115.
trating effects of this socio-political metamorphosis. Some of her women characters are influenced by historical figures also.

The Western aggression was the greatest danger for the Manchu Government. Until the early decades of the 19th century China enjoyed undisturbed peace for centuries and had not faced any foreign attack. The first definite conflict with the white races began with the English East India Company regarding the opium trade. Great quantities of opium were sent to China by an uncontrolled smuggler traffic; to extract revenues the war lords fostered the growing consumption of this deadly poison. The efforts of China to put an end to the opium trade, and the foreigner’s persistence in this illegal but extremely profitable trade led to the Opium War in 1841. It ended with a series of defeats for China and the Peace of Nanking in 1842 was signed. By this treaty the English got the privilege of a number of open ports as Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo and Shanghai and also the cession of the island of Hongkong to England. This made them more powerful than before. Later Japan also entered into this remunerative trade. This illegal trade was disastrous to Chinese economy and the use of this deadly commodity became highly fashionable among the Chinese, crippling them to the bone. After the conquest of Manchuria in 1931 the Japanese opened numerous opium and heroine dens in various
parts of China. After 1937 Japan won over the control of all
the key cities in China and was free to foster the use of
drugs without any obstacle keeping the defeated Chinese
authority as helpless spectator. An American China-born
scientist observed: "In 1936 and 1937, as a medical social
worker with the Peking Union Medical College Hospital, I met
many victims of Japan's ingenious system of salesmanship. In
both Peking and Tientsin, the Japanese and their Korean
subordinates operated a series of hostels. Any Chinese could
live in one of them free, provided that he bought drugs from
the establishment. As soon as the addicts ran short of money
they went out to steal, swindle rob or do anything to re-
plenish their purses, while at the same time sure of a
sanctuary from which the Chinese police were barred."65

The humiliating treaties forced China to allow
opium trade without any restrictions. China did not have the
right to fix her custom duties in her own ports. Opium
addiction became a social evil. The highest estimate for
opium addiction in China was 70 million.66 Between 1840 and
1858 opium imports went up by 300 percent.67 In 1821 5000
chests of opium were sold in China, by 1839 it increased

65. Francis L. K. Hsu, Americans and Chinese (London: The
66. Ibid., p. 69.
67. M. D. David, The Making of Modern China (Bombay: Himalaya
upto 40,000 chests. This evil drug drained huge quantities of silver to foreign countries and thus aggravated economic problems.

Pearl Buck's women, particularly the women of the great houses, could not evade the all penetrating effects of this deadly poison. It is interesting to note that Pearl S. Buck draws none of her farm women as an opium addict. Opium smoking might be connected with affluence, especially in case of women. In the great houses none of the slave girls or concubines is portrayed as opium addict, where as all the first ladies of the great families were terribly addicted to opium for one reason or another.

In his first meeting Wang Lung finds that the first lady of the Hwang House is a terrible opium addict:

"... and upon a dais in the centre of the room he saw a very old lady, her small, fine body clothed in lustrous, pearly grey satin, and upon the low bench beside her a pipe of opium stood burning over its little lamp. She looked at him out of small, sharp, black eyes, as sunken and sharp as a monkey's eyes, in her thin and wrinkled face. The skin of her hand that held the pipe's end was stretched over her

68. Ibid., p.60.
little bones as smooth and as yellow as the gilt upon an idol." She is totally under the poisonous spell of opium. The distinction between reality and intoxicated oblivion is getting blurred in her: "The old lady looked at him carefully and with perfect gravity and made as though she would have spoken, except that her hand closed upon the pipe which a slave had been tending for her and at once she seemed to forget him. She bent and sucked greedily at the pipe for a moment and the sharpness passed from her eyes and a film of forgetfulness came over them." Instantly she forgets about everything around her including Wang Lung standing in front of her. She asks in sudden anger: "What is that man doing here?" Astonished Wang Lung has to remind her about his purpose of coming. The old lady recovers for a moment and settles her affairs with him. Her restlessness and her eagerness to be left alone in the stillness of the great room with her opium pipe indicate her heavy addiction. Her habit is an enormous drain on the Hwang family's wealth. She needs opium everyday to fill two shoes with gold and

70. Ibid., p. 16-17.
71. Ibid., p. 17.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., p. 42.
it ruins her health: "her body was a rotten reed with the opium she smoked." When the bandits loot the great house she dies out of shock.

The first lady of the Yang house uses opium as a pain-killer. She has chronic breathing difficulty accompanied by severe pain, 'the opium pipe was kept prepared and the lamp burning' for her instant use. The first lady of the Wu house also uses opium as a pain-killer. In Pavilion of Women it is shown that the first lady of the Wu house offers rich and delicious food to her only son and when he suffers from over eating she teaches him to puff at opium pipe to relieve the pain. In East Wind: West Wind Kwei-lan's mother-in-law, the first lady of the family is an opium addict: "She holds always a long pipe of polished silver, which her slaves keep filled for her and light from a twist of paper, smoldering and ready to be blown into a flame in an instant for her use." The miserable conditions of these addicted women bring out the evil effects of opium very vividly.

Within twelve years of Nanking agreement China faced Anglo-French joint expedition. On October 3, 1860, for

74. Ibid., p. 117.
75. Pearl S. Buck, East Wind: West Wind, p. 234.
76. Ibid., pp. 96-97.
the first time in Chinese history, Peking was under foreign troops. The Emperor Hsien Feng fled to Jehol in the north. The imperial summer palace of Yuan Ming Yuan was burnt by Lord Elgin's order. In 1860 China signed a treaty with Russia and thereby Russia also joined the foreign powers. Chinese sovereignty was almost lost. As a result of the unequal treaties, the Chinese people began to hate both the foreigners and the Manchus. The cumulative effect was the Taiping Rebellion of 1850-1864. Taiping Rebellion was the beginning of great uprisings of 1911 and 1949. The main aim of Taiping Rebellion was to abolish private property, to establish a Communist society, to overthrow Manchu dynasty. The leader Hung Hsiu Chuan can be described as the forerunner of Mao-Zedong in his socialist goals. Making use of the simple tenets of Christianity, he preached political and economic equality and he taught the equality of the sexes. He believed in the abolition of private property. The edict issued by Hung says: "The land of the world must be tilled in common by the people of the world. The areas that suffer from famine shall receive help from areas that have good harvest. So all shall enjoy the happiness given by God and the Heavenly Father." The edict added: "Land, food, clothing and money must be held and used in common, so that there is no inequality anywhere. No one shall have more than

his neighbour has and no one shall ever suffer from cold or
hunger, for the world is the family of God, the Heavenly
Father.\footnote{Ibid., p. 73.}

The Taiping Rebellion brought a great change to the lives of Chinese women. Making use of the Christian doctrine, Hung proclaimed equality of women with men. Women participated in civil and military administration and there were 100,000 female soldiers under the supervision of Hung’s sister.\footnote{Ibid.} He banned foot-binding, concubinage and prostitution. For the first time in Chinese history women were allowed to appear in the civil service examinations conducted by the Taipings. Women were encouraged to study and were given equal share in land distribution. Women held high official positions in the Taiping Government and took part in the war. Though it was a purely peasant uprising, the Taiping Revolution opposed both feudalism and foreign capitalist aggression. The Taiping Revolution was a failure but it awakened the Chinese nationalist potentialities.

The Western imperialists threatened China’s sovereignty. China began to acquire the status of a semi-colonial country. The greed of the foreign imperialist forces increased with time. The last two decades of the century
\footnote{Ibid., p. 73.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
were a history of foreign aggression and Chinese defeat.

The war between Japan and China in 1894–95 led to a crushing defeat for China and the implementation of the Peace of Shimonoseki. This treaty made it possible for all imperialists to set up their industries in China. The imperialist powers divided China into what they called spheres of influence. Maps of China were printed and circulated in Europe showing China in various colours as divided into spheres of influence of the powerful foreign nations.

The character of Ling Sao in Dragon Seed demonstrates the evil influence of foreign aggression in the traditional life of Chinese people. Ling Sao is a happy mother, a happy wife. Her family owns a good house, a pond with plenty of fish in it, a big rice field. A businessman brings her news along with his goods:

"'I have put the price at a gift,' he argued at last, 'because there is to be war this summer in the North'.

The cloth fell from her hand

'What war now?' she asked.

'No war of ours', the man replied. 'It is the little dwarfs from the East Ocean, who always like to fight.'

'Will they come here?' she asked
"Who knows?" he replied.\footnote{0}

The news does not disturb her, she has firm belief in her husband's words: "A man should stay in his own house ... if he stays in his own house and does the work he knows how to do and cares for his own. Who can destroy him? If every man so behaves himself, what enemy can prevail against the nation?"\footnote{1} Her life is safe and sure in her happy home. She plans to teach weaving to her second daughter-in-law, household work to the first and firm work to the third, "... and so every part of our life will have the one to tend it when we are not here."\footnote{2} While visiting her daughter in the city she hears the same horrible news of war from her city son-in-law, who tells her about the flying ships and their devastating power. On her way home she ponders over the horrible news but the rich and fertile rice-fields make her forget all the evil thoughts: "The rice fields were dried and the young rice was beginning to head and there was the promise of fine harvest. All was well with the land and when all was well with the land then everything was well."\footnote{3} At home she finds all the family-members waiting for her, she

\footnote{0} Pearl S. Buck, \textit{Dragon Seed} (New York: The John Day Company, 1941), p. 7.

\footnote{1} Ibid., p. 38.

\footnote{2} Ibid., p. 50.

\footnote{3} Ibid., p. 64.
forgets what she has heard in the city completely.

Very soon her safe and sure world is shattered into pieces. One fine morning Ling-Sao’s husband and sons hear the noise of the flying ships above their fields. For some moments they think them to be wild geese. They see a silver fragment coming down from the flying ships and falling in the rice-field and a fountain of dark earth blowing up. All the farmers in the field ran towards the spot, there is a big pit. The man who owns the land laughs. "I have wanted a pond on my land for ten years and never had time to dig it and here it is." All the farmers decide that the purpose of these flying ships is to dig ponds and wells.

The enemy soldiers enter their village and the villagers welcome them and offer tea. The soldiers demand wine and women and soon there is havoc which is beyond the imagination of the villagers used to peace and certainty. Ling Sao sends her family members from her home and herself hides with her husband. The enemy soldiers enter her home and from the hiding place she watches: "... they howled and ran from one room to another of the eight rooms and the kitchen and Ling Tan and his wife heard their good dishes thrown down and broken and they heard their furniture broken and smashed, and they only trembled lest the house be set on

84. Ibid., p.68.
fire and the burned with it."85

The enemy soldiers went away and Ling Sao is left there amidst the ruin of her orderly home: "It was ordered no more. They stood at last on the tiled floor of the main room and looked about them. There was nothing left whole, scarcely a chair and not the table even which now fell beneath their weight, nor the bamboo couch that the third son slept on, and they went from room to room, their two hands clasped together, and without one word of speech between them they saw the ruin of the house."86 Ling Sao's life also goes out of order like her ruined home. She has to witness the brutal rape of her daughter's old mother-in-law. She is shocked to her bones by the dehumanized and brutalized sexual aggression of the enemy. This is not normal sexual appetite but something more than animal passion, which she finds simply beyond her comprehension. Her husband sends her away from home to a safe place with her sons. The very conception of the term woman changes for Ling Sao in one night. Her two young sons stare at her and she hangs her head in shame, "... because they were men and she a woman, and for the first time in all their years she could not say, 'I fear no man' and so she was silent."87 She cannot adjust

85. Ibid., p.134.
86. Ibid., p.135.
87. Ibid., p.139.
herself in the camp provided by a white lady, she cannot sleep in the strange place with strange women: "Ling Sao had slept in only two beds in her life, the little narrow one where she slept in her father's house as a girl, and after that the wide bed where she slept with her husband, and she could not sleep...." In the camp she hears horrible stories of rape and murder and the story of the gang-raped young mother's death horrifies her.

Everywhere there is death, many are buried without coffins and as the enemies do not care to bury the dead bodies properly dogs crawl the rotten bodies. Villagers are robbed of their properties, even they are not allowed to eat the fish from their own ponds. The insane time destroys Ling Sao's peaceful home, death crawls into it. The first is her daughter-in-law Orchid, who is gang raped by enemy soldiers. Ling Sao's two grand children die of an epidemic. Her first two sons join the hill people, the third being sexually assaulted by the enemy soldiers leaves home. She knows that the world in which she must live will never be the same as the old world she had lived in and loved. Lin Sao is used with a house full of children and grandchildren, the emptiness of the home is too heavy for her to bear. She gives up the habit of brushing her hair or washing her face and she

88. Ibid., p.144.
lets her skin become sunburnt: "The uglier I am the safer I am." Thus man-made disaster plunders everything from the life of this simple farm woman.

Secretly the local people organise themselves against the enemy. The heavy taxation and other restrictive regulations hasten the underground movement. Ling Sao's three sons, her daughter-in-law and husband join the movement. Her three sons return home, changed beyond her recognition. This time the shock comes from her own sons. one day her eldest son rises from his seat while eating and immediately kills a lonely enemy soldier at their gate. When he returns to the dining table, his father asks him in wonder: "Do you not even wash your hands?" His blunt reply is: "Why should I?..... I did not touch him -- I only pushed him with my foot into the bamboo thicket." After finishing his meal, he buries the enemy soldier without any sign of emotion. The third son becomes an expert killer, revenge turns him mad: "We have lain dead with our ancestors instead of living in the world and while we slept others prepared weapons and came to attack us. We who are young know better!" When his father tries to reform him, he threatens to kill him: "These are other times! You may not strike me!

89. Ibid., p.213.
90. Ibid., p.249.
91. Ibid., p.250.
I can kill you as well as another!" Ling Sao's old happy
time is never to come again; she realises bitterly: "Can I
ever go back to the old days?... Are we not all changed?"
The enemy placed a puppet ruler on the throne and continued
to exploit the rich country. Meanwhile the underground
movement was being built up steadily.

Living amidst the ruins of what they had, Ling
Sao's husband curses the evil time, "Curse all these men who
come into the world to upset it with wars!... and curse them
for spoiling our homes and fouling our women and making our
life a thing of fear and emptiness! Curse such childish men
that cannot have done with fights and quarrels in childhood
but must still be children when they are grown and by their
fights and quarrels ruin the lives of decent people such as
we are! Curse all women who give birth to men who make war,
and curse their grandmothers and all who are their kin." Ling
Sao is not only a woman ravaged by evil times, but a
symbol of an old and civilized nation holding distinguished
position high above Western races, shaken to its core at
such barbaric treatment by strangers. The sullen mood of
Ling Sao was the mood of the nation wanting desperately a
change.

92. Ibid., p.251.
93. Ibid., p.252.
94. Ibid., pp.189-90.
The reaction was reflected in the formation of a society known as Boxers. The imperial court and many officials sympathised with them and from 1900 the government soldiers began to fraternize with them openly. Boxers claiming supernatural powers, let loose a reign of terror against the white races. The combined forces of Britain, Russia, Germany, France, Australia, Japan and United States subsequently routed them. This was the last desperate effort of the Empress of China to save her country by the crude and simple method of killing off who were there and letting no one come in. Pearl Buck describes the Boxer Rebellion in these words: "It remains, like the tale of the Black Hole of Calcutta, one of the festering spots of history. If the number of people actually dead was small, as such numbers go in these days of wholesale death by accidents and wars, it was the manner of death, the innocence of little children and babies, that makes the heart shudder and condemn even while the mind can reason and weigh." She herself was the victim of the deep hatred arising out of anti-foreigner feeling among the Chinese. Chased by the hysterical mob she hid with her family in a mud hut, ready to see the death of her children. In this extreme moment of danger she thought: "... I feel nothing but sympathy for the Chinese who knew

only the evil of the white man and none of the good. Were I a young Chinese, had I been taught only what the white man had done to my country, I too would have wanted to be rid of him forever." The Boxer Rebellion was the culmination of the anti-foreigner wave that swept the whole country. The Boxer Rebellion was also a powerful expression of Chinese nationalism. Empress Dowager was the last ruler of Imperial China in the real sense of the term. Her life and career reflected the history of the last quarter of the 19th century. Pearl Buck's *Imperial Woman* is inspired by the character of the Empress. The novel presents the picture of a woman's life trapped between the past and the present in a rapidly changing society. It deals with her life not just on the personal level but in the perspective of broad socio-political events faced by a ruler. Both as a woman and as an Empress, hers is an essentially pathetic personality. She is deprived of her childhood love and forced into marriage with the debauched weakling Emperor. Her only son turns against her. She fights against all odds to save her dynasty from foreign aggression but all her attempts are in vain. The driving force of her life is to destroy the foreigners in her country: "I swear I will not die or let myself grow old until I have destroyed every foreign power upon our soil and

have restored the realm to its own history!"97

She feels that the traditional China is threatened
to extinction by the cultural invasion of Western enemy:
"Our old ancient habits are to end, our wisdom flouted, our
schools destroyed. New schools, new ways, new thoughts are
now to be put in their place. Our enemies, the foreigners,
are to be our guides."98 The pro-western group in her court
try to subdue her so that they 'could bring a new nation
into being, a nation shaped and modeled on the West.'99 She
is dead against all the reforms but it is not possible for
her to resist the all pervading western influence, even her
son prefers foreign toys to traditional Chinese ones. When
her faithful general also joins the pro-reform group she
scolds him bitterly: "You have forgot the welfare of the
nation! Your concern has been only for those merchant steam-
boats you have made to sail upon our rivers, and for the
foreign railroads you built, though you know very well how I
hate such foreign objects, and I hear that you have even
built a foreign weaving mill in Shanghai whose profits you
pocket!"100 At last she understands the reality and subdues

98. Ibid., p.342.
99. Ibid., p. 341.
100. Ibid., p. 327.
to the Western power. As her first sign of welcome she invites the foreign ambassador's wives to her sixty-fourth birthday and offers them a warm greeting. She offers them costly gifts, entertain them with plays and fabulous food. The real story behind this warm welcome, pomp and grandeur is the helplessness of a nation paralysed by imperialistic forces. Suppressed and subdued, the Empress remained bitter about what she had to do: "Never in all her many years had the Empress looked upon a white face but now she prepared to do so, although the very thought revolted her." Empress Dowager is compelled by the forces of the time to order the same reforms which she had opposed.

The failure of the reform movement intensified the foreign aggression. Imperialism brought its culture to China. Western ideas penetrated into Chinese life. Particularly the young were highly influenced by the advanced Western ideologies. The Chinese response to the Western impact was reflected in the industrialisation, establishment of academic institution to study Western science and technology and intellectual reorientation of literary, scientific and political thinking in China. Chinese young men were sent abroad to study Western technology. Western influence was clear in Chinese society. One of the most striking

101. Ibid., p. 350.
102. M. D. David, The Making of Modern China, p. 81.
phenomena of the Chinese history was the large number of Chinese youths who went abroad to study. Each year hundreds of young men and women went to Japan, the United States, Western Europe and Russia. Most of the nation's leaders during the twentieth century had studied abroad. This group of leaders was the driving force in nearly every aspect of the multifaceted process of China's modernization—military, technological, scientific, diplomatic, financial, political, ideological and literary.\textsuperscript{103}

A number of women characters in Pearl Buck exhibit this all pervading powerful Western influence. Pearl Buck shows that Western civilization exerts deep influence on the modern generation of Chinese women. The generation gap between Madame Kang and her Western educated daughter as portrayed in Pavilion of Women reveals a lot about the Western influence upon traditional Chinese women. Madame Kang's daughter Linyi is educated in Shanghai and thereby exposed to the modern Western conception of love, marriage and the new style of living: "The child was modern, too modern, for her hair was cut to her shoulders and curled in the foreign fashion."\textsuperscript{104} She opposes her mother in every


\textsuperscript{104} Pearl S. Buck, \textit{Pavilion of Women}, p. 23.
aspect of life. Her new conception of marriage is a terrible shock for her old-fashioned mother who peeped at her husband in his first visit, an act that weighs on her like a sin. Madame Kang is surprised at her daughter's way of thinking: "I am surprised at my child, .... She says she will marry Fengmo if she likes him after she has talked with him several times, and after he has learned enough English to speak it. How shameless she is to want to see him!" ¹⁰⁵ When Madame Kang is pregnant after forty she is afraid of her educated daughter: "Linyi is so critical of me. She is always telling me I am too fat, and that I should comb my hair differently, and that it is shameful that I cannot read, and that the house is dirty, and that there are too many children. If Linyi stays with me and I have to tell her ... " ¹⁰⁶ Linyi marries Fengmo and they prefer the new style of marriage to the traditional one: "Three days feasting was too long for these impatient two, Fengmo and Linyi. They wanted the swift marriage of the new times, a promise made before the elders and that was enough." ¹⁰⁷ Linyi revolts against the traditional family ways. She complains that in the big joint family her husband belongs to the family; she expresses her desire to go out of the joint family and set up a house

¹⁰⁵. Ibid., p. 123.
¹⁰⁶. Ibid., p. 124.
¹⁰⁷. Ibid., p. 130.
alone. Linyi does not like the traditional life style; she is irritated by "The feast days and the death days and the birthdays and the duties of daughter-in-law and the servants who take over the children and all such things." Linyi’s sister-in-law Rulan is also a new-wave girl. Rulan is a learned woman and Linyi listens to her and together they talk about "things women should not know ... Constitution, and national reconstruction and unequal treaties and all those things." Rulan is against concubinage, when her mother-in-law brings a concubine to the family she protests vehemently: "Many of us worked hard to abolish concubinage ... we marched in procession in the Shanghai streets in hottest summer, and our sweat poured down our bodies. We carried banners insisting in the one-wife system of marriage as they have it in the West. I myself carried a blue banner that bore in white letters the words, ‘Down with concubines.’ Now when someone in my own family, my own husband’s mother, does a thing so old-fashioned, so—so wicked—for it is wicked, Mother, to return to the old cruel ways --." Rulan’s conception of man-woman relationship echoes Western ideas: "I believe in the equality of man and woman, .... If a woman is content with one man, a

108. Ibid., p. 147.
110. Ibid., p. 46.
man should be content with one woman." Linyi and Rulan are exposed to these liberal ideas through their education and Kwie-lan comes into contact with these new ideas through her Western educated husband. Kwie-lan's doctor-husband gives her the status of a friend, helps her to unbind her feet and teaches the Western ways of house keeping and child care. The older generation finds it difficult to understand the young generation's craze for everything foreign. Madame Wu praises her daughter-in-law Linyi's curly hair and Linyi answers: "All foreign women have curly hair." Madame Wu can't help showing her indignation: "Tell me why you have always been so fond of what is foreign." This love of everything foreign is a deep rooted imperialistic influence upon traditional China.

On October 10, 1911 Manchus were dethroned and the Republic of China was established under the leadership of Dr. Sun Yet Sen. In 1914 the Nationalists were firmly estab­lished. Pearl Buck records the silent torture inflicted upon the Manchu women in *The Exile*. Pearl Buck's mother Carie is a witness to the changes: "The heaviest fighting took place in Nanking, some miles up the river, but in her bed Carie

111. Ibid.
112. Ibid., p. 283.
113. Ibid.

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could hear the deep reverberation of modern cannon the Chinese had learned from the West to use. Once she heard the sharp crack of rifles very near the house and with her usual recklessness dashed to a window to see what it was.114 Carie saw outside the compound wall crouching figures hiding in the bamboo thickets. These refugees were women. They were beautifully dressed in long silk gowns, their hair dressed high and their feet unbound. They tried to hide their real identity by wearing Chinese dress but their high cheekbones and big feet betrayed them. These ladies were the wives and daughters of the Manchu officials. According to the custom in China, when a dynasty fell, the winners murdered all the surviving members of the fallen dynasty. The Manchu women and children along with their men folk were wantonly killed all over China. Carie could never forget the "...pity of those ladies, delicately nurtured and sheltered all their lives, haunted now like deer and lying among the bamboos dead, their satin gowns spotted with blood."115 The Manchu abdication was a momentous event; it marked the end not only of the Manchu dynasty but also the history of Imperial China since 221 B.C. It quickened the pace of China's change.

China's defeat at the hands of the foreign power,


115. Ibid., p. 190.
the failure of Opium wars, the unequal treaties, the defeat in Sino-Japanese War in 1895, the failure of the 1911 Revolution, the victory of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia all had profound impact upon China. The whole country was dominated by the economic interests of the foreign imperialist power. Common people suffered under the ruthless oppression of feudalism and imperialism. Meanwhile Communism was spreading steadily among the Chinese. A Communist Party had been formed in 1920 and began to work secretly. Later on Communists were admitted in Kuo-Min-Tang. But in about the middle of 1926 Chiang-Kai-Shek, a right winger, became the leader and he started to eliminate the Communists from the party. Inspite of the differences the two groups worked together, but on the question of Shanghai the Kuo-Min-Tang split into two. Chiang set up a government in Nanking and started a war against the Communists. Kuo-Min-Tang party was under the control of Nanking government and it continued its war against Communists; large number of people were shot down or beheaded, thousands were imprisoned and arrested. The imperialists regained their foothold in China and China became a war field for the war lords and generals. The nationalistic cause advanced victoriously despite civil war and state bankruptcy. Out of the strife and chaos the first Communist government was established in 1927. The imperialist powers realised that a new Red China appeared before them undaunted, claiming rights and refusing to be slaves.
Women took active part in the struggle. "Women were active in the early nationalist and republican movements, and women’s armies fought in the 1911 revolution. In 1924-1925, during the Nationalists’ northern expedition against the reactionary northern warlords, a fusion of women’s military, revolutionary, and feminist work among ordinary people took place for the first time. Women soldiers marched in the expedition and women propagandists from the political department of the army set up women’s leagues among peasant women to fight for women’s rights in each community through which they passed."

Land reform regulations stated specifically that women should receive their share of land. When women heard that they were to receive land, they were of opinion that 'After we get our share we will be masters of our own fate.' The party transferred women’s household duties from the household sector, where it was unpaid and unmeasured to public sector. The canteens, nurseries, sewing stations, grain-husking flour milling centres were established.

The People’s Republic of China promulgated the marriage law in 1950 stressing the system of monogamous marriage, free choice of the life partner, the


117. Ibid., p.459.

118. Ibid., p.462.
rights of widows to remarry, the prohibition of bride-price and child betrothal, and right to divorce by consent. These laws are fundamental to the liberation of women.\textsuperscript{119} The theoretical basis of the Chinese Communist party's policy on women was based on the Marxist proposition that women's liberation can come only through their participation in socially productive labour. The party aimed at giving women a productive economic role. The birth of a girl ceased to be a crushing economic blow to the poor families, young unmarried women came to be regarded as assets to their families, not as burdens. Land reform was carried out in the Old Communist base areas in 1946, and by 1952 it covered almost all the country. Land reform regulations gave women their share of land and thereby granted them economic independence. On the whole revolutionary uprising influenced the life of woman. Pearl Buck realises the effect of Communist ideology on traditional Chinese women: "The Communists could never have taken China, I believe, if they had not prudently given so much advantage to Chinese women."\textsuperscript{120} She recollects the account of two young Americans who had been forced to stay in the Communist territory of China and were later released. During their stay in the Communist village they observed how ardently the women supported the new

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 460.

\textsuperscript{120} Pearl S. Buck, \textit{My Several Worlds: a Personal Record}, p. 152.
regime. These young Americans were of the opinion that:
"... the Communists gave the women help with their children,
a meagre amount of medicine and food, and yet it was enough
to touch the hearts of those who had never been given help
before."121

In Letter from Peking Pearl Buck draws the character of Ai-lan in whom one traces the birth of Red China and
women’s ardent participation in the revolution. Ai-lan is
betrothed to a Chinese youth who dies of cholera. "She had
come to look upon herself as a widow, and she thought it
unchaste to marry. She had even considered becoming a Bud­
dhist nun, as many young widows do in China, but her brilli­
ant agnostic mind forbade this. She could not undergo a
life of ritual in which she did not believe.122 Later on she
gets married to an American living in China. She is an ideal
wife; she plays her lute, reads aloud ancient poetry to her
American husband. A son is born to them and gradually she
changes her life-style. She stops reading poetry and aban­
dons her lute. She begins to show distinct interest in the
Revolution. Her American husband is of the opinion that the
old form of government is the best; he distrusts Sun Yat-sen
and abhors revolutionary activities. The traditional Chinese

121. Ibid., p.152.
122. Pearl S. Buck, Letter from Peking (New York : Best
woman in Ai-lan gradually disappears and she transforms herself into a completely different woman. Formerly she was not interested in political affairs and did not care to read even a newspaper. After becoming the follower of Sun Yat-sen, she becomes a voracious reader. The change in her irritates her husband. In his own words: "We differed, she and I. She, who had been reared in every ancient tradition, was suddenly another woman than the one I had married. As a Chinese lady she had never left our house. Now, as the child grew out of babyhood, she began to go here and there and when I asked her where she went she said she went to meetings."

Ai-lan befriends Sun Yat-sen's wife and in her husband's words: "For she became a revolutionist, she became a violent revolutionist -- you understand? Not merely a patriot, you understand. She became one of Them." She deserts her husband and joins the revolution: "She was with Them in the South, where they were making the revolution. She and the wife of Sun Yat-sen, they were like sisters." In the year 1930, in the city of Nanking she was seized by the order of the secret police of the Nationalist Government. "She was living alone. She had not accompanied her friend, Madame Sun. She had not left with the others on the

123. Ibid., p.65.
124. Ibid., p.67.
125. Ibid., p.68.
Long March. For reasons I never knew she had told to remain in the city. Perhaps she was a spy. I do not know. But she was taken from her bed one cold morning in early spring, before dawn, and she was forced to walk, just as she was, in her night robes, to the Drum Tower, and there, with her back to the wall, and her eyes not blind-folded, she was shot and killed."126 The Communist China gave her the status of a martyr of revolution.

Ai-lan's radical change may be attributed to the influence of time, revolutionary inspiration and a strong patriotic urge. Ai-lan's American daughter-in-law, who was forced to leave her half-Chinese husband when the Communists entered Peking, put forward her apprehensions:

Her heart had waken when she saw her son. This child, half-white, she had born in ignorance of his fate. Where was his place? She knew that if he went to the land of his father, she would be left without love. His place must be in her country, and that she might keep him, she would make a new country for him. Oh, I do not doubt that I am putting very crudely. She would not have said it so, and perhaps would not even have thought it so. Doubtless she imagined she did all for the sake of her people. She

126. Ibid., p 73.
listened to the old arguments, that her people were insulted, the land threatened by foreigners. But I know that all arguments are specious. We do what we do for secret reason of our own, and this is true in whatever country men and women dwell. She wanted to keep her son. Now I perceive the web she wove about Gerald. 127

Whatever the reason Ai-lan marks the beginning of a new era.

Elizabeth MacLeod, the American daughter-in-law of Ai-lan, tried to analyse the awakening in Communist China in her own terms. Her son asks her: "What is Communism really?" I reply: 'It is what people make it.' And I tell him of Karl Marx: 'the strange little man, long dead, who lived his narrow little life, and somehow managed by the power of his wayward brain to lay hold upon millions of human lives.' 128

She thinks Karl Marx's philosophy is responsible for her tragedy. Elizabeth cannot understand her husband's attachment to China and cannot find justification for his decision to stay in China: "What is here that you love

127. Ibid., pp. 66-67.
128. Ibid., p. 23.
better than wife?" 129 It is natural for Elizabeth to explain her mother-in-law's transformation from a traditional housewife to a revolutionary martyr in terms of her own experiences. The character of Ai-lan is a representative one. As the society changes radically, her characters also undergo drastic changes. Without a socio-economic change in the society, secret reasons of one's own cannot transform a traditional housewife into an arch revolutionary. Every age throws up its characters. Ai-lan is also a creation of revolutionary China.

The society changed and its characters also underwent changes. The beauty roses of the great houses became a cry of the distant past. Women came to play other more important roles in the changing time. They could be seen in the role of revolutionaries as Ai-lan and ruthless executioners of enemies as Jade in the Dragon Seed. Such characters were never seen before and this change signalled the beginning of a new era for the women of China.

In The Mother women are shown as bold revolutionaries in whom ideological indoctrination is very deep. Their consciousness is completely changed from their predecessors as a result of the turbulent time they have to live in. The youngest son of the mother is to be executed because

129. Ibid., p. 47.
he is a Communist. On hearing the news she rushes to the town and reaches the gaol. She stares at the high walls spiked with glass. As soon as dawn breaks out the mother beholds a strange sight: "There came forth many persons, youth tied to youth and two by two, their hands bound with hempen thongs, and each two tied to the two ahead. At first they seemed all young men, and yet here and there were maids, but hard to tell as maids, because their long hair was shorn and they wore the garments that the men did and there was nothing to show what they were until one looked close and saw their little breasts and narrow waists. For their faces were as wild and bold as any young man's."130 These girls appear very strong to the old mother. Suddenly she catches a glimpse of her own son: "Yes, there he walked, his head down, and he was tied to a maid, and his hands fast to hers."131 The mother rushes forward and falls at his feet. Seeing his old mother the young boy turns pale and he is about to fall down. One of the strange girls to whom he is tied prevents him from falling down: "For this maid pulled at him and would not let him fall, nor would she let him stay, and when she saw the old white-haired woman at his feet she laughed aloud, the boldest, mirthless laugh and she cried out high and shrill, 'Comrade, remember now you have

130. Pearl S. Buck, The Mother, p. 296.
131. Ibid., p. 297.
no mother and no father, nor any dear to you except our common cause!' And she pulled him on his way. A guard knocks mother down on the road and another guard gives the mother a prod with his gun. After some moments mother hears someone cry out: "A very merry death they died, too, and full of courage! Did you see that young bold maid and how she was singing to the end and when her head rolled off. I swear she sang on a second, did she not?" The courage of these girls stem from their ideological inspiration. These bold characters seldom let this be forgotten that there is a revolutionary change in the consciousness of Chinese women. These girls dare to come out from their sheltered lives, abandon comfort, security and women's common dream of love, children and home making. These committed girls are sure of themselves, resolute and daring. Coquettish Lotus, passive Pearl Blossom, silent O-lan, even assertive Yehonala or vigorous Madame Wu appear pale before these bold girls.

War and its devastating effects upon society play a vital role in the making of characters like Jade as portrayed in Dragon Seed. Jade is a traditional Chinese woman but with a difference. She knows how to read. She asks her farmer husband to buy a book for her: "Will you buy me a book? There that is my secret. Instead of earrings, buy me a

132. Ibid., p. 297.
133. Ibid., p. 298.
book! It is why I cut my hair off. I was going to sell it to buy a book. Then I was afraid to tell you, so I said ear-rings. It is a book I want."134 Her farmer husband is surprised at her request: 'A book!' he said. 'But what have people like us to do with books?' 'I want only a book,' she said. 'But if you cannot read?' 'I can read' she said. Now if she had told him that she could fly like a bird, she could not so have astonished him.

'How can you read?' he cried. 'women like you never read!'135 He promised to bring her the book she desires and instantly he notices a warm change in her: "For now she curled down beside him as he spoke, and put herself close to him as she never had. It was so sweet, this movement of her own will toward him, that he could not say another word."136 This woman who can be wooed with a book and not with ornaments, feels that there is a change in the society. Jade protests against her husband's traditional outlook on women. She likes to move about freely in her village but her husband does not approve of it: "'I wish you would not go on the street alone.'

'Why?'

136. Ibid., p. 27.
'Other men will see you?'
'I do not look at them.'
'I do not want them to look at you. You are pretty and you are my wife.'
'But how can I stay always in the courtyard? These are not ancient times.... But still these are the new times and I will come and go.'

There is no wonder that Jade joins the anti-imperialistic struggle with her husband. Once she kills some stalwarts of the enemy camp by selling them poisoned ducks. The woman in her suffers; she asks her husband: "'Are you sure that you do not think me less a woman because of what I did?'

'Of which you did?' he asked, 'you are always doing something!'

'The poison,' she whispered, 'Sometimes when I wake up and think I did that- I hate myself.' 'But they were the devils,' he said. 'I know,' she said. 'But I mean—will there come a day when you will look at me—perhaps long after peace comes—and you will say to your heart. 'She could put poison into food,' and then think me less a woman than you like?"'

137. Ibid., p. 25.
138. Ibid., pp. 268-69.
Here Jade's traditional feminine impulses are in direct clash with the demands of struggle. Hard life of a revolutionary destroys Jade's womanly charm and she suffers for it: "I see no beauty in me... I am so thin, my flesh is so hard. To day when I was washing clothes I looked in the water and my face was dark and not like a woman's face."

Her participation in the anti-imperialistic struggle, her love for motherland shape Jade's personality. But her indoctrination is not too deep like the Communist girls to denounce all the traditional values and attachment with the traditional society. She waits eagerly for the good days to come: "Shall I wear paint and powder again and put earrings in my ears?"

Being a socially conscious writer Pearl Buck cannot ignore the socio-economic forces around her. Her women characters bear the sure mark of the social forces of her time. She has taken up her pen in a historical moment, she is the testifier of a nation's transformation. Her female characters are captured in a specific point of history. The overwhelming influence of the turbulent time shapes her female characters.

139. Ibid., p. 267.
140. p. 268.
Pearl Buck spent half her life in Asia, much of it in China and spent the other part in America. She does not react to Oriental ways with naive wonder, as many of her countrymen do. She does not need to understand the Oriental life, it is a way of life with her. She can realize the cross-cultural conflicts between East and West with sharp sensitivity and deep penetration. No wonder that cross-cultural conflict is a dominant theme in Pearl Buck's novels. "Two worlds, two worlds, and one cannot be the other, and each has its ways and blessings, I suppose." Pearl Buck observes as she visits an American woman in a modern South Dakota kitchen. Her kitchen is equipped with modern tools like washing machine, drier, electric stove, refrigerator etc. With such help her daily work is soon done. The American housewife confesses: "I get so bored after dinner—I haven't a thing to do." Instantly Pearl Buck remembers the merry chatter of Chinese women beating their laundry by the edge of the communal pond. Pearl Buck recalls nostalgically the mirth of Oriental life against the backdrop of mechanised Western civilisation.

Out of the two worlds springs her creativity. Pearl Buck grew up in a double world, the small Presbyterian


142. Ibid.
American world of her parents and the big, merry Chinese world. She slipped easily from Chinese patter with her playmates to formal English with her parents, from a poached egg English breakfast in the dining table to rice in the kitchen and easily from Mark Twain to Confucious. She learnt to speak Chinese first, she preferred chopsticks to fork and knife, Chinese food to Western food. Asia was her real and actual world and her own country appeared unreal and strange to her. She tried to seek an American boy of her age in the pages of Tom Sawyer. While playing with her Chinese-playmates their favourite game 'The Empress and the Son,' Pearl Buck with golden curly hair and blue eyes was often accused of having the wrong look for the role. Pearl shouted in protest: "I don't care if I do look different from her; I am just as Chinese as any of you." It may be safely said that Pearl Buck's identification with the Chinese people is almost total.

During the Boxer rebellion the Boxers attacked the white settlements and a spate of mayhem and murder followed. Pearl Buck's father sent his family to Shanghai. Pearl Buck was driven away from her loving and familiar world: "My worlds were no longer interwoven. They were sharply clear, one from the other. I was American, not Chinese and although

China was as dear to me as my native land, I knew it was not my land. Mine was the country across the sea, the land of my forefathers, alien to China and indifferent to the Chinese people. The new forces destroyed the traditional China familiar to Pearl Buck. Pearl Buck had to face the anti-white wave and the blazing hatred of the local people. She experienced the plight of the minority groups persecuted by the powerful majority. She had the bitter experience of being a refugee in a country which she thought to be her own.

These incidents go, in a large way, to the making of Pearl Buck the novelist. There is no wonder many of her female characters are shown as being trapped in cross-cultural conflicts. The cross-cultural conflicts as depicted by Pearl Buck have many nuances. In the case of Elizabeth the conflict is on the political level, in the case of Livy it takes a racial turn. What Madame Ezra faces is a cultural conflict, Mary's conflict arises from cultural differences.

In Letter from Peking, Elizabeth, an American girl, is married to a half-Chinese professor in Peking. When the Communist enter Peking Elizabeth Mac Leod is forced to leave her husband Gerald and she returns to America with her son. Elizabeth is sustained by her passionate love for

144. Ibid., p. 54.
Gerald, by her dream of reunion and by his letters. She honours both her husband and the ancient culture of China. Her husband's second marriage against his will, his tragic death in the hands of the Communists, her son's accusations violently overturn her existence. Through her son's happy marriage she managed to regain her calm and again faces life boldly keeping rich memories of her love life as her inner strength.

Elizabeth marks that her husband is more of a Chinese than an American. He leans to his mother, his Chinese side. His love and attachment with China is too deep to be rooted out by his American wife. He becomes a part of Communist China and is forced to take a second wife, this time a Chinese to become one of them. Always under constant watch, he is killed while trying to escape from Peking. They never trust him for his foreign blood and wife.

Gerald's son Rennie inherits the same conflict from his father. He hates his father's cord with China, he is of the opinion that he rejected his mother, he could have come with them but he did not, at his own will. Rennie cannot forgive his father. His mother tries to defend his husband: "It is because I am American and because your father is half American. And there is no fault in either of us for that. It is the split in the world that has driven us apart, exactly as though a tidal wave had rushed between us.
on a beach and swept us in opposite directions."\textsuperscript{145} Elizabeth is of firm conviction: "Gerald has not deserted me nor I him. We are divided by history, past and present."\textsuperscript{146} The burden of history, past and present is too heavy for her young son. His first love Allegra, an American beauty refuses his love just because of the Chinese part in him: "She is not afraid of me... she is afraid of what I carry in my veins, the genes, the ancestry, the irremovable part of me, that which I cannot change."\textsuperscript{147} Allegra’s refusal nearly drives Rennie to Peking, to his father’s side. But China is an unknown country for him. Rennie begins his painful search for roots. First, he accuses his mother: "Mother, why did you let me be born?"\textsuperscript{148} He goes out from home to work in Kanas. His agony makes Elizabeth suffer: "Where will I find a home for my son? Where can he find the country to be his own?"\textsuperscript{149} Eventually in love and understanding from sensitive Mary he finds a world to grow in. He selects his mother’s ancestry as his own.

Rennie can resolve his conflicts but his grandfather fails; he remains a hybrid all his life. He wears

\textsuperscript{145} Pearl S. Buck, \textit{Letter from Peking}, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., p. 187.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., pp. 131-32.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., p. 130.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., p. 133.
Chinese dress, eats Chinese food, uses chopsticks, speaks Chinese, reads Chinese but he can never love his black-haired son. The memory of his revolutionary wife is a nightmarish experience; he cannot understand her transformation from a traditional housewife to a revolutionary. All his life he remains a bundle of contradictions.

In *Come, My Beloved*, Livy's conflicts arise out of racial barriers. Livy's father is a missionary from the Mac Ard family. Mac Ard had established a vast missionary institution, his son carried his father's work. His grandson followed his footsteps. Livy's father is not contented with the luxurious life of missionary in Poona, he goes to Vhai, an interior village and begins his work there. He becomes almost an Indian, speaks Marathi, reads Sanskrit, wears a dhoti, lives in a mud hut. When he thinks about America he feels: "shallow roots as schooldays had given him were withered away."150 After his father's second marriage there is no home to return. He plunges into India deeper and deeper. This assimilation with India is complete in his daughter Livy. She refuses to go to America even for her schooling: "And indeed she was much an Indian, for it is not only blood that makes the human being but the air breathed, the water drunk, the food eaten, the sounds heard, the

language spoken and those with whom communications is made most deeply, and for these were all Indian." She falls in love with Jatin, an Indian doctor. Her affair with Jatin shocks her parents. Her mother cannot imagine her daughter being dragged down into the mass of the dark people. Livy’s love brings out the hidden racial prejudices in her missionary father. When Jatin begs his daughter’s hand he is full of revulsion: "His fervid eyes, his glowing words, the impetuous grace of his outstretched hands, the long fingers bending backward, the thumb apart and tense, the white palms contrasted against the dark skin, all were too Indian, and in one of the rare moments of revulsion which Ted considered his secret sin, he was now revolted and sick." Racial and colour prejudices win over his philanthropic attitude and missionary zeal. Livy’s father forces her to go to America. Being aware of the inevitable separation, Livy becomes physically intimate with Jatin. In due courses Mac Ards are in the ship, Livy’s parents are relaxed. Livy prays to God for a baby so that she will be able to come back to Jatin. Her young heart finds it difficult to bear the barriers of caste, race or colour: "She would never see anyone like him, never meet a man who could compare to him, but because the smooth skin that covered his handsome body, was dark, 

151. Ibid., p. 276.

152. Ibid., p. 284.
they must never be man and wife, a coating so thin though dark, that it could be pierced by a pin and underneath the flesh was as pale as her own and the blood as red. Yet it was the paper thin darkness of the skin that forced them on their separate ways, on opposite sides of the world. "153 Livy clings to her hope, if she can bear a child she will return to India, to her Jatin. But one day Nature announces that her love bears no fruit; her separation with her love and Jatin is complete.

Livy's American father cannot accept Indian Jatin as his son-in-law. In East wind : West wind, Kwie-lan's father and others refuse to accept the American girl as the daughter-in-law of the Yang family. Mary marries the handsome son of the Yang family. She thinks that she can become a "Chinese or Hottentot or anything"154 for her lover. But reality stores something else for her. Her mother-in-law simply cannot tolerate her: "As for that one, the foreigner within the courts, I know nothing about her. I sent for her once to prepare my tea, since your brother tired me with his beseeching that she be allowed to come into my presence. But I found I could not endure her awkward hands and barbarous looks. She was very clumsy about my person. I perceive

that she has never been trained in the proper behaviour to an elder. I shall not try to see her again."155 Mary is forced to live the life of a prisoner, her mother-in-law is adament: "I shall not allow her to go outside the great gate again so long as she remains here. She must learn the seclusion proper to ladies if she is to live here."156 Mary’s father-in-law is also hostile towards Mary: "It is not possible that the foreign one be received among us. In her veins flows blood unalterably alien. In her heart are alien loyalties. The children of her womb cannot be sons of Han. Where blood is mixed and impure the heart cannot be stable."157 Mary is laughed at and ridiculed by other family members: "Any one so ridiculous and inhuman in appearance must expect to be looked at--and laughed at as well!"158 The torture is too much for Mary: "I have always been used to frankness and cheerfulness and speaking straight out. And here it is all silence and bowing and sliding eyes at me. I could not bear being cut off from my freedom like this if I knew what was behind it all."159 Mary’s Western educated husband rebels against all the bindings of tradition and

155. Ibid., pp. 216-217.
156. Ibid., p. 217.
157. Ibid., p. 262.
158. Ibid., p. 231.
159. Ibid., p. 227.
goes out of the ascentral home. He vows to "start a new race free from those ancient and wicked bondage over our souls."\textsuperscript{160} His love and courage give Mary strength to live in a foreign country and to face life.

Pearl Buck is always compassionate with the minority groups. She was familiar with the experience of living as a refugee in an alien land, hated, segregated and persecuted by the powerful majority. Pearl Buck's concern for the minority groups finds eloquent expression in her novel Peony. She was stirred deeply by the plight of the Jews. She writes in a letter dated April 2, 1948: "In recent years I have been very much interested in the Jews, however, because, I believe that the years of persecution which they have suffered should have meaning for the rest of the world. It has always been my hope that as a consequence of their own suffering the Jewish people might take the lead in equality for all people everywhere in the world, and in seeing that the world is a safe place for all people. Until it is, the Jewish people cannot be safe either."\textsuperscript{161} Through her novel Peony Pearl S. Buck presents her views on ethnic problems. She believes in assimilation. In another letter dated July 2, 1948, she writes: "I myself, of course, with

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 264.

my Eastern background must believe in the merging of all peoples, not by force but by kindness. For this is the meaning of Peony, that by Chinese kindness and acceptance there was never any persecution of Jews in China, and nature did its works."162

In Peony, Pearl Buck traces the conflicts inherent in the Chinese and the Jewish temperament. Ezra, a rich merchant, is the son of a Jewish father and a Chinese mother. He is sure about him: "I sometimes wonder why we should ever leave China. Four generations we have been here, Naomi, and David's children will be the fifth. The Chinese are very kind to us."163 "But his wife hopes to return to the 'promised land.'"164 She is loyal to the orthodox Jewish faith and creates a Jew home in an alien land. She fails to love the people around her; even her faithful maid servant Wang Ma is not a human being but simply Chinese. Madame Ezra is afraid of the Chinese people; she believes: "They are not kind for kindness's sake, ... it's their trick to be kind. They win us by guile. They get their women to entice our men. And they pretend to be tolerant—why, they even say they are quite willing to worship our Jehovah as well as

162. Ibid., p. 267.
164. Ibid., p. 24.
their own idols!" She dreams that her son David will be the leader to take them to the promised land. But the illusion of Palestine cannot lure him, he is aware that Palestine is a dry place inhabited by nomads and heathens. The influence of Rabbi, the last pillar of Jewish religion and also his mother’s dream are not strong enough to hold him from the warmth of Chinese welcome. The Chinese believe that “When foreigners come to a nation, the best way is to make them no longer foreign. That is to say, let us marry our young together and let there be children. War is costly, love is cheap.” The love and warmth is irresistibly tempting for the young heart. Madame Ezra tries a new way to win over David to her side; she arranges his marriage with a Jewish girl—Leah. Leah is not a woman but a dead tradition: “Leah was more than a woman—she was a people and a tradition and a past, and did David marry her he espoused the whole, and to that he must return. He could not be himself or free, were he to return, for then must he become part of the ancient whole and bear upon himself the weight of their old sorrows.” Leah’s death frees David from his last binding with the past and with Leah’s death the spirit in Madame Ezra dies too. The strong woman becomes silent. The process...

165. Ibid., p. 68.
166. Ibid., p. 102.
167. Ibid., p. 103.
of his assimilation with the Chinese is complete when he marries a Chinese girl, Kao-Lien. David realizes deeply: "In the countries of Europe, yes, for there the people force us to be separate from them by persecution. We cling to our own people because no other will accept us, and we are martyred and glorified by our martyrdom. We have no other country than sorrow. But here where all are friends to us and receive us eagerly into their blood, what is the reward for remaining apart?" 168 David's cross-cultural conflicts come to an end through the process of assimilation.

While portraying cross-cultural conflicts Pearl Buck is blinded neither by the Oriental cultural nor by the glamour of West. She is free from racial and colour prejudices. In a letter dated May 2, 1947 she writes: "I suppose that growing up in the ancient civilization of the Chinese, so much more wise and cultivated than our own, had its effect on me. Most of the people in the world are not white, and the oldest and best civilizations are among the colored peoples. The people of China, India, Java, Indonesia, whom I know, are much more human than we are. From them I learned that under heaven all mankind are equally valuable and should have the same rights and opportunities. The humanity which the Christian religion have never been able to teach us, they knew centuries before Christ—Christ, who himself

168. Ibid., p. 276.
was not an Anglo-Saxon." Pearl S. Buck is above racial discrimination and colour prejudices. She believes that it is monstrous to hold that a whole race of people is inferior because it is born with a dark skin. She is critical about the Oriental culture also. She focuses on the darker side of Oriental civilization, as the deplorable status of a concubine as a woman in society, woman's tragic ordeal in trying to satisfy man's lust, unscientific customs such as foot-binding and practices like hiring of nurse maids are analysed and vehemently criticised by Pearl S. Buck.

While dealing with cross-cultural conflicts Pearl Buck tries to convey the message recorded in Peony. Love is divine, war is a folly, love is cheap, war is costly; it is this ideal that Pearl Buck hopes every nation will follow. Livy's protest in Come, My Beloved, against social conduct, moral ethos and colour discrimination echoes Pearl Buck's convictions. In a letter dated April 24, 1948 she writes: "The seat of prejudice is in the emotions and it remains in the emotions. Most of the people in the United States know now that there is no race or creed which is inherently inferior to others. Scientists have proved to us that Negroes are in no way inferior to whites or Jews to Gentiles,

but prejudice continues as strong as ever." Livy is a victim of colour prejudice of her white parents. Livy's parents reveal the mad irrationality and injustice of the white races.

Paul A. Doyle writes: "Both as a person and as a writer, the Worlds of East and West have broadened her spiritually and increased her depth of understanding and sympathy. The East and West meet in her and bring a mature realization of both differences and similarities; and this realization becomes a hallmark of her vision of life." This vision of life enables her to create women like Livy, Elizabeth, Mary or Madame Ezra. Her awareness of both the differences and similarities of the East and the West brings out the mature realization of the various aspects of the cross-cultural problems. Pearl Buck portrays the Chinese world from the perspective of twenty years in the United states and the American world from the perspective of forty years in China. This is a unique situation for any author worth his salt and Pearl S. Buck comes out triumphantly in response to such challenging stuff of fiction.

170. Ibid., p. 37.